

Whoever heard of Lord Dunsmore?

By CORINNE ABATT

You won't find Lord Dunsmore's War or the Battle of Point Pleasant in most American history books, and the average guy will probably return a blank stare when questioned about these events.

Someday this battle, fought on territory that is now West Virginia, may take precedence over Lexington and Concord as the first battle of the Revolution.

Patricia Burton of Farmington, the country's leading authority on the battle fought Oct. 18, 1774, spoke before the monthly meeting of the Sons of the American Revolution, SAR, in Farmington Hills last week.

Miss Burton, granddaughter of the late Clarence Monroe Burton, founder of Bur-

ton Abstract & Title Company, and herself a trained abstractor, told her audience, "My grandfather was an abstractor. My father was an abstractor. I have tried to use these principles to piece together this story."

SHE DISPLAYED her books of affidavits and her charts of dates and officers in the battle saying, "Everything is now arranged so historians can't say I'm a crackpot running around claiming I've found a war."

The Battle of Point Pleasant was the main event of Lord Dunsmore's War. Dunsmore was Governor of the Virginia Colony. The battle was between the armies of Virginia and forces made up of the Confederacy of Indian Nations led by Shawnee chief Cornstalk.

The American triumph was due, in part, to the fact that one young Virginian developed dynamism. Several soldiers were sent out from the fort to shoot wild turkeys for soup to help sustain the aging soldier's weary constitution.

They hurried back to the fort and Miss Burton says, "Reported they had captured five acres of Indians."

This advance notice allowed those in the fort time to prepare for the battle which was to claim 48 of the Virginians, including Col. Charles Lewis.

While actually that battle would seem to belong to the Indian frontier war rather than the Revolution, Miss Burton easily clarifies that point.

She calls a man, John Connolly, no relation as yet established to the present day John Connolly of Texas, the real key.

This was part of a massive collection of material which Draper eventually left to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin when he died in 1911. The government at that point couldn't recognize a battle of which they were not aware.

Gradually recognition of this battle is building and much of the 5 credit for this must go to Miss Burton who has been honored by Mason County West Virginia for her continuing effort to establish that conflict as the first battle of the American Revolution.

A plaque naming her historical consultant was unveiled last October at Point Pleasant.

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Pat Burton shows SAR president Don Pennell (left) of Birmingham, a picture of the mother of Colonel Charles Lewis, a man killed in the first battle of the Revolutionary War in West Virginia. Looking on is Marie P. Davies of Detroit in his uniform of the F1 Lennoult Militia. Davies will speak at the May meeting of the SAR which meets in Farmington Hills. (Staff photo)

Connolly and Dunsmore reached a gentleman's agreement in December 1773. Connolly agrees, 2,000 acres near Louisville, Ky., and a commission in the Virginia militia. In exchange he agreed to forgo his Virginia's claim to the area in and around Fort Pitt.

Connolly was one of the most notorious British agents, he was a real wheeler-dealer," Miss Burton said. "He received his authority from Lord Dunsmore, but Dunsmore was duped. Connolly was playing one side against the other. John Connolly, possibly the king's most loyal subject, was running things."

Further explanation of Connolly comes from a booklet on the Point Pleasant battle written by Miss Burton.

"On Jan. 1, 1774, Captain Commandant John Connolly issued a proclamation saying that Fort Pitt belonged, not to Pennsylvania, but to Virginia. This produced a series of dramatic happenings which brought Pennsylvania and Virginia almost to the brink of civil war."

Connolly was issuing orders—and counter orders—until the entire area was in virtual turmoil. Whites were killing Indians and Indians were killing whites until there was very real danger of the frontier being completely abandoned with whites fleeing eastward and leaving their fields, crops and plantations.

Miss Burton also says in her booklet that suspicion began shortly after the battle.

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A reward is being offered for any information leading to the arrest of the persons who vandalized Larkshire School in Farmington Hills.

The \$150 reward includes \$100 from the Larkshire PTA and \$50 offered by Gordon Johnson, a teacher at the school.

John Bailey, PTA president, reports a number of rooms were damaged and defaced with paint, ink and fire extinguisher foam. Books were ransacked and personal property in the school destroyed, damaged or stolen.

Two of the students' pet birds were tortured and one of them killed.

"Students' teachers and parents are very upset by this senseless act of vandalism," Bailey said. "We hope to catch the people responsible, and we hope the reward shows that we mean business and that we care about our school."

Bailey said residents near the school have reported seeing three persons thought to be two teenage boys and a girl on the school roof the day the break-in and vandalism occurred, Sunday, Feb. 29.

Anyone with information is asked to call Al Langan, Larkshire principal, 676-2200. Callers' names will be held confidential.

Adult education begins new term

Farmington Public Schools Community Education Classes will begin evening and day sessions during the week of March 29.

Day classes at Bond School, 3208 West Thirteen Mile Road at Orchard Lake, include metric instruction, quilting classes and an introduction to art. A class centered around the growing of house plants will also be offered.

Babysitting is available for children from two to five years of age for a small charge.

Pre-registration is necessary and may be completed by mail or in person at Bond School between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. For further information about day classes, call 681-0861.

Evening classes at Farmington High School, 3208 Schwansee, will include instruction in adult evening, beginning pottery and stoneware.

A rent-a-garden program, which makes available plowed areas for a fee, will be available this spring.

Registration for evening classes will be Monday, March 15 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Farmington High School, room 1603.

It is possible to pre-register at the Community Education office, 3208 Schwansee either in person or by mail.

For further information about evening classes or the rent-a-garden, phone the Community Education Office at 477-1500, ext. 28, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"IT WAS LATER highly suspected by the Virginia officers that the Indians had in reality been serving as allies of the British in an effort to divide the attention of the country just as the First Continental Congress was meeting in Philadelphia."

For a period in the mid-1800s, between careers as an abstractor and Sheridan pony racer, Patricia Burton lived in the back country of Virginia near the West Virginia line.

She became interested in local history and, with the same dogged determination and painstaking attention to detail which characterizes a reputable abstractor, she began to document events and personal life of an earlier time. She says she read and reread a slim volume, "History of the Battle of Point Pleasant" written by Virgil A. Lewis in 1960.

It was then that her decade of duty to the cause of Point Pleasant began. Several years ago Miss Burton went to Ireland to trace the ancestry of Charles Lewis killed in the Point Pleasant battle, and his brother Andrew who was commander in that same battle.

Their grandmother, Margaret Patton was born in Donegal and Miss Burton, also a writer, used the material gathered in Ireland as background for several historical articles.

Point Pleasant events of 1774 are unknown to many because details of the battle were written carefully, but never sent to the proper authorities.

It was a younger, New York born historian, Lillian Copeland Draper, who uncovered the first official report of the battle. It was given to him by Charles D. Fox, a great grandson of Patrick Henry. In this letter, written by Colonel William Preston to Patrick Henry are details of the battle written 21 days after it took place.

Draper searched for more and found it—all of the reports in an old trunk belonging to the daughter of one of the Virginia officers.

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