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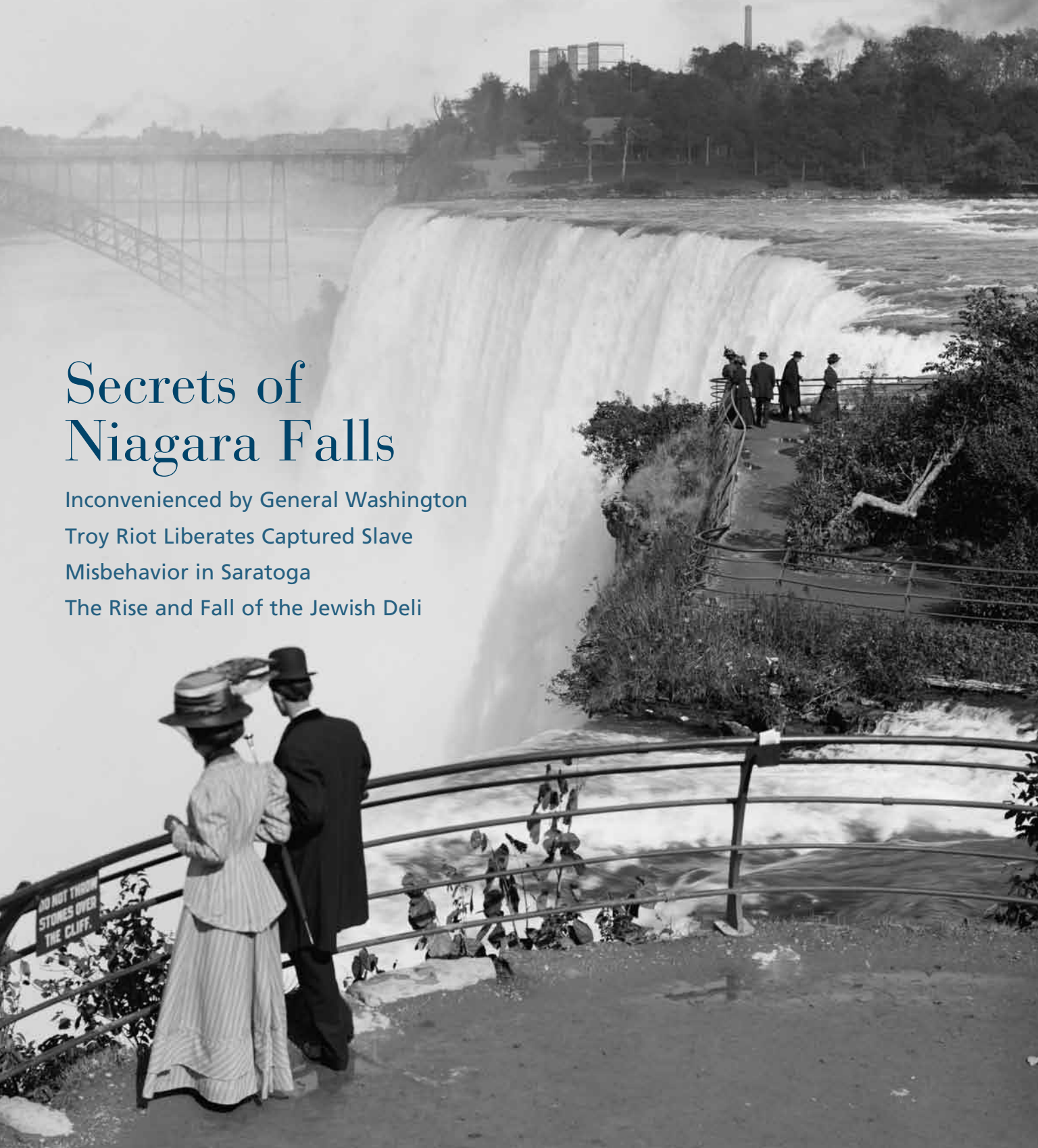
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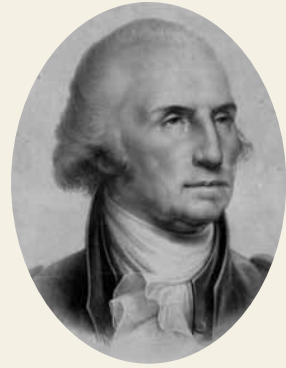
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Hotel Revolution

BY A.J. SCHENKMAN



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Tryntje and Jonathan Hasbrouck opened their Newburgh home to some unwilling—and uninvited—guests. But when George Washington needed a headquarters during the Revolution, the family moved out completely to make room for the general and his staff.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Hasbrouck house in Newburgh served as Washington's headquarters from 1782 to 1783.

In the City of Newburgh in the Hudson Valley, a fieldstone house still stands, which for just over sixteen months during 1782–83 was the nerve center of the Revolutionary War. General George Washington made the dwelling both his home and his military headquarters. But when he arrived in the spring of 1782, it was the home of Tryntje (Catherine) Hasbrouck, the widow of noted patriot Colonel Jonathan Hasbrouck.

In most histories of the house, Tryntje (the nickname is a Dutch affectionate diminutive of Catherine) is described as being visibly upset about the decision by Washington's officers to have him quartered in her home. An attending officer who broke the news to her recorded that she sat for some time in "sullen silence," and then remembered her saying

that the general and her family could not stay in the same house. Tryntje was quite right; she had to pack up three decades' worth of accumulated belongings to make room for the general and his staff.

When I started researching this state historic site, I found that most of the narratives written about the home focused on Washington's stay—indeed, the house was saved from destruction over 150 years ago because of the critical decisions that Washington made while residing in it, not to preserve the story and history of Tryntje Hasbrouck and her late husband. But today, there is renewed interest in both Colonel Hasbrouck, who enlarged the home and its farm during his lifetime, and in Tryntje, who was not just the "good wife" who packed up her home and vacated it for Washington.



NEW YORK STATE ARCHIVES

The hearth in the Hasbrouck house was typically Dutch: large, open, and with a hood chimney.

The baroness' diary described their accommodations:

"We had two rooms, which were rather small but neat, for me, my husband, my children, and my two maid-servants, and at dinner and supper, the general's aides-de-camp."

A Capable Woman

Tryntjen Dubois, the daughter of Cornelius de Bois and Margrieta Hoogteeling, was baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston on March 29, 1730. Like her future husband, she was a descendant of a group of Walloons who had fled Europe because of religious persecution. Ultimately twelve families settled on 40,000 acres of land granted to them by Governor Andros of New York; this grant became known as New Paltz. When or where Tryntje met Jonathan Hasbrouck is unknown, though their childhood homes outside of New Paltz were only a few miles apart. Eventually the two wed in May 1751 and relocated to Newburgh in June to a house with ninety-nine acres of land that Jonathan's mother had

purchased for her youngest son in 1749. When the couple arrived, the house was still in the early stages of construction. It would not take its current form until 1770.

Contemporaries in Newburgh remembered "Mrs. Hasbrouck" as tall and thin, and her skin color was described as dark. She managed the family store that she and Jonathan ran from their home in their later years. Accounts say that she always carried a great bunch of keys at her side; wore stays, a popular women's fashion of the day; and held all her conversations with her servants in Dutch. No doubt these servants were slaves. One of the earliest recorded "servants" to reside at the home was Negro Robb, whom Jonathan Hasbrouck purchased in the 1760s.

By the time the French and Indian War erupted in 1754, the couple had one child, Joseph, and by the time it ended in 1763 they had four more: Cornelius, Rachel, Isaac, and Mary. Eventually the family numbered seven children with the addition of Jonathan II and Abraham. Jonathan senior was a militia officer who was often posted a considerable distance from Newburgh; thus life could be hard on Tryntje. Although in later years she had the help of a few slaves for her daily chores, she was often left alone to run the house, farm, orchards, mills, and store, tend to her children, and manage a large herd of live-

stock. The latter was one of the reasons for a massive hay barracks that was built on the property.

Commandeered by War

If the Hasbrouck home seemed destined for relative historical obscurity, that course was reversed once the Revolution began. During this period, the home was used as accommodations for not only Continental officers such as Baron von Steuben, but the entire Pickering family as well. In at least one case, Hessian prisoners of war from the Battle of Saratoga were under house arrest there. Yet these "guests" at the home did not appear to create as much distress as Washington's stay, mainly because the family did not have to vacate, though Colonel Hasbrouck was less than thrilled about housing prisoners from Saratoga.

Baron Friedrich Adolf Riedel and his regiment were captured after the Battle of Saratoga. As part of the articles of capitulation, they were ordered south to Virginia, where they would eventually depart for Europe and "never again raise arms against the United States." Accompanying the baron was his wife, Baroness Frederika Charlotte Louise von Massow, and their children, as well as the general's aides-de-camp. All spent a week at the Hasbrouck house in December 1778 en route to Virginia. There has been some debate by historians about

their stay, mainly because in the translated version of the baroness' diary that she kept during this period, she referred to Jonathan Hasbrouck as Jonathan "Osborn." However, according to General George Clinton's papers, Baron Riedsel was denied his request to stay longer in "Newburgh" because of "his inflammatory speech." Thus it is likely that the baroness was talking about the Hasbrouck home.

The Hasbroucks most likely quartered the Riedsels in the recently constructed English parlor, which was in the newest part of the house. The baroness' diary described their accommodations: "We had two rooms, which were rather small but neat, for me, my husband, my children, and my two maid-servants, and at dinner and supper, the general's aides-de-camp." A later observer of Washington's stay described the parlor as "12 by 14 with a fire place." The baroness called the tall Mrs. Hasbrouck "amiable," believing that Tryntje made a sincere effort to make the baroness and her family as comfortable as possible. The diary recorded that the baroness was impressed by the wealth of the Hasbrouck family, and also noted that Tryntje invited her to coffee one Sunday after dinner, whereupon the two women were eventually interrupted by Colonel Hasbrouck bursting into the parlor.

The house was subsequently used for officers'

quarters because it was substantial, large, and close to the Hudson River and the Continental Ferry. In the summer of 1779, Baron von Steuben made the home his headquarters, followed in 1781 by Quartermaster General Colonel Timothy Pickering and his family. His son, Henry, was born in the house. By this time, Tryntje was a widow (Jonathan Hasbrouck died in 1780 of natural causes), and she housed the Pickering family in the same parlor that Baron Riedsel and his family had stayed in a few years earlier. To enlarge their accommodations, the Pickerings also rented out the Hasbroucks' "old shop," the family store that was run from the home.

Washington Comes to Newburgh

Colonel Pickering agreed to leave the Hasbrouck home in order to make way for General Washington and his staff. There are no extant records indicating where Tryntje and her family lived while the house was occupied by Washington. Some historians believe she stayed with her family in New Paltz; others, that she lived in New Windsor; still others think that she lived in one of the tenant houses she owned. But one thing is certain: she did not reside in her own home while Washington occupied it. He arrived around April 1, 1782 and left in August 1783, whereupon Tryntje returned, although the property did not

completely revert to her; as late as 1784, the quartermaster department still held onto some of her meadows for their horses. The department did compensate Tryntje for the use of her home while it was occupied, as well as for usage of her meadows after they were vacated. The department also paid her for any damages incurred.

Tryntje lived out her years in the house she had come to as a young bride some three decades earlier. The late Newburgh city historian, A. Elwood Corning, believed that she died after 1799, when an entry was made in the rolls of the Newburgh Presbyterian Church, of which she was a congregant. Her grave was located between the house and the "North River," next to her husband's and two of their sons'.

If Tryntje Hasbrouck could be transported to present-day Newburgh, she would no doubt recognize her home at the end of Liberty Street, since it has been preserved relatively intact. But the house that was once "out of town" is now in the heart of a city, not a small village; the enormous hay barracks no longer stands in the farm's meadows; and the vast Hasbrouck orchards have been replaced by townhouses. It's safe to say that of her familiar landscape in the eighteenth century, Tryntje would recognize the Hudson River and Mount Beacon looming on the other side—and little else. ■

THE ARCHIVES CONNECTION

It has been difficult to research and reconstruct the early history of the Hasbrouck house, and even more challenging to reconstruct the lives of Tryntje and Jonathan Hasbrouck, because historical information has been either lost or scattered over many archives. What compounds the problem is that much of the existing information about the Hasbroucks is from secondary sources, particularly from the writings of others, such as Washington and his junior officers who discussed the house as a potential headquarters. However, manuscripts housed at Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site in Newburgh include a receipt book kept by Jonathan, Tryntje, and later their sons. Included in this receipt book are family recipes, preserved by a descendant, one of which is for "Washington Cake." The Huguenot Historical Society in New Paltz has a unique collection of bonds, deeds, and receipts related to the Hasbroucks, and the Ulster County Clerk's Office in Kingston has a file of court cases and land transactions.