

**GRESHAM OUTLOOK**

Twice a Week

Published every Tuesday and Friday at Gresham, Oregon.

H. L. ST. CLAIR, Editor and Publ'r.

**Our Subscription Rates**

One year, \$1.50;  
six months, 75c;  
three months, 50c;  
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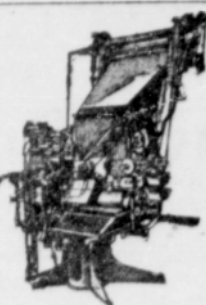
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Official paper of the Town of Gresham, Oregon.  
Official paper of the Town of Fairview, Oregon.

Entered as second-class matter March 3, 1911, at the Postoffice at Gresham, Oregon, under the Act of March 3, 1879.



**A War-Time Story**

**THE PATRIOT SPY**

How General Washington Secured Important Information

By F. A. MITCHEL

There is still standing in Morristown, N. J., a house which General Washington while maneuvering against the British army at New York occupied as his headquarters. It is kept in excellent repair by an association organized for the purpose and contains a great many relics connected with the Father of His Country. In the kitchen is the same enormous fireplace, with cooking paraphernalia, as was used in Revolutionary times. To some the most interesting room is one on the ground floor, in the rear of the building, that was used by Washington as a private office.

One spring morning in the year 1777 a young man wearing the uniform of a lieutenant of cavalry in the Continental army passed the sentry before Washington's headquarters at Morristown, returned the man's salute and entered the main hall. There he was met by the general's orderly, whom he told to announce Lieutenant John Woodville. In a few moments the officer was standing in Washington's presence.

"Be seated," said the commander, turning from his desk. "I have sent for you to do a more important work than any with which I have yet intrusted you. I wish you to go to New York and if possible learn the intentions of General Howe. I suspect that he is intending to move against Philadelphia. If so he must either march across New Jersey, where he will have to fight us, or go by sea. If he goes by land I desire to be advised of the time he moves, that I may be prepared to intercept his passage. My main object is to so threaten him that he will not be able to send any more troops to assist Burgoyne. I deem it essential that you should understand the situation in order that you may act intelligently. How soon can you leave?"

"As soon as I can secure a disguise." "Very well. Go, and remember that our cause may depend upon your success."

Lieutenant Woodville left his command and within an hour, in the garb of a young countryman, rode out of Morristown down the road leading to Orange, where he stopped at the tavern—the building is still standing—for dinner, thence to Newark, where he turned south toward Elizabethtown. He was now in territory within reach of the British at New York, and it behooved him to keep a sharp lookout not only to conceal his mission, but for indications of the movements of the enemy.

Woodville pretended to be a Tory to Tory sympathizers and found those of that persuasion jubilant at the prospect of ending the war and re-establishing the authority of the king. They told him that the troops from Canada were to be met near the mouth of the Mohawk river by troops from the south and the line of communication by way of the Hudson and Lake Champlain would soon be open to the British, cutting the confederated colonies in two parts. But he also heard from "patriots" that Burgoyne was marching through a wild country, in which it was difficult to feed his army, and unless he were successful in forming a junction with the force moving from the south he would be in a critical position.

This indicated to the young lieutenant that what Howe did in the way of sending troops to support Burgoyne was of great importance to the cause, and it was especially essential that General Washington should know, so far as possible, just what Howe was doing in the matter. But Woodville was not near enough to the British headquarters to learn much about the matter, so he determined to move on to the west bank of the Hudson, where Jersey City now stands. A family of patriots of the name of Curtis lived there, to whom he was known and on whom he could rely. On his way he passed the King's Arms, a tavern kept by a Tory named Smithson, who had a pretty daughter, Jennie, upon whom the young soldier looked with loving eyes. He desired to pay her a visit in passing, but dare not do so, because if recognized by her father he would be betrayed to the British and hanged as a spy, so he went on to the Curtises, where he was taken in and given a lodging.

Woodville noticed a number of ships lying at anchor in the river and that the boats going to them usually carried what appeared to be supplies. It looked as if they were preparing for a voyage, but to what point did not appear. The spy was near the ferry and noticed soon after his arrival a British soldier disembark, mount his horse and ride westward. A soldier becomes used to the ways of soldiers, and there was something in the man's movements that indicated to Woodville that he was going somewhere with an object. The most likely object he could have was carrying a message.

The spy ran to the barn, got out his horse and mounting, started to follow the soldier. Catching sight of him ascending the heights back of the river, he slowed his pace, riding only near enough to him to keep him in sight. The Britisher took the road to Elizabethtown. It was drawing near the close of the day, and, passing the King's Arms tavern, he stopped, dismounted and entered.

Woodville drew rein and considered the situation. He saw a negro take the soldier's horse to the barn and argued that the latter would stay to supper and possibly all night. The American wished that he could catch sight of Jennie Smithson without her father seeing him. He waited till it was dark; then, tying his horse to a tree, stole up to the house to reconnoiter.

Looking through a window, he saw the soldier standing before the bar, while the landlord was behind it in the act of serving a mug of flip. Woodville went around to the kitchen and saw Jennie superintending a negro cook, who was cooking the supper. He managed to attract Jennie's attention and, putting his fingers to his lips, signaled her to come out to him. Jennie joined him, and the two retreated into the darkness.

Jennie did not sympathize with the Tories, for she had been born in America and, being very much in love with Woodville, was ready to do anything he asked of her. He inquired if the trooper was to remain all night, and she replied that she did not know. She thought that, having eaten his supper, he would go on to either Newark or Elizabethtown. Woodville told her he suspected the man was a messenger, and if so he desired to get possession of any document he might have on his person. He begged her to find out if possible what was the man's errand and if he were carrying a message to try to get it away from him.

Jennie promised to do all she could in the matter and, returning to the house, brought out something for Woodville to eat and put him in the smokehouse. Later she returned and said that she had talked with the soldier and learned that he was on his way to Princeton, where a British commissary of subsistence was stationed for the purpose of gathering supplies for General Howe's army at New York. She would detain him if possible.

Woodville was puzzled. Having seen the British ships loading with supplies off Manhattan Island, he had got the idea that the force would be transported by sea. Was this commissary to be directed to have supplies ready for the British on a march through Princeton, or was he to be ordered to send them to New York that they might be loaded on the ships? This uncertainty rendered it important that Jennie should secure further information on the subject. Woodville paced back and forth before the smokehouse impatiently awaiting her return.

An hour passed, and Woodville concluded to reconnoiter. Leaving the smokehouse, he went to the front of the house and saw the soldier talking to Jennie, who seemed to be doing her best to entertain him, every now and again rising, going to the bar and returning with a mug of flip for the guest. Satisfied that all was going well, the spy returned to the smokehouse. About 10 o'clock Jennie came to him and told him that the soldier had gone to bed well filled with liquor. As soon as she was assured that he was sound asleep she would go into his room and capture anything he might have in his possession.

Woodville had been deprived of sleep for several nights and while waiting fell into a slumber. He was awakened by Jennie, who thrust a sealed paper into his hands. She had taken the precaution to bring also a flint and steel and a candle and struck a light. Woodville rubbed his eyes and read the superscription on the paper. It was to Captain George Doncaster, commissary of subsistence, Princeton, N. J. Breaking the seal, he read:

"Captain—You are hereby ordered to send all the supplies in your possession to a point on the coast directly east of Princeton and deposit them on the beach at the nearest inlet, where they can be taken off in boats. You will also direct any officer in charge of a supply station south of you to transport his supplies to the coast at a convenient point for shipment. Signal by fire on the dunes. The fleet will be near you on the 1st."

By order of Major General Howe. When Woodville had read this he threw his arms about Jennie and gave her a dozen kisses.

"What does it mean?" she asked. "It means that General Howe is going to attack Philadelphia, and he dare not try to force his way through New Jersey, liable to be pounced upon by General Washington from Morristown. I must be off with the document at once."

Giving Jennie a farewell kiss, Woodville went to the point where he had left his horse and, mounting, rode away. Passing through Newark and Orange, he ascended the rise west of the latter place, and early in the morning rode up to Washington's headquarters at Morristown. Throwing himself from his horse, he asked to see the general. Washington, who had risen early to begin the work of the day, hearing that Woodville had returned, directed that he be shown to his bedroom. On entering the young man held out to him the paper he had secured through Jennie Smithson.

"Ah!" exclaimed the general. "He goes by sea to Philadelphia. Now we know just where and when to meet him." Washington was not able to prevent the ultimate capture of Philadelphia, but he caused Howe so much trouble that he was prevented from sending more troops to help Burgoyne out of the difficult position into which he had fallen, and the British disaster at



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