

Thomas Butler  
1801

541 Maple Grove Avenue  
Herkimer, N. Y.  
August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1932.

Mr. J. R. Brown  
27 West Erie Street  
Albany, N. Y.

My dear Sir:-

My son, Ursoude  
L. Rolfs of New Haven, Conn.  
has sent me a letter, dated  
July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1932, which he  
received from you, in which  
you are seeking some  
biographical data con-  
cerning a "Thomas Butler",  
Class of 1801, Union College,  
from Niagara.

As you suggest, I think it most probable that he was from Niagara, Canada.

I have all the available records of the Butler family of Niagara, Canada, from 1690, when the first ancestor, Lieut. Walter Butler, settled in New London, Connecticut, up to now.

There is only one "Thomas Butler" in all these records, who would have been of the right age to have entered college in 1801.

This Thomas Butler was born Feb. 1780 at Niagara, Canada, the son of Thomas Butler and his wife Anne Horsfield of Yorkshire, England, and grandson of Colonel John Butler (who went to Canada during the Revolutionary War and located in Niagara), and his wife, Catharine Bradt of Schenectady. The subject, "Thomas Butler" married Ann Green, November 4<sup>th</sup> 1804, but left no descendants. He was a judge in Niagara. I do not know the date of his elevation to

4/  
the bench. It carried  
a life tenure. He died  
1863.

The family were Episco-  
pals. The first Parlia-  
ment of Canada was held  
in his grandfather Butler's  
home in Niagara. His  
father was killed in the  
war of 1812, when Niagara  
was burned by the Americans  
after which the seat of  
government was moved  
to Toronto, as were all  
subsequent public  
records of any consequence.

It would have been  
a most natural thing



5  
for this "Thomas Butler" to  
have chosen "Union College"  
at Schenectady, for he had  
relatives living there at  
that time:— The father &  
Bradt families. Colonel  
Christopher father married  
Jannetje Bradt, and Colonel  
John Butler married  
Catharine Bradt— sisters,  
before the Revolution.

My mother-in-law,  
Priscilla (Butler) Kobb, was  
this Thomas Butler's niece.  
It was she, who told me  
many interesting things  
about the family— perhaps  
fifty years ago.

The "Louns boys" you

mentioned, were descendants, (you no  
doubt know) of Colonel Leland - a  
son-in-law of Sir William Johnson.  
That family came to Niagara at the  
same time the Butler family settled  
there.

I realize much of all I am  
sending you, has only bearing on  
your conclusions, as to whether this  
"Thomas Butler" is the man you  
are seeking. And when you extract  
all you can use in the way of  
Biography from this I am sending you,  
it will not be much - but may  
be you will find just a little  
something to put after his name.

I would have sent you this  
before but ill-health would not  
allow. Hope it is not too late.

Yours very truly,

Harriet A. Rolfs

(Mrs Frederick C. Rolfs)



CLASS OF 1801.

THOMAS BUTLER.

Thomas Butler, Esq., is a grandson of Col. John Butler, and resides upon the farm where his grandfather located after the Revolution, near Niagara, C. W. He is an associate Judge of the Court of Queen's Bench. He was educated at Union College, Schenectady, residing there, in the family of the late Gov. Yates, who was his cousin. The author avails himself of a brief narrative he derived from him during a visit to his residence last summer, in search of some old manuscripts which had fallen into his hands as an attorney for one of the early Pioneers of Western New York:

"In 1797, during a vacation in college, I came home to Niagara. Joseph Ellicott, a surveyor named Thompson, and six or eight others, were just starting from Schenectady with batteaux, on their way to the Holland Purchase. I came in company with them. I found Mr. Ellicott a very agreeable traveling companion. Our route was via Oswego, and lake Ontario. Mr. Ellicott's party landed at Fort Niagara, their goods went to Lewiston, and from thence over the Portage, to Schlosser; thence to Buffalo.

"Col. John Butler died in 1794. Was, up to the period of his death, superintendent of Indian affairs for Upper Canada; was a half pay Lieut. Colonel. His remains are buried upon his estate. He organized at Niagara the corps he commanded during the Revolution. Butler's Barracks were originally built for their use.

"Col. Claus died at Niagara seven or eight years ago. His two sons, John and Warren, reside here now. Warren is an Attorney at law; at present, the Surrogate of the Niagara District.

Holland Purchase            p. 317  
O. Turner  
Jewett, Thomas & CO.,  
Buffalo, N. Y.  
1849.

THOMAS BUTLER, non-graduate of 1801, resident of Niagara, was a member of the Philomathean Society. He died in 1870.

Philomathean Catalogue 1830.

*check and  
send information*

Apartment 6C  
249 East 48th St.  
New York 17, N.Y.  
March 14, 1962

Mr. Henry J. Swanker  
Director - Alumni Relations  
Union College  
Schenectady, N.Y.

Dear Henry:

Bob Carman has asked me to try my hand at writing a piece for the new Symposium publication. In this, I'm not sure he was wise, for if I were the Editor I'd be careful about encouraging a guy like me to sound off on his pet enthusiasm.

However, since we both understand that he can turn down the offering, and no feelings will be hurt, I'm going ahead. The theme will be some aspect of history, picking examples of "Things I'd Like To Know" that deal directly or indirectly with the College.

One of my first clues leads directly to your Alumni Records. In the Centennial History of 1895 there is listed a non-graduating member of the Class of 1801 -- one Thomas Butler. He is recorded as coming to the College from Niagara; and he apparently died (place not given) in 1870. Now the given name and the mention of Niagara suggests that he was a member of the Tory Butler family, which rather surprisingly had a number of post-Revolutionary dealings with Schenectady. This is explained when it's known that they were closely related to such important local families as that of Gov. Yates. And a son of the Col. John Butler who headed the notorious Butler's Rangers about 1799 owned a large tract embracing the area where the Indian monument stands in front of Huddy Van Voast's office.

Can one of your girls look and see if there is any further information in the dossier of this Thomas Butler? If there is, and you can send me a note, I'll come into the office the next time I'm north and copy out what's there.

Sincerely,



Neil B. Reynolds



March 21, 1962

Mr. Neil B. Reynolds  
Apartment 6C  
249 East 48th St.  
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Neil,

Bob Carman shows good judgment in his selection of authors for his SYMPOSIUM! We will help you as much as we can from this end.

We have an interesting letter on Thomas Butler dated August 26, 1932 and written to Joe Brown by the mother of Ormonde L. Rolls, Union 1921. At that date Harriet A. Rolls (Mrs. Frederick C.) lived at 541 Maple Grove Avenue in Herkimer, N.Y., and she mentioned "ill health" as the reason for not responding to Mr. Brown's letter of July 10, 1932.

Since it is a handwritten letter and will not reproduce well, probably it would be better for you to look at it here in the Office. She wrote that she had "all the available records of the Butler family of Niagara, Canada, from 1690, when the first ancestor, Lt. Walter Butler, settled in New London, Connecticut, up to now."

Mrs. Rolls' letter confirms the relationship with the Yates family: "It would have been a most natural thing for this 'Thomas Butler' to have chosen Union College at Schenectady, for he had relatives living there at that time: the Yates and Bradt families. My mother-in-law, Priscilla (Butler) Rolls, was this Thomas Butler's niece. It was she, who told many interesting things about the family."

If you wish to write to Ormonde, his address is 23 Hickok Place, Burlington, Vermont. As you may remember he is with the Burlington Free Press.

The enclosure is the only other information we have in the biographical folder and is a piece contributed originally by Joe Brown. We hope this is of some use to you.

Sincerely,

Henry J. Swanker  
Director of Alumni Relations

MVL



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