

## Colonial History & Anglo-American tension: *Allegheny Uprising* & *Drums along the Mohawk*

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«...the Revolutionary [War] period, oddly enough, has been one of the least exploited epochs in our national history by the screen».  
(The New York Times, 4 November 1939)

Frank Nugent's *The New York Times* review of *Drums Along the Mohawk* (Twentieth Century-Fox) did not provide an answer to his implied question. Why had Hollywood largely avoided the period between 1776 and 1783? Excepting *The Last of the Mohicans* (1936) starring Randolph Scott and a matinee serial of the same name, the pre-1776 colonial period was also largely missing from American screens.

If film producers had been tempted by Revolutionary War stories, the script would have had to treat Great Britain as the enemy. Could Hollywood apply its basic and simplistic formula of a thoroughly despicable and villainous enemy and not have the film banned or boycotted on British and Empire - Commonwealth screens, thus losing valued foreign «coin»? Hollywood's Foreign Departments readily conjured up for their studio heads a vigilant London press headlining the 'unwarranted' effrontery of American accusations of the perfidiousness of the Hanoverian monarchy and the brutality of the British military, including German mercenaries. Public opinion and governmental pressure, could well have killed such films at the box office, even if they had escaped the scissors of the British Board of Film Censors, which would have been equally unlikely.

Paramount had led the way back into the eighteenth century's political quicksand with its 1938 release *The Buccaneer*. Cecil B. DeMille's epic featured the successful defense of New Orleans against British invasion at the end of the War of 1812 led by the forces of the famous pirate Jean Lafitte and General Andrew Jackson. DeMille even managed to allow the British to bum Washington, including the «Presidential Palace» (as a result of the fire it became the White House) and the Capital itself, without evoking political controversy on both sides of the Atlantic. Five major movies, released during 1939-40, were set in the period 1756-1783. These were divided between films dealing with aspects of the French and Indian War of 1756-63 and the American War of Independence or Revolutionary War. The first war had the French and their Indian allies as the American enemy and the British as their allies; during the latter war Great Britain was the enemy and the French the American ally. The French and Indian War was the setting of RKO's *Allegheny Uprising* (1939) and MGM's 1940 release *Northwest Passage. Book I: Rogers' Rangers*, while Twentieth Century-Fox explored the founding of Canada in *Hudson's Bay* (1940). Two films directly pitted the United States against Great Britain: Twentieth Century-Fox's *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), based on the best selling novel of the same name by Walter D. Edmonds, and Paramount's *The Howards of Virginia* (1940). Both of which were set in the American Revolution but at the opposite ends of colonial America -the New York frontier and tidewater Virginia. This shift to potentially controversial themes took place on the verge of war in Europe pitting Great Britain and France against Nazi Germany. Current events and the perceived impact of Hollywood on public opinion provided the motivation for interpreting these films as being either pro-British or anti-British, as well as supporting American intervention or rejecting it for continued American isolationism.

The first of these forays into colonial history were released in November 1939; the Revolutionary War story of *Drums Along the Mohawk* (which premiered at the Roxy Theater in New York) and RKO's *Allegheny Uprising* dealing with a frontier episode during the French and Indian conflict. Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Neil H. Swanson was the author of *The First Rebel*, whose complete title left nothing to the imagination and suggested a relatively small readership of committed

historical buffs (the book appeared in 1937 in a limited edition of 1000 copies.)<sup>1</sup> What the consciously archaic title hid was a fascinating tale recounted with considerable force; R L Duffus's lengthy review in *The New York Times Book Review* (25 July 1937) cautiously commended the author for making a 'most readable book' out of the realities of James Smith's life and 'rescuing a virile personality from near oblivion'. It was rather more than that for the tale that Swanson told was the compelling stuff from Hollywood made western movies, even if the frontier was well east of the great Mississippi River and the date was 1765 and not 1870. Swanson's *The First Rebel* was set in the Conococheague (in Susquehanna Indian it meant 'a long way') Valley which ran southward from the Blue Mountains of Pennsylvania to the Potomac River. Fort Loudon, Cunningham's Tavern and McDowell's Mill were located close to Forbes Road (now the Lincoln Highway, US Route 30) which ran from near Mercersburg westwards to Fort Bedford and Pittsburgh. The book promptly caught the reading public's imagination, two other editions appeared later that year and Swanson sold the film rights to RKO.

The story was re-titled '*Allegheny Uprising*' by RKO producer P. J. Wolfson who also was responsible for writing the script which, apparently as a matter of principle, not only retained dialogue with a distinctly historic ring derived from Swanson's account, but the issues as well. On to this was layered an obligatory love story and rawboned humor. Earlier the studio had turned down the chance to make *Stagecoach* when offered the project by director John Ford, who owned the story rights. RKO sought to cut its losses by capitalizing on Walter Wanger's good sense in taking Ford into United Artists and allowing him to make the film 'for peanuts'.<sup>2</sup> Thus RKO hired the stars of the enormously successful Oscar-nominated *Stagecoach*. Claire Trevor, a fine actress who seldom escaped 'B' films and the 'five day western' actor John Wayne became *Allegheny Uprising*'s: 'Janie and Jim... Blond in Buckskin; Fighting Frontiersman... around them roars the conflict of a nation aborning'.

Swanson, who had warned his readers: '*There is one parallel between our past and our present -the munitions trade. The settlers on the middle border had a name for it; they called it «licensed murder». And they fought it.*'. The film's opening title read:

Sixteen years before the revolutionary war, in a Pennsylvania valley, a group of British colonists spoke with guns in defense of liberty .This is the story of James Smith and his Black Boys, a chapter of history long lost in the Allegheny Mountains.

The opening scene took place during the French and Indian War (1757- 1763) at the time that Quebec fell to the British. Jim Smith and the 'Professor' (John F. Hamilton), who had spent the previous three years (actually five years) captives first of Indians and then of the French, were freed in an exchange of prisoners. In the company of their old friend, the Indian scout and tavern keeper, McDougall (British actor Wilfred Lawson in a rare Hollywood appearance), the men returned to their central Pennsylvania valley where they discovered that Philadelphia traders, led by Callendar (Brian Donlevy), were defying the King's prohibition against selling rum and weapons to the Indians. Upon arriving at their hamlet they learned that Indians had burned Fort Pitt and attacked a nearby town, massacring the inhabitants and carrying off two small children. Armed with long rifles and disguised as Indians by coating themselves 'black' with bear grease, the Black Boys ambushed the Indian raiding party (armed with illegal 'trade' weapons). Its leader confirmed, just before his death, that the British troops sent to make peace had been destroyed. Smith immediately went to the colonial capital of Philadelphia to confront Governor Penn with the demand that he enforce the prohibition on trading with the Indians and provide the settlers with military protection.

The Governor agreed on the condition that the valley's inhabitants build the fort and provide provisions for the troops. When the red-coats arrived they were led by the arrogant Captain Swanson (George Sanders) who, previously at the prisoner exchange, was prepared to court-martial Smith and the 'Professor' for insubordination. M'Cammon (Chill Wills), one of the Black Boys, warned that the trader's wagons were on the move again but now they were protected by military permits. Carting goods for the Army, the traders also carried contraband for the Indians. Captain Swanson promised to arrest anyone who interfered. Undeterred by Swanson's total lack of understanding of the gravity of the situation, Smith and his Black Boys, once more in Indian guise, attacked Callendar's wagon train and destroyed the Indian goods; Callendar then destroyed the Army goods, which Smith had put safely to one side, and blamed it on the settlers. Swanson proclaimed: '...destroy King's goods...I'll teach them the meaning of the King's name if I have to write it across their backs with a lash.'

Janie McDougall (Claire Trevor), the teenage daughter of the publican, rode and shot with the men, but was primarily interested in marrying Jim Smith; he obviously had other things on his mind. Unable to join the Black Boys because of her refusal to strip to the waist like the 'other men', she was captured by the Swanson washing the bear grease from her face. When Swanson attempted to take her and three other men, who were arrested for coming to her aid, back to Fort Loudon, he was blocked by the settlers led by Smith. Swanson was told: 'We want those prisoners Captain. You took 'em without warrant... There's still English Law in the valley. They're British and Free Born; if they're to stand trial it will be before twelve of their peers. Not before the likes of you.' Surrounded and outnumbered, Swanson gave in and the settlers sealed off the valley from the outside. However, the Philadelphia merchants, unprepared to lose their Indian trade, regardless of the effect upon the settlers, convinced the Governor, using a handbill forged by Callendar, that the valley people were traitors. Refusing to issue a warrant against his neighbours, the magistrate, using a relay of horses, returned to the valley with the warning of the Army's return.

Smith's strategy was to allow the Army and the traders back in unhindered so that the wagons would be at the fort enabling the magistrate with a search warrant to prove the illegal trading. Swanson refused to allow the search and Smith told him that 'according to the King's proclamation, you are a criminal and we will deal with you as a criminal.' Smith, while carrying a flag of truce, was shot in the back by a trader's rifle (which deeply offended Swanson's sense of military courtesy), but managed to direct the tactics of wearing down the defenders by non stop rifle fire without casualties. The next morning Swanson surrendered the fort, but the traders were stopped and lashed with branches. One of the illegally laden wagons was sent to Philadelphia as evidence. Until this point Swanson was a villain but not so great a villain as Callendar. In fact Swanson was allowed to be human when, during the siege, he warned that if any of his men went to sleep he would have them lashed to help keep them awake. When he does find a young soldier asleep, he encouraged him in a sort of avuncular way to stay awake. Callendar was the real villain, while Swanson was an unthinking martinet.

The British Army then returned in force, while the Black Boys went into hiding. While Smith recuperated, Swanson arrested the men he could find without warrant and put 'half the valley' in chains without a trial. When the news reached James Smith, he kissed Janie and left, rifle in hand, to rescue his neighbours. Subsequently it took just the nine of the Black Boys to capture the ill-defended fort and release the prisoners. The prisoners emerged shackled in leg irons and chains, the symbols of slavery and injustice. The incompetent Swanson suffered defeat once again.

Unexpectedly, Smith was captured by Callendar, who proceeded to murder Smith's companion, accusing him of the act. Jailed at nearby Carlisle, Smith told the crowd which came to save him, that he would stay put and be tried according to law. Tried for murder before a military court, Smith's lawyer proved that Callendar's testimony that Smith killed his friend standing four feet away was impossible for there were no powder burns on the shirt of the dead man. The proof was demonstrated by Janie firing into a shirt nailed to the courtroom wall first from across the room and then at close range. After her first shot, George Sanders, as Captain Swanson, pulled a marvelously distasteful face, waved the smoke from his nose with an elegant gesture and said: 'This is decidedly irregular, and smelly! How many more of these detonations are we to endure?' The evidence of the traders' illegal trade, brought Commanding General Gage personally to the frontier court where he dismissed the charges against James Smith, had the traders arrested, and relieve Swanson of command, in addition to ordering him back to England. British justice having been vindicated, Jim and the 'Professor' prepared to move onto Tennessee but not alone, for Janie, not to be denied her James Smith, rode off in hot pursuit.

The *New York Times*' critic Bosley Crowther found it 'downright incredible' that the movie could be as 'stiff and unexciting' as it proved to be for him, laying the responsibility directly on William Seiter's direction and the script written by the film's producer, P. J. Wolfson. John Wayne played his part in 'one grim monotone' but British actor George Sanders was 'grandly impressive as a red-coated British officer'. The film, with its memorable Anthony Collins's score based on variations of the Revolutionary War song 'Yankee Doodle Dandy', had turned out to be rather more complex than the normal Hollywood film. Audiences certainly recognized 'bad' Indians and could appreciate the Pennsylvania frontiersman's view that the 'only friendly Indian is a dead Indian'. Thus moviegoers might well have been mystified when Jim Smith berated a fellow settler for killing a captured Delaware Indian who had just massacred

the inhabitants of a local hamlet, implying that Indian barbarity was learned from the white man: '...we teach'em everything, don't we though?' The failure of Wolf son's script was the failure to jettison Swanson's historical account and end the story as Crowther recommended: 'as good old Western' technique demands- with a furious assault by the 'Black Boys' upon the troops of the King and the illicit wagon train...'.<sup>3</sup> Wolf son did not do this and the film retained its message which, reduced to its simplest term, was, according to author Swanson: '...a conflict of ideas. It was man against money -the desire of capital to take profits where they could be found. It was human rights against property rights.'

Production Code Administration director Joseph Breen's concerns with *Allegheny Uprising* had earlier centered on "bad" language, swearing, ruthless killing of Indians, strangling of characters, semi-nudity of men, obscene or objectionable gestures, riots, and cruelty of animals. There are several points at which the PCA recommended that the Foreign Department of RKO be consulted, particularly (30 March 1939) because of the British issues. Breen stressed that Callendar had to be punished for his crimes and suggested General Gage be given some lines indicating such. *Allegheny Uprising*, was passed without 'eliminations' by the censorship authorities of New York, Kansas, Massachusetts, Ohio and Pennsylvania, but was that a message which could safely cross the Atlantic in late April 1940? Apparently it could not.<sup>4</sup>

*Allegheny Uprising*, retitled to its original name *The First Rebel* was trade shown in London at the Cambridge Theater, Cambridge Circus on 23 April 1940. *The Cinema* (24 April 1940) promised exhibitors that it had 'virile leading portrayal, forceful direction, very able subsidiary characterizations, spacious all-round presentation. Excellent popular entertainment' *Kinematograph Weekly* (25 April 1940) not only liked the film but specifically referred to the settlers being 'victims of the stubborn stupidity of the Red coats, the murderous aggression of hostile Indians and the treachery of unscrupulous traders.' The *Monthly Film Bulletin* reviewer found the film unobjectionable and suitable for children over 11 years.<sup>5</sup> The British Board of Film Censors issued a 'U' (unobjectionable) certificate, an assessment to which the British government's Ministry of Information took strong exception.

Amongst the preview audience of exhibitors and reviewers were representatives from the MoI who were affronted by the all-too obvious «fascist» conduct of George Sanders putting colonists in chains, while failing to win a single battle. Not even the conciliatory role of General Gage could rescue the reputation of the British Army and government, Sander's performance as Captain Swanson proved to be altogether too convincing. According to Douglas Fairbanks Jr., the Russian-born Sanders' s own views on Britain and the conflict in Europe were quite distinctive and diametrically opposite to that of Hollywood's British community. A hint of this appeared in his autobiographical *Memoirs of a Professional Cad* which appeared in 1960. In this otherwise undistinguished volume, while talking about beautiful women he quoted the following: 'In a world where beauty is finished and dead, I would not wish to live'. At what might be interpreted as a Freudian slip, he had paraphrased the concluding lines from Alice Duer Miller's best selling epic poem *The White Cliffs* of September of 1940: '...in a world where England is finished and dead, I do not wish to live.'<sup>6</sup>

The Ministry of Information demanded the immediate withdrawal of *The First Rebel* for it was not prepared to have Sanders' s villainous and incompetent Captain Swanson striding across British screens depriving Americans of their rights at a moment when British soldiers were giving their lives in defense of the nation. This was not the view of the British empire that was to be promoted and, even more important, Americans were not to be found fighting, and defeating, the British Army even if the date was 1760. Americans should be defending the mother country, not defeating it. Colonel Jim Smith and his Black Boys may have been history but it was clearly the wrong history to be recalling at the moment. RKO President George Schaefer must have been amazed when he heard of the banning. Not even British producer Herbert Wilcox, currently working at RKO, was able to offer any assistance. The ban stood. The only surviving reference to this episode in British government records was the request by RKO' s British subsidiary, Radio Pictures Ltd., to the Board of Trade asking, that the film, already registered for exhibition under the Quota Act, be considered 'wrongly registered' due to the very exceptional circumstances preventing them from releasing the film; apparently the request succeeded.<sup>7</sup>

This was not the British government's first problem with American colonial history for in January 1940 the Ministry of Information had had to deal with Twentieth Century-Fox's *Drums Along the Mohawk*. After the film's London trade showing, *The Monthly Film Bulletin* reported that it was:

Spectacular melodrama (in Technicolor) set in the Mohawk Valley during the American War of Independence. Gilbert Martin, a young settler, marries Lana, a town girl, and takes her to his log hut in the wilds. They are in constant danger from Red Indians who are egged on by the British. Just before Lana's baby is born, their home is attacked and burnt down. Lana and Gilbert find work and a home with Mrs. McKlennar, an outspoken but kind-hearted widow. Later they build another home for themselves. Again the Indians attack. Many settlers, including Mrs. McKlennar, are killed. Gilbert slips through the besiegers and brings help only just in time. After the defeat of the Indians there is a hope of peace and prosperity for the Valley. This story is said to be found on fact. It depicts a grim and horrifying episode in history, and one of which the British have reason to be ashamed. The representation is realistic. The burning of homes by Indians, fierce fighting, torture of prisoners, the birth of Lana's dead baby, the suffering of the wounded, and an amputation do not make pleasant entertainment, while the impression they create seems deepened and enhanced by vivid Technicolor. Admittedly the technical presentation is admirable, many of the color scenes exquisite, and there is an abundance of thrilling action, while the courage of the pioneer is inspiringly displayed. The acting is sound. Claudette Colbert looks extremely attractive and acts, as always, with intelligence and poise. Henry Fonda is a pleasant and rather pathetic-seeming Gilbert. Edna May Oliver has some amusing comedy scenes which she puts over in a characteristic manner. The well-known supporting players all give good performances.

Suitability: A, B. (Children should not see this film.) E. P.<sup>8</sup>

'It depicts a grim and horrifying episode in history, and one of which the British have reason to be ashamed.' This was an extraordinary admission from E.P., one that potentially threatened the film's British release, but an admission which accurately reflected the film's message.

Twentieth Century-Fox production chief Darryl F. Zanuck's message was not intended to be political, as indicated by script conferences dating back to 1937. Notes from the Zanuck's first March conference on the First Draft Continuity ordered that they must discard "...completely all episodes dealing with war campaigns, revolutionary politics, and everything that does not directly include and have intimate bearing on our two leading characters...our intimate personal story ...we do not want to make a picture portraying the revolution in the Mohawk Valley. We want to tell a story about a pioneer boy who took a city girl to the Mohawk Valley to live." Nor did Zanuck approve material about the Declaration of Independence which, he said, was getting away from the theme, for the film was not to be a big 'epic' which it would seem to be if "we start delivering lectures on the Constitution." A subsequent conference (11 March) found Zanuck, by his own admission "bewildered and confused" with the revisions in the script. He reminded his writers, Lamar Trotti and Sonya Levien, that they were "...in business to GIVE A SHOW -that our first job is to MAKE ENTERTAINMENT ." -"Drop the patriotic element. "Whatever patriotism comes through should come from inference -let the audience write in the flag-waving for themselves. Mr. Zanuck stated that, for some reason or other, pictures that wave the flag are poison at the box office." Trotti was sent back to do the needed revisions. It was at this conference that Zanuck decided that the film's climax would be Gil's famous run for help. Zanuck decreed that "This can be whipped into one of the most unusual and exciting climaxes ever seen on the screen and we can afford to let it run a thousand feet." Zanuck also provided the line or tag about the new flag with 13 stars which comes at the end of the film, simply "The new American flag". Over the next three years Zanuck would turn 180 degrees on the issue of patriotism. Within those years the movie business went from just entertainment to entertainment with a strong lashing of patriotism and Anglo-American enthusiasm. *Drums Along the Mohawk.*, with its pre-production going back to early 1938 reflected an earlier irrelevance of history which would be corrected in *Hudson's Bay*, which could be said to have moved Zanuck at least 90 degrees in the right direction.<sup>9</sup>

The British connection occurred during the young couple's journey from Albany in the summer of 1776, where they had been married, to their frontier home at Deerfield in upstate New York's Mohawk Valley. At the King's Road Tavern Gil and Lana Martin met a tall dark cloaked figure, a stranger ('Caldwell', murderously played by John Caradine) with a black eye patch, who asked 'Planning on settling here in the valley?' Responding to Gil's statement that living 'out of the way' suited him, the man asked to which political party people in the area belonged? Gil's response 'American' brought the rejoinder 'Torys? They say that the Indians are going to line up with the British but I suppose that is just

talk.' The nearest settlement to Gil and Lana's farm was the fort at German Flats where the settlers, whose surnames reflected their mixed European origins, were led by German General Herkimer (Roger Imhof). Gil and the other able bodied men were formed into a militia because, as the general put it, '...ever since New York and the twelve colonies signed the Declaration of Independence this revolution has turned into a real war... This is our home and our land and I say its worth fighting for only we got to do it by ourselves. Congress can' t help us. They say Washington needs all the troops he can get and that the frontier will have to look out for itself.' The political aspects of the struggle had been defined by rough hewn Adam Helmer (Ward Bond) protesting the fining of a settler for missing the muster because he had to go and buy flour: 'I thought that's what this war was about. Making people pay taxes and they didn't have no say so about it.' The General agreed and let the man off.

During a church service, the Reverend Mr. Rosenkrantz's (Arthur Shields) prayers included asking divine protection for one of their daughters from a 'Massachusetts' soldier, announcing a new shipment of dry goods and women's clothing, as well as a serious plea: ' We call upon the Lord Jehovah, God of Battles, to aid thy people against the Tories. For I have disturbing news for You..' General Washington has advised us that an enemy army of many Tories and savage Indians is even now approaching our beloved land.' The prayer then instructed every man between 16 and 60 to report to the fort to be joined by a regiment of Washington's Continental Army marching up from Albany. Rosencrantz concluded: ' Any man failing to report for duty will be promptly hanged. Amen.' Off the men marched to war with the fife and drum playing Yankee Doodle Dandy. Based loosely on the historic American victory at the battle of Oriskany, 16 August 1777, against a corps of Burgoyne's army which contributed to the crucial victory at Saratoga two months later, the men returned victorious but badly savaged by the green-coated Tory-led Indians. Six hundred men had marched off, but 240 returned including a badly wounded Gil; Herkimer's leg was amputated in Widow McKlennar's front room. The Mohawk settlers had won only a temporary victory. Although strong in faith they had rebuilt only to find Caldwell and his Tories /Indians forces, reinforced by Red-coated British regulars, again invading the valley. The Widow McKennar's farm was burned and the fort besieged by the overwhelming enemy force. The first settler to try to raise help was captured and tied by the 'Sons of Belial' to a hay wagon to which they then set fire; the preacher shot the man to save him from being burned alive. Gil had made a successful escape with long shots of him running along the horizon followed by pursuing 'redskins' ; images replayed by director John Ford, again of Fonda, in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Gil and the relieving force arrived just as the enemy penetrated the fort. Lana, dressed like the other women in the uniform coat of the Continental Army, fired and killed the first Indian through the door, as the women and children waited in expectation for a horrible death at the hands of the savages who had already begun to dash babies to death against the walls. Gil found the preacher lamenting that he had killed a man before discovering the deeply shocked Lana huddled in a corner clutching their child. Not all Indians were savages as proven by Blue Bottle (Chief Big Tree), who had fought alongside the settlers, even as he had worshipped with them, adding, as a 'sure fine friend, fine Christian' , an occasional 'hallelujah' .It was Blue Bottle, seen standing in the pulpit wearing the Tory's eye patch, that killed Caldwell.

This was a story of settlers fighting for survival but they also were caught up in the struggle for independence. The story ended with the fort being repaired as they received the news of the surrender of the British Army under General Cornwallis at Yorktown. Passing through were regular troops carrying the state flag of New York and the new United States's Stars and Stripes. 'So that's our new flag. The thing we've been fighting for. Thirteen stripes for the colonies and thirteen stars in a circle for union.' Adam Helmer commandeered the new flag, proclaiming that they had done a bit of fighting around there themselves, as the flag was passed to the top of the fort where it was fixed to wave in honor. John Ford's final shots are impressive, including as they do dramatic low angles of Mrs. McKennar's previously stereotyped fumbling Negro servant/slave Daisy (Beulah Hall Jones) now transformed into a noble heroine symbolically having won her freedom, as well as of the loyal Indian - Blue Bottle. The film ended as the National Anthem swelled on the soundtrack.<sup>10</sup> Frank Nugent's *NYT* review (4 November 1939) had found that the unsettling central theme of Walter D. Edmond's novel was that the settlers had fought for survival and the preservation of their homesteads, rather than an idealized desire for American independence. Nugent pointed out that the Trotti / Levien adaptation tended to ignore this dimension, except for the final scene of the planting of the American flag on top of the settlement fort, in favor of stressing the romance and fighting which lead to the defeat of the murderous Indians and the salvation of the frontier.

The Ministry of Information, had it applied the same criteria to *Drums Along the Mohawk* as it later did to *The First Rebel*, would have banned the film, if only for the rapacious scalp-hunting Tory , Caldwell, who was infinitely more sinister than George Sander's ineffectual Captain Swanson. The British Board of Film Censors, according to Production Code Administration reports, had only ordered cuts involving the dialogue “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Reel 1, Scene 14) and the marriage ceremony. The PCA had issued several warnings about the use this Trinitarian benediction, as well as the use of the Lord's Prayer, the word “Hallelujah”, hymns and prayers. Other problems anticipated included scenes of Indians setting fire to houses and pregnant women fainting.<sup>11</sup>

Why had the MoI ignored the anti-British themes in *Drums Along the Mohawk* at the beginning of 1940 and then banned *The First Rebel* in April? The answer doubtless lay in the abrupt end of the military inactivity of the so-called Phoney War. With Hitler's unexpected attack on Norway on 9 April, Great Britain faced all-out war. The British military expedition sent to support the Norwegians had proven, by the end of April, to be a total disaster. The MoI was no longer prepared to allow the screening of films, such as *The First Rebel*, which demonstrated the inadequacy of the British army in any period of history.

Hollywood's increasing number of historical films, led to Will H. Hays's self-congratulatory proclamation in late September 1940 that it was the gravity of the present world situation that had led to 'pictures highlighting American ideals, history and biography .'

«For twenty-five years the screen has made its patrons living participants in their country's history , and this trend is strengthened in the productions this season. East, West, North, South -the people have understood sectional problems because they have been emotionally and intellectually a part of them. Dramatization of episodes in American history has made us conscious of a common heritage.»

Bosley Crowther had sardonically welcomed the 'eager devotion' with which Hollywood hurled 'itself into the lists' but after analyzing the films, excepting Frank Lloyd's *The Howards of Virginia* (Columbia, 1940), came to the conclusion that since history was considered 'dull' and had to be glamorized for the box office, the fundamentals were often lost or 'platitudinously glossed over -in competition with some catch-penny romance.' Hollywood's heavy stress on the emotional, as opposed to the intellectual, made it almost impossible to illuminate the 'common heritage'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1939 neither RKO or Twentieth Century-Fox was interested in either supporting or undermining possible economic and military Anglo-American cooperation. Anti-British sentiments could be read in both *Allegheny Uprising* and *Drums Along the Mohawk* and was the reason for the Ministry of Information's banning of *Allegheny Uprising*. Zanuck' sefforts to avoid politics represented his own intuitive view of what audiences wanted. However, by the end of 1939, a number of studio executives began to promote the United States' support of Great Britain. When MGM scripted Northwest Passage Anglo-American cooperation-fighting a common and merciless foe in late 1750s -was given a high priority .The fact that such a theme could be successfully worked into the film's narrative was an added blessing. *The Howards of Virginia*, made some months later, went out of its way to minimize the confrontation between the American colonies and the mother country .Conversely, in *Hudsons' Bay* Lamar Trotti's screenplay character of Pierre Esprit Radisson, half Daniel Boone and half Thomas Jefferson, provided a symbol of the democratic ideal in the New World, a world worth preserving, for 'le bon Dieu' had created it anew that in North American society might be perfected. DeMille's North West Mounted Police took the next step with its appeal for making a common cause against the enemies of Canada and the United States, already being realized as Canada became the crucial conduit through which aid flowed to Great Britain from the United States. Hollywood's particular version of history had begun its wartime support of the Great Britain and the United States' “special relationship”, as Winston Churchill described it.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES:

(1) Swanson's full title was: *THE FIRST REBEL; being a lost chapter of our history and a true narrative of America's First Uprising against English military authority and an account of the FIRST FIGHTING*

between armed colonists and British regulars, together with a biography of Colonel JAMES SMITH who was captured by savages, ran the gauntlet, saw the prisoners of the Braddock massacre burned at the stake, lived five years as an Indian, escaped, served through three wilderness campaigns, and led The Pennsylvania Rebellion in which backwoods men fought the famous Black Watch, besieged a British fort captured its commander and part of its garrison, and in the year 1765 forced its evacuation TEN YEARS BEFORE LEXINGTON recounted from contemporary documents. (NY,1937).For the quote seep. x. This was not the first foray into early American history for Swanson, four years earlier, had written *The Flag is Still There* (1933) about the Battle of Baltimore in 1814. Historical novels would remain his forte, later publishing *The Silent Drum* (1940) about Fort Pitt and in 1947 *Unconquered*, whose title (the story came from Swanson's *The Judas Tree*) would be used by Cecil B. DeMille that same year for a major Paramount Technicolor production starring Gary Cooper and Paulette Goddard.

(2) *John Ford's Stagecoach: starring John Wayne*, ed. Richard J. Anobile (NY ,1975), pp. 6f. Also see Tad GALLAGHER, *John Ford. The Man and His Films* (Berkeley ,1986), pp. 145-162.

(3) *The New York Times* (NYT) (10 November 1939).In retrospect would be interesting to know why Wolfson did not to use the Black Watch as the British regiment in question; RKO had used Scots uniforms in *Gunga Din*. Although the name of the Black Watch 42nd Regiment officer in Swanson's story was Lieutenant Charles Grant, Wolfson possibly chose to 'honor' author Swanson by giving the officer the new name, Swanson.

(4) Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science/Production Code Administration - *Allegheny Uprising*. The movie under the title *The First Rebel* was destroyed by Egyptian customs and its was banned in South Africa since the film was offensive in that it depicts scenes tending to create public alarm.

(5) *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol. 77, (31 May 1940): 73.

(6) SANDERS, George. *Memoirs of a Professional Cad* (New York, 1960), p. 118; Fairbanks, Op. cit., pp. 332f. That year, Sanders, Joan Bennett, Vincent Price, Alan Hale and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. were shooting the potboiler *Green Hell* (dir. James Whale) at Universal Studios. Fairbanks recalled Sanders as sardonic, caddish, and witty and amusing. However, he was astounded by Sanders "...laughingly telling us that he couldn't care less if Hitler took over everything. He agreed, he said, with Errol Flynn in that he wasn't going to fight or lift a finger to stop the Germans." *Green Hell*, set in the Amazonian American jungles, was voted the worst film of the year by Harvard's students.

(7) Public Record office, Kew, London, Board of Trade 64/115, 10 July 1940.

(8) *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol. 74 (29 February 1940).

(9) University of California Los Angeles/Twentieth Century-Fox Collection. No.1859. *Drums Along the Mohawk* conference notes also show (1859.12) the final editing of the closing sequence with the flag. At the end 1938 Zanuck had a story provisionally entitled *A Briton At Yale* which was dead by June 1939 (UCLA / TCF, VI60). To this dead project should also be added *The Rise of Disraeli* which had been under consideration since the Fall of 1937 (UCLA/TCF, 2021), *Transatlantic Cable* (UCLA / TCF, V80)

(10) For information on the making of *Drums Along the Mohawk* see Tad GALLAGHER, Op. cit., pp. 174f. Bert Glennon's Technicolor photography is excellent overall but it is very obvious that the countryside was not upstate New York; the film was shot in Utah's Wasatch Mountains. John Caradine had earlier led marauding Indians in a skunk skin hat in *Daniel Boon* (RKO, 1936). See also John O'Connor on " A Reaffirmation of American Ideals: *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939) in John O'CONNOR and Martin A. JACKSON (eds.) *American History/American Film* (New York, 1979), pp. 97-119.

(11) Production Code Administration files -*Drums Along the Mohawk*. *Drums Along the Mohawk* was re-released in the autumn of 1947.

(12) NYT «The American Ideal» 29 Sept 1940, p. 3.

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