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The Baroness Von Riedesel

Scott Stephenson: In fall 1777, Frederika Von Riedesel was 31 years old and was traveling with her three children and her husband, who commanded the Brunswick German forces serving with General John Burgoyne's British army in what's now upstate New York. She was taken prisoner along with the rest of Burgoyne's army in October 1777 after the Battle of Saratoga. The Baroness and her children faced harsh conditions following the surrender.

The Baroness (a woman's voice begins in German and fades to English): ...our cook had remained in town with my husband's baggage, all of which was lost on the second night after our arrival, though it was under the guard of ten or twenty American soldiers. I preserved only my bed and that of my children, and the little I had kept with me for daily use. This was the more unfortunate, as it was at a time when we were in pressing want of many things which we could not have procured even had we been furnished with plenty of money. Each of the English officers — or, as I should rather call them, our friends, for such they proved themselves to be during the whole time that we were together in America — supplied something for our relief. One gave plates, another spoons, etc., and from these supplies we were obliged to keep up our establishment for three years. I am not sure that my vehicle excited much curiosity, though really the wagon looked more like a cart in which wild animals are conveyed than anything else. But we were frequently stopped and inquiries were made for the German general's wife and children. To prevent them from tearing the oilcloth cover, I often alighted myself immediately, and did well in doing so. But I must say, in justice, that the Americans were civil and seemed much pleased that I spoke their language, the English.

Scott Stephenson: The Riedesels were eventually released, and they returned to Germany in 1783 along with a fourth daughter, born in 1779, whom they named America.