

History  
of  
The Battle of Red Bank

With Events Prior and  
Subsequent Thereto

by

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Gloucester County Historical Society

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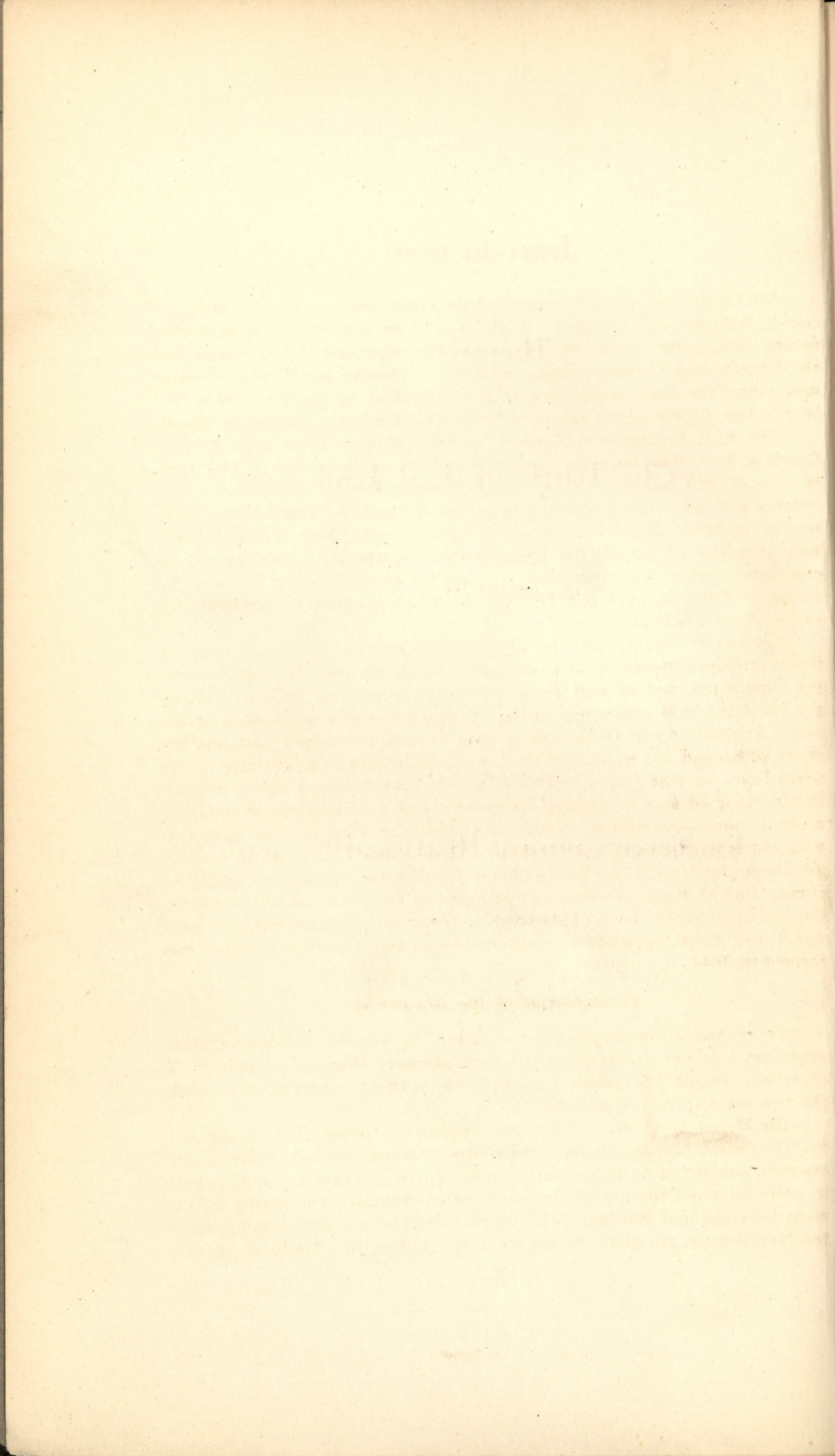
Board of Chosen Freeholders  
of Gloucester County

Woodbury, N. J.

1927

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## Introduction

Old Gloucester County comprised the three present counties of Gloucester, Atlantic and Camden. While West New Jersey was divided into tenths, Gloucester County was known as the third and fourth tenths, the third tenth, now Camden County between Pensauken and Timber Creeks, was called the Irish tenth because it was settled by Quakers from Ireland. The fourth tenth extended from Big Timber to Oldmans Creek.

The first European settlement on the Delaware was made by the Dutch at Fort Nassau, a log fort built in 1623, at the mouth of Big Timber Creek or Gloucester River called Timmer Kill by the Dutch. The Swedes arrived on the Delaware River in 1638 and the English took possession in 1664. When William Penn came in 1682, Fort Nassau, which had been erected twenty-one years before he was born, had passed so completely out of existence that no mention of its location can now be found in the first deeds for land of the English speaking settlers. Its exact site is unknown.

Gloucester County was formed in 1686 and its inhabitants agreed that the courts should be held alternately at Arwamus, the Indian name for Gloucester, and at Red Bank, so named because of the color of the gravel of the bluff where the battle afterward took place. Because of the better accessibility of Gloucester it soon became the county seat and the court house and jail were built there and existed until the burning of the court house in 1786 just a century after the establishment of the county. It was then decided to remove the county seat to Woodbury in order to make it more convenient to the inhabitants of Egg Harbor township who had been clamoring for the formation of a new county which eventually took place in 1837 when Atlantic County was established with the county seat at Mays Landing. The success of the inhabitants of Atlantic County encouraged the people of the northern end of the county to fight again for more convenient court facilities and Camden County was formed in 1844.

### Preliminaries of the Revolution

There was an intense feeling of unrest in America for ten or more years prior to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. The quartering of troops among the people and taxation without representation were the two main causes of grievances.

On March 22, 1765, the English Parliament passed the Stamp Act to take effect November 1st. When the stamps reached America the lawyers, supported by public sentiment, refused to draw up legal papers in order to avoid the use of the much hated stamps. The stamp agents were harassed and William Coxe, of Philadelphia, the chief stamp agent for New Jersey, resigned his office. John Hatton, Sr., the local agent—

afterwards a noted tory who had his property in Swedesboro confiscated by the patriots of Old Gloucester County—agreed not to act as a stamp man. The stamped paper for the colonies of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware arrived at New Castle on the ship Royal Charlotte October 1st, and four days later the vessel accompanied by the British warship Sardine came up the Delaware River where they were greeted above Gloucester with flags at half mast and with muffled bells.



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The stamps were printed on paper sheets and were not of the adhesive kind like the present day postage stamps. The four pence stamp shown here, the only one known to the writer, was found among the papers of John Ladd, Jr., who died in 1770. The first Colonial Congress, called the Stamp Act Congress, met in New York early in October, 1765, and its protests, together with those of the citizens of America, caused the repeal of the Stamp Act by Parliament March 18, 1766.

On July 2, 1767, the so-called Tea Act with duties on tea, glass, paper, etc., was passed to take effect in America November 20, 1767. Organizations called the Sons of Liberty were formed in the Colonies, especially in New Jersey, and it became very unpopular to drink tea. On November 27, 1773, the British ship Polly sailed into the Delaware with a cargo of tea and the patriots of Philadelphia and vicinity under threats of a coat of tar and feathers induced the captain to sail away with it on December 27, 1773. The "Boston Tea Party" took place on December 16, 1773. Annapolis, Maryland, and Edenton, North Carolina, had tea episodes in October 1774. Greenwich in Cumberland County, N. J., had another December 22, 1774, which is now memorialized by a fine monument. The various irritations and propaganda led to the formation of Committees on Correspondence and Observation throughout the Colonies and it is a matter of great pride today to know that Old Gloucester County, despite its being the domicile of a large number of peace loving Quakers, did not falter in its attitude of righteous indignation.

On July 11, 1774, an advertisement was placed in a Philadelphia newspaper and hand bills were posted in conspicuous places throughout the county from river to seashore calling a public meeting in the Court House at Gloucester on July 18th "to consider of some proper measure to be taken in support of American Freedom at this alarming crisis." Resolutions were adopted pertaining to the embargo trouble in Massachusetts; taxation without consent; non-importation; arbitrary acts of Parliament and the appointment of a Committee on Correspondence to act with other county committees to choose delegates to represent the colony of New Jersey at the forthcoming First Continental Congress to be held in Philadelphia. The committee consisted of Robert Friend Price, Sr., John Hinchman, Samuel Harrison, John Cooper, John Sparks, James Hinchman, Joseph Ellis, Samuel Clement, Joseph Hugg, Isaac Mickle, Joseph Morgan, Thomas Clark and Isaac Tomlinson. They were requested to start a subscription for the relief of the Boston sufferers of British

tyranny. This was done, and a large sum of money was raised by the public and the Quaker meetings, which was duly delivered by Captain Joseph Ellis to Hon. Thomas Cushing one of the Massachusetts delegates to the First Continental Congress.

On December 12, 1774, a new and larger Committee on Observation was appointed consisting of seventy-seven men spread over the entire county with power to vote for representatives in the New Jersey Legislature. Exactly a year later, December 12, 1775, another group of the same size was chosen as a Committee on Observation and Correspondence as follows:

Waterford—Kendall Cole, Joshua Stokes, Abraham Inskip.

Newton—Isaac Mickle, Samuel Clement, Joseph Cooper, William Cooper, Samuel Cooper, Doctor Vanleer.

Gloucester Town—Samuel Harrison, Robert Frd. Price, John Hinchman, Joseph Ellis, William Hugg, Jr., Joseph Hugg.

Gloucester Township—Peter Cheesman, Josiah Hillman, Benj. Pitfield, John Hider, Robert Mattocks, John Hedger, Isaac Tomlinson.

Deptford—John Sparks, John Cooper, Israel Shreeve, Doctor Thomas Hendry, James Wilkins, Joseph Low, John Wilkins, Jr., James Whitall.

Greenwich—Thomas Clark, Doctor Bodo Otto, Jr., Daniel Cozens, Archibald Moffett, John Barns, Robert Correy, John Cozens.

Woolwich—James Hinchman, George Vanleer, Robert Brown, William Zane, James Talman, Matthew Gill, William Guest, John Killey, John Rambo.

Great Egg Harbor and Galloway—Elijah Clark, Richard Wescott, Richard Somers, Samuel Sayre, Thomas Stites, Samuel Risley, John Somers.

Among the above names we find a great many of the outstanding patriots of Old Gloucester County, including John Cooper, member of the Continental Congress in 1776, who lies in an unmarked grave in the Friends Graveyard in Woodbury and to whose memory no tribute has ever been paid. He was a brother of Ann Cooper Whitall the picturesque and pious old Quakeress, famous traditionally, because she declined to flee from her home when she was warned of the expected conflict at Red Bank where she lived within gun shot of the fort. Her husband James Whitall was a member of the Committee on Correspondence and Observation. Her son Benjamin was a Captain Lieutenant in our first Artillery Company formed March 2, 1776. We are indebted a great deal to her son Job who kept a diary but so far as is known, was not inclined to view patriotic activities with any satisfaction.

On February 24, 1776, Job Whitall wrote "The people began to muster this day." On May 6th, "The alarm guns were fired betwixt twelve and one of the clock which occasioned great commotion amongst some of the people." Beginning at Lewes, Del., there was a series of cannon reaching up the Delaware to Philadelphia and when the enemy men-of-war appeared, the alarm signal was sent from gun to gun and thereby notified the patriots of the impending danger.

On May 8th he "heard a cannonading with the row galleys and a

man-of-war or two which lasted three hours or better. The people getting in arms as fast as possible." The next day he heard the cannon firing the most of the afternoon and evening.

The row galleys belonged to Pennsylvania and were propelled by oarsmen. They had a platform where one or two small cannon were mounted, and while not formidable, their officers and crews did not lack courage; some of the greatest feats of valor during the Revolution in this section were performed by the miserable little contraptions called row galleys, while in combat with the British warships. The history of the row galleys of the Delaware as adjuncts to the ships of the Continental Navy, has never received any praise from historians of the Revolution of this community.

### Preparations for Defense on the Delaware

The Council of Safety of Pennsylvania was organized July 3, 1775, and Benjamin Franklin was unanimously chosen as its first President and William Govett, Clerk. The latter was a partner of John Ladd Howell, the nephew of John Ladd. The next day, July 4th, a committee was appointed to visit Red Bank to take a view of the river and its islands and Franklin was requested to procure a model of a pike, which undoubtedly resulted in the chevaux de frise which was always credited to his genius.

On July 15th a committee was appointed to visit the principal inhabitants of Old Gloucester County to solicit their assistance. They were found willing to do everything in their power and proposed to man one or two of the boats for the defense of the river.

Two hundred and ninety-six pine logs, to be used in making the chevaux de frise, were generously donated by the following men who lived near the river front, viz: Benjamin Whittall, John Wood, Nathan Kimsey, Richard Johns, David Paul, Joseph Low, James Brown, Joseph Ward, Joshua Hopper, Isaac Hopper, Levi Hopper, James Wood, Joseph Tatem, and Charles West.

The first string of chevaux de frise was sunk at Fort Island or Fort Mifflin. These devices were built like a saw horse of pointed, iron-tipped logs fastened to a floating open framework, so built that when anchored it could be filled with stone brought down from the quarries along the Schuylkill and sunk in the desired positions. Thirty thousand feet of two inch pine planks for building the chevaux de frises were purchased of Capt. Jonathan Williams of Gloucester County at a price of nine pounds per thousand feet. He was a captain in the militia forces.

During August, 1775, some British officers were arrested in Gloucester and paroled, and two months later the officers and men on the transports Rebecca and Francis wrecked on Brigantine Beach in Old Gloucester County, and captured there by Major Wescott, were also paroled.

The Continental Congress decided it was necessary to build a redoubt at Billingsport and place chevaux de frise in the channel, and General Washington was requested to send an engineer to furnish plans for the

fortification. On July 4, 1776, the most famous day in American history, it was ordered that six hundred pounds Pennsylvania currency be paid for the land at Billingsport. The deed which is on record in the Gloucester County Clerk's office at Woodbury is dated July 5, 1776, from Margaret M. Paul, widow of John Paul, and Benjamin Weatherby, one of her sons, to George Clymer and Michael Hillegas, Treasurers of the Thirteen United Colonies. It calls for 96 acres of a tract of 100 acres called Billingsport, excepting the buildings and fences which could be removed within twelve days. On July 15th Benjamin Weatherby was paid fifty pounds more for the house on the land he and his mother had previously sold. He was later a Captain of the patriot forces. It will be noticed that Gloucester County has the unique distinction of having within its present boundaries the first piece of land purchased by the Government after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Billingsport was also again fortified and occupied during the war of 1812 and trenches are still visible, just the same as at Red Bank, and should be preserved likewise. George Clymer was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The work proceeded at Billingsport under the direction of the Council of Safety of Pennsylvania immediately after its purchase.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Polish patriot, was paid fifty pounds for his plan of a fortification at Billingsport. John Bull was appointed Colonel Commandant and Superintendent of it, and Blaithwaite Jones, Chief Engineer, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on February 15, 1777. The fort at Billingsport was erected by the troops of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia and South Carolina, together with laborers and craftsmen from civil life. It was not considered a military success by the French Engineer General Du Coudray who proposed that it be changed. Du Coudray referred to the fort at Red Bank as Col. Bull's fort and it is evident that he started the work there as early as April 16. In the middle of June 1777 the soldiers at Red Bank consisted of one captain, one ensign, three sergeants, one drum, one fife and fifty privates.

On July 22, 1777, Washington wrote that "the works at Billingsport were well worthy of attention and that it was expedient that their completion be effected as soon as possible." He visited and inspected Fort Mifflin, Red Bank or Fort Mercer and Billingsport August 1, 1777. He was accompanied by Lafayette, who had received his commission as a Major General from the Continental Congress the preceding day.

The Continental Congress on July 30, 1777, recommended, on account of the prospect of an invasion by the enemy, that the executive powers of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware cause the horses, wagons, carts and cattle and other livestock contiguous to the Delaware River and Bay, be removed whenever the arrival of the enemy's forces should make it expedient. Many traditions have been handed down in families of Old Gloucester County about hiding things, not only from the British and Hessians, but also from our own foraging parties.

A great deal of work had been done at Red Bank during the months of May and June, 1777, by the Pennsylvania troops, also by the Gloucester

ter County Militia under Captain John Hider, during which time it was renamed Fort Mercer in honor of General Hugh Mercer, killed at the Battle of Princeton.

Governor William Livingston apparently made Haddonfield the place of his residence during May, 1777, as indicated by several letters he sent to Continental Congress and dated at that town where, as is well known, the Legislature of New Jersey met on several occasions.

August 25, 1777, General Silas Newcomb reported that he had the following militiamen under his command at Woodbury: Col. Hand, 60; Col. Potter, 24; Col. Holmes, 110; Col. Ellis, 55. Other regiments, none.

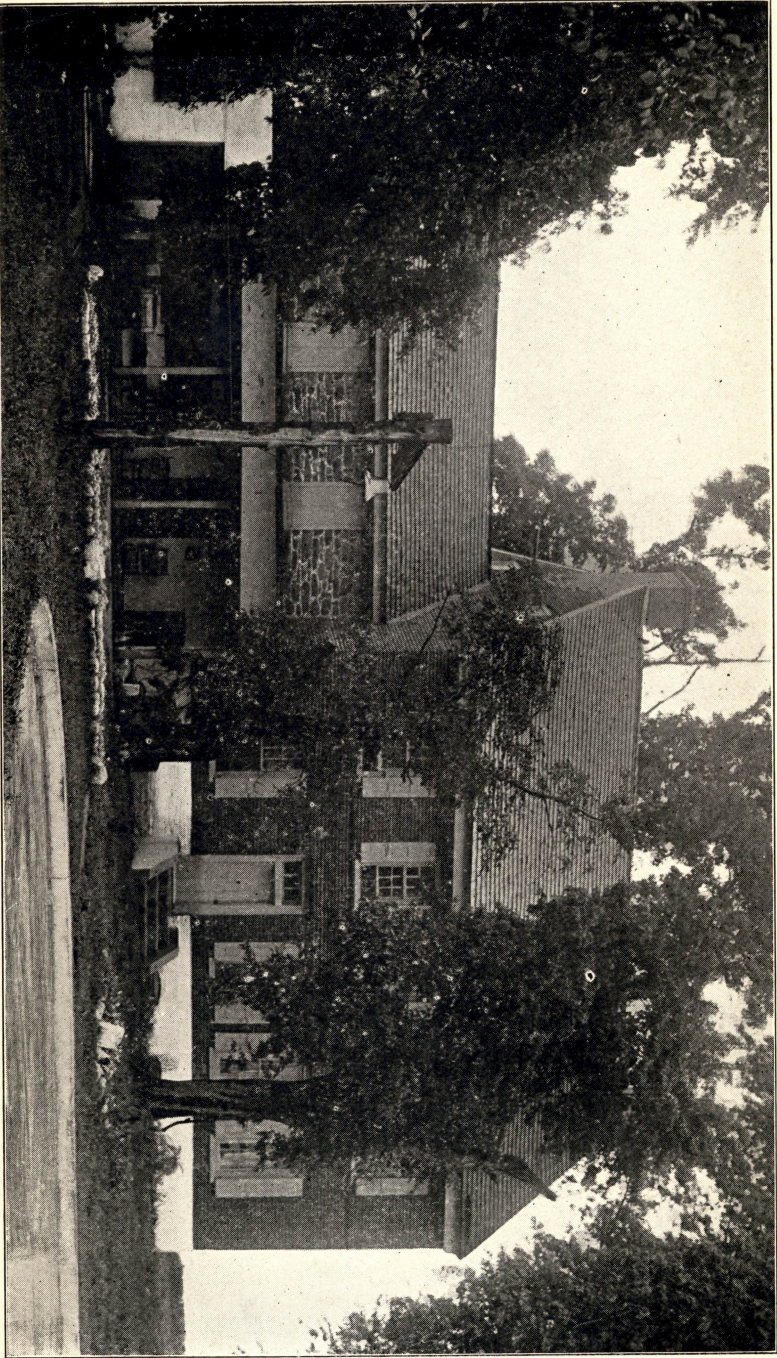
The British fleet after leaving New York, wandered around the New Jersey coast and Delaware Bay for some time but finally appeared in the Chesapeake about August 22 and made a landing on the 29th in the Elk River.

After the Battle of Brandywine September 11, 1777, and the occupation of Philadelphia September 26, 1777, by the British troops, the only thing that annoyed them seriously was that their fleet which had landed the troops in the Chesapeake and gone to the Delaware, did not have entrance to Philadelphia because of the chevaux de frises, and the forts at Billingsport, Fort Island or Fort Mifflin, and at Red Bank. This inability to unite the British fleet under Lord Richard Howe with the British army under command of his brother Sir William Howe, was the cause of continual conflicts on the Delaware that lasted for nearly three months in the Fall of 1777.

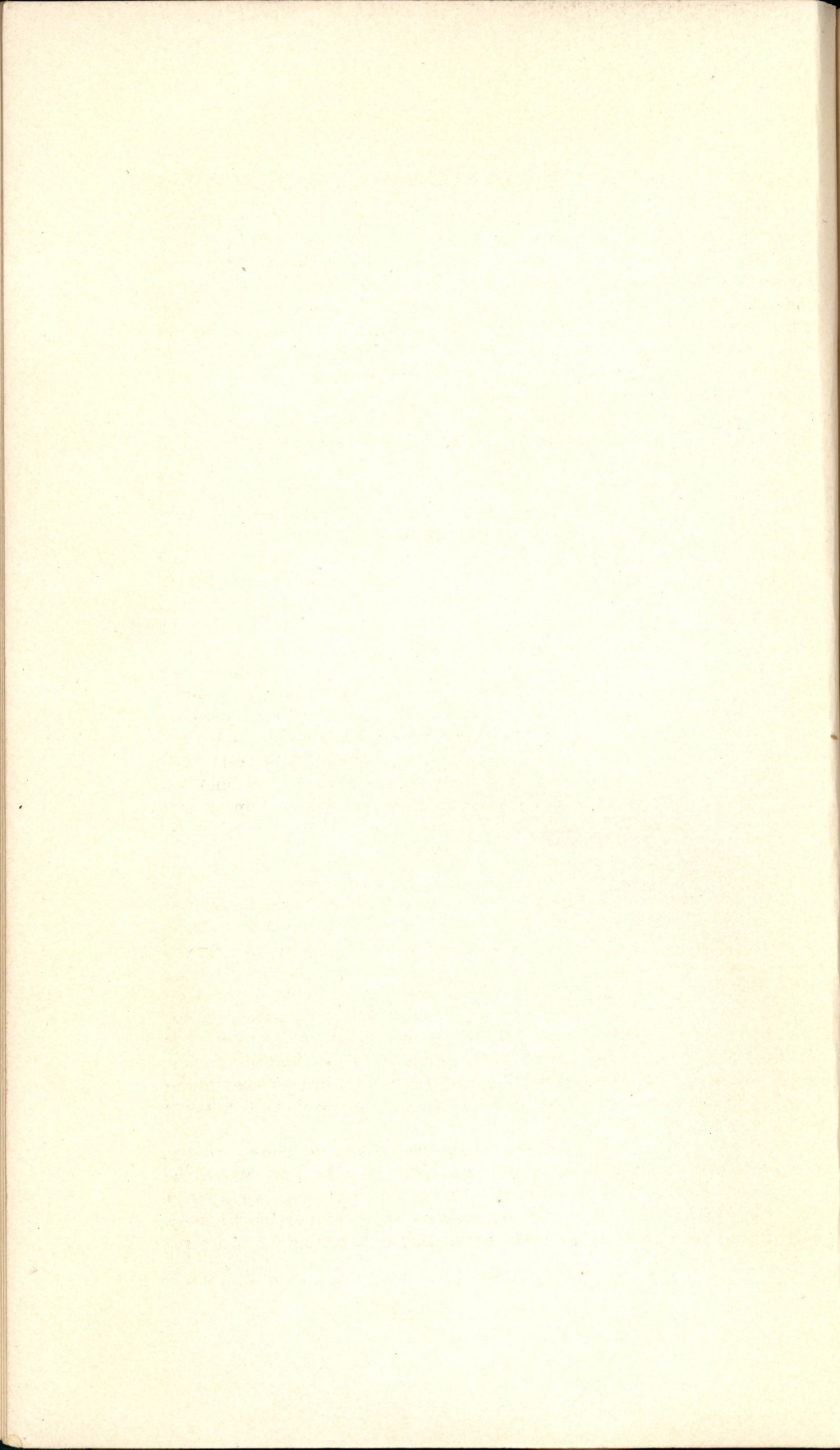
### The Enemy Takes Billingsport

On the first of October the enemy landed a force of men from its vessels, estimated between 500 and 1000, near Raccoon Creek. The next day General Silas Newcomb of the local militia had a small skirmish with them on the main road but Col. William Bradford who had command at Billingsport, set fire to the barracks, bakehouse and other buildings, excepting the farmhouse and took away the ammunition and what cannon he could, spiked the rest and fled in boats to Fort Mifflin. He had only twelve artillery men and about 100 other troops, not counting approximately 150 militiamen under General Newcomb whose command had been considerably reduced. Part of his force had been detached by orders of Governor Livingston to reinforce General Washington's army a few days before.

The destruction of Billingsport and the occupation of Philadelphia by the British left Fort Mifflin to bear the burden of the defense of the Delaware River against the British fleet. The only way to support Fort Mifflin was from the Gloucester County shore and General Washington as early as September 3rd had directed Lieut. Col. Samuel Smith of the Continental forces of Maryland to take command at the fort for the defense of which he was given a sword and the thanks of the Continental Congress. Smith, at the time of his decease, April 22, 1839, was mayor of the City of Baltimore.



The James Whittall House at Red Bank, Erected 1748



## Continental Troops Occupy Red Bank

Brigadier General James M. Varnum on October 7, 1777, was ordered by Washington to relieve the local militia at Red Bank; and General Varnum thereupon sent officers and men under Colonel Christopher Greene, of the First Rhode Island Regiment, and Colonel Israel Angell's Second Regiment of the same State. Washington also sent the French officer Duplessis to act as officer of the artillery and engineer of the fort. He had several other French officers with him, and it is presumed that the swarthy complexion of these Frenchmen gave origin to the report that there were some negroes under Col. Greene.

It is supposed that the forces at Fort Mercer consisted of the following: Col. Greene's regiment, 244; Col. Angell's regiment, 227; Capt. Cook's artillery, 63.

On October 9th Washington wrote Col. Greene that he had directed General Varnum to send Greene's and Angell's Regiments to Red Bank where he was to co-operate with Col. Smith at Fort Mifflin and Commodore Hazlewood, commander of the fleet in the river. Greene was told by Washington that Red Bank was a very good fortification and that he should not lose a moment's time in getting there and making every preparation for its defense because any delay might give the enemy an opportunity of getting there first.

He wrote, "You will be pleased to remember that the post with which you are now entrusted is of the utmost importance to America and demands every exertion of which you are capable for its security and defense. The whole defense of the Delaware absolutely depends upon it and consequently all the enemy's hopes of keeping Philadelphia and finally succeeding in the object of the present campaign." Washington also wrote to General Newcomb of the local militia asking him to give all the aid in his power.

## The Battle of Red Bank

General Sir William Howe, the commander-in-chief of the British land forces, on October 21st gave orders to the distinguished Hessian Colonel, Count Von Donop, to proceed across the Delaware to Cooper's Ferry, now Camden, and capture Fort Mercer, knowing that if this were done Fort Mifflin would fall. Donop had under him the three grenadier battalions of Lieutenant Colonels Von Minnegerode, Von Linsingen and Von Lengercke and Mirbach's regiment commanded by Lt. Col. Von Schieck; also four companies of light infantry, twelve horsemen chasseurs and some artillerymen with eight four-pound bronze field pieces and two English howitzers, amounting in all to about twelve hundred men.

According to Hessian accounts Donop, who asked for more artillery, was practically told by Howe that if he could not take Fort Mercer he would send English troops to do it. Donop who had been wounded at Mt. Holly January 9, 1777, after Washington had captured the Hessians at Trenton, was anxious to restore the former prestige of his hired

countrymen. He proclaimed that "Either the fort will soon be called Fort Donop or I shall have fallen." His prophecy was true but the name of Fort Mercer was not changed.

The Hessians, after they reached Camden, marched out to Haddonfield where they encamped for part of the night. Donop quartered himself in the farmhouse of John Gill on whom he made a favorable impression as a cultured gentleman. The Hessians captured several of the inhabitants of the town to tend camp fires, among them young Jonas Cattell, afterward famous as the guide of the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club composed of sportsmen of Philadelphia and Old Gloucester County. Before daybreak the Hessians departed and released the prisoners. There was no secret about their destination; the whole countryside was excited; John Gill sent a messenger to inform his brother-in-law Whitall. Jonas Cattell as soon as he was released, started immediately to tell Col. Greene that the Hessians were on the march. He crossed Big Timber Creek at Isaiah Marple's and claimed that he gave the first warning at the fort, although it was well known and expected for over two weeks that an attack would be made.

Captain Felix Fisler with a few local militiamen were scouting ahead of Donop's troops and met two officers of the fort who galloped back with the news. Cattell said that when he reached Fort Mercer and gave the first information about the Hessians, that Col. Greene called the men to arms and ordered the militiamen to leave, presumably because there was not room for them inside the fort. Col. Greene ordered the three iron gates at the south end of the fort closed and drove in a flock of forty-seven sheep belonging to the Whitalls, preparatory to a seige.

The patriots under Capt. Fisler destroyed the bridge on Kings Highway, at Big Timber Creek near the Buck Tavern (Westville), which crossed the stream several hundred feet above the present bridge. The Hessian scouts reported the removal of the bridge. They captured Jacob Stokes, a staunch Whig who lived near Mount Ephraim. They also captured the wife of Major Samuel Hugg who was riding a fine horse which the Hessians took and gave her an old nag in its place. Major Hugg was confined to his house with inflammatory rheumatism. While she was a prisoner she noticed the Negro Dick and the Irishman McElroy who were acting as guides for the Hessians and who were later hanged by the patriots. When she was released her own horse was returned to her.

According to Dr. Wallace McGeorge the Hessians crossed Timber Creek at Clements Bridge. Thence they proceeded along the road through Cattell Town, later called Baskettown, and now Wescottville, then they skirted the edge of the woods by the Cattell burying-ground over Lavender Hill, passing the Hannold and Johnson farms across the Westville - Glassboro road; then past the Knight, Ladner and McGeorge farms through Ladd's Woods out through Mann Town, now Park Avenue, across the Kings Highway now Broadway; and thence out what is

now called Hessian Avenue across the Crown Point Road and the highway from Woodbury to Red Bank to the edge of the woods before the fort.

In the absence of military maps this description of the route is unquestioned, and it is evident that the bad roads made the march a burdensome one. The advanced Hessians arrived at about mid-day.

When Donop arrived he ordered earth works thrown up at the north end of the fort, near the river, to protect his artillery which proved to be of little, if any, value to his zeal.

While entrenchments were being thrown up a large number of Hessians were engaged in cutting down small cedar and pine trees and preparing fascines to throw into the trenches of the fort in order, because of absence of scaling ladders, to have some means of entrance. All of this consumed considerable time but finally at four thirty o'clock on October 22d, Donop decided to attack and sent an officer with a drummer and a flag to demand the surrender of Col. Greene's troops.

The exact words used by the Hessian officer are, of course, unknown but are said to have been "The King of England orders his rebellious subjects to lay down their arms and they are warned if they stand the battle, no quarter whatever will be given." We can easily imagine the pompous Hessian officer, well fed and well clothed, striking a gorilla beast-like attitude before the half naked, unshod but determined to die-first Rhode Islanders and the talented, adventurous Frenchmen under Colonels Greene and Angell.

Lt. Col. Jeremiah Olney, of Rhode Island, met the Hessian officer with his big be - strapped drummer and told him "We shall defend the fort to the last extremity" and according to local tradition made an uncomplimentary remark about King George the Third.

Donop did not fool away any more time demanding what he did not expect to get—a surrender of the fort before it was attacked. His little bronze field pieces and his two howitzers opened up the fight at four forty - five and, so far as is known, did no damage whatsoever. After the cannonade Von Minnegerode stormed the northern end of the fort and met with no resistance because DuPlessis had changed its plan, unknown to the Hessians, who were mislead and shouted victory as they swarmed into the outer trenches which had been abandoned. Some of the little row galleys of the Pennsylvania Navy flanked the Hessians and damaged them with musketry fire and grape shot. Behind the cut branches of trees facing the outworks where the Hessians entered were masked cannon loaded with grape shot. At the opportune time they were touched off. They belched death at every discharge. The Hessians were brave enough, but they fell. Some were literally blown to pieces. While this slaughter was on, Donop was challenging death itself on the southern side of the fort where a tall hickory tree supported the stars and stripes hoisted October 18th, which had been adopted by the United States of America June 14th. Bullets and buckshot, made of leaden weights taken from grandfather's clocks, again tolled the hour—but

this time it was not of fleeting time but that of passing souls in a foreign land without justice to themselves.

“Heaps on heaps the slaughtered Hessians lie  
Brave Greene beholds them with tearful eye,  
Far now from home and their native shore  
They sleep in death and hear of war no more.”

Brave humanity could not long stand the terrible punishment inflicted on the Hessians by the cannoniers and riflemen of Col. Greene. The attack lasted just forty minutes, during which time the gallant Donop fell with a musket ball in his hip. He was a tall, fine looking man thirty - seven years old. The next day he was in his tent and appeared to be melancholy and not disposed to talk. He was taken across Woodbury Creek Dam to the house of the patriot Joseph Low where he died October 28th. The desperately wounded Hessians were arranged in the lower rooms of the Whitall mansion, which still stands, and those for whom there was some hope of life, were placed in the upstairs rooms. Dr. Seth Bowen, of Bridgeton, was the surgeon in charge of the wounded.

Donop was an unusual man and when found by DuPlessis outside of the fort among a pile of dead and wounded, he seemed to be pleased at the attention of the French officer who placed him in the hands of Surgeon Mate Harris of the New Jersey Continental Line. His tragic fate is best described in his own words, “It is finishing a noble career early; but I die the victim of my ambition and of the avarice of my sovereign.”

#### The Hessian Casualties

The eight Hessian officers who were killed, naked and torn by grape-shot, were placed in a row on the embankment of the fort the next morning preparatory to burial. The curious flocked to the fort by the scores to view the scene of carnage and witness the result of one of the greatest victories of American arms. One eye witness who helped to bury the dead Hessians in “deep wells” said their long queues and odd dress gave them a strange appearance as they were dumped from carts into their last resting places. With the lapse of time, the erosion of the bank caused by floating ice and storm tides, uncovered the bones of the poor Hessians and they fell down on the river beach to be picked up and again be re-interred by pitying citizens of Old Gloucester County. Even the grave of Count Donop, marked by a stone with his name thereon, was also washed away.

Stryker gives the names of the following Hessian officers killed and wounded as follows:

- Colonel Donop, wounded, died October 25, 1777. (?)
- Lt. Col. Minnigerode, wounded, died October 16, 1779.
- Lt. Col. Von Schiek, wounded, died October 23, 1777.
- Captains Wagener, Von Brogatzky, killed.
- Captains Von Stamford, Wachs, Stendorff, wounded.
- Lieutenants DuPuy, Riemann, Von Wurmb, Hille, Von Offenbach, Heymel, killed.
- Lieutenants Gottschalk, Ruffer, wounded.

The English account of the attack on Fort Mercer said, "that the intelligence was bad and what was represented as a battery, proved a very strong fort with a deep ditch. Col. Donop who commanded the Hessian Grenadiers, Ye Regiment of Mirebach and the Yagers, made his attack on the evening of the 22nd but, after sustaining a heavy fire from the fort, the ships and the floating batteries were obliged to retire. Donop received two wounds which it is feared, will prove mortal and was left a prisoner in the hands of the enemy." They reported officers killed and wounded, 25; men killed, 127; men wounded, over 200.

Samuel Mickle, the diarist of Woodbury, on February 22, 1798, while recording the deaths in the Whitall family by Yellow Fever, digressed as follows: "Also other scenes of distress have been at this place. Witness their fine apple orchard cut down and ground dug up in great trenches and works thrown up in erecting a fort there; their dwelling-house battered in holes while the family was endeavoring to live quietly therein; the fruits of a battle between the American and Hessian soldiers in 1777, when after it I saw men lying naked on ye ground except in part covered with a little straw and some of them with their limbs off, having died of their wounds." No diarist was more accurate than Samuel Mickle whose diary still exists in my possession.

#### The American Losses

The losses on the American side, according to Major Samuel Ward, were two sergeants, one fifer and four privates killed, one sergeant and three privates wounded and one captain taken prisoner of the First Rhode Island Regiment. One captain, three sergeants and three privates killed; one sergeant and fifteen privates wounded of the Second Rhode Island. DuPlessis had two men wounded.

The Captain belonging to Col. Angell's regiment who was killed, was named Sylvanus Shaw. The names of the privates who were undoubtedly buried in the Strangers Graveyard in Woodbury, cannot now be determined. When the graveyard was condemned and the bodies were removed, military buttons and other relics were found but apparently not saved, excepting a button dated 1776 that was offered for sale at a fabulous price. Even now it is probably lost. The local tradition has always been that the wounded Continental soldiers were taken to the Friends Meeting House in Woodbury, and that those who died together with those killed outright at the Battle of Red Bank, were interred in the Strangers Graveyard which used to be on Delaware street. Job Whitall in his diary November 7, 1777, wrote that the soldiers had made a hospital out of the Quaker Meeting House and on that account a meeting was held out-of-doors. See "Notes on Old Gloucester County" published 1917.

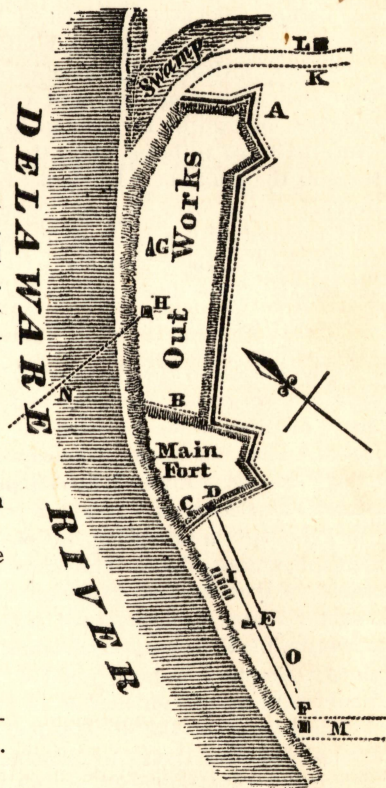
Captain Oliver Clarke, of Col. Greene's First Rhode Island Regiment, while out watching for the Hessians on the morning of the Battle was captured about three miles from the fort at Red Bank by a Hessian soldier, who not only took his horse, saddle and bridle and side-arms, but stole his money, watch and valuable private papers. Captain Clarke

PLAN  
Of Fort Mercer, at Red Bank, N. J.\*

References.

- A End of the fort at which the Hessians entered.
- B Small ditch, cross embankment and location of the masked battery.
- C Remains of the hickory-tree used during the battle as a flag-staff.
- D Ruins of a brick wall in the middle of the artificial bank.— Gateway.
- E Count Donop's grave.
- F Louis Whittall's house.
- G Monument, erected in 1829.
- H Pleasure-house.
- I Marks of the trenches in which the slain were deposited.
- K Road the Hessians marched to the attack.—Reeve's old road.
- L Tenant house.
- M Road to Woodburv.
- N Direction of Fort Mifflin.
- O Farm road.

Note.—The works represented extend about 350 yards in a right line.



**Diagram from Barber & Howe's History Showing the Plan of  
Fort Mercer at the Time of the Battle of Red Bank**

who was taken to Philadelphia as a prisoner of war, protested to Sir William Howe about the theft of his private property.

### The Hessian Retreat

When the Hessians retreated they did not all go back over the same route they came. Hessian Road is somewhat different from the day of the battle. Being without guides at night, and in unorganized groups, some of them got lost and a few of them then and there deserted the British cause. They carried away a large number of their wounded but by the time they had reached Clements Bridge, possibly forty had died and they were buried in the private burial place on the Isaiah Marple plantation according to the statement of Jonas Cattell.

When the straggling, woebegone Hessians again reached Haddonfield they were much confused; acted like wild men and mournfully cried, "Oh, Donop! Oh, Donop!", thus giving to the inhabitants the first knowledge of his defeat. A few more dead Hessians are supposed to have been buried in the Quaker Meeting Ground at Haddonfield. The Hessians did not tarry long in Haddonfield but went on their way to Camden and thence across the Delaware to meet the praise of General Howe for their gallant attack. They left behind, at Red Bank, about three hundred good muskets which were partly exchanged by Col. Greene, for the poor ones of his troops. The surplus arms were sent away in compliance with the orders of General Washington, and the wounded prisoners fit to be removed, were turned over to Col. Clymer, Commissary of Prisoners.

It was reported to Washington that the Hessians had thrown some of their field pieces into Big Timber Creek and he ordered a search made for them but they were never found, but some time no doubt, possibly in the remote future, the missing bronze field pieces to the number of at least four, may be found where they were hidden by the retreating Hessians. Jonas Cattell tried to find them in the Marple graveyard but the stench of the bodies caused him to quit digging. This private burial place where Isaiah Marple, a private in the militia during the Revolution and afterwards a colonel of the Gloucester County militia was buried, is in a forlorn condition at the present time.

On October 25, 1777, Washington issued the following general order: "The General again compliments the troops on the success of our Arms. On Wednesday last, October 22nd, a body of 1200 Hessians under command of Count Donop made an attack on Fort Mercer at Red Bank, and after an action of forty minutes was repulsed with great loss. Count Donop himself, is wounded and taken prisoner together with his Brigade Major and about one hundred officers and soldiers and about one hundred were left on the fields and as they carried off many of their wounded, their whole loss is probably at least four hundred. Our loss is trifling, the killed and wounded amounting to about thirty - two."

It is hard to tell at this time, a century and a half after the Battle of Red Bank, whether Col. Israel Angell, whose regiment was at Red Bank, was there or not, but a quotation from his diary, written in R. I. and dated October 22, 1779, is not without interest. It is as follows:

"This day being the day that we defeated the Hessians at Red Bank in 1777, the officers of the Regiment provided a dinner and all dined together with a great number of the inhabitants, as there were some hundreds of people out of the country on the hill looking out to see the fleet go off, but the wind not being fair prevented their sailing; they continued burning the platforms in their forts and some hay on Conanicut. Yesterday they set the lighthouse on fire about eleven o'clock. Though I forgot to mention in my journal, the troops burned the effigy of Count Donop this day and raised a Liberty pole near four - score feet high."

### The Loss of the British Warship Augusta

The British warships hearing the cannonade of Count Donop, came up the river but were of no assistance to him. It has been said the British ships had not expected the attack to be made until the morning of the 23rd. However, that may be, the Augusta of 64 guns, the Roebuck of 44 guns, the Frigate Merlin of 18 guns, another frigate and a galley with a thirty-two pounder appeared late in the afternoon and were attacked and driven back by the Continental fleet and navy under Commodore Hazlewood. The next morning it was observed that both the Augusta and Merlin were aground on the mud flat below Woodbury Creek. Commodore Hazlewood ordered an immediate attack by his twelve row galleys and two floating batteries, all of his fleet that could be brought into action. The Augusta caught fire and blew up with a tremendous explosion. The Merlin was also destroyed. It has never been definitely known just how many lives were lost on the two British ships.

Light Horse Harry Lee reported to Washington that the loss on board the Augusta was one lieutenant, a chaplain and forty seamen. Commodore Hazlewood said it had been reported to him by a deserter that between 150 and 160 were killed and drowned on board the Augusta. Two twenty-four pounders and a lot of coats, jackets, breeches and other plunder such as brass, copper, cloth and gun barrels were taken off by Hazlewood. A few decades ago the hulk of the Augusta was raised and taken to the beach at Gloucester where a few remnants of her still remain. The New Jersey D. A. R. room in Continental - Memorial Hall in Washington is finished with the beautiful old oak of the Augusta. The Camden County Historical Society has one of her small guns and another large one decorates the lawn of the late Col. G. G. Green at Woodbury. The Gloucester County Historical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania also have relics of the ill-fated Augusta. A great many cannon balls have been pumped out of the river by dredges.

The warship Augusta was launched at Rotherite by Wells and Co. in 1763, and was of 1381 tons burthen. She carried 64 guns placed as follows: 26 - 24 pounders on lower deck; 26 - 18 pounders on upper deck; 10 - 9 pounders on quarter deck; 2 - 9 pounders on forecastle.

A single discharge of all her guns would amount to 1200 pounds of

missiles. Her first and last engagement was at Red Bank. Her captain was Francis Reynolds, afterward the Earl of Ducie.

#### A Tory Newspaper Account of the Battle of Red Bank and the Loss of the Augusta

"On Tuesday last (21st), a party of Hessians under the command of Count Donop, crossed the river Delaware and, proceeding to Haddonfield, took possession of a quantity of Rebel stores and sent them to the city."

"The next morning they proceeded down to Red Bank where the Rebels had thrown up a very strong fortification on a high mole of ground. They got there that evening when a party of about 500 immediately made an attack on the fort with an intention, if possible, to carry it by storm, but found it had been very strongly reinforced and their few small field pieces not sufficient to beat down the works. They were, therefore, after bravely effecting a lodgement on the outer works and driving the rebels though twice their number, into their inmost post, obliged to decline the attack. The loss of the Hessians on this occasion, considering they had to pass through the fire of the row galleys both to and from the fort which kept pouring grape shot upon them, is considerable. Count Donop is among the wounded."

"Early the next morning the Augusta man-of-war of sixty-four guns came up and attacked the fort on Mud Island. Having silenced it for some time, preparations were made for taking possession of it when, by some unlucky accident, she took fire and finding every effort to extinguish it in vain, all on board left her and a little while later she blew up. A small sloop-of-war supposed to be the Merlin, having got aground on the Jersey shore during the firing on the Augusta upon the fort, was set on fire and burnt to the water's edge. The next day after the above action, some more large ships-of-war moved up to the station of the Augusta had held and we have no doubt but in a few days we shall have the pleasure of seeing the whole fleet lying off the city."

#### Efforts to Save Fort Mifflin and Red Bank

On Wednesday, October 22nd, the day of the Hessian defeat at Red Bank, Washington sent orders to Brigadier General David Forman of the New Jersey Militia then at the Pennsylvania Salt Works at Toms River, N. J. Forman immediately went to Red Bank where he maintained his headquarters in the John Ladd homestead known in olden times as Candor Hall. This property which still stands with additions at Colonial Manor, is undoubtedly one of the oldest, if not the oldest, dwelling house in Old Gloucester County. General Silas Newcomb of the local militia seems to have been quite stubborn in his disposition and would not co-operate satisfactorily with General Forman who eventually resigned his command.

On October 27, 1777, Washington wrote Col. Daniel Clymer, "If the field pieces were thrown into Timber Creek I should suppose they may be found by care and pains. They will be of great value if they can be

got and are worth a diligent search. From the accounts I have had the enemy certainly left some behind in their retreat."

On October 27th, Lt. Col. Adam Comstock wrote a letter at the request of Col. Greene to the effect that the enemy had again landed at Billingsport with three hundred men with two eighteen pounder cannon and ten days' provisions for the purpose of strengthening the works there.

On the following day Washington, who was fully aware of the importance of Red Bank and Fort Mifflin, ordered Brigadier General Varnum, of Rhode Island, to proceed from headquarters to Bristol, Pa., thence across the river to Mt. Holly and thence to Haddonfield and from there to Woodbury to work in conjunction with the New Jersey militia under Generals Forman and Newcomb, to support Red Bank and Fort Mifflin. Washington wrote that Woodbury was between two creeks and that some protection could be afforded if necessary, by breaking down the bridges. On October 31st, Washington wrote Varnum to remove all the large caliber cannon from Red Bank and Fort Mifflin that could possibly be spared and mentioned the acquisition of cannon from the wreck of the *Augusta*. The reason for this was that in the winter time the furnaces could not make cannon and he could not afford to run the risk of their capture. Washington authorized Gen. Forman to collect all the shoes, stockings, shirts and breeches he possibly could and deliver all he could spare to the garrison of Fort Mifflin.

General Varnum arrived at Woodbury November 2nd, where he found General Newcomb with less than two hundred militia. He reported that the two forts had no more large cannon than they needed and that he had ordered four captains, eight subalterns, twelve sergeants, twelve corporals and two hundred privates into Fort Mifflin. Lt. Col. Smith, whose troops were ragged and chiefly without breeches, wrote Washington that he had begun to take clothes from the inhabitants.

On November 1, 1777, Washington wrote, after General Newcomb had allowed all of the Hessians to escape after their defeat at Red Bank, to the President of Congress as follows: "As to General Newcomb, who is in the neighborhood of Red Bank, I have little to expect from an estimate of his future services from those he has already rendered. Under these circumstances I have been obliged to detach a further reinforcement of Continental troops under General Varnum to maintain the two garrisons if possible. This detachment when it arrives, will make the whole amount to sixteen hundred rank and file sent from this army."

On the 4th Washington wrote Col. Greene suggesting that caverns for protection of his troops be cut out of Red Bank and that provisions and wood for fires and cooking be taken into Fort Mercer for subsistence against a bombardment and siege.

Letters passed back and forth between the officers at the two forts and Washington practically every day. Winter was fast approaching and everyone concerned well knew that unless the British could get their ships past the *chevaux de frizes* and the forts they would have a hard time to remain in Philadelphia. The letters that passed are mostly to

be found in the Pennsylvania Archives and in the Pennsylvania Magazine printed by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The latter were contributed by Worthington Chauncey Ford. Varnum wrote Washington from Woodbury on November 6th that on the east side of Mantua Creek, about a mile from Billingsport, a small fascine battery had been erected two nights before, consisting of one eighteen and one twelve pounder, which played upon the British warships with good results. This battery was commanded by Capt. Lee. On this date about sixty of General Forman's militia were at Red Bank, but he was absent. General Newcomb was there with about two hundred of his militia which were poorly equipped, and General Varnum sent three officers from Fort Mifflin to take clothing from the Tory Quakers of Salem and give them receipts for the same. Washington ordered the Continental troops into or near the forts and also ordered the militia to be kept outside, because he thought they would dismay the Continentals rather than assist them, if shut up in the forts.

On the 8th Washington wrote to Major General Dickinson, of New Jersey, "The importance of Red Bank makes it necessary for us to employ all possible resources, etc. All the men in your State that can be spared should therefore be collected and marched to join General Varnum." On the same day he called a Council of War at which conference Lafayette, then only about twenty years of age, was present as a Major General. It was unanimously decided not to attack the enemy in Philadelphia in case they should assault the forts on the Delaware. Varnum sent fifty more men over to Fort Mifflin on the 9th. General Newcomb then had about five hundred militiamen, mostly without ammunition. Varnum wrote that the old gentleman Newcomb was anxious to do all the good he could "but, unfortunately the motion of the stars is not committed to superintendence."

Lt. Col. Samuel Smith said he only had four officers and sixty - five privates left of his own command, originally amounting to two hundred and that of the one hundred and twenty rank and file of the 6th Virginia Regiment, only forty - six were fit for duty. The work and fatigue of watching the enemy had worn them out. Fascines were made at Red Bank for Fort Mifflin and a chain floated by buoys, was proposed by Commodore Hazlewood but ridiculed by Major Fleury, the French engineer at Fort Mifflin. The long looked for bombardment began November 10th with five or six batteries and played real havoc right at the start. Washington ordered twenty thousand musket cartridges for the militia and seventeen wagonloads of cannon balls to be sent to Gen. Varnum. Captain Samuel Treat of the Artillery was killed, Capt. Cord Hazzard, of Delaware, and Lieutenants John George and James Henry were wounded on the 11th. General Varnum wrote Washington from Woodbury at midnight on the 11th that Col. Smith had been slightly wounded and that Lt. Col. Giles Russell of Col. John Durkee's Battalion (Connecticut) was in command. The defenses at Mud Island (Fort Mifflin) were almost destroyed. An eighteen pounder burst at Red Bank, killed one man and wounded several. (This may be the cannon

that is still there). Heroic Sam Smith as he signed his name wrote General Varnum, "I will keep the garrison tho' I lose mine and my soldiers' lives, by tomorrow night everything will be leveled."

From Woodbury at sunset on November 12th, Varnum wrote Washington that Fort Mifflin still held out. Lt. Col. Smith who had been wounded, wrote on the same day from Woodbury, a story of the pitiful condition of his men and the fort. Reinforcements from the Connecticut Continental line arrived to the number of about one hundred men. The bombardment continued into the night of the 13th when Major Fleury bewailed the inability to get materials to repair the fort. In his journal he wrote, "it is impossible, however, with watery mud alone to make works capable of resisting the enemy's 32 pounders." At this time the garrison had a force of four hundred and fifty men. He was short of ammunition and a great many of his cannon were disabled.

On the 14th instant a boat was said to have deserted from the American fleet. Three more men were killed and seven wounded in the fort. All of Lt. Col. Smith's force had been brought from Fort Mifflin to the New Jersey shore for a little rest and Major Simeon Thayer of Rhode Island was in command. Varnum sent his entire company of artillery into the fort under command of Capt. James Lee. There were no more of Varnum's troops left; all of them fit for service were now within the forts. The flag was still flying at sunset.

From Woodbury at 11 A.M. on the 15th, General Varnum wrote General Washington that he had spent a great part of the previous night in Fort Mifflin. The enemy had kept up the bombardment all night. At 6 P.M. from Fort Mercer he again wrote Washington, "We have lost a great many men today—a great many of the officers are killed and wounded—my fine company of artillery is almost destroyed—we shall be obliged to evacuate the Fort this night." Major Silas Talbot is badly wounded, Major Fleury is wounded also. It is impossible for an officer to possess more merit than Major Thayer, who commands the brave little garrison." Col. Greene sent boats over from Red Bank at ten o'clock at night and what was left of Fort Mifflin in the form of barracks was set on fire. The survivors were taken to Red Bank. The sailboats of the navy were set on fire and the row galleys escaped up the river past Philadelphia in a dense fog and were scuttled and sunk in the creeks on the New Jersey side where they remained until the British left Philadelphia after which time they were again floated.

The doughty warrior Lt. Col. Smith had been hoping to again take command at Fort Mifflin, but his wound had prevented. He wrote Washington a letter from Woodbury November 16th, praising Major Thayer, of Rhode Island, Capt. Edmund B. Dickinson, of the 1st Virginia, Capt. George Walls, of the 4th Virginia, and Capt. William Dent Bell of the 6th Maryland, regiments. The first Virginia regiment had been sent to Fort Mifflin with two hundred men under the command of Lt. Col. John Green of that regiment. Major Thayer left Fort Mifflin at 2 o'clock on the morning of the 16th for Red Bank. Fort Mifflin had fallen after

being literally knocked to pieces and leveled to the ground. The British commander called it a "cursed little mud island."

According to Stryker, in his most excellent history of "The Forts on the Delaware," furnished to the writer by Dr. Carlos E. Godfrey, Director of the Department of Public Records of New Jersey, the following officers and men of Connecticut troops were killed: Captains Stephen Brown, Nathan Stoddard; Lieutenant James Mackinson; Privates Alvin Ames, Mordecai Bedeant, Simeon Booten, Nathan Brown, Beriah Holbard, Nathaniel Harris, William Jenkins, Constant Matthewson, Samuel Patten, Uriah Pease, Richard Sowas, Luther Watterson, and probably others.

### The Abandonment of Fort Mercer

Lord Cornwallis landed at Billingsport on November 18th, where some men from the British fleet also landed the same day. He marched up to Woodbury with an army of about five thousand troops where he had his headquarters in the brick house of John Cooper for three days. The building is now occupied by Dr. Duncan Campbell. Washington made strong efforts to reinforce Red Bank. He ordered troops under Generals Greene, Glover and Huntington to its support, but they were too late. In a letter to General James M. Varnum dated November 19th, he said he did not remember whether there was a well in the fortification at Fort Mercer or not, which corroborates the statement that he had visited Red Bank on August 1st.

On November 20, 1777, Washington addressed an appeal to the officers and soldiers of the militia in the counties of Hunterdon, Burlington, Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland to help "rid your country of its invaders."

Varnum lacking the necessary support of additional troops to engage Cornwallis and afraid of being trapped, removed from Woodbury to Haddonfield. Skirmishing occurred at a ford on Mantua Creek, five miles above the bridge which had been destroyed by the Patriots. Col. Christopher Greene abandoned Fort Mercer on the night of November 20.

DuPlessis, who had distinguished himself at Brandywine and Germantown, caused some valuable artillery and stores to be saved. He volunteered to blow up the magazine at Red Bank and, as a result of his exploits was recommended for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel by Washington to Congress.

Three hundred militia were at Mt. Holly, seven hundred at Haddonfield and two hundred more at Cooper's Ferry (Camden). Skirmishes took place at both Little and Big Timber Creek bridges. On the 25th Cornwallis had reached Gloucester and had quartered himself in the house of Col. Joseph Ellis and the Hessian commanding officer in a house opposite.

The abandonment of Fort Mercer was described in a tory newspaper of Philadelphia as follows: "Last Thursday afternoon (20th), the Rebels after blowing up their fortifications evacuated Red Bank upon the appearance of a detachment of the British troops under the command of

Lord Cornwallis, and the next morning they set fire to all their fleet consisting of about twenty sail except some of the gondolas which, keeping close to the Jersey shore, ran up the river under cover of a thick fog."

"The Delaware has never had the number of ships in it as are at present, there being supposed to be upward of four hundred. And a very considerable number of merchant vessels laden with provisions and dry and wet goods, are expected every day from New York and the West Indies."

#### Lafayette at Gloucester

On the 24th Lafayette, had a smart engagement with a body of Hessians to the number of about four hundred belonging to Cornwallis' army. The skirmish took place just before dusk on the Gloucester road between Big and Little Timber Creeks and resulted in the capture of fourteen men and twenty-five or thirty killed and wounded of the enemy. Lafayette's loss was two militia officers killed and five privates wounded. His force consisted of about one hundred and fifty riflemen under Lt. Col. Butler and about the same number of militiamen, a part of them of Gloucester County under Col. Ellis, also ten light horsemen and a group of four French officers including DuPlessis Mauduit. The action lasted about three-quarters of an hour. Washington was well pleased with Lafayette and recommended him for an active command of a division in the Continental army, to which Congress generously agreed on December 1st. It may therefore be truly said that Lafayette won his spurs right here in Old Gloucester County.

Cornwallis' army retired across the river from Gloucester on the 26th and 27th of November and the conquest of Fort Mercer and other forts on the Delaware was completed.

#### Punishment of the Tories and Loyalists

After the British evacuation of Philadelphia, June 18, 1778, the Patriots of Old Gloucester County paid considerable attention to the Tories and those of the community who had served as officers and privates in the Loyalist forces, mainly at Billingsport while it was occupied by the British. Those convicted of high treason were sentenced to death and had their property confiscated. Some few who were indicted fled the country and went to Canada, put in claims for their losses to the Crown of Great Britain and never returned to this section. Others convicted of trading with the enemy were let off with fines. The names of those indicted for high treason and other offenses may be found in the minutes of the Gloucester County Court in the Court House at Woodbury.

Benjamin Carpenter in his diary under date of November 18, 1778, wrote, "I have been at General Court amongst a great company of people these two days." December 5th, "This day was an awful session. I saw and heard sentence of death passed on nineteen men whom I exhorted and prayed with in prison. I promised, at their request, to visit them again."

January 10, 1779, he paid them another visit but thought "They

depended too much on reprieves; many people coming to see them and a general carelessness spreading among them."

January 23, "I visited the prisoners, all being reprieved but one William Hammet. When I went in his apartment I found him very solemn sitting in irons with one or two others. He was only nineteen years old."

Jan 29, "He was executed. I went with Mr. Kemble early in the morning to pay him a last visit. He showed no fear of death and behaved with Christian courage and fortitude. He was also attended by Mr. Collin the Swedish minister. The prison keeper showed him much kindness."

The Judge who sentenced them made a report of the degree of guilt of each one to Governor Livingston who signed the pardons, several of which are now in the custody of the Gloucester County Historical Society.

### Ownership and Preservation of Red Bank— Its Monuments

Odd as it may seem the United States did not buy the land used at Red Bank for the erection of Fort Mercer. Possession was taken as a matter of necessity and while it is probable that an effort was made to purchase it there is no evidence of it now to be found. It is equally probable James Whitall and his wife Ann, would treat with disdain the idea of selling land for the purpose of erecting a military fortification.

Col. Greene, after October 12th, 1777, took fifteen tons of his hay; sixty bushels of wheat; 1000 cedar boards; 8550 rails; 2048 stakes; 50 white oak posts, and tore down a barn and hayhouse besides damaging other buildings. His pailed gardens were cut down and taken to Fort Mifflin and his apple orchard of three hundred grafted trees was cut down.

The old gentleman, James Whitall, rendered a bill to the Legislature of New Jersey under date of April 17, 1779, for damages done to his property by the American forces, to the amount of five thousand seven hundred and sixty pounds one shilling. This sounds like a tremendous sum of money but it really did not amount to much in real value when one considers that the currency of New Jersey was very much depreciated at that time and that the pound of New Jersey did not have the same par value as the English pound. He was not paid. His bill shows that the first breaking of the ground was April 16, 1777, which may properly be considered the beginning of the fort.

DeChastellux in his travels in North America (1780), mentions a visit with Lafayette, DeNoailles, and DuPlessis Mauduit, to the home of Friend Whitall, rather facetiously. The old gentleman was paring herbs over in a chimney corner and refused to look at or greet the visitors, among whom was DuPlessis who had ordered the destruction of the Whitall buildings in order to obtain the lumber. The Whitall plantation originally consisted of over 400 acres when purchased in 1704 by the first James Whitall. At the time of the purchase it was tenanted by Joseph Tomlinson. The sheepskin deed still exists.

On May 16, 1872, Benjamin P. Heritage and his wife, Margaret, deeded one hundred acres of the Red Bank plantation to the United States of America for a consideration of \$2500. The Government intended to use the sand and gravel at League Island or thereabout. On different occasions workmen uncovered a large number of cannon balls ranging from ten to thirty - six pounds and also grape shot.

During 1903 it became known that the Government had decided to sell the Battlefield and the Gloucester County Historical Society was formed with John Gill Whitall as its first President, evidently with the main idea of preserving the place for a public park. William H. Albright was Recording Secretary of the Society, Hon. David O. Watkins was chairman of the committee that with the assistance of United States Senator Dryden effected the preservation. Hon. John Boyd Avis was also active and interviewed President Roosevelt, who said the property should not be sold. Twenty acres were set apart under the care of the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders who look after it today. Governor Watkins prepared the bill presented to Congress and when the act was signed January 27, 1905, by the President, the pen was saved and given to Governor Watkins who afterward presented it to the Gloucester County Historical Society. The Society proposed a State monument and its minutes show that the New Jersey Legislature appropriated \$15,000 for that purpose. The act was passed March 30, 1905.

While the excavations were under way for the State monument, two ancient cannon, a large number of grape shot, an iron camp stove and other relics were uncovered. The two cannon, one of which was bursted, are now mounted at the Battlefield Park. The grape shot and camp stove are in the local Historical Society. The monument was dedicated on Thursday, June 21, 1906, said to have been one of the hottest days within the memory of living men.

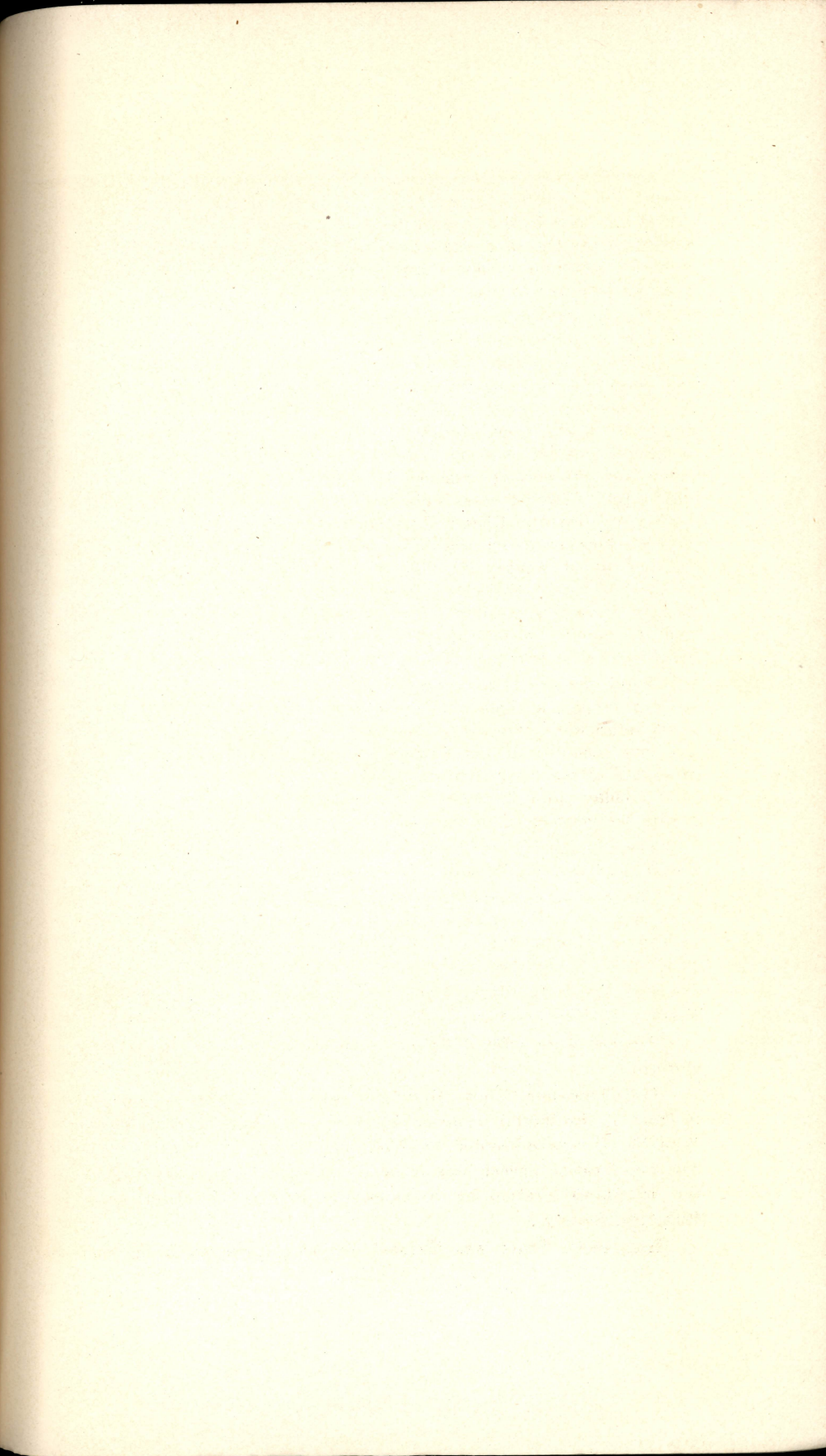
The Commissioners for the erection of the monument were W. H. Albright, President, Wilson T. Jones and Edward G. Miller.

The Reception Committee was composed of Hon. John Boyd Avis, Chairman, Hon. Lewis Starr, John Stratton, Howard W. Miller, Harry G. Peddle, Alex L. Rogers, D. Graham Craig, Horace F. Nixon, John G. Whitall, C. H. Feters, M. F. Crane, W. H. McCullough, Major C. H. Barnard, Selah P. Clark, Hon. W. C. Cattell, G. Percy Brick, Harry Waram, W. Harrison Livermore, Franklin D. Springer and J. Paul Miller.

Prayers were offered by Rev. Edward Dillon and Rev. J. Leland Howard.

The Gloucester County Historical Society raised the American Flag in front of the Whitall mansion which was unfurled by Miss Matilda F. Whitall. It was presented by Woodbury Council No. 31, O. U. A. M. The presentation speech was made by Captain George W. Hughes and the acceptance oration by Alexander L. Rogers as Secretary of the Historical Society.

Hon. Lewis Starr was Marshal of the parade which included the





A Part of the Trench at Red Bank in 1927

of the New Jersey militia officers who, with their commands were on duty in the campaign resulting in the Battle of Red Bank, either actively engaged therein or stationed as supporting forces at Woodbury, Haddonfield or Gloucester. The list has never been published. It follows:

Newcomb's Brigade: Brigadier General Silas Newcomb and staff; Major Robert Patterson, Brigade Major.

Burlington County: Colonel Bowes Reed and staff, Captain Joseph Borden, troop of horse; Captain Edward Thomas, troop of horse, Captain Albemarle Collins, Lieutenant Daniel Hendrickson, Captain John Leak, Captain Robert Quigley, Captain Joseph Vandyke.

Cape May County: Colonel John Mackey and staff, First Lieutenant John Cresse, Captain Salathiel Foster, Captain Henry Y. Townsend, Captain James Willets, Jr.

Cumberland County: Colonel Elijah Hand and staff, Captain John Barker, Captain Jonathan Beesley, Captain Elijah Davis, First Lieutenant Ephraim Foster, Captain William Lowe, Captain John Peterson, Captain David Platt.

Gloucester County: Colonel Joseph Ellis and staff, Captain Richard Cheeseman, troop of horse; Captain Franklin Davenport, artillery; Captain Jacob Browning, Captain Joseph Collins, Captain Joseph Conover, Captain Sawtel Elwell, Captain Felix Fisher, Captain David Paul, Captain William Price, Captain Christopher Rape, Captain John Stokes, Captain William Watson.

Morris County: Lieutenant Colonel Benoni Hathaway, commanding and staff; Captain David Bates, Captain Aaron Bigelow, Captain Ezra Brown, Captain Nathan Horton, Captain Jeremy Slaight.

Salem County: Major Edward Hall, commanding; First Lieutenant John Smith, adjutant; First Lieutenant James Steel, quartermaster; Captain Jacob DuBois, Captain Joseph Haywood, Captain Abner Penton.

Sussex County: Lieutenant Colonel John Seward, commanding and staff; Major Samuel Westbrook, Captain George Allen, Captain Josiah Cole, Captain Benjamin Coykindall, Captain Conrad Gunterman, Captain Thomas Hill, Lieutenant Abijah Hopkins, Captain Manuel Hover, Captain Simon Simonson.

### Our National Flag

It is quite probable that the stars and stripes were first flown on the Delaware River near Red Bank.

On June 14, 1777, Congress "Resolved that the flag of the Thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, that the Union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation."

On the same day it was Resolved that Captain John Paul Jones be appointed to command the Ranger. He probably had the distinction of first flying our flag on the high seas as he claimed. On May 29, 1777, Betsy Ross was paid for making ships colors, by the Council of Safety of Pennsylvania and on September 24th following Ann King was paid four pounds, twelve shillings and six pence for making sundry colors for the fleet. It will be noticed that one of these women made flags for the

patriots before the adoption of a National flag and the other apparently afterward. These payments tend to prove that the making of flags was not a charity job, and it is possible that definite proof may sometime be found as to who was really the first National flag maker.

#### Events on the Seacoast of Old Gloucester County

It is not within the scope of this article to include everything that happened in Old Gloucester County during the Revolution. It is, however, well to state that the northern end of the County along the Delaware, had no monopoly of patriotism. The English ships harrassed the people of the seacoast as is shown by the following letter dated:

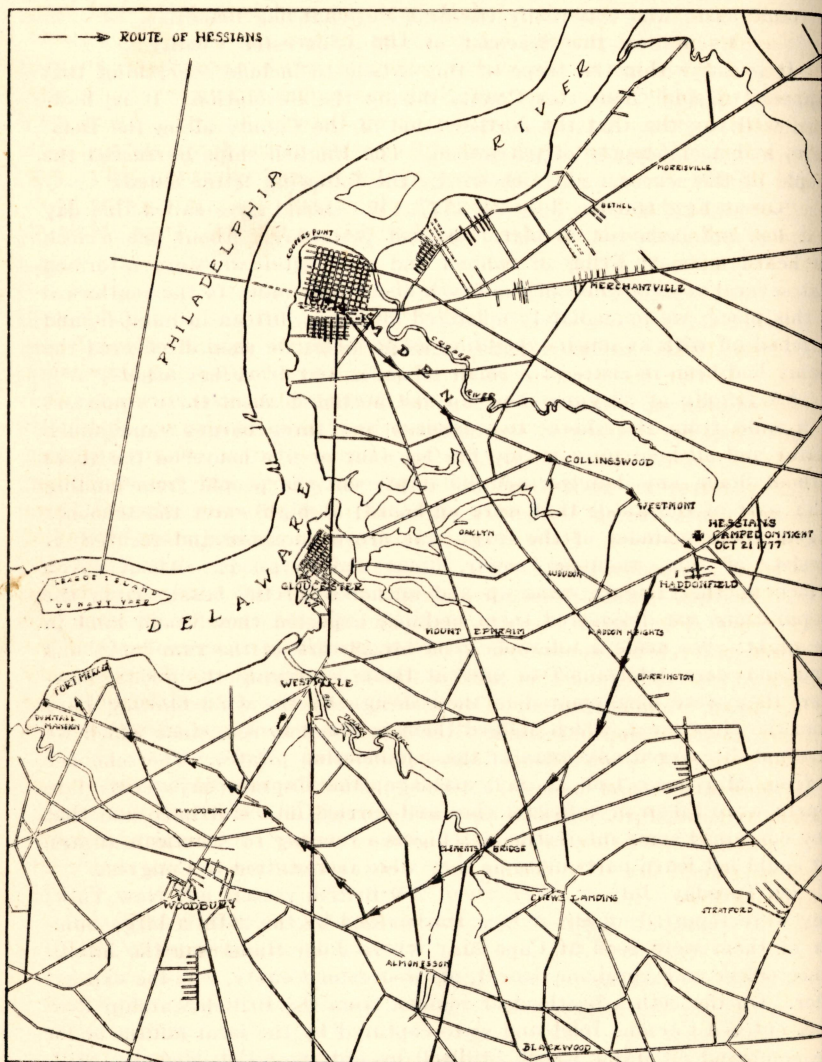
"Great Egg Harbor, July 24, 1777. We should have sailed this day if it had not been for an alarm we had yesterday. About one o'clock we heard a smart firing of cannon and soon after we were informed that several vessels were off the beach about four miles to the southward of this place; we immediately mustered all hands, fifteen in number, and marched off with as much expedition as possible; we soon discovered the enemy had been in chase of a small schooner and drove her ashore."

"A frigate of 32 guns came up and anchored about three-quarters of a mile from the shore; two tenders and three barges came much nearer and all kept up a steady fire for four or five hours on the shore without doing any damage, nor did it prevent the people from landing chief part of the goods that were on board; at high water the schooner bilged, the remainder of the cargo was drove on shore and secured; it consists of rum, molasses, sugar, limes and drygoods. About seven o'clock another frigate came up and anchored off the beach; from the preparations we discovered them making, expected they would land in the night. We made a tolerable good breastwork of the rum casks and sand and were determined to prevent their destroying the goods; however, they were disappointed in their design by the wind blowing hard from the Northwest, which obliged them to stand to sea, since which we have not discovered any more of these plundering pirates. The schooner is from Martinico, had 22 days passage; the Captain says some late papers were taken in a Bristol ship and carried into Martinico and that they contained some interesting intelligence relating to American affairs, but could not learn particulars as they were transmitted to Congress."

On Tuesday, July 22, 1777, about 250 British vessels left New York; they were reported off Great Egg Harbor and by the 25th, a large number of them were seen at Cape May where John Hunn was the intelligence officer and Abraham Bennet, of Gloucester County, was the express rider. On the 26th a boatload of seamen from the British warship Roebuck entered Corsons Inlet and were captured by the local militia under the command of Major Enoch Stillwell by orders of Col. Nicholas Stillwell, on the west end of Pecks Beach (Ocean City).

On July 30 Henry Fisher counted 228 of the British vessels off Lewes, Delaware, but the next day they left the Delaware Bay later to appear in the Chesapeake.

A fort was built at Somers Point in September, 1778, but no mention of it has been found in the local histories of the neighborhood.



Route of the Hessians from Camden to Red Bank

A month later, on October 6, 1778, a battle occurred at Chestnut Neck (near the present Port Republic), then considered the most important place on the Southern New Jersey seacoast and probably the largest town as has been claimed. Pulaski was engaged here as he had been at Camden several months before. The British burned the town and destroyed the ships in the harbor, many of which were American privateers of small size. Chestnut Neck has a fine monument which was dedicated by the State of New Jersey on October 6, 1911. There was also a fort at Chestnut Neck and still another at the forks of the Little Egg Harbor River. On the river at Batsto and Pleasant Mills, bog iron ore was dug out of the swampy places and made into grape shot, cannon balls, shovels, kettles, etc., for the Continental Army while it was encamped at Valley Forge.

### Conclusion

New Jersey has been aptly termed the battle ground of the Revolution. Within the State more than one hundred battles and skirmishes occurred, ten or more of which were in Old Gloucester County. Our county has never received the attention in American History that it so richly deserves. Even Stryker, in his excellent list of officers and men of New Jersey in the Revolution, credits the county with not more than ten sergeants during the entire eight years of the war, whereas there were scores of them. He also omits several captains and other officers of the county from his lists.

The State of New Jersey has a right to be proud of its record during the times that "tried men's souls," and should compile at least one volume of archives containing a list of the battles, skirmishes and the dates of the same, together with a list of all the known Revolutionary militiamen, minute men and Continental soldiers of New Jersey. The writer knows of approximately seven hundred and fifty of such that have never appeared in any official State publication.

Monuments and memorial tablets should be erected on the site of every redoubt, fort, skirmish and battleground of the Revolution.

Patriotic societies, instead of spending money for banquets and fireworks, should use it to memorialize the patriots and events that made America Free.

FRANK H. STEWART,  
August 5, 1927

General Election Committee  
The Hon. Mr. Justice  
Duke of Rutland

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