



Appendix D

Expanding Historic Interpretation

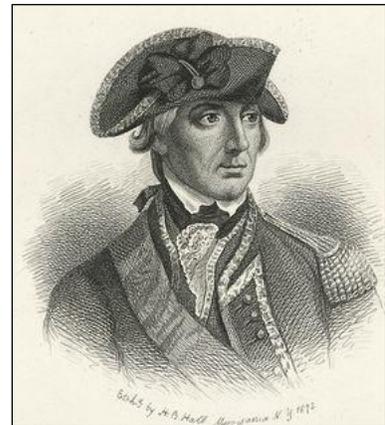
Background

During the first meeting held for the production of this document, staff from the American Battlefield Preservation Program suggested that there should be a focus on broadening the interpretation of the Battle of Brandywine to include topics that have not always been included in past interpretations. This appendix presents an example of some of the topics which could be addressed to broaden the interpretation. The topics discussed below do not focus on the most significant aspects of the Battle but rather on interesting narratives that provide a depth and understanding as to the communities, people, and personalities who were involved with the Battle either as combatants or noncombatants.

NARRATIVES ABOUT COMBAT OFFICERS¹

To understand the events of September 11, 1777, it is necessary to be familiar with the key individuals who planned the Battle, directed troops, or played an important role in the Battle's aftermath. These men, listed below, should not be regarded as the only major figures in the Battle, but rather just those who were most prominent in terms of executive decisions and overall strategy.

In the past, historic interpretation has focus on the role these men played in the Battle of the War, but did not go into much detail as to who these men were and what they did before and after the war. Such narratives can put the events of the Battle into context. For example, prior to 1776, Gen. Washington had spent over a decade as a farmer and surveyor, and so was not as experienced as the British generals. Conversely, Gen. Howe had vast combat experience, and spent so much time in North America that in some respects he was as much of an "American" as many people who had recently immigrated to America.



Gen. Sir William Howe (19th century), H. B. Hall.²

¹ Except where otherwise noted, the biographical information in this section comes from Justin Clement, *Philadelphia 1777: Taking the Capital*, (Osprey Publishing: New York, 2007), 14-18.

² Source: Emmet Collection of Manuscripts, New York Public Library, wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012. Public Domain.

The British and their German Mercenaries

Gen. Sir William Howe (1729-1814) was the reserved yet affable commander-in-chief of British Army forces in North America from 1775-1778. His mother was the daughter of King George I and his mistress.³ Howe joined the army in 1746, and distinguished himself during the Seven Years' War, commanding troops in the battles of Louisburg, Quebec, Montreal, Belle Isle, and Havana. He was elected to Parliament in 1758 and served until 1780.⁴ In 1772 he was promoted to major-general. As a result of his experience in the French and Indian War he became a skilled tactician, using light infantry to their fullest advantage throughout his career. As an ardent Whig, Howe was generally opposed to war against Britain's colonies, but he still vowed to crush the rebellion.

On June 17, 1775, he fought under Gen. Gage at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Howe was later appointed commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, and was knighted. In 1776, he participated in the successful campaign against New York City, including the crushing victory over Washington at Long Island. He conducted the advance through New Jersey early in 1777 as a precursor to his campaign against Philadelphia. Howe was popular with his soldiers and just before he returned to Britain, they held an all day event in his honor with decorated barges and fireworks.⁵ In May 1778, eight months after the Battle of Brandywine, he gave up his command to Sir Henry Clinton and sailed for England. Upon the death of his brother Richard in 1799, he inherited the title as 5th Viscount.

Maj. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis (1738-1805) fought in Germany at the victorious Battle of Minden in 1759 and was promoted to captain in the 85th Regiment. In 1760, he led the 12th Regiment, which fought against the French at the Battle of Vellinghausen in Germany. When his father died in 1762, Cornwallis succeeded to the earldom, and by 1765 he became an aide-de-camp to the King. With the outbreak of the American Revolution, Cornwallis was promoted major-general. In 1776 he proved himself a reliable field commander during the Battles of Long Island, Kip's Bay and Fort Mifflin. His conduct during the Philadelphia campaign earned him much respect from his fellow officers.



Charles Earl Cornwallis, (1783),
Thomas Gainsborough.⁶

In 1780, when the focus of the war moved south, Cornwallis led the British forces in the Carolinas and Georgia. Although he won many battles, his troops were worn down by the strategic attack of Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene.⁷ In 1781, the arrival of French warships and

³ Mark M. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), 522-23.

⁴ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 523.

⁵ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 710.

⁶ Source: National Portrait Gallery, Public Domain, wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012.

⁷ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 288.

troops in support of Washington's army forced Cornwallis to surrender at Yorktown.⁸ His surrender marked the end of the Revolutionary War. After the war, he was appointed Governor-General of India in 1786 and again in 1805. He served briefly as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1798, but resigned over his own government's refusal to grant Catholic emancipation.

Vice Admiral Richard, Viscount Howe, (1726 - 1799) was the brother of Sir William Howe, and the commander of British naval forces in North America during the Battle of Brandywine. Admiral Howe entered the Royal Navy in 1740, fighting in the Jacobite Uprising, the War of Austrian Succession and Seven Years' War. He became Treasurer of the Navy in 1765. In 1770 he was promoted rear-admiral, and in 1775 to vice-admiral.



Admiral of the Fleet Howe (1726-1799), 1st Earl Howe (1794), John Singleton Copley.⁹

Admiral Howe shared his brother's political views, and in late 1777 both of them served on a peace commission attempting, without success, to negotiate with the Continental Congress. Admiral Howe's command played a central role in the campaigns of 1776 and 1777, when great demands were placed upon the Royal Navy for the transport of troops. He served with distinction until his resignation in September 1778. His greatest accomplishment after the American Revolution was his command of the Channel Fleet in 1794 during the French Revolution. In 1797 he was knighted. He died two years later.



Wilhelm von Knyphausen, Baron (c. 19th Century), Artist Unknown.¹⁰

Lt. Gen. Wilhelm, Baron von Knyphausen (1716-1800) was a baron of the German principality of Hessen-Kassel. He entered the Prussian Army in 1734 and fought under Frederick the Great during the Seven Years' War. By the time of the American Revolution, he was a seasoned old officer with a great deal of campaign experience. Promoted to lieutenant-general in 1775, he served under Gen. Leopold von Heister during the New York campaign of 1776. After his successful assault on Fort Mifflin in November 1777, the fort was re-named in his honor.

In 1777, Knyphausen replaced Heister as commander-in-chief of the German troops in North America. He earned the respect of Gen. Howe and served with distinction as his second-in-command throughout the Philadelphia campaign. He later served under Gen. Clinton at the Battle of Monmouth. In 1779-

⁸ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1230.

⁹ Source: National Maritime Museum, London, wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012. Public Domain.

¹⁰ Source: New York Public Library. Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Humanities and Social Sciences, wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012. Public Domain.

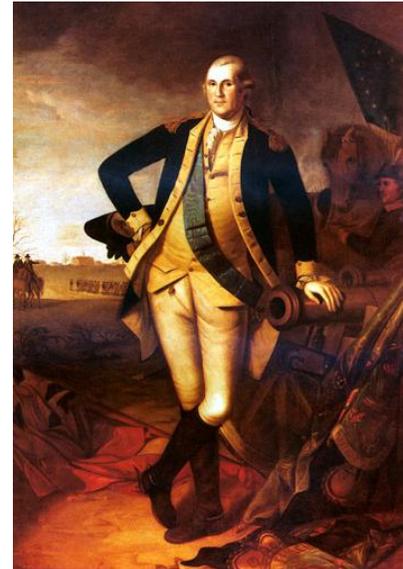
80 he commanded the force stationed in New York City. In 1780 he also led an invasion into New Jersey, fighting the Battle of Springfield. In 1780 he retired, returning to Germany where he served as a military governor in Hessen-Kassel.

The Americans

Gen. George Washington (1732-1799) was the commander-in-chief of American forces during the Battle of Brandywine. Washington was a wealthy Virginian planter and surveyor with strong local political connections. He was appointed a Lt. Col. of the Virginia Militia during the French and Indian War. In 1754 he led two companies, winning a battle at Great Meadows, but being forced to surrender at Fort Necessity.

In 1755 he served as aide-de-camp to Gen. Braddock, the British commander-in-chief for the colonies during the beginning of the French and Indian War.¹² Washington survived the Battle of the Monongahela in which Braddock was killed and his forces soundly defeated.¹³ Subsequently, Washington was made commander of the Virginia Militia, although he was only 23 years old. He retired from the military in 1759, and spent the next 15 years as a planter and member of the House of Burgesses, but did not take a leadership position.¹⁴

Washington served as delegate to the Second Continental Congress in 1775. It was there that he was made commander-in-chief of the new Continental Army following the recommendation of John Adams. His appointment is viewed by historians as having a political element, since the New Englanders who fervently wanted independence from Britain wished to garner support from Virginia, the largest of the southern colonies.¹⁵ Although Washington had some success in 1776, he was forced to retreat at the Battle of Long Island after being outflanked by Gen. Howe. However, that night Washington organized an evacuation, and as a result his army survived to continue the fight.¹⁶ In December of 1776, Washington also found success through his capture of Hessian troops at Trenton and Princeton.¹⁷



Portrait of George Washington, (1799), Charles Willson Peale.¹¹

¹¹ Source: US Capitol Collection, Public Domain, wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012.

¹² Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1166.

¹³ P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 91.

¹⁴ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1166.

¹⁵ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1166.

¹⁶ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 646.

¹⁷ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1112.

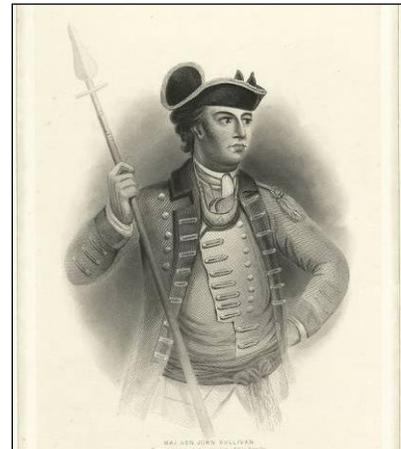


*Portrait of Revolutionary War General Nathanael Greene, (1783), Charles Willson Peale.*¹⁸

Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene (1742-1786) was a Quaker from Rhode Island who ran his family's foundry and served in the general assembly. He did not follow a pacifist path. In 1773 he was "read out of meeting," or expelled, by his Quaker meetinghouse for attending a military parade. In 1774, he organized a militia, but served as a private due to a bad knee which left him with a stiff leg. He rose through the ranks, and within a year was a brigadier general.¹⁹ Once the Continental Army was raised, Greene was given a brigade. On August 9, 1776, he was promoted to major general. Greene's keen grasp of military tactics earned him the respect of Gen. Washington.

During the Battle of Brandywine, Greene's spontaneous organization of the 2nd Virginia Brigade into a defensive line halted the British advance, allowing the rest of Washington's army to conduct an organized retreat. Greene was later made Quartermaster-General at Valley Forge to help deal with the army's supply shortages. In 1780, when the American cause faced ruin in the South, Washington gave Greene command of the American southern army. The southern army's very survival was due to Greene's well executed tactical retreat across North Carolina. Greene served for the duration of the war, during which his foundry business failed. In 1783, the state of Georgia gave him an estate confiscated from a loyalist. One year later, he died from sunstroke at the age of 44.²⁰

Maj. Gen. John Sullivan (1740-1795) was a prominent lawyer from New Hampshire who served in the General Assembly and became close friends with the Royal Governor. He was active with the New Hampshire Militia and served as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress. Sullivan was appointed a brigadier general in the Continental Army, and in the spring of 1776, was sent to Canada to take charge of the American army there. He was defeated in the Battle of Trois-Rivieres, but retreated with his force intact, and so was promoted to major general. During the Battle of Long Island, Sullivan was taken prisoner, but was exchanged and returned to the command of his division. In August 1777, he was assigned to recapture Staten Island but the attempt failed.



*Maj. Gen. John Sullivan (19th century), Thomas A. Emmet*²¹

¹⁸ Source: Independence National Historic Park, wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012. Public Domain,

¹⁹ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 454.

²⁰ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 454

²¹ Source: New York Public Library, Emmet Collection, Vol. 3: John Sullivan., digitalgalley.nypl.org accessed October 2012. Public Domain.

Sullivan's troops rushed from New York to join Washington in opposing Howe's campaign against Philadelphia. His conduct at Brandywine was questioned by Congress, but Washington supported him. Sullivan's greatest military success came during his 1779 campaign against the Iroquois of New York who were fighting as allies to the British. This campaign destroyed 40 Iroquois towns, weakening them as a military force, although they later regrouped, fighting battles in 1780 and 1781.²² After the war, Sullivan served in Congress and as the Governor of New Hampshire. In 1789, President Washington named him a Federal judge for the New Hampshire District Court, a post he held until his death.

Maj. Gen. William Alexander "Sterling" (1716-1783) was known by the name "Lord Sterling" after his failed attempt to petition the House of Lords to claim the vacant Scottish earldom of Stirling. A wealthy socialite, he sat on the New Jersey Provincial Council and was the first governor of King's College (now Columbia). Once war broke out, he commanded a regiment of militia, and in January 1776, captured the British ship *Blue Mountain Valley* at Sandy Hook, NJ. Soon after, he was promoted to brigadier general.



Engraving of William Alexander, Major General in the American Revolutionary Army and Claimant to the Scottish Title Earl of Stirling, (1905), Harper & Brothers.²³

During the Battle of Long Island, Stirling held back a British force advancing to his front. Upon retreating, he secured his flank with the Maryland Brigade against a superior force of British, allowing the rest of the wing to escape. Stirling was promoted to major general and earned a reputation for sound judgment under fire. In June of 1777, he extricated his force from a fierce British attack during the Battle of Short Hills. Stirling served with distinction throughout the duration of the war as one of Washington's most reliable generals.

Maj. Gen. Adam Stephen (1718-1791) served as lieutenant colonel under Washington in the Virginia Provincial Regiment during the French and Indian War. He remained active in the Virginia militia and in 1776, was made a brigadier general in the Continental Army. As early as 1763, he had been suspected of commanding his troops to make unwarranted actions of no military value. In May of 1777, Washington confronted Stephen for submitting reports that exaggerated Stephen's success in the field, but Stephen defended his statements.²⁴ At the Battle of Germantown in October 1777, brigades under Brig. Gen. Wayne and Maj. Gen. Stephen mistook each other for the British due to the heavy morning fog and the smoke of battle. However, shots were exchanged, and as a result Sullivan was submitted to a court marshal. He was convicted of un-officer-like behavior and drunkenness, and was dismissed.

²² Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1,076.

²³ Source: *Harper's Encyclopædia of United States History*, Vol. I, Harper & Brothers, pp. p. 95, Public Domain. commons.wikipedia.org, accessed October, 2012.

²⁴ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1,054.

After his dismissal, Stephen's division was given to the Marquis de Lafayette – who was quickly becoming a favorite of Washington's. Some historians hold that Stephen was made a scapegoat by Congress, taking the blame for the loss of Germantown. Others portray him as a man who made many mistakes, which reached a tipping point at Germantown.²⁵ Stephen remained active in the politics of western Virginia (now West Virginia) until his death in 1791.

Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne (1745-1796) was the son of a prosperous tanner from Chester County who was elected to the Pennsylvania legislature in 1774. In 1776 he was appointed a colonel and fought at the Battle of Trois Rivieres in Canada. He was promoted to Brig. Gen. and fought at Brandywine, mostly in the vicinity of Chadds Ford Village. Later that month, his troops stationed in Paoli were attacked in a late night raid known as the Paoli Massacre, and Wayne and his men fled. He later requested a court marshal to determine his responsibility for the loss and was acquitted. He participated at the Battle of Germantown, and won fame in 1779 for his impressive victory at Stony Point, NY. After the war he pursued an unsuccessful career as a rice planter. During the 1790s, he served in the United States Army commanding troops in the Northwest Indian War in present day Ohio, Indian and Michigan. In 1795, he won the complete surrender of the previously combatant tribes of the Ohio Valley.²⁶

NARRATIVES ABOUT WASHINGTON'S TROOPS

Washington's "War of Posts"

As the Revolutionary War progressed, Washington came into conflict with number of politicians, namely John Adams, who wanted the American army to win a large decisive victory. However Washington was concerned that is troops were not trained well enough to win against the British army using conventional warfare tactics. For a start, Americans were independent minded, self sufficient pioneers who were simply not accustomed to taking orders. Washington felt that a series of small victories at outposts (or "posts") would be a better approach. As historian John Ferling wrote:

"... most in Congress understood that if Washington was an inexperienced citizen soldier, so was every other American-born officer who might have supplanted him. Every congressman was also aware that the unpracticed Continentals had been compelled to fight against an army of numerically superior regulars.

Many were heartened, too, by Washington's willingness to abandon his original, misplaced strategy of direct confrontation with the enemy. After Long Island and Kip's Bay he had come to see that his men were no match for European regulars. He informed Congress that henceforth he would employ Fabian tactics, fighting a war of attrition, retreating and avoiding hostilities until every advantage for a strike was in his favor.

²⁵ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1054.

²⁶ Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1177.

What he termed a “war of posts” was designed to exhaust the British and convince them that a costly protracted war was not in their best intention”²⁷

In 1776, Gen Washington described it this way:

“In deliberating on this Question it was impossible to forget, that History, our own experience, the advice of our ablest Friends in Europe, the fears of the Enemy, and even the Declarations of Congress demonstrate, that on our Side the War should be defensive. It has even been called a War of Posts. That we should on all Occasions avoid a general Action, or put anything to the Risque, unless compelled by a necessity, into which we ought never to be drawn.”²⁸

A Failure of Intelligence: Lessons Learned

During the Battle of Brandywine Washington’s officers suffered from a lack of accurate intelligence of the landscapes in which they were fighting. They had no good mapping of the land, and so when they received reports about the British troop movements they were unable to determine with any accuracy how far away or close the British were. Washington himself noted this as a major shortcoming when he wrote a report of the Battle saying:

“Unfortunately the intelligence received of the enemy’s advancing up the Brandywine, received of the enemy’s advancing up the Brandywine, and crossing at a ford about six miles above us, was uncertain and contradictory, notwithstanding all my pains to get the best. This prevented my making a disposition, adequate to the force with which the enemy attacked us on the right; in consequence of which the troops first engaged, were obliged to retire before they could be reinforced. In the midst of the attack on the right, the body of the enemy which remained on the other side of Chadds Ford, crossed it, and attacked the division there under the command of General Wayne and the light troops under General Maxwell who, after a severe conflict, also retired. The Militia under the command of Major General Armstrong, being posted at a ford, about two miles below Chadds, had no opportunity of engaging.”²⁹

One prime example is the report that Washington received from Maj. Gen. Sullivan regarding the whereabouts of the British troops in the more northern reaches of the Brandywine Valley. The report read:

²⁷ John Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 190.

²⁸ Russel F. Weigly, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 3.

²⁹ Quoted in Bruce Mowday, *September 11, 1777: Washington’s Defeat at Brandywine Dooms Philadelphia*, (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2002), 161.

“Since I sent you the message by Major Morris I saw some of the Militia who came in this morning from a tavern called Martins on the forks of the Brandywine. The one who told me, said that he had come from thence to Welche’s Tavern and had heard nothing of the enemy above the forks of the Brandywine and is confident that [sic] are not in that quarters. So that Colonel Hazen’s information must be wrong. I have sent to the quarter to know whether there is any foundation for the Report.³⁰

However, as historian John H. Pancake has noted, Martin’s Tavern, which was described as being at the “forks” of branching of the creek, is actually located three miles north of there, near Trimbles Ford. Thus, there may have been an error in which the word “forks” was confused with “fords.” If Washington’s troops had better mapping or informed local guides, they might have known the actual location of Martin’s Tavern.

The Materials Carried by and Lost by the American Troops

One of the side effects of the confusion during the Battle was that many American troops were forced to flee quickly. In so doing, they left behind their gear and supplies, which was one reason why the Americans were poorly supplied later on at Valley Forge. John H. Hawkins, a Sergeant Major at the Battle of Brandywine, wrote:

“...in the engagement I lost my knapsack, which contained the following articles, 1 uniform coat – brown faced with white; 1 shirt; 1 pr stockings; 1 sergeants sash; 1 pr. Knee buckles; ½ bar of soap; 1 orderly book; 1 mem book, of journal and state of my company; 1 quire paper, 2 vials of ink; 1 brass ink horn; 40 morning returns, printed blanks; 1 tin gill cup; a letter and a book entitled Rutherford’s letters. I likewise lost my hat, but recovered in again.

The weather was very warm, and, thus my knapsack was very light, was very cumbersome, as it swung about when walking or running, and in crossing fences was in the way so I cast it away from me, and had I not done so would have been grabbed by one of the ill-looking Highlanders, a number of whom were firing and advancing very brisk towards our rear.³¹

African American Soldiers: Slaves and Volunteers

African Americans fought in the Revolutionary War and in many respects the American troops were more integrated than the United States army would be through the 19th and early 20th centuries. As historian John S. Pancake wrote:

³⁰ John S. Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1977), 172

³¹ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 155.

“Both Congress and General Washington opposed the enlistment of Negroes in 1775, and both were forced to swallow their prejudices in the face of the realities of war. Although neither gave any formal sanction, at the end of 1775 the commander in chief issued a general order which read: “As the General is informed, that numbers of Free Negroes are desirous of enlisting, he gives leave to recruiting officers to entertain them, and promises to lay the matter before Congress, who he doubts not will approve it.” ...

But the reality of the enlistment of black soldiers had little to do with the law. The combination of whites who wanted to avoid service by furnishing black substitutes and recruiting officers who were under pressure to fill their quotas resulted in the appearance of considerable numbers of black Americans in the Continental ranks. Officers might rail at “the strangest mistake of Negroes, Indians, and whites, with old men and children, ... [whose] nasty lousy appearance make the most shocking spectacle,” but the regiments had to be filled. It has been estimated that about 5,000 identifiable black men served in various branches of the armed forces during the War of Independence. In August, 1778, Washington’s adjutant general reported 755 black troops serving in fourteen regiments of the New York Continental Line; if these were typical regiments Negroes constructed about ten percent of their strength.³²

One of the more-well known African American soldiers was Ned Hector who gathered discarded arms under fire rather than retreating. As historian Bruce Mowday wrote:

“In all of this chaos, someone remembered to order the drivers to abandon their ammunition wagon and flee. However, one of the drivers belonging to Captain Courteney’s company, a negro named Edward Hector, refused to obey. Instead, he moved out with his wagon and team and as he passed abandoned muskets discarded by retreating infantry men, gathered them up, eventually making his way safely to the army’s rendezvous point in Chester. Despite Hector’s achievement and efforts of Col. Chambers’ men, the 4th Continental Artillery lost a number of its guns and the bulk of its available ammunition at the Battle of Brandywine.”³³

Camp Followers: Women as Support Staff

In the 18th century it was common for troops at war to be followed by “camp followers, who included woman who served as cooks, washerwomen, or were simply the wives of the soldiers. In many respects they played the role of military support staff, but they were also viewed as a source of unneeded distraction. In regards to those who followed the British troops, historian John S. Pancake wrote:

³² Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman*, 74-76

³³ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 148-149.

“Drinking, gambling, and women provided most of the diversions for the British redcoat. That estimable chronicler of army life, Sergeant Roger Lamb, relates that privates would often gamble away their uniforms, and be forced to borrow clothes from their comrades in order to muster for inspection. Women were commonplace with the army. It was said that Burgoyne’s army was accompanied by 2,000 women when he invaded New York, and Sir William Howe issued a general order authorizing six women per company in the campaign of 1776, a total of 2,776 women and 1,994 children. Some few of these were undoubtedly wives, and there is convincing evidence that many of the women, wives or not, were remarkably loyal to their men, some even accompanying the troops to the battlefield.”³⁴

Militiamen versus Trained Soldiers

The Americans who fought at the Battle of Brandywine were a mixture of local militiamen and the trained soldiers of the Continental Army. This was a concern to military planners. They were worried that the local militias were not ready to fight and would not adapt well to military life in which they had to follow orders, and in a sense give up the freedoms of civilian life. Washington himself expressed this concern in the fall of 1776 when he wrote:

“To place any dependence upon Militia, is, assuredly, resting upon a broken staff. Men just dragged from the tender Scenes of domestic life; unaccustomed to the din of Arms; totally unacquainted with every kind of Military skill, when opposed by Troops regularly trained, disciplined and appointed, makes them timid and ready to fly at their own shadows. Besides, the sudden change in their manner of living, (particularly lodging) brings on sickness in many...Men accustomed to unbounded freedom, cannot brook Restraint which is absolutely necessary to the good order and Government of the Army; without which licentiousness, and every kind of disorder triumphantly reign.”³⁵

Prior to the Battle, Maj. Gen. Greene was concerned with the quality of the local militiamen from Pennsylvania noting: “The militia of this country (is) not like the Jersey militia, fighting is a new thing with these, and many seems to have a poor stomach for the business.”³⁶

Confusion among Sullivan’s Troops

Perhaps the greatest error of the Battle for the Americans was the failure of Maj. Gen. Sterling’s troops to join with the west of the American northern front along Meetinghouse Road. There is still uncertainty as to the location where Sullivan’s troops were when they were routed by the British. Col. John Stone who fought under Sullivan described it this way:

³⁴ Pancake, 1777: *The Year of the Hangman*, 71.

³⁵ Quoted in Pancake, 1777: *The Year of the Hangman*, 82.

³⁶ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 60.

“Our division marched to join Lord Stirling who was on the ground where the enemy appeared, and where they seemed to intend their attack; by the time we reached the ground they had to cannonade the ground allotted to us, which was very bad, and the enemy within musket shot of it, before we were ordered to form the line of battle. I marched in front of General Sullivan’s division, when I received orders from him to wheel to the left and take possession of a rising ground 100 yards in our front, to which the enemy was marching rapidly. I wheeled off, but had not reached forming regularly, and by wheeling to the left it doubled our division on the brigade immediately in the rear of the other. Thus we were in confusion, and no person to undue us to order, when the enemy pushed on and soon made us all run off.

Of all the Maryland regiments only two ever had an opportunity to form, Gist’s and mine, and as soon as they began to fire, those who were in our rear could not be prevented from firing also. In a few minutes we were attacked in front and flank, and by our people in the rear. Our men ran off in confusion, and were very hard to be rallied. Although my men did not behave so well as I expected, yet I can scarcely blame them when I consider their situation; nor are they censured by any part of the army. My horse threw in the time of action, but I did not receive any great injury from it.³⁷

NARRATIVES ABOUT HOWE’S TROOPS

The Sniper Who Didn’t Shoot Washington

Before the Battle, Washington and another officer, possible Casimir Pulaski in a French-style uniform, traveled out to the banks of the Brandywine to get a better understanding of the land. While there, they were sighted by a British unit under Captain Patrick Ferguson who were hidden above in the hills and as noted below, could have shot Washington in a sniper attack, but did not. Ferguson would later write about it saying:

“We had not lain long when a rebel officer, remarkable by a hussar dress, passed towards our army, within a hundred yards of my right flank, not perceiving us. He was followed by another dressed in dark green or blue, mounted on a bay horse, with a remarkably large cocked hat. I ordered three good shots to steal near to them and fire at them; but the idea disgusted me. I recalled the order.

The hussar in returning made a circuit, but the other passed again within a hundred yards of us, upon which I advanced from the wood towards him. On my calling, he stopped; but after looking at me, proceeded. I again drew his attention, and made signs to him to stop leveling my piece at him, but he slowly continued on his way. As I was within that distance at which, in the quickest firing I have seldom missed a sheet of

³⁷ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 122-123.

paper and could have lodged half-a-dozen of balls in or about him before he was out of my reach, I had only to determine but it was not pleasant to fire at the back of an unoffending individual, who was acquitting himself very coolly of his duty so I let him alone.

The day after I had been telling this story to some wounded officers who lay in the same room with me, when one of our surgeons, who had been dressing the wounded rebel officers, came in and told us they had been informing him, that General Washington was all the morning with the light troops, generally in their front and only attended by a French officer in a hussar dress, he himself mounted and dressed as above directed. The oddness of their dress had puzzled me and made me take notice of it. I am not sorry that I did not know at the time who it was.³⁸

The Class Differences between British Officers and Foot Soldiers

As noted in the description of the British commanders at the beginning of this appendix, many of the British officers came from the aristocracy. This cultural distinction was noted by Joseph Townsend who witness to the Battle as a boy. He saw the advancing British troops and described their fine clothing and un-tanned skins, which would have been an unusual sight in a colonial American farming community where most people worked outdoors:

“Cornwallis passed by and he was on horseback, appeared tall and sat very erect. His rich scarlet clothing, loaded with gold lace, epaulets & c., occasioned him to make a brilliant and martial appearance. The advanced part of the army made a halt at this place, and refreshed their horses by hastily cleaning off some of the corn patches that were within their lines. It may be observed that most or all of the officers who conversed with us, were of first rank, and were rather short, portly men, were well dressed and of genteel appearance and did not look as if they had ever been exposed to any hardship; their skins being as white and delicate as is customary for females who were brought up in large cities or towns.”³⁹

While the officers in the British Army came from the aristocratic class, the foot soldiers were drawn from the lower ranks including vagrants and convicts. And yet these men found a home and a purposed in the military, as noted by historian John S. Pancake who wrote:

“...those who were enlisted were for the most part riffraff and vagrants, and those who’s earning power was so low that a guinea and a half bounty was irresistible. From such “disorderly persons” and “incorrigible rogues” the ranks of the army were filled, scarcely “such Recruits as a Battn. might choose to take in times of profound Peace. “But under hard-eyed sergeants these recruits became soldiers, and whatever identity they

³⁸ Quoted in Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 96-97

³⁹ Quoted in Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 112.

might have had as civilians was lost as they merged into and became a part of the regiment. This new identity led to the development of a fierce pride and loyalty..."⁴⁰

Howe's Difficult Voyage from New York to the Chesapeake Bay

Howe's strategy for taking Philadelphia involved sailing his troops and their horses from New York City south past the coastline of New Jersey and Delaware and then north up the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately for Howe, the weather was bad, and the confined quarters below deck led to illness among the men. Furthermore, the many of the horses died thus reducing Howe's cavalry strength.

Two days after landing, Howe wrote to an aide that he had to delay his plans because, "'Since the heavy rain continues, and the roads are bottomless, and since the horses are still sick and stiff, we had to . . . countermand the order of march."⁴¹ Hessian Officer Carl Philipp von Feilitzsch wrote a diary of the unpleasant voyage in which he noted:

July 28th: Heavy fog and at ten o'clock thunderstorms and rain, and then a strong wind from the east. At six o'clock in the evening the thunder resumed and at seven o'clock we had a frightful weather. Here I will add something. Storms here in America are much stronger and last longer than in Europe.

August 8th: The mate was very sick with a high putrid fever, very contagious and lying not far from my bed...On this day we saw a great many different fish.

August 10th: At about one-thirty in the afternoon the mate died. I must admit that I was glad, because he could not have recovered and was no longer able to resist death...

August 19th: This was a rainy day with thunder. I also heard today that a few days ago, lightning struck an English ship, killing four dragoons and six horses.

August 23rd: ...Today a jaeger from the Major's Company died and was immediately thrown in the water.

August 25th: We entered the flatboats at two o'clock in the morning. The first brigade formed and sailed eight miles into the Elk River. The entire fleet sailed behind us and at ten o'clock we arrived at Elk Point, where we landed. We occupied the heights at once, without seeing a single rebel. Later we marched three miles. The heat was terrible. A Hessian jaeger dropped dead and I was sick myself."⁴²

⁴⁰ John S. Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman*, 70.

⁴¹ Samuel S. Smith, *The Battle of Brandywine*, (Monmouth, NJ: Philip Freneau Press, 1976), 5

⁴² Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 27-31.

During the voyage, Howe's troops lost so many horses that he had to purchase them from local sources, which drove up the cost. As historian Samuel S. Smith wrote:

"On the 6th, the British discovered a new way of getting good horses. News of the high prices that they were paying reached the American lines, and the British soon noted, "Many dragoons of the rebels have deserted. Undoubtedly the amount of money they get from us for their mounts is the reason."

The situation in the American camp made it easy for dragoons to desert. They had no over-all leader at this time. It would be several weeks before command of the four regiments of dragoons would be given to the Polish volunteer, Casimir Pulaski. Further, the American dragoons were constantly out in the field these days, in small parties, reconnoitering the enemy, and they would come in to headquarters only when there was something to report. This made it easy for them to go over to the British to sell their mounts, then, later when exchanged, claim to have been captured and their mounts seized."⁴³

The Role of Loyalists and Runaway Slaves

Some of the harshest combat in the Battle involved Loyalist Americans, known a "green coats" who were "fighting for their county" just as much as Washington's troops. At Brandywine, a unit of Loyalists called the Queen's Rangers fought with distinction. Of them, historian Bruce Mowday wrote:

"For their share in the encounter, the Queen's Rangers received warm praise from their General, and they were commended also by the Commander-in-chief of the British Forces. Their loss was heavy, about one-fifth of the total British loss, but their reputation was made... 'I must be silent as to the behavior of the Rangers,' Lieutenant General Knyphausen wrote to Lord Howe, 'for I want even words to express my own astonishment to give him an idea of it.' Henceforth the Rangers were placed in the vanguard of service, and the eyes of the entire army followed their activities with envy and admiration."⁴⁴

At the Battle of Brandywine there were two units of "Black Pioneers" which were composed of loyalist runaway slaves who, lacking military training, were assigned to engineering units. At the outset of the Revolutionary War, the British offered freedom to any slave who would run way and join their army. Historian Ira Berlin noted that there were 4,000 to 5,000 former slaves in Cornwallis's train when he surrendered at Yorktown, and that prior to the Battle of Brandywine, slaves in Maryland were running away to join Howe's troops. Berlin wrote:

⁴³ Smith, *The Battle of Brandywine*, 6.

⁴⁴ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 84.

“In August with the sight of General William Howe’s armada sailing up the Chesapeake to assault Philadelphia, the number of runaways escalated. Slaveholders confiscated even the even the smallest dinghies, posted militiamen “to stop the negroes flocking down from the interior parts of the country,” and, in desperation, summarily executed captured fugitives. But there was no way to guard all of the Chesapeake’s numerous creeks and inlets, and not even the closest surveillance or rumors of abuse at the hands of their owner’s enemy could stem the flood of runaways.”⁴⁵

NARRATIVES ABOUT IMPACTS TO CIVILIANS

Washington’s Impact on Civilians Prior to the Battle

Prior to the Battle, Gen. Washington took efforts to make it more difficult for the British to invade the Brandywine Valley by ordering his officers to remove any material, livestock or other item that they invading army might want to size for supplies. Washington wrote a letter to Brig. Gen. Caesar Rodney about this issue, stating:

“The more effectually to distress them in this respect, I would have you to remove such grain, catt(le), horses, stock and other articles of subsistence, that lie so contiguous them, as to be in more immediate danger of falling into their hand(s)out of their reach, and to continue doing this as they continue the(ir) progress through the Country. You will also withdraw every kind of carriage which might serve to facilitate the Transportation of their baggage... One more precaution in this way I must recommend to you to use – which is, if there should be any mills in their neighborhood, to take away the runners and have them removed out of their reach. This will render the mills useless to them...”⁴⁶

The Loyalties of Quakers

The loyalty of the Quaker civilians across whose land the Battle was fought was complex. Their religious principle forbade them to fight in, or even to provide material support to any army. And yet some fought, while others supported the British or American troops in other ways. As historian Bruce Mowday wrote:

“Chester County’s population at the time of the Battle of Brandywine was approximately 30,000 – the two armies almost doubled the population – with many being Society of Friends members... Many supporters of the new American government believed the Quakers were Tories because of their pacifist beliefs. Others believed differently: “if the preferences of those Friends who violated the discipline of the Society

⁴⁵ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1998), 258-260

⁴⁶ Quoted in Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 37-38

by taking up arms is any indication of the prevailing sentiment we might conclude that at least ninety percent of Friends secretly favored independence." Many Quakers were disowned, that is forced from the church, for such transgressions as joining the military, both British and American; driving a team to collect forage for the armies; paying taxes to support the war; working as a smith for the armies; holding a slave; driving a team for the armies; paying for substitutes; becoming a tax collector; keeping a tavern; and marrying outside the faith."⁴⁷

The Reaction of the Quakers to the Invasion

For the most part, the Quakers of the Brandywine Valley and points south did not cooperate with either the Americans or the British. Many of them simply fled and abandoned their houses as was noted in a letter written by Maj. Gen. Greene on the day before the Battle:

"Here are some of the most distressing scenes imaginable. The inhabitants generally desert their houses, furniture moving, cattle driving and women and children traveling off on foot. The country all resounds with the cries of the people. The enemy plunder most amazingly."⁴⁸

But not all Quakers fled, as was noted by Joseph Townsend, a witness to the Battle, who wrote:

"Several persons in the neighborhood, who had manifested a disposition to support the Americans, now thought it advisable to remove their families, stock and furniture to a distance, that it would be the consequence if left in their way. Others being of a different opinion, were disposed to remain at home and risk the danger that they might be exposed to, let the consequence be what it might. A majority of the inhabitants were of the Society of Friends, who could not consistently with their principles take any active part in the war, and who generally believed it right to remain in their dwellings, and patiently submit to whatever suffering might be their lot, and trust their all of a kind protecting Providence, who had hitherto protected and prospered their undertaking in all extraordinary manner, ever since their first settlement of the country under the proprietor and governor William Penn."⁴⁹

The Quaker's lack of cooperation was the source of frustration for some American officers as noted in a letter written by Alexander Scammel while he was encamped at Valley Forge, who wrote:

"Dear Sir, I have not sit down to fulfill my promise of writing a long letter, if these milk & water, white livered, unsancify'd Quakers don't interrupt me in behalf of their friend in ye provost. I am apprehensive that I shall imbibe an inverted hated against the whole

⁴⁷ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 54.

⁴⁸ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 60.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 111.

sect, or rather against those who make a cloak of that profession to perpetrate the blackest villainies.”⁵⁰

The Hessians’ Reputation with American Civilians

To this day, the Hessian troops have a somewhat poor reputation in Chester County. Local lore often portrays them as thuggish, such as when they supposedly stole pies cooling at the springhouse at what is now the Myric Environmental Center. Certainly there was plundering by some Hessians, as there was by troops of both armies, as noted by historic Bruce Mowday:

“Howe’s promise of harsh punishment for plundering and assaulting the local inhabitants didn’t stop every British and German soldier from attempting to take advantage of the citizens. A Hessian officer, a member of the Regiment von Mirbach and a member of Lieutenant General Wilhelm Knyphausen’s staff, wrote in a letter home, “In the first onrush and rigid orders against plundering were not strictly observed. General Howe sentenced some to be hanged on the spot and others to be flogged within an inch of their lives. On the other hand, the Hessian troops under Colonel von Donop and Lieutenant Colonel (Ludwig) von Wurmb were warmly thanked in the orders of the 28th for observing the necessary discipline in every way.” German soldiers were not as pure as the Hessian officer claimed. Ambrose Serle, civilian secretary to Lord Richard Howe, wrote in his journal on August 29, 1777, “Went on shore and motified (sic) with the accounts of plunder, committed on the poor inhabitants by the army and navy...Parties straggling for plunder, were surprised by the Rebels. The Hessians are as infamous and cruel as any.”⁵¹

The reported arrogance of the Hessian officers was recorded by Mowday who wrote:

“...one local tale has a Quaker woman confronting General Knyphausen as he led his troops to meet Washington at Chadds Ford. She urged Knyphausen not to proceed and to stop the killing. The story has her saying, “Oh, my dear man, do not go down there, for George Washington is on the other side of the stream, and he has all this world with him.” Knyphausen is said to have replied, “Never mind, madam, I have all the other world with me.”⁵²

The cultural differences between the local pacifist Quakers and the Hessian was highlighted by Joseph Townsend, a Quaker who witness to the Battle as a boy. He later wrote about how, on the day of the Battle, Hessians troops drew their swords and forced him to help them take down a fence that was in their way:

⁵⁰ Quoted in Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 57.

⁵¹ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 35.

⁵² Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 56.

“We reached the advanced guard, who were of the German troops. Many of them wore their beards on their upper lips which was a novelty in that part of the country. They were then between the dwelling of Richard Strode and Osborne’s Hill...On the removal of the second rail, I was forcibly struck with the impropriety of being active in assisting to take the lives of my fellow beings, and therefore desisted proceeding any further in obedience to his commands.”⁵³

But it is important to remember that there were also German’s fighting with the Americans. One of Greene’s officers was Brig. Gen. Peter Muhlenberg who was known to the Hessians since he had fought alongside them years earlier. Upon seeing him come into view during the Battle the Hessians cried out. “Hier kommt Turfet Piet!” which translates to “Here comes Devil Pete!”⁵⁴

Squire Cheney’s Warnings Discounted

Part of Washington’s errors in gathering intelligence related to the fact that his officers were not informed as to the loyalties of the local residents. Thus they did not know which civilians to trust to give them accurate information. The best example is the story of Squire Cheney, whose story is legendary among the Quakers of Chester County. Chester County historian Bruce Mowday described Cheney’s attempt to warn the American troops about the British advance as follows:

“Continuing downstream Cheney suddenly came upon General Sullivan and the units he was commanding some distance upstream. Flanked by his jeering staff, Sullivan listened with impatience to the Squire’s story of imminent danger, making little effort to conceal his suspicion. This story was ridiculous, he told Cheney. Had not he himself just heard from a corps of local militiamen that no British troops were reported above the Brandywine? Indeed he had just now dispatched that very information to General Washington... Sullivan now leaned closer into the Squire’s face. Persons supplying such false information, he said pointedly, could have only one purpose: to serve the British cause by confusing the American command. Shaking with fury at Sullivan’s blunt dismissal, Cheney remounted, demanded directions to Washington’s Headquarters and galloped off cursing the ineptitude of subordinates.

He was still uttering dark oaths when finally he reached Chadd’s Ford. To his complete surprise and further indignation aides blocked his path to the General and, like Sullivan, treated his information with contempt and disbelief. The Squire’s face, already flushed from his hard ride, grew redder with increasing fury. What was wrong with the American officers, he thought. Why wouldn’t they listen to him? He began to bellow, insisting that he be taken immediately to General Washington.

⁵³ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 133-114

⁵⁴ Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 132.

Washington, who was sitting inside his quarters, could not help but hear the shouting. Going to the entrance he demanded an explanation for the uproar. Cheyney, sweaty and disheveled, poured out what he had seen at Trimble's Ford. The General listened quietly to his story, but it was obvious, with skepticism. When Cheyney finished the story, General Washington looked him in the eye and said sternly, "Sir, do you know the penalty for spying?"

Stunned by another rebuke - and from the General himself! - the Squire exclaimed, "By hell, it is so!" Jumping from his horse, he picked up a twig and scratched a quick map into the dirt, pointing to the spot where he had observed the British cross the Brandywine, and then to the area around Birmingham Meeting where he suspected the British had by now advanced.

Washington still did not look convinced. Cheyney tried again. "If you doubt my word, sir, put me under guard till you ask Anthony Wayne or Persie Frazer (Colonel Persifor Frazer of the local militia) if I am to be believed." The General's officers continued to sneer at him. He turned to them and yelled "I would have you to know that I have this day's work as much at heart as e'er a blood of you!"⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Bruce Mowday, *September 11, 1777*, 7-8.