Fort Mercer and Fort Mifflin:
The Battle for the Delaware River
and the Importance of the American Riverine Defenses
during Washington's Siege of Philadelphia

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an in-depth study of General William Howe's Philadelphia campaign and the ensuing battles with the American river defenses and Pennsylvania navy over control of the Delaware River. Through the available literature, and supported by abundant primary sources, a story unfolds of the siege of Philadelphia. A chronology of events moves the reader from Howe's decision to move on the American capital Philadelphia, through the capture of the city, Washington's subsequent encirclement of Howe, and the two generals' struggle to control the Delaware.

In 1777, the British believed they could win the war in America by effectively cutting off the northern colonies form the rest of the rebellious colonies. Their strategy called for General John Burgoyne's army, consisting of British regulars, Hessian auxiliaries, Canadian volunteers, and Indians, to move south from Canada to Lake Champlain. He was to take Fort Ticonderoga, and proceed to Albany. General William Howe's army, supported by British warships under his brother Admiral Richard Howe, was to proceed up the Hudson, seize the American fortifications along the way, and link up with Burgoyne in Albany. The British also hoped that the threat they posed to the Hudson River valley, and its vital waterway, would force Washington to fight a general engagement, which they believed he would lose.

During the summer of 1777, General Howe assembled an expeditionary force at New York City. However, he was not planning to move north, but rather to sail south, attack Pennsylvania, and capture the American capital. Howe was sure Washington would not allow the capital to fall and would be forced to fight a general engagement he could not win. Howe also was led to believe that upon his arrival in Pennsylvania he could count on strong local Loyalist support.

The British government assumed that once Washington was defeated and Philadelphia was under British control, Howe could garrison the city with Loyalist troops and sail back north to the Hudson to complete his rendezvous with Burgoyne.

Inexplicably, Howe squandered months of good campaigning weather, until finally in late July he sailed out of New York to Chesapeake Bay. Landing at Head of Elk, Maryland, he proceeded slowly towards Philadelphia. Washington moved his army from New Jersey to Philadelphia to stop the British advance, but was defeated at the battle of Brandywine, and forced to retreat. Howe captured Philadelphia on September 26, 1777.

Howe had accomplished his mission but found he had placed himself in a precarious position. There was no great outpouring of Loyalist support. Washington's army, though beaten at Brandywine, was still intact and formidable. The Americans had encircled the British army and disrupted their long supply lines. American river forts and obstructions, in concert with Commodore John Hazelwood's Pennsylvania navy, had closed the Delaware River to Admiral Howe's efforts to resupply his brother.

General Howe's conquest of Philadelphia did not produce the desired results he had hoped for. Unlike campaigns fought in Europe where the capture of the enemy's capital had devastating , political, economic, and psychological consequences, the capture of the American capital did not have the same impact on the fledgling country. Furthermore, with cold weather fast approaching and the accompanying freeze of the Delaware, it was imperative that the river forts be eliminated. Without control of the river, so vital as a supply and communication line, Howe and his besieged army would be forced to abandon the city or be starved into submission.

During the next two months, Howe and Washington struggled for control of the Delaware. The three American forts, Mercer, Mifflin, and Billingsport, and the Pennsylvania navy, heroically battled the British, sinking two large warships, inflicting damage on many others, and defeating an assault by crack Hessian troops. Finally the forts began to fall. Billingsport, which guarded the first line of underwater obstructions known as chevaux-de-frise, was taken. Then on November 15th, after days of heavy bombardment by British land and naval artillery, Fort Mifflin's tenacious defenders were evacuated. Finally, on November 20th, as a large British force approached Fort Mercer, it too was abandoned and destroyed. The Pennsylvania navy, having lost the protection of the forts, made a valiant escape upriver past the Philadelphia shore batteries. Although many of the smaller galleys went undetected, the larger American ships were fired on and severely damaged. Rather than allowing them to fall into British hands, they were set on fire by their crews and destroyed.

The British had broken the siege of Philadelphia and averted disaster. But it was a Pyrrhic victory. Howe had lost two warships, some of his best officers, and many troops. But perhaps more critical was the time lost. It had become impossible for him to assist Burgoyne who was defeated in October at Saratoga, New York. Howe set up winter quarters in the American capital while Washington's army camped at Valley Forge. The British strategy to end the war in 1777 had failed.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis by Gregory Michael Browne is accepted in its present form by the Department of History of Western Illinois University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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GLOSSARY

Abatis. Barricade of felled trees with their branches, sometimes sharpened, directed toward the enemy.

Artificer. Soldier mechanic.

Banquette. Platform for the riflemen inside of parapet.

Barbette. Wooden or earthen platform inside a fortification, on which cannon were mounted to permit firing over the rampart instead of through embrasures.

Bastion. Projecting work or blockhouse, usually in angle of fort, to allow enfilading of the enemy along the wall or curtain.

Berme. Horizontal surface between the ditch and the base of the rampart.

Blind. A traverse or defensive barrier, usually a wall of earth to provide cover and passage for artillerymen serving the guns.

Blockhouse. Traditional frontier defense, either detached or used as a bastion in a fort. Constructed of either round or square logs, with an overhanging second story, the structure was loopholed for musketry or embrasured for cannon, or both.

Boom. A barrier composed of a chain and floating logs, typically used to obstruct passage; A long spar extending from a mast to hold or extend the foot of a sail.

Bowsprit. A spar, extending forward from the stem of a ship, to which the stays of the foremast are fastened.

Breastwork. A temporary, quickly constructed fortification, usually breast-high.

Brig. A two-masted sailing ship, square-rigged on both masts, carrying two or more headsails and a quadrilateral gaff sail. As a warship, known as a Brig-of-war, it carried about twenty guns.

Brown Bess. Familiar name for a short, light musket first used by the British Army at the beginning of the eighteenth century. "Brown" was derived

from the color of the gun's stock, while "Bess" was apparently a corruption of "buss" in the outmoded blunderbuss.

Caliber or Calibre. Measurement applied to the bore of a gun.

Canister or Case Shot. Bagged or cased small metal pellets, loaded in cannon on top of gunpowder charge. Devastating at close quarters.

Carcases or carcass Incendiary shells shot from a mortar. Sieved metal can, loaded with rags soaked in a flammable liquid, that was set afire when shot from a cannon; a firebomb.

Casemate. Bombproofed vault in fortification wall.

Causeway. Elevated roadway, usually over a ditch or moat, or occasionally a marsh or morass, leading to the fort's entrance.

Chevaux-de-frise. A barricade used on land or in the water, it was constructed of massive timbers with protruding iron-tipped poles.

Cohorn or Coehorn. Originally of Dutch derivation (coehoorn), it was a small short-barreled howitzer.

Counterscarp. Outer wall or slope of moat or ditch.

Covered Way or Covert. Depressed platform in outer wall of ditch (counterscarp) for riflemen thus protected by an earthen breastwork.

Cross Bar. A metal bar with two identical half-balls or half-spheres attached at each end. Primarily used against sailing vessels. When shot from a canon it traveled with a spinning motion.

Curtain. The wall of a fortification between bastions.

Defilade. A natural or man-made shield to protect either troops or a gun position in face of the enemy.

Demilune. A crescent-or half-moon-shaped gorged outwork to protect the fort's curtain or a bastion.

Drawbridge. Bridge across a ditch or moat at the fort's entrance, manually raised or lowered.

Embrasure. Aperture or slot in curtain or rampart with the sides of the opening slanted outward to increase the angle of cannon fire.

Enfilade. Position of fortified works or soldiers subjected to a sweeping fire from a line of troops or gun batteries.

Envelopment. Assault directed against an enemy's flank. In case of attack against two flanks, a double envelopment.

Epaulement. Immediate area where the curtain and a bastion meet. A rough parapet thrown up to afford cover from flanking fire, used exclusively for cover and not capable of a defensive fire.

Fascine. Bound bundle of long branches or twigs, used in construction of a rampart or an earthworks.

Field Gun. Cannon mounted on a mobile carriage for use in the field.

Flank. The right or left side of a military formation; The right or left side of a bastion.

Fleche. (French for arrow). A defensive outwork with two walls or faces forming a salient angle with an open ditch or gorge.

Flintlock or Firelock. A gun with a mechanism for firing the priming charge by a piece of flint striking on steel to produce sparks.

Fort. An enclosed defensive work, with walls or palisades, blockhouses or bastions, armed with cannon, howitzers, etc., and manned by soldiers.

Fortalice. A small fort or outwork of the fort.

Fosse. Ditch or moat.

Fougasse. A camouflaged underground mine.

Fraise. Pointed stakes in rampart or berme, either horizontal or inclined.

Frigate. A high-speed, medium-sized sailing war vessel of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. They carried twenty-six to fifty guns.

Gabion. Wickerwork filled with earth and stone, used to protect gun batteries. Revolutionary equivalent of today's sandbag.

Gaff. A spar attached to the mast and used to extend the upper edge of a fore-and-aft sail.

Galley. A large, usually single-decked ship of shallow draft, propelled by sails and oars and used as a merchant ship or warship.

Gaol. Jail.

Gill. A liquid measure equal to 1/4 of a pint or four ounces.

Glacis. Sloping earthwork from either the covered way or counterscrap.

Grape or Grapeshot. The same as canister, except that the balls are much smaller and more plentiful.

Grasshopper. Nickname for the small three-pounder field gun, mounted on legs instead of the normal wheeled carriage. Name derived from the action of the gun when fired.

Hawser. A cable or rope used in mooring or towing a ship.

Hornwork. An outwork of a pair of demi-bastions joined by a wall or curtain.

Hot Shot. Cannonballs heated red-hot in a hot-shot oven and utilized for setting fire to wooden fortifications or enemy vessels.

Howitzer. In use today, it is a short-barreled gun with the ability to fire shells at a high angle of elevation, particularly effective against targets within fortified enclosures or trenches.

Jäger. A Hessian (German) sharpshooter. Also known as chasseurs.

Kedge. A light anchor used for warping a vessel.

Linstock. A cannoneer's forked rod or stick that held the slow-burning match to be applied to the prime charge in the touchhole of a muzzle-loading cannon.

Loopholes. Apertures or slots in defenses through which the fire of small arms or cannon can be directed at an outside enemy.

Lunette. Same as demilune. A crescent-or half-moon-shaped gorged outwork to protect the fort's curtain or a bastion.

Magazine. Storage facility, usually bombproofed, for ammunition and armaments.

Mantelet. A mobile bulletproof screen to protect gunners.

Merlon. Section of fortification wall located between any two embrasures. A solid facing, frequently flared on each side of an embrasure.

Mortar. In use today, it is a short-barreled gun with a large caliber bore, able to propel shells at high angles.

Musket. The heavy smoothbore handgun of large caliber, used universally throughout the Revolution.

Naval guns. Naval guns of the Revolutionary period were cast-iron, muzzle-loaded cannon, mounted on black-painted, wheeled truck carriages. The cannon were classified according to the weight of the shot they fired. Standard sizes were four-pounders, six-pounders, twelve-pounders, eighteen-pounders, twenty-four-pounders, and thirty-two-pounders. Eighteen and twenty-four-pounders could fire a ball over a mile.

Palisade. Wall or curtain constructed of logs or stakes set perpendicularly in the ground, forming a defensive enclosure.

Parade. Level area of interior of fortification where troops are assembled or reviewed while marching or drilling.

Parallel. Trench in the ground, parallel to the lines of the besieged fortification, for covering attacking force.

Parapet. An earthen or stone embankment protecting soldiers from enemy fire.

Portcullis. Reinforced grating, raised or lowered on vertical channels, to prevent entrance through a fort's gateway.

Poundage. Term applied to guns that fired solid balls (four-pounder, twelve-pounder, etc.).

Rampart. A fortification consisting of an embankment, often with a parapet built on top.

Ravelin. V-shaped outwork outside main moat or ditch.

Redan. V-shaped outwork, with its angle projected toward the enemy.

Redoubt. A defensive outwork, usually square or polygonal, minus defensive flanks.

Revetment. Support facing, masonry or earthen, of a rampart between the fort's wall and the ditch.

Royal. Name for a small mortar.

Salient Angle. Projecting angle, opposite of recessed angle or reentrant.

Sally Port. Gateway or postern of a fortification.

Sap. A deep, narrow trench, protected by gabions, used as an approach to a besieged enemy's position or fortification.

Sapper. British nomenclature for a military engineer who specializes in sapping and other field fortification activities

Saucisson. A large fascine.

Scarp or Escarp. Inner wall of ditch surrounding a fort's ramparts.

Shallop. A small open boat propelled by oars or sails and used chiefly in shallow waters.

Shell. Explosive missile or bomb fired from a cannon.

Ship-of-the-line. A large three-masted, fore-and-aft-rigged, two-decked sailing ship of war. It carried sixty guns or more.

Sloop. A single-masted, fore-and-aft-rigged sailing boat with a short standing bowsprit. Sloops-of-war carried four to Twenty-four guns.

Slowmatch. Slow-burning fuse or match, consisting of a cord or rope usually soaked in saltpeter.

Spar. A wooden or metal pole, such as a mast, boom, yard, or bowsprit, used to support sails and rigging.

Spiking a gun. Rending a muzzle-loading cannon useless by driving a spike deep into the gun's touchhole.

Stockade. Palisade or barricade, usually loopholed, for entrenchments, blockhouses, and bastions.

Swivel Gun. A small cannon mounted on a swivel support to permit wide movement of the weapon on a horizontal plane; usually mounted on a fort's parapet or in a blockhouse.

Tenaille. A fieldwork with one or two reentering angles, planted in a ditch or moat between two blockhouses or bastions, immediately in front of the fort's curtain.

Terreplein. Platform for cannon on rampart behind the parapet.

Traverse. Defensive barrier placed across the terreplein to minimize enfilading by an attacking enemy.

Trunnion. One of the two cylindrical projections on a cannon, one on each side to support the gun on its carriage.

Warp. To move a vessel by hauling on a line that is fastened to or around a piling, an anchor, or a pier.

Wolf Pits or Wolf Traps. Pits with sharpened stakes placed at the bottom.

Xebeck or Zebeck. A small three-masted vessel with both square and triangular sails.

INTRODUCTION

The American Revolutionary soldier was unconventional by eighteenth century military standards. Believing this to be an inherent weakness, the British and their Hessian auxiliaries initially viewed the Americans as unworthy opponents rather than feared and respected adversaries. Compounded by a string of early defeats, retreats, and defensive skirmishes, a haughty disrespect and contempt soon consumed and clouded British judgment.

The memory of the British Commander-in-Chief, General Sir William Howe, was not so short as to forget the toll exacted by Americans as the thin red line of British regulars marched back from Concord, or the carnage inflicted on the King's finest soldiers as they marched again and again up that hill outside Boston. It seemed that the Americans loved a good fight as long as they had something to stand behind. Try as he may, Howe could not lure Washington out in the open to fight the conventional European battle.

British troop movements were linear in fashion, influenced by predominant geographic features of Europe, large expanses of open fields so aptly suited for large-scale troop maneuvers. British strategy was predicated on the use of large formations of troops providing massive firepower. With capable generals, strict discipline, and the judicious use of cavalry and artillery, the British army was a devastating fighting machine. Washington learned his lesson only too well after the crushing defeat at New York. He never again would expose his entire army to the British. Instead he adopted a sagacious

use of terrain, strategic withdrawals, hit and run operations, disruption of supplies, and the use of river fortifications and obstructions.

With Washington's defeated army drawn back across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania, Howe planned to secure New Jersey, consolidate the loyalists, and establish a line of communication from Trenton to New York. This would consist of a line of fortified posts manned by British and German units. He intended to winter at his New York City headquarters and plan a spring campaign for 1777.

Howe's plan was an ambitious one. Calling for reinforcements of 15,000 men, he proposed to attack Boston, Albany, and Philadelphia. The British Secretary of State for the American colonies, Lord George Germain, refused Howe's request for so large a reinforcement. Germain included in his letters to Howe his own ideas on how the war should be fought. As a consequence, Howe was repeatedly forced to revise his plan of operation. Complicating matters was the slow-moving, ship-borne correspondence between London and New York, and that military strategy was being planned at two separate locations.

Howe's situation was further exacerbated by Washington's victories at Trenton and Princeton. These gave a much needed boost to American morale, disproved the invincibility of the British and Hessian troops, and forced Howe to withdraw his forces to eastern New Jersey. Consequently, Washington moved his army to winter quarters in Morristown, in the central highlands of New Jersey, and only twenty-five miles from New York.

By the summer of 1777, Howe and his brother, Admiral Lord Richard Howe, were assembling ships, men, and materiel for the capture of Philadelphia. Concurrently, General John Burgoyne received orders from Germain to form an army in Canada and move on Albany, New York. Poor

coordination and a lack of specific orders had Howe directing all his energy toward the Philadelphia campaign.

Very little had been done during the past year for the defense of the American capital. A fort begun by the British was slowly being improved, units of local militia were trained, the locations of batteries and river obstructions for the Delaware River were discussed, and a small Pennsylvania navy was established. Washington knew that British forces were readying for an assault from Canada but was not sure of Howe's objective. He did know that Philadelphia was a likely objective and advised that the defenses of the city be constructed with all possible speed.

It is my intention to explain the contributions the defenders of the Delaware River made during Washington's encirclement of Howe's army during his occupation of Philadelphia. The emphasis of this study will focus on the struggle of the men of the Delaware River forts and their naval counterparts to block the efforts of the British army and navy to resupply Howe's beleaguered forces. I will show the tactical and strategic importance of these little known river forts and defenses, the battles fought, the significant impact they had on Howe's Philadelphia campaign, and subsequent far-reaching consequences on the revolution.

CHAPTER 1

THE INVASION

HMS Eagle, Admiral Richard Howe's flagship, tugged silently at its anchor as the swift tide of the North River swept past the warship's gun-ported sides.[1] It was surrounded by hundreds of ships and transports. Smaller vessels plied among the fleet carrying men and supplies from shore to ship. The activity had been going on for weeks and it was now July, 1777. British soldiers suffered the heat and the foul-smelling holds of the transports, while the General and his subordinates enjoyed more comfortable lodging; British generals were not overly concerned with the comfort of their men.[2] The time was near for General Sir William Howe to order his fleet to set sail for Pennsylvania, to march on the American capital, and mete out the same humiliating defeat to Washington as his men had to endure at Trenton and Princeton.

The past winter had proved disastrous for the British. After the stunning American victories at Trenton and Princeton, British Major General Cornwallis was concerned Washington might capture his advanced base. Rather than pursue the Americans, he moved his men twenty-eight miles in a dawn to dusk march to reach the safety of Brunswick. This relocation of British troops to eastern New Jersey placed western New Jersey in American control, and made the remainder a no-man's-land. Skirmishes were a daily occurrence. British regulars, Hessians, and their officers ventured into the countryside only in strong detachments, constantly fearful of surprise attack.[3] During the last

days of June, Howe moved his troops to Staten Island. This effectively relinquished control of New Jersey to the Americans which was a major factor in Howe's decision to move on Philadelphia by sea rather than by land.

While Howe readied his fleet for the invasion of Pennsylvania and the capture of Philadelphia, many of his officers advised against it. Most notably among the detractors was Major General Sir Henry Clinton, Howe's second-in-command. Clinton's argument was sound. He reminded Howe that the ministry's objective was a speedy end to the rebellion. A junction of his army with Major General John Burgoyne at Albany would successfully sever New England from the rest of the rebellious colonies. Furthermore, Clinton believed that Washington was more inclined to fight for possession of the Hudson River and the surrounding highlands, and he was in favor of drawing Washington out to fight one decisive battle.[4]

Howe would not be dissuaded, especially by Clinton. He defended his plan to attack Philadelphia with the argument that Burgoyne was advancing south from Canada without any problems. Fort Ticonderoga could be taken easily, and his army was increasing in size with the addition of loyalist troops and Indian allies.[5] Howe's decision to go by sea instead of across New Jersey is expressed in a letter to Germain. He described how the garrisoning of posts to keep lines of supply and communication open with New York would weaken his army. "In the former campaign [New York-New Jersey, 1776] the force was suitable to the operation, whereas in the ensuing one, from the several posts necessary to be preserved, the offensive army will be too weak for rapid success . . . ."[6] He also explained the decision to proceed by sea. "From the difficulties and delay that would attend the passage of the river Delaware by a march through Jersey, I propose to invade Pennsylvania by sea . . . ."[7] A more subtle motivation was Howe's dislike for Clinton. Clinton aggravated Howe with

criticism and suggestions and only made him more resolute in his plan to attack Philadelphia.[8]

By July 9th the army was embarked and ready to sail.[9] Howe had frittered away June and most of July. These were months ideally suited for campaigning. Nevertheless, Howe waited for word from Burgoyne, which he finally received on July 15th. Howe dispatched a reply and sent a letter to Germain before he joined his brother on board the *Eagle* the evening of July 17th.[10] While the squandering of the summer months was incomprehensible to his officers, it was intolerable for the army aboard the fleet. For weeks his soldiers were sweltering in the stifling, malodorous holds of the ships. When word came to set sail, unfavorable winds postponed the movement of the fleet for another week. On July 23, 1777, the fleet sailed out of New York Harbor, past Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and out to sea. At last the invasion of Pennsylvania was underway.[11]

Washington's network of informants and observers sent him conflicting intelligence reports on the location and destination of Howe's fleet. Each report handed to him contradicted the previous one, placing the "British ships up the Sound, in North River, off Sandy Hook, and at sea on voyages to unascertained anchorage."[12] Perplexed by the uncertainty of the whereabouts of Howe, Washington halted his army in Orange County, New York. He had believed that the most strategically obvious and prudent move by Howe would be up the North River to Albany, to assist Burgoyne and force a decisive battle. On July 24th, Washington received word that the fleet had sailed past Sandy Hook and out to sea.[13] He now believed Philadelphia to be Howe's objective. He immediately dispatched Colonel Theodorick Bland's Virginia Light Dragoons to Philadelphia.[14] Major General John Sullivan's and Major General William Alexander Lord Stirling's Divisions were also sent to the capital. General Adam

Stephen's and General Benjamin Lincoln's Divisions were directed to proceed to Trenton.[15] General Nathanael Greene's Division was sent to Coryell's Ferry on the Delaware River.[16] A request for New Jersey militia units from the counties along the Delaware to muster at Gloucester County, New Jersey was sent to Governor William Livingston.[17] Washington then hastened south to the Delaware with the main army.

As Washington advanced south towards Philadelphia he continued to receive numerous reports of large numbers of British ships off the coast of New Jersey. He was still wary of Howe's intentions to attack Philadelphia, and could not believe Howe would leave Burgoyne to fend for himself when the combining of the two armies would make such a formidable force. He still entertained the possibility that this was just a feint and that Howe would turn the fleet back to New York after deceptively maneuvering the American army south to defend Philadelphia. Washington wrote to General Gates, "Howe's in a manner abandoning General Burgoyne is so unaccountable a matter that till I am fully assured it is so, I cannot help casting my eyes continually behind me."[18]

While Washington's army moved into Philadelphia, General Howe rounded Cape May, New Jersey, and entered the Delaware Bay. The fleets arrival was observed by Captain John Hunn who had been instructed that, "all movements of the enemy fleet were to be transmitted to Washington accurately and promptly."[19] To insure the safe arrival of the message, two riders were sent to Washington's headquarters at Chester, Pennsylvania.[20]

The frigate *HMS Roebuck*, stationed in the Delaware Bay since early 1776, under the command of Captain Andrew Snape Hamond, joined the fleet.[21] He reported directly to General Howe concerning all aspects of the Delaware River. He knew the river well from his forays against the Americans and the months patrolling the bay, and told the general of the strong currents,

Fig. 1. Delaware River area: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware -- 1777. Baurmeister, Confidential Letters and Journals, 1776-1784, of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces, 146.

narrow channels, sand bars, and tides.[22] Hamond believed the American defenses were formidable, with their armed galleys, fire ships, floating batteries, forts, and lines of underwater obstacles known as chevaux-de-frise. Without a river pilot to guide them through the obstructions, it would take considerable time and effort to force their way past these impediments.[23]

On July 30th, General Howe held a meeting aboard the *Eagle* and informed his officers that the Chesapeake Bay would be the new landing site rather than the Delaware River. This came as a surprise to many of the officers, especially Hamond.[24] Hamond acknowledged that the American river defenses were strong, but a safe landing could be accomplished at Reedy Point, ten miles south of New Castle, Delaware.[25] He exhorted the General to reconsider, but to no avail. Howe would not be dissuaded.

General Howe's decision to continue to the Chesapeake Bay and not land on the Delaware River was predicated on four factors: time, terrain, river, and defenses. First, the voyage from New York had taken too long and provided Washington time to reach Philadelphia. Washington could contest a British landing close to the American capital. Second, the terrain along the west side of the Delaware was not conducive to military operations. It was low, crisscrossed with streams, and interspersed with marshes. If the army was put ashore on the New Jersey side of the river, where the terrain was more suitable to troop movements, the problem of crossing the Delaware had to be overcome. Third, the Delaware was too narrow and difficult for a fleet of this size. And fourth, the American river defenses were too strong to overcome in a short time, if a swift advance on Philadelphia was to be accomplished.[26]

The Tories of Pennsylvania were outraged. Joseph Galloway, titular head of the Philadelphia loyalists, believed that General Howe was once again showing signs of indecisiveness and incompetence. In a vituperative letter

Galloway wrote that:

> The fort at Mud Island was garrisoned only by 130 militia, and Billingsport with 90. The floating batteries were not manned, the lower Chevaux-de-frize were not placed in the river. The chain was not finished; the passage from the Capes to Philadelphia was open; Red Bank was not fortified or occupied in short, there was nothing to oppose the taking possession of mud Island fort, the city of Philadelphia, and all the rebel water guard in the Delaware.[27]

Perhaps Galloway's information was not made known to General Howe. Possibly Hamond's information about the American defenses was exaggerated as a result of his disastrous May, 1776, engagement with the Pennsylvania navy when he nearly lost the *Roebuck*.[28] Clearly, Galloway's and Hamond's interpretation of the defenses were decidedly different. Most importantly though, Hamond, an officer in His Majesty's navy, was the most credible purveyor of extensive intelligence about the Delaware River area. It was also the information General Howe needed to hear in order to justify a change in plans. During the morning of July 31st, the fleet sailed out of Delaware Bay and headed for the Chesapeake.[29]

The news of the British fleet sailing out to sea once again confused Washington, leaving him in a quandary as to where the British intended to strike. His frustration concerning the British movements was apparent when he wrote, "Their conduct really is so mysterious that you cannot reason upon it so as to form any certain conclusion."[30] He did recognize the need to move his army to protect the New York highlands and the vital North River should this be Howe's objective. He was equally cognizant of the condition of his fatigued troops and concerned about reissuing orders to move them after having marched the length and breadth of New Jersey.[31] On August 1st, he issued orders to some of his division commanders to march back north.[32] Washington then moved his army slowly north along the Delaware to Coryell's Ferry. From this camp Washington reasoned that he could, "succor Philadelphia should the

enemy, contrary to appearances, still make that the object of their next operations; and will be so much more conveniently situated to proceed to the Northward, should the event of the present ambiguous and perplexing situation of things call them that way."[33]

During his move north through Pennsylvania, Washington received word that a large fleet had been sighted off the coast of Delaware.[34] He decided to have his army make camp and establish his headquarters near the Neshaminy River, about twenty miles north of Philadelphia.[35] It would be here that he would wait for further news of the whereabouts of the British fleet; the elusive enigma that so confounded him.

While Washington waited in Pennsylvania, the British fleet was sailing, all too slowly, south to Chesapeake Bay. The winds were unfavorable and the weather was extremely hot and humid, taking its toll on man and beast. Captain John Montresor aptly described the torrid August days aboard the ship:

> 12th. The heat of the Sun here feels more like an artificial than a genial heat, and the heat of this night Insupportable.
> 13th. The intense heat and closeness horrid, obliged now to lay on deck.
> 14th. The heat of this day (if possible) more insupportable than yesterday, the pitch melting off the seams of the vessel.
> 17th. No wearing coats or waistcoats with any satisfaction. This if possible the hottest day.
> 19th. The fleet and army much distressed for the want of fresh water, having been for some time put to an allowance, but not so much so as the horse vessels, having been obliged to throw numbers of their horses overboard.[36]

The fleet finally reached Chesapeake Bay on August 16th.[37] Six days later, after sluggishly proceeding northward, the ships anchored at the mouth of the Sassafras River, ten miles from Head of Elk.[38] The Howes took three armed ships to reconnoiter the proposed landing site. With the help of a pilot, they were able to negotiate the shallow, muddy waterway. After returning that same afternoon Howe announced the landing would take place in two days.[39]

On August 25th, Howe's invasion force landed. The troops came ashore at Elk Ferry in five disembarkations, setting to flight four militia companies without the Americans firing a shot.[40] That paltry show of resistance only corroborated the British presumption that the Americans were unaware of their destination. Montresor wrote in his journal, "The Shoalness of the Elk convinced the rebels that our fleet would never navigate it, but . . . it was happily effected as the bottom was muddy and the ships on it were cutting channels through it for each other."[41] The army was assembled into the Regimental Brigades they had been in at Staten Island, and the Light Infantry was sent ahead four miles to secure the beachhead.[42]

For seven weeks the British troops had been cooped up in the crowded transports' holds. They had suffered the rigors of sea travel in foul conditions, enduring sweltering heat and limited allowances of food and water. By the time the troops were landed, 300 horses were dead or sickly, prompting descriptions of the wretched animals as "mere carrion" and "miserably emaciated."[43] The soldiers, though needing a good meal to regain their strength, were in generally good health.[44]

Two days of thunderstorms kept Howe and his army penned up at camp.[45] It was at this time that he issued a proclamation offering protection to all who surrendered with their arms and to those who would stay home rather than support the enemy.[46] On August 28th, the weather cleared and the army began to move north toward Philadelphia.

During the days following the landing at Head of Elk, the expected surge of Loyalist support never materialized.[47] Galloway's predictions that seventy-five to ninety percent of Pennsylvanians were Loyalists proved to be mere fanciful exaggerations. Most disheartening for Howe was the realization that there would be no Loyalist regiments swelling the ranks of the army. He had

counted on the provincial units to hold conquered territory and substitute as reinforcements.[48] As the assurances of local support quickly vanished, the reality of the situation began to erode some of Howe's confidence. Writing to Germain, a pessimistic-sounding Howe informed the Minister that he would not be able to support Burgoyne, that he would need reinforcements in order to sustain an offensive position, and that he doubted he would be able to end the rebellion by the end of 1777.[49]

Up to the time that Washington received incontrovertible reports that the British fleet was actually in Chesapeake Bay, and with sightings of the fleet sailing south, he assumed that Howe's destination was Charleston, South Carolina.[50] On August 21st, he had decided to move the army north to confront Burgoyne. These orders were immediately rescinded the following day amidst the startling news that the British fleet was heading north up the Chesapeake. It was now certainly clear that Philadelphia was Howe's intended objective, and Washington appropriately decided to defend the American capital.

A flurry of orders were issued to countermand previous orders to march north. Regiments were summoned, "with all convenient speed," to join the army.[51] Requests were sent for militia companies to join Washington, and defenses around Philadelphia were to be strengthened.[52]

Washington notified Congress that he and his army would be passing by Philadelphia. As they neared the city, his officers persuaded Washington to parade the army through the capital. As news of the American victory at Bennington, New Hampshire, had already lifted the morale of the army, they believed it would further boost confidence within the ranks, build a patriotic verve amongst the inhabitants, and present a show of force to those with a loyalist persuasion. Washington was at first reluctant. He finally acquiesced to his officers' requests, instructing the soldiers to clean their clothes, polish their

weapons, and look their very best. To present an air of uniformity to an army with an eclectic assortment of attire, he ordered the men to adorn their hats with a "green sprig, emblem of hope."[53]

On August 24th, men, women, and children thronged the streets in anticipation of seeing the country's grand army and its famous leader. Under overcast skies, with drums and fifes playing "a tune for a quick step,"[54] Washington led his 11,000 troops through Philadelphia.[55] Behind the Commander-in-Chief were the mounted Regiments of George Baylor and Theodorick Bland, followed by Greene's, Lincoln's and Stirling's Divisions. The units, led by their commanders, were spaced 100 yards apart and marched twelve abreast. A Company of Pioneers, with their axes and various tools, a wagon of ammunition, and batteries of artillery were included in the procession. Sheldon's and Moylan's cavalry brought up the rear of the three hour martial spectacle.[56] One month later the citizens of Philadelphia would watch Howe's army parade through their city.

Sporadic clashes between small American and British units marked the slothful advance of Howe's army. Washington kept track of the British progress from his headquarters at Wilmington, Delaware. Reports on September 5th and 8th of the southerly movement of the British fleet through Chesapeake Bay convinced Washington that Admiral Howe's fleet would be used to attack Philadelphia by way of the Delaware River.[57] This in fact was the British plan. Howe intended to attack Washington, "as soon as the ships reached New Castle to support him or in approximately ten days time."[58] On September 9th, Washington moved his army behind Brandywine Creek, to the high ground opposite Chad's Ford, athwart Howe's line of march to Philadelphia.

The general engagement on September 11th, known as the battle of Brandywine, resulted in a British victory and precipitated Washington's

withdrawal toward Chester, Pennsylvania.[59] Although a serious defeat for Washington, he was not beaten. His men were fatigued, disorganized, and in retreat, but not disheartened. Captain Enoch Anderson wrote, ' "I saw not a despairing look, nor did I hear a despairing word. We had our solacing words already for each other - 'Come, boys, we shall do better another time' - sounded throughout our little army." '[60] In a report of the battle to Congress, written by Adjutant General Timothy Pickering for the exhausted Washington, he said, "Notwithstanding the misfortune of the day, I am happy to find the troops in good spirits."[61]

As happened so many times before, the overcautious Howe did not press the advantage and pursue the retreating Americans. Once again the opportunity to destroy the American army was squandered, amidst the incredulous disbelief of his officers.[62] During the four days following the battle, September 12th to 15th, he had his wounded cared for, rested, resupplied, and reorganized his army, secured the captured territory, and sent out patrols to scout and probe the American lines. The 71st Regiment was dispatched to take possession of Wilmington, where they found, "7 pieces of cannon unspiked and also 2 Brass field pieces taken from the Hessians at Trenton."[63]

On the morning of the 16th the British marched out of camp towards the Old Lancaster Road. Howe had determined that denying Washington access to this road would prevent the Americans from fleeing west, nor could they receive supplies from Lancaster and York. At the same time Washington believed the British column to be most vulnerable as the long red line filed down the road. He believed an opportunity for victory was at hand and moved his forces across the Schuylkill to White Horse.

British Captain John Montresor wrote in his journal, "About 2 this afternoon we were attacked on our right Flank by a body of the rebel army

under General Wayne."[64] The two armies formed up to do battle, with Howe obtaining the advantage of the high ground. Washington moved to the other side of the valley when torrential rains soaked the battlefield, the men, and their powder.[65] Hessian Adjutant General Major Carl Leopold Baurmeister recalled the deluge in his journal. "I wish I could give a description of the downpour which began during the engagement and continued until the next morning. It came down so hard that in a few moments we were drenched and sank in mud up to our calves."[66] Washington retreated, headed north to be resupplied, and on the 19th, recrossed the Schuylkill.

The chess-like campaign was drawing to a conclusion, and Howe was winning. On the 17th Howe received word that Hamond had arrived with his escort of supply ships and were "at anchor in the Delaware off Chester."[67] Howe waited until the 18th for the roads to dry, then headed northwest, giving the appearance that his intentions were on Washington's supply base at Reading, Pennsylvania. From information conveyed by a spy, Howe knew of a cache of supplies near Valley Forge.[68] He sent the 1st Battalion of Light Infantry and the English grenadiers and Guards to investigate.[69] After a brief skirmish[70] they captured "upwards of 3800 Barrels of Flour, Soap and Candles, 25 Barrels of Horse Shoes, several thousand tomahawks and kettles, and Intrenching Tools and 20 Hogsheads of Resin."[71]

Reports of an American division somewhere to the rear of Howe's army prompted him to postpone his advance until they were located. By the next day Loyalist spies gave Howe the location of Brigadier General Anthony Wayne[72] and his 1500 men.[73] That night, September 20th, Major General Charles Grey, with the 2nd Light Infantry, the 40th, 42nd, 44th, and 55th Regiments of Foot, and part of the 16th dragoons, some 5000 troops all together, was sent to surprise Wayne at his camp near Paoli, Pennsylvania. Using only bayonets, the

British swarmed into the American camp, killing and wounding about 150 and capturing half that number. Wayne was able to escape with most of his division and cannon.[74]

Howe's strategy of marching north to Valley Forge had worked superbly. Washington was placed in the predicament of choosing to defend Philadelphia or his supply base in Reading. Washington opted for Reading.[75] Howe in turn crossed the Schuylkill below Washington's army and turned southeast to Philadelphia. He camped at Germantown on the 25th, a mere five miles from the American capital.

Philadelphia was a tense city during the early part of September. Howe's army was methodically advancing north towards the city while Washington moved south to defend it. The outcome of the anticipated great battle between the two armies "caused a very general apprehension."[76] After Washington's defeat at Brandywine, the city was abuzz with activity. Government papers and public records were removed to nearby towns, and the most pessimistic citizens packed their belongings and fled to safer towns.

Early in the morning of September 19th, Alexander Hamilton delivered a message from Washington to the Continental Congress saying that the British would soon cross the Schuylkill and could not be prevented from entering the city.[77] As the news spread the people, including the members of Congress, panicked which incited a mass exodus well before dawn. One eyewitness described the frenzied departure as, ' "wagons rattling, horses galloping, women running, children crying, delegates flying, & altogether the greatest consternation, fright & terror that can be imagined. Some of our neighbors took their flight before day, & I believe all the Congress moved off before 5 o'clock [A.M.]." '[78] The papers of the Continental Congress were sent to Bristol Pennsylvania, followed by the congressmen. Continental Congress President

Henry Laurens provided an insightful observation of the members of America's government during their flight when he remarked, ' "Fright sometimes works Lunacy. This does not imply that Congress is frighted or Lunatic but there may be some men between this and Schuylkill who may be much one and a little of the other." '[79]

It was on September 26, 1777, a beautiful autumn day, that Major General Lord Charles Cornwallis took possession of Philadelphia. With the band playing "God Save the King," and "amidst the acclamation of some thousands of inhabitants,"[80] he led two battalions of British Grenadiers, two Battalions of Hessian Grenadiers, two squadrons of the 16th Dragoons, and some artillery, into the city. Cornwallis deployed his troops to the north, east, and south, securing the city for General Howe, who entered the following day.[81]

It had been two months since Howe left New York. He had been victorious in his encounters with Washington, and had taken Philadelphia, the objective of his campaign. But his victory was an empty one. The Loyalists he had counted on to hold the city did not exist. The city was stripped of anything useful to the British. Washington's army had been defeated but was far from destroyed. Egress of the Delaware River by his brother's navy was blocked by the American riverine defenses. Consequently, all communication and supply lines were tenuous at best. No deleterious effect on the American cause by the capture of the capital ever materialized; the Continental Congress had escaped and was safe. The astute Washington wrote optimistically that Howe's, "acquisition of Philadelphia may, instead of his good fortune, prove to be his Ruin."[82]

NOTES

[1] Today the North River is known as the Hudson River.

[2] Lynn Montross, Rag, Tag and Bobtail: The Story of the Continental Army, 1775-1783 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 187. Hereafter cited as Montross, Rag, Tag and Bobtail.

[3] Ibid., 177.

[4] William B. Willcox, ed., The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1954), 60-61. Hereafter cited as Willcox, ed., Clinton's Narrative; Ira D. Gruber, The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 230-233. Hereafter cited as Gruber, Howe Brothers.

[5] Stephen Kemble, Journals of Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Kemble, 1773-1789; and British Army Orders: General Sir William Howe, 1775-1778; General Sir Henry Clinton, 1778; and General Daniel Jones, 1778, ed. New York Historical Society (Boston, Mass.: Gregg Press, 1972), 124-125. Hereafter cited as Kemble, Stephen Kemble.

[6] Colonial Office Papers, vol. 5/94 (London: Public Record Office, 1776-1778), 287-294, Howe to Germain, April 2, 1777, as cited in Troyer Steele Anderson, The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 224. Hereafter cited as Anderson, Command of the Howe Brothers.

[7] Colonial Office Papers, vol. 5/94, 287-294, Howe to Germain, April 2, 1777, as cited in Anderson, Command of the Howe Brothers, 223.

[8] Willcox, Clinton's Narrative, 62, "My arguments were at first but little attended to, though from a conviction of the solid ground on which they were founded [they were] repeated perhaps oftener than was agreeable."; David G. Martin, The Philadelphia Campaign, June 1777-July 1778 (Conshohocken, Pa.: Combined Books, 1993), 28. Hereafter cited as Martin, Philadelphia Campaign.

[9] Edward H. Tatum, ed. The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778 (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1940), 234. Hereafter cited as Tatum, ed., Journals of Ambrose Serle; G. D. Scull, ed. Montresor Journals (New York: New York Historical Society, 1881), 427. Hereafter cited as Scull, ed., Montresor Journals.

[10] Gruber, Howe Brothers, 234.

[11] Marion Balderston and David Syrett, eds. The Lost War: Letters from British Officers during the American Revolution (New York: Horizon Press, 1975), 138, July 23, 1777, Captain John Bowater to Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 429.

[12] Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington, 7 vols., vol. 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948-1957), 445. Hereafter cited as Freeman, George Washington.

[13] Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 31.

[14] Thomas Boyd, Light-horse Harry Lee (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 26. Hereafter cited as Boyd, Light-horse Harry Lee; Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 32; Freeman, George Washington, 4:446-447; John C. Fitzpatrick, ed. The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, 39 vols., vol. 8 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 434. Hereafter cited as Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington.

[15] George Washington, George Washington Papers (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), microfilm 36, Reel 17, 391. Hereafter cited as Washington, Washington Papers.

[16] Freeman, George Washington, 4:447.

[17] Carl E. Prince and Dennis P. Ryan, eds. The Papers of William Livingston, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1980), 26-27.

[18] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 8:499.

[19] John W. Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, 1775-1781: The Defense of the Delaware (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 103. Hereafter cited as Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy.

[20] Samuel Hazard, ed. Pennsylvania Archives, 12 vols., First Series, vol. 5 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Joseph Severns & Co., 1852-1914), 453. Hereafter cited as Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives.

[21] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 431.

[22] Henry B. Carrington, Battles of the American Revolution (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1877), 364, as cited in Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution, ed. John Richard Alden, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 332. Hereafter cited as Ward, War of the Revolution.

[23] Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 40, 104; W. Hugh Moomaw, ed., "The Autobiography of Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, 1738-1828" (University of Virginia, 1953), 72, as cited in Gruber, Howe Brothers, 238; Christopher Ward, The Delaware Continentals (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 497-499, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 413, n. 18. The British were frustrated that they could not capture a river pilot who knew the secret passage through the chevaux-de-frise. This was credited to Henry Fisher of Lewes, Delaware, who made certain no pilot would be placed in a position to be captured. He also kept a meticulous log book of all British naval activity in the Delaware Bay, especially the movements of the *Roebuck*.

[24] Bruce E. Burgoyne, trans., "Journal kept by the Distinguished Hessian Field Jaeger Corps during the Campaigns of the Royal Army of Great Britain in North America," Journal of Johannes Schwalm Historical Association Volume 3, Number 3 (1987): 46. Hereafter cited as Burgoyne, trans., "Jaeger Corps Journal"; Carl Leopold Baurmeister, Confidential Letters and Journals, 1776-1784, of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces, Translated and annotated by Bernhard A. Uhlendorf (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 99. Hereafter cited as Baurmeister, Baurmeister Jounals; Tatum, ed., Journals of Ambrose Serle, 241; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 236.

[25] Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 104; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 235.

[26] Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 104; Leonard Lundin, Cockpit of the Revolution: The War for Independence in New Jersey (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1940), 330. Hereafter cited as Ludin, Cockpit of the Revolution; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 235; Anderson, Command of the Howe Brothers, 280.

[27] Joseph Galloway, Letters to a Nobleman on the conduct of the War in the Middle Colonies, Second ed. (London: 1779), 70, as quoted in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 105.

[28] Anderson, Command of the Howe Brothers, 278; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 44-47. Jackson provides an excellent description of the engagement between the *Roebuck* and the Pennsylvania Navy; Burgoyne, trans., "Jaeger Corps Journal," 46. Burgoyne recounts a Hessian officer's observation of the outcome of Captain Hamond's meeting with General Howe aboard the *Roebuck*. "July 31 - To our utter amazement the fleet departed from the Delaware Bay and put to sea. Sir Snape Hammond [Captain Hamond] is said to have caused this in that he claimed that the area around New castle is too dangerous because of the many enemy fire-ships which can be sent against the fleet. The fleet set a course toward the Chesapeake. . . ."; James Wilkinson, Memoirs of My Own Times, vol. 3 (Philadelphia, Pa.: 1816), 238, as quoted in Ward, War of the Revolution, 1:331. Wilkinson provides a compelling narrative that imputes Captain Hamond for Howe's decision to sail to Chesapeake Bay.

'Lieutenant William John Hall of the 45th regiment makes this point clear in a letter dated December 26, 1777: "In our appearance off the capes of Delaware, the *Roebuck* came out and Capt. Hamond going on board the Admiral produced a chimerical draught of fortifications that were never erected and Chevaux de Frise that were never sunk. This intelligence caused us to bear away for the Chesapeake." '

[29] Charles Stedman, The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Privately printed, 1794), 290. Hereafter cited as Stedman, History of the American War; Ward, War of the Revolution, 1:331, Howe's letter to Germain, August 30, 1777. "Arrived off the Capes of the Delaware. . . when from information, I thought it most advisable to proceed to Chesapeake Bay."; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 431; William Abbatt, ed. Major Andre's Journal: Operations of the British Army Under General Sir William Howe and Sir Henry Clinton, June, 1777 to November, 1778. (Tarrytown, N.Y.: 1930), 35. Hereafter cited as Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal.

[30] Freeman, George Washington, 4:449; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:18.

[31] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:20; Freeman, George Washington, 4:449. Captain John Chilton of the Third Virginia wrote to his brother, August 17, 1777, "We have made a complete tour of the Jerseys."

[32] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:2-5.

[33] Ibid., 9:46.

[34] Ibid., 9:55.

[35] Freeman, George Washington, 4:451. n. 451, "Washington, his aides and his secretaries used no less than eight different names or phrases, with minor variants, from day to day, in giving the location," of his headquarters.

[36] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 436, 438, 440.

[37] Ibid., 438.

[38] Ibid., 441.

[39] Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 35; Scull,ed., Montresor Journals, 443.

[40] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 442; Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 36.

1st Debarkation
1st and 2d Light Infantry
1st and 2d Grenadiers
Hessian and Anspach Jagers
2d Debarkation

Hessian Grenadiers
Queen's Rangers
Guards
4th and 23d Regiments
3d Debarkation
28th, 48th, 5th, 10th, 27th, 40th, 55th, 15th, 42d
4th Debarkation
44th, 17th, 33th, 37th, 46th, 64th, 77th
5th Debarkation
Brigade of Stirn, consisting of Donop, Du Corps, Mirbach, and Loos [Lossberg]

[41] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 442.

[42] Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 36-37.

[43] Scull, ed., Montresor Journal, 442; Ward, War of the Revolution, 1:336, 338.

[44] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 442.

[45] W.H. Wilkin, Some British Soldiers in America (London: 1914), 336-347, as cited in Anderson, Command of the Howe Brothers, 286.

[46] Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 38-39.

[47] F. A. Whinyates, ed. The Services of Lieut. Colonel Francis Downman, R. A. in France, North America, and the West Indies, between the Years 1758 and 1784 (Woolwich: 1898), 30, August 27, 28, 1777, as cited in Gruber, Howe Brothers, 238.

[48] John W. Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 1777-1778 (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1979), 3. Hereafter cited as Jackson, With the British in Philadelphia.

[49] Colonial Office Papers, vol. 5/94, no. 67, Sir William Howe to Germain, August 30, 1777, as cited in Gruber, Howe Brothers, 239.

[50] Otis G. Hammond, ed. Letters and Papers of Major-General John Sullivan, Continental Army, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Concord, N.H.: 1930-1939), 436; Jared Sparks, ed. Correspondence of the American Revolution; being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Boston: 1853), 429, as cited in Freeman, George Washington, 4:460; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:115, 54, 102-103.

[51] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:115-117.

[52] Ibid., 9:127-128.

[53] Lafayette, Memoirs, Correspondence and Manuscripts of General Lafayette, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London: 1837), 20, as cited in Freeman, George Washington, 4:462; Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 35; Montross, Rag, Tag and Bobtail, 189.

[54] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:127.

[55] Montross, Rag, Tag and Bobtail, 189; Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 36. Martin cites the number at 16,000.

[56] Charles F. Adams, ed. Familiar Letters of John Adams and his wife Abigail, During the Revolution, with a Memoir of Mrs. Adams (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Miflin and Co., 1875), 297-298. Hereafter cited as Adams, ed., Letters of John and Abigail Adams; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:124-127.

[57] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:186, 197.

[58] Gruber, Howe Brothers, 238.

[59] It is not my intention to elaborate on the battle at Brandywine, as it does not fall within the scope of this thesis. The reader who is interested in a detailed examination of this engagement should check the many scholarly studies of the battle. Some good examples are Samuel S. Smith, The Battle of Brandywine (Monmouth Beach, N.J.: Philip Freneau Press,1976), and Joseph Townsend, The Battle of Brandywine (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

[60] Ward, War of the Revolution, 1:354.

[61] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:65; Octavius Pickering and Charles W. Upham, Life of Timothy Pickering, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Boston: 1867-1873), 156, as cited in Freeman, George Washington, 4:483.

[62] Stedman, History of the American War, 1:294.

[63] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 451.

[64] Ibid., 453.

[65] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:237-238.

[66] Baurmeister, Baurmeister Journals, 114.

[67] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 453.

[68] Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 83.

[69] Baurmeister, Baurmeister Journals, 115.

[70] Boyd, Light-horse Harry Lee, 27-28. Captain Lee relates the account of this action with the British. He and Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Hamilton were sent with a small detachment, to remove the stores to a safe place. Before they could accomplish their mission, they were attacked by the British, and retreated for their lives in different directions. Each thought the other had been killed or captured and reported the sad tidings to Washington, where, much to their joy, found each other alive and well.

[71] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 454-455; Baurmeister, Baurmeister Journals, 115. Baurmeister has a different inventory: "flour magazine of four thousand tons, many iron implements, as well as other goods like soap and candles. Over twenty thousand broadaxes and a great quantity of horseshoes and horseshoe nails were distributed to the army. They also found many iron cannon balls of various sizes."

[72] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:235.

[73] Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 85.

[74] Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 49-51; Baurmeister, Baurmeister Journals, 115-116; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 455-456; There are very good accounts of the "Paoli Massacre" in Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 84-93, and Ward, War of the Revolution, 1:358-359, n. 469. Wayne would get his revenge when he planned and led the attack on the British fortification at Stony Point, New York, July 16, 1779. It was also a bayonet attack.

[75] Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:397. In a letter to his brother John, Washington writes, "Tho' I do not know that it was in our power to prevent it, as their Manoeuvres made it necessary for us to attend to our Stores which lay in Reading, towards which they seemed bending their course, and the loss of which must have proved our Ruin."

[76] Adams, ed., Letters of John and Abigail Adams, 305.

[77] Ibid., 314.

[78] Sarah Logan Fisher, "A Diary of Trifling Occurrences, Philadelphia, 1776-1778," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 1958, 449 as quoted in Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 13.

[79] Edmund C. Burnett, ed. Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, 8 vols., vol. 2 (New York: 1941), 502-503, as quoted in Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 14.

[80] Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 458.

[81] Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 53; Baurmeister, Baumeister Journals, 117; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 458-459; Stedman, History of the American War, 1:295; Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 16-17.

[82] Fitzpartick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:259.

CHAPTER 2

THE RIVER

Prior to the Revolution, the Pennsylvania government was not concerned with the defense of Philadelphia and the fortification of the river approaches to the city. The Quakers, who controlled the General Assembly, held strong religious convictions of nonviolence and an abhorrence of war. Consequently, they rejected any request of expenditures for military operations or building. Finally, in 1747, after appeals for military assistance by citizens and merchants were sent to Great Britain, the Assembly reluctantly approved funding for "cannon providing the citizens would fund the construction of a battery along the waterfront below Gloria Dei Church."[1]

Over the years, the city's lone waterfront battery, neglected by the Assembly, fell into disrepair and weathered away. The city was once again devoid of any military works. In 1770, Governor John Penn, realizing the vulnerability of the city to attack by way of the river, requested assistance from the British army. General Thomas Gage sent Captain John Montresor of the Royal Engineers to Philadelphia to design river defenses.[2]

Montresor arrived in Philadelphia on April 21, 1771, and two days later met with Governor Penn and the Board of Commissioners. The Commissioners were appointed by the governor to administrate the operation. The governor produced a sketch of Mud Island, located just below the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. It was here, in 1762, that Lieutenant Myers, of the 60th Regiment, suggested the building of fortifications. Likewise, it was the

opinion of Penn and his Commissioners that Mud Island be "the proposed spot for fortifying."[3]

Montresor studied the area, carefully inspecting the waterways, islands, and surrounding terrain. Eventually he presented six designs to the Commissioners of which the first, a star redoubt on Mud Island, was his preferred choice. To provide strength to the structure the foundation was to be built on piles. The fort was "intended to mount 32 pieces of cannon, 4 mortars, and 4 royal howitzers, making on the whole 40 pieces of ordnance, which at 6 men each make 240 men required, 160 musquetry, in all 400 garrison."[4] As it was a comprehensive defensive system, it included batteries north of Mud Island located at Gloucester, New Jersey, Gloucester Point, Pennsylvania, and Windmill Island. Montresor also recommended twenty floating batteries, an unspecified number of fire-rafts, and a substantial amount of military supplies. The engineer estimated the cost at 40,000 pounds.[5]

The Commissioners were astonished by the cost and rejected much of the design. They requested Montresor remove what they believed to be excesses, thus providing a less costly fortification.[6] Indignant at the mere suggestion that he compromise his plans, Montresor was inexorable to the Commissioners' entreaty for a design reduction. He made his feeling clear when he wrote to them:

> that a good engineer is not unlike a good physician, who prescribes what is most beneficial without regarding expenses. Whatever is to be done ought to be permanent and compleat, otherwise it will never be an honour to those that order it, nor those that execute it; on the contrary (while it has an existence) it will remain an imputation of ignorance to the engineer, and of ill-timed parsimony to the provinces. . . . What I purpose laying before you shall be compleat to the utmost of my ability.[7]

The Commissioners disregarded Montresor's rebuke, and conveyed their opinions to Penn and the General Assembly. The Assembly in turn appropriated 15,000 pounds for the purchase of Mud Island and the building of

a fortification, without the use of piles. Action on the other aspects of the design were postponed indefinitely. Ironically, the island was purchased from Joseph Galloway, Speaker of the House of Assembly, and one of Pennsylvania's most ardent Loyalists during the Revolution.[8] On June 4, 1772, an exasperated Montresor laid out the outline of the fort, gave the plans to the construction foreman, and then "repaired to New York to resume his duties."[9]

Construction continued for a year on the fort at Mud Island. Unfortunately, progress slowed without Montresor's superintendence. Richard Penn wrote to Montresor requesting him to return as soon as possible in order to oversee the completion of the fort. He described the construction of the fort as ' "almost at a stand, and unable to proceed without more ample directions and some particular plan, and begs his personal attendance as soon as he can make it convenient." '[10]

Although Penn's letter did not produce the desired results, construction of the fort continued into 1774, albeit at a very diminished pace. With a substantial amount of money already spent on the project, workmen waiting to be paid, and no money allocated for its completion, Governor Penn appealed to the General Assembly to think of the city's best interest for more funding. He ended his speech by saying that:

> the plan of the Fort, and the Commissioner's account, will be laid before you, by which you will perceive what remains to be done, in what manner the money has been disposed of, and how much is yet in arrears to the workmen, &c. From hence you will be able to judge what further sum will be wanting to complete a work which has for years been considered by the legislature of this Province as an object of the greatest importance for the defense and protection of this populous and flourishing city, against His Majesty's enemies in time of War.[11]

The Assembly agreed to provide the needed funds, and work on the fort continued, once more proceeding in a dilatory manner.

The year 1775 was a tumultuous one for Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia in particular. The old self-serving, conservative ruling class in the General Assembly was losing control, and "men of different social background and of a different cast of mind were coming to power."[12] Armed confrontation with Great Britain erupted during the spring, and the Continental Congress took up residence in Philadelphia, making the city the American capital. This effectuated the port city as a potential target for the British and made defense of the city imperative.

A Committee of Safety, made up of dedicated Patriots, and presided over by Benjamin Franklin, was formed to evaluate, organize, and establish defenses for the city.[13] During the second week of July, Franklin and the Committee carefully and critically inspected the river approaches to the city, the many islands in the river, the potential locations for defensive positions in the area, and the unfinished fort on Mud Island.[14] After careful review of their findings they concluded that the protection of the city would be predicated on a number of land and river-based defensive systems, independently commanded, yet interdependent, and mutually facilitating. These would include a navy, forts and shore batteries, and river obstructions known as chevaux-de-frise. The fort on Mud Island would be the primary defensive position and the key to the river defenses.[15] An early warning system of lookouts, express riders, and warning cannon, from Delaware Bay to Philadelphia, would later be established as an additional precautionary measure.[16]

The Committee of Safety named Robert Whyte and Owen Biddle to supervise the construction of the river defenses. They immediately set about building the Pennsylvania State Navy. Requests were made for designs of river galleys. John Warton and Emanuel Eyre submitted very similar models, which

were approved and authorized to be built. During July, eleven more galleys were commissioned.[17]

The Philadelphia shipwrights were kept busy during the summer of 1775, as they constructed the galleys. These small ships were to have a keel of forty-seven to fifty-feet, a beam of thirteen-feet, and a depth of four-and-one-half-feet.[18] The galleys were pointed at both bow and stern. The design called for them to be completely decked, with a small quarter-deck platform in the aft for the helmsman and captain. Below deck the hold was divided into areas for officers' cabins, and storage. The crew slept in cramped quarters beneath the oarsmen platforms. A small caboose, or cook room, with an iron hearth, was provided for each ship.[19]

The galleys were superbly fitted for river travel. Their shallow-draught and maneuverability made them ideally suited for traversing the chevaux-de-frise. They were at home in the Delaware's main channel as well as in the shallow waters along the shore or at low tide. Twenty-two foot long oars, arranged in two banks of ten oars on each side, propelled the crafts.[20] They also had two masts rigged with lateen sails.

The galleys' main armaments were cannon in the bow on the foredeck. Most of them carried one eighteen-pounder.[21] Ammunition chests were placed on each side of the cannon along the railing. Swivels were also issued to each galley, and the caps along the railing were fitted with swivel pivots. The railing cap also had sockets to fix posts to support awnings of sailcloth to shelter the crew during inclement weather and to provide protection from enemy sharpshooters.[22] In addition, an assortment of arms were kept on board. These included howitzers, pikes, cutlasses, muskets, and hand grenades.[23]

When the galleys were completed and ready for launching, they were painted black and yellow, the official colors of the Pennsylvania State Navy.[24]

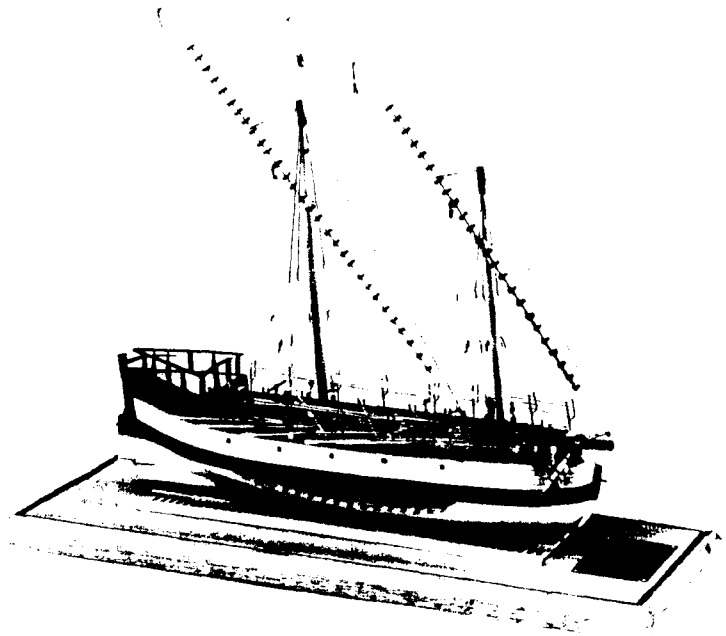


Fig. 2. Galley similar to those of the Pennsylvania Navy, 1775-1781. Philadelphia Maritime Museum. Jackson, Delaware Bay and River Defenses of Philadelphia, 4.

Each galley was then assigned the full complement of 53 officers and men.[25] Occasionally, members of the Committee of Safety would be present at the launching ceremonies. On July 26, 1775, Committee members attended the launching of the galley *Bull Dog*, after which they boarded the boat and sailed down river to Gloucester, New Jersey, to hold a Committee meeting.[26]

Twenty-one guard boats were built during 1775. The last one was completed July 1, 1775.[27] Their primary function was to patrol the many creeks and inlets along the banks of the Delaware. Later their duties were expanded to guarding the fire rafts, and the observation and alarm posts. They rarely ventured far from shore as they were easily swamped.

The guard boats were smaller than the galleys, measuring thirty-five feet long. They were flat-bottomed, equipped with ten to twelve oars, with single masts which had lateen sails. Their armament included a two, three, or four-pounder cannon, two swivels, and the standard issue of small arms.[28] The men, having no quarters, were compelled to sleep under awnings. A small iron cook pot was issued to each boat.[29] The designated complement was fourteen officers and men, but usually they sailed with less.[30]

A number of fire rafts were built as another offensive weapon to be used against the British navy. The Committee of Safety believed that the fire rafts would "contribute greatly to defend the city against hostile attacks from Men-of-War."[31] Eighteenth century warships were constructed of wood and highly susceptible to fire. The fire rafts were capable of quickly engulfing an enemy ship in a conflagration of death and destruction.

Captain John Hazelwood was in charge of the construction of the fire rafts and at least forty-eight rafts were built under his supervision. He became so proficient at building fire rafts that he was sent to New York to assist in

obstructing the North River.[32] Hazelwood would later be promoted to Commodore and command the Pennsylvania State Navy.

The rafts were of a simple log construction. They varied in size, but were generally thirty-five feet long and thirteen feet wide. Railings surrounded the combustible materials to which sail cloths were secured in order to keep the cargos dry.[33] The flammable concoctions were comprised of an eclectic mix of "Staves of tar barrels, Oil barrels, turpentine and Rosin Casks with hay [or] Straw, turpentine, Brimstone and other Combustible Substances thrown into the hogsheads and between them - a quantity of pine wood intermixed and Powdered Rosin Strew'd over the whole . . . ."[34] Fastened to the bow of the rafts were barbed iron prongs that held fast to the enemy ship when rammed.

The forty-eight fire rafts were deployed in groups, known as chains. Each chain had six rafts, linked together, and assigned to a guard boat or galley. It was their duty to maneuver the chain into action.

Eight ships were purchased to be used as fire ships.[35] These ships were loaded with cargos of combustibles similar to that which the fire rafts carried. The fire ships were sail powered and therefore carried larger crews than those on the fire rafts.

Aboard both types of fire vessels were crews whose job was to ignite the craft as they approached the enemy ships. It was a dangerous job, making the men prone to panic, and often resulting in premature ignition.

The threat the American fire vessels posed made the British circumspect of any enemy naval incursion down the Delaware. They prudently ordered lookouts to be especially vigilant, mindful of the destructive nature of the small pyric craft. Although a military failure, the American fire crafts were successful in a roundabout way. They induced the British navy to behave cautiously and to assume a more defensive posture.

The Pennsylvania navy had two floating batteries on duty in 1776. The *Arnold*, mounting ten eighteen-pounders, was commissioned in March, and the *Putnam*, with twelve eighteen-pounders, in September.[36] They were over one hundred feet long and twenty feet wide, had fifty oars, and a sail.[37] Each had two swivels mounted on parapets that protected the crews and their contingents of marines from enemy small-arms fire. Although unwieldy, these shallow-drafted craft were able to move close to shore and lend supporting fire when and wherever needed.[38]

At a Committee of Safety meeting on November 7, 1775, it was decided that a contract be made "for the immediate building and equipping a Ship of War for the River Service, to mount twenty Eighteen pounders."[39] The ship was finished in March, 1776, named the *Montgomery*, and designated flagship of the Pennsylvania navy.[40] Originally armed with fourteen eighteen-pounders, sixteen cohorns, and eight swivels, her long, heavy eighteen-pounders were exchanged in October for sixteen twelve-pounders.[41] In addition to the officers and crew, a company of marines, consisting of fifty-nine officers and men, was assigned to the new provincial ship of war.[42]

Two other ships were built during the summer of 1776. They were the armed schooner *Delaware* and the brig *Convention*. When they were completed in October, they were fitted with twelve-pounders.[43] They too were intended to operate the length of the Delaware.

The remainder of the fleet consisted of a variety of vessels, all purchased or hired rather than built.[44] These auxiliary ships served the multitude of tasks needed to store, supply, and replenish Commodore Hazlewood's fleet. These ships also ferried soldiers, delivered messages, reports, orders, and helped lay the chevaux-de-frise. Though seemingly mundane duty, the ancillary function

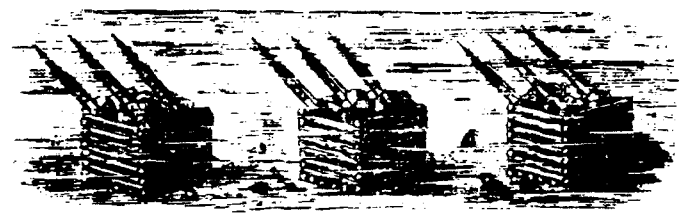
of these ships and their crews were immensely important to the Pennsylvania navy and to Washington's defense of the Delaware.

During the summer of 1775, while the galleys of the Pennsylvania navy were being built, the plan to place obstructions in the channel of the Delaware River was begun. These underwater "machines" were known as chevaux-de-frise.[45] The Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, and their compatriots in New Jersey, the Gloucester County Committee of Observation, agreed to work together to obstruct the river.[46] Citizens from Gloucester County contributed 296 logs for the construction of the chevaux-de-frise.[47]

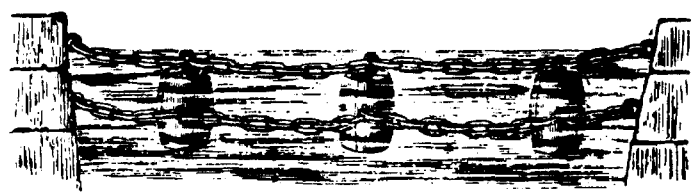
On July 24th, Robert Smith brought "a model of a machine for obstructing the Navigation of the River" to a Committee of Safety meeting.[48] He showed the members how his device would stop the British ships, and described how it could be constructed. Furthermore he offered to supervise the building of the chevaux-de-frise. The Committee approved the building of Smith's machines and accepted his services.

Smith's design was simple, solid, and efficacious. It was basically a large open-topped box or crib, known as a frame. The frames were thirty feet across, and made of logs. It took about "25 or 30 Logs from 40 to 65 feet in length, 12 to 26 inches thick" to build each frame, which were lined with pine boards.[49] Three large iron-tipped logs, resembling huge spears, were positioned upward and at an angle. The frames were chained together to make them more difficult to tip over or remove. They were then floated to the desired location in the river, spears pointing down river, and sunk by using heavy anchors. After the frames were filled with twenty to forty tons of stone the anchors were retrieved. They were placed sixty feet apart, measuring from the center of one frame to the center of the next. To be most effective the spear tips had to be approximately six feet below the surface. In order to accomplish this

A chain from Fort Mifflin, now in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



Chevaux de frise, opposite to and below Fort Mifflin.



Chain between piers, opposite to Fort Mifflin.

A "boom" between piers, tried but abandoned.

Fig. 3. Delaware River obstructions used by the Americans. Strittmatter, Importance of the Campaign on the Delaware During the Revolutionary War - 1777, 12.

uniformity, each frame was a different height to compensate for the varying depth of the river.[50]

During the month it took to build the seventeen chevaux-de-frise, as Smith's machines were now called, Smith brought before the Committee of Safety "a Model of a Machine for lowering and raising balace into & out of the Chevaux de Frise."[51] This device significantly improved the time and effort otherwise expended on the task of loading the stones into the submerged frames.

In September, 1775, the first row of chevaux-de-frise was sunk in the channel off the fort on Mud Island. This would come to be known as the upper chevaux-de-frise. In October ten river pilots were selected to learn the secret route through the obstacles. During the next few years, the British would try to acquire one or more of these pilots by whatever means possible.[52] An additional three tiers of chevaux-de-frise were added by July, 1776. The upper chevaux-de-frise would total forty-three frames, and included a heavy chain attached to two piers close to the Mud Island fort.[53] A row of twenty-four frames, referred to as the lower chevaux-de-frise, was sunk in a narrow part of the river between Billingsport and Billingsport Island. This was completed by June, 1777, effectively closing the river to the British.[54] Ann Whitall, a Quaker living on the bank of the Delaware, noted in her diary that "Now the implements that were put into the river to keep the ships of the King from coming to the city were strong and many."[55]

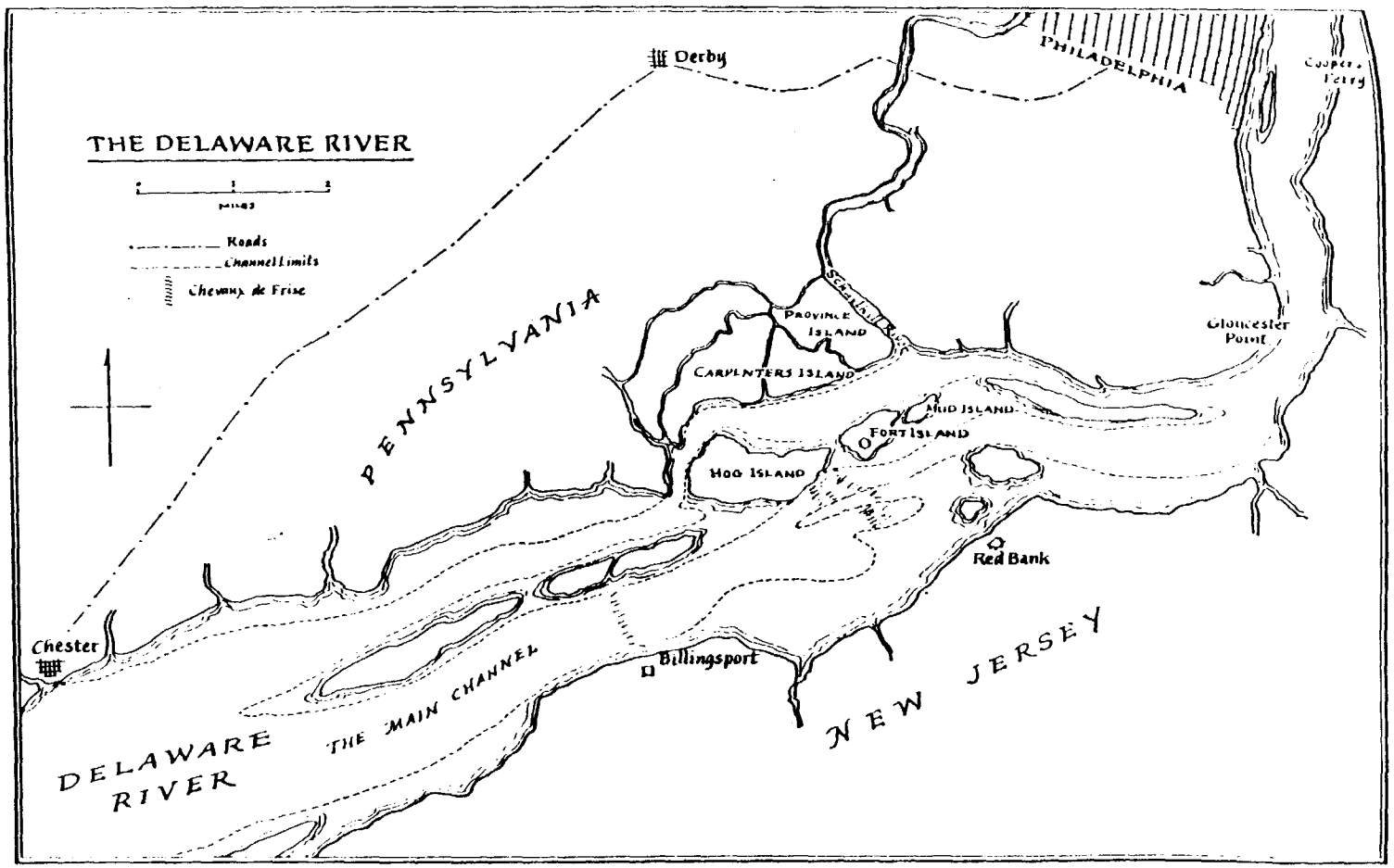


Fig. 4. The Delaware River from Chester to Philadelphia, 1777. Gruber, Howe Brothers, 245.

NOTES

[1]John W. Jackson, Fort Mifflin: Valiant Defender of the Delaware (Philadelphia, Pa.: Old Fort Mifflin Historical Society Preservation Committee, 1986), 1. Here after cited as Jackson, Fort Mifflin.

[2]Ibid., 1.

[3]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 415.

[4]Ibid., 416.

[5]Ibid., 415; Samuel Steele Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 1777 (Monmouth Beach, N.J.: Philip Freneau Press, 1970), 6. Hereafter cited as Smith, Fight for the Delaware; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 433, n. 19. Gloucester, New Jersey and Gloucester Point, Pennsylvania, were located opposite each other just below Philadelphia, and commanded a narrow part of the Delaware River. Windmill Island was about a mile long and near the Philadelphia shore. It extended from Fitzwater Street on the South to Arch Street on the north. It was named after the windmill built by John Harding.

[6]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 415. The Board of Commissioners overseeing the construction of the fortifications at Mud Island rejected Montresor's use of piles for the foundation. He had stated ' "that it will take 20 men six months to lay the foundation of piles, each pile to be from 12 to 15 inches in diameter, capped and shod; each, when drove, will cost about fifteen shillings, Pennsylvania currency, and to be drove only their own diameter asunder." '

[7]Ibid., 416.

[8]Ibid., 416-417; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 60.

[9]Scull, ed. Montresor Journals, 416-417. Apparently Governor Penn and the Pennsylvania General Assembly assumed that compensation was unnecessary for Montresor since he was a military officer sent on assignment by his commanding officer, General Gage. Obviously, an angry Montresor was of a different opinion. One of Montresor's notebooks is entitled "Expenses paid by me on the works at Philadelphia and not yet reimbursed me." In this he lists all his expenses associated with the Philadelphia project. Another notebook is labeled "Fort I Built on Mud Island for the province of Pennsylvania, and for which I have never been paid."

[10]Robert I. Alotta, A Fort Mifflin Diary (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Shackamaxon Society, Inc., 1973), 4. Hereafter cited as Alotta, Fort Mifflin Diary; Scull,ed., Montresor Journals, 417; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 2. Montresor would not return to Philadelphia until 1777. While accompanying Howe's army, he was assigned to destroy the fortifications he had designed.

[11]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 417.

[12]Edward Countryman, The American Revolution (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 118.

[13]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania: Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, From the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government, 16 vols., vol. 10 (Harrisburg, Pa.: State of Pennsylvania, 1838-1853), 280, 282. Hereafter cited as Colonial Records of Pennsylvania. The Committee of Safety was made up of twenty five of the most able and talented men in Pennsylvania. Benjamin Franklin was elected president of the Committee. The other members included John Dickinson, George Gray, Henry Wynkoop, Anthony Wayne, Benjamin Bartholomew, George Ross, Michael Swope, John Montgomery, Edward Biddle, William Edmunds, Bernard Daugherty, Samuel Hunter, William Thompson, Thomas Willing, Daniel Francis Johnston, Richard Riley, Samuel Morris, Jr., Robert Morris, Thomas Wharton, Jr., and Robert White (also spelled Whyte). The Pennsylvania Committee of Safety would later be named the Pennsylvania Council of Safety.

[14]Ibid., 10:279-280.

[15]Mark Edward Lender, The River War: The Fight for the Delaware, 1777 (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1979), 10. Hereafter cited as Lender, River War; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 4; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:282-284.

[16]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 8.

[17]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:283-285.

[18]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:284-285; Peter Force, ed. American Archives, Fourth Series, 6 vols., Fifth Series, 3 vols., Fifth Series, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: 1837-1846, 1848-1853), 749, as cited by Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 46. Hereafter cited as Force, ed., American Archives. Smith gives larger galley dimensions of a 60 foot keel, 18 foot beam, and a 6 foot hold.

[19]William Henry Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, 19 vols., vol. 1 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1874-1890), 110, 155, 163, 175. Hereafter cited as Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:593; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 408, n. 33. Jackson describes the caboose as a "diminutive substitute for the cook room (galley), a portable shelter lashed to the deck with ropes, with a ring bolt in

each corner and four ring bolts on the deck. The Pennsylvania fleet had both wooden and iron caboose . . . . While some were lashed to the decks, others were permanently installed with a masonry foundation."

[20]Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd ser., 1:160.

[21]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 336-339, 16. The thirteen galleys in the Pennsylvania Navy's fleet carried one of three size cannon. The *Washington* had a thirty-two-pounder. The *Chatham, Congress, Dickinson,* and *Franklin* each had one twenty-four-pounder. The *Bull Dog, Burke, Camden, Effingham, Experiment* [a fitting name for the first galley built], *Hancock, Ranger,* and *Warren* each had one eighteen-pounder. The large cannon in the bow was balanced by scrap and pig iron in the stern below decks; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 46. Smith cites different statistics. He writes that one galley carried a thirty-two-pounder, two carried twenty-four-pounders, and ten carried eighteen-pounders.

[22]Howard I. Chapelle, The History of the American Sailing Navy (New York: 1949), 111.

[23]Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Miscellaneous Collection: Revolutionary Correspondence, Statistical Lists 1775-1791, Invoices of Stores, 1775-1779, Box 15 B. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Historical Society of Pennsylvania), "Accounts of Defenses in Pennsylvania," as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 16, 341.

[24]Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd ser., 1:86.

[25]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:350-351. Although the official complement called for fifty-three officers and men, these ships rarely had more than thirty-five officers and men on the musters.

[26]Ibid., 10:290-291.

[27]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 340-344. The twenty-one guard boats were the *Argus, Basilisk, Brimstone, Dragon, Eagle, Fame, Firebrand, Hawk, Hornet, Lion, Porcupine, Race Horse, Repulse, Resolution, Salamander, Terror, Thunder, Tormentor, Viper, Vulture,* and *Wasp.*

[28]Ibid., 21-22.

[29]Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd ser., 1:121.

[30]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:586.

[31]Ibid., 10:396.

[32]Lincoln Diamant, Chaining the Hudson: The Fight for the River in the American Revolution (New York: Carol Publishing, 1989), 74-75. Hereafter cited as Diamant, Chaining the Hudson; Edward M. Ruttenber, Obstructions to the Navigation of Hudson's River (Albany, N.Y.: 1860), 19, 23, 24, 36, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 19.

[33]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 19.

[34]Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd ser., 1:230, as quoted in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 19; Diamant, Chaining the Hudson, 75-76. Hazelwood's procedure for assembling the combustibles on a fire raft was described by Captain Daniel Joy:

> Begin by dipping all inflammetery Matter in boil'd turpentine. Lay a tier of faggots supported here & there with billots of wood to give a free passage for air. Then put Shingle shavings, Billots of wood & faggots alternately, until the Body of the Raft is full; Then lay three false Gutters charged with quick-match, prepared in the following manner:
>
> Take several clear thrids of woostard of yarn, slack twisted together, & dip it in a compound of pounded gunpowder & saltpeter, well mixed up with Spirits of Turpentine, & then well Dryed. Lay it in the whole length of the gutter, over which put a length of tow, oakem or straw dipt in Spirits of Turpentine & Dryed, & tack it down with a few Nails to keep them both fast.
>
> Then lay several wisp of straw as before cross-ways, & some to be carried off through the Middle from the intersection of the others, in order that the whole may be on Fire by the time they get's alongside the Enemy. Then raise the remainder with cedar rails or dry sparrs - first a tier one way, kept apart by here & there a faggot, then a tier crossways & so alternatively until high enough. Then the whole should be secured together by two Small chains crossing on the top, to secure it from being pulled to pieces by the enemy.
>
> Towards that part where you Judge the Enemy will come with their boats to tow them off, place Rocket & Pistol barrels charged with Serpent composition, all inclining toward the Enemy, that when they take fire, they shall continue blowing off the matter they are charged with, amongst the Ships rigging & sails. Over them raise a ridge of straw like a roof, on which scatter a quantity of powdered rosin. Next secure it from the weather by Thatching it with rye straw, & pay it well with Turpentine. After that is hardened, give it a coat of hot tar.

[35]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 347-349. The eight fire ships consisted of the brigs *Comet, Hellcat, Vesuvius,* and *Volcano*, the brigantine *Blast*, the ship *Hecla*, and the sloops *Aetna*, and *Strombello.*

[36]William Bell Clark, ed. Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 6 vols. (Washington, D.C.: 1964), 4:163-164, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 23.

[37]J. Almon, The Remembrancer or Impartial Repository of Public Events, 12 vols. (London: 1775-1783), 2:364, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 23.

[38]Egle,ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd ser., 1:131.

[39]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:395.

[40]Ibid., 10:525.

[41]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 25; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:741.

[42]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:505.

[43]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 346-347.

[44]Ibid., 350-352.

[45]Diamant, Chaining the Hudson, 39-40. Chevaux-de-frise is a term meaning Friseland horses. They were devices used by the people of Friseland, an area of Holland and Germany, to stop cavalry. Spears or pikes were lashed together to heavy timber frames forming self-standing rows, with tips pointing out at a forty-five degree angle, and chained together. They would then be placed in narrow city streets, in gaps of defensive lines, or in shallow streams, to obstruct enemy attacks.

[46]Dennis P. Ryan, New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763-1783: A Chronology (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1993), 23. Hereafter cited as Ryan, New Jersey in the Revolution.

[47]Hazel Burrough Simpson, The Byllynge Point Saga (Woodbury, N.J.: Privately published, 1971), 14s. Hereafter cited as Simpson, Byllynge Point Saga; Harry D. Mackey, The Gallant Men of the Delaware River Forts, 1777 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Dorrance & Co., 1973), 4. Hereafter cited as Mackey, Gallant Men; Ryan, New Jersey in the Revolution, 23; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 363. The logs were donated by fourteen men: Benjamin Whitall, John Wood, Nathan Kimsey, Richard Johns, David Paul, Joseph Low, James Brown, Joseph Ward, Joshua Hopper, Isaac Hoper, Levi Hopper, James Wood, Joseph Tatem, and Charles West.

[48]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:290.

[49]Ibid., 10:774.

[50]John W. Jackson, The Delaware Bay and River Defenses of Philadelphia, 1775-1777 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Philadelphia Maritime Museum, 1977), 5. Hereafter cited as Jackson, Delaware Bay.

[51]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:299.

[52]Hazard, Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:280-281, 337-340. A bit of intrigue and espionage surrounds the story of James Molesworth and the chevaux-de-frise pilots. Molesworth was a Philadelphia loyalist who fled to New York. The British enticed the young man to return to Philadelphia with an offer of a Captain's commission. His mission was to find river pilots, familiar with the Delaware River and the passage through the chevaux-de-frise, willing to lead the British ships past the American defenses. He was authorized to offer a bribe.

Upon returning to Philadelphia, he visited boarding houses where river pilots were known to stay, and enlisted the help of two proprietresses, Abigail McCay and Sarah O'Bryan. They arranged a meeting with two pilots, Andrew Higgins and John Eldridge. Molesworth told them that they would receive a large sum of money for their services. He also disclosed the British plan. He explained that when they reached the fort "the Posts at the Ferry were to be cut down, and the Bridge over Ogdens Ferry to be cut away, and the Cannon at the Fort to be Spik'd by a Person on duty there." Eldridge refused, but Higgins said he would pilot the British and that he knew another pilot, John Schnyder, who might join them. The pilots instead reported the plan to the authorities. Molesworth was apprehended, questioned, and hanged on March 31, 1777.; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 5-6.

[53]Lender, River War, 10; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 355; R. Lamb, An Original and Authentic Journal of Occurrences during the Late American War, from its Commencement to the Year, 1783 (Dublin, Ireland: 1809), 232; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 750.

[54]Lender, River War, 10; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 354, 364-365.

[55]Isabella C. McGeorge, Ann C. Whitall, The Heroine of Red Bank (Woodbury, N.J.: Gloucester County Historical Society, 1904), 5. Hereafter cited as McGeorge, Ann Whitall.

CHAPTER 3

THE FORTS: MERCER, MIFFLIN, AND BILLINGSPORT

With the construction of the Pennsylvania navy and the chevaux-de-frise well under way, Whyte's and Biddle's attention to the land fortifications became the priority. A small defensive position, to be used as a lookout post along the Delaware River, was being built at Billingsport, New Jersey, overlooking a narrow part of the channel.[1] The fortification on Fort island was as yet unfinished, although under construction for three years since 1772.[2] Having no knowledge of engineering, and with little hope of finding a competent supervisor educated in this aspect of military architecture, they deferred to Pennsylvania militia officers for advice. Consequently, the work proceeded in a less than professional manner.

On October 15, 1775, a delegation from the Committee of Safety, led by Robert Morris, President pro tempore, along with Whyte and Biddle, visited Fort Island, "in order to view the works . . . and to consult what other buildings may be proper."[3] After walking the grounds, the men were dismayed at what they found. The fortifications were unfinished and in such disarray that any thought of defense was out of the question. The artillery platforms were not completed, the barracks were a shambles, the men had makeshift cooking facilities, and no fireplaces to keep them warm. The next day the Committee authorized the building of a lean-to against the existing stone wall to shelter the garrison. The house on the island was ordered to be fixed and chimneys, forges, and

fireplaces built. Furthermore, it was ordered that whatever works found "necessary for the defense of this Province" be constructed. Six eighteen-pound cannon were to be placed on suitable platforms, and an artillery company consisting of "one Captain, one Lieutenant, one Drum & Fife, and twenty-five private Men, to be immediately raised."[4] Within two weeks Thomas Proctor was appointed Captain in command of a company of artillery whose duty it was to garrison the fort.[5]

Proctor rigorously trained his artillery company and had them lend a hand with the fort's construction. He also appealed to the Committee for suitable winter quarters and provisions; the hastily constructed lean-tos proved inadequate lodging against the cold autumn nights, and would be useless during the winter months. The Committee attended to his entreaties by having the old barracks repaired, and ordering wood and blankets. Unfortunately, Joseph Fox, Barracks Master, could not supply the required bedding but instead purchased straw for the Captain and his company.[6]

On November 29, 1775, Francis Proctor was appointed Lieutenant and assigned to his brother's artillery company. During the same month, Colonel John Bull and his militia battalion were ordered to Fort Island to assist with the construction of the fort. Apparently the Proctor brothers and two of Bull's officers became involved in an altercation. The incident was investigated and brought before the Committee of Safety, where the Proctors were found guilty of behavior unbecoming officers. They were asked to apologize, which they refused to do, and were dismissed from service. After a few days they reconsidered, apologized, and were back in command of Fort Island.[7]

This incident, though seemingly insignificant, was indicative of some of the command problems Washington had to endure. Command jealousies, personality conflicts, and inappropriate behavior displayed by some of the

Continental officers and their Provincial counterparts during the fight for the Delaware River only exacerbated the problems with which both the army and Pennsylvania navy had to contend: low pay, inadequate manpower, poor supplies, and desertion -- all of which led to low morale. In spite of the vexatious problems caused by these officers' divisive actions, the preparations for a determined defense of the Delaware remained foremost in the mind of the patriots.

In addition to the survey of the river fortifications the Committee of Safety appointed Henry Fisher to organize a series of alarm posts from the Delaware Bay to Philadelphia. Fearful that the city was a probable target, this precaution would preclude any surprise attack up the Delaware which the British might be planning. It would also enhance intelligence on British ship movements. Fisher established thirteen alarm posts, each of which was usually attended by one man and supplied with a cannon and a small boat. He also set up express-rider stations that made it possible for riders to carry a message from Lewes, Delaware, near Cape Henlopen, to Philadelphia in twenty-one hours.[8]

From December, 1775, to February 1776, members of the Committee of Safety made a number of visits to Fort Island and Province Island to decide "what further Defences may be thrown up . . . for the security of the Fort, and passage through the Chevaux de Frize."[9] Their inspections "revealed an alarming scarcity of powder, ordnance and supplies; works that were vulnerable and could not be defended by the poorly constructed battery; barracks that were so poorly constructed they were unfit for use."[10] To remedy some of the deficencies, an artillery company was sent to Fort Island, bringing the size of the garrison to ninety men. Barracks for five hundred men were ordered built, and supplies were moved to the fort.[11] It was also decided to make a

comprehensive inspection and survey of the New Jersey shore from Billingsport northward and determine appropriate locations to fortify.[12]

The spring of 1776 brought the first indication of possible British naval incursion up the Delaware. On April 28th, one of Fisher's express riders arrived in Philadelphia. He carried news of a British warship, the *Roebuck*, having gone aground "eastward of the Brandywine" near Wilmington, Delaware while in pursuit of the Continental ship *Wasp*.[13] Eight galleys at Fort Island were made ready and ordered to proceed down the river and destroy the enemy ship. They set sail and moved through the upper chevaux-de-frise that evening. To provide additional firepower the Pennsylvania navy's armed ship *Montgomery* and the Continental ship *Reprisal* were ordered to follow as soon as possible. Citizens turned out to load supplies, arms, and ammunition on board the two warships despite a driving rain.[14]

On the morning of the 29th the two warships, each with a complement of marines, set sail from Philadelphia. Before they were able to move through the upper chevaux-de-frise they met the returning galleys. The *Roebuck* had gotten free of the shoals and moved back down river and into the bay.[15]

With but a week's respite the citizens of Philadelphia were once more thrown in a furor. On May 6th, an express rider brought word that the warships *Roebuck*, and *Liverpool*, were leading a small flotilla up the Delaware Bay with the apparent intention of sailing up the Delaware River.[16] The Committe of Safety, believing the capital was the enemy's destination, immediately ordered the "Commanding officer of the fleet and Artillery Company at Fort Island, to call every Boat & Soldiers to their stations, & each to prepare for immediate action."[17] Supplies and ordnance were checked on the ships and at the fort. In addition to the ordered military preparations, a request for lead was posted throughout the city. "There being a very pressing necessity for a large Quantity

of Lead for the public use, in the Defence now formed for the security of the Liberties of this Country, It is most earnestly recommended to all the Inhabitants . . . to send in . . . all such Lead as they may have in use in their Families and about their Houses, such as draught weights, window weights & clock weights."[18] The Committee, and the city, then spent an anxious day waiting for additional news of the British. The news was not long in coming.

A few hours before midnight a second rider galloped into the city with word that "two Ships of War, a Top Sail Schooner & three smaller Vessels, supposed to be tenders, were in sight of Port Penn."[19] The Committee was now sure that Philadelphia was the intended target. They speculated that the British would test the river defenses, attempt to break through the chevaux-de-frise, engage the defenses at Fort Island, and attack the city.

The defenses assembled to meet the British invaders were considerable and quite formindable. The Pennsylvania navy was ready with the ship *Montgomery* and thirteen galleys.[20] The floating battery was manned and ready near the upper cheavux-de-frise, and fire ships and two chains of fire rafts were sent down to Fort Island.[21] Providing additional naval support were three Continental vessels, *Reprisal*, *Lexington*, and *Hornet.* A fourth Continental ship, the *Wasp,* was somewhere down river.[22] With the battery and a well-trained artillery company, now numbering 119 men at Fort Island, and the two lines of chevaux-de-frise, the Committee was confident that a successful defense could be achieved.

On the morning of May 7th, the Committee of Safety ordered, without hesitation and with great aplomb, Captain Thomas Read of the ship *Montgomery*, to take thirteen galleys and the fire sloop *Aetna* and "proceed down the river, when they must concert the best method to attack, take, sink, destroy or drive off" the British, taking care not to expose "any of the Boats to

Capture or destruction."[23] A shallop was to accompany the small flotilla, loaded with supplies and "30 Round of Cartridges of ammunition for each of the armed Boats [galleys], two-thirds of the Shot to be Cross Barr, if so many are in Store."[24] Read received the order at 12:30 that afternoon.

Read quickly assembled the galley captains on board the *Montgomery* for a briefing of the Committee's orders. It was agreed that the galleys would rendezvous that evening near Hog Island and wait for first light to embark on their sortie. He was also informed at this meeting that eleven of the galleys did not have their full complement of men.[25] Captain Lambert Wickes, of the *Reprisal*, was directed to provide the needed replacements. Wickes refused to comply with the Committee of Safety's order, stating that "I have received no order from the Marine Committee, and I cannot let any of my men go without one. I wish that I could and I will immediately upon receipt of the order."[26] Read quickly made up the manpower deficiencies with volunteers from the floating battery and from the *Montgomery*.

Later that evening a boat arrived from Philadelphia with four members of the Committee of Safety. They wanted to hear what plans Read had made for the ensuing attack. They also produced the missing Marine Committee order for Wickes. Read then visited Wickes on the *Reprisal*, gave him the mislaid order, and again requested men for his boats. This time it was for two pilot boats and two small fire sloops. Wickes immediately complied with the request. Lieutenant Robert Harris and ten seamen were sent to the fire sloops, and Captain Miles Pennington and twenty-six of his marines were sent on board the pilot boats.[27]

At dawn, May 8th, Captain Henry Dougherty with thirteen galleys and a fire sloop, slipped through the lower chevaux-de-frise and proceeded down river to do battle with the British warships. The *Montgomery* and the floating

battery *Arnold* were to remain north of the lower river obstructions to form another line of defense. Wickes was to station the *Reprisal* on the opposite side of the chevaux-de-frise in order to sail down river should the galleys need his assistence. The tide and wind were not favorable for the large warship to negotiate the passage through the chevaux-de-frise and the *Reprisal* remained with the other two ships. The shallop loaded with ammunition was able to slip through the obstacles and sailed off towards the galleys.[28]

The intentions of the small British flotilla were far less threatening then the Americans had imagined. Captain Hamond of the *Roebuck* had been given orders to head south for an attack on Charleston, South Carolina, and to leave Captain Henry Bellew of the *Liverpool* to patrol the Delaware Bay. Hamond was low on fresh water so he "thought it necessary to run up the River for the purpose of completing it, which would also give me an opportunity of reconnoitering the Enemy's force, so as to be useful when any attack should be planned against it."[29] He would also take any American ship that had the misfortune of being sighted by his flotilla. One other reason for coming up river was to send a flag of truce to Philadelphia to obtain a prisoner exchange, and to procure a safe-conduct pass for Captain Bellew's wife to visit relatives in New England.[30]

On May 5th, Hamond made his way up the bay and anchored off Bombay Hook, Delaware. This is when Fisher dispatched his first express rider to Philadelphia. The next day Hamond had foraging parties ashore looking for water and supplies, and sent boats after two shallops, which they captured. The landing party was called in, narrowly escaping an attack by Colonel Samuel Miles and his Chester County militia. That night Hamond anchored south of Reedy Island, near Morris Listen's creek.[31]

Early on the morning of May 7th, Hammon saw the *Wasp* between Reedy Island and the Delaware shore. The *Roebuck* and *Liverpool* immediately began pursuit of the American warship. Soon a brigantine, seeing the British ships making their way up the river, took flight herself and joined the Wasp's desperate run for freedom. For nearly three hours the ships beat their way up the Delaware, with the British slowly gaining on the Americans. Finally "Captain [Charles] Alexander, finding . . . that he must inevitably fall a prey if he trusted to the speed of his vessel, suddenly hauled his course to the wind and ran into Wilmington Creek [Christiana River], where he was safe from the pursuit of the frigates."[32] The brigantine that followed the *Wasp's* lead also found safety in the shallow waters of the creek.

Hamond and Bellew anchored their frigates off the mouth of the creek and waited for the brig *Betsey* and the other auxiliary ships to arrive. During the excitement of the chase a small schooner, trying to avoid capture, was forced to beach herself. Boats from the warships were dispatched with kedge and hawser to refloat her and add another prize to their increasing inventory or captured American ships.[33] The British flotilla spent the night off Wilmington, Delaware.

May 8th, found the British once more trying to refloat the stranded schooner. The fog that lingered on the river in the morning lifted around noon. The breeze died down providing a beautiful calm spring day. The serenity of the moment was shattered by warnings from the look-outs. They had sighted the approaching State fleet.[34] Upon seeing the enemy the British junior officers mocked the American vessels, showing a haughty contempt for the small craft, and a smug arrogance in their own superior firepower. Hamond, an experienced naval officer, having no such delusions immediately ordered both ships cleared for fighting.[35]

As the battle began crowds of people assembled along the shore. They had come to watch the great spectacle, which took on the appearance of a gala occasion. "The banks were lined with spectators, of course at a discreet distance from the line of fire. Many of the onlookers brought chairs and refreshment as though they were attending a fair, each rooting for his favorite."[36]

The galleys opened fire first but were over a mile away and well out of their range. The *Roebuck* and *Liverpool* weighed anchor and maneuvered into position. The *Roebuck* responded, firing from her stern-chasers. "Then, with her anchor apeak, she got under sail, her head being to the eastward and the *Liverpool's* to the westward. In this position, and moving up the river with a light breeze from the north-north-east, both frigates brought their broadsides to bear on some of the galleys and began a thunderous bombardment."[37] For two hours the combatants fired at each other. The galleys never ventured within a mile of the British ships, fearful of a devastating broadside. Colonel Miles, who arrived with his militia too late to intercept the sailors working to free the schooner, observed the battle from the shore and noted "there is no damage done on either side, tho' I suppose three or four hundred shot have past between them."[38]

During the battle Captain Alexander made a daring attempt to capture the brig *Betsey*. When it seemed that the British were too occupied with the galleys, he seized this opportunity to take the *Wasp* out of Willmington Creek, board the *Betsey*, capture her, and re-enter the Creek.[39]

At approximately four o'clock, the galleys stopped firing and turned upriver. They had completely expended their powder and shot. Dougherty had decided to replenish his ammunition and attack again the next morning. Damage and casualties were light on both sides. The galley *Camden* was hit

by one shot and had one man killed.[40] The *Roebuck* had damage to her rigging and a few holes in her side.[41] She had also run aground.

As the battle drew to a close and the galleys retired upriver, the *Roebuck* went aground just south of Wilmington Creek near Carney's Point, "about half a mile from the Jersey shore."[42] As soon as Hamond "felt his keel grate, he had signaled the *Liverpool* to come astern and cover him."[43] Boats from the frigates were sent out as pickets should the galleys return to take advantage of the *Roebuck's* precarious situation, while all means were employed to refloat her. Matters worsened as the tide ebbed and the hapless ship began to list. "The lower deck ports were necessarily shut on the reclining side to keep out the water."[44] The warship was now completely defenseless, being incapable of bringing her guns to bear on any attacker. "Not a soul on the frigates slept that night, captains and officers being constantly on watch while the crew labored."[45] At four o'clock the next morning, with the help of the incoming tide, the *Roebuck* was pulled off the shoal and anchored in the channel.

The morning of May 9th, was a foggy one. Alexander believed this would be the opportune time to sail out of Wilmington Creek. He assumed the *Roebuck* was still aground on the shoal. He could then take the *Wasp* under cover of fog, dash past the British and beat a swift escape to the American lines. As he entered the Delaware, the fog lifted, undoing his plan for a stealthy escape, and a one hour chase ensued. Between nine and ten o'clock the galleys were sighted making their way downriver. Hamond prepared to fight and closed on the Americans, only to find that "he had less than six inches of water clearance over the shoal. Fearing a repetition of yesterday's mishap he withdrew downriver."[46]

Having traveled a considerable distance down the river, Hamond believed he had seen the last of the small fleet of galleys and ordered his ships

to anchor. He again prepared to replenish his water supply and make any needed repairs. At four o'clock in the afternoon the British captain was astonished to see the galleys once again relentlessly bearing down on him. He signaled his ships to weigh anchor and meet the enemy. However, the narrow channel afforded the large British warships little room to maneuver and, with the wind from the north, Hamond moved slowly down river.

Thinking the British were retreating, the galley crews took courage and closed within three-quarters of a mile. At this range their cannon fire was more accurate, inflicting extensive damage to the British ships, especially the *Roebuck*. The battle raged for nearly four hours as the combatants fired continuously, the thunderous report of their guns trumpeting the coming of the naval struggle. Once again the shores were lined with cheering spectators eager to see the wasp-like galleys destroy the King's ships. In response to their rebellious encourgment, Hamond "ordered several of the guns to be loaded with grape and round shot, which were fired at the Rebels (as the Captain and officers called them) who stood on the shore and banks."[47]

The battle lasted well into the evening at which time both sides ceased fire and evaluated the damage. The galleys were virtually unharmed with only a few men wounded. Damage to the *Roebuck* was substantial. The ship's carpenters took "forty of the row-galley's ball out" of her, and "the rigging, sails, and spars . . . were often struck, damaged, and cut."[48] "One eighteen-pound shot had entered an upper port, ruined the carriage, dismounted a nine-pound cannon, killed one man, and wounded two others." "Six were much hurt and burned by an eighteen-pound cartridge of powder taking fire, among whom was an acting lieutenant, and several were hurt by splinters."[49] The *Liverpool* did not escape unscathed. Its hull had been struck several times and her rigging

and sails were torn. The British anchored off Reedy Island while the Americans spent the night near New Castle.

The British spent the next three days making repairs and replenishing their supply of water. When this was completed Hamond moved his ships down river and into the bay. He sailed out to sea on May 16th. The galleys continued to guard the river, remaining in the vicinity of New Castle until word was received of the British departure.

The recent action on the Delaware made British intentions to capture Philadelphia a forgone conclusion. The Americans were sure the *Roebuck* had been sent to probe the defenses and report any weaknesses. Although the menace had been driven off, problems had been exposed. The city's brisk maritime trade had been viritually paralyzed during the brief struggle. "Twenty-one vessels, granted pilots between April 24th and May 18th, lay idle in the river awaiting an opportunity to fall down the bay. Most of them were on Congress' account, destined to Europe and the West Indies with cargoes which could be exchanged for warlike stores."[50] It was also clear that land fortifications had to be strengthened, especially on the New Jersey shore.

Early in May, 1776, the Committee of Safety had appointed John Reed as Clerk, Commissary of Stores, and Barrack Master, at Fort Island, to provide some organization and direction to the efforts already under way.[51] After the river battle, work on the fortification took on an urgency and construction proceeded rapidly. Reed and Proctor now worked together during the summer to expand the defenses on the island. They supervised the completion of the ten foot high zig-zag stone walls on the east and south. In addition, a palisades made of fifteen inch pine logs was constructed on the north, west, and south, which essentially turned the battery into a fort. Large wooden blockhouses were built at each of the fort's corners except the southeast where the stone wall

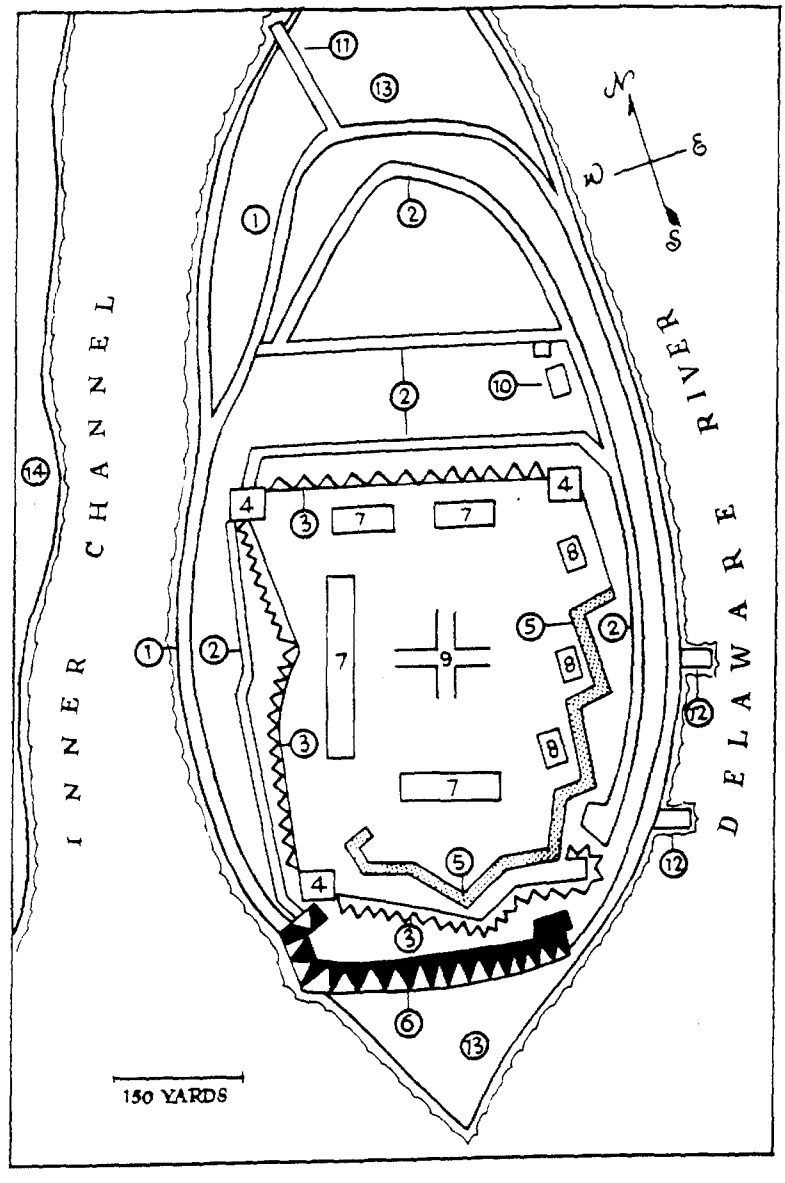


Fig. 5. Fort Mifflin. 1. Dikes; 2. Ditches, four feet wide; 3. Stockade; 4. Blockhouses; 5. Masonry wall; 6. Earth bank on which the main battery was constructed; 7. Barracks; 8. Latrines; 9. Defensive structure for last retreat in the middle of the fort; 10. Original cartakers house; 11. Wharf; 12. Docks; Meadows. Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 15.

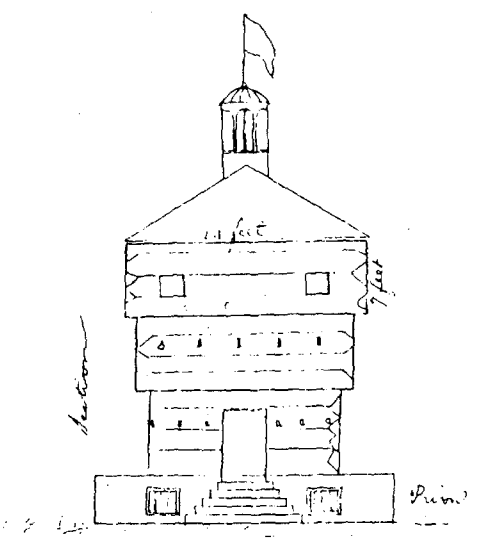


Fig. 6. A frontier blockhouse similar to those built at Fort Mifflin. Sketch by Colonel Villefranche, courtesy of U.S. Revolution Papers, American Antiquarian Society, as illustrated in Roberts, New York's Forts in the Revolution, 385.

was considered ample protection. Work on the barracks, auxiliary buildings, and battery platforms also continued. Futhermore, piers were ordered sunk off Fort Island, with a chain boom attached to block any egress through the chevaux-de-frise's secret channel.[52]

Because the entire island was very close to water level, workers were assigned the task of digging ditches and building dikes to prevent the island from being inundated by the river at high tide. The network of ditches were "so constructed that the fort can be laid under water at pleasure."[53] The work had became a continual struggle against erosion. The grazing of cattle and sheep on the island destroyed much of the grass that helped keep the earthen dikes intact, while the many muskrat holes caused them to leak.[54] Reed wrote about the problem in one of his reports: "The Banks of this Island on the west side in several places, is wash'd near half thro' which should be dubbed; there are a great number of Leaks many very large and dangerous, which on every high tide is liable to Increase."[55]

In July, six cannon were sent to Proctor which he was to mount on carriages and place on the main battery platforms.[56] One of the eighteen-pounders exploded when they were tested.[57] The remaining guns brought the strength of the main battery to one twelve-pounder, seven eighteen-pounders, and one thirty-two-pounder.[58] The battery bisected the southern tip of the island just outside the south stone wall and palisade. It was an earthen embankment with nineteen embrasures, and cannon platforms made of "nothing more than old spars and timber laid up in parallel lines and filled between with mud and dirt."[59] Facing down river, this battery was intended to protect the main channel and the chevaux-de-frise, while the thirty-two-pound cannon was positioned to cover the back or west channel and Carpenters Island. Additional firepower

was provided by fourteen eight-pound cannon mounted in the three blockhouses.[60]

Previously, in June, 1776, the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety had convinced the Continental Congress of the importance of a strong fortification at Billingsport, New Jersey, and persuaded them to pay all construction costs.[61] The Congress negotiated with Margaret M. Paul for the purchase of a parcel of riverfront land, taking legal title on July 5, 1776, of ninety-six acres for the sum of six hundred pounds, Pennsylvania currency.[62] The Committee of Safety then charged Robert Smith, the designer of the chevaux-de-frise, with the task of constructing a fort on the newly acquired land.

Smith began work on the parapet and ditches, but was more concerned with building barracks for the soldiers, shelters for his workers, and the new row of chevaux-de-frise. Newly appointed Superintendent General of Workmen, Colonel John Bull, and his engineer, Captain Blaitwaite Jones, supervised the construction of the fort. In September the Council of Safety (formerly the Committee of Safety) called on Philadelphia's militia to help with the construction at Billingsport in order "to put this City [Philadelphia] in a proper state of Defence."[63]

The approach of winter brought the usual cold weather and the consequential slowdown of construction at the forts. With the barracks still unfinished and provisions for the winter month in short supply, Reed, Proctor, Smith, and Bull had a difficult time persuading the workman to remain at work. To make matters worse the laborers demanded an increase in wages. Their problems were overshadowed in November, 1776, by the startling news that Fort Lee, which commanded the Hudson River from atop the New Jersey Palisades, had been abandoned. Washington was leading the remnants of the

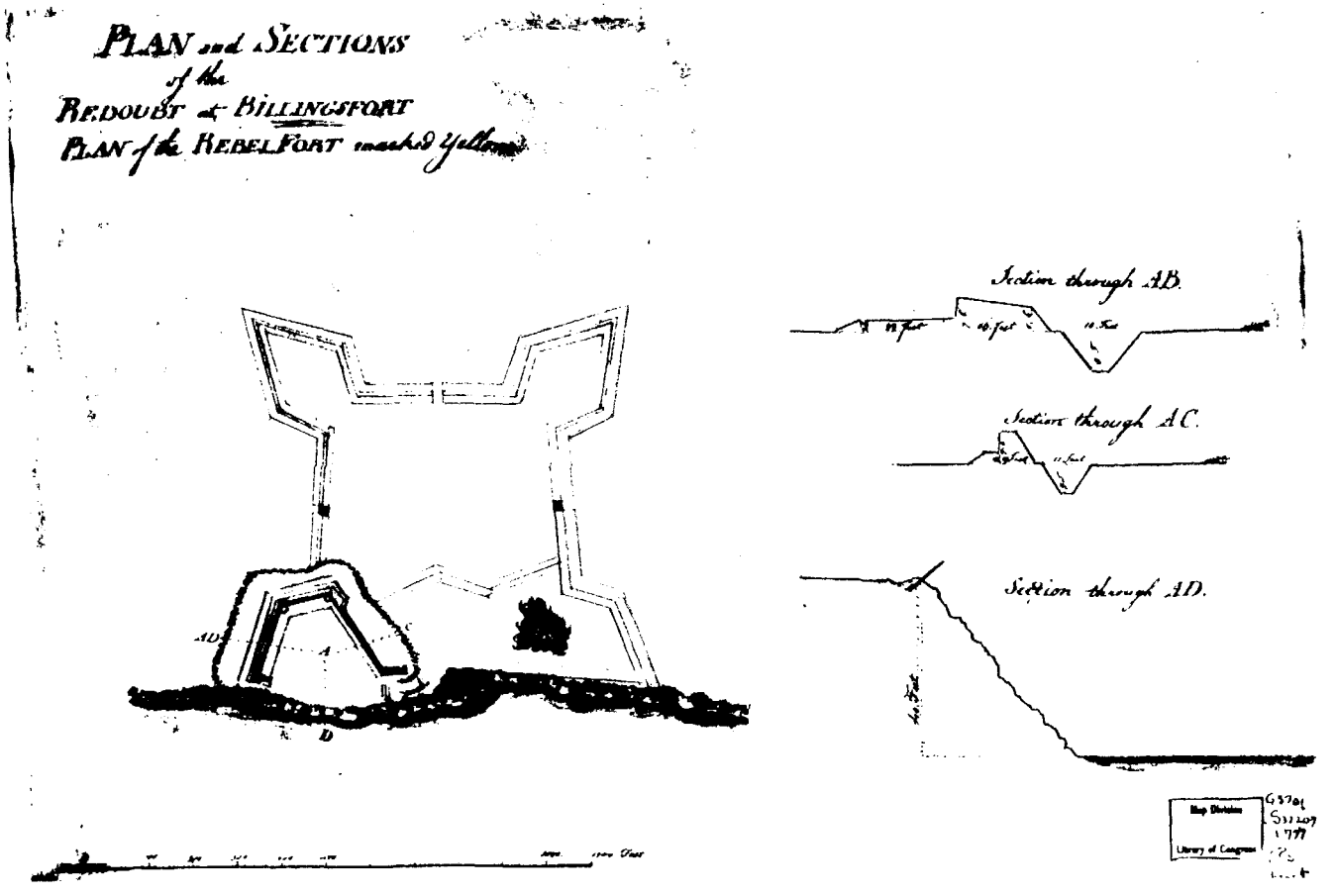


Fig. 7. Plan of Fort Billingsport. The drawing shows the reductions in size of the original large fort. The section of the fort marked A is the fort defended by the Americans in October, 1777. Three cross sections of the defenses are also provided. Peter Force Collection, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. From the Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, N.J.

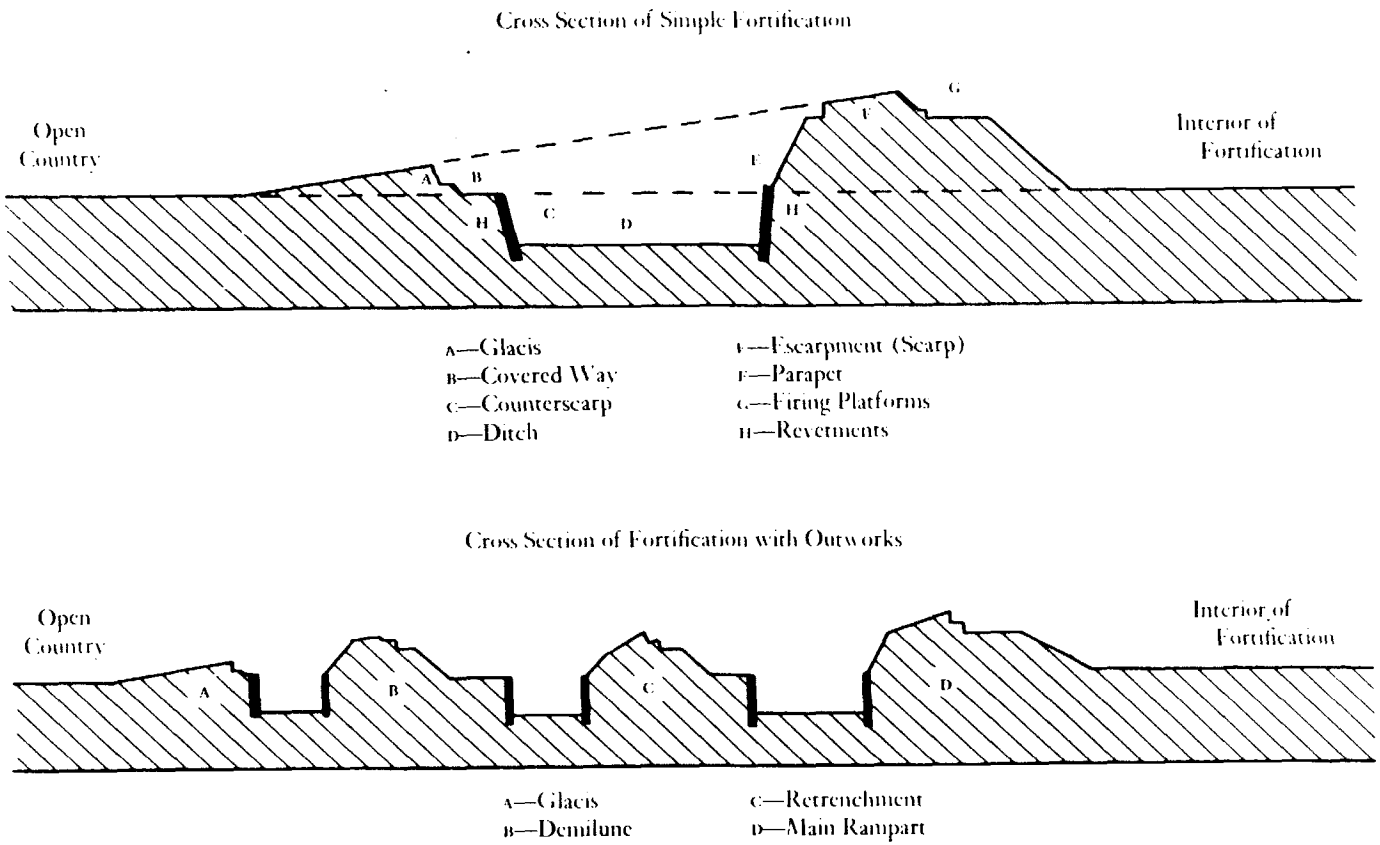


Fig. 8. Cross sections of typical eighteenth century fortifications. Roberts, New York's Forts in the Revolution, 466.

Continental army in a hasty retreat across New Jersey towards the Delaware River with the British army in close pursuit.[64]

Once more frenetic activity was evident at the forts in response to rumors and conjecture that the British might continue on to Philadelphia, while the British fleet would try to force its way through the still-unfinished river defenses before the river froze. As a precaution to deprive British and Hessian foraging parties of local supplies of food, owners of livestock along both sides of the river were to move their animals five miles inland.[65] Although Washington had brought his army across the Delaware to the relative safety of Pennsylvania, and within thirty miles of the capital, the inhabitants of the city felt far from secure. With Howe in Trenton, many residents left Philadelphia for the country. Others prematurely gave up the American cause and skulked out of the city to join the British general and renew their allegiance to the King.[66]

On December 13th, Howe ordered an end to campaigning for the winter and left for New York. He posted three regiments of the dreaded Hessians at Trenton and another two thousand at Bordentown to keep a watchful eye on Washington and the Delaware River. A string of cantonments and garrisoned towns were established across New Jersey to keep a line of communication open with headquarters in New York.[67]

Relieved and confident that Philadelphia was safe for the winter, the Council of Safety went about the business of assisting Washington. The Pennsylvania navy was ordered up the Delaware where they ferried men and supplies for the army, patrolled the river, reported enemy troop movements, and interdicted anyone suspected of colluding with the British. Men and supplies were also sent to Washington, including an artillery company from Proctor's Fort Island garrison.[68] Washington in turn sent General Israel Putnam to examine the area north of the city to prepare appropriate defenses. On December 22nd,

Putnam visited Proctor at Fort Island to examine the fortification and discuss the defenses south of Philadelphia. Putnam suggested that, "the Block houses at the Fort should be removed to Red-bank, to be fixed as redoubts," and linked together by earthen walls.[69] This idea proved unnecessary after Washington's stunning victories at Trenton and Princeton, and the subsequent withdrawal of British forces to eastern New Jersey.

On February 11, 1777, Robert Smith died. Four days later Colonel Bull was made Commandant of the Fortifications at Billingsport and Superintendent of the Works.[70] Bull was determined to finish the project that Smith had neglected. His plan for the fort was extensive, if not grandiose. The four-sided fort covered more than three and a half acres. It had huge bastions at each corner, earthen walls seven and a half feet high, and was surrounded by a ditch nine feet deep and eighteen feet wide. Armament consisted of four nine-pound and one twelve-pound cannon.[71] The fort would later be reduced to one third its original size by enclosing the two riverfront bastions with a connecting wall.[72] Eventually the fort would be reduced one final time to include only the northeast bastion.

In March, Hazelwood, now second in command of the Pennsylvania navy, began the building of a redoubt and barracks near the mouth of Darby Creek on Tinicum Island. Its four-gun battery would protect the back channel along the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware. Another small redoubt facing down river was built on Bush Island (Woodbury Island), located a few hundred yards off Red Bank. Two eighteen-pound cannon were moved to this site. Both positions would be abandoned and their guns removed, when the British captured Philadelphia.

In the spring of 1777, Bull was ordered to proceed to Red Bank and begin work on a new fortification. On April 16th he arrived with a few hundred

Pennsylvania militia and began work. The land appropriated for the fort was part of a farm owned by Quakers, James and Ann Whitall.[73] Selecting a site atop a steep bluff along the Delaware, his plan for the fort was once again far in excess of what was needed. The works were about three hundred fifty yards long and seventy-five yards wide. In each corner were large bastions. The earthen ramparts, capped with parapets, measured ten feet high and eighteen feet thick. Rows of sharpened poles of the fraise sloping out of the forts walls made it all the more formidable. To complete the defenses, a ditch, fifteen feet wide and twelve feet deep, was dug along the outside of the three landward walls. Fourteen cannon were moved into the fort.[74] Named after General Hugh Mercer, the fallen hero of the Battle of Princeton, Fort Mercer would also be reduced in size and play a significant role in the defense of the Delaware.

Philippe Charles Trouson du Coudray, a French general arrived in Philadelphia in June, 1777. The Continental Congress had bestowed upon him the title of Inspector General of Ordnances and Military Manufactories, and sent him, accompanied by General Thomas Mifflin, to inspect, evaluate, and recommend improvements to the defenses on the Delaware River. Within a few weeks Coudray presented his report to the Council who forwarded it to Congress. Coudray's opinion of the defenses were that they were ill conceived and poorly constructed. He criticized all three forts, but believed that Billingsport, commanding the narrowest part of the river channel, be the focus of the river defenses. He recommended that the fort be reduced to one-third its size and that most of the cannon at the other two forts be removed to Billingsport. A supporting battery of fifteen or twenty cannon was planned for Billings Island, portecting the west end of the chevaux-de-frise. Coudray believed that with support from the Pennsylvania navy, Billingsport would be the

most defensible position on the river.[75] By the middle of July, his plan was approved and work began at the fort in earnest.

When Washington arrived in Philadelphia on July 31, he asked Coudray for an update of his work. He also instructed Generals Nathanael Greene, Anthony Wayne, Henry Knox, and Colonel Joseph Reed to inspect the river defenses and report on their findings. Coudray's report reiterated his former position that Billingsport was the key to the defense, and Fort Mifflin (This is the first time the fort was referred to by this name) was situtated on an undefensible site.[76] Washington's officers were of a different opinion, the consensus being that Fort Island should be the main defensive position on the Delaware. Coudray took this as an affront to his military expertise which would lead to a polemic relationship between Washington and him.

Washington's own misgivings of the the Frenchman's defensive strategy led to his personal inspection of the river defenses. In August, after a careful review of both the upper and lower defensive lines, he drafted a letter to Congress explaining why the Fort Mifflin-Fort Mercer line of defense was the logical choice. He concluded that Fort Mifflin with its three lines of chevaux-de-frize was the key to blocking the river. It was difficult to assault by land, had substantial fortifications in place, could be reinforced and resupplyed quickly, and it was guarded by the Pennsylvania navy. Furthermore, its sister fortification, Fort Mercer, could protect the eastern end of the chevaux-de-frise, provide assistance and supplies, was more defensible than Billingsport, and enjoyed a closer proximity to the Continental Army, "which means the garrison might receive succors from time to time . . . ."[77]

Washington's attention was soon diverted from the river defenses to more pressing matters. He had received startling news of the sighting of Howe's fleet sailing up the Chesapeake Bay and immediately ordered his army

to move south to Delaware. All available Continental and militia forces were called upon to join with the main army. Consequently the garrisons of the river forts were stripped to a mere token force leaving them virtually defensless. The Pennsylvania navy's ships and galleys were ordered back above the upper chevaux-de-frise.

With Washington gone, an expedient Coudray once more tried to convince a nervous Council of Safety that Billingsport was the best place to mount a river defense. The Council's President, Thomas Wharton, did order some available militia to garrison the vacant forts and redoubts, but did not authorize any additional work on Billingsport.[78] On September 7th, a persistent Coudray wrote to Congress, expressing his concerns about Fort Mifflin. He would never receive a reply. While crossing the Schuylkill in a small boat Coudray fell overboard and drowned, ending any further divisiveness for Washington.[79]

On September 11th, Washington was defeated at Brandywine Creek and forced to withdraw towards Philadelphia. Exhorted by the government to defend the capital, and determined to keep his army intact, he refused all requests for troops to man Fort Mifflin and the other forts. He did, however, ask Hazelwood, now Commodore, "to take out of the Ships and the Row Gallies, two or three hundred Men and Garrison the fort with them until I can relieve them with some Continental Troops which I design as soon as possible."[80] He also wanted Hazelwood to circle Fort Island with galleys and collect any boats found along the river and take them to New Jersey.

Two days after the battle at Brandywine, Congress gave Washington complete control over the river forts and all defenses on the Delaware.[81] A force of one hundred Pennsylvania militia and two hundred New Jersey militia, under Colonel William Bradford of the Pennsylvania Navy Board, was sent to

garrison Fort Billingsport.[82] The complement at Fort Mifflin consisted of a mere thirty Continental artillerymen and fifteen militiamen.[83] Washington assigned command of Fort Mifflin to Colonel Heinrich (Baron) d'Arendt.[84] Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Smith was made second in command and ordered to Fort Mifflin with two hundred infantrymen and officers.[85] There were no troops assigned to Fort Mercer.

Smith and his men arrived at Fort Mifflin on September 26, 1777. On that same autumn day General Howe captured the American capital. Flush with the victory of his proud accomplishment, his triumphant celebration would be short lived. The ensuing struggle to break the seige of Philadelphia and open the Delaware River would consume men, supplies, and materiel. But more important than material losses would be the lose of time; time he could ill-afford to squander; time that would significantly alter the outcome of the war.

NOTES

[1]Lender, River War, 13.

[2]Originally referred to as Deep Water Island, then Mud Island, by 1775 the island was called Fort Island. In 1777 it was named Fort Mifflin.

[3]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:367.

[4]Ibid., 10:367-368.

[5]Ibid., 10:387-388.

[6]Ibid., 10:390,400,406,408,426.

[7]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 5; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:423. In the case of the Proctor brothers, the Committee's decision was as follows:

> Upon information to this Committee that Capt. Proctor & Lieut. Proctor, had behaved in a manner unbecoming officers, to Capt. Williams and Lieutenant Watson, of Colonel Bull's Battalion, and this Committee have heard the parties and their evidences, and upon full consideration, unanimously agreed that the charge was fully proved, and recommended to the said Capt. Proctor and Lieut. Proctor, to make a suitable acknowledgment to the parties injured, which they have peremptorily refused to comply with; It is therefore resolved, that the said Capt. Proctor and Lieut. Proctor, be dismissed the service.

[8]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:337-338; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 29-30, 413-415.

[9]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:432.

[10]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 7.

[11]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:437, 490; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 7.

[12]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:465.

[13]William Bell Clark, Lambert Wickes, Sea Raider and Diplomat (New Haven, Conn.: 1932), 15-16. Hereafter cited as Clark, Lambert Wickes.; Hazard, ed. Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:736-737.

[14]James S. Biddle, ed., Autobiography of Charles Biddle (Philadelphia, Pa.: 1883), 67, as cited in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 16. Hereafter cited as Biddle, Charles Biddle.

[15]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:552; Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:738. An express rider arrived in Philadelphia on April 30th to confirm the freeing of the *Roebuck*.

[16]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:743; Clark, Lambert Wickes, 18-19; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 41-42.

[17]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:557.

[18]Ibid., 10:558.

[19]Ibid., 10:557.

[20]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:739; Clark, Lambert Wickes, 18.

[21]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:557.

[22]Clark, Lambert Wickes, 18.

[23]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:557-558; Clark, Lambert Wickes, 19; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 41. Captain Read took command because Commodore Andrew Caldwell was too ill and bedridden.

[24]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:558.

[25]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:789.

[26]Clark, Lambert Wickes, 21. Captain Wickes took his orders from the Continental Marine Committee. An unfortunate aspect of this incident was that the Marine Committee had sent the order to the Committee of Safety directing Wickes to allow his Continental sailors to fill out the undermanned galleys. However, the Marine Committee's orders were not included with the dispatch carrying the Committee of Safety's orders to Read.

[27]Ibid., 22.

[28]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 44; Clark, Lambert Wickes, 22.

[29]Admiralty, Secretary, Letters, vol. 487 (London: Public Records Office, 1776), November 28, 1776, as quoted in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 24. Hereafter cited as Admiralty, Secretary, Letters.

[30]Clark, ed., Naval Documents, 4:1470; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:563.

[31]Admiralty, Master's Logs, Class 52; H.M.S. *Roebuck, Pearl, Burford* (London: Public Records Office, 1776), May 6 & 7, 1776, as cited in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 24. Hereafter cited as Admiralty, Master's Logs; Pennsylvania Journal & Weekly Advertiser, May 8, 1776; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 41.

[32]Mary Barney, Biographical Memoir of the Late Commodore Joshua Barney (Boston, Mass.: 1832), 39-44, as quoted in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 24-25. Hereafter cited as Barney, Joshua Barney.

[33]Admiralty, Master's Logs, *Roebuck*, May 6 & 7, 1776, as cited in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 24.

[34]Admiralty, Captain's Logs, Class 51: H.M.S. *Roebuck, Fowey, Bristol, Solebay, Liverpool, Orpheus, Kingfisher, Shark, Pearl, Burford, Foudroyant.* (London: Public Records Office,1776), 51/796, Journal of H.M.S. *Roebuck*, Captain Andrew Snape Hamond, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 45. Hereafter cited as Admiralty, Captain's Logs.

[35]"Depositions of William Barry and John Emmes," Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 29, 1776. William Barry and John Emmes were prisoners on the Roebuck during the engagement with the Pennsylvania Navy. They provide detailed firsthand accounts of the battle.

[36]Biddle, ed., Charles Biddle, 84-86, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 46.

[37]"Depositions of William Barry and John Emmes", Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 29, 1776.

[38]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:748.

[39]Barney, Joshua Barney , 39-44, as cited in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 26-27.

[40]Constitutional Gazette, May 11, 1776, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 46; Force, ed. American Archives, 4th ser., 6:408.

[41]"Depositions of William Barry and John Emmes," Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 29, 1776.

[42]Admiralty, Master's Logs, *Roebuck*, May 6 & 7, 1776, as cited in Clark, Lambert Wickes, 26.

[43]"Depositions of William Barry and John Emmes," Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 29, 1776.

[44]Ibid., June 29, 1776.

[45]Ibid., June 29, 1776.

[46]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 49.

[47]"Depositions of William Barry and John Emmes," Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 29, 1776.

[48]Ibid., June 29, 1776.

[49]Ibid., June 29, 1776.

[50]Egle, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd ser., 1:537-538.

[51]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:553, 567-569.

[52]Ibid., 10:648,658-659, 699, 718, 723, 750, 784.

[53]Joseph Plumb Martin, Private Yankee Doodle: Being a Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier, ed. George E. Scheer (New York: Eastern Acorn Press, 1962), 86. Hereafter cited as Martin, Private Yankee Doodle.

[54]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:23, 25, 26.

[55]Ibid., 5:23.

[56]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:630.

[57]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 4:790.

[58]Colonial Office Papers, 5/95, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 15.

[59]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 88.

[60]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 15.

[61]Kathy Dodson, "Billingsport: Washington Never Slept There," (National Park, N.J.: 1987), 2-3. Hereafter cited as Dodson, "Billingsport". Billingsport, or Billing's Point as it appears on many old maps, was named for Edward Byllynge, an early Quaker proprietor of New Jersey. A portion of his estate was sold to the Pauls, and became known as Billing's Point plantation. Margaret M. Paul, widow of John Paul, was the owner of the property in 1776; Worthington C. Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: 1904-1937), 5:443. Hereafter cited as Ford, ed., Continental Congress.

[62]Woodbury, New Jersey, Gloucester County Courthouse, Deed Book C, page 280, Deed of Margaret Paul to 13 United Colonies of America, July 5, 1776. This is thought to be the first land purchased by the United States after the Declaration of Independence; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:625, 631, 645.

[63]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 65; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 10:652, 700, 729, 730, 734, 753, 755, 770. The Committee of Safety reorganized on July 22, 1776, and became the new Council of Safety.

[64]Arthur C. Mack, The Palisades of the Hudson (New York: Walking News, 1982), 13-23; William F. Conway, "Fort Lee - The Post at Burdett's Ferry," Bergen County History (1975), 7-22; Claire K. Tholl, "Fort Constitution and/or Fort Lee," Bergen County History (1975), 23-26; John Spring, "The 1776 British Landing at Closter," Bergen County History (1975), 27-42.

[65]Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 11:4, 21.

[66]Ward, War of the Revolution, 1:286-287.

[67]Montross, Rag, Tag and Bobtail, 159.

[68]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:129-130; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 11:25.

[69]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:130.

[70]Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, "Billingsport: The Forgotten Fort," in Sons of the Revolution (Maryland: 1977), 7. Hereafter cited as Simmons, "Billingsport"; Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 11:125.

[71]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 8.

[72]Simpson, Byllynge Point Saga, 26.

[73]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 39; Florence DeBuff Friel, ed., The Diary of Job Whitall, Gloucester County, New Jersey, 1775-1779 (Woodbury, N.J.: Gloucester County Historical Society, 1992), 72-73 Hereafter cited as Friel, ed., Job Whitall.

[74]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 153.

[75]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:360-363. I have included both Coudray's and Washington's full reports to Congress on the defenses of the Delaware River to illustrate the difference of opinion between the two men. Washington's report is in note 77.

Observations on the Forts intended for the Defence of the two passages of the River Delaware.

Fort at Billingsport

1. As to the Situation, it is well chosen, it commands the River in the narrowest Part I have seen, and is the most capable of Defence.

2. As to the Plan or Projection, it is very bad. The object in view ought to have been to defend the Chain of Chevaux-de-Frize, which bar the River. For that purpose 30 or 40 Cannon well placed would have been sufficient. The edge of the Scarp would have afforded Room enough; it was there fore necessary to shut the gorge of the Battery, so that the Enemy might be obliged to land and open Trenches, in order to take possession of it. And in the particular circumstances in which this Fort was begun, it was necessary in 6 weeks or two months to have had something finished to answer the end proposed. But to complete it agreeable to the present circumference, and to finish the half-moon necessary to command the Height on the opposite side of the River, would require at least four or five Months, provided it were well constructed and a great number of men were employed, in as much as the soil is the most unfavourable that can be met with.

Besides the Length of Time, which the plan of this work would require in the present situation of affairs, another inconvenience attends it, which is, that it would require for its defence, a more numerous Garrison than could be spared from the Army, for it would require at least 2000 men, as , from the Badness of the soil, the Enemy's Cannon would soon make great Destruction, which must be repaired every Night, to prevent the works from being stormed.

3. As to the Execution of these works, I find it to be without judgment. The Planks and Piles to support the sand are not half thick enough. The Piles instead of being inclined to bear against the Bank, have been fixed perpendicular and are already overturned. Instead of placing the Batteries destined to fire on the River, on the Border of the Scarp, they have placed them 7 or 8 Fathoms back, which removes them farther from their objects, and exposes them to the Enemy's attempts at the bottom of the Scarp. And suppose the works completed, only one Piece of Cannon can do Execution; instead of making use of the ground which forms the Border of the Scarp, and which is firm on the superficies, and supported, at least for some depth by the Roots of Trees which grow there, they have raised a great part of the Breastwork with loose sand in the manner before mentioned, and have taken the trouble to sink a Ditch, which might have been spared, as the Scarp answered the Purpose. From whence it appears that no dependence can be put upon this work, as it cannot be finished in time and requires too great a number of men and artillery for its Defense.

To defend the Chain of Chevaux-de-Frize which bars the River opposite to the Fort, all dependence for the present must be on the Floating-Batteries and Gondolas which are ready, or which can soon be so. Some use however can be make of a Part of the Fort, of which we have been speaking; and for this purpose there should be a battery fixed in

each of the two Demi-Bastions on the side of the River, and by cutting those two Demi-Bastions by the Gorge and the angle of the Flank, they will each be transformed into a Redoubt with four Fronts, each of these Redoubts may be secured against a Coupe de main by covering them with a double Ditch and Palisades in the bottom of the Ditch.

It will then be necessary to level all those Parts of the Fort which may serve to cover the Enemy.

These two Works by means of 1500 or 2000 Labourers well directed may be executed in 20 Days; and in my opinion this is all that can be done in the present situation of affairs.

I would advise to hazard in those Redoubts only 4 or 500 men with 25 or 30 Pieces of Cannon, still observing that it is not upon them, but on the Floating Batteries supported by those Redoubts that the defence of the Chevaux-de-Frieze depends.

In times less urgent than the present, a better use might be made of this Place, but by reason of the Badness of the soil, nothing solid can be constructed but by extreme expense.

Unless shoal Water prevents the Enemy from going to the opposite side of the River, it will be necessary to construct on the opposite Island [Billingsport Island], another battery of 15 or 20 guns, which must also be fortified. This may be performed with little expense on account of the goodness of the Soil and Facility of making use of the River to cover it by wide and deep Ditches.

The Fort

The fort [Fort Mifflin] is badly situated; the Battery which forms its principal object is improperly directed, which renders Half the guns useless: The embrazures are badly constructed, too open on the inside, and not sufficiently open without, some are directed obliquely without any motive; the interior slopings are too straight, and by this means begin already to tumble down.

This Fort cannot prevent the passage of the Enemy, and when they have passed, it can be of no use, consequently it can answer no valuable purpose.

Fort at Red Bank

This fort is better conceived, directed, and executed than either of those above mentioned. It does the more Honour to Colonel Bull, as he had no other assistance than natural good-sense unenlightened by theory. This is perceivable from a view of it. There are indeed Faults in the plan, and in the execution, but they do not render it useless as the two former forts. If we may judge by the proportion of the work already finished, it is reasonable to expect the whole will be in a state of Defense in the Course of a Fortnight.

What unfortunately renders this Fort of little or no consequences is this, it's object is, and can be no other than to prevent the Enemy from taking Possession of the Height upon which it is situated, in order to establish Batteries and thereby oblige the gallies and Floating-Batteries employed in supporting the Chain of Chevaux-de-Frize, to retreat. But this Case could never happen, unless the Enemy should be exposed to a fire

from the Floating-Batteries and gallies which they could not silence with their Ships. This would oblige them to land men and artillery, to occupy by Force, the Height in Question, and then fire on lthe Floating-Batteries and gallies occupied in supporting the chain. But the situation of the place will not permit such an Idea; for the river is here so wide that if the States had four times as many gallies, Ships, and Batteries as they have at this place and above it, the Enemy we must think, would still have a superior Fire, as the width of the River would allow them to employ a greater number of Ships. If by this means, they succeed in beating off the Gallies and Floating-Batteries, it cannot be supposed they will put themselves to the trouble of landing to attack Colonel Bull's Fort.

Therefore I look upon this Fort as useless with Respect to the object for which it was intended, viz., to contribute in obstructing the pasage of the River, and preventing the enemy from possessing the Height it commands.

This passage is much too wide to be defended by the present means. I would therefore advise to carry all the means of Defense to the pasage at Billingsport. This place is incomparably more capable of support, and it is better to make a reputable stand in one place, than to defend two in an indifferent manner. The Gallies and Floating-Batteries removed thither, will make up for the Insufficiency of the intrenched Battery, which I would propose to substitute in place of the present Fort [Fort Mifflin], and of that which I still think ought to be erected at the Point of the Island, the River being much narrower in this place than in that of which we have been speaking. The Gallies and Batteries may more easily make Head against the Enemy who will not be able to make so great a Fire, and will be obliged to bear a much nearer one, and better supported, than could be opposed to them at Red-Bank. The cannon at this Fort might partly serve for the batteries at Billingsport. I would not however advise to demolish the Battery at Red-Bank. But to leave there two or three of the poorest of the Cannon.

I would also advise to remove from this Line no more Cheveaux de Frize than would be judged necessary to secure by three Rows, the Passage of Billingsport.

I also advise to preserve Colonel Bull's Fort. Thereby you may induce the Enemy to believe they would have a second Line of obstacles to encounter after they had surmounted the first; and besides for another Reason, which appears to me a very important one, especially in the present Circumstances of Affairs, the Government would escape the censure of Inconsideration and mistakes, which the evil-minded are always ready to pass, and the People to adopt, when they see works, which have been erected with much Labour and expense, pulled down. For the same Reason, I would propose to preserve in Colonel Jones's Fort, all that will not be of service to the Enemy in Case they should attack the Redoubts, which I think ought to be substituted in Place of this Fort.

My Thoughts on the above Subjects, as here expressed, seem the better founded, as they appeared to conform with the Ideas of General Arnold, to whom I had the Honour to communicate them, as far as the

Difference of Language would permit; and also with those of Mr. Duer and Mr. Shea, by whom I had the advantage of being understood.

[76]Worthington C. Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia in 1777 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Historical Printing Club, 1897)., 5-30.

[77]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:45-53.

To THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

Head Quarters, Camp near German Town, August 10, 1777.

Sir: The disappearance of the Enemy's Fleet for so many days, rendering it rather improbable that they will again return, I have thought it advisable to remove the Army back to Coryels, where it will be near enough to succour Philadelphia, should the Enemy, contrary to appearances, still make that the object of their next operations; and will be so much more conveniently situated to proceed to the northward, should the event of the present ambiguous and perplexing situation of things call them that way. I was the more inclined to this step, as the nearness of the Army to the city, beside other disadvantages, afforded a temptation both to Officers and men, to indulge themselves in licenses inconsistent with discipline and order, and consequently of a very injurious tendency.

But before my departure, I esteem it my duty to communicate to Congress the result of my examination into the nature of the River defence, proper to be adopted, according to the means in our possession, to prevent the Success of any attempt upon Philadelphia, by water. I therefore beg leave to lay before Congress what appears to me most eligible, considering all circumstances and comparing my own observations, with the different opinions of the Gentlemen, whom I consulted on the occasion.

It is generally a well-founded Maxim, that we ought to endeavor to reduce our defence, as much as possible, to a certainty, by collecting our Strength and making all our preparations at one point, rather than to risk its being weak and ineffectual every where, by dividing our attention and force to different objects. In doing this, we may disable ourselves from acting with sufficient vigor any where, and a misfortune in one place, may pave the way for a similar one in another. In our circumstances we have neither men, cannon, nor any thing else to spare, and perhaps cannot with propriety hazard them on objects, which being attended with the greatest success, we can promise ourselves, can be productive of only partial and indecisive advantages, and which may possibly fail of the end proposed, may have some serious ill-consequences, and must at all events have some disadvantages.

It is then to be considered, where our defence can be most effectually made; whether at Bilingsport, or at Fort Island. It appears to me, that the last deserves greatly the preference. Bilingsport has but one row of Chevaux de frize, fort Island has three, and in addition to them, a boom and another chevaux de frize, ready to be sunk in the channel, on the approach of the enemy; of course the obstructions in this respect are four times as great at the one as at the other. The Gallies and floating batteries,

that could be brought for the defence of the chevaux de frize at Bilingsport, would be unable to Maintain their Station, when once the enemy were in possession of the commanding ground on the Jersey side, to which they would be entirely exposed, and notwithstanding the works raising there, even supposing them complete, the strongest advocates for making our defence in this place, do not pretend that the event can be protracted, more than fifteen or twenty days at most; at the end of which time, we should be obliged, and leave it in the Power of the enemy to remove or destroy the chevaux de frize at pleasure. Nor is it by any means certain, that a single row of chevaux de frize would be an impenetrable barrier to the enemy ships. Experiments have been made, that lead to a contrary supposition, and if they should hazard one, which it might be worth their while to do, with some of their less valuable Ships, under favour of a leading breeze and tide, and should succeed in it; the consequence might be the loss of our gallies and floating batteries, which I apprehend might be intercepted; and with the assistance of their gallies and small armed vessels, taken, and would greatly weaken the opposition we might otherwise give, at Fort Island, and tend powerfully to render it abortive. But if they should not attempt this, contenting themselves with safer tho' slower operations, I have already observed, that it is agreed on all hands, in fifteen or twenty days, they would be able to possess themselves, of infallible means of frustrating our opposition there, by the capture of our works; and if we add to this, that it might very possibly happen in less time; if from no other cause, yet from the garrison being intimidated, by a consciousness of its own inferiority and inability to support itself, against a so much superior force of numbers, which might occasion a conduct destructive to itself, there will remain no sufficient reasons to justify the making this the principal point of defence.

At Fort island the boom and chevaux de frize are an ample security against any forcible impression of the enemy's ships, which it would be imprudent in them to attempt. On the Jersey Side, the situation of the grounds is such, that the gallies, floating batteries and forts employed in the defence of the obstructions, would have little to fear from any batteries erected there. Red Bank seems, by its elevation, to be the only advantageous spot for annoying them; but as it is computed to be above 1900 Yards from Fort island, the distance is rather too great to allow any battery, raised there, to act with so much effect as to be able to silence our fire. On this side, the ground by dykes and sluices may be laid under water, to so considerable an extent, as to leave no danger of our River force being annoyed from thence; for which purpose, suitable preparations ought at once to be made against it may be necessary to carry them into effect.

But tho' a Battery upon Red Bank would not, in my apprehensions, be able to prevent the efficacy of our defence or give any material disturbances to Fort Island in particular, yet it might serve to make the situation of some of our gallies rather uneasy, and this perhaps makes it worth while to pre-occupy it, in order to keep it out of the Enemy's hands, erecting a small but strong work there, capable of containing about two

hundred Men with six or eight pieces of light cannon, and a proportionable quantity of stores. As the approaches to it are difficult, on account of the adjacent creeks and a communication can be kept open, between it and our army, by which means the garrison might receive succours from time to time, though we could not expect to make it impregnable, yet we should have a prospect of holding it much longer than we could the work at Bilingsport. In the position, which from my present view of it, I should think it best for our Army to take, the left wing of it would be nearly opposite to Red Bank, and therefore in a condition to relieve and support it; whereas Bilingsport, being more remote, from the probable position of the army and detached from any other work, could not easily derive any assistance from without, and must rely wholly upon its own strength.

Either at Bilingsport or at Fort Island, I believe, there is not much to be apprehended from the fire of the enemy's ships unaided by land batteries: For as by the information of those who ought to be acquainted with the fact, not more than three ships can act abreast at a time, at either place; and as the gallies, not requiring the same depth of water, can extend themselves at pleasure, and besides carry a superior weight of Metal to that which frigates commonly have, a much superior fire could be opposed to them, than any they could bring; and from the difference of size and make between the frigates and gallies, to much better effect than theirs. The comparative extent of the River at Bilingsport and at Fort Island has been assigned as a motive of preference to the former, the river being narrower there than at the latter, and supposed to admit of fewer ships operating at a time; but as it is asserted by the Gentlemen in the River department, that the sand banks and shallowness of the River in most places near Fort Island, compensate for the width of it and make it impossible for more than three ships to act at a time, this reason for preferring the position at Bilingsport seems to have no foundation. And if we consider, that our whole force of gallies and floating batteries would be collected at Fort Island, assisted by the fort itself, and that it would not be safe to trust them all out, for the defence at Bilingsport, for fear of the disaster already suggested: it seems evident enough that this is the place where our defence may be most successfully made.

One of the weightiest considerations with me, is, that our Army as before intimated, could more conveniently cooperate with the defence by water here, than at Bilingsport. The ground on this side is better situated here, than at the other place; and the army being so much nearer the city, it is so much the less likely, that the enemy should be able, by a circuitous route, to fall into the rear of it and Separate it from the city; which is a circumstance that ought carefully to be attended to.

Some Gentlemen are of Opinion, that our principal dependance ought to be upon Fort Island and its appendages; but at the same time, that we should make a part of our defence at Bilingsport; proposing for that purpose, that the works there should be continued in the new contracted scale to be garrisoned by four or five hundred Men. The reasons for this are, that it would serve to delay the enemy and give our army time to come up, should it be at any distance, and that it would prevent those

disagreeable impressions, which never fail to accompany the abandoning works that have been once raised, and plans that have been once in execution; especially when the persons concerned in the defence of them, repose a degree of confidence in them; which is said to be the case in the present instance. But these reasons may perhaps not be so conclusive as 'tis imagined; for 'tis a question, whether if our army was so remote, as to make such a delay necessary, the Enemy would embarrass themselves with removing the water obstructions in the first place; but would not rather debark and make a rapid March by land, possessing themselves of the city and of those positions which would make the surrender of the gallies &c in some sort a natural consequence; and it is worthy of consideration, whether the abandoning the works begun, at this time, which will probably allow some leisure, for any disagreeable impressions it might make to be effaced will not be less injurious, than the abandoning them hereafter, when they have cost more expense time and labour, and in the critical moment of an attack, when every misfortune and the loss of the most inconsiderable post is too apt to have a much worse influence upon the mind, than the real importance of it will justify. Add to this, the possibility that the garrison, dismayed at the approach of numbers so superior to their own, might not answer the end expected from them, and might even be lost by their timidity; the certainty of losing the cannon after the time limited for the defence, and thereby weakening that of the upper position; the chance of losing the gallies and floating batteries, requisite for covering the chevaux de frize, by a hazardous and successful attempt to break through them, and the garrison with them, which would fall of course upon such an event. It is however submitted to Congress to balance the advantages and disadvantages and determine accordingly. I would only beg leave to give it clearly as my opinion, that our principal dependance ought to be upon Fort island and the obstructions there, and that Bilingsport ought not, by any means to be defended, more than as a secondary object.

And to that end, I would recommend, that the works on Fort Island, which on their present construction are, by no means calculated for the defence of the Chevaux De Frize, be immediately altered and adapted to that purpose, taking care at the same time to make them defensible with a small number of men against any sudden attempt to land in boats and carry them by assault.

But whatever scheme is pursued, I could wish the greatest diligence and dispatch may be used in bringing it to maturity, for though the danger which lately threatened seems to have subsided, there is no knowing how soon it may return, and certainly it will be prudent to do every thing in our power to be prepared for it, as we can lose nothing by being so, and may lose a great deal by neglecting to improve the interval of leisure they have given us, should it be their intention to revisit this quarter. As the means to this, it will be necessary to furnish Mr. Du Coudray, to whom the superintendency of those works has been entrusted, with a competent number of workmen, tools and other things he may want, to enable him to carry them on with propriety, ease and expedition.

On the whole, I am of opinion, that the obstructions in the River, with the help of the gallies, floating batteries, and with tolerable industry to put the land works in a proper state, will be extremely formidable to the enemy, and authorize a reasonable expectation of their being effectual. The fire ships also will contribute to this end, for though there are many obstacles that render their success precarious, and a happy concurrence of circumstances is necessary towards it any of which failing, may disappoint the project, and there is therefore no room to be sanguine, yet there is some probability of its succeeding, and they will be at least an embarrassment and terror to the enemy, and will oblige them to use precautions, inconvenient to them and serviceable to us.

As an accurate knowledge of the Country is essential to a good defence, and as the Enemy's approach may be sudden and we may be called to act, without having time, when it happens, to examine it sufficiently, if it is not done beforehand; it would answer a valuable purpose, to have it immediately carefully reconnoitred, and sketches taken of all the landing places, great roads, and bye-paths, encamping grounds, heights, rivers, creeks, morasses, and every thing that it can be of any importance to know. Marcus Hook seems to be the most advanced place, at which it is conjectured the enemy will land; the survey should therefore comprehend all the country between that and Philadelphia. Mr. Du Coudray has offered his service with his Engineers, to do this business, if authorized by Congress, only requiring that they may be supplied with horses. If Congress approve of it I shall be glad they may be desired to enter upon it, without loss of time.

[78]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:591.

[79]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 23-24.

[80]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:256.

[81]Washington, George Washington Papers, Reel 44, September 13, 1777, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 119.

[82]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 26-27.

[83]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:572-573.

[84]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:256-257.

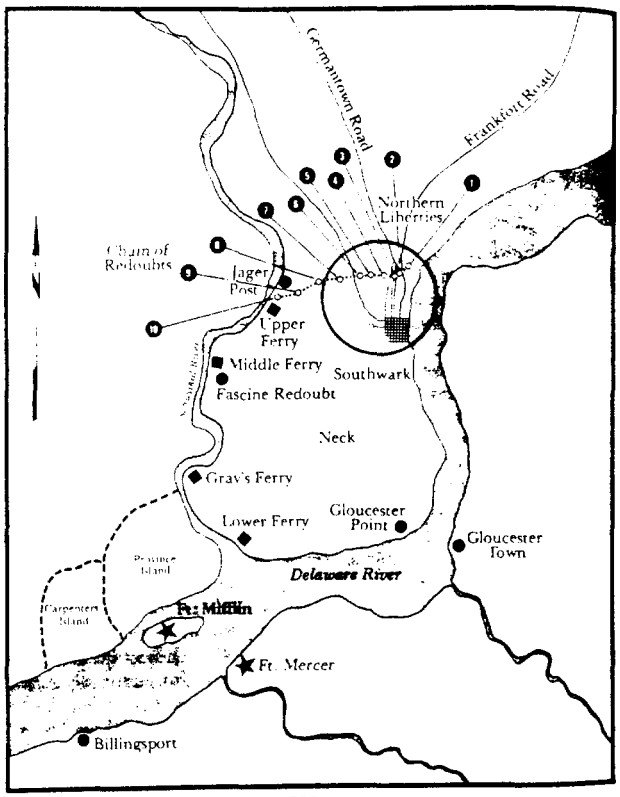
[85]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 24; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:260-261.

CHAPTER 4

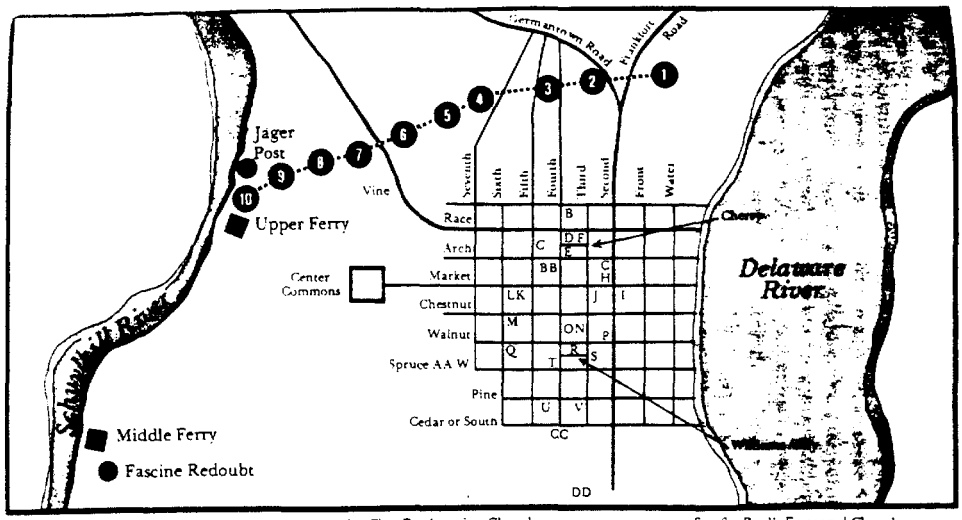
THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DELAWARE

Howe's capture of Philadelphia prompted Washington to formulate plans for a siege of the city. Although Washington had suffered defeat at Brandywine and loss of the capital, he predicted victory when many saw disaster, because he realized the British had placed themselves in a precarious position. He recognized that the key to victory was to deny Howe a means to resupply his army. The British supply ships were waiting down river near Chester, halted by the first line of chevaux-de-frise. Wagons could transport supplies the twelve miles to Philadelphia, but the route provided ample cover for the opportunistic Americans to ambush them. An overland supply route to the Chesapeake through American held countryside, would be long, slow and dangerous. It would also require protection by more men than Howe could spare. The other overland route, across American held New Jersey to New York, was even more hazardous. Furthermore, Philadelphia was located at the northern part of a peninsula formed by the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, confining the British to the city and a narrow strip of land. The British were virtually trapped. If Washington could keep the Delaware closed until it froze in December, he could defeat Howe, or at the very least, force him to evacuate the city under most uncomfortable conditions.

The British had, upon entering Philadelphia, immediately prepared to defend the city against an American attack. Captain John Montresor, chief engineer, and designer of Fort Mifflin, hastily erected three batteries along the



Philadelphia and environs 1777 1778



A – British Barracks
B – St. George's Methodist Church
C – St. Michael's Lutheran Church
D – German Reformed Church
E – Zion Lutheran Church
F – Mickveh Israel Synagogue
G – Baptist Church
H – Christ Church
I – London Coffee House
J – First Presbyterian Church
K – Howe's Headquarters
L – Galloway Residence
M – State House (Independence Hall)
N – Carpenter's Hall
O – Friend's Meeting House
P – City Tavern
Q – New Gaol
R – St. Joseph's Catholic Church
S – St. Paul's Episcopal Church
T – St. Mary's Catholic Church
U – 3rd Presbyterian Church (Old Pine)
V – St. Peter's Episcopal Church
W – Pennsylvania Hospital
AA – Bettering House
BB – College of Philadelphia
CC – Southwark Theatre
DD – Wharton Mansion

City of Philadelphia 1777-1778

Fig. 9. Philadelphia and the protective screen of redoubts erected by Montresor during the 1777-1778 occupation. Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 166-167.

riverfront consisting of "6 medium 12 Pounders and 4 Royal Howitzers."[1] Defensive positions "forming a semi-circle" were established to ensure a protective screen for the city's occupation force. Howe and the main army remained at Germantown. The following day, September 27th, Montresor began work on a chain of redoubts to defend Philadelphia, "extending along the heights from Delaware to Schuylkill, North of the city."[2]

As soon as the city was secured, General Howe began plans to capture the American forts while Admiral Howe concentrated on the removal of the chevaux-de-frise. The significance of opening the Delaware and the critical situation the army would be forced into, should this not be accomplished in a timely manner, was not lost on the Howes.[3] They believed that if the army and navy worked in concert, the river defenses could be forced to surrender and American resistance would be destroyed, and the army resupplied.

Of crucial importance to the river defenses was Fort Mifflin. The fort was intended to command the main channel and protect the chevaux-de-frise, not to contest an assault from Philadelphia. Consequently this part of the fort was quite weak and vulnerable to land attack. In order to protect the poorly fortified portion of the fort facing the back channel, Washington had ordered Colonel Joseph Penrose to cut the dikes and flood Carpenters and Province Islands.[4] He mistakenly believed that this would prevent the British from erecting batteries that could threaten Fort Mifflin. However, after the islands were flooded, there were areas and dikes that remained above water, providing solid ground for the British cannon.[5]

When Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Smith arrived at Fort Mifflin to assume command, he was dismayed by the deplorable situation at the fort and the condition of the men of the garrison. The commander was Colonel Lewis Nicola, "with about 60 of his Regiment of Invalids and two Companies of Artillery

of thirty each."[6] Immediately, Smith tried to assert his authority by giving Nicola orders concerning his men and the fort. Nicola would not acknowledge any orders given by a lower ranking officer. After several disagreements, Nicola withdrew his regiment from the fort. The disputes with Nicola would be characteristic of Smith's contentious relationship with many officers while at Fort Mifflin.[7]

When it was learned that the British had established batteries along the riverfront, a meeting of State and Continental Naval captains was held. It was agreed to send a flotilla to investigate. Captain Charles Alexander of the twenty-four gun Continental frigate *Delaware* would be in command of the mission. Accompanying the *Delaware* were the eight-gun Continental sloop *Fly*, the ten-gun State ship *Montgomery*, and four galleys.[8] Alexander was instructed to warn the British to stop the building of batteries in the city and to fire on them if they refused. He was also to remove all boats from along the river and send them down to Fort Mifflin.[9]

At eight-thirty in the morning of the 27th, the American flotilla approached Philadelphia. As soon as they were in range two British batteries began to fire. "Extremely well directed" fire raked the *Delaware.*[10] Captain Francis Downman of the Royal Artillery was in charge of the lower battery. He recalled the Delaware received "some shot and shell which set her on fire, the people were thrown into great disorder, neglected the management of the sails, and she ran aground within 250 yards" of his position.[11] Alexander had been either trying to avoid the British fire or was trying to turn guns to bear on the batteries when the ship got stuck in the shallows. In spite of the dire predicament, Alexander continued to fire on the British. Finally, with his ship damaged and on fire, he surrendered. The British then trained their guns on the remaining American vessels. The *Fly* was hit several times and her foremast was shot away, after

which she drifted across the river to the New Jersey shore.[12] Seeing the *Delaware* on fire and the *Fly* damaged and adrift, the Americans moved out of range of the British guns. That evening the *Fly*, escorted by the *Montgomery* and the galleys, moved back to Fort Mifflin.

Upon the surrender of Alexander, and the cessation of the battle, Captain James Moncrief of the Engineers was immediately dispatched with ten grenadiers and carpenters to extinguish the fire and save the abandoned ship.[13] The fire was not easily extinguished because it continued to reignite. Finally, after "cutting away parts of her side" the ship was rescued.[14]

Although this minor engagement lasted less than an hour, the Americans had lost their largest and most heavily armed ship. The *Delaware* was refloated, repaired, manned by sailors form the *Roebuck*, and used to protect the city's riverfront during the British occupation. Furthermore, Alexander was unable to fulfill his task of retrieving the small boats and river craft from the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware before they could fall into enemy hands. The British found about fifty boats, one "a Durham boat from Frankford creek that will hold 100 men," providing Howe the wherewithal to transport troops to the New Jersey side of the river, and enabling him to strike Fort Billingsport and open the Delaware.[15]

During the day after the battle many deserters entered the city. Montresor noted that thirty men, with a galley, came ashore, "while their Captain was gone for Orders."[16] And Lieutenant-General Archibald Robertson, Royal Engineers, wrote in his diary of the desertion of a captain, a lieutenant, and fifty-six sailors from the American fleet.[17] Desertions such as these would plague Hazelwood and the Pennsylvania navy during the struggle on the Delaware. One of the reasons was " the crews were filled with dregs of the waterfront taverns and those interested in escaping service in the army, men who were

always ready to decamp at the first sign of action or disaster."[18] Fortunately for the Commodore, the majority of the crews were patriotic and dedicated sailors.

Washington followed his original assessment of the river defenses with Fort Mifflin as the main defensive position. Considering Billingsport indefensible against a land assault, he sent a letter on September 29th, to "call in the few Men that are at Billingsport and if there are any Stores there, remove them to Fort Mifflin.[19] But the message was sent too late. Howe was moving swiftly to open the river. The trickle of food and supplies arriving overland were insufficient to feed his army of 18,000, much less the city's civilian population which had swollen with Loyalist refugees.[20] He had sent Hamond with the *Roebuck* to meet with the frigates *Pearl*, *Camilla*, and *Liverpool*, that were already on station below the chevaux-de-frise at Billingsport, near Chester. On the 29th, Howe ordered Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Stirling to march from Wilmington to Chester with two regiments, the 10th, Lincolnshire, and the 42nd, Black Watch, and a battery of two six-pounders.[21] They were then to be ferried across the river to New Jersey by Hamond, march to Billingsport and take the fort.

During the afternoon of the 29th, Hamond began to move Stirling's troops to his ships, where they were to spend the night. Unexpectedly, the Americans attacked. At 7 P.M., Hazelwood sent three fire-rafts at the British warships.[22] By quickly slipping their cables and being towed by their long boats, Hamond avoided disaster by the fiery assault.[23] Stirling and his men stayed the night on board the frigates and were taken to the New Jersey shore the next day.

Colonel William Bradford of the Pennsylvania militia had been sent by Brigadier General James Potter to take command of Billingsport. He arrived on the 28th, where he "found Col. Will of the 4th Battalion with about 100 men, &

Captain Massey's Company of Artillery which was reduced by desertion to 12 men, after I got in was reinforced by 100 Jersey Militia and the next day with about 50 more."[24] Early on October 1st, Bradford sent out scouting parties to determine the British strength and location. The following day General Silas Newcomb of the New Jersey militia visited the fort and removed the 150 New Jersey militia. He told Bradford that he needed the men to bring his strength up to that of Sterling's force, which his intelligence estimated to be about four hundred. He then headed south "to harass the Enemy."[25] Bradford was left with a mere 112 men to defend Fort Billingsport.

Sterling had spent October 1st, near the Delaware, planning his assault on Billingsport and briefing his officers. The next morning he marched out of camp towards the American fort. About half way to the fort, on the Salem Road, Sterling and Newcomb's forces met and a heated action ensued. Newcomb realized that Sterling's force was not four hundred but 1500. He also saw that British flanking movements were threatening to envelope his small force, so he prudently retreated. The British pursued the Americans up the road and across Mantua Creek. Once on the north side of the creek, Newcomb formed up his men and again engaged the enemy. After an exchange of volleys, Stirling turned towards the river and his objective.[26]

Bradford had heard the musket and cannon fired since eight that morning. He sent out two officers, Majors Marsh and Boys, to reconnoiter. He also advised the guard boats and galleys that were stationed near the fort to be ready to evacuate the garrison.[27] When his officers returned they apprised him of the situation, informing him of the size of the British force, that Newcomb's militia were in retreat, and that the British were now advancing on Billingsport. Bradford ordered the immediate evacuation of the fort. "I ordered the People into Boats and sent most of them to Fort Island, spiked up all the Cannon we

could not carry off, and set the Barracks & Bake House on Fire, but the Dwelling House somehow escaped. We took off all the Ammunition. I stayed myself with Captain Robeson of the Continental Brig [Andrea Doria] on shore for some more certain advice; about 12 o'clock the Enemy come on so close thro' a corn field that they were not more than 30 yards from us, and began to fire on us before our Boat put off the shore, we returned the fire with 6 muskets we had on board, and a Guard Boat we had with us also fired on them, and all got off, one man only being wounded."[28]

Hazelwood ordered his galleys to shell the British as soon as they occupied the fort. Hamond brought up his ships to support Stirling and soon a battle developed between the two navies. Each exchanged volleys but the Americans received the most punishment and were forced to retire up river. With Fort Billingsport in British hands and the galleys sustaining some damage from the British warships, a rash of desertions again beset the Pennsylvania navy.

Captain Hamond believed the Pennsylvania navy had been so weakened by the battle and recent desertions that he sent a flag of truce and offered terms of surrender to Hazelwood. The Commodore was to "give up the Fleet, and he should with his men have his Majesty's Pardon and be treated kindly."[29] Indignant that Hamond could make such a preposterous offer, Hazelwood retorted that "he should defend the Fleet to the last, and not give them up, and was not afraid of all the Ships they could bring, and desired they would send no more such Flags."[30]

Sterling spent October 3rd and 4th at Billingsport, while Hamond moved up to the chevaux-de-frise to begin the task of removing the frames. The fort was dismantled and two twelve-pound cannon were moved to the site to protect Hamond as his ships struggled with the underwater obstacles.[31] A near

successful American attack at Germantown on October 4th prompted the ever-cautious Howe to recall Sterling and join the main army. On the 4th, Sterling, his mission accomplished, moved out of Billingsport, leaving a detachment of two hundred to hold the position.[32] However, he did not move north to Red Bank and take Fort Mercer, which he could easily have accomplished. Fort Mercer, with all its cannon, was unattended except for a few workers. Instead of taking the initiative and capitalizing on the American oversight, Sterling squandered the opportunity and marched back to the Delaware. Sterling later reported that his orders stated that he take Billingsport, with no mention of Fort Mercer, and then return to join Howe.[33]

As Sterling moved down to the river to meet the transports, he was attacked by the New Jersey militia. Although this was an insignificant skirmish, the British garrison at Billingsport feared that a force that could attack Sterling would soon retake their post. On the morning of the 5th, they "Set Fire to all the Works & Houses that were left at Billingsport" and evacuated the fort.[34] A small American detachment soon reoccupied Billingsport, and Hazelwood returned to plug the opening in the chevaux-de-frise with two fire ships, the *Vesuvius* and *Strombello*.[35] Hamond continued his work on the breach in the chevaux-de-frise while Hazelwood endeavored to thwart the British progress. During the night of October 6th, the Pennsylvania navy let loose a chain of fire rafts while the galleys fired on the British warships. Montresor noted in his journal that "a continued cannonade between the enemies Row Galleys and our Ships of war" lasted throughout the night.[36] Hazelwood's attack was successful and the British "got under Way and fell down to Chester."[37]

Admiral Howe, aboard his flagship, the *Eagle*, and accompanied by the *Isis*, *Vigilant*, and a number of transports, arrived at the Delaware River on October 4th. They proceeded up river to Newcastle and Reedy Island where

the Admiral ordered the ships to wait for the arrival of the rest of the fleet, while he continued on with the *Eagle*, anchoring off Chester on the 6th.[38] The remainder of the fleet reached Newcastle on the 9th, having been blown out to sea by a severe storm.[39]

With the British fleet stalled below the lower chevaux-de-frise, and with its all-important cargo of food and supplies for Howe's army, Hamond's efforts to breach the river obstructions were charged with a sense of urgency. On October 7th, he returned to the opening where the American's had sunk the fire ships and moved them "to one side so that a ship may warp thro."[40] The British continued their work until the 13th, succeeding in the removal of one frame but only turning another on its side. During the entire time Hazelwood harassed the British with his galleys, guard boats, and fire rafts. He was also supported by a lone cannon placed in the remnants of Fort Billingsport, protected by fascine, and manned by Samuel Hugg and his small New Jersey militia artillery detachment.[41]

During the second week of October, while Hamond struggled with the lower chevaux-de-frise, General Howe approved a plan to establish batteries along the Pennsylvania shore opposite Fort Mifflin. Believing the fort to be the crucial link in the chain of riverine defenses, the artillery would simply bombard the fort until it surrendered. The army could then occupy it, remove the upper chevaux-de-frise, and open the river to the waiting British fleet and supply ships. Furthermore, and much to the satisfaction of Howe, the plan did not call for the deployment of large numbers of troops from Philadelphia. After narrowly escaping defeat at Germantown, an unsettled Howe had consolidated his strength around Philadelphia, ordering Sir Henry Clinton to send four thousand troops from New York.[42]

Captain John Montresor, Captain James Moncrief, Major Ferrington, and twenty grenadiers were sent "to ascertain the distances to the shipping" and to reconnoiter possible sites for batteries and redoubts across from Fort Mifflin.[43] Three days later, on the evening of October 6th, as a result of their reconnaissance, the 42nd and 10th regiments escorted a supply train back to Philadelphia from the ships at Chester. They returned with "two 8 inch Mortars, two 8 inch Howitzers, and 400 eight inch Shells, and 500 Barrels of Pork."[44] Montresor immediately began work on the batteries and gun platforms on Province and Carpenters islands. By October 10th, "the first battery of two medium twelve-pounders was constructed on the Philadelphia side of the Schuylkill. Work on a battery of two iron eighteen-pounders began near the pest house [hospital] on Province Island," and "two small batteries, each with one eight-inch howitzer and one eight-inch mortar, were built on the Carpenters Island dike opposite Fort Mifflin."[45]

The progress on the artillery emplacements was hampered by bombardments from Fort Mifflin, but not curtailed. Smith knew that when the British batteries were completed there would be little hope for the fort. He needed help from Hazelwood's Pennsylvania navy. In order to deter Hamond's work on the chevaux-de-frise and simultaneously impede construction of the batteries, Hazelwood was obliged to split his fleet, leaving only a token force at Billingsport. Taking most of the galleys, guard boats, and floating batteries to Fort Mifflin, he began his attacks on the British batteries. In spite of the additional firepower provided by Hazelwood, and the severing of the dikes and flooding of the islands, progress on the artillery positions continued.

During the night of the October 10th, the British "Engineers constructed a battery unperceived, the battery 250 yards from the enemy's floating battery, and 500 yards West of the Fort on a dyke in an overflowed meadow."[46] The

next morning, after seeing the new British position, Hazelwood ordered three galleys and a floating battery to attack. After nearly two hours of bombardment, Major Robert Ballard landed with a force of one hundred men.[47] As they approached the battery, a white flag was raised and Captain John Vatass of the 10th regiment surrendered his detachment of one hundred grenadiers. As the prisoners were being loaded aboard the galleys, Captain James Moncrief with fifty Hessians attempted to rescue the British soldiers by attacking across the meadow. Smith, in one of the blockhouses, saw the advancing Hessians and fired his cannon at them. The cannon fire caused such confusion among the Americans that nearly half the prisoners were able to escape. To add insult to injury, Moncrief "took possession of their battery again and fir'd on" the retreating Americans. Colonel Bradford and Commodore Hazelwood, who were with the landing party, angrily blamed the incident on Smith's cannon fire. "So that by one imprudent step we lost one half of our prisoners and the Cannon which they had in the redoubt, and must now fight for it again."[48] The relationship between Hazelwood and Smith would, from this time on, grow progressively worse.

Hazelwood and Smith agreed that an invasion of Carpenters Island and destruction of the battery were essential to insure the survival of the Fort. Although the British had reinforced the battery which had been assaulted the previous day, a determined Hazelwood bombarded their position and then landed five hundred soldiers. With bayonets fixed, the Americans attacked. For nearly one hour both sides kept up a heavy fire, using the dikes, trees, and bushes as cover. Major Gardiner, with fifty grenadiers, was ordered to outflank the Americans. Realizing that their assault had stalled and seeing the British flanking movement, Hazelwood ordered his men back to the waiting galleys.[49]

After the repulse of the American attack on the British battery, Smith recognized the dangerous situation the Fort and his men were now facing. He quickly constructed a battery of two four-pounders on the shore of the inner channel, north of the fort. He also installed a chain in the inner channel, running the length of the stockade wall, to protect against a landing of British troops. Smith also sent another urgent request for clothes and reinforcements to Washington.[50]

On the morning of October 15th, the British began their bombardment of Fort Mifflin from their four completed batteries. They fired throughout the day and "about every half hour during the course of the night."[51] The batteries "fired some Red hot shot out of the Howitzers to set fire to the barracks . . . which did not take place for the Instant the shells fell, they were immersed in the mire, that work being constructed in and on the mud."[52] However, the British cannonade did not have the desired effect. General Howe, who was growing impatient, visited the batteries to assess the damage to the fort. Realizing that Fort Mifflin was still intact and far from surrender, Howe remarked "that 3 weeks were now elapsed and nothing done."[53] Montresor attributed the failure to reduce the fort to "the lightness of our Artillery and the shortness of our ammunition."[54] Howe returned to his headquarters bent on formulating a new plan that would remove the American forts once and for all.

Howe's solicitous demeanor was quite justified. It had been a troublesome three weeks since his triumphal march into Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania navy's fleet of small ships had successfully hampered the lifting of the chevaux-de-frise which kept the supply ships from reaching the city. Washington had effectively cordoned off the city, denying food and supplies from entering. Foraging parties and supply trains had to venture out in force. Washington's surprise attack at Germantown had nearly succeeded, resulting in

a nervous state of affairs for the British troops and their officers. The British medical staff was overburdened and hospital facilities were limited. As of October 13th, there were 2,612 sick and 850 wounded British and Hessian soldiers.[55] There were also hundreds of sick and wounded American prisoners. Furthermore, the army was put on limited rations, because food supplies were low, the winter months were approaching and the troops were in their summer uniforms, fuel supplies were becoming scarce, hay and feed for horses was in short supply, money for the purchase of supplies and pay for the troops was running out, and looting and stealing were becoming a frequent occurrence.[56] To make matters worse, the civilian population, swelled by Loyalist refugees, was also suffering from the shortages. When the bombardment of Fort Mifflin was first delayed and then ineffectual, Howe lost his patience.

Howe moved his army and headquarters to Philadelphia on October 19, 1777, thus consolidating his forces and allowing deployment of troops for the planned attack on the American forts. His plan called for a coordinated three-pronged attack. A strong force would assault Fort Mercer, the fleet would warp through the lower chevaux-de-frise, open fire on Fort Mifflin and support the attack on Fort Mercer, and a force would be ferried over to Mifflin and storm the wooden stockade. He also ordered Montresor to continue work on more batteries, and keep up the bombardment of Fort Mifflin. Timing would be critical if the plan was to succeed.

Washington was not sitting idly by as the British sought a way to overcome the river defenses. During the first week of October he was informed of the arrival of Brigadier General James Mitchell Varnum's 1,200 man brigade, consisting of Rhode Island and Connecticut regiments. On October 7th, Washington ordered Varnum to send Colonel Christopher Greene's First Rhode Island regiment, Continental infantry, and Colonel Israel Angell's Second

Rhode Island regiment, Continental infantry, to Fort Mercer.[57] Washington also apprised Hazelwood and Smith of his decision to reinforce Fort Mercer with Continental troops and New Jersey militia and informed them that Colonel Greene would be in command of the fort. To provide additional assistance to Greene, Washington sent Captain Chevalier Thomas Antoine Mauduit du Plessis, an experienced engineer and artillery officer.[58] Plessis's modifications of Fort Mercer would prove invaluable against the attacking Hessian forces.

Washington did not neglect Smith's requests for men and supplies. Orders were given for clothes and ammunition to be forwarded to Smith and for Colonel Greene to send a detachment of soldiers from Fort Mercer. He also sent French engineer Major Francois Louis Teissedre de Fleury to Fort Mifflin to supervise the construction of improvements of the fort's defenses.

Washington wrote to Colonel Greene informing him that the command of Fort Mercer was his, and that upon his arrival he should meet with Lieutenant Colonel Smith and Commodore Hazelwood. Washington made it clear that he would "find a very good fortification at Red Bank [Fort Mercer], but if anything should be requisite to render it stronger or proportion it to the size of your Garrison, you will have it done."[59] Moreover, Washington emphasized how significant Fort Mercer was to the American defenses and how important it was for Greene to defend it, saying:

> You should lose not a moment's time in getting to the place of your destination and making every proper preparation for its defence. Any delay might give the Enemy an opportunity of getting there before you, which could not fail being of the most fatal consequence. If in the progress of your march you should fall in with any detachment of the Enemy bending towards the same object, and likely to gain it before you, and from intelligence should have reason to think yourself equal to the task, you will by all means attack them, and endeavor by that mean to disappoint their design. I have written to Genl. Newcomb of the Jersey Militia, to give you all the aid in his power, for which you will accordingly apply, when necessary.

> Upon the whole Sir, 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 you are capable of, for its security and defence. The whole defence 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. Influenced by these considerations, I doubt not your regard to the Service and your own reputation, will prompt you to every possible effort to accomplish the important end of your trust and frustrate the intentions of the Enemy.[60]

Greene and Angell moved towards Fort Mercer when on October 9th, Washington sent a dispatch ordering Angell's regiment back to join Varnum.[61] Greene continued on to the fort, arriving October 11th.

Colonel Greene and Captain Plessis promptly surveyed Fort Mercer. Both men recognized the most obvious and immediate problem; the fort was too large to defend by the force at hand. Measuring 350 yards long and seventy-five yards wide, it would require nearly three times the men Greene had to defend it successfully.[62] The logical solution was to reduce the size of the fort and make the new fortification as defensible as possible. Plessis began construction of the new defenses while Greene appropriated tools from the local citizens and building materials from James and Ann Whitall, owners of the farm on which the fort was built.[63] Whitall's apple orchard of 300 trees was cut down to provide a field of fire for the fort's cannon. Their barn was torn down and the lumber used to build a double board fence across the interior of the fort, forming the new northern wall, and reducing the fort to a third of its original size. Thousands of oak staves were also taken from Whitall and used to strengthen the fences. The space between the fences was filled in with earth, hay, lumber, and any refuse that could be found. Sharpened stakes were then driven into the top of the new wall.[64] To impede an enemy assault, an abatis around the new fort was constructed from the trees that had been cleared from the orchard, their trunks buried in the ground and the branches sharpened.[65] Brush, hay, and tree branches were used to conceal the fourteen cannon, mounted at

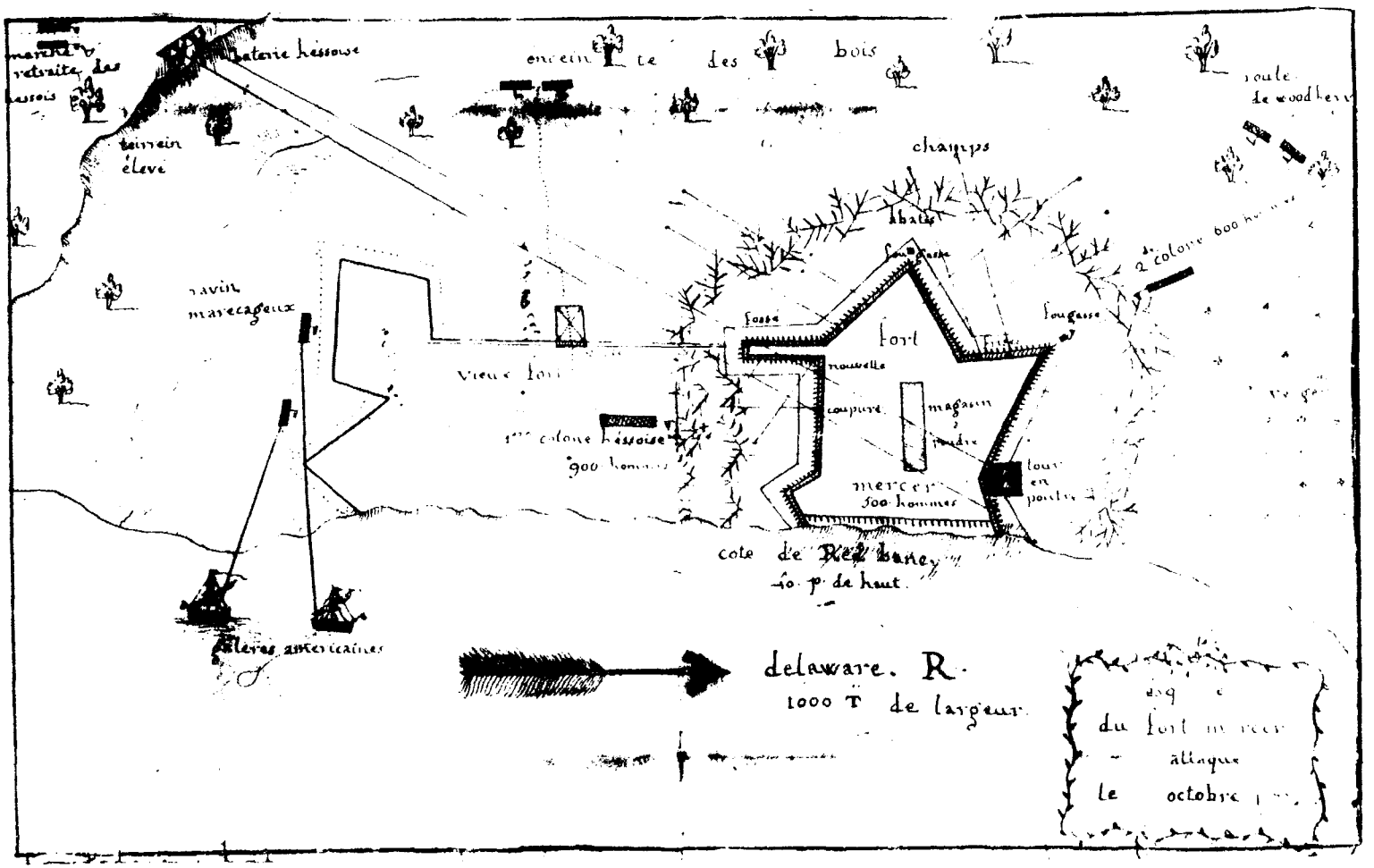


Fig. 10. Fort Mercer. The drawing shows the original size of the fort and the reduced version. The smaller fort and additional defenses were initiated by Colonel Greene and Captain Plessis shortly before the October 22, 1777 battle with Colonel Donop's Hessians. Courtsey of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and illustrated in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 17.

angles along the parapet, "giving the place the appearance of a farm brush heap."[66] Part of the old east rampart was fortified and extended past the new north wall. This curtain would provide enfilading fire on enemy troops assaulting the north wall. The ditch or fosse surrounding the fort was enlarged to twelve feet deep and fifteen feet wide. The earthen walls on the east, and south were fifteen feet thick and ten feet high. To further hinder the enemy's progress, should they penetrate the abatis and traverse the fosse, fraises were implanted into the sides of the parapet, like so many porcupine quills waiting to impale the aggressor. Fraises were also placed along the top of the forty-foot-high cliff-like riverbank that made up the fort's western boundary.[67] Three iron gates secured the entrance at the south end of the fort.[68]

To provide further security for the fort, Greene drilled the men every day, before and after their work on the fortifications. Drummers and fifers were issued arms, practiced with their instruments, and called the troops to their positions on the walls. In order that prying Tory eyes did not see the changes made to the fort, Greene issued orders that no one was to "come into the Fort except such as appears to be Officers of the Army, and those that belong to the Garrison without the Knowledge of a Field Officer, Officer of the Day or the Commanding office of the Guard."[69] Furthermore, none of the garrison was allowed to leave, "but by permission from the commanding Officer or Officer of the Day. If any attempts to go out without leave the sentries are Ordered to fire upon them."[70] A new countersign was issued every day.

Fleury was having to face similar problems at Fort Mifflin. Like Plessis, he had to strengthen the fort's defenses. He also faced the problem of repairing the damaged parts of the fort, providing protection for the men, and constructing new defensive works. Unlike Plessis at Fort Mercer, all the work at Fort Mifflin was carried out under the duress of British bombardment.

Upon his arrival on October, 14th, Fleury surveyed the fort and noted the improvements that should have been made earlier. These included, among other things, increasing the height of the dike protecting the western palisades, better protection from cannon fire for the main southern battery, the building of an interior work for a last resort defense, and protective blinds for the troops. "All this might have been done while the Enemy were intent on their works (which should have been destroyed)."[71] With that said, he immersed himself in the improvement of the fort, each night pushing the small garrison to near exhaustion. Described as "a very austere man," Fleury kept the men "constantly employed day and night."[72] One of the troops, Jeremiah Greenman, succinctly described the working conditions at the fort. "The duty very hard indeed. Keep a continual fire on the Enemy & they on us with hot Shot & Shells."[73]

Within ten days of his arrival significant improvements to the fort were completed. "Traverses to defend the Battery [southern main battery] from Ricochet shot" were built from the pine logs of the supply raft. "Ditches to close the left [Delaware River side] of the battery, which was open." In the southwest corner of the fort he floated "a double iron chain which incloses the right of the battery." Around the outside of the walls were dug "Pits with sharp upright Stakes [Wolf Traps], to defend the approaches to our Inclosure." Platforms called banquets were "raised around the wall" to protect the riflemen from enemy fire. "Ditches and Parapet of Reunion between our Barracks," constructed mostly from "barrels filled with sand, formed another defensive inclosure." The Barracks were also "furnished with loop-holes." In the center of the fort was built a box-like structure for the safety of the men. This was constructed of "Pine logs six feet high." The roof was elevated and covered with "earth well rammed." Smith praised the shelter as a sanctuary where "not a man was hurt although many shots reached that work and were buried in it." A

palisade was thrown up around the shelter "in the form of a cross." A demiline was built out from the middle of the north palisades, between the two blockhouses. Fraises were also placed in the ditches in front of the southern main battery.[74]

Washington sent word to Colonel Greene, on October 15th, of an imminent attack on Fort Mifflin. "Sir: I am persuaded by intelligence from different quarters, that the enemy are determined to endeavor by a speedy and vigorous effort to carry Fort Mifflin, and for this purpose are preparing a considerable force."[75] Greene was to send Smith as many men as he could spare. He immediately sent "a S[ubaltern], a Serjeant, and Twenty Men who will work at Fort Mifflin under the direction of Colo. Smith."[76] The next day Colonel Angell was ordered to take his 2nd Rhode Island regiment and reinforce Greene at Fort Mercer. Angell was told "that the greatest part of your men will be wanted in fort Mifflin, and as you have many Seamen, you will give the Commodore every assistance which may be thought prudent and necessary."[77] Washington's intelligence was accurate. Howe was preparing an attacking force. But the assumed target was incorrect. The British main objective was Fort Mercer, not Fort Mifflin.

Angell's regiment arrived at Fort Mercer on October 18th, and on the 19th, "Major Thayer with 3 C[aptains], 9 S[ubalterns], 12 S[ergeants], 4 D[rum] and f[ife], & 121 Rank & file to parade in the Fort at 3 oClock P.M. from Colonel Angels Regiment to relieve a Detachment from Colo. Greene's regiment at Fort Mifflin."[78]

On October 18th, Washington, in an effort to strengthen the garrison at Fort Mifflin, ordered Lieutenant Colonel John Green of the First Virginia Regiment to immediately proceed "to Red Bank, from whence you are to go over to Fort Mifflin, and do everything in your power for the support and defence of

that garrison."[79] Along with Lieutenant Colonel Charles Simms, Sixth Virginia Regiment, second in command, he took a detachment of the Sixth Virginia, about 150 men, to Ft. Mercer.[80] He arrived on October 21st, and the next day was sent over to Ft. Mifflin to relieve Major Thayer and his Rhode Islanders.[81]

Washington made one more change at the Fort Mifflin. On October 18th, Baron D'Arendt, Washington's original choice for commander of Fort Mifflin, having recovered from his illness, was ordered to resume command at the fort.[82] The General believed that it would be prudent to have a higher ranking officer in charge rather than those sent to reinforce the defences. Smith was notified of the change of command. Indignant at what he perceived as an afront to his leadership abilities, a bitter Smith wrote back to Washington requesting to be recalled. On October 22nd, Washington responded to Smith's sullen request. "I now leave it to your own option whether to rejoin your Corps or continue where your are, and have no doubt but you will determine upon that which in your opinion is most Serviceable and consistent with the character of an Officer."[83] Smith did not leave Fort Mifflin.

The American and British batteries fired at each other during the day and repaired the damage at night.[84] A lull in the firing occurred on October 18th, when a "surprisingly high" tide of the Delaware flooded the meadows, inundating the platforms "of the right and middle Batteries."[85] The respite ended on the 20th, when the British artillery resumed their bombardment with the addition of a "13 inch mortar" having "arrived in the night."[86] Montresor kept up the bombardment on Fort Mifflin which increased as each new battery was completed and brought to bear on the American stronghold.

Early in the morning of the 20th, the transport boats Howe needed to ferry the troops across the Delaware for the attack on Fort Mercer, arrived at Philadelphia. The "12 Flat bottomed Boats and a whale boat" had to run up the

western channel past Fort Mifflin's cannon and the patrolling galleys.[87] Although "receiving an abundance of Grape[shot] from the Fort and 2 Gallies" they went unscathed until friendly fire from a British battery on the Schuylkill killed one seaman.[88]

Also on the 20th, the British ships *Vigilant*, *Zebra*, and the galley *Columbus*, sailed up the western channel and anchored off Hog Island. The *Vigilant*, a converted transport armed with one twenty-four-pounder, nine two-pounders, and six four-pounders, lightened to draw only "11 1/2 feet" so she could navigate "through a shallow and very confined Channel between Hog island and the Pennsylvania Shore: To arrive and act upon the rear and less defensible part of the work [Fort Mifflin]."[89] The three British vessels were attacked by Hazelwood's galleys, but with the help of British shore batteries, the Americans were driven off.

At Howe's headquarters a request to lead the force against Fort Mercer came from the Hessian Colonel Carl Emil Ulrich von Donop. Donop felt some responsibility for the humiliating Hessian defeat at Trenton in December, 1776, and believed this was an opportunity to atone for the disaster.[90] Cornwallis conferred with Howe about Donop's desire to lead the expedition. Howe and Cornwallis were delighted to send the haughty German, who more than once angered them with "his violent and impetuous ways" and criticism of their leadership.[91] Donop was given instructions to wait for the fleet to warp through the chevaux-de-frise and move up to Fort Mercer before attacking.[92] He asked "if it was expected he should make the attack at all hazards?" and was told "that he was to be guided by his own judgement on the spot, but the attack was to be made, unless he saw good reason to the contrary."[93] Donop also requested more artillery but was curtly turned down by Cornwallis saying that the British would take the fort if he thought the Colonel was not up to the task at hand.[94] It

was said that Donop disdainfully retorted, "Tell your general that Germans are not afraid to face death."[95] He then announced prophetically, "Either the fort will soon be called Fort Donop or I shall have fallen."[96]

Donop's brigade consisted of the grenadier battalion von Minnigerode, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Ludwig von Minnigerode, grenadier battalion von Linsing, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Otto Christian von Linsing, grenadier battalion von Lengerke, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel George Emanuel von Lengerke, the fusilier regiment von Mirbach, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Justus Henrich von Schieck, four companies of Hessian Jägers under Colonel Ludwig von Wurmb, and a scouting party of twenty mounted Jägers.[97] Each Hessian battalion and regiment had their standard issue of two brass three-pounders with them, for a total of eight cannon. In addition, Howe sent two fourteen-pounder howitzers, commanded by Captain Francis Downman.[98] British Major Charles Stuart was assigned to the Hessian staff as an interpreter.[99] Donop's force totaled approximately 2,100.[100]

Two men, John McIlvaine, a Tory, and Dick, a runaway slave, volunteered to lead the Hessians through the New Jersey countryside and on to the fort. A third guide, "a negro named Old Mitch," unwillingly accompanied the German force.[101]

At four in the morning, October 21, 1777, Donop assembled his men and marched down to the Delaware and waiting flatboats. "The first transport consisting of about 630 men crossed to the opposite bank at daybreak," and disembarked at Cooper's Ferry, New Jersey.[102] By two that afternoon all the men and the last of the artillery were ashore. Captain Friedrich Lorey, with twenty mounted Jägers, was ordered to wait at the Ferry, "escort some

ammunition carts that had not yet arrived," and then proceed on to Haddonfield.[103]

Captain Johann Ewald led sixty Jägers in advance of the main force up the road toward Haddonfield. Within a half hour he encountered a picket of fifty men of the Salem and Cape May Counties, New Jersey militia.[104] The militia immediately fired on the approaching Hessians and retreated to Cooper's Bridge. Ewald pursued them "up to the end of a wood, where I discovered several hundred men on both sides of Cooper's Creek, with whom I skirmished until about four o'clock in the afternoon, after which they withdrew."[105] As the main body of Donop's brigade moved down the road, Ewald was ordered to hold his position until nightfall, to prevent an attack on the column's flank, and then take up the rear guard. When the column finally passed, and the road began to darken, Ewald's Jägers became the target for snipers. Ewald finally arrived in Haddonfield at eight that night, finding the brigade encamped "in a field owned by John Key, just above the mill."[106]

Donop's circuitous route to Fort Mercer through Haddonfield was meant "to mislead the enemy and conceal his march."[107] As a further precaution against the fort being warned, Donop had his guides and some local Tories identify citizens active in the American cause. They were rounded up, taken to town, "and forced to stay all night by the camp-fire in the middle of the street."[108]

At four in the morning the next day, October 22nd, Donop marched out of Haddonfield. When the last of the column left town, the prisoners were released, Jonas Cattell being one of them. As soon as he was freed he "slipped quietly away, and started immediately for Red Bank, to give notice of the approach of the enemy."[109] He made his way through the wooded countryside until he came to Timber creek. Here he found some boats that "had been scuttled to prevent the people from taking produce to market to the enemy."[110]

He selected the least damaged and started across the creek. The boat quickly filled with water forcing Cattell to swim to shore. Wet, chilled, and exhausted, he continued on to the fort, arriving before noon to inform Greene of the approaching enemy.[111]

Greene had received reports on the 21st and again during the morning of the 22nd, that a large troop movement into New Jersey had taken place.[112] Although he suspected their intended destination was Fort Mercer, he thought that it might just be a large foraging operation. He sent out Captain Oliver Clarke with six men to scout out the Hessian movements and determine their intentions. Clark came upon Captain Felix Fisler's company of Gloucester County militia. They had been posted at Timber Creek bridge, but upon hearing of the approaching Hessians, destroyed the bridge, and then headed for Fort Mercer. Clarke told Fisler to move on to Woodbury since the small fort could not fit any more men.[113]

Clarke continued on with his scouting assignment when he was captured by Captain Wreden and his advance guard of Jägers. He soon learned that the Hessians believed the Americans were unaware of their presence in the area. When asked what his mission was, the quick thinking Clarke used the pretense of being on a foraging party "to get fresh meat at a plantation."[114]

In fact, Greene was well aware of the enemy after the arrival of Cattell and his information about the Hessians. "The drums beat to arms, and every disposition was immediately made to give them a warm reception."[115] Greene immediately ordered the Rhode Islanders into the fort, the cannon to be loaded with grape shot, muskets loaded, and all men to their posts. In expectation of a siege, supplies were again taken from the Whitall farm. "Ye People in ye fort drove from father & I, 47 Sheep into ye fort."[116] The militia was ordered to move on to Woodbury, but to harass the enemy if the opportunity arose. The three

iron gates were ordered closed. To continue the ruse of an unsuspecting garrison, sentries were ordered to walk the walls of the vacated section of the fort, while others were told to hang up their wash and attend to their daily duties. The rest of the garrison was to remain out of sight.[117]

While on route to Fort Mercer, Donop again collected suspected American militia and sympathizers in an effort to stop locals from warning the garrison. He forced them to accompany him to the fort where they were later released. Traveling south for about five miles he swung the column west towards the Delaware. Upon finding the Timber Creek bridge dismantled, he turned southeast, "compelled to make a four miles' march up its right bank," to Clements Bridge.[118] Once over the bridge he moved directly west to Fort Mercer.

Around noon, and approximately one mile from the fort, Donop had the men stop and rest. "The entire corps remained in column on the road in the wood. The men were permitted to sit down and told to eat, but since this day was not bread or provisions day, very few had any bread to break or bit."[119] Donop met with his officers and decided to divide his command. He would take the larger force, comprised of the grenadier battalions von Minnigerode and von Lengerke, the four companies of Jägers, and the artillery, and approach from the northeast. They made their way through the woods to within four hundred yards of the fort. The second force consisted of the grenadier battalion von Linsing and the fusilier regiment von Mirbach. They would approach the fort from the east and the southeast, respectively.[120]

At one o'clock, as the troops were forming up in the woods, Donop, accompanied by Stuart, Major Pauli, and artillery Captain Krug, personally reconnoitered the fort.[121] The soldiers could be seen going about their duties in an unsuspecting manner, some even "hanging out their wash to dry."[122] He

also saw that the fortifications, contrary to Howe's intelligence, were indeed complete and quite extensive. Donop conferred with Stuart, and agreed that it would be improper to assault till heavier guns could be brought to bear on the fort. He requested the British officer to suggest postponing the attack whereupon Stuart replied that "he was too young and had not sufficient authority to have delay of the commander-in-chief's orders rest on him."[123] Donop returned and ordered redoubts constructed to protect the artillery.

Donop decided to give the commander of Fort Mercer the option of surrendering. He "sent his Adjutant-Lieutenant Wagener of the Ditfurth's Regiment, with a drummer up to the Fort and summoned it to surrender, but instead of the rebels surrendering it, they replied that the Fort would be defended down to the last man."[124]

Shocked at the response from the fort, he ordered each battalion to make one hundred fascines. These would be used to fill in the ditches surrounding the fort.[125] Although he had no scaling ladders to negotiate the walls, no saws to cut through the abatis, and no heavy artillery to batter down the defenses, he was determined to take the fort. Donop had also seen boats loaded with men leaving the fort and going to Fort Mifflin. He believed the fort was being evacuated and would provide only token resistance. In fact, what he had seen was Lieutenant Colonel Green's Virginians, who had arrived shortly before the Hessians, being transported to Fort Mifflin to relieve Thayer's Rhode Island detachment.[126] Donop's honor was at stake as well as the reputation of the Hessian Corps, and his emotions clouded his judgement. Not only would the fort be assaulted, but he would lead the attack.

Nearly four hours elapsed before Donop's troops were ready. He decided to give Greene one last chance to capitulate.[127] He sent Major Stuart and a drummer to the fort with his demands. As the two walked to the

fortification, the drummer beat out a martial cadence announcing their approach, Donop and his staff "regarded the affair with levity."[128]

Below the walls of the American bastion the arrogant British officer gave the ultimatum: "The King of England orders his rebellious subjects to lay down their arms; and they are warned, that if they stand the battle, no quarter whatever will be given." Greene, who was atop the ramparts, retorted: "With these brave fellows this fort shall be my tomb."[129] Then Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah Olney came out to speak to the officer. Olney recounted that Stuart told him, "their force was amply sufficient to take it, and if we persisted in defence, they would give no quarter, therefore our blood would be on our own heads."[130] Olney replied with great élan: "We shall not ask for nor expect any quarter, and mean to defend the fort to the last extremity."[131] Then, after making a few disparaging remarks about King George the Third, he turned and calmly walked back to the fort.[132]

Stuart returned with the refusal and Greene's reply: "Colonel Greene, who commands the fort, sends his compliments and he shall await Colonel Donop."[133] He also reported that he had seen very few men in the fort.[134] Donop immediately ordered his artillery to commence firing. Although he knew that he was to wait for the British navy to take up positions opposite Mercer in order to keep the American galleys away and to soften up the defenses prior to the assault, he made the fateful decision against his better judgment.[135] All the artillery, which was formed up into one battery at the edge of the woods, began their barrage at fifteen minutes to five. Lieutenant Colonel Olney, having just met with Stuart, was walking back to the fort, "had scarce time to get into it before there followed him by a tremendous discharge of grape shot and ball."[136] It was said that the grape shot made a "horrible music" as it screamed towards the fort.[137] The cannonade lasted a short fifteen minutes and "made the gravel

and dust fly from the top of our fort, and took off all the heads that happened to be in the way."[138] However, it had little effect on the walls of the fort.

At five o'clock the cannon fell silent. Donop, wanting to inspire his troops, made a rousing speech, promising to change the name to "Fort Donop."[139] He then drew his sword, and with his officers, took up a position at the head of his troops, who were forming up in ranks for the attack.

The small American garrison of 540 men were ready for the Hessian assault.[140] The men were all at their assigned positions, safely hidden behind the fort's walls. The officers, all seasoned veterans, whose resumé of military experience included the Indian wars, Bunker Hill, and Quebec, were confident and consequently instilled trust and faith in their soldiers. Greene's advice shortly before the attack was to wait till the enemy was within "50 or 60 paces," and to "Fire low, men, [because] they have a broad belt just above their hip, -- aim at that."[141] A flag was run up to signal Hazelwood to move his galleys into position

The von Linsing Battalion, under Captain Stamford, for some unknown reason, attacked the south rampart and the main gate well before the other two battalions were ready.[142] As the first grenadiers reached the abatis, they began to hack at the branches with their short swords. Pulling the obstructions aside, they swarmed through the narrow openings to the ditch. The soldiers carrying the fascines threw them haphazardly into the deep trench.

The Americans poured a galling fire with musket and cannon into the Hessians, while the galleys raked their flanks. The defenders on the north wall, as yet not engaged by the enemy, added their support by firing over their kneeling comrades at the advancing Hessians. The dead and wounded covered the ditch while others hung like scarecrows impaled on the sharpened branches of the abatis. Yet they still advanced. Not until they reached the

sharpened stakes of the fraise did the attack falter. Some officers, who were helped up to the top of the rampart in an effort to rally their troops, were immediately shot.[143]

The slaughter continued at the main gate where Captain Stamford led the assault. The bodies of the dead and wounded quickly piled up, among them Stamford, shot through the chest and right leg.[144] With their leader down and many of the officers dead or wounded, the attack quickly turned into a panic-stricken rout. Some Hessians were too afraid to advance or retreat. Twenty were later found huddled under the shelter of the south wall.[145]

As the din of battle subsided, the defenders' attention turned to the two columns moving out of the woods from the north and east. Greene's First Rhode Island regiment had successfully defended the southern rampart. They would now be tested in defense of the eastern wall. Angell, along with Olney, and the Second Rhode Island regiment, were assigned the newly constructed northern rampart and the flanking curtain. While the Americans made ready for the next attack, the galleys, instrumental in the defeat of the first wave, were communicating the movements of the enemy by way of speaking tubes (megaphones).[146]

Minnigerode's battalion advanced from the woods to the north wall. Schieck's Mirbach regiment, accompanied by Donop, attacked the east wall. Lengerke's battalion was stationed in the woods along the Delaware, just north of the fort. They were to thwart any attempt by the galleys to land men for a flanking movement. Wurmb's four companies of Jägers were deployed behind the artillery and covered the roads leading to the fort. Ewald was ordered to place "sixteen good marksmen at the edge of the wood in the vicinity of the battery, who were to shoot at those men who showed themselves on the parapet."[147]

As the first ranks of the Minnigerode battalion left the woods, Hazelwood's "ships started a hellish fire and swept the whole place where the attack was being made."[148] They also fired "the so-called cross-bar shot up through the trees so that the falling branches and pieces of timber did us the greatest injury."[149] Withstanding this, the men pressed on to the north wall of the old fort. The first one hundred grenadiers carrying fascines quickly filled the ditch enabling the following troops to climb the wall. As they clambered up the embankment, the "uninterrupted fire of grape-shot from the row-galleys tore down whole rows of our men."[150] Finally, the battalion reached the interior of the old fort and its relative safety from the naval fire.

At the same time as the Minnigerode battalion was advancing from the north, Schieck's Mirbach regiment, accompanied by Donop, assaulted the east wall of the old fort. In the van of each force were one hundred fusiliers carrying fascines, which they hurriedly tossed into the ditch before scaling the wall with their comrades. The sentries, posted by Greene, waited till the Hessians were near the ditch, fired their muskets, and retreated to the reconstructed fort.[151]

Once Donop and the Mirbach regiment were in the fort, "which he [Donop] did not have much trouble or glory in seizing," the troops of the Minnigerode battalion joined them.[152] Seeing the fort abandoned, and thinking they had forced the Americans to flee to the small southern portion of the fort, the men waved their hats and cheered "Victoria!"[153] Flush with confidence from the apparent victory the Hessians moved towards the new fortification. Again the Americans held their fire, allowing the Hessians to advance up to the first of two abatis. Suddenly, the defenders let loose a murderous musket fire on the unsuspecting Germans. "Mauduit then lashed them with 4 pieces of cannon loaded with canister shot."[154] The initial shock of the blast caused confusion in the ranks, and the attack wavered. But the officers spurred on their men who

"pressed on, treading now in slippery blood, and stumbling over mangled bodies."[155] Desperately tearing at the barricade of fruit trees, their sharpened branches impeding every step, openings were finally cleared through the obstruction, only to find the second abatis.

A steady fire was kept on the Hessians from the curtain and the north wall, who, being so bunched together and advancing so slowly, were easy targets.[156] The defenders on the south wall having repulsed their attackers, now turned and fired over their compatriots, at the advancing Hessians. While the added firepower was helpful, they killed at least one of their own with their "friendly fire."[157]

Determined to break through the second abatis, the courageous Hessian "officers were seen continually rallying their men, marching back to the abatis, and falling amidst the branches they were endeavoring to cut."[158] Finally, a gap was opened. Donop, seeing the courage of his officers and men, took command. Schieck had been killed early in the assault and Minnigerode lay wounded, shot through both legs. Donop and his men poured through the opening only to be halted at the edge of a deep ditch. Although they had no fascines to fill the trench, Donop exhorted his men to continue on while he directed others to fire at the head of any soldier that appeared above the wall. Both sides were now shooting at point blank range. Tenaciously, they still attacked, the officers "pushing forward the men, until within about two paces of our breastwork."[159] In some instances the combatants were so close that the "wads from the fort's muskets were blown entirely through the bodies" of the attacking Hessians.[160] The cross fire from the fort exacted a terrible toll on the Hessians, whose bodies piled up in the ditch and on the side of the rampart.

Finally, Donop, conspicuous in his officers' uniform and shouting of orders, became a target and was shot many times.[161] With their leader

wounded and the American fire too much to withstand, the Hessians quickly retreated through the abatis. Donop and some officers were able to regroup their men for an attempt to skirt the abatis "by attacking on the side of the escarpment, but the fire from the galleys sent them back with a great loss of men."[162] This resulted in a hasty, disorderly retreat through the abandoned portion of the fort and back to the protection of the reserve units in the woods. As soon as the Hessians emerged from the fort the galleys once more ripped into their ranks with grape shot. Gripped with panic the Germans' retreat turned into a headlong flight.

Donop, though severely wounded, managed to "retreat out of the works, 20 or 30 rods, where he fell," from a shot that shattered his hip.[163] Lieutenant von Toll of Mirbach's regiment and several men stopped to help Donop to safety. As they were dragging the colonel, they were all shot.[164]

Linsing, seeing the panic stricken men running from the fort, stopped them and tried to regroup them into their units. He had the wounded officers put on horses or carried on the gun carriages, "since we had flattered ourselves in advance with a successful surrender, no retreat then was thought of, and no wagons brought to transport the wounded."[165] The "privates who could not drag themselves away on their wounded limbs fell into enemy hands."[166] Wurmb instructed his Jägers to cover the rear, while he and the Lengerke's battalion quickly set out to occupy Clements Bridge over Timber Creek before the Americans could reach it. The remenants of the once proud Hessian brigade, who just the day before encamped at Haddonfield, limped into town that evening, much to the amazement of the local inhabitants. Linsing allowed his soldiers to rest, then pushed on to Cooper's Ferry, arriving in the afternoon of the 23rd. Here they met with the "27th Regiment and a Battalion of Light

Infantry," sent by Howe to cover the Hessian retreat.[167] All were back in Philadelphia by midnight.

Fearing another assault, Greene kept his men in the fort and did not attempt to follow the retreating Hessians. With daylight fading he quickly posted sentries and sent out small detachments to repair the outer defenses and help some of the wounded. One group, led by Plessis, "was surprised to find about twenty Hessians standing on the berm and glued against the face of the parapet."[168] Also found among the wounded was Donop, who was moved into the fort.[169] Then the gate was ordered closed. Captain Stephen Olney described the cold moon-lit night as the men on duty peered over the ramparts in expectation of another attack: "I had charge of the guard on the night after the battle. My sentries were placed round the whole fort. The part we had evacuated on the preceding day, was covered with dead, wounded and dying Hessians. The groans and cries of the wounded and dying, were dreadful music to my ears; and but for the reflection of what would have been our fate had they been victorious, our sympathy would have been truly distressing."[170]

In the first rays of daybreak of the 23rd, the grim aftermath of the assault became evident. The ground was littered with dead and wounded Hessians. In the short forty-five minute battle the Hessians lost 151 killed and 266 wounded.[171] American losses were light with fourteen killed and twenty-three wounded, and one missing.[172] Greene had his men bury the dead and gather the wounded who were taken to the Whitall's farm house where Ann Whitall tended to the men's injuries. There were so many wounded that "the house was filled, even the attic was crowded."[173] Hazelwood allowed British and Hessian surgeons to cross the Delaware to care for the wounded. "A few of these arrived the same day, and were able to help at least a few of us. Some of us were promptly bandaged, and on others amputations of legs or of arms were

performed."[174] Donop lingered on for three days. His last words were said to be, "This is finishing a noble career early, but I die the victim of my ambition and of the avarice of my sovereign.[175]

Soon after the battle Donop's guides, John McIlvaine and the Negro Dick, "went too near and fell into the hands of the Americans."[176] Greene held a trial at the fort and denounced the men as traitors. They were found guilty and sentenced to death. A gallows was erected outside the fort and on November 1st, at ten o'clock in the morning, with the entire garrison in attendance, the two men were hanged.[177]

The loss of Donop and a significant number of his battalion was not the only setback befalling Howe's second attempt at opening the Delaware. The destruction of two ships, the *Augusta* and the *Merlin*, the day after the defeat at Fort Mercer, only contributed to Howe's growing list of failures and increasing dissatisfaction among his officers and men.

Howe's plan had called for Donop to wait untill October 23rd, before attacking Fort Mercer. By then a large portion of the British fleet would be in position to bombard forts Mifflin and Mercer. However, when Captain Francis Reynolds of the *Augusta*, having taken command of the fleet from Hamond, heard Donop's artillery on the 22nd, he ordered the ships to immediately warp through the lower chevaux-de-frise. By six o'clock that evening, the *Augusta*, *Roebuck*, *Pearl*, *Liverpool*, *Merlin*, and the galley *Cornwallis*, were through the obstruction and commenced firing on the galleys and forts.[178] The Americans returned fire and an intense fight ensued. After two hours, both combatants ceased fire.

As the British ships retired downstream, two went aground. "The natural course of the channel having been altered by the artificial obstructions thrown across it, and sand-banks being collected where there were none before, two of

these ships, the *Augusta* and the *Merlin*, unfortunately got a-ground a little below the second line of chevaux de frize."[179] The Americans did not notice the predicament the two ships were in, and so the British were free to make every effort throughout the night to refloat the warships.

The morning of the 23rd found the ships stuck fast in the river. The *Roebuck*, *Liverpool*, *Pearl*, and *Cornwallis* had come back through the chevaux-de-frise to help and protect the ships when Hazelwood's galleys and floating battery opened fire.[180] The main battery at Fort Mifflin also joined the cannonade. The firing was intense from both sides. Finally, the *Roebuck* and the other British ships were forced to move off from their beleaguered friends. The British kept up their fire at the small galleys while the Americans concentrated on the helpless *Augusta* and *Merlin*.

Admiral Howe realized that time was running out if he was to save the ships. He ordered transports sent up to the *Augusta* to off-load equipment and supplies. Once lightened it was hoped they could be towed to safety. Hazelwood, seeing the large number of British ships near the *Augusta*, sent down three fire ships. The British directed their fire on the approaching ships, knowing full well their destructive potential. "Their shot flew so thick around them and indeed cut their rigging so much that the crews got frightened and set them on Fire so soon, that they were burnt in vain."[181] The British then sent out boats to tow them safely away. (Montresor, pg. 470) Hazelwood sent another fire ship down at ten o'clock, but it too was unsuccessful.

Hazelwood continued to press the attack, driving the British farther downstream, while the batteries at Fort Mifflin plied the *Augusta* with hot shot. Soon the ship was on fire and the crew began to abandon ship. At noon the *Augusta* blew up "with a thundering noise, before the Enemy could take out all their hands."[182] The American galleys were showered with debris and "several

peaces [sic: pieces] fell on board of them in which one officer & a number of men [were] wounded."[183] Thomas Paine was near Germantown when he heard the explosion: "We were stunned with a report as loud as a peal from a hundred cannons at once, turning round, I saw a thick smoke rising like a pillar and spreading from the top like a tree."[184] Sixty-two crewmen died in the explosion.[185]

Admiral Howe did not want the *Merlin* to fall into American hands, but when told that all efforts to refloat her had failed, ordered her destroyed.[186] The *Roebuck* rescued the *Merlin's* crew, set her ablaze, and moved a safe distance from the doomed ship. Shortly before three o'clock the *Merlin's* magazines exploded and both sides broke off the engagement.[187]

The third part of Howe's plan was also a failure. The *Vigilant*, a converted merchant ship, commanded by Captain John Henry, carried sixteen twenty-four pounders on her starboard side. Ballast was placed on the port side to offset the weight of her armament. Being of shallow draft, she was to approach the fort up the back, or western channel, and lend her firepower to the batteries on Province Island. After the fort's defenses were destroyed it would be assaulted and taken by "200 Grenadiers."[188]

On the 23rd, while the battle raged around the *Augusta* and the *Merlin*, the *Vigilant* attempted to sail up the back channel to support the assault on Fort Mifflin. Previous attempts had grounded her on the sandbars. This time she fought a stiff northerly wind. Unable to make much headway in the narrow channel, and his slow progress making the ship an easy target for the galleys, Henry turned his ship about. Without the *Vigilant's* additional firepower, "the troops that were to storm did not attempt" the dangerous mission.[189] The grenadiers were recalled, leaving Montresor to continue the daily, sporadic shelling of the fort.

The British ships did inflict some heavy damage to Fort Mifflin, but this was inconsequential compared to what the British lost. Howe lost many fine officers, hundreds of men, two ships, and another week without opening the Delaware to his ships and their much needed supplies. Morale among his officers and men was low while American spirits were high with the stunning victories by Greene and Hazelwood. The defense of the Delaware River forts held and was still firmly in American hands. "Such were the unfortunate consequences of the attack on Red Bank fort."[190]

NOTES

[1]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 458.

[2]Ibid., 458-459.

[3]Tatum, ed., Journal of Ambrose Serle, 264; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 246.

[4]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:216-217.

[5]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 26.

[6]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:284.

[7]Samuel Smith, "Defence of Fort Mifflin," Maryland Historical Society Magazine, September 1910, v. 5, 206-229, as cited in Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 25; Mackey, Gallant Men, 48; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 12.

[8]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 7; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 121.

[9]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:637.

[10]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 459.

[11]Francis Downman, "Report of Captain Francis Downman," Royal Artillery Institution 25 (1898): 161, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 7. Hereafter cited as Downman, "Report."

[12]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 459.

[13]Ibid., 459; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 7.

[14]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 459.

[15] Ibid., 459; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 125.

[16]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 460.

[17]Harry Miller Lydenberg, ed., Archibald Robertson, Lt. General Royal Engineers: His Diaries and Sketches in America, 1762-1780 (New York: 1930),

151, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 8. Hereafter cited as Lydenberg, ed., Robertson, Royal Engineers.

[18]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 127.

[19]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:283.

[20]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 26.

[21]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 9; Simmons, "Billingsport,"12; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 131.

[22]Admiralty, Master's Logs, Pearl, Class 51, 675, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 9.

[23]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 9.

[24]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:644.

[25]Ibid., 1st ser., 5:644.

[26]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 10; Simmons, "Billingsport," 12.

[27]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 133.

[28]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:644-645.

[29]Ibid., 1st ser., 5:648.

[30]Ibid., 1st ser., 5:648-649.

[31]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 11.

[32]Scull, ed., The Montresor Journals, 462.

[33]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 27.

[34]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:648.

[35]Ibid., 1st ser., 5:648.

[36]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 462.

[37]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:648.

[38]Gruber, Howe Brothers, 249; Tatum, ed., Journal of Ambrose Serle, 252; William S. Stryker, The Forts on the Delaware in the Revolutionary War (Trenton, N.J.: John L. Murphy Publishing, 1901), 8. Hereafter cited as Stryker,

Forts on the Delaware; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 11; Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:649.

[39]Tatum, ed., Journal of Ambrose Serle, 252.

[40]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:649.

[41]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 141.

[42]Gruber, Howe Brothers, 249.

[43]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 461-462.

[44]Ibid.,462.

[45]Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 60; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 463-467.

[46]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 464.

[47]Henry B. Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith. The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries Concerning Antiquities, History and Biography of America, vol. 7 (New York: Columbia University, 1870), 27, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 14. Hereafter cited as Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 464. Montresor estimated the American landing force to be nearly 180 men.

[48]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:663.

[49]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 465; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 14; Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 61; Washington, Washington Papers, microfilm 36, reel 44, Hazelwood to Washington, October 12, 1777, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 144.

[50]Washington, Washington Papers, microfilm 36, reel 44, Smith to Washington, October 14, 1777, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 146-147.

[51]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 466. The British batteries that began the bombardment of Fort Mifflin on October 15, 1777 were:

> Battery on the north side of Schuylkill Point, 2 medium 12 Pounders.
> Battery at the Post Houses, 2 rebel Iron 18 Pounders.
> Battery Middle 1 Eight inch Howitzer and one 8 inch mortar.
> Battery Night 1 Eight inch Howitzer and one 8 inch mortar.

[52]Ibid., 467, 469.

[53]Ibid., 467.

[54]Ibid., 467.

[55]Colonial Office Papers, 5/253, October 13, 1777; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:323, n. 75.

[56]Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 81, 86, 89, 90, 92, 93, 95.

[57]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 318, 326, 328, 333-334; Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 11; Robert Bray and Paul E. Bushnell, eds., Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775-1783, An Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), 79. Hereafter cited as Bray,ed., Diary of a Common Soldier.

[58]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:327, 328, 333-334.

[59]Ibid., 9:335.

[60]Ibid., 9:334-335.

[61]Ibid., 9:345; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 79. Washington had received intelligence reports of British troop deployments near Peekskill, New York. Thinking that he might have to send troops north, he recalled Angell to join the main army. When the reports proved to be false, Angell's regiment was ordered to rejoin Colonel Greene at Fort Mercer.

[62]Catherine R. Williams, Biography of Revolutionary Heroes: Containing the Life of Brigadier General William Barton, and also, of Captain Stephen Olney (Providence, R.I.: Privately printed, 1839), 222. Hereafter cited as Williams, Revolutionary Heroes; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 149; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 17.

[63]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 16; Mackey, Gallant Men, 8; Frank H. Stewart, Notes on Old Gloucester County, 4 vols., (Woodbury, New Jersey: The Constitution Company, 1934), 2:167. Hereafter cited as Stewart, Notes on Old Gloucester County; Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, 151,153, 438-439, n. 71. James Whitall filed a claim with the New Jersey State Adjutant General on April 17, 1779, in an effort to gain restitution for losses caused by the Americans at Fort Mercer:

April 16, 1777
First Breaking the ground which is Rendered'd unfit for tilling.
Cutting and Destroying the Timber.
Pasturing Cattle and horses for the use of the Army.

October 12, 1777
To Pasturing Continental Cattle & Horses while Colonel Green Ocupy'd Fort Mercer.

To 15 Ton of Hay at £30 per Ton.
To 63 Bushel of wheat at £6 per Bushel.
To 1000 feet of Cedar Boards at £40 per Thousand.
8550 Rails at £12 per Hundred.
2048 Stakes also at £4 per Hundred.
50 White oak Posts at 3s per piece.
To one Barn & Hayhouse totally Destroy'd & Damages done to Sundry other Buildings.
To two pailed Gardens Cut down and carried to fort Island.
To an orchard near 300 trees all Grafted trees.

Total - £ 5760 1s

[64]Mackey, Gallant Men, 8; Colonel Christopher Greene, ""Orderly Book October 11, 1777, to November 20, 1777"," in Year Book, 1928, of the New Jersey Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Penn.: New Jersey Society of Pennsylvania, 1928), 47, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 153. Hereafter cited as Greene, "Orderly Book"; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 16; McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 6.

[65]Johann Carl Buettner, Narrative of Johann Carl Buettner in the American Revolution, trans. Charles Heartman (New York, N.Y.: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1971), 52. Hereafter cited as Buettner, Narrative of Johann Buettner; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 16; McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 6; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 153.

[66]McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 6.

[67]Chevalier Thomas Antoine Mauduit du Plessis, "Map of Fort Mercer at Red Bank," (Philadelphia, Penn.: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1777). Hereafter cited as Plessis, "Map of Fort Mercer."

[68]"Reminiscences - Jonas Cattell," Woodbury Constitution, March 10, 1846.

[69]Colonel Christopher Greene, "Excerpts From Colonel Greene's Orderly Book," Woodbury Daily Times, Woodbury, N.J., 1930. Hereafter cited as Greene, "Excerpts From Colonel Greene's Orderly Book."

[70]Greene, "Excerpts From Colonel Greene's Orderly Book."

[71]Washington, Washington Papers, microfilm 36, reel 44, Fleury to Hamilton, October 17,1777, as cited in Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 36.

The whole Front of the Fort now attached is surrounded by palisades, the Bank which ought to mask it is too low to cover it from the Battery placed on the opposite bank at the distance of 500 yards - we might when the Enemy were quiet have raised this Causeway, clear'd the Ditches of the mouldered Earth, and have secured our Inclosure if not from ricochet at least

from horizontal shot - we might have arm'd our Battery (assailable in all points) by a sloped fraised work placed in a Ditch Dug at low water in the Gravel - we might have added to the Fort an interior Inclosure of Earth and Blinds, in order to renew the conflict with the Enemy, in case they should possess themselves of the first - we might have made Loop-holes in the Barracks and Windows - Fougasses constructed in the manner of double coffers or Lodgements - we might have raised Epaulements against the Cannon which might rake our place of Arms - and have formed Blinds to shelter us from Bombs and smaller shells.

[72]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 88.

[73]Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 81.

[74]Major Francois Louis Teissedre de Fleury, "Figure Approximatif du Fort Mifflin desouvrages des assiegeans 9th 9bre 1777," (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Library, 1777). Hereafter cited as Fleury, "Map of Fort Mifflin"; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 30-31; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 38-39; Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith, 27, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 31; William G. Simms,ed., The Army Correspondence of Colonel John Laurens in the Years 1777-8: Now First Printed from Original Letters Addressed to his Father Henry Laurens, President of Congress, (New York: 1867). Hereafter cited as Simms, ed., Correspondence of John Laurens.

[75]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:374-375.

[76]Greene, "Excerpts From Colonel Greene's Orderly Book," October 15, 1777.

[77]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:380-381; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier , 79.

[78] Greene, "Excerpts From Colonel Greene's Orderly Book," October 19, 1777; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier , 80.

[79]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:395.

[80]Richard K. Showman, ed., The Papers of General Nathanael Greene, vol. 2 (Schenectady, N.Y.: Union College Press, 1980), 179. Hereafter cited as Showman, ed., Papers of General Nathanael Greene; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:395.

[81]Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 80-81; Stryker, Forts on the Delaware in, 13; Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, 175-176.

[82]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:394.

[83]Ibid., 9:416.

[84]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 468.

[85]Ibid., 467.

[86]Ibid., 468.

[87]Ibid., 468.

[88]Ibid., 468.

[89]Ibid., 519; Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 64; Admiralty Records, vol. 487-488, Class 1 (London: Public Record Office, 1776-1777), 488:74, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 45. Hereafter cited as Admiralty Records.

[90]Rodney Atwood, The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 122. Hereafter cited as Atwood, Hessians.

[91]Ernst Kippling, ed. Von Jungkenn Manuscripts (Ann Arbor, Mich.: William M. Clements Library, University of Michigan), O'Reilly letter, December 22, 1777, as cited in Atwood, Hessians, 122. Hereafter cited as Kippling, Von Jungkenn Manuscripts.

[92]Lidgerwood Collection, Journal of the Grenadier Battlaion von Minnegerode, 1776-1784, Fiche 228-233, Letter K., Microfiche (Morristown, N.J.: G. K. Hall Micropublications, 1989), fiche 232, K85. Hereafter cited as Lidgerwood, Minnegorode.

[93]William Howe, The Narrative of lieut. Gen. Sir William Howe in a Committee of the House of commons, on the 29th of April, 1779, relative to His Conduct during His Late command of the King's Troops in North America. (London: 1780), 28-29, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 18. Hereafter cited as Howe, Narrative. Atwood, Hessians, 123; Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, 172.

[94]Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 15; Ernst Kippling, ed., At General Howe's Side, 1776-1778: The Diary of General William Howe's aide de camp, captain Friedrich von Münchhausen (Monmouth Beach, N.J.: Philip Freneau Press, 1974), fasc. 4, folder 4, as cited in Atwood, Hessians, 123. Hereafter cited as Kippling, ed., At General Howe's Side: Münchhausen.

[95]Edward J. Lowell, The Hessians and the Other German Auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War (Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House, 1884), 204. Hereafter cited as Lowell, Hessians and Other German Auxiliaries; Atwood, Hessians, 123 n 19. Atwood contends that Max von Eelking, Die deutschen Hilfstruppen im nordamerikanischen Befreiungskriege 1776 bis

1783 (2 vols., Hannover, 1863) v. 1, 219, embellished Donop's reply to Cornwallis by "putting an heroic speech in Donop's mouth."

[96]Lowell, Hessians and Other German Auxiliaries, 204.

[97]Joseph P. Tustin, ed., Diary of the American War, A Hessian Journal: Captain Johann Ewald, Field Jäger Corps (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), 97. Hereafter cited as Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary; Lidgerwood, Minnegerode, fiche 232, K85; Lidgerwood Collection, Journal of General von Heister, 1776-1777, Fiche 41-46, Letter FZ. Microfiche (Morristown, N.J.: G. K. Hall Micropublications, 1989), fiche 45, FZ134-135. Hereafter cited as Lidgerwood, Heister; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 465; Atwood, Hessians, 122; J. G. Rosengarten, ed., The German Allied Troops in the North American War of Independence, 1776-1783 (Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969), 117. Hereafter cited as Rosengarten, German Allied Troops.

[98]Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ134-135; Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 97. Ewald states that two of the Hessian cannons were six-pounders; Atwood, Hessians, 27, 122. Atwood states that the size of the English howitzers were eighteen-pounders; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 18.

[99]Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 63; Atwood, Hessians, 124.

[100]Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 296, n. 15. There are many different estimates of the size of Donop's force. I have used John W. Jackson's figure of 2,100 because he seems to have done a more thorough investigation than the other authors. Jackson states:

> On 7 May 1777, the Hessian grenadier battalions and the infantry regiment numbered 1,792 rank and file but on Wier's ration list of September, it had increased to 1,822 - possibly because of the arrival of new recruits from Europe in June. According to Ewald, the jäger corps totaled nearly 300. A patrol of twenty mounted jagers was left in Philadelphia. Added to these figures would be the small detachment of British artillerists. The Hessian losses, since landing at the Head of Elk, had been insignificant; however, if Ewald is correct, the jägers, alone, lost twenty-five or thirty men. Otherwise, the musters of these elements closely represent the size of Donop's column.

Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 45, and Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 15, have the force at 1,200. Atwood, Hessians, 122, has the Hessian force at 1,800. Mackey, Gallant Men, 29, lists Donop's force to be 2,000. Gruber, Howe Brothers, 251, estmates the number of troops at 2,400.

[101]McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 6.

[102]Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ134-135; Bruce E. Burgoyne, "Journal kept by the Distinguished Hessian Field Jaeger Corps during the Campaigns of the Royal Army of Great Britain in North America," Journal of

Johannes Schwalm Historical Association v.3, no. 3, 45-62 (1987), 50. Hereafter cited as Burgoyne, "Hessian Field Jaeger Corps Journal."

[103]Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ134-135.

[104]Ibid., fiche 45, FZ134-135; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 18.

[105]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary , 97.

[106]Ibid., 97; Stewart, Notes on Old Gloucester County, "Jonas Cattell's reminiscences of the Revolution," 3:78; "Reminiscences - Jonas Cattell," Woodbury Constitution, March 10, 1846.

[107]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 97.

[108]Stewart, Notes on Old Gloucester County, 3:78; "Reminiscences - Jonas Cattell," Woodbury Constitution, March 10, 1846.

[109]"Reminiscences - Jonas Cattell," Woodbury Constitution, March 10, 1846.

[110]Ibid., March 10, 1846.

[111]Ibid., March 10, 1846.

[112]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:407, 411, 413, 416-419.

[113]Stryker, The Forts on the Delaware, 16.

[114]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 97-98.

[115]"Reminiscences - Jonas Cattell," Woodbury Constitution, March 10, 1846.

[116]Friel, ed., Diary of Job Whitall; McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 6

[117]"Reminiscences - Jonas Cattell," Woodbury Constitution, March 10, 1846.

[118]George Washington Greene, The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution, 3 vols. (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890), 1:480. Hereafter cited as Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene.

[119]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98.

[120]Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ135-136; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 45.

[121]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98.

[122]Buettner, Narrative of Johann Buettner, 51.

[123]E. Stuart-Wortley, A Prime Minister and his Son: from the Correspondence of the 3rd Earl of Bute and of Lt.-General the Hon. Sir Charles Stuart (London: 1925), 117, as cited in Atwood, Hessians, 124. Hereafter cited as Stuart-Wortley, A Prime Minister and his Son.

[124]Lidgerwood, Minnegerode, fiche 223, K86. Many in the battalion von Minnegerode believed Donop had squandered a chance to surprise the defenders and take the fort. "If he had attacked and stormed it at once, he could have effected an entry forthwith and put the garrison to death at the point of the bayonet, seeing that he had approached the Fort through a wood and reached to within gunshot distance of it; the door of the Fort stood open and the sentinels at the gate and in the Fort were pacing quietly up and down with their guns on their shoulders, probably unloaded."; Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, 1:480. This of course was hindsight, and in fact not true. The gate had been closed, and Greene's men were waiting for the Hessian assault, fully aware of their presence. "The little garrison was on the lookout for them, and, peering curiously through the embrasures and over the parapet, could see them gathering on the skirts of a wood within cannon-shot of the fort, and preparing themselves for the onset."

[125]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98; Lidgerwood, Minnegerode, fiche 232, K86; Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ136.

[126]Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 81.

[127]Burgoyne, " Hessian Field Jaeger Corps Journal," 50.

[128]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98. Not all the officers took the impending attack so lightly. Ewald did not, nor did Captain Krug. Ewald recounts Krug's opinion of the operation:

> He who has seen forts or fortified places captured with sword in hand will not regard this affair as a small matter, if the garrison puts up a fight and has a resolute commandant. We have let luck slip through our fingers. We should not have summoned the fort, but immediately taken it by surprise, for no one knew of our arrival. But now they will make themselves ready, and if our preparations are not being make better than I hear, we will get a good beating.

[129]Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 17.

[130]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 223.

[131]Ibid., 223; Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 17; Jeannette D. Black and William Greene Roelker, eds. A Rhode Island Chaplain in the Revolution: Letters of Ebenezer David to Nicholas Brown, 1775-1778 (Port Washington,

N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972), 52-53. Hereafter cited as Black, ed., Rhode Island Chaplain.

[132]Frank H. Stewart, History of The Battle of Red Bank (Woodbury, N.J.: Board of Chosen Freeholders of Gloucester County, 1927), 11. Hereafter cited as Stewart, Red Bank.

[133]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98.

[134]Rosengarten, ed., German Allied Troops, 118.

[135]Lidgerwood, Minnegerode, fiche 232, K86. Donop had, "express orders from General Howe not to attack the Fort before the 23rd, because on the east side of this Fort there was a river in which the rebels had some armed cruisers lying, which could sweep the land-side of the Fort with their guns. General Howe wished to send some frigates up at the same time, which were to keep the rebels's armed cruisers fully employed and so prevent them from hindering the troops in their attack on the Fort."; Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 103. "In fact, the colonel was supposed to postpone his attack until the next day, the 23d, if he could not take the fort by surprise. On that day, two warships were to approach the chevaux-de-frise as closely as possible to drive away the enemy vessels by their fire."

[136]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 223.

[137]Florence Parker Simister, The Fire's Center: Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era, 1763-1790 (Providence, R.I.: Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, 1979), 188. Hereafter cited as Simister, Rhode Island in the revolutionary Era.

[138]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 223.

[139]Rosengarten, ed., German Allied Troops, 118.

[140]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 44. The garrison at Fort Mercer numbered 540 officers and men. This number included Greene's First Rhode Island Regiment of 244 men, Captain Cook's Continental artillery detachment of sixty-three, Angell's Second Rhode Island Regiment of 227, and the Frenchman Plessis and a few advisors.

[141]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 224; Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, 480.

[142]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98. Colonel von Linsing was sick and did not participate in the attack. He would lead the retreating Hessians back to Philadelphia.

[143]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 223-225; Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, 482-485; Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 18-19; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 184.

[144]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 102.

[145]Ibid., 99; Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, 485; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 184; Marquis Francois Jean de Chastellux, Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782. Revised translation, trans. Howard C. Rice, Jr., 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 1:158. Hereafter cited as Chastellux, Travels in North America.

[146]Buettner, Narrative of Johann Buettner, 51-52.

[147]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 98-99.

[148]Lidgerwood, Minnegerode, fiche, 232, K87.

[149]Ibid., fiche, 232, K87.

[150]Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ136-137; Kippling, ed., Von Jungkenn Manuscripts, 7:5, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 22.

[151]Anthony Walker, So Few the Brave: Rhode Island Continentals, 1775-1783 (New Port, R.I.: Seafield Press, 1981), 42. Hereafter cited as Walker, So Few the Brave.

[152]Evelyn M. Acomb, ed., The Revolutionary Journal of Baron Ludwig Von Closen, 1780-1783 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 122. Hereafter cited as Acomb, Von Closen Journal.

[153]Chastellux, Travels in North America, 158.

[154]Acomb, ed., Von Closen Journal, 122.

[155]Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, 485.

[156]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 224. To illustrate the ease with which the defenders were able to shoot the Hessians, Captain Olney recalls an incident during the battle. "While the enemy were in confusion, not more than 20 paces off, a man by the name of Sweetzer insisted that I should see him kill when he fired. I indulged him four or five times, and his object fell. I then directed him to fire at an officer, and he only made him stagger a little."

[157]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 224. Captain Stephen Olney recounted the incident. "I believe Asa Potter, of our company, was killed by our own men . . . Our men on the other side of the works, also fired across my station. Next day, Lieutenant Samuel Whipple told me he counted 13 musket

balls lodged within the breastwork, where it was impossible the enemy could have lodged them."

[158]Chastellux, Travels in North America, 158.
[159]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 224.

[160]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 183.

[161]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 225. Captain Olney states that Donop "received thirteen musket ball wounds."

[162]Chastellux, Travels in North America, 158; Acomb, ed., Von Closen Journal, 122; Mackey, Gallant Men, 34.

[163]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 225.

[164]Atwood, Hessians, 127.

[165]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 99.

[166]Ibid., 99.

[167]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 470.

[168]Chastellux, Travels in North America, 159.

[169]There are three different accounts relating to the finding of Colonel Donop. The Plessis version, recorded in Chastellux, Travels in North America, 159, states that after the battle he took a few men to survey the outer defenses and heard a voice "from the midst of these corpses, and said in English: 'Whoever you are, take me out of here.'" He then had the Colonel carried into the fort. Another version, by Stephen Olney, is in Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 225. He recalls that Donop was severely wounded and retreated out of the fort, "20 or 30 rods, where he fell, but was brought into the fort after dark by Major Thayer, at the request of the Count's servant." A third account is in Stone, The Invasion of Canada in 1775, vol. 4 (Providence, R.I.: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1867), 75. Major Thayer states that while he was tending to the wounded outside the fort, "two Hessian grenadiers approached and told him that their commanding officer, Count Donop, was lying wounded in the edge of the woods." He then had Donop brought into the fort.

[170]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 225.

[171]Tustin, ed., Ewald Diary, 101-102;Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:703. When including the eighty grenadiers who deserted after the battle, and the 20 prisoners captured next to fort's wall, the number totals 417; Lidgerwood, Heister, fiche 45, FZ137. The journal of General von Heister has the total of Hessian dead and wounded at 371.

[172]Samuel Hazard, ed. Register of Pennsylvania, 16 vols., (Philadelphia, Penn.: 1828-1839), Ward to Washington, October, 23, 1777, 3:181, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 192. Hereafter cited as Hazard, ed., Register of Pennsylvania. Colonel Greene has "two serjeants, 1 fifer, and 4 privates killed, 1 serjeant and 3 privates wounded, and one Captain taken prisoner. Col. Angel has one Captain killed, 3 serjeants, 3 rank and file; and 1 ensign, 1 serjeant, and 15 rank and file wounded; 2 of Capt. Duplessis company were slightly wounded."

[173]McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 7-8. A quaint local story, embellished with excerpts from Ann Whitall's diary, describes her recollection of the battle. Ann refused to leave her home on the day of the battle. "After setting her house in as good order as possible, and that she might protect herself for whatever God ordained . . . took her spinning wheel to the southeast room." As the battle raged, "she resisted the impulse to even look northward, fortifying herself with the thought that by abstaining she was bearing testimony to Friends' abhorrence of war." A stray cannonball hit the house. "It crossed the northeast room, then the hall, and into the southeast room in which Ann Whitall sat spinning, where it fell inert." Realizing that she was in danger, "She remembered that Providence favors those who aid themselves, so she carried her wheel out into the hall! - oh-h - what an ugly hole that ball made! - down the open stairway, speedily reaching the cellar door and made quick descent to the cool depth of the southeast corner. Here she continued to spin until the tumult ceased and the battle was over."

[174]Buettner, Narrative of Johann Buettner, 53.

[175]Chastellux, Travels in North America, 160.

[176]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 6-7.

[177]Greene, "Orderly Book, October, 21, 1777"; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 83; McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 7. Old Mitch, the third guide, hid at the beginning of the battle and was not accused of any wrongdoing.

[178]Sparks, ed., Correspondence, 2:20; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 194.

[179]Stedman, History of the American War, 1:303; Sparks, ed., Correspondence 2:20.

[180]Stedman, History of the American War, 1:303; Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:722.

[181]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:707-709; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 82.

[182]Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 83.

[183]Ibid., 83.

[184]C. Henry Kain, The Military and Naval Operations on the Delaware in 1777 (Philadelphia, Pa.: The City History Society of Philadelphia, 1910), 187. Hereafter cited as Kain, Military and Naval Operations.

[185]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 470.

[186]Stedman, History of the American War, 1:303-304.

[187]Sparks, ed., Correspondence, 2:20; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 83; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 199.

[188]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 49, 447, n. 70; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 470.

[189]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 51; Bray, ed., Diary of a Common Soldier, 83; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 252.

[190]Stedman, History of the American War, 304.

CHAPTER 5

THE PYRRHIC VICTORY

In the aftermath of the victory at Fort Mercer and the destruction of the *Augusta* and *Merlin*, a euphoric optimism spread throughout the American army and civilian population. However, while enjoying the boost in morale, Washington was not foolhardy enough to believe that Howe had given up on his quest to open the Delaware. In a letter to Brigadier General David Forman of the New Jersey militia, he revealed his expectation of another assault by the British. "I am far from conceiving that it will deter them from endeavouring by slower, and more effectual means, to possess themselves of it [Fort Mercer]; to make themselves perfect Masters of the River and the defences of the Chevaux de Frieze it is essential to them to occupy that spot."[1] Washington began to move what men and supplies he could spare to the two key fortifications and Hazelwood's little navy.

On October 26th, Washington ordered Forman to proceed to Fort Mercer "with a respectable body of Militia," as soon as possible. The same day Lieutenant Colonel Robert Ralston, of the Pennsylvania militia, was ordered to take three hundred men and reinforce Forts Mercer and Mifflin.[2] Two days later Washington ordered Brigadier General Varnum, with the remainder of his brigade, to Woodbury, New Jersey, "to aid and give greater security to the Garrisons at Red-bank and Fort Mifflin."[3] Hazelwood's pleas for men and supplies did not go unheeded. He was sent powder and shot. Also, one hundred seamen were found amongst Generals Muhlenberg's, Weedon's, Woodford's, and Scott's brigades of Virginians and Pennsylvanians,

Smallwoods's Second Maryland Brigade, and McDougall's North Carolina Brigade. The seamen accompanied Varnum to New Jersey.[4]

To further strengthen the defenders, Hazelwood sent salvage crews aboard the smoldering hulks of the *Augusta* and the *Merlin* to retrieve the cannon and recover anything of value. Two twenty-four-pounders were taken from the *Augusta* on October 25th, and they "are this day preparing to get the rest, if the [British] ships do not come near us - The smaller ship's [*Merlin*] are also easily to be got."[5] The British did try to prevent the salvage operation but the galleys drove them back to the chevaux-de-frise.

On October 23rd, as Howe watched the remnants of Donop's shattered brigade begin to file into Philadelphia, explosions rang out across the Delaware. These were the death knells of the *Augusta* and *Merlin*, ominously tolling the defeat of the British land and naval operation. But Howe was not about to surrender the American capital and march off in defeat. The next day he ordered his artillery to resume their shelling of Fort Mifflin, and Montresor to continue to build new gun emplacements.[6] Howe then returned to his headquarters to formulate another plan to open the Delaware River.

The British had nearly sixty ships anchored off Chester waiting to supply Philadelphia, yet a mere trickle of provisions made their way past the watchful Americans. Consequently, prices rose and food became "very scarce and dear in the City."[7] To make matters worse, the Delaware usually froze over by December. Howe also knew that if the rumors of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga, New York, were true, American reinforcements would already be on their way to Washington.[8] Howe realized time was running out. He had to take Fort Mifflin as soon as possible.

Howe's new plan was simple. A combined land and naval bombardment would pound Fort Mifflin's defenses to pieces, after which the fort would be

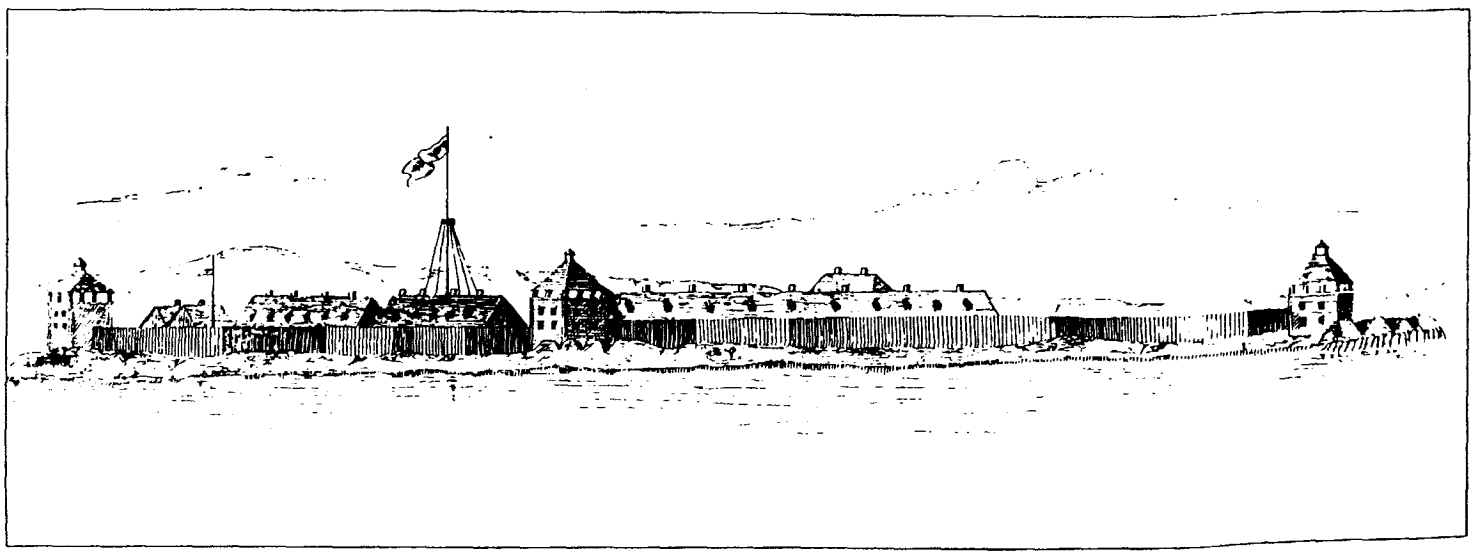


Fig. 11. Fort Mifflin. A view of the north and west sides of the fort. From a map prepared by Captain John Montressor, as illustrated in Ford, Defences of Philladelphia in 1777, i.

taken by British troops.[9] The batteries on Carpenters and Province Islands would destroy the western wall and blockhouses. The naval contingent of the operation would move up the main and western channels of the Delaware. The fleet would fire on the fort and the American galleys from the main channel. Simultaneously, the *Vigilant* and *Fury* would sail up the western or back channel, to attack and destroy the fort's southwestern defenses and battery. Two regiments of Grenadiers could then cross the back channel, storm the island, and carry the fort.[10]

To insure superior fire power over the Americans in Fort Mifflin, Howe requested cannon from the navy. His brother, Admiral Howe, answered his request by sending six twenty-four-pounders from the *Eagle* and four thirty-two-pounders from the *Somerset*.[11] On October 25th, Montresor began work on two floating batteries that would each carry two thirty-two-pounders, and continued to build large artillery platforms in anticipation of the heavy naval ordnance soon to arrive.[12]

To provide protection for the British warships as they warped through the lower chevaux-de-frise, one hundred marines took possession of the dismantled fort at Billingsport on October 26th.[13] They immediately began to construct a redoubt, incorporating some of the old fort's defensive works. The next day, in a pouring rain, the marines were reinforced by "200 Men of the 71st," and two eighteen-pounders.[14]

A torrential downpour began on October 26th, which continued into the 29th. During these four days the rains forced a halt to all work by both sides. In Fort Mifflin the rains stopped the tenacious Fleury and his intrepid work crews from working on the fort's defenses. The soggy ground of the fort quickly flooded leaving "no dry place except the Barracks and platform. Two feet of water [flowed] over every other spot."[15] The British on Province and Carpenters

Islands suffered equally from the deluge. All the artillery fell silent during the storm. The swollen Schuylkill tore "the floating Bridge at Middle Ferry" from its moorings, sweeping it down to the Delaware, stranding Montresor and his men on the inundated islands.[16] Montresor could not work in what he called a "Tempest," as he noted on the 28th, "No working parties this day and indeed from the nature of this overflowed land and the heavy rains and great freshet in the Delaware retards our progress beyond description."[17] The storm forced the British soldiers who had just recently reoccupied Billingsport, to seek shelter in the fleet.[18] Even when the rains finally subsided during the night of the 29th, work on new British gun emplacements was hampered by the mire and knee-deep water. Work did not begin until November 3rd.[19]

As if the weather and sodden conditions were not enough to contend with at Fort Mifflin, there arose a problem in the chain of command. Colonel d'Arendt, the commander of Fort Mifflin, sustained two wounds during the actions of October 22nd and 23rd. These wounds combined with his weak state of health to necessitate a leave of absence. On the 26th, he notified Washington that he would have to temporarily leave Fort Mifflin and recommended John Green of the Virginia Continentals, rather than Smith, to take command. This precipitated a dispute between the two officers as to who should command, since both men held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Green felt that he should replace d'Arendt by virtue of his seniority, while Smith had been at Fort Mifflin longer and in fact commanded the post before d'Arendt's arrival. Perplexed by the situation, Washington believed it best to continue with Smith and requested Green to waive his right to command for "the good of the service."[20] Green agreed to Washington's request and, when d'Arendt left on October 29th, he turned the command of his own Virginians over to his second in command, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Simms, and left for Fort Mercer.[21] In a

letter to Varnum Washington revealed his feeling of exasperation towards his officers' petty quarrels. "How strange it is that men engaged in the same Important Service, should be eternally bickering, instead of giving mutual aid!"[22]

Varnum, having been ordered by Washington on the 28th to move his command to New Jersey, was obliged to postpone his departure due to the heavy rains and impassable roads. He did not resume his march until October 30th, arriving at Fort Mercer on November 2nd, with the two remaining regiments of his brigade, Colonel John Durkee's Fourth Connecticut Continental and Colonel John Chandler's Eighth Connecticut Continental.[23] While on his march Varnum received orders from Washington to "remove from Red Bank and fort Mifflin all the large Calibers [cannon] that can possibly be spared from the necessary defence of those posts -- to some Place of safety where they may be kept in Reserve."[24] Upon his arrival at Fort Mercer, he viewed the forts, sent 236 men to Fort Mifflin, and ordered the removal of all "unnecessary" cannon.[25] Varnum also surveyed the area and ordered a small shore battery of one twelve-pounder and one eighteen-pounder be constructed on "a small Eminence" overlooking the Delaware, two and a half miles south of Fort Mercer and just east of Mantua Creek.[26] The battery, commanded by Captain James Lee, was ready for action on November 5th.[27]

When the rains subsided, the Americans knew the British would push to complete their artillery emplacements and floating batteries. The Americans did their best to thwart the British efforts. General James Potter's Pennsylvania militia succeeded in cutting a dam and flooding parts of Carpenters Island.[28] The fort fired on the unfinished British works while the galleys made daily sorties. However, British artillery fire was able to drive the small ships back to the New Jersey shore.[29] The maneuverable galleys were extremely effective

against the larger British warships, but proved all too vulnerable to fixed artillery positions.

Despite the Americans' best efforts, Montresor was making progress on the gun emplacements. Furthermore, much to the dismay of the Americans, small flat-bottomed boats plied the back channel between the Pennsylvania shore and Fort Mifflin each night, bringing provisions to Philadelphia. Although the fort's defenders could hear the boats they could not see them. "About 2 O'Clock in the morning we hear a great noise of oars near the Shore of Province island," and "a considerable number of the Enemys boats pass'd and repass'd in the course of the night. . . . We cannot cannonade them from the fort, the shade of Trees prevents our being informed of their passage otherwise than by the noise of oars, and firing at sounds would be wasting precious Ammunition."[30] It was by these small boats that the naval ordnance was transported from the *Eagle* and *Somerset*. On November 1st, and again on the 3rd, they transported six twenty-four-pounders to Montresor.[31]

As Montresor and his work crews labored day and night to complete the artillery positions, they noticed that a small redoubt with one cannon had been erected near the mouth of Mantua Creek. Orders were sent to the fleet to destroy the battery. On the morning of November 5th, the fifty gun *Isis*, thirty-two gun *Pearl*, and one gun galley *Cornwallis*, sailed up the Delaware towards Mantua Creek.[32] Captain Lee fired on the British ships with his twelve-pounder as soon as they were in range. The eighteen-pounder that was also supposed to be part of the battery, "was overset on the way, and could not be got to the Battery 'till two o'Clock in the afternoon."[33] Hazelwood and several galleys dropped down to aid Lee, and a heated artillery exchange ensued, lasting nearly two hours. Varnum made every effort to bring the eighteen-pounder to the battery, while "the Twelve [pounder] in the intermediate Time, was ply'd with

great Advantage."[34] Hazelwood broke off the attack just before noon, having run out of ammunition. He returned half an hour later and forced the British ships to move downstream.[35] As the warships retreated, the *Isis* went aground a "Mile and a Quarter from the Battery."[36] Finally the eighteen-pounder was in place and Lee brought both his cannon to bear on the helpless *Isis*. Hazelwood, with four galleys, also attacked. The *Pearl* and *Cornwallis* stayed near until the incoming tide refloated the warship. She struggled downstream but since "there was no Wind, she could not get far from us, by which means she suffered extremely from our Eighteen & twelve Pounders."[37]

Howe had come down on the 5th, to visit Montresor and see the progress on the gun emplacements. What he witnessed was another defeat of the navy by a relatively small American naval force and one shore battery. Montresor then offered his own plan "for the storming of the Rebel Fortress of Mud Island."[38] He also promised that artillery positions would be completed and ready to fire by November 10th. The day ended with thunderstorms that continued sporadically for the next four days.

Montresor's self-imposed deadline produced a frantic activity. Large reinforcements to his work crews, working day and night, did not go unnoticed, nor did their intent go unperceived. Fleury recorded the British progress in his journal:

> Novem. 5th 6th. They are raising a 4th work between the two bank batteries, and half way to Gayers house, where their great work is situated on an eminence.
> 7th. The Enemy appear desirous of fortifying themselves in province Island to maintain the Communication with their Fleet at Billingsport. They are raising Redouts from 5 to 600 yds from the bank, and the Fort on the rising ground advances rapidly towards Perfection.
> 8th. The Enemy have enlarged the upper battery opposite the Fort, we this morning discover 5 Embrasures, masked as yet with Fascines. It is probable they will all open at once. Their project seems to be, to knock down our palisades, and storm our west front between the two block houses.[39]

Attempts were made to mislead the Americans from the actual British objective. Varnum was convinced that Fort Mercer would be the target. On November 7th, he had been given information that the garrison at Billingsport was being reinforced by two Hessian regiments. Mercer would then be attacked by the Billingsport force from the south, and from the north by a force that would cross the Delaware and land above the fort. Varnum alerted Colonel Christopher Greene at Fort Mercer and "took every Precaution in my power" to prepare for the expected attack.[40]

Washington had different intelligence, convincing him "that the Enemy are upon the point of making a grand effort upon fort Mifflin," on November 8th.[41] There was no attack on the 8th, but a report from Captain Charles Craig, and convincing news from Philadelphia set the attack for the 9th.[42] To add even more credence to the information of the impending attack, British warships had warped through the lower chevaux-de-frise anchoring out of range of Varnum's shore battery, just above the obstruction.[43] With little doubt that the British were intent on taking Fort Mifflin, Washington ordered Varnum to "immediately reinforce Fort Mifflin as strongly as possible, and give the Commodore notice of the intended attack."[44] Varnum had sent fifty-six men to the fort the previous day.[45]

On November 9th, the storm continued, making it impossible for the British fleet to move up the Delaware. It also canceled the planned bombardment from Montresor's recently completed batteries.[46] The rains did give Fleury another day to "raise the bank which covers our Palisades on the west Front, against which the whole Fire of the Enemy is directed, and which will be the point of attack in case of their storming the Fort."[47] That same day Smith sent a report to Washington describing in simple terms the obvious British

plan of attack. "I am of opinion their Intentions now must be to knock down our palisades on that side [west], destroy our Block houses & storm us."[48]

November 10, 1777, opened to overcast skies. The mist-shrouded light settling on the cold, damp landscape made the morning especially dismal and dreary. The rain had stopped, allowing activity to be seen within the British batteries. Suddenly the stillness was shattered by the thunderous salvo of fourteen cannon.[49] The artillery raked the palisades, cutting out huge pieces with each blast. The mortars fired carcases which were large incendiary shells, "having hooks which permitted it to attach itself to the wooden shingles of the barracks and other buildings."[50] The battery of two thirty-two-pounders targeted the blockhouse, damaging them and destroying three guns.[51]

The American artillery men fought bravely, disabling two eight-inch Howitzers, killing four men and wounding another. However, they were no match for the British whose artillery commanders had orders for each of the "batteries to fire 80 rounds [from] each gun."[52] The American battery of two eighteen-pounders near the northwest blockhouse was destroyed, with one of the British balls breaking the muzzle off one gun.[53] The other American battery facing the British was comprised of two four-pounders located near the Old Ferry wharf. It was destroyed, but for one of the four-pounders that fired defiantly on into the night until it too was finally silenced.[54]

The British cannonade was unremitting well into the early afternoon when at last the batteries had consumed their required eighty rounds. The firing continued sporadically throughout the rest of the day and into the night.[55] The damage to the fort was extensive, but miraculously there were no American casualties. That evening a storm swept in, adding to the discomfort of the defenders as they struggled to repair the defenses. It did however extinguish the fires in the burning buildings.

Smith surveyed the first day's destruction. The palisades, blockhouses, and barracks were all heavily damaged. The lack of casualties was attributed to providence and the protection provided by the masonry eastern wall.[56] He wrote Washington, "My Opinion & the Opinion of the Officers in this Garrison is, that unless the Siege can be rais'd the enemy must in a short time reduce this place. . . . In 5 or 6 Days the fort will be laid open, and everything destroyed, if they continue to cannonade and Bombard us as they have done, of which I haven't the smallest Doubt."[57] Smith therefore concluded that it would be better to evacuate the fort, "destroy the whole of the works and take the guns to the Jersey Shore," where they could still fire on the British ships, defend the chevaux-de-frise, and protect Hazelwood's galleys.[58] However, if he was ordered to stay, he assured Washington that "We are determined to defend it to the last extremity."[59]

Fleury in the meantime worked his men through the night to repair the palisades and get some of the disabled cannon back into action. The storm grew more intense while the temperature dropped. When the rain subsided early the next morning, an icy wind blew from the northwest over the combatants. Once again the morning erupted with the roar of the British guns.

The cannonade on November 11th was more intense than that of the previous day. The American gunners returned fire as best they could, putting up a persistent and heroic stand under the weight of the British batteries. Concentrated fire from the six twenty-four-pounders reduced the northwest blockhouse to a pile of broken timbers.[60] The barracks sustained more damage, and parts of the stone wall "is broke thro' in different places."[61] This day also saw the first casualties. Smith and Captain Samuel Treat, the artillery commander, were "conversing near the 32 pounder, when a ball from the enemy came. It looped in the traverse. Captain Treat tottered, and was upheld

by the Colonel. A slight squeeze of the hand, and he expired."[62] He was probably killed by the concussion. A private was also killed during the attack. During the day, Fleury, Smith, and Lieutenant John George of the artillery, were also wounded. Smith was in the barracks when " a ball came through the stockade, the barracks, and two stacks of chimneys: and, nearly spent, it struck him on the left hip and dislocated his wrist. He fell covered with bricks, by which he was severely bruised."[63] Doctor Thomas Skinner of the 8th Connecticut, "came immediately, drew his wrist into place and bled him."[64] Smith and George were sent to Woodbury to recover. Fleury, who felt that his wounds did not warrant his removal, stayed at the fort. The command of the fort now passed to Lieutenant Colonel Giles Russell of Durkee's Connecticut Regiment. The *Vigilant* again tried to move up the shallow western channel but went aground.[65] She was finally able to break free with the help of the incoming tide and a towing effort from some British ships.

When night fell Fleury would once again have his men work on the defenses, repairing the damage wrought by the British that day. This would become a nightly routine that exhausted both the Frenchman and the garrison. To make the work even more difficult, throughout the night the British would periodically fire all their guns in an effort to hinder repairs and deprive the defenders of sleep. A soldier at the fort recalled the annoying and deadly practice. "During the whole night, at intervals of a quarter or half an hour, the enemy would let off all their pieces, and although we had sentinels to watch them and at every flash of their guns to cry, 'a shot,' upon hearing which everyone endeavored to take care of himself, yet they would ever and anon, in spite of all our precautions, cut up some of us."[66]

Late that night Varnum visited the fort and was appalled by the conditions. He returned to Woodbury where he immediately wrote Washington

that "Every Defence is almost destroyed," and "If as great Injury should take Place tomorrow as to Day, we may be obliged to relinquish the Place."[67]

Early on the morning of the 12th, the British resumed their intensive cannonade. The palisades was pounded until there were twenty gaping holes in the log defense, and the southwest blockhouse was seriously damaged. By one o'clock in the afternoon all the fort's guns were silenced. Two hours later the Americans brought three guns back into action, continuing the lopsided artillery exchange until nightfall. Gale force winds kept the British navy at anchor and unable to cooperate in the attack on the fort.[68]

During the day Varnum received orders from Washington to hold the fort and "immediately withdraw all the invalids and fatigued Men and fill up their places with the most fresh and robust, and that the troops in the Garrison be often exchanged that they may by that mean obtain rest."[69] But, knowing the fort would soon fall, he advised Varnum to remove the cannon from the fort, have everything of value ready to be removed at a minutes notice, and recommended that "a party to be left, who might find good Shelter behind the ruined Works, and when they abandon, they should set fire to the Barracks and all remaining buildings."[70] That night Varnum sent one hundred men to the fort to evacuate the wounded and most fatigued.

A very cold wind blew hard from the northwest on November 13th, keeping the *Vigilant* from attempting another run up the western channel. However, it did not deter the British artillery from their daily bombardment of Fort Mifflin. The Americans were able to respond with only one eighteen-pounder and a small four-pounder. Although seemingly feeble in firepower, the reply was quite potent, as the accurate fire by these guns disabled a British twenty-four-pounder.[71] However, this was but a small hindrance to the unrelenting barrage which took its toll on the fort and its defenders.

One victim to the stress of the duty was the fort's commander. After only two days in command, a worn-out Russell requested Varnum for a replacement. Varnum realized that a weak commander would undermine the resolve of the defenders and jeopardize any possibility to hold the fort. He assembled his officers and asked for a volunteer to assume command of Fort Mifflin. Major Simeon Thayer of the 2nd Rhode Island, an able and battle experienced officer, stepped forward. Delighted with such an officer, Varnum sent Thayer, 286 men of the Connecticut regiments and Captain James Lee's Continental artillery battery of twenty, to Fort Mifflin the night of November 13th. Smith's and Green's men were relieved and ferried back to New Jersey, along with some of the fort's cannon. The garrison at the fort now stood at over four hundred.[72]

While Thayer and his men were arriving, Fleury worked feverishly to repair the palisades and the lower level of the western blockhouses, although at times he was forced to use his cane on some of the workmen. He succeeded in closing "the breaches made in our Palisades, with Planks, Centry-boxes, Rafters, and strengthen'd the whole with earth."[73] A bright moon also made the work dangerous, illuminating the men to the British artillerists.

On November 14th, before the British began their daily bombardment, Fleury took Thayer for an inspection of the fort. In the first light of a cold, cloudy day, the two officers, weary from the last night's activities, were informed of the approach of a British floating battery mounting two thirty-two-pounders. Thayer's first order of his new command was to move two eighteen-pounders out of the main battery and to the platform outside the northwest blockhouse. The floating battery moved "within 500 yards of the fort," and opened fire along with the shore batteries.[74] The fire from the new American battery "was so hot that the [floating battery] crew jumped overboard and waded ashore."[75] The

British shore batteries continued to blast away at the fort, destroying the repairs made the night before, and more.

Conditions in the fort became horrid. The cold November weather chilled the men to the bone. The men lacked blankets, coats, shirts, shoes, and stockings. They huddled in makeshift shelters to avoid the raw winds and to find safety form the continual shelling. To fend off the terrible cold, the defenders burned fragments of the palisades which now littered the ground. "It was utterly impossible to lie down to get any rest or sleep on account of the mud," and the exploding shells.[76]

In addition to the suffering of the men and destruction of the fort, ammunition for the cannon was running low. The artillery crews tried to make every shot count, engaging the British batteries only during the day and with as accurate fire as possible. Eventually there were no more cannon balls for the thirty-two-pounder.[77] One of the fort's defenders, Private Joseph Plumb Martin, recalled how they remedied the problem:

> We had, as I mentioned before, a thirty-two-pound cannon in the fort, but had not a single shot for it. The British also had one in their battery upon the Hospital Point, which, as I said before, raked the fort, or rather it was so fixed as to rake the parade in front of the barracks, the only place we could pass up and down the fort. The artillery officers offered a gill of rum for each shot fired from the piece, which the soldiers would procure. I have seen from twenty to fifty men standing on the parade waiting with impatience the coming of the shot, which would often be seized before its motion had fully ceased and conveyed off to our gun to be sent back again to its former owners.[78]

During the 14th, Generals Greene, Wayne, Cadwalader, accompanied by Thomas Paine, and escorted by a company of light horse, made a reconnaissance of the British positions across from Fort Mifflin. They were trying to evaluate the possibility of mounting an attack to relieve the fort. During the late afternoon Greene observed a frigate and a sloop attempting to move up the western channel between Hog and Carpenters Island. He noticed that they

did not succeed but recommended to Washington that Hazelwood "should be directed to sink a vessel or two in the new channel as soon as possible."[79]

What Greene had seen were the *Vigilant* and *Fury* making another attempt to move through the shallow channel to take their positions off Mud Island. His suggestion to obstruct the western channel was too late. The Americans had thought that this channel was unnavigable for the deep-drafted British warships. What they did not realize was that the rows of chevaux-de-frise in the main channel had become a partial barrier to the natural flow of the Delaware. Consequently, more water was diverted to the western channel, raising the level which afforded the possibility for British ships to negotiate the waterway during high tide. Furthermore, the Delaware was unusually high from the recent heavy rains. The failure of the Americans to block the channel was an oversight that would have devastating consequences for Fort Mifflin and its defenders.[80]

The night of the 14th found the defenders trying to repair a fort that was in shambles. The defenses were no more than a hodgepodge of remnants, scavenged from shattered walls and buildings. The men were exhausted, with no prospect of reinforcements from New Jersey. Thayer also expected British troops to assault the island at anytime. He therefore ordered Major Silas Talbot and his detachment of Rhode Island infantry to take up positions under the box-like structure in the fort's interior work, to act as a reserve should the need arise.[81]

During the night the *Vigilant* and *Fury* made another effort to pass over the sand bar in the shallow western channel. With the help of a full moon tide and a favorable wind, the *Fury* sailed over the bar and into the channel. At midnight the *Vigilant* also succeeded in crossing the shallows. The two ships then waited till morning before attacking the fort.

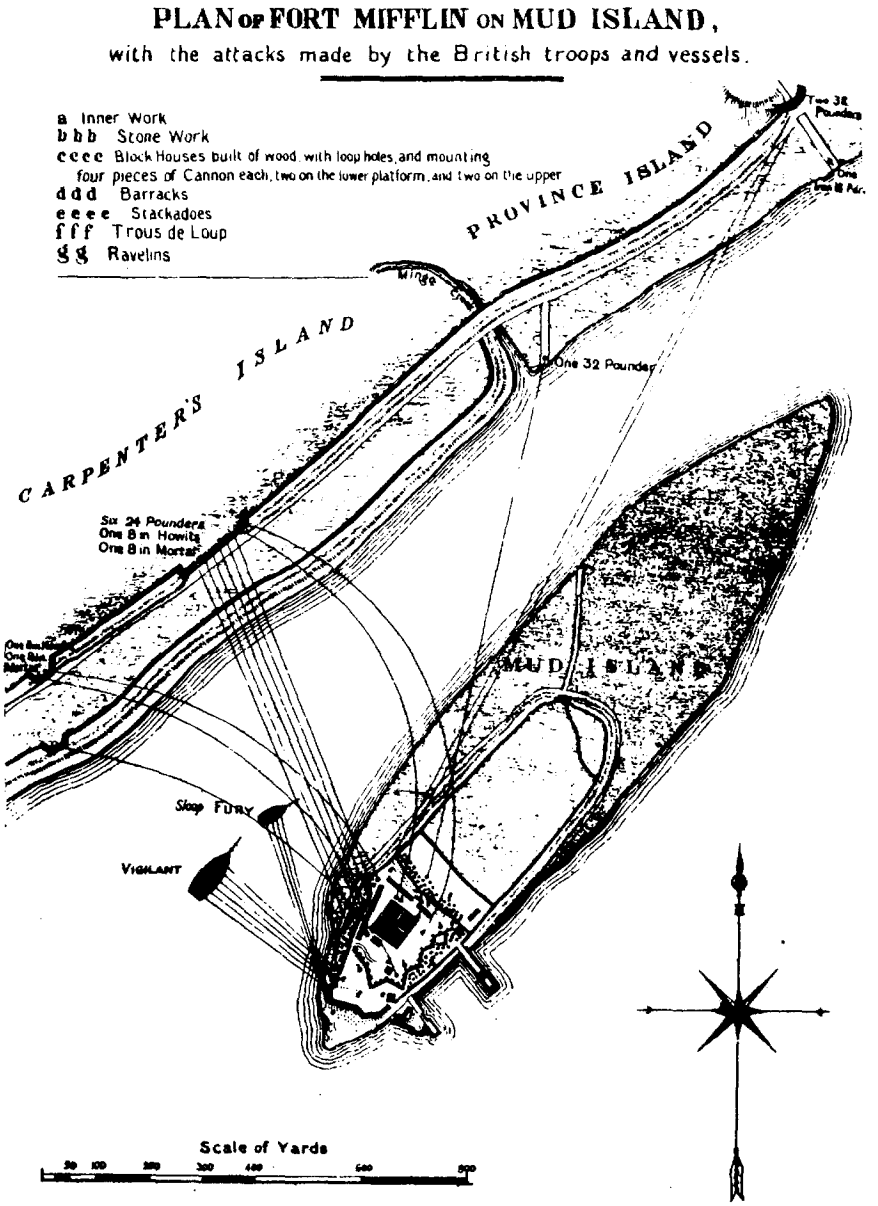


Fig. 12. The map shows the attack by the British shore batteries and ships *Vigilant* and *Fury*. Strittmatter, The Importance of the Campaign on the Delaware During the Revolutionary War - 1777, 9.

The morning of November 15th was clear, sunny, and cold. The British began their daily bombardment of Fort Mifflin's pathetic defenses, albeit more vigorous than usual. The work crews from the night before scrambled for a safe place to rest, while the artillery companies manned the guns and exchanged their unequal fire with their British counterparts. The sentries watched for troop movements and the anticipated frontal assault. What they saw was the beginning of a coordinated naval and land attack on the fort.[82]

At eight o'clock, the *Isis* and *Somerset* sailed up the main channel, stationing themselves about six hundred yards off the southern end of Fort Mifflin. They anchored broadside to the fort and opened up a devastating fire. The *Roebuck* soon joined the two ships, taking a position near the *Isis*. The *Pearl*, *Liverpool*, and *Cornwallis* engaged the American batteries near Mantua Creek.[83] The Mantua Creek batteries consisted of Varnum's original battery, now with two eighteen-pounders and two nine-pounders, and a new two-gun battery of twenty-four-pounders. The new battery that was completed on November 15th, took part in that day's action.[84]

Hazelwood moved down with his galleys and floating batteries to meet the naval threat. A heated exchange between the Mantua Creek batteries, Pennsylvania navy, and British warships developed, forcing the *Isis*, *Somerset*, and *Roebuck* to divide their fire between the fort and the galleys. Nevertheless, the combined fire from the British land batteries showered the fort with shot and shell, wreaking havoc on the defenders.

Much to the consternation of the Americans, the *Vigilant* and *Fury* were seen approaching the fort from the western channel. Two cannon, an eighteen-pounder and a thirty-two-pounder, began to fire at the ships as they approached, hitting them many times.[85] The thirty-two-pounder was firing a combination of eighteen and twenty-four pound shot, since all thirty-two pound

shot was gone. When the two ships were within one hundred yards from the island they let loose a broadside that tore into the southwest corner of the fort. Soon the two American guns were silenced allowing the *Vigilant* to move within twenty yards. A contingent of forty Royal marines stationed in the round-tops of her masts poured musket fire and hand grenades on the American defenders. "They killed every Man that appeared upon the Platforms."[86] Fleury assembled a number of marksmen from the garrison "to answer the fire of the enemy's tops."[87]

With the additional fire from the *Vigilant* and *Fury*, the British bombardment of Fort Mifflin was heavier than any experienced so far in America. "More than one thousand and thirty discharges of cannon from thirty-two to twelve pounders, were made in twenty minutes."[88] The roar of the guns was deafening. The western palisades was swept away along with the shattered remnants of the blockhouses. "The fort itself was so shrouded in smoke and flame, that it was impossible to see what was going on there, except when occasionally a gust of wind would sweep over, blowing it partially aside, and disclosing the busy scene acting on the ramparts."[89] After the western defenses were gone, the British turned their attention to the eastern masonry wall. Soon it too began to crumble under the weight of the cannonade.

The men ran about the fort in search of shelter. "As fast as one breastwork was battered down, the Americans retreated behind another."[90] The ditches were filled with mud and debris. Private Martin recalled, "Our men were cut up like cornstalks. I do not know the exact number of the killed and wounded but can say it was not small."[91] By eleven o'clock the ammunition for the cannon was nearly exhausted, leaving only two guns operable. Two hours later the last of the shot was gone.

The situation had become critical. All the cannon but two were "dismounted, block-houses destroyed, barracks shattered to pieces, and palisades beat down."[92] Thayer knew that the fort could not be held. He called his officers, Talbot, Fleury, Lee, and Dickinson, to discuss the situation. They agreed the fort was lost and must be evacuated during the night. Until then they must try, as best they could, to keep the men and themselves out of harm's way.

Around one o'clock Thayer had sent a request to Hazelwood to drive off the *Vigilant*. Hazelwood sent six galleys, which arrived soon after Thayer had met with his officers. The galleys tried to force the western channel but were driven back by heavy fire from the British shore batteries. Some of the galleys received heavy damage with men killed and wounded. The galleys worked their way around the east side of Mud Island and attacked the *Vigilant*, but once again came under heavy fire which drove them away. They rejoined the other galleys in the main channel still battling the British frigates.[93]

The British continued their merciless attack throughout the afternoon, making no place safe within the fort. Many were killed by exploding shells, while others lay dead or wounded from shrapnel and wood fragments that ripped through the air. Captain Lee was killed by such flying debris. Lee and Fleury were standing together near one of the blockhouses when a shell shattered a section of the building. The explosion sent wood and splinters flying, one of which struck Lee, killing him instantly. Fleury was knocked unconscious. Talbot, seeing his fellow officers knocked to the ground, rushed to their aid, only to be struck down also by a blast of grapeshot that wounded him in the arm and thigh.[94]

At five o'clock the squadron of British warships stopped firing and retired downstream to Billingsport. With darkness approaching they thought it prudent to move to a safer position. The ships had also suffered considerable damage

form the Pennsylvania navy and Varnum's New Jersey shore batteries.[95] Soon after the navy moved off, Montresor's batteries also ceased fire. However, the *Vigilant* and *Fury* continued to fire on the fort well into the evening.[96]

As soon as it was dark Thayer prepared to evacuate the fort. He selected forty men to remain with him until all the garrison, including the dead, were brought to Fort Mercer. The first transports reached Fort Mifflin at seven o'clock. Ten eight-pounders were loaded into one of the boats but it sunk before it got too far from shore. Eventually all three hundred of the fort's survivors were safely across the Delaware. Not until then did Thayer and his remaining contingent set about their task of destroying the remains of the fort. The fort was said to be a picture of desolation. Thayer quickly had the men spike the cannon and set fire to the barracks and whatever else would burn. When their work was completed they hastily boarded the three waiting boats. Private Martin described their narrow escape:

> Before we could embark the buildings in the fort were completely in flames, and they threw such a light upon the water that we were as plainly seen by the British as though it had been broad day. Almost their whole fire was directed at us. Sometimes our boat seemed to be almost thrown out of the water, and at length a shot took the sternpost out of the rear boat. We had then to stop and take the men from the crippled boat into the other two, and now the shot and water flew merrily, but by the assistance of a kind of Providence we escaped without any further injury and landed, a little after midnight, on the Jersey shore.[97]

The American flag still waved over the ruins of Fort Mifflin on the morning of November 16, 1777. The fort had withstood six days of hellish bombardment before the brave and resolute defenders were forced to abandon their river stronghold.

As soon as it was light, British soldiers occupied the island, hoisted the British flag, and Montresor's men began work on a battery for four thirty-two-pounders.[98] However, the task of controlling the Delaware was only half complete with the occupation of Fort Mifflin. Fort Mercer and the New Jersey

shore defenses had to be taken before unchallenged use of the river could be restored. Therefore, on November 17th, Cornwallis, with two thousand troops, moved across the Schuylkill, and down to Chester, where they crossed over to Billingsport. On the 18th, Major General Thomas Wilson, who had arrived earlier with reinforcements from New York City, landed four thousand troops, and joined Cornwallis at Billingsport. Many of Wilson's regiments were experienced veterans, having participated in the storming of Forts Clinton and Montgomery on the Hudson River. The force under Cornwallis was now a formidable one, totaling six thousand. It also included twelve cannon and several howitzers.[99] To further strengthen the British presence in New Jersey, Howe sent the 42nd regiment to Cooper's Ferry, across from Philadelphia.

On the same day Cornwallis left Philadelphia for Billingsport, Washington sent Major Generals Arthur St. Clair, Baron Johann De Kalb, and Brigadier General Henry Knox to Fort Mercer to confer with Varnum, Hazelwood, Greene, and the other officers at the post, about the loss of Fort Mifflin. They were to examine the consequences of the loss, and make recommendations pertinent to the continued defense of the Delaware.[100]

A steady stream of intelligence reports alerted Washington and the officers at Red Bank of large British troop movements. It was apparent that Fort Mercer was the intended objective.[101] On the 19th, the three generals at Fort Mercer hurried back to Washington's camp at Whitemarsh, Pennsylvania, and recommended that the fort be held as long as possible. Washington concurred and immediately ordered Brigadier General Jedediah Huntington's brigade of 1,200 men to reinforce Varnum.[102] That evening he sent word to Varnum and Hazelwood to hold the fort because reinforcements were on their way.

But events were out pacing Washington's orders. Cornwallis moved north on the 19th, forcing the Americans to abandon their Mantua Creek

batteries. Proceeding cautiously, Cornwallis sent patrols to scout ahead of the main army, resulting in a number of skirmishes. Reports of the fighting and the approach of the large British force prompted Greene to prepare to evacuate the garrison and destroy Fort Mercer. He had powder scattered throughout the fort to insure its destruction. That evening Varnum visited Greene and entreated him to postpone the withdrawal until the next day, when reinforcements were sure to arrive. Greene agreed to wait, but later that night the men heard the sound of oars in the river. Thinking they were British boats, Greene and the garrison hurried off to Haddonfield without destroying the fort.[103]

Hazelwood was also preparing to retreat. On the 19th he received word that Greene was getting ready to evacuate and destroy Fort Mercer. Without the protection of the fort, his fleet could be attacked easily from the east shore of the Delaware. He met with his captains and ordered the fleet to sail upstream, past Philadelphia, early the next morning. All ships and galleys were to "be prepared with combustible matter so as to be set instantly on fire and consumed," rather than falling into British hands.[104] At three o'clock on the morning on the 20th, the thirteen galleys and nine guard boats that hugged the east channel of the Delaware, went undetected, passing safely by the British batteries.[105]

Later the same morning, Varnum and Colonel Greene decided to send a small detachment back to Fort Mercer. The soldiers would march to "Gloucester Point and there will be supplied with boats to go to the fort."[106] They were to occupy the fort until the British approached, at which time they were to ignite the powder, destroy the fort, and retreat safely in the waiting boats. Unsure whether reinforcements would arrive before the British, their apprehension increased as they waited. By the afternoon the nervous soldiers could wait no longer and blew up the fort.[107]

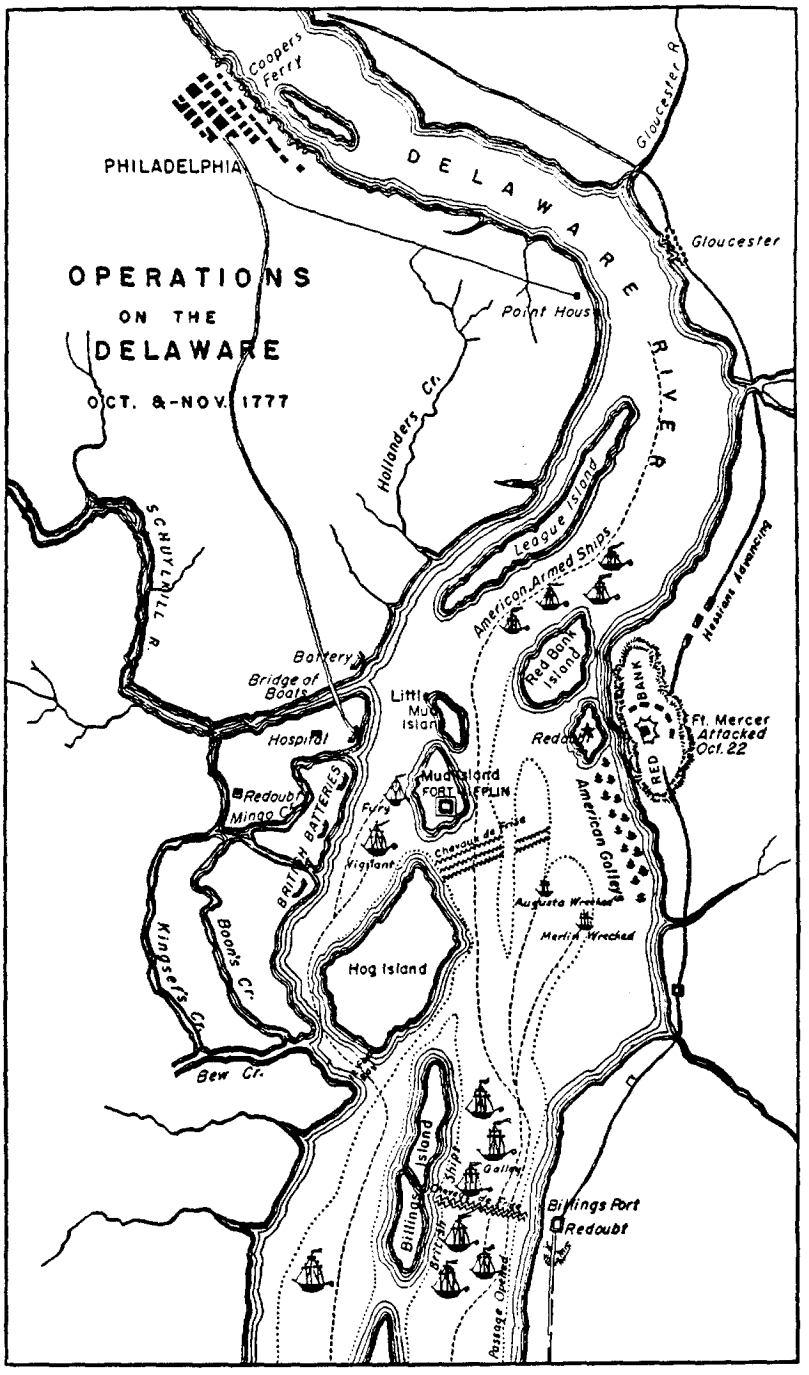


Fig. 13. Operations on the Delaware River from October to November, 1777. Ward, The War of the Revolution, 1:375.

Washington had ordered General Greene to take his division to New Jersey to assist Varnum. General Greene was given command of the American forces in New Jersey, and on November 20th, with his division of two brigades, Muhlenberg's and Weedon's, began to cross over to Burlington, New Jersey.[108] On the same day Washington requested the militia of Hunterdon, Burlington, Gloucester, Salem, and Cumberland counties, New Jersey, to turn out and join General Greene.[109]

Early on the morning of the 21st, the remainder of Hazelwood's fleet attempted their escape. They had to use the main channel because they drew more water than the galleys. The American ships were "soon discovered, and a very hot fire of shot and shells from the Town [Philadelphia] & Frigate [*Delaware*] began on them."[110] The schooner *Delaware*, and another small boat, were forced to shore and set on fire. The Continental brig *Andria Doria*, xebecks *Repulse* and *Champion*, sloops *Race Horse* and *Fly*, the state ship *Montgomery*, and two floating batteries, were set on fire, "which made a most terrible conflagration."[111] The Brig *Convention*, and four shallops made it safely up river to join the remainder of the American fleet.[112]

The fate of Fort Mercer having been decided, Varnum quickly turned his attention to other matters. With Cornwallis's force so near he thought it wise to move his command to a safer distance. On November 21st, Varnum, with Colonels Greene and Angell's Rhode Island regiments, and Colonels Durkee's and Chandler's Connecticut regiments, relocated his headquarters to Mount Holly, New Jersey, and waited for reinforcements. Huntington's brigade soon joined Varnum at Mount Holly, as did 1,200 New Jersey militia. General Greene's forces arrived on the 22nd, and Colonel Daniel Morgan with 170 riflemen, arrived on the 23rd. Finally, on the 25th, General John Glover's

brigade arrived, having left the Hudson highlands on November 10th. General Greene's forces numbered about seven thousand.[113]

After Cornwallis had Fort Mercer razed on November 22nd, he moved his army towards Gloucester, on the Delaware. His mission accomplished, he was returning to Philadelphia. As he moved through the countryside he sent out foraging parties who scoured the area for food and supplies, so dearly needed by Howe's army.[114] He began to embark his troops on the 25th, completing his withdrawal on the 27th.[115] During his foray into New Jersey the first supply ships, since the siege began two months earlier, arrived at Philadelphia on November 23rd.

When General Greene was finally ready to attack Cornwallis, Washington recalled him and his forces back to Pennsylvania to join the main army. Washington had learned of Cornwallis's move to Philadelphia and was apprehensive of a general attack by the British against his divided army.[116] Although Lafayette, with some light horse, Morgan's riflemen, and two companies of local militia, attacked and routed a rear guard unit of Hessians, Greene's army never engaged Cornwallis's.[117] On November 28th, Greene, convinced that Cornwallis had withdrawn from New Jersey, led his forces back to join Washington.

Washington would spend the first two weeks of December deciding on a permanent winter camp for the army. It had to be easily defended, yet close enough to Philadelphia to keep an eye on the British. After fending off a failed surprise attack by Howe on the American army's camp at Whitemarsh, Pennsylvania, December 4th and 5th, Washington finally encamped his army at Valley Forge. Howe likewise made arrangements for winter quarters. Now with the Delaware free of American defenses and obstructions, and his line of supply

unencumbered by enemy forces, he and his army settled into the more comfortable lodgings of Philadelphia.

The siege of Philadelphia was broken and the fight for the Delaware River was over. General Howe's obsession with the capture of the American capital had resulted in a lengthy campaign, and in the end his resignation. The possession of Philadelphia and the victories at Brandywine and Germantown, were overshadowed by his apparent inability to seize Forts Mercer and Mifflin, and secure the Delaware in a timely manner. The two months that Howe was involved in driving the Americans from the river proved to be a costly delay for General John Burgoyne's army of Canada. Howe's neglect to move north to support the Canadian army contributed to Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, New York. At best, Howe's securing of Philadelphia could be considered a Pyrrhic victory. The following spring the British abandoned the city, pursued by an army tested in the crucible of battle and annealed by the hardships at Valley Forge.

NOTES

[1]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:431.

[2]Ibid., 9:431,443, 444.

[3]Ibid., 9: 425,433-434.

[4]Ibid., 9:461, 469; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 209.

[5]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:708, 722; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:448; Wallace McGeorge, The Frigate Augusta (Camden, N.J.: 1905), salvage list, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 203.

[6]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 27.

[7]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 5:719.

[8]Gruber, Howe Brothers, 255, n. 81, 82. Although Howe had heard rumors of Burgoyne's surrender during October, 1777, official confirmation did not reach him until October 31, 1777.

[9]Ibid., 257.

[10]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 62; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 28; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 257.

[11]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 221; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 472-473; Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 63.

[12]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 470.

[13]Ibid., 471; Worthington C. Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia in 1777 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Historical Printing Club, 1897), 60. Hereafter cited as Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia.

[14]Lydenberg, ed., Robertson, Royal Engineers, 154, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 27.

[15]Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith, 38, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 27.

[16]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 471.

[17]Ibid., 471.

[18]Gruber, Howe Brothers, 257.

[19]Ibid., 258; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 473.

[20]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:458.

[21]Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 28-29; Alotta, Fort Mifflin Diary, 21.

[22]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:5.

[23]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 57.

[24]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 70.

[25]Ibid., 78.

[26]Ibid., 86; Simms, ed., Correspondence of John Laurens, 69-70; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 27.

[27]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 87.

[28]Ibid., 69; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 9:475, 10:12; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 472.

[29]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 473.

[30]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia , 74, 81, 98.

[31]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 472, 473; J. Almon, The Remembrancer or Impartial Repository of Public Events, 5:501. Lord Howe to Stephens, November 23, 1777, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 221.

[32]Jackson, Fort Mifflin, 59; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 46.

[33]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 86.

[34]Ibid., 86.

[35]Jackson, With the British Army in Philadelphia, 74.

[36]Ford, ed. Defences of Philadelphia , 86.

[37]Ibid., 86. Varnum said that the galleys "expended an immense quantity of ammunition," and "the Battery discharged, from both Guns, more than one hundred and twenty Pounds; two Thirds of which at least took place: And as almost every Shot was directed at the sixty four [*Isis*], she must be greatly shattered."

[38]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 519.

[39]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 98-99. Fleury Journal.

[40]Ibid., 95-96, 102-104.

[41]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:16; Simms, ed., Correspondence of John Laurens, 73.

[42]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 99; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:25; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 223.

[43]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 28.

[44]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:25.

[45]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 102.

[46]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 474.

[47]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 106.

[48]Ibid., 106.

[49]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 474. The artillery used in the initial bombardment were "two 32 pounders, six 24 pounders Iron, one 18 pounder, two 8 inch Howitzers, two 8 inch mortars, and one 13 inch mortar."

[50]Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith, 89, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 453, n. 7; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 474.

[51]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 111-112.

[52]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 474.

[53]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 29; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 111.

[54]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 29; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 474.

[55]Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, 235; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 107.

[56]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 112; Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 88; Benjamin Cowell, Spirit of '76 in Rhode Island (Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing, 1973), 297. Hereafter cited as Cowell, Spirit of '76.

[57]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia , 112.

[58]Ibid., 112; Simms, ed., Correspondence of John Laurens, 75.

[59]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 112.

[60]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 475.

[61]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 117; Simms, ed,. Correspondence of John Laurens, 75.

[62]Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith, 39, as cited in Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 29.

[63]Dawson, ed., Papers of General Samuel Smith, 90, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 239; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 121-122; Cowell, Spirit of '76, 296.

[64]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 29.

[65]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 475.

[66]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 88.

[67]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 116.

[68]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 475.

[69]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:48-49.

[70]Ibid., 10:50.

[71]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 244.

[72]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 126.

[73]Ibid., 123.

[74]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 476.

[75]Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 63; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 476; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 124-125. Fleury Journal, November 14, 1777.

[76]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 89.

[77]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:68-69.

[78]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 90.

[79]Showman, ed., Papers of General Nathanael Greene, 2:197.

[80]Black, ed., Rhode Island Chaplain, 47; Kain, Military and Naval Operations, 191-192.

[81]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 33.

[82]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 476.

[83]Admiralty, Captain's Logs, Class 51: H.M.S. *Roebuck*, November, 15th and 16th, 1777, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 254; Stedman, History of the American War, 1:304; Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 64; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 34; Stryker, Forts on the Delaware, 36.

[84]Smith, Fight for the Delaware36; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 133.

[85]Cowell, Spirit of '76, 297; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 140.

[86]Ibid., 297; Ibid., 140; Simms, ed., Correspondence of John Laurens, 79.

[87]I. P. Strittmatter, The Importance of the Campaign on the Delaware During the Revolutionary War - 1777 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Privately printed, 1932), 22. Excerpts from Colonel Lauren's Diary. Hereafter cited as Strittmatter, Importance of the Campaign.

[88]Cowell, Spirit of '76, 301; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 255.

[89]Williams, Revolutionary Heroes, 229.

[90]Ibid., 229.

[91]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 92.

[92]Cowell, Spirit of '76, 296.

[93]Ford, ed. Defences of Philadelphia, 129.

[94]Strittmatter, Importance of the Campaign, 22. Excerpts from Colonel Lauren's Diary; Washington, Washington Papers, microfilm, reel 44, Fleury Journal, November 15, 1777, as cited in Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 256.

[95]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 37.

[96]Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 257.

[97]Martin, Private Yankee Doodle, 93-94.

[98]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 477.

[99]Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 64; Gruber, Howe Brothers, 260; Martin, Philadelphia Campaign, 142-143; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 38; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 272.

[100]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington , 10:77-78.
Washington requested the generals investigate the following points:

1. The Practicability of hindering the Enemy from clearing the main Channel of the Chevaux de frize which now obstruct it, without having possession of Mud Island.
2. What farther aid would be required from this Army to effect the purpose above mentioned, supposing it practicable, and how should such aid be disposed.
3. Whether our Fleet will be able to keep the River, in case the Enemy make a lodgement, and establish Batteries on Mud Island.
4. Supposing the fleet necessitated to retire, whether the Land force could maintain its present Position independently of it.
5. Whether it be practicable to take or drive away the Enemy's Floating Battery, and if either can be done, whether an obstruction may not be laid in the Channel through which she passed, so as to prevent the passage of any Vessel in future.
6. If the Fleet should be obliged to retire and Fort Mercer be invested by the Enemy, by what means could the Garrison be drawn off, or reinforced if either should be judged necessary.

[101]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 145-147.

[102]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:84-85; Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 38.

[103]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 156.

[104]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 6:21,49; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 272.

[105]The American galleys and guard boats, as they assembled for their run past Philadelphia, were the same ones that Colonel Greene mistakenly assumed were the British and which prompted him to abandon the fort.

[106]Greene, "Excerpts From Colonel Greene's Orderly Book," Woodbury Daily Times, 1930.

[107]Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 478.

[108]Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 158; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 275.

[109]Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:89-90.

[110]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 6:28.

[111]Ibid., 1st ser., 6:28; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 478; Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 65; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 273-274.

[112]Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, 1st ser., 6:28.

[113]Smith, Fight for the Delaware, 40; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia , 157-158, 165; Jackson, Pennsylvania Navy, 269, 275. General Greene's forces were as follows: General Greene - 2,000; Huntingtion - 1,200; Glover - 1,176; N.J. Militia - 1,200 (This number had dwindled to 700 by November 24th); Varnum - 1,800; Morgan - 170.

[114]Friel, ed., Job Whitall, 85-86; McGeorge, Ann Whitall, 8-9.

[115]Showman, ed., Papers of General Nathanael Greene, 2:216; Scull, ed., Montresor Journals, 479; Abbatt, ed., Andre's Journal, 66.

[116]Showman, ed., Papers of General Nathanael Greene, 2:216; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 10:103, 104-105, 107-108.

[117]Wallace McGeorge, The Battle of Gloucester (Woodbury, N.J.:Gloucester County Historical Society, 1906), 10-15; Ford, ed., Defences of Philadelphia, 201-202.

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