

***“Their presence Here ... Has Saved this State ...”<sup>1</sup>***  
***Continental Provisional Battalions with Lafayette in Virginia, 1781***

**Part I**  
**“This Detachment is Extremely Good ...”<sup>2</sup>**  
**The Light Battalions Move South**

John U. Rees

**“... the Brilliant Conduct of Majr Galvan & the Continental [light infantry] Detachment under his command entitles them to applause, the Conduct & Exertions of the Pensylvania Field & other Officers are new Instances of their Gallantry & Tallents – the Fire of the Light Infantry under Maj Wyllys cheked the Enemys Progress round our right Flank –” The Marquis de Lafayette, writing of the 6 July 1781 Battle of Green Spring.<sup>3</sup>**

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In February 1781 British troops on and around the Virginia Peninsula were wreaking havoc with no effective Continental contingent on hand to oppose them. In consequence Gen. George Washington resolved to send southward a detachment of light infantry under Maj. Gen. Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette "to act against the corps of the enemy [under British Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold] now in Virginia." This was the beginning of Lafayette's seven-month independent command, operating against the forces of Maj. William Philips and Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis, culminating in a junction with the combined American and French armies under General Washington and Lt. Gen. Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, at Williamsburg in September.<sup>4</sup>

General Lafayette labored under many difficulties, contending with haphazard logistical support, and usually outnumbered by his opponent, who also controlled coastal waterways. The three provisional light infantry battalions that accompanied him from the north, and the three Pennsylvania provisional battalions that joined him in June, formed a solid core around which a small contingent of Virginia Continental soldiers and larger militia forces coalesced to oppose the invaders. Two additional light battalions were formed in the main army during summer 1781 and both marched south under General Washington that August. These two battalions were placed in the light division that General Lafayette commanded from late September through the Yorktown siege. The composition, service, and other details of the light infantry and Pennsylvania provisional battalions are the subject of this four-part study.

***“The Fire of the Light Infantry ...ched the Enemys Progress ...”***  
***Light Battalion Composition and Service***

Early on special Continental Army provisional battalions or corps were formed by using men picked or drafted from existing organizations. In 1777 Col. Daniel Morgan's "Corps of Rangers" (a.k.a., "Rifle Regiment") and Maj. Henry Dearborn's Light Infantry served in the Saratoga Campaign, while Brig. Gen. William Maxwell's Corps of Light Infantry fought with General Washington's army in Delaware and Pennsylvania. The advent of Maj. Gen. Friedrich Wilhelm de Steuben's standard manual of discipline in spring 1778 truly made possible the organization and use of effective and efficient provisional battalions of

picked troops. This was first made evident during the Monmouth Campaign when several picked provisional units were formed only several days before the 28 June battle. Excepting Morgan's Corps, these provisional battalions all served under Maj. Gen. Charles Lee's Advance Force at Monmouth Courthouse, carrying most of the weight of the action throughout that day. Later that summer Brig. Gen. Charles Scott took command of a newly-embodied corps of light infantry, and in 1779 the light troops under Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne captured the British post at Stony Point in a night assault, finally avenging the September 1777 Paoli "Massacre." In the year prior to Lafayette's Virginia service, he was given command of the Light Infantry Division, formed in August 1780 and disbanded the following November. While all of these provisional units contained hardy, largely veteran soldiers, culled from most states' regiments in Washington's army, only Maxwell's Light Infantry in 1777, Morgan's Corps in 1777 and 1778, the Monmouth campaign provisional battalions, and Wayne's 1779 light infantry represented troops from both northern and southern states.<sup>5</sup>

Lafayette's 1781 light infantry and Pennsylvania battalions were worthy successors to those forebears and among the finest Continental soldiers to serve during the war. The highest encomium was claimed for the provisional light battalions by Lafayette, who wrote on 20 July, "These three Bataillions are the Best troops that Ever took the field. My Confidence in them is Unbounded. They are far Superior to any British troops, and None will Ever Venture to meet them at Equal Numbers." The Marquis does not say the same for the Pennsylvanians, but their eight-year service record speaks for itself, as does their performance in the face of superior numbers at the July 6<sup>th</sup> 1781 Green Springs action. More on the Pennsylvanians later.<sup>6</sup>

General Washington first learned in late December 1780 of a British force aboard transports leaving New York, destination unknown. He informed Lt. Col. John Laurens, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, "Letters by the last Southern Post advise me of Arnolds having landed high up James River, Marching to Richmond, destroying a few public Stores, and a public Foundry, and then retiring to the place of his debarkation, since which I have heard nothing further of him." The stage was thus set for Lafayette's southward march.<sup>7</sup>

The situation that compelled the American commander-in-chief to counter Major General Arnold was laid before Congress in late February:

In obedience to the orders of Congress, I have imparted their wish to His Excellency The Count De Rochambeau, informing him that the proposal was made on the presumption of [French] naval superiority. But as this superiority has ceased ... it will ... be out of the power of our allies to transport the whole or any part of their troops to the succour of the Southern states ... On the first notice of the storm and its ill effects [on the British ships], I intimated to the French General the possibility and importance of improving the opportunity in an attempt upon Arnold. When I received a more distinct account of the damage sustained by the British fleet ... I immediately put in motion as large a part of my small force here as I could with any prudence spare to proceed under the command of the Marquis De la Fayette to the head of Elk; and made, without delay, a proposal for a cooperation in Chesapeake-bay, with the whole of the fleet of our allies and a part of their land force. Before my proposition arrived [news was received that French naval forces were unsuccessful] ... This ... prevented the execution of my plan; but the Marquis De la Fayette still continues his march to attempt whatever circumstances will permit.<sup>8</sup>

General Lafayette's original detachment was composed of standing and provisional light infantry companies from every northern state but New York and Pennsylvania. Army orders detail their first formation:

Head Quarters, New Windsor, Thursday, February 1, 1781 ...

Light Infantry companies are to be immediately formed — one from each regiment, and to consist of: One Captain, Two Subalterns, Four Serjeants, One Drum, One Fife and for the present, Twenty five rank and file.

The honor of every regiment is so much interested in the appearance and behavior of the Light troops which are a representation of the whole Army that the General exhorts and expects the commanding officers of them will exert themselves to make a judicious choice for the formation of their respective companies. The Assistant Inspector General is to review each company and reject every man who in his opinion is not likely to answer the above ends. The General would prefer well made men from five feet six to five feet ten inches stature.

Every regiment that has at this time more than two hundred and twenty five rank and file for duty including those on command and on furlough is to give a full ninth of its number instead of twenty five for the Infantry company, and as the other regiments increase in strength and exceed this number they are to do the like invariably. When these Companies are formed they are to relieve the Troops on the Lines and do duty there by rotation in such manner as Major General Heath shall direct.<sup>9</sup>

Two weeks later the light troops were organized for the march south. General orders, 16 February:

The Light companies are immediately to be augmented to fifty rank and file each with an additional serjeant and are to rendezvous the 19th. at Peekskill prepared for a march.

They are to be completed in shoes. The former directions concerning the greatest care in the choice of the men are repeated; the Adjutant General will inspect the companies when formed and exchange all the men who have been indifferently chosen.<sup>10</sup>

The day before, Maj. Gen. William Heath, commander at West Point, had been told to augment "all the light companies of the troops under your command" and "assemble the whole without delay at Peek Kill. They must be completed with shoes and as far as possible with all other necessities, for a march to Morris Town; as it will be a pretty expeditious one it is an additional reason for having the men robust and in other respects well chosen ... I wish the light troops to be ready to march from Fish Kill [Peekskill] by the 19th. at furthest. I shall instruct the Qr. Mr General to prepare waggons. The officers will take their light baggage and there must be a serjeant added to each Company."<sup>11</sup> Battalion organization was as follows:

I would have Eight Companies from the oldest Regiments of the Massachusetts line form one Battalion. The 2 remainig. Companies from that State, and those of Connecticut and Rhode Island to form another. Those of New Hampshire and Hazen (with such others, as shall hereafter join them) will form another Battalion.

Each Battn. must have two field Officers, and I earnestly wish for good ones; how this is to be effected with the present number, without injury to the Regiments (which ought *never* to be left without a field Officer much less at a time when the recruits will be coming in and the Regiments are forming) is not easy to arrange, and leads me to think

that Colo. Gemat and Majr. Galvan ought, circumstanced as things are, to be employed upon this detachment, no better disposition therefore occurs to me than the following.

Major Reed, of Hazens Regiment, to take charge of the Company of his own Regimt. and those of New-Hampshire. Colo. Sherman, if in Camp, and Majr. Galvan to take charge of the Battn. in which the Connecticut Troops are; but if he should not be in Camp (as is doubtfully expressed by the Adj. Genl.) then Colo. Jemat and Major Willis to have the care of it, in the last case, Colo. Jackson or Vose, and Majr. Galvan, are to be appointed to the Battn. composed altogether of Massachusetts Troops; but in the former Jemat and a good Major is to command it.

The appointment of these Officers is temporary. The general arrangement of the light Infantry for the Campaign will not be affected by it; they will return to their respective Batts. so soon as the Service on which they are going is effected.<sup>12</sup>

Under the circumstances this was a heavy commitment in troops, as the Marquis later told Major General Nathanael Greene: "The Light Compagnies of Every Regiment (Newyork Excepted) ... were By Common Drafts from the Regiments Increased to 50 and to Complete the Number of 1200 (Which Was immense in Comparaison to our force then at West Point) ..."<sup>13</sup>

The Jersey brigade commander, headquartered at Chatham, New Jersey, was informed on the 16<sup>th</sup>, "You will immediately, agreeable to the General Order of this day, augment the two light Infantry Companies to the number directed, and you will also be pleased to order three other Companies of equal numbers to be formed by detachment from the Brigade, taking the same care in the choice of Officers and Men as for the light Companies. To enable you to do this more effectually, you may, if you find it necessary, lessen the command at Ringwood and Sufferans, especially the latter. The whole detachment to be held in readiness for a march at a days warning. The service will be but a temporary one. Lt. Colo. Barber will command the detachment from your line ... You will procure for and send with the detachment a spare pr. of shoes for each Man."<sup>14</sup> The detachment was then formed as follows:

Col. Joseph Vose (1<sup>st</sup> Mass.)  
Maj. William Galvan (French volunteer)  
8 Massachusetts companies (1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Regiments).

Lt Col. Jean-Joseph Sourbader de Gimat  
(French volunteer, former aide-de-camp to Lafayette)  
Maj. John Wyllys (3<sup>rd</sup> Connecticut)  
2 Massachusetts companies (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Regiments), 5 Connecticut, 1 Rhode Island

Lt. Col. Francis Barber (1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey)  
Maj. James Randolph Reid (Hazen's Canadian)  
5 New Jersey companies, 2 New Hampshire, 1 Hazen's Canadian Regiment

Supplies and transportation had to be found, and quickly. Quartermaster General Timothy Pickering, at Newburgh, New York, informed Washington on the 18<sup>th</sup>,

I had previously ordered 50 draught horses to be impressed for transporting the artillery, amunition and tents. I now propose to dispose of them as follows –

For the Marquis de la Fayette's waggon	4 [horses]
a baggage tumbril for the artillery officers	3
three close waggons in which are to be carried	12
from hence eleven horseman's & 60 common tents	
the field officers & captains of artillery two or three	3
	22 [total]

These may proceed to morrow for Pompton .... I wrote yesterday morning to Col. Hughes, desiring him to give the necessary orders to his assistant at the [Continental] Village & Kings ferry, to impress 25 riding horses for the field & staff officers of the detachment, the whole, if he thought best, on the West side of the river, to save the trouble of crossing. I also desired him to impress ten two horse waggons & have them at King's ferry on the 20th to take up the baggage of the officers & the kettles of the men, as soon as they crossed. That number I judged sufficient, supposing the officers would take with them only their blankets, portmanteaus & cooking utensils... I have wrote to [Hughes] to send one hundred axes to Major Campbell at the Village to distribute to the detachment when assembled, if they should need them... I have sent orders to Morristown to have 150 common & ten or twelve horseman's tents put in order immediately. These, with those proposed to be sent from hence will be sufficient for the detachment, allowing seven men one common tent, and four captains & subalterns one horseman's tent. If there be three officers to a company six will have but one horseman's tent.

It is proposed to furnish the detachment with 200 narrow axes – 130 pick axes – 150 spades, – & 250 shovels. – By a return received in November there appeared to be enough spades & shovels & 106 picks at Philadelphia. At the same time there was plenty of good axes at Lancaster, from whence the transportation is easy to the Head of Elk. There are also 500 axes at Morristown. But if on my arrival at Philadelphia there should be found a deficiency of intrenching tools, it will be practicable to complete the requisite number in two or three days.

I have proposed that the horses going from hence & Kings ferry should be relieved at Pompton. That the teams requisite for the tents at Morristown should be impressed in that neighbourhood, and go as far as Trenton. That the horses and teams impressed at Pompton should be relieved about Somerset Court House. But should there chance to be provision teams at Morristown returning to Trenton, they may be detained a day or two to take up the baggage waggons. The same may take place from Pompton to Morristown, should there be teams returning from Ringwood. That from Bucks county in Pennsylvania, teams & horses should be collected sufficient for the baggage of the whole detachment, & rendezvous at Trenton ferry: unless the river should admit of water transportation. That if the whole proceed by land, the Bucks county teams should be relieved at Chester. That teams should be furnished at Philadelphia for the intrenching tools & whatever may be taken up there – And that the whole proceed to the Head of Elk. ... I have provided two forage masters that have appeared to me as clever as any in the service to accompany or rather precede the detachment to impress teams & forage; and a conductor to attend to the march of the baggage.<sup>15</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> General Lafayette was given his marching orders from the commander-in-chief.

I have ordered a detachment to be made at this post to rendezvous at Peeks Kill the 19th. instant. which together with another to be formed at Morris Town from the Jersey troops will amount to about twelve hundred [rank and file.]

The destination of this detachment is to act against the corps of the enemy now in Virginia, in conjunction with the Militia and some ships from the fleet of The Chevalier Des touches ... You will take the command of this detachment, which you will in the first instance march off by batalions towards Pompton there to rendezvous and afterwards proceed with all possible dispatch to the Head of Elk.

You will make your arrangements with the Qr. Master General concerning the route you are to take ... transportation, tents, intrenching tools and other articles in his department of which you may stand in need; with the Commissary General concerning provisions; with the Clothier concerning Clothing, shoes &c. And with General Knox, concerning the artillery and stores you will want for the expedition ... You are not to suffer the detachment to be delayed for want of either provision, forage, or waggons on the route; where the ordinary means will not suffice with certainty, you will have recourse to military impress.<sup>16</sup>

And, looking ahead to military operations and possible success,

You should give the earliest attention to acquiring a knowledge of the different rivers but particularly James' River, that you may know what harbours can best afford shelter and security to the cooperating Squadron, in case of blockade by a superior force.

You are to do no act whatever with Arnold that directly or by implication may skreen him from the punishment due to his treason and desertion, which if he should fall into your hands, you will execute in the most summary way ... I wish you a successful issue to the enterprise and all the glory which I am persuaded you will deserve.<sup>17</sup>

On February 19th Lafayette noted "the troops will begin marching on the twentieth for Morristown ... the detachment ... is composed of three battalions .of 400 men [each] under Colonels Vose, Gimat, and Barber ... Our destination is a deep secret, and everyone believes we are going to Staten Island or Bergen Neck ..." After the Jersey companies joined the New England contingent on 26 February the detachment made its way south. In Maryland they learned that Destouche's fleet had turned back and the original purpose of their expedition was no longer possible. General Lafayette was then ordered to "turn your detachment to the southward" to reinforce Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene's forces in North Carolina.<sup>18</sup> The circumstances and misapprehensions of the troops, as well as morale problems in the detachment, were described by Lafayette on 17 April:

When this Detachement Was ordered out ... they were Going on a tour of duty of two or three days and Provided Accordingly ... [After learning of the French fleet's rebuff] Every thing ... Went on Very Well, and the troops Being Ready to March [north] from Elk, Reconforted Themselves with the Pleasant Prospects of Returning towards Home, Seeing their Wives all of whom Had Remained, and Getting Large Sums of Monney which You know the New England States Have Sent to their troops. When My Countermanding the Order was ... Imagined to Relate to a Retrograde March to the Southward. The officers did not like it More than the Men, and the Men Whose discipline does not Give them the Idea of Complaining Began to Desert in Great Numbers ... The New England troops Have taken An idea that Southern Climates Are Very Unwholesome and that of Carolina Mortal to them ... My first object Was to Get the troops on this Side

of the Susquehanna and Request the Militia officers to pick up Deserters and send them to me Immediately. I then Made An Adress to the Detachement which Enforced By the difficulty of Crossing and the Shame I Endeavoured to throw upon Desertion Has Almost Entirely Stopped it. The Men Are Now on the other Side of Elk Ridge Ferry which is a New Barrier. Two deserters Have Been taken up One of whom I will Have Hanged to Morrow, and the other as well as an other Soldier who Behaved A miss will Be Disgraced So far as to Be Dismissed from this Corps.<sup>19</sup>

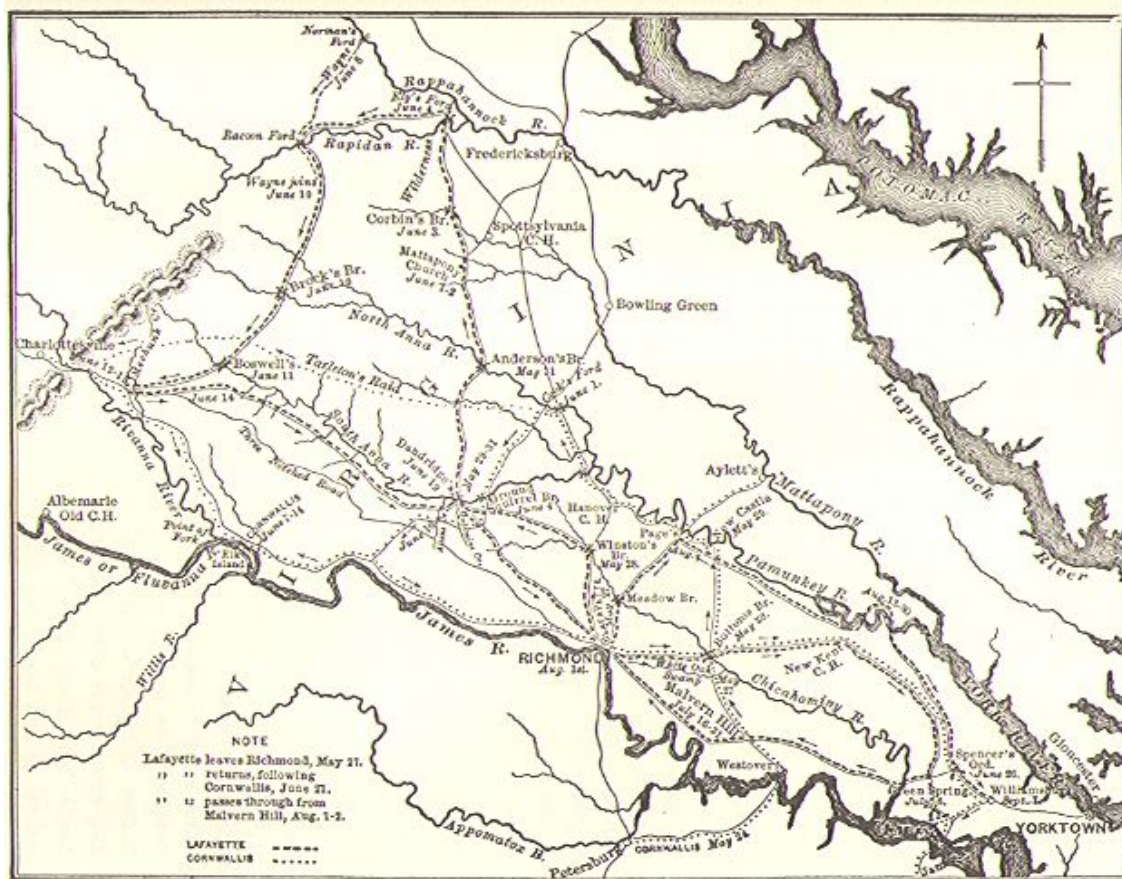
Lafayette tried to remove one point of contention, as General Washington relayed to Assistant Paymaster General John Pierce on 6 May.

Sir: As there is a sum of Money sent on from the Eastern States for the payment of the Detachments of their Lines, under the Command of the Marquis De la Fayette, I wish provision could be made to forward two or three Months pay, in specie value, for the Company of Colonel Hazen's Regt. on that Command. You will consider yourself authorised hereby, to make application for the same.

Lieut. Colonel Barber having been sent from the Marquis De la Fayette, to negotiate the affairs of the Detachment of the Jersey line; it is to be presumed that State has, or will advance Money for their payment, in which case, the Company from Col Hazens Regt. will be the only one unprovided for; and the sum necessary for the purpose being inconsiderable, I hope it may be procured ...<sup>20</sup>

The detachment left Baltimore on 19 April 1781. Traveling in light order once more, the troops reached Richmond on the 29<sup>th</sup>, remaining in the area until late May. There, after learning that the British forces of Lt. Gen. Earl Cornwallis and Maj. Gen. William Philips had united at Petersburg, Virginia, Lafayette received orders from Greene "to halt and take command of all the troops in Virginia, and defend the State." His forces for the purpose consisted of his own light infantry, one Virginia Continental battalion, several detachments of light horse and Virginia riflemen, any available Virginia militia, and the detachment of Pennsylvania Continentals under Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne that joined him in early June.<sup>21</sup>

When the Marquis learned on 27 May that the enemy had crossed the James River below Richmond he evacuated that place and headed north towards Fredericksburg. During the next eight days his troops covered at least seventy miles. This retreat away from the British, in the direction of reinforcements from the north, was merely the beginning of a month-long period of almost incessant marching.<sup>22</sup>



**Area of operations for Cornwallis and Lafayette in Virginia, 1781. Henry P. Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* (New York, 1881), 57.**

Following the junction with Wayne's Pennsylvanians on 10 June Lafayette's force moved immediately towards the British under Cornwallis and encamped the next day near the South Anna River. On 15 June Cornwallis turned his troops towards the east and Lafayette followed. Conditions during the subsequent marches were quite difficult. On the day the British moved off Lt. William Feltman, Stewart's 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania (Provisional) Battalion, wrote: "A great scarcity of water, and a very fatiguing march"; the heat, sometimes described by the soldiers as being "excessive," was repeatedly mentioned.<sup>23</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup> the Continentals forced a skirmish on the Crown troops commanded by Lt. Col. John Simcoe, Queen's Rangers. From "Mr. Tyree's plantation 20 miles from Williamsburg 27 June 1781" the Marquis reported to Nathanael Greene,

On the 18<sup>th</sup> the British army moved toward us, with a design as I apprehended to strike at a detached corps commanded by Gen: [Peter] Mulenberg. Upon this the light infantry and Pennsylvanians marched under Gen: Wayne, when the enemy retired into Town. The day following I was joined by Gen: [Wilhelm Friedrich de] Steubens troops and on the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> Richmond was evacuated.

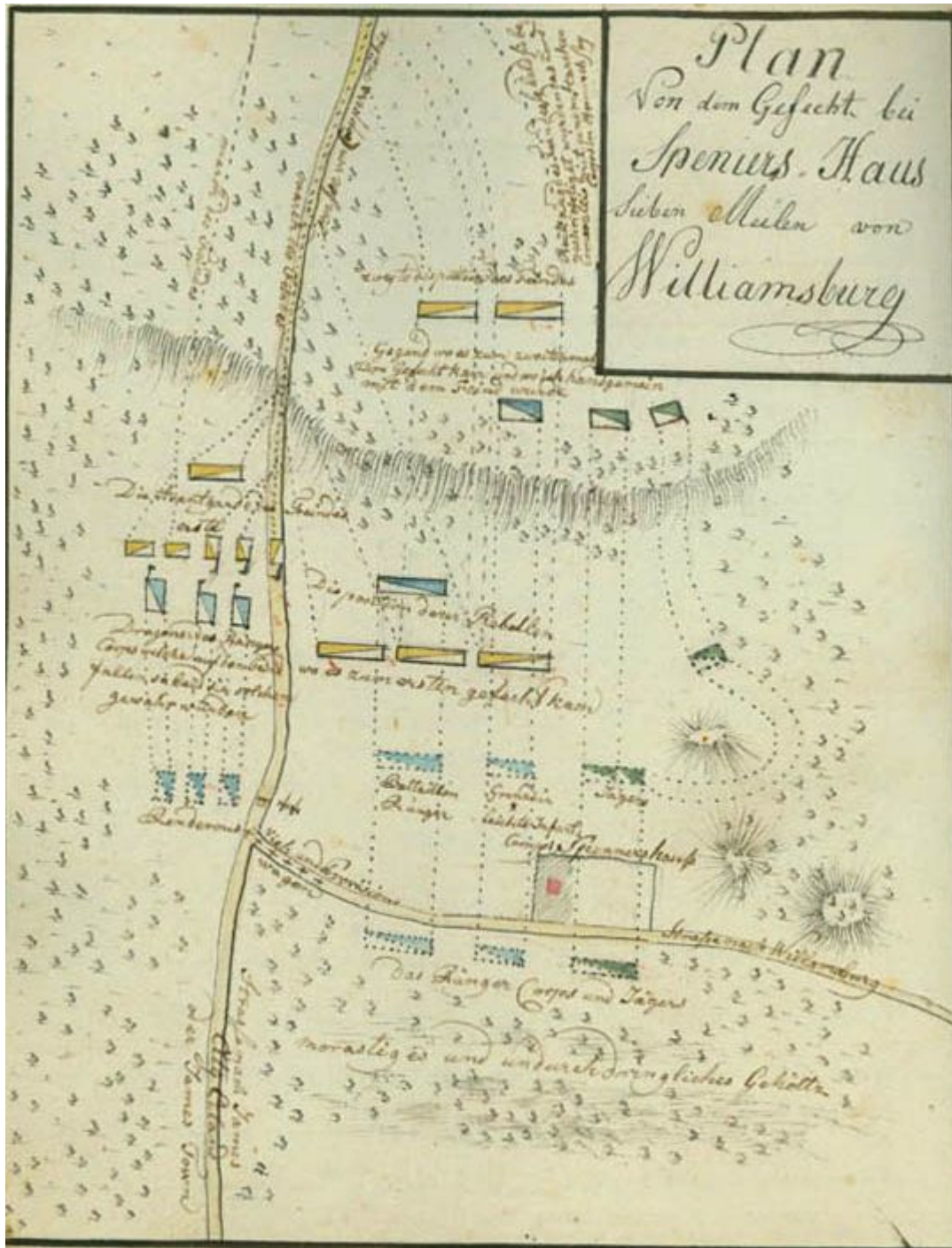


Having followed the enemy our light parties fell in with them near New Kent Court house. The army was still at a distance, and Lord Cornwallis continued his route towards Williamsburg. His rear and right flank were covered by a large corps commanded by Col. Simcoe. I pushed forward a detachment under Col. [Richard] Butler [2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania Provisional Battalion] but notwithstanding a most fatiguing march the Col. reports, that he could not have overtaken them, had not [Pennsylvania] Major [William] Macpherson mounted 50 light infantry behind an equal number of dragoons [elements of Armand's Horse and 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Light Dragoons], which coming up with the enemy charged them within six miles of Williamsburg. Such of the advanced corps as could arrived composed of [Virginia] rifle man under Major [Richard] Call and Majr. [John] Wilis began a smart action. Inclosed is the return of our loss. That of the enemy is about 60 killed including several officers, and one hundred wounded, a disproportion which the skill of our rifle men easily explains. I am under great obligations to Col. Butler, and the officers and men of the detachment, for their ardor in the pursuit, and their conduct in the action.

Gen. Wayne who had marched to the support of Butler sent down some troops under Major [James] Hamilton [1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Provisional Battalion]. The whole British army came out to save Simcoe, and on the arrival of our army upon this ground retired to Williamsburg. The post they now occupy is strong, and under protection of their shipping

<sup>24</sup>  
...

William Macpherson, whose brother John had lost his life in the 1775 assault on Quebec as an aide to Maj. Gen. Richard Montgomery, had been a lieutenant in the British 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot until he resigned his commission in late 1778, escaping to the American lines. Awarded by Congress the rank of brevet major in September 1779, Macpherson first served as Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair's aide-de-camp, then as second in command of a battalion in the 1780 Light Division. His promotion over other Continental Army officers caused difficulties, and in 1781 he headed to Virginia as a volunteer aide to Lafayette. Pennsylvania Lieutenant William McDowell identified Macpherson's light infantry: "Capt. Ogden's company of Jersey Troops were ordered to mount behind the same number of Dragoons, and pursued [the enemy] and soon overtook them." The Jersey soldiers evidently came away unscathed. American losses were noted as two lieutenants and six privates of the light horse, and one sergeant of the riflemen killed; one light horse captain, one rifle captain and ten riflemen wounded; one light horse lieutenant and fourteen riflemen missing; and one sergeant and private of the light horse captured. British losses were admitted to be "three officers and thirty privates killed and wounded."<sup>25</sup>



**(See map on previous page)**

**“Plan of the Action at Spencer's House, Seven Miles from Williamsburg,” by Capt. Johann Ewald, Field Jäger Corps. Inscriptions read, from bottom to top: Below road to right: "Marshy and impenetrable wood"; "The Ranger Corps and jägers." Along lower vertical road: "Road to James City Island or Jamestown." Along road to right: "Cattle and provisions wagons"; "Road to Williamsburg." Left of vertical road: "Rendezvous"; "Dragoons of the Ranger Corps which fell upon the enemy as soon as they were sighted"; "The advanced guard of the enemy"; "March of the enemy." Right of vertical road: "Spencer's house"; "Ranger battalion -- Grenadiers and Light Infantry Company -- Jägers"; "Where the first action occurred"; "First disposition of the rebels"; "Area where the second action occurred and where I came to close quarters with the enemy"; "Second disposition of the enemy"; "Retreat of the enemy as soon as they were informed that Lord Cornwallis was advancing with a strong corps." Along upper vertical road: "Road from Cooper's Mill." Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, Joseph P. Tustin, trans. and ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 310-311. See also Andruss Library Special Collections, Harvey A. Andruss Library, Bloomsburg University, 400 E. Second Street, Bloomsburg, PA 17815; (World Wide Web), <http://www.bloomu.edu/library/Archives/Maps/maplist.htm>**

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The British remained centered in Williamsburg until July 4<sup>th</sup>. Even with the enemy in a static position Lieutenant Feltman, writing on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, recorded that "[our] Manoeuvres retrograde and many; the troops almost worn out; very hot weather."<sup>26</sup> Ens. Benjamin Gilbert, Vose's Light Battalion, noted the same day,

Having a few moments of leasure at this time, which I have not had before for upwards of a month, I chearfully imbrace it in writing you a few lines ... I injoye my health, but am so Fatigued by an insessant marching that should it continue I fear I shall be relaxed and reduced to that degre I shall not be able to do duty in the Field ... Cornwallis ... has now made a stop at Williamsburg wheir he sais he will rest his troops ... In consequence of which we halted this Day at 9 oclock and expect to tarry two or three days if the enemy do not move towards us, which is more than we have done for more than a month past.<sup>27</sup>

Lt. Col. Francis Barber told his wife of the trying campaign they had experienced thus far,

Camp 15 miles from Williamsburgh July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1781

My dear Girl ... Since my last our affairs in this department have taken a very favorable change. The Enemy, upon our receiving the reinforcement of Pennsylv[ania]. troops and a considerable one of militia riflemen evacuated Richmond & retreated with much precipitation to Williamsburgh. We have since our reinforcements afforded the enemy numerous opportunities for action; but they have carefully declined them. We have frequently marched for that purpose from our camp another four or five miles of theirs in the morning & have remained until after sundown; and the only reason why we are encamped at so great distance from them, is, there is no water for an army between this & Williamsburgh. There are many very plausible reasons for conjecturing that they mean to evacuate this state instead of attempting a prosecution of the war here. This country is at length alarmed & begin to turn out with spirit which if there were no other reasons would

be sufficient to put a period to their operations in this quarter ... The campaign in this quarter has been much the most severe that I ever experienced from the warmth of the climate & our almost incessant marching – marching almost day & night. Altho we are perfectly healthy, yet we do not look like the same men. Our flesh & colour have gradually wast'd away. Three of my captains are, as we say, totally knocked up; one of them John Holmes is obliged to quit the department & return to New Jersey to be relieved by another officer. I am leaner than ever I was in my life; but I do assure you, I am very healthy. Billy is also much reduced, but enjoys his health & spirits.<sup>28</sup>

Lt. Ebenezer Wild, of Vose's Battalion, wrote of the army's movements during July's first four days,

Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1781. Marched at daylight, and halted at 9 o'clk on a large plain near York river, where we built bush huts (the weather being exceeding warm). In the afternoon our men had orders to bathe in the river, where a Surgeon[<sup>s</sup> Mate James Downey, Pennsylvania line] and two soldiers were unfortunately drowned. At 8 o'clk P.M. we marched again, and halted at midnight near the ground we moved from this morning.

2d. Marched a daylight, and passing by Bird's, turned out of the road (at Chickohomni meeting-house) into the woods to form an ambuscade for a party of the enemy's horse which were grazing in a field near by. But unfortunately (for us) they discovered our manoeuvre and made their escape; after which we marched out of the woods and built some bowries, which we lay in till 3 o'clk, when we marched again back to the place we left at daylight this morning.

3d. Marched at 6 o'clk A.M. and proceeded 4 miles, and halted in a field (in N. Kent County), where we pitched what tents we had left (the greater part of them being lost). The Marquis quartered in [a] large house which is on the left of the L. Infantry.

4<sup>th</sup>. This being the anniversary of American Independence, the day was celebrated by a feu de joy fired by the whole army (except those on duty), after which the Light Infantry was manoeuvred by Major Read on a plain before the Marquis's quarters.<sup>29</sup>

British forces left Williamsburg on 4 July and moved to Jamestown Island. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Wild wrote,

Marched at eight o'clk A.M., and proceeded half a mile below Bird's, where we halted & built bowries. Eight officers from each Regiment of L. Infantry dined with General Muhlenberg at Bird's [Ordinary]. I mounted the camp [guard] at this place. At five o'clk we marched one mile further, halted, and built huts. At nine in the evening the troops marched again (at which time I dismissed my guard), and passing by the meeting house, halted at Chickohomni Church, where we remained all night.<sup>30</sup>

On 6 July a brief but severe engagement occurred, pitting approximately 800 Continental troops under Wayne against a large part of Cornwallis's 4,000-man army. Known as the Battle of Green Spring, the Pennsylvania battalions bore the brunt of the action, though a force of Virginia riflemen and volunteer light horse, Major Galvan's advanced guard comprising troops from Vose's Light Battalion, Major Wylls' (Gimat's) battalion of light infantry, and Major William Macpherson's legion of eighty cavalry and light infantry also took part.<sup>31</sup> New Jerseyan Aaron Ogden recounted that he,

was a Captain of a company of the Light Infantry of General the Marquis de Lafayette ... in Virginia in 1781 ... Early in this Campaign General De Lafayette formed a legionary corps of horse and foot commanded by Major McPherson, the foot was composed of one Company selected from each of his three regiments of Light Infantry. These were all picked men, and always lay between the two armies, and so particularly exposed to a surprise, which though frequently attempted was never affected, and to guard against which required the greatest vigilance. ... [Near Jamestown Island on 6 July the Marquis] ordered an attack on the left of the front of the enemy, and Captain Ogden was ordered with the infantry of this legionary corps and a body of militia, to march to the left and cover the retreat of the main body, which retreat at the same time was ordered by the General.

After marching some distance ... Captain Ogden discovered the right wing of the British Army advancing rapidly to turn the left wing of our army, when in order to conceal the comparative weakness of his force, he threw his men into a neighboring wood and posted them behind a surrounding fence.

This caused the enemy to halt & reconnoitre, and form their line of attack, which marched up to charge into the woods, in this however they were checked by a galling fire from our men behind the fence, by which the right wing of the enemy was retarded untill the firing on the left had entirely ceased, when Captain Ogden drew off his men, and fell into the rear of our main body and so covered its retreat.<sup>32</sup>

The Marquis described the action to General Greene:

Amblers plantation opposite James River 8<sup>th</sup> July 1781

Sir On the 4<sup>th</sup> Instant the Enemy evacuated Williamsburg where some stores fell into our Hands, and retired to this place under the Cannon of their shipping. The next morning we advanced to Birds tavern, and part of the army took post at Norrels mill, about nine miles from the British camp.

The 6<sup>th</sup> I detached an advanced corps under General Wayne, with a view of reconnoitering the enemy's situation. Their light parties being drawn in, the piquets which lay close to their encampment were gallantly attacked by some riflemen, whose skill was employed to great effect.

Having ascertained that Lord Cornwallis had sent off his heavy baggage under a proper escort and posted his army in an open field, fortified by the shipping, I returned to the detachment, which I found more generally engaged. A piece of cannon had been attempted by the van guard, under Major Galvan, whose conduct deserves high applause. Upon this the whole British army came out, and advanced to the thin wood occupied by General Wayne. His corps, chiefly composed of Pennsylvanians and some light infantry, did not exceed eight hundred men with three field pieces; but notwithstanding their numbers, at sight of the British army, the troops ran to the rencountre [engagement]. A short skirmish ensued, with a close, warm and well directed fire, but as the enemy's right and left, of course, greatly outflanked ours, I sent General Wayne orders to retire half a mile to where Col. Vose and Col. Barbers Light Infantry battalions had arrived by a most rapid move, and where I directed them to form. In this position they remained till some hours in the night. The militia under General Lawson had been advanced, and the [Virginia] continentals were at Norrills mill, when the enemy retreated, during the night, to James Island, which they also evacuated, crossing over to the south side of the river. Their ground at this place and the Island, was successively occupied by General Muhlenberg. A number of valuable horses were left on their retreat.

From every account the enemy's loss has been very great, and much pains taken to conceal it. Their light infantry, the brigade of guards, and two British regiments formed the

first line. The remainder of their army the second. The cavalry were drawn up, but did not charge ... General Wayne's detachment suffered most. The services rendered by the officers make me happy to think, that, although many were wounded, we lost none. Most of the field officers had their horses killed; the same accident to every horse of the two field pieces made it impossible to move them, unless men had been sacrificed. But, it is enough for the glory of General Wayne, and the officers and men he commanded, with a reconnoitring party only, to have attacked the whole British army, close to their encampment; and, by this severe skirmish, hasten their retreat over the river.<sup>33</sup>

Ebenezer Wild described the activities of Vose's and Barber's light battalions the day of the battle:

6<sup>th</sup>. Marched at 7 o'clk, and passing through hot watter, halted in a field about three miles from the British encampment at James Town. Our men being much tired and fatigued, and having nothing to eat for more than 24 hours, the L. Infantry moved back 3 miles for the purpose of cooking. By this manoeuvre we left the Pennsylvania troops in our front to watch the motions of the enemy. General Wayne being anxious to perform wonders! (about 5 o'clk) with his 3 Regiments & some small detachments, the whole consisting of about 1,000 men, attacked the whole British army in their own encampment. We immediately marched to reinforce him; but before we could reach the field of action, met the Pennsylvania line retreating in the greatest disorder (having been overpowered by numbers, and left their artillery). We marched past the disordered troops, and formed a line of battle in a field near the Green Springs. The day being spent, the enemy stopped their pursuit. About 9 o'clk we began our march again, & retired to the Church we left in the morning, where we arrived about midnight, much tired and fatigued.<sup>34</sup>

General Lafayette portioned out his praise in general orders the same day:

Head Quarters Chikhamminy July 8<sup>th</sup> 1781

The Genl is happy in acknowledging the spirit of the Detachment commanded by Genl Wayne in their Engagement with the whole of the British Army of which he hapned to be an Eye Witness –

Genl Wayne & the Officers & Men under his Command are requested to receive his best thanks, the Bravery & destructive Fire of the Rifle Men engaged rendered Essential service / the Brilliant Conduct of Majr Galvan & the Continental Detachment under his command entitles them to applause, the Conduct & Exertions of the Pennsylvania Field & other Officers are new Instances of their Gallantry & Tallements – the Fire of the Light Infantry under Maj Wyllys cheked the Enemys Progress round our right Flank – the Genl was much pleased with the Conduct of Capt Savage of the Artillery & it is with Pleasure he observes nothing but the loss of Horses could have produced that of the two Field Pieces belonging to Capt Duffey – his Compy did great Execution – the zeal of Col Mercers little Corps is hansomly expressed in the number of Horses he had killed –<sup>35</sup>

Continental casualties suffered in the action amounted to twenty-eight killed, ninety—six wounded and twelve missing. The light infantry losses were, "Major Galvans advanced guard," four rank and file killed; one sergeant, and seven rank and file wounded; "Majr. Willis's" (Gimat's) light infantry battalion, one sergeant and one rank and file killed, seven rank and file wounded; and "Capn. Ogdens Co. of Macphersons

Legion,” two rank and file wounded.<sup>36</sup> Two weeks after the Green Springs action the Marquis summed up the campaign to date and paid tribute to his adversary.

So long as Mylord [Cornwallis] wished for an Action, Not one Gun Has Been fired. The Moment He declined it we Have Been Scarmishing. But I took Care never to Commit the Army. His Naval Superiority – His Superiority of Horse, of Regulars, His thousand Advantages over us were Such that I am lucky Enough to Have Come off Safe. ... Should He go to England, we are, I think, to Rejoice for it. He is a Bold and Active Man, two Dangerous Qualities in this Southern war.<sup>37</sup>

Following the Green Spring action the British moved on to Portsmouth, Virginia, where they remained until the beginning of August. On 2 August 1781 they disembarked from shipboard to take up a new post on the York River. Sometime during that month Ensign Gilbert wrote, "the Enemy ... l[a]y at York[town] and in its Vicinity. Our army are lying in different parts of Kings County upwards of thirty miles from them, and are daily marching. Our Provision is very Indifferent but the duty is not hard. We are Ragged and destitute of Cash ..."<sup>38</sup>

That September the Marquis's independent command was joined by French and American troops moving from the north, sealing the fate of Cornwallis' forces. At Williamsburg two more provisional battalions were placed under Lafayette's command. Beginning on 24 September, and continuing during the Yorktown siege, Vose's, Gimat's and Barber's light battalions formed a brigade commanded by Virginia Brig. Gen. Peter Muhlenberg, their field commander during much of that summer's campaign. Muhlenberg's Brigade was placed in the light division under the overall command of General Lafayette. The division's other brigade, under Brig. Gen. Moses Hazen, consisted of Hazen's own Canadian Regiment, and two provisional light infantry battalions, one commanded by Col. Alexander Scammell, main army adjutant general for three years until January 1781, the other under Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton, aide and secretary to General Washington since March 1777.<sup>39</sup> The strength of Lafayette's division was as follows:

**Williamsburg, Va., 26 September 1781<sup>40</sup>**

**Muhlenberg's Brigade** (Brigade Grand Total: 788 rank and file present fit for duty)

**Voses's Battalion**

"Officers present fit for Duty": 1 colonel, 1 major, 6 captains, 5 lieutenants, 6 ensigns

Staff: 1 adjutant, 1 surgeon's mate

"Non commissioned": 1 quartermaster sergeant, 1 drum major, 29 sergeants, 10 drum and fife

"Rank and File": 247 fit for duty, 34 sick present, 33 sick absent, 1 on command, 17 "on Extra service"

(TOTAL: 330)

**Barber's Battalion**

"Officers present fit for Duty": 1 major, 6 captains, 10 lieutenants, 2 ensigns

Staff: 1 adjutant, 1 surgeon's mate

"Non commissioned": 1 sergeant major, 1 quartermaster sergeant, 1 drum major, 22 sergeants, 11 drum and fife

"Rank and File": 300 fit for duty, 41 sick present, 18 sick absent, 6 on command, 18 "on Extra service," 1 on furlough

(TOTAL: 384)

**Gimat's Battalion**

"Officers present fit for Duty": 6 captains, 6 lieutenants, 3 ensigns

Staff: 1 adjutant, 1 quartermaster

"Non commissioned": 1 sergeant major, 1 quartermaster sergeant, 1 drum major, 27 sergeants, 12 drum and fife

"Rank and File": 241 fit for duty, 25 sick present, 51 sick absent, 11 on command, 24 "on Extra service"

(TOTAL: 352)

Hazen's Brigade (Brigade Grand Total: 689 rank and file present fit for duty)

Scammell's Battalion (2 NH, 3 Mass., 3 Ct. companies)

"Officers present fit for Duty": 1 colonel, 1 lieutenant colonel, 1 major, 6 captains, 7 lieutenants, 4 ensigns

Staff: 1 adjutant, 1 quartermaster, 1 surgeon, 1 surgeon's mate

"Non commissioned": 1 sergeant major, 18 sergeants, 7 drum and fife

"Rank and File": 298 fit for duty, 30 on duty, 2 sick present, 4 "on Extra service"

(TOTAL: 334)

Hamilton's Battalion (1<sup>st</sup> NY and 2<sup>nd</sup> NY light companies, 2 NY levy companies, 2 Ct. companies)

"Officers present fit for Duty": 1 lieutenant colonel, 1 major, 3 captains, 4 lieutenants, 4 ensigns

Staff: 1 adjutant, 1 quartermaster, 1 surgeon

"Non commissioned": 1 sergeant major, 1 quartermaster sergeant, 16 sergeants, 8 drum and fife

"Rank and File": 187 fit for duty, 18 on duty, 13 sick present, 3 sick absent, 2 "on Extra service"

(TOTAL: 223)

Hazen's (Canadian) Battalion

"Officers present fit for Duty": 1 lieutenant colonel, 2 majors, 10 captains, 5 lieutenants, 2 ensigns

Staff: 1 surgeon

"Non commissioned": 1 sergeant major, 1 quartermaster sergeant, 1 drum major, 1 fife major, 21 sergeants, 17 drum and fife

"Rank and File": 204 fit for duty, 10 sick present, 1 "on Extra service"

(TOTAL: 215)

Scammell's Battalion, formed of drafts from the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire lines, was established in late spring of the year. General Washington's orders for 17 May stated,

The Enemy having embarked a considerable number of troops lately at New York the General thinks it necessary (though the destination of them is not yet known) to have a detachment of four hundred men immediately formed and held in readiness to march at an hour's warning.

This Corps is to consist of a Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel and Major, eight Captains Sixteen Subalterns with staff and Non-commissioned officers proportioned.

Colonel Scammell will command it and 'till further orders may lay encamped contiguous to King's ferry and be ready to support the Party on the lines.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of July a second battalion was ordered formed.

Head Quarters near Dobbs Ferry, Tuesday, July 31, 1781 ...

The Light Companies of the first and second regiments of New York (upon their arrival in Camp) with the two companies of [New] York Levies under command of Captains [William] Sackett and [Daniel] Williams will form a Battalion under command of Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton and Major Fish.

After the formation of the Battalion Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton will join the Advanced Corps under the Orders of Colonel Scammell.<sup>42</sup>

Just prior to marching south Hamilton's Battalion was augmented with "Two Companies each to consist of a Captain, two Sub[altern]s four Serjeants and Fifty Rank and File ... to be immediately formed from the Connecticut Line and join the Light troops ... it is expected that the companies will be composed of good men engaged either for the War or three years." (This same order noted, "Major [Caleb] Gibbs [commander of Washington's Life Guard until January 1781] is to join the Battalion of Light infantry commanded by Colonel Vose in the room of Major Galvan whose bad Health obliged



him to leave that corps.”) Scammell’s and Hamilton’s battalions marched to Virginia under the commander-in-chief the following month.<sup>43</sup>

Commencing their march from Chatham, New Jersey on 29 August, Washington’s troops had assembled at Williamsburg by late September. On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>

the Allied Army moved ... and took post in the neighbourhood of York that night. The Enemy gave us no annoyance on the March; a body of Horse that was paraded in front of their Works retired upon our firing a few shot among them. The 29<sup>th</sup>. was spent in reconnoitring, and taking a position as near the advanced Works as could be done without placing the Encampments directly in the range of the Enemy's shot; some skirmishing happened between our Riffle men and the Yagers, in which the former had the advantage. At night, the Enemy abandoned all their Out Posts (some of which were very advantageous) and retired to the Town. Yesterday Morning we occupied the same ground and last night made some lodgments at a short distance from the Lines. The Horses and Teams are beginning to arrive from the Northward, the heavy Artillery will be brought up as soon as possible and the Seige pushed with vigor ...<sup>44</sup>

While reconnoitering the enemy lines on 1 October Colonel Scammell was shot and captured (some accounts say he was captured and then shot) by a party of British light horse. Released on parole the next day, his condition worsened, and he died of his wounds on the 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>45</sup> Two days later his command was reapportioned:

The Regiment lately commanded by Colonel Scammell is to be formed into two Battalions, one to be commanded by Lieutenant Colonel [Ebenezer] Huntington [3<sup>rd</sup> Connecticut Regiment] and Major [Nathan] Rice [4<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts]: the other by Lieutenant Colonel [John] Laurens, Aid to the Commander in Chief and Major [John Noble] Cummings [2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey Regiment].

Lieutenant Colonel Laurens will join his corps whenever it mounts the Trenches. ...<sup>46</sup>

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**Section of the first U.S. survey of the Virginia Peninsula, 1818, showing the topography and landings in 1781, Henry P. Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* (New York, 1881), 103.**

With the beginning of excavations for the first parallel of Allied trenches on the night of 6/7 October, Lafayette's light division performed regular stints in the lines and in making their portion of materials (fascines, hurdles, gabions, and saucissons) for the trenches and fortifications. After the initial parallel, with associated works and batteries, was completed, the second parallel was opened on the night of 11/12 October.<sup>47</sup> Lieutenant Ebenezer Wild noted on the 13<sup>th</sup>,

At sunrise the Regt. [Vose's Battalion] turned out and carried our day[s] proportion of gabions & other materials to the top of the trenches, which we mounted at the usual hour. About 7 o'clk in the evening our Regt. moved from the first to the right of the second parallel, where Capt. [William] White [7<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment] (a brave and deserving officer) and one private were killed. Two privates [were] wounded by a shell which dropped and burst in the centre of the Regt. as we were halted and taking tools to go to work. About nine o'clk we broke ground about twenty yards advanced of the second parallel by beginning to erect a battery, on which we worked all night.<sup>48</sup>

Major John Noble Cummings, who marched south with Washington's forces, but was now serving with the light battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Laurens, described operations to this point:

Camp before York Octr 12th 1781

Dr Brother This is the first that I have wrote you since the Allied Army took this Position which was completely done on the 9th Ultimo. The 30th [September] Coll.

Scammel made prisoner and agreeable to British Barbarity wounded after he had surrendered / from this Time to the 6th of Octr busily employed in preparing Materials for the first parallel which was opened on the evening of the sixth within six hundred Yds of the enemys lines with the loss of six French [grenadiers or soldiers] – On the 9th we opened a ten Gun battery / 10th continued opening Batteries the fire from which was so superior to that of the British that but few shot are fired by them exept under cover of the Night when by their bad Directions they are scarce felt. Their Embrasures are very much battered particularly by the French whose main Battery is opposite to theirs; in the Evening a hot shot or the Explosion of a Shell from the french sett fire to the Charon a british Ship of 44 Guns and consumed her with another Vessel and on the Morning of the 11th a large Brig was consumed by the French in the same manner / The Cannonade and Bombardment increases with us and with the Enemy the Reverse / This Evening we have opened our second Parallel at the Distance of 200 Yds from the Enemy's Works with the Loss of only two Malitia and one regular killed. 12th The Bombardment more severe than yesterday. Twenty two Deserters came from the Enemy yesterday Night and 40 by their Acconts (which must be imperfect) have been killed four of which were Officers and two Commissary's – Lord Cornwallis's Head Quarters is in a Cave – Our Loss very trivial – Camp Healthy, Provisions good. Army in high Spirits and do duty with the greatest Cheerfulness. Haste on the God of Armes the happy Hour of the Surrender of the Lord of the South and give to thy injured Servants the American Whigs Joy of Heart in seing the Pride of Britain the declared Foes of Humanity reduced to proper Terms; --

My Duty, Affections, Friendship &c &c &c attend my nearest Connections & Friends and as those of your County are well known I request you would communicate my Esteem to them.

Intimately & sincerely  
Yours JNC<sup>49</sup>

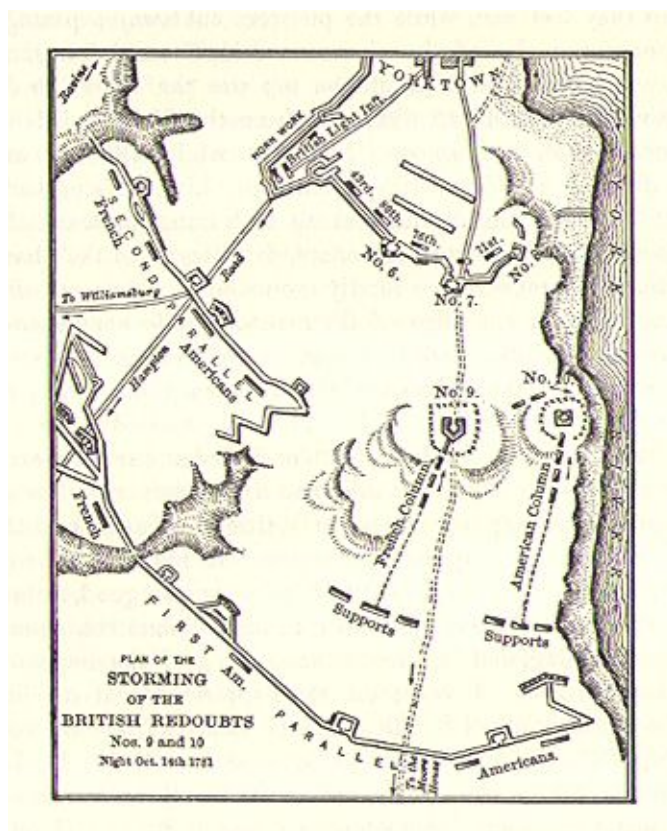
In order to complete the second parallel two redoubts on the British left needed to be captured. Lieutenant Wild of Vose's Light Battalion was with the support troops during the 14 October evening attack on the works, and recorded this brief narrative of the event:

14<sup>th</sup>. At 3 o'clk A.M. we were relieved from work by a Regiment of militia commanded by Col. Tucker; when we took our former position in the first parallel. We were relieved from the trenches as usual. At 5 o'clk P.M. the light Infantry mounted the trenches again. Immediately after dusk we advanced from the battery on our right (in one column) to the redoubt on the enemys left, which we attacked and carried by storm. A detachment of French Grenadiers carrying the one on our left about the same time (& in the same manner). We had nothing but the enemy's fire from their main works to hinder our completing our second parallel, which we proceeded to do with all possible expedition.<sup>50</sup>

General Washington informed Samuel Huntingdon, President of Congress of the operation:

Sir: I had the honor to inform your Excellency in my last, of the 12th. instant, that we had the evening before opened our second parallel. The 13th. and 14th. we were employed in compleating it. The Engineers having deemed the two Redoubts on the left of the enemy's line sufficiently injured by our shot and shells to make them practicable, it was determined to carry them by assault on the evening of the 14th. The following disposition was accordingly made. The Work on the enemy's extreme left [Redoubt No. 10] to be

attacked by the American Light Infantry under the command of the Marquis de la Fayette. The other [Redoubt No. 9] by a detachment of the French Grenadiers and Chasseurs commanded by Major General the Baron Viomenil. I have the pleasure to inform your Excellency that we succeeded in both ... The Works which we have carried are of vast importance to us. From them we shall enfilade the enemy's whole line and I am in hopes we shall be able to command the communication from York to Gloucester. I think the Batteries of the second parallel will be in sufficient forwardness to begin to play in the course of this day.<sup>51</sup>



**Storming of Redoubts 9 and 10, 14 October 1781, Henry P. Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* (New York, 1881), 144.**

The American assault force consisted of Gimat's and Hamilton's light battalions, plus detachments from Laurens' Battalion and the Corps of Sapper and Miners. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton was overall commander of the enterprise, and submitted this report on the operation to the Marquis:<sup>52</sup>

Sir I have the honor to give you an account of the corps under my command in your attack of last night upon the redoubt on the left of the enemy's lines.

Agreeable to your orders we advanced in two columns with unloaded arms – the right composed of Lt Col Gimat's batalion and my own commanded by Major [Nicolas] Fish [2<sup>nd</sup> New York] – the left of a detachment commanded by Lt Col Laurens destined to take the enemy in reverse and intercept their retreat. The column on the right was preceded by a van guard of twenty men led by Lt [John] Mansfield [4<sup>th</sup> Connecticut] – and a

detachment of sappers and miners commanded by Capt [James] Gilliland for the purpose of removing obstructions.

The redoubt was commanded by Major Campbell, with a detachment of British and German troops and was completely in a state of defence.

The rapidity and immediate success of the assault are the best comment on the behaviour of the troops. Lt Col Laurens distinguished himself by an exact and vigorous execution of his part of the plan, by entering the enemy's work with his corps among the foremost and making prisoner the commanding officer of the redoubt.\* [Comment added in lefthand margin.] Lt Col Gimat's batalion, which formed the van of the right attack, and which fell under my immediate observation, encouraged by the decisive and animated example of their leader, advanced with an arder and resolution superior to every obstacle. They were well seconded by Major Fish and the batallion under his command who when the front of the column reached the abates, unlocking his corps to the left as he had been directed advanced with such celerity as to arrive in time to participate in the assault.

Lt Mansfield deserves particular commendation for the coolness firmness and punctuality with which he conducted the van guard. Capt Olney, who commanded the first platoon of Gimats batallion is intitlled to peculiar applause. He led his platoon into the work with exemplary intrepidity and received two bayonet wounds. Capt Gilliland with the detachment of sappers and miners acquitted themselves in a manner that did them great honor.

I do but justice to the several corps when I have the pleasure to assure you, there was not an officer nor soldier whose behaviour, if it could be particularized, would not have a claim to the warmest approbation. As it would have been attended with delay and loss to wait for the removal of the abatis and palisade the ardor of the troops was indulged in passing over them.

There was a happy coincidence of movements. The redoubt was in the same moment inveloped and carried on every part – The enemy are intitlled to the acknowledgement of an honorable defence.

Permit me to have the satisfaction of expressing our obligations to Col Armand Capt [Ligangne?], The Chevalier De Fontevieux and Capt [Henry] Bedkin officers of his corps, who acting on this occasion as volunteers, proceeded at the head of the right column, and entering the redoubt among the first, by their gallant example contributed to the success of the enterprise.

Our killed and wounded you will perceive by the inclosed return. I sensibly felt at a critical period the loss of the assistance of Lt Col Gimat, who received a musket ball in his foot, which obliged him to retire from the field. Capt [Stephen] Bets [3<sup>rd</sup> Connecticut] of Laurens corps Capt [Thomas] Hunt [9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts] and Lt Mansfield of Gimats were wounded with the bayonet in gallantly entering the work. Capt Lt [David] Kirkpatrick of the corps of sappers and miners received a wound in the ditch Inclosed is a return of the prisoners. The killed and wounded of the enemy did not exceed eight. Incapable of imitating examples of barbarity, and forgetting recent provocations the soldiery spared every man who ceased to resist.

Camp before York Town October 15 1781

Capt. Stephen Olney, commander of the Rhode Island company in Gimat's Battalion, described the attack on the redoubt from his vantage point.

After forming our parallel within cannon shot, it was thought necessary to get possession of two of the enemy's redoubts, which projected from their main works, and were situated where it was thought proper to erect our second parallel, in order to level the way, cut off palisades, and beat down other obstructions. Our artillery were briskly served the 13th of

October; on the 14th the Marquis had orders to storm the redoubt on our right ... while the French troops attacked that on our left, which was of greater force, and in their front. Our regiment of light infantry, commanded by Colonel Gimatt, a bold Frenchman, was selected for the assault ... [On the night of the attack] The column marched in silence, with guns unloaded, and in good order. Many, no doubt, thinking, that less than one quarter of a mile would finish the journey of life with them. On the march, I had a chance to whisper to several of my men (whom I doubted,) *and told them that I had full confidence that they would act the part of brave soldiers, let what would come;* and if their guns should be shot away, not to retreat, but take the first man's gun that might be killed. When we had got about half way to the redoubt we were ordered to halt, and detach one man from each company for the forlorn hope. My men all seemed ready to go. The column then moved on; six or eight pioneers [sappers and miners] in front, as many of the forlorn hope next, then Colonel Gimatt with five or six volunteers by his side, then my platoon, being the front of the column. When we came near the front of the abatis, the enemy fired a full body of musketry. At this, our men broke silence and huzzaed; and as the order for silence seemed broken by every one, I huzzaed with all my power, saying, see how frightened they are, they fire right into the air. The pioneers began to cut off the abatis, which were the trunks of trees with the trunk part fixed in the ground, the limbs made sharp, and pointed towards us. This seemed tedious work, in the dark, within three rods of the enemy; and I ran to the right to look a place to crawl through, but returned in a hurry, without success, fearing the men would get through first; as it happened, I made out to get through first, and entered the ditch; and when I found my men to the number of ten or twelve had arrived, I stepped through between two palisades ... on to the parapet, and called out in a tone as if there was no danger, 'Captain Olney's company, form here!' On this I had not less than six or eight bayonets pushed at me; I parried as well as I could with my espontoon, but they broke off the blade part, and their bayonets slid along the handle of my espontoon and scaled my fingers; one bayonet pierced my thigh, another stabbed me in the abdomen just above the hip-bone. One fellow fired at me, and I thought the ball took effect in my arm; by the light of his gun I made a thrust with the remains of my espontoon, in order to injure the sight of his eyes; but as it happened, I only made a hard stroke in his forehead. At this instant two of my men, John Strange and Benjamin Bennett, who had loaded their guns while they were in the ditch, came up and fired upon the enemy, who part ran away and some surrendered; so that we entered the redoubt without further opposition.

My sergeant, Edward Butterick, to whom I was much indebted for his bravery, helped me nearly all this affray; and received a prick of the enemy's bayonet, in his stomach. Sergeant Brown was also in time, but attempting to load his gun, received a bayonet wound in his hand. Colonel Gimatt was wounded with a musket ball in the foot, about the first fire of the enemy; and I suppose it took all the volunteers to carry him off, as I never saw any of them afterwards. When most of the regiment had got into the redoubt, I directed them to *form in order*. Major Willis's post being in the rear; I supposed he got in about the time I was carried away with the wounded.

My company, which consisted of about forty ... had only five or six wounded, all slightly, except Peter Barrows, who had a ball pass through the under jaw; I believe we had none killed.

The French suffered much more than we did. I was informed they had eighteen killed, and was half an hour before they took the redoubt, waiting with the column exposed, until the pioneers completely cleared away the obstructions. We made out to crawl through, or get over, and from the enemy's first fire, until we got possession of the redoubt, I think did not exceed ten minutes.

When my wounds came to be examined, next day, that on my left arm, which gave me most pain when inflicted, was turned black all round, three or four inches in length; neither skin nor coat broken. The stab in my thigh, was slight, that in front, near my hip, was judged to be mortal, by the surgeons, as a little part of the caul protruded. I was carried to the hospital at Williamsburgh, twelve miles, and in about three weeks my wounds healed, and I joined the regiment ...<sup>53</sup>

One of Olney's men, 21 year old former drummer John Strange, echoed Captain Olney's account in his 1824 pension deposition, noting "that he was one of the two first privates that mounted the breach & made good his stand on the breast work ..." Strange went on to claim, "while standing on the breast work it was his good fortune to preserve the life of his Captain, by killing the man who had his bayonet charged at his breast & to escape himself unhurt. The Storm lasted about an hour before fort surrendered." In a statement supporting Strange's quest for a pension, Olney merely echoed that "he [Strange] belonged to the Light Infantry company of which I was commander at the siege and capture of Lord Cornwallis at York Town Virginia & performed the part of a courageous & good soldier in the storm of the enemies redoubt the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1781, being one of the two first private soldiers that mounted the breach & made good his stand on the enemies breast work."<sup>54</sup>

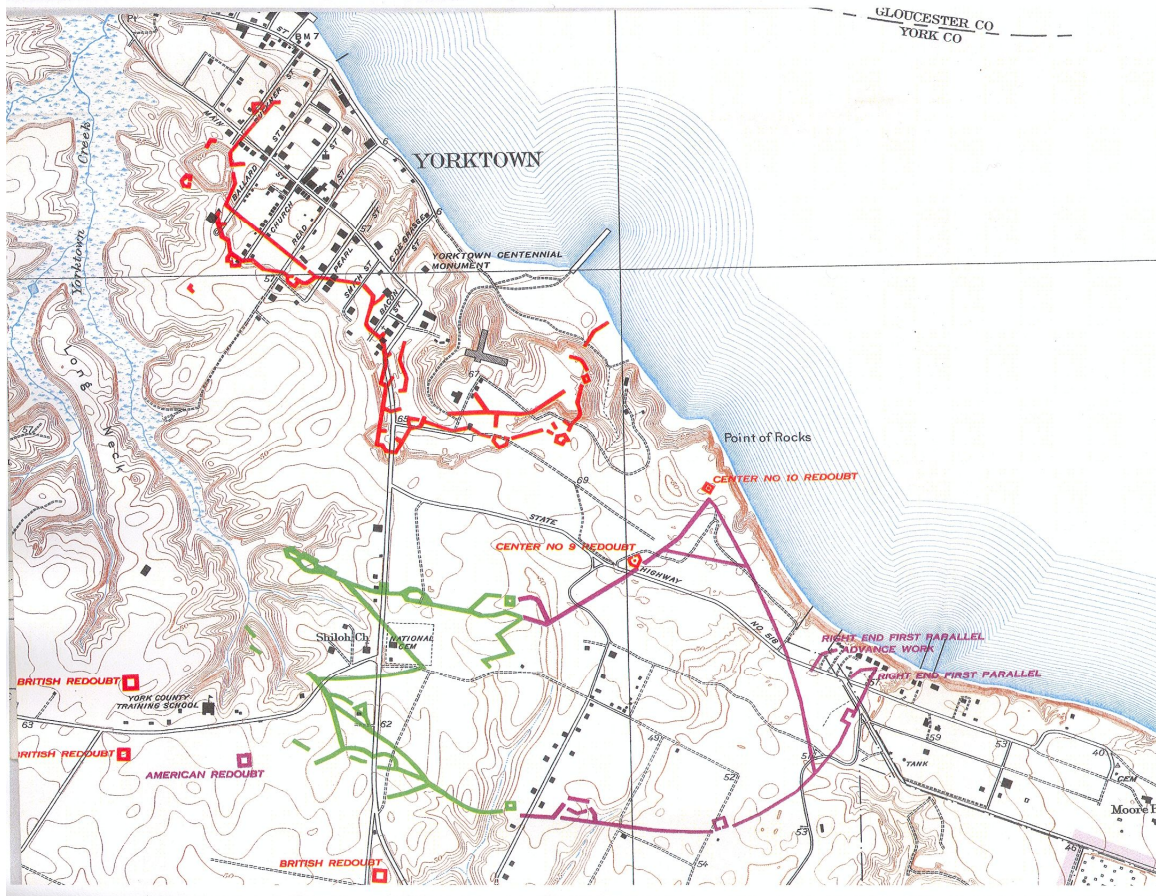
Crown losses in the redoubt were six officers, one sergeant, and sixty-six rank and file, consisting of detachments from the British 33<sup>rd</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 71<sup>st</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup> Regiments, and the Hessen-Cassel Regiments Erbprinz ("Prince Hereditary") and von Bose. Following are total Continental losses and breakdown by unit:<sup>55</sup>

Hamilton's Battalion	Wounded	4 rank and file
Gimat's Battalion	Killed	1 sergeant, 7 rank and file
	Wounded	1 lieutenant colonel, 2 captains, 1 subaltern,
		1 sergeant, 15 rank and file
Laurens' Detachment	Killed	1 rank and file
	Wounded	1 captain, 5 rank and file
Corps of Sapper and Miners	Wounded	1 captain, 1 rank and file
Total: Killed 1 sergeant, 8 rank and file		
Wounded 1 lieutenant colonel, 4 captains, 1 subaltern, 1 sergeant, 25 rank and file		

American officer casualties in the action were:<sup>56</sup>

Lieutenant Colonels Barber and Gimat  
Major Barber Division Inspector to the Light Infantry  
Captains Olney and Hunt of Lieut Colo. Gimat's Battal. of Light Infantry  
Captain Lieutenant Kirkpatrick of the Corps of Sappers & Miners  
Lieutenant Mansfield of Lieut Colo. Gimat's Battal. of Light Infantry





**American siege works and British defenses, including Redoubts 9 and 10, Colonial National Monument, Yorktown Battlefield, Virginia (section), 1:25,000-scale topographic map of Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia (Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1981)**

As the only soldier to provide a comprehensive account of the operations of the light battalions under Lafayette, we turn to Ebenezer Wild for a look at the final days of the Yorktown siege.

15<sup>th</sup>. The works were carried on last night with such spirit that at daylight we found the parallel extended quite to the river on our right and nearly completed. Batteries are erecting with great expedition. Being now but 200 yards distant from the enemy's line of works, we are much troubled with their small shells, which they throw into our trenches exceeding fast. At 11 o'clk we left work and marched to our tents. Capt. White was interred last evening after we mounted the trenches. The fire, both of shot & shells, on both sides, has been exceeding hot all day.<sup>57</sup>

On the 16<sup>th</sup> the British attacked, took and briefly held two French batteries, succeeding in spiking several cannon. As Wild noted, "This was done so slightly that the spikes were easily extracted." The following day at dawn



we found the enemy had stopped the embrasures of most of their batteries, and the fire from their cannon ... almost silenced. By this time the fire from our works became almost incessant ... About nine o'clock a drummer appeared and beat a parley on the rampart of the enemy's horn work; in consequence of which hostilities ceased till a flag came from their works to ours and returned again, when the firing commenced on both sides as usual. About 11 o'clock an answer to the enemy's flag was returned, and a cessation of arms granted them.<sup>58</sup>

The commissioners from both sides met on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and the articles of capitulation signed. On 19 October 1781

At 12 o'clock the allied armies were paraded, our right wing being at the entrance of the American encampment (which is one mile and a half). Being thus paraded for the reception of the British Army, at 2 o'clock P.M. they began to march out with shouldered arms, and drums beating, but were [not] allowed to beat any French or American march; neither were they allowed to display their colors. In this order they were conducted (by General Lincoln) to a large plain in front of the American encampment, where they grounded their arms ...<sup>59</sup>

Some of the Continental troops that fought at Yorktown marched south after the siege to reinforce General Greene's forces in South Carolina and Georgia, but Wild and his compatriots in the light battalions took ship up the Chesapeake to Head of Elk. From there most made their way to West Point, New York, and surrounding dependencies, there staying the winter of 1781-82. The New Jersey troops wintered in their home state, at or near the town of Chatham.

Although the fighting would continue for another year, the war was, to all intents and purposes, over.

***“Ill founded jealousies, and groundless suspicions.”  
Unrest in the Light Battalions***

As intimated in Lafayette's 17 April letter (see above) there was unease in the light battalions regarding the length of absence from their families, matters of pay, and possible service in the deep south, but personnel problems had begun much earlier than that. The first matter to arise was animosity between the New England troops and the Jersey men. The trouble stemmed from the mutiny of the New Jersey line in late January 1781. In response, General Washington called for Maj. Gen. Robert Howe to move with a detachment of five hundred Massachusetts troops and, in conjunction with Connecticut and New Hampshire soldiers, quell the insurrection. The operation was successful, the mutiny put down and two ringleaders executed. Lt. Wild of Vose's Battalion noted that after the New Jersey light companies joined with Lafayette's detachment on 26 February, on the “27<sup>th</sup>. We began our march [from Somerset Courthouse] at sunrise ... After a short halt we continued our march to Princeton, where the troops were quartered in the college and other houses in town ... A riot happened in the evening between the Massachusetts and Jersey troops.”<sup>60</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Barber informed his regimental commander back in New Jersey of the incident:

Trenton Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1781

Dr Sir We embark tomorrow morning early for Philadelphia to proceed from thence to Virginia. It is certain that Arnold is blocked up, and perhaps this expedition will contribute to his captivity. It is said the tour will be a short one and should we be successful, it will compensate for any accidental disagreeablenesses.

The Jersey troops have behaved scandalously thus far. Last night, when at Princeton, they created a small riot with the Eastern troops. The grudge occasioned by the late subduction was the leading motive. After a little tumult they were dispersed to their quarters and all [was] quiet after. This night many of them are drunk & turbulent. They are clamorous about their money, meaning the fourth part of their depreciation, which they say is due tomorrow, the first of March. Several threaten not to march unless they receive it. This is the effect of liquor, and I hope when that is evaporated, they will be quiet. Our men I think are exceedingly altered for worse; from being almost the most orderly & subordinate soldiers in the army, they are become a set of drunken, and unworthy fellows. The situation of an officer among them is rendered more disagreeable than any other calling in life, even the most menial, can possibly be. I had ten thousand times rather be a private centinel in an Eastern [i.e., New England] regiment than be the commander of such soldiers under such circumstances. This description of their conduct and my situation I know will afflict you on their and my account, and I should not have troubled you with it, had I not conceive[d] it my duty. Nothing but the highest severity will reclaim them, and whether or not that will be effectual while they receive such countenance from the public, is very uncertain. I thank God, tomorrow is the last day, or rather this night. So soon as we get out of the State, I am determined they shall pay very severely for the least irregularity.<sup>61</sup>

Bad feelings likely continued, but did not hinder the men's performance during the ensuing campaign, though the Marquis did note on 14 April, "Some disputes that Have at first Happened Between the Jersey and New England troops make me think that these Last Must Be as much as possible separated from the Pennsilvanians." This refers to the tinderbox that might have been created by contact with General Wayne's soldiers who had satisfied their grievances via a successful mutiny just after the New Year.<sup>62</sup>

General Washington wrote Major General Heath on 21 March concerning another contentious matter, instigated by Massachusetts officers disputing positions in the provisional light battalions.

Upon my arrival at [New Windsor] yesterday, I found your letter of the 2d., inclosing the complaint of sundry field Officers of the Massachusetts line. It is a painful reflection, that the best meant endeavors to promote the Service is subject to, and often meets with, the most unfavourable constructions; and that the numerous embarrassments which the distressed situation of our affairs unavoidably involve us in, should be increased by ill founded jealousies, and groundless suspicions.

If the Gentlemen who addressed you ... were hurt at the appointment of Colo. Gemat and Majr. Galvan to commands in the detachment which marched (and which I presume to be the case) a candid investigation of the cause would have evinced, in a moment, the principle; and that it was not a predilection in favor of those Gentlemen, or a want of confidence in the complainants, but the peculiar circumstances of the Army that gave birth to the measure.

At the time the detachment was ordered, there was not by the Adjutants return ... but two Regiments in Camp that had more than one field Officer; namely Hazen's and Webbs. Nothing therefore but necessity, could have justified my leaving a regiment

without one, at a time, when the new levies were ordered to join, and were momentarily expected from every State; and when an equal, and impartial distribution of them was to be made, and the whole to be provided for. Under such circumstances, no one, I am perswaded, who considers the good of the Service, and the consequences of such a want, can blame me for taking Officers who were eligible to command, and unoccupied by other duties to accompany the Detachmt.

These, and these *only*, were the reasons why no more than one field Officer was taken from the line of Massachusetts bay, and not, as I have said before, from a want of confidence in them, or because I preferred those that did go. Thus much justice has dictated; and I insert, to remove the idea which these Gentn. seem to have imbibed of an intended slight. But they must excuse me for adding, that I conceive it to be a right inherent with command to appoint particular Officers for special purposes.<sup>63</sup>

On 14 April at “Susquehana Ferry” General Lafayette wrote of continuing dislike for one of his foreign officers and other personnel problems.

I am Sorry to Inform Your Excellency that the Uneasiness in Clel. Vose’s Bataillon Had Increased to the Highest pitch. Their Hatred to Major Galvan is not without foundation as He does not treat them with that Even temper which troops Have Right to Expect – But should Not prove So prejudicial Had the officers and Men the least Confidence in Clel. Vose, or Colonel Vose the least firmness to superintend the Conduct of His Major and other officers. These last Have Complained to me, But I did not think it Consistent With discipline to Give them a Redress when Clel. Vose is present and is to answer for the Maintenance of Good order and A proper Conduct in His Corps. In the Mean while the Men desert, the officers are dissatisfied, Major Galvan goes on in the same Way, which He thinks to Be the Best, and I Cannot punish this officer who is Active, zealous, But plagues the Bataillon with a peculiar line of Conduct which Cannot Bring Any charge upon Him and is Not Cheked By His Colonel.<sup>64</sup>

The Marquis went on,

... Disatisfaction and Desertion Being two Greater Evils than Any other We have to fear, I am Anxious to Have Rivers, other Country, And Every kind of Barrier to Stop the Inclination of the Men to Return Home. Many Men Have Already Deserted. Many More will I am afraid take the Same Course. Whatever Sense of duty, ties of affection, and Severity of discipline May Operate Shall Be Employed Most Earnestly By me, and I wish we Might soon Come Near the Ennemy which is the only Means of putting a stop to that spirit of desertion ... While I was writing this, Accounts Have Been Brought to me that a Great Desertion Had taken Place Last Night. Nine of the Rhodeisland Compagny, and the Best men they Had who Have made Many Campaigns and Never were suspected – these men say that they like Better [a] Hundred Lashes than a journey to the Southward. As long as they Had an [short] expedition in View, they were very well satisfied – But the idea of Remaining in the southern states appear to them Intolerable and they are Amazingly averse to the people and climate. I shall do my Best, But if this Disposition Lasts, I am affraid we will Be Reduced Lower than I dare Express.<sup>65</sup>

***“The Cloathing you ... long ago Sent to the light infantry is not Yet Arrived.”  
Apparel and Equipment***

When light companies were combined into a light corps or division they wore the clothing issued to their parent regiments. Thus the men who started out with the Marquis in February 1781 would have had a hodge-podge of apparel. If clothing standards were adhered to, the New England soldiers (eighteen companies) would have worn blue coats with white facings, while the five New Jersey companies should have been clad in blue coats with buff facings. The uniform of Hazen’s light company at the time is unknown; that regiment not being associated with any state it had no set or stable clothing supply, but Col. Moses Hazen had requested of the commander-in-chief on 8 January,

As the Regiment is an exception to General Establishment of the Army I would be happy for your Excellency’s Oppinion and approbation in a Uniform white with Green facings was the first fixed upon in Canada and the Field Officers would wish to continue it if your Excellency approves ...

Thus it is possible Hazen’s light troops wore coats of the aforementioned colors. In any event, at this stage in the war, as in other phases, uniformity was the exception rather than the rule, and, despite the October 1779 uniform regulations, there was likely some disparity even among soldiers from the same region.<sup>66</sup>

In any event, supplies of clothing were sorely needed. On 19 February General Washington had informed Assistant Clothier General John Moylan,

Lt. Colo [William Stephens] Smith [Light Division Inspector, formerly of Spencer’s Additional Regiment] has orders to Inspect the clothing of a detachment now assembling at Peeks Kill and to make a return of its wants to you or your deputy on the other side, agreeable to which the Issues are to be made without delay, and forwarded to the detachment at the above place or at Pompton ... Independent of these, one thousand pair of good and strong shoes, and one hundred and fifty watch Coats are to be packed up and sent to Pompton.

These things are to be issued to the order of the Marqs de la Fayette ... some person in your department is to attend for this purpose, and to note the Regiments, and men who receive Clothing, that proper accts may be kept of the Issues.<sup>67</sup>

The needs were as follows:<sup>68</sup>

Return of Cloathing wanting in the Light Infantry Feby. 20<sup>th</sup> 1781

Regiments	Hats	Stocks	Shirts	Coats	Vests	Overalls	Shoe	
							Blanketts	Buckels
Colo Vose	57	70	1	204	5	13		160
Lt Colo Gimat	51	72	2	69	1	13	1	117
Major Reid	27	37	16	39	1	6	11	65
Total	135	179	19	312	7	32	12	342

The Jersey troops are Not included in this Report – the weather is such that an addition of those will be necessary. [Taken at Peeks Kill] Wm Smith Lt Colo  
[Vose and Gimat had 400 men per battalion; Reid had only 150 men, lacking the Jersey companies.]


*Return of clothing wanted in the light Infantry Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 1781*

<i>Regiments</i>		<i>Hats</i>	<i>Stocks</i>	<i>Shirts</i>	<i>Coats</i>	<i>Vests</i>	<i>Miralls</i>	<i>Blankets</i>	<i>Shoe Buckles</i>
<i>Companies</i>	<i>Colo Vose</i>	57	70	2	204	5	13		160
	<i>Colo Ginnel</i>	51	72	2	69	1	13	1	117
	<i>Major Reed</i>	27	37	16	39	1	6	11	65
	<i>Total</i>	135	179	19	312	7	32	12	342

*No the Jersey troops are not included in this Report - the weather is such that an addition of these will be necessary.*

*Wm Smith Lt Col.*

*Becks Killis*  
*Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 1781*  
 166-77



Return of clothing needed by the light companies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Hazen's Regiment, before they began their southward march in February 1781. Enclosure in the letter of Lafayette to Washington, 23 February 1781, George Washington Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm (Washington: Library of Congress, 1961), series 4, reel 75.

Massachusetts Lieutenant Wild noted the New Englanders received their clothing issue before they were joined by the Jersey contingent:

25<sup>th</sup>., Sunday. At sunrise the troops paraded & marched to Moristown, where we ... drew clothing for our men.

26<sup>th</sup>. Being detained by the delivery of our clothing, we marched at 11 o'clk A.M. After making about five miles were joined by five companies from the N. Jersey line ...<sup>69</sup>

Less than a month later Lafayette complained of major shortages in several letters. He wrote to the commander-in-chief on 14 April:

Many Articles, and Indeed Every one which Compose the Apparatus of a soldier will Be Wanting for this Detachment. But shoes, Linnen Over alls, Hunting shirts, shirts And Ammunition will Be the Most Necessary supplies for which I Request Your Excellency's Most pressing orders to people Concerned and Most warm Entreaties to the Board of

War. I wish it was possible to Have the Men Equiped at Once, and this would Be a Great Saving of Expense.<sup>70</sup>

And to Nathanael Greene:

Baltimore April the 17h. 1781 ... When I Was Crossing the ferry I was Overtaken By a Letter from General Washington ... Promising Every Relief He Could Afford in our Circumstances.

Previous to that, I Had Sent Clel. Barber to the Board of War And directed Him to Get whatever He Could for our Relief. Barber is Not Returned, But the Answer from the Board Gives us a Very poor prospect. Such officers as Could not Conveniently or to Speack With truth Could not possibly Remain Have Been discharged By me and others will Be Sent to Reimplace them. An officer Per Bataillon is Gone to Head Quarters to fetch Summer Cloathes for the Rest ... When this Detachement Was ordered out Every Individual in it thought they were Going on a tour of duty of two or three days And Provided Accordingly ... Thus Circumstanced our Officers Had No Monney, No Baggage of Any Sort, No Summer Cloathes and Hardly a Shirt to Shift. To these Common Miseries the Soldiers Added their Shocking Naked[ness and] a want of Shoes &c &c. Having Been thus Conducted to Trenton, they were Hurried on Board of Vessels and Having Been Embarked at [Head of] Elk they Arrived at Annapolis where the Hope of A Short Expedition Against Arnold Silenced Every Complaint and kept up their Spirits. They Had Hitherto Been in Houses or on Board of Vessels, So that it was Impossible they Would feel the Extreme Want of tents Which However Crouded with officers and Men Leave a Number of them to Sleep in the Oppen Air, Camp Kettles Could Be Borrowed in towns or from Vessels, and Blankets were Almost Unnecessary. To this I May Add that Every farthing of Monney Has Been Spent, Every Shoe Worn out, and Many Hatts Lost in the Navigation, and that Want of Linnen Has given a dreadful itch to a great part of our Men [who] ... are Shokingly Destitute of Linnen, I Have Borrowed from the Merchants of Baltimore A sum on My Credit which will Amount to About two thousand Pounds and will procure a few Hatts, Some Shoes, Some Blanketts, and a pair of Linnen over alls, and a Shirt to Each Man. I Hope to Sett the Baltimore Ladies At work for the Shirts which will Be Sent after me, and the Over Alls will Be Made By our tailors. I will use My Influence to Have the Monney Added to the Loans which the French Court will Have Made to the United States, and in Case I Cannot Succeed Bind Myself to the Merchants for a paiement With Interests in two years.

With these Precautions I think our Present detachement will Be Preserved in Good order, and As I Will Send an Exact Return will only Say this time that we Have about [one] thousand men Rank and file and a Compagny of Artillery.

By a Letter Received from Baron de Steuben I am Informed that General [William] Philips Has Brought to Portsmouth 1500 or 2000 men. This In Addition to Arnold Must Give Between 2500 or 3000 men. Reducing it to 2000 men Philips Might operate With, it Becomes Essential that My detachment Should Advance as fast as possible. The Common Way of Marching troops, Besides that it Announces the Very day of our Arrival and Every one of our Stages to the Ennemy, Has Appeared to me So dilatory that I would Be upon the Roads or at the ferries for An Eternity. I will therefore Leave our tents, Sick men, two Howtizer[s] and the Artillery ... Those and the Artillery Compagny with a detachement of infantry under a Major [William Galvan] will follow us as fast as possible. The Rest of the Corps Having Compleated their Rounds [musket cartridges] will Make forced Marches to Fredericksburg and Every Waggon and Horse I Can Come Across will Be Impressed for that purpose.<sup>71</sup>



General Washington addressed some of Lafayette's concerns in a letter dated 22 April.

I am extremely concerned at the temper of your detachment and the desertions that are taking place. I imagine however these would have been nearly as great in any other corps that might have been sent, and after the Pennsylvania line I think it would be ineligible to detach any other state line. We find by experience that they are not only dissipated on the march; but being at a great distance from their states are almost intirely neglected ... Our plan at present appears to me to be to commit the defence of the Southern states as far as Pennsylvania inclusive, and to make up any additional succours that may be necessary by detachment. We must endeavour to compensate these detachments for the loss of state supplies by giving them a larger proportion of Continental. On this principle I am sending you the articles mentioned in the inclosed list. 1200 Shirts, 1200 linen Overalls, 1200 pr. shoes, 1200 socks, 100 Hunting Shirts, which set out two days ago from this place [i.e., New Windsor, New York]. I have also urged the Board of War to do their best for you.<sup>72</sup>

The clothing Washington mentioned as being sent south on 20 April seems not to have been received until much later than expected. Likely regarding this promised supply, Lafayette informed the commander-in-chief on 20 July, "The Cloathing you Have long ago Sent to the light infantry is not Yet Arrived. I Have Been obliged to send for it, and Expect it in a few days." (According to a letter from Virginia Brig. Gen. George Weedon a lack of wagons delayed the shipment.) The next mention we find is on 18 August when Lieutenant Wild noted in his diary, "a quantity of clothing arrived in Camp for the non-commissioned officers and privates of the Light Infantry." The Marquis wrote General Wayne the same day he was sending him shoes and overalls, but Wayne replied on the 23<sup>rd</sup> that he had yet to receive the goods. Two days later Lafayette sent back that "the Shoes and Over alls for Your line which I thought long Ago Gone, and a Waggon to Carry them Have Been Delivered to Lt. [George] North [5<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment]." <sup>73</sup>

Before any supplies from the north arrived the Marquis decided to take matters into his own hands, ordering at "Head quarters Fredericksburgh 26<sup>th</sup>. April 1781,"

An addition of shoes and some Blanketing will be delivered. The tailors of the Battalions have made paterns of light infantry Jackets, and the Gentlemen officers are requested to have every coat made upon this same plan, as soon as possible: Besides the advantage of uniformity, these Jackets are calculated to the season and climate.

The commanding officers of Battalions will give proper orders to have their Jackets exactly uniform, and the men furnished with the means of makeing them up ... <sup>74</sup>

He then discussed head-cover and hairstyles.

Such of the hats as can afford it, are to be made in to light infantry caps with a very large front piece, as the climate of the state renders it extremely advantagious to them. The hair to be cut round from time to time, and washed every day. The Majr. General recommends this mode, but leaving the choice to the men, he only orders, that such as do not cut their hair, to be very exact in combing and dressing it every day. Such part of the hair as is cut must be very short and carefully washed. The gentlemen officers are requested to be particularly attentive to those articles which have a great influence upon the health of the soldiers. <sup>75</sup>

The cut-down hats are reminiscent of similar measures adopted by Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne twice before. In late autumn 1778 the Pennsylvania troops received new French uniforms, but the soldiers having only old tattered hats, Wayne ordered his troops in early 1779 to convert into caps all the hats “which do not Admit of been[g] Cockd.” Wayne’s instructions were to cut off all “but About half An Inch of the brim” around three quarters of the crown. The remaining flap was cocked up to make a front piece, and the edge of the brim was “bound Round with White Tape Linnen.”<sup>76</sup> In October 1780 General Wayne again resorted to modified hats:

I believe no Army before this was ever put to such shifts, in order to have even the appearance of uniformity – when the Charge of the Pennsa Division devolved on me, after the removal of Genl. St. Clair to the command of the left wing, I thought of an expedient of reducing the heterogenious of new, old, cock’d & flopped hats & pieces of hats, to [light] Infantry Caps, in which we succeeded very well – by making three decent caps out of one tolerable & two very ordinary hats, to which we added, as an embellishment, a white plume & a Comb of flowing red hair.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, on 6 September 1780 the Brig. Gen. James Clinton’s New York Brigade orders recommended “to the Officers Commanding Regiments [2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>] to have the Hatts of their Men formed into Caps of one Moddle and Covered with white Hair.” Fourth New York Regiment orders followed on 30 September: “the Col<sup>o</sup> [Frederick Weissenfels] Orders that the remaining hatts in the Regiment immediately Cut into Caps and if there Cannot be any white hair procured Red or black must be Adapted.”<sup>78</sup>

Lieutenant Wild several times mentioned clothing in his diary of the campaign, including shirts made by the “Baltimore Ladies.”

2<sup>d</sup>. [May 1781, Richmond, Va.] The weather being exceeding warm, our men were ordered to cut their coats short for their greater ease in marches.

5<sup>th</sup>. [May, 16 miles from Richmond] A large quantity of linen cloth for overalls & shoes arrived from Baltimore for the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Light Infantry.

10<sup>th</sup>. [June] ... halted in the woods in Louisa County, where 1,200 shirts (from Baltimore) arrived and were delivered to the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Light Infantry.<sup>79</sup>

Regarding Wild’s 2 May mention of cutting coats, we can again turn to General Wayne for a similar reference. Resigned to the failure of a promised supply of clothing for the Pennsylvania regiments, in mid-October 1780 the general was

induced to call upon the Honourable Council to adopt some move to procure a fresh supply of Blankets, & winter Clothing, for the Officers & privates belonging to the State of Pennsa. The weather begins to pinch – hard necessity obliges us to be economists – our Soldiers uniforms are much worn & out of repair, we have adopted the idea of Curtailing [i.e. shortening] the Coats to repair the Elbows & other defective parts for which we shall Immediately want needles and thread ...<sup>80</sup>



It seems by early June the three light battalions were issued a large quantity of uniform clothing. Connecticut Private Josiah Atkins was sent to Virginia in mid-May 1781 with a party escorting wagons carrying “cloathing, money & arms to the [light] infantry.” The shipment reached Lafayette’s troops June 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> (Atkins may have mistaken the date), the same day Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne’s Pennsylvania battalions rendezvoused with the Marquis. Private Atkins noted in his diary for the day, “Our [light] Infantry, this day, (except those who came with me) had dealt out to them one Holland shirt, one linning one, one frock, and two pair overalls.” Receipt of this clothing was confirmed by Ens. Ebenezer Denny, Butler’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania (Provisional) Battalion, who wrote on 18 June, “Joined the troops under command of Lafayette ... His men look as if they were fit for business. They are chiefly all light infantry, dressed in frocks and overalls of linen.”<sup>81</sup> The shipment Josiah Atkins accompanied south likely included the following items listed in an 8 May letter from the commander-in-chief to the Board of War:

Clothing sent to the southward upon Mr. [Ezekiel] Cornell’s requisition –  
1500 Woolen Vests  
300 pr: Leather Breeches  
3000 pr: socks  
Sent to the southward at the same time the Clothing for the Marquis’s detachment went  
3000 pr: socks  
900 Hunting Shirts  
4000 pr: Shoes ordered from Jersey <sup>82</sup>

There are two other accounts mentioning hunting shirts (“frocks”) being issued to Lafayette’s 1781 light troops. Eli Seymour, who was a light infantryman in the 1<sup>st</sup> Connecticut Regiment of 1781, recalled in his 1836 pension deposition, in “the early part of the year 1781 (if my memory is correct) the Soldiers received twenty four dollars each and some clothing. Our clothing was Rifle Frocks and Linnen Pantaloons for Summer.” Seymour’s old-age memoir is supported by the account book of Capt. Thaddeus Weed’s company. Weed belonged to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Connecticut Regiment, and was detached in August for service with Hamilton’s Light Battalion. His company consisted of picked men from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Regiments. On 9 September 1781 at Head of Elk, Maryland, Weed’s company was issued twelve hunting shirts for three sergeants, three corporals, and fifty-two privates. Another accounting of the same clothing issue notes receipt of twelve “Frocks,” reinforcing the contention that Denny’s narrative indeed referred to hunting “frocks.”<sup>83</sup>

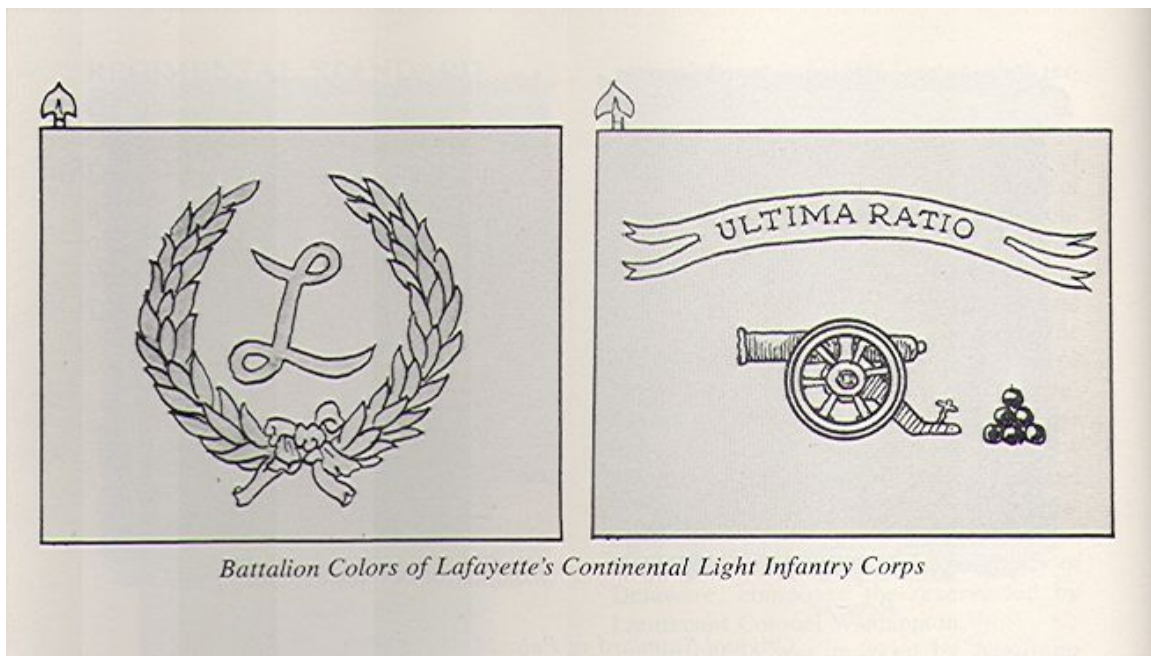


A light infantryman wearing a cap made from a cut-down felt hat, with linen hunting shirt and overalls. The light troops under the Marquis de Lafayette likely wore similar caps from late spring 1781, through that summer, while the coats worn varied. At least one hundred hunting shirts were sent from the north in late April, and some additional hunting shirts may have been produced from material procured at Baltimore. Lt. Wild mentioned regimental coats being cut short on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and not long before that, on 26 April, Lafayette had ordered that light infantry jackets be made: “The tailors of the Battalions have made patterns of light infantry Jackets, and the Gentlemen officers are requested to have every coat made upon this same plan, as soon as possible ...” In June the men seem to have attained uniformity. On or about June 10<sup>th</sup> Private Josiah Atkins recorded “Our [light] Infantry, this day ... had dealt out to them one Holland shirt, one lining one, one frock, and two pair overalls.” In confirmation, Pennsylvania Ensign Ebenezer Denny noted in early June that Lafayette’s troops “are chiefly all light infantry, dressed in frocks and over-alls of linen.” (Artwork by Don Troiani. Courtesy of the artist.)

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Despite receipt of a “large quantity of ... shoes” mentioned by Lieutenant Wild on 5 May, the light troops sorely needed footwear by late summer, Ensign Gilbert noted on 18 July while at Malvern Hill, “we are in Daily expectations of marching [to Carolina]. But I dread the march, our men having not more than one pair of shoes or Hose to Eight men, and the sands are so hot in the middle of the Day that it continually raises Blisters on the mens feet.” General Wayne claimed the same hardship for his troops, writing on August 9<sup>th</sup>, “Notwithstanding this Circumstance, Delicacy has induced me to march the Penns[ylvani]ans. bare foot over sharp pebbles, & thro’ burning sands (altho’ heretofore unused to such treatment) rather than discriminate between any body of troops under my Command.”<sup>84</sup>

The clothing worn by Scammell’s and Hamilton’s Light Battalions is also open to some conjecture, but generally similar to those troops already discussed. The Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York troops serving in the two provisional light battalions that marched south under Washington likewise wore into service the clothing of their parent regiments. The coats may already have been shortened in the case of men from the light companies, while the coats of the troops taken from the line companies may have been shortened after they were detached. Hamilton’s men, and likely Scammell’s also, were issued some proportion of hunting shirts; that item of clothing plus linen overalls being considered best for summer campaign apparel.<sup>85</sup>



**Flag possibly carried by one of the Marquis de Lafayette’s light battalions in the 1781 Virginia Campaign. The motto, *Ultima ratio*, translates to “The last argument.” Edward W. Richardson, *Standards and Colors of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1982), 54–55.**

Battalion colors are also mentioned, Massachusetts Lt. Wild noting on 23 February 1781, “Arrived at Pumton [Pompton, New Jersey] at one o’clk P.M. ... The Marquis arrived & took command of the detachment, in consequence of which each regt. [i.e., provisional battalion] rec<sup>d</sup> a standard.” These must have been some of the same flags used by the regiments of Lafayette’s light division the previous year. Just after the division’s formation in summer 1780, on 14 August “a company of each regiment of [light] Infantry marched to Marquis De La Fayette’s Quarters, and received each an elegant standard, made a present of by the Marquis to each reg<sup>t</sup> of Lt. Infantry.” A British headquarters intelligence book tells more of these standards: “A Rebel Deserter who came over to Long Island 26th Augt. [1780] says the Number of the Light Infantry with General Washington is 2200 ... They have Received New Colours white A Flower Deleua [fleur de lis] and Small Stripes. The Troops will not fight under French Colours. They say the[y] would rather fight against the French.” On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1780 “4 Coulers” were turned in to the store at New Windsor by Quartermaster Sergeant C.H. Sheinemann, Second Light Infantry Brigade; “3 stands Coulers” were then delivered on 19 February 1781 at New Windsor for Lafayette, undoubtedly intended for the light battalions slated to accompany him to Virginia. Little is known of these standards, but one was described at Yorktown when “colours were planted upon the parapet with this motto: *Manus Haec inimica tyrannis*.” (trans., “This hand is hostile to tyrants.”) Lafayette described two others, “One of these colors bore a canon with this motto: *Ultima ratio* omitting the word *regum* used in Europe [*Ultima ratio regum*; trans., “The last argument of kings”]; the other, a crown of laurel joined with a civic crown, and for its motto *No other* (no other); as well as other emblems.”<sup>86</sup>

The Marquis had a high regard for the three provisional light infantry battalions that served with him in 1781, telling General Greene on 17 April, of “our Brave and Excellent Men (for this Detachement is Extremely Good) ...”<sup>87</sup> He was more effusive on July 20<sup>th</sup>, writing two weeks after the Battle of Green Springs:

These three Bataillions are the Best troops that Ever took the field. My Confidence in them is Unbounded. They are far Superior to any British troops, and None will Ever Venture to meet them at Equal Numbers. What a pity these men are not Employed along with the french Grenadiers! They would do Eternal Honor to our Arms. But their presence Here, I must Confess, Has Saved this State, and indeed the Southern part of the Continent.<sup>88</sup>

Even Pennsylvanian Ebenezer Denny wrote that September, after Washington’s army reached Williamsburg, the “Pennsylvania brigade [are] almost all old soldiers, and well disciplined when compared with those of Maryland and Virginia. But the troops from the eastward [Lafayette’s provisional light battalions] far superior to either.”<sup>89</sup>

The next parts of this article will look at Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne’s Pennsylvania battalions, with additional accounts of the Battle of Green Springs.

## Appendices

### **1. *Diary of Soldier with Lafayette's Light Infantry, 1781***

### **2. *Asa Redington, Scammell's Light Infantry Regiment, 1781***

### **3. *Barber's Light Battalion, 1781 (New Jersey Light Company Personnel)***

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## Suggested Reading List: Lafayette's Light Battalions

Josiah Atkins, *The Diary of Josiah Atkins*, Steven E. Kagle, ed. (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1975); Atkins was sent south in May 1781 to join Gimat's Battalion. The detachment he marched with served to guard a shipment of "cloathing, money & arms" for the light troops.

Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "The 'Affair Near James Island' (or, 'The Battle of Green Spring') July 6, 1781," *Virginia Historical Magazine*, vol. 53 (July 1945)

Henry P. Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881; reprinted by Eastern National Park & Monument Association, 1975), 29–70.

John U. Rees, "'The multitude of women': An Examination of the Numbers of Female Camp Followers with the Continental Army," *The Brigade Dispatch* (Journal of the Brigade of the American Revolution) Three parts: vol. XXIII, no. 4 (Autumn 1992), 5–17; vol. XXIV, no. 1 (Winter 1993), 6–16; vol. XXIV, no. 2 (Spring 1993), 2–6 (Reprinted in *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, vol. XIV, no. 2 (Summer 1996)) (World Wide Web), <http://revwar75.com/library/rees/wnumb1.htm>

Information on female camp followers with Lafayette's light battalions and Wayne's Pennsylvanians in 1781 can be found in part one, pages 6 to 9, and part two, pages 9 to 15.

Daniel Shute, "Journal of Dr. Daniel Shute, Surgeon in the Revolution, 1781-1782," *New England Historical & Genealogical Register*, 84 (1930), 383-389. Dr. Shute was surgeon of Hamilton's Light Infantry Battalion.

John Shy, ed., *Winding Down – The Revolutionary War Letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert of Massachusetts, 1780–1783* (Ann Arbor, Mi.: University of Michigan Press, 1989)

Ebenezer Wild, "Journal of Ebenezer Wild," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2nd series, vol. VI (Boston, Ma., 1891).

For other records and information of men who served in the 1781 light battalions, see:

William S. Stryker, *The New Jersey Continental Line in the Virginia Campaign of 1781* (Saddle River, N.J.: K/S Historical Publications, 1970; originally published Trenton, N.J., 1882), 29–32 (men detached from the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment). This work does not list the men from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jersey Regiment sent south with Lafayette, and contains other inaccuracies. The five New Jersey companies under Lt. Col. Barber contained 4 captains, 5 lieutenants, 1 ensign, and 275 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file. Of that total 149 were from the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Regiment, and 126 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey.<sup>90</sup>

Daniel Popek, “The Men of Capt. Stephen Olney's Light Infantry Company, 2nd R.I. Regiment, 1781 (Rhode Island Regiment, consolidated)” Contains names, pension depositions and other details of Olney's troops.

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~smithandyoung/CaptOlneysCo.htm>

### **Bibliography: Officer Identification**

Mark M. Boatner III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966) (esp. Galvan and Gimat).

Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution – April 1775 to December 1783* Washington, D.C.: The Rare Book Publishing Shop, Inc., 1914). Heitman contains inaccuracies and omissions, but remains a useful work.

### **Endnotes**

1. Lafayette to Washington, 20 July 1781, Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution – Selected Letters and Papers, 1776–1790*, vol. IV (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 256.
2. Ibid.
3. Lafayette to Washington, 20 July 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 255.
4. Washington to Lafayette, 20 February 1781, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745–1799* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1937), 21 (1937), 253–256.
5. **Morgan's Rifle Corps:** In a 13 June 1777 letter to Daniel Morgan, General Washington wrote that “The Corps of Rangers newly formed, and under your Command, are to be considered as a body of light Infantry and are to Act as such ... It occurs to me that if you were to dress a Company or two of true Woods Men in the right Indian Style and let them make the Attack accompanied with screaming and yelling as the Indians do, it would have very good consequences especially if as little as possible was said, or known of the matter beforehand.” Washington to Daniel Morgan, 13 June 1777, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 8 (1933), 236. Mark M. Boatner III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1966), 736.



**Dearborn's Light Infantry:** On 11 September 1777 Major Henry Dearborn, 3<sup>rd</sup> New Hampshire Regiment, was "appointed to the Command of 300 Light Infantry who are Draughted from the Several Regements in the Northern army & to act in Conjunction with Colo. Morgan's Corps of Riflemen." about one week before the Battle of Freeman's Farm. This battalion, titled the "Corps of Light Infantry" was made up of drafts from the Continental regiments from the following brigades: Glover's (4 Mass. Regiments), Nixon's (4 Mass. Regiments), Patterson's (4 Mass. Regiments), Poor's (3 NH, 2 NY Regiments), and Learned's (3 Mass., 1 'Canadian' Regiments; a.k.a., Col. James Livingston's Battalion, New York). Therefore, the Corps of Light Infantry was made up of men from 21 Continental regiments."

General order August 24th, 1777: "The Commanding officers of regiments are desired to recommend to the General one Officer, one Sergt., one Corpl., and 15 Privates each, of the most able, active, Spirited men in their respective Regts. This body is to join to, and do duty with the Rifle Regiment commanded by Colo. Morgan."

"The Corps of Light Infantry was divided into five companies. By October 2, however, 'The Quotas of Colo Livingstons [4<sup>th</sup>) New York] and [Van] Courtlands [2d) New York] regiments joined & afterwards returned to their regiments'; part of the reason for detaching the New York men may have been sectional strife with the New England troops." This information is courtesy of Eric Schnitzer, "A Review of the Organization of the Corps of Light Infantry, Northern Department, commanded by Major Henry Dearborn, 3<sup>d</sup> New Hampshire Regiment, August – November 1777" (Mss., author's collection), and Eric Schnitzer to author (email), 19 January 2006, 10:14 AM.

Cited sources:

Lloyd A. Brown and Howard H. Peckham, eds., *Revolutionary War Journals of Henry Dearborn* (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, Inc., 1994), 104–105.

General Orders (transcribed from a photocopy of an original brigade-level orderly book in the collection of Saratoga National Historical Park, Historian's files. The original is in the collection of the New-York Historical Society. The original and the park's copy begins 21 August 1777; the park's copy ends 20 October, 1777. Possibly "Revolutionary Orderly Book, 1777" [Orders of Major-General Horatio Gates, commanding in the Northern department, 21 Aug–31 Dec 1777]. United States of America, Department of State and Public Institutions Army, 1928. Cross Ref: HH-15-09 – Highlands Department, Revwar75 Order Books (World Wide Web)

<http://www.revwar75.com/ob/higher.htm#HH-15-09>)

Courtesy of Eric Schnitzer. Saratoga National Historic Park.

**Maxwell's Light Infantry:**

Robert K. Wright, Jr., *The Continental Army* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), 118. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 688. Boatner erroneously states that Maxwell's Light Infantry formed the reserve corps at the Battle of Germantown, 4 October 1777. The light corps had actually been disbanded on September 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>.

"Head Quarters, 11 o'clock, A.M., September 25, 1777 ... I mean to halt here ... to day ... I should be glad, therefore, if your Lordship would consult Genl. Armstrong and the other General Officers with you, and determine whether it will be best for you to march back to the Picquets, and for Maxwell's Corps to join their respective Brigades immediately or wait till tomorrow."

"Head Quarters at Pennibeckers Mill, September 28, 1777 ... of Continental Troops at this time in Camp, exclusive of the Detachment under Genl. McDougall and that under Genl. Wayne at the

Trap, there were returned present fit for duty 5,472, to which is to be added the light Corps lately under Genl. Maxwell, supposed to amount to 450 Men, and the Militia of the State of Pennsylvania under the Command of Major Genl. Armstrong.”

Washington to William Alexander, Lord Stirling, 25 September 1777; Council of War, 28 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 9 (1933), 265–266, 277–278.

**Monmouth Campaign, 1778:** For a discussion of provisional light battalions under Maj. Gen. Charles Lee see, John U. Rees, "What is this you have been about to day?": The New Jersey Brigade at the Battle of Monmouth” (World Wide Web),

<http://revwar75.com/library/rees/monmouth/MonmouthToc.htm>

Narrative and appendix C., “General Lee being detached with the advanced Corps ...”: Composition of Charles Lee’s Force [24–28 June 1778].”

<http://revwar75.com/library/rees/monmouth/MonmouthC.htm>

**Scott’s Light Infantry:** “Head Quarters, W. Plains, Saturday, August 8, 1778.

After Orders For the Safety and Ease of the Army and to be in greater readiness to attack or repel the Enemy, The Commander in Chief for these and many other Reasons orders and directs that a Corps of Light Infantry composed of the best, most hardy and active Marksmen and commanded by good Partizan Officers be draughted from the several Brigades to be commanded by Brigadier General Scott, 'till the Committee of Arrangement shall have established the Light Infantry of the Army agreeable to a late Resolve of Congress ... The details of the several Brigades are to be draughted and got in readiness as soon as possible.”; Washington, White Plains, N.Y., to Charles Scott, 14 August 1778, “Sir With the detachment of light troops under your command you are to take post in front of our camp and in such a position as may appear best calculated to preserve the security of your own corps and cover this army from surprise.”

Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 12 (1934), 300–301, 323–324.

See also, Peter Comtois, “Development of the Tactical Doctrine of the United States Corps of Light Infantry, 1777-1778” (thesis submitted to the Faculty of State University of New York College at Oneonta, Cooperstown Graduate Program in History, Museum Studies, 1975), Traces the early growth and development of the U. S. Corps of Light Infantry. Although the history of the Corps runs from 1777 to 1783, this paper covers its formative years of 1777 and 1778. The only known study of the light infantry embodied under Brig. Gen. Charles Scott during the summer and autumn of 1778.

**Wayne’s Light Infantry:** Wright, *The Continental Army*, 149. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 1062–1067, 1177. See also, Henry P. Johnston, *Storming of Stony Point on the Hudson, Midnight, July 15, 1779: Its Importance in the Light of Unpublished Documents* (New York: James T. White, 1900).

**Light Infantry Division, 1780:** “General Orders Head Quarters, Pracaness, Sunday, July 16, 1780 ... As the ensuing Campaign will in all Probability be peculiarly Interesting the Commander in Chief is desirous of having a well composed Corps of Light Infantry which cannot fail to be extremely useful in our operations: He therefore determines that one Company shall be drawn from each Regiment which shall finally be proportioned to the general strength of the Regiments so as not to be too large a diminution but for the present shall consist of one Captain, one Lieutenant or Ensign, three serjeants one Drum one Fife and Twenty Rank and File.

The General is persuaded that the Officers commanding Regiments will be very careful in the choice of the Men for these Companies as the good of the service and the honor of their Regiments will be materially concerned in it; The Men should be mostly of a middle size, Active, robust and Trusty, and the first Twenty must be all old Soldiers the remainder will have a proportion of Levies: These Companies will with this Part of the Army assemble at the Grand Parade on Tuesday next nine o’Clock to be Inspected by the Inspector General or Assistant Inspector General who will reject all such as are improper for the service to be replaced by



- others.” Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 19 (1937), 188–189. See also, John U. Rees, “‘Firm built men inur’d to the Field ...’: The Embodied Corps of Light Infantry, 1780” (Mss, author’s collection).
6. Lafayette to Washington, 20 July 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 256.
  7. Washington to President of Congress, 26 December 1780; Washington to John Laurens, 30 January 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 22, 161–162.
  8. Washington to President of Congress, 27 February 1781, *ibid.*, 300–301. For French naval movements see, Robert Gardiner, ed., *Navies and the American Revolution, 1775–1783* (Chatham Publishing, London, 1996), 114.
  9. General orders, 1 February 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 169.
  10. General orders, 16 February 1781, *ibid.*, 232.
  11. Washington to William Heath, 15 February 1781, *ibid.*, 228.
  12. Washington to William Heath, 17 February 1781, *ibid.*, 234–235.
  13. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, “Baltimore April the 17h. 1781,” Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981) 37.
  14. Washington to Elias Dayton, 16 February 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 233.
  15. Timothy Pickering to Washington, 18 February 1781, George Washington Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm (Washington: Library of Congress, 1961), series 4, reel 75.
  16. Washington to Lafayette, 20 February 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 253–255.
  17. *Ibid.*
  18. Lafayette to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, 19 February 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, III (1980), 330–333. Benjamin Gilbert to his father, 15 March 1781, from Annapolis, Maryland, John Shy, ed., *Winding Down – The Revolutionary War Letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert of Massachusetts, 1780–1783* (Ann Arbor, Mi.: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 39–40. Ebenezer Wild, “Journal of Ebenezer Wild”, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2nd series, vol. VI (Boston, Ma., 1891), 131. Henry P. Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), 32–33. Washington to Lafayette, 21 April 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 421. For French naval movements see, Gardiner, *Navies and the American Revolution, 1775–1783*, 114.
  19. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, from Baltimore, 17 April 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 37–38.
  20. Washington to John Pierce, 6 May 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 22 (1937), 45.
  21. Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 33–35 (see also 35, pagenote 1). Lafayette told Major General Greene in mid–April, “I will not only Mention that General Phillip’s Battery at Minden Having killed My father [a colonel in the French Grenadiers], I would Have No objection to Contract the Latitude of His plans.” The Marquis never satisfied this wish, Maj. Gen. William Philips having died of typhoid fever on 13 May 1781 at Petersburg, Virginia. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, “Baltimore April the 17h. 1781,” Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 39–40.
  22. Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 37. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 1153.

23. Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 45–48, 51–59. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 1154–55. William Feltman, "Diary of the Pennsylvania Line. May 26, 1781 – April 25, 1782," John Blair Linn and William H. Egle, *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution, Battalions and Line 1775–1783*, two volumes; II (Harrisburg, Pa., 1880), 679; the foregoing "Diary" includes the journals of both Captain Joseph McClellan and Lieutenant William Feltman.

24. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, 27 June 1781, The Papers of the Continental Congress 1774–1789, National Archives Microfilm Publications M247, (Washington, DC,: Government Printing Office, 1958), reel 176, 166–167. For Colonel Simcoe's account of the 26 June 1781 action, see John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers* (originally published as *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers from the End of the Year 1777, to the Conclusion of the Late American War* (Exeter: Printed for the Author, 1784; reprinted as *Simcoe's Military Journal*, New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1844; reprinted, New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1968), 225–235 (World Wide Web),

<http://home.golden.net/~marg/bansite/src/simcoesjournal2.html> Charles E. Hatch, Jr., "The 'Affair Near James Island' (or, 'The Battle of Green Spring') July 6, 1781," *Virginia Historical Magazine*, vol. 53 (July 1945), 176–177.

25. Maj. William Macpherson's background as a Continental Army officer is extraordinary, and, as commander of a portion of Lafayette's light infantry, merits some discussion. His older brother John was aide-de-camp to Maj. Gen. Richard Montgomery, and died with that general during the 31 December 1775 attempt to capture Quebec. William at the time was a lieutenant in the British 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, having served in that position since July 1773. When the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment was transferred from Florida to New York in late 1778 William was permitted to resign (but not sell) his commission, and not allowed to leave the city. He made his way to American lines late in December, providing an intelligence report on British forces in New York to the commander-in-chief. Desiring to join the Continental Army, he realized a commission in the line would have presented many difficulties, and asked instead for a position with the Mustermaster General. In an extraordinary move, on 16 September 1779 Congress awarded him a brevet major's commission, as much for his brother's services as for his own abilities. At first ordered south to serve under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, on 31 January 1780 he was appointed aide-de-camp to Pennsylvania Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair. In August Major Macpherson was assigned as second in command of Col. Walter Stewart's battalion in the Lafayette's newly forming Light Infantry Division. Almost immediately, and quite understandably, his fellow officers protested the appointment, but the brevet major continued with the division until it was disbanded at the end of the year's campaign. Macpherson marched to Virginia in 1781 as a volunteer with Lafayette, first serving as an aide, then being awarded command of a mixed force of cavalry and light infantry, seeing action at Spencer's Ordinary on 26 June, and again at Green Spring on 6 July. Sent north with important dispatches on August 1<sup>st</sup>, he missed the siege and capitulation at Yorktown. William Macpherson's brevet rank was made permanent in March 1782.

John Dwight Kilbourne, *Virtutis Praemium: The Men Who Founded the State Society of the Cincinnati of Pennsylvania*, two volumes (Rockport, Me.: Picton Press, 1998), vol. I,

615–622; vol. II, 1286–1288. William McDowell, "Journal of Lieut. William McDowell of the First Penn'a. Regiment, in the Southern Campaign. 1781–1782", William H. Egle, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, second series, vol. XV (Harrisburg: E.K. Meyers, State Printer, 1890), 300. Breakdown of American casualties as follows:

Return of the killed, wounded, and missing of the Light Corps under Col. Butler in the action of the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1781

Cavalry under Majr Macpherson

of the 1 <sup>st</sup> . Regt. of Dragoons	1 Capn. wounded 5 privates killed 1 Do. taken (since returned)
--	--

of Armands horse	2 Lieut. killed 1 private Do. 1 sergt. prisoner
------------------	---

[light] Infantry and Rifle-men  
under Majr. Mcpherson

Capn. Longs Co. Rifle men	1 sergt. killed 1 private wounded 5 Do. missing
---------------------------	---

Horses lost — 11

Loss of Major Willis's corps of Rifle-men

3 privates wounded 2 Do. Missing
-------------------------------------

Do. of Major Calls Do. Do.

1 Capn wounded 6 privates Do 1 Lieut. Missing 7 privates Do.
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Total Wounded	2 Caps. 2 lieuts. 10 privates
Killed	2 Lieuts. 1 sergt. 6 Do.
Missing	1 Lieut. 12 privates
Prisoners	1 sergt. 1 private (return'd since)

Richd. Butler Col. Commanding Advanced light corps

Richard Butler, "Return of the killed, wounded, and missing of the Light Corps under Col. Butler in the action of the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1781," PCC, reel 176, p. 169; Earl Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, "... their army has generally kept about twenty miles from us, without any material attempt by detachment, except in an attack on Lieutenant colonel Simcoe, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, as he was returning with his corps, and the yagers from the destruction of some boats and stores on the Chickahomany. The enemy, though much superior in numbers, were repulsed with considerable loss, three officers and twenty-eight privates were made prisoners: the rangers had three officers and thirty privates killed and wounded." "Extract – From Earl Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, K.B. dated Williamsburgh, June 30, 1781," (World Wide Web),

[http://home.golden.net/~marg/bansite/campaigns/campaigns5n.html#note\\_w\\_2](http://home.golden.net/~marg/bansite/campaigns/campaigns5n.html#note_w_2)

26. Feltman, "Diary of the Pennsylvania Line," Linn and Egle, *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution*, II (1880), 681. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, 27 June, 1781, Papers of the Continental Congress (National Archives microfilm), reel 176, pp. 166–167.
27. Gilbert to his father, from Newcastle, Virginia, on the Pamunkey River, near the head of the York River, 3 July 1781, Shy, *Winding Down: Revolutionary War Letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert*, 45.
28. Francis Barber to his wife, Mary Ogden Barber, 3 July 1781, Roland M. Baumann, ed., *Miscellaneous Manuscripts of the Revolutionary War Era, 1771–1791*, in the Pennsylvania State Archives, Manuscript Group 275 (microfilm edition, 1 reel) (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1978), frame 298.
29. "Journal of Ebenezer Wild", *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 143.
30. *Ibid.*, 143.
31. "McPherson's Legion of 80 men ...," William Galvan to Richard Peters, "Near Norrell's Mill, July 8, 1781" in *Gazette of the American Friends of Lafayette*, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1942), 3. Hatch, "The 'Affair Near James Island' (or, 'The Battle of Green Spring') July 6, 1781," 178–179 (British strength approximately 4,000); 187, "At this point Wayne faced the major part of the British army with about 800 men ... and three field pieces ..." William McDowell, "Journal of Lieut. William McDowell of the First Penn'a. Regiment, in the Southern Campaign. 1781–1782," Linn and Egle, *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution, Battalions and Line 1775–1783*, II (1880), 297.
32. Aaron Ogden, *Autobiography of Col. Aaron Ogden, of Elizabethtown* (Paterson, N.J.: Press Printing & Publishing Co., 1893), 26–27.
33. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, 8 July 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 236–238. See also photo of original, Papers of the Continental Congress (National Archives microfilm), reel 176, 171–172.
34. "Journal of Ebenezer Wild", *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 143–144.
35. Lt. Col. Gimat's Light Infantry Battalion, (LaFayette's and Muhlenberg's Light Infantry Brigade), 18 May 1781–30 Oct 1781, New Windsor, Albemarle, Williamsburg, Yorktown, John Hart Orderly Book, 1781, vol. 6R, American Revolution Collection, microfilm 79956, reel 3, frame 948–949; reel 4 frames 4–10, Series 6, Journals and Order Books, 1775–1782, US/CTH/AMREV/1776/VI–IX, at the Connecticut Historical Society.
36. William Barber ("Major and D.A.Genl."), "Return of the killed wounded and missing of the detachment commanded by General Wayne in a skirmish with the British army near the Greene springs, in Virginia, July 6th 1781," Papers of the Continental Congress (National Archives microfilm), reel 176, p. 173.
37. Lafayette to Washington, 20 July 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 255.
38. Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 68–70. Burke Davis, *The Campaign That Won America – The Story of Yorktown* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 124–127. Gilbert to Park Holland, August 1781, Shy, *Winding Down Revolutionary War Letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert*, 47.

39. Boatner, 478, 988–989.

“Head Qrs Williamsburgh Sept 24<sup>th</sup> 1781

The Continental Troops composing the Army in Virginia are to be Brigaded as follows

Col Vose Regt }  
LCol Barbers } Light Infantry to form a  
LCol Gimat } Brigade under BG Muhlenburgh

Col Scammell Regt }  
LCol. Hamiltons Battn } BGenl Hazen  
Hazens Regimt }

LCol Gaskins [Virginia] Regt } BGenl Wayne  
the two Pensylvania [Battalions] }

two Jersey Regts } Col Dayton  
Rhode Island }

3<sup>d</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Maryland Regts — BGenl Gist  
1 & 2<sup>d</sup> New York Regt — BGenl Clinton”

(Frame 956), Lt. Col. Gimat's Light Infantry Battalion, (LaFayette's and Muhlenberg's Light Infantry Brigade), 18 May 1781–30 Oct 1781, New Windsor, Albemarle, Williamsburg, Yorktown, John Hart Orderly Book, 1781, vol. 6R, American Revolution Collection, microfilm 79956, reel 3, frames 939–end; reel 4 frames 4–10, Series 6, Journals and Order Books, 1775–1782, US/CTH/AMREV/1776/VI–IX, at the Connecticut Historical Society. See also, General orders, 24 September 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 23 (1937), 134–135.

40. “Return of the Continental and Virginia State Troops under the command of His Excellency General Washington, Williamsburgh Septemr. 26 1781,” Revolutionary War Rolls, National Archives Microfilm Publication M246, Record Group 93, reel 137, item 209.

41. General orders, 17 May 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 22 (1937), 98.

42. General orders, 31 July 1781, *ibid.*, 438–439.

43. General orders, 19 August 1781, *ibid.*, 23 (1937), 19. For the movements of Scammell's Light Battalion, see the diary of Lieutenant Reuben Sanderson, 5<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, on duty with Scammell's Light Infantry, Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 170–173.

44. Washington to William Heath, 1 October 1781, George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 75.

45. Diary of Lt. Reuben Sanderson, Scammell's Light Battalion, Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 171. Lafayette wrote Washington after Scammell's capture:

Camp Before York September 30h 1781

My dear General ... Clel. Scamel is taken. ... I am Very Sorry we loose a Valuable officer, But, tho' Clel. Scamel's Being officer of the day Has Been a Reason for His Going in front, I think it would Be well to prevent the officers under the Rank of generals or field officers Reconnoitring for the Safety of their Commands from advancing So Near the Ennemy's lines.

There is a great disproportion Between Huntington's and Hamilton's Battallions. Now that Scamel is taken we Might Have them Made Equal, and put the eldest of the two lieutenant Colonels upon the Right of the Brigade.

Lafayette to Washington, 30 September, 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 409.

46. General orders, 8 October 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 23 (1937), 199–200.

47. General orders, 6 October, 8 October, 10 October 1781, *ibid.*, 177–185, 199–200, 204–205. General Washington described the troops' duties in the trenches and in making siege materials: "Head Quarters before York, Monday, October 8, 1781. ... As the Service of the Trenches unites the double object of defending a post and prosecuting the Works of the Siege, the troops that mount are all in rotation to be employed on Fatigue. The Major General commanding will take care that such dispositions are made that the Labour may be equally shared by the whole: that the fresh succession of fatigue men may enable the Soldier to work with the greater vigour and alacrity, and the several parties may be contiguous to their respective alarm posts, where the men called out for work are previously to lodge their arms in order, that in case of a Sally they may resume their stations in the Line with the greatest promptness and regularity.

The Gabions and other materials for the Siege are in future to be provided by Corps.

The Adjutant General will apportion the number to be required of each corps, which number is to be kept constantly complete. A regimental officer is always to superintend and see that the Dimensions of the several materials required are conformable to the regulation of the 6th instant." Army orders for 6 October listed 54 directives under the heading "Regulations for the Service of the Siege," including:

34 The Gabions are to be three feet high including the end of the Pecquetts which are to enter the ground, they are to have two feet and a half diameter and be formed of Nine Picquetts, each of two and a half inches circumference interlaced with branchery, striped of leaves to be equally closed at top and bottom, in order that they may not be larger at one end than the other.

35 Hurdles shall be six feet long and three feet wide and shall be made of Nine Picketts, each of two inches and a half to three inches circumference, equally distant from each other and interwoven with stronger Branchery than that employed for the Gabions.

36 The Fascines are to be sixfeet long and six inches through, to be made of branchery, the twigs of which are to be crossed, to be bound with Withs at each end and in the middle, to each fascine, three pickerrs of three feet long and two or three inches diameter.

37 The Brigades shall always have at the head of their Camp, the stated Number of fascines which they will replace in proportion as they are used.

Orders for October 10<sup>th</sup> directed "The Saucissons are to be from nine to eighteen feet long the Gabions two and a Half feet wide and three feet high; and the Fascines six feet long," and stipulated the number to be made by each battalion:

Barber's 29 saucissons, 290 pickets for staking saucissons, 29 gabions, 99 fascines

Gimat's 25 saucissons, 250 pickets for staking saucissons, 25 gabions, 83 fascines

Vose's 25 saucissons, 250 pickets for staking saucissons, 25 gabions, 83 fascines

Huntington's 19 saucissons, 190 pickets for staking saucissons, 19 gabions, 64 fascines

Lauren's 19 saucissons, 190 pickets for staking saucissons, 19 gabions, 64 fascines

Hamilton's 21 saucissons, 210 pickets for staking saucissons, 21 gabions, 70 fascines

Hazen's 19 saucissons, 190 pickets for staking saucissons, 19 gabions, 64 fascines

48. "Journal of Ebenezer Wild", *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 154.

49. John Nobel Cumming to [John?] Howell, 12 October 1781, Howell Papers, Special Collections, Savitz Library, Rowan College, Glassboro, N.J.

50. *Ibid.*, 154.

51. Washington to President of Congress, 16 October 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 23 (1937), 227–229.

52. Lieutenant Colonel Gimat was originally assigned that command the assault on Redoubt No. 10, but Hamilton, serving as officer of the day, voiced his objections to Lafayette, who informed him the choice had already been made. Hamilton sent a written remonstrance to General Washington, who reversed the decision, giving Hamilton the command. Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, 144–145. Alexander Hamilton to Lafayette, 15 October 1781 (with Return on Casualties), George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 81. The Marquis de Lafayette submitted this report to the commander-in-chief:

Camp before York

16<sup>th</sup> Octr. 1781

My Dear General Your Excellency having personally seen our dispositions, I shall only give an account of what passed in the execution.

Colonel Gimat's battalion had the van, and were followed by that of Colonel Hamilton who commanded the whole advanced corps, at the same time a party of eighty men under Col. Laurens turned the redoubt. I beg leave to refer your Excellency to the report I have received from Col. Hamilton whose well known talents and gallantry were on this occasion most conspicuous and serviceable. Our obligations to him, to Col. Gimat to Col. Laurens and to each and all the officers and men are above expression. Not one gun was fired, and the ardor of the troops did not give time for the sappers to damage the abattis, and, owing to the conduct of the commanders and bravery of the men the redoubt was stormed with an uncommon rapidity.

Colonel Barbers battalion which was the first in the supporting column being detached to the aid of the advance arrived at the moment they were getting over the works, and executed their orders with the utmost alacrity and good order. The Colonel was slightly wounded. The rest of the column under Gen Muhlenberg and Hazen advanced with admirable firmness and discipline. Col Vose's battalion displayed to the left, a part of the division successively dressing by him, whilst a kind of second line were forming columns in the rear. It added greatly to the character of the troops, that under the fire of the enemy, they displayed and took their ranks with perfect silence and order.

Give me leave particularly to mention Major Barber, division inspector, who distinguished himself, and received a wound by a cannon ball.

In making the arrangements for the support of the works we had reduced, I was happy to find Gen: Wayne and the Pennsylvanians so situated as to have given us in case of need the most effective support.

Lafayette to Washington, 16 October 1781, *ibid.*, series 4, reel 81.

53. Catherine R. Williams, *Biography of Revolutionary Heroes; Containing the Life of Brigadier Gen. William Barton, and Also, of Captain Stephen Olney* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1839), 275–278.

54. John Strange deposition (S39858), reel 779, *Index of Revolutionary War Pension Applications in the National Archives* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), copies of depositions and related materials in National Archives Microfilm Publication M804 (2,670 reels), courtesy of Mike Barbieri:

“State of Rhode Island & Providence Plantation County of providence &c. ... Be it Remembered that on this 21st day of September A.D. 1824 personally appeared in open court ... John Strange aged 64 years now resident in North Providence in said county being duly sworn maketh the following declaration ... that in the year 1777 in the month of April he enlisted as a drummer in Capt. Stephen Olney's company & in the regiment commanded by first by Col. Angell & afterward by Col Jeremiah Olney of the army of the United States & of the Rhode Island line: that he enlisted for & served during the war & was honorably discharged. ... Said John declares ... that at the Siege of York Town just before the surrender of Lord Cornwallis & while the light



infantry were under the command of General La Fayette we stormed the enemies redoubt on the night of the 14th. of October 1781. – that he was one of the two first privates that mounted the breach & made good his stand on the breast work & while standing on the breast work it was his good fortune to preserve the life of his Captain by killing the man who had his bayonet charged at his breast & to escape himself unhurt.

The Storm lasted about an hour before the fort surrendered. This event was soon followed by the surrender of the whole British Army ...”

Captain Olney’s supporting deposition:

“I Stephen Olney of North Providence in the State of Rhode Island formerly a Captain in the Rhode Island Regiment ... do hereby testify & say that John Strange served as a soldier & drummer from about the year 1777 to the fore part of the year A.D 1782 that he belonged to the Light Infantry company of which I was commander at the Siege & capture of Lord Cornwallis at York Town Virginia & performed the part of a courageous & good Soldier in the storm of the enemies redoubt the 14th of October 1781, being one of the two first private soldiers that mounted the breach & made good his stand on the enemies breast work.

Give under my hand at said North Providence this 10th day of December 1824

Stephen Olney”

55. Thomas Durie, deputy commissary of prisoners, “Return of Officers and Privates Prisoners of War taken the 14 October 1781,” and “Return of Killed & wounded in the advanced corps commanded by Lieut. Colonel Hamilton in an Attack on the Enemies left Redoubt on the Evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> Octr. 1781,” 15 October 1781, George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 81. British casualties were apportioned as follows:

“Return of Officers and Privates Prisoners of War taken the 14 October 1781.”

Artillery: 2 rank and file

33<sup>rd</sup> Regiment: 1 lieutenant, 8 rank and file

43<sup>rd</sup> Regiment: 1 captain, 1 corporal, 11 rank and file

71<sup>st</sup> Regiment: 1 major, 9 rank and file

80<sup>th</sup> Regiment: 1 captain, 9 rank and file

Prince Hereditary: 1 lieutenant, 1 sergeant, 16 rank and file

Regiment De Bose : 1 ensign, 11 rank and file

Total: 1 major, 2 captains, 2 lieutenants, 1 ensign, 1 sergeant, 1 corporal, 65 rank and file

Officers’ Names:

71<sup>st</sup> Regiment: Major James Campbell

43<sup>rd</sup> Regiment: Captain Duncan Cameron

80<sup>th</sup> Regiment: Captain Patrick Tyler

33<sup>rd</sup> Regiment: Lieutenant Thomas Innes

Prince Hereditary: Lieutenant William [Andrisohn?]

Regiment De Bose: Ensign Nicholas Runck

On 2 October Thomas Durie, deputy commissary of prisoners, submitted another list, that one a “Return of Prisoners of War taken by the Army under the command of Major General Marquess Delayfayette.” All were soldiers captured prior to the Yorktown siege. Twenty-four prisoners, as follows:

**British Legion**, Robert Seaton, lieutenant, “Parol’d to York”

**82<sup>nd</sup> Regiment**, Robert Hamilton, lieutenant, “Parol’d to York”

**“Loyalist,”** Lt. Col. John Conolly, “taken near Hampton Sepr [25?] 1781”

**23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment**, “Confined at Williamsburgh”

James Anderson, private

James Kent, private

George Boyle, private

William Crampton, private

**43<sup>rd</sup> Regiment**, “Confined at Williamsburgh”

John Slade, private

**80<sup>th</sup> Regiment**, “Confined at Williamsburgh”

Alexander Wood, private

Robert Stewart, private

Adam Dixon, private

**82<sup>nd</sup> Regiment**, “Confined at Richmond”

Robert Hamilton, sergeant

James McComack, private

John [Falmer?], private

William Rogers, private

Patrick Conly, private

Duncan Cameron, private

James Gray, private

William Marshall, private

Samuel Johnston, private

Jams Oldham, private

Peter Harwood, private

George [Ostler?], private

Stephen Jackson, private

Thomas Durie, deputy commissary of prisoners, “Return of Prisoners of War taken by the Army under the command of Major General Marquess Delayfayette ... Camp near Yorktown October 2d 1781,” *ibid.*, series 4, reel 81.

56. “Officers Wounded at the Storming the Redoubts,” Edward Hand, “Return of the Killed and Wounded of the American Army from 28<sup>th</sup>. of September 1781 the day of the Investiture of York to the Storm of the Enemy’s Redoubts on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October following inclusive,” *ibid.*, series 4, reel 81.

57. “Journal of Ebenezer Wild”, *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 154.

58. *Ibid.*, 154.

59. *Ibid.*, 155.

60. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, 17 April 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 37–38. Carl Van Doren, *Mutiny in January* (New York: The Viking Press, 1943), 215–224. “Journal of Ebenezer Wild”, *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 131. New Jersey Major John Noble Cumming left this account of the New Jersey line mutiny:

“Jersey Camp, March 5th [1781]

Dr. Sr. I now put pen to paper to give you a general account of the Revolt of our Line – The Pennsylvanians previous to their Revolt had kept up a Correspondence with our Line I mean a few Individuals who at the Time of their Revolt were not fully ripe as they had neither Money nor Rum for the want of which the Devil had not sufficient Power – Neither do I believe he would [have] prevailed at last had not such [a] vile proposal been made and agreed to with the Pennsylvanians – To give them their Oath and allow one Soldier to appear as evidence for another [soldier’s time of enlistment] – The Consequence of which is that the whole line (almost) are perjured and disbanded. Our Line about Dusk on the 20th of Jany., (I mean the Leaders which I believe at the greatest Computation did not exceed thirty) fired a few Musquetts and beat to Arms when those leaders in one general Shout cried out – Turn out God Dam you turn out and fight for your Rights – Let us go to Congress who have got Money and Rum enough but wont giv

it to us (observe upon this Very Day they received five Specie Dollars and their being a Sutler in Camp they spent it freely. I with several Officers went among them and wherever we attempted to say anything to them by way of Argument they Huezza'd and drowned our Voices – Force of Arms we were too weak to attempt and to a sett of Madmen it would have been presumptive foolishness – we retired to our Hutt, and they went off for Chatham w[h]ere [there] was a Detachment of the Brigade which they and we joined the next Day – And the Day after they found their Numbers decreasing very fast as a great number were forced to join them – They grew fearful and were fond of coming to Terms which they wished to be the same of the Pennsylvanians – This we absolutely refused – They wanted us to confer with their Board of Sergeants which we also refused. And informed them that provided they returned to their Hutts and put themselves under the Orders of their Officers – Their Complaints should be heard and if well founded redressed – The Board of Sergeants being weary of their usurped Power and finding their Authority of no weight agreed to the Proposal – Many of the Men disagreed – They however marched back to their Hutts and when they arrived there were very insulting to many officers / on the Day before their Reduction by Gen. Howe a Sergt. Refused my orders upon which I knocked him down beat him soundly and putt him under Guard – Fifty Men turned out under Arms to oppose my Orders but my Threat and the Advice of some good Men among them returned them to their Hutts. The next Morning I heard [illegible word] Gen, Howes Detachment arrived and surrounded our Camp being Conducted by Coll. Barber, Halsey and your Humble Servt., when we brought the Insurgeants to proper Terms and put only two Villains to death.

Adieu pro Tem.

Your obdt. Servt'

J.N. Cumming"

John Noble Cumming (major) to John Ladd Howell, 5 March 1781, Howell Papers, Special Collections, Savitz Library, Rowan College, Glassboro, N.J.

61. Lt. Col. Francis Barber to Col. Elias Jonathan Dayton, 28 February 1781, Larry R. Gerlach, ed., *New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763–1783: A Documentary History* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), 351.

62. Lafayette to Washington, "Susquehana Ferry April the 14h. 1781," Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 31.

63. Washington to William Heath, 21 March 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 342–344.

64. Lafayette to Washington, 14 April 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 30–31.

65. Ibid., 30–32. General Washington took some measures to augment Lafayette's light troops: "General orders Head Quarters, New Windsor, Friday, May 11, 1781 ... The Companies of Light Infantry with Major General the Marquis de la Fayette are to be completed from their respective regiments so far as the deficiencies are known. The men formerly belonging to these companies (who were absent when they marched) or others of a similar description to be sent on this service; these men to be marched under the direction of the officers who are going to join the Light Infantry."

66. Uniform clothing regulations, 1779, General orders, 2 October 1779, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 16 (1937), 387–388. Moses Hazen to Washington, 8 January 1781, George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 73.

67. Washington to John Moylan, 19 February 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 246.

68. Lafayette to Washington, 23 February 1781, George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 75.

69. "Journal of Ebenezer Wild", *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 131.
70. Lafayette to Washington, 14 April 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 31.
71. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, 17 April 1781, *ibid.*, 37–39.
72. Washington to Lafayette, 22 April 1781, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 21 (1937), 493–494.
73. Lafayette to Washington, "Malvan Hill July 20h. 1781," and Lafayette to Anthony Wayne, 25 August 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 256 (also note 8 same page), 359–361, 360 note 1. Wild's Journal, 147.
74. Lafayette, general orders, 26 April 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 64.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Don Troiani, Earl J. Coates, and James L. Kochan, *Don Troiani's Soldiers in America, 1754–1865* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1998), 57.
77. Anthony Wayne to Joseph Reed, president of the Pennsylvania Assembly, dated "Totowa, 25<sup>th</sup> Octr. 1780," *Pennsylvania Archives*, vol. VIII (Philadelphia: Joseph Severens & Co., 1853), 593.
78. Almon W. Lauber, ed., *Orderly Books of The Fourth New York Regiment, 1778–1780; the Second New York Regiment, 1780–1783, by Samuel Tallmadge and Others with Diaries of Samuel Tallmadge, 1780–1782, and John Barr, 1779–1782* (Albany, The Univ. of the State of New York, 1932), 482, 515.
79. "Journal of Ebenezer Wild", *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 137, 141.
80. Wayne to Reed, dated "Camp at Totowa 17<sup>th</sup> Octr. 1780," *Pennsylvania Archives*, VIII, 587–588.
81. Josiah Atkins, *The Diary of Josiah Atkins*, Steven E. Kagle, ed. (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1975), 23, 28. Ebenezer Denny, "Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. VII (1860), 239.
82. Washington to the Board of War, 8 May 1781, George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 75. Ezekiel Cornell (1733--1800), was a delegate to the Continental Congress from Rhode Island 1780--83 and member of the Board of War.
83. Eli Seymour (R9403), *Revolutionary War Pension Applications in the National Archives*. Account and Orderly Book, Captain Thaddeus Weed's Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Connecticut Regiment (detached to Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton's Light Infantry Battalion), August to November 1781, vol. 158, target 9, Numbered Record Books Concerning Military Operations and Service, Pay and Settlement Accounts, and Supplies in the War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records (National Archives Microfilm Publication M853, reel 17), Record Group 93, National Archives, Washington.
84. Gilbert to Park Holland, August 1781, Shy, *Winding Down Revolutionary War Letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert*, 46–47. Anthony Wayne to Lafayette, 9 August 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 307–309.
85. Hunting shirts/frocks were first adopted to clothe Continental troops on a widespread basis in 1776, Washington's army orders for 24 July stating,  
The General being sensible of the difficulty, and expence of providing Cloaths, of almost every kind, for the Troops, feels an unwillingness to recommend, much more to order, any kind of Uniform, but as it is absolutely necessary that men should have Cloaths and appear decent and tight, he earnestly encourages the use of Hunting Shirts, with long breeches, made of the same Cloth, Gaiter fashion about the Legs [i.e., overalls], to all those yet unprovided. No Dress can be

made cheaper, nor more convenient, as the Wearer may be cool in warm weather, and warm in cool weather by putting on under Cloaths which will not change the outward dress, Winter or Summer – Besides which it is a dress justly supposed to carry no small terror to the enemy, who think every such person a complete Marksman.

By 1777 hunting shirts were being recommended not only as inexpensive uniform clothing, but the best dress, in conjunction with linen overalls, for warm weather. Referring to warm weather campaigning, on 10 June of that year General Washington noted that, "The [hunting] Frocks and overalls at this Season, are far preferable to Uniforms ..." The commander-in-chief reiterated the preference in several other June 1777 letters. To James Mease on the 13<sup>th</sup> he wrote, "The Hunting Shirts and overalls will ... be more comfortable at this Season than Uniform, and I have given Genl. Putnam particular orders to let none draw them that had before been furnished with Uniform." And on 23 June to Gen. William Heath, "I have ordered all the Clothing now coming on to stop at Peek's Kill, and the Clothier General has sent up a Deputy to distribute it to those who want. As it consists of Frocks, Waistcoats, and Overalls, it will be more proper for the Season than Cloth Uniform, which must be provided against Winter."

This preference to hunting shirts during the warm months was emphasized in 1778 and again in 1779. Ensign Jeremiah Greenman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Rhode Island Regiment, noted their clothing issue just prior to the warm-weather Monmouth Campaign: S[unday] 31 [May 1778 Continuing at Valley Forge] / rain & cold. order'd to hold our Selves in readiness for to march / all ye Rijtm [i.e., 2nd Rhode Island Regiment] draw'd frocks hats & overalls, we hear that the enemy is moving out of Philadelphia. "In December 1778, after his regiment had received their portion of a shipment of imported French regimental coats, waistcoats, and breeches, Colonel Moses Hazen emphasized the practicalities of supplying hunting shirts for summer wear: "as I wish to Take every Measure and all Possible care in preserving the uniform Cloathing, I would beg to propose a linen Coat, or hunting shirt, and some overalls for the Spring – That the uniform Cloathing may be Pack'd up and Laid by During the hot weather in Summer ..." Continental army general orders for mirrored Hazen's mid-war reasoning:

Head Quarters, Tuesday, August 27, 1782. ... Before the troops remove to their new position it will be proper for the mens baggage and effects to be thoroughly inspected and the articles pointed out which they are to carry with them; they may take all their regimentals into the field; but when they are compleated with hunting shirts it is expected the uniform coats will not be worn so long as the warm season continues, except on particular occasions, such as on guards formed on the grand parade, Inspections, reviews &c.

A month earlier the commander-in-chief reiterated the correlation of hunting shirts with warm weather apparel, writing to General Heath, Head Quarters, Newburgh, July 31, 1782. ... I approve of the Order for furnishing hunting shirts to the Light Infantry Companies on the Lines, the remaining Companies can draw as soon as they please: the transportation of the remainder of the Summer cloathing was urged in the strongest possible manner when I was in Philadelphia, but that almost insuperable bar in all our affairs has hitherto prevented it, yet I cannot but hope the frocks will now be on speedily.

General Orders, 24 July 1776, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 5 (1932), 336.

Washington to Charles Young, 10 June 1777; Washington to James Mease, 13 June 1777; Washington to William Heath, 23 June 1777, *ibid.*, 8 (1933), 223, 237, 288–289.

vol. 8 (1933), 288–289. Robert C. Bray and Paul E. Bushnell, eds., *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution: An Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman*, (DeKalb, IL, 1978), 119. Moses Hazen to Washington, 24

December 1778, George Washington Papers (Library of Congress microfilm), series 4, reel 55. Washington to William Heath, 31 July 1782; General orders, 27 August 1782, Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, 24 (1938), 31, 69–70.

86. "Journal of Ebenezer Wild", *Proceedings Mass. Hist. Society*, 131. Joseph McClellan, "Journal of Capt. Joseph McClellan," Linn and Egle, *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution, Battalions and Line 1775–1783*, II, 573. Clinton (Sir Henry), Information of Deserters and Others, Not Included in Private Intelligence, From October, 1780 to March 26, 1781 (Under the date 15 August 1780), New York Public Library, Emmett Collection (courtesy of Todd W. Braisted). Donald W. Holst, "Notes on the Standards of the Continental Light Infantry," *Military Collector & Historian*, vol. XLII, no. 4 (Winter 1990), 138–140. See also, Edward W. Richardson, *Standards and Colors of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1982), 54–55. Coat buttons with the motto "*Manus Haec inimica tyrannis*" have been attributed to light infantry units, but that connection has been disproved. Philip Katcher, *Uniforms of the Continental Army* (York, PA: George Shumway Publisher, 1981), 47, plate 26. Also button attribution and rebuttal, Don Troiani, 6 September 2004 phone conversation with author.

87. Lafayette to Nathanael Greene, 17 April 1781, Idzerda, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution*, IV (1981), 38.

88. Lafayette to Washington, 20 July 1781, *ibid.*, 256.

89. "Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny," 244.

90. The New Jersey light troops comprised five companies. Total strength: 4 captains, 5 lieutenants, 1 ensign, 275 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file (149 from the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Regiment; 126 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey).

(No. 3671), "Return of Capt. Aron Ogdens compy of light Infantry being a detachment from the first New Jersey regiment commanded by Lieut Col Barber ... Camp Hed of Elk April 11<sup>th</sup> 1781," Capt. Aaron Ogden, Lieut. John Blair, Lieut. Wessel Stout, 58 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file.

(Taken from all eight companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Regiment.);

(No. 3672), "Return of Capt. Jonathan Forman's Company of light Infantry being a Detachment from the first New Jersey Regiment ... Head of Elk April ye 11<sup>th</sup> 1781." Capt. Jonathan Forman, Lieut. John Howell, Lieut. John Reucastle 57 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file.

(Taken from all eight companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Regiment.);

(No. 3673), "Return of the men[s] names in Cap. Dharts Compy of light Infantry ... April 11<sup>th</sup>. 81," Capt. Cyrus D'Hart, Lieut. James Paul, Ensign Peter Faulkner 58 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file.

(Taken from seven companies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey Regiment.);

(No. 3674), "Return of the Men[s] Names of Capt Holmes Compy of Light Infantry from the second Jersey Regimt taking the Different Companies they belong to," 11 or 12 April 1781, Capt. Jonathan Holmes, 49 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file.

(One man from the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Regiment, the balance taken from five companies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey.);

(No. 3675), "A Return of the light Infantry company commanded by Capt. Piatt ... April 12<sup>th</sup> 1781," Capt. William Piatt, 53 non-commissioned officers, and rank and file. (33 men from the 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Regiment, and 20 men from the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey.)

Revolutionary War Manuscripts (Numbered), Nos. 1–10811, microfilm edition, reel 159 (Box No. 5807861909), items 3671–3675, New Jersey Bureau of Archives and History.