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THE PENNSYLVANIA FLYING  
CAMP, JULY – NOVEMBER  
1776

THE FLYING CAMP originated as an emergency device to make available reliable troops for the American Army in mid-1776. Nevertheless, its existence has been called “inglorious” by a noted authority, and indeed, how could a military force have had a glorious existence when it was never committed to action as a unit or under its own very promising commander?<sup>1</sup> The Flying Camp was employed in a remarkably piecemeal fashion. Seldom were more than two of its battalions committed together. Often only fractions of battalions—a company or two—participated in a given battle. Some battalions were decimated before others were fully formed. Far from the highly mobile reserve intended by the literal translation of the French *camp volant*, the Flying Camp was desperately called upon to plug gaps in badly leaking American lines, in whatever size units were immediately available, often within only hours of a battle.<sup>2</sup> In one case days after a battle, Washington was still struggling to establish—from the British—which Flying Camp units had been lost.<sup>3</sup>

Nor is “inglorious” an appropriate descriptive term. Pennsylvania battalions of the Flying Camp participated in most of the major battles of the New York campaign in the fall of 1776, often commendably, only once with a suggestion of discredit—largely unsustained—against part of one of them. Nevertheless, so lost to memory is the Flying Camp that the editor of the *Pennsylvania Archives* lamented that “although Pennsylvania furnished—four

1. Mark M. Boatner III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York, 1966), p. 373.

2. See Boatner, p. 372 for the implications of the term.

3. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, 1932), 6:390.

thousand five hundred troops for the so-called "Flying Camp," it has been impossible . . . to find the names of more than five hundred. . . ."<sup>4</sup> Leading sources on the Revolutionary War are deferred to, if they can identify the colonels commanding four of the Pennsylvania battalions.<sup>5</sup> To establish their first names has been viewed as a notable discovery.<sup>6</sup>

Much of the obscurity of the men and deeds of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp battalions is due to the circumstances surrounding its origin. In the spring of 1776 the focus of the Revolution shifted from Boston simultaneously to an attack on Canada and the defense of the Middle Colonies—especially the area around New York City. The continental Army was incapable, given its size, of coping with both tasks. Congress would not enlarge it; Washington was already unhappy with the short terms of enlistment, loose discipline, and reluctance of much of the militia to serve far from home. The resulting compromise was that the Flying Camp was to be culled from the militias of Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.<sup>7</sup>

General Hugh Mercer was appointed to command the Flying Camp and by 9 July was in New Jersey to receive and organize its component units as they reported. Washington sent his chief engineer to fortify its encampment at Perth Amboy,<sup>8</sup> and Congress appointed a surgeon general for the camp.<sup>9</sup> Mercer soon clarified his mission as being the defense of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, while assisting operations around New York.<sup>10</sup> All was ready, awaiting the arrival of the designated troops. Mercer's impatient wait

4. Thomas L. Montgomery, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 5th Series, 7:17 (Hereafter cited as *Archives*, 5th Series).

5. See for example Boatner, p. 371 quoting Douglas S. Freeman, *George Washington*, (New York, 1951), 4:248 n.

6. See for example Charles H. Lesser ed., *Sineus of Independence* (Chicago, 1976), p. 31, footnotes.

7. The compromise status of the Flying Camp continued to be reflected throughout its existence. Officially (in returns for example) and in the minds of many generals, including Washington, Greene, and Mercer, it was clearly distinguished from the militia. This had a practical foundation. The Flying Camp solved some, but not all, of the problems with the militia system. Relatively short enlistments continued, but its units would reliably go where ordered, and desertion was reduced. By contrast, in the minds of other officers of regular continental and state battalions to whom the distinction was not of practical consequence, the Flying Camp was mere militia.

8. Peter Force, *American Archives* (Washington, 1837-48); 5th Series, 1:140, 147 (Hereafter cited as Force, 5th Series).

9. Force, 5th Series, 1:371, 140.

10. *Ibid.*, 1:346.

was punctuated by communiques exhibiting a clear concern as to whether approaching units were intended for the Flying Camp, or merely militia sent to serve until the camp was established.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, in Pennsylvania, a committee of the Continental Congress and the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety had on 5 July agreed upon a joint resolution that the Pennsylvania militia, excepting that part from three western counties, be marched to New Jersey. The militia was to serve there until the Flying Camp was able to relieve it. The Committees of Inspection for the individual counties were simultaneously instructed to raise troops for the Flying Camp, and forward those raised to New Jersey.<sup>12</sup> The resulting arrival of troops for the Flying Camp in units of various sizes, and at various times, when combined with Washington's demand for reinforcements from the Flying Camp due to British attacks around New York, led to confusion regarding the composition and activities of Pennsylvania Flying Camp units.

Various counties employed diverse means for raising their contribution to the Flying Camp. As the summer wore on and policy was clarified, two major incentives were used above all others. Providing a positive consideration, Mercer interpreted the agreement about the term of militia service to mean that any militia battalion that provided its quota to the Flying Camp was released from service.<sup>13</sup> On the negative side, after one amnesty conditional upon returning within eight days, the Pennsylvania Convention passed strong legislation against desertion.<sup>14</sup>

The first unit to take advantage of the quota system and to arrive at the camp in Perth Amboy was Col. William Montgomery's Chester County Battalion. Part of this unit marched through Philadelphia on July 18th and 19th, and was with Mercer by the 24th.<sup>15</sup> By forming expeditiously and setting out promptly, the need to send, and then relieve the entire militia of the county was eliminated.

Alternatively, Bucks County sent its full militia to New Jersey. When Col. Joseph Hart's Battalion was formed from it, those who had not joined the Flying Camp were allowed to return home, as originally contemplated.<sup>16</sup>

11. Ibid., 1:140.

12. Ibid., 1:15, 1565-6.

13. Ibid., 1:1061-2.

14. Ibid., 1:978; 2:22.

15. William Duane, *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall* (New York, 1969), pp. 84-5. Force, 5th Series, 1:557, as corrected on 1:574.

16. Force, 5th Series, 2:256.



GENERAL HUGH MERCER. General Mercer held overall command of the Flying Camp drawn from the Middle Colonies. Although he rarely commanded its Pennsylvania units in battle, on the night of 15 October 1775, he led a force including a large detachment from Colonel McCallister's battalion under Major John Clark in an attack on Stanton Island. (*Library of Congress*)

Other counties faced more complicated situations. Berks County—after some initial confusion as to what was required—tried, like Chester, to raise its Flying Camp commitment directly in sufficient time to avoid involving the whole militia. Several companies were raised expressly for the Flying Camp and were ordered to proceed directly to New Jersey in late July commanded by the second in command of the Berks Flying Camp Battalion, Lt. Col. Nicholas Lutz. Several other companies, failing to reach minimum strength, were dissolved. Their members, however, remained committed for Flying Camp duty. Meanwhile, they returned to their militia unit, and the original ordering of all militia to New Jersey was applied to Berks until Col. Henry Haller's Berks Battalion was fully formed.<sup>17</sup> As a result, this was one of the several battalions which suffered heavily in early fighting before being fully organized.

Another complication in the raising of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp occurred in late July, when John Hancock, as President of

17. *Ibid.*, 1:254, 1299-1300.

Congress, requested the province to increase its quota by four battalions.<sup>18</sup> The request was accepted, and the increased quota apportioned among eight counties and the city of Philadelphia on 12 August.<sup>19</sup> An additional complication for staffing the battalions still lay in store. The next day the Pennsylvania Convention voted to send signed blank commissions to New Jersey to be filled in by the field officers and specially appointed commissioners of the Flying Camp.<sup>20</sup> In one case, one of the new battalions, Col. Jacob Clotz's 2nd Lancaster Battalion, was organized in New Jersey by promoting Clotz, then a captain in Col. James Cunningham's 1st Lancaster Battalion.<sup>21</sup>

Less than two weeks after the decision to create the new battalions, the officers commanding the advanced sections of two of the original battalions in New Jersey were captured in battle. Their units had not yet appeared on General Mercer's monthly returns.

In all events, by August all Pennsylvania battalions had been basically provided with officers, in some counties through election by the men, in others through appointment by the county committee of safety. In some of these latter, particularly on the company level, captains were appointed conditionally upon recruiting themselves a company.<sup>22</sup> Michael Swoope had resigned his seat on the Pennsylvania Council of Safety (the *de facto* ruling body of the province) to command a battalion—the highest civilian office holder to join the Pennsylvania Flying Camp.<sup>23</sup>

By 20 August six full strength Pennsylvania battalions had reported to Mercer, and were stationed at Fort Lee on the New Jersey bank of the Hudson, well north of the main camp at Perth Amboy. These were the Lancaster Battalion, temporarily commanded by Captain Jacob Clotz (later commander of the 2nd Lancaster) who was relieved of command within the next few days by the arrival of Major William Hays; Col. Joseph Hart's Bucks County Battalion, Lt. Col. William Baxter commanding; Col. Richard McCallister's 2nd York County Battalion; Col. William Montgomery's Chester County Battalion; Col. Michael Swoope's 1st York

18. Ibid., 2:7-8.

19. Ibid., 2:20.

20. Ibid., 2:20-1.

21. See footnote 44 below.

22. See for example 5th Force 5th Series, 1:254, 1300-1.

23. Ibid., 2:39, 76.

County Battalion; the Cumberland County Battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Frederick Watts.<sup>24</sup> In addition, an understrength battalion identified as Col. Moore's was at Newark, and three companies under the command *in absentia* of Lt. Col. Lawrence were at Elizabethtown.<sup>25</sup> A total of some 2,600 of Pennsylvania's Flying Camp troops were stationed at various points in New Jersey. They were concentrated at Fort Lee. Indeed, with over 2,000 troops they were providing the primary garrison of that fort.<sup>26</sup>

24. *Ibid.*, 1:1079-80. Boatner explains that "battalion" in the Revolutionary War was the practical equivalent of "regiment." Battalions normally consisted of eight companies. The actual full strength of a Flying Camp battalion was about four hundred officers and men. See Boatner, p. 63.

Clutz, also spelled Clotts, Clottz, Clutz, and Klotz, should not be confused with Lt. Col. Nicholas Lutz. MacCallister was occasionally spelled McAllister, Swoope was often spelled Swope, and Watts was occasionally spelled Watt. On the confusion surrounding the origins of the 2nd Lancaster Battalion see footnote 44 below. Flying Camp battalions were not numbered, as were regular Pennsylvania state battalions. However, where a county had more than one, a semi-official distinction of 1st and 2nd developed.

25. Moore and Lawrence remain the two mystery commanders of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp. Moore's most likely identity is Major. John Moore of Col. Robert Lewis' Philadelphia Battalion (Force, 5th Series, 1:254). Supporting this is that in one return, the final one of 1 December, he is given as Major James Moore (Cf. the returns of Ewing's Brigade in *Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:762-63 and Lesser, p. 43, with Lesser, p. 40). This gives support to the rank but not the first name. However, no Lewis' Brigade or Hughes' (the name of the lieutenant colonel of the Philadelphia County Battalion) is ever reported in any context. That a battalion of the Flying Camp could have never appeared in New Jersey returns or suffered any officers captured is improbable. Thus this solution to Moore's identity also solves the question of the missing brigade.

The name James, however, is against this. Col. James Moore (who is perhaps the second most likely claimant) was colonel of the 1st Battalion of Chester County militia, (*Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:66; 5th Series, 5:452-53). Some units of his battalion were sent to New Jersey under their lieutenant colonel, Joseph Park, in August 1776, but did not constitute parts of the Flying Camp (Force, 5th Series, 1:1604). Col. James Moore can be established as not being in the field on November 29th (Force, 5th Series, 3:778).

A Major James Moore enlisting troops in 1783-84 exhausts Pennsylvanian field officers of that name. The dates of his activities are too late to be connected with the Flying Camp.

Major John Moore is, then, the only field officer named Moore in the Pennsylvania Flying Camp. No brigade appears in returns, by the name of his superior officers in the Philadelphia County Battalion; one does by his. In 1777, he was a colonel of militia (*Archives*, 6th Series, 1:661). Possibly he was one before July 1776 and accepted lower rank in the Flying Camp. If so this might explain the confusion of rank on Flying Camp returns.

Lt. Col. Lawrence was the nominal commander of two to three companies of Pennsylvania Flying Camp at Elizabethtown, N.J. in returns from 20 August through 8 October. No officer higher than a captain is ever shown as present on these returns, however. (Force, 5th Series, 1:1079-80; 2:941-42).

26. (Force, 5th Series, 2:1079-80.

About two weeks later, Washington wrote Mercer that in view of changes in the overall situation, "it appears to me of the utmost importance and that the most salutary consequences may result from our having a strong encampment at the post on the Jersey side of the North River [Hudson] opposite Mount Washington. . . ." This was the site of Fort Lee. Washington went on to order Mercer to send a skillful engineer to strengthen the fort itself, and a strong force under an officer of note to command it. Two days later, having received Mercer's response, Washington cancelled the second half of the order saying, "When I wrote you for troops to send to the post opposite Mount Washington, I did not imagine you would have so many to spare."<sup>27</sup>

The change in circumstances that Washington referred to in ordering the strengthening of Fort Lee was the loss of Long Island to the British after the American defeat in the Battle of Long Island on 27 August. Washington had long since expressed the opinion that the establishment of Mercer's camp in New Jersey had changed the the focus of British strategy from there to Long Island.<sup>28</sup> Before 12 August Washington demonstrated his concern by ordering Mercer to send him reinforcements. By that date Mercer had responded by sending three regular Pennsylvania battalions directly to Washington, and dispatching Flying Camp troops supplemented by militia volunteers to serve as a ready reserve of about four hundred.<sup>29</sup> Thus began the piecemeal commitment of the Flying Camp which resulted in confusion about even the existence of some of its battalions—much less the precise identity of its commanders, or what part the units took in various battles.

Whether they arrived as adjuncts to the regular Pennsylvania battalions, or—more probably—in a call up of the ready reserve of Flying Camp is uncertain. However, sometime before 20 August, when the August monthly returns of Mercer's command were made, a sizable number of members of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp had left New Jersey and were being transported toward Long Island. Included were the several companies of Haller's Berks Battalion that had been sent ahead under Lt. Col. Nicholas Lutz; the Northampton County Battalion at about half strength commanded by Lt. Col. Peter Kachlein, Sr.; and the majority of Col. James Cunningham's 1st Lancaster Battalion under the command of Lt.

27. *Ibid.*, 2:139, 182.

28. *Ibid.*, 1:558.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:908.

Col. William Hays. The first two battalions had never appeared on Mercer's returns, the latter only cryptically.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, small detachments of about one company each of Montgomery's Chester and Swoope's York battalions arrived in an obscure fashion.<sup>31</sup> Each of these units took an active and sometimes prominent part in the subsequent battle.

About midnight on 27 August, Maj. Edward Burd, second in Command of Lutz's Berks detachment, with a company or two, relieved the picket in front of the western flank of the American advanced line. Around one o'clock Burd's force, patrolling the Narrows Road, encountered in the dark three to four hundred British troops—at least three times their number.<sup>32</sup> In the ensuing exchange of fire Burd and some of his men were captured. The rest fell back towards the main force in the area. The main force had retreated in disorder to high ground near the Red Lion Tavern, where it was partly rallied after daybreak by Gen. Samuel Parsons, and held until reinforcements arrived.<sup>33</sup> The battle of Long Island thus began with an attack on a unit of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp.

30. Lt. Col. Peter Kachlein Sr.'s identity and the fact that his battalion was a Flying Camp unit are both subjects of confusion. (e.g. Fitzpatrick, 6:26, 23n). Two clear listings of officers of his half-strength battalion exist, (*Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:557-69; 5th Series, 8:12-14) as well as a partial supplement organized by the militia company from which individuals were drawn. (*Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:636-37). While one of the former two lists does not explicitly state that it is a Flying Camp Battalion, it is separated from the regular militia organization; the other does identify it as intended for the Flying Camp, but in the text only. The latter list clearly states Flying Camp, but creates confusion due to its principle of organization. However, Col. Atlee's journal, and numerous prisoner lists confirm the Flying Camp status of Kachlein's Battalion. (Cf. the two versions of Atlee's Journal *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:512, 514; and Force, 5th Series, 1:1251, 1253). Pertinent prisoner lists are in *Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:649; 6th Series, 2:880.

Cunningham's Battalion under Hays does in fact appear on Mercer's returns but under Clotz's name. (Cf. *Archives*, 5th Series, 7:17-18, 1078; Force, 5th Series, 2:873-74, 1079-80).

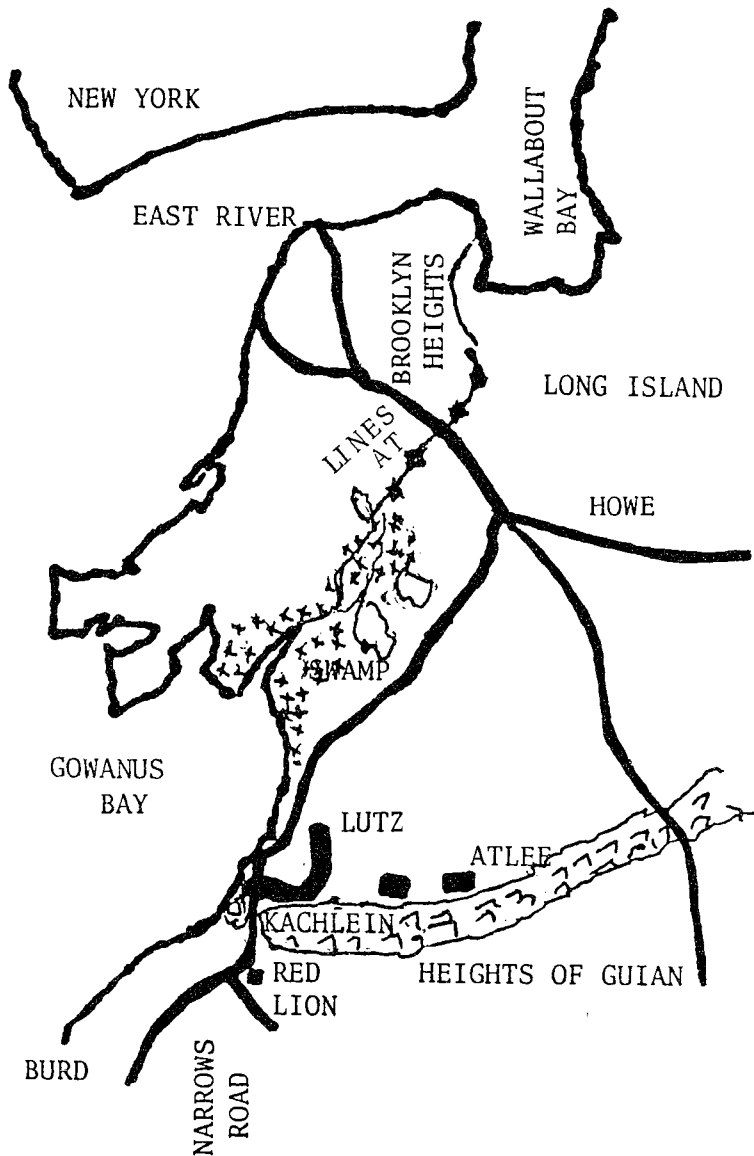
31. *Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:640-41; 6th Series, 2:870, John Gibson, *History of York County*. (Chicago, 1880), p. 130.

32. Contrary to Freeman, 4:162 and Boatner, p. 649, Burd did not command an independent battalion, but was second in command of Lutz's detachment from Haller's battalion. (See *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:628, 760). Reed's contemporary estimate of the size of the guard as 800 men refers to the main body not to Burd's Picket. (Force, 5th Series, 1:1231). Haller's entire battalion at full strength would be about half that number. Lutz's detachment was certainly three, possibly four, companies, or about half of that total. Burd had been detached from Lutz, who had been left with a force capable of acting independently. Thus, Burd's picket was outnumbered more than two to one.

33. "Brig. Gen. Parsons to John Adams." 8 October 1776 in Henry P. Johnson, *The Campaign Around New York and Brooklyn*, (New York, 1878, reprinted New York,



BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND



The main American defenses on Long Island were on Brooklyn Heights, cutting across a projection of land several miles wide on the northwestern end of the island. They ran approximately southwest to northeast from Wallabout Bay to Gowanus Bay, taking consecutive advantage of a swamp, creek, and mill pond along the southern half, and elevation along the northern. The advanced line extended almost west to east beginning south of the swamp. It consisted primarily of forces at three road passes in a wooded ridge known as the Heights of Guian. At its eastern end it deteriorated into mere patrol activity. The British outflanked this advanced line to the east, while a secondary attack occupied its western flank, and cannon fire, followed later by another secondary attack, occupied its center. The result was that much of the American advanced line was cut off from the main defenses and captured. Pennsylvania Flying Camp units participated primarily in the defense of the western flank against the secondary attack.

Lutz's partial battalion was divided into two primary segments. One, Maj. Burd's pickets, had opened the battle, having been driven back by what proved to be advanced units of the British secondary attack against the western sector of the American advanced line. By providing an alert against the attack and allowing the American line to be reinforced, Burd's detachment had successfully fulfilled the role of picket, regardless of the failure of its main force to sustain it. Warned by news of the firing from Burd's position, Gen. Israel Putnam had ordered Lord Stirling to take the battalions nearest him and rush to the relief of the embattled area. Gathering battalions as he advanced, Stirling eventually assembled a force of about 2,300, composed of parts of five battalions, including the balance of both Lutz's and Kachlein's.<sup>34</sup> This force, in one of the few American successes of the day, resisted the British western secondary attack throughout the morning.

Kachlein's Battalion, divided into two, and at one point possibly three, segments, was in the front line of Stirling's force sustaining this attack. Marched forward to support the defenders for whom Burd had served as picket, Kachlein's unit arrived shortly after the initial brief clash between the reinforcements which had marched with Stirling and the British. Stirling immediately divided

1971), Part II, pp. 34-35. See Ibid., 1:161-62 for Johnson's correction of Parson's impression that Burd's picket did not fire on the British. Burd's force did fire, but Parsons may be right that the main body did not. Like Reed his estimate of an 800 man guard refers to the main body not Burd's seriously outnumbered picket.

34. Force 5th Series, 1:1195-96, 1245-56, 1251-54; *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:512-16.

it into two segments. One was placed along a hedge in front of a woods topped hill which then constituted the western anchor of Stirling's position. The rest were placed in front of the woods. There they resisted attack of the British light infantry during the mid-morning, sometimes from as close as 150 yards away. After two hours of fighting the British light forces withdrew. Directly facing Kachlein now, threatening to follow the light forces with the main attack, was an entire brigade—four regiments—of the main British western force. Throughout, British artillery maintained a constant barrage. At Stirling's order Kachlein's Battalion, with the other battalions under his command, faced this onslaught without cover, lined up in European parade ground fashion.

Moreover, at some point during the morning Stirling has responded to Col. Samuel Atlee's request for reinforcements to the east with two of Kachlein's companies. These were shortly ordered by Stirling to rejoin their own battalion, but for a time Kachlein was deprived of about half his meager strength in the face of the British attack.<sup>35</sup>

Kachlein himself, and probably two of his four captains, Henry Hagenbuck and Timothy Jayne, were captured at Long Island. In a third company, Capt. John Arndt's, two sergeants and nineteen privates were either missing or wounded. Even at this, incompleteness of records must understate the battalion's losses.<sup>36</sup>

About eleven o'clock, Stirling learned that the main British force under Gen. Howe had succeeded in outflanking the American line far to his east, and now was behind him. Upon hearing this, he ordered most of his troops to escape across the creek which formed

35. The view that Kachlein's force was divided between the east center and the western end of Stirling's lines is traditional. Boatner repeats it. (p. 651) It is implied in an 1877 map (Henry R. Carrington, *Battles of the American Revolution* (New York, 1877; reprinted New York, 1968) p. 214). However, Stirling merely describes the terrain; he gives no directions. (Force, 5th Series, 1:1245). A nearly contemporary English map shows terrain on both of Stirling's flanks that could fit the general description he gives (C. Stedman, *The History of the American War* (London, 1794; reprinted New York, 1969, p. 195).

Contrary to Boatner, the two companies of Kachlein's brigade that joined Atlee remained only briefly, as Atlee heartily complained. (5th Series, 1:1253; *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:514).

36. Johnson, 2:177. Hagenbuck and Jayne were exchanged on 8 December (*Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:8). Contrary to Johnson's sources, Kachlein had no Captain Graff. Captain Gerhart Graeff of Swoope's battalion was present at the battle of Long Island.

The list of Kachlein's officers taken prisoner in Force, 5th Series, 1:1251 is totally irreconcilable with known names of his officers. For returns on the enlisted men of Arndt's Company lost, see *Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:561.

the southern extension of the American main line, while with half of a battalion he held back the attacking British.

Due to the disposition of Stirling's forces, which formed something of a right angle, the segment of Lutz's unit with Stirling did not come into combat until the main British attack had succeeded in moving most of the distance east to west behind the crumbling American advanced line. Additionally, by now, the American center had been pushed back by the delayed secondary attack against it. At this juncture, Lutz's force, being positioned somewhat behind Stirling's front line and joined by a retreating Connecticut regiment from further east, took advantage of some woods to help cover the retreat of the western portion of the American line, which until now had been successfully resisting the secondary attack against it. Eventually Lutz's command and its Connecticut companion were forced to withdraw, but not until providing the last resistance in their sector.<sup>37</sup> Lutz himself was captured, presumably at this point. In addition to Lutz and Burd the detachment from Haller's Berks Battalion lost three captains captured, Joseph Hiester, Jacob Crowle, and Jacob Mauser, and one lieutenant, Stephen Baldy.<sup>38</sup>

Details of the role of Hay's command from the 1st Lancaster Battalion are sparse. That it saw heavy service is evident from the fact that at least five companies had officers captured or discharged because of wounds received in the Battle of Long Island. A sixth reported the loss of equipment on Long Island.<sup>39</sup> The small force from Montgomery's Chester Battalion can only be established to have been present at Long Island.<sup>40</sup>

In the only shadow to be cast on the Pennsylvania Flying Camp, three officers of Kachlein's Battalion, the major, the adjutant, and a lieutenant, were court martialed for cowardice and misbehavior in abandoning their post on Long Island. This shadow was largely

37. Force, 5th Series, 1:1195-96, 1251-54; *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:512-16.

38. *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:628.

39. *Archives*, 5th Series, 7:17-19, 1078.

40. *Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:640-41; 6th Series, 2:870.

See *Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:561 for the remnants of Arndt's Company, Kachlein's Battalion, being attached to Hart's (Baxter's) Battalion. Additionally two officers of Hagenbuck's Company can be identified in Hart's (Baxter's) Battalion, Lt. Godfrey Myers and Ens. Jacob Mumma (Mummey) and one of Jayne's Company, Lt. Abner Everett. (*Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:773-74). The wording of *Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:562, 565, 567 remotely suggests earlier contemplation of a merger of Lt. Col. Kachlein's partial brigade and Lt. Col. Baxter's partial brigade into a full brigade under Col. Hart. The different wording *Ibid.*, p. 558 suggests that the wording is mere coincidence.

lifted by the complete acquittal of the latter two officers, who were ordered to rejoin their battalion. Kachlein's major was acquitted of cowardice and Washington himself stayed his dismissal on the misbehavior charge saying, "there is reason to believe further evidence can soon be obtained with respect to the Major."<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, no record of the ultimate outcome is to be found.

Four days after the Battle of Long Island Washington ordered "the remainder of Lutz's and Kachlein's Battalions to be joined to Hand's Battalion." The portion of Cunningham's 1st Lancaster Battalion under Lt. Col. Hay was also placed under the same regular Pennsylvania Colonel's "special command." By the end of September, Col. Henry Haller had taken command of his Battalion at Kings Bridge. It was up nearly to two-thirds strength and its losses showed primarily in its lack of officers. With Lutz and Burd in captivity it was without a lieutenant colonel or major. At least eight of its nine companies were commanded by first lieutenants and were devoid of second lieutenants. Lt. Col. Hay's command was at almost full battalion strength. Only Kachlein's Northampton Battalion had failed to regain its strength and independent identity. Its remnants were attached eventually to Hart's Flying Camp Battalion.<sup>42</sup>

Entering the second week of October, the Pennsylvania Flying Camp battalions were as dispersed as ever. McCallister's and Moore's battalions had been moved to the base camp at Perth Amboy, perhaps as a result of Washington's surprise at the numbers Mercer had been able to send to Fort Lee. Lt. Col. Lawrence's small force, now down to two companies and its commander still absent, remained at Elizabethtown. Colonels Swoope's and Montgomery's battalions, together with the battalion under Lt. Col. Watts, remained at Fort Lee. Col. Haller's Battalion was with Hand at De Lancey's Mills in Westchester County N.Y., as was Col. Cunningham with the bulk of his battalion.<sup>43</sup> Capt. Coltz, now promoted to major, had taken command of the newly formed 2nd Lancaster County Battalion, consisting of three companies. This new partial battalion was stationed at the Perth Amboy camp.<sup>44</sup>

41. Force 5th Series, 2:238, 291. Fitzpatrick ed., *Washington*, 6:26, 40-41.

42. Force, 5th Series, 1:1248; 2:449-50.

43. Force, 5th Series, 2:897-98, 941-42.

44. Mercer's October 8th return shows a partial battalion of three companies commanded by a major (identified, nevertheless, as Col. Clotz's Battalion) at Perth Amboy. (Force, 5th Series, 2:941-42). Cunningham's return of three days earlier

By the end of the month, Clotz's Battalion was almost up to full strength, and serving under General Nathanael Greene's command in New Jersey.

Since early September General Mercer had been planning an attack on British held Staten Island from the camp in New Jersey as soon as adequate Flying Camp forces were available for his own deployment.<sup>45</sup> On the night of 15 October he was at last able to act. Included in his force was a large part of McCallister's Battalion under Major John Clark. On the island, at about 11:00 P.M., Mercer suddenly was forced to modify his plan. Receiving information that an English force of three regiments was in the town of Richmond, Mercer sent about an equal force, including Clark's detachment, to circle the town and attack from the east while he enclosed it from the west. By dawn both sections of Mercer's force were in position, but their presence had been detected by the British. According to Clark's account, his forces led the advance from the east, taking the first prisoners and capturing the colors of the Twenty-Third Light Dragoons. After a brief clash with these forces, which left two dead on each side, the English retreated. Mercer's forces captured seventeen prisoners and some supplies. Further attack was prevented by orders from Washington for Mercer to return to alter New Jersey defenses, thus cutting short one of his few opportunities to lead even part of his Flying Camp. However, as Mercer commented, the loss of surprise precluded further pursuit of his plan in any case.<sup>46</sup>

Mercer's recall to attend to the defenses of New Jersey was occa-

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show Clotz promoted, creating a vacancy in the command of his company. (Force, 5th Series, 2:873-74). Clotz is sometimes listed as a captain commanding a company in Col. Matthews Slough's Battalion of the Flying Camp. (*Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:632; 5th Series, 7:1060). Whatever Slough's connection, he never assumed command of a Flying Camp battalion over Clotz. He did dispatch six companies of militia to New Jersey between September 9th and 11th, but he did not accompany them; more significant, none of the names of the officers of these companies correspond to the few clearly identified officers of Clotz's Battalion. One explanation could rest on the July 8th date on the listing of Clotz in Slough's battalion. This would simply be that an earlier attempt to form a second Lancaster Battalion under Slough failed, and a company raised by Clotz was incorporated into the first battalion. Later a second battalion under Clotz materialized.

45. Force 5th Series, 2:212.

46. *Ibid.*, 1073, 1093, George R. Prowell, *History of York County Pennsylvania*, (Chicago, 1907), 1:180-81.

In fact, the British force was only two companies, the third having left the night before. Major Clark's estimate of the number of prisoners taken is over three times the number in Mercer's official return.

sioned by the decision of Washington and his division commanders on 16 September to have the main army retreat from New York to White Plains. This movement was accomplished in a leap-frogging fashion, one division passing behind the others, who held their position facing the British until White Plains was reached. Haller's and Cunningham's Flying Camp battalions were now in Lord Stirling's Brigade. Stirling's was the third in order in the retreat.

The Battle of White Plains, after some preliminary skirmishing, consisted of a sharp clash and a stand-off. The American army had terminated its retreat by forming lines in almost an east to west direction. The western end rested on the small Bronx River. As an afterthought, Chatterton Hill, beyond the river, which commanded the ground at that end of the line, was occupied. On 28 October, after hard but limited fighting, the British took that hill. Washington's army then fell back to even stronger ground, and the British turned to another object of attack.

Stirling's Brigade occupied the western part of the American lines near the Bronx River on 27 and 28 October. Although two of Stirling's battalions (Reed's and Hazlet's) took part in the conflict on Chatterton Hill, Haller's and Cunningham's Pennsylvania Flying Camp battalions apparently remained in the established lines. The next day, after Washington was forced to withdraw northward to stronger ground due to the loss of the crucial hill, Stirling's command took up a position two to three miles west of the new lines to defend against any attempt to outflank them from that direction. Thus, the two Pennsylvania Flying Camp battalions at White Plains twice readied themselves for attack but saw no combat. The first alarm was when, after the loss of Chatterton Hill on the 28th, they faced the possibility of an immediate British attack from that commanding position. The second was on the 29th, when in the early morning reinforcements were mistaken for two columns of attacking British troops.<sup>47</sup>

Confronting the new American positions, the British army withdrew to attack the one remaining American stronghold on New York Island—Fort Washington. This fortification, deemed both crucial and impregnable, had been left with a garrison of somewhat over 1,000 when the rest of the army moved to White Plains. It was under the immediate command of Col. Robert Magaw, and the overall command of Gen. Nathanael Green who was at Fort Lee directly across the Hudson.

47. Force, 5th Series, 3:471-74, 499. Freeman, pp. 229, 233.

On 9 November while leading a detachment of two hundred men from MCallister's battalion to guard supplies at Dobbs Ferry on the New York side of the Hudson, Major John Clark discovered five thousand English encamped nearby. He reported his opinion that they were planning to attack Fort Washington.<sup>48</sup> As the British intent to attack became evident, Greene, left with discretion by Washington, began to strengthen the garrison of that fort. Since he did so almost entirely with units of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp, the battle for Fort Washington became not only the action involving the largest number of members of the Pennsylvania Camp but also the only one in which they constituted a near majority of the American force. Moreover, the only full colonel in the garrison, except for Magaw, was Michael Swoope commanding one of the Pennsylvania battalions of the Camp—a point Magaw seems to have considered in one instance.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, General Greene, in opting to strengthen the garrison, did not know that two weeks previously Magaw's adjutant, William Demont, had deserted to the British with the plans for the fort.<sup>50</sup> Typically, Flying Camp units were rushed across the Hudson piecemeal, the first, only two days before the battle. In the resulting confusion even Magaw became unclear about the numbers under his command.

By 14 November Greene had stripped his own garrison at Fort Lee down to just over five hundred, and had hastily ferried slightly more than 1,500 men to strengthen Fort Washington. Of these, about half were troops of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp. The majority of them were in a heavily reinforced battalion under Col. Michael Swoope. Five companies of Hart's Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. William Baxter, were also included. These contained remnants of three companies of Kachlein's now absorbed command.<sup>51</sup>

48. Prowell, p. 181.

49. The British list four colonels and four lieutenant colonels captured at Fort Washington, (Force, 5th Series, 3:1058). This apparently is the result of listing lieutenant colonels commanding regular state battalions as colonels. Each individual of the eight can be identified: Colonels Magaw and Swoope; Lieutenant Colonels Bull, Lambert Cadwalader, Thomas Hobby, Holden, Moses Rawlings, and Stephenson. Lieutenant Colonels Baxter and Miller were killed and so would not be included in the British list. Mackenzie clearly illustrates that the British considered Cadwalader a colonel. *Diary of Frederick Mackenzie*, (Cambridge, 1930; reprinted New York, n.d.), 1:109. However, as Freeman (4:245n) points out he had not yet then been promoted. Rawlings was probably extended similar courtesy.

50. Thomas, Jones, *History of the Revolutionary War* (New York, 1968), 1:628-31.

51. Force, 5th Series, 3:663. Cf. *Archives*, 2nd Series, 14:557-58; 15:769-70.



Additionally, probably on the nights of the 14th or 15th, Greene drew in other forces under his command in New Jersey, and dispatched them to Fort Washington. These included two sizable units from the Pennsylvania Camp. Maj. Andrew Galbreath led four companies from Watt's Battalion, and Lt. Col. Thomas Bull four from Montgomery's.<sup>52</sup>

Smaller units from the Pennsylvania Camp were also sent. Capt. William Scott's company of Clotz's Battalion can be identified, as well as Capt. Nicholas Bittinger's and Capt. William McCarter's companies of McCallister's.<sup>53</sup> These smaller units need not represent net increases in the total size of the garrison, however, for between the 13th and the 14th, Swoope's Battalion had been reinforced from unexplained sources by about three companies.

On the 15th, Howe's Adjutant General, James Patterson, was sent by the British under a flag of truce. Possibly out of a desire to be represented by a colonel in discussions with a colonel (and one, at that, who three months earlier had been permitted to negotiate directly with Gen. Washington,<sup>54</sup>) Magaw reported, "I sent down Colonel Swoope."<sup>55</sup> The wording "I sent down" indicates that Swoope, at this point, was with Magaw in the inner fort. The message with which Swoope returned was a demand for surrender within two hours, under threat of denial of quarter in the attack. Magaw replied with an admirably worded refusal expressing his determination to "defend this post to the last extremity." The attack began the next day.

Fort Washington itself was an open earthwork fortification on top of Mount Washington, a ridge in the northwestern part of New York Island. It was situated with more concern for dominating the Hudson River below to the west, than for its own defense from elsewhere on the island. At the northern end of the ridge there was a small outwork named Fort Tyron. To the east was a slightly higher ridge, Mount Laurel, beyond which ran the Harlem River. To the south, the northernmost of the old defenses of Harlem Height had been adapted as outworks. The British attacked from all three directions. Pennsylvania Flying Camp forces were prominent in the defense against the attack from the east, across the Harlem River.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 729-30.

53. *Archives*, 2nd Series, 15:772-73. John Gibson, *History of York County Pennsylvania*, (Chicago, 1886), pp. 130-31.

54. Carrington, pp. 194, 249.

55. Force, 5th Series 3:699, 700.

Of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp units, the role of Lt. Col. Baxter's command is best known. Baxter's partial battalion was on the central to northern part of Mount Laurel, the ridge east of Fort Washington. Four British battalions in two waves, the second commanded by Lord Cornwallis, rowed across the Harlem River and landed in front of them. The attackers charged up the slopes protected by heavy artillery fire from the high ground across the narrow river. Baxter himself was killed while leading his force early in the attack, one of two American field officers killed in the defense. His small force, overwhelmed by numbers, was driven back to the fort.<sup>56</sup>

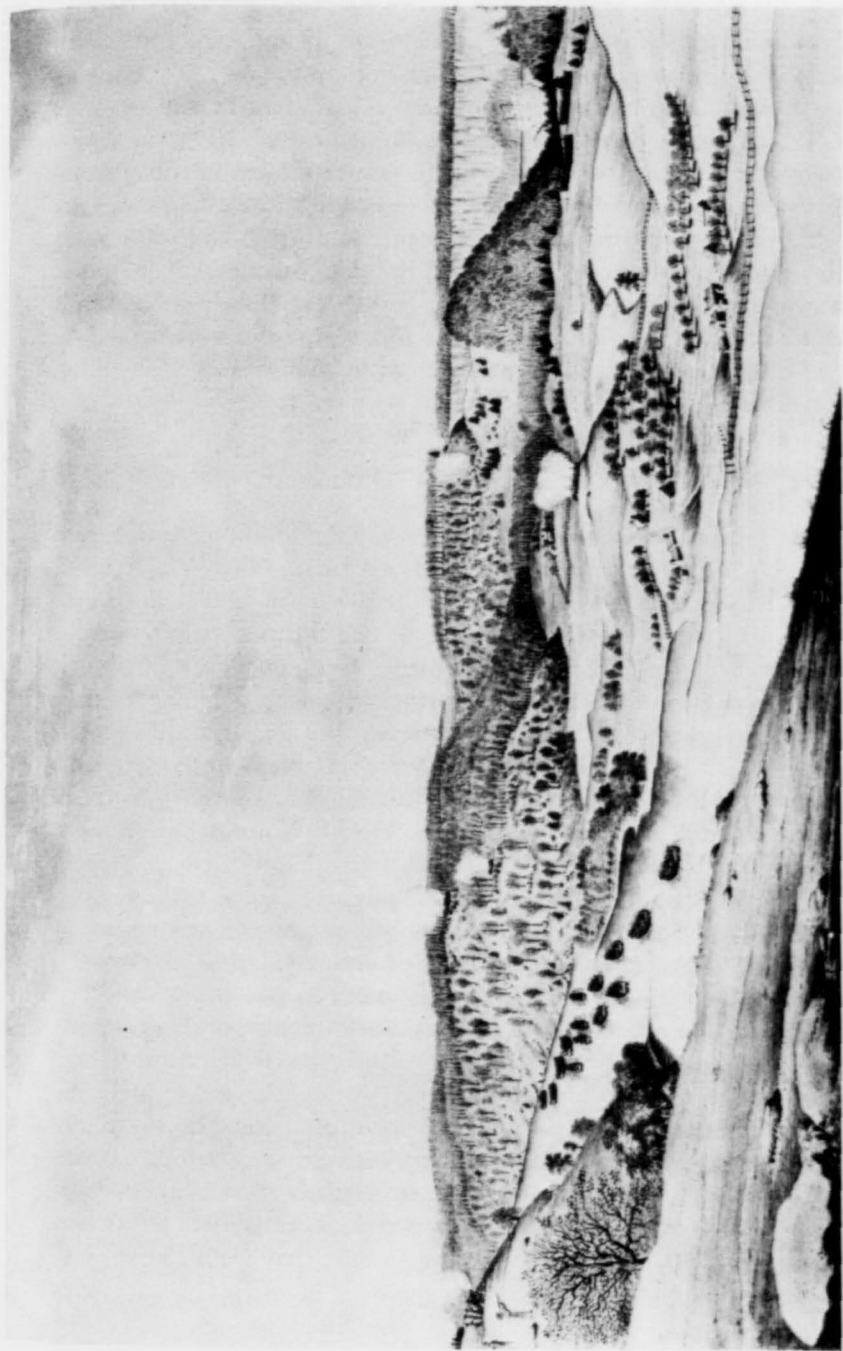
Southeast of the fort and north of where the old Harlem Height defenses approached the Harlem River, Col. Swoope's Battalion, in light outworks, encountered three battalions, including the famous "Black Watch," attempting to outflank the American southern outworks from boats crossing the river. Swoope's troops subjected the attackers to heavy fire during their landing and charge up the slope. A measure of the sharpness of the battle at Swoope's position is the approximately ninety British casualties there. Swoope's color bearer Ens. Jacob Barnity was wounded in both legs. Capt. William McCarter of McCallister's battalion was fatally wounded. In spite of attempts to reinforce Swoope's defenders from both the fort and the southern outworks, the highlander's bayonet charge prevailed. Some hundred of the Flying Camp defenders were captured here, others retreated toward the fort.<sup>57</sup>

By afternoon the fort was hopelessly crowded with troops driven from the outworks. The threat of British shells being fired into the immobilized defenders forced Magaw to surrender. The entire gar-

56. Graydon, (quoting Cadwalader), p. 201, Carrington, pp. 250-51.

57. Swoope's battalion is the unidentified American force reported stubbornly holding light earthworks at Lt. Col. Stirling's point of disembarkation. Carrington (p. 250), Prowell (pp. 181-183), and Gibson (p. 398) establish Swoope's unit as south-east of the fort, opposing troops coming by boat across the Harlem, through they wrongly identify the enemy as Hessians. Graydon's account of the interrogation of an unidentified York County captain among the prisoners taken south of the fort confirms Swoope's position. (pp. 200-01, 207-09) Graydon, however, is in error that the landing was unopposed until by forces dispatched from the southern outworks, (p. 196) but as he acknowledges he was at the other side of the island. (Ibid.) Boatner wrongly identifies Swoope's position as Baxter's. (p. 387) Baxter's position was well to the north of Swoope's.

Mackenzie (1:108) and Howe (Force, 5th Series, 3:925) among British sources testify to the heavy resistance their attack encountered at this location.



A VIEW OF THE ATTACK AGAINST FORT WASHINGTON (16 NOVEMBER 1776) by Capt. Thomas Davis of the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Seen from the northeast, Col. Baxter's position is marked by two clouds of smoke in the left center. Col. Swoope's location, right of the Morris house in the left background, is not yet under attack. The preceding day Swoope was sent from the fort in the center background to meet Col. Patterson on the Plain in the right foreground. (J. N. Phelps Stokes Collection, Prints Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.)

ri son of Fort Washington was lost—most being captured—when Magaw capitulated sometime before mid-afternoon. Any hope of the Flying Camp's achieving an independent identity was lost with it. The defeat at Fort Washington has been called the heaviest suffered by the American army during the entire war, and Pennsylvania Flying Camp battalions had borne the major burden.<sup>58</sup> In their last battle, as in their first, they had been committed with such haste that their presence and identity became obscure. Days later, Washington was appealing to the British for information about which units he had lost, due to the hurried reinforcement of days preceding the battle. Until exchanged, in many cases years later, the officers captured here alternated between periods of parole on Long Island and of confinement in New York. The enlisted men were confined in the notorious New York prisons, and prison ships, where many died.

The final two weeks of the Flying Camp's formal existence were spent by its Pennsylvanian remnants retreating with Washington across New Jersey. On 1 December, the day most of its enlistments expired, six of its battalions at half to two-thirds strength were at Trenton. Clotz's, McCallister's, Moore's, Montgomery's, and Watts's constituted Ewing's Brigade. Totaled, they were only moderately stronger in number than the reinforcements of Pennsylvania Flying Camp which had been sent to Fort Washington with Swoope and Baxter on 14 November alone. Additionally, a weakened Haller's Battalion, and a surprisingly up-to-strength Cunningham's, were back under Hand.<sup>59</sup> Slightly more than a month later General Mercer was fatally wounded at Princeton. Thought by some to have been potentially one of Washington's two best generals, he had never led his Flying Camp in battle. He had not even had all of its Pennsylvania battalions under his direct command at one time.

Certainly no military force which existed in confusion and terminated in defeat can be called glorious. But equally, certainly a unit which stopgapped Washington's army throughout the entire New York campaign; which participated in almost every battle of the campaign, usually disadvantaged by hasty and piecemeal attachment to other commands; and which committed and lost almost half its remaining strength with less than two weeks enlistment left (when militia were often dictating when and where they would serve) was neither ordinary militia nor inglorious.

58. Johnson, p. 285.

59. Force, 5th Series, 3:1035-36; *Archives*, 2nd Series, 1:762-63.