Lord Howe Clears The Delaware

It is almost incredible that two men with such brilliant military records as Admiral Lord Richard Howe and his brother Sir William were able to accomplish so little during the American Revolution. Some writers have said, or at least inferred, that they did not want to win, having too strong a liking for the Americans, which, if so, would have made them less than desirable as naval and military commanders. It is true that Lord Richard would not accept his appointment unless he was empowered to treat with the colonies for peace. Sir William did not want to go to Boston as an enemy; Boston had only the kindest feelings for the memory of his eldest brother George Augustus, who had been killed in an earlier war at Ticonderoga. Massachusetts had placed a statue of George Augustus in Westminster Abbey. Actually, the Howes were attempting the impossible—the defeat of the enemy while keeping him sufficiently friendly so that he might yet sit down and talk peace terms.

William seemed to like going the longest way round to an objective; he took his army from Boston to New York in 1776 by way of Halifax, and he set off to capture Philadelphia the next year by putting his troops in ships and taking them there by way of the Chesapeake; thirty days by sea instead of a march across New Jersey—part of his army had been stationed at New Brunswick. He felt he had not enough men to keep the supply lines open from New York. General Howe seemed to be the classic commander who wins the battles but loses the war, and his answer to all problems was to demand more and more troops. He won Bunker Hill in 1775 but

1 Dictionary of National Biography (DNB), XXVIII, 103.
2 They were tall, brawny men with very dark hair and eyes. William (1729–1814) was easy-going, indolent, preferring gambling to campaigning; Richard (1726–1799) was popular with his men who affectionately called him Black Dick.
3 For an excellent article on William Howe, see the DNB, XXVIII, 102. His puzzling conduct of the war is given in detail in Troyer Steele Anderson, The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution (New York, 1936), 102–104, 203, 277, 287, 303, cited hereinafter as Howe Brothers.
with catastrophic losses, he won New York but let Washington escape across New Jersey and the Delaware (from where Washington returned to win the battles of Trenton and Princeton, thus restoring American morale).

In 1777 Howe won Brandywine and Philadelphia, which he held because his brother kept the Delaware open and the army supplied. In the meantime, General Burgoyne was defeated for want of reinforcements, which, however, the confident Burgoyne had not requested. The belated suggestion that Howe might send help came from London while Sir William was sailing into the Chesapeake.4

Discouraged and angry because he felt he had not been properly supported by the government, William at length sent in his resignation—something a general could do in those days. Meanwhile, he had spent a pleasant winter in the city, with gambling and parties and the company of his mistress.

His brother Lord Richard also had a disappointing time as commander in chief of all the naval forces in North America.5 Although he had his commission to treat for peace with the American colonies, it was his misfortune to arrive in New York on July 12, eight days after the Declaration of Independence was signed and the country committed to freedom. He did meet with his friend Benjamin Franklin and a few men sent from the Congress, but, as he had no power except to grant pardons to those returning to their former allegiance, that came to nothing.6

Since the colonies had practically no navy for him to fight, he devoted the rest of 1776 to assisting the army. He ferried 15,000 and later another 10,000, troops across the bay for the invasion of Long Island in boats with hinged ends that dropped down (small predecessors of the LSTs), so that the army could land dry shod.7

4 F. J. Hudleston, Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne (Indianapolis, 1927), 220, 235–236. Burgoyne’s bitterest feelings were against Lord George Germain, secretary of state for the colonies, who, off for a weekend, missed a mail boat, so Howe did not receive his letter suggesting he support Burgoyne until too late. See also The American Journal of Ambrose Serle (San Marino, Calif., 1940), 260, 261, cited hereinafter as Serle.
5 Only one biography of Lord Howe has been written, Life of Richard Earl Howe, K. G., a sometimes unreliable account by Sir John Barrow, printed in London in 1838. He does not even mention Philadelphia or the Delaware.
6 Paul Leicester Ford in the Atlantic Monthly for June, 1896, gives a detailed account of the meeting with the delegates of Congress.
7 Howe Brothers, 130.
He failed to bottle up the Rebels in Brooklyn owing to an adverse combination of wind and tide, but he cleared the Hudson River, making a reinforcement of Burgoyne's army possible—had the order been given. However, it was thought at the time that a triumphant Burgoyne would march his army down river to New York.

In the winter the Howes made plans for the capture of Philadelphia in a campaign that was to end the war. That all-important city was thought to be full of helpful Loyalists. There was a theory in those days that you waited for the grass to grow so the horses could feed on the march, but this was not the reason why Sir William delayed so long. He was hoping for a letter endorsing his latest plans, and for fresh troops from England. Certainly much grass had grown before the Howes embarked 14,000 men and sailed from New York with 260 or more ships on July 23, 1777.

No one has explained why they went part way up the Delaware, then turned back and finally sailed up the Chesapeake. It was not because of the obstructions in the river below Philadelphia, for Lord Howe had easily overcome similar obstructions in the Hudson. He knew in detail about the chevaux-de-frise; it was impossible for him not to know. Not only had Philadelphia been boasting about them for two years, the Roebuck and Captain Andrew Hammond had been stationed at the mouth of the Delaware to keep Howe informed of all activities on the river, and a British agent in Philadelphia had sent him detailed sketches.

It was Sir William, not, as has been written, Lord Richard, who changed plans and turned to the Chesapeake, he seems to have had

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8 Ibid., 241.
9 William Bell Clark, ed., Naval Documents of the American Revolution (Washington, 1969), IV, 567, 1314. The facsimile of the agent's letter on page 1314 shows two elongated triangular boxes, filled, he wrote, with up to twenty tons of stone each, placed in groups of three or four below the water surface in the main channels of the river. The "gentleman of credit," as he calls himself, does not mention that each box was topped with iron spikes, capable of ripping out the bottom of any vessel trying to pass over. Instead, he ends his letter by saying that "nothing is impossible for the British tar."

No one seems to have given a detailed description of how the obstructions were removed. The "British tar" probably used grappling irons to drag out the rocks until the frames floated to the surface and could be destroyed, a long and dangerous job. The agent also suggested bribing the American pilots who knew the secret channel up to Philadelphia.

Another picture of the chevaux de frise with spikes was in a letter by the Hessian Major Baummeister to his superior in Germany. Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB), LX (1936), 166.
an idea of getting behind Washington, should that general retreat to the Susquehanna. The change of plans and delay horrified Ambrose Serle, Lord Howe’s confidential secretary.\(^\text{10}\) It also told Washington, who was holding his army at a strategic point, that Howe was not marching north to relieve Burgoyne.\(^\text{11}\)

Not until September 25 did the British land at the Head of Elk. The horses, turned loose into the fields, grazed literally to the bursting point, and more than half died that night.\(^\text{12}\) Heavy rains after the intense heat further delayed the army. They had lost the advantage of surprise; Washington awaited them at Brandywine.

Lord Howe took up the story in reports to the Admiralty, which are preserved in the Public Record Office in London.\(^\text{13}\) The “Sir” at the head of each letter is for Philip Stephens, secretary to the Admiralty.

* * *

**Eagle In the Delaware**\(^\text{14}\)

Sir,

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty\(^\text{15}\) will be informed by my last Letter of the 28th of August, of the Arrival of the Fleet at the Head of Chespeack Bay, and Debarkation of the Army the 25th in the River Elk.

The Provision, Military Stores and Baggage required, having been landed under the Direction of Captain [Henry] Duncan [of the *Eagle*] by the 7th of the next Month, the Army advanced towards the Rebel Forces assembled near Wilmington on the Side of the Delaware.

The Enemy confiding in the Strength of their Situation, and waiting the Approach of the Army, were charged the 11th in the Evening with so much Spirit, that not withstanding the Advantages of their

\(^{10}\) Serle, 241; also W. M. James, *The British Navy in Adversity* (London, 1936), 64.

\(^{11}\) Samuel Stele Smith, *Fight for the Delaware* (Monmouth Beach, N. J., 1970), 5.


\(^{13}\) The PRO number is Adm-1-488, Lord Howe’s Letters, 72 et seq.


\(^{15}\) The Admiralty at that time consisted of the Earl of Sandwich, Sir Hugh Palliser, Capt. Lord Mulgrave, Henry Panton, John Buller, Lord Charles Spencer, the Earl of Lisburne and Henry Temple, Viscount Palmerston, who, however, resigned in December, 1777. The two secretaries were Philip Stephens and George Jackson.
post, they were quickly forced on every part; And retreated in great Confusion towards the Town of Philadelphia.

When this Account was forwarded, the Loss in either Army was not ascertained. But twelve pieces of Cannon had been taken in the Field; And the Victory would have probably been complete, but for the great Fatigue of the King's Forces in a long and difficult March round the Forks of the Brandywine, to arrive in the destined position for the Commencement of the Attack.

Upon Intelligence of this Event received the 13th, Preparation was made for taking the first favorable Opportunity to move the Fleet round to a proper Anchorage for preserving a free Communication with the Army in this River.

The Progress down the Bay was considerably retarded by the State of the Weather and Intricacies of the Navigation, which did not admit of continuing under Sail during the Night. Wherefore, tho quitting the Elk the 14th [September], the Fleet could not put to Sea from the Capes of Virginia until the 23rd of the same Month. I then proceeded forward in the Eagle with the Vigilant and Isis, and a small Division of the Transports, in which some Articles of Provisions and military Stores likely to be soonest wanted by the Army, had been for that purpose embarked, and left the Body of the Fleet to be conducted by Captain [Walter] Griffith [of the Nonsuch], with the rest of the Ships of War.

Having had very tempestuous Weather, of some Duration, to the Northward, in the passage down Chesapeake Bay, the Prospect was favorable for the speedy Arrival of the Fleet in the Delaware.

But when the two Divisions (little separated) were advanced within a few Leagues of the Entrance of the River, the Wind changed in a sudden Squall from the Southward in the Evening of the 25th; And having continued between the North West and North East with a Degree of Force much too great for the Transports to make any Way against it, I was unable to get into the River (followed a few Days after by the first Convoy, which I had left in the Care of Captain [Sir William] Cornwallis [of the Isis] when the Weather became more settled) until the Evening of the 4th Instant.

The larger Convoy with Captain Griffith, tho much more dispersed, arrived between the 6th and 8th of the Month: With no other material Accident except the Loss of the Transport named the
Father’s Good Will, which having sprung a Leak when no Assistance could be given during the bad Weather, sunk at Sea. But the Crew were saved.

The Ships of War and Transports were anchored in the most convenient Situations on the Western Shore from Newcastle down towards Reedy Island.

On my Arrival off of Chester on the 6th Instant I learnt that the Rebel Army, since the 11th of last Month, had always been retiring with precipitation, to avoid a general Action. Sometimes attempting Advantages by Surprize; But the King’s Forces maintaining their usual Ascendancy on every Occasion.

The General [Sir William Howe] was in possession of Philadelphia, and a Frigate of Thirty-two Guns, named the Delaware, attempted to be passed above the Town, had been taken by the Troops which were first posted there.

Captain [Andrew] Hammond (who was returned here in the Roe-buck) had moved up the River with the Pearl, Camilla and Liverpool, as the Army advanced.16

When I came to this Station, he was lying with those Frigates off of Billington, where the Rebels had nearly completed a very extensive Work, for defending the Approach to the first Line of sunk Frames, or Chevaux de Frize, which crossed the Navigable Channel in that part of the River

The General having a few Days before, appointed a strong Corps of Infantry to be landed on the Jersey Shore, to dislodge the Enemy from that Post, they abandoned it at his Approach. The Front to the River had thereupon been destroyed, and the Troops that Evening withdrawn.

A Trial had in the mean Time been begun for opening a passage through that first obstruction, which the Enemy with their Fire-Rafts, Gallies and other Armed Craft, repeatedly endeavored to

16 The ships in the Delaware were the flagship Eagle, 64 guns, Henry Duncan; Augusta, 64 guns, Francis Reynolds; Isis, 50 guns, William Cornwallis, later S. W. Clayton; Nonsuch, 64 guns, Walter Griffith; Vigilant, 16 guns, John Henry; Pearl, 32 guns, John Linzee or Thomas Wilkinson; Camilla, 20 guns, John Collins or Charles Phipps; Liverpool, 28 guns, Henry Bellew; Roe-buck, 44 guns, Andrew Hammond; Merlin, 16 guns, Samuel Reeve; Buffalo, 32 guns, Hugh Bromedge; and the Cornwallis Galley, 8 guns, John Brown. The names are given in Robert Beatson, Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain (London, 1804), VI, 74-76 101-103. See also Smith, 46.
prevent under Cover of the Night; But without any material Injury to the Frigates. And a sufficient Channel was at length (tho' not without much Difficulty) made for the larger Ships, by the advanced Squadron; The Conduct of which was on every Occasion to be much approved.

The remaining Obstructions to an uninterrupted Communication with the Town of Philadelphia, consisted of an enclosed Work [Fort Mifflin] erected on a flat, muddy Island, named Fort-Island, a little Distance below the Entrance of the Schuylkill, strengthened by four Block-Houses; With two floating Batteries of nine Guns each, and twelve or fourteen Gallies mounting heavy Cannon. Besides many other Armed Craft of lesser Force, and several Fire Ships. Opposite thereto on the Eastern Shore, at Red Bank above Manto [Mantua] Creek, a Redoubt was constructed, under which their movable Water Force could find Protection occasionally.

In the Front of these Defences, to the Extent of half a Mile or more below the Island (being the part of the Channel where the Navigation was contracted in the Width to about one hundred Fathoms) several Rows of the Chevaux de Frize were sunk so as intirely to render the nearer Approach of the Ships impracticable. And no Attempt could be made for moving the sunk Frames or otherwise clearing the Channel, until the Command of the Shores on each Side of the River could be obtained.

For these purposes, the General ordered more Batteries to be erected on the Western Shore to dislodge the Enemy from the Island; And a Body of Troops to be landed for forcing the Redoubt on Red-Bank.

It was intended that the Vigilant should [go] through a shallow and very confined Channel between Hog-Island (next below Fort-Island) and the Pennsylvania Shore: To arrive and act upon the Rear and less defensible part of the Work. And the Circumstances of the Navigation not admitting a more serious Attack for the Reasons before-mentioned, a Diversion was proposed to be made at the same time by the advanced Frigates, together with the Isis and Augusta, in the Eastern or Main Channel of the River: As well for engaging the Attention of the Enemy at Fort-Island and the Redoubt, as to restrain the motions of the Gallies and other Armed Craft, which had retired under the Works at Red-Bank, when they
discovered the Danger they would be exposed to in their former Stations near Fort-Island, from our Batteries on the Western Shore.

The Wind continuing from the Northward several successive days, the Vigilant could not proceed according to her Destination, at the Time intended. The Augusta, Roebuck, Liverpool and Pearl, were nevertheless ordered above the first Line of Chevaux de Frize the 22nd Instant, to be in Readiness for such Service as they should be able to render when the Redoubt should be attacked. And Captain [Francis] Reynolds [of the Augusta], being the Senior Officer, succeeded to the Command of the advanced Squadron.

The Detachment of the Army, consisting of Hessian Troops under Colonel Donop [Count Carl von Donop] appointed to attack the Redoubt, crossed the Delaware opposite to Philadelphia the 21st Instant, in a Division of Flat Boats which Captain [S. W.] Clayton conducted in the Night by Fort-Island, along the Western Shore for that purpose.

The Attack of the Redoubt being observed to take place the Evening of the 22nd, just upon the Close of Day, Captain Reynolds immediately slipped and advanced with the Squadron (to which the Merlin had been joined) as fast as he was able with the Flood [tide]; to second the Attempt of the Troops which were seen to be very warmly engaged. But the Change in the natural Course of the River caused by the Obstructions, appearing to have altered the Channel, Augusta and Merlin unfortunately grounded some distance below the second Line of Chevaux de Frize. And the fresh North Wind which then prevailed greatly checking the Rising of the Tide, they could not be got afloat on the subsequent Flood.

The Diversion was endeavored to be continued by the Frigates at which the Fire from the Enemy's Gallies was chiefly pointed for some Time. But as the Night advanced, the Hessian Detachment having been repulsed [and Count von Donop killed], the Firing ceased.

The Rebels discovering the State of the Augusta and Merlin in the Morning of the 23rd, renewed the Fire from their Gallies, Works and floating Batteries. But their movable Force approaching little nearer than a Random-Shot, the Injury was inconsiderable to the Ships. And by the Alertness and Spirit of the Officers and Seamen (of the Transports as well as Ships of War) attempts in the Boats of the [Rebel] Fleet on this Occasion, four Fire Vessels directed against the Augusta, were sent without Effect.
The Isis was at this time warping through between the lower Chevaux de Frize. Empty Transports had been ordered up from the Fleet and other Preparations made for lightening Augusta; When by some Accident, not otherwise connected with the Circumstances of the Action, but as it was probably caused by the Wads from her Guns, the Ship took Fire abaft. And it spread with such Rapidity, that all Endeavors to extinguish it were used in vain. The men were thereupon taken out, except a very small Number not yet ascertained. The second Lieutenant Baldock, the Chaplain and Gunner appear to be of that Number.

In this State of the Proceeding it was necessary to withdraw the Frigates, for securing them from the Effect of the Blast. And as the Merlin could not be protected from the same Injury, I judged it requisite to give Order for the Sloop to be evacuated and destroyed. The other Ships dropped down nearer to Billingport.

Much Commendation is due to the several Captains, inferior Officers and Seamen concerned in this Service: And particularly in their resolute Exertions to assist in saving the Crew of the Augusta.

The Packet being to sail immediately with the General’s Dispatches, I have only to mention; That as the Appointment of the Ships for the Winter-Season must be regulated by the Motions of the Army; I am not at this Time able to submit any particular Ideas for their Lordship’s Information thereon, in Addition to the enclosed Return of their present Disposition.

A State of the Ships is sent herewith. And I have the Mortification of being obliged to observe, with respect to the Health of the Seamen; That I fear it will be farther very much impaired on Account of the small Proportion of Slops\(^\text{17}\) which (as I [re]collect from my last Letter of the 31st of May from the Commissioners of the Navy) are arrived in the Buffalo. The Fatigues which the few Seamen capable of doing Duty in Boat Service necessarily undergo, gives great Cause to apprehend how much it may operate in its Consequences, on the future Service of the Ships attending upon the Army.

I am with great Consideration,

Sir

Your most obedient humble Servant

HOWE

\(^{17}\) Loose garments worn by seamen, the trousers coming half way to the ankles.
The General [Sir William Howe] advising me of his Intention to send a Packet immediately to England, I avail myself of the opportunity, to acquaint you for the Information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, respecting the Progress of the Military Services in which the Ships of War have been concerned since the date of my last Letter of the 25th of October, the Duplicate of which is herewith enclosed.

I mentioned in that Letter, the Preparations making for the Attack meditated on the Works the Rebels had constructed on either Shore, for preventing an open Communication by Water with the Army at Philadelphia; on which it was obvious to them that the farther Operations of the Campaign would greatly depend.

The Wind still continuing to prevent the Vigilant from passing to the Rear of the Enemy's Works on Fort Island, by the only Channel practicable for that purpose, the opportunity was taken by the King's Forces and by the Enemy, with equal Assiduity, to strength the Preparations judged expedient on either part for the proposed Attack.

The Officers and Seamen of the Ships of War and Transports, were employed in the mean time with unremitting Fatigue and Perseverance, to convey Provisions, Artillery and Stores, to the Schylkill, between Fort Island and the Pensylvania Shore. Six 24 Pounders from the Eagle, and Four 32 Pounders from the Somerset,\(^{18}\) transported in the Same Manner with the requisite proportions of Ammunition, were mounted in the Batteries erected by the General's Appointment on Province Island.

The Wind becoming favorable the 15th Instant, that first Occasion was taken for ordering the Ships upon the intended Service.

The Somerset and Isis were appointed to proceed up the Eastern Channel of the River; to act against the Fort in Front: The Roe-buck, Pearl, and Liverpool, with the Cornwallis Galley and some smaller armed-Vessels, against a Battery with heavy Artillery which the Rebels had lately opened on a Point above and near to Manto Creek; in a situation to rake the Ships anchored to fire upon the

\(^{18}\) Somerset, 64 guns, George Ourry.
A Sketch of Fort Island

A Commandants House, B Barracks, C High thick Wall, with parts indented for the Men to boil their Kettles, and pierced with Loop Holes. DDDD Block Houses built of Wood with Loop Holes, and mounting 4 pieces of Cannon each, 2 on the lower Platform, and 2 on the Upper. E.E. Ravellins with Trous de Loup.
Fort, and more advantageously chosen as the shoalness of the Water did not admit Ships to approach within a desirable distance of the Work.

The Vigilant, with a Hulk mounting Three 18 Pounders, commanded by Lieut. Botham of the Eagle, proceeded at the same time through the Channel round Hog-Island, and anchored on that side the Fort, according to the intention pointed out, for co-operating with the Batteries on the Pensylvania Shore.

The Isis being as well placed in the Eastern Channel as the Circumstances of the Navigation would permit, rendered very essential Service against the Fort and Gallies much to the personal Honor of Capt. Cornwallis and Credit of the Discipline in his Ship. The Roe-buck and other Frigates stationed against the Battery, were equally well conducted.

Greater Caution being necessary in placing the Somerset, that Ship could not be carried as far up the Channel as the Isis was advanced.

The Impression made by the Batteries on Province Island (before very considerable) being united with the well-directed Efforts from the Vigilant and Hulk, soon silenced the Artillery of the Fort: And farther Preparation being in Progress for opening the Stockade and forcing the Works next Morning, the Enemy set fire to and evacuated the Fort during the Night.

The Numbers of the Enemy killed and wounded, appeared to have been very considerable. Those in the different Ships, as stated in the annexed Return, were much less than could be supposed; particularly of the Isis and Roebuck, which were struck many times from the Gallies and Works.

As a farther Evidence to their Lordships of the meritorious Conduct of the several Officers therein named, I have added the General's concurring Sentiments signified to me on the Occasion. Captain Duncan remained several Weeks with the Army, to superintend the different nautic[al] Services and Preparations before mentioned.

A Detachment from the Army under the Command of Lord Cornwallis, having been landed the 18th at Billingport (where a Post had been sometime before established) for attacking the Redoubt

19 Lord Cornwallis on Oct. 19, 1781, surrendered his army at Yorktown, and the war was over.
at Red Bank, the Enemy abandoned and blew up the Work. They had passed several of their Gallies unperceived above the Town of Philadelphia in the Night of the 19th which proved very favorable for the purpose, and attempted to do the same with the rest of the Gallies and other Water-Force the following Night: But being seasonably discovered, they were opposed with so much Effect by Lieutenant [James] Watt of the Roebuck (ordered by Captain Hammond before my Arrival to take his Station in the Delaware Prize near the Town) that not more than Three or Four of the former appear to have escaped: And being otherwise unable to prevent the Capture of the rest of their armed Craft (consisting of Two Zebecques, the Two Floating-Batteries, and several Ships, besides Fire-Vessels amounting to about Seventeen in Number) they were quitted and burnt. Lieutenant Watt having testified great Propriety and Spirit on this Occasion, I have continued him in the Command of the Delaware, retained as an armed-Ship in the Service, to remain near the Town of Philadelphia, where such additional Naval Force is particularly requisite. And if Their Lordships shall think fit to have that Ship purchased and received into His Majesty’s Navy on the Establishment of a Sloop of War, I beg leave to recommend the Appointment of Lieutenant Watt to the Command thereof, on such Establishment.

A more accurate Inspection of the Obstructions to the Navigation of the River adjacent to Fort Island, becoming practicable under the Circumstances beforementioned. Two Channels were discovered through which the Transports containing the Provisions, Stores and other Necessaries for the Army might proceed to Philadelphia. They were ordered up the River accordingly, to be afterward secured at the Wharfs of the Town, for the approaching Winter Months.

The Vigilant, and the Cornwallis Galley will be to remain with the Delaware at the Town, in such Stations as the General deems expedient for the defence of it: and the Roebuck, Pearl, Camilla, and Zebra will be left there also for any occasional Service under the chief Command of Capt. Hammond, during my Absence with

20 Also zebec or xebec, a small two- or three-mast ship, with one lateen sail, otherwise square-rigged.
21 Zebra, 14 guns, Hon. John Tollemache.
the other Ships of War for which no sufficient Retreat is to be here obtained.

When these Arrangements have been completed, I intend proceeding to Rhode Island, with such of the larger Ships as may not be immediately appointed for particular cruizing Service. I shall then deliver Their Lordships Instructions to the Rear-Admiral [Sir Peter Parker], that he may repair to his destined Command at Jamaica, as soon as I am able to make a proper Disposition for the Conduct of the Squadron attached to the central Station where he is now detained; Commodore [William] Hotham's presence being indispensable, in the meantime, at New York.

I have on this head farther to represent the great Difficulties I am under in the present Circumstances of the War, for want of the Assistance to be derived from the requisite Number of Flag, or other Commanding Officers, necessary in this extensive Charge; more especially since the Illness of Captain Griffith who has been incapable of business ever since his Arrival in this River, has deprived me of the benefit I before received from his able Services. And I am to entreat that in the Nomination of such Officers (which I am of opinion should not be less than Three, or even Four, including Commodore Hotham from whose Talents I have received the most essential Aid). Their Lordships will be pleased to take into their Consideration the particular Officer in whom they will permit me to vest the Authority with which I have the Honor to be intrusted, in case of my greater Inability to execute the various Duties of this very complicated Service, which I must acknowledge with much Concern I have great Reason to apprehend my impaired Constitution will not allow me to attend, with the Punctuality that the Nature and Importance of it requires.

The unfortunate Event of Lieut. Gen'l. Burgoyne's Operations with the Northern Army, terminating as I am advised by the Commander in Chief, with the Surrender of those Troops agreeable to the Tenor of a Convention executed the 16th of last October, has rendered a suitable Provision necessary to be made for their Conveyance to Europe. A proper Number of Transports has been appropriated for that Occasion. But as it would be scarce practicable at this Season of the Year for light Transports to gain the Port of Boston, where the Embarkation is conditioned to take place, the
Transports have been ordered under Convoy of the Raisonable\(^{22}\) to Rhode-Island: that if the proposed Alteration is adopted, and the Troops can be embarked at that Port, they may be the sooner released.

The Rear-Admiral is directed to furnish Two Frigates for attending the Transports to Europe; subject in their more particular Appointments to the desires of the Lieut. General [Burgoyne], or other Commanding Officer present with the Troops, conformable to the Intentions of the Commander in Chief forwarded by the same opportunity. The Captains nominated for this purpose, are upon their Arrival in England, to acquaint You therewith and transmitting the Particulars of the Orders and Requisitions by which they have been governed, they will be to wait for their Lordships Commands in consequence at the Ports to which they have been respectively directed.

In my Letter of the 29th of June last I reported the destination of the Milford\(^{23}\) to attempt the Seizure of a foreign Ship said to be taking in Masts in Kennebec River. The Captain, Sir William Burnaby went there, and afterwards to Sheepscot River for the same purpose, but was not able to provide any Information correspondent to the Intelligence on which his Instructions were founded. A subsequent attempt has been executed in Sheepscot River by Sir George Collier in the Rainbow\(^{24}\) with Effect. The Intricacy of the Navigation, and Opposition made by the armed Inhabitants from the Shore in the narrower part of the River where the Ships had been conveyed did not admit of her being moved down to the Rainbow. The Officer ordered upon this Service, was therefore obliged to destroy the Ship. Four Masts of different Dimensions were brought away in the Rainbow for Use in the Yard at Halifax. Sir George Collier succeeded farther to destroy some Stores and other Materials provided in the Harbour of Mechias [Machias] for making Incursions upon the opposite Shore of Nova Scotia.

On the 9th Instant I received Letters from Captain Pearson dated the 1st of last August from Quebec. He acquaints me therein, that he had found it necessary, in consequence of Gen’l. Burgoyne’s

\(^{22}\) *Raisonable*, 64 guns, Thomas Fitzherbert.

\(^{23}\) *Milford*, 28 guns, Sir William Burnaby.

\(^{24}\) *Rainbow*, 44 guns, Sir George Collier.
Application, to send all the Supernumeraries which arrived from England, being 185 in Number, for the Lake Service. He does not specify what had been done with the Transports detained by the Absence of their Crews: but as he adds that he had sent an armed-Ship to England with the Dispatches from General Burgoyne to make known the Progress of the Northern Army, at that time upon the Lakes, I conclude he will have advised You by the same Conveyance, of the farther Particulars necessary to be communicated respecting the several Services he had in charge. His Letters have been forwarded to me from Halifax. But all Intercourse with the St. Lawrence being impracticable since the Receipt of those Letters, I have not been able to send any Instructions to him on their Contents.

I am with great Consideration
Sir Your most obedient
humble Servant
HOWE

* * *

The Pearson to whom Howe was unable to send instructions was Richard Pearson (1731–1806), later Sir Richard. Pearson's next command was the 44-gun Serapis. While bringing in a convoy from the Baltic he fell in with John Paul Jones in the Bonhomme Richard. Pearson fought Jones so valiantly that, though defeated (he saved his convoy), he returned to England a hero and was knighted by the king. On hearing this Jones is reported to have said that if he had the good fortune to meet him again he would "make a lord of him."

It is disappointing that Lord Howe never mentioned how the chevaux de frise were destroyed. Probably the Navy Board was already familiar with how to breach this type of river defence.

Philadelphia being secured and the army comfortably settled for the winter, with the navy to keep the supply lines open, Lord Howe sailed for Rhode Island. It was now the navy's task to take Burgoyne's entire army home. Returning to Philadelphia in the spring he saw his disillusioned brother off to England, and in May sent in his own resignation.

Having accomplished nothing, the British army evacuated Philadelphia, and Lord Howe returned to New York. In the meantime the French had entered the war; their battleships lay off Rhode
Island. This was war as Howe understood and preferred it, and, though the French ships were bigger and more heavily armed, he sought an engagement. A gale, however, scattered both fleets, which were forced to retire and refit.

Howe's resignation having been accepted, he turned the American command over to Rear Admiral James Gambier (1723–1789) and sailed for England. In October, 1778, he struck his flag at Portsmouth and went ashore to face criticism, the common fate of the commander who does not bring home a victory. That disappointed Loyalist Joseph Galloway published pamphlets accusing him of stupidity in not blockading the whole American coast with his eighty-five big ships, and of cowardice in running away from D'Estaing's French fleet, ignoring the fact that a violent gale had blown both fleets apart.

Lord Howe was not allowed to remain in retirement long. The next ministry recalled him and years of fighting and honors lay ahead, climaxed by Queen Charlotte's presentation of a diamond-hilted sword. Once more a national hero, but crippled with rheumatism, he died in 1799 at the age of seventy-three.

_San Marino, Calif._

_Marion Balderston_