



Detail from *A view of the attack against Fort Washington and rebel redoubts near New York on the 16 of November 1776 by the British and Hessian brigades*, by Thomas Davies, 1776

Picture Source: From *New York Public Library, Digital Collection*

Gen. Sir William Howe's Attack on Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Excerpts of Letter No. 31 from Gen. Sir William Howe, Commander-in-Chief, North America, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, Reporting the Capture of Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

New York 30 November 1776

My Lord...

[Hessian] Lieutenant-General [Wilhelm Von] Knyphausen had for some days established his post on the York side of King's Bridge within cannon shot of Fort Washington, which was covered by very strong ground and exceedingly difficult of access; but the importance of this post, which with Fort Lee on the opposite shore of Jersey, kept the Enemy in command of the navigation of the North River while it barred the communication with York by land, made the possession of it absolutely necessary. Preparations were therefore made for a general attack and thirty flatboats under the direction of Captains Wilkinson and Malloy passed up the North River on the night of the 14th undiscovered by the Enemy.

Everything being prepared and the attack fixed for the morning of the 16th, Lieutenant Colonel [James] Patterson, Adjutant-General, was sent the 15th to summon the commanding Officer [Rebel Col. Robert Magaw] to surrender and to warn him of the consequences that must attend a general attack, to which he relied he would defend himself to the last extremity.

Four attacks were determined upon: the first, under the command of Lieu^t. General Knyphausen, against the Enemy's left on the side of King's Bridge, in two columns formed by Detachments from the Hessians of his Corps, the Brigade of Raille and Regiment of Waldeck; the 2nd by the 1st [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] and 2^d Battalions of Light Infantry and two Battalions of Guards under the command of Brigadier General [Edward] Mathew to land by Haerlem Creek upon the Enemy's right from thirty Flatboats, which attack was to be supported by the 1st and 2^d Grenadiers and 33^d Regiment under the Command of [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis; the 3^d attack intended as a feint by the 42^d Regiment, to be embarked in batteaux in a [Harlem] Creek opposite to Colonel [Roger] Morris's house and upon the left of the Enemy's lines towards New York; the 4th by [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy with the Corps under his command on York Island to assault the right flank of the Enemy's Entrenchments on that side.

The field Artillery and batteries being properly disposed for the three attacks on the side of King's Bridge and Haerlem Creek, Lieu^t General Knyphausen moved forward about noon; but having a

very thick wood to pass in which the Enemy was very advantageously posted, it was some time before he could penetrate, from which difficulties his Corps was for a considerable time exposed to the fire of three pieces of cannon. As soon as this attack began, the Light Infantry moved and landed under a brisk fire, before and after they had quitted the boats, from a party of the Rebels posted behind rocks and trees; however, by getting up a very steep, uneven mountain with their usual activity they soon dispersed the Enemy. The Guards, followed by the Grenadiers and 33^d, landed without any loss.

Intelligence in the meantime being received that Lord Percy had carried an advanced work, orders were sent to Lieutenant Colonel [Thomas] Sterling commanding the 42^d Regiment to endeavour to land and for two Battalions of the 2^d Brigade [5th and 49th Regts.] to support him. Upon which he immediately advanced in his boats through a heavy fire with great perseverance, and forcing his way up a steep height which was well defended by a body of the rebels, he gained the summit, took one hundred and seventy prisoners, and penetrating across the island facilitated Lord Percy's success against the Enemy's lines opposed to him, which his Lordship passed.

Colonel [Johann] Raille who led the right column of Lieutenant-General Knyphausen's attack, having after a considerable opposition forced the Enemy from their strongholds, pushed forward to their advanced works and lodged his column within one hundred yards of the Fort, from whence he summoned them to surrender, upon which they readily desired to treat.

Lieutenant General Knyphausen's column, having more impediments to encounter in passing through the wood, could not join the right column until they had got up to the Fort. The Enemy upon his appearance surrendered prisoners of war to the number of two thousand seven hundred, including Officers, besides the prisoners made by the 42^d Regiment.

The Enemy had 3 Officers and 50 Men killed and 6 Officers and 90 Men wounded in the different attacks.

Source: *Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. XII, Transcripts 1776*, p. 258 - 264 from TNA, Colonial Office, Secretary of State, Military Dispatches at CO 5/93, f. 294.

Extract of the Scots Magazine Account of Capture of Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Extracts from Letters

"Delancey's Mills, Nov. 24. On the 15th current, the Adjutant-General went, in the evening, with a summons for the rebels to surrender Fort Washington, otherwise that Gen. [Sir William] Howe must be expected to storm the place, and every one in it might expect to be put to the sword. The answer he received was, That Col. [Robert] Macgaw, who commanded, and the troops in the fort, were determined to hold it out to the last extremity; and that they knew the humanity of the General and the British too well to expect that no quarter would be given them. – The attack of the rebel lines had been previously concerted, and the army ordered to be under arms at break of day...

Flat-bottomed boats came round, by the North river, to King's-bridge, to take on board the light infantry, grenadiers, and guards, who were to attack a redoubt of the enemy's on a height above Haerlem river; and more boats came round by Haerlem, to take on board the 42d, who were only intended to make a demonstration, but which afterwards proved a very serious affair...

The 42d regiment was the first who gained their point, although they had several killed in their boats; and as their landing was entirely within the rebels lines, they facilitated [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy's attack; who indeed, had not a shot fired on his entering the lines, the enemy having run from them on seeing the 42d regiment on the heights at Col. [Roger] Morris's, and made the best of their way to get across the North river in boats; but the Highlanders pursued them, and took 170 of them prisoners before Lord Percy came up to their assistance...

The light infantry met with little opposition in their attack, and soon possesses themselves of the redoubt; and, likewise, obliged the rebels to take shelter in the fort. The Hessians lost near 300 killed and wounded, and the 42d about eighty.

All that was intended by the different attacks was to gain the high grounds on a level, so as to be able to make our approaches; but as they all succeeded, the rebels had nothing left but to surrender on capitulation, and themselves, in number 2700 men, prisoners of war: for, indeed, the fort was incapable of holding half the men, and only depended on the strength of the lines for its own safety.

[Hessian Lt.] Gen. [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen and the Hessians, and [Lt.] Col. [Thomas] Stirling and the 42d regiment, gained great honour, and the particular thanks of the General, for their spirited behaviour. They undoubtedly deserved it: for, to crawl up a hill with their hands and feet, in the face of an enemy, was a thing few troops would, or, indeed, could do.”

Source: *Scots Magazine*, Appendix, 1776.

Adm. Richard, Viscount Howe’s Account of the Naval Support for the Attack on Fort Washington, 64-gun *HMS Eagle*, Nov. 16, 1776

Admiralty Office, December 30, 1776.

CAPTAIN Mason, of his Majesty’s [16 gun] sloop the *Tamar*, arrived yesterday at Dartmouth, and came to town this morning with dispatches from Lord Viscount Howe, of which the following is a copy.

Eagle, off New-York, November 23, 1776.

SIR...

On the 16th instant the General directed an attack to be made on their lines adjacent to Fort Washington, a regular work constructed upon the high grounds above Jeffery’s Hook. It was appointed to be carried on from the side of New York, off Kingsbridge, and two separate embarkations from the continent, across the East river. Thirty flat boats were ordered up to Kingsbridge by the North river the night of the 14th, under the direction of Capt. [Thomas] Wilkinson... assisted by Capt. Molloy.- The batteaux, mostly manned from transports, were commanded by Lieutenant Botham of the [32-gun *HMS*] *Brune*, Lieutenant Loggie of the [20-gun *HMS*] *Mercury*, and the Agent Lieutenant Henry.

The troops embarked in the boats, had a considerable fire to sustain from the enemy, in their passage across the East river, and at their landing; but having surmounted every obstacle under the farther disadvantage of a very steep ascent, to gain the flank of the enemy’s lines, and the other attacks succeeding at the same time, the fort was completely invested in the evening. The rebels, in number about two thousand seven hundred, were thereupon induced to surrender prisoners of war, and several cannon, with a considerable proportion of military stores, were taken from the fort, and out-works.

Captain Wilkinson’s presence being deemed most material with the flat boats; the [32-gun *HMS*] *Pearl* was left under the direction of the First Lieutenant Scott to be placed for covering the march of the Hessian troops, and to flank the enemy’s lines on the side of the North river, in which service his behaviour was much approved. The same commendation is due to the officers and seamen in the boats; only one of the last was killed and five wounded. The loss of men, at the landing, having happened chiefly amongst the troops.

Source: *General Evening Post* (London), Dec. 29 -31, 1776.



Detail Showing the Attack on the Laurel Hill Redoubts from “A view of the attack against Fort Washington and rebel redoubts near New York on the 16 of November 1776 by the British and Hessian brigades, by Thomas Davies, 1776

Picture Source: From *New York Public Library, Digital Collection*

Brig. Gen. Edward Mathew’s Attack on the Laurel Hill Redoubt and Fort Washington with the Light Infantry, Brigade of Guards and Grenadiers New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Excerpts of Letter No. 31 from Gen. Sir William Howe Describing Brig. Gen. Mathew’s Attack, Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

New York 30 November 1776

My Lord...

Four attacks were determined upon... the 2nd by the 1st [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] and 2^d Battalions of Light Infantry and two Battalions of Guards under the command of Brigadier General [Edward] Mathew to land by Haerlem Creek upon the Enemy’s right from thirty Flatboats, which attack was to be supported by the 1st and 2^d Grenadiers and 33^d Regiment under the Command of [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis... The field Artillery and batteries being properly disposed for the three attacks on the side of King’s Bridge and Haerlem Creek, [Hessian] Lieu^t General [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen moved forward about noon; but having a very thick wood to pass in which the Enemy was very advantageously posted, it was some time before he could penetrate, from which difficulties his Corps was for a considerable time exposed to the fire of three pieces of cannon. As soon as this attack began, the Light Infantry moved and landed under a brisk fire, before and after they had quitted the boats, from a party of the Rebels posted behind rocks and trees; however, by getting up a very steep, uneven mountain with their usual activity they soon dispersed the Enemy. The Guards, followed by the Grenadiers and 33^d, landed without any loss...

Source: Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. XII, Transcripts 1776, p. 258 - 264 from TNA, Colonial Office, Secretary of State, Military Dispatches at CO 5/93, f. 294.

Account of Battle of Fort Washington by Lt. and Capt. Thomas Glyn, 1st Regt. of Foot Guards, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

November 16 [1776]

The Light Infantry & Brigade of Guards under Brigadier Gen^l [Edward] Mathew marched at five embarked in the flat Bottom Boats at Kingsbridge Creek, as soon as the tide served this Corps fell down to the place of landing which was a steep rock to ascend, and very difficult for Boats to approach with any expedition, the Rebels as the day had broke opened a Battery of two six Pounders to annoy the troops in the Boats, but fortunately no damage was done, upon our making the Shore the rebels appeared in some force came down from the height, and fired small Arms into the foremost Boats three private were killed & two wounded in the headmost Boat; upon the two first Companies being landed the Enemy retired to the Fort the Post required was to gain Fort Washington afterwards called Fort Kniphausen which could open a free Communication to new York, & secure the island. The fort was situated on a very high ground guarded on the West by the Hudsons River, on the North by strong Ground very difficult of access with Abbatis of great length placed in every path; on the east by strong ground, Kingsbridge and Harlem Creeks; on the South which is the main road to new York were considerable detached Works; Indeed the Works throughout were too extensive for the Number of troops, as were generally the case with the Americans who were indefatigable in constructing Redoubts...

Source and Note: *The Journal of Ensign Thomas Glyn, 1st Regiment of Foot Guards on American Service with the Brigade of Guards 1776-1777*, Transcription by Linnea Bass from the original handwritten manuscript, pp. 14-15. Thomas Glyn was promoted to Lt. and Captain in the 1st Regt. of Foot Guards on June 15, 1776.

Ens. Henry Stirke's Account of the 1st Lt. Infantry Battalion in the Attack on Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

16th This morning the Army made 4 different Attacks on the Rebel lines, and Works, on the Heights, round Fort Washington, in York Island; which were carried with very little loss. Our [1st Lt. Inf. Bn.] Battalion had not a man Kill'd, or Wounded. The Hessian Grenadiers suffer'd most.

Source: "A British Officer's Revolutionary War Journal, 1776 – 1778," Ed. S. Sydney Bradford in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Baltimore, June 1961, p. 163.



Detail showing Brig. Gen. Edward Mathew's Assault on Laurel Hill redoubt from "A Topographical Map of the North". Part of New York Island, Exhibiting the Plan of Fort Washington, now Fort Kniphausen, With the Rebels Lines to the Southward, which were forced by the Troops under the Command of the R^t. Hon^{ble}. Earl Percy, on the 16th Nov^r. 1776, and Survey'd immediately after by Order of his Lordship, By Claude Joseph Sauthier. To which is

added the Attack made to the North^d. by the Hessians Survey'd by Order of Lieut^t. Gen^l. Knyphausen. Published by Permission of The R^e. Hon^{ble}. the Commissioners of Trade & Plantations. By W^m. Faden, 1777."

Map Source: Wikimedia Commons, from *Boston Public Library Digital Map Collection*

Excerpt of Notebook of Lt. John Peebles, 42nd Grenadier Company (3rd British Grenadier Battalion), Describes the Battle of Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Nov^r. 16th. Attack of F^t. Washington

The Troops were under arms according to the orders of yesterday. We the [1st, 2nd and 3rd Bns.] Grenad^{rs}. marched from our Encampment (leaving our Tents stand^e), an hour before day towards Kingsbridge when near that turned to the left & halted about sun rise in fields near Harlem River about a mile below Kingsbridge & out of site of the Rebels works on t^h other side Harlem River. having a great train of artillery brought up to play against the Enemy, most of which was planted on the eastern bank of Harlem River, a Cannonade was began between six & seven in the morn^g. which increased as the day advanced from all our Guns & Mortars on Harlem River and those in [Hessian Lt.] Gen^l. [Wilhelm von] Knyphausens [northern approach] Quarter together with that of a Frigate [32-gun *HMS Pearl*] lying in Hudsons River, and continue for several hours. The Light Infantry [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] & Guards were Embark^d in flat boats about King's Bridge, that came round by the North River, & fell down tow^{ds}. the high point of land opposite to where we halted, keeping themselves under cover of the westshore from few Guns the Enemy had on the high ground that was to be attack^d, against which our Guns and mortars kept up a very brisk fire. it was near noon when a signal was made for Gen^l Kniphausen to begin his attack upon the Enemy posted on the High grounds to the Right nearest Hudson River... In the mean time the Light Infantry & Guards were landed at the foot of the high ground opposite to where we were, & dash^d up the Hill with alacrity, driving the Enemy before then. The Boats were immediately sent back for the Grenad^{rs} who mounted the hill as they arrived without firing a shot. While these operations were going on to the northward of F^t. Washington, [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy was advancing with his Troops from the Lines on New York Side & the 42^d. Reg^t. cross^d Harlem River near opposite to Colo: [Roger] Morris's House which is 4 or 5 miles below King's bridge, where they were opposed by a considerable body of the Enemy Posted on those steep hills who began their fire upon them before they landed; notwithstanding every difficulty they push^d ashore unsupported, mounted the Hill & drove them quite across the island killing & taking a good many, & clear^d the way in a great measure for Lord Percy's Brigades to advance – by this time about 3 oclock in the afternoon all the different attacks had succeeded & we were in possession of all the High grounds in the environs of Fort Washington, having taken & killed a good number between 3 & 400 of the Enemy & driven the rest into the Fort: Gen^l. Kniphausen proceeded with the Hessians to the very Barrier of the Fort which being surrounded on all quar^{ters} they beat a parley & desired to Capitulate. The terms given them were to ground their arms and become Prisoners of war, which they did to the Number of about 2600 & the Fort was taken possession immediately by the light infantry & some Hessians... Most of the Troops returned to their former ground that night a good deal fatigued

Source and Note: NRS, *Peebles' Journal* Entry Nov. 16, 1776 also published in *John Peebles' American War*, Ed. Ira D. Gruber, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg (Pa.), 1998, pp. 62-64.

Friend of Rebel Capt. Alexander Graydon's Account of the Attack on Laural Hill Redoubt, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

But I here suspend my own relation for the purpose of introducing a more ample statement of unquestionable authenticity, obligingly furnished by a friend; and which, embracing more, detail, and mentioning some interesting particulars but little known, will occupy a few pages, much to the advantage of these Memoirs... [Rebel] Colonel [Robert] Magaw, who commanded on the island, remained in the fort... [Lt.] Colonel [William] Baxter, with his regiment of militia [five companies of Col. Joseph Hart's

Bucks County Battalion of the Pennsylvania Flying Camp], on Harlem river, opposite Fort Washington... The militia under Colonel Baxter, posted on Haerlem river, were attacked by the British guards and light infantry, who landed on the island of New York, protected by the fire from the work on the heights on the opposite side of the river. A short contest ensued; but our troops, overpowered by numbers, and leaving behind them Colonel Baxter, who was killed by a British officer as he was bravely encouraging his men, retired to the fort. The guards and light infantry, then crossed the island to the heights on the North river, a little below the fort, underwhich [Rebel Lt.] Colonel [Lambert] Cadwalader with his party [3rd Pennsylvania Bn.], but a few minutes before, had passed, in his way to the fort.

Source and Note: *Memoirs of His Own Time...*, by Alexander Graydon, Ed. John Stockton Littell, Lindsay & Blakiston, Philadelphia, 1846, Google Books, pp.197 – 202. Baxter's force noted from "The Pennsylvania Flying Camp, July-November 1776," Francis E. Devine, Univ. of Mississippi, p. 76.



Royal Highlanders Clambering up the Steep Rise from the East River towards Fort Washington

Picture Source: *The Black Watch, The Record of an Historic Regiment*, by Archibald Forbes, Cassell and Company, Ltd., London, 1910, Google Books, facing. p. 106.

The Attack by the 42nd Highlanders Across Harlem Creek and Up the Heights Near Col. Roger Morris' House, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Excerpts of Letter from Gen. Sir William Howe Describes the Attack of the 42nd Highlanders, Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

New York 30 November 1776

My Lord...

Four attacks were determined upon... the 3^d attack intended as a feint by the 42^d Regiment, to be embarked in batteaux in a [Harlem] Creek opposite to Colonel [Roger] Morris's house and upon the left of the Enemy's lines towards New York; the 4th by [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy with the Corps under his command on York Island to assault the right flank of the Enemy's Entrenchments on that side...

Intelligence in the meantime being received that Lord Percy had carried an advanced work, orders were sent to Lieutenant Colonel [Thomas] Sterling commanding the 42^d Regiment to endeavour to land and for two Battalions [5th and 49th Regts.] of the 2^d Brigade to support him. Upon which he immediately advanced in his boats through a heavy fire with great perseverance, and forcing his way up a steep height which was well defended by a body of the rebels, he gained the summit, took one hundred and seventy prisoners, and penetrating across the island facilitated Lord Percy's success against the Enemy's lines opposed to him, which his Lordship passed...

[Hessian] Lieutenant General [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen's column, having more impediments to encounter in passing through the wood, could not join the right column until they had got up to the Fort. The Enemy upon his appearance surrendered prisoners of war to the number of two thousand seven hundred, including Officers, besides the prisoners made by the 42^d Regiment.

The Enemy had 3 Officers and 50 Men killed and 6 Officers and 90 Men wounded in the different attacks.

Source: *Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. XII, Transcripts 1776*, p. 258 - 264 from TNA, *Colonial Office, Secretary of State, Military Dispatches* at CO 5/93, f. 294.

Excerpt of Letter from Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling to Gen. Lord John Murray, Col., 42nd Regt. Describing the Royal Highlanders at Fort Washington and Some of the Wounded Officers, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Dated Piscataqua in the Jerseys 3 Miles from Brunswick
on the road leading to Amboy 13th March 1777

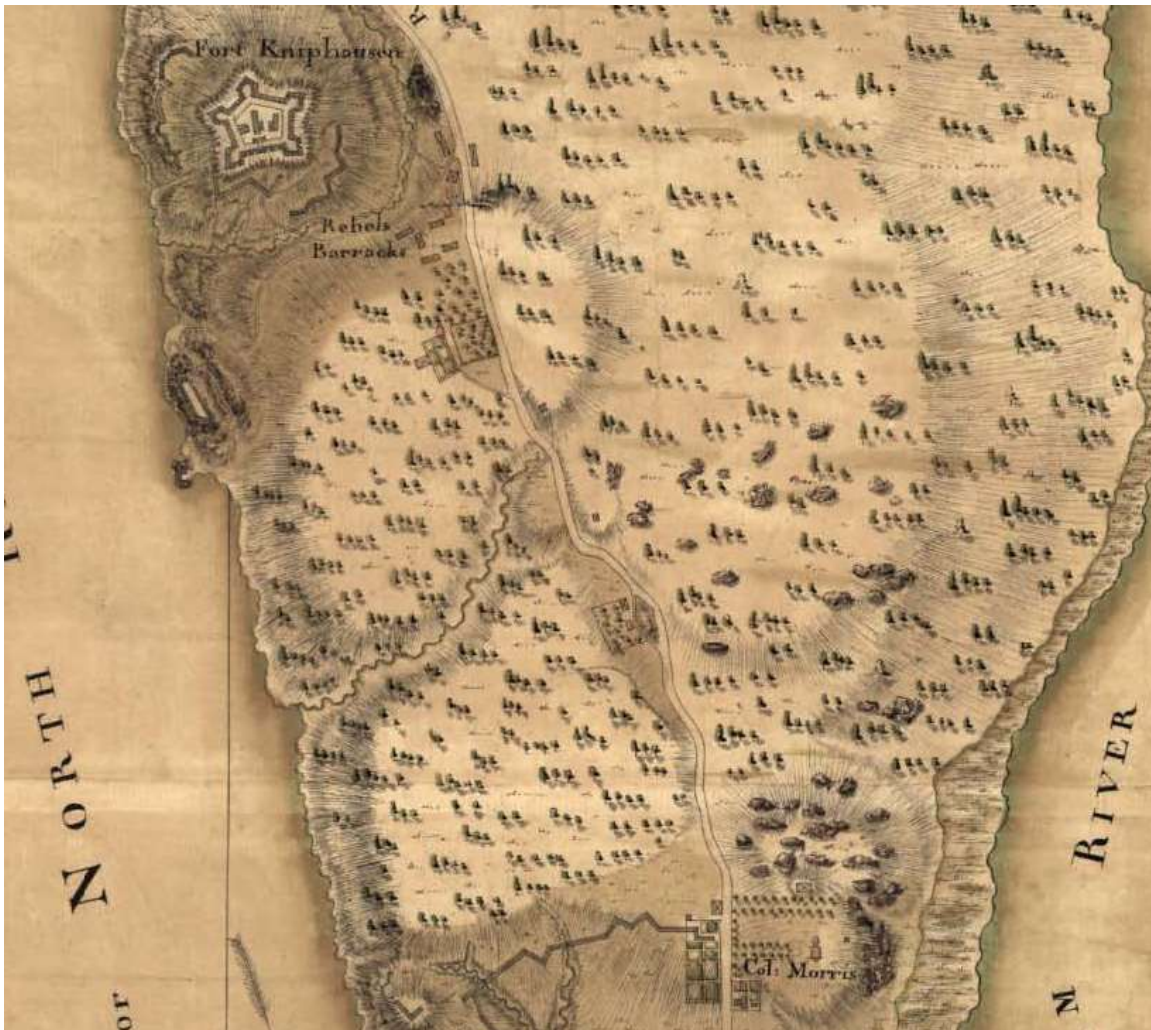
My Lord.

I have the honor of your Lops: [Lordship's] letters of the 30th Dec^r & 4th Jan^y and am much obliged to you for the Gazette Extraordinary inclosed the Accounts in it of the behavior of your Reg^t on the 16th Nov^r is very justly told, and nothing but the Intrepidity and valour of Such men could have Surmounted the Difficultys we had to encounter that day, as the Troops ordered to Sustain us did not land until the affair was over, I believe I did not mention to your Lordship the Bravery & coolness of Lieu^t Norman M^cLeod, which ought not to be omitted, he happened to be wounded in the Boat before he Landed, by a Shot through the body but least the men should be intimidated he said nothing of it but Landed with his men, when he could go no further, he is now in a fair way of recovery..., L^t Peter [Patrick] Graham is recovering, but will be long e'er he gets the use of his Arm.

I have the honor to be

[Thomas Stirling]

Source and Note: *Lord John Murray Papers*. Regarding Lt. Patrick Graham, the names Patrick and Peter were often used interchangeably.



Detail of "A map of part of New-York Island showing a plan of Fort Washington, now call'd Ft. Knipphausen with the rebels lines on the south part, from which they were driven on the 16th of November 1776 by the troupes under the orders of the Earl of Percy," 1776, by Claude Joseph Sauthier, Showing area between 42nd Regt. landing at Col. Morris' House and Fort Washington.

Map Source: *Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.*

**Letter from Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling, 42nd Regt., to His Brother, Sir William Stirling of Ardoch,
Describing the Royal Highlanders' Attack on Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776**

Camp at English Neighborhood in the Jerseys near Fort Constitution [Approx. Nov. 18] 1776
... the army marched down to about Kingsbridge which the rebels had abandoned on the approach of a body of Hessians under the Command of [Hessian Lt.] Gen^l [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen retiring to a very strong post they had made further in the island of York called Fort Washington, there they expected to have withstood all our efforts as the Ground was remarkably strong & they had 3000 men to occupy it & winter there having a communication with the Jerseys from where they could at all times have supplies of every kind, this post was of importance for us to force as we could not be masters of York Island or indeed secure at New York while they had it, on the 16th therefore it was determined to attack it, [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy with 2 Brigades of British & two of Hessians marched from N York

side, where they had very strong lines, Gen^l Knyphausen with two columns of Hessians, about 2500 men, attacked them toward Kingsbridge; the L. Infantry [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] & Guards were to attack them across Harlem river, & the 42^d was intended to make a sham attack lower down on the same river to facilitate L^d Percy's approach, Knyphausens troops behaved Gallantly and earned their point over the most rugged Ground troops could march, the L^t Infantry & Guards met with no opposition except a few Grape at the L^t Infantry while in their Boats, L^d Percy was stopped by their lines which were strongly manned, the 42^d instead of a sham was ordered to make a real attack, and as that was not designed little was prepared to assist us, neither troops to second us nor a sufficiency of Artillery to cover our landing which for shortness of the space was as steep a precipice as you can conceive, in the face of an Enemy who lined the top of it and killed our men in the Boats as they approached, and so smart was the fire that the Sailors abandoned their oars & hid themselves in the bottom of the Boats, notwithstanding all this, we accomplished our point drove them from the Hill & chased them into the Fort and over to the North River, which immediately opened a door for L^d Percys troops the Rebels having abandoned their lines upon our getting behind them & giving a cheer on gaining the top of the bank, never did men behave more Gallantly than ours did, which all the army acknowledged or were in a more desperate situation, we had 3 officers wounded [Lts. Patrick Graham, Alexander Grant and Normand M^cLeod] & 79 men killed and wounded, next day the Reg^t & I got the particular thanks of the Gen^l [Sir William Howe] for our behavior along with others that were engaged, that evening the Fort surrendered into which we had drove all the Rebels to the amount of 2500, besides 150 our Reg^t took in the engagement, this secures all York Island to us we took a number of cannons stores of all kinds with two Months provisions & likewise took the heart of the rebels.

Source: NRS, *Papers of the Family of Stirling Home Drummond Moray of Abercairny* at GD 24/1/458/5.

Excerpt of Memorial to Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling, 42nd Regt., Regarding the 42nd Regt. at Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Memorial

L^t Col: Stirling 42^d Reg^t ...

... the 16th Nov^r when it was determined to Storm Fort Washington & the lines, [Lt. Gen. Wilhelm Von] Knyphausen w^t 2 Columns Hessians advanced from toward Kingsbridge The Light Inf^y supported by the Guards of the reserve were to cross Harleam river in Boats covered w^t 26 pieces of cannon lower down on Harleam opposite Morris's House 42^d was ordered to embark, and [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Earl Percy marched from N York Side w^t orders to attack their Lines, this has been sufficiently described by Gen^l [Sir William] Howe...

Source: Archives, *Regimental Headquarters, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment)*, Balhousie Castle, "Short account of the movements and engagements of the two battalions of the 42nd from 22nd August to 16th December 1776" (Addressed to Col T Stirling commanding 42nd Royal Highlanders.) BWRA 0398 Stirling Papers /5.



Pass of Killikrankie, Scotland, 1802

Picture Source: Wikimedia Commons from *A Journey from Edinburgh Through Parts of North Britain*, Alexander Campbell

Excerpt of Letter from Chap. James M^cLagan, 42nd Regt. to Gen. Lord John Murray, Col., 42nd Regt. Describing Assault on Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Dated Piscataway 31st May. 1777

My Lord...

On the 16th Nov^r a Body of Hessians passed along Kings Bridge and attacked Fort Washington on the North side; Some British Corps advanced on their left. The 42^d Reg^t in particular in 13 Boats crossed the east branch of North River & landed at the Foot of a Rock, which resembles that of the Pass of Killikranky on the side of the River opposite to the Road, only there is no level spot at all like the little field in the Middle of the Pass. It is said that only a feint was intended here at first, but as the Nature of the Ground, & the Enemy's Fortifications would not Suffer [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy to advance from the South, The Royal Highlanders rec^d orders to land on the East side of the Island, When they advanced to the foot of the Rock, The Rebels came from the South Lines to meet them, made a hot fire upon them in the boats, which hurt several of them. They landed notwithstanding and Scrambled up the Rock by a few narrow Paths, without any order / a thing then impossible/ each in the best Manner he could. Many were retarded some fell and were hurt by reason of the Steepness of the Rock. When a few of the Most Active gained the Top, and fired upon the Enemy, some one called out to Charge the Rebels with bayonets upon which they fled, some to the Fort and others to the West branch of the N. River in consequence of this, the Lines before Lord Percy were intirely evacuated & he got forward; which service he afterwards very prettily Acknowledged to [Lt.] Co^l [Thomas] Stirling, The Hessians also advanced to the Fort in Spite of very great difficulties, so that it was Surrounded on all Sides and Surrendered before night. When [Lt.] Colonel [William] Sheriff [47th Regt.] & others from the East Side of the River saw the Highlanders landed they exclaimed "*the 42^d is no more*" Kind Providence however ordered it otherwise, the Highlanders themselves said that if a company of them were at the top they would keep the whole Rebel Army from coming up, the Trees in the face of the Precipice are full of Shott, I afterwards counted 5 musket & one cannon shot in one Birch tree...

I have the honor to be with the highest Esteem. My Lord

Your Lops: most obe^d & most humble Servant

the R^t Hon^{ble} Lord John Murray

Source: *Lord John Murray Papers*.



Morris-Jumel Mansion

Picture Source: Wikimedia Commons, by I, Sailko

**Lt. John M^cDonald's Account of 42nd Regiment's Assault of Fort Washington
Near Col. Roger Morris' House, New York, Nov. 16, 1776**

Whether my son [Vol. William MacDonald] landed before or after me, it is certain we lost each other in scrambling up the rocks, and knew nothing of each other's fate till the evening, when it will be allowed, when hot firing ceased, natural concern took place After mounting the hill, and firing ceased, to capitulate, our party sat down under trees to rest. I soon observed to Colonel [Brevet-Maj. Duncan] Macpherson... that we had better look for our Regiment. He answered, as there seemed nothing to be done, we were as well there for the present. I replied, My dear Duncan, you have no son on the Island this day. Very just, says he, let us move, and we soon find the corps, when [Lt.] Colonel [Thomas] Stirling shook hands with me, and thanked me for my activity in dispersing the rebels at Morris' House, adding, Your son has been with me through all this day's danger to yourself, and trust him to me in the future.

Source: "Major John Macdonald – His Autobiography" by M.A. Rose in *Celtic Magazine*, Vol. X, Conducted by Alexander Mackenzie, F.S.A. Scot. , A. & W. Mackenzie, Inverness, 1885, Google Books. Macdonald's son was later commissioned in the regiment.

**Lt. John Grant's Later Account of the Route taken by the 42nd Regt. at Fort Washington,
New York, Nov. 16, 1776**

...I cannot help giving some remarks concerning the Conduct of your Lordships Reg^t; I had the Curiosity to go see Fort Washington, I took a view of the Rocks they climbed, and to be sure, no men in the world but Highlanders would ever have thought of it, it was only fit for Goats to climb, there and upon every other occasion, they behaved like hero's...

Source: Letter from Lt. John Grant, 42nd Additional Company, to Gen. Lord John Murray, Col., London, August 27, 1777 in the *Lord John Murray Papers*.

Corp. Thomas Sullivan' Account of the 5th and 49th Regts. Supporting the 42nd Highlanders' Attack, Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

An Account of the taking of Fort-washington,
16th. November. 1776...

As soon as this [Hessian] attack began, the Light Infantry moved, and landed under a brisk Fire, before & after they had quitted the Boats, from a Party of the Enemy posted behind Rocks and Trees; however by getting up a very steep uneven mountain with their usual Activity, they soon dispersed the Enemy. The Guards followed by y^e. Grenadiers and 33^d Regiment, landed without any loss.

Intelligence in the mean time being received that [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Earl Percy had carried an advance work, orders were sent to Lieu^t. Colonel [Thomas] Stirling, commanding the 42^d. Regiment, to endeavour to land, and for two Battalions of the 2^d. Brigade British. i.e. 5th. and 49th. Regiments to support him. Upon which he immediately advanced and embarked in Flat Boats, and strived for the opposite shore through a heavy fire with great perseverance. When the Enemy saw him advancing still in the Boats across the Gut; they came down the Hill to obstruct his landing, and killed two of the men in the Boats. The Highlanders made their landing good in spite of all opposition; and forcing their way up a steep Height, which was well defended by the Rebels in a large body, they gained the summit, and after an obstinate attack took 170 prisoners, and penetrating across the Island, facilitated Lord Percy's success against the Enemy's Lone opposed to him, which his Lordship passed.

In the mean time, the Highlanders attacked another Redoubt, in which were three Pieces of Cannon, and when the Enemy saw that they were resolutely advancing, they rallied out of an inside Breastwork, and attacked them; the Highlanders made an immediate charge upon them, which they can never stand to the Bayonet, the Rebels retreated....

Source and Note: *From Redcoat to Rebel, the Thomas Sullivan Journal*, Ed. Joseph Lee Boyle, Heritage Books, Bowie (Md.), 1997, pp. 76-79. Corp. Sullivan was in the 49th Regt. in the 2nd Brigade.

Maj. of Brigade and Capt. Frederick Mackenzie's Account of 42nd Regt. Clearing the Way for Lt. Gen. Hugh, Earl Percy's Attack from the Southern Lines, Fort Washington, New York, Sept. 16-17, 1776

16th Nov^r

When I went to [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy's quarters this Morning at an early hour for orders, I found that His Lordship and the troops under his Command at McGowan's had advanced to assist the Attack of Fort Washington; I therefore followed him... The 3rd brigade of British and Stirn's Brigade of Hessians, advanced from our lines early in the Morning, and proceeded as far as the 9 mile Stone with very little opposition, then formed in line about 200 yards from a Line of works which the Rebels occupied in considerable force. The troops were in this position when I joined them, and found the orders were to remain in that position until firing was heard from near [Col. Roger] Morris's house, where an attack was to be made from the West Chester side by the 42^d Regiment. While we lay waiting for this attack we heard a severe fire of Musquetry beyond Fort Washington, and some firing at other points. As soon as the 42^d Regiment commenced their attack, the Rebels in the Lines opposite Lord Percy began to abandon them, and run towards the Fort; they were instantly pursued by the two brigades, until they got within 600 yards of The Fort, where the Rebels threw themselves into a small wood, and our people pursuing too eagerly received a heavy fire from thence which checked them a little. The 42^d having carried their point pursued those who opposed then, and some of those who fled before Lord Percy, quite to the shore of the North River, where they took good many prisoners... Gen^l [Sir William] Howe met Lord Percy before the place surrendered, at the 11 mile Stone, which is very near the Fort. He crossed over Haerlem Creek with the Light Infantry.

17th Nov^r

The following is a more circumstantial account of the attack of Fort Washington. –

General Howe having made every necessary arrangement for the attack of Fort Washington, and erected Batteries on all the heights which were within reach of it, ordered the place to be summoned on the 15th. The [Rebel] Commanding Officer [Col. Robert Magaw, 5th Pennsylvania Bn.] was informed that it was impossible for them to hold out or to escape, and assured of the General's determined resolution to take the place at all events; he was also assured that if he was so obstinate as to persist in defending it, the Garrison must expect to be put to the Sword. He however talked in a high strain, & rejected all terms whatever; confiding in the strength of his situation. In consequence of this it was determined to make a general attack upon all the Enemy's works round the Fort yesterday, and to Storm the Fort itself. The attack commenced accordingly at day break, with a furious Cannonade from all the Batteries which were within reach of the works, but particularly from those on the heights on the West Chester side [across the Harlem River to the east] opposite Col^o Morris's house, and from those along Haerlem Creek as far as the Enemy's posts reached.

The Disposition of the several attacks was nearly as follows – [Lt.] General [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen, with the Hessian brigades under his Command, was to advance from Kingsbridge, and drive the Enemy from their advanced posts, and then to take post on a hill which was within half Cannon shot of the Fort, with his right to the N[orth] River. The Brigade of Guards were to cross Haerlem Creek, and join Gen^l Knyphausen's left. The 1st Light Infantry [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] were to cross the Creek on the left of the Guards; the 2^d Light Infantry in another place on the left of the 1st, and the 42^d Regiment to pass it under Col^o Morris's house. All these were separate attacks, and to be supported by other troops. Lord Percy, with the 3rd brigade of British Infantry, & Stirn's brigade of Hessians were to advance from the Lines at McGowans, drive the Enemy from their most advanced posts & wait, with his left to the N. River, until he heard or saw that the troops which were to cross Haerlem Creek, had gained the summit of the hill. Every Column was then to push forward, force all the Enemy's posts, and unite as near as possible to Fort Washington. This was executed on every side with success... The 42^d also met with some resistance, and sustained a heavy fire, from between 2 and 300 rebels strongly posted near Morris's house, while they were rowing across and getting out of the boats; but as soon as the Highlanders had landed they pushed the rebels up the precipice with great bravery, notwithstanding all the disadvantages they laboured under, and pursuing them across the Island with their bayonets, took above 100 prisoners close to the North River shore. The Guards and Light Infantry drove all before them... The troops from all sides having got close up to the Fort, the Rebels, in momentary expectation of being Stormed, and finding they were much crowded in the Fort that they could not possibly defend it, beat their Drums, and sent out to desire terms; General Knyphausen, who at that time Commanded, demanded that they should surrender at discretion, and they desired half an hour to consider of it. In the meantime Gen^l Howe, who had passed Haerlem Creek after the Light Infantry, came up, & sent to inform the [rebel] Commanding officer that he insisted they should surrender immediately, without any other terms than a promise of their lives, and their baggage, which after some hesitation they agreed to. This was about 3 o'Clock, and about 4 they marched out, amounting in all to about 2300 men. They left their Arms & accoutrements in the Fort, and were sent under escort of the 10th & 52^d Regiments to Haerlem.

About 200 prisoners were taken before the surrender; of which, 104 were taken by the 42^d regiment...

The 2^d Battalion of Light Infantry took possession of The Fort. It is an irregular Pentagon, well situated, with a small outwork, or Covert way in front of the entrance. The Bastions have two Embrazures in each face, and one in each flank. The whole is of Earth, without any fraize or palisade; but there is good Abbattis round it. As it is situated on very rocky ground there is hardly any ditch. There would therefore have been no difficulty in Storming it...

*Return of The loss of The King's Troops, in the Attack of Fort Washington
16th Nov^r 1776*

Regiments, or Corps	Killed					Wounded						Missing		Total
	C	S	S	D	R&F	FO	C	S	S	D	R&F	St	R&F	
42 nd [Regiment]	.	.	1	.	8			3	4	.	66	.	.	82...
Total	3	3	3	1	67	2	1	11	24	1	335	1	6	458

18th Nov^r 1776... The Rebel prisoners were in general but very indifferently clothed; few of them appeared to have a Second shirt, nor did they appear to have washed themselves during the Campaign. A great many of them were lads under 15, and old men: and few of them had the appearance of Soldiers. Their odd figures frequently excited the laughter of our Soldiers.

Source and Notes: *Dairy of Frederick Mackenzie*, Vol. I, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1930 and reprinted by The New York Times & Arno Press, 1969, pp. 104-112. In the casualty report the abbreviations stand for FO-Field Officers, C-Captains, S-Subalterns, S-Sergeants, D-Drummers, R&F-Rank and File. The 42nd Regt. had the highest number of total casualties at 82. The Hessian Wutginau Regt. had the most killed with 16 total.

Account of 42nd Highlanders Using Swords, Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

An anonymous Correspondent has sent us the following Extract of Part of a letter from an Officer of the 49th Regiment, dated at New York the 29th of November, 1776, to his Father in London:

‘It is truly amazing as it is singular, that our Success, I may say, is without Interruption. The Rebels are not disposed to look us ‘in the Face: Their Prudence in fortifying their Camps, &c. is admirable but when all their Art is employed at a very great Expence to somebody to build Forts, Redoubts, &c. fifty Britons are found now by Experience to be equal to the surprising Task of driving five hundred of them out their strongest Holds. The Friends of Old England must rejoice that the Villains have met with their Deserts already, and you shall very soon hear of some of them dying by the Hands of the common Hangman.

‘The Spirits, Courage, Bravery and ardent Zeal in Old England’s Cause is painted in every Soldier’s Face. The Hessians have acquired great Glory by their Bravery and Fidelity. The Highlanders with their broad Swords have not their Equals in doing ready Business: They are brave Fellows, and unacquainted with fear, especially if they have their Broad Swords. I saw one of those breechless Boys kill four Rebels all within the Space of half an Hour. The last of them begged hard for Quarter; upon which ‘the Highlander told him, he was not so ‘the Butcher as to quarter him, but that he intended to bring him back to his Allegiance to King George the Third.’

Source and Note: *Public Advertiser* (London), Jan. 4, 1777, p. 2. The basket-hilted backsword with only one side sharpened was standard issue for the 42nd Highlanders. The 49th Regt. was part of the 2nd Brigade which was assigned to support the attack of the 42nd Highlanders at Fort Washington.

Extract from the Journal of Thompson Forster, Surgeon to the British General Hospital in America, Describes Highlanders with “Basket hilted Ferrara” Swords at Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16-17, 1776.

Our Army advanced regularly on, taking many Forts, and different Works of the Enemy with scarcely any opposition, till we arrived at their strongest Hold, which they thought impregnable, on which the Hope of all America seemed to rest, this was Kings Bridge and Fort Washington. Nature seems to have fortified that end of York Island herself, the Rebels had little more to do than to bring their cannon upon the different eminences; on the most commanding of these, they built a most amazing large strong Fort – which one would imagine two thousand men could hold against the whole World – this was Fort Washington. The outworks, posts, and lines were wonderfully strong, the labour they have bestowed on these advantageous Hills to fortify them still stronger is beyond description; they felled huge Trees down and layed them cross each other to obstruct our Troops and Cannon, for three Miles round them; that perhaps the taking this Fort was as great a coup de main as ever was executed. I may, I think, call it not

improperly a coup de main as there was not a cannon fired at the taking of the Fort itself, all our Cannonading was levelled at their different out works, which were regularly taken by battery one after another, and as most of their works commanded each other, when they abandoned one they retreated to another and so on, with this advantage, that it was always in their Power to play upon the work they had abandoned, in some, we had an opportunity of turning the Cannon they left behind them, against the net work, which saved us a vast deal of Time and Labour; for near five hours the Cannonading on our side was incessant, till we had carried all their Lines and outworks and they had all of them retreated into the great Fort as to a Citadel; as they had six Months Provisions in it, they thought they had nothing immediately to fear, when to their great surprise they found themselves surrounded all of a sudden by the Hessians with two large Howitzers, the Highlanders and several British Regiment with [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Lord Percy and [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis at their Head, they were astonished beyond the Powers of Discription not knowing how we came there – the case was this; very large Bodies of Pioneers had been employed all the preceeding night to make passages thro’ the thickest part of the Wood, which was felled down in order as they supposed to render it impossible to be attacked from that Quarter, and this was the way we poured in upon them so unexpectedly – judge of their situation – three Thousand men and some women confined in a Fort that would but just hold them – intirely surrounded by us their Enemy situated so low that none of their Cannon could bear upon us, we had eight large Howitzers ready at the word of Command to shower a Storm of Shells amongst them, which in a few minutes must have made terrible carnage! A dreadful silence ensued – the besieged in the greatest agony of Distress every moment expecting the impending distruction to begin – the besiegers waiting with eager impatience for the Word of Command – which might have been heard a mile off so profound a Silence reigned – had any word been given to have rushed on upon their Enemy – the Hessians slung their Muskets at their Backs and each man drew his trusty Sword – the Highlanders brandished the Basket hilted Ferrara, our Light Dragoons with their long Sabers kept in the Plain below – the sturdy English formed an impenetrable half Moon enclosing half the Fort – gripping with impatient Ardour their discharged Muskets armed with the grinning Bayonet, which hemmed in the Enemy with an Iron Frize – in this awful moment the Hessian Trumpet summoned the Fort to surrender, a Flag was immediately sent to General [Sir William] Howe and the Fort with all its contents surrendered to His Excellency – thus the strongest Hold in all America fell into our Hands with upwards of three Thousand Prisoners, one Hundred and Fifty Pieces of Cannon, Mortars, Howitzers, Cohorns, Muskets, and Rifle Barrels out of number, a large Quantity of Ammunition, six months Provisions and clothing for six Thousand Men – the Prisoners were conducted to York the next Day."

Source and Note: *Unpublished Diary of Thompson Forster, Staff Surgeon of His Majesty's Detached Hospital in North America*, transcribed in 1938 from the original in the possession of Robert Ethelstone Thompson Forster, pp. 110-114. A "Ferrara" was a common name for Highland broadswords/backswords after a Spanish or Italian artificer named Andrea Ferrara who was brought to Scotland in the 16th century to instruct Scots in making high quality blades.

Rebel Capt. Alexander Graydon's Detailed Account of His Capture by the 42nd Regt. at Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

... Intelligence having been received by [Rebel Lt.] Colonel [Lambert] Cadwalader [3rd Pennsylvania Bn.], that the enemy were coming down Haerlem river in boats, to land in his rear, he detached Captain [David] Lenox with fifty men, to oppose them, and, on farther information, a hundred more, with Captains [Evan] Edwards and [George] Tudor, This force, with the addition of about the same number from Fort Washington, arrived on the heights near [Col. Roger] Morris's house, early enough to fire on the enemy [42nd Highlanders] in their boats, which was done with such effect, that about ninety were killed and wounded. The great superiority, however, of the enemy, (their numbers amounting to about eight hundred men) prevailed over the bravery and good conduct of our troops, who, with some loss retired to Fort Washington.

This body of the enemy immediately advanced, and took possession of the grounds in advance of, and a little below Morris' house, where some soldiers' huts had been left standing, not far from the second line. This position of the enemy being observed, it was expected they would march down and take possession of the second line, (which from the want of men, was entirely without defence.) and thereby place the troops in the first line, between two fires. This important movement did not, however, take place; owing, as was afterwards learned, to the apprehension they entertained, that the enclosed bastions concealed therein a number of men, whose fire would greatly annoy them. They hesitated;— and this being perceived, from the delay that took place, Colonel Cadwalader, to avoid the fatal consequences that must have resulted from the expected movement, immediately resolved to retire to the fort... The first notice that I had of the entrenchment being given up, was from an officer I did not know, posted at some distance from me, going off with his men. I called to him to know what he meant. He answered, that he was making the best of his way to the fort, as the rest of the troops had retreated long since. As I had no reason to doubt his veracity, I immediately formed my company, and began to retire in good order... it was yet possible my movement might be premature. I knew nothing of what had passed in the centre, or of the enemy being master of the high grounds in my rear about Colonel Morris's house, from which, no doubt, had proceeded the cannon balls that whizzed by us; and for which, coming in that direction, I could not account. To be entirely correct in my conduct, I here halted my men, and went myself to a rising ground at some distance, from which I might have a view of the lines where Colonel Cadwalader had been posted. They seemed thoroughly manned; and at the instant, I beckoned to the officers to march back the company, which they immediately put in motion; but looking more attentively, I perceived that the people I saw, were British and Hessian troops that were eagerly pressing forward. Upon this, I hastened back to my party, and as there was no time to be lost, being in a situation to be cut to pieces by a corps of cavalry, I ordered them under the command of my ensign, to make the best of their way and join the body of men, which none - doubted being our own, on the heights beyond the inner lines; and that I would follow them as fast as I could, for I was a good deal out of breath with the expedition... The body I had pointed to and directed my company to join, under the idea of their being our own men, turned out to be the British, consisting of [Lt.] Colonel [Thomas] Stirling's divisions of [Royal] Highlanders, a circumstance that was not at first perceived on account of the distance; nor, owing to the smoke of an irregular fire which they kept up, and the entrenchment in which they were posted, covering them to the breast, was it manifest until we got pretty near them. Upon this discovery, we held a moment's consultation, and the result was, that hemmed in as we were on every side, there was no chance of escaping; and that there was nothing left but to give ourselves up to them... Thus circumstanced, we clubbed our fuses [light muskets] in token of surrender, and continued to advance towards them. They either did not or would not take the signal; and though there were but two of us, from whom they could not possibly expect a design to attack, they did not cease firing at us. I may venture to say, that not less than ten guns were discharged with their muzzles towards us, within the distance of forty or fifty yards; and I might be nearer the truth in saying, that some were let off within twenty. Luckily for us, it was not our riflemen to whom we were targets; and it is astonishing how even these *blunt* shooters could have missed us. But as we were ascending a considerable hill, they shot over us. I observed they took no aim, and that the moment of presenting and firing, was the same. As I had full leisure for reflection, and was perfectly collected, though fearful that their design was to give no quarter, I took off my hat with such a sweep of the arm as could not but be observed, without ceasing however to advance. This had the intended effect: A loud voice proceeded from the breast-work, and the firing immediately ceased. An officer of the forty-second regiment advanced towards us; and as I was foremost, he civilly accosted me by asking me my rank. Being informed of this, as also of Forrest's, he inquired where the fort lay and where Colonel [Robert] Magaw [5th Pennsylvania Bn. and Commander, Fort Washington] was. I pointed in the direction of the fort, and told him I had not seen Colonel Magaw during the day. Upon this, he put us under the care of a sergeant and a few men, and left us. The sergeant was a decent looking man, who, on taking us into custody, bestowed upon us in broad Scotch the friendly admonition, of *Young men, ye should never fight against your king...*

Source and Note: *Memoirs of His Own Time...*, by Alexander Graydon, Ed. John Stockton Littell, Lindsay & Blakiston, Philadelphia, 1846, Google Books, pp. 194-205. Graydon was familiar with a number of the Highland officers, who had stayed at his mother's boarding house in Philadelphia during the French & Indian War.

Gen. Sir William Howe's Second Summons to Rebel Col. Robert Magaw, Commander of Fort Washington after Surrounding the Fort, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Copy of the SUMMONS sent to the Commander of Fort-Washington

Nov. 16, 1776

The Commander in Chief demands an immediate and categorical Answer to his second Summons of Fort Washington.

The Garrison must immediately surrender Prisoners of War, and give up all their Arms, Ammunition and stores of every Kind, and send two Field Officers to Head-Quarters as Hostages; in so doing, the General is pleased to allow the garrison to keep Possession of their Baggage, and the Officers to have their Swords.

J. PATERSON, Adj. General

Agreed to

ROBERT MAGAW, Col. 5th
Pennsylvania Bat. Commanding
at Fort Washington

Source: *New York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, Dec. 2, 1776, p. 3.

Col. David Stewart's Account of the Attack on Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

The garrison consisted of nearly 3000 men, and the strong grounds round the fort were covered with lines and works. The principal attack was to be made [Lt.] General [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen with the Hessians, supported by Major-General [Lt. Gen. Hugh] Earl Percy, with the whole reserve except the 42d, who were ordered to make a feint on the east side of the fort. On this side, the hill was so steep and rugged, that the enemy, thinking its summit inaccessible, had taken no measures to secure it. Before day-break of the 16th November, the 42d marched from their encampment, and embarked in boats, to be conveyed to a small creek at the foot of the rock, where they were to land, and make demonstrations to ascend the hill, for the purpose of diverting the attention of the enemy from the principal attack. The morning was well advanced before the boats with the 42d reached their station. The enemy, seeing their approach, opened a smart fire, which could not be returned, owing to the perpendicular height of the enemy's position. The instant the Highlanders landed they formed hastily, and forgetting that their duty was intended only as a feint, they resolved to attempt an assault, and scrambled up the precipice, assisted by each other, and by the brushwood and shrubs which grew out of the crevices of the rocks. On gaining the summit, they reached forward, and attacked the enemy with such rapidity, that upwards of 200, who had no time to make their escape, threw down their arms; while the Highlanders, pursuing their advantage, penetrated across the table of the hill, and met Lord Percy, as he was mounting on the opposite side; and thus the Highlanders, with their characteristic impetuosity, turned a feint into a real attack, and facilitated the success of the day. The enemy seeing General Knyphausen approach in another direction, surrendered at discretion. Of the enemy 2700 men were made prisoners. The loss of the British was 1 captain, 2 serjeants, and 17 rank and file killed; and 4 subalterns, 8 serjeants, 1 drummer, and 88 rank and file, wounded: the proportion of the Royal Highlanders being 1 serjeant and 10 privates killed, and Lieutenants Patrick Graeme (Inchbrakie) Norman Macleod * and Alexander Grant, and 4 serjeants and 66 rank and file wounded.

* This hill was so perpendicular, that the ball which wounded Lieutenant Macleod, entering the posterior part of his neck, ran down on the outside of his ribs, and lodged in the lower part of his back. One of the pipers, who began to play when he reached the point of a rock on the summit of

the hill, was immediately shot and tumbled from one piece of rock to another till he reached the bottom.

Major [William] Murray being a large corpulent man could not attempt this steep ascent without assistance. The soldiers, eager to get to the point of their duty, scrambled up, forgetting the situation of Major Murray, when he in a melancholy supplicating tone, cried, “Oh soldiers, will you leave me?” A party leaped down instantly, and brought him up, supporting him from one resting rock to another till they got him to the top.

Source and Note: *Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland; with Details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments*, Vol. I, Second Edition, Col. David Stewart, Archibald Constable and Co., Edinburgh, 1822, Google Books, pp. 375-377. Although Col. Stewart was not an eyewitness of the assault, he later served in the 42nd Regt. with officers who had been at the battle and relied on accounts provided to him from officers in the regiment at the time.

Excerpt of British Casualty List for the Attack on Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Return of Commissioned & Non Commissioned Officers , rank & File Killed, Wounded & Missing belonging to the Army under the Command of His Excellency The Hon^{ble} Gen^l. Howe, in several actions with the Rebels from the 17th Sept^r to the 16th Nov^r 1776 inclusive, specifying the different periods, & the Corps the casualties have happened in - - -

In the Action at Pelham Manor in the 18 th October or in previous Skirmishes from the 17 th Sept ^r Inclusive	British... Regim ^{ts} 1 st Bat ⁿ L ^t Infantry...	Killed [Rank & File] 2	Wounded 1 [Field Off.], 1 [Capt.] 1 [Sgt.] 1 [Drum. or Trumpeter] 23 [Rank & File]	Officers Kill'd & Wounded...
In the Action of the 26 th October in passing the Bronks River, and in previous Skirmishes from the 19 th October Inclusive ...				
In the Attack of the 16 th November when the rebel Lines & redoubts near Fort Washington were Storm'd & that Fort Surrendered & other casualties since the 19 th Oct ^r and proceeding the 16 th November –	British... Regim ^{ts} 42 ^d	Killed 1[Serjeant] 8 [Rank & File]	Wounded 3 [Subs] 4[Sgts] 66 [Rank & File]	[Officers] Wounded { Alex ^r Grant } 42 ^d { Pat: Graham } { Norm ^d McLeod}...

W. Howe

Source: *Records of the British Colonial Office Class 5, Part 5: The American Revolution, 1772-1784*, Ed. Randolph Boehm, University Publications Inc., Frederick, MD, 1972 from TNA, *Colonial Office: Secretary of State, Military Dispatches* at ff. 502-526, 607.

London News Account of 42nd Regt. Casualties at Fort Washington and Incorrect Mention of a Promotion for Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

The total Number of British, killed and wounded on the 16th November, in the Attack of the provincial Lines, and storming Fort Washington, is One Hundred and Twenty-eight; of which Eighty-two are of the 42d Regiment or Royal Highlanders; so that these fellows (as our Correspondent observes) have *paid dear* for their *climbing*.

It is said that Lieutenant Colonel [Thomas] Stirling who commanded the Highland Regiment at the taking of Fort Washington, is advanced to the Rank of Colonel.

Source: *Public Advertiser* (London), Jan. 1, 1777, p. 1. The article was also published in *Oxford Journal*, Jan. 4, 1777, p. 2.

**Officer's Account of the Climb of the 42nd Highlanders at Fort Washington,
New York, Nov. 16, 1776**

Genuine Extract of a Letter from Lieutenant Colonel _____ at New York, dated Dec. 5, which was forwarded by a Transport arrived from Corke.

My Dear Friend,

No doubt you would be extremely sorry to hear, that [Rebel Gen.] Mr. [George] Washington had given us the *Slip* at King's Bridge, and had got safe to the Mountains...

The foreign Troops have answered the most sanguine Expectations; the Hessians are steady Fellows; and the Highlanders can never be enough commended, both for their Spirit and Activity, – They climbed like Cats, and fought like Furies – (here follows a particular Account of all the Manœuvres, relative to the Attack, and Surrender, of Fort Washington; which need not be repeated here, as they are nearly familiar to what has already appeared in the *Gazette Extraordinary*.)

Two Days after the Fort surrendered, I went to examine (*cooly*) the Heights which the Troops had ascended with so much Ease and Alacrity, and I declare upon my Honour it was with the utmost Difficulty I could scramble up, thought I was not, like them, loaded and entangled with Arms and Accoutrements; but in the Heat of Action, Zeal for the Service, doubtless lent tem Wings: – And in those Moments, 'tis very certain, that Men will perform Feats which they could not do in *cold blood*.

We have now got near 5000 Prisoners in New York, and many of them are such Ragamuffins, as you never saw in your Life ...

Source: *Public Advertiser* (London), Jan. 14, 1777, p. 2.

**London News Account Blames Slow Progress of Lt. Gen. Hugh, Earl Percy's Brigades
for High Casualties in the 42nd Regt., Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776**

The Friends of America, says a Correspondent, have the Consolation of seeing that the principal Authors of their Distresses are likely to be Sufferers in their Turn; for of the five Officers killed on Long island, four were Scotchmen; and at Fort Washington every Officer of the British either killed or wounded were of that Country.

A Correspondent remarks, that the Justice of Providence was never more conspicuous than the Affair of Fort Washington. In the Disposition made of the King's Troops, it was not at first intended that the old Highlanders should have any other Part to act than that of a Feint; yet out of 124 British killed and wounded, eighty-two were Scotchmen; and what is still more remarkable, a Descendant of the ancient Scourge of Scotland (the Percy Family) was the Occasion of it.

Source and Note: *Public Advertiser* (London), Jan. 2, 1777, p. 2. The lack of progress by Lt. Gen. Hugh, Earl Percy's brigades on the southern front during the attack on Fort Washington, led to the change of mission for the 42nd Highlanders from a feint to an assault up the steep embankment of the Harlem River near Col. Morris' House (Jumel Mansion). As a result of their actions in the 1300's, histories of Scotland termed the Percy family as "*hereditary guardians of the north and the scourge of Scotland*."

News Account of Capture of Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

NEW-YORK, November 25.

On the Day, when Fort Washington was taken, about 60 Rebels, who attempted to escape in a Boat, overloaded or overset it, and were drowned, not one of them escaping, in the North River...The Flower of the Rebel-Army are among the Prisoners taken from Fort Washington; Most of them are from

Maryland and Pennsylvania, who themselves have expressed the utmost Contempt for the New-England Men, or (as they term them) the Yankees.

The Rebel Prisoners, amounting to about 3000 Men, taken at Fort Washington, were brought to Town last Monday...

A Gentleman, who saw the Action on the Kingsbridge Side, affirms that nothing could exceed the Firmness and Intrepidity of the German Troops in making their Attack, nor the Alertness and Vigor of the Highlanders in ascending Rocks and Precipices almost insurmountable...

Source: *New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, November 25, 1776.

Letter from Gen. Lord John Murray, Col., 42nd Regt., to Lt. Col Thomas Stirling Congratulating the Royal Highland Regiment for Actions at Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 16, 1776

Banner Cross 4th January 1777

Dear Colonel

It gave me the Greatest Satisfaction to see the Gazette Extraordinary which I got Yesterday, with the acct. of the Service of His Majesty's Troops under General [Sir William] Howe, their Gallant behavior, and of the honorable mention of your Name, and the Royal Highland Regiment... Commissions, therefore hope you wont Recommend any of them to Sell Should any of them desire it. Please direct for me to the Care of [Regimental Agents] Mess^{rs} Anderson & Richardson Lothbury London, and desire any of the other officers to do the same. I shall be glad to know if I can be of any Service to you here, and am

&c
[John Murray]

P.S. I hope the Rebels will be soon brought to a due sense of their duty, if they print any acc^t of their defeat, wish you would send it.

NB. Wrote the same day to Major W^m Murray [42nd Regt.], much to the same purpose.

Source and Note: *Lord John Murray Papers*. Lord Murray is likely referring to the *London Gazette Extraordinary* dated Dec. 30, 1776 which included a paragraph praising the 42nd Regt. actions at Fort Washington.

General Order Congratulating the 42nd Highlanders and the Army for Success in Taking of Fort Washington, New York, Nov. 17, 1776

Head Quarters De Lancey's Mill Nov. 17th 1776.

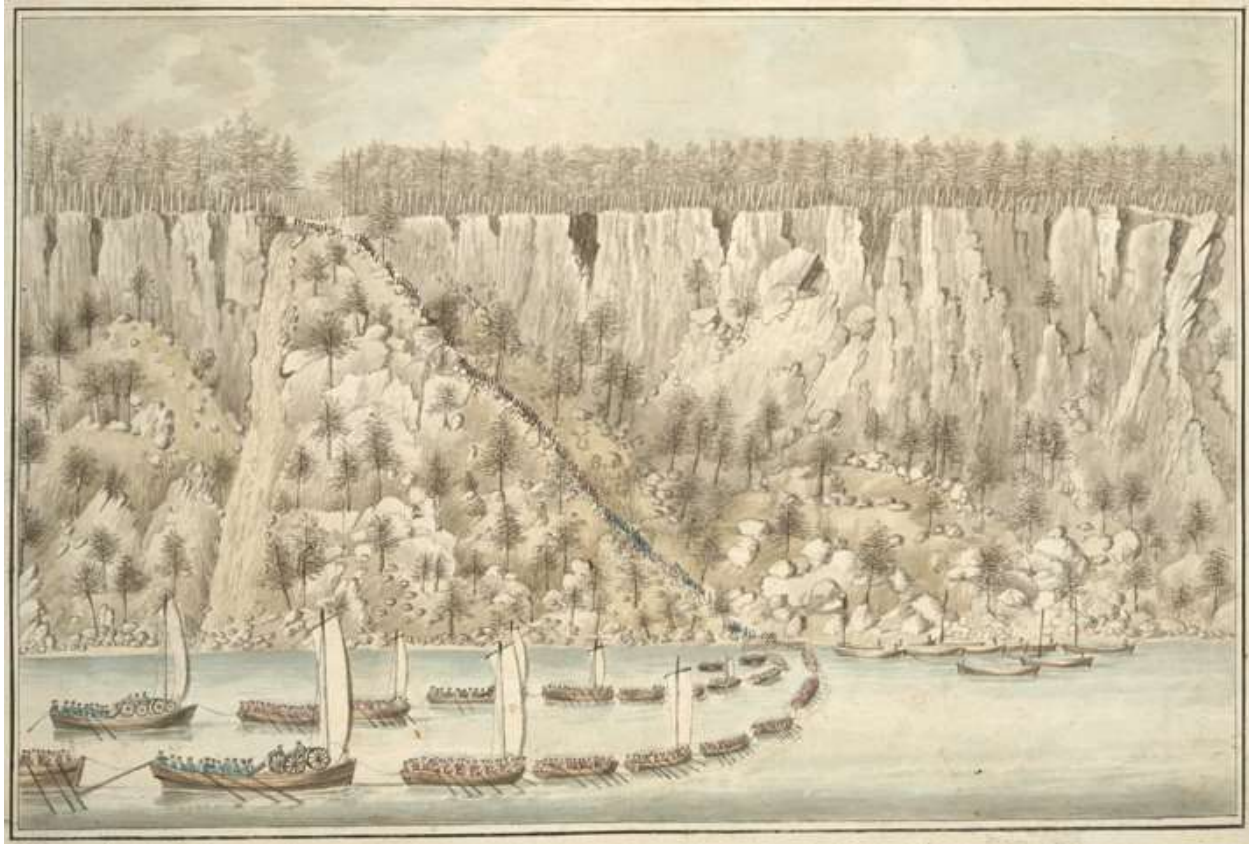
The General is extremely sensible of the Universal Spirit and Alacrity which evidently animated all the Troops that were Yesterday engaged, and desires his particular thanks may be given to His Excellency [Hessian] Lieut.-Gen. [Wilhelm von] Knyphausen, [Hessian] Maj.-Gen. [Martin] Schmidt, and the Corps under their Command, to Lieut.-Gen. [Hugh] Earl Percy, [Hessian] Maj.-Gen. [Johann David] Stirn, Maj.-Gen. [Valentine] Jones, and the Corps under his Lordship's Command; to Brig.-Gen. [Edward] Mathew, the Brigade of Guards, and Light Infantry. To Lieut.-Gen. [Charles] Earl Cornwallis, Maj.-Gen. [John] Vaughan, and the Reserve under his Lordship's Command. To Lieut.-Col. [Thomas] Sterling, and the 42d. Regiment, and Col. [Johann] Rall for his Conduct at the Head of the Right Column of Hessian....

The 1st and 2^d Battalion Light Infantry to occupy the Post now Possessed by the 3^d Battalion Light Infantry, under the Command of Maj.-Gen. [James] Grant...

A Return to be given in to-morrow at Orderly time of the Number of Killed, Wounded, and Missing of Yesterday. An Embarkation Return to be given in this day at 4 o'Clock, to the Deputy Adjutant General of the Troops that encamp to-morrow near New York, and from the 3^d and 5th Brigades,

as soon as possible, be given in; all Arms taken from the Rebels are immediately to be given to Brig.-Gen. [Samuel] Cleaveland [Royal Artillery], and no person is upon any Account to be allowed to buy or sell them...

Source: "The Kemble Papers: Vol. I, 1773-1789 in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1883*, Publication Fund Series, Printed for the Society, New York, 1884, Google Books.



Landing of the British troops, Fort Lee, New Jersey, November 20, 1776, by Thomas Davies

Picture Source: From the *New York Public Library*, Digital Collection, Digital ID 54210

Capture of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 19 – 20, 1776

General Order to Prepare to Attack Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 19, 1776

Head Quarters De Lancey's Mill Nov. 19th 1776...

The following Corps are to strike their tents, load their Waggons and be in Readiness to march, with their Blankets and Provisions, this Night at 9 o'Clock: Two Companies Chasseurs [Jägers], 1st [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] and 2^d Light Infantry, 1st and 2^d Grenadiers, 2 Battalions of Guards, 33^d Regiment, and 42^d Regiment, 3 Battalions of Hessian Grenadiers, 100 Men of Rogers's, without Arms; two Engineers, with twelve Carpenters and three Guides. They will receive their Orders from Lieut.-Gen. [Charles] Earl Cornwallis...

Source and Note: "The Kemble Papers: Vol. I, 1773-1789 in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1883*, Publication Fund Series, Printed for the Society, New York, 1884, Google Books. This order prepares for the attack by Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis across the Hudson River to seize Fort Lee on the Palisades in New Jersey.

Excerpts of Letter No. 31 from Gen. Sir William Howe, Commander-in-Chief, North America, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, Reporting the Capture of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 20, 1776

New York 30 November 1776

My Lord...

1st & } Battalions of
2^d } Light Infantry
2 Comp^{ys} of Chasseurs
2 Batt^{ns} British } Grenadiers
2 D^o Hessian }
2 D^o of Guards,
33^d } Regiments
42^d }

Fort Lee being the next object for the entire command of the North River and a ready road to penetrate into Jersey, an addition of boats under the Command of Captain [Hon. Charles] Phipps was sent by the Admiral to Kingsbridge on the Night of the 17th without being discovered by the Enemy. The 1st Division for embarkation landed next day at 8 o'clock in the morning about seven miles above the Fort while the 2^d division marched up the east side of the river, by which Movement the whole Corps as *p^r* Margin were landed with their Cannon by 10 o'clock under the Command of Lieutenant General [Charles] Earl Cornwallis.

The Seamen distinguished themselves remarkably upon this Occasion by their readiness to drag the Cannon up a rocky narrow Road for near half a mile to the top of a Precipice which bounds the Shore for some Miles on the West Side.

Lord Cornwallis immediately began his March, and had not the Enemy at Fort Lee been apprized of his moving towards them by a Countryman after he had proceeded some Distance, he would have surrounded two thousand Men at the Fort, who escaped in the utmost Confusion leaving all their Artillery and a large Quantity of Stores and Provisions, their Tents standing and Kettles upon the Fire.

His Lordship encamped that Night near the Fort, making use of the Enemy's Tents...

Source: *Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. XII, Transcripts 1776*, p. 258 - 264 from TNA, Colonial Office, Secretary of State, Military Dispatches at TNA, Colonial Office: Secretary of State, Military Dispatches at CO 5/93, f. 294.



Detail from "A plan of the operations of the King's army under the command of General Sr. William Howe, K.B. in New York and east New Jersey against the American forces commanded by General Washington, from the 12th. of October, to the 28th. of November 1776, wherein is particularly distinguished the engagement on the White Plains, the 28th. of October" by Claude J. Sauthier, 1777

Picture Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.

**Letter from Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling, 42nd Regt., to His Brother, Sir William
Stirling of Ardoch, Describing the Capture of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 20, 1776**

Camp at English Neighborhood in the Jersies near Fort Constitution 1776

...on the 20th we were detached under [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis Command with 4000 men to this side to scramble up a path worse than the Cran road where fifty might have prevented us, luckily we surprised them & got up without opposition marched on & so frightened were they that 2000 of them run off leaving Forts Constitution and Lee with all their Guns stores to a great amount behind them and was not the season so far advanced I make no doubt but we might march to Philadelphia with little opposition, these last two blows are of the utmost consequence to us and the first dawn of hope I have had of ever bringing them to reason, they are madly enthusiastic and nothing but the distraction this occasions in their councils could ever bring them to their duty for tho they never have fought us like men yet they have made such excellent use of their axes spades and shovels with the natural strength of the Country that had they obstinacy, & method among themselves we could never subdue them, what the operations for the rest of the season may be I know not but I suppose our success will keep us latter in the Field - an Expedition under [Lt.] Gen^l [Henry] Clinton is going on, 15000 ton of shipping is prepared, but where I know not, we are not to go - [Brig. Gen.] Sir Will^m Erskine [Lt. Col., 1st Bn., 71st Highland Regt.] has distinguished himself in a most remarkable manner in getting intelligence planning our operations & etc. and I know not what the Gen^l could have done without him...

Source and Note: NRS, *Papers of the Family of Stirling Home Drummond Moray of Abercairny* at GD 24/1/458/5. The "Expedition under Gen^l Clinton" was to seize Rhode Island. The 42nd Grenadier Co. participated in that expedition.

**Memorial to Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling, 42nd Regt., Describing the Crossing of the North River at
Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 20, 1776**

Memorial

L^t Col: Stirling 42^d Reg^t

... on the 20th Nov^r 42^d was w^t the landed in Jersies & proceeded w^t it during the whole operation In this province till the troops were dispersed in Quarters when the 42^d was attached to the Hessian Corps which was to form the advance chain of our Cantonments...

Source: "Short account of the movements and engagements of the two battalions of the 42nd from 22nd August to 16th December 1776" (Addressed to Col T Stirling commanding 42nd Royal Highlanders.) BWRA 0398 Stirling Papers /5, Archives, Regimental Headquarters, The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) Balhousie Castle, Hay Street Perth PH1 5HR (Note: pages one and two reversed to correct error by original author.).

**Journal of Maj. of Brigade and Capt. Frederick Mackenzie, 5th Brigade,
Describes Attack of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 20, 1776**

20th Nov^r - A good deal of rain last night. Fine mild day.

The 1st [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] and 2^d Battalions, of Light Infantry, the [1st and 2nd Bns.] Grenadiers, Guards, and other Corps of the Reserve [including the 42nd Regt.] under the Command of [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis, struck their tents last night at 9 o'Clock, and about daylight this morning passed The North [or Hudson] River in flatboats, and landed on the Jersey shore about 5 miles above Fort Constitution [also Fort Lee] without opposition. Tis said the Rebels have been withdrawing from Fort Constitution for these last two days.

21st Nov^r

The troops that landed in Jersey yesterday, marched immediately towards Fort Constitution which they found had been very recently abandoned by the Rebels, who retired further into the Country in the most precipitate manner; leaving behind them, 2 brass and one Iron, 13 Inch Mortars, and several pieces

of Cannon, brass & iron, some of which they had drawn some distance from the Fort, but finding our troops were advancing, they abandoned them, as also their tents, baggage, Stores, provisions, &c. &c. Our troops pursued them so rapidly, that about 8 or 10 were killed, and about 70 taken prisoners when the accounts came away. This is the time to push these rascals, and if we do, and not give them time to recover themselves, we may depend on it they will never make head again...

Source: *Dairy of Frederick Mackenzie*, Vol. I, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1930 and reprinted by The New York Times & Arno Press, 1969, pp. 112-113.

Lt. Henry Stirke's Account of the 1st Lt. Infantry Battalion at the Attack on Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 18-20, 1776

18th We returned to the post we had left, near Kings Bridge.
 20th We landed in the Jerseys, after passing a very disagreeable night in the Flat boats, under a thick heavy Rain. The Guards, with y^e British, and Hessian Grenadiers; and all the Cannon succeeded us; which were oblig'd to be drawn up a precipice, above a half mile in length, buy men as it was impassable for Horses. (The 10th and 17th Companys were to make the 1st land^g with orders to push up the hill, with as much expedition as possible to take post; and maintain it, 'till sustained) Our landing was not oposs'd (tho under so many disadvantages) certainly owing to their not expecting us in that Quarter. On our march to Fort Lee, we took some prisoners; the Fort is about ten miles from where we landed, which y^e Rebels abandon'd on our approach, and in Such Confusion as to leave their cannon, Stores, &c, with their tents Standing near the Fort, all of which fell into our hands. The military Stores &c taken this day is suppos'd to be worth £3000 Ster^g.

Source and Note: "A British Officer's Revolutionary War Journal, 1776 – 1778," Ed. S. Sydney Bradford in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Baltimore, June 1961, pp. 164-165. Lt. Stirke was assigned to the 10th Lt. Inf. Co. in the 1st Battalion.

Journal of Lt. and Captain Thomas Glyn, 1st Regt. of Foot Guards, Records Taking of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 19-20, 1776

Head Quarters DeLanseys Mills Nov^{ber}. 19th [1776].

The following Corps are to strike their Tent, load their waggons and be in readiness to march with their Blankets and provisions this Night at nine oclock, Two Companies of Chasseurs [Jägers] 1st [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] & 2^d Battalions of Light Infantry, 1st & 2^d Batt^{ns} Grenadiers 33^d & 42^d Regiments, the Brigade of Guards, 100 men of [Maj. Robert] Rogers Corps without Arms, two Engineers with 12 Carpenters and three Guides they will receive their Orders from L^t Gen^l [Charles] Earl Cornwallis.

These Corps were to attack Fort Lee in New Jersey which was separated from Fort Washington by the Hudsons River. The 1st Division consisting of the Light Infantry and Chasseurs embarked in the Boats at Spiting Devil, while the 2^d Division marched & lay on their Arms near Phillipps Farm by Tetards Hill.

November 20th [1776]

At Day Break the 1st Division disembarked on the Jersey Shore having a very perpendicular Bank of Rock 80 feet high to ascend the path to the Summit very broken, this was beyond the usual Landing Place, & considered inaccessible for any body of troops; as soon as the Boats could return, the 2^d Division embarked at Phillipps farm, & the whole Corps made good their Landing without any Opposition; Lord Cornwallis immediately formed his Corps in two Columns the right consisting of the Light Infantry Chasseurs and Brigade of Guards; the left of the British Reserve, a very rapid march followed & the Enemy were completely surprised in their flying Camp near the Forts Lee and

Constitution; the Light Infantry soon drove in the Enemy's Picquets, such was the Confusion of the Enemy that not only all their Tents were standing their Meal at the fire but all the Sick fell into our hands.

Source: *The Journal of Ensign Thomas Glyn, 1st Regiment of Foot Guards on American Service with the Brigade of Guards 1776-1777*, Transcription by Linnea Bass from the original handwritten manuscript, pp. 14-15. Guards officers held both regimental and Army-wide rank, thus Glyn was a Lt. in the regiment but was considered a Captain in the overall army.

**Account of Capture of Fort Lee by Gen. Sir William Howe's Aid de Camp,
Capt. Friedrich von Muenchhausen, Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 19 – 20, 1776**

November 19. In the evening at ten o'clock, the Hessian grenadiers, jaegers, and the English reserves, a total of 5,000 men under the command of [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis, broke camp quietly. November 20. At dawn this force was ferried across the Hudson River on large flatboats at two spots and was disembarked approximately six miles from Fort Lee. Both Fort Lee and Fort Constitution were defensible. On the morning that our troops were taken over, both [Rebel] Generals [George] Washington and [Israel] Putnam were in the fort. When the news of the advance of our troops reached the fort, Washington departed after giving Putnam command. Putnam, half an hour later, handed the command over to the senior colonel. Shortly thereafter the colonel took flight with all his men, without waiting for a single shot. The Rebels left behind 7 mortars, 32 cannon, 432 tents, 400,000 rounds of ammunition, provisions for three months for 5,000 men, and 73 invalids.

Source: *At General Howe's Side 1776-1778, The diary of General William Howe's aide de camp, Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen*, Trans. and Ed. Ernst Kipping and Samuel Smith, Philip Freneau Press, Monmouth Beach (N. J.), 1974, p. 5.

**Hessian Jäger Capt. Johann Ewald's Account Lt. Gen. Charles,
Earl Cornwallis' Capture of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 19, 1776**

At eleven o'clock on the night of 19th the jägers, the English and Hessian grenadiers, and five English brigades [see note] marched under the command of [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis to Phillipsburgh on the Hudson River. At daybreak this army crossed the river in flatboats, the crossing being covered by several frigates on the left. We climbed ashore along a steep bluff and scaled the rocky and bushy height as quickly as possible. At the top we found several plantations in a district called Tenaflly, where the jägers and light infantry deployed in a semicircle behind the stone walls and posted sentries by platoon at distances of three hundred paces. Fort Lee lay two hours away from us on the left...

Toward four o'clock in the afternoon the entire army assembled. The remainder of the troops with the guns had taken a steep road to the right, which we covered and upon which we they could make fairly good progress with the guns. The entire army then set out to the left toward the fort; the 1st Jäger Company formed the van and I covered the right flank...

At dusk we arrived at Fort Lee, in and around which the army camped in great disorder. At Neighborhood there was a huge magazine of forage, flour and biscuit. A number of cannon and part of the ammunition were captured in the fort, where some fifty men who had straggled fell into our hands...

Source and Note: *Diary of the American War, A Hessian Journal, Captain Johann Ewald, Field Jäger Corps*, Trans. and Ed. Justin P. Tustin, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1979, pp. 17- 19. Ewald's list of units is incorrect. The actual list from Gen. Sir William Howe's Nov. 30th report to London included the 1st and 2nd Lt. Inf. Bns, 1st and 2nd British Gren. Bns, two Hessian Gren. Bns., two Guards Bns., 33rd and 42nd Regts.

**Excerpt of Letter from Rebel Gen. George Washington to Maj. Gen.
Charles Lee, Reporting the Loss of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 20, 1776**

Hackinsack, Nov^r. 21, 1776

Dear General

It must be painful to you as well as to us to have no News to send you but of a melancholy Nature. Yesterday Morning the Enemy landed a large Body of Troops below Dobb's Ferry & advanced very rapidly to the Fort called by your name. ~~The General~~ I immediately [^] went over & as the Fort was not tenable on this side & we in a narrow Neck of Land the passes out of w^{ch} the Enemy were attempting to sieze directed the Troops consisting of Bealls, Heard's the Remainder of Ewing's Brigades & some other Parts of broken Regiments to move over to the West Side of Hackinsack River. A Considerable Quantity of Stores & some Artillery have fallen into their Hands—We have no Account of their Movements this Morning. But as this Country is almost a dead Flat, we have not an intrenching Tool, & not above 3000 Men, & they much broken & dispirited not only with our ill Success but the Loss of their Tents & Baggage; I have resolved to avoid any Attack tho by so doing I must leave a very fine Country open to their Ravages, or a plentiful Store House, from which they will draw voluntary Supplies...

I am Sir with great regard Y^r Most Obe^d Serv^t

GW

Sources: Lib. of Congress, *George Washington Papers*, Series 4, General Correspondence and "From George Washington to Major General Charles Lee, 21 November 1776," *Founders Online, National Archives*, last modified February 1, 2018.

News Account of Lord Cornwallis' Capture of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 20, 1776

NEW-YORK, November 25...

On Wednesday Morning, [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis, with about 6000 Men, landed on the Jersey Shore, above Fort Lee, and advanced without Opposition into the Colony.

On Friday three other Regiments passed over to the Jerseys to join Lord Cornwallis, who is in Possession of Hackensack, and rapidly extending himself into the Country.

The Rebels abandoned Fort Constitution, lately called Fort Lee, without a blow...

Source: *New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, November 25, 1776. The 42nd Regt. was included in Lt. Gen. Earl Cornwallis' landing to take Fort Lee.

General Orders Thanking Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis' Troops, Including the Royal Highlanders, for the Capture of Fort Lee, New Jersey, Nov. 22, 1776

Head Quarters De Lancey's Mill Nov. 22^d 1776...

The Commander in Chief desires to return his Thanks to Lieut.-Gen. [Charles] Earl Cornwallis, Maj.-Gen. [John] Vaughan, Brig.-Gen. [Edward] Matthew, Col. [Carl von] Donop, and to the Officers and Soldiers under his Lordship's Command, for the meritorious Service performed by that Corps on the 20th Inst, accomplished with infinite Fatigue to the Troops...

Source and Note: "The Kemble Papers: Vol. I, 1773-1789 in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1883*, Publication Fund Series, Printed for the Society, New York, 1884, Google Books. This order begins by thanking the troops involved in the capture of Fort Lee, including the 42nd Regt. and 42nd Light Infantry Co.



Detail showing Lord Cornwallis' route from Fort Lee to New Bridge from "A plan of the operations of the King's army under the command of General Sir William Howe, K.B. in New York and east New Jersey, against the American forces commanded by General Washington from the 12th of October to the 28th of November 1776, wherein is particularly distinguished the engagement on the White Plains the 28th of October," by Claude Joseph Sauthier

Map Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.

Gen. Sir William Howe's Advance toward Trenton, New Jersey, Nov. 21-Dec. 14, Dec. 1776

Excerpts of Letter No. 31 from Gen. Sir William Howe, Commander-in-Chief, North America, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, Describing Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis' Advance toward Brunswick, New Jersey, Nov. 21- 28, 1776

New York 30 November 1776

My Lord...

The next day Major General [John] Vaughan, with the Light Infantry [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.] and British Grenadiers, was detached to the New Bridge upon Hackinsack River, and a Detachment of the 16th Dragoons under the command of Colonel [William] Harcourt was sent over to Fort Lee. This Detachment with some companies of Light Infantry scoured the country on the 22^d as far as Pisaick River and found the Enemy had abandoned all the intermediate country, their advanced guard being at Aquakinunc.

On the 24th, the 2^d and 4th Brigades of British and 1 Battalion of 71st [Highland] Regiment joined his Lordship, who leaving the 2^d Brigade at Fort Lee advanced with the main body on the 25th to the New Bridge. On the Enemy retiring from Newark as his Lordship approached, he took possession of that place on the 28th and is now following them retreating towards Brunswick...

Signed

Source: *Documents of the American Revolution*, Vol. XII, *Transcripts 1776*, pp. 258 - 264 from TNA, *Colonial Office: Secretary of State, Military Dispatches* at CO 5/93, f. 294

Hessian Jäger Capt. Johann Ewald's Account Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis' Capture of New Bridge, New Jersey, Nov. 21, 1776

Toward morning on the 21st the 1st Battalion of Light Infantry under [Lt.] Colonel [Robert] Abercromby and the Donop [1st] Jäger Company under Captain [August von] Wreden occupied New Bridge, where there is a bridge over the Hackensack River for which there is no detour...

After we had mastered this position, Lord Cornwallis's army moved into cantonment quarters on the plantations along the road from Bergen Point to Tappan...

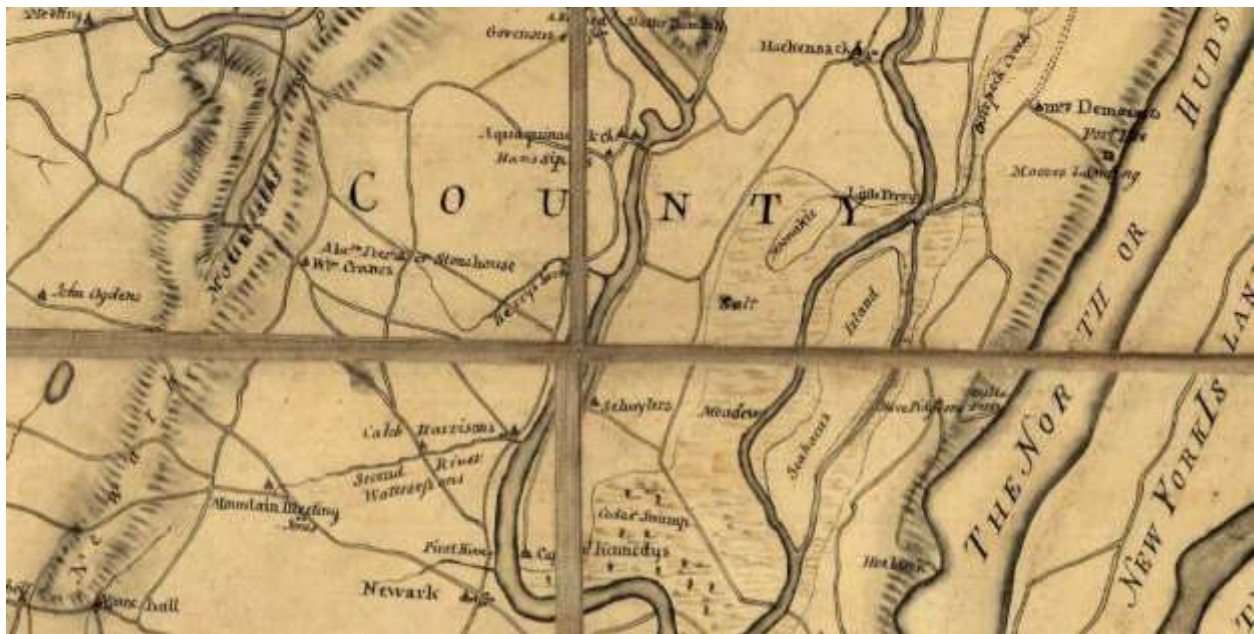
Source and Note: *Diary of the American War, A Hessian Journal, Captain Johann Ewald, Field Jäger Corps*, Trans. and Ed. Justin P. Tustin, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1979, pp. 17- 19.

Account of the Army's Advance Towards the Delaware River by Gen. Sir William Howe's Aid de Camp, Capt. Friedrich von Muenchhausen, New Jersey, Nov. 21 – 30, 1776

November 21. Beginning this day, [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis started to employ his corps [including the 42nd Regt.] toward Hackensack, and left only a Small guard at the two forts taken the day before...

November 30. Lord Cornwallis advances without opposition to the left toward the Delaware River.

Source: *At General Howe's Side 1776-1778, The diary of General William Howe's aide de camp, Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen*, Trans. and Ed. Ernst Kipping and Samuel Smith, Philip Freneau Press, Monmouth Beach (N. J.), 1974, pp. 5-6.



Detail showing the area between Hackensack and Newark, from "A map containing part of the Provinces of New York and New Jersey," 1781, by Andrew Skinner and Thomas Millidge

Map Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.

Lt. Henry Stirke's Account of the Pursuit of the Retreating Rebel Army From Fort Lee to the Delaware River by 1st Lt. Infantry Battalion (Including the 42nd Lt. Infantry Co.), New Jersey, Nov. 21 – Dec. 8, 1776

21st We push'd on to New-bridge [3 miles north of Hackensack], where the Rebels (on our appearance) began to set fire to their Stores, and some houses; but on Our Advancing to the

bridge they fled without effecting as much Mischief as intended; as a good part of the Stores fell into Our hands... At night we took post at Old Bridge, which y^e Dasterdly Rebels, had broke down, to stop the pursuit. 22 miles from New-York...

- 26th The Light Infantry, grenadiers, and Guards; with Hessian Chasseurs, and Light dragoons, march'd at 3 O'Clock in the morning to the Village of Hackquackinack [Acquackanonk], but the Rebels breaking down the Bridge, oblig'd us to ford the River about a mile above the Village. Our field pieces [artillery] play'd into the Woods above the ford, to prevent y^e lurking Scoundrels, from annoying us in Crossing the River. This Village is 14 miles from New-York.
- 27th March'd about 5 miles towards Newark, and took post on some heights, by Second River. We saw a few Rebels at a great distance.
- 28th March'd to Newark. Was informed that y^e rebels had left the Town, that morning.



Detail showing the area between Newark and Brunswick from "A map containing part of the Provinces of New York and New Jersey," 1781, by Andrew Skinner and Thomas Millidge

Map Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.

- 29th March'd thro' Elizabeth-Town and took post between that & Woodbridge. The Rebels we hear have push'd on to Brunswick.
- 30th March'd to Amboy.
- Dec^r
- 1st We march'd towards Brunswick. On our appearing on the heights before the Town; the rebels began to abandon it, with all y^e expedition possible: we fired on them a Cross the River, from our fieldpieces; which was return'd for sometime. As the Rebels took care to demolish part of the bridge, we cou'd not prevent their carrying off some of their stores &c. The Hessians lost a Captⁿ [Friedrich Karl von Weitershausen], kill'd by a Riffle, and a Grenadier by a Cannon ball. Having the bridge repaired, we took possession of the Town... [Lord Cornwallis remained at Brunswick on Gen. Howe's orders]
- 6th His Excellency [Commander-in-Chief] Gen^l [Sir William Howe] How arriv'd.



Detail showing the area between Brunswick and Trenton from "A map containing part of the Provinces of New York and New Jersey," 1781, by Andrew Skinner and Thomas Millidge

Map Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.

- 7th The Army march'd to Prince Town; the Light Infantry took post about a mile beyond it; when we saw a small body of the rebels, destroying a bridge, which they effected, before we could drive them off.
- 8th March'd to Trent-Town; met with no Opposition; 'till we arrived at the River Delaware just between the Town, & the Ferry; where (just as we halted) we receiv'd a very heavy Cannonade from the opposite Side of the River, which (before we could get under cover of a hill, at the back of the Town) Kill'd one of the Dismounted Dragoons wounded a man of the 27th light Company and an Artillery man.

Source: "A British Officer's Revolutionary War Journal, 1776 – 1778," Ed. S. Sydney Bradford in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Baltimore, June 1961, pp. 165-166. Lt Stirke was assigned to the 10th Lt. Infantry Co.



Detail of Map of [proposed] British outposts between Burlington and New Bridge, New Jersey, December 1776

Map Source and Note: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div. Due to Rebel Gunboats, the 42nd Regt. did not progress past the Bordentown/ Black Horse (now Columbus) area of New Jersey.

Excerpt of a Letter No. 32 from Gen. Sir William Howe, Commander-in-Chief, North America, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, Reporting His Plans to Station a Large Body of Troops to Hold New Jersey, Nov. 30, 1776

New York 30 November 1776

My Lord, the troops being upon the eve of going into winter cantonments, I trouble your lordship with this separate letter respecting the succeeding operations of the present campaign and with some particulars relative to the next...

In consequence of my expectation that [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis will shortly be in possession of East Jersey, I propose to quarter a large body of troops in that district, without which we should be under much difficulty to find covering, forage, and supplies of fresh provisions for the Army...

Source: Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. XII, Transcripts 1776, p. 264-266 from TNA, Colonial Office: Secretary of State, Military Dispatches at CO 5/93, f. 304.

Excerpt of a Letter No. 38 from Gen. Sir William Howe, Commander-in-Chief, North America, to Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, Reporting Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis' Advance to Trenton, New Jersey, Dec. 1-9, 1776

New York 20 December 1776

My Lord...

In Jersey, upon the approach of the van of Lord Cornwallis's Corps [including the 42nd Regt.] to Brunswick by a forced march on the 1st instant [Dec.], the Enemy went off most precipitately to Prince Town; and had they not prevented the passage of the Rariton by breaking a part of Brunswick Bridge, so great was the confusion among them that their Army must inevitably have been cut to pieces.

My first design extending no further than to get and keep possession of East Jersey, Lord Cornwallis had orders not to advance beyond Brunswick which occasioned him to discontinue his pursuit; but finding the advantages that might be gained by pushing on to the Delaware and the possibility of getting to Philadelphia, the communication leading to Brunswick was reinforced and on the 6th I joined his Lordship with the 4th Brigade of British under the command of Major General [James] Grant. On the 7th, Lord Cornwallis's Corps, the Guards accepted who were left at Brunswick, marched to Prince Town which the Enemy had quitted on the same day. This Corps marched in two divisions on the 8th the first, advancing to Trenton, reached the Delaware soon after the Enemy's rearguard had crossed. Their main Army, having passed the preceding day and night, took post on the other side of the river.

Lord Cornwallis with the rear division halted at Maidenhead six miles from Trenton and marched at one o'clock next morning [Dec. 9] to Corriel's Ferry, 13 miles higher up the Delaware, in some expectation of finding boats there and in the neighbourhood sufficient to pass the river; but in this he was disappointed, the Enemy having taken the precaution to des troy or to secure on the south side all the boats that could possibly be employed for this purpose...

I cannot too much commend Lord Cornwallis's good services during this campaign and particularly the ability and conduct he displayed in the pursuit of the Enemy from Fort Lee to Trenton, a distance exceeding eighty miles in which he was well supported by the ardour of his Corps who cheerfully quitted their tents and heavy baggage as impediments to their march...

Signed.

Source: Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. XII, Transcripts 1776, pp. 266-268 from TNA, Colonial Office: Secretary of State, Military Dispatches, 1776-1777 at CO 5/94, f. 15.

Account of the Army's Advance Towards the Delaware River and Entry Into Winter

**Quarters by Gen. Sir William Howe's Aid de Camp, Capt. Friedrich von Muenchhausen,
New Jersey, Dec. 1 – 14, 1776**

December 1 and 2. [Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis advances still further, [Hessian] Colonel [Johann] Rall follows up with his brigade... Lord Cornwallis has arrived at Brunswick, after having covered the areas of Hackinsack, Bootbridge, Bergen, Elizabeth Point, Elizabeth, and Amboy. There have been no important engagements up to this time, only small skirmishes...

December 3 and 4. Lord Cornwallis is standing quietly at Brunswick; he has orders not to advance, but to rebuild the dismantled bridge over the Raritan River near Brunswick...

December 6...

At four o'clock in the afternoon we [including Gen. Sir William Howe] arrived at Brunswick where we met Lord Cornwallis with his corps. Immediately upon our arrival, the Hessian grenadiers received orders from General Howe to move out to the right one hour's march...

December 7. In the morning the whole corps marched in two columns to Princeton. The Hessian grenadiers and jaegers, who had arrived yesterday, made up the second column, marching one hours' distance to the right. Our column of only Englishmen accompanied General Howe. We marched in trains except for two battalions of light infantry [including the 42nd Lt. Inf. Co.], two battalions of grenadiers, 150 mounted light dragoons with eight 3-pounders, all of whom marched in battle order ahead of us.

The rebels were always barely ahead of us. Since General Howe was with the vanguard, we advanced very slowly, and the rebels had time to withdraw step by step without being engaged. Jersey is a beautiful, through mostly flat country, but there are numerous small woods and dense thickets. In one of these woods several of our scouts were killed...

In the evening we arrived at Princeton, which is 14 English miles from Brunswick. Princeton is a nice little town and has a fine college. Its main building has 36 windows on its length and 24 on its width, and is four stories high. A remarkably excellent library has till now been spared by the war.

December 8. After a dismantled bridge had been repaired, the march continued toward Trenton in a single column... Again today, we had in front of us a vanguard in battle order, which followed closely on the heels of the retreating enemy.

Trenton is 12 miles from Princeton. Beyond Trenton is a plain more than 200 paces wide with the Delaware at the right and a wooded valley to the left. At two o'clock we reached Trenton outskirts. Some inhabitants came running toward us, urging us to march quickly through the town in a hurry so we could capture many of the enemy who were just embarking in boats and were about to cross [Delaware River]. General Howe, who probably knew the rebels had strong batteries on the other side of the Delaware, surmised that they hoped we would follow the straggling parties and become exposed to enemy fire as we reached the plain. The general therefore ordered a halt of all troops except some light infantry and jaegers.

With these troops, General Howe, Lord Cornwallis, and three of us aides, went through Trenton and down to the plain. Just as we arrived, the rebels opened a terrific fire upon us with all their batteries, containing 37 cannon. The light infantry and jaegers were forced to retreat in a great hurry to the valley on the left. In their way, in the blink of an eye, they lost 13 men.

General Howe rode with us all around, stopping from time to time; he stayed there with the greatest coolness and calm for at least an hour, while the rebels kept their strongest fire going. Wherever we turned the cannon balls hit the ground, and I can hardly understand, even now, why all five of us were not crushed by the many balls. Then, just as General Howe was about to move back into the town, a ball landed so close to him in soft ground that dirt splattered his body and face...

When General Howe returned, he ordered the troops to march into town. Lord Cornwallis was detached in the evening, with four regiments, to move to the right beyond Pennington, 22 miles away. It was hoped that he would find boats or perhaps a good ferry so that he could cross over.

December 9. News was received from Lord Cornwallis that a crossing was impossible, because he could find neither boats nor a ferry. Besides, the rebels had been informed of his intentions. He therefore returned to Pennington, eight miles from here...

December 11. Last evening and last night the enemy opposite to us marched off. They left behind to oppose us 11 cannon, and according to two deserters, 4000 men. The balance of the [rebel] army has been spread along the river by corps...



Detail of 36-pounder at the ready, by Antoine Leon Morel-Fatio

Picture Source: Wikimedia Commons

December 12. The rebels brought up from Philadelphia about 13 row galleys mounted with heavy cannon, some as large at 36-pounders. The craft are propelled by many oars, so that they do not need favorable winds to advance. With these galleys they alarm our riverside very much. We do not have heave artillery with us, and if we did, we could not get them in place to fire before we would be attacked by the galleys, unless we did so at night.

The detachment under [Hessian] Colonel [Carl] von Donop [including the 42nd Regt.], which left yesterday, advanced as far as Burlington [see note], 21 miles away from here, and 18 miles from Philadelphia. They failed to find a way of crossing the Delaware...

December 14. Since there is no possibility of crossing the Delaware, we were constrained to give orders to go into winter quarters...

Source and Note: *At General Howe's Side 1776-1778, The diary of General William Howe's aide de camp, Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen*, Trans. and Ed. Ernst Kipping and Samuel Smith, Philip Freneau Press, Monmouth Beach (N. J.), 1974, pp. 6-7. Because of the Rebel row gallies, Col. Donop's brigade, including the 42nd Regt., was not able to reach Burlington.



Detail showing Pennington from "A map containing part of the Provinces of New York and New Jersey," 1781, by Andrew Skinner and Thomas Millidge

Map Source: Library of Congress Geography and Map Div.

**Rebel Gen. George Washington's Account of the 42nd Regt., Pennington, New Jersey,
Dec. 10, 1776**

Trenton Falls, December 10, 1776

Dear Sir: ...

The Enemy are now extended along the Delaware at several places. By a prisoner who was taken last night, I am told, that at Penny Town there are two Battalions of Infantry, three of Granadiers, The Hessian Granadiers, 42^d of Highlanders and 2 others. Their object doubtless, is to pass the river above us, or to prevent your joining me. I mention this that you may avail yourself of the information...

Source: *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress*, George Washington to Charles Lee, Dec. 10, 1776, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, Vol. 6., John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor

**Rebel Gen. George Washington's Account of Interrogation of 42nd Regt. Prisoner,
Falls of Delaware (Opposite Trenton), Dec. 11, 1776**

Head Quarters, Falls of Delaware, December 11, 1776.

Sir...

I yesterday rode up the River about 11 Miles to [Maj. Gen. William Alexander] Lord Stirling's post, where I found a prisoner of the 42d Regiment, who had been just brought in; he informed me that Lt. Gen. Charles] Lord Cornwallis was at Penny Town, with two Battalions of Grenadiers and three of Light Infantry, all British; the Hessian Grenadiers the 42d Highland Regiment and two other Battalions the names of which he did not remember. He knew nothing of the reasons of their being assembled there, nor what were their future Intentions; but I last night received Information from my Lord Stirling, which had been brought in by his Scouts, which in some Measure accounted for their being there. They had made a forced March from Trenton on Sunday Night to Coryell's Ferry, in hopes of Surprising a Sufficient Number of Boats to transport them, but finding themselves disappointed, had marched back to Penny Town, where they remained yesterday. From their Several Attempts to seize Boats, it does not look as if they had brought any with them, as I was at one time informed...

Source and Note: *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress*, George Washington to Continental Congress, Dec. 11, 1776, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, Vol. 6, John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor. The Falls of the Delaware is a stretch of about two miles in length where the river is full of stones almost across it, which are not very large, but in consequence of shallowness the water runs rapidly and

breaks against them. (Ref. *History of Trenton*, Trenton Hist. Soc.) It describes the general area of the river near Trenton.