

COL. ROBERT MAGAW

The Defender of Fort Washington

Major in Colonel William Thompson's "Battalion
of Pennsylvania Riflemen"

The first troops from the South to reach Boston

Colonel of the Fifth Pennsylvania Regiment
Assigned by Washington to defend Fort Washington

"To the Adjutant General of the British army.—Sir, if I rightly understand the purport of your message from General Howe, communicated to Col. Swoope, this post is to be immediately surrendered or the garrison put to the sword. I rather think it is a mistake than a settled resolution in Gen. Howe to act a part so unworthy of himself and the British nation. But give me leave to assure his excellency that actuated by the most glorious cause that mankind ever fought in, I am determined to defend the post to the very last extremity."

Paper read before the Hamilton Library Association,
Carlisle, Pa.—The Historical Society of Cum-
berland County, Pennsylvania

BY

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FIRST TROOPS TO ARRIVE AT BOSTON.

According to Capt. H. M. M. Richards—Proceedings of the Pennsylvania-German Society, Vol. XVII—Capt. Nagel's company, from Reading, arrived at camp at Cambridge, July 18, before Doudel's company, which, according to the same authority, arrived at Cambridge July 25, at 1 P. M. Compare p. 14; p. 15, August 18, undoubtedly error for July 18.

WASHINGTON'S ORDER TO MAGAW AND REPORT TO CONGRESS.

The precise words of General Washington, over his own signature, to Colonel Magaw, entrusting the defense of Fort Washington to him, seem to the writer to allow of more discretion on the part of that officer than might perhaps be inferred from the words used by General Washington in his Report to Congress. In it he says Colonel Magaw was left in that command, "and orders given to defend it to the last;" and afterwards in the same report, he says that he wrote to General Greene, who had command on the Jersey side, "directing him to retain or evacuate the post as he should think best, and revoking the absolute order to Colonel Magaw to defend the post to the last extremity." These last words were not in his order to Magaw, and seem to follow the language of Magaw's reply to Howe.

In this connection it seems proper to correct a statement, p. 48, sometimes made, that Washington, in the Report alluded to, called Magaw's reply a "spirited reply," the exact language in the Report being "a spirited refusal."

ADDRESS AT DEDICATION OF MONUMENT.

The address quoted, p. 49, was not by Judge Steele, but by Walter B. Logan, President of the Empire State Society of the American Revolution.

DATE OF DEATH OF MAGAW.

The date given—p. 54—January 6, as that of the death of Col. Magaw, is that of his funeral. His death probably occurred on Sunday, three days earlier.

The date of the death of his wife, Marietta, should be April 18, instead of August 18.

Colonel Robert Magaw, The Defender Of Fort Washington.

By Professor Charles F. Himes.

An account relating to some important historic events in the early days of the War for Independence, more particularly of the part in them taken by Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

Read before the Hamilton Library Association—The Historical Society of Cumberland County.

LOSS OF FORT WASHINGTON—THE CENTRE OF THE CONFEDERATED COLONIES BROKEN.

The capture of Fort Washington, on the Hudson, now well within the limits of New York City, with its garrison of 3000 men and its military stores by the forces of King George, November 1776, may well be regarded in all its aspects as the greatest disaster of the War for Independence. The loss of the garrison was not simply a loss of 3000 men, but of the flower of the little patriot army, which, indeed, outside of it, could hardly be called an army at all, but rather a loose, heterogeneous aggregation of undisciplined men; and even that rapidly dissolving by expiration of terms of enlistment.

Hardly second to the loss of men was the loss of munitions of war, which had been collected by a supreme effort, and included 40 cannon. But to this loss must be added the still more serious one of cannon and munitions, resulting from the immediate and hasty abandonment of Fort Lee, on the opposite bank of the Hudson, necessitated by the surrender of Fort Washington.

But even more depressing to the hopes of the patriots than the loss of men and munitions, and the whole series of disasters leading up to the fall of Fort Washington, was the strategic loss of that point on the Hudson. New York, the natural strategic, as well as commercial and political center of the federated colonies, had just fallen into the hands of the King's forces, and with the loss of Forts Washington and Lee, which were regarded as commanding the Hudson, the last hope of preventing the passage of the British fleet up and down that river at will was gone. On the control of the Hudson, Congress had insisted by resolution, and by positive command to Washington, even to the overruling of his military judgement. The people of the colonies had, indeed, come to regard the control of that river as absolutely necessary to the effective military co-operation of New England and the more southern colonies.

The center was now broken. The Confederation was cut in two. When it is remembered too, that the Declaration of Independence was then little more than four months old, and that this was the first campaign after that defiance to King George, it can be imagined what a staggering, if not crushing blow it must have been to the hopes of the colonists. A reader of history, unaware of the ultimate result, when he reached that point would regard the cause of the infant nation as hopelessly lost; or as it was put by an early historian, "a paragraph would have closed some small section in the history of England treating of the American troubles.

REJOICING IN ENGLAND. COLLAPSE OF THE
"REBELLION" IN SIGHT.

Within the British lines, from the commanding officer down to the humblest private, all seemed to feel that, although the "old fox" had not been bagged, there was little left for them to do, but to finish up the minor details of the conflict. Even after the battle of Long Island, a swift sailing ship had already been dispatched to carry the news to George III, that the war of the American rebellion was practically over. There was great rejoicing in England on the arrival of the news, and the seemingly decisive victory was celebrated in many ways.

Several years ago I was interested in looking over the newspaper files of that day in London; and a few extracts will serve to show the feeling there. Thus a letter from Glasgow to a London paper, Jan. 6th, 1777, says: "There is little talked of here but the fate of America; it is considered already conquered. Two private letters arrived here yesterday night importing that Gen'l. Howe had sent one part of his army to subdue Rhode Island, and the other to reduce Philadelphia. The merchants here have a good brisk trade, and some of them are amassing goods to export to America as soon as the peace is settled." Again: "On Monday, Jan. 6th, the Mayor, Aldermen, and Gentlemen of Appleby assembled at the King's Head to celebrate the success of his Majesty's army in America. A haunch of venison distinguished the feast, which in other respects also was elegant and plentiful. The company consisted of gentlemen of all parties, who concurred in their state-

ment on this occasion, and demonstrated the true spirit of rational Englishmen. Various toasts were given expressive of the same just ideas and honest feeling, and a general procession was made in the evening to the boufire at the Low Cross, where the Gentlemen drank his Majesty's health, and treated a numerous circle with liquors for the same purpose. The ringing of bells, the discharge of guns, and the acclamations of the people concluded the festival."

Another account states: "Lord Cornwallis has got to Brunswick, on the high road to Philadelphia, and means to beat the quarters of the General Congress; but I fancy when he gets there he will find that flock of *unclean birds* have become *birds of passage* and have winged their way to a more southern clime." The London Advertiser of Jan. 11, 1777, says: "By recent and authentic accounts from America we can assure our readers that the greatest consternation prevails among the leaders of the rebellion." "It was an electric shock to Congress." "Hancock was seized with an attack of apoplexy, a disorder akin to strangulation, and Adams is literally at bay in the Massachusetts." "Those who are enemies to America are all cock-a-hoop about this intelligence." "It is impossible but that peace must be the consequence of our successes."

EFFECT ON THE COLONIES.

In the Colonies, as the news passed from town to town, village to village, and to the solitary farm houses and cabins by express riders of that day, the deep gloom and depression can be imagined. Some, indeed many, fell in

with the overtures of pardon offered by the British general, and among them were men of political prominence. But with most, if there was a feeling akin to despondence, it soon gave way to a manifestation of more earnest resolve to renewed efforts.

The event of course called for investigation, for inquiry as to the cause of the disaster, as to who was to blame, who had failed in the performance of duty. The discussion was long and acrimonious, and filled with personalities, in which Washington came in for a share, but with the perspective we have now, of 150 years, the common consensus is, at least, that the brave but unfortunate commander, Col. Robert Magaw, in whom we are particularly interested, had failed neither in duty nor military skill; and the increased confidence in the leadership of the great commander, whose transcendent military ability and true greatness of character never shone more conspicuously than in the face of disaster and the most discouraging conditions, was evinced by the complete entrustment to him for the future, of the military direction of affairs, which up to this time had been too largely shared, if not dictated by a Committee of Congress,

COLONEL ROBERT MAGAW.

The chief reason for the selection of this event of highest military and political, as well as dramatic interest, for a paper before this Association is because it has a special interest for us as citizens of Cumberland county, for Colonel Magaw, to whom Washington had directly entrusted the honorable and responsible duty of holding that post,

after the main army had withdrawn from New York Island, was a leading citizen of Carlisle, was among the very first in the State to respond to the call from Boston after Lexington, and, like a true Carlisle, he returned to the Borough, resumed his place as a citizen, and here he ended his days, and here he was laid to rest with unusual honors, in which all classes of the community took part.

It is also proper to state, however, that the paper is not intended to present a formal biographical sketch of Col. Magaw, nor the details of the movements and counter movements that led up to the capitulation. but it is simply proposed, in the time at our disposal, to group around the central figure and the event associated facts and incidents often of more than local interest.

In the interest of historic accuracy attention will be called to some errors of statement found in some works of high authority, and consequently frequently repeated. Like many others prominent in the history of the county, Robert Magaw was not a native of this county. I mention this particularly, because he is so frequently put down as a native of Cumberland county. Thus Wing (Hist. Cumb'd. Co. p. 76,) calls him a native of Cumberland county, whilst in the same work (p. 169), the writer on the Bar of Cumberland county calls him an Irishman. In the "History of Cumberland and Adams Counties," the statements of Wing are repeated. In an account of highest value, perhaps the most complete and accurate of "The Defence and Reduction of Mount Washington," by Reginald Pelham Bolton, (p. 92) Magaw is put down as a "native of the town of

Carlisle, Penn'a." The Rev. Dr. J. A. Murray, after careful investigation, found that his father, William Magaw, was a Scotch-Irish lawyer; who came from Strabane, in the County of Tyrone, Ireland, but was uncertain as to the birth place of his sons, Robert, Samuel and William; Robert being the eldest. But according to the most authoritative sources, Robert, the son of William and Elizabeth Magaw, was born in Philadelphia, in 1738; where his father had first settled on coming from the North of Ireland to America. The son was educated at the Academy of Philadelphia, and studied law. His father removed to Carlisle, about the time of the erection of the county. Here as a lawyer Robert Magaw acquired a practice that, for several years preceding the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, was by far the largest at the Carlisle Bar. It extended into the county of Northumberland, and adjoining counties. He also acted as prosecutor for the Crown in a number of cases. After the war and years of absence from the town, he re-acquired a very large practice. I have been particular to emphasize the fact that he was a Carlisle lawyer, because Bancroft, in history of that period, states without qualification; "the fort was under the command of Col. Magaw, who had passed from the Bar of Philadelphia to the army."

The following quotations from recognized authorities will make his position as a lawyer perfectly clear. "From 1759 to 1764 Magaw appears to have had by far the largest practice at the Carlisle bar; and from 1764 to 1770 Magaw, Wilson and Stephenson had the largest

practice; and he had a very large practice in 1782." Judge Biddle, in his "Three Signers," says: "Early in 1762 Robert Magaw settled in Carlisle and began the practice of law, and in a few years transacted two thirds of the legal business of the county."

With the first measures of oppression by the mother country his feelings became actively enlisted on the side of the colonies. Upon the receipt of the circular sent out by the Committee appointed by the large meeting in Philadelphia to take action in regard to the Boston Port-Bill, in June, 1774, the historic meeting for Cumberland county was held in the Presbyterian church in Carlisle, presided over by John Montgomery, which passed a series of resolutions, responded to the call for a general meeting of the counties, to be held in Philadelphia, by the appointment of three deputies to such a meeting, one of whom was Robert Magaw. It also appointed a permanent Committee of Correspondence for the county, of which Magaw was made a member, and it also recommended a Congress of Deputies from all the colonies. As events moved rapidly the feelings of the citizens kept pace with them, and were ready to assert themselves in action.

MILITARY MEASURES IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY
AFTER LEXINGTON.

As a suitable historic background for the most effective presentation of the peculiarity of their action a very brief recapitulation of the events immediately preceding, and of the conditions at the time will be of assistance. When the second Continental Congress met, May

10, 1775, Lexington had been fought; the New England colonies, almost without realizing it, had taken up the gage of battle; they had already collected an army, or what might be formed into an army; and had cooped up General Gage with his regulars in Boston. A state of war actually existed. The pressing question was a military one. Congress at once formed a federal union, and then proceeded to exercise sovereign powers, although still British subjects. It ordered the enlistment of troops, the purchase of military supplies, and the issuing of notes of the United Colonies. But the question present in the minds of all was that of the man to organize and lead the army. Washington seems to have been in the minds of all; but local jealousies and personal aspirations retarded the unanimity that finally marked the action of the Congress. The question naturally presented itself: why not adopt the New England army already in the field? It can be readily understood that there was a natural hesitation to suggesting a commander-in-chief a man from a different section, and without a representation in that army, and that hesitation would not be lessened when it was felt that Hancock and others resented it, and were perhaps not without aspirations of their own. But when the time came for a vote the commander-in-chief was selected by ballot, without opposing vote.

Washington was commissioned on the 20th of June, started for Boston on the 21st; was received in Boston July 2nd with greatest cordiality and evidences of joy; and assumed command. But the troops were still exclusively from New

England. It was, in fact, of a New England army.

"FIRST BATTALION OF PENNSYLVANIA RIFLEMEN," UNDER COL. WILLIAM THOMPSON, OFF TO BOSTON.

A resolution of Congress, of June 4th, called for six companies of expert riflemen from Pennsylvania. This was followed by another of June 22, directing two more companies to be raised, and the eight companies to be formed into a battalion. The officers recommended by a committee of the Assembly, appointed for that purpose, June 24, were commissioned next day, 25th, by the Continental Congress. There is, however, no record of these commissions in the proceedings of the Continental Congress, as the 25th of June of that year was a Sunday, and there are no records of the Continental Congress of that date.

William Thompson, of Carlisle, was commissioned as Colonel of the Battalion and Robert Magaw, who had been very active in recruiting it, as Major.

Although the records of the Continental Congress, as we have said, are wanting at that date, there is no doubt in regard to the date of these commissions. That of William Thompson can be seen in the J. Herman Bosler Memorial Library, in Carlisle, where it hangs suitably framed, the gift of Mrs. Mary E. Himes, from the collection of her father, the Rev. Joseph A. Murray, D. D. It bears the well known signatures of "John Hancock, President" and "Chas. Thomson, Sect.," of the Continental Congress, and is dated "June 25, 1775." It reads, that he is appointed "to be Colonel of the Battalion

of Riflemen Raised in the Province of Pennsylvania, in the army of the United Colonies, raised for the defence of American Liberty, and for repelling hostile invasion thereof."

The commission of General Washington preceded these commissions by only five days. That of Col. Thompson is especially interesting as the first commission as Colonel issued by the Continental Congress; at least the first of the kind that is known to have been served under. The absence of the name of Georgia, from the list of "United Colonies," named in the Commission, is noticeable, as Georgia had not yet cast in her lot with the other colonies; but, Sept. 25, 1775, delegates from Georgia took their seats, and the names of the several colonies, in commissions after that date, were replaced by the words, "The Thirteen United Colonies of America."

This body of troops was styled by Gen. Washington, in his orders: "Col. Thompson's Battalion of Riflemen," as the Continental army had not yet been organized; and the commission of a captain read, "to be a captain of a company of riflemen in the battalion commanded by Colonel William Thompson."

The name "Thomson" in his commission, as Colonel, is incorrectly spelled, but in the commission of a captain, of the same date, it is correctly spelled Thompson.

These Pennsylvania riflemen were the first troops from west and south of the Hudson to join the army under Washington before Boston. Their arrival there was significant. Up to that time that army had been a New England

army. From that time it became more and more an army of the Thirteen United Colonies soon to be styled the Continental Army. We can realize how the Commander in Chief appreciated this fact, and what a cordial welcome he gave the men; and that the Bostonians saw in this arrival an evidence of sympathy on the part of the other colonies, more substantial than resolutions. Whilst it is perfectly proper to speak of this battalion as Col. Thompson's battalion, too much credit, however, is often claimed for Carlisle and our county, even by careful historians, by reason of his residence here. The correctness of the statement, (Wing p. 80) that the "battalion was formed, officered and equipped principally in Cumberland county," would be justly disputed by historians of our sister counties.

The facts are, that the number of companies called for at first was six, soon increased to eight, and finally to nine by the acceptance of a company from Lancaster, that had not been called for. Only two of these companies were from Cumberland county, including the one from Franklin, then a part of Cumberland.

Again in stating that "the battalion marched directly to Boston," and giving the route, a fact of considerable interest is overlooked, namely, that the battalion was recruited by companies in the several counties, some of which, as we shall see, pushed on separately, as rapidly as possible, and reached Boston before the others; and the routes taken as well as the dates of arrival are variously given. Bancroft says, that, between the 25th of July and the 7th of August,

1400 riflemen arrived in camp; that they were the first troops levied under the authority of the Continental Congress, and were from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, the larger number from Pennsylvania; and "of the eight companies from Pennsylvania, William Thompson was colonel;" this is not inaccurate as to the number of companies, as one of the companies did not reach Boston before September. But the dates within which the arrivals are said to have taken place, are not strictly accurate, as Col. Thompson and the field-officers reached Boston, August 17, and several companies about the same time, and others later, as we shall see. Thus Lieut. Col. Hand writes, August 20: "Arrived with Col. Thompson. * * * got into Cambridge August 18, and the return of the 18th includes captains with field-officers who got in on the 17th."

Hildreth speaks of Thompson's regiment as, "riflemen from western Pennsylvania." This may not be so far out of the way; as Carlisle was spoken of, at that time, frequently as in the western part of the State. The dates of departure for, or more particularly those of the arrival at Boston of the several commands, are of very special interest in settling claims of priority. Bancroft, in giving July 25th as the earliest date of arrival of riflemen from the south is undoubtedly correct, but in grouping all from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania together, and mentioning Morgan and his Virginians first, may unintentionally create the impression that the Virginians were first on the field; or at least that there was no marked difference in the times of arrival of the different

commands. As a matter of history it is of some interest to us to know, that the Pennsylvanians were first on the field. There can be no question that Capt. Doudel's company of Thompson's battalion was the first body of troops to report to Washington at Boston. It was from York; but it is but fair to little Adams county to state, not only that it was a part of York county then, but that, as a fact, a large number of Capt. Doudel's company was recruited from the hardy mountaineers around Getty's Tavern, now Gettysburg.

Several authentic records show that this company left York, July 1st, 1775, for Boston, and, as the Committee wrote, "began their march the nearest road to Boston." The old Moravian records, which are always most reliable where they exist, for fixing historical data of all kinds, note under the above date, "this afternoon a company of 100 men of this town left for the American army in New England, with the ringing of bells, after a sermon had been preached to them by the Presbyterian minister." Undoubtedly the minister of the German Reformed church is here meant; as it was frequently, or generally, called the "German Presbyterian" church, at that time, and that denomination was one of the oldest and most influential in the town.

Another equally authentic account states: July 26, 1775, Capt. Doudel, with his company of riflemen, from Yorktown, Pennsylvania, arrived at Cambridge at 10 o'clock today. This is the earliest date assigned by Bancroft for the arrival of any of the riflemen.

As regards the Virginia riflemen, the

records of the Moravian church in York are also valuable. Under date of July 19, they note: "A company of Virginia troops arrived here on their march to join the American army, we were especially affected by the sight of the motto, "Liberty or Death," which their commander wore on his breast;" and under July 20th, is recorded:

"The Virginia Company left town today for the army;" and again Aug. 5th: "The last Company of Virginia troops marched through the town for the American army." Whilst then, to the company from York county must be conceded priority of arrival at Boston, the companies from Cumberland county were a good second. Capt. Chambers, of the Franklin county company, writes from Cambridge, Aug. 18th: "Arrived in camp on 7th, ultimo about 12 o'clock." (Garrard, p. 43.) The "ultimo" is evidently a slip of the pen. Capt. Hendricks' company left Carlisle July 15th, and arrived at Boston, Aug. 8th.

It was a matter of some chagrin to Col. Thompson that the companies from Cumberland were so much behind that from York. In a letter, from Carlisle, to Col. Montgomery, June 30th, he writes: "I am sorry to inform you that the companies asked from this county are not near complete, nor can I say when they will be filled, as it is in the heat of harvest and I doubt arguments are rather used to keep the men here than to forward the service. The York county Company is quite complete and has received my orders to march this day." Capt. Nagel, with Reading Rifles, arrived at Cambridge Aug. 18th.

ROUTES AND INCIDENTS OF THE MARCH FROM
CARLISLE TO BOSTON.

As to the routes taken by the battalion, or rather the routes of the several companies, accounts are incomplete and contradictory. The sources of information, outside of official documents, are journals of soldiers, letters, petitions for pensions and newspaper accounts of the day. Doudel's company, the first to start, according to the report of the Committee, proposed to "go by the most direct way to Boston." The History of Cumberland county says the regiment moved directly to Boston by way of Easton, etc. But this can only be true in a very general way, as the regiment did not march as a body. One account says that Doudel's company passed through Bethlehem July 8th, the other companies July 21st and July 24th, whilst a newspaper account tells of Doudel's company marching through Dey street, New York, to the music of its drums on its way to Boston. The Philadelphia Post, of Aug. 17, 1776, says, between the 28th of July and Aug. 2nd, riflemen under the command of Smith, Loudon, Doudel, Chambers, Nagel, Miller and Hendricks passed through New Windsor, a few miles above West Point, on their way to Boston. Reading was a point of supplies, and of rendezvous for most of the companies.

As to Capt. Hendricks' company, in which we are naturally most interested, which started from Carlisle, there is a journal, which purports to have been kept by Capt. Hendricks himself of his own company and that of Capt. Chambers, which gives a detailed account of

each day's march after leaving Carlisle, July 18th. This journal was, however, first published in Glasgow, whither it was sent in 1776, by a citizen of Quebec, after the battle in which Hendricks fell. It contains some statements that show that it was completed by another hand; but the account of the march from Carlisle to Boston is probably correct, and is corroborated by a journal kept by Geo. Morrison, a private in the company, which also includes the march to Quebec through the Maine Woods. The company's march, the first day from Carlisle was to Harris' Ferry, thence to Lebanon and Reading. At the latter place met four other companies destined for Cambridge. From thence went by way of Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, points in New Jersey, New Windsor, on the Hudson, Litchfield, Connecticut, where Capt. Price, of Maryland, came up with them, Hartford, Farmington, on 9th, to Headquarters, at Cambridge; having marched a distance of 432 miles.

There are several interesting incidents illustrating the temper of the times, and the mode of settling individuals running counter to it. Thus at Log Gaol, N. J., the entry is made: "Tared and feathered one of the ministerial tools." The term "ministerial" might be misleading but it simply carries the political meaning of the time, having no relation, whatever, to a minister of the gospel, but to the Ministers of King George. The colonists were still British subjects; with them the King could do no wrong; and all the measures for the oppression of the colonies had to be attributed to his Ministers, and individuals who supported them were "ministerial tools."

Even the army of Gen. Gage, at Boston, was often spoken of as the "Ministerial Army." The colonists had not yet reached the point of openly declaring that they were fighting King George and his armies; that would have been treason. At Litchfield, Connecticut, where they met the Maryland Company, they "tarred and feathered another ministerial tool, under which treatment he recanted." Morrison says in his journal: "We apprehended a violent Tory, whom we tarred and feathered for refusing to sign the Resolutions of Congress, and left him to ruminate on the quality of our manners." Again the entry of Aug. 3rd, which confirms the meeting with the Maryland Company; is: "Marched through Litchfield, a small town in Connecticut, where we tarred and feathered another Tory, brought into town by a company of Maryland troops. He had been very violent and clamorous, deriding the cause and all who espoused it. After causing him to drink to the health of Congress, he was drummed out of town."

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENDRICKS

Captain Hendricks fell with Montgomery, in the attack on Quebec, at the Palace Gate, Dec. 30, 1776. The selection of his company, with that of Smith of Pennsylvania, and Morgan to go on the expedition to Canada, through the Maine Woods, under Arnold was a high compliment to the young officer. The journal of Morrison says the "Rifle Captains cast lots who should go;" but I find no allusion to such a fact by Henry, who was in the company, in his classic account of the memorable march, and there are some reasons to doubt it.

This worthy representative of our county deserves more than this passing notice. According to Henry, "although Hendricks was the oldest commissioned officer of the rifle companies, he was still the youngest man. For the sake of peace and good order, he had not assented to, but merely acquiesced in Morgan's assumption of the command of our corps, as the older *person*." But it is only proper to add, that whilst the commission of Hendricks in the Continental army, was among the very first as a Captain in Thompson's battalion, Morgan was his superior in actual service, and had been with Washington in his Indian campaigns, and had his fullest confidence, as well as his personal friendship.

Hendricks is described by Henry as "tall, of mild and beautiful countenance. His soul was animated by a spark of genuine heroism." So Bancroft, in speaking of the riflemen says: "One of the captains was Hendricks, long remembered for his stately person and heroic soul;" and the dispatch of the day, announcing the losses of the assault on Quebec, reads that "excellent young officer Captain William Hendricks of Pennsylvania." We will venture to add to these an extract from the oration of Provost Smith, of the University of Pennsylvania, before the Continental Congress, Feb. 19, 1776, on the death of Montgomery, as follows: "I must not, however, omit the name of the brave Captain Hendricks, who commanded one of the Pennsylvania Rifle Companies, and was known to me from infancy. He was indeed prodigal of his life, and courted danger out of his tour

of duty. The command of the guard belonged to him on the morning of the attack, but he solicited and obtained leave to take a more conspicuous post; and having led his men through the barrier, where his commanding officer, General Arnold, was wounded, he long sustained the fire of the garrison with unshaken firmness, till at last receiving shot in his breast, he immediately expired." His commanders, Gen. Thompson and Col. Magaw, in letters testified that: "No fatigues of duty ever discouraged him, he paid the strictest attention to his company, and was ambitious that they should excel in discipline, sobriety and order."

OBSERVATIONS BY THE WAY AND SENSATIONAL
NOTICES OF THE RIFLEMEN.

Magaw found time to write full letters addressed to the Committee of Cumberland County, not official, but with the freedom of intimate personal friendship. Of course they were not for publication at the time but we may be permitted to take a glimpse through extracts from them at the conditions of that time. The first one after arrival reads: "Camp at Cambridge, Aug. 18, 1775." Dear Gentlemen: „I came here with three Companies of our Battalion on Wednesday the 9th instant in the forenoon, having been but 20 days on actual march between this place and Carlisle. We became so accustomed to walking that I sincerely think we could have continued '6' months." "We made 177 miles the last week." "The country we passed through from Delaware to this place is poor, hilly and very stony, and in many places the roads as bad as in

our mountains, the country well improved, stone fences, frame houses; but by no means experienced the friendship and hospitality in Connecticut and Massachusetts, which was shown us in the Jerseys and New York." "The nearer we approach to Boston the less appearance of danger and distress; and here I have not seen a melancholy countenance, or heard the least complaint or uneasiness." "A great number of individuals must have suffered. Perhaps time and custom has made their losses sit easy, but for the greater part must be making money fast by supplying our great Army. They take care to ask enough for everything they sell. The Massachusetts Bay troops are numerous, but the least respectable of any. Small and great, old and young, some negroes and Mulattos are among them. Their dress is much against their appearance, some with long coats, almost trailing the ground, the next naked to the middies, in general but ill officered. The Rhode Islanders are allowed to excell the other New England troops. A number of their officers are very genteel men. You will think me vain should I tell you how much the rifle men are esteemed, their dress, their arms, their size, strength and activity, but above all their great eagerness to attack the enemy entitle them to the first rank. The hunting shirt here is like a full suit at St. James. A rifleman in his dress may pass Sentinels and go almost where he pleases, while officers of other regiments are stopped. Since we came here the enemy does not show their heads. It was diverting. Their great guns throw the balls so wild and uncertain that there

is very little danger. The town is situated on a beautiful plain, * * * Some of the most elegant buildings I ever saw, though framed. A deserter says the enemy are much terrified on account of the riflemen. If but the God of Armies be with us the Liberties of America are safe."

So it seems these riflemen created a sensation aside from being the first troops to reach Boston from the south.

They were described in letters by different observers, as stout, vigorous, many of them exceeding six feet and their uniforms, almost as impressive, as "made of brown Holland, or Osnaburg, something like a shirt double-caped over the shoulders, in imitation of Indians." Henry a member of Hendrick's company, after fully describing their equipment, says: "The underdress, by no means in a military style, was covered by a deep ash-colored hunting shirt, leggins and moccasins when the latter could be procured," and adds, "it was the silly custom of those days for riflemen to ape the manners of the savage."

But it was their expertness with the rifle that made them terrible to the British officers. It is narrated, that in recruiting Capt. Doudel's company, at York, there were more applicants than could be taken, and young Lieut. Miller chalked a very small nose on a barn door and said: "I'll take only the men who can hit that nose at 150 yards." The newspaper of the day, appreciative of the humor of it, said, "General Gage take care of your nose." In spite of this test there was still an excess of applicants, and some of the rejected ones accompanied the company as volunteers.

Captain Chambers in writing to his wife says: "The riflemen go where they please and keep the regulars in continual hot water." (Garrard 43). He adds that one of the officers picked off by them was the son of a lord with 40,000 pounds a year. Their skill and efficiency was described in many accounts of the day. Thus it was said "a company of them while on a quick advance fired their balls into objects of seven inches in diameter, at a distance of 250 yards. Another account says, "shots were frequently fatal to British officers at more than double the distance of common musket shot."

The wife of John Adams in a letter describing the skirmish at Lechmere's point for which Washington publicly thanked Col. Thompson's battalion in general orders, writes: "The British had landed under cover of a fire from their batteries on Bunker, Breed's and Capp's Hills, as well as from a frigate, which lay 300 yards off the point. In high tide it is an island. Col. Thompson marched instantly with his men, and though a very stormy day, they regarded not the tide, nor waited for boats, but took to the water, although up to their armpits, for a quarter of a mile, and notwithstanding the regular's fire, reached the island, and although the enemy were lodged behind the walls and under cover, drove them to their boats."

Lieut. Col. Hand in writing to his wife, about what he terms, "the fun our regiment had yesterday," says "when the alarm was first given Col. Thompson was at Cambridge, and he (Hand) marched the regiment, as it was the first ready, though the most distant:

but Col. Thompson met him and Major Magaw on the causeway, and the whole then passed with the utmost diligence up to our middies in water."

Col. Magaw, who was in this action, as will be seen from the following extracts from a letter, had been sent to Cape Ann: "Prospect Hill, Aug. 29, 1775. Dear Gentlemen:—On the morning of the 16th, I was sent to Cape Ann * * in consequence I suppose of intelligence that the enemy intended to burn the town. I had 260 chosen riflemen and 12 officers and some volunteers under my command. Was ordered back in five days to Prospect Hill—rifles in good order—good powder, men cool. Have seen boys and soldiers fifty times—run after cannon balls before they fell, and some have been hurt attempting to stop them before they were done running. Boys often pull hair for who shall be first at them. Col. Thompson presents his love to you, this letter will serve for us both, as he is much engaged at this critical period. I am Dear Gentlemen, with great esteem, your affectionate friend and servant.—R. Magaw."

A CAPTURED RIFLEMAN, AND HOW HE SERVED HIS COUNTRY.

The following interesting incident, from a paper by J. W. Shettel before the York County Historical Society, illustrates the bitterness of feeling of the British officers toward these sharp-shooter riflemen, and how it offered one opportunity to do his country much more important service than he had anticipated. After one of the early engagements one of the riflemen of Doudel's company—Walter Cruise was missing, and was put down as killed. But he had

been taken prisoner, and after being very roughly treated by the British officers was finally sent to England. There he was a great curiosity, as the reports of the riflemen had preceded him. He was imprisoned for a time, and upon his release fell in with Arthur Lee, the secret agent of the Colonies in London. He seemed to see in him the very man he needed to carry very important information to the Continental Congress. He asked Cruise whether he could trust him to deliver dispatches into the hands of General Washington. His reply was: "My life is at the service of my country." Lee got passage for him to Halifax, urging him to deliver the papers as soon as possible into the hands of General Washington, or to Congress. On arrival at Halifax, he made straight for New York and delivered the papers to General Washington. They were read by Congress with surprise. Many of the leading statesmen were still hopeful of a peaceable solution of the troubles, in fact, Peace Commissioners were looked for by some. These papers told that the British Ministry had concluded arrangements for sending German mercenaries, beside additional British troops. This news confirmed the wavering, and unified the people in support of the most radical measures of resistance. Within two weeks resolutions looking toward Independence were introduced into the Congress, and a few weeks later were passed. Cruise was rewarded and appointed a Captain in the 6th Regiment.

THE RIFLEMEN PETTED AND SPOILED.

There is, however, another little

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episode, in this connection of a different color, that ought not to be passed over in absolute silence. These riflemen had come so far, had arrived so opportunely, and were so conspicuous in their many and unique soldierly qualities, that they were granted many privileges, as intimated in Magaw's letter, beyond the ordinary soldier. Their camp was separated from the others by 100 yards; they were excused from all working parties, camp guards, camp duties. In other words they were petted and consequently spoiled. They released offenders, of their company, from the guard-house, and interfered with punishment of others. Finally 32 members of one of the companies broke out in open mutiny, with loaded rifles in protest against the punishment of one of their number. General Washington soon brought them to terms, disarmed them, and had them tried by a general court martial. One of their companions, deeply sensible of the disgrace to the regiment, could only say for them, "that upon every alarm it was impossible for men to behave with more readiness, or attend better to their duty; it is only in the camp that we cut a poor figure." The immediate result was a general order that, "Col. Thompson's battalion of riflemen, posted on Prospect Hill, to take their share of all duty, of guard and fatigue, with the Brigade they encamp with." The Lancaster companies seem to have been the most serious offenders; but Col. Hand, in a letter at the time, remarks, "The expedition with which the York company was raised does not help on with their misconduct." "The General positively refused to take the York

company" for the Quebec expedition. This was an early escapade of new and petted recruits, and of which they were at once heartily ashamed, all disgrace of which was soon wiped out by subsequent service.

PROMOTIONS AND CHANGES IN THE RIFLE
BATTALION.

Thus much time has been given to this regiment not only because its Colonel, and its Major and two of its companies were from our county, but because of its interesting place in the history of the Continental Army. It was the first to reach Boston from the south. Col. Thompson was the first Colonel in service under the Continental Congress. As to his rank in the Continental Army, as reorganized in 1776, Washington speaks of Thompson as "the first Colonel in this army."

But Thompson's battalion of riflemen, as a whole had disintegrated long before the term of enlistment had expired, July 1, 1776. On the 6th of September preceding, the two companies of Hendricks and Smith had been detached to form part of Arnold's memorable expedition to Canada. On the 6th of January, Major Magaw was commissioned Colonel of the Fifth Pennsylvania, and March 2nd, left for Pennsylvania; Col. Thompson, was commissioned Brigadier General and left about the same time; March 7, Lieut.-Col. Hand became Colonel of the battalion; and Captain Chambers, of one of the Carlisle companies, was promoted to the Lieut.-Colonelcy of "Hand's Rifle Battalion in the Army at Cambridge," as some records still style it. Sept. 26, 1776, he

was commissioned Colonel of the First Regiment of Continental troops of the Pennsylvania Line. In the same way others were assigned to higher rank in the new regiments and some privates were re-enlisted before their term expired in new regiments. Col. Thompson was commissioned Brigadier General, March 1, 1776, was in command in New York for a short time, and then put in command of the expedition to Canada by way of Albany, not of that through the Maine Woods as is sometimes stated. He was captured with most of his command, July 4, 1776, at Three Rivers, Canada, and was not exchanged until 1780. The Sixth Pennsylvania battalion under Col. William Irvine of Carlisle, formed part of his command. Col. Magaw's new command was formed under a resolution of Congress, Dec. 9, 1775, ordering the raising of four more battalions in the Colony of Pennsylvania. Of the four Colonels, St. Clair, Shee, Wayne and Magaw, commissioned Jan. 3rd, 1776, Magaw was the junior, and Colonel of the Fifth battalion, which he commanded until the surrender of Ft. Washington. He left Boston, Feb. 2nd, the battalion being then only partially raised. There is considerable misunderstanding as to the locality to which this battalion is to be credited. The History of Cumberland County says: "The fifth was made up of companies principally from Cumberland county. It was recruited during the months of December, January and February. In February there are references to it in the proceedings of the Committee of Safety, which imply that some of the companies were already in Philadelphia on their

way to Head Quarters, but the main body did not leave the county until the middle of March." The account before alluded to by a writer on this subject, which makes Magaw a native of Carlisle, also stated that after taking part in the siege of Boston, he returned home and organized the Fifth Regiment from men of his own county.

The fact is, that this regiment was recruited in the eastern part of the State, largely from Bucks, Berks, Lancaster and Philadelphia counties. The rolls in the Pennsylvania Archives, though incomplete, show no names from Cumberland county, and the return, by order of Gen. Washington, of prisoners taken at Ft. Washington, as taken from the original, does not contain a single name in the battalion from Cumberland county. A statement, originally by Linn the historian, that would give most color to the belief that they were from Cumberland county, is in regard to a sermon, as preached to them before leaving Carlisle, March 17, 1776, by Rev. Wm. Linn, subsequently pastor of the Presbyterian church at Big Spring. The published sermon is still in existence. The fact is that Mr. Linn was appointed Chaplain of the Fifth and Sixth battalions, and the sixth battalion, that of Col. Irvine, afterward General Irvine was raised in great part six companies out of eight, in Cumberland county. It was before this regiment, not the both regiments that the sermon was preached, a further confirmation of which view is the statement that it did not take part in the battle of Long Island and the defence of Ft. Washington, but went directly under Brig.-Gen.

Thompson to Canada by way of the Hudson river and Albany, and was there for the most part captured. The account itself states that some of the companies of the Fifth must have been in Philadelphia in February, and it is not probable that they would have marched to Carlisle, and back again to Philadelphia. According to Magaw's own statement he had his "new raised regiment as soon as possible in very good discipline and on the 12th of June was ordered with the regiment from Philadelphia to New York," where it arrived between the 20th and 25th of June.

DIGGING AT FT. WASHINGTON.

A few days afterward it was marched with Shee's battalion "towards Kingsbridge, and encamped on the ground on which Ft. Washington was erected." They formed part of the command of General Mifflin, and began on the construction of the fort under direction of Col. Rufus Putman as engineer. It may be of some local interest to know, that this Colonel Putman had a son, Edwin, who was graduated at Dickinson, in the class of 1797.

Magaw's and Shee's battalions, the latter soon to be commanded by Cadwallader, were not only closely associated in the construction of the fort but in all the subsequent operations up to the capitulation. Shee's battalion was composed largely of aristocratic Philadelphians. There was a Captain Graydon in this battalion, who was a gentleman of fine literary ability as well as a careful and impartial observer. He has given a detailed account of all the occurrences in connection with Ft. Washington, in

what he modestly styles, "Memoirs of a life, principally passed in Pennsylvania," without name on the title page, but known to be by Alexander Graydon. It has been pronounced, "a production rich in the various excellencies of style, description and impartiality," and I would add that, where his aristocratic tendencies, or prejudices are not involved, of the highest reliability, and furnishes data obtainable from no other source, which are readily recognizable in our best histories. In a few weeks they had produced immense mounds of earth, resulting in a fort of five bastions. He found that the dry weather and dust gave them the appearance of scavengers sadly at variance with neatness, of person of which Colonel Shee was an enthusiastic admirer.

Whilst the work of digging, *Improbis Labor*, as Graydon terms it, may have seemed unsoldierly and have been uncongenial to the aristocratic Philadelphians, one writer remarks that to the men of the Fifth regiment, the hardy frontiersmen of the Cumberland Valley it was no novelty, which may be correct, except as to locality to which he credits them.

BRITISH FLEETS AND HESSIANS RETREAT FROM LONG ISLAND.

But events were transpiring elsewhere that Graydon felt were soon to give them more congenial occupation and give them the post of honor in one of the most famous military movements.

The forced evacuation of Boston by Gen. Howe, March 17, 1776, whilst the occasion of great rejoicing in the Colonies and humiliating to the British army, did

not even cripple it, but released it, with the large fleet at its command for transfer to some other field. Where will it turn up? Was the anxious question to Washington. New York seemed the most probable objective point, the key to the continent, the depot of supplies. To it he rapidly transferred his army, where it arrived April 15th. On June 29th, 40 sail and 6 transports brought Gen. Howe with more than 10,000 troops, which were landed on Staten Island, July 3rd. Admiral Howe with his fleet and troops arrived from England July 12th, and by other additions the force was brought up to more than 14,000, to which Sir Henry Clinton with his fleet, returning from his unsuccessful attack on Charleston added more than 3,000 more with other additions making the army about 30,000 men. But the most significant fact of all was that among these were the first foreign mercenaries—13,000 Hessians, 4,000 Brunswickers and others. They were not altogether unexpected, thanks to the dispatches brought by the captured rifleman, before alluded to.

Washington's army all told, including raw levies and militia was 27,000 scattered at distant points. Gen. Greene was in command at Brooklyn, Long Island. In the battle of Long Island on the 27th, Hand's battalion, Thompson's old rifle battalion, was the first to engage the Hessians, and was driven back by greatly superior numbers. The evening of that day found the army shattered and dispirited behind the entrenchments on Brooklyn Heights with the victorious enemy within musket shot in front. Express was sent requiring the im-

mediate march of Shee's and Magaw's regiments from Ft. Washington. They seached the city, which was "a scene of tumult, confusion and dismay," under orders to cross the East river by break of day. They crossed early next morning, under command of Gen. Mifflin, with Glover's Massachusetts regiments, there they "inspired no inconsiderable degree of confidence. The faces that had been saddened by the disasters of yesterday assumed a gleam of animation." They were posted but a few hundred paces from the enemy. After continual skirmishing they were ordered at dark, on the 29th, to hold themselves in readiness for a night attack upon the enemy. This was intended to conceal the retreat from Long Island. Gen. Mifflin had earnestly advocated the retreat, and only asked the rear in case of retreat, the van if in action. During that eventful night the battalions of Shee and Magaw were only aware of a "deep murmur in the camp" which indicated a movement toward the river. Severe as this test was for these troops, of holding the rear of a retreating army, whilst a "victorious army in overwhelming numbers was so near that they were heard at work with their pick-axes and shovels it was made more trying by an error in orders by an adjutant, which imperilled the whole movement, and caused Washington great anxiety. Gen. Heath wrote, "Whoever has seen troops in a similar situation, or duly contemplates the human heart in such trials, will know how to appreciate the conduct of those brave men on this occasion." The great retreat from Long Island was accomplished. Early next

morning the British outposts saw only the rear guard of the retreating army, out of reach of their fire. It has been well said that: "The withdrawal of a defeated, dispirited and undisciplined army, of 9,000 men from the view of an able and experienced officer, and to transport them with their military stores, provisions, artillery and horses, across a wide and navigable river, watched by a numerous and vigilant fleet, ranks the retreat from Long Island justly among those skillful maneuvers that distinguish a master in the art of war." We can well be proud of the part taken by Cumberland county in this memorable event.

YORK ISLAND ABANDONED, FT. WASHINGTON
TO BE HELD.

But this was merely preliminary to even more honorable service. Washington soon saw the necessity of the ultimate abandonment of New York on account of the vast superiority in numbers of the well disciplined veteran troops opposed to him, and realized the risk of being cooped up in it by the aid of the powerful fleet, which not only held his front, but menaced his sides and even his rear. At a council of war, Sept. 7, Washington inclined to the evacuation of the city. Gen. Greene, who was sick, by letter advocated not the abandonment of the city, but of the whole island and advised the burning of the city and its suburbs to prevent its affording shelter to the British army. Strange and radical as this proposition may seem, it had many advocates, and Washington was not altogether adverse to it. But Congress forbade it. On Sept. 10, Congress allowed Washington discretion as to the abandonment of the

city; and on Sept. 13, a Council of War decided that it was absolutely necessary to withdraw from the city, but the central of the east side of the Hudson was not to be given up.

After British war vessels, on the 16th in the North river, had stopped movement of stores from the city by water, and troops from the East river had defeated the militia in skirmishes, the army hastily abandoned New York, with the loss of all the heavy artillery, and a large portion of the baggage, provision and military stores. The battalions of Shee and Magaw, after the retreat from Long Island, encamped about 18 miles above New York, without tents or shelter of any kind and joined by other portions of the army were posted on the heights near Ft. Washington until the middle of October. Howe's activity, manifested in passing vessels up the North river, Oct. 9th, and landing troops from Long Island Sound, Oct. 12th, led to the determination by a Council of War, Oct. 16th, to abandon York Island, except Ft. Washington. This was left to be held by Col. Magaw with about 2,000 men. This was contrary to the expressed judgment of Washington and some of his best generals, but the known wish of Congress had great influence in reaching the conclusion.

The exact site of this fort has recently been determined with great care, from the small remnants of the bastions, at about Eleventh avenue and 118th street, and has been suitably marked. The house of James Gordon Bennet is close to the N. bastion. At that time the whole of the upper part of Manhattan,

or York Island as it was more generally called, was a narrow, wild, wooded, rough elevated plain, rising abruptly about 200 feet above the Hudson on the west, and nearly the same height above the Harlem creek, on the east, separated from the southern part of the island by the plains of Harlem, and stretching with an average width of three quarters of a mile, about four miles to Kingsbridge, across the Spuyten Duyvel creek, that forms York Island.

Over it passed the Kingsroad, now Broadway, from New York to the north, picking its way along the little valleys around the hills of this end. As early as Jan. 10, 1776, Washington had sent Lord Stirling to examine positions for defence around New York and along the Hudson. Gen. Lee was commissioned for the same purpose. On June 7th, Generals Greene and Knox reconnoitered the ground at that spot and named a fort to be erected there, Fort Washington. In the middle of June, Washington reconnoitered the place himself on horseback, and located the fortification. It was about that time that we found Magaw's battalion arriving and put to work digging, from which they were temporarily taken to cover the retreat from Long Island. This point was the highest point on the Hudson. The whole ridge was called Mt. Washington. A projecting point at the base narrowed the channel of the river somewhat. It was thus adopted by nature to command the passage of the river. But according to Graydon, the fort was not entitled, as far as he could judge, to the name of a fortress in any degree capable of sustaining a

siege. It was an open earth-construction, without barracks or casemates, without a ditch of any consequence, and required no parallels to approach it, it being at once within reach of the assailants

WAR SHIPS PASS THE FORT AND
OBSTRUCTIONS.

But even before the call of the regiment to cover the retreat from Long Island it had been demonstrated that the river was not to be controlled by constructing fortifications. Two vessels of the fleet of Admiral Howe, which had been sighted on July 12th, soon came boldly up the bay, passed up the Hudson unmindful of batteries on either side, only replying to their fire with broad sides, up part Ft. Washington, which had been notified by Washington, by express, of their coming, unharmed, although every gun was trained on them.

Their decks were protected by sand bags. At Ft. Washington the question now was, how to prevent their return, as well as the passage of others up the river. General Israel Putnam, not the engineer, devised a plan of obstruction by means of sunken vessels. Mifflin and his regiments at once entered into it. Surveys of the river were completed by July 21st. Vessels with tall masts, chained together, were to be sunk. Digging gave way to hauling stones to load the hulks. By August 5, three were sunk. The frigates above were attacked in many ways; finally by fire boats. But, August 18, they passed back down the river, through an opening in the obstructions, which was to have been closed in a few days, unin-

jured by a furious fire from the fort. The work went on. Another scheme was presented to Congress, by an enthusiastic individual and Washington was instructed to carry it out. Fourteen fire ships of special construction were to be sent down among the enemy's fleet and a simultaneous attack to be made by land. Much work had been done, but it fell through for want of time and other reasons. After the battle of Long Island, even greater anxiety was felt to secure the control of the Hudson. Four more ships were sunk in such a way that the obstructions were commanded by the fort. A sloop was on hand with a submarine explosive machine to blow up the war ships—a sort of torpedo boat, a favorite scheme of Putnam's. Four galleys, mounted with heavy guns, were stationed at the obstruction; more ships were on hand ready to be sunk. But at 8 a. m. Oct. 9, the Phoenix, Roebuck and Tartar with their tenders, stood up the river toward the fort. The galleys, the vessels intended to be sunk, the sloop with the submarine machine, all got under way in haste. The warships broke through the obstructions as if they were cobwebs, in spite of the vigorous fire from all the batteries, as the Americans thought at the time without injury, but as the British admitted with three officers and six men killed and eighteen wounded and much damage to the masts and rigging. They continued up the river capturing and devastating, causing great anxiety up as far as the Highlands. Militia were called out, Washington dispatched artillery. The excitement may be inferred from a letter of John Jay to

Rutledge, a member of the War Board, saying "I would have last spring desolated all Long Island, Staten Island and the city, and county of New York, and all that part of West Chester county that lies below the Highlands." He would have shallowed the Hudson, by filling it with stone, so that war vessels could not pass, etc. Congress met the incursion by a resolution directing Washington by every art and at whatever expense to obstruct effectually the navigation of the North River, between Ft. Washington and Ft. Lee on the Jersey side opposite.

MAGAW APPOINTED TO DEFEND FORT
WASHINGTON.

Gen. Howe, assured now of ability to pass up the North river at pleasure with his vessels and troops, put in motion the other part of his scheme to bag the Old Fox by landing forces, Oct. 12th, on the east side of the island. Washington at once moved to check his advance. There were actions that were more than mere skirmishes. Councils of War were held, but without unanimity; but that of Oct. 16th, at which all the Major Generals and Brigadier Generals were present, except Greene, finally acted in accordance with Washington's judgment, in so far at least, that the obstructions at Ft. Washington having proved insufficient and the enemy's force now being in their rear on the east side, making it impossible to prevent the enemy from cutting off their communications, and compelling them to fight at a disadvantage, or surrender at discretion, they agreed to evacuate New York Island, but in deference to the wish of

Congress, which had great influence with generals, decided that "Fort Washington be retained as long as possible."

This was a post of danger and of honor for which there were always aspirants. Doubtless in this case there were others who might have claimed it. Washington had doubtless frequently to quiet very natural rivalries of this kind. In his order assigning Magaw, and giving him his instructions, he asks that "the reasons of Magaw's appointment to the command at that post" be made known to another Colonel, whose regiment it was found necessary to keep there. According to Chief Justice Marshall, in his life of Washington, the command was given to Col. Magaw, "a brave and intelligent officer, in whom great confidence was placed." He had at first about 1400 troops, among them the 3rd and 5th Pennsylvania regiments, now under Cadwallader and Magaw, to which others were added, bringing the number at the time of the capitulation up to 2300.

PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS.

By Oct. 23rd, Washington had stationed himself in a fortified compact White Plains, beyond Kingsbridge, after a series of movements and skirmishes. Oct. 25th, Howe moved toward White Plains, on the 27th British troops made an attack on the post on Harlem Heights and Magaw sent troops from the fort to aid. Quite an engagement ensued, in which Magaw checked the British advance. At the same time two war ships attempted to pass Forts Washington and Lee.

The forces were hurried from the fort

into the southern line of defence. The ships came abreast of the first lines and poured an enflading fire into them. Magaw dragged down one of his eighteen pounders from the fort to the point immediately below, and at shorter range, with double shotted charges opened upon the ships, and soon reduced one of them almost to a wreck. They got off with difficulty. On the land side, where the attack was met effectively, the repulse of the ships caused the withdrawal of the attacking forces.

During this attack, General Greene, who was at Ft. Lee in general command, was with Magaw, but only as a spectator, as he was so well pleased with Magaw's management. He says: "Col. Magaw had so happily disposed and arranged his men as to put the British out of conceit with their original intentions." In his report he remarks: "Our artillery behaved incomparably well. Col. Magaw is charmed with their conduct in firing at the ship and in the field." The battle at White Plains occurred the next day, followed by Washington's withdrawal, on the 31st, to the heights of North Castle, five miles above, where Howe gave up his intention of attacking him, with his vastly superior forces, and, Nov. 4th, decamped from in front of Washington's position, moving down the Hudson; and in three days all the British and Hessians were gone, leaving Washington with divided anxiety between the safety of Ft. Washington, and its garrison, and a movement of Howe into New Jersey and on to Philadelphia the latter of course more serious, as the former could be obviated by the withdrawal of the gar-

rison. A Council of War, Nov. 5th, decided to pass a portion of the army into New Jersey. Washington urged that Ft. Washington would attract Howe's earliest attention.

November 5, two more frigates passed up past Ft. Washington in spite of the increased obstructions. November 8, Washington wrote to Greene: "If we cannot prevent vessels passing up, and the enemy are possessed of the surrounding country, what valuable purpose can it answer to attempt to hold a post from which the expected benefit cannot be derived? I am therefore inclined to think that it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Ft. Washington; but as you are on the spot I leave it to you to give such orders respecting the evacuation of the place as you may think most advisable; and so far revoke the orders given to Col. Magaw to defend it to the last." In the same letter he directed Gen. Greene to remove all stores at once not necessary for the defence. Greene replied on the 9th, that he did not consider the fort in immediate danger, that Col. Magaw thought it would take the enemy until the middle of December to carry it, and expressed the advisability of holding it. Washington left North Castle on the 10th, leaving Lee there with a portion of the army; on the 12th he crossed the Hudson, went immediately to Ft. Lee, and was greatly disappointed to find next day that Greene had not only not withdrawn the troops from Ft. Washington, but had sent over additional troops. Col. Magaw, however, still thought he could hold it.

INVESTMENT, ASSAULT, SURRENDER.

By this time the fort was practically invested. On the night of Nov. 14th, 40 flatboats moved up the river past Ft. Washington into the Harlem river. On the same date Washington wrote a letter from Ft. Lee to Congress showing that neither he nor Gen. Greene anticipated an immediate attack on Ft. Washington. On Nov. 15th he wrote two letters to the Board of War, one from Greene's headquarters, Ft. Lee, the other from Hackensack; in neither of which was allusion made to the condition of Ft. Washington.

But Howe's plan of attack was rapidly maturing. The arrival of the flatboats on the night of the 14th, completed them. Shortly after noon on the 15th, an officer under a white flag passed over Kingsbridge toward the fort. Magaw sent down Col. Swope to meet him. He brought a summons to surrender at discretion, or liability according to military law to be put to the sword if taken by storm, and required an answer in two hours. Magaw at once dispatched a note to Gen. Greene saying we are determined to defend the post or die; and returned the following answer to the summons: "To the Adjutant General of the British army.—Sir, if I rightly understand the purport of your message from General Howe, communicated to Col. Swoope, this post is to be immediately surrendered or the garrison put to the sword. I rather think it is a mistake than a settled resolution in Gen. Howe to act a part so unworthy of himself and the British nation. But give me leave to assure his excellency, that actuated by the most glorious cause that mankind ever fought in, I am determined to defend the post to the very last extremity."

It was signed, "Robert Magaw, Colonel Commanding."

I give this reply in full because the substance only is frequently given. Washington in his report said, he sent a spirited reply. Graydon says, "he returned the usual answer that he would defend it to the last extremity;" whilst in the latest up-to-date history of Fiske, it is given, he replied, "if you want it come and take it." This savors of impulse and bravado, compared with the serious dignity of Magaw's reply. The latter, too, compares better with the following from his order of the day, of Nov. 2nd: "The officers of the several guards to recommend the greatest alertness to their Centinels, at this time and place the most dangerous, important and honorable post that perhaps Americans were ever placed in. The liberty of this great and free Continent may in great measure depend on our vigilance and bravery."

Gen. Greene sent over reinforcements at once from Ft. Lee and sent an express to Washington, who was at Hackensack. He came immediately to Ft. Lee. Finding that Generals Lee and Putnam had gone over to Ft. Washington, he took boat at 9 o'clock for the fort, but met Greene and Putnam midway the river on their return. They reported the garrison in good spirits and assured him it would make a good defence and succeeded in persuading him to return. The next morning, Nov. 13, before day-break, Magaw took a position from which he could control the whole and made disposition of his troops to meet the oncoming assault. He distributed his little force, to the different

outlying fortified positions. The three lines of defence on the south, from the Hudson to the Harlem, were assigned to the regiments of Cadwallader and Magaw, the latter under Lieut.-Col. Penrose, with companies from Miles' and some other battalions. The little three gun fort on the north end of the rocky ridge, was given to Rawlins with his Maryland riflemen. The long line on the east, on the steep sides of the Harlem river, was assigned to Col. Baxter, of Bucks county, and the Flying Camp. For complete list of names worthy of mention, reference can only be made to fuller accounts, we will only add those of Col. Watts, Lieut. Col. William Butler, Montgomery, Thomas Bull and Col. Hastett with his Delaware Boys.

The British plan included four simultaneous attacks. That on the South was made by artillery between 7 and 8 o'clock from the other side of the Harlem river. They soon approached in great force, some coming down the Harlem in flat-boats. During the hour and a half that this fight was going on, General Washington, and Generals Putnam, Greene and Mercer came over from Ft. Lee, viewed the positions of the troops, and the operations of the enemy in that quarter. As Greene relates, "there we all stood in a very awkward position, as the dispositions were made and the enemy advancing, we durst not attempt any new disposition, indeed we saw nothing amiss." They all urged Washington to come off. A writer quoted by Graydon, as an undoubted authority, says, "It is a fact not generally known that the British took possession of the very spot on which they stood in 15

minutes after they left."

But it was on the north that the decisive conflict took place. Rawlins was attacked sometime later in the morning by Gen. Knyphausen and his division of Hessians. The German General had asked it as a special favor that he might lead the main attack at the head of German regiments, exclusively. The ground was rough and wooded. Both sides fought with great stubbornness. The losses of the Hessians were the greater, as again and again they attacked the intrenchments and were repulsed. But numbers finally prevailed and they carried the crest of the hill. The rifles of the Americans had become too foul for use. Knyphausen reached position 100 yards from the fort and sent a second summons to surrender. The fort was crowded with troops that had been driven in from different points. Magaw asked four hours time, but was allowed only half hour. A council of war decided that as their supply of water was cut off and the fort was incapable of defence, to surrender at discretion.

During the final assault of the Hessians, in nearing the fort, Washington was a spectator from the heights opposite and saw his soldiers bayoneted by the Hessians, infuriated by the stubborn resistance. It is said the sight drew tears to his eyes. The following description is by a German officer. When the half hour was up, the commander, Magaw, came himself, and his fate seemed hard to him. The officer told him Gen. Knyphausen was 100 paces off, and he should come with him, under his safe conduct, and see if he would give him better terms. But with-

out result. The men marched out between a double line of grenadiers, gave up their yellow, blue and white banners, on which Knyphausen looked with disdain. The prisoners were not only matter of curiosity, but of abuse. According to Graydon, "the term rebel, with the epithet "dammed" before it was the mildest they received." He narrates that when he was captured, outside of the fort, an officer rode up at full gallop and exclaimed: "Wnat! taking prisoners! Kill them, kill every man of them!" Graydon, taking off his hat and saying: "Sir, I put myself under your protection;" his manner was softened at once. They were marched to New York, the story of the prison ship is too notorious to be repeated. There were some numerous incidents of course, one showing that they were not all Scotch-Irish at least. The enumerating officer coming where the American officers were collected, came upon "a little squat militia officer from York county," as described by Graydon. "You are an officer, Sir?" he said in a questioning manner. "Yes," he answered. "Your rank, Sir?" With a significant smile, the reply was, "I am a Keppen."

But before we go further there are one or two points to be noted. It is evident that the rapidity of Howe's movement was a surprise. Even the day before the summons, that event seemed remote in Washington's mind. Howe's extreme caution in attacking fortified positions, after his experience at Bunker Hill, as shown at Brooklyn and White Plains, seems to have left him. His movement on Fort Washington was made with a celerity, confidence, and directness not

in keeping with his character. Graydon in his memoirs, published in 1812, expressed a surmise of treason, which has since become demonstrated fact by documents since discovered. The treason of Demont accounts for it. He was adjutant of Magaw's own regiment, and enjoyed his fullest confidence. He had been appointed by the Committee of Safety of Pennsylvania. He was intelligent. He deserted to the British lines with complete plans and information in regard to every detail of the position, that enabled Howe to plan and execute his plans with absolute certainty, with the overwhelming forces at his command, that Washington could not have looked for. Another question that arises is: Why Washington allowed himself to be over ruled into holding the post against his positive and expressed judgment? It must be borne in mind that, up to that time, Washington was limited in his powers as Commander-in-Chief, by a Committee of Congress and the Councils of War of his generals; and the latter were largely, though unconsciously, influenced by the known and positively expressed views of Congress. One great compensation for these series of disasters was the early deposit of all military power, unreservedly in the hands of Washington. There is another little incident, not of high importance, but rather of romantic interest. In the little redoubt, where Knyphausen led his attack, there was a great lack of artillerymen—one now being required to do the work of four.

John Corbin, of York County, at one of the guns was killed. His wife, Mar-

garet Corbin, by his side, helped to serve the gun, until she fell, struck by three grape shot. Her services and heroism were recognized at once by the State, and by Congress.

The fort, renamed Fort Mifflin, in honor of its captor, was repossessed by the Americans Nov. 25, 1783. In England amid their rejoicing they did not conceal their admiration for the defender. One newspaper said of the defense that "It was conducted with infinite spirit by Col. Magaw;" another that "Col. Magaw made offer of capitulation under fire of the cannon, with a musquet of each other, mutually agreeing that a gun should not be discharged." To be sure there were parvanymous ones who found their opportunity to speak otherwise. Thus one "who had long admired the martial spirit of the Americans" "highly applauds their new invention of defending their strongholds to the last extremity, by laying down their arms." This he thinks an improvement in the art of war. But among his countrymen his bravery had never been questioned.

Judge Steele, in concluding his address at the dedication of the monument at the site of the fort, Nov. 16, 1901, said: "The most gallant figure of the Revolution, to my mind, is Colonel Magaw; and I say that, well remembering Putnam and Warren at Bunker Hill, and Anthony Wayne at Stony Point, and Alexander Hamilton at Yorktown. But Colonel Magaw held the fort here against overwhelming odds and against a sure defeat.

Colonel Magaw, to my mind, stands out as the sublime personal hero of the Revolution."

Prisoner on Long Island—Marriage— Exchange

But to return to our hero, Magaw and the other officers were sent to Long Island, Flatbush, Gravesend and other places, where they were allowed many privileges and enjoyed as much of life as their condition as prisoners would allow. Obstacles continually arose to their exchange. Graydon well gives vent to their longings for liberty and home and restoration to their places in the army. Even threats of sending them to England had something of relief in them. Still as the months and years rolled on they began to be at home among the proud old Dutch families, that talked Knickerbocker Dutch, and held their heads high. Col. Magaw in the meantime became intimate in the family of Rutgers Van Brunt, a prominent citizen, for several years sheriff of the county, a colonel in the militia, and member of the New York Assembly, who lived on his farm near Gravesend, Long Island. His daughter Maretje (Marrtie, Marietta) a prepossessing, well educated young lady, a brilliant conversationalist, and patriotic with all,—well—in short she became Mrs. Colonel Magaw, April 1779, at the age of 17, and at the time was regarded as one of the handsomest women on Long Island. He was not exchanged until more than a year later, as the follow-

ing transcript of the document shows, which also included his friend and fellow townsman Gen. Wm. Thompson:—"I Joshua Loring, Esq., British Commissary of Prisoners do certify for and in behalf of his Excellency Sir Henry Clinton, that Brigadier General Thompson, Col. Magaw and Lieut. Laurens, American prisoners of war, are exchanged by composition according to the tariff or valuation settled and adjudged as reasonable by the Commissioners British and American at the last meeting held at Amboy in March, 1780, against Major General Riedesel, of the Brunswick troops of the Convention of Saratoga 25th Oct., 1780." Col. Magaw did not re-enter the army though eager to do so. In a letter urging his claims he writes: "As the commissions I had the honor to bear were unsolicited on my part, and the motives to act under them solely the good of my country; if my services shall be deemed further necessary for that purpose, shall continue in the army, provided the rank I am now entitled to, is secured. Otherwise in Case of an Exchange shall return to my former profession with a firm determination that whenever the liberties of my country shall call for my mite, my life and property shall be devoted to do its service— independent of rank or other circumstance." He was, during his captivity, made Colonel of the Sixth Pennsylvania Line, from which he was retired, at his request, Jan. 1, 1781. As Graydon says: "As to officers all the regiments were not only completely but

overflowing; and upon the re-organization of the army there were a great many supernumeraries. Of this description those who were taken at Fort Washington emphatically were. They were considered as extinct, and their places had been supplied by others." "It was evident that a reinstatement in the rank to which they were entitled by seniority was not to be effected without extreme embarrassment and injury to the service."

Return to Carlisle

Col. Magaw and his wife, therefore, on his exchange, removed to their home in Carlisle, and tradition has it that she was the life of that coterie of women which made the town's society so delightful. Whilst he re-acquired a large practice in his profession he took a leading interest in everything relating to town and the county. He organized a military company. He was a member of the Legislature.

In the grant by the Penns of the lot of ground on Pomfret street, on which was erected the so-called "Old College," now occupied by the Hamilton School House, to Trustees for a Grammar School, Magow's name appears among the Trustees. He was one of the original members of the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College. As to his church relations there is nothing very definite. Dr. Wing in his very complete and interesting "History of the First Presbyterian Church in Carlisle," which is in fact

a history of early Presbyterianism west of the Susquehanna, gives sketches of many prominent men of that period among them Magaw, and remarks, "These men were nearly all connected with the Presbyterian congregations in Carlisle" and in another place, in the list of contributors to Rev. Steele's church, about 1773, the name of Robert Magaw is found; to these facts may be added the other that at his burial a discourse was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Davidson, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church; so that it is probable that he was connected with that church. A fact that might suggest a different church connection, recently called to my attention, is that when he was taken seriously ill, shortly after the surrender, whilst a prisoner in New York, he was visited by Rev. Charles Inglis (Episcopal-Trinity Parish) who, Dec. 8, 1776, wrote that he was acquainted with the Colonel, adding: "He is now recovering and I flatter myself, past danger."

His characteristic signature appears as a witness to the first contract for the building of the Old Stone Church on the square—1769—, but as the contract is in his handwriting, he may have simply acted as attorney in the case.

As an evidence of active interest in purely social matters is the appearance of his bold signature, almost at the head of the list, containing many other prominent names of subscribers to the Rules and Regulations of the Dancing Assembly, of the town. One

line, almost completely erased, however, limits the age under which a lady may not be invited. In Philadelphia Assembly it is 18, I believe. But we have seen Marrittle Van Brunt was married at 17.

He resided in the house on the southeast corner of the Square, on Hanover street, and also owned the house adjoining on the south. The latter is interesting as having been occupied by Washington during the Whiskey Insurrection, as it happened to be unoccupied at that time. He took his meals, however, at a house, now Franklin House, on the opposite side of the street. Dr. Nisbet, the President of the College, also occupied it for a short time. On the map of Carlisle, by Judge Creigh, in 1764, lot No. 210, on the south side of East Pemfret street, is marked "R. Magaw." It does not follow that this lot was in his possession in 1764, as the name might have been inserted after that date. He also had a plantation near the town.

Death—Burial in the "Old Graveyard"

His death occurred suddenly, Jan. 6th, 1790, at the early age of 52 years. It affected greatly the whole community. He was described as an eminent attorney, and an amiable and benevolent gentleman; that by a singular felicity he lived and died without a foe. His funeral has been described in several accounts, but in a general way, so that I have taken pains to get the full account from what I be-

lieve to be the only copy of Kiime's Carlisle Gazette of Jan. 13, 1790, and give it without correction of typographical or other errors, as it is sometimes misquoted, and has an important bearing on the determination of his unmarked place of burial.

Carlisle, Jan. 13.

On Wednesday evening last the remains of the late Robert Magaw, Esq. was entered at the burial place near this town. The funeral was perhaps the most respectable ever seen here. The following was the order of procession:

Troop of horse dismounted,
Music,
Corps of Infantry, lately commanded
by Col. Magaw,
Clergy,
Physicians
The Body—Pall supported by six
Gentlemen, late Officers of
the American Army
Trustees and Faculty of Dickinson
College,
Justices of the Court of Common Pleas,
Attorneys at Laws,
Students of Dickinson College
Officers of the County, and Principal
Officers of the Borough of Carlisle
Citizens

Minute guns were fired by the Artillery during the procession. At the grave a pathetic discourse was delivered by the Rev. Doctor Davidson. Three volleys from the Infantry closed the scene."

His grave is unmarked, and the expression "burial place near this town" is not definite. It has been in-

interpreted, in comparatively recent years to mean "Meeting House Springs Graveyard," about two miles west of Carlisle. There is, however, nothing in the records, traditions or history, or family associations to suggest it as the burial place of Colonel Magaw. It was first suggested, rather incidentally by Hon. J. E. Linn, a high authority on facts of Pennsylvania history. In an article on Magaw, in 1873, he says, "The date of his death is unknown and no tombstone marks his grave." But in a subsequent article, five years later, he writes, "He died Jan. 7, 1790, and is buried in Meeting House Springs Graveyard, two miles west of Carlisle." Whilst he quotes freely from the account, just given, from Kline's Gazette, he does not quote the descriptive words "burial place near this town," but substitutes his interpretation, doubtless as giving fuller information. On careful consideration of all the circumstances it seems probable, indeed practically certain, that the so-called old graveyard at Carlisle, was meant. It could not have been better described at that time than as "near this town." The lot was given to the town for burial purposes shortly after it was laid out. It was outside the limits of the town. At the time of the burial of Col. Magaw it was separated from the town, which consisted largely of two main streets, by unimproved lots, and it was the general burying ground for the town. Gen. Wm. Thompson, Magaw's warm, personal friend and former Colonel, and whose executor Magaw was, ten

years before, was brought from his place, "Soldiers' Retreat," four miles west of Carlisle, and lies in a well-marked grave in the old graveyard, then near, now in the Borough limits of Carlisle. On the other hand, the Meeting House Spring graveyard was attached to one of the oldest Presbyterian Churches west of the Susquehanna, older than Carlisle. The church, the exact site of which is now uncertain, was abandoned by the congregation before 1760 for a meeting house in Carlisle, which was subsequently abandoned for the Old Stone Church erected on the Square. The burying ground in connection with the church, grew rapidly into disuse, except by some of the older families, who had plots there, and by the time we are considering, 1790 was practically abandoned. At the time when Magaw settled in the county the church was abandoned, and his wife was from Long Island so that there were no family considerations why he should have been buried apart from those among whom he had lived and by whom he was so highly esteemed.

But another consideration would almost decide the inapplicability of the word "near" in that connection to Meeting House Springs. The large funeral procession, in which all classes took part, for most part on foot, could hardly have gone four miles, there and back, in midwinter over a rough road, and have listened to a funeral discourse at the grave. Taking it all in all, therefore, I think we are justified in saying that the heroic de-

fender of Fort Washington rests in our Old Graveyard, where rest many other worthies of our country. That his grave should be unmarked is not as exceptional as it may seem. Little attention seems to have been given to preservation of such records. There are doubtless many other unmarked graves there. Even Ephraim Blaine, whose descendants continued to live in Carlisle, lies in an unmarked grave in an unknown place.

The executors named in his will, dated Nov. 29, 1789, were Marietta Magaw, Rutgert Van Brunt, George Cavenhoven, Samuel Laird and James Hamilton.

Children

Col. Magaw's Long Island wife, Marietta, as he calls her, died in Carlisle, April 15th, 1803.

They had two children: Elizabeth Magow, born Jan. 8th, 1780, and Van Brunt Magow, born Sept. 2nd, 1783. Elizabeth married Peter McCarthy, who, in spite of his name, was a Dutchman, or conversed in Dutch. She died in 1808 of yellow fever. They had children; among their descendants is Professor Fitzgerald Tisdall, who represented the family at the dedication of the monument. Van Brunt Magaw, inherited Gravesend, married Adrianna Voorkees, and settled down to the life of a farmer. They also had issue. He died in 1831. The purpose in this paper has been not so much to give purely biographical data, but to present, in a necessarily hurried manner, the salient

points in the history of one of whom our country may well be proud, that portray as much as possible of the man as a citizen, a patriot, and a soldier, and incidentally afford glimpses at the environment and spirit of the time in which he lived.

The effort has been to give data that are accurate, and to correct some prevalent errors, but I am fully aware that there may be lurking among my statements some that fuller investigation may correct.

I would particularly emphasize, however, the fact of considerable local interest, that the burial place of Col. Magaw is, with little question, our Old Graveyard.

References

As sources of information, besides the standard histories, I would refer particularly, the "History of the Defense and Reduction of Mount Washington," by Reginald Pelham Bolton; "Graydon's Memoirs;" "Capture of Mount Washington," by E. F. de Lancey; "The Bergen Family," by Teunis G. Bergen; "History of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania," by Rev. Conway P. Wing, D. D. But I have relied in the last resort for verification or correction of data upon original documents and correspondence, and particularly upon historical contributions of the Rev. Joseph A. Murray, D. D., who rescued many documents relating to Magaw and others as Linn says, "from the maw of the paper mill."

In preparing the manuscript for

publication, opportunity has been taken to give, in some cases, more fully, what was necessarily abridged by reason of the time limit of a paper.