



The Florida Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Fort Lauderdale Chapter Newsletter



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Highlights of March Chapter Meeting

by Oscar Krahenbuehl

President George Dennis called the March 13th meeting to order at noon. It was announced that Compatriot John Stewart has moved back to Palm Beach and will no longer attend our meetings. John sent thanks for the warm reception that had been received by him and his wife. Compatriot Henry Fancher was welcomed back after having wintered at his fishing camp in Texas.

Once again it was asked that suggestions for meeting speakers be given to Pres. Dennis. He can be reached at: grdennis@attbi.com or (954) 942-3081.

George Dennis reported that he has been or will be in attendance to present SAR Certificates of Recognition to three new Eagle scouts in acknowledgement of their achievements. On March 8th, Stephen Matthew George Dixon and Ryan David Ostrower received their Eagles at a Court of Honor at the Fern Forest Nature Center. At least 21 merit badges are required to become Eagle, with 11 of these for required subjects. Ryan has earned 62, which is the most George has ever known. On Thursday March 27, Jonathan Alden Baker will receive his Eagle at a Court of Honor at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Boca Raton. Jonathan boasts of six relatives that served in the Revolutionary War. It is believed that he also is the President of "Swamp Fox" chapter of CAR.

Richard Jones, Chairman of the SAR's Knight Essay Contest reports that our chapter winner is Christopher Cook of Cooper City. His essay has been forwarded to be included in the state competition, the results of which will not be known until the FLSSAR annual meeting and BOM in May. Christopher has been invited to attend a chapter meeting and to read his essay. As of now, we understand that he is unable to be present. A certificate and letter of commendation have been sent to acknowledge his accomplishment.

Secretary Krahenbuehl reviewed highlights of the January BOM meeting in Maitland as gleaned from their minutes; namely:

+ Former Pres. General Arthur King is 100 years old.

+ 1561 members currently in the Florida Society

+ The FLSSAR ended 2002 with \$2000 surplus

+ St. Lucie River Chapter has produced a CD presenting information about

all 51 flags associated with the American Revolution. It is available for sale.

+ The slate of state officers for 2003-4 includes:

- President Larry Bradley

- Sr. VP Harold Miller

- SE Reg. VP Saul Montes-Bradley

+ Charles Bragg, Natl. Membership Chairman, was present and reported on the need for a new headquarters library (Louisville) to house the society's large book collection, Rev. war newspapers and memorabilia of George Rogers Clark, Marq. de Lafayette and George Washington. A discussion of the funding campaign revealed that about half of the initial (??) \$3 million has been raised. Brochures and pledge cards were provided. More info available on www.sar.org for those interested in contributing.

Compatriot Bragg is to run for Registrar General and received the endorsement of FLSSAR.

NEXT MEETING - APRIL 10th

TOWER CLUB !!!

\$20.00 INCL. TAX AND TIP

11:30 SOCIAL 12:00 LUNCH

28TH FLOOR BANK OF AMERICA

1 FINANCIAL TOWER

SE 3RD AVE & BROWARD BLVD

FORT LAUDERDALE

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL:

954-942-3081

or e-mail George Dennis at: grdennis@attbi.com

The Battle for Philadelphia

Part 7 of 12 continues from last month

No-Flint Grey

By now General Grey had started his stealthy mission. Before marching, the general took the remarkable step of ordering his troops to unload their weapons or remove the flints from their guns. Only bayonets and swords would be used in the attack. Major Andre later explained Grey's rationale:

Library of Congress

General Charles "No-Flint" Grey

No soldier was suffered to load; those who would not draw their pieces took out their flints. It was represented to the men that firing discovered us to the Enemy, hid them from us, killed our friends and produced a confusion favorable to the escape of the Rebels and perhaps productive of disgrace to ourselves. On the other hand, by not firing we knew the foe to be wherever fire appeared and a charge ensured his destruction; that amongst the Enemy those in the rear would direct their fire against whoever fired in front, and they would destroy each other.

Thus did the British General earn his nickname: No Flint Grey.

"Here we are and there they go."

The British were guided toward Wayne's camp by Tory farmers who had also given them the American password for that night: "Here we are and there they go." Use of the password allowed the British to approach American pickets without suspicion. And when the Americans then let their guard down the British would slide up to the pickets and slice them up with their bayonets.

To further heighten secrecy, the British detained any citizen who happened to be out that night. They didn't want word of their advance leaked to Wayne.

Again Captain Andre takes up the story:

About three miles from [our] camp they turned to the left and proceeded to the Admiral Warren [a tavern], where, having forced intelligence from a blacksmith, they came in upon the out sentries, piquet and Camp of the Rebels.

The story continues

Grey had pulled off a nearly perfect march in the dead of night. He had evaded or killed the outer sentries and save for the last-second warning of two vedettes -- which came too late -- no one had warned Wayne that Grey was on the way. Now the British General had his army poised on the eastern edge of the encampment ready to sink their bayonets into sleeping American flesh.

Two American sentries on horseback came upon the British and were able to fire their guns, escape, and ride back to warn the camp. They sped back to the sleepy soldiers shrieking, "Up, men, the British are on you." It was too late. With the British light infantry leading the way, the pickets guarding the camp's eastern perimeter were taken by surprise. Most paid with their lives.

At about 1 a.m., the British rushed wraithlike from the murky woods.

Again Andre:

The piquet [guards on the perimeter of the camp] was surprised and most of them killed in endeavoring to retreat. On approaching the right of the Camp we perceived the line of fires, and the Light Infantry being ordered to form to the front, rushed along the line putting to the bayonet all they came up with, and, overtaking the main herd of the fugitives, stabbed great numbers and pressed on their rear till it was thought prudent to order them to desist.

The British had blown by the pickets guarding the camp's perimeter and bayonet-rushed the sleepy encampment. Once past the pickets, the sleepy or unprepared Americans had little time to gather their wits or weapons.

Yet another infantry officer later recalled the massacre this way in a letter to a friend:

We took a circuit in dead silence; about one in the morning fell in with a rebel vidette, who challenged three times and fired. He was pursued, but escaped. Soon after two foot sentries challenged and fired; these escaped also. We then marched on briskly. A picket fired upon us at the distance of fifteen yards, miraculously without effect.

The unfortunate guard was instantly dispatched by the riflemen's swords. We marched on through a thick wood, and received a smart fire from another unfortunate picket -- as the first, instantly massacred. We then saw their wigwams or huts, partly by the almost extinguished light of their fires and partly by the glimmer of a few stars, and the frightened wretches endeavoring to form. We then charged.

Indeed, Wayne had attempted of form the "frightened wretches" into lines. The route the British took to get to the camp lay at a right angle to the Americans. Had Grey taken Wayne by total surprise, the British would have been able to easily rip into an undefensible position. But Wayne had barely enough time to try to form a line parallel with the enemy. He ordered his troops to "wheel by subplatoons," that is, move to their right to face the enemy head on. In this way he hoped to buy himself enough time to extricate both his soldiers and the four pieces of cannon he had with him. Wayne hoped to retreat west to where General Smallwood's Maryland troops were posted.

But the troops were not able to form properly, for the British were already upon them. The 1st Pennsylvanians pumped a volley toward the British, but their gun flashes only served to illuminate the soldiers. These flashes made them visible as lightning bugs on a soft summer's night.

The Charge

The British charged at the flashes, ripping bayonet holes into the deformed American line. The Americans gave way quickly. Many were cut to bits; others surrendered; yet others fled.

Colonel Richard Humpton's 2nd Brigade got the worst of it. According to Wayne, Humpton reacted slowly to his order to turn right. Then, as the army tried to exit toward the left, Humpton mistakenly spun right -- right into the bayonets of the enemy. Worse yet, Humpton moved his men in front of the campfires. It was as if a spotlight had been shone on them. Gleaming bayonets ripped into their flesh and the Americans' screams filled the dark air.

...the Most Dreadful Scene I Ever beheld.

A British officer reported his impressions:

[General Grey] came to the head of the battalion and cried out "Dash on, light infantry!" and, without saying a word, the whole battalion dashed into the wood, and guided by the straggling fire of the picket, that was followed close up, we entered the camp and gave such a cheer as made the wood echo. The enemy were completely surprised; some with arms, others without, running in all directions in the greatest confusion. The light infantry bayoneted every man they came up with. The camp was immediately set on fire, and this, with the cries of the wounded formed altogether one of the most dreadful scene I ever beheld. Every man that fired was instantly put to death.

The 44th Regiment had followed the light infantry into the American camp wielding terrifying bayonets. Then the 42nd Regiment followed setting fire to huts. A British officer reported, "As many of the enemy would not come out, chusing rather to suffer in the flames than to be killed by the bayonet."

Another officer remembered:

The whole action was a "dreadful scene of havock -- the shrieks groans shouting imprecations deprecations the clashing of swords and bayonets [with] no firing from us & little from [the Americans] except now & then a few scattering shots were horrible to witness.

When Wayne saw the slaughter being inflicted, he formed his light infantry to cover his retreat. Miraculously, Wayne was able to prevent his four cannon from being captured. The Americans withdrew west toward White Horse Tavern and General Smallwood's militia. Smallwood, however, had heard the sound of fighting and was bringing his men toward the battle along the Lancaster Road. Wayne's retreating men ran smack dab into Smallwood's creating yet another chaotic scene. Soldiers and militiamen fled in all directions. Wayne and Smallwood tried to rally the troops but to no avail.

Wayne and Smallwood gathered their troops near West Chester. Wayne wrote Washington a letter which put the best possible spin on the events of the night. He also commended all his officers for their behavior. Then the two generals went off to find Washington and the rest of the army.

General Grey, following orders from General Howe, returned to camp immediately after the raid was complete. The British set out early the next morning for the fords along the Schuylkill.

Next morning

The morning of September 21 was chilly and wet. Local farmers awoke to find a field of shredded and burned American bodies awash in blood. The Americans suffered greatly. The final count was 53 dead, about 100 wounded and 71 captured. Of the captured, 40 also had been wounded. Since the British had decamped the business of burying the dead was left to the farmers. The land on which the massacre occurred was owned by a Tory who denied the Americans permission to bury their dead there. Tradition holds that the Americans were buried in a common hillside trench overlooking the battlefield.

The fact that the raid occurred at night and involved the dreaded bayonet soon gave rise to rumors that the fight had been a massacre and that the British had bayoneted many men who were trying to surrender.

After the massacre, the following letter, supposedly written by a Hessian soldier was circulated widely. Historians recognize both that there were no Hessians involved at Paoli and that 53 were killed. It is widely assumed that the following was American-created propaganda.

What a running about barefoot, and half clothed, and in the light of their own fires. These showed us where to chase them, while they could not see us. We killed three hundred of the rebels with the bayonet. I stuck them myself like so many pigs, one after another, until the blood ran out of the touch-hole of my musket.

American propagandists used the Paoli Massacre to rouse anti-British sentiment. Americans thought that bayonets were barbaric. It will not be until Valley Forge that Americans are taught to fight with bayonets. Further, night raids were relatively rare adding to the general horror. Burning of huts gave rise to rumblings that the Americans were burned and bayoneted in their sleep. All this, and rumors that the British killed Americans trying to surrender were shocking.

The British action at Paoli would even influence their own thinking. Two weeks later at the Battle of Germantown a group of besieged British soldiers locked themselves in a house and faced almost certain death rather than to come out and surrender. They were worried that Wayne's men would offer them no quarter after what happened at Paoli.

Charges Filed

Colonel Humpton filed charges against Wayne claiming that Wayne had received word of the coming attack, but failed to make "a Disposition till it was too late." A court of inquiry brought in a verdict of "Not Proven" which left Wayne's reputation on the line. Wayne demanded a court-martial to clear his name.

At the court-martial which lasted four days, Wayne testified that:

A Mr. Jones, an old gentleman living near where we were encamped, came to my quarters between nine and ten o'clock at night, and informed me before Colonels Hartley, Broadhead and Temple, that a servant boy belonging to Mr. Clayton had been taken by the enemy and liberated again, who said that he had heard some of their soldiers say that they intended to attack me that night. I immediately ordered out a number of videttes in addition to those already planted, with direction to patrol all the road leading to the enemy's camp. I also planted to new picquets, the one in front of a blind path leading from the Warren to my camp, and the other to the right, and in the rear which made on that night not less than six different picquets.

I had, exclusive of these, a horse picquet under Captain Stoddard, well advanced on the Swedes' Ford Road, being the very way the enemy marched that night. But the very first intelligence which I received of their advancing was from one of the videttes which I sent out in consequence of the timely notice from Mr. Jones, had only time to go about a mile before he met the enemy. Immediately on his return the troops were all ordered to from, having been warned to lay on their arms in the evening. At this time it was raining and in order to save the cartridges from wet, I ordered the soldiers to put their cartouch-boxes under their coats. This, gentlemen, does not look like a surprise [since] we were prepared either to move off or to act as the case might require.

The tribunal declared that Wayne had done "everything that could be expected from an active, brave and vigilant officer." He was acquitted with the "highest honor."

The March to Germantown

After the Paoli Massacre, something akin to a chess game ensued, but with Howe and the British controlling the board. The British army moved to Valley Forge which forced Washington to protect either Philadelphia or his supply base at Reading -- he could not protect both. Washington chose to protect Reading which allowed the British a clear path to the capital.

Once it became clear that Philadelphia was in grave danger of falling to the British, a panic gripped the city. Rumors that the British would burn, pillage, and plunder galloped along the streets. Patriots moved out, businesses closed down, and the Liberty Bell was removed to Allentown for safekeeping.

Library of Congress Lord Cornwallis

On September 26, Lord Cornwallis led a resplendent procession of Grenadiers, Dragoons, and artillery into Philadelphia.

When word reached Benjamin Franklin in Paris that Philadelphia had fallen to the British, the wise statesman rhetorically asked, "Howe has Philadelphia, or does Philadelphia have Howe?" Franklin recognized that occupying Philadelphia would pose a major logistical nightmare.

Of the residents who remained in Philadelphia, some were hopeful, some scared, and all wondered what would happen. Though the Tory sympathizers greeted Cornwallis with "acclamations," many would soon be displaced from their houses and all would be forced to pay exorbitant prices for food.

Meanwhile, Washington, humiliated that the British had taken the capital, but buoyed by the performance of his troops at Brandywine, prepared a major offensive. His target was Germantown, a village five miles north of Philadelphia. Howe had posted the bulk of the British army there because the British Commander in Chief thought it was a safe spot to keep an eye on Washington. He was wrong.

The Chess Game

General Howe had two choices. He could capture the capital city of Philadelphia, with its political and social benefits, or he could capture the supply depot at Reading, depriving the Americans of their primary source of ammunition and ammunition manufacture. This would have great military benefits for the British.

Howe would force Washington to choose which to protect. Washington, meanwhile, was trying to discern which target was Howe's goal.

The first move was Howe's. He marched to Valley Forge and from there spread his men along the Schuylkill River. Tents stretched from Fatlands Ford (near Valley Forge) in the east, to Gordon's Ford (Phoenixville) in the west. If Howe wanted to attack Reading, he would use Gordon's Ford. If his destination was Philadelphia, he would use Fatlands Ford.

Washington was in trouble. His men were exhausted, having just returned from a tiring three-day ammunition-gathering mission at Reading Furnace. The trip was taken after most of their cartridges and powder had been ruined during the Battle of the Clouds.

Further, Howe's arrayment of British troops along the river baffled and hamstrung Washington -- he just couldn't tell which way they were headed. Washington personally rode to Fatlands Mansion, a home on the north side of the river to see if he could decipher what the British were up to. From his position he was able to see by telescope all the way down the British line to Cornwallis's camp at Gordon's Ford. Washington still could not gain an idea of British intentions.

He observed that Howe had wisely spread his troops out along the river so the Americans couldn't possibly defend both fording points. Howe probably preferred to take Philadelphia, although he seemed quite willing to attack Reading, if Washington elected to defend the capital. So, Howe had a bridge constructed at Gordon's Ford to encourage Washington to believe that his goal was Reading

Knight Essay Contest Report

Richard Jones, Chairman of the SAR's Knight Essay Contest reports that our chapter winner is Christopher Cook of Cooper City. His essay was forwarded to be included in the state competition but, although it was an excellent composition, it was not a prize winner. Christopher has been invited to attend a chapter meeting and to read his essay. As of now, we understand that he is unable to be present due to school commitments. A certificate and letter of commendation have been sent to acknowledge his accomplishment.



This month's Guest Speaker.

Our Guest speaker this month is David Butler. He is Vice President of the Lighthouse Preservation Society located in Pompano Beach, FL. His subject will be The history and other interesting facts about the Hillsboro Lighthouse and the Hillsboro Inlet.

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