



The Florida Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

Fort Lauderdale Chapter Newsletter



APR 2013

website: www.learnwebskills.com/sar/index.html
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President's Message

Dear Compatriots,

Our next two meetings before the summer break will be held at Primavera Restaurant in Oakland Park. The restaurant offers a fantastic menu and much needed audio visual capabilities for speakers. We look forward to seeing increased participation from our chapter members at this new location. The Broward Chapter is dwindling due to lack of member participation and the Executive Committee encourages you to attend the meetings each month so we can continue the long-standing tradition of the Fort Lauderdale chapter.

Compatriot George Dennis, one of the nation's oldest Boy Scouts (who still fits in his uniform by the way) will be presenting the Eagle Scout Scholarship Medal to Eagle Kurt Wuest at our next meeting on April 20. This is a historic occasion and we are inviting the local media to join us. If any of you are, or know, members of the media, please contact me for additional information.

I want to thank visiting Compatriot Dr. Haley who led a round table discussion on aging at our last meeting. The discussion was very interesting; with a good dialog among those in attendance.

Finally, as a reminder, there are no meetings in June, July or August with many of our members visiting locations with cooler climates.
Fraternally,

Lance T. Pfeifer



Minutes of March meeting

Trivia not minutes, An active discussion was being held on life during the social hour. This discussion continued while our orders for food were taken and continued while waiting to be served. Dr. Harold Haley then lead in our discussion to more direct Nuts and Bolts in the process of aging. One phenomenon is that at some undefined age or period one reacts to aging. Our young people worry about social security, then memory loss occurs at any age What is senile? dementia ?

The discussion continued into health problems, which all the old folks talk about. Companionship is a contact need for most people, Changes in life style, loss of mobility, living in the past, good and bad memories. Short term memory declines, long turn becomes more real Being unable to drive closes your world and makes one dependent on family, friends, or taxicabs. Or worse you, just can't go.

Along with health, finances may or maybe not place pressure on you. We need to know the difference between income and assets.

Travel may have a important part of life is now restricted Many have been active in organizations, just getting together for meals, playing golf, bridge, and volunteer activities.

Nothing is more important than family. The growing up of grandchildren, their successes and failures, their education, marriages make their world alive for many elders.

1:30 P.M. came fast.

The discussion was closed with the SAR recessional.



NEXT MEETING - APRIL 20, 2013

Primavera Restaurant
830 E. Oakland Park Boulevard
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334
954-564-6363

Future Dates:

Saturday, 05/18/2013

Time: 11:30AM social gathering; Lunch at noon
Luncheon - \$24.00

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL: 954-441-8735
or e-mail Joe Motes at: joemotes@aol.com

Battles of the American Revolution

The Battle for Fort Washington

Saturday, November 16, 1776

~28°F; winds ~20-30 knots; Light snow

Washington Heights, Manhattan, New York

The US Colonies United States

George Washington, Robert Magaw

Force: 3000

Killed: 59

Wounded: 96

Captured: 2837

Great Britain Great Britain, Hessians

Sir William Howe, Wilhelm von Knyphausen

Force: 8000

Killed: 84

Wounded: 374

Captured: 0

Overview:

Heavy rains spoiled Maj. Gen. William Howe's planned second attack on the American army near White Plains on October 31. The next day the Americans were found to be apparently well entrenched at North Castle Heights. The rebel earthworks were composed largely of cornstalks pulled from nearby fields, whose roots, full of clinging soil, faced outward. Howe may have been discouraged by these illusory defenses, but his goal remained the complete removal of American troops from Manhattan, not the annihilation of Washington's army. His attention returned to Fort Washington which the American commander in chief had left garrisoned under Col. Robert Magaw after a general rebel evacuation of the island. Synopsis:

On the night of November 2 a defector, William Demont, entered the camp of Lord Hugh Percy at McGowan's Pass, south of Fort Washington. Demont had been Magaw's adjunct; the deserter placed the plans of the fort into Percy's hands. Although Howe had probably already begun to arrange operations against Fort Washington, exact knowledge of the fortification and its defenses would assist his attack.

Fort Washington's works, built the previous July, covered a hill 230 feet high (modern West 184th Street) and a mile long. Vertical cliffs rendered the fort unassailable from the Hudson River below. Additional protection was provided by Fort Tyron on the north, Laurel Hiss on the east, and the old Harlem Heights defenses on the south. Fort Lee stood opposite Fort Washington in New Jersey. Between the two forts ran a line of sunken obstructions

to prevent British ships from passing up the Hudson.

The natural defenses afforded by Fort Washington's position were superior, but the fort itself was less than ideal. A pentagonal earthwork without ditches or palisades, the structure lacked barracks, bombproofs, and an interior source of water. A captain stationed in the fort noted that it had none of "those exterior, multiplied obstacles and defenses, that...could entitle it to the name of fortress, in any degree capable of withstanding a siege." This weakness, recognized by some of the garrison went unnoticed by Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene, who was in charge of both forts.

Washington had been out of touch with Greene since October 22. Now, as Howe began moving south to direct the seizure of Fort Washington, the American commander had to consider the fort's defensibility. On November 5 three British vessels passed over the river barricades in the Hudson amidst rebel artillery fire and anchored, undamaged, at the northern tip of the island, Washington, in the process of deploying most of his troops in Westchester County, was much alarmed by this news and wrote to Greene on November 8, "I am inclined to think it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores," but "as you are on the spot, I leave it to you to give such orders as to evacuating Mount Washington as you judge best."

Greene replied that the fort served some purpose beyond the prevention of ship passage up the Hudson. It hampered British communication between the island and the country to the north, compelled the maintenance of British troops at Kingsbridge (which connected Manhattan to Westchester County), and was clearly regarded as important by the British, or else they would not attempt its capture. These arguments were offset by Greene's assurance that if the situation grew dangerous, the stores and men could be shifted to Fort Lee at any time. Magaw said the garrison could hold out through December. But Washington's second in command, Maj. Gen. Charles Lee, expressed ominous concern. In a letter to Joseph Reed, the adjutant general, Lee wrote, "I cannot conceive what circumstances give to Fort Washington so great a degree of value and importance as to counterbalance the probability or almost certainty of losing 1,400 of our best troops."

With some 2,000 of his troops, Washington moved down the west side of the Hudson and reached Fort Lee on November 13. Meanwhile, Greene had reinforced Magaw's original garrison of about 2,000 men (Lee's figure was low) with an additional 900. Greene continued to favor a defense of the fort, and Washington finally relied upon his subordinate's judgment. The commander in chief would later write that Congress's desire to retain the area's defense and his own wish to keep an impediment in the enemy's way "caused that warfare in my mind and hesitation which ended in the loss of the garrison."

On November 4 Howe dispatched several brigades to march quickly south and reinforce Brig. Wilhelm von Knyphausen. His division had crossed the river at Kingsbridge on November 2 and began harassment of the rebels in the northern outpost of Fort Tyron. During the night of November 14, 30 British flatboats sailed up the river past Fort Washington undetected by the Americans. The following day the enemy approached the fort in force.

Lord Cornwallis and Brig. Edward Mathew were to approach from across the Harlem River on the east, and Percy was to strike from the south. A British officer was sent to summon Magaw to surrender with the threat of no quarter if the fort was stormed. Magaw flatly refused. He had dispersed his forces at the various outposts on the three sides of the fort, posting minor detachments in between. The Americans covered a large perimeter of four to five miles. Early on the morning of November 16, Knyphausen opened the attack against Col. Moses Rawlings's Virginia and Maryland riflemen who managed to stall the Germans temporarily. Percy advanced on Lt. Col. Lambert Cadwalader's Pennsylvanians but they halted (to the Americans' surprise) to wait for a signal gun from Cornwallis or Mathew. Washington, Greene, Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam, and Brig. Gen. Hugh Mercer crossed to Fort Washington as the firing commenced, but they could do nothing to help Magaw and so returned to Fort Lee to watch the developing action.

Mathew, who had been somewhat delayed by the tide pushed across the river and established a foothold on Laurel Hill. Cornwallis followed with more troops. Once the signal had gone out to Percy, pressure on the Americans began to mount. Rawlings was forced back and Cadwalader withdrew. Confusion was rampant within the reduced perimeter; the

retreating Americans poured into the fort. By 3:00 PM the Germans had reached Fort Washington from the north, and the British were in view on the east and south. Despite the original surrender terms, another flag was sent into Magaw to ask for capitulation. Realizing that to stand now would create a bloodbath within the crowded fort, Magaw surrendered.

The attack cost the British and Germans 67 killed, 335 wounded, and 6 missing. The Americans suffered 54 killed and 2,858 captured, including probably more than 1000 wounded. The loss of all their arms and equipment was especially damaging.

Fort Lee was now untenable and Washington began transporting the ammunition out of the fort. On the night of November 19 the British brought boats through the Harlem River and carried a force under Cornwallis across the Hudson in the rain. They landed about six miles north of Fort Lee and began marching southward. Washington and Greene roused the garrison to a hundred flight and led them to Hackensack, then toward Newark and New Brunswick. Cornwallis marched into the empty fort on November 20 and found tents, military baggage, 50 canon, and 1,000 barrels of flour. More than 100 skulkers were rounded up in the neighborhood, a few were killed.

Cornwallis pursued the Americans with some reinforcements sent from Howe and routed them at each New Jersey town where they stopped. Many of Howe's officers believed he would maintain this drive. As Lt. Frederick Mackenzie noted in his diary for November 21, "This is now the time to push these rascals, and if we do, and not give them time to recover themselves, we may depend upon it they will never make head again. A body of troops landed at this time at Amboy might, in conjunction with those already in Jersey, push on to Philadelphia, with very little difficulty." But Howe had begun preparations for an offensive in Rhode Island. He knew there was not time enough before winter's arrival to employ the same troop force in both New Jersey and Rhode Island.

In addition, Howe was criticized by some for sparing the garrison at Fort Washington. Capt. Lt. Archibald Robertson considered the rebels' losses "trifling." Thomas Jones, a former justice of the New York Supreme Court being held prisoner in

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Sons of the American Revolution
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Joe Motes presents a check for \$350 to the Swamp Fox Society Children of the American Revolution at their annual picnic and Installation of Officers for 2013-2014.



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Connecticut, believed that a general slaughter would have struck panic through the rebel countryside and forced congressional submission. "The most rigid severity at the first would have been the greatest mercy and lenity in the end." Of the nearly 2,000 Americans captured in the fall of the fort, over 100 were officers. Many of these were paroled and walked the New York streets in their uniforms to the chagrin and even fear of the loyalists and British. The soldiers were eventually put aboard prison ships in the harbor to languish; large numbers of them died under the atrocious conditions.

But Howe's victory had been decisive, and for the Americans, the aftereffects were serious. The loss of the garrison troubled Washington because the enlistments of many of his remaining troops were to expire in less than two months. An alarming percentage of his men were unfit for duty from sickness or want of clothes and shoes. Perhaps even more significant was the tremendous loss of precious material. The British had seized 146 canon, 12,000 shot and shell, 2,800 muskets, and 400,000 cartridges. American resources had been dispersed and inadequate before this capture; now they were stretched very thin indeed. Washington would soon make his winter headquarters in New Jersey for a number of reasons, one of which was to protect the invaluable forges and furnaces in the northwestern part of the state.

The blame for squandering the men and supplies in the two forts rested naturally with Magaw, Greene, and Washington. Greene recognized that the lines around Fort Washington had been too extensive for 2,900 men to defend, especially in a disordered state. Since Washington had some early doubts about the fort's impregnability, his vacillation, finally favoring Greene's discretion, was inexcusable. Washington's trusted friend Reed termed this a "fatal indecision of mind." Many British were light-headed after their successful New York campaign and felt that the end of the war must be near. But Washington's error was not fatal. Nor was his disappointment so deep that he rejected thoughts of raising a new army.

Battles of the American Revolution continues in the May issue

