

# HESSIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE ATTACK ON FORT WASHINGTON, 1776 AND THE OCCUPATION OF NORTHERN NEW JERSEY, 1777

The following excerpts are taken from the journal of a Hessian battalion in British service during the American Revolution from 1776 to 1784.<sup>1</sup> The author, Quartermaster Carl Bauer, was a keen observer and gave a thorough account of the organization and training of the unit in Hessia and of its unpleasant voyage to England and across the Atlantic to North America. During the assault on Fort Washington, and later during the occupation of New Jersey, Bauer was serving in the Grenadier Battalion von Köhler, which was re-designated two years later, upon a change of command, as the Grenadier Battalion von Graff, and four years later as von Platte, the name of the battalion at the time that Bauer completed his journal.

Bauer gives the date of each event in a column along the left margin of the page, yet sometimes the date is incorporated into the grammar of the sentence. For the convenience of the type-setter of this translation, all dates will be embodied in the text.

§§§

## October

At nine o'clock on October the 16th the commodore and various transport ships raised flags indicating, to our general joy, that they had sighted land. At about one o'clock in the afternoon we saw various promontories to the north of us. I greatly doubt that Columbus could have had greater joy than we at his first view of the New World and at the discovery he had made. Everyone seemed to revive again. The sick had themselves brought up from between decks to convince themselves of this discovery. Another sailor died.<sup>2</sup>

(The 17th) Because of the calm we could not sail far today. However, we were already so close to land that we cast anchor this evening.

(The 18th) Because of the scurvy raging among the sailors we could hardly raise the sails today even with the greatest effort. The land that lay so close to us last night to the west was the province of New Jersey,<sup>3</sup> between the

Delaware River and New York. After we had finally raised the sails with great effort and through the help of the soldiers, we steered northward toward Long Island. However, because of contrary winds we could not sail into the harbor of New York but were compelled, to our general displeasure, to cast anchor at about twelve o'clock noon at Sandy Hook.

(The 18th) Sandy Hook is a small unoccupied sandy island on which stands a lighthouse toward which the ships going to New York must head. A river separates this island from New Jersey.

This morning (the 19th) at six o'clock we weighed anchor and sailed into the channel between Long Island and Staten Island that leads to New York. On Staten Island we saw a Hessian encampment. On both islands we saw pleasant farms. We dropped anchor in North River off New York at about seven o'clock in the evening in the dark of the night. Because the wind today was not the best for sailing into the harbor, the largest part of the fleet had to remain at Sandy Hook, which is thirty English miles from New York.

Today (the 20th) everyone was on deck very early, and instead of a beautiful city we saw nothing but the ruins of beautiful buildings. We were lying off the west end of the city, where the Rebels had burned down thirteen hundred houses after the city had fallen into our hands. At noon today the remainder of our fleet came to us with the flood tide. Despite our long journey, we had good reason to consider ourselves lucky that we had never had to suffer a violent and lasting storm and that the entire fleet, which consisted of sixty-three sails, had arrived here without having lost a single one.

(The 20th) In this harbor we found more than four hundred large ships and a multitude of small ones that were anchored here. New York is a large city that is said to have had five thousand houses before the fire. Some of the streets are regular, others are irregular. It is very convenient for trade. Merchant ships can come close to the wharves and unload their

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wares easily. It lies on an island that is called York Island,<sup>4</sup> to wit, on the point to the south, where the North and the East Rivers flow together.<sup>5</sup> On this point near the water lies a fort called Fort George.

(The 20th) The Rebels had dug trenches and thrown up earthworks everywhere, which, however, were of no use to them since our army made its attack on this island in their rear. With regard to population, the island was waste and empty, for most of its inhabitants had fled through fear and the houses in entire streets stood empty. Most of these were converted into barracks. New York has eighteen churches and meeting-houses, of these St. Paul's and George's Chapel were the most splendid. Two of these eighteen had been victims of the flames during the fire. There was also a beautiful college there which, however, has now been converted into a hospital for the army. There is a royal shipyard here; however, no new ships can be built but only old ones repaired. The area around New York is very pleasant. Two more grenadiers died today.

On the 21st we lay quietly at anchor. Today, the 22nd, the so eagerly awaited moment finally arrived when, after a sojourn of a hundred and forty-two days, we left the dwelling in which we had suffered so much fear, worry, and sad hours. We were loaded aboard a schooner; and for a while everyone in it seemed as melancholy as if we were once again remembering all the dangers from which we had been so fortunately released.

We sailed up the East River between Long Island and York Island until we finally reached an eddy where there are great rocks. The route between these rocks is very narrow and dangerous and is called Hell's Gate. Here one sees the remains of many wrecked ships. The passage is so narrow that one can throw an object from the ship to the land on either side. Nevertheless, transport ships and frigates can go through it safely with a good wind. The master of our schooner told us that a boat with British grenadiers and artillery had sunk here during the landing of our troops.

Pro nota. Subsequently, Sir James Wallace passed through Hell's Gate in the year 1778

with the warship *Experiment* with fifty canons. Today we sailed some fourteen English miles and had to drop anchor toward evening, which would not have been necessary if we had not run up on sandbanks twice because of the uncertainty of the master of our schooner.

Today, the 23rd, we weighed anchor at break of day and were disembarked on dry land at about ten o'clock at New Rochelle about three miles from where General Howe was camped.<sup>6</sup> Here we met all the troops of the Second Division who had come with us from Europe and who had been disembarked on flatboats and had come ashore before us. We had to leave our baggage behind us on the ships and could take nothing with us but the tents. After all the troops had landed and four two-span wagons had been supplied to each regiment for the transport of the tents (for, indeed, no more could be loaded on them), we set out on our march toward New Rochelle. This actually begins where the church stands. After we had marched for several miles we had to march past His Excellency Lieutenant General von Heister.<sup>7</sup> Although we had marched for only three English miles, a large number of exhausted men remained behind.

Near the New Rochelle church we made camp in the army line. This place is a colony of French who were settled here under British sovereignty. The entire colony is divided into farms that lie scattered about. It belongs to the province of New York. This evening the Yeager Company<sup>8</sup> that disembarked with us today has already had an engagement with the Rebels, in which Lieutenant [Karl]<sup>9</sup> von Rau was severely wounded in his leg. Most of the area around here has been laid waste by the Rebels.

On the 24th we remained quietly in our camp.

At daybreak on the 25th we received orders to break camp and to be ready to march. The entire army marched away from us. However, at about midday the Second Division under the command of Lieutenant General von Knyphausen<sup>10</sup> returned to the old camp, but to deceive the enemy the tents were pitched in two lines, for which reason our front extended twice as far as yesterday. This evening, because

of a heavy cannonade from the army on our right, we had to withdraw; but nothing else occurred.

On the 26th we were still standing in our former position, and we received provisions for the second time. A man receives daily one pound of Zwieback or wheat flour, a pound of fresh beef or three quarters of a pound of salted pork, and one and one third gills of rum, which is as much as one and one third quarts or one twelfth measure. For this, two and a half pence are deducted from his pay.

On the 27th we had a rest day. The region appears rather fertile. Cattle raising is still in a right good condition now even though a great many cattle were taken away. The inhabitants, of whom one finds few in their dwellings, all appear to have lived in a happy condition. The houses are beautiful and regular, not built in the way our peasant houses are. In all the abandoned houses we found fine furniture, which was ruined and from which one can conclude that the occupants were above the taste of German peasants.

The crops we found around here were wheat, oats, Indian corn, potatoes, flax, and buckwheat. Rye could also be found, but not much of it. We found whole fields of squash. The other European garden plants had already been harvested by our predecessors, yet we still found traces of them proving that they had grown here. Fruits of all sorts, with the exception of *Zwetschen*,<sup>11</sup> were found here in great quantities, but especially very many peach trees. The wild trees were various kinds of oaks, walnuts, leafnut trees,<sup>12</sup> cedars, acacia, tulip trees, beeches, white beeches, alders, willows, and a quantity of ???<sup>13</sup> There are also many chestnut trees, the ripe fruit of which we could gather in the morning in our camp.

A multitude of shrubs and bushes were entirely unknown to us. The inhabitants' knowledge of botany was very limited, for often they could not give us any names for the trees with which we were not familiar. Birches and lindens were to be found individually here and there, and we found a kind of mulberry here that looked like a linden with respect to trunk and leaves but bore a black mulberry. Wild

cherry trees, whose fruit grows like a bunch of grapes and is black and the size of a pea, grow here in great quantities. Its wood is said to be very good for working by cabinet makers, and it is especially good for gun stocks.

On the 28th the Corps under the command of Lieutenant General von Knyphausen marched to Mile Square.<sup>14</sup> It consisted of 1) the Grenadier Battalion Köhler, 2) the von Wutginau Regiment, 3) von Stein, 4) von Wissenbach, 5) von Huyn, 6) von Büнау, and 7) Regiment Waldeck from New Rochelle.<sup>15</sup> The march was about six English miles. The way was very bad and stony. All the houses we passed were empty and wasted. We came to the rear of the army of Lieutenant General Howe.

The 29th. Day of rest in Mile Square. It is a hilly region which forced us to pitch our camp on various hills. Yesterday evening, the 30th, at nine o'clock, First Lieutenant [Wilhelm Ludwig] von Romrodt of the von Wutginau Regiment was commanded to march from the camp at midnight with three hundred men of the said regiment. After midnight at about three o'clock the entire Corps, under the command of Lieutenant General Knyphausen, broke camp and arrived an hour after daybreak at a knoll on the eastern side of Kingsbridge.

En route we saw several burned down huts that were built in the form of a barracks. We also found the remains of ruined magazines. On the above-mentioned height, ndhl??<sup>16</sup> First Lieutenant von Romrodt and his command had taken possession of a fort named Independence, which the enemy left last night. It was rather large. For its defense at least nine hundred or a thousand men would have been required. The enemy had left the cannons and ammunition behind. The fort has several small redoubts, past which we marched this morning on either side. Fort Independence covers the entire region and is especially situated to cover the passage over the King's Bridge from the land side.

At a distance of about three quarters of an English mile and between the hills and cliffs there is a creek that unites the North or Hudson River with the East River.<sup>17</sup> By means of this creek both rivers form an island which is called

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York Island and on which stands New York City. The mainland and this island are connected by a little wooden bridge called Kingsbridge, from which the area around here gets its name of Kingsbridge.

The enemy are now occupied with tearing down the bridge to deny us passage to York Island. They are also bringing the magazines that are still standing on both sides of the bridge further towards their camp below Fort Washington. This fort lies, reckoned in a straight line, about an hour in front of us on the highest summit, one might well say cliff, of York Island. It is surrounded on all sides by thick forests and marshes and high cliffs. Nature has contributed far more than skill to its fortification. The enemy consider it invincible. However, since it appears that our sojourn here was coined for the capture of this fort, it is questionable how long they will be able to maintain this adjective.

On the 31st we are lying camped quietly on the height of Fort Independence. King's Bridge, which was ruined by the Rebels, was repaired again last night; and Captain [Johannes] Neumann of our battalion crossed Harlem Creek this morning with a hundred men by means of this bridge and drove back the enemy outposts into the forests below Fort Washington and took firm possession of a height across the bridge with his command. The unit that crossed Harlem Creek today has sent back several lightly wounded.

### **November**

On the 1st we were still lying quietly in our camp. We had to have supplies sent up from New Rochelle.

This morning, the 2nd, our battalion marched over Kingsbridge and pitched camp on a height, On the 3rd the Kohler Grenadier Battalion's outposts were engaged almost all day with the enemy's patrols and had seven wounded.

On the 4th three more men from Köhler's outposts were wounded. Today the entire battalion advanced into a forest lying to the right front of the camp, which the enemy had still held until now, but they were compelled to

abandon it and to withdraw into their abatises closer to Fort Washington. Our battalion's tents remained standing. The von Wutginau and von Stein regiments also crossed Kingsbridge. When the von Stein regiment wished to pitch camp on a plain before our camp, the enemy began to cannonade the regiment violently from Fort Washington, and because of this it was forced to leave the place chosen for a camp and to withdraw behind a height next to the von Wutginau regiment.

Today, the 5th, the Wissenbach regiment occupied the camp of the grenadier battalion Kohler. At eight o'clock in the evening the grenadier battalion was detached from all the other regiments by a *meliertes* command,<sup>18</sup> and it occupied the camp on the right wing of the regiments von Wutginau and von Stein. Today we again had several severely wounded. On the 6th we remained quiet. The outposts were engaged constantly.

(The 16th) From the 6th until now nothing has occurred except that we have suffered wounded and dead on the outposts. The entire army, under the command of General Howe, came from White Plains and pitched camp across King's Bridge on a high ground behind Fort Independence. A battery for heavy artillery was erected on this high ground opposite Fort Washington. At daybreak today the following regiments under the command of Lieutenant General von Knyphausen marched into the forest lying on North River to the right of our camp: 1) One unit of yeagers under the command of Capt. Loreis,<sup>19</sup> 2) Grenadier Battalion Köhler, 3) Regiment von Wutginau, 4) Regiment von Losberg, 5) Regiment Rall,<sup>20</sup> Regiment von Huine,<sup>21</sup> 8) Regiment von Bünau, and 9) Regiment Waldeck. Regiment von Stein occupied a redoubt on a plain to the left.

At about seven o'clock the previously mentioned nine regiments, battalion, and corps formed the main attack from the forest against Fort Washington. However, the many and strong abatises and marshes forced them to stand still until about ten o'clock until they could clear away enough area to get through. At ten o'clock the main attack began against a large and tree-covered cliff, which they had to

occupy before they could attack the fort. By eleven o'clock they were masters of this cliff. Between this and Fort Washington nature had formed an entrenchment, or rather a breastwork, of rocks, which the Rebels had occupied with cannons without Avetten.<sup>22</sup> This breastwork was seized at the same time, but not without great loss on our side, which the Wutginau Regiment felt especially severely. This was because it, like the largest part of the left wing of this corps, was flanked by the cannons with grape shot that were placed on the cliffs. We halted as soon as this entrenchment, called the Stone Entrenchment,<sup>23</sup> was in our hands. In addition to Lieutenant General von Knyphausen's corps, the fort was bombarded by various frigates on North River from the direction of New York. It was also attacked by an English division that crossed Harlem Creek in flatboats and made an assault below Laurel Hill.

The fire from all sides was very heavy until the capture of the Stone Entrenchment, at which time it entirely stopped. The troops there halted and began surrendering. In the afternoon the fort capitulated and the garrison surrendered as prisoners of war. The number is said to amount to more than three thousand. The losses on our side from the crossing of Kingsbridge to the surrender of the fort are said to amount to nearly four hundred dead and wounded. The grenadier battalion Kohler had in all thirty-eight men dead and wounded.

On the 17th the prisoners were transported to New York and the wounded to Harlem, where a Hessian sick bay was established. On the 18th the grenadier battalion Kohler and the von Stein and Wissenbach regiments pitched camp at Fort Washington. Several English regiments, likewise 1) the von Wutginau regiment, 2) the von Ditfurth, 3) the Leip Regiment,<sup>24</sup> 4) the Prince Karl<sup>25</sup> 5) the von Huyne, and 6) the von Büнау marched to New York and pitched camp near the city and received orders to submit embarkation lists.

On the 18th we received orders to submit embarkation lists.

On the 19th Lord Cornwallis went with a corps across North River. Of the Hessians, the three grenadier battalions and 1) von Linsing,

2) Block, and 3) Minnigerode, as well as the two yeager companies crossed with him. (The 21st) According to today's general orders, Fort Washington will henceforth be called Fort Knyphausen.

#### **December**

(The 19th) Since the previous date the regiments 1) von Stein and 2) von Wissenbach and 3) the grenadier battalion Köhler remained in camp near Fort Knyphausen. During this time work was done continuously on the barracks that are to be built for those by the fort. However, today the grenadier battalion received orders to march tomorrow from here to New York. All other regiments, battalions, and corps were moved into winter quarters or into cantonment quarters.

On the 20th the grenadier battalion Köhler was relieved by the von Trümbach regiment, which came from New York.<sup>26</sup> The former occupied the quarters left by the above-mentioned regiment. This evening we received orders to stand ready for embarkation tomorrow.

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#### **Hessian Operations in New Jersey**

##### **Dec. 21,1776-July 6,1777**

After reporting the capture of Fort Washington, Bauer tells what disposition was made of the various Hessian units. On December 19, 1776, he reports that the Grenadier Battalion Kohler has received orders to prepare for embarkation the next day. He then continues:

On the 21st the aforesaid grenadier battalion was embarked, to wit: 1) the staff on the transport ship *Aeolus*, 2) Capt. [Friedrich Wilhelm] Boden's and Capt. [Heinrich Christian] Hessenmüller's companies on the ship *Symmetry*,<sup>27</sup> Capt. [Johannes] Neumann's and Capt. [Georg] Hohenstein's companies on the ship *Royal Exchange*.

At 8 o'clock this morning, the 22nd, our ships set sail. We took our course toward Perth Amboy but dropped anchor in Prince's Bay off Staten Island. Until today, the 27th, we remained on our ships in Prince's Bay. During all these days we had to put up with a great deal. The weather was so very cold and frightfully

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stormy that we were forced to drop three anchors to keep the ship from being anchorless. The Second Day of Christmas was the saddest of all for us since we thought at every moment that the storm would carry the ship away.

Our suffering was greatly intensified because we had no foodstuffs with us. In New York we had been told that we would be disembarked on the 23rd or the 24th and did not need to take any provisions along because they would have to be left behind when debarking. Having relied on this, we had nothing more with us but what was necessary for our subsistence until the 23rd at the longest. Unfortunately, the ships had no provisions either, and we had to get along as best we could in these most pitiful circumstances until today, when the storm abated and we received fresh provisions from Perth Amboy.

Here in Amboy<sup>28</sup> we received news that Col. Rail's brigade in Trenton was captured on the 26th of this month. Here in Amboy we inquired concerning our horses that had been sent from New York with four grooms in a separate sloop, but no one could give us any information about them.

The battalion was debarked at South Amboy in Jersey today, the 28th. No troops from the army had come into this region. We marched almost all day in nothing but forest. The region is scarcely cultivated and, with the exception of a few houses, we found nothing but some miserable shacks that were built on newly cleared fields. In the evening we arrived at a little village named Spottswood, where we were quartered. Here there was a handsome forge.

Today, the 29th, we marched in a region just as distressing as yesterday from Spottswood to New Brunswick on the Raritan River.<sup>29</sup> Although we thought that we would be quartered here according to our orders, we learned the contrary here and had to inarch ten English miles farther to Hillsborough.<sup>30</sup> Here we joined three English regiments, which were part of Col. [Charles} Mawhood's brigade. Because they had already taken possession of all houses in the village, our battalion had to make do with two barns.

The 30th, rest day in Hillsborough. On the

31st we made cantonment quarters in the houses on the eastern side of Mill River.

January 1, 1777. Instead of occupying the cantonment quarters as we expected, we received orders last night to break camp at once. At two past midnight the three English regiments and our grenadier battalion inarched to Princeton. The baggage remained behind in Hillsborough. These three English regiments remained under the command of Col. Mawhood in Princeton. The Grenadier Battalion Köhler joined Col. [Carl Emil Ulrich] von Donop's brigade in Trenton.

On the 3rd General Washington marched to Princeton and attacked Col. Mawhood, who lost very many men from the three regiments he had with him.<sup>31</sup> Today, from the Battalion Köhler, one grenadier was shot dead and one man was wounded.

On the 4th the corps under Lord Cornwallis marched from Trenton back to New Brunswick on the Raritan. The entire corps consisted of sixteen battalions and regiments and two companies of yeagers.<sup>32</sup> All these troops established winter quarters in and around Brunswick<sup>33</sup> on both sides of the Raritan in a line of about one and a half hours. In view of the many men, these quarters had to be bad. All the officers of the Grenadier Battalion Kohler received two rooms. Small redoubts were established all around Brunswick.

Brunswick is an open place, built in a square; and it is pleasingly situated with many lovely houses. All in all, the number of houses amounts to about one hundred and fifty. Two-masted and one-masted ships can come close to the wharves when the tide is high. A sloop of twenty guns came close to the city. About one English mile up the Raritan River lies Raritan Landing, where a wooden bridge spans the river. The tide goes up to this bridge. Here at Brunswick are copper mines, which are not being operated at present. They are the property of a local family named French. The Rebel army had encircled us so that our outposts could be alarmed constantly from all sides, and all too often they were.

General Washington had his headquarters in Morristown. This town lies very much in the

mountains and was strongly entrenched on all sides. We had no other outpost in Jersey but Perth Amboy, which is on the point at the mouth of the Raritan River. It is approximately sixteen or eighteen miles from Brunswick. However, we had no other contact with the corps there but what could be made on several occasions by strong detachments that had to consist of closed regiments. The only communication between New York and Amboy was maintained by way of the river, yet it too was sometimes very unsafe because of the hostile patrols on land, from which the ships were often attacked.

With the exception of two fruitless expeditions to, or rather attacks against, Bound Brook,<sup>34</sup> we remained on the defensive all winter except when we foraged. For this, often five or six regiments had to be taken in order to dislodge the enemy first. The service was extremely difficult and very strenuous for the men. Everyone who served had to lie in the open air. The snow fell very often and deep. It seemed to us that the weather here is generally colder than in Europe.

The men were unable to buy anything to supplement the provisions supplied us, which at first were not of the best. If one also adds the poor and miserable quarters, it is easy to conclude that sickness could not stay away. This had a particularly bad effect on the Grenadier Battalion Köhler, which consisted of young people who were still full of scurvy from the ships.<sup>35</sup> Because of the cold, the scurvy diminished and changed itself into sicknesses. Naturally, for those who were still healthy the service became heavier and heavier because of the sick who were increasing daily and because of the additional circumstance that those who were convalescing in the hospital in New York often had to remain there for a month before finding an opportunity to return to the battalion. As a result of this, the healthy decreased daily until finally the battalion was no longer in a condition to perform like the other three grenadier battalions.

May 10. So far, nothing has changed except that we have been alarmed and disquieted, especially the two Hessian yeager companies that

held the outposts before Bound Brook and Quibbletown. At about five o'clock today, in the direction of Piscataway on the road to Perth Amboy, we heard a heavy cannonade and small arms fire, which not only was very violent but also lasted a long time. The 42nd regiment of Scots had intended to attack the enemy in their quarters, but they were driven back with a loss of fifty men dead and wounded. In the meanwhile this regiment had thirty-six men dead, captured, and wounded, among the latter the major.

On May 11 the garrison of Bound Brook and surrounding places made an attack against the yeager companies and the English guards, but they, likewise, had to retreat with loss. From captives and deserters we now learned that there was a misunderstanding in yesterday's attack. According to their report, the enemy had firmly determined to launch a general attack against Brunswick at four o'clock this morning.

Because we had occupied the side toward Princeton most strongly, the main attack was to be made from this direction and, in their expectation of achieving their goal, their forces were to be detached to the other side toward Amboy, which was our weakest. This they were going to do in hopes of destroying the troops there completely or at least of causing our side to withdraw, whereby we would naturally have to suffer frightfully many losses as well as being forced into a corner.

On the 16th of May the garrison in and around Brunswick on both sides of the Raritan pitched camp on the heights. From then on hardly a day passed that our outposts were not attacked by the rebels. We were now more shut in than in the winter, we could not venture out any more than in winter; and to this the forests and fields, which had become green, contributed much.

On the 5th of June we received orders to hold ourselves ready for an impending embarkation. The place where this will occur still remains undetermined. Every battalion is to take no more than seven riding horses and five wagons without horses. On the 6th we were told the names of the transport ships that will hold each of our battalions. The Grenadier

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Battalion Köhler is getting one called *Bird* of 277 tons and *Twiet* of 162 tons.

Today a rebel captain, who has been in Brunswick as a spy for some time and has been practicing merchandizing, was hanged on a tree near our camp. A letter that he had written to General Washington promised to ignite all the magazines in Brunswick on His Royal Majesty's birthday. He had given it for forwarding to an English grenadier who had offered to desert for a promised number of guineas. However, the said grenadier brought it to Lord Cornwallis. The plan had been made for General Washington to be ready on that day to attack as soon as the fires were set. This spy's enthusiasm was so great that, when he came to the ladder, he climbed it very calmly and, as he pulled the white mask over his eyes, he said to those standing around, "I die for liberty."<sup>36</sup>

On June the 9th the first recruits from Lt. [Friedrich Adam Julius] von Wangenheim's transport came to us here in Brunswick. On the 12th arrived in Brunswick the commanding general-in-chief Sir William Howe and also Lt. Gen. [Philip] von Heister with many English regiments and Maj. Gen. [Johann Daniel] von Stirn's brigade, consisting of the Prince's Own Regiment, the regiments of von Donop and von Mirbach, and also the Combined Battalion.<sup>37</sup> As soon as the regiments had reached the camp, large redoubts were thrown up on both sides of the Raritan.

On June the 13th many flatboats from New York came up the Raritan River. In every flatboat was a wagon which could be launched in the water with little effort and on which the boat could be loaded very quickly. In a short time we saw the boats that had come by water proceed further on land. With the coming of night the army set out in two columns on their march to Princeton. They stopped, however, on Mills River in the vicinity of Hillsborough and Middlebush. The rebels have moved into the mountains across the Mills River and fortified themselves. Various English regiments, the Grenadier Battalion Köhler, and the Combined Battalion remained in Brunswick under the command of Gen. [Edward] Matthew.

On June the 19th the army came back here

without having undertaken anything against the enemy. On the 20th, in compliance with the orders we received yesterday, our battalion had to break camp today with Maj. Gen. [John] Vaughn and escort the flatboats on the wagons to Perth Amboy. Here we encountered two yeager companies that had just come from Hessian, also two regiments from Anspach and the Waldeck regiment.<sup>38</sup>

On the 22nd the entire army also came here from New Brunswick and pitched camp on the heights before us. The English light infantry suffered more than forty dead and wounded in their rear guard. The region between Brunswick and Amboy is an uninterrupted forest and very suitable for the rebel's manner of fighting. Between the two places there is a small and pleasant village named Bonhamtown. Six English regiments and Maj. Gen. von Stirn's brigade embarked today and went to Staten Island, from where they went aboard their transport ships. Today in Amboy<sup>39</sup> Lt. Gen. von Heister received their call back to Hessian and they had themselves ferried at once to Staten Island in order to go to New York.

On June the 25th six embarked English regiments and Stirn's brigade arrived at Amboy on their transport ships and were debarked here already this evening. On the 26th the army broke camp again and marched to Brunswick in several columns in order to fall upon the rebels, who had moved out of their entrenched camp. With a loss of sixty prisoners and many dead and three metal<sup>40</sup> cannons they returned to their mountains. Many of our men lay dead from the heat.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to our crossing the Hudson, when one calculates the advantages that this last expedition has brought us, the losses on both sides seem to balance out. Several of the regiments that returned from the expedition were embarked today. The Grenadier Battalion von Minnigerode captured two of the three previously mentioned metal cannons.

Today, the 26th, a large part of the army's baggage was ferried over to Staten Island. On the 28th Gen. Howe returned from the expedition with his army.<sup>42</sup> Several English regiments, the Regiment von Mirbach, and the Prince's

Own Regiment were immediately embarked on the transports assigned to them. Some English regiments and the Grenadier Regiments von Linsing, von Lengercke, and von Minnigerode were ferried over to Staten Island today.

On June the 29th six English regiments, the two Anspach regiments, the Waldeck regiment, and the Grenadier Battalion Kohler were ferried over to Staten Island and pitched camp near the ferry. At three o'clock in the afternoon today, the 30th, our Light Infantry, and the Hessian Jägers, who formed the rear guard, crossed the Hudson River. With these we were abandoning New Jersey, which had brought us little profit and had cost us many men. Perhaps it would have been better if we had not invaded it or else had held on to it. The enemy's light cavalry was already in Perth Amboy before the last boats shoved off.

New Jersey is undeniably one of the most fertile and pleasing provinces in North America. One finds there many beautiful, splendid, and pleasant farms that supply an excess of everything needed for human subsistence. However, this province does not yet have nearly enough people to cultivate it. It could nourish at least four times as many people as it actually has. There are still considerable large and uncultivated regions where one sees only forests and where one finds no other trace of culture than what nature provides. Perth Amboy has some beautiful houses.

The location of the city is exceptionally pleasant because it lies on a gradually sloping mountain and gives a very glorious view of all parts of the city. It lies on a spit of land that is made by an arm of the Hudson River, the Kills, and the Raritan River. Toward the south one sees the open sea across a large bay in the direction of Sandy Hook. Up to now there are still few houses, but the streets are laid out regularly. It is convenient for commerce because merchant and transport ships can come up close to the wharves.

On July 2 the army on Staten Island marched out. The march went very slowly because on Staten Island only one road goes from southwest to northeast and we had to

march on it. This road is seventeen English miles long and is the same length as Staten Island. We pitched camp at Cole's Ferry, just opposite New York. This area is also called "the watering place" because ships are accustomed to take on water here.

On July the 6th Lt. Gen. [Henry] Clinton arrived from England on a frigate, which had eight transport ships under its protection. On the 7th to the 9th the troops assigned to the expedition<sup>43</sup> were embarked on the fleet that was lying here. With warships and all other vessels the fleet had a strength of three to four hundred ships, the strongest fleet that any of the inhabitants here had ever seen. Staten Island is rather well cultivated and has many hills and fresh water springs. On the 14th the Grenadier Battalion Köhler and two English regiments marched to Cole's Ferry and were ferried to New York. It is ten miles from Cole's Ferry to New York. Two miles behind New York we pitched camp at Greenwich Road.

§ § §

The Hessians' morale had been badly shaken by the surrender of Gen. Burgoyne at Saratoga, and it suffered another blow when Gen. Johann Gottlieb Rail's crack Hessian regiment was captured at Trenton just five days after the Kohler Battalion arrived in New Jersey. Bauer probably reflected the general Hessian sentiment when he concluded that the entire expedition to New Jersey had been useless.

After more than two years spent, mostly inactively, in the area of New York City, the von Kohler Battalion had the opportunity to prove itself in the siege of Charleston, South Carolina, which capitulated on May 11, 1780. Bauer's account of the campaign is very informative.<sup>44</sup>

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Journal vom Hochfürstlich-Hessischen Grenadier-Battalion Platte vom 16ten Februar: 1776 bis den 24then May 1784, geführt durch den Regiments-Quartier Meister Carl Bauer (Hessisches Staatsarchiv, Marburg, Signatur I B a 16)

The sailors, even more than the soldiers, were suffering from scurvy.

<sup>3</sup>Bauer writes "New jersey."

<sup>4</sup>Manhattan Island.

<sup>5</sup>By North River, Bauer meant the Hudson. Instead of "East River" he writes "Edisto."

<sup>6</sup>General Sir William Howe, commander of British troops in New York.

<sup>7</sup>Lieutenant General Philip von Heister, senior Hessian officer in the New World.

<sup>8</sup>The Jager (called "yeagers" by the Americans) were chasseurs, or light infantry recruited among foresters and gamekeepers, who were therefore good marksmen and familiar with the forest. The most famous of these was Capt. Johann Ewald, best known for his trail-blazing military account of his experiences in the War of Independence (trans, and ed. by Joseph P. Tustin as *Diary of the American War*, New Haven, 1979).

<sup>9</sup>Names in brackets have been added. The first names of the Hessians can be found in Hetrina, *Hessische Truppen in amerikanischm Unabhängig-keitskrieg* (Marburg 1974).

<sup>10</sup>Lt. Gen. Wilhelm von Knyphausen, honorary commander of the Fuselier Regiment.

<sup>11</sup>A kind of plum.

<sup>12</sup>"Blatnussbäume," unidentified.

<sup>13</sup>The text appears to read "hier," but the context calls for a kind of fruit tree.

<sup>14</sup>Bauer consistently writes Knyphausen.

<sup>15</sup>

1) Bauer fails to note that this was his own battalion, which later became Grenadier Battalion von Platte (See note 1).

2) Usually called the Regiment Landgraf. Frederick II, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, was the honorary commander, but Lt. Gen. Henrich Wilhelm Wutginau actually led it.

3) Garnisons Regiment von Stein, honorary commander Lt. Gen. Johann Ludwig Ferdinand von Stein, but actually commanded by Franz Erdmann Carl von Seitz.

4) Garnisons Regiment Wissenbach, honorary commander Lt. Gen. Christoph Moritz von Wissenbach, but actually commanded by Lt. Cols. Friedrich von Porbeck and Carl von Kitzel.

5) Garnisons Regiment von Huyn. The name appears mostly as "Von Huyn" or "Von Huyne," Bauer writes von Hine. Honorary commander Johann Christoph von Huyne, actually commanded by Lt. Col. Hubert Frantz Kurtz.

6) Garnisons Regiment von Bunau, honorary commander Col. Rudolph von Bunau, actually commanded by Lt. Col. Johann Adam Scheffer.

7) The Waldeckers were not Hessians. The principality of Waldeck had its own Prince Friedrich.

<sup>16</sup>"ndhl" is not explained.

"Later identified as Harlem Creek.

<sup>18</sup>The common meaning of meliert is "mixed," but its meaning in this context is unclear.

<sup>19</sup>This would appear to have been Capt. Friedrich Heinrich Lohrey of the Courier Corps (Feldjäger-Korps).

<sup>20</sup>This was the Hessian regiment captured by Washington at Trenton. In 1777 the remnants and returned prisoners were reorganized as the Wöllwarth Regiment, which was redesignated a year later as the von Trumbach Regiment.

<sup>21</sup>The von Huyn Garrison Regiment was redesignated in 1780 as the von Benning Regiment.

<sup>22</sup>Mounted sentinels.

<sup>23</sup>"Steinschantze."

<sup>24</sup>Leib-Infanterie-Regiment (the Prince's Own Infantry Regiment).

<sup>25</sup>Regiment Prinz Karl.

<sup>26</sup>Von Trumbach.

<sup>27</sup>Bauer, who tended to write phonetically, wrote "Cymetry."

<sup>28</sup>Bauer sometimes writes Perth Amboy and sometimes just Amboy, just as he writes both New Brunswick and just Brunswick.

<sup>29</sup>Bauer consistently writes Rarington.

<sup>30</sup>Bauer writes Hillsborry.

<sup>31</sup>This was the Battle of Princeton.

<sup>32</sup>The Jager were recruited among foresters and gamekeepers and were therefore good shots and familiar with the woods. The Americans usually called them "yeagers."

<sup>33</sup>Bauer fluctuates between Brunswick and New Brunswick, as he does between Amboy and Perth Amboy.

<sup>34</sup>Bauer consistently writes "Baumbrouck."

<sup>35</sup>Bauer had previously mentioned the scurvy among his troops, which had been even more severe among the seamen.

<sup>36</sup>Considerable inquiry has failed to reveal the name of this hero, who should be remembered along with Nathan Hale.

<sup>37</sup>Gen. Leopold von Heister was the commander-in-chief of the Hessians serving in North America. Gen. Johann Daniel Stirn's brigade consisted of the Leib-Infanterie-Regiment, the regiments of Wilhelm Henrich August von Donop and Werner von Mirbach, and the Combinierte Battalion under the command of Capt. Eman Anselm von Wilmovsky.

<sup>38</sup>The auxilliary troops from Anspach and Waldeck were not actually Hessians, being from independent states, yet they are usually included in the term "Hessian."

<sup>39</sup>See note 33.

<sup>40</sup>"Metal" must have meant "brass," as opposed to iron.

<sup>41</sup>Almost exactly a year later at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, Maria Ludwig (Molly Pitcher) took over her husband's cannon when he was prostrated by the heat.

<sup>42</sup>This would appear to be Howe's unsuccessful attempt to come to the aid of Gen. Burgoyne.

<sup>43</sup>At this time Bauer does not seem to know the destination of the impending expedition. Since Howe's expedition up the Hudson has failed, he must be referring to the impending campaign against Charleston.

<sup>44</sup>See The 1780 Siege of Charleston as Experienced by a Hessian Officer," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 88 (1987), 23-33, 63-75.