

“THE GOWANUS GAZETTE”

Historical Journal and Newsletter

The Battle of Brooklyn Chapter

Empire State Society

Sons of the American Revolution

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16 Aug 2026

Compatriots and Friends,

From the last edition of the Gowanus Gazette published in June the chapter has been quite busy especially with the events surrounding the 250th 4th of July Celebration and I plan publish these past events in the next edition after the upcoming events of of 250th anniversary of the Battle of Brooklyn. This edition will deal with the history of the battle in two parts first a comprehensive “Order of Battle” and second part a “Time of the Battle”. – David Peters, Editor “Gowanus Gazette” and Battle of Brooklyn Chapter Historian.

Here is brief summation and highlights of this summer’s events:

Induction of four new members, Reed Phillips, David Henry, Ben Peters and Elliot Hamilton, Davis Richardson’s speech “From Franklin to Lafayette: the Enduring Atlantic Alliance, recognized by the National Society as a “Notable Speech by an SAR Member, Eagle Scout and JROTC Awards, Channel 12 TV Interview of Dave Nelson. Norman Goben and Dave Peters on the Battle of Brooklyn, Palmer Grave Marking, NYC Flag Day Parade, Camp Pouch Flag Retirement, Green-Wood 6 Patriots Grave Marking, 4th of July Parades, Staten Island 250th Time Capsule. 250th Declaration of Independence Readings of July 9th, The White Horse and Bowling Green, Liberty Weekend at New Utrecht, Lott House and S. I. Reformed 250th Celebration. I would be remiss not to mention the passing of two compatriots this summer Thomas Taylor and Peter Fontaine. both funerals were attended by SAR compatriots, a proper memoriam will be published in the next issue.

PART I

ORDER OF BATTLE

BATTLE OF BROOKLYN, LONG ISLAND, NY

27 AUG 1776

AMERICAN CONTINENTAL LINE, STATE and MILITIA TROOPS

In theater – Brooklyn, Manhattan, Kingsbridge in Lower Westchester (Bronx), Queens and Suffolk Counties, additionally at Paulus Hook in New Jersey. About 30,400 troops were in theater, about 10,00 fought in the actual battle. About 6000 were positioned at

Brooklyn Heights and remainder dispersed throughout Manhattan, Lower Westchester and small contingent in New Jersey. About 10,000 were unfit for duty due to illness.

Commander-in- Chief: Gen. George Washington

General Washington was positioned on an observation redoubt near current Atlantic Ave. and Court St. known as Ft. Cobble Hill aka Ft. Corkscrew about midway between Brooklyn Heights and the Gowanus Heights battle line.

Headquarters Staff: Aides-de-Camps: Col. Wm. Grayson, Lt. Col. Richard Cary, Jr, Lt. Col. Samuel B. Webb, Lt. Col. Tench Tighman, Secretary: Lt. Col. Robert H. Harrison

Adjutant General: Col. Joseph Reed, Quartermaster Gen.: Col. Stephen Moylan, Commissary Gen.: Col. Joseph Trumbull, Paymaster Gen.: Col. Wm. Palfrey. Muster-Master: Col. Gunning Bedford, Director of Gen. Hospitals: Dr. John Morgan, Chief Engineer: Col. Rufus Putnam

Artillery

Commander: Col. Henry Knox, Continental Artillery

405 artillerymen in about 5 companies, most of these companies were posted at Flatbush Pass and other key points like Governor's Island, the Fort George Battery but were outgunned by the British Artillery

Col. John Lambs NY Artillery, one or two companies, did not fight in the main battle but were posted at strategic points. Capt. Alexander Hamilton's commanded a battery at Bayard's Mount, Fort Bunker Hill in current Chinatown overlooking the East River.

Unknown number of State and Militia artillery companies

Batteries at Corlear's Hook, Coenties Slip, Fort Defiance at Red Hook, Fort Hand at Horn's Hook, Spuyten Duyvil (Kingsbridge), Fort Narrows at Denyse's Ferry and other key points

MAIN ARMY

PUTNAM'S DIVISION

Commander: Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam, Maj Aaron Burr, Aide-de-Camp. This Division was stationed in Manhattan for its defense during battle with the exception of Scott's New York Militia Brigade, 5,615

Clinton's Brigade

Brig. Gen. James Clinton's Massachusetts Continental Line, Commanded by Col. Joseph Read in Clinton's absence

3rd Continental Regt. Col, Ebenezer Learned, 521

13th Continental Regt. Col Joseph Read, 505

23rd Continental Regt. Col John Bailey. 503

26th Continental Regt. Col. Loammi Baldwin, 468

Scott's Brigade

Brig. Gen. John Morin Scott's New York Militia Brigade, Nicholas Fish, Maj. of Brigade, 1,527

Col. John Lasher's Independent Regt. Manhattan, this regiment had one grenadier company 510

Col William Malcolm's New York Levies, Manhattan, 297

Col. Samuel Drake's Regt. Westchester Co., 459

Col. Cornelius Humphrey's Batt. Dutchess Co., 261

Fellow's Brigade

Brig. Gen. John Fellow's Massachusetts Brigade, Mark Hopkins, Maj. of Brigade, this brigade was stationed in Manhattan during the battle

Col. Jonathan Holman's Militia, Worcester Co., 606

Col. Simeon Cary's Militia, Plymouth and Bristol Counties, 569

Col. Johnathan Smith's Militia, Berkshire Co., 551

Col. John Glover, 14th Continental Regt. "the Marbleheaders". This regiment was instrumental in evacuating the troops from Brooklyn Heights across the East River on the 28th

HEATH'S DIVISION

Commander: Maj. Gen. William Heath, Maj. Thomas Henly and Maj. Israel Keith , Aides-de-Camp this division was stationed in Upper Manhattan and Kingsbridge and was responsible for the northernmost defenses, some regiments on the 28th were sent to Lower Manhattan and aided in the retreat after the battle

Mifflin's Brigade

Brig. Gen. Thomas Mifflin. Jonathan Mifflin, Maj. of Brigade, this brigade was stationed at Harlem Heights

Col. John Shee's 3rd Pa. Batt., 496

Col. Robert Magaw's 5th Pa. Batt., 480, The two Pennsylvania Battalions later fought at Ft. Washington

Col. Israel Hutchinson's 27th Continental Regt (Mass.), 513, this regiment along with Glover's 14th Cont. Regt(Mass.). aided in rowing the troops across the East River on the 28th

Col. Paul Dudley Sargent's 16th Continental Regt. (Mass.), 527
Col. Andrew Ward's Connecticut Batt., 437

Clinton's Brigade

Col. George Clinton's New York Militia Brigade, Albert Pawling, Maj. of
Brigade, 1,812, This brigade was stationed in Upper Manhattan
Col. Isaac Nichol's Orange Co. Batt., 289
Col. Thomas Thomas', Westchester Co. Batt., 354
Col. Jacobus Swartwout, Dutchess Co. Batt., 364, this regiment built the fortifications at
the Spuyten Duyvil and Kingsbridge.
Col. Levi Paulding, Ulster Co. Batt., 368
Col. Morris Graham, Dutchess Co. Batt., 437

SPENCER'S DIVISION

Commander: Maj. Gen. Joseph Spencer, Maj. William Peck and Maj. Charles Whiting,
Aides-de-Camp. Stationed in Manhattan with a portion of the units were sent to
Brooklyn, 5,889

Parson's Brigade, Continental Line

Brig. Gen. Samuel Holden Parsons, Thomas Dyer, Maj. of Brigade, sent to Brooklyn on
the 25th, Parson's had overall command of defenses of the Heights of Gowanus, 2,469.
Col. John Tyler's, 10th Continental Regt. (Conn.), 569
Col. Jedediah Huntington's, 17th Continental Regt., this regiment suffered heavy
casualties, 199 KIA, MIA and POWs of 346 when it was cut off from the retreat at
Battle Hill.
Col. John Durkee's, 20th Continental Regt. (Conn.), 520
Col. Jonathan Ward's 21st Continental Regt, (Mass.), 502
Col. Samuel Wtlyys', 22nd Continental Regt. (Conn.) This regiment was assigned to guard
the Bedford Pass on the far left of the American line

Wadsworth's Brigade of Connecticut Levies

Brig Gen. James Wadsworth, John Palgrave Wyllys, Maj. of Brig. 3,420, most of this
Brigade was transferred to Brooklyn
Col. Gold Selleck Silliman's Batt., 415
Col. Fisher Gay's Batt., 449
Col. Comfort Sage's Batt. 482
Col. Samuel Selden's Batt., unknown number
Col. William Douglas' Batt., 506
Col. John Chester's Batt., 535
Col. Phillip Burr Bradley's Batt. 569, this battalion was stationed at Paulus Hook, NJ

SULLIVAN'S DIVISION

Commander: Maj. Gen. John Sullivan Maj. Alexander Scammell and Maj. Lewis Morris, Aides-de-Camp, 5,688, Center right of the American Line, near Flatbush Pass

Stirling's Brigade

Brig. Gen. William Alexander, Lord Stirling, W.S. Livingston, Maj. of Brigade, 3,700, this brigade was positioned on the right side American line at Gowanus Heights and suffered among the heaviest casualties of the battle. Gen. Stirling commanded Smallwood's Maryland and Haslet's Delaware Regiments in the absence of their commanders. Stirling's Brigade was positioned on the far right of the American Line against Grant's diversionary attack and moved closer to the center and Old Stone House in delaying retreat

Col. William Smallwood's 1st Maryland, Maj. Mordecai Gist second in command, 400, "the Immortals", This regiment suffered the heaviest casualties of any regiment in the battle with about 100 taken as POWs and 256 KIA and MIA in the vicious final stand and rear guard fighting retreat allowing the army to escape.

Col. John Haslet's 1st Delaware Regt. Maj. Thomas McDonough, 750, two companies of where attached to the Maryland Regt. in the final retreat. They were primarily deployed against Grant's diversionary attack.

Col. Samuel Miles's 1st Pennsylvania State Rifle Regt, 2 Battalions, 1st Batt. Lt. Col. James Piper (died as a POW after the battle), 2nd Batt. Lt. Col. Daniel Brodhead, 650. Responsible for guarding the hills near the town of Bedford on the far left of the American line, detached from the main body of Stirling's Brigade on the far right, suffered heavy casualties 209 KIA and MIA

Col, Samuel Atlee's Pennsylvania Musketry Batt., 650. In some accounts they are considered the 3rd battalion of Miles's Regt., later merged in 1777 to form the 13th Pa., this battalion took heavy casualties

Pennsylvania Militia Flying Camps, these units all took heavy casualties

Maj. William Hay's, 1st Lancaster Flying Camp Batt., 200 Made up of many men from Hanover Twp. and Derry Church (Hershey) now in Dauphin Co.

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Lt. Col. Nicolas Lutz's Berks County Batt., 200, This unit was the first to engage the British in Grant's first diversionary attack. The pickets commanded by Maj. Edward Burd were overrun and Burd taken as POW. Some of Lutz's riflemen were attached to Hand's 1st Continental Rifle Regt.

Lt. Col. Peter Kachlein's Northampton Co. Batt., 200
Chester Co. Militia, one or two companies attached to the Flying Camps

McDougall's Brigade

Brig Gen. Alexander McDougall, Richard Platt, Maj. of Brigade, 1,986 Some of these troops were sent to Brooklyn

Col. Goose Van Schaick, 1st New York Regt., 428

Col. Rudolphus Ritzema, 2nd New York Regt., 434

Col. Charles Webb's 19th Continental Regt.(Conn.), 542, Sent to the battle

Col. Johnathan Brewer's, Artificers Regt. armorers and ammunition handlers, (Mass.), 584

GREENE'S DIVISION

Commander: Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, Maj. William Blodgett and Maj. William S. Livingston, Aides-de-Camp, 3,912. This division was commanded by Gen. Sullivan in Gen. Greene's absence due to illness. Center Left of the American Line, near Flatbush Pass

Nixon's Brigade

Brig. Gen John Nixon, Daniel Box, Maj. of Brigade(built Fort Box in Brooklyn), 2,318

Col. Edward Hand's 1st Continental Rifle Regt.(Penn.), 288, numbers were diminished due to losing two companies in Canada and one year enlistments expiring. This regiment was stationed initially at New Utercht to scout the "Narrows". They skirmished with their Hessian counterpart Jagers in the days leading up to the battle and burned the farms of those supplying the British in their retreat. They stoked the fires to feign an active camp and were the last regiment to retreat across the East River on the 28th.

Col. James Varnum's 9th Continental Regt. (Rhode Island), 391, later 1st R.I

Col. Daniel Hitchcock's 11th Continental Regt.(Rhode Island), 368, later 2nd R.I

Col. Thomas Nixon's 4th Continental Regt.(Mass.), 419

Col. William Prescott's 7th Continental Regt. (Mass.), 399

Col. Moses Little's 12th Continental Regt. (Mass.).453

Heard's Brigade of New Jersey Militia

Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Heard, Peter Gordon, Maj of Brigade, 1,594, this brigade was sent to Long Island prior to battle to disarm Loyalist

Col. David Forman's, New Jersey State Troops, this regiment made up primarily of soldiers from Monmouth and Middlesex Counties, 372

Col Phillip Johnson's Regt, Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, Johnson was mortally wounded on Flatbush Rd. prior to the battle, 235

Col. Ephraim Martin's Regt. Sussex County. Martin was wounded in a skirmish a few days prior to the battle, 382

Col Silas Newcomb's Regt., Cumberland County, 336

Col Peter Van Cortlandt's Regt., 269, from Essex and Bergen Counties, Van Cortlandt was a New York officer in command of New Jersey militia troops, 269

Additional Troops, unattached to any Division

Brig. Gen. Oliver Wolcott's Connecticut Militia Brigade, 4,200, Stationed in Manhattan during the battle. All regiments had about 350 militiamen.

Lt. Col. Jabez Thompson, 2nd Regt, New Haven area counties

Col. Benj. Hinman, 13th Regt, New Milford area counties

Col. Jonathan Pettibone, 18th Regt., Simsbury Co.

Col. Joseph Platt Cooke, 16th Regt., Danbury area counties

Col. Matthew Talcott. 23rd Regt., Middletown and Chatham Cos.

Col. Samuel Chapman, 22nd Regt. Tolland area counties

Lt. Col. Jonathan Baldwin, 10th Regt. Wallingford Co.

Lt. Col. John Mead, 9th Regt., Greenwich, Norwalk and Stamford Cos.

Lt. Col. Icabod Lewis, 4th Regt., Fairfield and Strafford Cos.

Lt. Col. George Pitkin, 19th Regt., East Windsor Co.

Lt. Col. Selah Heart, Maj. Simeon Strong, 15th Regt. Heart was taken as a POW at Kip's Bay, Farmington Co.

Maj. Roger Newberry, 1st Regt., Windsor and Hartford Cos.

* Connecticut numerically designated their militia regiments sequentially, the counties were small and 3 or 4 counties might up one regiment other states organized according to counties 1st Regt, 2nd Regt., 3rd Regt, etc.

Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Woodhull's Long Island Militia Brigade, Jonathan Lawrence, Maj, of the Brigade, 450

This brigade of was primarily tasked with herding livestock away from British foragers on Long Island, although there are accounts of Long Island militiamen fighting in the battle. Gen. Woodhull died of infection from saber wounds at New Utrecht as a POW received in a skirmish at Jamaica, Queens. The Suffolk County regiment was a large regiment and only a portion came west with Col. Smith.

Col. Josiah Smith's Suffolk Co. Regt., 250, Capt. Paul Reeve's Co. was detailed to a forward observation post at Flatbush prior to the battle

Col. Jeromus Remsen's Queens and Kings Co. Regt., 200, 2 Troops of King's Co. Cavalry were with Gen. Woodhull when he was wounded and captured, Capt. Lambert Suydam's Troop of Horse and Capt. Adolphus Waldron's Troop of Light Horse.

Lt. Col. Nicholas Cowenhoven second in command of Kings Co, defected to the British, along with other Kings Co. militiamen during the battle

Col. John Sands 2nd Queen Co. Militia Regt from Cow's Neck and Sand's Point (now Nassau Co.), not officially attached to Woodhull's brigade but performed similar duty of driving livestock away from the British and coastal patrol.

BRITISH ARMY

Commnader-in-Chief: Lt. Gen. Sir William Howe

Please note the British Army command structure was organized differently than the American. The Continental Army had no Lt. Generals. A British Colonel were the equivalent of an American Brigadier General and an American Colonel was the equivalent of British Lt. Colonel in terms of the number of soldiers under their command.

LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE

These light infantry troops aka "light Bobs" were the vanguard of Clinton's 1st Line and Cornwallis' Reserve Corps attack through the Jamaica Pass

Commander: Brig. Gen., Alexander Leslie

1st Batt. Maj. Thomas Musgrave

2nd Batt. Maj. John Maitland

3rd Batt., Maj. Henry Johnson

Royal Artillery, unspecified numbers

Commander: Brig. Gen Samuel Cleaveland

Dragoons

16th Light Dragoons “the Queen’s Own”, Lt. Col. William Harcourt

17th Light Dragoons, Lt. Col. Samuel Birch (Birch later presided over “the Birch Trials” at Fraunces Tavern that determined eligibility for passage out of New York for enslaved black Loyalist).

The two Dragoon battalions lead Clinton’s 1st Line column

1ST LINE of INFANTRY

Commander: Lt. General Henry Clinton

1st Brigade: Maj. General, James Robertson

40th Regt. of Foot “the Kings Own”, Maj, James Ogilvie

15th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. James Bird* see Grant’s Diversionary Force

27th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. John Maxwell

45th Regt of Foot, Maj. James Saxton

2nd Brigade: Maj. Gen. Robert Pigot

5th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. William Walcott

28th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. Robert Prescott

35th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. Robert Carr

49th Regt. of Foot, Sir Henry Calder

5th Brigade: Brig Gen. Francis Smith

22nd Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. John Campbell

43rd Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. George Clarke

63rd Regt. of Foot, Maj. Francis Sill

6th Brigade: Brig. Gen. James Agnew (see Grant’s diversionary force)

2ND LINE OF INFANTRY

Commander: Lt. Gen. Hugh Smithson, Earl of Percy

3rd Brigade: Maj. Gen. Valentine Jones

10th Regt. of Foot, Maj. John Vass

37th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. Robert Abercromby

38th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. William Butler

52nd Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. Mungo Campbell

4th Brigade: Maj. Gen. James Grant (see Grant’s diversionary force)

7th Brigade” Brig. Gen. William Erskine

1st Batt., 71st Regt. of Foot, Maj. John MacDonnell of Loch Gary
2nd Batt. 71st Regt. of Foot. Maj. Norman Lamont of Lamont

RESERVE CORPS

Commander: Lt. Gen Charles Earl of Cornwallis
Cornwallis' Corps followed second after Leslie's Light Infantry through the Jamaica Pass

Grenadier Brigade, Brig. Gen. John Vaughn
1st Batt. of Grenadiers, Lt. Col. William Meadows
2nd Batt. of Grenadiers, Lt. Col. Henry Monckton
3rd Batt. of Grenadiers, Maj. James Marsh
4th Batt. of Grenadiers, Maj. Charles Stuart
33rd Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. James Webster
42nd Regt, "Royal Highlanders" of Foot, Lt. Col Thomas Stirling

GRANT'S DIVERSIONARY FORCE

This division formed the British left and was the first to attack attack Stirling's Brigade at Lower Gowanus, about current 38th St, and 4th Ave. in the early morning

4th Brigade of the 2nd Line
Commander: Maj. Gen. James Grant
17th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. Charles Mawhood
40th Regt, of Foot, Lt. Col. James Grant, Grant was killed by a Pennsylvania sharpshooters.
46th Regt. of Foot., Lt. Col Enoch Markham
55th Regt. of Foot, Maj. Cornelius Cuyler

6th Brigade of the 1st Line
Commander: Brig. Gen. James Agnew
23rd Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. Benjamin Bernard
44th Regt. of Foot, Maj. Henry Hope
57th Regt. of Foot, Lt. Col. John Campbell
64th Regt. of Foot, Capt. Robert McLeroth

Royal Marines

Commander: Unknown
This detachment of Royal Marines numbered about 2000 was landed at Red Hook about 10:00 AM, one company mistook American troops for Hessians and were taken as POWs

HESSIAN DIVISION

The Hessian Division attacked the center of American Line through the Flatbush Pass
Commander: Lt. Gen. Leopold Phillip de Heister

Mirbach's Brigade: Maj. Gen. Werner von Mirbach
Knyphausen's Regt., Col. H. C. von Brock
Rall's Regt., Col. Johann Rall, Rall later died of his wounds at Trenton
Lossberg Regt., Col. H.A. von Heringen

Stirn's Brigade: Maj. Gen. J. D. Stirn
Donop's Regt., Col. D. E. von Gosen
Mirbach's Regt., Col. Johann von Loos
Hereditary Prince's Regt. Col. C. W. von Hachenberg

Donop's Brigade: Col. Carl von Donop
The Grenadier and Jager Brigade was the vanguard of the Hessian column through the Flatbush Pass
Bloch's Grenadier Batt., Lt. Col. Justus Bloch
Minnigerode's Grenadier Batt, Lt. Col. Frederich von Minnigerode
Linsingen's Grenadier Batt. Lt. Col. Otto von Linsingen
Feldjager (riflemen, light infantry) Corps, Col. Carl von Donop

These units remained on Staten Island to protect the British supplies and camp from raiders and took no part of the battle

54th Regiment of Foot of the 1st Line, 5th Brigade, Lt. Col. Alured Clarke
Lossberg's Hessian Brigade, Col. A.H. von Lossberg
Ditfurth Regt., Col. Carl von Bose
Trumbach Regt., Col C. E. von Bischauen

ROYAL NAVY SQUADRON

The Royal Navy gave the British army extra troop mobility and artillery cover the Americans did not have.

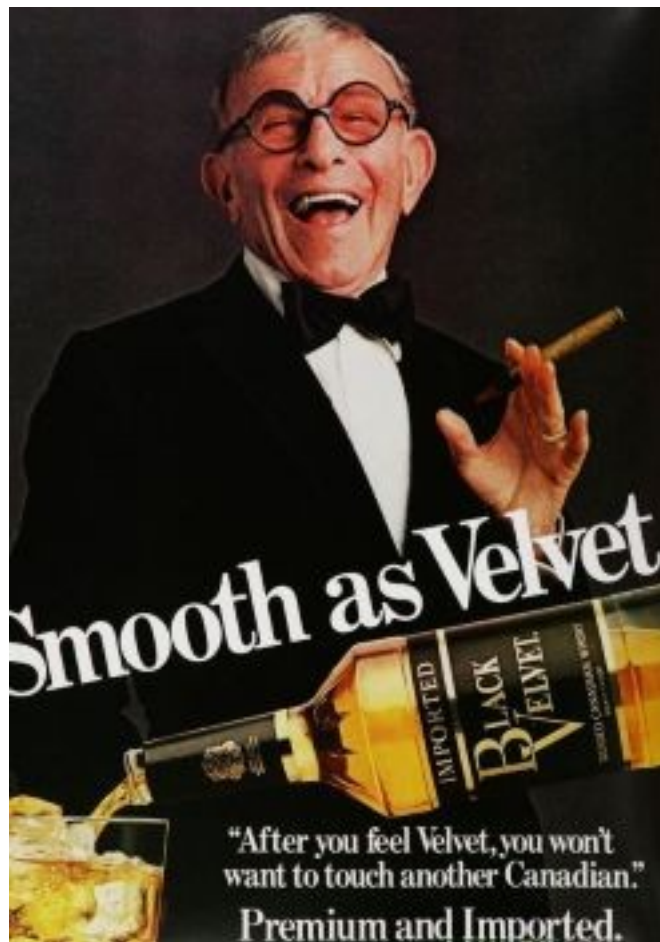
- * HMS Asia, 64 gun, 3rd rate ship of the line Capt. George Vandeput. later survived a fire boat attack by Capt. Silas Talbot(buried in Trinity Churchyard) on the Hudson River
- * HMS Renown, 50 gun, 4th rate ship of the line, Capt. Francis Banks
- * HMS Preston, 50 gun, 4th rate ship of the line, Capt. Basil Keith
- * HMS Phoenix, 44 gun, 5th rate ship of the line, Capt. Hyde Parker
- * HMS Roebuck, 44 gun, 5th rate ship of the line, Capt. Andrew Hamond, engaged the artillery battery Ft. Defiance, Red Hook

- * HMS Repulse, 32 gun, 5th rate frigate, John Lempriere
- * HMS Orpheus, 32 gun, 5th rate ship of the line, Capt. Charles Hudson
- * HMS Carysfort, 28 gun 6th rate frigate, Capt. Robert Fanshawe
- * HMS Rose, 20 gun, 6th rate post ship Capt. James Wallace

Troop Designations: These are some of types of troops that fought in the battle

- * Light Infantry, light infantry were hand picked for their, marksmanship athleticism, speed and the ability to scale and breach redoubt's and fortifications, The were usually the vanguard of any assault like Leslie's British Light Infantry at Brooklyn or Gen. Anthony Wayne's at Stony Point or Lafayette's Light Division at Yorktown later in the war
- * Grenadiers, these were also elite troops picked for their physical strength, size and overall height generally over 6' tall These were the "shock troops", usually second in the line after the light infantry made their breach. They wore tall miter hats to make them look even taller and more imposing, both the British and Hessian had more of these type of troops but Lasher's NY Regt. had one company
- * Riflemen, these were light infantry troops armed with much more accurate rifles instead smooth bore muskets. This one area the Americans excelled, both the British and Hessians (Jagers) had rifle troops who were armed with a short barreled rifled carbine. good for close quarter combat but did not have the range and accuracy of the Pennsylvania Rifles. There were two rifle regiments from Pennsylvania, Col. Edward Hand's 1st Continental Regt, and Col. Samuel Miles 1st Pa. State Rifle Regt., plus a good number of riflemen mixed into the Flying Camps. Rifle troops were best used as forward skirmishers, scouts and snipers than line infantry troops because of the slower loading of the long barreled rifles and the inability to attach a bayonet, riflemen used tomahawks and long knives as secondary weapons, the also had more autonomy on the battlefield than line troops.
- * Flying Camps, these were militia troops but were considered Continental Line troops that were meant to be rapid response and flexible force ready to "Fly" as needed, sort of like Minute Men, there about 10,000 Flying Camps troops mostly from Pennsylvania but there were troops from Maryland and Delaware. About 600 from Pennsylvania fought in Brooklyn in Stirling's Brigade, plus number of companies in the Maryland Regiment. There use was discontinued in 1777.
- * Levies, these were militia troops drafted into the Continental Line to fill a state's required troop quota

Adjust those rabbit ears and stay tune for Part II "Time Line of the Battle of Brooklyn after a word from our sponsors



PART II

TIME LINE

BATTLE OF BROOKLYN on LONG ISLAND TIME LINE

27 Aug 1776

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

The Battle of Brooklyn occurred the 27th of August, 1776. It was the first major battle of the American Revolutionary War after the signing of Declaration of Independence and is considered the largest battle of the war. After Boston was evacuated both side realized the strategic importance of New York, primarily the Port of New York.

There is little dissension over the correct name of the battle whether it is properly called the Battle of Long Island or Brooklyn, both are equally correct but the Battle of Brooklyn is the more accurate terminology. In 1776 Long Island consisted of the three counties, Kings, Queens and Suffolk. Kings County consisted of six militia districts Bushwick, Brooklyn, Flatbush, Flatlands, New Utrecht and Gravesend. Brooklyn stretched from Bushwick in the north through to New Utrecht and Flatbush on the south.

For the most part the whole of battle was fought within the Brooklyn district in the current neighborhoods of Park Slope, Lower Gowanus, Prospect Heights, Windsor Terrace, Bedford, Fort Greene, Wallabout (Dumbo), Sunset Park and Brooklyn Heights, much of the battle was fought with some of the heaviest fighting within confines of current Green-Wood Cemetery. The Heights of Gowanus or Guan was long high ridge stretching along Park Slope and Prospect Heights from about Fort Greene to Sunset Park. This was strong position strategically not topographically unlike the Union Army's battle line at Gettysburg, even a comparison can be made between the British and Confederate battle tactics (expect the British succeeded) but the truth was the Americans were simply outnumbered about 3 to 1 and beaten by better trained and led professional army, despite their strong defensive position. The main part that led to the defeat was the British exploiting the unguarded Jamaica Pass on the far left of the American line.

BUILT UP TO THE BATTLE Late Winter through the Summer of 1776

- * 17 March 1776 Boston is evacuated by the British, retreat to Nova Scotia.
- * American troops even prior to the evacuation begin to arrive in New York
- * The main Continental Army marches from Boston
- * "Fatigue Work" begins American troops begin to build forts, redoubts and artillery batteries at key strategic points.
- * About 55 forts, redoubts and batteries were built within current NYC
- * Gen. Stirling orders all able bodied, free and slave men to assist in the building.

Key Forts, Redoubts and Batteries

- * New York: Reinforced Ft. George (Battery Park), Ft. Mifflin at Horn's Hook (Gracie Mansion), Montresor's Island (Randall's Island), Nutten Island (Governor's Island), Ft. Washington, Ft. Bunker Hill at Bayard's Mount (Chinatown), Coenties Slip, Corlears Hook and other locations along the Hudson and East Rivers
- * Lower Westchester (Bronx): Kingsbridge Forts numbered 1, 2, and 3 on Spuyten Duyvil Hill, Spuyten Duyvil Battery and Ft. Independence.
- * Brooklyn: Ft. Stirling (Brooklyn Heights) Ft. Cobble Hill aka Corkscrew, this is where Washington observed the battle, Ft. Defiance (Red Hook), Ft. Box (Boerum Hill), Ft. Putnam (Ft. Greene), named for Col. Rufus Putnam, Engineer General, one of the British objectives of battle and the Narrows Battery or Ft. Narrows at Denyse's Ferry
- * Staten Island: Construction was begun on Flag Staff Fort and other fortifications under Generals Stirling and Israel Putnam but were abandoned after the British occupation in July, refortified by the British.

- * Queens there were no known fortifications but the British later build batteries at Hallet's Point and Newtown Creek

BRITISH ARRIVAL and TROOP BUILD UP

Summer of 1776

- * The "Watering Hole" on Staten Island is guarded by Rawling's Maryland and Virginia Rifle Batt., to prevent the British Navy from obtaining fresh water, some minor skirmishing
- * 2 July 1776 Gen. Howe arrives from Canada at the Watering Hole at Tompkinsville with 9,000 troops unopposed, additional troops arrive from England and Ireland, including the Hessians through July and August bringing their numbers to about 32,000. There is large presence of Royal Navy.
- * British troops are billeted throughout Staten Island but the main encampment was in Richmond Town, at current LaTourette Park
- * The small contingent of American troops on Staten Island retreat to the American lines across the Narrows
- * In addition to the Continental and militia troops here. Additional troops arrive from regional states New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New England, Delaware and Maryland bringing the number to about 30,434.
- * Independence is declared 4 July 1776
- * 9 July 1776 the Declaration is read "at the Commons" (City Hall Park). A patriot mob razes the gilded lead statue of King George at Bowling Green, a portion of which is melted down into musket balls.
- * 9 July 1776 a good portion of the Staten Island Committee of Safety and Militia defect and swear an "Oath of Allegiance to the King, patriots flee to New Jersey where many enlist.

BRITISH INVASION OF LONG ISLAND and EARLY SKIRMISHES

22 Aug to 27 Aug

- * Mid-August the British Army musters at Flag Staff Fort (Ft. Wadsworth) at the Narrows.
- * Dawn of 22nd August (the 20th is also give) the British invading Armada begins, British troops cross the "Narrows" many in barges with bow drop gates, much like the LCVP "Higgins Boats" of WWII. There is large presence British war ships.
- * Col. Edward Hand's 1st Pennsylvania Continentals are stationed at New Utrecht to scout the coastline.
- * Col. Hand is alerted to the British crossing and sends word from Ft. Narrows back to Gen. Washington.
- * The Fort Narrows artillery begin to engage the British Navy in an artillery duel but are quickly out gunned, retreat and abandon the battery.

- * The British Army lands at Gravesend Bay on the property of Capt. Adrian Van Brunt of the King County Militia and Isaac Cortelyou, patriots pick off a number of British soldiers, these were likely Hand's riflemen.
- * Hand's riflemen engage in a number of skirmishes with their Hessian counterparts the Jagers, they retreat when artillery is brought up.
- * Hand's men in their retreat to the American lines burn a number of farms to deprive the British of provisions.
- * Capt. Cornelius Van der Veer and his Flatbush militia company engage in a skirmish with the British, Van der Veer is later apprehended and threaten with hanging but an order was issued from Gen. Howe he was not to be unmolested, Van der Veer never swore an Oath of Allegiance.
- * New Jersey militia under Gen. Heard are ordered to confiscate the firearms of known Loyalist on Long Island, Col. Phillip Johnson is killed in skirmish on Flatbush Rd. and Col. Ephraim Martin is wounded in another skirmish prior the battle.
- * Long Island militia troops are stationed at forward observation post to watch for British troop movement, such as Capt. Paul Reeve's Co. of Col. Josiah Smith Suffolk Regt. was posted at Flatbush.
- * Brig Gen. Nathaniel Woodhull's Long Island Militia Brigade of Smith's Suffolk Remsens's Queens and Kings Regts. plus Sands' Cow's Neck, Queens Regt. began to herd livestock away from British foragers and serve as coast guard along the Long Island Sound
- * Additional American troops are sent to Brooklyn once the British objectives are known

TOTAL TROOP STRENGTH and DEPLOYMENT

- * American: Total of 30,434, about 10,000 to 12,000 fought in the actual battle, 6,000 where stationed at Brooklyn Heights and the remaining 12,000 to 14,000 remained in defense positions in Manhattan, Lower Westchneter (Bronx) and New Jersey at Paulus Hook. Basically Gen. Washington had to cover four counties and at least six shorelines. Because of the large presence and mobility of the British Royal Navy and their ability to quickly transport troops. About 10,000 are ill and not fit for duty
- * The American line is dug in along the Heights of Gowanus
- * British: About 32,000 fought in battle and four regiments remained garrisoned on Staten Island to the guard the supplies against raiders
- * Gen. Howe divides his Army into three prongs
- * Lt. Gen. James Grant's Diversionary Force which will march up the Gowanus Rd. which will attack the far right of Stirling's Brigade at Lower Gowanus,
- * Lt. Gen. Phillip de Heister's Hessian Division, will attack the American center through the Flatbush Pass

- * Main body of the British Army under the command of Lt. Gen. William Howe will attack through the Jamaica Pass marching north toward the Flatlands then west through the pass

THE BATTLE BEGINS

*See Part I Order of Battle for details of all troops involved

- * 9:00 PM of the 26th Gen. Howe's army begins their march
- * First shot fired about 11:00 PM on the 26th, the British probe lines and raid the watermelon patch at the "Red Lion" Inn (39th St. and 5th Ave, SW of Green-Wood Cemetery) and encounter a patrol of Hand's 1st Continental* riflemen and a sharp skirmish ensues and the British retreat to their lines. (*Gallagher and O'Donnell)
- * About 1:00 Maj. Gen. Grant begins his diversionary attack and encounter the Berks County Flying Camp under Maj. Edward Burd near 38th and 3rd Ave. Burd's men break and run, the British take Burd and about 16 militiamen as prisoners.
- * Thinking this is main attack Generals Sullivan, Stirling and McDougall amass their troops on right of the American Line.
- * Pennsylvania riflemen shooting from tree perches kill Lt. Col. James Grant of 4th Regt. (same name as the Gen.) and one or two other officer, they are driven from the trees. This thoroughly infuriates Grant.
- * The main British Army, commanded by Howe, Clinton and Cornwallis march through night to reach the Jamaica Pass
- * Intelligence of the American vulnerability at the Jamaica Pass was made known to Gen. Howe by the notorious Loyalist raider and spy Cornelius Hatfield, who also later burned Rev. James "Give 'em Watt's" Caldwell's church in Elizabeth, N.J.
- * Tavern owner William Howard and his son are pressed to guide the British through the Jamaica Pass, where to the avoid American pickets
- * Grant pulls back and holds the line with intermittent fire, waiting for the signal of the final push
- * When all the British units are in place, a cannon signal is given in the early morning by British artillery to begin the attack.
- * Lt. Gen. Phillip de Heister's Hessian Division attacks the American center through the Flatbush Pass, with Col. von Donop's Grenadier and Jager Brigade in the vanguard
- * The main British Army with Leslie's Light Infantry Brigade and Dragoons in vanguard attack through the Jamaica Pass, followed by Grenadiers of Cornwallis' Reserve Corps, then Clinton's Line Infantry
- * Grant resumes his attack on the American right.
- * Basic American Line left to right, Far left, Miles' Pa. Rifle Regt and New England Continentals at Bedford. Center, Greene and Sullivan's Divisions, Flatbush Pass, supplemented by additional brigades and regiments sent from Manhattan prior to the battle. Far right Stirling's Brigade of Sullivan's Division.

- * American left collapses, Mifflin's Regt., and other troops are overrun by Howe's men and retreat toward Brooklyn Heights and main British Army is able to flank the American line and get behind the American line by 9:00 AM
- * The Hessians break through the line at Flatbush Pass and Grant pushes northwest toward the Old Stone.
- * A general retreat is called
- * Gen. Sullivan's troops are overrun by the Hessians, his men retreat to the Brooklyn Heights' fortification. Sullivan surrenders and is taken as a POW
- * Stirling's men continue to fight a few more hours
- * Atee's Musketry Batt. and the Pennsylvania Flying Camps repulse two assaults on the Old Stone House, they begin to retreat
- * Gen. Stirling calls for a delaying retreat. Leaving only the 1st Maryland and some Delaware troops on the field at the Old Stone
- * Col. Jedediah Huntington's 17th Conn. Continental Regt. and some Pennsylvania troops are cut off from the main retreat at Battle Hill and suffer heavy casualties.
- * Under the command of Gen. Stirling and Maj. Mordecai Gist, Troops of 1st Maryland Regt, "the 400" fight a viscous and valiant "final stand, allowing the rest of the army to retreat
- * The Maryland troops retreat down the back slope of the Heights of Gowanus toward the area near the current Rawley American Legion, this was largely swamp land where they got bogged down, this where they faced their heaviest casualties.
- * There has been stories of a mass grave of the Maryland 400 but this has not been adequately proven, the general consensus is the large number of dead were left unburied or in shallow graves where they lay.
- * Large numbers of American troops killed or missing in action, wounded or taken as prisoners the survivors retreat to safety of fortifications at Ft. Stirling,
- * Additional troops from Brooklyn Heights cover the retreat
- * Ft. Stirling was located at highest point of Brooklyn Heights in the area around Clark St. and Columbia Heights, on the north end, overlooking the BQE.

"THE GREAT ESCAPE" ACROSS the EAST RIVER

- * Howe pursues the American troops to Brooklyn Heights and pulls up to rest his exhausted troops figuring he will finish the job in the morning.
- * Gen. Washington faces the "Classical Dilemma" with no right or wrong choice. With the whole of British Army in front of him and to his back the East River patrolled by the Royal Navy.
- * Washington decides to evacuate his troops over the river
- * Hand's riflemen stoke the fires to feign an active camp, while the troops stealthily move toward the shore (near current Fulton Landing)

- * In what has been called “an act of Divine Providence” a dense fog rolls in the early morning hours to camouflage the retreat.
- * Col. John Glover’s 14th “the Marbleheaders” and Col. Israel Hutchinson 27th Continental Regiments both made up of mariners from Essex County, Mass., acquire the boats needed and row the army across the East River.
- * They cross and come ashore around the South St. Seaport near Coenties and Beekman Slips



Causalities

- * Historian John Gallagher places the number at about 3000 American causalities, KIA, WIA, MIA or POWs
- * 1st Maryland of 400, 256 KIA, 100 MIA, unknown wounded
- * Huntington’s 17th Conn. Continentals 199 of 348, total causalities
- * Mile’s Pa, Rifle Regt. 209 of 650, total causalities
- * Atlee’s Batt., 1st Delaware Regt, and the Pa Flying Camps also suffered heavy casualties
- * From Gen. Howe’s officer’s returns 1,079 Americans taken as POWs
- * British: 53 KIA, 228 WIA, 37 MIA
- * Hessian: 2 KIA. 26 WIA

Field Grade Officer Causalities

- * POWs- MG John Sullivan, BG Wm. Alexander, Lord Stirling , Col. Samuel Miles, Col. Samuel Atlee and Maj. Edward Burd
- * Died of their wounds after the battle as POWs, BG Nathaniel Woodhull and Lt. Col. James Piper (Mile’s Regt.)

AFTERMATH and OCCUPATION

- * British incrementally occupy\ied the lower New York counties Kings, Queens Richmond, Suffolk and the forts at Kingsbridge in Lower Westchester (Bronx)
- * Patriots that will not swear an Oath of Allegiance to King George, go in exile

- * Military age patriots enlist in New Jersey, Connecticut and unoccupied New York counties.
- * Property is confiscated and marked with red “R” or the King’s Broad Arrow aka Crow’s Foot, many properties are despoiled and used for barracks, stables or officer’s headquarters this includes the estate Col. Henry Blackwell in Newtown, Queens and Francis Lewis in Whitestone his wife is harshly imprisoned and later dies of disease contracted in prison.
- * Great Fire of 1776, 20 Sept 1776 much of lower Manhattan is burned. Probably set by the Sons of Liberty, many of the firemen were NY militia and were with army
- * Makeshift prisons are set up in the three sugar houses and some churches in Lower New York, decommissioned ships are towed in Wallabout Bay in Brooklyn to house prisoners of war.
- * Final Battles of the New York campaign of 1776: Kips Bay, 15th of Sept., Harlem Heights, 16th of Sept. Throg’s Neck and Pelham Bay, Oct 12th and 18th, Mamaroneck, Oct., 22nd, White Plains, Oct. 28th , Fort Washington Nov, 16th, British Landing at Fort Lee, Nov. 20th

FINIS, In the next issue we will return to our regularly scheduled programming

Primary Resources: Battle of Brooklyn by John J. Gallagher, Washington’s Immortals by Patrick K. O’Donnell, Washington’s Crossing by David Hackett Fischer, Battle for New York by Barnet Schecter, The Battle of Long Island by Thomas W. Field, The Campaign of 1776: Around New York and Brooklyn by Henry Phelps Johnston, Revolutionary Incidents of Suffolk and Kings Co., The Battle of Long Island by Henry Onderdonk, The Refugees of 1776 of Long Island to Connecticut by Frederic G. Mather, Long Island City in 1776 by Richard Melnick, Paper: The Pennsylvania Flying Camps by Frances E. Devine, Univ. of Southern Miss. Articles, “Spartans of Long Island: the Pa. Flying Camps and Decoding the Connecticut Militia, Journal of the American Revolution, Accounts from pension records files and other first hand accounts, old maps of fort locations and other online resources, the rest I just made up.