

THE AFFAIR AT EGG HARBOR

NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 15, 1778

(BATTLE OF CHESTNUT NECK)

(6 OCTOBER 1778)

By

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Adjutant-General of New Jersey

Read July 3, 1894, at the dedication of a memorial tablet, erected on the field of the massacre by the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Jersey, and at the annual meeting of the Society on the following day.

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The annals of the war for independence in America are replete with pages of fearful suffering, of cruelty and of bloodshed. The British Soldier's reputation for chivalry was stained again and again by acts of brutal passion and by the malignant butchery of an unprotected foe. Even as early in the war as the battle of Long Island they record it as "a fine sight to see with what alacrity they dispatched the rebels with their bayonets, after we had surrounded them so they could not resist." The barbarities in the prisons and on the prison ships at New York fill the legendary history of the Revolutionary War, and the atrocious conduct of the army in the Southern States had left a stigma on the soldiery of the crown never to be effaced. The Tory marauder, the Indian ally and the Hessian hireling led the way in these deeds of blood-thirstiness; but, the Highlander, the British dragoon and the British fleet followed rapidly in the path of plunder, of rapine, and of murder. The year 1778 is particularly noted as being that period in the conflict during which most of these inhuman crimes were committed in the middle colonies. The massacre at Wyoming, the malicious attack at Andrustown, the brutality at German Flats, the bloody work at Old Tappan, all preceded the merciless affair which we are about minutely to describe. The brutish assault at Cherry Valley fitly closed a year conspicuous for its record of cruelty.

It is asserted by Stedman, the British military historian - and he was in a position to be correctly advised - that the predatory advance of Lord Cornwallis' division in New Jersey on the west side of the Hudson River in September 1778, and incident of which advance was the massacre at Old Tappan, and the change of position made by General Knyphausen and his Hessian troops on the east side of the river, was part of the general plan to divert the attention of General Washington from the expedition which had been fitted out to make an incursion on the Jersey coast at Little Egg Harbor. This movement of the British forces was certainly a correct military proceeding to successfully create a diversion of the patriot army.

During the early years of the war Little Egg Harbor, a bay lying east of the main shore of old Burlington county, and separated from the ocean by a narrow sand dune, was, as the British officers called it, a "nest of rebel pirates". The sea-faring patriots of that section of the State were accustomed to slip out of the bay and capture many of the richladen cruisers which sailed between New York harbor and Delaware bay. The prizes taken were brought into Little Egg Harbor, and a vast amount of stores and other property was thus distributed among the daring sailors of that Port of New Jersey.

Local tradition says that in this resort for American privateers as many as thirty armed sloops at one time have been lying in wait for some heavy laden vessel which had been signaled off the shore-land. Late in the summer of 1778 two very valuable and important prize ships, the Venus and the Major Pearson, both under manifest from London, were towed into the harbor by these bold seamen. It became necessary, therefore, for the British commander, Sir Henry Clinton, to take speedy and sure measure to stop this business, which seriously menaced the commerce of the old country.

In the last week of September a fleet of vessels was collected and placed in commission in New York harbor for the purpose of suppressing the work of these patriots. The vessels assigned for this duty were the sloops Zebra, Vigilant and Nautilus, with two galleys and four other armed boats - nine sailing vessels in all. Captain Henry Collins, of the Zebra, was ordered in command of the fleet. On these vessels were placed a detail of three hundred men of the Fifth Regiment British Foot and one hundred men of the Third Battalion New Jersey Volunteers. The former organization was an old regiment of the British Line and the latter a force of Royalists. Captain Patrick Ferguson, Seventieth Regiment British Foot, was placed in command of this detail of soldiery.

A brief sketch of Captain Ferguson, the master spirit of this affair, will not be inappropriate. He was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in the year 1744. At the age of fifteen he purchased a commission as Cornet, dated July 12, 1759, in the Second Regiment British Dragoons and served in that command during the war in Flanders, where he distinguished himself greatly by his courage and ability. On September 1, 1768 he bought a commission as Captain in the Seventieth Regiment British Foot and with this command he took part in quelling an insurrection on the Island of Saint Vincent. Just before the opening of the war in America he invented a new military rifle, and in the completion of his invention he became very expert in the practice of this new weapon. He was soon afterward regarded as the best marksman in the British army. In the spring 1777 he was sent to America and with a select corps of riflemen he participated in the

battle of Brandywine. In this battle he was severely wounded in his right arm, from which disability he never fully recovered. On October 25, 1779 he was made the Major of the Second Battalion Seventy-first Regiment British Foot, which was commonly called the Highland Light Infantry. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel on taking command of the American Volunteers in 1779, and setting out with the expedition against Charleston. He took a conspicuous part in the fight at McPherson's Plantation where he received a bayonet wound in his left arm, but this did not deter him from taking an active part in the massacre at Monk's Corner. In the latter part of April, 1779, he captured a fort at Haddrell's Point, near Charleston. In the fight at Cedar Springs he distinguished himself by the skillful management of his troops. He entered on the fight at King's Mountain with a profane boast that he could not be dislodged from the natural defense, but the mountaineers of the surrounding country proposed to destroy his force, and at the close of the terrific fighting on the hillside, when first retreat and then flight was the desperate order of the British commander, several of Colonel Sevier's men took deliberate aim at Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson and he fell from his horse pierced with six or eight bullets. He wore that day a light hunting shirt, and carried his sword in his left hand, but when he fell both garment and sword were soon covered with his blood. He died very soon after receiving these wounds and was buried in a hastily made grave on the side of the mountain.

On September 30, 1778, the fleet of Captain Collins weighed anchor and passed outside of Sandy Hook, but the weather soon became boisterous, and it was with some difficulty owing to contrary winds, that they could sail down the Jersey coast. It was not until quite late in the afternoon of October 5th that the fleet appeared off the bar at an inlet, about a mile below what is now called Long Beach, the inlet then being designated as Little Egg Harbor inlet. It was closed by the shifting sand in the year 1874.

The fact of the sailing of this expedition and its destination was immediately made known to General Washington, and he sent Count Pulaski and his Legion to the little village on Pohatcong creek, called "Middle of the Shore", now known as Tuckerton, to defend that part of the State. Governor William Livingston heard of it on the evening of September 29th, and at three o'clock the next morning called a meeting of the Council of Safety to take measures to defeat the enterprise. He immediately sent express riders into all that section of Burlington county to arouse the inhabitants that they might be on their guard against this incursion and prepare to defend their homes.

The village, as we have said, was known as "Middle of the Shore", but the Orthodox Quakers, who lived in this section, generally spoke

of this district as "Little Egg Harbor Meeting". Another name however, had been given it, probably in derision, possibly from the toothsome bivalves found in the bay - "Clam Town". Judge Ebenezer Tucker, in 1786, named the place Tuckerton, giving, at the time, a great feast to his neighbors. It is said that after partaking of his bounty to the full they left his house with an ungrateful cheer for "Clam Town".

Before the arrival of the British fleet, on the morning of October 2nd, three captured privateers, with six or eight guns each, and a strong, well armed pilot boat had been sent out of the Harbor to sea. All the other vessels, which could not be prepared quickly for ocean service, were sent some twenty miles up the creek to the small village of Chestnut Neck.

On the morning of October 5th Captain Collins found that, owing to the winds, he was still unable to get his fleet inside the harbor, and Captain Ferguson, knowing full well that the whole neighborhood would soon be prepared for his attack, and waiting not for passage of the sloops through the inlet, filled the galleys and armed boats with his soldiers and started up the creek in all haste.

Captain Ferguson had been informed by the Loyalists that Chestnut Neck was the nearest wharfage and store house for prize vessels and their goods, and he immediately ordered his party to row up the creek to that place. When they came near the village, which was obscured by a thick fog, they discovered the shipping, and instantly prepared to make a landing and an attack. As they reached the shore they were greeted with some little show of resistance from a small body of militia behind a breast-work near the landing, and from another battery on a little piece of high ground behind it. Neither of these works, however, were provided with artillery. The landing of the British troops was effected under fire of the galleys, and the only casualty was the wounding of one man of the Fifth Regiment. A charge was then made on the militia, driving them from their breastworks and compelling them to take refuge in an adjoining woods. Returning to the shore, the British found two large prize ships scuttled and dismantled and these they destroyed.

They also burned eight other sloops and schooners, with some periaguas and large whaleboats. The twelve houses which constituted the little town were plundered and destroyed, as well as several barns belonging to the Villagers. The store house near the wharf was stripped of all the goods it contained, and fired. The breastworks, which had afforded some scanty protection to the militia, were demolished. This completed the destruction of Chestnut Neck.

The day was well advanced when they had finished this work of plunder and devastation, and it was with great regret that Captain Ferguson obeyed the dictates of prudence and retired his force under the protection of the guns of the Zebra, the Vigilant and the Nautilus. It would have afforded him much pleasure to have pressed on twenty miles up the creek to "The Forks", where he knew from the Tories that the principle depot for the captured goods had been located for many months. It was said that this place was but thirty-five miles from the Quaker City of Philadelphia, where, through the last long winter, the officers of the Fifth Regiment of British foot had reveled in routs, and in balls, in gaming, in masquerades and in cock-fighting. But Mullica's creek was too shallow for their galleys, and forty miles was too far to push out from their supplies and from their fleet into a country aroused and excited. The eager desire to undertake this part of the expedition was, therefore, abandoned.

Before the British commander left Chestnut Neck on his return to the convey he was notified of the contiguity of three small salt works on Bass River. Orders were then given to steer the barges to the landing place of Eli Mathis, near the mouth of the river. Here the party again disembarked, and tradition says they were welcomed with a feast at a Tory farmer's near by. It is said that having heard that the British were in the vicinity he concluded that the salt works would attract them, and that a generous table would perchance save intact both his property and his life. His hospitality and his loyalty to the crown availed him well, for having eaten of his banquet they left him unharmed. Not so did they serve the patriot Eli Mathis, for they destroyed his dwelling house and farm buildings, with all their contents. The salt works were then destroyed, a saw mill burned, as well as twelve houses of well-known patriots near the banks of Bass River.

It was not until the following day, Wednesday, October 7th, that Ferguson's party reached the inlet at the mouth of the harbor, and here they found the Zebra and the Vigilant aground on the bar. It took them all that day and night to lighten up the sloops, so that it was not until the next morning that the vessels were again afloat.

On the evening of the same day, October 8th, the force of Count Pulaski entered the little village the "Middle of the Shore", and proceeding down the Island Road, encamped on the farm of James Willets. This legion of the distinguished Pole had arrived at Trenton on October 4th. The next evening Pulaski had heard of the anticipated descent on Little Egg Harbor, and on October 6th had started across the State "with all his troops in high spirits and with great alacrity". The command consisted of three companies of light infantry, a detachment of light artillery, but equipped with one brass field piece, and three troops of light horse.

Brigadier-General the Count Casimer Pulaski was born in Podolia, March 4th, 1748. He commenced his military life in the guard of Duke Charles of Courland. Afterward he joined his distinguished father in the struggle for liberty in Poland as one of the Eight Associates of the Confederation of Barr. In the year 1770 he was elected Commander-in-Chief of the insurgent army, and, on its defeat, he was outlawed and fled to Turkey. With a heart full of sympathy for the cause of freedom everywhere he came to America in March, 1777, and offered his sword to the Continental Congress. He was first temporarily attached to the Staff of General Washington, and in that capacity acted well at the battle of Brandywine and also took part in the fight on the streets of Germantown.

At this time the Congress of the United States placed Pulaski in charge of the cavalry of the army, and on September 15th, 1777, commissioned him a Brigadier-General. He resigned the command of the cavalry on March 28th, 1778, but later, under the order of Congress, began with the same rank to recruit a legion to consist of sixty light horsemen and two hundred foot soldiers. He was allowed to enlist deserters from the British and Hessian armies, and also prisoners of war. This he did principally in and around the city of Baltimore. In February, 1779, having a second time recruited his legion, he went to the South and took part in the siege of Savannah. In this fight, October 9th, 1779, he was mortally wounded by a ball in the upper part of his right thigh and died two days later on the United States brig Wasp. Some reports say he was buried at sea, but a more probable statement is that he was interred on Saint Helena Island, South Carolina. Count Pulaski was accounted the finest swordsman and one of the best horsemen in the army, and frequently astonished his men by his marvelous feats of horse-manship. Tradition informs us that when his horse was at full gallop he would discharge his pistol, throw it in the air, catch it as it descended, again hurl it with all his power in front of him and with but one foot in the stirrup pick it up from the ground and resume his position in the saddle. On the formation of his legion it is said that the Moravian Sisters, at Bethlehem, made for his command a beautiful flag of crimson silk, with neat design embroidered in yellow silk and surrounded with a deep green bullion fringe. The flag was twenty inches square, and the legion carried it attached to a lance. It is now in possession of the Maryland Historical Society at Baltimore. Longfellow wrote a hymn in commemoration of this gift. To return to the narrative. The legion had encamped on the James Willets farm, which was later owned by the heirs of the late Nathan Andrews . . . From the front of the homestead—a good view could be taken of the harbor and of the English fleet at anchor there. Pulaski had his headquarters in this house. A few hundred yards from the doorway, and nearer to Little Egg Harbor Bay, but concealed, from the bay by a close growth of timber, (which still remained in 1894), the troops

of horse, the artillery and a portion of the infantry of the Legion were encamped. Farther down the Island road, and nearer to the lowlands and Osborn Island, was a picket post, occupied by about fifty infantrymen under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel the Baron de Bosen, the second in rank in the Legion. This post was then the untenanted farmhouse of Jeremiah Ridgway. The farm was afterward sold to the Hubbs family, and subsequently came into the possession of Joseph Parker, whose daughter married the present (1894) owner, George S. Courtney, of Philadelphia. Mrs. Blackman (Leah Blackman) in her interesting narrative says that the site of the house is still (1894) indicated by a hollow place in the ground and a cluster of trees.

On the afternoon of October 13th Lieutenant Gustav Juliet, of the Legion, organized a fishing party to go out on the bay, and having reduced three of their number to a state of helpless intoxication, and compelled two others to submit to their disgraceful proceedings, they signaled and were taken on the British fleet as deserters from the Americans. This renegade poured into the willing ears of Captain Ferguson a complete account of the strength and the position of Pulaski's force. Captain Ferguson always spoke of this man by the name of Bromville, but returns show that it was as herein given. Juliet falsely informed Captain Ferguson that Pulaski had directed in orders that no quarter should be given to any of the British soldiery if at any time a fight ensued. This man Juliet had in 1777 belonged to one of the Landgrave regiments of Hessian troops, had deserted from them, and without a commission had been sent by the Board of War to do duty in the Legion as an acting Sub-Lieutenant. Lieutenant-Colonel the Baron de Bosen did not admire that style of a man who would desert his colors after once enrolling himself, and he did not show him any respect whatever. This it was that made Juliet seek to avenge himself, especially on De Bosen. When Juliet did not return from his fishing party that evening it was supposed that he had drowned in the bay, but it did not once occur to his comrades that he would a second time become a deserter.

In Vol. IV. Historical Magazine, page 136, a letter appears dated Newport, Rhode Island, January 11, 1779, saying, "In the fleet from Long Island arrived several Hessians, among them Lieutenant Juliet, of the Landgrave Regiment, who deserted to the Provincials when the island was besieged by them and then went back to New York. He is under arrest".

From this letter it is apparent that even the great services of Juliet at the affair at Little Egg Harbor did not shield him from Sir Henry Clinton's wrath.

Soon after Captain Ferguson had returned from his Chestnut Neck expedition, and had relieved the war vessels which had been aground, Captain Collins, who on September 23rd, had been placed in chief command of the British fleet on the American station in the place of Lord Howe, received from Admiral Gambier a letter which had also the concurrence of Sir Henry Clinton directing him to return immediately to New York. But again the winds were contrary. As at first they had successfully foiled his attempt to enter the harbor promptly, so they would not allow him to leave it. The British army no longer held any portion of New Jersey, from whence any aid or succor could be rendered, and the British commanders of both sea and land forces agreed that it was unwise to remain in that part of the State any longer. So day after day passed with the idle soldiers on board the windbound fleet. But Juliet's arrival and the information he brought determined Captain Ferguson to make an attack on that part of Pulaski's corps which had been cantoned on the road leading to Osborns Island. He fully believed he could thus occupy his time to the advantage of the royal cause and could make good his retreat when it became necessary.

At an hour before midnight on October 14, 1778, Captain Ferguson, accompanied by the renegade Juliet, left the fleet with two hundred and fifty men, detachments from the British regulars and the Jersey Loyalists, and a number of marines attached to the war vessels. They proceeded somewhat over ten miles in their row-galleys to what in English reports is called Monhunk Island, but was then, and is now (1894), better known as Osborn's Island. This little tract of land has been in a Quaker family of that name as far back as the first settlement of the country. The hostile force effected a landing between three and four o'clock in the morning of Thursday, October 15th, and Captain Ferguson immediately sent a party to guard the inmates of the dwelling house of Richard Osborn, Junior, and to force some man therein to guide them on the mainland to the picket post of the Americans. Mr. Osborn's son Thomas was instantly threatened with a drawn sword and compelled thus to accede to their will. He readily saw the outcome of this demand and begged that they would spare the lives of his neighbors. It does not appear in the sequel that any of the Ridgway family were injured. Marching across the island they came first to a narrow defile and then to a bridge over what was called "The Ditch" on Big Creek. Here they found no sentinel, a criminal neglect of De Bosen, when he knew the enemy were so near. The British Commandant left fifty men at the bridge to secure his retreat. Then silently proceeding about a mile over a rough corduroy road across the salt meadows north of the bridge, they came suddenly at the bend of the Island Road, on the upland, upon a single sentry, whom they captured before he could discharge his firelock. This soldier being secured, and some accounts say he was killed, and the three houses near by, which contained a picket guard,

being descried, a rush was made by the whole command of Ferguson and they succeeded in surrounding the entire party. In the meantime, Thomas Osborn, the unwilling guide, had concealed himself in the low meadow, and from his hiding place he could distinctly hear the massacre which followed. The American infantry, awakened by the shouts of the British party around their houses, hastily seized their weapons and prepared to make a defense. Lieutenant-Colonel de Bosen led his men from the houses in their desperate charge to break the cordon of their captors. He was a large, soldiery man, of great personal bravery, and with both sword and pistol he vigorously fought the ranks of his foe. Juliet spied him and called out, "This is the Colonel; kill him!" and instantly his body was pierced with many bayonets. The men cried out for quarter, but, as at old Tappen, their appeals for life were disregarded.

Some forty men, including the Lieutenant-Colonel in command and a sub-altern officer, Lieutenant de la Borderie, were over-powered by the number of the enemy and cruelly butchered. Some British reports also add that two captains were killed. Five men only were taken prisoners, and very few escaped. As Ferguson reported, they were "almost entirely cut to pieces". The British destroyed also some baggage and equipments of the Legion. Captain Ferguson implies in his report that he did not destroy the houses used by the infantry as quarters, for he wrote that "the injury that would have been done to the enemy would not have compensated for the sufferings of these innocent people". History, however, in many places informs us that he burned these houses of the Quaker settlers.

The first discharge of firearms at this encounter was heard at Pulaski's headquarters and at the camp of the cavalry of the Legion, scarcely more than a half mile distant. The General was instantly in the saddle, and while his command was "mounting in hot haste" he plunged spurs into his horse and dashed down a short wood to give aid to de Bosen. But he was too late. The British after their cruel deed made a hasty retreat to the bridge and toward the island.

Pulaski and his troopers soon came up to the picket post, saw the dead bodies of his murdered officers and men lying near the burning houses, and without halting they dashed down the rough road in the track of the hurrying foe. On their way thither they cut off a few of the stragglers who took to the low ground, but the mounted men were stopped at the creek where the planking had been torn up on the bridge. The stream, at that time was not fordable by horses, but a little detachment of riflemen and a few light infantry, which had followed as closely as possible in the wake of the troopers succeeded in getting across and in firing first on the upper and then the lower side of the creek at the retreating enemy. In this they succeeded in doing some little damage. It was thought

safer, however, to recall the men when it was found that the cavalry could not in any way support them.

On their return to the scene of the massacre they hastened to succor the wounded, and they buried the dead on a knoll on the southern end of the lot on which the farm house stood.

The reluctant guide, Thomas Osborne, had come out of the low meadow as soon as he had seen the American force pushing down the Island road after the fugitives. He came up to Count Pulaski and told his story. The excitement of the hour was so great no one believed the tale he told of his compulsory service, and the angry soldiers fastened him to a tree and commenced to flog him. Had it not been for the timely interference of the officers he might have been killed. They sent a party over to Osborn Island and took his father a prisoner and had them both conveyed to Trenton and lodged in the jail at that place. Some two weeks after this event these two Quakers, against whom no treason could be proven, were released from jail and allowed to return to their home under the protection of the following pass:

"Permit the bearers, Richard and Thomas Osborn to pass to their homes at Egg Harbor; they being examined before the Judges at Trenton, and found not guilty, are therefore discharged and at liberty.

"By order of Gen. Pulaski.

"Le Bruc De Balquer,

"Aide-de-camp.

"William Clayton,

"Justice of the Peace.

"Hugh Rossel,

"Jailer.

Trenton, Oct. 30th, 1778".

The British loss in this affair was two soldiers of the Fifth Regiment British foot, killed, and two men of the same Regiment slightly wounded; Ensign John Camp, of the Third Battalion New Jersey Volunteers stabbed in the thigh, and a private soldier of the same command wounded. Some sketches of this affair speak of a Captain in the British line being pinned to the door of the house by a patriot bayonet but I find no account of such a wound in the British records.

The British force left the south side of Osborn Island about ten o'clock in the morning of the same day, and in their hurry of retreat lost several arms, accoutrements and some clothing. As they were crossing the island a Tory informant told them that Colonel Thomas

Proctor, the Pennsylvania artilleryist, with a detachment of artillery, armed with two brass twelve-pounders and one three-pounder, was hotly pursuing them and was now about two miles in their rear, being well supported by the fully-aroused militia of the neighborhood. Having no artillery to oppose the coming force of patriots, Captain Ferguson concluded that he would not remain longer and risk another encounter with men rendered desperate by the thought of the butchery of their comrades. In the middle of the afternoon, therefore, they rejoined the fleet, which immediately weighed anchor in the harbor and put to sea.

As the Flagship Zebra was a second time passing over the bar at the inlet she again struck on the sand bar. After trying in vain to get her off, the men on board of her were transferred to the Nautilus and the Vigilant, and Captain Collins, with great reluctance, ordered her to be fired. He then feared greatly that she would fall into the hands of the Americans. Much amusement was created in Pulaski's camp and indeed in all the neighborhood, as the shotted guns were heard to discharge when the flames enveloped the vessel.

The fleet arrived in New York on Thursday morning, October 22nd.

For his cruelty of the previous night Captain Ferguson attempts to excuse himself in his report - "it being a night attack, little quarter could, of course, be given". Hearing falsely from Juliet that Pulaski had ordered no quarter to be given, he thought he could do no less than pursue the same method.

In the history of the Fifth Foot it is said that the commanding officer of the expedition reported: "It is but justice to inform you that the officers and men, both British and Provincials, behaved on the occasion in a manner to do themselves honor. To the conduct of Captain William Cox, Lieutenant Thomas Littleton and Ensign Cotter of the Fifth Regiment, and of Captain Peter Campbell, of the Third New Jersey Volunteers, this little enterprise owes much of its success".

Of this affair Judge Jones, the Tory historian, speaks as follows: "They plundered the inhabitants; burnt their houses, their churches and their barns; ruined their farms; stole their cattle, hogs, horses, and sheep, and then triumphantly returned to New York". Washington Irving says of it that it was "a marauding expedition worthy of the times of the buccaneers". Admiral Gambier, however, called it "a spirited service", and to Sir Clinton it was a "success under the direction of that very active and zealous officer Ferguson".

APPENDIX

Report of Captain Collins, British Navy

Zebra, in Little Egg Harbor, October 9th.

Sir - The King's ships, galleys and armed vessels, appointed to act under my orders, having all joined at Staten Island the evening of the thirtieth of September, and the troops being embarked on board the transports, I got under weight and stood to sea, with the wind northerly, but it shifting the day following to the southward, and blowing strong, together with some severe weather, which afterwards ensued, prevented our getting off this place before the afternoon of the 5th of this month, when the tide proving favorable, I ordered the Halifax brig, together with the Dependence and Cornwallis galleys to proceed into the harbor and take a position to prevent the escape of any of the enemy's vessels. The wind being at N.W. and continuing to blow fresh the next day, made it impossible to get the King's ships or transports over the Bar. I, therefore, ordered the troops to be put on board the armed vessels, and it proving a little more moderate in the evening, we had the good fortune to get them all safe into the harbour. As we found, by some information we received, that intelligence of our intentions had reached the rebels several days preceding our arrival (which enabled them to get four privateers to sea), no time was to be lost in proceeding up the river; we, therefore, embarked as many of the troops as was possible on board the galleys and armed vessels (previously taking everything out of them which could be done to lessen their draught of water), and the rest I ordered into the flat and gunboats, and proceeded with the whole at daybreak the next morning up the river; our progress was attended with great difficulty, owing to the extreme shoalness of the water and the want of pilots; the Grandby and Greenwich, armed sloops, grounded off Mincock Island, and could not be advanced farther; we, however, got up with the galleys, and Nautilus and Experiment's tenders, about four in the afternoon, to Chestnut Neck, where the rebels had several vessels and storehouses. They ranged themselves in numbers, in a breastwork they had erected on an eminence, and showed themselves in a battery (which, as we afterwards found, had no guns) on the beach, but were soon disordered by a well-managed fire from the galleys, the troops landing immediately under the protection of the gunboats and cannonade of the galleys, soon drove them from their works, and made them disperse in the woods without any loss. The vessels at this place, amounting to ten in number, we found were mostly British, which had been seized upon by the rebel cruisers; amongst them was the Venus, of London, and others of considerable size; which they could not carry higher up; as all of them were scuttled and dismantled, and some sunk, it was impossible (notwithstanding my solicitude and wishes to recover the property of the King's subjects) to get

them down here; I, therefore, ordered them to be fired and destroyed. The storehouses and settlements here, which seemed so particularly adapted to the convenience of the nest of free-booters, I was also of opinion, with the commanding officer of the troops, should be destroyed; which was accordingly done, also the battery before mentioned, and the work on the hill. About noon this day all the King's ships and the two transports got safe over the Bar, and anchored in the harbour.

Had the weather admitted of our arriving more opportunely, we had it in view to attempt penetrating to the Forks, where the rebels have some small privateers and a few other inconsiderable trading vessels; but as the country had been long alarmed, the natural difficulties attending the bringing the galleys and armed vessels, unprovided with pilots, up so shoal and narrow a channel, a commanding country, would have been so much increased by the efforts of a prepared enemy, that we could not entertain much hopes of success, particularly, as we had intelligence the rebels had collected all their strength to that point, consisting of Proctor's artillery and some other regular force from Philadelphia, in addition to a large body of militia provided properly with cannon; we, therefore, thought it most prudent to abandon that enterprise.

The 7th, at noon, I got under weight with the galleys, armed vessels, etc., and stood down the river; the Greenwich and Granby, armed sloops, being still aground, I brought to anchor in the evening, to assist in getting them off, which was effected by taking everything out of them the next morning; during this delay of the vessels, the troops under the command of Captain Ferguson were employed, under cover of the gunboats, in an excursion on the North Shore, to destroy some principle salt works, also some stores and lodgements belonging to the people the most notorious for being concerned in the privateers, and destroying and oppressing the peaceable and moderate part of the King's subjects, which was likewise accomplished without any loss.

The morning following I got under weight with all the vessels, and came down here with the Cornwallis galley and two of the armed sloops, the Greenwich having again got aground in her way down, has obliged me to leave the Dependence galley at some distance from here, for her protection.

I shall take the most early opportunity of the wind to leave this place, and (if the weather proves so favorable as to admit of it) we have it in view to employ ourselves, on our return to New York, in looking into Barnegat and Cranbury inlets, and to destroy or bring off any vessels that may happen to be there, and demolish the salt works, which are very considerable, on the shores of those recesses.

I think it my particular duty to inform you, the officers and seamen I have had the honour to command on this service, have manifested their best endeavors in their duty. I should also think myself wanting, if I omitted to acquaint you, that Captain Ferguson, the commanding officer of the detachment of the army, as well as every officer and man under his command, have shown the utmost zeal and forwardness to co-operate in everything for the advancement and benefit of his Majesty's service. I have the honour to be, with great respects, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

Henry Collins

P.S. - This will be delivered by Lieutenant Quarme, of the Halifax brig, who, being on a cruise on this station, and thinking his vessel might prove useful, I took the liberty to bring on with me. Besides the vessels I have before had the honour to inform you were destroyed at Chestnut Neck, we have taken a brig here, laden with lumber; but as she is stripped of the most material of her rigging, and all her sails, and being besides very old and unfit to bring around, I have ordered her cargo to be put on board the two transports, knowing how serviceable such a supply will prove to the dock yard.

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Report of Captain Ferguson, of the seventieth Regiment, to his Excellency, Sir Henry Clinton, dated -

Little Egg Harbour, October 10th.

Sir - I have the honour to inform you that the ships, with the detachment ordered to this place, arrived off the bar on the evening of the 5th instant, when Captain Collins sent in the galleys, but the ships could not enter before the 7th.

Three privateers of six or eight guns, with an armed pilot-boat had escaped out of the harbour before our arrival, in consequence of advice received on the second from Mr. Livingston, warning them of our destination.

As it was from this evident that preparations had been made against us for several days, it was determined to allow no further time, but to push up with our galleys and small craft, with what soldiers could be crowded into them then, without waiting for the coming in of the ships; accordingly, after a very difficult navigation of twenty miles inland, we came opposite to Chestnut Neck, where there were several vessels and about a dozen of houses, with stores for the reception of prize goods, and accommodation for their privateers' men.

The rebels had there erected a work with embrasures for six guns, on a level with the water, to rake the channel, and another upon a commanding eminence, with a platform for guns en barbette, in which, however, it afterwards appeared that they had not yet placed artillery.

The banks of the river below the works being swampy, rendered it necessary for the boats with the troops to pass within musquet shot, in order to land beyond them, previous to which Captain Collins advanced with the galleys to cover our landing, and as he came to very close to the works, and the guns of the galleys were remarkably well pointed, the fire from the rebels was effectually stifled, and the detachment, landing with ease, soon drove into the woods the skulking banditti that endeavored to oppose it.

The seamen were employed all that evening and the next day till noon in destroying ten capital vessels, and the soldiers in demolishing the village, which was the principle resort of this nest of pirates. Had we arrived by surprise, we meant to have pushed forwards with celerity to the Forks, within thirty-five miles of Philadelphia. But as the alarm had been spread through the country, and the militia there had been reinforced from Philadelphia by a detachment of foot, five field pieces and a body of light horse, our small detachment could not pretend to enter twenty miles further into the country to reach the stores and small craft there; and the shallowness of the navigation rendered it impracticable for the galleys to cooperate with us; it was, therefore, determined to return without loss of time and endeavor to employ our force with effect elsewhere; but some of our vessels having run aground, notwithstanding the very great diligence and activity of Captain Collins, and the gentlemen of the navy, an opportunity offered, without interrupting our progress, to make two descents on the north side of the river, to penetrate some miles into the country, destroy three salt works, and raze to the ground the stores and settlements of a chairman of their committees, a captain of militia, and one or two other virulent rebels, who had shares in the prizes brought in here, and who had all been remarkably active in fomenting the rebellion, oppressing the people and forcing them, against their inclination and better judgement, to assist in their crimes.

At the same time, be assured, Sir, no manner of insult or injury has been offered to the peaceable inhabitants, nor even to such, as without taking a lead, having been made, from the tyranny or influence of their rulers, to forget their allegiance.

It is my duty to inform you that the officers and men have shown a disposition to encounter any difficulties that might offer.

I have the honour to be with the greatest respects, etc.

Pat Ferguson
Captain, Seventieth Reg.

P. S. - One soldier of the Fifth was wounded through the leg at Chestnut Neck but we have neither lost a man by the enemy nor deserting since we set out.

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Report of Captain Collins, British Navy -

Zebra, Little Egg Harbor, October 15

Sir - Since closing my letter of the 9th inst. I have had the honour to receive your orders of the 10th, by a sloop from New York, to which I shall not fail to pay due attention. The weather having proved exceedingly bad since that time, and the wind having been continually foul, has prevented me dispatching the Halifax, as I first intended, and put it totally out of my power attempting any movement from hence with the fleet, which cannot be undertaken but with a good opportunity to pass the bar, which is dangerous and difficult. This delay of the vessels has given Captain Ferguson and his detachment an opportunity of performing a very gallant and meritorious piece of service. A Captain, sergeant and four men came down to us the evening before last from the rebels, and gave us some very satisfactory intelligence of the Legion of Pulaski (to which they belonged), being posted about ten miles from hence; and Captain Ferguson being of opinion, with myself, that a safe attempt might be made to surprise them, an arrangement was accordingly determined on last evening, and a detachment of 250 men, partly marines, were embarked with him in the flatboats, gunboats, etc., under the command of Capt. Christian of the Vigilant; they arrived at the place of landing about four in the morning, and the troops, making a quick movement towards the enemy got into their quarters almost undiscovered; they made their attack with the bayonet, and killed about fifty of the legion of Pulaski, among whom was a lieutenant-colonel and three other officers, and brought off four prisoners. Our loss on this occasion, I have the satisfaction to tell you, is very inconsiderable. This morning a small privateer appearing appearing off here, and it being calm. I sent out the boats of the fleet and brought her in; she is one of the piratical crew that infest these inlets, mounts only six swivels and one two pounder; her people made their escape in their boat. I have the honour to be, with great respects, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant.

Henry Collins

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Report of Captain Ferguson to Sir Henry Clinton -

Little Egg Harbour, October 15, 1778.

Sir - Since the letter which I did myself the honour of writing to you on the 10th instant, Captain Collins has received a letter from Admiral Gambier, signifying that the Admiral and you are both of opinion that it is not safe for us to remain here, as the army is withdrawn from the Jerseys and ordering our immediate (withdrawal); but as the wind still detained us, and we had information by a captain and six men of Pulaski's legion, who had deserted to us, that Mr. Pulaski had cantoned his corps, consisting of three companies of foot, three troops of horse, a detachment of artillery, and one brass field piece, within a mile of a bridge, which appeared to me easy to seize, and from thence to cover our retreat; I prevailed upon Captain Collins to enter into my design, and employed an idle day in an attempt which was to be made with safety, and with probability of success. Accordingly, at eleven last night, two hundred and fifty men were embarked, and after rowing ten miles landed at four this morning, within a mile of the defile, which we happily secured, and leaving fifty men for its defense, pushed forward upon the infantry, cantoned in three different houses, who are almost cut to pieces. We numbered among their dead about, fifty, and several officers, among them, we learn, are a lieutenant-colonel, a captain and an adjutant. It being a night attack, little quarter could, of course, be given, so that there are only five prisoners; as a rebel, Colonel Proctor, was within two miles, with a corps of artillery, two brass twelve-pounders, one three pounder, and the militia of the country, I thought it hazardous, with two hundred men, without artillery or support, to attempt anything farther, particularly after Admiral Gambier's letter.

The rebels, attempted to harass us in our retreat, but with great modesty, so that we returned at our leisure, and re-embarked in security.

The captain who has come over to us is a Frenchman, named Bromville. He and the deserters inform us that Mr. Pulaski has, in public orders, lately directed no quarter to be given; and it was, therefore, with particular satisfaction, that the detachment marched against a man capable of issuing an order so unworthy of a gentleman and a soldier.

Pat. Ferguson
Captain, 70th Regt.

P.S. - The despatch vessel having not got to sea last night, I am enabled to inform you, that our yesterday's loss consists of two men of the Fifth; and one of the Provincials missing, and two of the Fifth slightly wounded. Ensign Camp, of the Third Jersey Volunteers, has received a stab through his thigh.

We had an opportunity of destroying part of the baggage and equipage of Pulaski's legion, by burning their quarters, but as the houses belonged to some inoffensive Quakers, who, I am afraid, may have sufficiently suffered already in the confusion of a night's scramble, I know sir, that you will think with us, that the injury to be thereby done to the enemy would not have compensated for the suffering of those innocent people.

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Extract of a letter from General Count Pulaski to Congress.
(From Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet, Tuesday, October 20th, 1778).-

October 16, 1778

Sir. - For fear that my first letter concerning my engagement should miscarry or be delayed, and having other particulars to mention, I thought proper to send you this letter.

You must know that one Juliet, an officer, lately deserted from the enemy, went off to them two days ago with three men whom he debauched, and two others whom they forced with them. The enemy, excited, without doubt, by this Juliet, attacked us the fifteenth instant, at three o'clock in the morning, with four hundred men. They seemed, at first, to attack our pickets of infantry with fury, who lost a few men in retreating; then the enemy advanced to our infantry. The Lieutenant-Colonel Baron de Bose, who headed his men and fought vigorously, was killed with several bayonet wounds, as well as the Lieutenant de la Borderie, and a small number of soldiers and others were wounded. This slaughter would not have ceased so soon, if on the first alarm, I had not hastened with my cavalry to support, the infantry, which then kept a good countenance. The enemy soon fled in great disorder, and left behind them a great quantity of arms, accoutrements, hats, blades, etc.

We took some prisoners, and should have taken many, had it not been for a swamp, through which our horses could scarcely walk. Notwithstanding this, we still advanced, in hopes to come up with them, but they had taken up the planks of a bridge, for fear of being overtaken, which accordingly saved them. However, my light infantry, and particularly the company of riflemen, got over the remains of the plank and fired some volleys on their rear. The fire began again on both sides. We had the advantage and made them run again, although they were more in number.

I would not permit my hunters to pursue any farther, because I could not assist them, and they returned again to our line without any loss at that time.

Our loss is estimated, dead, wounded, and absent, about twenty-five or thirty men, and some horses. That of the enemy appears to be much more considerable. We had cut off the retreat of about twenty-five men, who retired into the country and the woods, and we cannot find them. The general opinion is that they are concealed by the Tories in the neighborhood of this encampment.

In Congress, seventeenth of October, 1778.

Ordered to be published.

Henry Laurens
President.

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Extract of a letter from Rear Admiral Gambier to Mr. Stephens, dated on board the Ardent off New York, October 20th -

You will please to acquaint their lordships that having, in conjunction with the commander-in-chief of the army, judged it expedient to annoy the rebels at Egg Harbour, situated near the south of this port, from whence their little privateers sally to intercept the trade hither bound, I ordered Captain Collins of the Zebra, with the Vigilant, Nautilus, some galleys and small armed vessels of little draught of water, on this service, the army furnishing 300 men under the command of Captain Ferguson, on board small transports. The little squadron sailed on the 30th of September, but, by unfavorable winds, could not get off the bar until the 5th following. I have this moment received the accompanying letter from Captain Collins, which I enclose for the information of their lordships, of the particulars of that spirited service; which, we have reason to believe, has sensibly annoyed the rebels.

The Raleigh, a very fine rebel frigate, has been taken and brought in here by the Experiment and Unicorn.