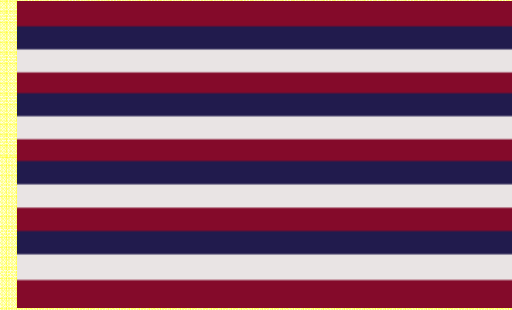


Col. Richard Somers' "Atlantic County" Regiment October 1777



A Story of 3 Skirmishes & 2 Battles



- **Fort Billingsport: Oct. 2, 1777**
- **Fort Mercer & PA Navy – Red Bank battle: Oct. 22, 1777**
- **Fort Mifflin – Mud Island battle: Nov. 15, 1777**
- **Fort Mercer – Red Bank & PA Navy – Nov. 21, 1777**
- **Counter-attacking the final British Withdrawal at Timber Creek under Lafayette – Nov. 25, 1777**

The General Background

- **Jul. 1775 – Congress begins DR obstructions.**
- **Jun. 1776 – Congress begins Fort Billingsport.**
- **Apr. 16, 1777 – Americans start to build Fort Mercer & reinforce Fort Mifflin; PA Navy on the Delaware. Col. Somers' men involved at fort.**
- **Aug. 25 – British land at Head of Elk, MD.**
- **Sep. 11 – British win the battle at Brandywine.**
- **Sep. 22 – Cornwallis occupies Philadelphia.**
- **Oct. 22 – first Red Bank battle occurs.**

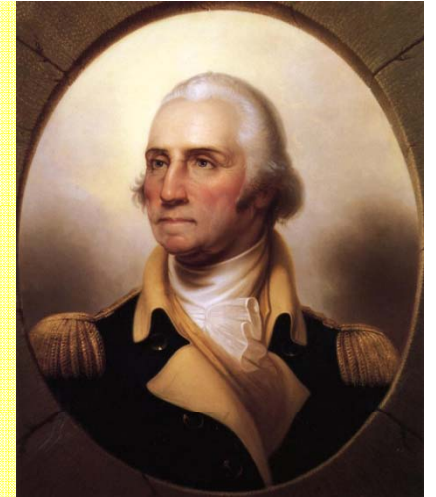
Our Guys' Service in 1777

(in addition to being the continual (1775-83) "Egg Harbour Guard" on the Beaches of Brigantine and Absecon Island, possibly stationed at "Fort Clark" (source: AC Press Jul. 14, 1963), plus Peck's Beach)

- Jan – Trenton follow-up work
- Feb – guard duty at Raritan River; Morristown fighting; Burlington, Forks & Fox Barrows guard duty
- Mar – guard duty at Cooper's Ferry & Fox Barrows (prob. Apr too)
- May – Haddonfield guard duty (prob. June too)
- Jul – Haddonfield guard duty
- Aug – Cooper's Ferry & Forks guard duty
- Sep – at Haddonfield (heard Brandywine); at Brandywine in battle – Enoch Gandy; at Red Bank & Somers Point (skirmish) guard duty.
- Oct – Battles at Red Bank
- Nov – Haddonfield guard duty
- Dec – Cooper's Ferry guard duty – skirmish

(source: various pension apps)

The Battle Preparation from GW



- Sep. 23 – to Comm. Hazelwood: “I think it of the greatest importance that...we can stop the Enemy’s fleet from coming up and prevent them from getting possession of the Mud Fort”. (GW Letters, vol. 11, p. 303)
- Sep 23 – to Col. Samuel Smith: “You will take the safest and most expeditious method of conducting the detachment (4th MD Reg.) to Fort Mifflin. The keeping of the fort is of very great importance...” (vol. 11, p. 308)
- Sep 26 – to Elbridge Gerry: “We are now in motion and advancing to form a junction with Gen. McDougal. I expect to be joined in a day or two by Gen. Foreman with 1440-1500 NJ Militia”. (vol. 11, p. 326)

An aside: One of Our Guys Was at Brandywine!

“When they left their winter quarters (in Sept), he believes they marched to Woodbury again...they were marched from Woodbury down Jersey and crossed the Delaware Bay at a ferry above Wilmington and opposite to Schuylkill in the State of Delaware. And they were marched from there to within a short distance of the ground where the Battle of Brandywine was fought and there encamped. They had not been long there before the British army arrived and attempted to cross the Brandywine, and at which time they had a very warm engagement. The regiment to which he belonged left the area and marched through Westchester to the best of his recollection to a place called Chestnut Hill, in Philadelphia County in the State of Pennsylvania, at which place a large army was encamped. The British army were in Philadelphia and sallied out and were met at Germantown near to the encampment by the American army and had a very warm engagement.” (continued on next slide)

“Not long after the Battle of Germantown, he (Enoch Gandy) believes, they were marched to a ferry below Bristol on the Delaware and crossed the river Delaware into the State of New Jersey again, to go into winter quarters. But before they had reached winter quarters, they were ordered to Red Bank at which place they had a warm engagement with the Hessians. After the battle they went into winter quarters to the best of his recollection at Egg Harbor, also in the State of New Jersey.”

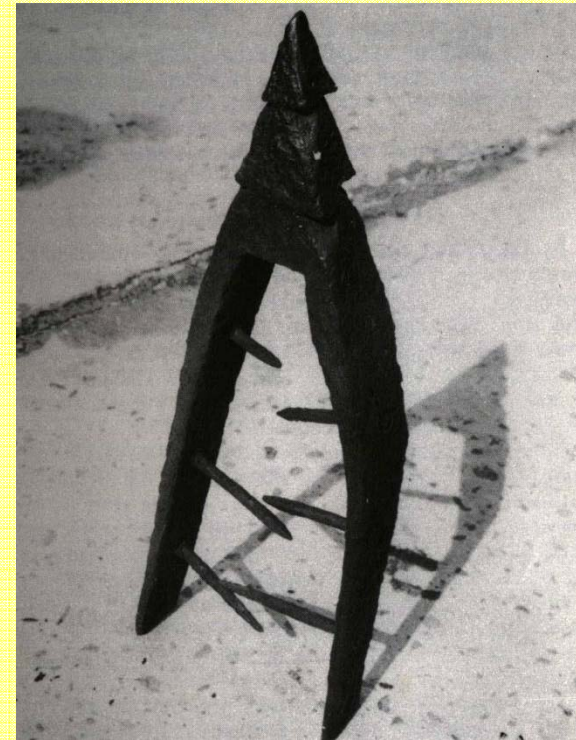
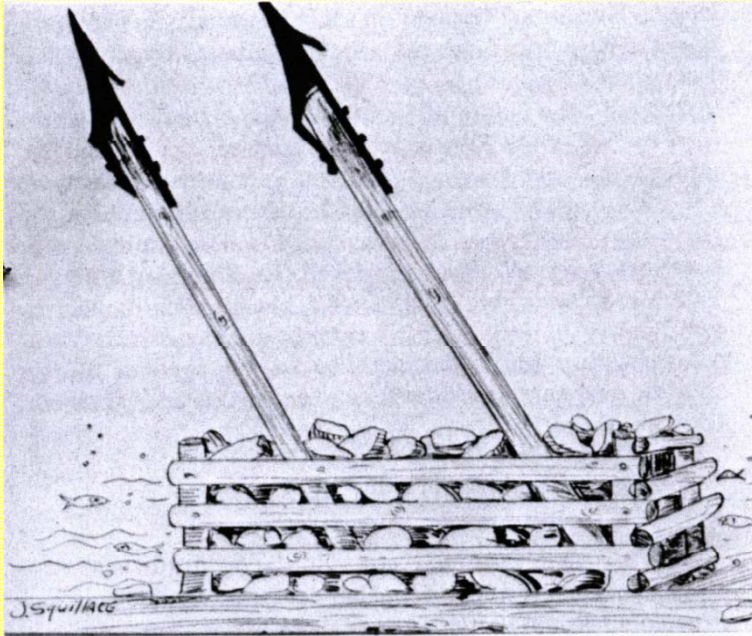
Pvt. Enoch Gandy, in NJ Line, in his pension application

Now, back to our story...

Responses to GW

- Sep 27 - from Col. Smith at Fort Mifflin: “...I find everything in the utmost confusion...60 untrained militia (PA – Chester County)...Gen. Newcomb is now at Woodbury with 500 militia (Gloucester)”. (GW Letters, vol. 11, p. 334)
- Oct 3 – from Col. Smith: “...the enemies have landed near Billingsport, which place they now have possession of...our militia (PA) evacuated it...the enemy has not yet taken possession of Red Bank”. (vol. 11, p. 386)
- Oct 6 – from Col. Lewis Nicola in Trenton: “Col. Somers of the Militia, dispatched by Gen. Newcomb, in quest of arms and ammunition for the militia who assemble at Red Bank very fast, has just been with me to enquire where he can be supplied....I have recommended to the Colonel to go by the way of Princeton as the Governor and the Council are assembled there.” (vol. 11, p. 412)

1. A Skirmish at Fort Billingsport

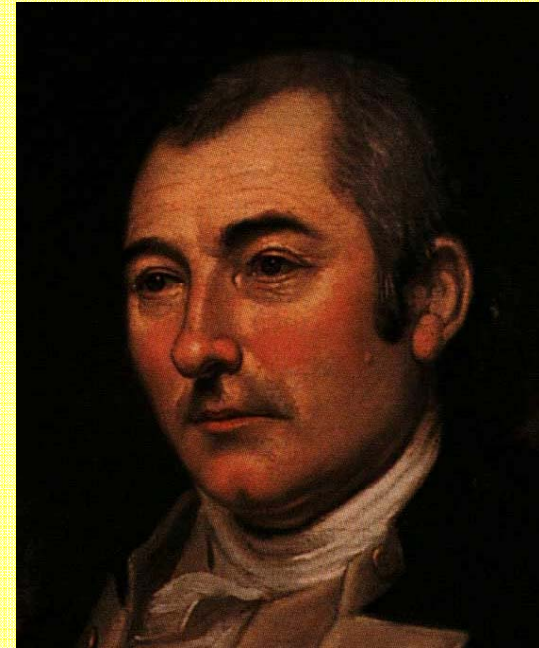
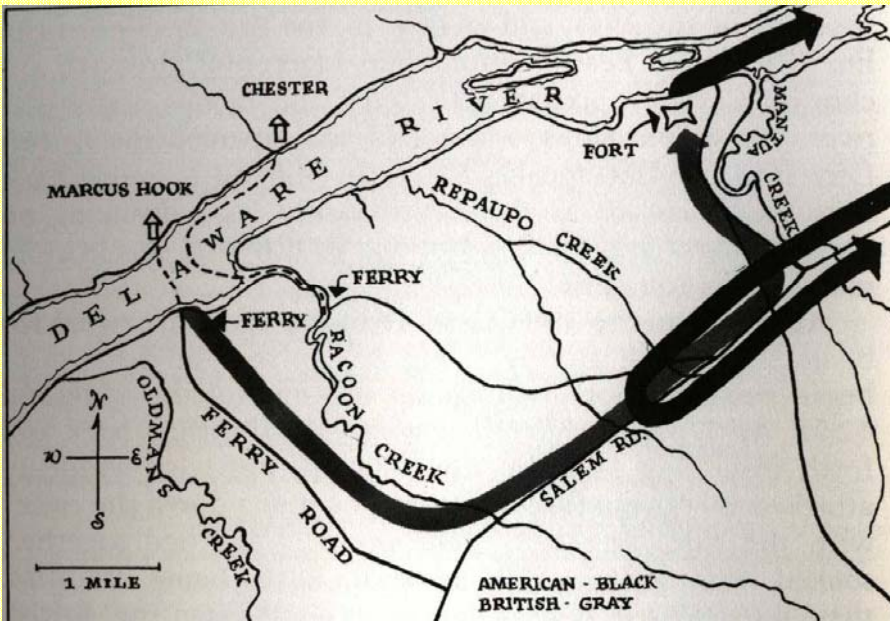


The Chevaux-De-Frise = Iron Horse

“I was out on a reconnoitering party in the neighborhood of Raccoon Creek. The enemy...crossed said creek...and attacked us. We retreated back to Woodbury.”

Source: John Ingersoll pension application, 1832.

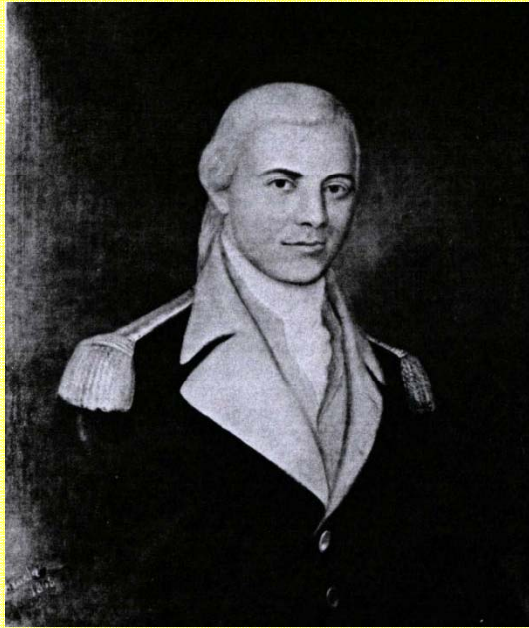
Fort Billingsport Lost



Commander John Hazelwood
The Pennsylvania Navy

**GW Plan: The 1500
British Delayed & No
American Losses of 300**

2. Fort Mercer Battle Preparation

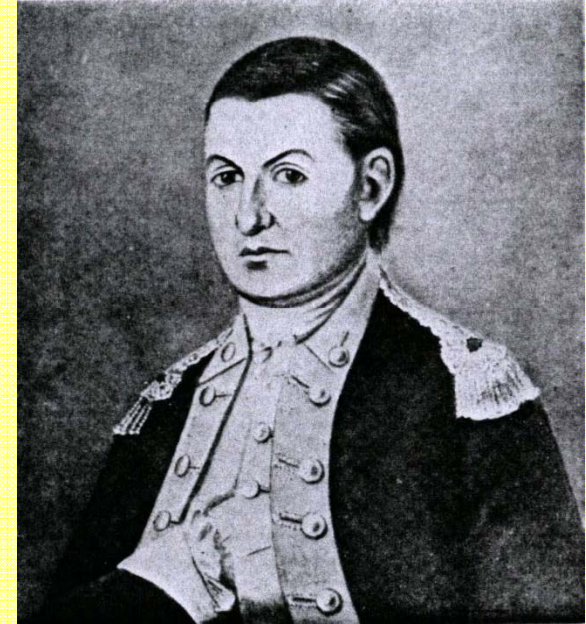


**GW to Brig. Gen. James Varnum - Oct. 7,
1777:**

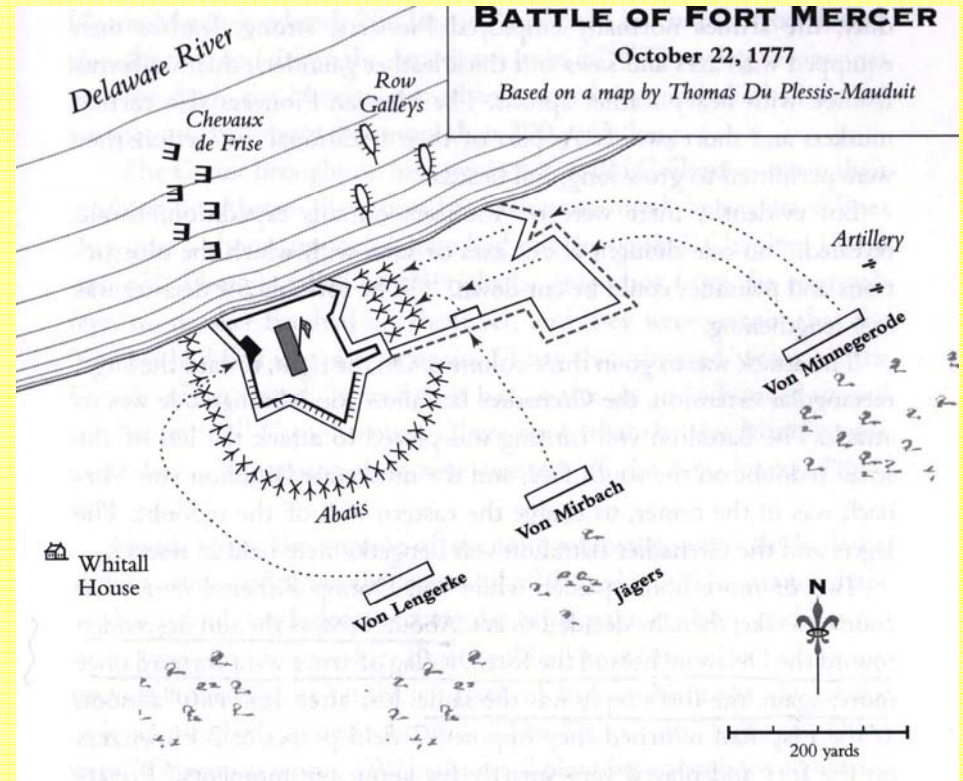
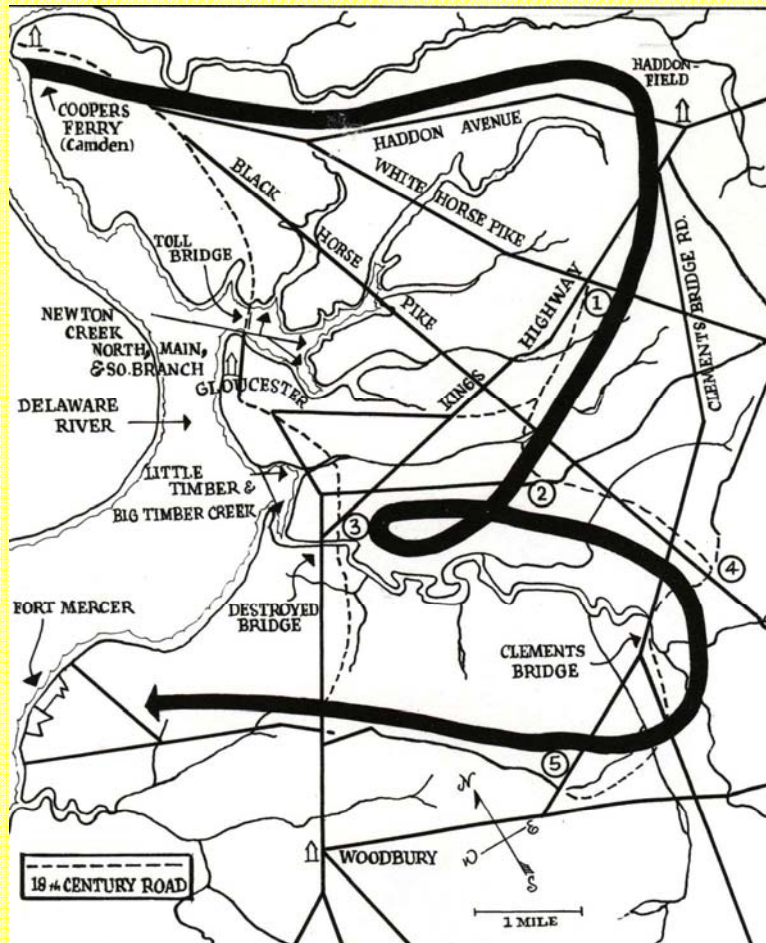
**“I desire you will immediately...detach Col.
Green’s and Col. Angel’s regiments...with
orders to throw themselves into the fort at
Red Bank.” (vol. 11, p. 427)**

**GW to Col. Christopher Greene –
Oct. 8, 1777:**

**“You should lose not a moments time
in getting to the place of your
destination and making every proper
preparation for its defense....I have
written to Gen. Newcomb of the
Jersey militia to give you all the aid in
his power....The whole defense of the
Delaware depends upon it.”
(vol. 11, p. 437)**



Red Bank - Fort Mercer Victory



“I heard the firing” –
John Giberson pension application

“The Battle of Red Bank was fought the afternoon before we arrived.” - Lt. Jeremiah Leeds

Our Guys Pulled Tough Duty

“He next entered as a fifer in the company of militia commanded by Captain Joseph Conover in Colonel Somers Regiment. The company marched from Egg Harbor to the fort at Red Bank on the Delaware -- he arrived at the fort the day after the battle -- he heard the firing in the battle when it choose landing on their march up. He helped to bury those who were killed in the battle (127 were buried at the Fort). He remained at the fort one month it was discharged.”

Pension application of Levi Price

Hessian Losses:

151 killed 263 wounded 80 Desertions 20 Prisoners

American Losses:

14 Killed 23 Wounded

Other Somers Guys Had to Continue to Guard the Coast

“He enlisted as a musket man under Capt. John Hamilton who commanded the Ship Mifflin, belonging to the State of PA. The Mifflin sail to Jamaica...and made many prizes. This declarant remained in the service as a marine on board the said ship...comprising a period of 2 years 6 months.”

Stephen Ford pension application

“He then volunteered under Capt. James Somers and served under him for 3 months. During this term of service, they took a schooner from the Refugees on its way to New York. It was loaded with flour and had on her 2 negroes which they also took.” (and presumably freed as few held slaves in our area)

John Steelman pension application

3. Fort Mifflin Battle

- Oct 10 – British fire on Mifflin
- Oct 15 – British fire increases – Col. Smith wounded
- Oct 21 - Col. Greene & 150 regulars defending
- Oct 22 – Red Bank land battle – American victory
- Oct 23 – Red Bank naval battle – American victory
- Nov 10 – all-out British fire from land and water destroys fort
- Nov 15 – Americans evacuate fort
- Nov 16 – British occupy fort & later return to Philadelphia under militia harassment fire



4. & 5. The Final Skirmish at Red Bank

- Nov 18 – British land 4000 troops at Billingsport & 1000 at Cooper's Ferry
- Nov 19 – British land 3000 more troops under Cornwallis, for a total of 8000 men to face 3000 Americans
- Nov 21 – (4) Americans under Lafayette destroy Fort Mercer and retreat to safety
- Nov 24 – Colonels Ellis, Hillman and Somers lead the combined Gloucester County Militia battalions as a team
- Nov 25 – (5) Militia under Lafayette harass the British withdrawal; our Lt. John Lucas KIA & Ensign John Tilton & Hugh Jones WIA at Timber Creek
- Dec ?? – Col. Somers goes home sick
- Winter & Spring 1778 – Gloucester militia harasses British food gathering
- Summer 1778 – the British give up Philadelphia

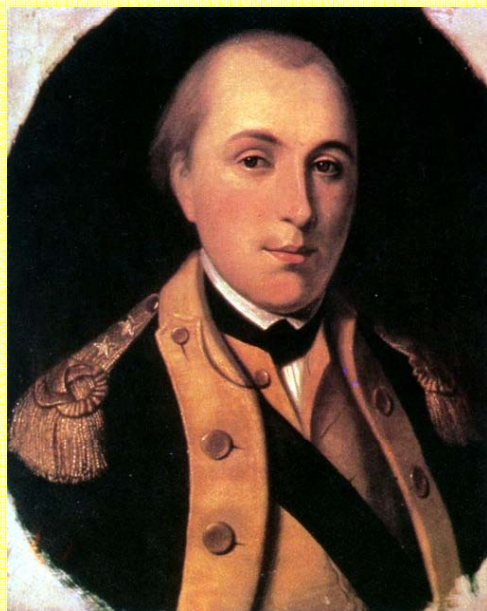


**Col. Joseph Ellis, Gloucester Militia,
to Gen. Nathaniel Greene, Nov. 24, 1777:
(Col. Ellis & Col. Somers were command-partners in
almost all missions, thus, this is joint report)**

“In compliance with your letter of yesterday, I send you a state of the Militia under my command, which is about 400 effective at this place (Haddonfield), and about 100 in the neighborhood before Manto Creek; the time of service for which they came out will for the greater part expire in a few days; orders are out for assembling the other classes (those at home) so that I hope to keep up the number. As to the Enemy, from the best discoveries we have been able to make, their main strength is at Woodbury, and their lines extend from Manto Creek to Little Timber Creek, an extent of 6 or 7 miles: their whole force about 5,000 consisting of British, Hessians, and Marines. The Marines are employed in destroying the works at Red Bank; when that is effected, they give out they intend moving their army upwards to Burlington and Mt. Holly. Their post at Woodbury is advantageous and difficult to attack.”

Gen. Lafayette's Report in 3rd person:

“...he accompanied (Gen.) Greene as far as Mt. Holly, where he detached himself to reconnoiter, and found the enemy on Nov. 25 at Gloucester...to make certain of their activities M. de Lafayette went out to Sandy Point...at about 4 o'clock he found himself two miles from the British camp, facing a unit of 400 Hessians with cannon. He had with him only 350 men, most of whom were militia men (Gloucester men were about half of these), but he attacked suddenly, and the enemy gave way. Lord Cornwallis came up with the grenadiers, but, believing he was engaging Greene's entire force in those woods, he let himself be pushed back to the outskirts of Gloucester, with a loss of about 60 men. Greene arrived during the night but chose not to attack, and Lord Cornwallis crossed the river.”



The Marquis de Lafayette, Memoir of 1776-77, p. 98

Our Casualties after Red Bank

“The Company to which deponent belonged was at a creek called Little Timber Creek and exchanged shots with the British on the other side. The next day they had another skirmish with the British near the same place; in this Lt. Lucas was killed by a ball which struck him in the breast below the left nipple and went through his body. Ensign John Tilton was shot in the left shoulder.”

Lt. Robert Leeds’ pension application

“A man named Hugh Jones was also wounded. We did not know that Lt. Lucas had been killed until we got back to Haddonfield, and the next day James Murphy and myself went to the battleground, and brought him (Lucas) to our quarters. He had been thrown into a ditch and covered with some rubbish and was pretty much stripped of his clothes.”

Patrick McCollum pension application

“We went down to Timber creek and took four prisoners.”

David Somers pension application

“I received a severe wound and was taken home and placed under the care of the physicians about six months. I am disabled to this day – 1833.”

John Tilton pension application

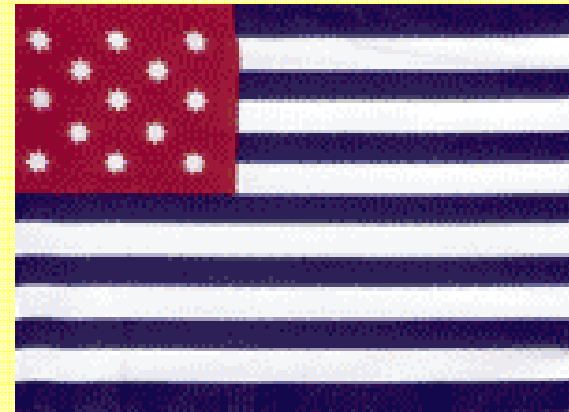
Field Officers in these battles

**Maj. Gen. Philemon Dickinson,
NJ Militia Com.
Col. Richard Somers, Batt. Com. (later sick after RB)
Col. Joseph Ellis (later Brig. Gen.)
Col. Josiah Hillman
Lt. Col. Elijah Clark
1st Maj. Richard Westcott (later Lt. Col.)**

Company Officers in these battles

**Capt. Joseph Conover
Lt. Jeremiah Leeds
Capt. Richard Higbee
Capt. George Payne (later sick after RB)
Lt. John Lucas (killed)
Lt. John Adams
Ens. John Tilton (wounded)
Capt. Christopher Rape (sick, possibly before RB)
Lt. Samuel Springer
Lt. Robert Snell
Capt. Zephaniah Steelman
Lt. Peter Cowenhowen
Capt. Samuel Snell
Lt. Isaac Hickman
Capt. Arthur Westcott**

**By: Norm Goos 652-2238
normangoos@comcast.net**



Privates in these battles

**Albert Albertson
Jesse Conover
Enoch Gandy (Cont. troops)
John Giberson
Edward Higbee
John Ingersoll
Hugh Jones (wounded)
Robert Leeds
Patrick McCollum
Levi Price
David Somers**

**+ about 200 others of the 350
3rd Bat. privates**

Col. Richard Somers' "Atlantic County" Regiment October 1777

As always in the War
for Independence,
our local 3rd
Gloucester Battalion
men under Col.
Richard Somers
answered the call to
duty, no matter
what the cost!

