



The Battle at Chestnut Neck

Port Republic, New Jersey

October 6, 1778

New Jersey in 1778



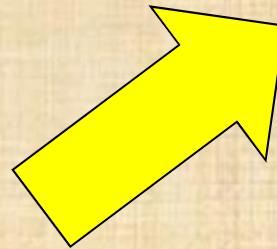
**Little Egg Harbor River
Area (Mullica River today) –
Chestnut Neck**

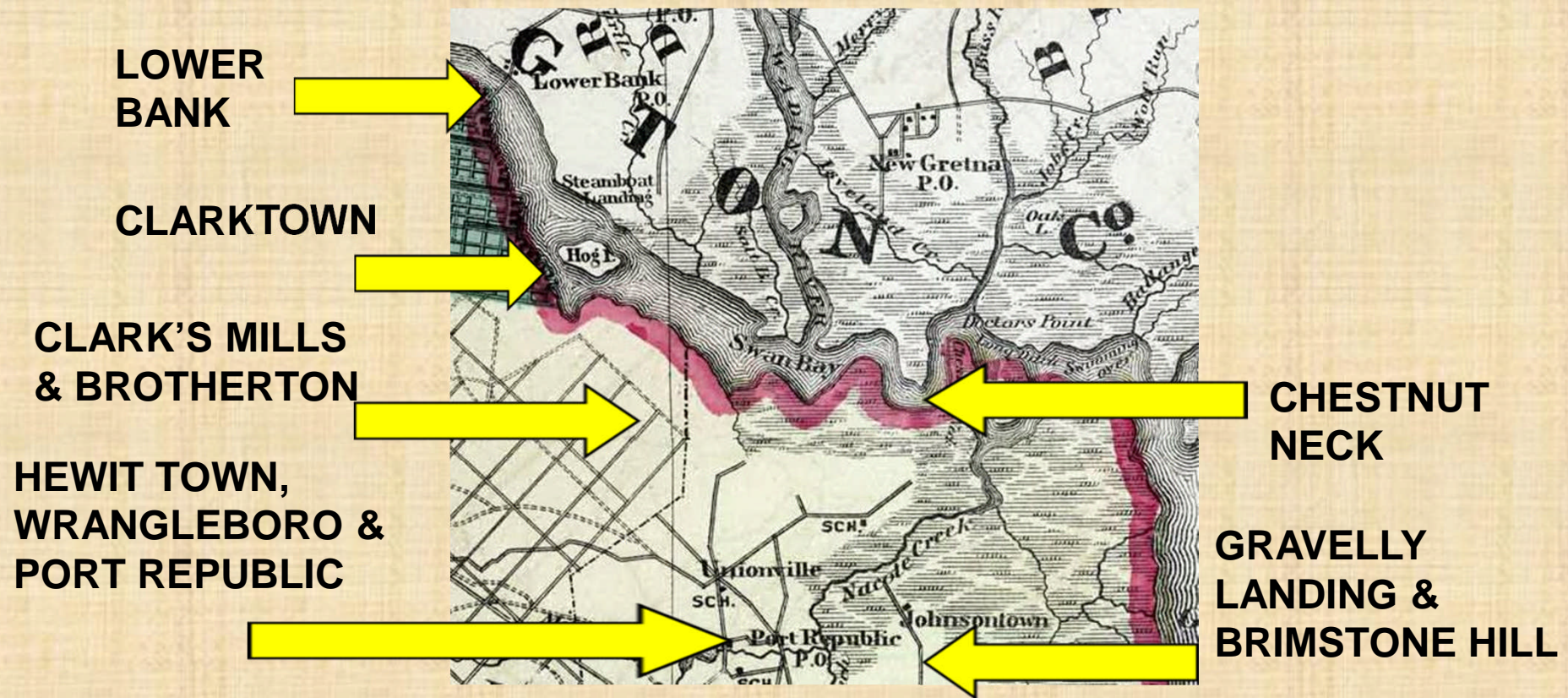
**Great Egg Harbor River Area
– Somers Point**

Chestnut Neck Origins

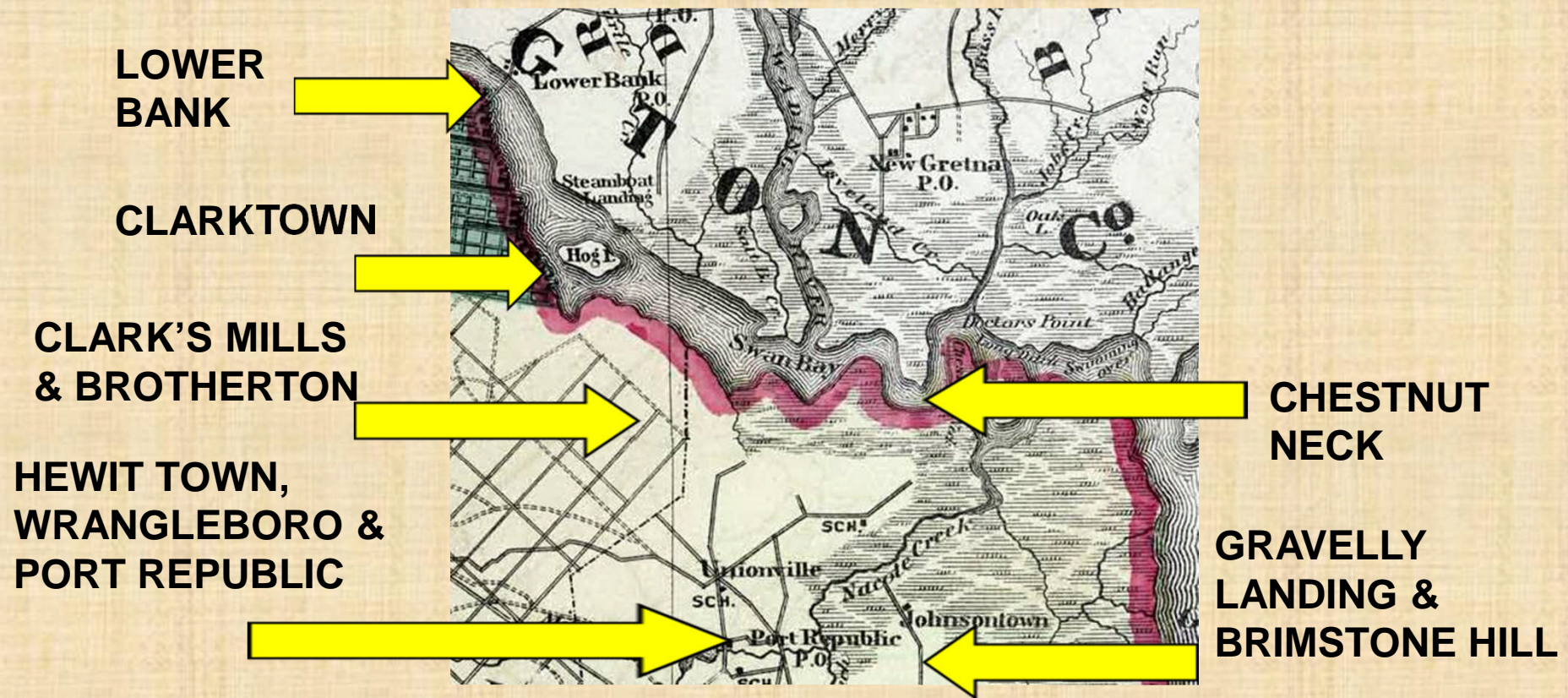
- 1678 - William Clark settles across from Lower Bank – begins Clark Town – legal shipping and privateer smuggling starts immediately: molasses, sugar, rum, lumber and food items.
- 1690 – other families settle the county: farming, cedar lumbering, privateering, and fishing.

**“Partying
Presbyterians” and
“Quivering
Quakers”!! 😊**

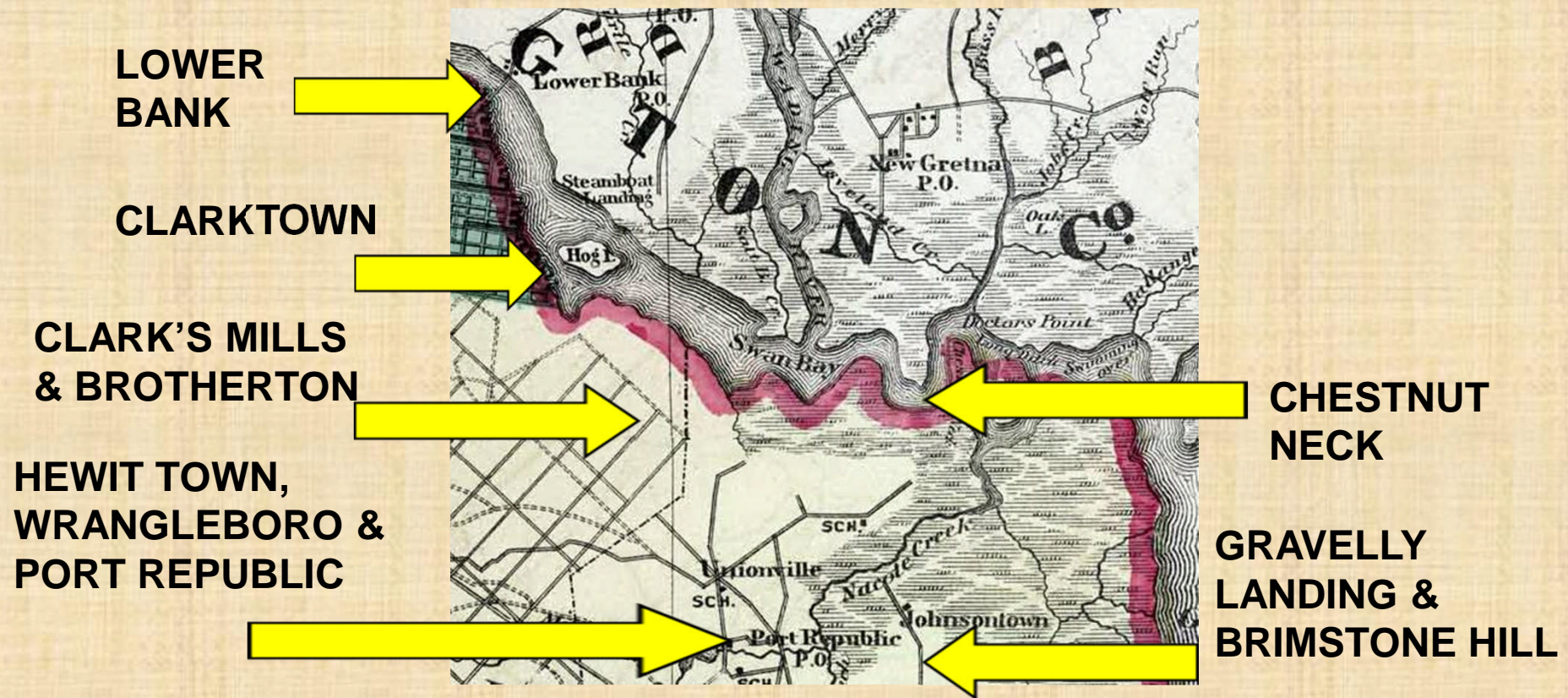




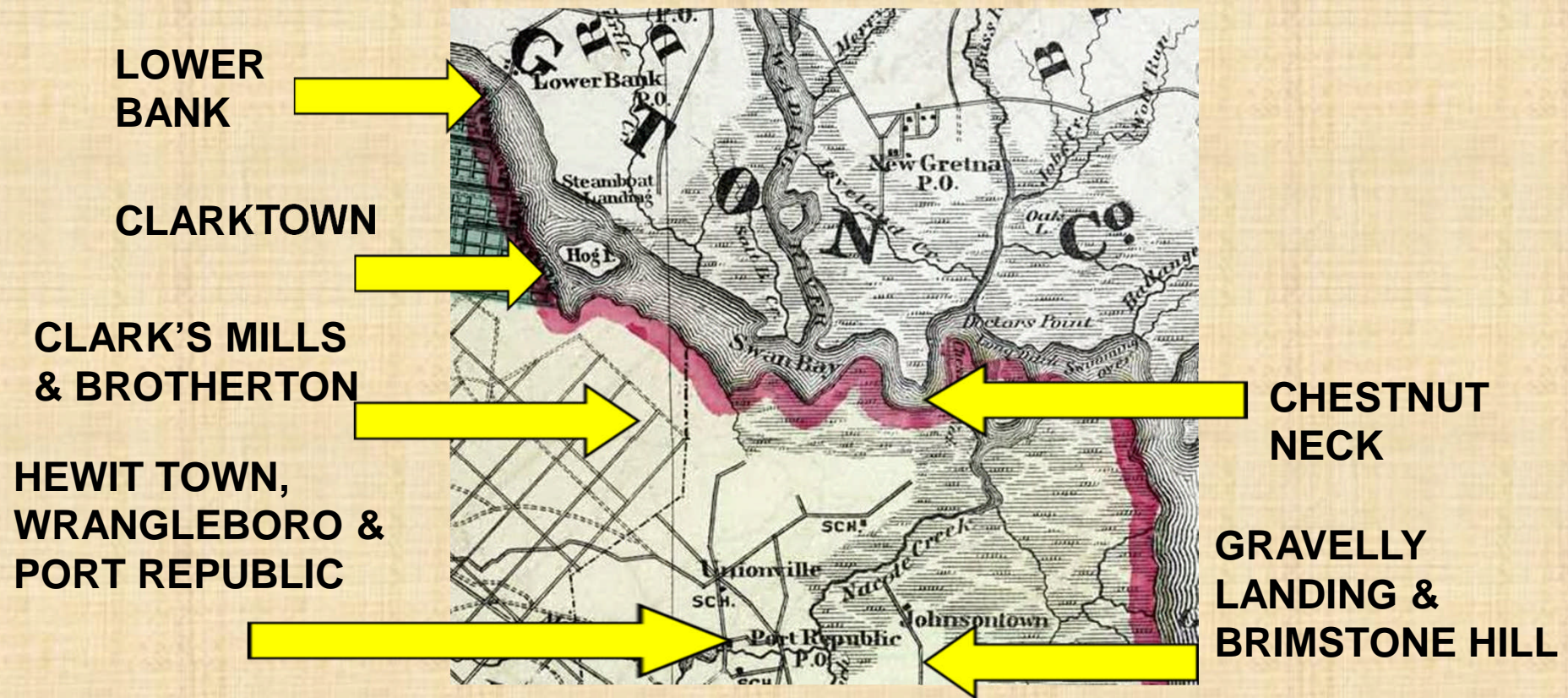
- 1710 – Swedes settle Hewit Town in area of present Port Republic – Hewit Town name gives way and the larger area becomes known as Wrangleboro due to feisty tavern activity – rum!
- 1731 – Shore Road is built from Somers Point to Nacut (Naked) Creek. No ferry on the creek until the early 1800s.



- 1733 – Molasses Act enacted to prevent smuggling; actually increases activity at Toms River, Little Egg Harbor River, Cape May & Cohansey.
- 1762 – Clark's Mills/Brotherton settled 1 mile north of present Port Republic. Chestnut Neck lightly populated as a public and privateer port & takes its name based on trees in area; unloading port for The Forks.



- 1764 – Sugar Act enacted; backfires again.
- 1770 – north side of creek at Port Republic known as Wrangleboro Mills and Blackman Mills, and south side as Wrangleboro and Gravelly Landing.



- 1774 - Galloway Township formed with Wrangleboro and Chestnut Neck as areas within it.
- 1778 – Oct. 6th battle – most buildings at Chestnut Neck burned. Three rebuilt for privateering activity. Other folks moved to Gravelly Landing for a tough, cold winter – they nicknamed it Brimstone Hill after their tough experience.
- 1779 – most of Chestnut Neck area folks move to Wrangleboro on both sides of the creek.

Now Let's Talk About the Battle



Before The Battle at Chestnut Neck





- **Dec. 16, 1773 – Boston Tea Party and the British blockade of Boston followed by the 1st Continental Congress in 1774.**
- **Aug. 19, 1775 – Battles at Lexington and Concord and the American blockade of Boston. The Egg Harbor Guard was immediately formed and guarded The Forks (PA Pvt. John Jeffries).**

- **1775 – 2nd Cont. Congress; Washington made Commander in Chief; Britain declares war; battles at Breed’s & Bunker Hills occur.**
- **Oct. 1775 – 3rd Battalion captures 1st prize – the “Rebecca & Francis” on Brigantine Beach (PA Pvts. David Somers & Albert Albertson).**



The Mud Fort – Fox Burroughs

- April 1776 – 1st recorded activity – “we commenced building a small fort” (Pvt. Isaac Hickman). Continued in May/June – it was also called Fort Tucker (Pvt. David Denike).
- July 1776 – 1st fire fight – “some of the British Cruzers came in and drove us off...before the Fort was completed and we had any guns; we were ordered back to the same place” (Pvt. Zadock Bowen).



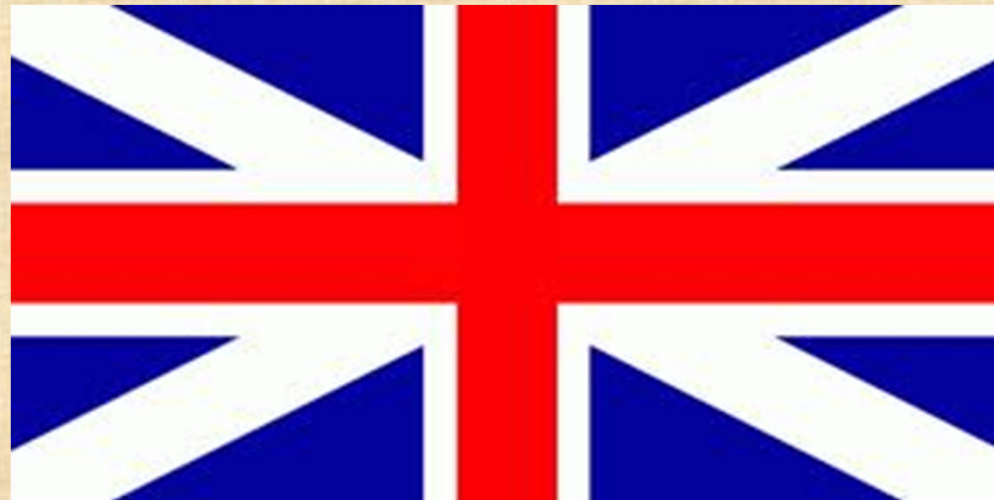


- **Aug 1776 – Fort men ordered to Absecon to capture 16 Tories (Pvt. Isaac Hickman).**
- **Sep 1776 – 3rd Battalion captures 3 more cargo ships (Pvt. Levi Price).**

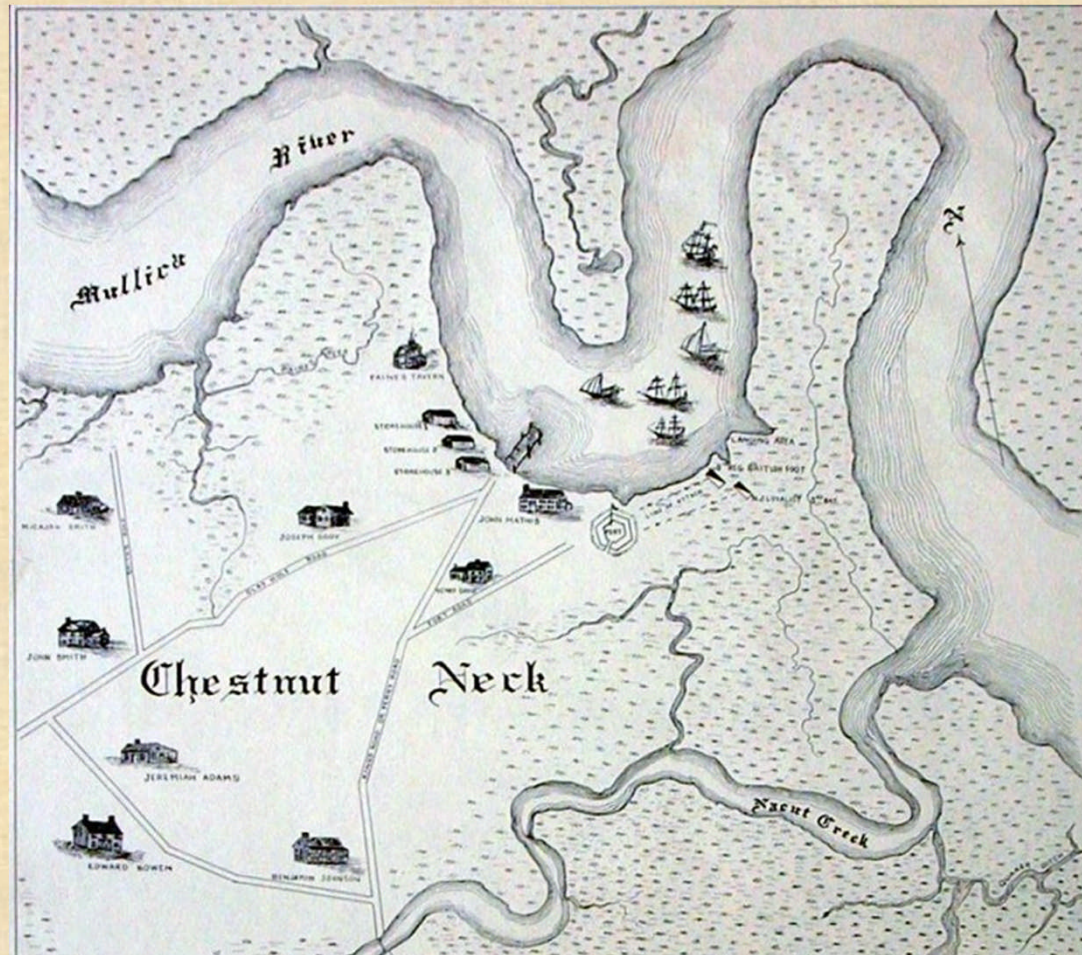
- **June 1777 – “we marched to Leeds Point...in order to attack 3 of the enemy ships laying in the bay...we succeeded in setting one of the ship on fire...she sank” (Pvt. John Ingersoll).**
- **Mar 1778 – “we marched...to Clam Town (Tuckerton), a place much infested by Tories...we found them too strong for us” (Pvts. James Steelman & David Somers).**



- **June 1778 – “we had a long chase after a company of Refugees...we took 20-30 prisoners and their Captains Turner & Howlings” (Pvts. Zephaniah Steelman & John Jeffries)**
- **Before Oct 1778 – “the British had been to that place (Chestnut Neck) 3 times and burned the vessels or took the off” (Pvt. James Giberson).**



At The Battle at Chestnut Neck



The Final 18 Straws for Gen. Clinton

- **“10 Ships Captured & Sold**: at the house of Richard Westcott, Esq. at the Forks at Egg Harbor on Tuesday, the 28th of July (1778) the following vessels: *Industry, Dispatch, Molly’s Adventure...Canester, Carolina Packet, Prince Frederick, Speedwell, Jenny, Bachelor...*”
\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$
- **“4 Ships Captured & Sold...on Tuesday, September 8th (1778) at Chestnut Neck...*Rising Sun, Governor Henry, Nancy, William...*”** \$\$\$\$
- **“4 Ships Captured & Sold...on Monday, September 14th at ML...the cargo ship *Venus*, the schooners *Fame, Hannah...Defiance*”** \$\$\$\$

The British Decision

- “Embark a body of troops...to attack the ports...and destroy all ships and other property alongshore...so as to incapacitate the Rebels...from continuing their depredations...” (Lord Germain, Sec. of State for the Colonies, to Gen. Clinton)

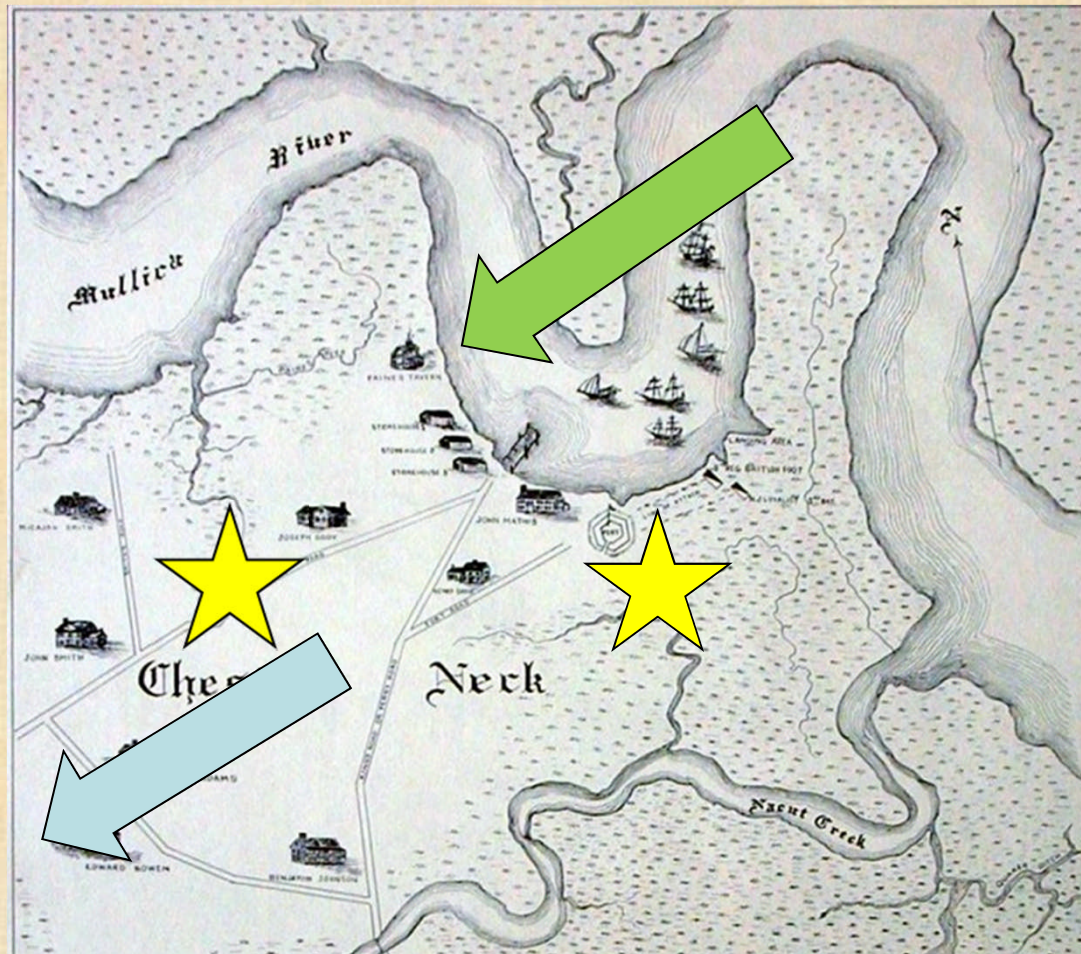



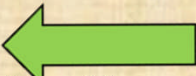
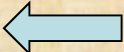
The British Decision

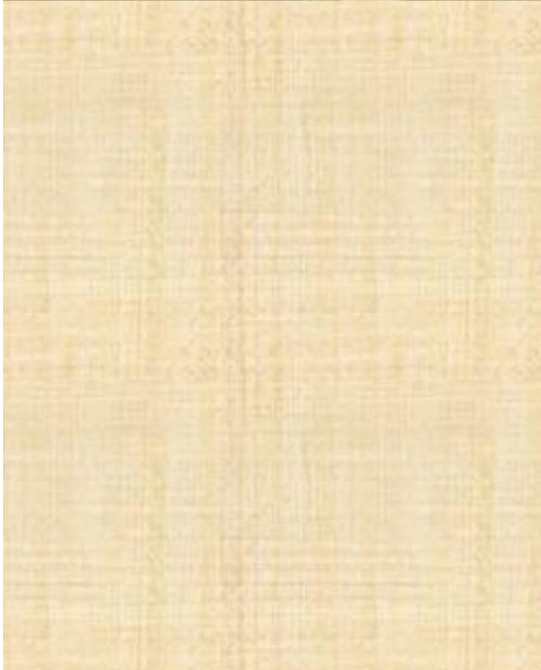
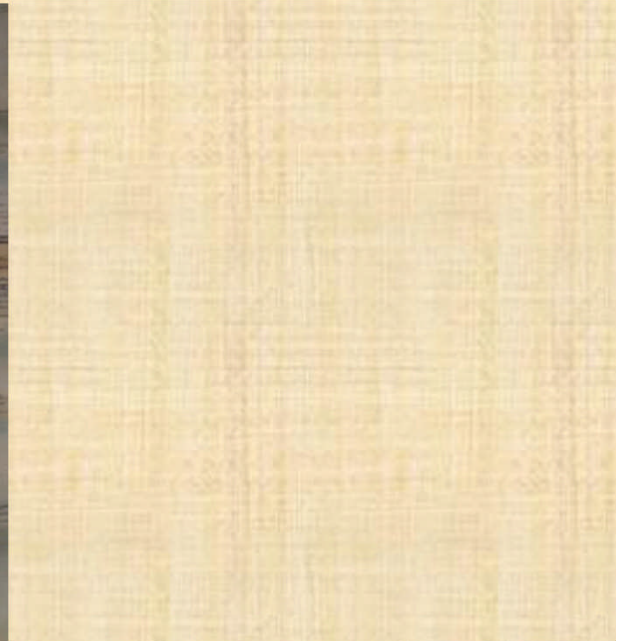
- “I proposed taking a forward position with the army...to favor an expedition to Egg Harbor, at which place the enemy had a number of privateers and prizes and considerable salt works...accordingly...I requested Lord Cornwallis to take a position...in Jersey”
(Clinton to Germain)
- 13 ships and 1690 men were sent to Egg Harbor. Gen. Cornwallis’ troops acted as a distraction in the North.



The Battle Itself



1. Oct 5 - British arrival in Little Egg Harbor Bay
2. Loyalists warn British that 3rd Batt. Militia is at the fort.
3. Oct 6 – British row troops 20 miles up river in smaller boats with cannons.
4. Oct 6 – 4 PM – British see two forts and attack with  cannon first.
5. Oct 6 – 4:30 PM – the British land and take the village. 
6. Oct 6 – 5 PM – the militia withdraws after wounding 1 British soldier. 
7. Oct 6 – 6 PM – ships and village are burnt



The Day After



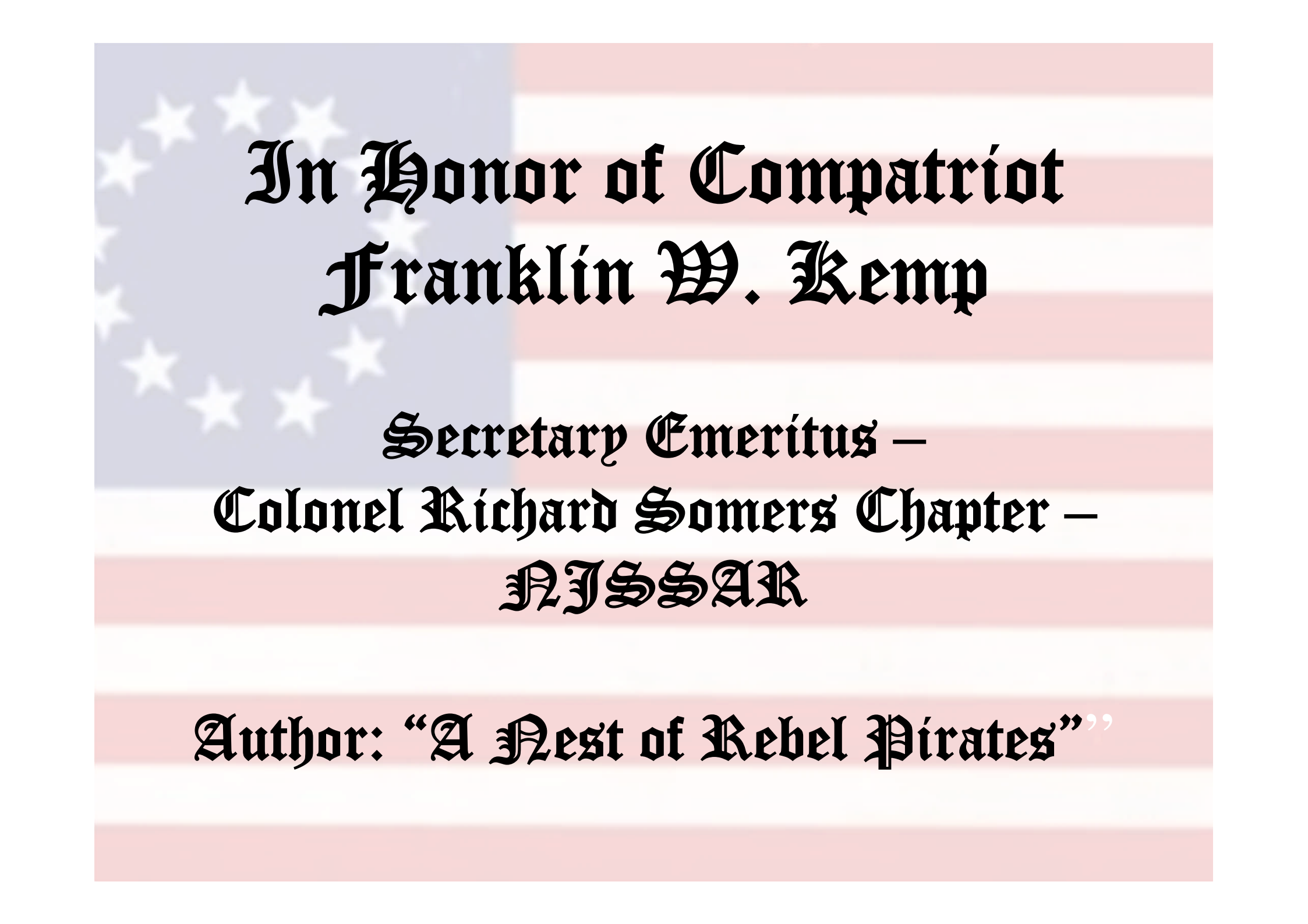
1. The Militia moves through Wrangleboro to Leeds Point to await reinforcements.
2. The British complete destroying the village and ships.
3. The British troops cross the river to destroy 3 salt works and several patriot homes.
4. The British receive word that Proctor and Pulaski's men are almost upon them and withdraw back to Little Egg Harbor Bay to their main ships.
5. The Militia reoccupies Chestnut Neck and remains there until the British leave the larger area 3 weeks later.
6. A few Militia on patrol are taken prison and sent to NY.
7. The rebuilt Fort is occupied until the end of the war.

3rd Battalion Soldiers Present

**Col. Richard Somers
Col. Robert Taylor
Capt. Joseph Conover
Capt. George Payne
Capt. Richard Higbee
Capt. Zephaniah Steelman
Capt. William Price
Capt. Joseph Estell
Capt. Samuel Snell
1st Lt. Jeremiah Leeds
Lt. Simon Lucas**

**Pvt. Levi Price
Pvt. Zadok Bowen
Pvt. Robert Leeds
Pvt. Abraham Albertson
Pvt. John Giberson
Pvt. Jesse Conover
Pvt. David Denike – POW 7 months
Pvt. John Thomas
Pvt. Stephen Ford
Pvt. Enoch Gandy
Pvt. Zephaniah Steelman
Pvt. James Giberson
Pvt. James Steelman
Pvt. John Jeffreys
Pvt. David Somers**

Note: the 3rd Battalion contained about 250 men. We know of seven companies that were present on Oct. 6, 1778 when the British came ashore. This means that there were at least 180 men present, some guarding The Forks, some guarding Somers Point and most at Chestnut Neck. The list above contains only the 26 names that are documented to have been present via items from the NJ State Archives.

The background of the entire image is a stylized American flag, featuring a blue field with white stars in the upper left corner and alternating red and white horizontal stripes for the remainder of the page.

**In Honor of Compatriot
Franklin W. Kemp**

**Secretary Emeritus –
Colonel Richard Somers Chapter –
NJSSAR**

Author: “A Nest of Rebel Pirates””

**This presentation is a work in progress.
If you have any additional information
about any of the activities of Col.
Richard Somers' 3rd Gloucester Militia
Battalion, please contact me and share it.**

Thank You!

Norm Goos

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