

IX WAR AND PEACE

Alexander (Lord Stirling) presided over the court, which opened in New Brunswick on July 2 and closed in Paramus on August 9. Lee was found guilty of all three charges brought against him—disobedience of orders, misconduct in ordering the retreat, and insubordination—and sentenced to suspension from command for twelve months. On December 5, the Continental Congress voted that the sentence be executed.

5. A causeway linking the Middle and West Ravines.

6. Washington regrouped his forces on an elevation behind the West Ravine.

7. It is believed that at least thirty-seven Americans and fifty-nine British died from sunstroke or heat prostration. Many horses also succumbed to the debilitating heat and lack of water, including Washington's magnificent white charger presented as a gift that very day by Governor William Livingston.

8. Washington displayed uncharacteristic thirst for battle, perhaps because he felt Lee's conduct would lead to criticism of his command. At any rate, Monmouth was one of the few instances where Washington's emotions colored his behavior on the battlefield.

9. Clinton rushed to join General Wilhelm von Knyphausen, who had left Monmouth at 4 a.m. on the twenty-eighth with his division and the baggage train. Except for one foot brigade and the Seventeenth Dragoons, Knyphausen's forces did not participate in the battle. Clinton caught up with Knyphausen at daybreak and was in Middletown by 10 a.m. on the twenty-ninth, at Sandy Hook on the thirtieth, and in New York with his entire army by July 5.

10. After recouping in New Brunswick, Washington marched to White Plains to keep Clinton under surveillance; the North River is the Hudson River.

11. Major Edmund Dickinson, First Virginia Regiment, Continental army.

12. Captain Henry Fauntleroy, Fifth Virginia Regiment, Continental army.

13. The Anspach-Bayreuth battalions were shipped from Philadelphia to New York City because Clinton apparently thought they would desert; the remainder of the German troops (mostly Hessians) made the march across New Jersey under the command of Knyphausen.

14. The Carlisle Peace Commission. See Sec. X, Doc. 8, note 2.

8 Colonel Sylvanus Seeley Describes the Battles of Connecticut Farms and Springfield

[Sylvanus Seeley, Diary, Morristown National Historical Park.]

The last military engagement of any consequence to take place on New Jersey soil ranks among the most baffling enterprises of the entire war—baffling in terms of both strategy and execution. Except for minor patrol actions

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and skirmishes, all had been quiet on the Jersey front since the pitched battle of Monmouth Court House in June 1778 (see Doc. 7). Then, to the utter surprise of the Americans, Baron Wilhelm von Knyphausen, commander in chief of German forces and acting commandant of the British army at New York during the absence of General Sir Henry Clinton, crossed over from Staten Island to Elizabethtown on June 7, 1780, with a 5,000-man contingent comprised of British regulars, German mercenaries, and Loyalist volunteers. The purpose of the mission is uncertain, but Knyphausen probably wanted to capitalize on the reported war-weariness of the local militia as well as Washington's Continentals encamped at Morristown. Despite the size of their attacking force, the British had insufficient baggage to mount a serious campaign. At any rate Knyphausen pushed rapidly toward Morristown. But upon encountering spirited resistance on June 8 at the tiny hamlet of Connecticut Farms (now Union), he gave a brief fight, put a torch to the community, and quickly retraced his route. While the militia rose in anger over the wanton sacking of the village (see Doc. 14) and the killing of innocent civilians (see Doc. 9), Washington, baffled by the destructive foray, nervously awaited the Hessian's next move. Meanwhile, Clinton, who had returned from a victorious campaign in South Carolina, first inspected Knyphausen's forces and then feigned an advance up the Hudson River toward West Point. Washington countered by moving his main force to Pompton, leaving General Nathanael Greene with 1,000 Continentals supplemented by state militia at Springfield. History then repeated itself. Once again striking suddenly, Knyphausen set out from Elizabethtown on June 23. The rival armies met at Springfield, two and one-half miles northwest of charred Connecticut Farms. After a brief skirmish, the British once again inexplicably retreated after burning all but four of the houses in the town. Jerseymen had seen the last of the British army. But they long retained vivid memories of the cruelty displayed at Connecticut Farms and Springfield—recollections that would in most cases guard against the very disillusionment that Knyphausen had hoped to exploit. In a rustic style characteristic of the poorly educated New Jersey yeomanry, Colonel Sylvanus Seeley, prosperous Morris County farmer and sometime commander of the East Morris Militia, recounts the fighting at Connecticut Farms and Springfield.

[June 7-23, 1780]

7th June 1780: Had an Alarm and the Enemy came out as far as Springfield Bridge.¹ The Militia collected fast and joining Maxwels² Brigade stopt the Enemy and after sum Fire at long Shot the Enemy retired to a Breast Work they had threw up on an Advantagious Pice of Ground on this side the Farm Meeting Hous[e].³ About 3 this Aftarnoon they set Fire to about 30 Buildings one of which is the Meeting Hous[e]. We have had about 15 Killed and 40 Wounded, among the latter my Brother Sam[ue]l slightly.⁴ I had Orders and Marched my Regiment to Thompsons Mills whare we lay all Night.

8th: This morning about 1/2 after 12^s the rear of the enemy left the ground. About 8 o'clock received orders to follow them and on ower [i.e., our] march receive[d] intelligence that the Enemy are going but when we got to Town⁶ find a

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guard in the Woods back of Decon Ogdens hous[e] and at the forks of the Road. Aftar sum Time here and being Joined by Lord Stirlings⁷ Troopes he Orders us to Advance in three Colloms one on the Main Road (the Continental Troops)⁸ Col[one]l Cortland⁹ on the Left Myself in the Centor. We Advanced and the Troop under my Command behav[e]d Exceeding well altho at a certain time one Platoon fell back a little but after being ordered to Com[e] up came up and stood thare ground well. We took about 20 Prisoners and Advance[d] Through the Woods whare the enemy open[ed] upon us with a number of Field Pieces and finding they ware towe heavy for us¹⁰ Hand¹¹ Ordered a Retreat which was perform[e]d in good Order. I had one Man Killed and Three wounded. After Retiring about half a Mile we lay on ower Armes untill Evening and then Returned to the North End of Town and staid all Night.¹²

9th: E[ar]ly this Morning Rec[eive]d Orders to Return to Springfield which Don[e] and Men Refreshed Returned to the Farms.¹³ Joined G. Maxwel and lay on ower Armes all Night. . . .

[23rd]: This day the enemy came out and burnt Springfield and returned about 3 Oclock P.M., Pursewed by ower People. The Enemies loss this day is thought to be Considerable. Owers is about 15 kill[e]d and 40 Wounded. I got home about 10 at night.

1. Over the Rahway River.
2. Brigadier General William Maxwell of Morristown, Continental army.
3. The Presbyterian Church.
4. Sylvanus Seeley's younger brother Samuel, a second lieutenant in the First Regiment of the New Jersey Continental Line, who was wounded in the shoulder.
5. 12:30 a.m.
6. Elizabethtown.
7. William Alexander, New Jersey's self-styled Lord Stirling, major general in the Continental army.
8. Under the command of Brigadier General Edward Hand of Pennsylvania.
9. Colonel Philip Van Cortland of Essex County, state militia.
10. The action took place between Elizabethtown and the British landing-site of Elizabethtown Point on the coast.
11. Brigadier General Edward Hand.
12. In Elizabethtown.
13. Connecticut Farms.