



COLORADO RIVER RED, WHITE & BLUE NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Number 3

Welcome to this issue of your Colorado River Chapter, AZSSAR newsletter. The Colorado River, Red, White & Blue is an official publication of the Colorado River Chapter, AZSSAR.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter and the updates and information it provides.

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Chapter Meetings

Next Chapter Meeting December 12th Mohave Community College Kingman

Colorado River Chapter rotates meetings between Kingman and Lake Havasu in hopes that one location will be more appealing to you than the other.

Our meeting location in Kingman is Mohave Community College, 1971 Jaegerson Ave, Kingman, which is about 4-5 miles north of I-40. The meeting room is in the Library Building in a really nice conference room across from the Library.

Our meeting location in Lake Havasu is Mohave County Library in the K-Mart Plaza at 1770 North McCulloch Blvd, Lake Havasu City.

December 2015

Election 2016 Chapter Officers

At our 14 November meeting the following Chapter Officers were elected for 2016:

Reighard – President

Ray Lackey Vice-President

Mike Boop – Secretary

Ray Lackey – Treasurer

Jimmie Bodenhamer – Registrar/Genealogist

Mike Boop – Sergeant at Arms

We hope you will support your 2016 Chapter Officers. Remember your Officers would love to have you join them at meetings or provide ideas for things you would like our Chapter to do. Your participation is important.

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Campaigns and Battles of the American Revolution (1775-1783)

Our series on Battles of the American Revolution continues with this issue's installment – Battle of Long Island (New York Campaign). I hope you find it interesting and informative!

Battle of Long Island (New York Campaign)

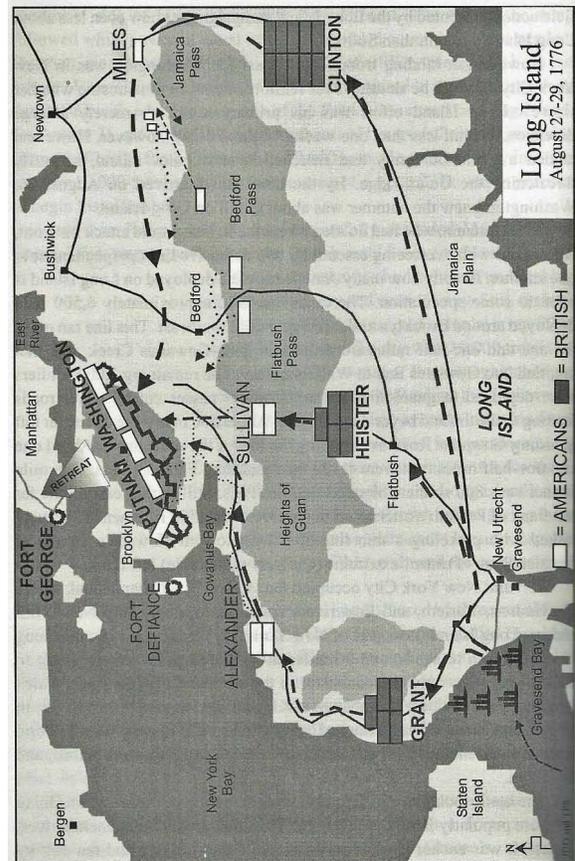
27-29 August 1776

New York City, at the time of this campaign, occupied the land on Manhattan Island where the Hudson, Harlem, and East Rivers converge to empty into New York harbor. Long Island (now part of New York City) measures 118 miles long (roughly north to south) and 20 miles at its widest point (roughly east to west).

In 1776 there was only one connection to the mainland of New York, which was on the north side of Manhattan at Kingsbridge on the Harlem River. Long Island was a mixture of heavily forested hills and pastoral rolling farmland that included several small towns such as Flatbush, Bedford, and Brooklyn.

In the end the Battle of Long Island would take place in the northwestern section of the Island on Guian (more popularly know Brooklyn) Heights. This was a piece of high ground running generally west to east, and was anchored on the west above Gowanus Bay and from there east by northeast several miles into Long Island.

For the British Army, the heights as an area to attack the Americans presented a challenge as they were more abrupt on their southern side, towering about 80 feet above the lower approaching elevations from the water, which resulted in providing the Americans a natural barricade against Howe's advance. However, this high ridge was cut by four major roads, which for the most part dictated where the Patriot defenders could deploy.



After the British had evacuated Boston they reorganized their soldiers and decided to focus British efforts on New York. By 25 June 1776 British General Howe had replaced General Gage as the Crown's Commander-in-Chief in the Colonies and he led an armada to Sandy Hook, NJ. This area provided a great location to protect the southern entrance to New York Harbor.

From this location in New Jersey the British Royal Navy guarded the harbor entrance while British army soldiers disembarked to prepare for land operations against the Patriots.

On 12 July 1776 Admiral Howe joined his brother General Howe when he delivered additional soldiers and 150 more ships to support British operations in the area. In addition, Major General Clinton with his armada fresh from their ill-fated attempt to take Charleston, SC, joined this massing of British forces.

This combined task force totaled nearly 40,000 men and several hundred warships, which showed the Crown's determination to stamp out this war wrought by the rebellious colonies.

Local British Loyalists had provided the British intelligence as to the location of deployed Rebel soldiers in defensive positions along Brooklyn (Guian) Heights where Patriots had prepared a series of forts with interconnecting trenches to protect New York City from invasion.

These same Loyalist spies also provided the British with information about weaknesses in the Patriot lines that offered tempting targets. Using this information General Howe promptly made plans to exploit these weaknesses, ever mindful of the resolve the Americans had shown in Massachusetts. This time however, Howe planned his offensive operations in New York with more deliberations and care.

For General Washington, having successfully defended Massachusetts from the British invasion, anticipated that the British would move to New York City next. Based on this belief, he had established a defensive network around the city's harbor, a vast undertaking for his fledgling army, supported by only a tiny and untried Navy.

Patriot recruits continued to flood to the cause and by August 1776 the nascent colonial army filled fortifications and defensive positions around the city with 19,000 soldiers.

General Washington felt the terrain of Long Island was very similar to Boston while the harbor area was much larger. He also felt the devil was in the vexing detail of how to defend this vast area against overwhelming land and naval forces.

Washington knew his men were for the most part inexperienced and inadequately trained and equipped for the task of defending and holding both New York City and Brooklyn (on Long Island). He knew if they could not properly defend this area they need to at least extract previous blood and treasure from the British before giving them up.

Washington's architect of Long Island's defense was Patriot General Greene who knew the terrain and his men who must defend it. Greene had decided to concentrate his troops in a line anchored by three small forts named Putnam, Greene, and Box along Guian Heights or Brooklyn Heights.

The American line was reinforced by felled trees, and good fields of fire, and it also offered a three-mile barrier along a natural neck of strategic terrain that would have to be taken if New York was to be threatened by a ground assault. Other forts positioned along the harbor shore would be used to defend against a British maritime assault directed at New York City.

However, the Americans were about to learn that strategic plans could go wrong in a hurry, as two days before British soldiers would begin landing operations against the southwest coast of Long Island General Greene fell sick with a fever and was replaced by Brigadier General Sullivan. This change in leadership erased Greene's extensive knowledge of the terrain and disposition of the defenders from the battle about to unfold.

As if this first change in plans was not disruptive enough, four days later Sullivan was replaced by Major General Putnam. While Putnam was a hard fighter, a trait amply demonstrated at Boston, most observers agreed he was not capable of managing the large scale field action presented by the Long Island Campaign as he knew even less about Long Island's terrain than had Sullivan.

Early on the morning of 22 August 1776, British General Howe led his first contingent of 20,000 British soldiers in an amphibious assault on Long Island. The initial part of Howe's force (about 4,000 soldiers) had launched from Staten Island and landed on the southwest side of Long Island near New

Utrecht. The remainder of his army would follow with powerful naval warships for cover and support, and by noon on 22 August, more than 15,000 soldiers and dozens of artillery pieces had been put ashore. On 23 August a British march of four miles inland to Flatbush had resulted in a sharp skirmish with advance elements of Patriots on Long Island.

More British soldiers had landed southeast of Denyse's Point by 25 August bringing Howe's operational force to more than 20,000 men. As a tactical move Howe split his army into two elements of about 10,000 men each, and by the morning of 27 August Howe's men were in position to begin his offensive.

General Washington was in New York City when Howe began to move British forces and even though he was unsure if Howe's Long Island efforts were his primary attack or merely a large diversion he made the decision to shuttle over American reinforcements. But by the time sunset had arrived on 26 August, Washington knew the hammer was about to fall on Long Island.

Washington had tasked Major General Putnam, even though the Americans had no idea exactly where the British would attack, to oversee the movement of two defensive lines of men perpendicular to one another. But exactly how many Patriot soldiers were on Long Island for this mission is open to speculation! But it is known that the American main line held approximately 6,500 men who were deployed around Brooklyn, facing generally southeast.

The American line ran north for one and one-half miles from the mill-dam area at Gowanus Creek that emptied into Gowanus Bay and onto Wallabout Bay. The remaining 3,000 American soldiers were deployed to guard four strategic natural passes cut by the major roads mentioned earlier which led to the top of the heights and beyond.

Of these 3,000 soldiers, about 550 were on the far left flank guarding Gowanus Road which overlooked the bay of the same name, and about one and one-half miles east was another 1,100 soldiers guarding Flatbush Pass. Farther east another one mile was 800 more soldiers who were blocking Bedford Pass, and

still further east on the far left flank Putnam had stationed another 500 riflemen who were tasked with picketing a thin line of men stretching towards Howard's Tavern at Jamaica Pass. This strung out positioning of his men had left Putnam's left flank very vulnerable to British attack.

General Howe's plan of attack was simple, a column of 5,000 British soldiers under the command of General Grant would move against Major General Putnam's right flank above Gowanus Bay to divert Patriot attention from the western end of Putnam's line. At the same time Grants men were moving into position, a Hessian column of similar strength under von Heister would move against and hold in place the American center around Flatbush.

The British plan was that while the Americans were focused on defending their center-right flank, General Howe along with Generals Cornwallis and Clinton would march east and then north with 10,000 soldiers beyond Putnam's left flank. In addition, as British soldiers moved forward they would engage and crush Patriot soldiers strung along this high ridge in defensive positions.

The Battle of Long Island began on the morning of 27 August just after midnight when Grant moved his 5,000 British soldiers north along the Gowanus Road and began skirmishing with rebel defenders.

However, Putnam was not advised of the British attack until about 3:00 a.m. He immediately ordered General Alexander to advance to his far right flank with about 1,600 men as reinforcements. But in doing so, Alexander realized he was confronting a much stronger opponent.

When American opposition occurred, Grant stopped his column in front of the rebel line and shelled the Patriot positions while threatening an infantry attack. American General Sullivan meanwhile had reached the center of the line near Flatbush Pass, where he discovered von Heister's Hessians menacing his front with artillery, while holding back on any further ground offensive.

Playing into Howe's hands, Sullivan dispatched some of his soldiers west to help reinforce Alexander's

position, even though it reduced his own ability to defend his position.

By 8:00 a.m. General Washington had arrived on Long Island to make his own assessment of the situation and what the Americans needed to do to counter the British attack.

As British soldiers began firing on the Patriots right and center defensive positions, American Colonel Miles moved his Pennsylvania riflemen west toward the fighting, which effectively left Jamaica Pass (Putnam's extreme left flank) unguarded.

Once Putnam realized Miles' move had left Jamaica Pass undefended he ordered Miles to return immediately to the pass. But by the time his men arrived they were just in time to see the tail end of Howe's column (his baggage train) rolling through the undefended position.

Colonel Miles quickly realized the peril of the unfolding situation and sent about half of his men toward the main line to warn their comrades so they might escape the closing British trap, and with his remaining 250 soldiers Miles attacked the baggage train. It was a forlorn hope, though a brave effort, that resulted in the capture of Miles and 160 of his riflemen who were not killed by the British during his attack.

Howe's plan was working perfectly. His large British turning column marched completely behind Putnam's line and reached Bedford about 8:30 a.m. Thirty minutes later (after Miles's attack on his baggage train) Howe had a pair of signal guns fired to alert Grant and von Heister to attack the American position on the front of the heights while Howe's men advanced against the rear.

However, only the Germans attacked the American positions, and von Heister's advances north up the main road in the center of the battlefield struck General Sullivan's Patriot defenders who now faced pressure from both the front and rear. Within minutes the Patriot line fell apart east to west (left to right) as men dashed along the wooded heights in an effort to reach safety of the main Brooklyn line.

General Sullivan and many of his men were captured near Baker's Tavern where a stout but short defense was attempted. But pressure from the Hessians in front and Howe's column behind them left Sullivan's Patriots nowhere to run and they had to surrender or be killed.

By 11:30 a.m., Alexander's infantry who had been holding Putnam's far right flank above Gowanus Bay were overwhelmed by Grant's numerically superior command which finally moved forward in a decisive attack that broke apart the Patriot line. Most of these fleeing Americans headed for Gowanus Creek in an effort to escape the closing enemy jaws.

But when Cornwallis and the 71st Regiment of Highlanders were discovered blocking their route to retreat, Alexander launched a series of daring counterattacks with about 250 Maryland riflemen led by Major Gist.

This bold tactical effort allowed some of his men to escape across Mill Dam Road, but Alexander was unable to clear a path of retreat for the bulk of his command, and most of the attackers, including Alexander, were captured.

After soundly sweeping Putnam's Patriot defenders off the Guian high ground Howe interrupted his own brilliantly conceived and executed battle plan. There were still hours and daylight left for the British to keep the attack moving but instead Howe halted his army, reorganized his command, and ordered entrenchment dug facing the Patriot defensive works. He had failed to realize how close he was to defeating the last line of the Patriots defense.

With control of the East River Howe apparently believed Washington was trapped and at his mercy. The two armies remained in place as rain curtailed aggression throughout the next day and, luckily for the Patriots, heavy winds prevented Howe's warships from moving behind Washington's trapped army.

On the evening of 29 August 1776 Washington ordered boats to be gathered to withdraw his troops from Brooklyn Heights. The Americans' luck continued as a heavy fog, rain and wind helped mask their narrow escape from Long Island.

By the next morning the Americans were safely across the river and Howe's warships were finally able to move up the river only to find they were a few hours too late to effectively end the American Revolution.

Casualties for this battle were: British 63 killed, and 314 wounded. For the Americans however the estimates vary widely, from 800 (Washington) to 6,000 (Clinton). A reasonable American tabulation would be 300 killed, 650 wounded and 1,100 captured (2,050 all causes).

For the Americans the fight on Long Island was a terrible defeat and it left freedom-seeking Patriots less confident of final victory over Britain.

While the Patriots had a reasonably sound defensive plan, when Greene became sick with fever and Putnam was consequently given command it all fell apart.

Putnam had failed to properly guard his far left flank which allowed a 10,000-man British column to slip around almost completely unnoticed, which ensured the American defeat. Compounding this was his failure to effectively use his cavalry to watch his flank, which was unacceptable for a field commander.

Only weeks earlier, the colonists had declared their intent to break away from British rule by signing the Declaration of Independence, and now this resounding Patriot defeat at the hands of British General Howe, sent morale plummeting throughout the colonies and caused many to question Washington's fitness to command the Continental Army.

Sources: A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution by Savas and Dameron.

NEXT: Battle of New York (Kip's Bay, Harlem Heights, Fort Washington) (New York Campaign) November 1776.

Chapter Member Birthdays

December 2015

Paul Mauser – 27th

January 2016

Craig Vallon – 6th

Chapter Officers

Donald Reighard – President – (928) 680-4087

Ray Lackey – Vice President – (928) 754-1941

Mike Boop – Secretary – (928) 753-7968

Ray Lackey - Treasurer – (928) 754-1941

Jimmie Bodenhamer – Registrar/Genealogist – (928) 692-6636

Michael Boop – Sergeant at Arms – (928) 753-7968

Membership

If you need assistance with a membership issue, or know someone interested in joining the NSSAR, please provide me the contact information and I will work the issue for you.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

December 1st
Chapter Newsletter Mailed

December 7th
Hanukkah

December 12th
Chapter Meeting
Mohave Community College
Kingman

December 25th
Christmas

December 31st
New Year Eve

January 1st
New Years Day

January 9th
Chapter Meeting
Mohave County Library
Lake Havasu

January 18th
Martin Luther King
Birthday

February 1st
Chapter Newsletter Mailed



Happy Hanukkah Newsletter Editor

Hope you enjoyed this newsletter and I look forward to any comments or suggestion. Jimmie Bodenhamer, Editor, jimmieb@frontiernet.net.

Need another copy of this Newsletter? It is on our AZSSAR website link.



Merry Christmas



Happy New Year