



Participants in Battle



General Hugh Mercer (January 17, 1726 – January 12, 1777)

Soldier and physician. He initially served with British forces during the Seven Years' War but later became a brigadier general in the Continental Army and a close friend to George Washington.

Mercer died as a result of his wounds received at the Battle of Princeton and became a fallen hero and rallying symbol of the American Revolution. In 1755, when General Edward Braddock's army was cut down by the French and Indians during the first British attempt to take Fort Duquesne, Mercer came to the aid of the wounded and eventually took up arms in support of the army. By 1756 he was commissioned a captain in a Pennsylvania regiment, and accompanied Lt. Col. John Armstrong's expedition on the raid of the Indian village of Kittanning in September 1756. During the attack, Mercer was badly wounded and separated from his unit. He trekked 100 miles through the woods for fourteen days, injured and with no supplies, until he found his way back to Fort Shirley, where he was recognized and promoted. He rose to the rank of colonel and commanded garrisons. It was during this period that Mercer developed a lifelong and warm friendship with another colonel, George Washington.



General Hugh Mercer

There are rumors that Mercer originated Washington's daring plan to cross the Delaware River and surprise the Hessians at the Battle of Trenton on December 26, 1776, and he was certainly a major contributor to its execution. Because of the win at Trenton Washington's men agreed to a ten-day extension to their enlistment. When Washington decided to face off with Cornwallis during the Second Battle of Trenton on January 2, 1777, Mercer was given a major role in the defense of the city.

The next day, January 3, Washington's army was en-route to Princeton. While leading a vanguard of 350 soldiers, Mercer's brigade encountered two British regiments and a mounted unit. A battle ensued at an orchard grove and Mercer's horse was shot from under him. Getting to his feet, he was quickly surrounded by British troops who mistook him for George Washington and ordered him to surrender. Outnumbered, he drew his saber and began an unequal contest. He was finally beaten to the ground, then bayoneted repeatedly - seven times - and left for dead. When he was discovered, Mercer was carried to the field hospital in the Thomas Clarke House at the eastern end of the battlefield. In spite of medical efforts by Benjamin Rush, Mercer was mortally wounded and died nine agonizing days later on January 12, 1777.

In April Congress ordered the building of a Fort on the Whithall plantation at Red Bank. General George Washington ordered that the Fort be named Mercer in tribute to his friend General Hugh Mercer.

General William Howe 5th Viscount Howe,
(Aug. 10, 1729 - July 12, 1814, Plymouth, Devonshire, Eng.),

Commander in chief of the British army in North America (1776–78) who, despite several military successes, failed to destroy the Continental Army and stem the American Revolution.

Brother of Admiral Richard Lord Howe, William Howe had been active in North America during the last French and Indian War (1754–63), in which he earned a reputation as one of the army's most brilliant young generals. Sent in 1775 to reinforce Gen. Thomas Gage in the Siege of Boston, he led the left wing in three costly but finally successful assaults in the Battle of Bunker Hill.



British General William Howe

Assuming supreme command the following year, Howe transferred his forces southward and captured the strategic port city of New York, severely defeating the Americans at the Battle of Long Island. A competent tactician, he preferred maneuver to battle, partly to conserve scarce British manpower, but also in the hopes of demonstrating British military superiority so convincingly that the Americans would accept negotiation and reconciliation with Britain.

When active operations were resumed in June 1777, Howe moved his troops to the south bank of the Delaware River and won two successive victories over the Americans at the Battle of Brandywine (September 11, 1777) and the Battle of Germantown (October 4, 1777). On October 22, 1777 his Hessian forces under the command of Colonel Carl von Donop and the British Navy under the command of his brother Admiral Richard Howe attempted to take Fort Mercer and Fort Mifflin. His next winter was spent in the occupation of Philadelphia. Howe recognized his failure, however, to destroy the modest force of Gen. George Washington, then encamped at nearby Valley Forge. His Pennsylvania campaign had furthermore exposed the troops of Gen. John Burgoyne in upper New York State and led to the disastrous British defeat at the Battle of Saratoga that fall. Under increasing criticism from the British press and government, Howe resigned his command before the start of operations in 1778.

Returning to England, Howe saw no more active service but held a number of important home commands.

Colonel Count Carl Emil Ulrich von Donop

(January 1, 1732 – October 25, 1777)

The son of a noble family of Hesse-Kassel, von Donop was well connected in the European courts and served as personal adjutant to the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel and served with distinction in the Seven Years' War. When the American Revolutionary War began, von Donop asked for leave to fight against the revolutionaries. The Landgrave appointed him to command four battalions of grenadiers and the prestigious Jäger Corps. A highly ambitious officer, von Donop hoped to remain in North America after the war, to pursue dreams of power and glory. Von Donop was an able officer but was not well liked by his subordinates. To his inferiors he was short-tempered and harsh, and he had a take-no-prisoners policy that was enforced by severe beatings.

Von Donop's troops took part in the initial British landing on Long Island, New York, on August 22, 1776, and in the ensuing Battle of Long Island on August 27. Von Donop distinguished himself at the Battle of Harlem Heights, going to the aid of the British troops involved.

Von Donop was the senior officer present in southern New Jersey in late 1776, and commanded the garrisons in Trenton, Burlington, and Bordentown. His main camp was at Bordentown prior to the Battle of Trenton, with one battalion occupying the town and the rest billeted along the country roads.

On December 22, 1776, Colonial militia attacked Donop's southern outposts. On Christmas Eve, the colonials retreated a few miles to Moorestown. Donop's officers wanted him to return to Bordentown, within easy supporting distance for Rall. Von Donop had nothing but contempt for Rall and decided to spend Christmas in the company of "a beautiful young widow" - as reported by his Captain of Jägers, Johann Ewald. A rider brought news of the disaster at Trenton about mid-day on December 26.

When Howe's forces captured Philadelphia, in an attempt to recoup his tarnished reputation from his defeat at Trenton, von Donop volunteered to capture Fort Mercer at Red Bank. General Howe gave von Donop command of 2,000 Hessian troops. Von Donop led 1,200 Hessians in the attacks on the fort resulting in nearly 400 casualties, including von Donop himself.



Hessian Colonel Carl Von Donop

Admiral of the Fleet Richard Howe

1st Earl Howe, (March 8, 1726 – August 5, 1799)

British naval officer, notable in particular for his service during the American War of Independence and French Revolutionary Wars. He is best known for his service during the American War of Independence, when he acted as a naval commander and a peace commissioner with the American rebels. At the beginning of the War Howe was known to be sympathetic to the colonists. He had known Benjamin Franklin, who was a friend of his sister, a popular lady in London society. Howe had written to Franklin in a peacemaking effort. Because of his known sentiments, he was selected to command in America. He was joined in a commission with his brother, General Sir William Howe, head of the land forces, to attempt a reconciliation. A committee appointed by the Second Continental Congress conferred with Howe in September 1776, but nothing came of it.



British Admiral Richard Howe

Howe was ordered to institute a naval blockade of the American coastline, but this proved to be ineffectual. Howe claimed to have too few ships to successfully accomplish this, particularly as a number had to be detached to support operations by the British army. As a result large amounts of French supplies and munitions were smuggled to America. It has been suggested that Howe's limited blockade at this point was driven by his sympathy with and desire for conciliation with the Americans. By 1778 the blockade was more promising, with many merchant ships being taken.

The strategy of the British in North America was a combination of operations aimed at capturing major cities and a blockade of the coast. In 1776 the British captured New York City with combined operations between the army and the navy. In 1777 Admiral Howe provided support to his brother's operation to capture Philadelphia, ferrying Howe's army to a landing point from which they successfully marched and took the city. Howe spent much of the remainder of the year concentrating on capturing the forts that controlled entry to the Delaware River without which ships could not reach Philadelphia.

The appointment of a new peace commission in 1778 offended the admiral deeply, and he resigned his command. His resignation was reluctantly accepted by Lord Sandwich, then First Lord of the Admiralty. Howe left his station in September 1778.

Colonel Christopher Greene (May 12, 1737 – May 13-14, 1781)

Christopher Greene was an American legislator and soldier. He is best known for leading the spirited defense of Fort Mercer in the 1777 Battle of Red Bank, and for leading the African American 1st Rhode Island Regiment during the American Revolutionary War, most notably with distinction in the 1778 Battle of Rhode Island. He was killed in May 1781 by Loyalists, possibly because he was known to lead African American troops.

Greene was born 12 May 1737 at Warwick, Rhode Island, to Judge Phillip Greene and Elizabeth (Wickes) Greene. On May 6, 1757, Greene married his third cousin Anna Lippitt. Greene and Anna would have nine children together. When Greene's father died in 1761, Greene inherited the family's mill estate and ran the business until he became an officer in the Continental Army. He served in the Rhode Island Legislature from 1772 to 1774.



Lt. Colonel Christopher Greene

In May 1775, he was appointed a major in the Army of Observation by the Rhode Island legislature. He was given command of a company and marched to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in support of the rebellion against British rule. In 1775 George Washington put him in charge of a Continental regiment in Cambridge under the command of Benedict Arnold. Greene's regiment was part of Arnold's expedition through present-day Maine to attack the British garrison at Quebec. In the assault on that city, Greene led a detachment of troops, and after Arnold was wounded Greene was taken prisoner. He was exchanged after eight months' confinement.

In June 1776, Greene was promoted to major under James M. Varnum, in a division which was commanded by his third cousin, General Nathanael Greene. In October he was promoted to colonel, with charge of Fort Mercer. On October 22, 1777, the fort was assaulted by the Hessians under Colonel Carl von Donop and were repulsed with heavy loss, and von Donop was mortally wounded. Colonel Greene returned to his home state and pieced together a unit of former slaves – the 1st Rhode Island. Fewer than two hundred soldiers were recruited. Greene and his officers proceeded to train the black infantrymen who had signed on.

Greene and several of his black soldiers died on May 13 or 14, 1781, when a group of loyalists surrounded his headquarters on the Croton River in Westchester County, New York. From one account of the attack, "his body was found in the woods, about a mile distant from his tent, cut, and mangled in the most shocking way." A common conjecture is that this indignity was retribution for his leading black soldiers against the British Crown.

Congress voted Greene a sword, which in 1786 was presented to his son by Secretary of War Henry Knox. A monument to his memory was erected in October 1829 by New Jersey and Pennsylvania volunteers.

Commodore John Hazelwood

(1726 – March 1, 1800)

John Hazelwood was an officer in the Continental Navy. Born in England, Commodore Hazelwood commanded all units of the Pennsylvania and Continental navies participating in the defense of the Delaware River approaches to Philadelphia in 1777. His gunboats and galleys engaged British men-of-war on October 23, near river obstructions; and, after the British frigate Merlin and ship of the line Augusta grounded, their crews were forced to burn them. Later Commodore Hazelwood took command of Continental vessels in Delaware Bay.

It is not known when Hazelwood settled in America. He was born in England and served as a captain in the merchant service, sailing between London and Philadelphia, for several years, and in 1772 became one of the founders of the St. George society in the city.

He was appointed superintendent of fire vessels in December of 1775, and was promoted to the post of commodore in the Pennsylvania navy in October 1776. Hazelwood was entrusted with the full "command of the naval force of the state" in September 1777. Afterwards, the continental vessels in the Delaware river were put under his command.

According to a letter of Col. William Bradford from 1777, Lord Admiral Richard Howe sent Hazelwood a request that he give up the Pennsylvania fleet while Howe and his fleet were in Delaware Bay. Howe allegedly promised Hazelwood the king's pardon and kind treatment. Hazelwood refused the offer, and notified Howe that he would "defend the fleet to the last."

Later, Hazelwood was appointed one of the "commissioners of purchase" in Philadelphia. Charles Wilson Peale, artist and patriot, thought Hazelwood worthy as a subject for his collection of portraits of American heroes, and the painting was purchased by the city of Philadelphia. The portrait was placed in Independence Hall.

In recognition of his services in the War for Independence, the Continental Congress voted him a handsome sword, now in the collection of the Naval Historical Foundation.

Commodore Hazelwood died in Philadelphia on March 1, 1800.



Commodore John Hazelwood