

# The Fourth Continental Battalion from Georgia 1777

## A footnote from the dusty records of the American Revolution.



Figure 1-Mile Marker 7- Merionville 1777

The annals of military history are full of misfiled unit actions summarized expeditiously and placed in the vast depository of records hither and yond. The letters of notable and insignificant souls, then written in a fever of urgency are strewn from public and university libraries to the Library of Congress. Huge volumes of published works on the colonial period date from the end of the American Revolution to the present. Some event happens and historical activists exhume and re-examine.

Recently such an event occurred in an old house in Lower Merion Township, Bala Cynwyd west of Philadelphia. Amidst basement rubble, workers found an old historical marker cast with just enough information to pique the interest of the saltiest historian. The subject: *The Fourth Continental Battalion from Georgia*; Their guard duty assignment, August of 1777, at Merionville, Mile Marker 7, the old Lancaster Pike.<sup>1</sup> Exercising considerable research, The Daughters of the American Revolution mounted the marker on a tree in 1919. At some point the tree was removed and the marker disappeared. Who were these soldiers? From where exactly did they originate? What authority or authorities put them in a place that would soon represent a turning point in history? What records might account for this unit's performance? From the battalion's arrival by the first 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration in 1777 to their departure in late in October 1777, the unit's conduct surely tested Washington's patience. At the time of the battalion's August guard detail on the Lancaster Road, the British occupation of Philadelphia was only a few months away in October of that year? Georgia of that day a mere steamy province was so far away from this place yet threads of correspondence slowly brought this distant colony into the fray and into the early union of the original Thirteen American colonies.

A fast-forward style military calendar might begin with General Washington traveling up the post road to Boston to take command in June of 1775. The enlistment situation became apparent and continued to plague the General and Congress up to the spring of 1777. Do recall that a major problem facing Washington from White Plains to Trenton in December of 1776 was expiring enlistments leaving Washington to cajole and promise reenlistment bonuses, with the help of Congress and his friend Robert Morris. The solution to the problem, Washington felt, would be to recruit for the duration of the war as opposed to serving a single year.<sup>2</sup> Initially it was consensus that reconciliation with the King would occur within a year or so then the battles of Long Island and New York happened.

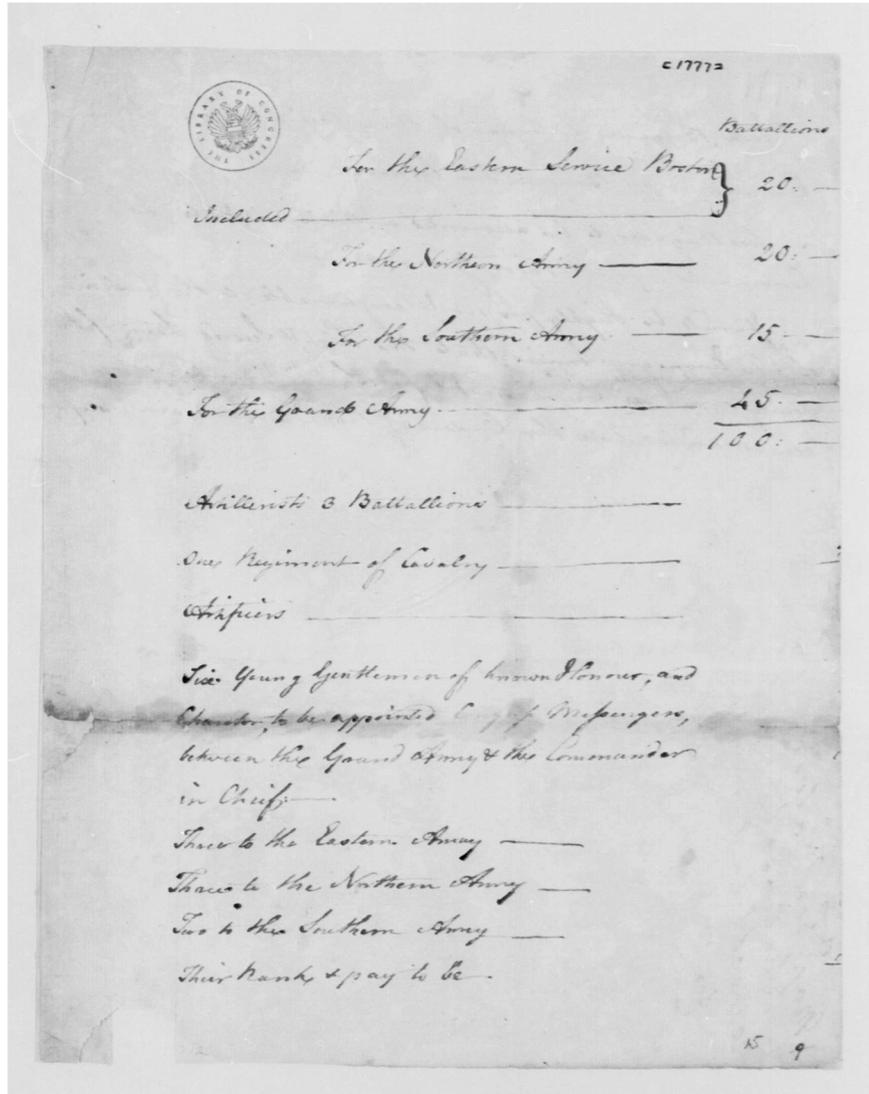


Figure 2-General Washington's accounting of battalions and their source. Note the Southern Army he expects 15 battalions.

Young William Jennings, a Harvard grad from Boston had taken a commission in Washington's Army at Boston in 1775. His enlistment up, he departed at the end of the Battle of Long Island August of 1776 and walked back to Boston. He briefly joined the light horse, and then in 1778 took a commission with the newly formed Marines to serve aboard the Ship *Boston*, Richard Palmer Captain.<sup>3</sup>

By late summer of 1776 consensus in Congress and the Officer Corps shifted from local, continental soldiers and militia to a three year enlistment into a Grand Army. John Adams wrote that the newly independent nation needed a "regular Army...with the most masterly discipline,

*because without these we cannot hope to be a powerful, a prosperous or a free people.*”<sup>4</sup> In September an amended plan known as the “eighty-eight battalion resolve” provided for eighty eight regiments. Congress established that an estimate of a state’s population should govern its quota for military enlistments. Quotas ranged from fifteen regiments for the larger states to a single regiment from Delaware and Georgia for example. A recruitment incentive, enlistment bonuses and land grant benefits were offered.<sup>5</sup> Washington had determined also that the states, rather than sending their best most experienced officers to serve under him, were holding them back for their own use. Nipping this in the bud, Washington requested that only Congress vet and appoint officers although candidates might be recommended by the state’s delegates to Philadelphia. One such appointment was Colonel Lachlan McIntosh of Georgia commissioned around January 1776 .

In addition to the enlistment issue, Washington had decided during the summer (1776) while engaged in New York that existing Articles did not take in consideration a reality that he had become keenly aware of since taking over in Boston; misbehavior<sup>6</sup>. General Washington sent Judge Advocate William Tudor of New York down to Philadelphia to suggest changes to Congress. The central changes added to the list of capital crimes- *the punishment for desertion was death by hanging*- and increased the maximum corporal or minor intra unit infraction punishments from 39 to 100 lashes. Today *judicial* and *non-judicial* punishments are the terms. This version remained in effect for the rest of the war. Tudor received a commission of Lt. Colonel and authorized a corps of deputy judge advocates (JAGs) to assist him in the growing number of cases.<sup>7</sup> The JAGs under his command would become involved with issues generated by the so called Georgia Continentals.

A thumbnail history is necessary to link the continental troop deployment to its source: James Oglethorpe, the first Georgia governor at quite a young age, back in England had proposed to parliament from his chairmanship on the board of prisons to allow him the adventure of opening a new colony, a colony in 1732 which would be populated by only a select number of debtors from the dingy jails of England. But far more immigrants than debtors flooding to the new world made up the early population mix. What a great idea it was. Slavery was initially prohibited. As indentured servants these debtors could work off their debts, generate vast export crops of rice and indigo, even silk, and contribute to the already far reaching power of the British Empire. There were objections to the idea because Georgia was dangerously close to Spanish Territory in Florida. Plus, eighteen Indian cultures originating from the beginning of time surrounded them in the larger southeast. Sir James established military units of Scotts Highlanders as security along the Georgia frontiers. These original Scotts settled the town of Darien<sup>8</sup> , the Parrish of St. John in 1735 and their children would become players on the stage of revolution. One of these Highlanders was an



officer and friend of Oglethorpe, Captain John McIntosh Mohr. Mohr's son Lachlan would recruit the first soldiers of the Georgia Continentals to serve under Washington at Valley Forge in 1777. But the sparse population and the recruiting quota caused recruitment to draw from South Carolina, Virginia and British prisoners, the beginning of trouble.

The long roots of American colonial history reach deeply into early arrivals from Jamestown and Plymouth to Savannah. From those 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century stirrings in the new world family lineages of old Europe began to cross pollinate from what David Hackett Fischer calls *Albion's Seed*.<sup>9</sup> Old grievances came with them. In political, social and economic potency, Colonial Georgia was thirteen distinctly different parishes situated along the swampy fertile, crop rich Georgia coast. Its contact with the outer world was through Savannah and Charleston. Those early independent, self-sufficient settlers of Darien added a third port, Sunbury. All of the parishes were exposed to three of the thirteen Native American Indian tribes of the southeast, Cherokee, Hitchiti, and Yamacraw, all vying with one another to develop strategies of defense, diplomacy or war. In one of his first letters to General Washington dated February 1776, the newly commissioned Colonel Lachlan McIntosh offers testament of his experience and predicament.

“Our settlements extend back to the northwest above two hundred miles, in other parts to the southward not above ten, and very thinly inhabited; indeed, this large space of land, altogether, has not more than three thousand men, chiefly in the back country, and many disaffected and doubtful in our cause, especially the men of the greatest property among us. Our slaves will be above fifteen thousand souls, mostly within twenty miles of the sea-coast, and make above thirty-five thousand tierces of rice, annually, besides many other articles of provision, which, with our fine harbours, make the security of this Colony, though weak in itself, of the utmost consequence to the whole Continent of America; and we have every reason to think our enemies intend to make it a place of general rendezvous and supplies.”<sup>10</sup>

Lachlan McIntosh to General Washington Feb 1776

This letter probably reached Washington by March or April of 1776 when he was moving swiftly into New York. The Two letters by McIntosh to General Washington dated February and March of 1776 acknowledge his commission and go on with a long list of issues facing him and the colony. The highlights of McIntosh's lengthy letter under candlelight no doubt caught the General's weary eyes; Indian Tribes on all sides, Spanish and hardcore Tories to the south and meager resources, British ships threatening in the harbor, troubles ahead, troubles behind. Yet he maintained a cool analysis of situation. This was the kind of officer with whom the General could relate. Washington repeatedly deferred correspondents to Congress on issues like enlistment quotas, a quality of management, compartmentalizing, that sparkles in swiftly growing government bureaucracy engaged in a revolution.

The delegates from Georgia had failed to appear at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia 1774. The political roil in that province was in the throes of metamorphosis. Royal Governor Sir James

Wright, not a malevolent figure<sup>11</sup> ruled with a slack rein. But any legislation passed by parish representatives in the Assembly even suggesting resistance to the King, Governor Wright deep sixed. By the time of the meeting of the Second Continental Congress in the summer of 1775, the two fermenting rival internecine factions began to emerge, the Radicals of St. John Parish and the Conservatives of Christ Church Parish. The conservatives were wealthy plantation owners mostly of Anglican, Christ Church religious denominations with strong ties to England. It was the same strong business oriented conservatives who overturned the original charter prohibiting slavery in turn favoring free slave labor in crop production.

The radical governing body of St. John's, seizing the opportunity of representation the following year [1775] at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, went ahead without the rest of the province parishes and made the selection of a delegate. Carrying a letter of instruction from St. John's Parish, Lyman Hall departed on horseback. The people of radical St. Johns Parish wanted Hall to convey to congress the understanding that [British] soldiers at Saint Augustine were "*in our very neighborhood*" along with elements of the enemy to include "*our blacks and tories*".<sup>12</sup> The puritan like culture of St. John's Parish had become self-sufficient by virtue of a strong God fearing work ethic that had rooted out their subsistence and survival without slaves, as the original charter specified. Royal Governor Sir John Wright, hardly ignorant of the nature of his citizens, even validated the St. John's culture as "*Olivarian*". The previous century, Oliver Cromwell's arch enemies were the Royalist whom he had driven from power. The Royalist hated him. When the Royalists returned to power in 1660, they dug up his remains at Westminster Abby, hung them in chains and beheaded the corpse.<sup>13</sup> Old cultural grievance had come with the baggage of these early St. John's inhabitants. So the first delegate to Congress in Philadelphia from Georgia was Lyman Hall from St. John's Parish. Journal of Continental Congress entry:<sup>14</sup>

### **Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789**<sup>15</sup>

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1775 The Congress met according to adjournment.

Present, the same as yesterday, and also Mr. J. Jay from New York and Thomas Stone from Maryland. The Congress being informed that Doctr. **Lyman Hall** attended at the door, as a delegate from the parish of St. John's<sup>3</sup> in the colony of Georgia, and desired to know whether, as such, he may be admitted to this Congress;

Agreed unanimously, That he be admitted as a delegate from the parish of St. John's, in the colony of Georgia, subject to such regulations as the Congress shall determine, relative to his voting.

Mr. **Lyman Hall** being accordingly admitted, produced his credentials, which were read and approved,

One John Adams biographer, Catherine Drinker Bowen's dramatization of Lyman Hall's arrival at the Second Continental Congress, State House, (*now Independence Hall*), in Philadelphia, Saturday May 13, 1775<sup>16</sup>:

*"Here and again, it was true, something happened to lift the gloom of these first days. There was knock at the door one morning and a traveler entered, his face and cloths streaked with dust. It was a Dr. Hall, from the Parish of St. John's, Georgia. The Parish- a whole county- had sent him as delegate, he told Congress a trifle breathlessly. He had ridden nearly eight hundred miles. Of course he couldn't expect to vote, he added hastily, seeing that the rest of Georgia had not*

*joined the union. But could he sit here, that his constituents might know they were part of the union? John [Adams] all but wept as the Doctor walked to the seat assigned, limping a little from six consecutive weeks on horseback.”<sup>17</sup>*

Delegate Hall presented the following letter:

"To Archibald Bulloch, John Houstoun, **Lyman Hall**, **Button Gwinnett** and **George Walton**, Esquires, or to such of them, who shall repair to and join the Congress at Philadelphia. Gentlemen,

"Our remote Situation from both the Seat of Power and Arms, keep us so very ignorant of the Counsels and ultimate designs of the Congress, and of the Transactions in the Field, that we shall decline giving you any particular instructions, other than strongly to recommend it to you, that you never lose sight of the peculiar situation in the Province you are appointed to represent. The Indians both South and North-westerly upon our backs, the fortified Town of Saint Augustine made a continual Rendezvous for Soldiers in our very Neighbourhood, together with our blacks and Tories within us. Let these weighty truths be the powerful Arguments for support. At the same time we also recommend it to you, always to keep in view the general Utility, remembering that the Great and Righteous Cause in which we are engaged is not Provincial but Continental.

"We therefore, Gentlemen, shall rely upon your Patriotism, Abilities, Firmness and Integrity, to propose, join and concur in all such measures as you shall think calculated for the common good, and to oppose such as shall appear destructive.

"By Order of the Congress,

"Archd Bulloch, President.

"Savannah, 5th April, 1776."

Addressed "**Lyman Hall**, Esquire, at his plantation, St. Johns."]<sup>18</sup>

During July, General Washington in Boston writes to Governor Trumbull of Connecticut to hasten recruitment of soldiers and send flour only at his convenience. Georgia's five delegates were finally official by the Provincial Congress.<sup>19</sup> Two months later, John Hancock, President of Congress, included the good news in a letter to General Washington dated July 24, 1775.

"I have the pleasure to inform you that the Congress have received a letter from the Provincial Convention of Georgia dated 8th instant,(5) informing that all the parrishes in that colony except two, which it is supposed do not contain a score of freeholders inhabitants, met by their delegates in convention on the 4th inst.; that those parrishes that upon former occasions seemed reluctant have manifested a laudable zeal on this occasion; that several Gentlemen in Savanna, that have hitherto been neuter or declared against America, now speak of the proceedings of parliament as illegal and oppressive; that the convention had applied to the Governor to appoint a day of fasting and prayer with which request the Governor informed them he would comply; that they have chosen five delegates to represent their colony in this Congress viz, John Houston, Archd. Bullock Esqr., The Revd. Doctor Zubly, Lyman Hall and Noble Wimberly Jones Esqrs; and lastly that they have resolved strictly to adhere to the Continental Association and are heartily disposed zealously to enter into every Measure that the Congress may deem necessary for the safety of America.

Mr Thomas & Mr. Trumbull's Commissions are Inclos'd in unseal'd Letters to them.

When any thing Occurs Respectg your Department you shall be made Acquaintd.

I have the honor to be with great Esteem, Sir Your most Obedt. hum Servt

John **Hancock** President

Note that Hancock's letter of July 24<sup>th</sup> to General Washington list names other than the original letter carried by Lyman Hall of St. John's Parish. Except for one name, a minister Doctor Jochem Zubley, all of the delegates were conservatives. Eight delegates in all were tapped for attendance in Philadelphia. In the end Houston, Bullock, Zubley, Hall, Gwinnett and Walton remained. Some entries in the daily Congressional Journal indicate Gwinnett as unavailable ; one in particular was the all-important Marine Committee. His close friend Lyman Hall took his place.<sup>20</sup> In his diary Christopher Marshall, of the Committee of Safety notes that “..Last night, [August 11, 1775] arrived the Georgia Packet, from Georgia in which came passengers the Hon. John Houston, Archibauld Bullock and Dr. Zubley, Delegates appointed to represent that colony....”<sup>21</sup>

As 1775 played out, in September John Adams noted in his diary that he had spent a “very agreeable” evening with “Mr. Bullock and Mr. Houstoun, the Gentlemen from Georgia. Mr. Langdon of N. Hampshire was with us. Mr. Bullock after Dinner invited me to take a ride with him in his Phaeton, which I did. He is a solid clever man. He was the President of their Convention.”<sup>22</sup> Also in September Dudley Saltonstall in New York received a letter from John Adams to proceed in raising as many officers and sailors as possible to man two Brigantines being fitted out in Philadelphia. If he needed money he was to see Eleazer Miller a Merchant in New York. A Mr. Mumfords was to call shortly with particulars regarding “conditions and encouragement offered to seamen.”<sup>23</sup>

The Naval or Marine Committee's imagination through long debate materialized in the form of the first five ships of an infant American Navy moored under guard by new Marines and the Pennsylvania Battalion along Water Street that December. Finally sailing in the freezing air of February 1776 to the cheers of on lookers the vessels became iced in at Reedy Island but soon broke for open sea. With a mission similar to Harassment and Interdiction, Saltenstall and Commodore Esek Hopkins, counter to orders, lead the fleet of five on past the Chesapeake Capes, off Carolinas and the Georgia coast bound for New Providence, Bahamas. Aboard the flag ship Alfred the newly commissioned Captain of Marines Samuel Nicholas maned his charge of two battalions of Continental Marines serving the flotilla.

During this time also, the delegates from Georgia got to work taking their assignment to committees. Dr. Zubley, *Accounts or Claims*; Lyman Hall, *Clothing*; George Walton, *Executive*; Dr. Lyman Hall, *Medicines*; Button Gwinnett ?, *Naval Committee*; Archibald Bulloch, *Secret Committee*. There were thirteen committees during this period, some delegates sat on two or three.

In April General Washington perused an accounting document from Colonel Lachlan McIntosh sizing up a rather weak recruiting campaign to raise a Battalion of Continentals in Georgia.

By June of 1776, George Walton writes to his friend Colonel Lachlan McIntosh in Georgia that he [Walton] has

*A Return of the Strength of the Georgia Battalion 23rd April 1776*

| Companies          | Captains | Subalterns | Sergents | Corporals | Drummers | Soldiers | Centinels  |
|--------------------|----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| Company of Marines | 1        | 2          | 1        | 2         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>8</b> | <b>16</b>  | <b>8</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>256</b> |

*A Return of the Strength of the Georgia Battalion 23rd April 1776*

| Ranks             | Captains | Subalterns | Sergents | Corporals | Drummers | Soldiers | Centinels  |
|-------------------|----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|
| 2d Lieutenants    | 1        | 1          | 2        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| 1st Lieutenants   | 1        | 1          | 2        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 25         |
| 5 Sergeants       | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 11         |
| 9 Corporals       | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1          |
| 36 rank file      | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 10         |
| 200 Privates      | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 2          |
| Drummers          | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1          |
| Officers          | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1          |
| Officers Servants | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1          |
| Officers          | 1        | 1          | 1        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>8</b> | <b>16</b>  | <b>8</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>256</b> |

By the information I have I suppose an Recruiting Officer may have about 400 or 500 men more who are not yet in the service of Georgia 23rd April 1776  
Lachlan McIntosh (Colonel)

been in ill health since leaving Georgia but states “*I am not too late for the great American question- if a question now it may be called!*” Walton continues, “*I shall set out after Dinner for Philadelphia, and having recovered my health considerably in this place, and having also obtained fresh horses of my friends in this country, expect to be there in seven or eight days.*”<sup>24</sup> Walton concludes that he has “*Secured permission from the Virginia Convention for the recruitment of 300 Virginia men for McIntosh’s battalion.*”<sup>25</sup>

General Washington, having sized up the developing military situation in Georgia sent the following letter that might have shocked the freewheeling Col. Lachlan McIntosh. McIntosh would, going forward, need to go through the chain of command. Now, keep in mind the military history that had become a part of General Washington the man, at that moment commanding a new army in the midst of a revolution. McIntosh has kept Washington advised by lengthy letters to the General since his commission five months earlier.

*From George Washington to Colonel Lachlan McIntosh, 4 June 1776  
To Colonel Lachlan McIntosh  
Philadelphia June 4. 1776  
Sir*

*I received your favor of the 16 of Feby by Yesterdays post, with Its Inclosure for which and the Inform[atio]n respectg the state of your province, I return you my thanks.*

*I am exceedingly sorry for the difficulties you have had to encounter, and that they are not yet all at an End—but I am hopefull by your perseverance and activity, they will be surmounted and that things will assume a more pleasing appearance.*

*Being far removed from the department you are in, It will be impossible for me to know or Transmit the Orders necessary for regulating your Battallion; I must therefore refer you to Majr Genl Lee who has been appointed to command in the Southern District & to Brigadr Genl Armstrong in South Carolina who are now immediately over you—they will give you from time to time such Instructions as appear to them necessary, proper & likely to Advance the public good, which you must make the rule of your conduct—You will be particular and punctual in making your Returns to these Gentn who will forward’em to me, and trusting that every thing in your power will be done to promote the Common cause and Interest of the United Colonies I am Sir &c.*

G.W.

Into the late summer and fall of 1776, as the mind numbing stream of issues passed endlessly before the delegates; a single sentence appears in the Friday August 2, 1776 Journal.

*“The **declaration of independence** being engrossed and compared at the table was signed [by the members]”* <sup>26</sup>

Three of the five delegates from Georgia, Lyman Hall, George Walton and Button Gwinnett affixed their signatures to the document along with their fellow delegates. Georgia’s support of the cause and the Continental Association continued to be undermined by factional bickering and political maneuver at home. Gwinnett not a man to involve himself in trifling committee work likely sensed that opportunity and windfall for himself in Philadelphia had played out after signing the Declaration and hurried home to re-enter the political fracas in Georgia. And re-enter he did.

Archibald Bulloch, president of the Georgia Assembly had also returned home from Philadelphia and shortly afterward turned up dead. There was a suspicion of poisoning but no proof. The Assembly leadership position then defaulted by his own vote <sup>27</sup> to Button Gwinnett. In an ambitious military campaign to clean out Loyalist, Gwinnett wielded his power to lead the militia in the campaign. Washington’s officers present in Southern Department advised Gwinnett that the plan was unsound. General McIntosh ended up deploying his under strength Continental Battalion against St. Augustine the British strong hold. The results was lackluster.

The officers in charge of the Southern Department, Major General Lee and General Howe’s over all assessments of the activities in Georgia can further illuminate the situation from an outside perspective. Congress authorized money and incentives that fall [1776] for the raising of a Georgia Brigade. Congress also promoted Colonel Lachlan McIntosh to Brigadier General. While the leadership of the St. John’s Radicals had been away in Philadelphia, the Conservatives moved quickly but unsuccessfully restore their former dominance. McIntosh’s, whose loyalties stood in both camps, could report the recruiting situation had vastly improved into late 1776. In the wake of Washington’s victory at Trenton, McIntosh could report the First Georgia Battalion of 538 soldiers, two artillery companies of 40 men, and brother, Colonel William McIntosh’s regiment of Light horse of 300. A troubling element of ‘freebooters’ numbered among these soldiers.<sup>28</sup> Thus far no enlistments existed for the third and fourth battalion, the subject of this research. The additional Virginia recruitments of 300, would begin building the third and fourth battalion, the subject of this inquiry.

Exasperated with the Georgia military situation, complicated by families split into either faction or the overall unprofessional atmosphere, Howe and Lee departed for their Charlestown Headquarters. Likewise the new military political figures of the Southern Department were opposed to “outsider” involvement in their affairs. In a letter from General Lee to General John Armstrong one can imagine the dissonance.

*“The people here are if possible more harum skarum than their sister colony. They will propose anything, and after they have propos’d it discover that they are incapable of performing the least. They have*

*proposed securing the Frontiers by constant patrols of horse Rangers. When the scheme is approved of they scratch their heads for some days, and at length inform you that there is a small difficulty in the way; that of impossibility to procure a single horse – their next project is to keep their inland Navigation clear of Tenders by a numerous fleet of Guarda Costa arm's boats, when this is agreed to they recollect that they have not a single boat- Upon the whole I should not be surprised if they were to propose mounting a body of Mermaids on Alligators.”<sup>29</sup>*

Elements are now in place to examine correspondence relating to the recruiting activities in Georgia and the first mention of a Fourth Georgia Battalion. McIntosh would remain in Georgia until shortly after a significant event in May of 1777, a duel resulting in the death of Governor Button Gwinnett. The mention of the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia Battalion begins to appear early in May 1777. Georgia Historical Society Abstract: “John White was born in England and served in the British Navy. After emigrating from England, he joined the American Army as Captain in the 2nd North Carolina in 1775. He was promoted to Major in 1776. In 1777, White was appointed Colonel of the 4th Georgia Battalion.”<sup>30</sup>

*George Walton to General Washington [Regarding Colonel John White]*

*Philadelphia 27 May 1777*

*Dear Sir,*

*Well aware of the many great objects which [ ] occupy your mind, I would not trouble upon the present occasion, were I not [ ] to it the [ asses]. He is appointed to the command of the fourth Georgia Battalion, which is yet in great part to be raised, and that [ ] in other [ ].*

*I have suggested to him [ ] the general difficulties. I have told him that as Congress have required of the States certain quotas of troops, they would not by any recommendation [ ] them until those quotas were completed.*

*Colonel White still urges that Georgia, opposed by Savages on one side and [Loyalist] Floridians on the other ought to be upheld; and thinks he can by a [ ] referendum convince your excellency that there is necessity for more thought. If he should succeed in this; it is probable that you will recommend [ ] to the southern states to [ ] him to recruit a few companies, I beg leave to suggest one thing if the enemies army should be divided this [ ] in any part of the campaign, these companies under a good officer. Would be at your Excellencie's hand.*

*I am, with a the greatest esteem and & [ ]<sup>31</sup>*

McIntosh again wrote to Washington in May 1777 soon after the drama of his duel had played out. He explained the circumstances of the duel as well as the factional attacks on his family at

the hands of Gwinnett. – explaining the complexity of issues after his duel. Delegate George Walton had concerns that the acceptance of McIntosh coming to Pennsylvania and into Washington’s staff of officers might cause trouble only because of his recent intrigues related to the duel. After the duel, Major John White seems to have taken over the recruitment process.

*George Washington to George Walton*

*Head Quarters, Middle Brook, June 2, 1777.*

*Sir: I have the pleasure of yours of the 27th May by Colo. White.<sup>62</sup> I think the Answer which you gave him [White] respecting his request for Liberty to recruit a Regiment for Georgia, in the other States, at this time, was extremely proper. For experience shews us that the Quotas already allotted to them are full as much and I fear more than they will be able to furnish. At any rate, a recommendation of this kind would go very improperly from me, as it would be assuming a kind of right, to levy Men upon the States, which right is and ought to be solely vested in the Members of the different States in Congress. To them therefore I think he ought to apply for a recommendation for such liberty, if it is thought expedient. I am &ca.<sup>63</sup>*

*[Note 62: Col, John White, of the Fourth Georgia Regiment. He was wounded and taken prisoner at Savannah Oct. 9, 1779... ”<sup>32</sup>*

George Walton to General Washington

Philadelphia August 5, 1777

Sir,

Moved Congress a few days ago to order Brigadier General McIntosh from his position in Georgia to join the Grand Army; and if it was objected to because it was feared it might derange the Army or that you would have no command for him. The cause of my having made this proposition was, that he had lately fought a duel with Governor Gwinnett in which the latter had fallen and was afraid the friends of the deceased made [ sore ] by the [ ] of the principal would [ ] blow up the [ embers ] of party definition and disturb the [harmony ] and vigour of the civil [ & Military ] authorities.

I have since received a letter from Georgia proving that my concerns were too well founded, [ I therefore ] take the liberty of requesting to know who [whether ] it will be [convenient ] and agreeable to you that he [ would ] be ordered to join the Grand Army. He is a man of sense and judgement with [ a

great ] experience of the [sword, world]? And in point of bravery he is fit to fight under the banners of General Washington.

I have the happiness to be .....

Excellency's most ..... George Walton

P.S. I Intend to send off an Express to Georgia [ ] should be obliged by an answer today. <sup>33</sup>

It was during the second Fourth of July celebration July 4 1777 that the Georgia Battalion signaled its arrival by cutting loose with a fusillade of musket firings on the corner of Walnut and Second Street, in front of City Tavern. Known as a *faux de joie*, the firing of weapons in celebration was a custom of celebration but under the delicate circumstances it likely scared everyone half to death. Indiscriminant or unauthorized firing of a weapon, in the newly formed military judicial code was also a court martial offence. Another incident while in Philadelphia involved the murder of one of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion's soldiers. For the moment a security detail at Mile Marker 7 in Merrionville was their next encampment. The Georgia 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion had reported for duty.

**A**t the time of Walton's August letter Colonel John White was commander of the Georgia Battalion. The Georgia Continentals had taken up their position guarding Lancaster Road west out of the city. DAR documents <sup>34</sup> indicate that complaints from local farmers had streamed into President Thomas Wharton's office that the Georgia Continentals under Colonel White were pilfering crops for food at the location now occupied by residential homes, businesses and St. John's Episcopal Church. The complaint offers verification that British prisoners were indeed a disruptive portion of the Battalion. It was the custom of the day on land and sea, to take prisoners and install them into crews and field units to serve in some capacity. British and American sailors, after capture were pressed into enemy crews. An officer or NCO noticing hesitancy to fight was empowered to execute the prisoner on the spot.

*"It is notorious that from the first day of their incamping they began to show their aversion for all Law, Divine or Human, abusing travelers, Robing the neighborhood of everything they could lay their hands on, pillaging their dwelling Houses, Spring Houses and Barns, Burning their Fence rails, Cutting down their Timber, Robbing Orchards and Gardens Stealing their Piggies, Poultry & Lambs, and sometimes killing them through wantonness or bravado, & when complaints were made, they with the most unparalleled impudence, would threaten the lives of the Complainants or their Houses with fire, frequently damning the Congress, and Swearing they will never fight against King George."* <sup>35</sup>

Washington headquartered in Potts Grove by September. After The Battle of Brandywine in early September, Washington interdicts the British at Germantown suffering heavy casualties on

October 4<sup>th</sup>. After two years of fighting and his slow struggling egress southward Washington writes Delegate Henry Laurens from his Headquarters at White Marsh (now Ft. Washington). It is November and among a trove is other matters, quartering the Continental Army for the winter of 1777 is under his consideration. Resulting from their ravages at Mile Marker Seven ,the “Georgia Battalion” in late August was moved off Lancaster Road and sent off to Lancaster a town [ ] to the west and hopefully insulated from further trouble. The composition of this Battalion had changed from original recruits of Lachlan McIntosh to include Continental Soldiers with malicious intent or loyal British soldiers impressed to serve General Washington.

There is no central archive containing court martial records of the American Revolution. Rather, one can access instances of these trials in General Washington’s General Orders. Some of the following items appear in these orders beginning January 1777:

HQ Morristown-Commanding Officers of Regiments, to order, Regimental Courts Martial, for the trial of such prisoners as belong to them, now confined in the Provost Guard, that do not come under the consideration of a General Court Martial. January 1777

It having been observed that the Waggoners, and those who have the care of the public Horses, use them very cruelly, by riding them extremely hard upon all occasions, it is therefore recommended to the Quarter-Masters, and Waggon-Masters, to give strict orders against such practices in future, which, if continued after such notice is given, the offenders shall be liable to immediate punishment, by order of any commissioned Officer who happens to see them. April 1777

The Execution of Serjt Porter field is suspended (by Order of His Excellency General Washington) 'till Friday the 11th Inst. April 1777

A General Court Martial to sit to morrow at 9 O'Clock, for the trial of Lieut. Carnes<sup>42</sup> of Col: Martins Regt., and such other prisoners. as may be brought before them. All Evidences to attend. April 1777

Roxboro - A General Court Martial is to sit to morrow, at nine oclock in the morning, at or near Judge Laurence's<sup>25</sup> quarters by Schuylkill falls, for the trial of all such prisoners as shall be brought before them. Col James Wood is appointed president of this court. August 1777

A General Court Martial of the light dragoons is to sit to morrow morning at nine o'clock, at Lush's tavern, in German town, for the trial of all prisoners belonging to any of the corps of light dragoons, which shall be brought before them. Col. Sheldon is appointed president of this court--Col. Moylan will direct the several quotas of officers for members which the different corps of horse are to furnish; And the Judge Advocate General will appoint a deputy to attend the court..... August 1777

Capt. Crump<sup>91</sup> of the 1st. Virginia regiment charged with "Cowardice," is found guilty, and sentenced to be cashiered, and his name, place of abode, and his punishment, published in the Newspapers of the particular state he came from, or in which he usually resides. After which, it shall be deemed scandalous, for any officer to associate with him. October 1777

Lieut. Simon Morgan of the 13th. Virginia regiment charged with "Cowardice on the 4th. instant." Acquitted with honor by the unanimous opinion of the court. October 1777

Capt. Henry Shade of the 10th. Pennsylv. regiment charged with "Absenting himself from the regiment without leave for near two months"; found guilty and sentenced to be *cashiered*. October 1777<sup>36</sup>

Washington's creation of a vigorously operating Judge Advocate General function is clearly evident in this sampling of escalating courts martial events. The full spectrum is represented in these examples, from a death sentence to a variety of charges, cowardice, absent without leave, disrespect of a superior to abuse of government property e.g. waggoneers running the "Public Horses" into the ground. Washington's constant reminders of service to cause and the public good, exemplifies his steadfast devotion to shaping a new nation under law and principle. Any person from private to senior staff officer ranks serving in the military today is acutely familiar with the military justice system, a direct descendent of Washington's and Colonel Tudor's actions during the American Revolution 1775-1784

*2d. Augt. 1777 Philadelphia George Walton to George Washington*

*Sir,*

*Despairing of an opportunity of personally communicating a piece of business, in your present perplexing situation, I beg leave to take this method of doing it. The exposed state of **Georgia** calls aloud for a pretty formidable force to defend it; for this reason congress have not forbid Col **White** recruiting deserters from the British Army. I have been informed that there are a considerable number now in the grand army; and [these?] I conceive might be more safely and better employed at a distance from the army from which they deserted. I would then submit it, whether it would not be eligible to turn them over to **White**, he refunding to the officer the bounty?*

*It is not necessary to adduce reasons to a Gentleman of your discernment, to prove what ought to be done; but I would only observe, that I have no view in making the proposition but the public service. It may be objected, that, if deserters are refractory, or willing to return, in the face of the grand Army, they would more probably be worse in a distant weak state. Against which I would say, that Discipline is much severer there-they might be incorporated into other regiments, & kept in Garrisons and upon the Indian line to awe the Savages.*

*I have the happiness to be your Excellency's most Obedient Servant , Geo Walton.*

*N.B. I have desired Colonel **White** to wait upon & deliver this to you, of whom you may satisfy yourself as to any particulars.*

*LOC Archive note: There is no evidence that Washington responded directly to Walton's request that British deserters serving in the American army be transferred to the **Georgia battalion**, but Col. **John White's** recruiting activities were examined by a board of general officers on August 12 and **White** was cleared of charges that he had been recruiting men for the Fourth **Georgia** Regiment from other Continental regiments.<sup>37</sup> So General Washington actually met Colonel White face to face as he delivered this letter of George Walton to him. By the first week in September the Georgia*

Battalion and their Commander Colonel White struck their tents in along Lancaster Pike and marched thirty miles west and set up their camp in Lancaster.

On September 6 [1777] Christopher Marshall, an official of the Continental Congress in exodus from Philadelphia to Lancaster and York during the British occupation, noted in his diary: *“This afternoon, the two thieves, who stole Col. White’s cash and trunk, were marched about a mile and a half out of town, in order, it’s said, to be hanged, but upon the Colonel’s lady’s intercession, it’s said, they were pardoned from death, but received two or three hundred lashes each, well laid on their backs and buttocks. A great number of spectators, it’s said, were assembled.”* Marshall noted earlier on August 30 that a great stir in town surrounded *“some men of Col. White of the Georgia Regiment’s robing him last night”* Some cash was recovered but a trunk containing his commission, more money and his papers was not recovered.”<sup>38</sup>

By Friday October 10, 1777 after this battalion’s duty at Mile Marker 7 in August, and subsequent deployment to Lancaster probably in September, Colonel White’s 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion was on the march South back to Georgia after inflicting further damages in their passage through Maryland in October. The following instruction to Colonel White from Congress is an attempt to specify a strict code of conduct in White’s Battalion’s remaining service to General Washington’s Army.

Journal of Continental Congress page 793, October 1777:

“Congress being informed of great irregularities committed by the fourth Georgia batallion, commanded by Colonel White, contrary to all order and discipline, and to the great annoyance and injury of the good people of the country through which the said regiment hath passed:

Resolved, That Colonel White be ordered immediately to join his regiment, and continue with it until the regiment shall arrive in Georgia: that he take the most effectual care to prevent future irregularities of any kind being committed by the said regiment on its march: and that his excellency the governor of Maryland, be requested to appoint proper persons to value the damages done by the said regiment since it entered the State of Maryland, and that the same be sent to the regimental pay master, who is directed to deduct the amount from the pay of the said regiment, and pay the same to the order of Governor Johnson, for the benefit of the sufferers.”

Colonel John White’s Fourth Continental Battalion had reached Georgia by early 1778. That spring at Valley Forge, General Washington issued a direct order to General Lachlan McIntosh on April of 1778 to act as Inspector General visiting every single field hospital in the region. Washington’s expectations were tersely clear; in effect turn malingerers back to their units for duty and report the exact status of wounded and attending staffs. Soon afterwards, McIntosh received orders from Washington to command the Western Department, dominated mainly by

Native Indian affairs a subject familiar to McIntosh. McIntosh built two forts in the same area of a young Washington's misadventure at Fort Duquesne mid century , Fort McIntosh and Fort Laurens after his close friend and business mentor in Charleston. By late in the year 1779, the difficult command of Colonel James White's 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Georgia Continentals was nearing an end.

*On October 1, 1779, White led a small patrol to capture a British detachment of 111 troops, commanded by Lt. James French, camped at Savage Station, Savage Point Georgia. White and his men lit fires in the woods surrounding the British troops to create the effect of a large force of American troops, and his men rode in circles around the perimeter of the British encampment shouting orders. He then rode up to the British camp and demanded their surrender; believing themselves to be surrounded, the British complied. He was wounded and taken prisoner at the attack on Savannah, October 9, 1779. He escaped but died soon after.”<sup>39</sup>*

Having served under General Washington; caring for those other Georgia Continentals who wintered at Valley Forge; as inspector general of the hospitals and duty in the Western department, McIntosh returned to Georgia in time for the sieges of Charleston and Savannah and discovered that some of the old bitter rivalries remained. But Harvey Jackson indicates; “The radical conservative conflict that did so much to bring Georgia into the Revolution waned after 1779 and by war's end was eclipsed by other forces.”<sup>40</sup>

Summary: The original theme of the Historical Marker dedication featuring the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia Battalion at Mile Marker Seven was like many such markers, elevating the event or participants in the American Revolution to a sacred patriotic mission in pursuit of liberty and freedom.

Certainly in some degree they were in the fray. But at close examination of this event and the participants the simple encampment was far from the imaginary glorious pursuit of the cause often depicted in paintings. Looking upon the re-instated marker today we might remember that the creation of the first Corps of the Judge Advocate General came to exist at the very season of this Battalion's encampment at Merrionville. It was the birth of the present day Uniform Code of Military Justice (U.C.M.J.) designed to guide conduct of all soldiers, officer and enlisted in an honorable direction consistent with the mission of the military organization at any given time and location. The



citizens, farm crops and animals of Merrionville were the casualties of misconduct apparently so extreme that it stood beyond the conduct of other units who passed through, that the citizens courageously filed a powerful grievance to Governor Wharton.

Although no record of Colonel Whites day book remains, it is safe to speculate that in the end at Lancaster a function of the JAG, a Court Martial sentenced to death by hanging those who disrespected their commander by theft of his belongings. Members of Congress were passing through Lancaster on the way to York. It is possible that the altered sentence of severe lashings instead requested by Colonel John White's wife ameliorated some troublesome elements of the battalion. Still further complaints followed the battalion through Maryland. Whatever changes Colonel White applied after being reprimanded by the Continental Congress must have fine-tuned the unit, leaving at least a greater percentage of them able and willing to conduct a successful final battle under his command at Savage Station, Georgia 1779. The performance and character of Colonel White may best be estimated by his continued efforts to command a very disruptive band of soldiers. Even when assaulted by his own men, Colonel White, strongly supported by his wife who was present with him throughout the campaign, eventually drew his sword to lead the remainder of his Fourth Georgia Battalion to face the British Rangers at Savage Point. Wounded, taken prisoner Colonel White died soon afterward.

Ironically, perhaps most will agree that the dismal reputation of this small so called Fourth Georgia Battalion was actually a composite of British prisoners and soldiers from other states, North Carolina and Virginia, leaving only a fraction of Continentals who were actually from Georgia. Remembering Lachlan McIntosh's description of them, "*disaffected*" humble farmers doing their duty to God and Country, likely looked on in utter amazement, painfully hoping to get back to their own "simpler place and time."

Mike Malsbary  
Paoli, PA

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USMC Infantry 1963-1967 Enlisted  
For the Lower Merion Historical Society  
October 17, 2015

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<sup>1</sup> Lower Merion Historical Society, President Gerald Francis, announced that this particular Historical Marker was discovered in a housed marked for demolition. date

<sup>2</sup> Robert K. Wright, *The Continental Army, Center For Military History*, United States Army, Washington, D.C. 1983. Ch. 5, Accessed 7/26/2015 <http://www.history.army.mil/books/RevWar/ContArmy/CA-fm.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Charles R. Smith, *Marines in Revolution*, Appendix- Diary of William Jennings, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1975

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Wright, note: Write cites "Burnette Letters 2:61" for John Adams's statement.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Wright

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, Wright

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Wright

<sup>8</sup> Harvey H. Jackson, *Georgia and Politics of Revolutionary Georgia*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1979

<sup>9</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Albions Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989 (the Albion was the a ship carrying some of the first settlers.)

<sup>10</sup> Documents of the Revolutionary Period, s4-v4-p01-sp28-D006, Lachlan McIntosh to General Washington, February 16, 1776 accessed 8-8- 2015,

American Archives <http://amarch.lib.niu.edu/islandora/search/Mcintosh%20to%20Washington?type=dismax>

<sup>11</sup> Harvey H. Jackson, *Lachlan McIntosh and the Politics of Revolutionary Georgia*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1979, p22

<sup>12</sup> American Memory, Journals of Continental Congress 1774-1789, Entry Monday May 20, 1776, page 367 [Search Lyman Hall ]

<sup>13</sup> Wikipedia, Oliver Cromwell, accessed 7/30/2015

<sup>14</sup> Journals of the Continental Congress, LOC American Memory, search date May 1775

<sup>15</sup> American Memory, [www.memory.loc.gov](http://www.memory.loc.gov) 1700-1799, search word Lyman Hall

<sup>16</sup> American Archives, , This date may be verified under Lyman Hall search, Samuel Ward's Diary, Item 4 – so Hall's admission to Congress in Philadelphia was in early summer of 1775.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Drinker Bowen, *John Adams and the American Revolution*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1950, p 523.

<sup>18</sup> American Memory, Journals of Continental Congress 1774-1789, Entry Monday May 20, 1776, page 367 [Search Lyman Hall ]

<sup>19</sup> Entries in Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789 reveal the chronology of political changes occurring in Georgia. The final letter presented to Congress in Philadelphia by the new delegates

<sup>20</sup> Journal of the Continental Congress, (date) ,

<sup>21</sup> William Duane, *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall*, Joel Munsell, Albany, 1877

<sup>22</sup> John Adams, *Diary, Letters of Delegates to Congress*, v 2 September 1775- December 1775. American Memory, item 34 , this and other letters and Journal entries may be found by searching by month and year.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid American Memory, search by month and years- in this citation "September 1775" and on.

<sup>24</sup> Lachlan McIntosh Letter to Georgia Walton, *Macon Daily Telegraph and Confederate*, January 25, 1865, noted as such in American Memory search "Georgia Walton to Lachlan McIntosh"

<sup>25</sup> George Walton to Lachlan McIntosh Letter June 17, 1776, LOC American Memory search by correspondents

<sup>26</sup> Entry August 2, 1776, Journals of the Continental Congress, p629, American Memory LOC [memory.loc.gov] search date or Declaration of Independence.

<sup>27</sup> Notated in summary of Letter from George Walton to Lachlan McIntosh April 18,1776 item #2 search by correspondents.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, Harvey H. Jackson, p. 49

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, Harvey H. Jackson p.44

<sup>30</sup> MS 859, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. transparent Loc. of Orig./Dups.: Original letter in the possession of Col. Preston Davie of New York City.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Letters of Delegates; George Walton to General Washington May 1777, LOC, American Memory

<sup>32</sup> Letters of Delegates and entries in the Journal of the Continental Congress are easily accessible at Library of Congress website <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query> Included in the collection are many digital transcriptions of Writings of George Washington which LOC cites to John C. Fitzpatrick multi volume work of the same name.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, LOC

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Dora Harvey Devlin

<sup>35</sup> Thomas McGuire, *The Philadelphia Campaign v.1* Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA 2006 p 118

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, George Washington's General Orders may be found in American Memory LOC <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query> Search words Court Martial [ year] will also produce a variety of JAG event entries.

<sup>37</sup> American Memory, Walton to Washington August 2, 1777, LOC cites Washington, Writings (Fitzpatrick), 9:64.

<sup>38</sup> William Duane, Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall, Joel Munsell, Albany, 1877

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, Abstract, Georgia Historical Society.....

<sup>40</sup> Harvey H. Jackson, Lachlan McIntosh and the Revolutionary Politics of Georgia, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1979 p. 126-127