



CANNONEER



Newsletter of the *Fernando de Leyba Chapter*

Sons of the American Revolution

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November 2013

Meets 2nd Monday of every month (except July and August) at
Culpepper Restaurant in St. Charles, MO

On December 09, 1775

American victory at the Battle of Great Bridge

On this day in history, December 9, 1775, an American victory at the Battle of Great Bridge sets the stage for the British abandonment of Virginia. The Battle of Great Bridge was a decisive blow to the Royal Governor, **John Murray, Lord Dunmore**. The battle caused Dunmore to abandon Norfolk and seek refuge on a navy ship.

After bombarding the city and a few more raids, Dunmore abandoned Virginia for New York, never to return.

In April of 1775, at the same time the Rev War broke out in Massachusetts, Lord Dunmore ordered the confiscation of the gunpowder supply at Williamsburg, Virginia. The act alarmed the colonists, who began to rise up against him. Lord Dunmore began to fear for his safety, left Williamsburg and moved his family on to a Royal Navy ship at Norfolk.

Skirmishes continued for the next several months, escalating when a British ship ran aground and was captured, causing the death of several sailors in the fight. Dunmore issued a proclamation declaring **martial law** and began to fortify Norfolk as his last stronghold. 9 miles south of town, at a small village called Great Bridge - he had a small fort set up to guard the only approach south of Norfolk. The fort was on the north side of a small bridge on a road running through a swamp.



View at the Great Bridge
An 1850 drawing of the site of the
Battle of Great Bridge

From: *Benson John Lossing's*
"The Pictorial Field-Book of the
Revolution"

500 men from Virginia's 2nd Regiment took positions on the south side of the bridge on December 2. Over the next few days, their numbers swelled to almost 900. The British garrison had less than a hundred men. Upon learning of the situation, Dunmore decided to send a few hundred reinforcements and attack the Americans first. Early on the morning of December 9, the attack began. Dunmore had unfortunately been misinformed, however. His best intelligence estimated the rebel camp numbers at no more than 400 men. The overwhelming superiority of the Americans' numbers led to a rout. The British lost over a hundred men killed or wounded, while there was only one American injured.

Lord Dunmore's forces retreated to Norfolk. Alarm struck the town as the patriots' numbers continued to swell, causing Dunmore and most of the Loyalists in town to flee to the ships in the harbor. Norfolk was occupied by the Continental Army and the royal navy ships maneuvered into a threatening position, causing much of the rest of the town to evacuate. On January 1, the ships began bombarding the town for nearly a whole day. The patriot forces began looting and destroying much of the Tory owned property in town. Within a few days, most of Norfolk had burned to the ground.

COLONIAL FORCES

- Colonel William Woodford
- 861 men

BRITISH FORCES

- Captain Samuel Leslie
- Captain Charles Fordyce
- 409 men, 2 guns

Battle of Great Bridge - Background:

As in Massachusetts, early 1775 saw tensions between the colonists in Virginia and the British authorities become increasingly strained. In response, the legislature began recruiting troops in March leading the royal governor, John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, to direct British troops to remove the gunpowder from the magazine at Williamsburg. With the beginning of hostilities at **Lexington and Concord** in April, the situation in Virginia continued to deteriorate. Increasingly concerned for his safety, Dunmore evacuated his family to Norfolk and set about making the town a Loyalist base. Supported by a small squadron from the Royal Navy, he

requested ground forces from General Thomas Gage in Boston.

Though having won a bloody victory at Bunker Hill, Gage remained besieged in Boston by General George Washington's army. As a result, he was only able to send elements of the 14th Regiment of Foot to Dunmore's aid. Using these forces, the governor began raiding the region around Norfolk in an effort to capture colonial military supplies. In November, after a raid had been turned back by colonial forces, Dunmore escalated the situation by issuing a proclamation stating that he would emancipate Patriot-held slaves if they volunteered to fight with the British Army. Moderately successful, this effort netted enough recruits for the formation of the **Ethiopian Regiment**.

Battle of Great Bridge - Movement to the Bridge:

As part of his fortification of Norfolk, Dunmore directed that a stockade be built nine miles to the southeast at Great Bridge. A strategic location, Great Bridge possessed the main bridge over the southern branch of the Elizabeth River and commanded the sole road south to North Carolina. Surrounded by swamp to either side, Great Bridge could only be approached by causeways to the north and south. Placed just north of the bridge and dubbed Fort Murray, the

stockade was constructed from planks, logs, and earth. To defend the fort, two cannon and several swivel guns were emplaced and the planks were removed from the bridge. Through November, Dunmore continued to augment the fort's garrison. Concerned about the governor's proclamation and seeking to open the road to Norfolk, the Virginia Committee of Safety directed colonial forces to move against Great Bridge.

Battle of Great Bridge – Woodford Arrives:

Responding to these orders, Colonel William Woodford marched for Great Bridge with the 2nd Virginia Regiment as well as five companies of Culpeper Minutemen. Arriving on December 2, Woodford established a camp south of the bridge just out of range of the British guns. Putting his men to work, he ordered that an **M**-shaped line of earthworks be constructed across their front as protection from a British attack. As the Americans established their position, the British began burning the buildings between the lines to ensure a clear field of fire. Lacking artillery, Woodford made no plans for assaulting Fort Murray. Instead, he directed that entrenchments be constructed to the west on suitable ground for firing on the fort should artillery arrive.

Battle of Great Bridge - The Situation Escalates:

Over the next week, both sides received a steady stream of reinforcements as Great Bridge became the focal point of the conflict in the region. In attempting to assess the situation, both Dunmore and Woodford suffered from a wealth of poor intelligence. While the latter believed the British garrison to be larger than it was, the former came to think that the enemy had obtained artillery. In actuality, Woodford had received two guns from newly-arrived North Carolina forces, but lacked the carriages to mount them. Concerned that American guns would reduce Fort Murray and with the weather deteriorating, Dunmore resolved to attack Woodford's lines. Though his subordinates recommended holding their position, the governor was not to be dissuaded.

Battle of Great Bridge - A Bloody Repulse:

Dunmore's plan called for elements of the **Ethiopian Regiment** to threaten a crossing downstream as a diversion before assaulting the American line with Captain Samuel Leslie's recently-arrived forces. As Leslie began preparing for the attack, he learned that the Ethiopian Regiment was not in place due to confusion with their orders. Resolving to move forward regardless, he directed some of his men to

replace the planking on the bridge just before dawn. This done, Leslie ordered Captain Charles Fordyce to advance with sixty Grenadiers while he moved out of the fort with reinforcements and two guns in support. Advancing south, the Grenadiers were forced to march six abreast due to the narrowness of the causeway.

Quickly alerted to the threat, Woodford pushed his men into the entrenchments where Lieutenant Edward Travis directed them to hold their fire until the British were within fifty yards. Advancing and firing in a disciplined fashion, the Grenadiers came under fire as they neared the American position. Though wounded in the leg, Fordyce remained with his men while Woodford continued to feed additional men into his line. Surging forward, the British attack was halted by intense fire from the Americans which killed Fordyce. Reeling, the British began falling back. Though Woodford resisted the urge to counterattack, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Stevens moved with 100 of the Culpeper Minutemen to the entrenchments to the west. Here, using their long rifles, they harried the British retreat and began striking at Leslie's gunners and reserve force. Maintaining their fire, they were able to compel Leslie to retreat back into Fort Murray.

Battle of Great Bridge - Aftermath:

In the fighting at Great Bridge, Woodford suffered one wounded while British casualties numbered between 62 and 102. Granted a truce later in the day, Leslie retrieved his dead and wounded before withdrawing north during the night. Further reinforced by North Carolina troops, the victorious Americans at Great Bridge began moving north against Norfolk. With his forces beaten, Dunmore evacuated his men using the Royal Navy vessels in the harbor and abandoned Norfolk. Though beaten, Dunmore continued to mount raids in the area until August 1776.

Lord Dunmore decided to withdraw, but continued making raids on shore for supplies. In February, he was able to occupy Portsmouth to try to reestablish a base of operations, but was driven back to the ships in March by **General Charles Lee**. After a few more raids over the next few months and living on a ship for months on end, Lord Dunmore finally gave up and abandoned Virginia in August. He sailed for New York.

**The royal government to
never be seen again in
Virginia.**

Next meeting will be on DEC. 9, 2013 and we will meet at Culpeppers 6:30 PM.

Treasurer's report as of October 2013:

Beginning Balance = \$2,068.48 – Ending Balance = \$2,155.48

As a reminder to all members Due's (\$59.00) for 2014 will be collected during the Sept., Oct., Nov., Meeting for Josiah Fog award points.

37 Members paid to Date

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Genealogist report as of October 2013:

New Members: Ron Hauser, Adam Schnelting, Michael Snyder, Jim Bunch, Marvin Koechig, Adam Bell, J.D. Kirtlink

"FDL "49" soon to be "50" members strong"

4 Pending New Memberships for November:

At National:

- David Hoffman
- David Cox (3 sup, 2 pended)

At State:

- Tom Buskin (new member)
- Richard Denning (new member)

Heading to State:

- Keith Morris (supplement)
- Jim Borgman (supplement)

At Chapter:

- Jim Borgman (supplement)
- Ron Hauser (supplements)
- David Hoffman (supplements)

At the November 14, 2013 meeting:

Meeting Opens 7:02 pm

Introductions: Ron Hauser, Mary Hauser, David Hoffman, Pam Davis.

Color Guard: Bill Grote

Washington Mo., Jefferson Barracks Dec 10, Boones Lick at Williamsburg, 50 year Reunion of DAR's care of the Cold Water Creek Cemetery. Three Eagle Scout prospects.

1. Dennis Hahn: Supplemental Fees to raise from \$40.00 to \$80.00 MOSSAR Dues will remain at \$10.00. We have been invited to attend meeting at Lewis and Clark Chapter on December 11. Bring DVD's for Veterans to the December Meeting.
2. Steve Baldwin: Motion to donate \$100.00 to Bowling for Veterans– Motion PASSED.
3. Martin White: Sworn in as VP of FDL.
4. Charles Lilly: Knight Essay will be presented by December 1, 2013. David Christian is handling Teacher of the Year.
5. Keith Morris: Wreaths Across America will be On December 14, 2013 at Jefferson Barracks.

Old Business: Fundraising at the Family Arena will resume in Nov / Dec – Look for Emails and respond to volunteer. New Chapter trying to start up in western St. Charles and Lincoln County.

New Business: Ron Hauser was sworn in as “49th” member of FDL. Keith Morris received Supplement. Michael Snyder received Supplement. Martin White nominated as Vice Pres for the remainder of 2013. Passed by majority vote.

Meeting Closed at 8:30 P.M.

November 14, Program: Bill Grote – “Patriot Lt James Milligan”.

December 9, Program: Trivial Pursuit



25 Members and Guest in Attendance:

Steve Baldwin, Millan Paddock, Ron Hauser, David Hoffman, Carol Wiseman, Dale Wiseman, John Rush, Keith Morris, Barbara Morris, Sylvia Grote, Bill Grote, Jim Borgman, Diane Borgman, Evelyn Bunch, James Bunch, Bob Raines, Vera Raines, Charles Lilly, Dennis Hahn, Charles T. “Pat” Jefferson, Jeff Sullivan, Michael Snyder, Marty White, Mimi White, Paul Smith

Announcements:

Pat Jefferson returned to FDL after recovering Quadruple Bypass Surgery.





Revolutionary War Quotes

"Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes."

General William Prescott

Yesterday is History. Tomorrow is Mystery?? Today is a Blessing!!!

"CARPE-DIEM"

Looking forward to seeing everyone on Monday...

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