

ELIJAH FISHER'S DIARY

1778

March 19th: There was orders that there should be three men sent from each Reg't to jine His Excelences Gen. Washington's Life Gard and Seth Lovil was sent out of our Company but after being there a fue days and did not like to be there he said, but I sepose that he was afeared that the Reg't would go to Rhode Island which they did afterward and he could not go with them and he come back to the Company and I was sent in the room (1) of him.

March 30th: I jined the Life Gard and liked being there much better than being in the Ridgement let them go where they would.

April 4th: There come nuse that Gen. Lee (2) was come to the Lines and there was a Corp'l and Eight men sent to the Lines to guard his baggage to Head Quarters.

April 5th: Gen. Washington with all his attendance went to the Lines to meet Cen. Lee and to accompany him to Head Quarters where they arrived at two of the Clock in the afternoon where they was received with a kind salute of arms, drums, fifes and band of musick.

May 6th: We had Rejoicing on the account of the French declaring for us Independence and the howle [whole] of the Continental Army was ordered to three larm [alarm] posts in the senter and the army was all around us at there several stations and there was a grand harbar (3) bilt and all the Commissioners were envited to dine with his Excelency. Our gard gave the first fire then thirteen cannon then the fire began at the rite of the army and went through the howl line and fired three rouns apeace the artillery discharged forty-four cannon and it was followed with three chears for the King of France and the three for the Friendly Powers of Europe and three chears for the Thirteen United States of America and his Exelency gave orders that every prisoner should have his freedom that belonged to the Continental army that they might taste the pleasur of the day.

April 15th: The Ingen [Indian] Chief come to Head Quarters to congratelate with his Excelency and also dined with him.

April 18th: One hundred and two of the Life Guard and three thousands of the army was sent as a Detachment under the command of the Right Honorable Maj. Cen. Delefiatee (4) and we marched to Barronhill Chirch and there we made a halt and formed a line of battle and our gard lay on the frunt of the party by the Cen. Marques Quarters. Sixteen miles from Valleyford (5).

April 20th: This morning at nine of the clock there come an express to the General Quarters and brough entelegence that the howl of Cen. How's (6) Army was advansing upon us in three colloms one collom in the senter to meet us one collom coming round on our left wing marching up the Delwar river and though the Crooked Hills and so crossing the country towards Schookills [Schuylkill] River to cute off our retreat, the other striving to flack us on our right wing. The nuse alarmed is instantly and we took a road that lead to Jones's Forde at Schookill river (for we were obliged to retreat instantly) and the enemy was so nigh on our right flank that we could see them plain and our howl party crossed the river and the warter was up to our middle and run very swift so that we were obliged to hold to each other to keep the corrent from sweeping is away and all in a fluster expecting the enemy to fire in upon is for we could see them plain but the reason was they could not git thare cannon to bare on us but we got all safe across without the loss of any save fore or five of our party that the enemy lite horse cut to pieces and our flanks killed three of there lite draghoons and four of there granadears (7). After we had crossed the river we retired to Gulf Mills where we remained till two in the afternoon and then we marched to Sweed's ford and there stayed all night after a march of twelve miles.

April 21st: We crossed Sweed's ford and marching down to the same place of ground where we was the day before (Barrenhill Chirch nine miles.

April 22nd: We at four of the clock in the morning, left Barrenhill Chirch and marched derect back to Sweed Ford there stays till twelve of the clock then return to camp after the march of twenty-two miles.

April 30th: I unhapely falls in to Schoolkill River enliked to have drowned.....

June 4th: There was a spye hung on the grand parade from the enemy he formerly belonged to our army and was an ensign in the Second Pencelvania Ridgt. His name was Thomas Church .(8)

June 9th: Lady Washington left Head Quarters to return to Virginey.

June 1st : Our army left there huts and went into tents.

June 1st: The Regelars (9) left Philadelphia and some part of our army took possession of the city and Gen. Lee's Division marched for the eastward.

June 19th: The remander of the army left Valy Forde and marched and crossed Solevan's [Sullivan's] Bridge over Schoolkill and pitched tents.

June 20th: We left Schoolkill and marched and come into Bucks County after marching fifteen miles and pitched our tents.

June 21st: We left Buck's County at ten of the Clock in the four noon and after ten miles march we arrived at Carrell's [Coryell's] ferrey (10) and the Life gard crossed at four in the afternoon and marched to Mr. Haises in Hunberton's [Hunterdon] County where his Excelency had his Quarters and pitched our tents.

June 23rd: Capt. Gibbs, Leut. Grimes, four Serj. and four Corpl and seventy-two men of the gard jined Col. Morgan's party and went down to the lines and the rest of the gard went with the Baggage and Leut. Colsare (11) had the Command and at four in the afternoon we left Mr. Haises and marched all night and mett with a good deal of dificulty in giting along (12).

June 24th: We come to Kittorn and pitched our tents after a very fetigeing march. We left Kittown at nine of the Clock A.M. and marched and come to Rocky Hill and pitched our tents there a while.

June 28th: On Sunday our army had the engagement with the British at Monmouth Court-house where Gen. Lee went contrary to orders but our army drove them and if that he had managed according to his orders it was likely in all probablity we should have taken the howl or the bigar part of there army It was a vary hot day and a grate many died a drinking water.

July 1st: We left Rocky Hill and marched and come to Brunswick where Head Quarters was pitched our tents.

July 4th: We selebrated the Independence of America and the howl army paraded and at the right of every brigade there was a field piece placed, then was the signal given for the howl army to fire an they fired one round apiece and the artillery discharged thirteen cannon we gave three cheats, &c. At night his exelency and the gentlemen and ladys had a bawl at Head Quarters with grate pompe.

July 7th: We left Brunswick and come to Schots Plains [Scotch Plains] and there Capt. Gibbs and he rest of he Guard that left us at Carels farrey [Coryell's Ferry] jined us again after a march of nine miles from Brunswick.

July 8th: We leaves tile Schots Plains we marched in the morning marching through Springfield and the township of York an come to the Stone house piket [Plains] we pitched our tents after the march of twenty-six miles.

July 10th: We marched at three of the Clock in the morning and after eighteen miles we come to Head Quarters two miles from Primmiss [Paramus] Chirch and there we pitched our tents.

July 14th; All the army but Gen. Marque's [LaFayette] Division marched and Sargt. Edward and twenty-fore of the Guard have still for his Excelency remained at Prurmass [Paramus] . the rest of the Guard marched on and come to Col. Haze's three miles from Things Farrey [King's Ferry] and encamped after the march of twenty-fore miles from Purmass [Paramus].

July 16th: His Exelency come up with us and jined us.

July 19th: We left Col. Hazes and marched and crossed the North [Hudson] River at King's Farrey and marched bye Crumford [Crompond] and after thirteen miles marched we pitched our tents at Cotalan's [Cortland] Manor.

July 20th: We marched at three of the Clock in the afternoon and crossing Cotalan [Cortland] bridge and after twelve miles march we come to Mr. Right's mills (13)on the age [edge] of the White Plains.

July 25th Head Quarters moved down to the White Plains and the guard likewise and pitched our tents and there remained some time.

August 17th: There was a man shot near Head Quarters for enlisting seven times and taken bountys.

August 21st: There was sixteen men to be executed some for desarsion and some for enlesting numbers of times but for there good conduct and the enterseding of there officers his excelency was pleased to pardon them (14).

September 16th: We left the White Plains and marching through North Castel [Castle] and after sixteen miles march we come to Mr. Ragemand in Bedford.

September 18th: We left Bedford and marched and come to Fredexburg [Fredericksburg] after a march of fifteen miles and pitched our tents.

September 19th: We left Fredexburg and after thirteen miles mamh we pitched our tents at Mr. Reed's field in Oblong (15).

September 25th: Head Quarters and likewise the guard left Oblong and come to Mr. Cain's in Fredexbugh for miles and pitched our tents.

September 2 _th: A large detachment under the command of Gen. Lord starling (16) marched for the Jarseys Capt. Levenston (17) his addecamp [Aide-dc-camp].

September 30th: His Exelency and his Addecamps went to Fishkill.

October 1st: I had a pass for five days to go to New Miliford (Mr. N. Fisher) to see a relation of mine.

October 5th: As I was returning from New Milford, missed my way which detaned me.

October 6th: I returned and jines the Guard again at my return I finds an alteration in the dress of my mates. I asked one of them J. Herrick it seams as though there had been an alteration since I have been gon. He said that he had money sent to him that he sent for (now I know that he has sent for som money from his father). I said that I was glad of it for I hoped that we should not be so putout for money to bye things with now and that you will be able to pay me that trifill you owe me (sixteen dollars). He said he hoped be could. Presently in comes one or two more I said have you had money sent you from home tool fear thay you have taken some other way to git it than that. The Herrick said that as J. Herrin was out after things for the General's famely (now Herrin was one that was sent to bye things for the General's famely and he had a horse and a pass to go where he could git such things as was wanted for the General's famely) he come to an old Tory's house and they would not let him have say thing and he sees several things that they wanted so when he come home he gos to his messmates (18) and tales them and they gos and robed him of several things. I said that whether he be a Tory or not if it should be found out (which such things as robbery seldim is) some or all of you will be hung which surprised them vary much but there was no more heard about it.

October 8th: His Excelency and Addecamp returned from Fishkill to Mr. Cane's.

October 17th: In remembrance of Gen. Burgoin's (19) defeet the day was selebrated with the firing of cannon and in throing of skilokets (20) in the are [air] thirteen cannon was fired then they begun to through the skilokets and a merry day they had too at the park of artillery. At night some of the Guard was a going to the park Col. Harrison's waiter was a coming from there under swift way run over one of them which hurt him so that he died the same night.

October 18th: John Lovjoy (21) the man that was killed by the horse was desently buried. There was then four that was said that robed the Tory brought to an exemanation" John Herron, John Herrick, Moses Walton and Elias Brown. The same day John Stogdel one of the guard was to Mr. Howlens and he was a telling him how that he had been robed so and so at such a time and that the liver that the men had on that robed him was a round hatter with a piece of Bare Skin (22) on it but they ware all blacked and that he had made enquirey through the army but could not find any that wore such hats but the guard asked him if he had seen any of the guard more fuller of money than usuel he said he did not know but he had but did not know how they come by it. The man said he knew that they would be hung if they were found out and told Stogdal that if he would find the things and put them where he mite find them be would say no more about it. Stogdal gos home to the guard and was consulting with one of his messmates about it for they had destroyed a part of the things and if they did anything about it it would bring it all out. In the meen while there come Mr. Howage [Mr. Price Howlandj] to the officers of the Guard on suspicion that some one had robed him (for they robed one on Friday night and the other Monday night [John Hoag]) and as they was a talking about it one of the waiters come and told them that Stogdal knew something about them. He was called and exemened but tryed to hide what he could but they told him that if he did not tell all he knew about it he would be taken up on suspicion and fare accordingly then he thought it would be known and if he did not tell what he knew it would bring him into dificulty so he up and tells all that he knew consarning the affare then they sends and confined Herrick and Brown and sends Sergt, Harris with two lite horse men into the country after Walton that was not well and he was abed and asleep and they tells the wooman that they wanted a candle and so they gos up chamber and stands over him with there swords drawn in there hands and awakes him and told him that he was there prisoner and he gits up and had a pare of dearskin breeches that they had got to Mr. Howlens so they fectes him to the guard and confinds him with the others and Herrin was out and having a general pass they ware afrade that he would hear of it so they sends to a place where he did sometimes reside but he being not there they returned.

October 19th: The next morning Leut. Livinstone (23) was to the park of artillery (Herrin) in his return from the country come by there) sends a man with him for fear he would make his escape so he was handed to Head Quarters and confined with the others. The same day they were examend and Herrick said that he was loth to go after they had set out and gon a little way he would fane have had them gon back but they told him that if he did not go that they would dispatch him for they would not have him enform against them so he was obliged to go so he turned States Evedence against the others so after examination was found guilty and what things that could be found that they had not despoised too and where they had payd any dets they was obliged to restore it to them again and they to the ones they got it from, then the same day they was all sent to the purvey (24)Guard.

October 22nd. They all had there Tryel and Herrin, Walton and Brown was sentenced to be hung and Herrick to have a hundred lashes. Walton made his escape from the Purvey gard and Herrin was hung at Fishkill and Brown (25) made his escape from the gard that was sent to gard him to the place of execution to New Milford to the part of the army that lay there. Herrik (26) was carried to Fredixburg and had a hundred lashes.

October 23rd: Gen. Patesons, Gen. Huntington and Gen. Nixson's Brigades marched to Hartford save Col. Parson's Regt and that went onward.

October 24th: The Gard marcht down to Fredixburg to see a man hung for robing. He was executed at eleven in the four noon, Thomas Clover by name and there was five whipt one hundred lashes apeace all save one for robing two of them belonged to the Gard, John Herrick and Joseph Timberlek (27) was for striking an officer.

October 25th: The Pensilvania troops marcht for the Jarseys.

October 26th: Cen Nocks [Knox] parke of artillery marched for the Jarseys.

November 28th: His Excelency and also his Gard left Fredixburg and marched for the Jarseys and at night we pitched our tents by Clane's Tavern in Phillips patten after a march of sixteen miles.

November 29th: We left Patten at seven of the four noon and at five in the afternoon we pitched our tents by Mr. Lents in Piekskill two miles from the King's Farret after the march of seventeen miles.

November 30th: Gen Nock's park of artillery crossed at King's Farrey. we lay still.

December 1st: The Gard left Piekshill and crossed at King's Farrey marched on to Col. Hazes and encampt after marching two and three is five miles.

December 2nd: We left Col. Hazes and after seventeen miles march we come to Mr. Jones Baggat in Romepawe [Rampo, New York] and pitched our tents.

December 3rd: We left Romepawe and after twenty miles march we come to Mr. Lott's in Prequannackit [Pequannock, New Jersey].

December 4th: We left Mr. Goods and after twenty miles march we come to Mr. Lott's in Troy and pitched our tents.

December 5th: We left Troy and marched and come to Morristown.

December 6th: We left Morristown and after twenty-three miles march we come to Mr. Wallaces where his Exelency had his winter Quarters and likewise the gard built huts and had there winter quarters in Barringtown [now Bernardstown].

December 9th: We begun to git timber for the huts and to work on them.

December 16th: We finished our huts and we left our tents and moved into them

December 30th: There was a Continental thanksgiving day ordered by Congress.

1779

February 10th: I makes an agreament with Mr. J. Wallais for to clear a peace of land for him, the condishons are as follows: I was to clear so much land fit for mooing and in my fulfilling my oblegation Mr. Wallais was to give me one hundred dollars paper currency but if Head Quarters moved before I had finished he was to pay for what I had dun according to the agreament.

April 22nd: The French and Spanish Embasendor arrived at Head Quarters and they was received with selute of arms and drumes and fifes and band of musick and wellcome by his Exelency (28).

April 30th: The army was reviewed by the two Embasendors on the grand parade.

May 2nd: Both the French and Spanish Embasendors left Head Quarters at five in the morning for Philedelphia and as they past our army (they being on the grand parade) they were seluted by the firing of thirteen cannons and a desent seute of arms by our army and his Exelency accompanied them on there way.

May 6th: There was a farst [fast] ordered by Congress and there was a sermon preached by Mr. Armstrong at Head Quarters.

May 12th: The King of the Ingens [Indians] with five of his Nobles to attend him come to Head Quarters to congrattulate with his Exelency.

June 1st: I settels with Mr. Wallas and he gave me eighty dollars.

June 4th: The gard left Berington [Bernardstown] at twelve O'clock for New Winsor [Windsor] and after twenty miles march we come to Mr. Kimballs in Morristown.

June 5th: We left Mr. kimball's and after fourteen miles march we come to Potewonick [Pequannock] and pitched our tents.

June 6th: We left Petwonick and after twenty miles march we come to Gen. Arsell's at Kingwood and come up with his exelency (29).

June 7th; We left Kingwood and come to Smith Cove at Head Quarters after a march of twenty five miles and pitched our tents and staid till

June 21st: We left Smith's Cove and after fourteen miles march we come to Mr. Ellis in New Windsor where the Gen. had his Quarters and pitched our tents and staid there till.

June 27th: Was Sunday and there was a Sermon preached at Head Quarters by Mr, Hitchcock and he took his text in the twenty-seventh chapter of Job at the fifth Varce you may find the words.

July 6th: There was one man killed and twenty wounded by thunder in Gen. Patteson Bregade.

July 16th: At night Gen. Wane (30) with a party of the infantry surprised the enemy and took Stoney Point fort from them and bewixt five and six hundred prisoners.

July 20th: After putting all the baggage aboard the sloop we left New Winsor at four in the afternoon and went by water to West Point and staid aboard that night twelve miles.

July 21st: We onlodged the baggage and pitched our tents at Morses Folley [Moore's Falls] at little distance from West Point Fort.

August 6th: There was two more deserted from the Gard; Timothy Smith and Levi Deen. Serjt. Edwards was sent after them but found them not.

August 15th: We had a Sermon preached at Head Quarters by Mr. Armstrong and he took his text in the one hundred and twenty-sixth psalm at the fifth varce you have these words "They that sow in teers shall reep in joy."

August 29th: We had the Resolves of Congress of the Nineteenth Instance read to us that the solgers [soldiers] wages should be ten dollars more added to these wages and what clothes they had not received that they should have them and confirmed by General Orders.

September 15th: His Exelency Gen. Washington and Gen. Green with there Addecamps went to New Winsor the honourable Chelevier LeDeLuzerne and Embasender from the Coart of France and accompened him to Head Quarters at West Point and when they arrived they are received and welicomed with the selutes of drums and fifes and the gard present there arms. They arrived at three in the afternoon and at five there was thirteen cannon fired from the fort on account of his arrival.

September 16th: His Exelency and the Embasendor went and vewed all the fort and battery that were on West Point and Sarjt. Harris and ten of the Guard went over the river to Gen. DePotales [Duportail] and carrys a markee and several other things and pitched the markee and at five of the Clock in the afternoon Gen. Washington and the Embaendor and several other gen. and officers with them arrived there and dined.

September 17th: The Embasender left West Point at eight of the clock in the four noon for Philedelphia and was accompanied by his Exelency and addecamps as far as New Winsor and returned.

September 23rd: Leut. Colefax and the part of the guard that left the guard at Barington for East Town they arrived there the sixth instant with the Baggage and left there the twentyth of Sept. and after the march of an hundred miles they come to New Winsor the twenty-third and left the baggage and come to West Point.

October 1st: The North Carolina troops left West Point and come to New Winsor and incampt.

November 15th: One of the guard, John Piller deserted from the guard at West Point.

November 19th: All the Carolina men that belonged to the guard joined there regiment and the Carolina Troops left West Point on there way to Gorja [Georgia] (31).

November 21st: There was three men to be hung for robing and one whipt for Mr. King;s house. Two of them had thee reprove, the other two hung. They belonged to the Carolina Troops and five others whipt.

November 30th: His Exelency and likewise the guard left West Point and come to New Winsor and encampt.

November 31st: We left New Winsor for Morristown and come to Smith's Cove.

December 1st: We left Smith's Cove and come to Wingwood eighteen miles

December 3rd: We left Wingwood and come to Mr. Good's in Reading

December 4th: We left Rocheway and come to Morristown where Head Quarters was and pitched our tents.

December 6th: We begun to git timber for our huts and to work on them

December 9: We finished our huts and left our tents and moved into them

December 23rd The man that was sent after our clothes the seventeenth instant returned.

December 31st: Lady Washington arrived at Head Quarters at Morristown.

1780

January 7th: I had my discharge from the Corps of Guards,

Transcribers note: The balance of the journal concerns Elijah return to civilian life, then reenlisting, and finally returning the Massachusetts and ending his army career. Although very grateful that Private Fisher kept this diary, it is unfortunate that he was not in the Guard when it participated in the Battles of Connecticut Farms, King's Bridge and Yorktown. His input would have been invaluable.

Footnotes:

- (1) The word “room” in the 18th century was used as “in place of”.
- (2). Major General Charles Lee, then the second in command of the Continental Army.
- (3) Again, 18th Century word usage - “Harbar” - a “grand stand”.
- (4) Major General, the Marquis de LaFayette
- (5) Valley Forge
- (6) Lieutenant General, Sir William Howe, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America.
- (7) Granadears: Grenadiers - Each British Regiment had one company of Grenadiers, considered to be their best soldiers.
- (8) Elijah didn't get his fact straight. The hanging took place, but the convicted spy was Thomas Shanks, formerly an ensign of the Tenth Pennsylvania Regiment. He had been cashiered October 12th, 1777, for stealing shoes, he then went over to the British. There was no formal Court Martial, the facts and his confession was enough.
- (9) The Regulars is the name most Americans gave to the British army.
- (10) Coryell's Ferry is now Lambertville, New Jersey.
- (11) Lieutenant William Colfax - - See his biography on our web site.
- (12) General Washington wrote to General Benedict Arnold that the army had been impeded by a heavy rain. See our article on our web site “Joint Operations” which details the Guard and Colonel Morgan's famed Corps of Riflemen.
- (13) Right's Mill: This was the mill of Rueben Wright, near present Kensico, New York. The Wright home is where the three captors of Major John Andre took him.
- (14) According the General George Washington's General Orders of August 15th, 1778, those scheduled for Execution were David Potter, Solomon Lynes, Alexander Graham, Nicholas Fitzgerald, Zechariah Ward, Richard Burk, Michael Carmen, William McLaughlin, John Jenkins, John Craige and Neil Megonigle now under sentence of death, the ten first for desertion &c, and the last for wounding an Officer in the execution of his office.
- (15) Oblong is a tract of land still known by that name owing to its physical shape.
- (16) Gen. Lord Starling: Major General William Alexander, Lord Sterling.
- (17) Probably Captain W. Livingston.
- (18). Messmates: A small group of soldiers, 6 to 8, that shared a tent and cooked their own meals.
- (19) Burgoins - Lieutenant General John Burgoyne. He surrendered his army at Saratoga, New York.

Footnotes (Continued):

(20) skilokets = “Sky Rockets”?

(21) Private John Lovejoy transferred from the Eleventh Massachusetts Regiment to the Commander-in Chief Guards on March 19th, 1778 at Valley Forge.

(22) This vague description of the bear skin crested helmet worn by the Guard also shows it as the only detachment in the Continental Army to wear one at the time.

(23) 1st Lieutenant Henry Livingston - See his biography on our web site.

(24) Purvey Guard - The Provost Guard - The first Military Police.

(25) Elias Brown, 20 years old at the time was a lifer. He transferred from the 5th Connecticut Regiment on August 1st, 1778. On September 7th, 1781, he returned to the Guard, was pardoned and promoted to Fife-Major? Unfortunately, no details of why have survived. He served until November 3rd, 1783, when the Guard was disbanded.

(26) Private John Herrick received the punishment of 100 lashes on October 24th. He returned to duty in early January and continued to serve in the Guard until it was disbanded on November 3rd, 1783. When he left the guard he was designated a 3rd Corporal.

(27) Private Joseph Timberlake was Court Martialled on October 15th, 1778. In the General Orders of October 23rd, the following description of the charges against him were given: Joseph Timberlake, a Soldier of His Excellency's guard was tried for knocking down Lieut. David Zeigler when he was in the way of his duty. The Court are of opinion that altho' it appears that the Prisoner did not knock Lieut. Zeigler down, yet as it appears he struck him, his Conduct was highly blameable and unjustifiable being a breach of Article 5th., section 18th. of the Articles of War and sentenced to receive one hundred lashes on his bare back. Upon recovering from his punishment he returned to duty and served until the Guard was disbanded on November 3rd, 1783. At the same General Court Martial of the Line., Henry Despert, Daniel Thompson, John Kidder, John Cole, Asa Adams, Samuel Wortman, Jonathan More, Davis Brown and Edward Wiley of the Commander in Chief's guard were tried for going out secretly with their side Arms in the night of the seventh instant with a design of being revenged on Captain Van Heer's men for confining some of the Guard and acquitted of the charge exhibited against them; Also Thomas Piper of His Excellency's guard was tried for destroying and moving Mr. Kean's House; It appearing to the Court that said Piper carried away some of the boards after the house was pulled down; but from circumstances they are of opinion he is undeserving of any more punishment than what he has already received by confinement. The Commander in Chief confirms the opinion of the Court and orders the aforementioned Prisoners to be released and return to their duty.

(28) The Ambassadors were M. Gerard, the French Minister and Don Juan Marailles from Spain.

(29) General Robert Erskine.

(30) General Anthony Wayne

(31) This simple statement is significant in that Elijah uses the plural when he refers to the Carolina Troops returning to their original regiments. Our records show only one, John Tipper. Obviously there were more.