

# ALLEN McLANE

*Patriot, Soldier, Spy, Port Collector*



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*Published by the Delaware Heritage Press in conjunction with the Allen McLane Public Symposium – Wesley College; Dover, Delaware – October 25, 2014; Booklet revised 2016*

ALLEN McLANE  
PATRIOT, SOLDIER, SPY,  
PORT COLLECTOR

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Published by  
THE DELAWARE HERITAGE PRESS

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Second Printing, 2016



The Delaware Heritage Press is a branch of the Delaware Heritage Commission;  
121 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard North; Dover, Delaware 19901

Website: <http://heritage.delaware.gov/>

Telephone: 302-744-5077

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*Cover Illustration – Portrait of Allen McLane by Ethel P. B. Leach, after Charles Willson Peale, 1942. Peale's original portrait hangs in the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. In 1942, Mrs. Mabel Lloyd Ridgely, historian and patron of the arts in Delaware, arranged for Ethel P.B. Leach, an accomplished artist who had, among other commissioned works, painted portraits of several Delaware governors, to paint a copy of the Peale portrait to be displayed in the State of Delaware. It hung for several years in the Hall of Records and then went into a collection of paintings in a State Museum storage facility. In 2010, in the face of increased interest in the life and military career of McLane, the Delaware State Senate and the Delaware Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs arranged to have the portrait hung in the first floor hallway of Legislative Hall, next to a portrait of McLane's notable son, Louis McLane (reproduced here through the courtesy of the Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs).*

## DEDICATION

This booklet is dedicated to all the unknown, forgotten, overlooked, and under-appreciated veterans of the Revolutionary War and all of the other wars and conflicts that were fought to secure our freedom and independence.



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# AN INTRODUCTION TO ALLEN McLANE

By Kim Burdick\*

“...from the time of his joining the Continental army, I can testify, that he [McLane] distinguished himself highly, as a brave and enterprising officer...”

~ General George Washington, 1783.

Long ago and far away, in the years of the Bicentennial, I knew the stories of Allen McLane. I lived in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, surrounded by Valley Forge, Barren Hill, Fort Washington, and Chestnut Hill. The exploits of Allen McLane were trickster tales told to amuse and amaze wide-eyed children and credulous adults. McLane was the Revolutionary War's Br'er Rabbit.

A generation later, thanks to the efforts of Tom Welch, a retired Wesley College administrator, and the scholars whose essays are included in this book, we are beginning to separate fact from fiction. The Delaware Division of Libraries has recently published a LibGuide entitled *Allen McLane: Delaware Revolutionary War Hero*. The LibGuide provides a wide variety of information about the Smyrna, Delaware patriot, including an extensive biography, reading recommendations, a McLane family quiz, quotes and a listing of sites in Delaware and the nation associated with McLane. This collection of essays printed by the Delaware Heritage Commission and its related symposium, supported by the Delaware Humanities Forum, are pieces of that larger puzzle.

Andrew West once described Allen McLane as “a rascal, patriot, spy, fearless fighter.”<sup>1</sup> Yes, McLane was a trickster hero, but he was also a farmer, soldier, businessman, member and Speaker of the Delaware legislature, privy counselor to the governor, and judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati, an avid abolitionist, and a supporter of the Federalist Party. He had a wife and many children, and he lived here, in Kent County, Delaware.

There are many reasons to be proud of Allen McLane and to celebrate his life, yet Allen McLane's story is both broader, deeper, and more important than a simple look at one man's story. Studying his life and times gives us an opportunity to explore the nature of historiography, the importance of oral tradition, and a chance to examine how we perceive the past. I tell my students that history is like looking through a kaleidoscope. Each person will see something different, and if you look through the same kaleidoscope a second time, the pieces will form a different pattern. This is doubly true of the life of Allen McLane.

We hope our collective efforts will inspire professional and amateur historians, young and old to become engaged in research and writing about Allen McLane and other forgotten heroes of all the wars. As British historian Geoffrey Elton once wrote: “history is an unending search for the truth, with the only certainty at each man's end that there will be more to be said and that, before long, others will say it.”

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\* Kim Burdick holds Masters Degrees in American Folk Culture from the Cooperstown Graduate Programs, and in Organizational Theory and Culture from the College of Urban Affairs of the University of Delaware. She is Chairman of both the American Revolution Round Table of Northern Delaware and the George Washington Society, and was the 225th Anniversary Chairman of the National Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (now W3R-NHT).

## REFERENCE NOTES

1. *Delaware State News*, Dover, DE, Sunday, July 3, 2011.
2. *Defender Of The Faith: Geoffrey Elton And The Philosophy Of History*. Geoffrey Roberts. Department of History, University College, Cork. *Chronicon* 2 (1998) R1: 1-22. ISSN 1393-5259. <http://www.ucc.ie/chronicon/elton.htm>.

# PREFACE: THE ODYSSEY IN SEARCH OF THE ALLEN McLANE STORY

By Tom Welch

I woke up at 3:00 a.m., just as the clock was changing to 2:00 a.m., the temporal end of summer. I was pondering on a question that consumed me for the next hour: “How did this compelling interest to know more about the military career and the life of Colonel Allen McLane become so intrusive into my consciousness that it can truly be referred to as a passion?”

The very seed of this passion was initiated on Wednesday, September 18, 2008, when Beverly Laing, Supervisor for the museums at the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, called ten of us historical interpreters into the House Chamber at the Old State House in Dover. She informed us that a performance of a historical play entitled “Fully, Freely and Entirely” by Nate Davidson was planned for Delaware Day, December 7, 2008. It was to be a reenactment of the Dover convention at which Delaware had become the first state to ratify the newly-adopted U.S. Constitution on December 7, 1787. She asked me to be a member of the cast, playing the part of one of the 30 delegates. My character was to take part in a discussion with one of the key members of the convention, Gunning Bedford, Jr., who had also represented Delaware at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Bedford, to be portrayed by Curt Stickel, and my character were to carry on a discussion regarding the small state versus large state concerns that had resulted in the so-called “Great Compromise,” the mechanism by which the size of a state’s delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives is based on population, while each state has equal representation in the U.S. Senate, regardless of population. Beverly suggested that I choose one of the other 29 delegates to portray.

We were seated in the House chamber, and it happened that I was directly in front of the speaker’s desk. On the desk was a placard reading ALLEN McLANE, SPEAKER. I had noticed just a few days earlier that the list of 30 deputies to the Ratification Convention did, in fact, include the name of Allen McLane. I asked Beverly if it would be appropriate for me to portray him. She suggested that I do a little research and get back to her in a couple of days and the decision could then be made.

The next morning, determined to quickly resolve the identity of this historic figure as yet unknown to me, I found on-line an article from the October, 1956, issue of *American Heritage* Magazine entitled “Allan McLane, Unknown Hero of the Revolution.” Since the first name was spelled “Allan” rather than “Allen,” I thought it might be another person with a similar name. But I proceeded to read the article, which had been written by Fred Cook. It started out with a stirring adventure that held me in rapt attention as I read the next ten pages describing the daring and audacious exploits and military success of this amazing character. Since the article referred to his home as “Duck Creek Crossroads,” the old name for the nearby town of Smyrna, Delaware, I was sure he must be the correct person. I found myself spellbound in a way that I rarely am when reading non-fiction. I was impressed that the article had been published in a nationally-recognized magazine and that it was written as historical truth, not fiction, but I found Cook’s account of McLane’s life hard to believe for two reasons.



First, I found some of the episodes describing some of his military adventures and narrow escapes incredible. Also, as a history nut who has lived in Delaware for over 45 years, I found it hard to believe that I had never heard about McLane or any of his exploits during the Revolutionary War.

I shared with other members of the cast my enthusiasm about the prospect of portraying this larger-than-life character and my astonishment upon learning the details of his remarkable life. In the next several weeks the other cast member, Curt Stickel, and I provided some notes about McLane's exploits to the staff of Dover's First State Heritage Park to be inserted into the play. This led to McLane being not just a bit part supporting the major role intended for Gunning Bedford, but assuming equal standing in the script. This idea was embraced by all parties and added an additional dimension of excitement to the ratification play. So, as announced, the play went on and an audience of fifty persons was introduced to this larger-than-life Revolutionary War hero from Duck Creek Crossroads.

Over the next few weeks I began to look for books about McLane and to search the internet for whatever I could find about him. I discovered that he had owned two homes in Smyrna, Delaware (known until 1804 as Duck Creek Crossroads), and that there is a Delaware Public Archives historic marker in front of one of them, which still stands on Mount Vernon Street in Smyrna. So I drove there one very cold day in January, 2009, to seek out the house. I stopped at the intersection of Main and Mount Vernon Streets and stopped in a beauty shop on the corner to inquire. There were seven ladies in the shop. I asked if they could tell me where the McLane historic home was. They all said they had no idea. So I asked if they knew of this man sometimes referred to as "The Unknown Hero of the (American) Revolution." None knew of him. So, being slightly puzzled and not ready to abandon my mission, I asked where else I might go in my search for the historic home. They suggested the library and the museum, both of which were three blocks south on Main Street.

Even though it was cold and I was only wearing a light jacket, I walked briskly to the museum. It was closed for repairs. I went to the library, just a few doors away, where I asked the four ladies working at the main desk. They did not know who McLane was, either. One of the ladies, seeing my disappointment, suggested that I might try City Hall, only two blocks away. So I braced myself, since that would be against the wind, and trudged through the snow to the next destination. In that short walk I determined that I was going to continue to be optimistic that I would soon have the answer. I entered City Hall hoping for the best, yet fearing the worst. I asked the four women working at the reception desk about McLane and his home. Alas, none of the four could help me. One of the ladies must have noticed my demeanor and suggested that I go upstairs to the City Planner's Office. Surely the planning director would know about historic houses. So I went upstairs with renewed but diminished hope. When I got there I was introduced to Janet Vinc, the Director of Planning, who handed me a copy of the Smyrna Bicentennial booklet, which had been published to commemorate the town's 1968 bicentennial. As I opened the booklet to a page marked with a slip of paper, two pictures of historic homes fell out and I was gazing at a portrait of Col. Allen McLane, who was featured in a three-page article in the booklet. It was as though the heavens opened, just as they had when Moses received the plaque with the commandments or Don Quixote defeated his dragons. The Director then gave me directions to the houses, both on Mount Vernon Street, across the street from each other and only about one-and-a-half blocks from City Hall. Such is life and Americans' knowledge and appreciation of their history, both national and local.

I read the historic marker and scanned both houses, determined to meet the owners and, if possible, visit the homes and find out anything I could about Allen McLane and his family and their life in Smyrna. I have since talked to the owners of both homes, have visited one and have been invited to visit the other. As I drove

the twelve miles back to Dover that day, I had a wry smile on my face the whole way. It was becoming clear to me that the process of uncovering information about Allen McLane was going to be a long and arduous, yet a most satisfying, journey.

### *Follow-up: Three Years Later*

After the bridge over Smyrna's Lake Como was dedicated on September 20, 2012, and renamed in honor of Allen McLane, I did a follow-up survey, including Smyrna's town hall and public library. I asked 18 persons if they knew who Allen McLane was, and only two said they knew of him. So the job is not yet done.

### *The Master Plan*

My determination to try to set the record straight and to bring the life and achievements of Allen McLane to the attention of the people of Delaware led to the creation of what I refer to as the "Allen McLane Master Plan." To date there have been a few successful efforts to pay tribute to Allen McLane. In 2010, a copy of the Charles Willson Peale portrait of McLane by well-known Delaware artist, Ethel P.B. Leach, was placed in a very desirable location in the the first-floor hallway of Delaware's Legislative Hall next to a portrait of his son, Louis McLane. In June, 2011, the General Assembly passed a resolution honoring Allen McLane and calling on the citizens of Delaware to find ways to specifically do so. The resolution was signed by Governor Markell on August 15, 2011, in a well-attended ceremony at Dover's Old State House. On September 20, 2012, a plaque honoring McLane was placed at Smyrna's Lake Como Bridge by action of the Delaware Department of Transportation and the Smyrna Town Council.

As a side benefit of my participation in the play, "Fully, Freely and Entirely," I began to receive requests to speak about Allen McLane, or to make a first-person presentation to organizations across the state. As a result of the growing recognition and the increased enthusiasm on the part of dozens, if not hundreds, of Delawareans, I have been honored to present the McLane story over eighty times to almost 3,000 persons.

To better inform myself about his life and military career, I have read every reference that I could find about McLane. The search for more background on him has taken me to the National Archives, Historical Societies in Delaware, Pennsylvania and New York, the David Library of the American Revolution, Hagley Museum and Library and several other libraries and six battlefields. The bibliography in the appendix includes some general history books, but the vast majority at least have a mention of Allen McLane, indicating that he may not have been as unknown as I first thought.

As the recognition of McLane's contributions slowly began to grow, the idea began to emerge of having some kind of event which would bring together scholars, students and the general public. In March, 2013, I approached Kim Burdick, the Director of the Hale Byrnes House and a noted historian, to present the idea, together with a request that the American Revolution Roundtable of Northern Delaware consider becoming a sponsor of "The Allen McLane Symposium." They accepted.

A request was made to Wesley College President William Johnston and Professor Susanne Fox, Head of the History Department, to also be a sponsor. They also accepted and will host the symposium on October 25, 2014.

I approached Richard Carter, Chairman of the Delaware Heritage Commission, to discuss the Symposium

and how the Commission could be of help. His response was that the DHC would be willing to publish a booklet of up to 150 pages if I could round up a team of writers to provide the copy. This booklet is the evidence that the challenge was met. A copy will be distributed to all attendees at the Allen McLane Symposium and, if there are sufficient copies, to all the libraries in the State of Delaware.

### *Where to we go from here?*

It is hoped that persons, whether they be professional historians, students or members of the general public, reading this booklet will become interested enough to take on a research project to add to the knowledge and awareness of the life and military career of this extraordinary patriot. At the June, 2011, meeting in Legislative Hall to draft the Resolution honoring Allen McLane, one member of the committee, being more aware of McLane's contribution to the Cause of Freedom than most, asked the question "what shall we name for this man?" Another member of the committee thought that a statue would be appropriate. One nationally-known author has a book about McLane on his list of projects to be done. Another gentleman has repeatedly commented that Ken Burns needs to be made aware of the potential for an historical film that the McLane's story affords. More than a few have suggested the idea of naming a school for Allen McLane. More recently, a member of the Symposium Planning Committee suggested a very useful project - the raising of funds to digitize the 350 documents in the Allen McLane Papers held at the New York Historical Society. As we have found out in recent years, such an achievement would greatly enhance the research capabilities of historians and the public. Possibly other people across the state have ideas to help make the "Unknown Hero of the Revolution" less unknown.

Since the first printing of this publication in 2014, a new component has been added to the Master Plan—that of having the McLane Papers located in the New York Historical Society digitized. The 350 original documents would then be made available to students and historical researchers anywhere. Contact has already been made with both the Delaware Public Archives and the New York Historical Society regarding this project and how it might best be accomplished.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to offer a special thanks to the writers who joined me in producing this book: John Nagy, Michael Lloyd, Michael Sheehan and Edith McLane Edson. Additional writing assistance was provided by Ann Happoldt and Dan Beck. A very special thanks goes to Kim Burdick, whose advice and counsel and countless hours in all aspects of the “McLane Project” have been invaluable. Additional thanks go to three persons who were involved in proofing and correcting the text: Dr. Deborah Haskell, Robert Briggs and Steven Welch.

While there were many individuals and organizations that provided enormous assistance and aid to the symposium and the book, there is one group that deserves the highest appreciation, the Caesar Rodney Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. Under the leadership of Troy Foxwell, then chapter president, the Caesar Rodney Chapter of the SAR provided valuable financial assistance to meet the matching requirement for the Delaware Humanities Forum grant. Then, when the designated treasurer of the grant funds passed away, Troy stepped up to take on the important responsibility of handling all financial transactions and producing the reports. Thank you CR SAR!

An advisory committee of three key people has given counsel and behind-the-scenes assistance on the symposium and booklet. My appreciation to these three persons: Professor Samuel Hoff of Delaware State University, Professor Stephanie Holyfield of Wesley College, and Thomas Summers of the Delaware Public Archives.

Over the past five years there have been many others who have made a contribution to this project dedicated to the research and dissemination of the life and military career of Allen McLane.

In January, 2009, Janet Vinc, City Planner for the City of Smyrna, gave me a copy of the 1968 Smyrna Bicentennial Booklet which includes a three-page article on McLane and his portrait, the one which now hangs in the first floor of Legislative Hall. She also called to my attention the two homes on Mt. Vernon Street in which the McLane family lived. She also provided photographs of the two homes.

In June, 2009, with help from Leg Hall staff member David Wilkins, Ann Horsey, and Claudia Leister, the portrait was located in storage at Tudor Park. In February, 2010, with the support of Senator Brian Bushweller, Dick Carter and Ann Horsey, the portrait of McLane was hung on the first floor of Legislative Hall next to the portrait of his son, Louis McLane.

Judge Robert Wall allowed me to borrow a copy of the Fred Cook book, *What Manner of Men: Forgotten Heroes of the Revolution*, which featured the stirring military exploits of Allen McLane and seven other outstanding patriotic unsung heroes.

Historical researcher Ann Happoldt has provided several “gems” that she located in the Delaware Archives. The most interesting of her discoveries is an 1848 article from a Gettysburg newspaper telling of the chance meeting between a Captain Evans and Captain McLane shortly after the British vacated Philadelphia in June, 1778. This is presented in an appendix, telling about a meeting between British spymaster John Andre and Washington’s Philadelphia spymaster, Allen McLane.

My son, Steve Welch, located a reference in a CIA website to Allen McLane as a master spy, specifically at the fort at Stony Point on the Hudson River.

A good friend, Tom Spangler, brought to my attention the writings of Masonic author and historian Charles E. Green, who wrote several books on Masons in the Revolutionary War, with Allen McLane being one of the major subjects in three of his books.

Lucas Clawson, Curator at Hagley Museum, provided from the Hagley collection letters from Washington,



Baron von Steuben, the French Admiral De Grasse and a unique, 1824 letter from McLane to Victor du Pont regarding meeting Lafayette on his arrival in New York City for the Marquis's much-heralded reunion with his American Revolutionary fellows.

Fellow HCA interpreter Rich Bazelow located the posting for sale of the McLane historic home in Smyrna on a website dedicated to historic homes. He also found a map entitled "LaFayette at Barren Hill," compiled and drawn by Colonel Carrington relating to the attempt by General Howe to surprise and capture the Marquis.

Curt Stickel, my colleague at the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (HCA) brought me material about McLane's successful voyage to the West Indies, where he was able to convince the French Admiral, the Count de Grasse, to sail his fleet to the Chesapeake.

Chuck Fithian, HCA Archeology Curator, gave me a copy of "The Philadelwareans," a paper by Delaware historian John A. Munroe, giving a historical account of the McLane family.

In June, 2011, Sen. Bushweller, Sen. Bruce Ennis, Dick Carter and Drew Slater drafted and guided through the General Assembly a joint resolution honoring Allen McLane and calling on the citizens of Delaware, and especially Smyrna, to find ways to honor him. Credit for planning and carrying out the Governor's signing event goes to the Governor's Office, Greg Patterson in particular, and the committee that drafted the resolution.

Margaret Dunham, research specialist in the Delaware Public Archives, brought to my attention the papers of W. H. Richardson of Newark New Jersey, a history enthusiast who discovered the Allen McLane story in 1927 and later wrote Professor John Munroe of the University of Delaware, urging him to research and write about McLane, which Dr. Munroe most certainly did, both in such papers as "The Philadelwareans," and in his full-length biography of McLane's son, Louis, entitled *Louis McLane, Federalist and Jacksonian*. I am grateful to Ed and Nancy Simpson, who donated a copy of this fine book, which provided excellent material on both Allen McLane and a subsequent project on his notable son, Louis.

Mike Keen has provided a copy of a 1986 *Smyrna Sun-Times* full-page article on the McLane family of Smyrna by Kathryn Pippin. This article was later included in a publication on families of Smyrna.

Kathie Ludwig, Librarian at the David Library of the American Revolution at Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, has been very helpful in accessing the McLane materials there, especially his pension papers, which showed that McLane was awarded 6,500 acres by the State of Virginia for his services to Lee's (cavalry) Legion.

Mike Lloyd, who has been researching Allen McLane for over twenty years, has shared with me an article he published in a New Jersey Revolutionary War newsletter. He also gave me a copy of the words and music to the song, "Allan McLane," which was written in 1963, to be featured at the Continental Insurance pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. He has loaned me books, one mentioning the Oneida Indians who fought with McLane's light horse cavalry company. He also helped me to obtain an Allen McLane commemorative coin and also called my attention to a three-page article in the June, 1964, *Boys Life Magazine*, entitled "Washington's Favorite Cavalryman." A Dover-area Boy Scout leader, Patrick Weaver, purchased a copy of the magazine online and made it available to me.

Mr. Lloyd also introduced me to Edith McLane Edson, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Allen

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\*Note: The first of Delaware's four state constitutions, adopted in 1776, referred to the lower house of the Delaware General Assembly as "the House of Assembly," a term changed in the next (1792) constitution to "House of Representatives." The upper house was originally referred to as "the Legislative Council," changed in 1792 to "Senate." The first constitution also provided for a chief executive, equivalent to the former royal governor, known as the "president" or "chief magistrate," who was chosen by a vote of both houses of the General Assembly. Another survivor from the colonial period was the "Privy Council," a four-member body, on which McLane served in 1787, consisting of two members appointed from each house of the General Assembly, (from which they were required to resign before assuming their duties on the council, in keeping with the separation of powers principle) and functioning in an advisory capacity to the president. It had first been provided for by Penn's Charter of 1701, and, like most of these terms, derived directly from those in use during the colonial period [from *The Delaware Constitution of 1897—The First One Hundred Years*, pg. 30, edited by Harvey B. Rubenstein, et al, and published by the Delaware State Bar Association in 1997].

McLane, and her husband, Bob Edson, who have been working for over twenty years to gather research on the McLane's life and military career. I want to acknowledge the wise council and materials shared with me by Mrs. Edson. One very special occurrence was when she alerted me to the article, "George Washington and the Extraordinary Allen McLane," by David Hackett Fischer, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Washington's Crossing*. She assisted me in obtaining a copy of the article from the national office of the Society of the Cincinnati.

My daughter, Laura Wisk, found the website that includes the words and music played with graphics of the eight songs that were featured at the New York World's Fair. Arnold Leftwich, a volunteer in the Johnson Victrola Museum, provided a compact disc which plays the music.

In August, 2012, Robert Ryan provided reports from the John Haslet papers housed at the Milford, Delaware, Museum with references to McLane.

David Little, then an Archives researcher, found a reference in William H. Williams's book, *Slavery and Freedom in Delaware, 1639–1865*, reporting that in 1785, Allen McLane, then a member of the Delaware House of Assembly\* introduced a bill to gradually end the slave trade.

A librarian at the Library of Congress, Ida Brudnick, sent me a copy of the article "James Rivington, Tory and Spy," which appeared in a 1959 issue of *The William and Mary Quarterly*. It relates the story of Allen McLane being commissioned by the Board of War in 1781 to go to New York and obtain the stolen British naval signal codes and deliver them to Washington and French Admiral de Grasse.

Deborah Hammond brought me a letter from President Thomas Jefferson to John Dickinson, asking for a character reference on Allen McLane, as Jefferson was faced with deciding whether or not to reappoint McLane to the post of Wilmington Port Collector.

In August, 2014, Dr. Mary Emily Miller, retired DSU professor, brought me references from John Daigler's new book, which tells in some detail the role that Allen McLane played in the final months of the War—specifically his trips to Haiti and New York.

Also, I want to acknowledge the support in so many ways by so many members of the staffs of the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs and the Delaware Public Archives.

I want to thank Chris Mlynarczyk and John Foskey of the 1st Delaware Regiment for help and advice.

When I needed advice on formatting the computer for the writing process or maneuvering through Microsoft Word or Google featuresw, I turned to my colleague, Chris Hall, for expert assistance.

As the press of publication deadlines approached, a friend of Allen McLane, Bob Briggs, offered his help in editing several chapters of his book, which I gratefully accepted.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the advice, the assistance, booklet-formatting suggestions and detailed editing of the entire Allen McLane booklet by Dick Carter, Chair of the Delaware Heritage Commission, as well as thanks to the Heritage Commission for publishing this document.

Finally, I am appreciative of the myriad of favors done by my wife, PJ, to help me accomplish the objectives of the "Allen McLane project." I cannot begin to cite all the help she has given, since the list would be infinitely long.

*Tom Welch*

## ILLUSTRATION ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the use of the following illustrations:

Front Cover: "Portrait of Allen McLane" by Ethel P. B. Leach after Charles Willson Peale, courtesy of the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

Page 19: Photograph of Belmont Hall, Smyrna, Delaware, courtesy of Wikipedia online encyclopedia.

Page 22: Photograph of "The Delaware Continentals" sculpture at Legislative Hall, courtesy of Dick Carter.

Page 21: "The Battle of Long Island," by Domenick D'Andrea, a part of the National Guard Heritage Collection, courtesy of the Delaware National Guard.

Page 28: "Portrait Engraving of Benedict Arnold," by H.B. Hall after John Trumbull, published 1879, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Page 41: "Portrait of Henry "Lighthorse Harry" Lee by Charles Willson Peale, courtesy Independence National Historical Park, U.S. National Park Service.

Page 42: Detail of a display at Stony Point Battlefield from a photograph by Tom Welch.

Page 45: Contemporary map of Paulus Hook, courtesy of the website, <http://www.history-of-american-wars.com/revolutionary-war-battles.html>.

Page 51: "Portrait of Admiral de Grasse" (public domain), courtesy of Wikipedia online encyclopedia.

Page 59: The old State House, photo by Dolores Michels, courtesy of the Delaware Heritage Commission.

Page 60: The McLane House, Smyrna, Delaware, photo by Patrick Jackson, courtesy of the Delaware Heritage Commission.

Page 61: "Delaware Becomes the First State," painting by Robert Goodier, courtesy of PNC Bank.

Page 64: "Portrait of Governor Richard Bassett," courtesy of the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

Page 64: "Portrait of the Rev. Freeborn Garretson" downloaded from Google E-books, where it appeared in the book, *The Life of the Rev. Freeborn Garretson: Compiled from His Printed and Manuscript Journals, and Other Authentic Documents*, by Nathan Bangs, D.D., published by G. Lane & C.B. Tippet, for the Methodist Episcopal church, 1845.

Page 65: "The U.S.S. Wasp" by Thomas Birch, courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum (via Wikipedia).

Page 78: "Portrait of Louis McLane" courtesy of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Page 79: "Portrait of James Asheton Bayard, Sr.," courtesy of the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

Page 84: "Portrait of Allen McLane," (Henry Bryan Hall etching), courtesy of Edith McLane Edson.

Page 85 and rear cover: "The Ambush of Captain Allen McLane," by James Peale, courtesy of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

Page 92: Photograph of Allen McLane sword and pistol, courtesy of Edith McLane Edson.

Page 93: Photograph of two sides of Allen McLane commemorative coin, courtesy of Tom Welch.

Pages 127 through 129: Reproduced newspaper photographs of Tom Welch's portrayal of Allen McLane, courtesy of Mr. Welch.



# Chapter One – “A warm friend to American Liberty”

By Tom Welch and Mike Lloyd

The McLane family genealogy preceding the Allen McLane family featured in Chapter 7 is a bit of a mystery. Clearly, McLane and his progeny had roots in the Scottish Clan McLeane (however it was spelled.) Clan McLane, with that spelling and over a dozen other variations, had as its home the Inner Hebrides Islands off the southwest coast of Scotland. Family tradition places them on the Isle of Coll or the Isle of Mull. With virtually no trees and lots of peat that could be used as both fuel and housing material, life was rather bleak and austere. Even today some of the inhabitants carve out a living digging peat from the coastal flats. There is not much information on the forebears of Allen McLane. Edith McLane Edson, a McLane descendant, and her late husband, Robert Edson, working with a genealogist and taking a trip to Scotland, went to great lengths to discover his roots, but Mrs. Edson admitted to finding “no help in definitively tracing Allen’s lineage.”<sup>1</sup>

What we do know with reasonable certainty is that Allen McLeane, the father of Allen McLane, in 1740 married Jane Erwin from the Falls of the Schuylkill, outside of Philadelphia. They settled in Philadelphia, where Allen McLeane established a lucrative trade tanning hides and making leather breeches, the same trade that his son, Allen, was to follow when he moved to Kent County, Delaware, as a young man.<sup>2</sup> The McLeanes had three children, Allen, Samuel and Jane. Samuel, four years younger than Allen, followed the trade of his father. Samuel was an officer in the Pennsylvania militia but did not enjoy the military reputation that his brother did. He married Elizabeth Miller, the daughter of a Dover, Delaware, Presbyterian minister. Ann, eight years younger than Allen, married Isaac Lewis, a Philadelphia lawyer.<sup>3</sup>

Different accounts place Allen McLane’s move to Kent County within a year or two of 1770, possibly as early as 1769. There is also a bit of uncertainty regarding the length and the purpose of a trip to Europe when he was about twenty. Was it a trip to see the world or to meet with kinfolks to keep the ties to the “Old Country?” Legend has it that Allen changed the spelling of his name to avoid being identified with Colonel Sir Allan MacLeane, who successfully defeated the American Army’s raid on Canada.<sup>4</sup>

In any case, McLane chose Duck Creek Crossroads as his home. On January 1, 1770, he married Rebecca Wells, the daughter of James Wells, the Sheriff of Kent County since 1767 and a local innkeeper.<sup>5</sup> The village of Duck Creek Crossroads was situated in the region along the western shore of the Delaware River and Bay then known as “the Lower Three Counties of Pennsylvania” or “the Three Lower Counties upon Delaware.” The area did not become simply “Delaware” or “the Delaware State” until Separation Day—June 15, 1776—when the citizens of the lower three counties declared their independence not only from Great Britain, but also from Pennsylvania. The separation from Pennsylvania was largely symbolic, however, since the lower counties had maintained their own separate colonial assembly since 1704, although they had shared a governor with Pennsylvania during the colonial period.

Thirty years later, Duck Creek Crossroads was renamed Smyrna, with several conflicting theories why the name was chosen.<sup>6</sup>

Duck Creek Cross Roads, now Smyrna, (was) a small market town at the northern edge of Kent County in a rich agricultural region. Annually Duck Creek shipped forty thousand bushels of corn



and wheat, plus barley and lumber, to Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and the Wilmington area in the years that Allen McLane settled there. Residents called the little stream a 'bold and ....valuable water,' but bars of sand and silt that greatly hindered navigation were constantly forming near its junction with the Delaware.<sup>7</sup>

The merchants who had counted on consistent flow of water into and out of the Duck Creek were greatly disadvantaged by the silt and sand which inhibited commercial traffic. An impoundment or dam was placed on the Creek, which provided a steady flow of water to the grist mill where local grain farmers could bring their wheat and corn to be ground and then to be shipped to Philadelphia and to the world.

Due to the silting problem a landing was established at the confluence of Duck Creek and the mouth of Green's Branch, which would later be named Smyrna Landing.<sup>8</sup> It was at this landing where McLane would receive raw material for his trade, breeches making, and from whence he would ship his breeches to the centers of commerce, where men of means would be his most likely customers.

After James Green sold fifteen acres of his inherited land to Samuel Ball, a merchant of Philadelphia, this transaction signaled the end of the Duck Creek Village and the rise of Duck Creek Cross Roads. Records show that between 1768 and 1775, the following persons purchased land in the settlement on Duck Creek: William Jordon, Fenwick Fisher, Daniel Cummins, William Dawson, Colonel John Vining, Allen McLane, leather breeches maker, Thomas Shillington, tavernkeeper, Joseph Shown, Thomas Ross, Robert Wilds and Presley Spruance. Within a few months after these persons purchased their land, the name Duck Creek Cross Roads began to be used. By 1770, business was thriving and it was fairly well assured that it would become a permanent village.<sup>9</sup> Allen and Rebecca bought four and a half acres of land near Duck Creek on January 4, 1772. They lived in two different homes on Methodist Street or Church Street, which is now known as Mt. Vernon Street.<sup>10</sup> Between living in these two homes they had moved to Philadelphia.

Transportation in the early days was by sailing vessels until the building of roads. There was an east-west road that went from what is now Smyrna Landing into Maryland. The north-south road started as a link between Cantwell's Bridge (Odessa) and the Duck Creek Crossroads.<sup>11</sup>

Around 1772, when the hostilities between the King's troops and the local citizens of Boston began to heat up, the people of Duck Creek responded. Collections of money were solicited and sent. Patriotic leaders in the area of northern Kent County began to gather to express their views and to begin to develop courses of action. Many of these meetings were held at Belmont Hall, the home of Thomas Collins, who later served as the eighth "President" of Delaware (as the state's first ten chief executives were known before the title "Governor" came into use). Among those who came to Belmont were Ebenezer Cloak, Daniel Cummins, David Kennedy, John Darragh, George Read, Thomas McKean, Richard Bassett, and Caesar Rodney.<sup>12</sup> Others who were involved in these meetings included Charles Polk, John Dickinson, John Haslet and Allen McLane.<sup>13</sup>

With the fires of rebellion burning across the land, especially in Massachusetts, McLane caught the spirit. He was moved by the writing of Thomas Paine and the zeal of the Minutemen at Lexington and Concord and looked for ways to join in the fray. The writings of Paine had an incendiary impact on McLane. He was driven to act. That caused him, in the fall of 1775, even before the Delaware Regiment was formed, to seek an outlet for his passionate patriotism. He discovered that the Virginia patriots were doing battle with the Royal Governor and his loyalist troops. General Caesar Rodney wrote him a safe passage letter. It could be called his "warm friend to American Liberty" letter.

To All Whom It May Concern:

I beg leave to recommend A. McLane, Esq. who is inclined to visit the camp in Virginia,



*Belmont Hall at Smyrna, Delaware (formerly Duck Creek Crossroads), where, in the early 1770s, Allen McLane met with the home's owner, Thomas Collins, and other patriotic leaders of northern Kent County, including Ebenezer Cloak, Daniel Cummins, David Kennedy, John Darragh, George Read, Thomas McKean, Richard Bassett, and Caesar Rodney, among others (photo courtesy of Wikipedia).*

or elsewhere as a warm friend to American Liberty to be unmolested to the City of New York or elsewhere.

Dover October 10, 1775

(Signed) Caesar Rodney<sup>14</sup>

This letter allowed McLane to travel to Virginia, where, as a volunteer, he joined Continental and Virginia Militia troops in their defeat of Lord Dunmore at the Battle of Great Bridge. That successful effort only spurred



him on further. He wrote in his journal that, while fighting at Great Bridge and Norfolk in 1775, he “found that he could face fire.”<sup>15</sup> Yet McLane had done little to distinguish himself from the many other volunteer militia men from Maryland and Virginia who also fought there. That would all change in a few days in late August, 1776. When the Delaware Regiment was formed in August of 1776, General Rodney made him a lieutenant and appointed him to serve as his adjutant.<sup>16</sup>

The threat of the British invasion of New York led General Washington to issue an urgent call for help to face the British in New York, especially the militias of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. This call was answered by the militia of Delaware only weeks after the Separation and the Declaration of Independence. Thus, led by Colonel John Haslet, the Delaware Regiment marched to New York in response to General Washington’s urgent plea. It appears that Lieutenant McLane made the trip on his own, as evidenced by the letters of safe passage issued to him by both Caesar Rodney and Thomas McKean. McKean’s letter stated:

Philada Aug 13d 1776

I do join in the above Certificate of Brigadier General Rodney, one of the Delegates for the Delaware Government and request all whom it may concern to permit Mr. Allen M,clane to pass and repass unmolested to the City of New York or elsewhere.

Tho McKean Col. 4th Batt., Phila Associators<sup>17</sup>

Armed with the letters of safe passage from Rodney and McKean, McLane made his way to Long Island, again as a volunteer as he had done at Great Bridge, and immediately found himself attached to the first American fighters he encountered—Colonel Samuel Atlee’s Pennsylvania Regiment of Riflemen. It was an opportune choice, as it did not take long for Atlee’s troop to see action. On the night of August 26, as Atlee’s men observed the Hessian troops who had just landed the night before, a firefight broke out between the two scouting parties. This was the first time that American militia had faced the fearsome professional German imports, which included a troop of renowned marksmen known as Jaegers. When one of Atlee’s men went down with a broken leg from a Jaeger musket ball, McLane acted immediately and impulsively and charged onto the field, oblivious to his own safety. Crawling on his hands and knees to avoid the enemy fire, he carried the wounded soldier to safety.<sup>18</sup>

The Battle of Brooklyn Heights was about to heat up and Allen McLane would be in the thick of it from start to finish. In his handwritten journal, McLane notes that he “fought all day and night in the bloody battle of the 27th,” and in a most dangerous capacity while doing so. McLane was present when Colonel Atlee’s second in command, Lt. Colonel Caleb Parry, was killed during fierce fighting in which the badly outnumbered and battered riflemen twice repulsed the advancing British. As Atlee prepared to make a last stand – fully expecting the British to charge again – he sent McLane on a desperate sprint across the battle lines to get word to Lord Stirling\*, and to seek further orders.<sup>19</sup> McLane made it safely to the American lines, where he encountered the familiar faces of the Delaware Continentals, and delivered the message to Stirling shortly before everything fell apart. The battle did not go well for the patriots, as the overwhelming British and Hessian forces swept rapidly across Long Island. General Howe had managed to outflank the patriots and they were, by the end of the day, forced to the north shore where, historians assert, that if Howe had continued the fight, the Continental Army

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\* Note: “Lord Stirling” was born William Alexander, but claimed the disputed title of Earl of Stirling and was generally known in the Continental Army, where he rose to the rank of Major General, as “Lord Stirling.”



*The Battle of Long Island — A depiction of the Delaware Regiment at the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776 by artist Domenick D'Andrea, a part of the National Guard Heritage Collection, was unveiled on July 8, 2002 in Wilmington (courtesy of the Delaware National Guard).*

and the supporting militia could have been defeated at that moment. However, the British called off the fighting in the afternoon while Washington and his men hunkered down on the north shore.

One of the positive highlights for the Americans was the report that Lieutenant Allen McLane and his unit captured 23 British soldiers and then fought through the enemy lines to safety with their prisoners in tow. In the confusion of the battle, with two opposing armies firing at each other at close range, a small group of Hessian soldiers, led by Lieutenant Wragg, a member of General von Heister's command, made their way close to the Delaware Continentals, who, by coincidence, wore uniforms of the same blue and red trim colors which, in the thick of musket smoke, bore a striking resemblance to the uniforms worn by the Hessians. Wragg thought he saw fellow Hessians firing on his troop by mistake. He was attempting to stop what he thought was friendly fire when, all too late, he realized his mistake. Wragg and his entire command of approximately 20 soldiers were taken prisoner by charging members of the Delaware line, an event McLane happily reports in his journal, "with a party of Americans surprised and took this day near Yellow Hook 1 lieutenant, 2 sergeants, 2 corporals, and 15 British marines...."<sup>20</sup>

Joseph Harper, a sergeant in Captain Joseph Vaughn's 8th Battalion, witnessed the event and, in a letter he wrote to McLane in 1820, some 44 years later, like McLane, referred to the captured soldiers as British troops when they were actually Hessian soldiers. In his letter, Harper recounts that day:





*The Delaware Continentals – this life-sized bronze statue, located on the east side of Legislative Hall in Dover, was commissioned by the Delaware General Assembly in 2008 to honor the state's Revolutionary War soldiers. Created by the late Ron Tunison, one of the nation's finest sculptors of historic military figures, its three figures, representing Delaware's three counties, are among the most accurate depictions of Delaware Continental uniforms, resulting from the research of historian Charles Fithian, Mr. Tunison, himself, and other experts.*

About this time a small party of 18-20 of the British Army marched up in the rear of our Regiment and as well as I can remember I saw you (McLane) march off in the party which took them Prisoner. After the prisoners were brought to our Regiment, I saw you come down the front of our lines from the Right and as you prayed near where I was stationed, you met with Lord Stirling and informed him that we were surrounded by the British.<sup>21</sup>

By this time, according to Atlee's journal, the Americans were under heavy cannon and musket fire and their lines were on the verge of breaking.<sup>22</sup> McLane and the rest of the Delaware Continentals – with the captured prisoners in tow – then made a mad dash to break out and, while it was mostly an organized retreat, their primary objective was simply to escape with their lives. Luckily, they had a savvy leader to guide them. From McLane's journal comes another intriguing scribbled note..."my knowledge of the country in front of the American lines enabled me to lead off the vanquished Americans through sunken ground to a mill that stood with the American lines near Yellow Hook."<sup>23</sup>

McLane led the scattered American troops through a swamp or morass and to the edge of Gowanus Creek where once safely across the creek they would be back in American lines. However, it was no easy task, as British cannons and musket fire rained down on the fleeing troops, many of whom had been fighting and running all day and were on the brink of exhaustion. In addition, there were those who were unable to swim or even wade in the creek's swift current. McLane took charge once again, ordering those who had already crossed the creek, including the

captured Hessians, to throw wooden boards and logs from an old mill into the creek to give the fatigued soldiers something to float on while they made their way across the deep hole in the center of the 80-yard-wide creek. Harper continues, "I immediately plunged into the creek and upon approaching near the shore you helped me out and ordered some of the prisoners to throw a long piece of something into the creek which lay on the shore. ... I have no doubt you rendered considerable service to your country on that day and I believe (it) was the means of our whole brigade not being made prisoners of war."<sup>24</sup>

Colonel Atlee, however, was captured and would spend more than two years as a British prisoner; yet he still echoed that same sentiment in his journal, "Thus ended the unfortunate 27th of August, during which myself and a small detachment underwent inexpressible fatigue, and escaped death in a variety of instances; and

although the day terminated unsuccessfully, I have the pleasing reflection that the entire ruin of our Troop was by my small detachment prevented.”<sup>25</sup>

McLane had played no small role in this action. He had risked his own life several times as a runner for Atlee and had assisted in the capture and safe delivery of the largest group of enemy soldiers taken in the entire battle. Yet more importantly, McLane had played a key role in assisting in the escape of the disoriented retreating soldiers. Many may have been lost in the soggy wetlands or while crossing Gowanus Creek, were it not for McLane’s bravado and alert leadership during this chaotic time. He had truly proved himself “A warm friend to American Liberty.”

Though McLane had done his duty and was the savior of the moment, he did not have time to rest. He continued fighting a rear guard action with what remained of the Delaware and Maryland troops as Washington evacuated Brooklyn Heights in boats provided by Colonel John Glover’s Marblehead fishermen and Colonel Israel Hutchinson’s skilled Salem sailors. By sunup, all the “9500 men, all their baggage, field-guns and horses, equipment, stores, and provisions, ‘even the biscuits which had not been, and the raw pork which could not be eaten’ were safe in New York.”<sup>26</sup>

Historians have criticized Washington’s field generalship and his performance as a battlefield officer, but the removal of 9,500 troops under the direst conditions under the very nose of the powerful British forces has caused the evacuation to be called “a miracle.” Those who have chronicled the battle and the subsequent escape from Long Island of Washington’s army have called it “particularly glorious,” “one of the most signal achievements of the war,” “a master stroke of energy, dexterity and caution,” and “a feat that seemed an impossibility.”<sup>27</sup>

Historian Thomas Field, writing in 1869 about the Battle of Long Island, called the stand of the Maryland and Delaware troops of the Flying Camp “An hour more precious to Liberty than any other in history.”<sup>28</sup> He added “The soldiers from tiny Delaware fighting alongside the First Maryland Regiment may well have prevented the capture of the majority of Washington’s Army, an event that might have ended the colonial rebellion then and there.”<sup>29</sup>

The story of the Battle of Long Island might have ended much more negatively than it did due to a variety of circumstances. The decision by the British to call off fighting when they might have finished off George Washington and the Continental Army by continuing to completion is a very puzzling one. The arrival of Colonel John Glover’s Marblehead fishermen and Colonel Israel Hutchinson’s Salem sailors with several hundred boats that were used to ferry all the troops to Manhattan overnight was not an accident. Clearly, General Washington deserves credit for advance planning and having them available for the contingency. Finally, as Divine Providence was so often credited by General Washington for making possible fortuitous results of the Continental Army, so it was similarly credited on that night. All night long the New England fishermen laboriously rowed and rowed and rowed, taking the 9,500 American troops across the East River. When first light broke, which would have allowed the British ships to enter the Sound from the west and to bombard the remaining hundreds of American troops there, an extremely heavy fog rolled in, preventing the British cannon from pummeling the Americans in their very vulnerable position. Thus, the ferrying of troops continued until completion, with General Washington reported to be among the last to cross. Who is to argue with Washington’s views on Divine Providence?

Of course, the superior force that the British had would only be delayed by the successful escape of Washington and his men. The British pressed on, hoping to finish off what they viewed as a very inferior military force.

So McLane and the Delaware Regiment were with Washington at White Plains, Kip’s Bay, Mamaroneck,



Brooklyn Heights, the fall of New York to the British, the escape across New Jersey, the successful Christmas night attack on the Hessians at Trenton and then the January 2, 1777, Battle at Princeton. The Americans had now shocked the world with two consecutive victories over the superior British military forces. The world was now taking notice, as were the Congress, the American people and foreign governments especially the French.

A very succinct description of McLane's first 13 months in the war is offered by Christopher Ward in *The Delaware Continentals, 1776-1783*:

At the very commencement of hostilities, we find him (McLane) stepping forward as a volunteer. Persuaded, from the ardent temper and strong prejudices of Lord Dunmore, that an appeal to arms would speedily occur in Virginia, he particularly directed his attention to that quarter, and witnessed the repulse of the British at the Great Bridge. This early dawn of success giving increase to his military ardour, his utmost efforts were exerted to fit himself for command, and in 1775, a lieutenant's commission was presented to him, in a Militia Regiment, commanded by the Hon. Caesar Rodney, of Delaware. In 1776, he joined the army under General Washington, near New York. The battle of Long Island speedily occurring, afforded an opportunity, which he eagerly embraced to acquire distinction. Observing an exposed situation of a British party, he obtained from Lord Sterling the aid of a small detachment from the Delaware Regiment, made a lieutenant and eighteen privates, prisoners, and though surrounded by the enemy, led them off to safety. He was present at the battle of White Plains – witnessed the capture of the Hessians at Trenton, and at Princeton, by his good conduct and exemplary gallantry, so particularly attracted the attention of General Washington, as to be immediately appointed to a Captaincy in a Continental Regiment.<sup>30</sup>

The Battle of Princeton was a turning point in many ways for McLane. It was there that Colonel John Haslet was killed, taking a shot to the head while attempting to come to the aid of a fallen comrade. McLane was there to witness the passing of an inspired leader. It was shortly thereafter at Princeton that General Washington, having noticed McLane's bravery and contributions on the battlefield, promoted him to Captain and sent him back to Delaware to recruit his own company. McLane's Company "was authorized on January 13, 1777, as Captain Allen McLane's Company, Patton's element of the Main Continental Army; organized between February 14 – April 23, 1777, at Dover, Delaware; Withdrawn on December 16, 1778, from Patton's Additional Continental Regiment, attached to Major Henry Lee's corps, an element of the 3rd Virginia Brigade of the Main Continental Army; Withdrawn on July 13, 1779, from the Delaware Regiment and assigned to Lee's Legion of the 4th (Dismounted) Troop."<sup>31</sup>

Thus began the next chapter of Allen McLane's life, including Cooch's Bridge and the Valley Forge winter of 1777-78 through the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, a year in his life that could be considered "The Golden Period" or "The Shining Hour" of Allen McLane."

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## CHAPTER TWO: THE SHINING HOUR

By Michael Lloyd and Robert K. Edson

### *On the skirmish Lines with Allen McLane, January, 1777 – June, 1778.*

As the year 1777 began, Allen McLane was still fighting with Washington's army as a volunteer militia soldier, though you never knew where you might find him. At Maidenhead, on January 2, McLane was on the lines with General Hand's Pennsylvania Rifle Militia, and took part in the heated rear guard action in what is sometimes known as the Second Battle of Trenton. Less than 24 hours later, he was fighting alongside John Haslet's Delaware Regiment in the pivotal Battle of Princeton.

Princeton would prove to be a turning point for McLane, who was so active in this battle that he was personally noticed by Washington as "a man always heading into battle when others were running away from it."<sup>1</sup> Princeton was a great American victory but it came at a heavy price: the loss of two promising leaders, General Hugh Mercer and Colonel John Haslet, both killed in action. After the fighting at Princeton was over, McLane returned to the battle grounds and raised the body of his old friend, Haslet, and returned it to Philadelphia, where he was laid to rest.

On January 11, 1777, Congress authorized the creation of 16 additional regiments of foot soldiers and Allen McLane was offered a captain's commission in one of the seven companies that made up John Patton's Additional Regiment. Unlike the previous 88 approved state regiments that made up the Continental army of 1776, these 16 additional regiments were organized directly by Washington's authority, not the authority of the 13 colonies, and were completely under His Excellency's control. That is how, McLane, only a lieutenant in the Kent County militia, came to be handpicked as the leader of what would evolve into one of Washington's best partisan units –he had been seen in action and Washington knew what this man was capable of.<sup>2</sup>

McLane was quick to accept the captain's commission as a separate command not only matched his own fighting style, but, as he would later note in this journal, "it was McLane's pride."<sup>3</sup> McLane's commission was dated January 13, 1777, and within a few days he returned to his home state of Delaware to begin recruiting troops. With the passing of both his parents in 1776, McLane had inherited a sizable fortune by colonial standards: \$15,000 in property and cash, a large portion of which McLane now used to pay the bounty of each of the soldiers he enlisted. According to Christopher Ward, in his book, *The Delaware Continentals, 1776-1783*, recruiting for new troops was always a difficult task but it was especially difficult in Delaware, a small state with strong loyalist leanings. Sussex County especially was a hotbed for Tory activity and for that reason McLane recruited very few soldiers from lower Delaware. It took McLane several months to build up his troop to company strength. By the beginning of April, three months after his commission, he had only enrolled 30 soldiers. But by late May, as McLane recruited farther north and ventured into nearby Kent and Cecil counties in Maryland, his troop was up to 94 fighting men.<sup>4</sup>

We really don't know much about the men McLane recruited other than their names. We do know McLane recruited men from as far south as Milford, Delaware, and as far north as Chester,

Pennsylvania. Many came from such places as Dover, Blackbird Landing, Middletown, Port Penn, Welsh Tract (Glasgow), New Castle and Wilmington. John Vandergrift, whom McLane recruited on April 19, was a resident of Maryland. He stood about 5 foot 10 inches tall with sandy colored hair and a sandy complexion and was a shoemaker by trade.<sup>5</sup>

James Songo, one of the last men to join the original 94-man troop, was a farmer from Kent County, Delaware, and it is believed he may have been a whaler at one time in his life. He stood 5 foot seven inches tall with black hair and a yellow complexion. Dan Dewess, James Burke and Caleb Levick would be taken prisoner by the British during the war, yet all would find a way to escape their captors and rejoin McLane's troop. Patrick Dagnee would be killed by the Seneca Indians near Fort Wyoming in 1779, along with two of McLane's top officers, Captain Joe Davis and Lieutenant William Jones. In fact, of the 94 men McLane enlisted in the spring of 1777, all but about six had died by 1787.<sup>6</sup>



*Engraving of Benedict Arnold by H. B. Hall, after John Trumbull*

With his fighting troop in place, McLane marched north to the barracks at Middlebrooke, New Jersey, on May 25, 1777, and prepared his new unit for their first taste of battle. It came at a place called Short Hills, near modern-day Metuchen, New Jersey. McLane's troop was part of the action under the command of Lord Stirling and, while the fighting was brief, it was intense. That is what fighting a skirmish is—too brief or small of a fight to be considered a battle but, for those involved, it was as hotly contested as any of the war's more famous fights. McLane notes in his journal that he lost four men in a day of "hard fighting."<sup>7</sup>

Following the Short Hills skirmish, McLane soon found himself in a fight of yet another type. On June 9, while McLane and his troop were on duty in Middlebrooke, a deserter from his troop named Andrew Finney, whom McLane had recruited in Dover on April 24, had been apprehended and put on trial in Philadelphia. Though Finney was the one being court-martialed, he turned the tables on McLane. He asserted that he had never been paid a bounty and his enlistment was, in fact, illegal. In an amazing turn of events, the court, which was overseen by Lt. Colonel Francis Gurney, agreed with Finney and even though McLane was not there to offer his side of the story, the court freed Finney and fined McLane 10 pounds (the price of the bounty) and found him guilty of an illegal enlistment.

General Benedict Arnold, the senior officer present, approved the sentence (remitting the fine) and said Finney was referred to the civil law for redress, as he was illegally enlisted.

McLane was not present when this happened but once he heard of this charade, he contacted his old friend, Lieutenant Colonel John Parkes, and requested a court of inquiry, which, by order of Brigadier General Scott, was granted at Middlebrooke on July 2. Things were different this time. McLane produced an enlistment and receipt for the bounty signed by Andrew Finney in the presence of two of McLane's most trusted men, Lieutenant Edward Burke and Robert Laghorn. Also, the muster roll signed by Lieutenant Colonel Noarth, in which Finney was mustered, was presented. Lieutenant Burke also appeared before the court and gave testimony that the enlistment was entirely legal and stated that no improper or unwarrantable steps had been taken to procure it.



The proceedings were brought to the attention of George Washington who, through an aide, Richard Meade, added his two cents on the matter, "His excellency is perfectly convinced that the above Andrew Finney was legally and regularly enlisted by Captain McLane and accordingly orders that he return to his company and that every assistance be given to recover him."<sup>8</sup>

McLane was vindicated, but to say that he was still outraged by this affair is putting things mildly. So much so, that he published the following letter in the *Philadelphia Gazette* newspaper on July 6, 1777:

When a man accepts an office in the public service, it ought to be presumed that either his experience entitles him to enjoy it or that his abilities in time will render him equal to the duties he undertakes, if he possesses neither he is no more than a genteel robber...in the last month a general court martial was held at the barracks in Philadelphia at which a deserter from my company was arraigned, but no evidence appearing against him on in his behalf, the said court...admitted the prisoner's story as sufficient evidence in his own behalf; upon which self evidence he was discharged from the Continental service. They then, upon the same culprit's evidence, proceeded to try me illegally and tryranntically (sic) and not withstanding I was then on duty at the American camp, I was arraigned, tried, convicted and fined in the sum of Ten pounds...my wish and intention is to set my character in a respectable point of view in the eyes of my countrymen, and I am induced to hope that no man of candour will suffer his judgment to be biased by willful misrepresentations of wanton ignorance, which is ever so insolent when in office.<sup>9</sup>

With this episode seemingly behind him, McLane and his troop prepared for their next battle against their real enemy—the British—which came in late August, 1777. General Howe, whom Washington had expected to sail up the Delaware River to attack Philadelphia, made a long, roundabout journey of it and landed at Head of Elk, Maryland (about six miles south of modern-day Elkton, Maryland) in an attempt to surprise and outflank Washington. McLane and his men, along with other select militia—800 of the best in the army—had been handpicked and assigned to General Maxwell's infantry to observe and harass the approaching British juggernaut. And harass them they did.

McLane states in his journal that, from the time he first spied the British landing near Turkey Point, a heavily wooded and rugged spit of land that divides the Elk River from the Chesapeake Bay, he and his men constantly annoyed the enemy all along their march to Aiken's tavern, just north of modern-day Glasgow, Delaware. McLane's troops had first engaged the British in a little known skirmish at Gray's Hill, Maryland, during the last days of August, which mainly consisted of the two sides shooting at each other, then running away with little damage done to either side.<sup>10</sup> But as the British moved farther inland and closer to Philadelphia, the fighting became more deadly.

On the morning of September 3, 1777, McLane's partisan troops were part of a much larger unit of men—select sharpshooters all—that lay in wait along a shallow streambed that drained into the Christiana creek near Cooch's Bridge. The British would take this road as they marched north from Glasgow and the militia's job was to attack, run away and attack again to disrupt, harass and delay their march. The fighting broke out at about 9:00 a.m., and continued into the afternoon. The terrain was rugged thick woods with deep stream banks that made the crossing difficult. At one point, the British attempted to circle around the Americans but were held in check by an almost impenetrable morass



known as Purgatory Swamp. The terrain was hard on the Americans, too, though they were using it to their advantage. McLane called this hard-fought skirmish the Battle of Iron Hill, and reported he lost five men there.<sup>11</sup>

Though the fighting ceased for the day as the Americans retreated, McLane's men fought a rear guard action and scouted the British all along their march to the Brandywine. Every night, McLane reports in his journal, there were encounters with British pickets. Then, on September 11, the more famous Battle of the Brandywine was fought with McLane and his men in the thick of it. McLane states he lost 10 men in this major battle, including Lieutenant Houston, who was shot dead by a musket ball to his head as McLane was giving him orders. Lieutenant Houston, ironically, was one of the officers that sat on the court of inquiry that had exonerated McLane in the Andrew Finney affair. McLane also lost a trusted private, Caleb Levick, who was captured by the British and forced, through starvation, to join their ranks. Caleb Levick—remember that name: he will play a pivotal role in the taking of Paulus Hook two years later.<sup>12</sup>

Following the battle of the Brandywine, McLane's troop was with Washington's army in Malvern, Pennsylvania, at the so-called Battle of the Clouds, an almost major confrontation between the British and Americans that never took place due to a torrential, out-of-season thunderstorm that drenched the two armies. All the ammunition was soaked and the roads made impassable, preventing a major fight that McLane feared would have gone very badly for the Americans. "Washington would have been cut to pieces," McLane noted in his journal.<sup>13</sup>

On October 4, McLane led the vanguard that attacked the British pickets at Mount Airy, which led to the famous Battle of Germantown. McLane lost two men in this attack, but regrouped his partisan corps to take part in the morning's fighting, which was plagued by numerous errors, including two regiments of the Delaware Line shooting at each other in intense fog.<sup>14</sup>

Following Germantown, McLane joined the American army at Whitemarsh and this is really where the legend of Allen McLane, Partisan Fighter, begins. As the leader of an independent fighting force, this was McLane's time to shine. This was his style of warfare; everything he had done before, from Long Island to Princeton, had been a training ground to prepare him for this moment. He had been given a level of responsibility that few officers of captain's rank would be entrusted with—he was about to become the eyes and ears of the Continental army.

On November 7, McLane received direct orders from Washington, ordering him to "...take the post near Germantown most advantageous for watching the enemy, to send out the necessary parties and patrols for that purpose and to prevent, as far as possible, all intercourse between Philadelphia and the countryside..."<sup>15</sup>

McLane took those orders to heart and the first night on patrol he captured three spies, fifteen British soldiers and twelve Tories carrying supplies across the lines. McLane kept up an intense vigilance in the area assigned to him, and, though historical legends say he was "here, there, and everywhere," it only seemed that way. Actually, McLane was one of Washington's top three partisan commanders patrolling the outskirts of Philadelphia, along with Lighthorse Harry Lee and Major John Clark, and each was assigned to a specific area. McLane's territory was all the backcountry between the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers, as this was the area his family had come from and it was expected he would know

this territory the best. But he often went out of this assigned zone and fought the British wherever he could find them.<sup>16</sup>

With the British entrenched in Philadelphia only about 12 miles away, Washington's army was vulnerable in the camp at Whitemarsh. On the night of December 4, 1777, General Howe led 10,000 men out of their barracks with the intent of surprising and attacking Washington. McLane's scouts saw the British movements in the dark of night, as did several other spies and scouts Washington had operating throughout the area. A Quaker woman named Lydia Darragh, who owned the home where the British generals had held a war conference, overheard the whole plan and, according to her daughter, Ann, who told the story for the first time many years after Lydia's death, she made her way out of the city and into the countryside, where she delivered this important information, written in code, to one of Washington's scouts she encountered. Some versions of the story even state that she personally gave McLane this news, and that he then raced into Washington's camp to raise the alarm. Yet another version of the story has her delivering the message to Washington's quartermaster, Elias Boudinot, whom she encountered at a tavern.<sup>17</sup>

In any event, as the British began their secret advance under the cover of night, the Americans, including McLane's partisan troops, were ready for them. But, as at Germantown, there was some confusion that led to tragic results. McLane had two men killed as they advanced on Militia Hill—men shot down by the Pennsylvania Militia, who mistook them for the enemy in the dark. In addition, four militia members were shot, two of whom also died.

The British had hoped to surprise Washington but now it was they who were surprised. After the war, one British general was known to say of the Continental army, "They never outfought us; what they did was out spy us."<sup>18</sup> And Whitemarsh is a classic example of a disaster waiting to happen that was averted by Washington's brilliant network of spies, scouts and unheralded citizen patriots who watched the British every step of the way, and often knew what the British planned to do long before the British troops did.

The next morning, two American Generals, Joseph Reed and John Cadwalader, were reconnoitering the scene in the company of the Pennsylvania Militia when they were surprised by a troop of the British. The militia escorts fled and General Reed, who was injured when he was thrown from his horse, lay on the ground in a helpless state as the British marched forward with fixed bayonets. Suddenly, out of the woods, charged McLane and his men, who fought off the approaching enemy and put Reed upon their horses and scampered away to safety. A close call for General Reed, but for Allen McLane it was just another day on the job.<sup>19</sup>

Following the near disaster at Whitemarsh, Washington realized he needed a more fortified encampment for the winter and on December 19, the American Army entered Valley Forge, located about 20 miles from the occupied city. The fighting would cease between the major armies for the better part of the winter, but not for the skirmish fighters. McLane and his men would remain vigilant and continue to skirmish British troops every chance they had. Yet another mission lay ahead for McLane that, while seemingly less glorified, was of equal military importance.

In early January, McLane and a select group of his men were assigned to march to McLane's home state of Delaware on a dual mission. One, this was a forging assignment to acquire badly needed

livestock and food stuffs for the army at Valley Forge and, two, they were to capture a number of deserters who were known to be hiding in Delaware. Among them was McLane's old nemesis, Andrew Finney, who was still at large.

Just before leaving on this complex mission, McLane posted the following "want ad" in the *Philadelphia Gazette*, dated January, 19, 1778:

Deserted from the American army the following soldiers belong to the subscriber, John Denney, a likely well-made man, five feet ten inches high, Andrew Finney, alias Tinney, a roughhewn fellow and has an awkward appearance, five feet nine inches high. They have been seen since they deserted on Bombay Hook, in company with Thomas Tilton Esq., one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas of [Kent] county, who hath since taken his quarters with the enemy in Philadelphia...<sup>19</sup>

McLane also listed the names of several other deserters he was seeking and made it clear in his ad that anyone harboring or assisting these deserters would face the wrath of a continental officer wronged.

McLane had limited success in capturing some of the above-mentioned deserters –it remains unclear if Finney was one of those that were apprehended but he seems to have disappeared from history after this. McLane had much more success in his foraging expedition, which was of vital importance, considering that a previous foraging mission into New Jersey under the leadership of Captain Sherwood had lost 150 head of cattle, taken by a British patrol when they were less than 30 miles from Valley Forge. McLane, on the other hand, delivered 1,500 fat hogs, 500 head of cattle, and 200 head of horses for the army at Valley Forge and also stopped in Wilmington, where the Delaware Regiment under General Smallwood was based for the winter, and delivered an unspecified amount of cattle and hogs for the troops there.

General Smallwood was especially grateful for the bounty. "...with the attention in provisions of beef and pork am much obliged by your vigilance and attention in your pursuits which I hope will be still crowned with success. ....That chucklehead scoundrel Huggins will starve the troops here...he can forward supplies now and then..." Smallwood wrote in a letter to McLane shortly afterwards.<sup>20</sup>

Back in the no man's land between Valley Forge and Philadelphia, McLane and his troop continued to forage and harass any British patrols they encountered. The loyalist farmers and merchants who were supplying the British army quartered in Philadelphia grew to dread the name of McLane. McLane's troops were so efficient at what they were doing they became known as "The Market Stoppers." And rather than spend time foraging for the army themselves, McLane found it easier and more productive to let the British patrols do the foraging, then seize the goods and divert them from their intended destination of Philadelphia to Valley Forge.

McLane was such a menace to the loyalist merchants and British patrols alike that a reward of 1,000 pounds was placed on his head. Yet no one came close to collecting. McLane and his men were under strict orders to be constantly on the move, never staying in the same place for more than one night at a time and to be ever vigilant. When McLane's men were tuckered out by the constant raiding, Washington would send fresh replacement troops –always the best and most rugged men their outfits



had to offer—and McLane's raiding never ceased. Long after the war, a Philadelphia colonialist named Jacob Mitter told the tale of how he, as a 16-year-old youth, would slip into the city to buy goods by following closely behind a British patrol for safety and then take to the woods and back roads on his journey home, all the time keeping an eye out for McLane's men who would surely stop him and seize his goods.<sup>21</sup>

The weather at Valley Forge in the winter of 1778 was snowy and wet but was not as freezing cold as many historical accounts would lead one to believe. According to weather and temperature records for the years 1777-78 kept by Phineas Pemberton, a resident of Bucks County, Pa., the winter of 1778 was considered normal for the times. While there were periods of substantial snowfall in January, there was a period of six very warm days in February, with no precipitation. From December 19, 1777, to March 31, 1778, there were 29 days in which snow was either falling or already on the ground. There was also another eight days of either rain or sleet. On March 12, 1778, the weather warmed up to the point where it was called a "false spring" and stayed that way for eight days. Overall, it was considered a snowy but typical winter for the area. The real problem facing Washington's men was not so much the cold as inadequate shelter and the lack of food and the very real threat of malnutrition and starvation.<sup>22</sup> The daily ration for a soldier at Valley Forge was intended to be one pound of beef or fish, one pound of bread, a quart of beer, peas, beans and butter, but seldom did a soldier receive such rations on a regular basis. It was not out of the norm for a soldier to go several days on half, quarter or no rations.<sup>23</sup> McLane's foraging raids made the difference between life and death for many a huddled soldier. And every time McLane's troopers liberated goods from the British and delivered those goods to Valley Forge, they not only aided the American cause but made life that much more difficult for the pampered British troops housed in Philadelphia. Another favorite trick of McLane's men, legend tells us, was for his men to enter Philadelphia disguised as loyalist merchants and take a butchered horse and sell it as prime beef to the unsuspecting British, who paid in gold.

McLane, at this time, employed a small network of spies inside the city, who not only supplied him with up-to-date information on the British army but provided the means for McLane and his men to acquire luxury items from Philadelphia merchants, who normally wouldn't be caught dead selling such wares to non-loyalists. In fact, McLane often received requests from officers in Washington's command, demanding such frivolous items as new pen knives and tea pots, when McLane made his clandestine sorties into the occupied city. In exchange for these luxury items, besides their thanks, McLane would often receive additional sheets of writing paper—which was scarce—for him to send messages to his many contacts.

"When you reflect on the difficulties I have had to struggle with since the war for our independence you will be surprised that I saved any originals of importance," McLane once wrote in his journal. Often times, he would send orders to his men written on the back or sides of a letter he had received from someone else.<sup>24</sup>

Yet there were times when McLane would grow weary of these side-bar missions to obtain small items for Washington's staff and he let his feelings be known on more than one occasion. He was an important cavalry officer and not an errand boy. He must have had a discussion of this nature with William Johnstone, in the Valley Forge camp, who wrote a short note to McLane on May 24, 1778, to put his concerns at ease. "I have spoken to the General about what you spoke to me about and all is right with the General. Be aware



he would not do without you in the light corps, no, not for a 1,000 pounds....” Johnstone wrote.<sup>25</sup>

This short letter has gone on to become one of the most famous of all in the McLane Papers. Delaware Governor J. Caleb Boggs quoted from it in an address he gave at Valley Forge on January 3, 1954, and practically every writer to tell McLane’s tale since has used it as a shining example of how important McLane as a partisan fighter was in the eyes of George Washington.<sup>26</sup>

In the spring of 1778, Allen McLane was the scourge of the British and their loyalist friends and was an American legend in the making. But all did not go well at times. On April 23, 1778, a party of British dragoons and foot soldiers surprised a group of 21 of his men while they were sleeping near Barnhill Church after a night of hard riding and raiding. The British, with the element of surprise on their side, “cut them to pieces”, as McLane put it. Hearing shots, McLane attempted to come to their aid but was driven off by the British mounted infantry, who pursued him all the way to the Schuylkill River, which he was forced to swim across, with musket balls flying over his head.<sup>27</sup>

There were many military shortcomings that McLane would forgive a soldier for, but cowardice and neglect of duty were not among them, especially since McLane had given all his men strict orders to be on the lines before sunrise, as he knew the raiding party would be coming in to rest in the early morning hours. He was depending on these men in the front lines to be the ears and eyes for his resting troops and in this instance they failed. So outraged was McLane by this breach of conduct that he had the officer in charge arrested to face a court martial:

“You are to consider yourself under arrest and confine yourself to the bounds of the camp near Valley Forge for neglect of duty in leaving the different roads unguarded from Barnhill Church to Philadelphia by which neglect the enemy advanced a body of horse and foot to the church, surprised a Subaltern and his party that had retired,” McLane wrote in one of the papers of importance he did keep.<sup>28</sup>

Speaking of this time period and the events that transpired, McLane wrote in his journal, “I was often placed in perilous circumstances,” and in the month of May those perilous circumstances were almost nonstop.

As early as May 16, McLane was sending messages to Washington indicating that, due to information “from his friends” inside the city he knew the British planned to evacuate Philadelphia soon. On May 18, the British planned to say farewell to the city in the form of an over-the-top medieval themed ball called the “Mischianza.” It was largely put together by John Andre, an aide to General Howe, who was also a favorite among the loyalist tarts of Philadelphia and a close friend to Peggy Shippen, who would later marry Benedict Arnold.<sup>29</sup>

The Mischianza was to consist of, among other things, a dinner, a ball, a costume party, boat rides and a play, and lasted from 3:30 p.m. to midnight. At about 10:00 p.m., fireworks were set off as part of the night’s festivities and this is when Allen McLane and his men chose to crash the party. Dividing his troop into four detachments of 25 men and one lieutenant, and with back-up troops from Major Clough’s dragoons and infantry, McLane’s men took large kettles filled with combustible material and tossed them at the British pickets like homemade bombs. At the same time, whale oil was poured on the abatis\* on

\*Note: Abatis, abattis, or abbattis is a term in field fortification for an obstacle formed (in the modern era) of the branches of trees laid in a row, with the sharpened tops directed outwards, towards the enemy. The trees are usually interlaced or tied with wire. Abatis are used alone or in combination with wire entanglements and other obstacles.

the edge of the city's front lines and set ablaze. The British knew more than just their own fireworks were being set off and a drum roll was sounded "from river to river" but very little else came of this raid that apparently was nothing more than an attempt to harass the British while they were celebrating. But there was more to McLane's madness than meets the eye.<sup>30</sup>

At the time, the most notorious military prison for patriots in Philadelphia was the new prison located at 6th and Walnut streets. Inside were hundreds of American soldiers—officers and enlisted men mixed together—captured at Brandywine and Germantown. The conditions in the prison were extremely bad—prisoners were known to go without food for as much as five or six days—and a break out had been planned for the very night of the Mischianza. McLane's raid had been meant as a diversion and it had been a partial success. Seven officers and 49 enlisted men broke out that night through a tunnel they had dug through the walls but at least five inmates were killed when the tunnel they were in collapsed.

This was another feather in McLane's clandestine cap but he did not have time to celebrate his latest achievement. The very next day, Washington authorized Lafayette to cross the Schuylkill River with an expeditionary force of 1,200 of Washington's best soldiers. The purpose of this mission was to observe and check any British advance. Washington made it clear that Lafayette was to keep moving and not establish a tented camp where he could be seen by the British. Unfortunately, Lafayette did exactly that at Barren Hill.

But as he had done in serving Washington at Whitemarsh, McLane was, here, there and everywhere, and acted immediately to warn Lafayette of the perilous situation he had placed himself in. While out patrolling, McLane soon noticed Captain Craig of Colonel Proctor's artillery militia acting oddly around Barnhill Church and followed him from there to the home of a known Tory named Robert Morris Miller, where he witnessed Craig giving information on Lafayette's position to a party of British soldiers. McLane was able to capture Craig and put him in the custody of Lieutenant Claypole of his command before rushing off to Lafayette's camp at Barren Hill to warn him of the treachery and the danger he was in. McLane was successful in his part but the turncoat Captain Craig managed to escape after overpowering Claypole and shooting him in the side.<sup>31</sup>

By now things were moving briskly. Lafayette was in a vulnerable position but had been wise enough to place scouts throughout the woods surrounding his camp. Some of his scouts had noticed a little-known side road running along the river that wasn't on any maps. The road started out close to Lafayette's camp, then dropped down to the river and out of the view of the approaching British. The expeditionary force of 1,200 men now made a clandestine yet furious break out. McLane, who, at this time, had about 50 Oneida Indians in his troop, fought a rear guard action.

The Oneidas, part of the six nation Iroquois federation, had come to Valley Forge earlier in the spring. Washington liked their fighting style and thought they would make a good fit in McLane's outfit. It is unlikely that the Oneidas spoke much English, but they did speak some French and most likely they communicated with McLane through a French interpreter or used sign language. The Oneidas fought bravely as part of the rear guard action and at least four of them were killed in this skirmish. At one point, when a French officer was shot off his horse and fell into the Schuylkill river, two Oneida warriors dove in to rescue him, with little concern for their own safety.<sup>32</sup>

"I am proud to hear you are still doing some things to distinguish yourself in the eyes of your

country. I have the pleasure to inform you that your conduct to the Marquis has been very pleasing [to] his Excellency and the entire army," wrote Charles Scott in one of several complimentary letters McLane received following this most recent escapade.

While McLane received much well deserved credit for assisting in Lafayette's escape from this trap he did not rest on his laurels for long. On June 8, he was patrolling with just two of his men when the small group was jumped by a patrol of British dragoons. McLane made a run for it, racing through the woods in the hope of reaching the broken ground near Old York road and Shoemaker's Mill, which he did. As he entered the water near the mill, the two dragoons were soon upon him and yelled for him to surrender or they would cut him down. McLane retreated but with a pistol ready in his hand. As the dragoons followed, with their swords drawn, McLane raced up to a hill, where his horse suddenly tired. When McLane stopped, one of the dragoons came up on his left with his sword drawn. Another dragoon came up on the opposite side to box McLane in. At this point, McLane feigned surrender, then suddenly grabbed the sword of the dragoon on his left side, and fired his pistol into the chest of the dragoon on his right side. Then before the first dragoon could wrestle his sword out of his grip, McLane hit him twice with the barrel of his gun, dazing him and knocking him backwards in the saddle of his horse. McLane now made his escape as he had severely cut his hand when he fought the first dragoon for his sword. McLane then rested his bleeding hand in the cold water of the mill pond to stop the bleeding and was found by his men shortly afterwards.<sup>33</sup> This was one of the most famous of all of McLane's partisan adventures.

"I give you joy for your escape the other day and the cleverness with which you dispatched the two English dragoons. I have felt great pleasure in knowing your wound was a slight one," Lafayette wrote in a letter to McLane dated June 12, 1778.

But Peter Grubb, the same Peter Grubb who had presided on the court of inquiry that had cleared McLane in the Andrew Finney case, sent a letter to him that was more cautionary than complimentary. "I think you rather neglectful of your own person to reconnoiter without company. You certainly must imagine if you should be so unfortunate as to be taken little lenity will be shown you, particularly at this time when they are going off, perhaps carry you to some distant part of the world where your complaint will not be heard..." Grubb then went into details of McLane's next mission but closed the letter with this telling postscript "...once more I entreat you to be careful of your own person."<sup>34</sup>

McLane didn't really listen. Just eight days later he was involved in yet another close call as he was lured to the Rising Sun tavern to meet an informant who may have been a loyalist spy. In any event, McLane was once again ambushed by British dragoons and once again had to fight his way out in a running chase.

By this time, the British were fast evacuating Philadelphia and McLane's thoughts were on his property in the city. At least 600 homes had been destroyed or badly damaged by the British soldiers quartered there and McLane wanted to know how his personal property had held up over nine months of enemy occupation.<sup>35</sup> He obtained special permission from Washington to enter the city for the purpose of checking on his property, but on two conditions—one, he must not tell anyone of this arrangement and, two, once he was in the city he was to turn his command over to the first high ranking officer he encountered.

McLane, thus, became the first American soldier to enter Philadelphia after the British had



abandoned the town. He was also diligent in capturing some enemy soldiers still lagging behind—a captain, a provost marshal, an army guide, four sergeants and 30 privates. All were taken without a shot being fired and without the loss of any of McLane's men.

Shortly afterwards Washington's army left Valley forge and made a beeline across New Jersey in an attempt to intercept and engage the British one more time as they retreated to New York. This led to the Battle of Monmouth, an indecisive victory for the Americans that proved to be the final major battle of the revolution in the northern colonies. McLane and his men were attached to the New Jersey Militia of Philemon Dickinson during the Monmouth fight and McLane documented in his journal that he captured "300 British and Hessian deserters" at a loss of only four of his men. He and his men, fighting and hiding in the pine tree forests that dot the central Jersey landscape, followed the retreating British army almost all the way to Sandy Hook.<sup>36</sup>

This was the final major fight for McLane in the Philadelphia campaign. From Whitemarsh in early December, 1777, up to and including the Battle of Monmouth on June 28, 1778, McLane estimated he had been in 53 skirmishes and one major battle.<sup>37</sup>

Going further back, from Short Hills in June of 1777 to Monmouth in June of 1778—a span of roughly one year—McLane had lost over two-thirds of his original 94 recruits. His famed partisan corps was then down to one officer in addition to himself and 34 fighting men. Several officers were among the many brave lads McLane had lost while fighting some of the toughest skirmishes of the war—these little known skirmishes that the history books tell us were inconsequential in the big picture. But those little "hard fights," as McLane often termed them, were where the war was won—and the men who died fighting them are the little heroes that history has forgotten.

In addition, many of the replacement soldiers McLane employed from time to time had given their lives while riding with their dashing partisan leader, including at least four Oneida Indians. This was the hard and risky life of a partisan soldier fighting on the skirmish lines during the Philadelphia campaign.

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## CHAPTER THREE: “McLANE’S DOWN PERIOD,” JUNE 1779- 1780

By Tom Welch and Mike Sheehan

When the British departed from Philadelphia in June 1778, General Washington knew full well there needed to be a strong hand as military governor to keep the peace in that beleaguered city. General Washington also needed a strong leader to retrieve whatever supplies and materiel, specifically munitions, blankets, and boots that the British were forced to abandon due to the lack of transport. It was suspected that there would be large amounts of these goods in warehouses, basements and other likely storage places. The situation called for the position of military governor to be a strong and forceful military presence. It called for a general such as the injured hero of Saratoga, Benedict Arnold. Even though the declared “Hero of Saratoga” was General Horatio Gates, most of the people in the know were convinced that it was the actions of Benedict Arnold who rallied the retreating American troops to win the day.

Realizing that such a strong presence was needed for an extended period, Washington chose Brigadier General Benedict Arnold. There were two other factors that led General Washington to make this appointment. Primarily, the decision was made all the more likely due to the serious leg wound that Arnold had suffered at Saratoga. The other factor was that Arnold was feeling overlooked and underappreciated. Much has been written about the reasons for his becoming a traitor and the early experiences in his life that caused his perfidy. Washington wanted Arnold to feel wanted and a valuable member of the Commander’s team. Since he was not able to serve on the battlefield due to his leg injury, the role of military governor of Philadelphia seemed to be most fitting.

Captain Allen McLane had known of Arnold and had actually had a confrontation with him through a June, 1777, court-martial. The action had to do with one of the ninety-four men in what later became known as “McLane’s Partisan Party,” whom McLane had recruited between February and May, 1777. On the muster role listing the recruits, the date of enlistment, the bounty paid and food allotment paid was one Andrew Finney. It was indicated on the muster role that “Andrew Finny” had an enlistment date of April 24, 1777, and that he was paid a bounty of £7.10 (seven pounds, ten shillings) and £12.6 as subsistence.<sup>1</sup> Allegedly, he soon deserted. The tenacious new captain from Duck Creek went after and captured Finney and brought him up on the charge of desertion. The hearing officer for the court-martial was General Arnold. The hearing panel recommended that Finney be found innocent of the charge. Arnold upheld the recommendation and imposed a fine of ten pounds on Captain McLane for “abuse of authority.”<sup>2</sup> McLane subsequently appealed the fine to another general and it was overturned.<sup>3</sup> However, this would be a cause for animosity, with McLane feeling that he was being punished for doing his sworn duty.<sup>4</sup>

Through most of the eight months of the British occupation of Philadelphia, Allen McLane would disguise himself as a country bumpkin selling produce or some other nondescript persona to gather intelligence. Soon he had recruited seven patriot citizens who were willing to be his spy network. They made regular reports to McLane, who would share the results of these findings by sending express riders to General Washington and his staff. There are numerous letters in McLane’s papers from generals thanking him for his intelligence report and also thanking him for some item he picked up for them, such as a saber or knives and forks.<sup>5</sup> \* The point is that the spy network was firmly in place and there is no mention anywhere that this writer has seen which called an

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\* Note: There are letters in the correspondence appendix from General Scott and General Scammell mentioning these items that they had asked McLane to obtain. He even mused in his journal that he wished not to have to do their shopping.



end to the Philadelphia-based McLane spy connection.

It is not clear how McLane specifically came to the information that Benedict Arnold was not following the direct order to turn over all contraband and materiel that was discovered in Philadelphia. However, somehow it had come to McLane's attention that General Arnold was profiteering by selling these supplies on the black market. This was a very important and dangerous piece of intelligence. McLane felt that his sense of duty demanded that he report this dramatic finding. Since he had been making previous reports to General Washington, this charge against the military governor of Philadelphia was directed to Washington as well. It is not known if he tendered the information to another member of Washington's staff first and that officer took a hands-off approach, not intending to engender the wrath of General Arnold. Nonetheless, there was no buffer for McLane once he decided to report the offense.

When confronted with the report, General Washington flew into a rage against McLane. He could not believe the report of wrong-doing against one of his most valued and most effective field commanders. Whether he suspected that McLane was making the report to get even with Arnold for the unhappy result of the Finney court-martial hearing is not known, but certainly he would have known about the court-martial.

There were others who had made reports of Arnold's abuse of authority but Washington took a blind eye to them because of the position of support for Arnold that he had taken. One of those other reports came from a high-ranking member of Washington's staff, General Joseph Reed, who also served as President of Pennsylvania. Obviously, it was discounted as well. There were court martial proceedings regarding the alleged abuses of General Arnold but he was cleared of the charges.

The citizens of Philadelphia were either aware of, or at least suspicious that some kind of corruption was going on. Food was scarce and the people had seen wagons coming to town but mysteriously the food was not finding its way to the tables of the Philadelphia families. Without knowing the source of the problem, they turned their anger toward any persons in authority. Those suspicions led to an event that occurred on the streets of Philadelphia which became known as "The Battle of Fort Wilson." This event involved angry citizens rioting and storming the home of James Wilson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a ranking member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Shots were fired and persons were killed. At the time that the mob was forming, McLane was in the company of friends of Wilson. They were mobbed by the crowd and their very lives were in jeopardy. Rebecca McLane, Allen's wife, while observing the disturbing scene from a second floor window, fainted when she saw the danger that her husband was facing. Only by quickly getting into the Wilson residence did the men escape the danger in this most bizarre scene. This account is included to show that the local people were ready to blame anyone in authority whom they had an opportunity to confront.<sup>6</sup>

Once McLane reported to General Washington that Benedict Arnold was involved in profiteering, his former status as a favored cavalryman changed markedly for the worse. Washington raged at McLane for violating the military code, which contained a prohibition against reporting a senior officer. Before the punishment came, Washington told McLane "If I did not like you, the punishment would be much greater."<sup>7</sup> In summary, McLane's punishment included his demotion from a captain in charge of a company of horse to a company of foot; his removal from the independent command that he had enjoyed and had carried out so capably, especially during the Valley Forge winter of 1777-78, being denied promotion to Major three times; and finally being placed under the command of Henry "Lighthorse Harry" Lee, then in his early twenties, who would go on to become the father of future Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Washington may not have considered this part of his punishment, but clearly McLane did. He wrote in his journal that he would have preferred dying in battle rather than facing the situation in which he now found himself. He felt that Lee was



*Portrait of Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee  
by Charles Willson Peale.*

much more interested in glory for himself than serving the cause of liberty. As a "glory-seeker," Lee was prone to take the credit for what others achieved and was too quick to place blame on others. In his journal McLane complained "Many times has this man taken the laurels from my brow."<sup>8</sup>

General Arnold wanted the punishment of McLane to be much more severe. It appears that Washington was seeking the middle ground, punishing Captain McLane just enough to placate the "wronged General Arnold" but not so much as to break the spirit of the very enterprising and effective Captain McLane, who had become so very valuable to the General as a reliable and steady source of military intelligence ever since he promoted him to captain in January, 1777.

While McLane felt wronged by the punishment, he felt he had only done his duty. This was the second time that he had experienced this feeling of being wronged, both times by the same Benedict Arnold, the first time being the court martial hearing of alleged deserter Andrew Finney.<sup>9</sup>

However, his spirit of patriotism and diligence to do his duty seems not to have been affected. During the summer of 1779, once in June and once in July, McLane was called on to serve his country. Almost immediately after being reassigned to the command of Major Lee, he was pressed into service in two very important battles, Stony Point and Powles Hook (also known as "Paulus Hook"). There were letters between Washington and Major Lee which refer to McLane being reassigned to Lee's command. On June 9, 1779 Washington sent McLane this message requesting that McLane report to Lee:

On the receipt of this I request that you will proceed with your company by the nearest route towards Suffrans near the entrance of Smith's Clove, where or in the neighborhood you will meet with Major Lee, and place yourself under his command.<sup>10</sup>

On the same day June 9, the Commander sent a letter to Lee, which included this sentence:

Capt McLane I fully intended to have joined you before this and thought he had received orders for that purpose, but owing to some mistake I find it was not done; he is however now ordered to march and place himself under your command with his company.<sup>11</sup>

Note the different underlined verbs used. His note to McLane used the verb "request." His note to Lee used the verb "ordered." While not desiring to make too much of this difference in word usage, this writer is led to believe that Washington was aware of McLane's reluctance to place himself under Lee's command and had some sympathy for McLane's state of mind. McLane had written John Dickinson and Thomas McKean, seeking relief from the reassignment and they had turned down his request.<sup>12</sup>

## The Battle of Stony Point

By early 1779, London was growing impatient with the results of the war in America, having begun four years earlier. It was now desired that General Sir Henry Clinton, KB, the British commander-in-chief, bring





Detail of a display at Stony Point Battlefield recounting Captain Allen McLane's contributions to the American cause.

"Mr. Washington into a general and decisive action at the opening of the campaign."<sup>13</sup> Clinton chose to move against the American position at King's Ferry, forty miles up the Hudson River from British Headquarters in Manhattan. This essential ferry, located at the point where the river narrows to form the southern gate of the Hudson Highlands, was used by Washington to cross troops, supplies, and information between New England and the rest of the states. On May 31st/June 1st, 1779, Clinton took both termini of the ferry, Verplanck Point on the east, and Stony Point on the west, and immediately began garrisoning both sides.

General Washington, headquartered in New Jersey, responded quickly and moved to New Windsor, New York, to assess the situation. There was an immediate need for intelligence regarding the enemy at Stony Point; King's

Ferry had to be reopened. The British were fortifying Stony Point with alarming speed; Col. Jesse Woodhull noted that "they were at work like a parcel of devils."<sup>14</sup> Washington directed Major "Light Horse" Harry Lee to reconnoiter the area around Stony Point. McLane, who had just been assigned to Lee's Corps, was selected to gather further, and if possible, more intimate knowledge of the enemy's plans and fortifications.<sup>15</sup> Washington had specifically requested that someone "go into the works at Stony-Point, or if admittance is not to be gained... obtain... a sketch of the work."<sup>16</sup> McLane, determined to actually enter the works, found a way in. He was to escort a local woman into the fort so that she could see her sons, who had absconded to the British.<sup>17</sup> The woman was Mrs. Thomas Smith, sister-in-law of William Smith, Jr., former Royal Chief Justice of the Province of New York and a staunch loyalist. Mrs. Smith and her husband, Thomas, lived at Smith's Haverstraw property, "Belmont" (presently the grounds of the Helen Hayes Rehabilitation Hospital). Thomas, William Smith's pro-American younger brother, was permitted by the State of New York to live at Belmont, which had been confiscated from William when the war broke out.<sup>18</sup> Thomas and his sons had a falling out, likely over politics, and the sons decided to make for Stony Point to obtain transportation to Manhattan to seek the patronage of their powerful uncle. This provided Captain McLane with an excellent opportunity to enter the works, although it is not known how he found out about Mrs. Smith and her situation.<sup>19</sup> On the evening of July 2nd, McLane wrote in his journal that "By Genl. Washington's orders went in with a flag to conduct Mrs. Smith to see her sons."<sup>20</sup> There is some confusion with this report because McLane notes in his journal that he went into the fort on July 2, while Lee's letter to McLane relating to the matter is dated July 12. It is a mystery which begs to be solved.

July 12th, 1779

Sir:

You will accompany Mrs. Smith with a flag to the enemy lines, for the purpose of serving the delivery of some (illegible) for her two sons.

Henry Lee \_\_\_\_\_

Maj. Cmdr. Light Horse<sup>21</sup>



The information McLane gathered in his trip inside the works was essential, and gave an inside view of the British situation that neither the reconnaissance of Major Lee nor that of General Washington could have achieved. The works at Stony Point were incomplete and in two sections—the Lower and Upper Works. The Lower Works contained three flesches\* and were open in the rear; each contained artillery. The flesches were embedded in an abatis, hewn from sharpened trees felled on site. The first abatis stretched from the north face of the point, down into the water on the south side, where it extended for fifty yards to cover the fordable shallow. Behind the first abatis lay a second, shorter interior abatis, defended by a 3-pounder, marking the beginning of the Upper Works. Behind this lay the most important piece of artillery in the fortifications, an 8-inch howitzer, pre-aimed towards the end of the first abatis. This howitzer was capable of hurling a forty-six pound shell into the fordable water below. Aside from other guns in the Upper Works which were not able to be depressed to fire on attackers at point blank range, a gunboat (whose name has been lost to history) was stationed to make sure none would pass the shallow water.<sup>22</sup>

Armed with the information provided by McLane, Washington decided to go on the offensive. After assigning Brigadier General Anthony Wayne to the command of the Light Infantry Corps, the body of troops that would take Stony Point, Washington and Wayne set about hammering out the plan of attack. At midnight on a dark night, using only the point of the bayonet, the Lights would take the post. Major Hardee Murfree would lead a demonstration of 150 men in front of the works, who were ordered to keep up a “perpetual and galling” fire. From the north side, Colonel Richard Butler would lead 300 men through the abatis. On the southern end, with Wayne at the head of the column, Colonel Chrsitian Febiger, known to his men as “Old Denmark,” would take 700 men into the shallows and up the hill. Both columns would proceed with a twenty-man “forlorn hope,”\*\* whose muskets were slung, to remove obstacles. Behind them would be a 150-man vanguard to secure the entry; the remainder of the columns would march with shouldered muskets (bayonets still fixed) and use them as needed.<sup>23</sup>

The Light Infantry marched on July 15th and began their assault near midnight on the morning of the 16th. The action was a brilliant American success; the post was taken in just under a half hour with the loss of fifteen dead. The British lost all of their stores, artillery, arms, and 543 prisoners.<sup>24</sup> The Storming of Stony Point, one of the most brilliant affairs of the young United States was possible due to the bravery and fortitude of those who stormed the garrison that July morning, and to the scouts, observers, and essential intelligence received from Captain Allan McLane.

In summary, McLane had four specific roles in the Stony Point episode. First, his assignment was to go into the fort in disguise to gather the military intelligence needed to construct the plan of attack.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, he and Lee were in charge of troops held in reserve. Thirdly, he was directed by Colonel Alexander Hamilton to round up wagons necessary to remove the wounded and the captured stores.<sup>26</sup> Finally, in conjunction, he was in charge of dismantling the fort and spiking the British guns.<sup>27</sup> McLane wrote in his journal, “July 17th, Saturday – His Excell. Sent me to collect wagons to move the stores off the point – still cannonading the works on Verplank’s (Point) – Sunday, July 18 – Removed the stores and cannon – Dismantled the lines.”

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\* Note: The word “flesche” is French for “arrow” or “projection” and refers to an element of a fortification similar to what was known as a “redan,” the French term for “projection” or “salient.” A redan is a work in a V-shaped salient angled toward an expected attack. It can be made from earthworks or other material.

\*\* Note: A “forlorn hope” is a band of soldiers or other combatants chosen to take the leading part in a military operation, such as an assault on a defended position, where the risk of casualties is high.

On the day after the battle, July 17, McLane received this directive from Alexander Hamilton:

The General desires you will do everything in your power without delay to collect all the teams and wagons about the Country in this neighborhood – to remove the wounded, cannon and stores. There is no time to be left in doing it.<sup>28</sup>

For his efforts he received no recognition in the report by the commander, General “Mad Anthony” Wayne. Wayne, on the other hand, received accolades by the Congress, a large cash amount to be distributed to the men under him whom he named as deserving and a national reputation as a war hero. There are many places named for General “Mad Anthony,” including Fort Wayne, Waynesboro in many states, Waynesville and simply Wayne.

The omission was galling to both McLane and Lee but affected them in different ways. Lee was sufficiently offended that he decided to take the matter up with the commander-in-chief, so he contacted Washington to seek an opportunity to get the same glory for himself that Wayne had received. Lee did receive from Wayne a commendation for the high quality of the intelligence report, but as people eventually found out, that was McLane’s doing.<sup>29</sup> In the 20th century, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency recognized McLane on their history website, citing him for the use of disguise in reconnoitering the fort.<sup>30</sup>

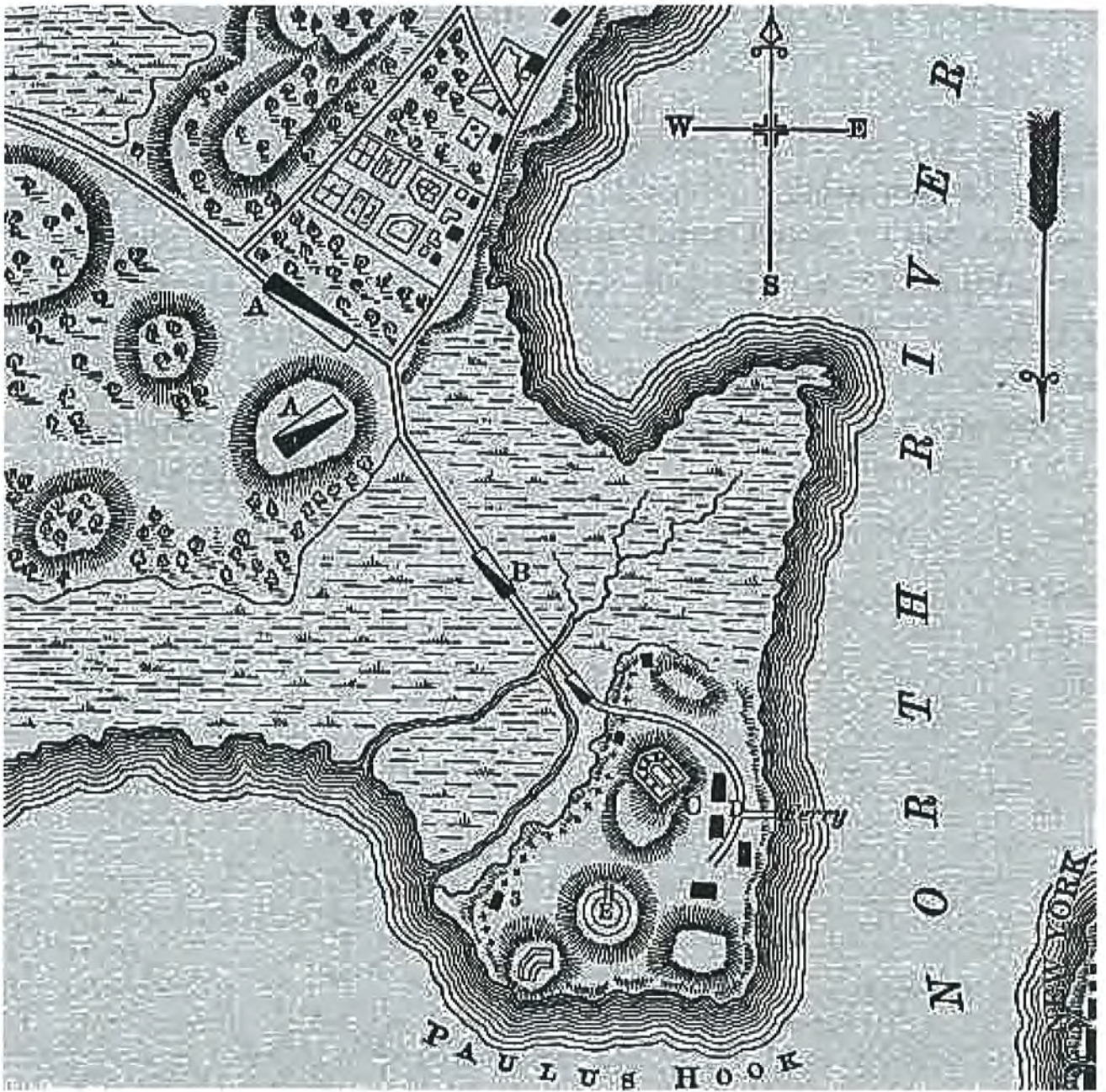
## The Next Target – Powles Hook

The similarities between Wayne and Lee went further than just having colorful nicknames. They were both brave and aggressive fighters. They both liked the limelight. Lee had more than a small advantage which went beyond fact that there may have been a compelling case to take on Powles Hook and “to strike while the iron is hot.” The Washington and Lee families were long-term landed gentry families who had been in Virginia for generations and had close ties. In addition, Washington had once been a suitor of Lee’s mother. The power of that connection in causing the Commander to listen to Lee’s fervent request for a command to follow up Stony Point with another successful raid cannot be dismissed.

Lee had his eye on the British fort at Powles Hook in New Jersey (also known as Paulus Hook). To match his rival, Wayne, Lee suggested an action against Powles Hook, which was situated on low land on the Jersey shore directly across from New York City. It was nearly surrounded by water, difficult to reach, with the only point of access being a circular raised road through a marsh. Like Stony Point, quality intelligence was needed. Also like Stony Point, the mission to gain intelligence was turned over to McLane. Historian William H. Richardson, who was charged with writing a commemorative piece in 1929 on the occasion of the 150-year anniversary of the battle, discovered, seemingly by accident, that McLane had been a key member of Washington and Lee’s team. Richardson wrote that Washington “committed the surveillance and safety of his twenty-three-year-old young neighbor (Lee) into the hands of the capable Captain McLane. McLane was thirty-three at that time and to the end of the war his life was a succession of ‘prodigies of valor,’ modestly performed and dedicated to the service of his country.”<sup>31</sup>

The military intention of the enterprise against Powles Hook, as was true of Stony Point, was not to hold the fort but to gain a moral victory over the British, which held great potential to raise the morale of the military, the Congress and the populace. In the next few paragraphs I will attempt to outline the plan of the battle, the results, the problems that were experienced and the matter of how the credit, praise, recognition and rewards were passed out to the participants.





*Contemporary map of Powles, or Paulus, Hook.*

The plan of the battle was to march to a staging point near the fort and arrive there by 12:30 a.m. The American forces were to be broken into three columns. "The attacking force as planned by Lee, was to consist of 100 men from Woodford's Virginia brigade under Major Clark to form the right; two Maryland companies commanded by Captain Levin Handy to compose the center; 100 of Muhlenberg's Virginians and Captain McLane's troop of dismounted dragoons to make up the left, which was to be led by Lee in person. After the fashion of the attack on Stony Point, there were three 'forlorn hopes,' 'desperadoes led by officers of distinguished merit,' to lead the van, and cut through the abatis. Their leaders were to be Lt. Vandeville of the 1st Virginia on the right, Lt. Reed of the 5th Maryland in the centre and Lt. Armstrong of Lee's dragoons on the left. There was



also a reserve under Captain Reed of the 10th Virginia.<sup>32</sup> The attack was to be bayonets only, but the muskets were loaded with the [priming] pans open.

The troops left Paramus at half past ten in the evening, with sufficient time for the march but things went downhill from there. The guide got lost, costing them an extra four hours of marching and causing the troops to be very exhausted before the attack was launched. There was already some resentment from Major Clark, who held equal rank with Major Lee, who was designated as the ranking officer in charge, but Clark actually had seniority. Clark felt that Lee had lied about the date of his promotion in rank to major. Some disgruntled Virginians got lost and were not available for the battle. So the plan of attack had to be modified at the last minute. Their late arrival led to two disadvantages. The risen sun made it more likely that the British would become aware of the presence of the American troops. The rising tide also created serious problems with troop movements and keeping their powder dry. Since the troops were trudging through the unexpectedly high water, all the powder got wet.

Given all the problems, the attack was reasonably successful. The troops performed effectively and bravely. The desperadoes cut their way through the abatis. In a short time, without a shot fired by the Americans, the blockhouse was taken. "Fifty of the enemy had fallen to the bayonet, 158 were taken prisoner; the entire garrison had been accounted for." The commander, Major Sutherland, and up to 50 Hessians had taken shelter in a blockhouse and never were ousted. American casualties included two killed and three wounded.<sup>33</sup>

After the successful attack a new set of problems were faced. Since the British ships in New York Harbor were less than an hour away, there was no time to delay. For this reason, they did not take the time to spike the British guns as planned. Nor did they burn the barracks, since there were wounded, as well as women and children there. They did not capture all the stores. As they moved as quickly as possible to the location of the boats that they expected to quickly take them to safety, they discovered that there were NO boats. Captain Peyton of the first company of Lee's Legion had, in fact, arrived with the boats but because of the lateness of the operation caused by delays during the first phase, and having been led astray by the guide, he had waited a while, and then assumed that the enterprise had been cancelled, and left.<sup>34</sup>

The troops had marched at high speed 30 miles, "through mountains, swamps and deep morasses, without the least refreshment during the whole march," fought a battle and now were 14 miles from their refuge without a cartridge. Their situation was now worse than hazardous, it was desperate. Lee divided the troops into three groups and they headed home, hoping not to be met by the roving British raiders led by Buskirk. By the time they were confronted by Buskirk, they had just come upon the Virginians, who, many hours earlier, had been separated from the main group. The Virginians, of course, still had dry powder and were able to provide rear guard cover while the exhausted troops made it back to camp.<sup>35</sup>

This fortunate exit from their dire situation made it possible for the Americans to claim a clear victory, but the close calls they had experienced meant that these men, who surely felt at risk throughout the enterprise, had probably felt that it was less than a total win.<sup>36</sup>

When it came time to pass out the honors, the acclaim, the glory and monetary rewards, it looked pretty much like the reward package at Stony Point. Like Stony Point, besides the prisoners taken and the inspiration, no military advantage had been achieved at Powles Hook. However, the country and the Congress, starved for victories of any kind, heaped praise, glory and money on Major Lee. He had achieved what he wanted—praise to rival that of General Anthony Wayne. Congress awarded Lee a vote of thanks and a gold medal, as they had done for Wayne. Congress also provided \$15,000 to be divided among the troops. However, Congress turned down a resolution commending the conduct of Major Clark, Captains Handy, Forsyth, Reed, McLane, and others.<sup>37</sup> It

should be no surprise that McLane wrote in his journal, "More than once I have had the laurels plucked from my brow."

In 1929, W. H. Richardson, while conducting research in preparation for writing a 150-year anniversary souvenir booklet commemorating the Battle of Powles Hook, apparently discovered sources that convinced him that Allen McLane was an unsung hero of both battles—Stony Point and Powles Hook. He proceeded, apparently excited about his find, to write six letters in November of 1929 to Henry Conrad, Delaware Archivist. In his first letter, dated November 4, 1929, he states, "I am preparing a monograph on Captain Allen McLane, who I have learned for the first time this summer, was one of the most remarkable figures of the Revolution."<sup>38</sup> The third letter in the series, dated November 13, 1929, begins, "I was rather delighted that I could have made a discovery that would have startled you and the rest of your historic Delawareans." He apparently was very convinced that the contributions of Allen McLane at the two noteworthy battles of 1779 were critical to the final result: "I dislike to tell our distinguished friends who still worship Major Lee that with the work of Capt. Allen McLane left out of the Powles Hook story, as well as Stony Point, there would have been no such historic dates in history."<sup>39</sup> It would appear that Richardson's discoveries came as news to Conrad, since there is no mention of Powles Hook in his 1908 *History of the State of Delaware*.

Even though McLane had just been put in a position that might have been considered a punishment for reporting Benedict Arnold for profiteering, it seems not to have dampened his sense of duty and patriotic desire to serve the cause of American Independence. It would also seem that W.H. Richardson shined the light on the extraordinary contributions of Allen McLane that account for the growing interest of other historians, causing them to slowly begin to unravel his story and to tell it to the people.

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## CHAPTER FOUR: HAITI, NEW YORK AND YORKTOWN – McLANE'S ROLE

By Tom Welch

After it was discovered that Benedict Arnold was a traitor, life for Captain McLane improved dramatically. He felt that he had been liberated by being removed from the command of Colonel Henry "Lighthorse Harry" Lee; he was transferred to the Southern Campaign under the command of General Baron Von Steuben<sup>1</sup>; and he was given the very important assignment of monitoring the British fleet, with orders from General Washington to report everything of importance to the commander. Finally, the roadblock to his promotion to Major was removed and he was breveted major, though this writer has not found any source indicating that his promotion was ever approved by the Congress.

Clearly, over the next few months his roles in intelligence gathering were expanded. What he was assigned to do was of critical importance, as evidenced by the letters of authority that he received from the highest ranking military commanders. While much of the detail of his assignments was cloaked in secrecy, what he was ordered to do was of the utmost importance. The level of his responsibilities for a captain, or even a breveted major, were surprisingly high. For example, a letter from Baron Von Steuben on March 9, 1781, gave him authority to accomplish his mission. The note in its entirety is as follows:

"Major McLane being ordered on business of great consequence, all quartermasters and civil and military officers, are directed to give him all possible assistance with respect to procuring Boats, horses, men, and anything else he may stand in need of to accomplish his business." *[A footnote at the bottom of the letter states "Major commanded a party under the secret instructions the remainder of this campaign, by water as well as by land, till the siege of York." It is not clear who is the author of this footnote. - T.W.]*<sup>2</sup>

The Marquis de Lafayette expressed in a March 16, 1781 letter:

Williamsburg 16 March 1781

Dear Sir,

I received yours of the 14th instant containing the agreeable intelligence of the fleets being out of reach of the Enemy's ships for which I acknowledge myself obliged, and must also thank you for the celerity with which you conveyed my orders.

Major McPherson is ordered to Col. Ennis's post on particular business in which from your knowledge of the Bay, etc. I am conscious you can be of great service.

I wish you to join him and after being acquainted with his orders act together as circumstances may require.

It may be of importance that M. McPherson should be acquainted with the force of the two frigates which have passed up the bay.

I am yrs \_\_

Signed

Lafayette, M.G.

Major McLane<sup>3</sup>

It was about this same time, in March of 1781, that McLane engaged in a very exciting venture—the capture of Benedict Arnold. Lighthorse Harry Lee had already tried and failed several months earlier. McLane

writes about this in his journal. John Bakeless in his book, *Turncoats, Traitors and Heroes*, describes the episode as follows:

In March 1781, Major Allan McLane also attempted to kidnap Arnold – being especially eager to succeed where Lee, whom he hated, had failed. From an advanced American signal station on the James River, McLane had noticed that Arnold rode out to the shore of the Chesapeake Bay every morning. He laid a plot to intercept him; but the untimely arrival of British warships, which anchored in the wrong place, saved Arnold, for the second time.<sup>4</sup>

The next major mission that McLane was called on to carry out was the delivery of dispatches from General Washington and General Rochambeau to the French Admiral, Comte de Grasse, in the West Indies. In March, King Louis XVI had commissioned de Grasse as Rear Admiral and given him the mission of sailing to the West Indies to protect the French sugar cane interests there. Meanwhile, on May 21, General Washington was meeting at Wethersfield, Connecticut, with General Rochambeau, the French commander, to discuss war strategy. Washington had come to the meeting prepared to push for a war-ending battle against the British at New York. While General Rochambeau did not argue with Washington, there is evidence that the French had already decided that it would be either impossible, or very problematic, to defeat the British in New York due to the number of waterways and the strength of the British fleet.

Whether in New York or elsewhere, the two commanders felt that they would need the added support of the French Admiral de Grasse. The fleet of De Barras was available in Rhode Island but more sea power would be needed against the powerful British armada. The fleet of de Grasse was quite a formidable force and included twenty ships of the line, a large number of support vessels and 4000 troops. With Washington's dispatches in hand, McLane sailed on the *Congress* to Haiti, where he found de Grasse. McLane was summoned to the *Ville de Paris*, de Grasse's flagship. An American lieutenant on the *Congress*, Richard O'Brien, relates that he was in command of the boat that rowed McLane to the *Ville de Paris*.<sup>5</sup>

McLane recorded in his journal—in the third person, as usual—the report of the dramatic mission to Haiti:

In the interval between the appearance of Cornwallis in Virginia and the month of June, 1781, McLane embarked on the ship *Congress*, of Philadelphia, Capt. Geddis, as Capt. of Marines. Visited Cape Francois in July, was examined by Count de Grasse in Council of War on board *Ville de Paris*, and gave it as his decided opinion that Count de Grasse could make it easy for Genl. Washington to reduce the British in the South if he proceeded with his fleet and army to the Chesapeake.<sup>6</sup>

McLane continues:

I was on the quarter deck of the *Ville de Paris* and after considerable time had elapsed one of the French officers the Captain of a '74, one of the Council of War informed me that in Consequence of the dispatches delivered to the Council of War by Col. Allan McLane, his clear and explicit statements and rational views of the probable Consequences, it was then determined to abandon the Expedition against the West Indies Islands and to sail with all Expedition for the Coast of the United States.

De Grasse dispatched messages to both Washington in New York and Rochambeau in Rhode Island indicating his decision.





*Admiral de Grasse*

Both the French fleet and the *Congress* with McLane aboard departed. The *Congress* sailed directly to the Chesapeake but encountered the British ship of the line, *HMS Savage*. In an intense battle in which both ships were severely damaged, the *Congress* took the *Savage*. McLane simply notes that “the *Congress* fell in with the British sloop of war *Savage* off Charleston Bar and took her.”<sup>7</sup>

Because there has not been much in the way of documentary proof that McLane took the trip to meet with de Grasse, there has been some conjecture as to whether he even made the trip. A book by Kenneth Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, published in 2014, recently came to my attention. It provides a bit of detail that may help to assure us all that McLane did, in fact, make the trip that triggered de Grasse’s decision to sail to America rather than remaining in the West Indies to protect the French sugar cane industry, as he had originally been ordered to do, and, further, to take his fleet to the

Chesapeake rather than to New York. Daigler writes that,

in late August 1781, he (McLane) had just returned from the Caribbean, where at Washington’s instructions he had met with the French admiral de Grasse to coordinate military operations in Virginia. Some historians have reasoned that correspondence from Washington which McLane carried to this meeting, along with McLane’s personal appeals, were the reasons that de Grasse agreed to the Chesapeake Bay location [versus] the New York City area.<sup>8</sup>

Daigler surmises, along with others, that McLane really did not have any convincing to do, since the French were already predisposed to favor the Chesapeake alternative rather than New York.

Since the French fleet’s voyage involved first sailing to Havana to pick up sufficient gold to pay and feed General Rochambeau’s troops, their trip was longer. The French fleet dropped anchor in the Chesapeake on August 26, 1781.<sup>9</sup>

The fortunes of war often hinge on the most opportune and inopportune circumstances. The gods of fate seemed to favor the French and the Americans throughout most of the several months leading up to the British surrender at Yorktown. The British fleet under Admiral Graves had been contesting the waters around Haiti with de Grasse’s forces. The British became aware, shortly after de Grasse’s departure from Haiti, that he had gone and surmised that he had headed north, either to Virginia or to New York. Because of the delays that the French fleet and the *Congress* faced, coupled with faster ships, the British were the first to arrive at the mouth of the Chesapeake. Not finding the French fleet there, Graves concluded that de Grasse was on his way to New York. He immediately sailed for New York, himself. As a result of that decision, the British were not in position to control the Chesapeake and to remove Cornwallis’s troops from the siege of Yorktown.<sup>10</sup>

While Washington and Rochambeau were leading the combined Franco-American forces to Virginia, arriving at Williamsburg on September 14, 1781, McLane was involved in another very important secret mission. In the book, *Washington’s Secret Six*, by Kilmeade and Yaeger, McLane’s role in that mission is told in some detail:

At roughly the same time, Allen McLane....had been ordered to Long Island to gather any information he could regarding the preparations of the British ships set to bring relief and, presumably, to meet with a the agents already working there who could provide him with a fuller picture before he slipped back out to rejoin Washington’s troops as they made camp at Yorktown.



McLane had special instructions to learn as many of the British navy's code signals as possible, so that the French fleet could decipher what the enemy ships were communicating to one another during naval engagements. It was nearly an impossible task, because ships in harbor are unlikely to use distress codes or signals for attack, so McLane was left to try any desperate or accidental manner he could devise to piece together the secret system – an ineffective (not to mention dangerous) approach.

Fortunately, while on Long Island, McLane was put into contact with James Rivington. The printer and coffeehouse owner was still operating his presses and still fraternizing with the British in Manhattan despite the dangers to spies, and his persistence paid off. Whether someone had left a copy in Rivington's coffeehouse or the British had commissioned him to print additional copies is not clear, but somehow he managed to procure a copy of the entire British naval codebook. Rivington passed it on to McLane, who rushed it to Washington.<sup>11</sup>

Both McLane and the codebook made it safely off Long Island and down to Virginia by the end of the summer, and Washington was able to transport the book to Admiral de Grasse's custody by mid-September. In French hands, it was a more effective resource than the Americans could have dared hope for, and its loss was more devastating than the British could have imagined.<sup>12</sup>

Daigler's *Spies, Patriots and Traitors*, contains some pertinent passages that speak to the issue of McLane's mission that brought the codebooks to Washington and de Grasse:

As the siege at Yorktown took shape, a potentially strategic piece of intelligence came into American hands. James Rivington, the New York City Tory publisher of the Royal Gazette and Culper Ring\* agent obtained a copy of the Royal Navy's signals book. This book described how the navy used its series of flags, or at night lights and rockets, to maneuver their ships in a naval engagement. Instant knowledge of how the British planned to form and use their ships in battle could give an opposing force a significant advantage in battle. How Rivington obtained the book has never been revealed. Also, while Rivington was part of the Culper Ring, the American intelligence officer who received the book from him was not directly connected to the ring.

That officer was Maj. Allen McLane, who had previously conducted intelligence activities against the British when they occupied Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup>

This account raises questions about how much contact McLane had with the Culper Ring\*. In his journal at the New York Historical Society he reports that he went to New York and received "the book from Mr. R."<sup>14</sup>

When the British realized that de Grasse was not in the New York area, they sensed that they needed to return to the Chesapeake as soon as possible. When they did, the Battle of the Chesapeake, or "the Battle of the Capes" as it is also called, ensued. On September 5, 1781, the massive sea power of the French confronted

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\* Note: The "Culper Ring," according to the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, "was a spy ring organized by American Major (later Colonel) Benjamin Tallmadge under orders from General George Washington in the summer of 1778 during the British occupation of New York City at the height of the American Revolutionary War. The 'Culper' name was suggested by Washington who devised it from Culpeper County, Virginia. The two main members of the Ring, Abraham Woodhull and Robert Townsend, used 'Samuel Culper, Sr.' and 'Samuel Culper, Jr.' respectively, as aliases. Tallmadge was in direct contact with, and control of, the Ring but Washington often directed its operations. Tallmadge was referred to by the alias 'John Bolton.' The Ring's task was to send messages to General Washington about the activities of the British Army in New York City, the British headquarters and base of operations..."

the massive sea power of the British. They bombarded each other for hours and wreaked massive damage on their opponents. Since the objective of the French fleet was to prevent the British from coming to the aid of Cornwallis, the victory belongs to the French.

Thus, the siege of the Franco-American forces was afforded the opportunity to continue to close the net around Cornwallis. Having no chance of victory and no avenue of escape, he had no alternative but to accept the terms of surrender. British naval historian Sir William M. James labeled this the “decisive battle of the war, one that sealed the fate of Cornwallis and of the British cause in America.”<sup>15</sup>

The surrender of Cornwallis did not end McLane’s assignment to monitor the British fleet. McLane still had the assignment to gather intelligence on the British fleet. Even though General Cornwallis had signed the surrender on October 19, 1781, the war was not over and there was still great cause not lessen the diligence in gathering information about the strength and disposition of the enemy. A shooting war continued for almost a year and a half. General Washington wanted to be sure that the British would not be able to recover and take advantage of a relaxed military posture. Therefore, he needed the quality of intelligence about British strength, movements and disposition that he had been receiving from McLane. So Allen McLane continued to do what he had been doing for over a year, serving the Commander and the Cause of American Independence. General Washington sent to Major McLane this letter on October 29, 1781:

To Major McLane

Sir

I request that you will proceed with all possible expedition in your boat to the Capes, and reconnoiter as nearly as is consistent with your safety, the British fleet, in order to ascertain their strength and disposition, and particularly whether they have any transports under convoy. If circumstances make it more desireable to make your observations from the shore, you will apply to any militia officers, and request their assistance, either for your personal safety and accomplishing your object, or for transmitting intelligence to me. You will likewise communicate such discoveries to Count de Grasse as you think deserve his attention.

Geo. Washington

Given at Head Quarters

The 29th Oct 1781<sup>16</sup>

[From the papers of Gen. Washington]

A similar authorization on October 30, 1781, from the French Admiral de Grasse called on the French troops “to give Allen McLane whatever support he needs.” Here is that letter in French and also a translation into English.

Capt. McLane

Il est ordonne a tous battiments Francois actuellement dans le Baye de Chesapeake de ne donner aucune depechement, a la commission de Mons. Mac Lane de lui a donner tout assistance sout tout fois montre et a reveler de sa mission.

Le Comte De Grasse

On borde la *Ville de Paris*, 30th Oct 1781

\*\*\*\*\*

Capt. McLane

It is ordered to all French warships now in the Chesapeake Bay, to allow passage to Mr.

MacLane's commission and to give him all assistance under everyone's watch and to further his mission.

#### The Count de Grasse

On board the *Ville de Paris*, 30th Oct 1781<sup>17</sup>

In 1824, more than 40 years after these events, the Marquis de Lafayette made a triumphal return visit to the United States. McLane was invited by Wilmington businessman Victor du Pont, a close friend of both McLane and Lafayette, to join him in travelling to New York City to welcome LaFayette at the beginning of his American travels. McLane replied to du Pont in an 1824 letter, indicating that, due to gout, he would be unable to join him on the trip to New York. McLane wrote "I have not seen the General (Lafayette) since he handed me Genl. Washington's instructions on board the *Ville de Paris* in Oct 1781."<sup>18</sup> He apparently was referring to the occasion after the Battle of the Chesapeake when General Washington was directing him to continue to monitor the British fleet.

When Lafayette came to Wilmington later in his historic journey, in July, 1825, McLane was there to welcome him.<sup>19</sup>

*(Many of the events during McLane's wartime service deserve to be researched in greater depth, including the battle between the Congress and the British ship, H.M.S. Savage, the critical Battle of the Chesapeake, the siege of Yorktown that forced Cornwallis to surrender, and the defeat of de Grasse by the British as he headed his fleet back to the West Indies. - T.W.)*

#### A CHRONOLOGY OF AMERICAN, BRITISH AND FRENCH EVENTS DURING 1781, LEADING UP TO AND FOLLOWING YORKTOWN.

May 1780	General (Comte de) Rochambeau and his force sail from France for Rhode Island with 450 officers and 5300 men in an expeditionary force known as "the Royal Bourbannais"; mission code-named "expedition particulare."
Feb 1781	British Admiral George Rodney, Britain's most capable sea commander, captures the Island of St. Eustatius and a booty of £3 million.
Mar 9, 1781	Letter from Von Steuben authorizing McLane to requisition support for his special mission (of monitoring the British fleet).
Mar 16, 1781	Letter of thanks from Lafayette to McLane thanking him for intelligence about the British fleet.
Mar 22, 1781	French King Louis XVI promotes de Grasse to Rear Admiral.
Mar 22, 1781	de Grasse sails from Brest to the West Indies with orders to protect sugar cane industry from the British.
Apr 9, 1781	George Washington writes, "We are at the end of our tether....and 1781 must produce results."
Apr 28, 1781	de Grasse arrives off the island of Martinique.
May 1, 1781	Most of Admiral Rodney's fleet and booty are captured by Captain de la Motte-Piquet.



May 6, 1781	With temporary naval superiority, de Grasse sails his fleet safely into Port Royal, Kingston Harbor, Jamaica.
May 21, 1781	George Washington and French General Rochambeau meet at Wethersfield, Connecticut, for first time to plan strategy. Rochambeau agrees with Washington on New York, but privately the French believe New York to be unassailable.
June 8, 1781	Rochambeau and Washington learn that de Grasse has arrived in the West Indies.
June 11, 1781	French cross to Providence with 450 officers and 2,900 men.
June 13, 1781	George Washington reminds Rochambeau that "New York is only practicable object."
June 15, 1781	Rochambeau receives message from de Grasse "expected in Santo Domingo by June's end and in American waters by July 15."
June 18, 1781	Royal Bourbannais set out for New York to link up with General Washington and the Continental Army.
July 15, 1781	de Grasse arrives at Cape Francois, Haiti.
July 17, 1781	de Grasse receives letters of instructions from Rochambeau, laying out his assessment of the choices of New York or Virginia as target for decisive battle, preferring Virginia.
July, 1781 [exact date unknown]	McLane sails on the <i>Congress</i> to deliver General Washington's dispatches to French Admiral de Grasse in the West Indies; McLane meets de Grasse and his War Council on the <i>Ville de Paris</i> , de Grasse's flagship.
July 16, 1781	Four more ships of the line join with de Grasse.
July, 1781	French forces meet with American troops at White Plains for first time.
July (mid)	de Grasse opts to sail to the Chesapeake.
Aug 1, 1781	Admiral Rodney sails home with his booty from St. Eustatius, leaving British Rear Admirals Samuel Hood and Sir Francis Drake in charge.
Aug 5, 1781	de Grasse leaves Cape Francois heading to Chesapeake Bay with 28 ships of the line, and a large flotilla of support ships; McLane sails separately on the <i>Congress</i> .
Aug 10, 1781	Hood and Drake leave the West Indies seeking to make contact with the French fleet but on a different route.
Aug 14, 1781	General Washington & Rochambeau learn from Concorde that de Grasse is sailing to the Chesapeake.
Aug 19, 1781	Combined American and French armies began their 450-mile march to Yorktown.
Aug 25, 1781	Admiral de Barras slips out of Newport, Rhode Island, with siege artillery.
Aug 25, 1781	The British fleet, Hood and Drake, arrive off the Virginia capes ahead of de Grasse.
Aug 25, 1781	The British fleet, finding no French fleet off the Virginia capes, sails on to New York.
Aug 26, 1781	de Grasse and the French fleet enter the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.
Aug 28, 1781	The British fleet drops anchor in New York Harbor.
Aug 30, 1781	de Grasse drops anchor at the mouth of the York River.
Aug 31, 1781	The British fleet, consisting of five ships under Admiral Graves and 14 ships under Admiral Hood, joins up and sails south.
Sep 5, 1781	The Battle of the Chesapeake between the British and French fleets commences.

- Sep 6, 1781 Both sides make repairs.
- Sep 6, 1781 The American privateer, *Congress*, comes upon British ship, *HMS Savage*, off the Carolina Coast and “takes her,” according to McLane’s Journal.
- Sep 9, 1781 de Grasse heads north.
- (Some would classify the Battle of the Chesapeake a draw but the strategic victory by the French fleet kept the British fleet from reaching the British army and taking them to safety.)*
- Sep 13, 1781 Admiral Graves returns to Chesapeake to find Admiral de Barras there.
- Sep 14, 1781 Generals Washington and Rochambeau arrive at Williamsburg ahead of their troops.
- Sept (date unknown) The War Council dispatches McLane to New York to obtain intelligence on the British fleet. McLane receives from James Rivington, Tory newspaper editor, the stolen British naval signal codes. He delivers the stolen codes to General Washington and then to de Grasse, who was “highly gratified,” on receiving this vital information.
- Sep 26, 1781 De Barras and transports arrive in the Chesapeake with French siege tools.
- Sep 28, 1781 The combined Franco-America army marches from Wburg to Yorktown.
- Oct 19, 1781 The British under Gen Cornwallis surrender with 7,000 troops at Yorktown.
- Oct 19, 1781 Graves with expanded fleet sails from New York to Yorktown to relieve Cornwallis, arriving TOO LATE.
- Oct 29, 1781 General Washington letter to McLane to secure boats, etc., to reconnoiter British fleet and report to De Grasse.
- Oct 30, 1781 Letter from de Grasse to all French warships in the Chesapeake authorizing them to give McLane “all assistance under everyone’s watch and to further his mission.”

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Letter from Admiral de Grasse authorizing Major McLane to requisition whatever supplies, men, and ships from American or French forces to carry out his military intelligence gathering operations. Hagley Museum and Library.

Letter from Richard Peters, taken from article by Crary, “James Rivington, Tory or Spy,” from a 1959 issue of *William and Mary Quarterly*.

*Compiled by Tom Welch, February 20, 2013; revised August 25, 2014*

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## CHAPTER FIVE: AFTER THE WAR—1783 – 1829

By Tom Welch

While Allen McLane's Revolutionary War service of more than seven years is an impressive record of patriotic endeavors and highly laudable accomplishments, his career of almost 47 years of service following the War is also extremely noteworthy. Toward the end of 1781, McLane felt the need to get back home to his wife, Rebecca, who had been without his presence more than they had been together during their marriage. By the end of the war six of their children had been born and four had already died. By 1783, a fifth child, the first to bear the name "Louis," had also died, leaving only three-year-old Rebecca. The mother, Rebecca, had every reason to remain in a permanent state of sadness and melancholy. It is obvious that Allen did enjoy some furloughs since two of the children had been born during the war.<sup>1</sup>

The family business, the making of leather breeches, had more or less vanished during the war. When he got back home, he found Rebecca selling their belongings to purchase food to feed the family. That left Allen to



*Delaware's Old Statehouse on The Green in Dover, where Allen McLane served several terms as a member of the Delaware House of Assembly (photo by Dolores Michels).*





*One of the two homes in Smyrna in which Allen McLane resided with his family (photo by Patrick Jackson).*

scurry to find a way to put food on the table. He engaged in one business venture with Robert Morris, famous financier of the Revolutionary War, which failed. “Despite such troubles, McLane persisted with his business. He imported rum and sheeting and sugar. He exported corn and wheat and other country produce. And he met several vexations: his vessels—shallow-draft sloops, shallops, that brought his goods from Philadelphia—were caught in the ice; his debtors were slow to pay; proper storage space was wanting or expensive; crops failed and ruined his market.” Jobs with the government provided some of his best opportunities. He became a magistrate in the Court of Common Pleas. He was elected to the Delaware House of Assembly three times—in 1785, 1786 and 1791. In 1791, while he was already serving as marshal, he was elected Speaker of the House. It was during his 1791-92 term that the Kent County court and the Delaware State government were able to move into the building which would serve as the seat of Delaware government for 142 years, the State House on the Dover Green. In 1786, county and state had reached an agreement that they would occupy the building jointly. It was also during his term as speaker that the foundation was laid for a new Delaware Constitution. By December, 1792, the second Delaware Constitution was drafted and ratified. It provided for an updated governmental structure and gave the General Assembly greater ability to raise the revenue needed to underwrite the costs of running the State of Delaware, the new name that was provided for in the 1792 Constitution.

When the Constitution of the United States of America was drafted in the summer of 1787, the Convention and the Congress called upon each state to decide on its own how that state would go about deciding their response to the matter of ratification. The Delaware General Assembly voted to have each county elect ten delegates, called deputies, to cast Delaware’s ratification vote. Each county elected ten men to go to Dover and meet in the Golden Fleece Tavern the first week of December, 1787. Allen McLane of Duck Creek Crossroads





*Delaware becomes the First State: This painting is one of a series highlighting important events in Delaware history by artist Robert E. Goodier (1925 – 2000), commissioned in the 1980's by the Bank of Delaware (now PNC Bank). The original of this work, along with others of the series, now hangs in the bank's downtown Dover office. The painting depicts Delawareans, including Allen McLane, gathered at Dover's Golden Fleece Tavern on December 7, 1787, on the day Delaware became the first state to ratify the new U. S. Constitution (courtesy of PNC Bank).*

was one of the representatives from Kent County. McLane voted “yes” to ratification along with all the other delegates, making Delaware one of three states to ratify the constitution unanimously. While there are no surviving minutes of the proceedings, there are two fictitious representations of the Ratification. In 1987, there was a movie entitled “The First State,” in which thirty-one actors, politicians and other volunteers performed a script written by longtime *Wilmington News Journal* columnist and historian, Emerson Wilson. Artist Robert Goodier made another attempt to capture the spirit of the ratification convention in a painting depicting eight of the delegates in a meeting room in the Golden Fleece Tavern. (For more detail see the appendix on “McLane in Fiction, Art, Music and Memorabilia.”)

When General George Washington, McLane's former commander, was elected the first president of the United States, he appointed McLane as the first U.S. Marshal of the Delaware District:

Sept. 30, 1789

Sir:

I have the pleasure to inform you that you are appointed Marshal of the District of Delaware

and your commifsion is enclosed accompanied with such laws as have pafsed relative to the Judicial Department of the United States.

The high importance of the Judicial system of our National Government made it an Indispensible Duty to select such proved characters to fill the several officers in it as would Discharge their respective trust with Honour to themselves and advantage to their Country.

I am Sir

Your Most Obt. Serv.

(Signed)

Geo. Washington

Allen McLane \_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>

For eight years, 1789-1797, the same eight years of Washington's presidency, McLane served as marshal. The financial situation of the McLane family became somewhat better but he still let it be known that he would be interested in a job of greater responsibility and correspondingly higher remuneration.<sup>3</sup> He had been serving as Marshal for the Delaware District since 1789, but still felt that he was not providing what was needed for his family. In 1794, he was named to command the Delaware militia, being granted the rank of Colonel.<sup>4</sup> That same year, he wrote the letter below to President Washington, almost pleading for some consideration.

I have to neglect all other Concerns to attend to the duties of the office which lies at Extream parts of the State it is an office of Considerable trust but no profit.

I am Sensable you Cannot alter the law but if you Could add Some appointment of profit that in your opinion I might be Capable of filling with reputation it would lay me Under fresh obligations Should their be no opening in this State and one offer in Penselvania it would sute me to meove their that being my place of nativety. I am

Sincearly your friend

A. McLane<sup>5</sup>

It was almost three years later that President Washington acted on the McLane letter, leading to a greatly improved financial situation for Allen McLane and his family for the next three decades. Toward the end of Washington's second term as president, there developed an opportunity to place the McLanes on much sounder financial footing. The U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, had designed the funding plan for the federal government which counted very heavily on port fees and other maritime taxes, the collection of which were the responsibility of port collectors all along the eastern seaboard. In 1790, Secretary Hamilton had created the U. S. Revenue Marine to police smuggling and thereby preserve the revenue that the new nation so badly needed. The cutters that this service provided were supervised by the Port Collectors of the twelve ports along the eastern seaboard.<sup>6</sup>

Without a doubt, the position of Port Collectors was an extremely critical one for the solvency of the Federal Government in the absence of a modern system of taxation. Diligent persons in these important positions would be key to providing the financial support for the newborn United States of America. It was probably the diligence and determination McLane had exhibited on the battlefield and in all other aspects of his military command that sealed the decision of President Washington to appoint McLane to one of these Port Collector positions. It must have been his commitment to uphold the laws and to aggressively collect the taxes and fees that continued to get him reappointed all the way into the presidency of our seventh chief executive, Andrew Jackson.

Whether the President and other key federal officials concurred that McLane would exhibit the same aggressive tenacity in the collection of port fees that he had shown as partisan skirmish fighter and fearless spy is not known for sure. What is clear is that they needed this kind of person. So it was that on February 27, 1797, with just five days remaining in Washington's presidency, he sent a letter to Allen McLane appointing him to the



office of Collector to the Port of Wilmington. The second paragraph in the letter is more personal and alludes to the possible improvement in the situation for the McLane family.

Philadelphia Feb. 1797

D... Sir

I have the pleasure to inform you are Appointed with the advice of the Senate of the United States Collector of the Customs of the District of Delaware.

I have selected you from a conviction that you will fill this important office with Honour to yourself and advantage to your country, and sincerely wish you may find it your interest to abandon your other pursuits for the support of your family.

Wilmington will be your place of residence \_\_\_\_\_ by law which I apprehend you will find more healthy situation than you have resided since the peace.

I am your Most

Obt. Sert.

(Signed) Geo. Washington

Col. Allen McLane<sup>7</sup>

As the letter required, the McLane family packed up and moved from the small, rural community of Duck Creek Crossroads to the City of Wilmington. Their home was right next to the city's Asbury Methodist Church, which bore the same name as the Methodist church in Duck Creek for which Allen had donated the land. Without a doubt, McLane demonstrated the same tenacity in collecting fees from ships entering, and sometimes trying to bypass, the port. He was accused by some very prominent men, such as George Read, Jr., of overcharging and had to face these charges in court. McLane vigorously defended the legitimacy of the charges and usually was found blameless.<sup>8</sup>

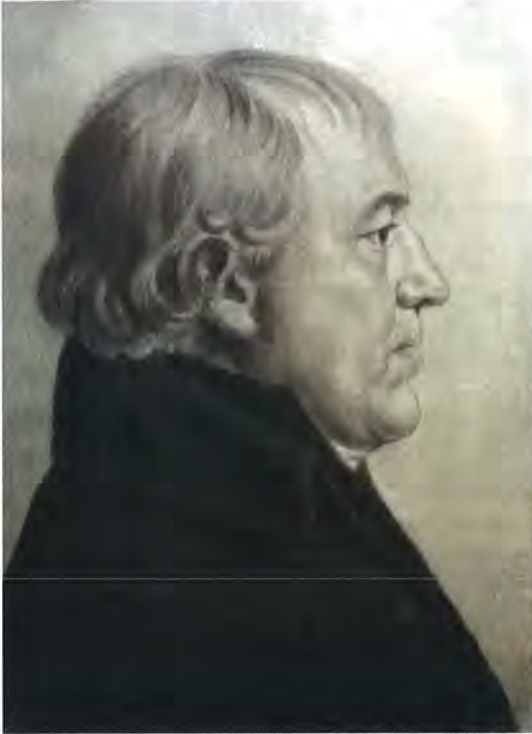
After living in Wilmington only eight years, through the birth of nine more children and the death of seven of them, the accumulated sadness in the life of Rebecca McLane came to an end in 1807. When she died, she was entombed in the Asbury Methodist Church cemetery at Second and Walnut Streets in Wilmington, only a few steps from the McLane home. When Allen passed on in later years, he took his place beside Rebecca. McLane never remarried and spent the remaining 22 years of his life continuing his service as the Collector.

When the threat of war with Britain again arose in 1812, preparations for the defense of our country soon followed. After war was declared by President James Madison on June 18, 1812, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin immediately sent a letter to all the Port Collectors directing that all the shipping in the area be notified that the United States was at war with Great Britain...again.<sup>9</sup>

When the war commenced, it brought with it more duties for the Collector. Since the British blockade brought commercial shipping to a virtual standstill, McLane had extra time to become more involved in actions of a military nature. Responding to Secretary Gallatin's directive, he ordered the cutters under his command to intercept all ships of every size and to inform them that the King of England was again going to try to subjugate the American people.<sup>10</sup>

In 1813, the leadership of the State of Delaware again called upon the old veteran of the War for Independence, Col. Allen McLane, to come to the service of his nation and his state. He was asked to take over the general measures for the defense of the City of Wilmington. Anticipating years earlier that someday the state might face military attack, McLane had in 1803 formed a volunteer militia unit called the "Veteran Volunteers." All its members had to have served honorably in the American cause during the Revolution and had to be at least 45 years of age. The group, who were also known as "76ers," gave him an impressive title, the "Commandant of the Home Guard." These volunteers were men too old to be drafted into regular service—by the onset of





*Two early Methodists, both close friends of Allen McLane, Delaware Governor and U.S. Senator Richard Bassett, left, and evangelist Freeborn Garrettson, right.*

hostilities, most of the corps for the defense of Wilmington were in their 50s and 60s. McLane, himself, was in his 66th year.

The first undertaking was to build a mud fort and other defenses. The first ones pressed into duty to shore up the defenses were the Veteran Volunteers, also called the “Home Guard.” Help came from manufacturers. Under a law passed by the General Assembly, the du Pont brothers, Éleuthère Irénée and Victor, organized a civilian military force to defend the powder mills. They were the captains. This was just as important as defending any other part of the city. They felt that the powder mills would be a primary target if the British attacked. Of the two brothers, McLane was closer to Victor. They had become hunting companions and would occasionally spend a day on Pea Patch Island tracking for deer or game birds.<sup>11</sup>

The Wilmington defenses were part of a statewide (north to south) defense line. New Castle, Smyrna, Dover, Milford, Milton and Lewistown were all armed and prepared for action. Lewes faced a terrific shelling and survived with relatively little damage—a testament to the courage of the town’s defenders and also to the poor aim of the British gunners. But the British never attacked Wilmington.

Such was not the case for the federal capital. Having gone to Washington on Aug 18, 1814, on business regarding the Port of Wilmington, McLane was in the office of the Secretary of the Navy when it was announced that the British Fleet under Admiral Cockburn had arrived in the area. They had entered the Patuxent River with transports of troops and a convoy from Europe. McLane offered his services to the Secretary of War, General John Armstrong. General Armstrong recommended him to General William Winder, commander for the defense of Washington, who appointed him as one of his aides to reconnoiter the enemy.<sup>12</sup>

What he experienced and observed over the next five days was a disappointment of major proportions. He found very lax military discipline and total disorder among the U.S. troops. The British had been able to disembark and begin their march to Washington with very little impediment. The Marylanders were so busy



*The U.S.S. Wasp, under the command of Delawarean, Master Com-mandant (later Commodore) Jacob Jones, capturing the Royal Navy sloop of war, HMS Frolic in October, 1812. This painting, attributed to Thomas Birch, was downloaded from Wikipedia and is in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum.*

getting their possessions to safety and quickly placing white flags of submission on their homes that there was no harassment of the enemy whatsoever by the people. The General ordered 300 axes from the quartermaster to be used for cutting down trees to block the roads as a hindrance of the enemy's march, but none arrived. General Winder apparently chose not to harass the enemy at the time of their landing or during the first few miles of their march. His plan was to have a major battle at Bladensburg, but that plan disintegrated. With neither disruption nor military intervention on the part of the defenders, within four days the British were able to march right into the Capital. They proceeded to blow up the Navy Yard and to burn many buildings in the city, including Congress Hall, the Library of Congress, and the President's House. The next day they strolled to the arsenal and blew up the powder and other combustibles located there.<sup>13</sup>

McLane wrote in his journal that if he had had 300 men like those who had fought with him at Powles Hook, they would have given the British a much different form of welcome. They would have routed General Ross, Admiral Cockburn and their incendiary devices. McLane felt that those in charge of the U.S. forces were failing the people miserably.<sup>14</sup>

In Baltimore, however, the Americans fared much better and McLane had great reason to be proud. His son, Louis, had volunteered to be part of the defense of that city.

As the War dragged on into its third year, both sides were ready for it to end. The British people and many in their Parliament were tired of war—they, after all, had been engaged in the Napoleonic Wars for many years at that point. The War of 1812 ended in 1814, with Delawareans having made serious contributions. The citizens of Lewes experienced the most jeopardy, having been bombarded by the British.

In October, 1812, Delawarean Jacob Jones, commanding the *U.S.S. Wasp*, captured the British 12-gun brig, *HMS Dolphin*, while on an Atlantic cruise. Several days later, despite storm damage to his ship, he attacked a British convoy and, following an intense battle, captured the Royal Navy sloop of war, *HMS Frolic*, in a battle that became quite famous. Jones was widely admired and when he returned to the United States he received a



gold medal from the U. S. Congress. After further exploits, Jones was promoted to the rank of captain in 1813 and commodore in 1814.

In 1814, another Delaware naval officer, Thomas Macdonough, commanding American naval forces on Lake Champlain, won a major naval battle near Plattsburg, New York, which had serious implications for the treaty negotiations to end the war, which were soon to begin in Ghent, Belgium.<sup>15</sup> \* Macdonough was honored with the erection of a large monolith monument in Plattsburg and was elevated to the rank of commodore.

A great deal can be determined about a person by simply making a list of the organizations to which that person belongs. McLane was an active member of the Federalist Party, the Methodist Church, the Masonic Order, the Society of the Cincinnati, and the Abolition Society. He was not an idler. He was a man of action.

While he was the first federal Marshal for the Delaware District, he was afforded the opportunity to serve as courier to deliver messages to members of the Federalist Party up and down the length of the state. He was considered a staunch supporter and a lifelong adherent to the Federalists' governing belief in a strong central government. This often put him at odds with the Federalists' principal opposition, the party known variously as the "Republicans," "Democrats," and "Democratic Republicans," among whose national leaders were Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

One very interesting story relating the animosity between the parties revolves around the election of 1800, the first in which political parties were active. H. Clay Reed recorded this strife, the story of which he extracted from three articles in the publication, *Mirror of the Times*, in the issues of 1, 4 and 11 October, 1800: "A Republican Paper claimed that Allan McLane, Revolutionary War hero and Wilmington Port Collector, was sent to Kent on an electioneering tour to persuade the people that the Jacobinical\*\* Democrats would if victorious 'drown all the men, women and children in Kent and Sussex.' Still the Federalists, although losing New Castle, won Kent and Sussex and with them the election."<sup>16</sup>

It was through his wife, Rebecca's, seeking out spiritual guidance from a Methodist man of the cloth, Freeborn Garretson, and his wife, that McLane finally came to join a Methodist Society.<sup>17</sup> The preaching of Garretson and the spiritual support that Mrs. McLane gained from sessions with Mrs. Garretson led her to become a Methodist. Her husband followed her into the denomination. McLane became a strong supporter of the church. When the Methodist Society in Duck Creek Crossroads was in need of land to build their meeting house, he gave them a parcel of land adjacent to his home. This became the site of Asbury Methodist Church.<sup>18</sup> He and Rebecca often hosted in their home John Wesley's great missionary evangelist, Francis Asbury, when he returned from his trips to proselytize the people as far away as the Carolinas, Kentucky and Ohio. After Asbury welcomed Thomas Coke, another Wesley-commissioned evangelist to Barratt's Chapel in November, 1784, the two men planned a large Christmas Day Conference at Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore to officially launch the Methodist Church in America. In addition to incorporating Methodism, they created the first Methodist college. McLane was selected as one of the trustees of Cokesbury College, named for the first two bishops of the American Methodist Church, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury. Soon thereafter, it was reported that Delaware's John Dickinson had donated \$1000 to the new college.<sup>19</sup> One might reasonably surmise that he was solicited by McLane.

Methodism had as its followers mostly the people of the lower classes but there were some exceptions. Historian William H. Williams counts Richard Bassett and Allen McLane as two of the persons of means who

\* Note: Among the commissioners at those negotiations was McLane family friend, James A. Bayard, Sr., of Delaware, who died within a few days of his return home in 1815. Bayard's father-in-law, Senator Richard Bassett, another close friend, also died within a few days of Bayard's death.

\*\* Note: The term "Jacobinical," derived from the French word, "Jacobin," a member of a radical society or club of revolutionaries that promoted the Reign of Terror and other extreme measures, so called from the Dominican convent in Paris, where they originally met, is used here to pertain to an extreme political radical.



were proudly Methodist, even though some society folks looked down on this strange denomination for some of its practices, one of which was the camp meeting with all of its shouting and loud preaching. These events involved setting up tents where 2,000 to 6,000 people might gather for a week in the summer for singing, shouting, praying, and preaching. One observer in the early 1800s reported that he had seen the old Collector (McLane) at a camp meeting down on his knees, tears in his eyes, "getting his soul right with the angel of the Covenant."<sup>20</sup>

McLane joined the Masonic Order, Lodge No. 18, in Dover and was raised to Master Mason on April 6, 1776.<sup>21</sup> Many of the early leaders of our country, especially members of the military, were among the leaders in the Masonic movement. Many critics of the Masons felt that they might lead to the restoration of a monarchy or a takeover of some sort. So far that has not happened. Due to the secretive nature, we do not know a great deal about McLane's activities in the Masons. However, Charles E. Green, a leading historian of Delaware Masonry, has written several books highlighting the contributions of Delaware Masons during the Revolutionary War. Allen McLane is among those featured in Green's works.

As a former officer in the Revolutionary War, McLane was drawn into membership in the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization that was founded primarily by General Henry Knox with the purpose of advocating for the rights of former Revolutionary War officers. The Cincinnati had the support of George Washington, who allowed himself to be elected its first president, but he was sensitive to the fears of some in the country, such as John Adams, as to possible misuse of the organization. Adams and others feared possible dangers from a standing army, both during and after the war. Their feeling, based on their reading of European history, was that it would be far too easy for a military junta to scuttle the democratic dreams of our founding fathers. The Cincinnati drew their name from the Roman general, Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who had led a fight on the battlefield to conquer an invading army and could have used his battlefield renown to become emperor. Instead he chose to live the life of a citizen, as Washington tried to do. In the biography of McLane prepared by the Society of the Cincinnati it is recorded that he was one of the founding members of the society in Delaware.<sup>22</sup> Also, when the Delaware chapter became inactive in 1802 due to the deaths of its aging membership, he was the only surviving member to transfer to the Pennsylvania chapter.

Nothing in McLane's background would appear to explain how he came to his view that slavery was wrong in a democratic nation other than his heartfelt adherence to the principles and teachings of John Wesley and Francis Asbury. Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, and his early associates such as Asbury were adamant foes of the practice of slavery and regularly preached against it, Wesley in England and Asbury in the colonies. Asbury and McLane were more than acquaintances, as Asbury often would stay with the McLane and Bassett families when returning to Kent County from his travels across the country. In 1785, when McLane was first elected to the Delaware House of Representatives, he introduced a bill to gradually eliminate the slave trade.<sup>23</sup> In 1804, he was elected president of the Delaware Abolition Society.<sup>24</sup>

After moving to Wilmington to take the post of Collector, he was a stalwart member of the mixed-race Asbury Methodist Church. One of his few disappointments with his son, Louis, was that Louis became a slave owner when he married Katherine Milligan, a member of a well-to-do plantation-owning family.

McLane was also a member of the Colonization Society, the organization that was committed to providing passage to Africa for freed slaves. It is hard to classify persons by their support of the society. So people saw this as a positive, an effort to return African families to the home of their birth or at least that of their ancestry. Critics of the society saw it as a negative, an attempt to rid the United States of all black people. Given the context of other visible aspects of McLane's views on race, I would tend to support the more generous interpretation.

In 1824, McLane had been planning to be present in New York City for the arrival of the Marquis de Lafayette there to begin his all-state reunion visit with the veterans of the Revolutionary War. Then McLane became afflicted with a bout of the gout, a condition he had been suffering from intermittently for twenty years. He wrote his friend and occasional hunting companion, Victor du Pont, and bemoaned the fact that he would be unable to make the trip, complaining that he was confined to his bed.<sup>25</sup> Soon thereafter, however,

when Lafayette's travels brought him to Philadelphia, Yorktown, and Richmond, somehow, when he crossed Delaware's borders, McLane was able to leave his bed to take part in the festivities honoring the great French hero of the Revolution. According to Lafayette's secretary, "General Lafayette recognized with pleasure Captain McLane, who commanded with great intrepidity under his orders, a company of partizans during the campaign of Virginia, and who at this time in spite of his 80 years of age, came to receive him on horseback, wearing the revolutionary hat and feather."<sup>26</sup> A year later, in 1825, when Lafayette's United States tour took him to the Brandywine Battlefield, his escort was led by Colonel McLane.<sup>27</sup>

McLane had served for forty years in two federal positions, both appointments having been made by his commander-in-chief, President George Washington. He had been appointed during the term of the first president and continued his service into the term of the seventh president, Andrew Jackson. It should be no surprise that Washington and Jackson were his two favorite presidents, both having worn the uniform and having fought fiercely for their country.

McLane brought all of the combativeness, pugnacity and determination to the position of Collector that he had demonstrated as a skirmish fighter with the British during the War. His dedication to his profession, which involved the collection of fees, the confiscation of cargo and the ships carrying illegal or untaxed cargo, often brought him into contention with persons of means who were attempting to circumvent the law. He had continued to fight for his country in ways very similar to those with which he had fought as a soldier. He labored very hard and long in the job until his death at age 83 in 1829.

The life of a great Delawarean has ended its earthly existence. He was a GREAT man, a devoted son of our blessed soil—a patriot whose exploits contributed enormously to victory for the American cause in the Revolutionary War—a hero unsung and nearly forgotten today....The name of Allen McLane should be passed to our children—to the sons and daughters of our beloved Delaware—as a precious part of their heritage—a name shining in all its glory.

ALLEN McLANE, THE GREATEST UNSUNG HERO OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

*(From his obituary in the May 30, 1829, issue of the Delaware Register.)*<sup>28</sup>

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## CHAPTER 6: ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES OF ALLEN McLANE DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

John A. Nagy

Learning from his mistake in not leaving a stay-behind intelligence network in New York City in 1776, when the Continental Army was forced to evacuate, General George Washington was not about to make the same mistake twice. In a precautionary move on April 10, 1777, Washington had instructed General Thomas Mifflin to set up a spy network “under the mask of friendship” in Chester, Bucks County, and the city and county of Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Mifflin had turned to Major John Clark Jr., Colonel Elias Boudinot, and Captains Charles Craig and Allen McLane to implement the assignment. At the time of the fall of Philadelphia to the British at the end of September, 1777, Washington had an intelligence network in place. At Philadelphia, Captain Allen McLane’s company served under George Washington’s command as an independent reconnoitering force.

Washington needing intelligence on what the British were doing in Philadelphia. On October 29, 1777, he gave Captain McLane a lengthy list of requests on the information he wanted. They were:

- 1st What number of troops supposed to be in Gen[era]l Howe’s Army, and how disposed of?
- 2d What works thrown up in and about the city, & what cannon in them?
- 3d Have any detachments been made over to [New] Jersey, & for what purpose?
- 4th How many men have they sent over there, & how many pieces of cannon?
- 5th What kind of cannon, whether field pieces or larger cannon?
- 6th What preparations are they making on the water; are they fitting out ships, gallies, fire rafts, or floating batteries?
- 7th Do they think they can stay in Philadelphia, if their shipping cannot pass the forts [Mifflin and Mercer below Philadelphia on the Delaware River]?
- 8th Are they resolved to make any farther attempts on both the forts or either of them, and in what way, whether by storm or siege?
- 9th Can you discover whether they will attempt anything against the forts and where? Observe carefully the preparations making on the river, and along the wharves, it is of great importance to know the time or near it.
- 10th Is there any talk of leaving Philad[elphi]a and by what route, observe carefully what they are doing with their wagons, whether their baggage is packed up, and what directions their wagons receive?
- 11th Are the Tories, and friends of the British Army, under much apprehensions of their leaving town, and what preparations are they making to remove themselves, or their effects?
- 12th For what purpose is it understood, the bridge is thrown over the middle ferry, and what force is kept on the west side of the Schuylkill [River]?
- 13th Has the bridge been injured by the late storm, or is it passable?
- 14th Where are the grenadiers, light infantry, and rangers, and are they making any preparations to move?
- 15th What number of men are sent over to Carpenters, and Province Islands, and how often are they relieved?<sup>2</sup>

- 16th In what condition are those banks since the late rain—Can wagons and carriages pass, so as to transport provisions and stores from the ships to the town.
- 17th In what condition are the troops for provisions, and in what articles is there the greatest scarcity?
- 18th How are the inhabitants situated for provisions?
- 19th What impression has the news of Gen[era]l Burgoyne's surrender made on the British Army?
- 20th Is there any conversation in the British Army, or among the inhabitants, of Gen[era]l Howe's coming out to meet Gen[era]l Washington?
- 21st What is the British Army now employed about? Note carefully the prices of every thing.
- 22d Does continental money rise or fall in value, in the town?
- 23d Can you learn whether there are any preparations making or any intentions to go up the Delaware [River], to burn the frigates & vessels there?
- 24th Find out what duty the soldiers do, and whether they are contented. How many nights in the week, are they in bed?
- 25th Enquire particularly into the treatment of the prisoners, in the new gaol, so that if necessary you make oath of it!
- 26th Do they compel any to enlist by starving or otherwise ill treating them?
- 27th Find out how far the redoubts between Delaware and Schuylkill [Rivers] are apart, and whether there are lines, or abattis between the redoubts.<sup>3</sup>

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On November 7, 1777 McLane was sent a letter from headquarters stating that, because he is familiar with the area around Philadelphia, they want him to take the most advantageous spot to watch the enemy. He is to send out patrols and stop the intercourse between the city and the country. Only those with proper passes from the Commander-In-Chief are to be allowed into the city. Only those people with the intention of staying in the country and those from which material intelligence can be obtained are allowed to come out of the city.<sup>4</sup>

McLane requested additional troops to accomplish the tasks he was given. Timothy Pickering sent him sixty soldiers from Conway's, Maxwell's, and the Maryland brigades. They marched to Germantown, where he took command. At the same time, Pickering complained to McLane about the number of women, some of whom were wives of British soldiers, getting past the pickets and patrols, and were carrying back provisions into the city. He refreshed McLane's memory that the general's orders were that nobody was to carry provisions into the city; also that no one from the city was to come into the country unless they planned to stay or were able to give material intelligence.<sup>5</sup>

McLane stepped up his effort and sent a report that he had detained servants with horses who had come out of Philadelphia to procure provisions.<sup>6</sup> He also turned over 115 bushels of potatoes and 600 cabbage heads.<sup>7</sup> George A. Baker, Assistant Commissary of Issues, sent him the supplies he requested. He also said "I hope you are working out well with the lads on the lines and dare say you'll give a good account of some of them."<sup>8</sup> Because of their success in harassing the enemy foraging parties, McLane's soldiers earned the nickname, "market stoppers."

McLane reported, "the enemy have but few troops in the city." He enclosed an unsigned report from one of his spies (person unknown) who had previously reported. This time the spy reported "The meadows before the redoubts [were] under water [and there were] fortification[s] across the roads of 2d & 3d streets." McLane reported to Washington that many of his men were "bare of clothes" and in need of relief.<sup>9</sup>

On November 22, McLane contacted Washington about a group "of able bodied, young men that lives about the lines." They were unemployed and wanted to form themselves into a company to work for one month.

He indicated they could be employed in doing reconnaissance work and relieving some of those employed in that service.<sup>10</sup> Washington immediately wrote back that he would accept their offer "provided they give in a list of their names, and engage to be under the absolute command for the time specified of such Officer as I shall appoint—this precaution is necessary, for otherwise they may receive the public money without performing the duty expected of them."<sup>11</sup> A list of the men was provided. They were John Coleman, Bartholemew Grog, Anthony Hubert, Jacob Paynter, William Thomas, William Wilcox, and William Will.<sup>12</sup> I was unable find what their duty was.

General Nathanael Greene, writing from Burlington, New Jersey, on November 28 to Washington, advised that he obtained information from Tench Francis, Junior, a Philadelphia merchant and lawyer, who had been to Gloucester, New Jersey.<sup>13</sup> He said the rumor amongst the British officers was that General Howe had plans for an immediate attack upon the American forces unless the weather was bad.<sup>14</sup> Captain Charles Craig of the 4th Continental Dragoons, who was stationed at Frankford, Pennsylvania, reported to Washington on the same day. He had some bad intelligence that he had received that day from inside Philadelphia to the effect that the British had made a move across the Schuylkill River and were going to Wilmington. It was uncorroborated. But the information indicated the British were under marching orders, which was true.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the intelligence Washington was receiving, he needed more information. Besides operating spies in the city, McLane stopped and interrogated those persons passing into and out of Philadelphia. Washington turned to McLane on the 28th to provide some answers as to what were the real British movements. Washington told him that he was expecting an attack from the British before General Greene could return from New Jersey. Additionally he said, I "depend upon your keeping a very good look out upon their line, and gaining every intelligence from people coming out of town, that I may have the earliest notice of their movements or intentions."<sup>16</sup>

McLane who had taken post at Rising Sun immediately responded that he had received some intelligence from an old friend in Philadelphia whom he trusted.<sup>17</sup> It was true the British were planning a major attack. However, they were playing a deception at the time. "Last night they gave out that a body [of soldiers] cross[ed the] Schu[y]lkill [River] and to cover the deception they kept, their wagons and artillery moving through the city all night."<sup>18</sup> British Captain Archibald Robertson of the 47th Regiment of Foot wrote in his journal for November 27, "From this day by the preparations that were made it was easily seen that a move was intended accordingly."<sup>19</sup>

McLane had sent in intelligence which Washington acknowledged on December 4.<sup>20</sup> The intelligence was that the British were on the move. It was part of a series of reports from several espionage activities that Washington had received. All indicated that the British were going to attack. The attack resulted in the Battle of White Marsh on December 5 to 8, 1778. British General William Howe wanted to engage the Continental Army in a major battle and crush it before the onset of winter. Using the intelligence he received, Washington was prepared for the engagement and the 10,000 enemy soldiers. The British could only obtain skirmishes and after three days of frustration they retreated to Philadelphia for the winter.

With the British Army settled in Philadelphia for the winter, there was little need for McLane's intelligence and reconnoitering operation. On January 8, he was given written orders to go to the Delmarva Peninsula to round up and bring back deserters from the Continental Army. Washington empowered him to call for assistance from all civil and military officers. He was advised that General Smallwood would provide him with whatever assistance he needed to accomplish this assignment.<sup>21</sup> Someone wrote a note on his copy of the document that this letter was to cover an expedition to the peninsular section between the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River to get supplies for the Continental Army at Valley Forge, which was low on food supplies.<sup>22</sup> The mission was kept a secret to keep the enemy from finding out how desperate the Continental Army was.

In May of 1778, Captain McLane, besides reporting spy and intelligence reports directly to Washington, also reported through Major Alexander Clough of the 3rd Continental Dragoons.<sup>23</sup> McLane's mounted troops



were fatigued. Clough, to keep up McLane's reconnaissance activities, sent him a sergeant and six men.<sup>24</sup>

McLane wrote to Clough from the Benjamin Chew's House in Germantown that he understood he was to get the earliest intelligence of the enemy's movements. He reported that one of his spies had arrived at 6 a.m. The information provided was that the enemy was preparing to move at a moment's warning. It was McLane's opinion that they were going to move that night and he did not have enough mounted soldiers to watch all the roads.<sup>25</sup> The British did not leave the city until June 3, when they attacked at Newtown and Chestnut Hill.<sup>26</sup> On June 18, 1778, the British evacuated Philadelphia and McLane was the first Continental officer to enter the city to confirm their departure.<sup>27</sup>

Prior to the Battle of Stony Point, New York, Allen McLane went in disguise under cover of a flag of truce into the British fort. On July 12, 1779, at Camp Haverstraw, Henry Lee, III ordered Allen McLane "to accompany Mrs. Smith with a flag to the enemy's lines for the purpose of serving the delivery of some necessaries for her two sons."<sup>28</sup> His journal entry indicates they, with the addition of the widow Calhoun and some children, left for the British fort on the 14th. While there, he studied their defenses. During his return trip the same day, he stopped long enough to drive off two horned cattle from the British army's pasture.<sup>29</sup> McLane later wrote about the visit, "this gave me a good opportunity to observe the best route to approach [the fort] which we did under Gen[era]l Anthony Wayne to affect [sic] on 16th July 1779."<sup>30</sup> The intelligence McLane acquired during his visit made possible the plan for storming the fort without having to fire a shot and resulted in the American victory.

In August, 1779, Major Henry Lee, III had a plan to attack the enemy forces at Paulus Hook, New Jersey. On August 10, Washington approved Major Lee's plan of attack and retreat by way of Secaucus Island.<sup>31</sup> There was no intent to hold the fort as the British navy could easily bring overwhelming force and bombard the fort until it surrendered. On August 11, Lee submitted a revised plan reducing the number for men involved from 600 to 400.<sup>32</sup> The next day Washington, at West Point, sent Lee a letter to deliver to General William Alexander, Lord Stirling, with instructions on the plan of attack.<sup>33</sup> Washington wrote that he employed Major Lee to make the necessary previous inquiries of the fort defenses.<sup>34</sup>

The task of obtaining information on the defenses of the fort was given to Captain Allen McLane of the 4th troop of Major Lee's Partisan Legion. He was instructed to use the services of Simeon van Riper, who was a farmer at Bergen.<sup>35</sup> \* Van Riper's mission was to go into the fort after dinner on August 19, 1779, to sell produce and bring back information on its defenses.<sup>36</sup>

McLane was instructed, upon the return of secret agent van Riper, to conduct him to "the place in the woods where Major Lee, Major Burnet and all hands set down to reconnoiter. There Major Lee will be found, and will expect to see Capt[ain] Mc[Lane], van Riper and the remainder of the men."<sup>37</sup>

The fort was under the command of Major Sutherland and Captain Heinrich von Schaller.<sup>38</sup> The American forces in their nighttime raid killed approximately 50 and captured 158 enemy soldiers which included nine officers. Captain Handy of the troops from Somerset County, Maryland, stated "the works were carried by storm, the whole to advance in three solid columns, one of which I had the honor to command... We advanced with bayonets fixed, pans open, cocks fallen to prevent any fire on our side; and believe me when I say we did not fire a single musket."<sup>39</sup>

The American loses were four killed, three wounded, and seven captured.<sup>40</sup> The American forces made good their escape, taking their prisoners with them.<sup>41</sup> The British took back the fort and did not evacuate it until November 23, 1783.

In the summer of 1781, Generals Washington and Rochambeau had planned to have a combined army and French navy attack on British-held New York City. French navy "Lieutenant Général des Armées Navales" [Admiral] Comte de Grasse was to bring his fleet of warships from the Caribbean to New York. When de Grasse

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\* Note: "Bergen Town" is the present-day Jersey City.

decided to go to the Chesapeake instead, the campaign was changed. British General Charles Cornwallis had established a deepwater post at Yorktown, Virginia. Washington and Rochambeau decided to take the fight to Virginia. McLane would be given a secret assignment. He traveled from Shrewsbury in northeastern Monmouth County, along the New Jersey coast just below Sandy Hook, to Long Island by barge. There he met the 57-year-old, London-born James Rivington, the publisher of the semi-weekly *Royal Gazette* in New York City. Rivington owned a paper mill on Long Island, which was most likely the location where Rivington gave McLane a copy of the secret British naval codes.<sup>42</sup> Naval codes are used by the commander of the fleet to secretly transmit instructions to the fleet concerning the next maneuver through the use of flags and lanthorns (lanterns).

After returning to New Jersey with the secret British naval codes, McLane set sail in a pilot boat for Virginia. Upon his arrival at the Chesapeake Bay, he delivered the British naval codes to Count de Grasse, commander of the French fleet. He then participated in the siege of the enemy at Yorktown.<sup>43</sup> The French fleet successfully kept the British from getting reinforcements to Cornwallis at Yorktown. Cornwallis surrendered his army to the combined American and French forces on October 19, 1781. It was the second major army the British lost in the American Revolutionary War. General John Burgoyne had surrendered his army at Saratoga in 1777. The Yorktown defeat caused the British to realize that continuing the war was no longer in their best interests. They then chose to negotiate an end to the war.

## REFERENCE NOTES

1. George Washington to Thomas Mifflin, April 10, 1777, General Correspondence, George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress 1741-1799 (GWP).
2. Carpenter's Island was located south of Province Island, which was at the mouth of the Schuylkill River. It is now part of Philadelphia International Airport.
3. "Questions for Captain Allen McLane, October 29, 1777," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0043>, ver. 2014-05-09). Source: *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 12, October 26, 1777–December 25, 1777*, ed. Frank E. Grizzard, Jr. and David R. Hoth. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002 (PGW), pp. 51–53.
4. Unsigned, November 7, 1777, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 10.
5. Timothy Pickering to Allen McLane, November 15, 1777, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 12.
6. Allen McLane to \_\_\_\_\_, November 18, 1777 in John Fitzgerald to Allen McLane, November 18, 1777, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 11.
7. Receipt from Allen McLane, November 16, 1777, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 14.
8. George A. Baker to Allen McLane, November 18, 1777, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 13.
9. Allen McLane to George Washington, November 20, 1777, General Correspondence, GWP.
10. Allen McLane to George Washington, November [22], 1777, General Correspondence, GWP.
11. George Washington at White Marsh to Allen McLane in the handwriting of Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens an Aide-de-Camp, November 22, 1777, General Correspondence, GWP.
12. A list written beneath George Washington's letter, docketed "Return of Detachment Nov: 22. 1777," includes the names of seven residents of Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. "George Washington to Captain Allen McLane, November 22, 1777," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0352>, ver.

2014-05-09). Source: *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 12, (PGW), p. 355.

13. Tench Francis, Junior (1730-1800) was an uncle of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman, who was Aide-de-Camp to George Washington. He was a lawyer and a merchant who lived in a two-story, five-bay brick house with green shutters and a curving driveway which was surrounded by trees. It was on the north side of Girard Avenue between 29th and 30th streets in Philadelphia.

14. Nathanael Greene to George Washington, November 28, 1777, Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0424>, ver. 2014-05-09). Source: *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 12, (PGW), pp. 436-437.

15. Captain Charles Craig was the control agent for Lydia and William Darragh, American spies in Philadelphia. For more on the Darraghs see John A. Nagy, *Spies in the Continental Capital, Espionage Across Pennsylvania During the American Revolution*. Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2011).

16. Captain Charles Craig to George Washington, November 28, 1777, Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0420>, ver. 2014-05-09). Source: *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 12, (PGW), p. 433.

17. George Washington to Captain Allen McLane, November 28, 1777, Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0427>, ver. 2014-05-09). Source: *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 12, (PGW), p. 439.

18. The Rising Sun Tavern was located at the north corner of Germantown Road and Old York Road (at one time called Twelfth Street. For a picture of the tavern see John A. Nagy, *Spies in the Continental Capital, Espionage across Pennsylvania during the American Revolution*. Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2011), 49.

19. Allen McLane to George Washington, November 28, 1777 General Correspondence, GWP.

20. Harry Miller Lydenberg, editor. *Archibald Robertson, Lieutenant-General Royal Engineers: His Diaries and Sketches in America, 1762-1780*. (New York, New York Public Library, 1930), 158.

21. Richard Kidder Meade to Allen McLane, December 4, 1777, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 24

22. McLane was attached to Patton's Regiment at the time. John Fitzgerald to Allen McLane, January 8, 1778, Varick Transcripts, Letterbook 4: 400.

23. John Fitzgerald to Allen McLane, January 8, 1778, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 25.

24. Richard K. Meade, Aide-de-Camp to George Washington, to Alexander Clough, May 23, 1778 and Allen McLane to Alexander Clough, May 23, 1778, General Correspondence, GWP.

25. Alexander Clough to George Washington, May 23, 1778, General Correspondence, GWP.

26. Allen McLane to Alexander Clough, May 23, 1778 at 8 a.m., General Correspondence, GWP.

27. Howard H. Peckham. *The Toll of Independence, Engagements & Battle Casualties of the American Revolution*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 51.

28. George Washington to Continental Congress, June 18, 1778, Varick Transcripts, Letterbook 3, 346-347.

29. Henry Lee to Allen McLane, July 12, 1779, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society.

30. The name might be Calhoun. There are many enhancements to the story. Some claim he stayed at the British fort for two weeks. His journal entries indicate he was there only on the 14th. Allen McLane's Journal, July 14, 1779 in Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society.

31. McLane's note is written on the back of the document. Henry Lee to Allen McLane, July 12, 1779, Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society.



32. George Washington to Henry Lee, III, August 10, 1779, General Correspondence, GWP.
33. Henry Lee's letter has not been found.
34. George Washington to Henry Lee III., August 12, 1779, General Correspondence, GWP.
35. George Washington to William Alexander, Lord Stirling, August 12, 1779, two same date, Varick Transcripts Letterbook 9: 306-307, GWP.
36. Ernest, Kipping, *The Hessian View of America 1776-1783*, (Monmouth Beach, New Jersey: Philip Freneau Press, 1971) 220 and Adrian C. Leiby, *The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, revised edition, 1992), 109 and 124 footnote 72.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Memorandum for Capt[ain] [Allen] McLane, August 18, [1779], Allen McLane Papers on microfilm, New York Historical Society, item 100.
39. The fort was under the command of a Major Sutherland. The only British Major Sutherland to serve during the American Revolution was Nicholas of the 21st Regiment of Foot. Worthington Chauncey Ford, *British Officers Serving in the American Revolution 1774-1783*. (Brooklyn: Historical Printing Club, 1897), 170.
40. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware 1609-1888*. (Philadelphia: L. J. Richards, 1888), 249.
41. Howard Henry Peckham, editor. *The Toll of Independence - Engagements & Battle Casualties of the American Revolution*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 63.
42. For the possible story on the McLane and Rivington Communications see John A. Nagy, *Invisible Ink Spycraft of the American Revolution*. Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2010), 245-246. Catherine Crary. "The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington", *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, January 1959: 68.
43. Alexander Garden. In *Anecdotes of the American Revolution, illustrative of the talents and virtues of the heroes and patriots, who acted the most conspicuous parts therein*. (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1828), 81.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: THE MCLANE FAMILY LEGACY

By Tom Welch

The McLane-Fischer Collection in the Maryland History Society in Baltimore, which includes several boxes of correspondence and other material, is said to be a veritable treasure trove of insights into the personalities and activities of the McLane family and the families into which they married. An outline of the various holdings is available online. I am sorry to say that after several aborted attempts to visit this institution, I still have not been able to benefit from the collection. The gaps in my knowledge could be greatly enhanced by finally making that trip. It may be that other researchers will be able to pursue the family genealogy and will bring additional material to light. I apologize in advance for any lapses in the material that appears here.

The extraordinary life and military career of Allen McLane brought him some recognition at the time. Local folks seemed to know something of his accomplishments and elected him to office and gave modest acclaim to his military career. McLane's children and grandchildren were able to benefit from the recognition that he achieved and then from his membership and participation in a number of important organizations. (See chapter 5 for specific involvement in government, church, fraternal and civic activities.)

Allen McLane's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren achieved prominence in a wide variety of arenas, including government, military, business, railroads, steamships, banking and medicine. The research that has been uncovered tells a story of his descendants that is quite laudable. The most startling and sad discovery about the children of Allen McLane and his wife, Rebecca Wells McLane, is that 11 of their 14 children died in infancy. The names of their children, with birth and death years can be found in the Family Papers and in the first chapter of John Munroe's biography of Allen's highly talented son, entitled, *Louis McLane, Federalist and Jacksonian*, from which this list is taken:<sup>1</sup>

James Allen	1772-73	Anne	1773-1778
Jane	1776-1777	Elizabeth	1779-?
Rebecca*	1780-1851	Louis	1782-83
Samuel	1784-86	Louis*	1784-1857
Mary	1787-88	John	1788-1789
Anne	1789-?	Allen*	1790-1845
Mary	1792-?	Betsy	1793-?

(Note: Those marked with asterisks are the only children to have lived to adulthood.)

The three children who lived to adulthood were Rebecca, the second Louis, and Allen, Jr. When their father was appointed by President Washington to become the Collector for the Port of Wilmington, the McLane family moved to Wilmington, as required by law. The main thing we know about Rebecca is that at age 17 she married Edward Worrell. Mr. Worrell worked with his father-in-law, Allen, and later became the cashier at the Bank of Delaware.<sup>2</sup> Rebecca was later afflicted by mental illness and was hospitalized for several decades at the end of her life.

The youngest of the three surviving children, Allen Jr. attended Princeton College and became a medical doctor. Like his brother, Allen married well. His wife was Catherine Read, the daughter of George Read, a prominent New Castle attorney, and the granddaughter of the George Read who signed both the Constitution

and the Declaration of Independence.<sup>3</sup> Like his father and his older brother, Louis, Allen, Jr. had an interest in politics and was a supporter of the Federalist Party. However, he never achieved the same level of political success as they did. He served as the president of the Wilmington branch of the Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware from 1824-1831 (his brother, Louis, held the same position from 1815 to 1818).<sup>4</sup> Allen, Jr. had a number of failed business ventures and died with a great deal of debt.

The most successful of the three McLane children, without doubt, was Louis, the second child to receive that name, which was given in honor and appreciation of the King of France, Louis XVI. He was born in Duck Creek Crossroads in 1784 (many sources incorrectly report his birth year as 1786). Louis early on showed that he had the fighting spirit of his father but was more polished. In May, 1799, at age 15, he was appointed a midshipman on the frigate *Philadelphia*, serving under the elder Stephen Decatur. After serving briefly in the Caribbean, he decided to leave the navy, not thinking that the seas would be the life for him.<sup>5</sup>

He attended Newark College, now the University of Delaware. He was admitted to the Delaware Bar in 1807 and was a law clerk under the tutelage of the influential attorney and politician, James A. Bayard, Sr.

Louis had been interested in Ann Van Dyke, the daughter of Nicholas Van Dyke, the powerful New Castle politician, but that relationship ended. Instead, in 1812, he married Catherine Mary "Kitty" Milligan of the prominent Baltimore Milligans. More than likely, Louis and Kitty were introduced by Bayard, who served as legal counsel to both the McLane and Milligan families. In addition, Bayard was almost a guardian to Kitty. Another connection Bayard had with the Milligans is that they were the owners of Bohemia Manor in southeastern Cecil County, Maryland, where his father-in-law, former Delaware Governor and U.S. Senator Richard Bassett, had grown up.<sup>6</sup> Bassett was a direct descendent of Augustine Herman, who had originally established the vast Bohemia Manor holdings in the 17th Century. Louis gained much from his union with this daughter of the Milligan family. Catherine proved to be a strong partner and served as one of his genuine political advisors. Also, her family were wealthy and he became the owner, as things happened in those days, of the Bohemia Manor property, the Maryland estate where Richard Bassett had been raised. The connection brought to Louis a whole new array of social and political contacts which were a great boon to his political career.

While not interested in being a practicing Methodist, as both of his parents were, he benefited greatly from his father's contacts in the Methodist Society, the Masons, the Federalist Party, and the Society of the Cincinnati.<sup>7</sup>

At age 32 in 1816, Louis McLane was elected to the first of his six terms in the United States House of Representatives. Before he was sworn in for his sixth term, he was elected by the Delaware General Assembly to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate. In the House and Senate, Louis received some key committee assignments and became known for his ideas and ability to get things done. He was highly regarded by his fellow representatives and senators. He held several key committee assignments, particularly membership on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. In addition to the personal attributes that Louis inherited



*Louis McLane (1786 – 1857), eldest son of Allen McLane, held a series of influential positions, including those of U. S. Congressman, U. S. Senator, U. S. Minister to Great Britain, U. S. Secretary of the Treasury and U. S. Secretary of State.*





*Delaware U. S. Congressman and U. S. Senator James Asheton Bayard, Sr. (1767 – 1815), was a mentor to Louis McLane. Bayard was the son-in-law of Governor and Senator Richard Bassett, a friend of Allen McLane.*

from his father, he enjoyed the counsel and support of mentors such as Bayard, Bassett, and Martin Van Buren, even though he and Van Buren later fell out.

Both Louis and his father, Allen, became supporters of the “Hero of New Orleans,” Andrew Jackson. Louis provided leadership in Delaware for Jackson’s 1828 presidential bid. Jackson won the election but did not win in Delaware. The Old Collector, Allen McLane, was able in the year that he died to attend the inauguration of Jackson, whom he greatly admired.

When it came time to pass out the rewards under Jackson’s “spoils system,” there was no room in the president’s cabinet for Louis, but he was rewarded with a nice plum, the appointment as American minister to England. This post then carried the impressive title of “Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of St. James.”\* When a vacancy occurred in the Cabinet in 1831, Jackson filled the position of Secretary of the Treasury with Louis. Being of a Federalist bent, McLane disagreed with President Jackson on his plan to scuttle the National Bank. Unable to accept that McLane position, Jackson “fired” him from the treasury and made him the Secretary of State instead. McLane was the first of three Delawareans to serve as Secretary of State, including John M. Clayton and his fellow ambassador to the Court of St. James, Thomas F. Bayard. Louis McLane received great acclaim

in Congress and in his two Cabinet posts.

Some aspects of his personality, part of his social inheritance from his father, caused him to make enemies and ruffle some feathers, but his wisdom, his ability to speak to a point and to convince people of a proper course of action won respect from persons in all parties. After leaving government service he became involved in railroad and canal businesses, ultimately becoming president of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.<sup>8</sup>

Immediately upon leaving government service he accepted the presidency of the Morris Canal and Banking Company in New York. He spent less than two years there, putting the company on a steady financial footing and making a reputation for himself as a sound business manager. His success in the canal business probably led the B & O Railroad in 1836 to offer him the post of president of their company, then the nation’s premier railroad. The Morris stockholders went to great lengths to keep Louis McLane as their president, but the double-barreled lure of a plum of a job and the chance to be back in Baltimore and Bohemia Manor with his Kitty and the children was too great an attraction. Because the financial condition of the Morris Canal Company took a sudden downturn, the company prevailed on Louis to stay until the crisis was over. He stayed on and helped them “right the ship.” He had led the company to a position of “growth, respectability, and profit.” When he left, they expressed their appreciation both vocally and with a bonus of \$9,312.95.<sup>9</sup>

For a period of more than ten years, from 1837 to 1848, Louis served as president of the B & O Railroad. While there his main achievement was getting tracks laid all the way to Cumberland, Maryland, so that coal and other products could be transported through Baltimore. In working toward that goal, he encountered serious problems in both the political and financial realms, brought on by fact that the nation had entered a severe

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\*Note: In 1893, many years after McLane’s tenure as minister, the title of the office became “ambassador” and the first person to hold it was another Delawarean, Thomas F. Bayard, Sr., grandson of McLane’s old mentor, James A. Bayard, Sr.)

economic depression. Louis provided outstanding leadership in negotiating with the governments of Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland to get the job done.<sup>10</sup>

In 1845, a second call to serve as Minister Plenipotentiary led McLane back to England, where he negotiated the boundaries of Oregon and again came into contact with his friend and colleague, the author Washington Irving, then serving as Minister to Spain. Irving, who had spent many years in Europe earlier in his career, had been McLane's private secretary during the latter's first years as Minister, and was often a guest in Louis and Catherine's home, sometimes staying for several weeks.

When McLane was asked to become Minister to England once more and to participate in the settlement of the Oregon border dispute, he had mixed emotions about his friend Irving being included that effort, since Irving was both a bit older and better-known internationally because of his many books. The negative side was that a person of Irving's prominence and stature might draw attention from any credit that might come his way. However, the positive was that McLane knew that, since no author was better known to the English than Washington Irving except James Fennimore Cooper, Irving's inclusion on the team would bring prestige and stature to the legation.<sup>11</sup>

As a member of President Tyler's negotiating team, McLane played a key role in achieving a good result in the Oregon Cession Treaty. He had disagreed with President's Tyler bellicose objective of "Fifty-four Forty or Fight." Instead, the result was that England ceded to the United States the portion of the Oregon territory south of the 49th parallel. In addition to the boundaries of Oregon, the land ceded also included Washington and Wyoming and portions of Idaho, Montana and British Columbia.<sup>12</sup> After the successful completion of the treaty Louis McLane returned to the presidency of the B & O Railroad, where he continued serving until 1850.

Like his parents, Louis and his wife, Catherine Milligan, produced many offspring. His parents had 14 children, three of whom survived infancy. Louis and Catherine had 13 children, twelve of whom survived. They instilled the same qualities in their children that Louis had learned from his parents, the importance of family, patriotic service to one's country, and an orientation to achieve. Another quality, less desirable, was the tendency to make enemies. If someone stood in the way of achieving a goal, Allen and then his son, Louis, would very often alienate the person and create grudges that lasted for extended periods of time. On one occasion he engaged in a duel with John Barratt over hurt feelings and a sense of pride being challenged. Both men fired two shots; each man was wounded; and they both survived.<sup>13</sup>

The acclaim that had come to Allen McLane and then to his son, Louis, did not end with them. The family's fame and notoriety passed down to future generations. Louis's children gained note by their involvement in military, medical, business, railroad, banking, shipping and governmental careers and through marriage. Munroe summarizes the highlights of the children of Louis McLane and Catherine Milligan McLane:

One of his sons became a governor, and a diplomat-minister to China, Mexico and France. A second became president of the greatest express company and one of the greatest banks in the West—Wells Fargo and Company and the Bank of Nevada. A third son became the president of the premier American steamboat company in the Pacific—the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Two other sons won a measure of distinction, and several of the daughters married or begot distinguished men—one son-in-law was General Joseph E. Johnston, and a grandson was Dr. Allan McLane Hamilton, called 'the alienist,' a precursor of the psychiatrist.<sup>14</sup>

Here are some highlights of a few of the most noted descendants of Allen McLane:

Robert Milligan McLane (1815-1898), the first son of Louis, studied in Paris where he became acquainted with Lafayette. He received an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy. He became friends with another West Point graduate, Joseph E. Johnston, who would later marry his sister, Lydia. Johnston would become a high-ranking general in the Confederate army. Robert would serve in the U. S. Army for eight years. When his father became Minister to England the second time to assist President Polk in the negotiations with England to



settle the Oregon land cession matter, Robert became a very important link as courier between Louis and the American negotiating team in Washington.<sup>15</sup> Robert was gregarious, suave and personable but at the same time mercurial, not able to focus on only one target. Robert was the better known of Louis's sons since, as a politician he was in the public eye.<sup>16</sup> After spending two years in California, Robert returned to Maryland, where his career blossomed. He served in the Maryland House of Delegates, in the U. S. House of Representatives, as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, as Minister to China, Minister to Mexico, the U. S. House again, Governor of Maryland and Minister to France.<sup>17</sup>

Louis McLane, Jr., the second son, had made an honest effort to pursue a career in the Navy, which his father wanted, but it did not suit him. In 1850, he went to California to take a business opportunity with Samuel Hoffman. His new bride, Sophie, stayed in Maryland until he could get established. Four of the sons, Louis, Robert, Allan and Charles, all landed in California to seek their fortunes and at times they were able to be together. Louis was the most successful of all the boys. After first engaging in the steamboat business, he went into real estate. Joining the great Wells, Fargo and Company, he quickly moved from the position of San Francisco agent to president of the company.

Allan entered the shipping business in California and progressed in his career until he became the president of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.

Charles became a civil engineer on the Baltimore and Ohio Railway. Charles also moved to California and moved into the position of San Francisco agent at Wells Fargo when his older brother, Louis, became the president.<sup>18</sup>

The daughters were successful in the sense that they married successful, well-known or prosperous husbands. One of the daughters of Louis and Kitty, Rebecca Wells McLane, married Philip Hamilton, son of Alexander. They had two sons—Louis McLane Hamilton and Allan McLane Hamilton, Louis being named for his father and Allan being named for his Revolutionary War hero grandfather. Louis Hamilton chose a career in the military and lost his life in the Indian wars during the Battle of Washita on 27 November 1868. Captain Hamilton served in a cavalry unit commanded by General George Armstrong Custer.<sup>19</sup> At the time of his death, he had the distinction of being the youngest officer of his rank in the regular U.S. Army.

Allen Hamilton became an alienist, a profession which later evolved into psychiatry. He received some acclaim for two very distinct achievements. He wrote a biography of his grandfather, Alexander Hamilton. He also was commissioned to perform psychological evaluations of two presidential assassins, Charles Guiteau, who killed President James A. Garfield in 1881, and Leon Czolgosz, who killed President William McKinley in 1901.<sup>20</sup>

After being introduced to Joseph E. Johnston, a West Point graduate, by her brother, Robert Milligan McLane, Lydia Milligan McLane married him in 1845. After achieving the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Army, Johnston resigned that commission when his native Virginia seceded from the Union to become a Confederate general. He commanded the Army of Northern Virginia until he was seriously wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines in 1862 and was replaced as commanding general by his West Point classmate, General Robert E. Lee.<sup>21</sup> After recovering from his wounds, he continued to serve in other capacities throughout the remainder of the war.

There are many other notable members of the larger McLane family that might have been included in this chapter. The task of gathering information about those persons will fall to other researchers into the history and genealogy of this extraordinary family.



Penniwell Brown. She was well known in Wilmington for breaking the all-male barrier at the Howard Pyle School of Art, located in that city. She made a number of famous portraits as well as other subjects. Her portrait of McLane was commissioned by the Delaware State Portrait Commission. It was common in those days to commission copies of portraits of men who had made a mark in Delaware. She received \$215 for her work. In her letters (in the Collections, Delaware State Museums, Dover) Leach said the portrait was not up to her standards and offered to refund the \$215. However, we can see that Leach faithfully captured the expression and pose originally achieved by CWP.

1999: Bradley Stevens, *Colonel Allen McLane after James Peale*. After publishing my findings concerning the source of the much-used Hall likeness of McLane (see above), I decided to commission a re-creation of the original, 1811 James Peale individual life portrait. I found Bradley Stevens, well-known in Washington D.C., as a copyist of old master paintings. Stevens' clients included Monticello, The White House, the National Portrait Gallery and the U. S. Department of State. Stevens agreed to create the McLane portrait from old family photographs and a tiny home movie segment, which showed the original JP portrait. The result, oil on linen, 29 inches by 24 inches, is a remarkably vivid and accurate reproduction, now owned by my nephew, Allan McLane.

2002: Ben Ferry, after James Peale, *Colonel Allen McLane Fighting Two British Officers*. From the McLane family's 20th century platinum print, artist Ben Ferry recreated the 1803 version of James Peale's depiction of the historic event. A lively oil on canvas, 28 inches by 36 inches, it now belongs to the Society of the Cincinnati and is displayed at their national headquarters at Anderson House in Washington, D.C.

# Appendices

## APPENDIX A: ALLEN McLANE TIMELINE

- 1740 Allen McLane's father, a breeches maker, and mother migrated from Ireland to Philadelphia.
- 1746 Aug 8 - Allen McLane born in Philadelphia
- 1767 Allen visited Europe (specifics not known)
- 1769 Moved to Duck Creek Crossroads
- 1770 Allen married Rebecca Wells, daughter of Kent County sheriff
- 1775 Sept - Commissioned as lieutenant and adjutant in Colonel Caesar Rodney's Regiment
- 1775 Father died and left Allen \$15,000 in Philadelphia property
- 1775 Dec - Fought as volunteer in Battle of Great Bridge, near Norfolk
- 1776 Fought in battles of Long Island, White Plains
- 1777 Fought in Trenton, Princeton, Cooch's Bridge, Brandywine, Germantown.  
Was Washington's eyes and ears during the winter of 1777-78 while troops encamped at Valley Forge and a primary provider of food at Valley Forge [On one foraging mission brought back 1200 fat hogs, 400 cattle and 200 horses to feed the troops] He also intercepted supply trains carrying food and supplies to the British in Philadelphia. His Light-Horse cavalry company known as Allen McLane's Partisan Party and the "Market Stoppers."
- 1779 Provided spying for Gen Washington, leading up to battles of Stony Point and Paulus Hook.
- 1779 Chastised strongly by Gen Washington for reporting that Benedict Arnold was profiteering
- 1779 Under command of Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee for 1 ½ years, his worst time in war
- 1780 Transferred to the command of Baron von Steuben; promoted to Major
- 1781 Commissioned as a special courier by Washington to sail to the West Indies to convince the French Admiral Comte de Grasse to bring his fleet to support the battle in the Chesapeake
- 1781 The ship returning McLane from the West Indies captured British ship *HMS Savage*;  
Was commissioned by the Board of War to go to New York to gather intelligence on British fleet;  
Returned from New York with stolen British naval signal codebook from "Mr. R" (Livington)
- 1782 Left the war
- 1784 Rebecca joined the newly-formed Methodist Episcopal Church, hosted Rev. Freeborn Garrettson.
- 1785 Elected to Delaware House of Assembly, served in 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1791
- 1785 Son, Louis, born—5-time Congressman, U.S. Senator, Minister to Great Britain, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and U.S. Secretary of State under President Andrew Jackson, president of the B & O Railroad
- 1786 Gave land for Asbury Methodist Church in Smyrna; sponsored Cokesbury College in Maryland, the first Methodist College in America, served on college board of trustees
- 1787 Elected to Delaware Ratification Convention, which led to Delaware becoming the First State to ratify the U.S. Constitution at Dover on 7 December 1787
- 1787 Elected to four-man Privy Council by General Assembly; Served as Judge, Court of Common Pleas
- 1789 Appointed first U.S. Marshal of the Delaware District by President Washington
- 1791 Elected Speaker of the Delaware House of Assembly
- 1794 Appointed as colonel in command of the Delaware militia
- 1797 Appointed by President Washington as Collector of the Port of Wilmington (held until 1829)
- 1797 Moved to Wilmington, where he frequently hosted Francis Asbury, Methodist evangelist
- 1801 Reappointed Collector by President Thomas Jefferson, even though a "thorn in the side" of Jefferson's new Democratic-Republican Party (rumor of a deal for elector's vote)
- 1803 Commissioned James Peale to paint "Ambush of Allen McLane," three separate paintings
- 1803 Elected President of Delaware Abolition Society
- 1807 Wife, Rebecca, passed away (11 of their 14 children died in infancy)
- 1808 Sold his home in Smyrna
- 1813 Organized the defense of Wilmington with Revolutionary War veterans against British



1824 Feted at Philadelphia, Yorktown and Richmond as a “last survivor,” reunion with Lafayette  
1829 McLane died at age 83; buried in Asbury Churchyard at 2nd and Walnut Sts., Wilmington  
1956 Smyrna Armory named in memory of Col. Allen McLane; name later removed  
6/30/2011 – Delaware General Assembly passed a Senate Joint Resolution honoring McLane  
8/15/2011 – Resolution signed by Governor Jack Markell  
9/20/2012 – Smyrna Bridge at Lake Como renamed the Major McLane Bridge

Compiled by Tom Welch

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## APPENDIX B: TIMELINE FOR BATTLES AND SKIRMISHES OF ALLEN McLANE

1775:

Dec 9 Great Bridge VA

1776:

Aug 27 Long Island  
Sept 15 Kip's Bay  
Sept 16 Harlem Hts, York Island (Manhattan)  
Oct 21 Mamaroneck,  
Oct 28 White Plains, Chatterton's Hill  
Dec 26 Trenton

1777:

Jan 3 Princeton  
Jan 2 Trenton  
Sep 3 Cooch's Bridge  
Sep 11 Brandywine  
Sep 21 Paoli  
Oct 4 Germantown  
Dec 4 White Marsh (Warned Washington)  
Dec 6 Chestnut Hill  
Dec 11 Gulph Mills PA, Philadelphia, PA

1778:

May 19 Mischienza (quasi-attack on Gen Howe's retirement gala in Phila)  
May 20 Barren Hill (Warned the Marquis de Lafayette)  
June 16 Rising Sun Tavern near Germantown, attempt to capture McLane  
June 18 Philadelphia: McLane first into the City and captured British laggards  
June 28 Monmouth Courthouse

1779:

July 15 Stony Point,

Aug 19 Powles Hook (also Paulus Hook)  
Oct 4 "Fort Wilson," Philadelphia

1780:  
Southern campaign – reconnoitering the British fleet

1781:  
At sea, off Charleston Bar – the American privateer, the *Congress*, under the command of Captain George Geddes, the vessel in which McLane was returning from the Caribbean, encountered the British sloop-of-war, *HMS Savage*, and defeated it in what is considered one of the hardest-fought single ship actions of the war

Sep 28-Oct 19 – Siege at Yorktown

1782:  
McLane as a cavalry officer on constant patrol, may have had 50-100 unnamed skirmishes, i.e. contact with British cavalry or foot soldiers on patrol.

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## APPENDIX C: McLANE IN FICTION, ART, MUSIC AND MEMORABILIA

### McLANE IN FICTION

Howard Fast, *Conceived in Liberty*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1939.

This book is historical fiction and to date none of the information contained therein has been confirmed as true. The story is about a group of Continental soldiers who experienced the many deprivations of hunger, disease, lack of clothing and shelter during the Valley Forge winter of 1777-78. They were destitute, hungry, disaffected and angry about their plight. They resented the better circumstances of their officers, even including Captain Allen McLane, who they viewed as a camp policeman. They decided to desert, but before they got far away, they were confronted by Captain McLane and his men. In an exchange of gunfire, one of the deserters and one of McLane's men were killed. McLane arrested the men and charged them with murder. With Alexander Hamilton as their defense attorney and a notable group of generals sitting on the hearing panel, they were found guilty. Some were executed, but one, more or less the central character of the book, avoided the death penalty. As if by a miracle he became a good soldier, coming to understand what he was fighting for. At that moment the reader comes to terms with the title, *Conceived in Liberty*. (When I requested this book on Delaware Inter-library Loan, the copy I received came from the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. – TW)

Silas Weir Mitchell, *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker: Sometime Brevet Lt. Col. on the Staff of his Excellency General Washington*, 2 Volumes, The Gregg Press, Ridgewood NJ, 1896.

This book is about a young Quaker whose initial struggle is with his family over his desire to join the Continental Army in the war against the British. He is saved from a severe situation when he is on his way to join up with General Washington. He is in a critical situation when he is accosted by a group of ten Tories. All of a sudden, Captain Allen McLane and his troop come on the scene to save Hugh from possible death. When McLane escorted him to General Washington, Hugh requested that he be able to serve under Captain McLane. In the first half of the book, he is engaging in the adventures of the Allen McLane Partisan Party during the Valley Forge winter of 1777-78. In the last half, he is in the midst of the conflict as a brevet Lt. Col. on the staff of General Washington. (When I requested this book on Delaware Inter-library Loan, the book I received came

*from the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, but it contained a stamp indicating that it had formerly been in the collection of Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. – TW)*

Charles B. Flood, *Monmouth*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1961.

This is a very fact-based historical fiction tracking the cavalry company of Allen McLane, especially his lieutenants, Silsby and Burk, (the actual names of the two lieutenants whom he recruited in February, 1777) as they interact with a family whose farm is located near Valley Forge, right in the midst of the struggle between the British and American forces. The action is set in Philadelphia, Valley Forge and the land between and ends at the Battle of Monmouth. — I heard about this book from historian William Welsch when he spoke at the Hale-Byrnes House in Stanton, Delaware, in December, 2011. My wife found it on line and put it in my Christmas stocking. – TW

## McLANE IN ART

This writer is aware of at least six paintings of McLane. First is the portrait that he commissioned Charles Willson Peale to paint, c. 1818. The original hangs in the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. According to Ann Horsey, Curator for the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the copy now hanging on the first floor of Delaware's Legislative Hall was done by artist Ethel P. B. Leach in 1942, when she was accompanied to the Maryland Historical Society by Mabel Lloyd Ridgely, chairperson of the Delaware Public Archives Commission. The location of the Mrs. Leach's copy in the years after it was painted is not certain. However, in 1968, the three-page article on Allen McLane in the Smyrna Bicentennial Brochure displayed a copy of it with a notation in the caption that it "is located in the Hall of Records." An attempt to locate the portrait in January, 2009, resulted in its being found mounted on a chain link fence in a museum storage warehouse at Tudor Industrial Park in Dover. Efforts by Senators Bryan Bushweller and Bruce Ennis, Richard Carter and Ann Horsey resulted in the portrait being hung on the first floor of Legislative Hall next to the portrait of McLane's famous son, Louis, the noted diplomat and statesman. There are other copies in a variety of locations within the state and possibly beyond.

McLane also commissioned a painting by James Peale entitled "The Ambush of Captain McLane." Multiple paintings of the scene were done. There is also an etching of Allen McLane done by H. B. Hall in 1869, based on an 1811 James Peale portrait. See Chapter 8, in which Mrs. Edith McLane Edson provides greater detail about the origins and history of these works of art.

Still another painting is one of a series of various scenes from Delaware history done by Robert E. Goodier under a commission from the Bank of Delaware, now PNC Bank. This painting depicts eight of the thirty delegates at the Delaware Ratification Convention in Dover, meeting at the Battel (Golden Fleece) Tavern on the Dover Green. The tavern was demolished many years ago and no one knows what its interior looked like, but Mr. Goodier used his creative imagination to depict the men sitting in a room in the tavern in December, 1787. Those depicted include Allen McLane, Gunning Bedford, Jr., James Latimer, Richard Bassett, Nicholas Ridgely, Gunning Bedford, Sr., James Sykes, and Kensey Johns. A book containing 8 ½ by 11 reproductions of all the paintings is available for viewing by the members of the public at the PNC bank branch at the corner of Loockerman and State Streets in downtown Dover. The original painting also hangs there.

## McLANE IN MUSIC

After publication of Fred Cook's book, *What Manner of Men: Forgotten Heroes of the Revolution*, in 1959, several of the subjects of his book were featured in a medley of songs performed at the Continental Insurance Company pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. Some alert marketing person at Continental saw that a patriotic theme would resonate well, especially since the company's logo was the Continental Soldier. Three

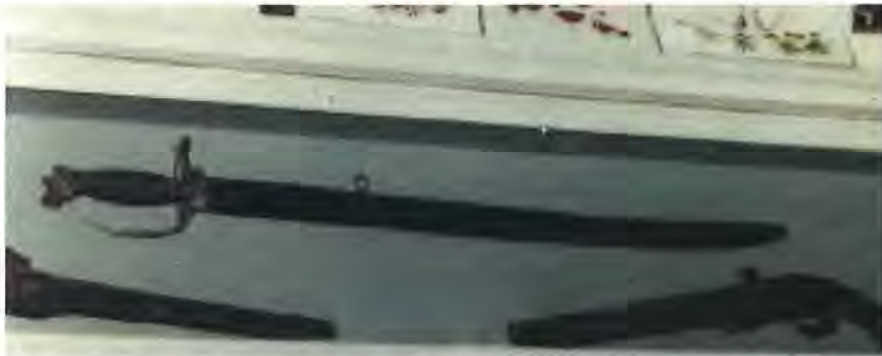


characters from the Mr. Cook's book were chosen to be part of the eight-song medley—Allen McLane, Timothy Murphy and Deborah Sampson. Four musical selections had as their subjects better-known figures, General George Washington, Baron Von Steuben, General Henry Knox and Colonel John Glover. The eighth character chosen was the Continental Soldier. The songs were all written by a noted lyricist named Ray Charles, who, though well-known, was not *the* Ray Charles. Each song featured three verses and a repeating refrain. The Allen McLane song starts with the line “The eyes and ears of the Newborn Nation.”

When visitors arrived at the Continental pavilion, they were treated to about thirty minutes of patriotic entertainment, including the eight songs with graphics to add a visual aspect. The songs are still around, having been recently rediscovered. The website where the songs can be viewed and heard is: <http://www.nywf64.com/conins03.8.shtml>

## McLANE IN MEMORABILIA

A member of the McLane family owned Allen McLane's pistol and saber. It is very fortuitous that a photograph of the two weapons was taken, since both were later destroyed in a fire. Below is a photo of the gun and saber provided by Edith McLane Edson.



*This somewhat blurred photograph was taken of Allen McLane's pistol and saber, which had been on display at the home of a descendant, before both were destroyed by fire (courtesy of Edith McLane Edson).*

Approximately a year ago, Mike Lloyd located an Allen McLane commemorative coin on-line, which my daughter, Laura, purchased and gave to me. It likely was produced by the Delaware American Revolution Bicentennial Commission in 1974-76, at the same time they produced the set of six Allen McLane post cards. Both sides are pictured on the next page.

## McLANE ON RADIO

On a February, 2016, research trip to study the papers of Louis McLane at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, a unique radio program was discovered. One of the programs on the “Cavalcade of America” series sponsored by the DuPont Company, entitled “Dangerous Mission,” featured Allen McLane's heroics during the June, 1779, raid on the British-held fort at Stony Point, New York. McLane was portrayed by noted actor Macdonald Carey.



*Allen McLane Commemorative Coin*

#### APPENDIX D: CORRESPONDENCE, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES AND OTHER WRITINGS

The following documents shed light on the military experience, accomplishments and personality of Allen McLane. Most are from the McLane Papers or Writings of Washington and were located at the New York Historical Society (NYHS), the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), and the Hagley Museum and Library (HML). All documents were transcribed by Tom Welch unless otherwise indicated.

- 1775 Sept 11 John McKinley to AM "Copy of Adjutant & Lieut. McLane's Commission"
- Oct 10 Caesar Rodney "Recommending AM as Warm Friend to American Liberty"
- 1776 Aug 15 Tho McKean "Authority for AM to pass to and from NY"
- 1777 Jan 13 Commissioning AM Captain
- June 9 Record of Court Martial ordered by B Arnold
- Nov 7 Timothy Pickering to AM "Be the eyes and ears of the Commander"
- General Order, "No Passes into Philadelphia"
- GW to AM "27 Intelligence gathering orders"
- Nov 12 Fitzgerald, aide de camp to AM "GW approves your detaining servants seeking forage for Phila"
- Nov xx Pickering to AM "No one to carry provisions into the city"
- Nov 20 GW to AM "Watch for Gen Cornwallis"
- Nov 23 GW to AM "Approving AM's request to employ spies in Phila"
- Dec 4 R.K. Meade to AM "GW's thanks for active exertion in early discovery of enemy intentions"
- 1778 Jan 8 Fitzgerald to AM "Go to Delaware to secure deserters"
- Feb 11 Smallwood to AM "Thanks for favors, beef and pork"
- Feb 25 Gen. Chas Scott to AM (to be transcribed TBT)
- May 10 LaFayette to AM re: recruiting spies for Phila
- May 16 Tench Tilghman to AM "Acknowledging young man brought in -a spy?"
- May 18 LaFayette to AM "Do British know our movements?"
- May 18 GW to LaFayette re: setting up post of watch at Barren Hill
- May 20 Scammell to AM "Congrats on brave little party (Mischienza?) and Marquis' escape"
- May 23 Gen Chas Scott to AM "Your conduct with Marquis pleasing to his Excellency"



- May 23 RK Meade to AM "Keep eye upon enemy/ report to his Excellency"
- May 23 Scammell to AM "Sending you a replacement for injured Claypool-Be careful"
- May 24 Fitzgerald to AM "Continue vigilance, send intelligence quickly"
- May 24 W Johnson to AM "GW – would not do without AM for 1000 lbs"
- May 27 John Laurens to AM "Keep us posted as to the Brit evacuation of Phila"
- May 31 McHenry to AM "permission from GW to employ spies"
- June Marquis de Lafayette "Congratulations of dispatching Dragoons" "Oneidas"
- June 1 GW to Gen Smallwood mentions McLane intelligence re: Brit ships
- June 6 McHenry to AM "Recd note from G'town/continue vigilance"
- June 12 Lafayette to AM "Indians going home to fight Senecas; congrats w/ dragoons"
- June 18 McHenry to AM "Soon to have the pleasure of entering the City"
- June 18 McHenry to AM "Congrats on success (entering Phila)"
- Jun 19 Scammell to AM "Congrats on narrow escape/knives and forks"
- June 19 Charles Scott to AM "Possession of City"
- Aug 29 Charles Scott to AM "Take charge of Indians; block British landing"
- Sep 8 Jos Reed to AM "AM transferring to Col. Hartly's Battalion"
- Sep 8 Gen Scott to AM "transferring , advance guard, plan to get rest."
- Dec 8 Scammell, AG, to AM "verifying his military involvement at Germantown"
- Dec 21 Scammell, AG Certif of AM authority to seize property of Loyalists/sympathizers
- 1779 Jan 5 Rich Platt ADC to AM "Furlough requested to deal with family concerns"
- Apr 29 Johnston certifying that AM recruited 94 men and citing money owed to AM
- STONY POINT related June 9 – July 22
- June 9 GW to Mjr. Lee re AM to report to him
- June 9 GW directing AM to proceed to join Maj. Lighthorse Harry Lee
- July 12 Lighthorse Harry Lee directing AM to Stony Point
- July 17 Hamilton to AM to gather wounded, wagons and stores at Stony Point
- July 20 Alex Hamilton directing AM to proceed to Stony Point
- July 22 Gen Orders "Q'Master Gen and Gen Knox will assess Stony Pt booty to pay Wayne & his troops"
- July 30 Henry Lee to AM "Interrupt correspondence betw enemy & disaffected at Bergentown"
- Aug 3 Scammell "thanks for newspaper and intelligence; d'Staing defeat of Brit ships"
- CIA website on McLane in disguise at Stony Point
- 1780 Jan 30 GW to Maj Lee, turning down AM request for promotion
- Apr 9 GW to the Board of War, turning down Lee's request for promotion of AM
- June 5 GW ltr to James Duane
- June 23 Stoddard "Report back to main army"
- Sep GW ltr discussing AM plan to resign
- Dec 1 Resolution for the purchase of sixty horses for Lee's Legion
- YORKTOWN (AM monitoring fleet, March 9-March 30)
- 1781 Mar 9 Von Steuben "authorization to procure boats, men, etc for import mission"
- Mar 16 Lafayette to AM "Thanks for info the Brit fleet is out of reach"
- Oct 29 GW to AM "authority to secure boats, etc to observe Brit Fleet"
- Oct 30 De Grasse "Give AM whatever support he needs"
- 1782 Mar 5 GW letter acknowledging service of AM
- 1783 Nov 4 GW "Acknowledging AM service, especially dispatches to De Grasse"
- 1788 Nicholas Ridgely verifying that AM took oath to become Magistrate in Common Pleas Court
- 1789 GW appointing AM first marshall of the Delaware District
- 1794 AM to GW expressing hope for a better job so he can take care of his family
- 1797 GW appointing AM the Collector of the Port of Wilm (replacing George Bush 1790-97)



- 1801 T.Jefferson to J.Dickinson asking for character reference for Allen McLane relative to leaving McLane in his post at Port Collector (Related to Pivotal vote of Rep. James A Bayard electing T Jefferson – a political bargain??)
- 1812 Sec of State Gallatin requesting AM to notify all ships that war with British has begun  
June Resolution forming military corps in defense of Wilmington, Col. McLane commandant
- 1813 May 13 Order by Col. McLane urging Veterans Association to be ready on a moment's notice
- 1814 AM comments about the weak defense of the capitol
- 1817 To CA Rodney from AM “ your uncle's trip” in carriage
- 1824 To Victor du Pont “ Inability to meet the Marquis in NY due to gout”

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In Council

The Council of Safety of the Counties of NewCastle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware,  
To Allen McLane, Gentleman

We reposing especial Trust and Confidence in your Patriotism, Valour, Conduct and Fidelity, Do by these presents constitute and appoint you to be Lieutenant and Adjutant of a Battalion of Foot militia, in the northern District of Kent County, whereof Brigadier General Caesar Rodney, Esquire is Colonel, afsociated for the Defence of American Liberty and for repelling every hostile Invasion thereof. Your are therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the Duty of Lieutenant and Adjutant of said Battalion, by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging. And we do strictly charge and require all Officers and Soldiers under your Command to be obedient to your orders as Lieutenant and Adjutant. And you are to observe and follow such orders and Directions, from time to time, as you shall receive from this or a future Council of Safety, for that purpose appointed by the House of Assembly of this Government, or from the commander in Chief for the time being, or from any other of your superior officers according to the Rules and Discipline of war, in pursuance of the Trust reposed in you. This Commission to continue in force, until revoked by this or a future Council of Safety, or House of Assembly of this Government.

By order of the Council of Safety

11th of September, 1775 - Jno. McKinly, President

[HSP]

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To whom it may Concern

I beg leave to recommend Allen McLane, Esquire, who is inclined to visit the Camp in Virginia, or elsewhere, as a warm friend to American Liberty.

October 10th, 1775

Caesar Rodney

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Philada Aug 13d 1776

Perth Amboy-Head Quarters August 15th 1776

I do join in the above Certificate of Brigadier General Rodney, one of the Delegates for the Delaware Government and request all whom it may concern to permit Mr. Allen M,clane to pass and repass unmolested to the City of New York or elsewhere.

Tho McKean Col. 4th Batt.

Phila Associators

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

In Congress

The Delegates of the United States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia

To Allen McLane, Esquire

We reposing especial Trust and Confidence in your Patriotism, Valour, Conduct and Fidelity, Do by these presents constitute and appoint you to be Captain in a Regiment of Foot Commanded by Col. John Patton, in the Army of the United States, raised for the Defence of American Liberty and for repelling every hostile Invasion thereof, you are therefore carefully diligently to discharge the Duties of of a Captain, by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging. And we do strictly charge and require all officers and soldiers under your command to be obedient to your orders as Captain. And you are to observe and follow such orders and Directions from time to time, as you shall receive from this or a future Congress of the United States or Committee of Congress for that purpose appointed, or Commander in Chief for the time being of the Army of the United States or of any other, your superior officer, according to the Rules and Discipline of war, in pursuance of the Trust reposed in you.

This commission to continue in force until revoked by this or a future Congress.

Dated the 13th of January, 1777 By order of the Congress

[Copies of Letters from the Commander in Chief and others to Allen McLane, HSP]

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At a General Court Martial held at the Barracks of Philadelphia the ninth of June 1777 by order of Major General Arnold

Among sundry prisoners appeared Andrew Fenney of Col. Patton's Regiment confined for desertion who upon the said Andrew Fenney Declares that he never was enlisted: nor directly or indirectly rec any bounty in the Continental Service the Court thereupon strictly examining the circumstances appearing to them are of opinion that the said Andrew Fenney hath been unjustly detained from his family by order of Captn McClean; And that Captn McClean ought to pay the said Andrew Fenney the sum of ten pounds for the great injuries he has sustained by the confinement and loss of time and ought immediately to be discharged.

The General approves of the proceedings of the court except the fine of ten pounds which the court have ordered Captn McClean to pay which is limited yet nevertheless the General agrees that Capt. McClean is answerable to the said Andrew Fenney at times in any court of judication.

Tho. Gourt?

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

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Headquarters

November 7, 1777

[from NYHS]

Sir:

You being acquainted with the country in the neighborhood of Philadelphia will take the post most advantageous for watching the enemy, sending out the necessary parties and patrols for that end and your own security. You are to prevent as far as possible all intercourse between Philadelphia and the country, suffering none to go to

the city without authority of the Commander in Chief. Nor are you to permit any persons to come from the city into the country, unless they come out with an intention not to return; or are persons from whom material intelligence may be gained; and in the latter case you will send them to headquarters under the care of a dragoon. You will also endeavor to gain the best intelligence relative to the enemy, and communicate the same to the commander without delay. On your return from this command you will make a report of such matters as you may think material or which may serve to guide any officer who may succeed you.

Tim Pickering Adj. G.

To Captain Allen McLeane  
OF Col. Patton's Regiment

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

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#### General Order

No passes to be given to any one to go into Philadelphia but by the Major General of the Day who will not grant them without due examination and upon the most reasonable and necessary occasions.

The detachment of 100 men for Capt. McLane's command to be furnished by Woodford's, Scott's, 1st Penn, 2nd Penn, Poor's, Glover's, Larned's, Patterson's, Weedon's, Muhlenberg's, Maxwell's, Conway's, Huntington's, and Varnum's Brigades. The Dragoons by Major Clow.

[From HSP]

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General Washington to Capt. McLane, Commandant Party of Observation in 1777-

1. What number of Troops supposed to be in General Howe's Army and how disposed of?
2. What works thrown up in and about the City, and what cannon in them?
3. Have any detachments been made over New Jersey and for what purpose?
4. How many men have they sent over there and how many pieces of cannon?
5. What kind of cannon, whether only field pieces or large cannon?
6. What preparations are they making in the water- are they fitting out ships-gallies-fire rafts-or floating batteries?
7. Do they think they can stay in Philadelphia - if their shipping cannot pass the forks?
8. Are they resolved to make any farther attempts on both the forts or either of them? And in what way whether by storm or siege?
9. Can you discover whether they will attempt any thing against the forts and when (or where)?  
Observe carefully the preparations making on the river and along the wharves; it is of great importance to know the time or near it.
10. Is there any talk of leaving Philadelphia- and by what route?  
Observe carefully what they are doing with their waggons - whether their baggage is packed up and what directions their waggoners receive.
11. Are the Tories and Friends of the British Army under much apprehension of their leaving town - and what preparations are making to remove themselves or their effects?
12. For what purpose is it understood the Bridge is thrown over the Middle Ferry? And what force is kept on the West side of the Schuylkill?
13. Has the bridge been injured by the late storm? Or is it passable?
14. Where are the Grenadiers - Light Infantry and Jaegers- and are they making any preparations to move?



Be particularly careful in observing their motions.

15. What number of men are sent over to Carpenters and Province Islands –and how often are they relieved?
16. In what condition are those banks since the late rain? Can waggon and carriages pass, so as to transport provisions and stores from the ships to the town?
17. In what conditions are the troops for provisions and in what articles is there the greatest scarcity?
18. How are the Inhabitants situated for provisions?
19. What impression has the news of Gen'l Burgoyne's surrender made on the British Army?
20. Is there any conversation in the British Army, or among the inhabitants, of Gen'l Howe's coming out to meet Gen'l Washington?
21. What is the British Army now employed about? Note carefully the prices of everything.
22. Does Continental money rise or fall in the Town?
23. Can you learn whether there are any preparations making or any intentions to go up the Delaware, to burn the frigates and vessels up there?
24. Find out what duty the soldiers do and whether they are contented – how many nights in the week are they in bed?
25. Inquire particularly into the treatment of the prisoners in the new gaol – so that if necessary you make a path of it-
26. Do they compel any to enlist by starving or otherwise ill treating them?
27. Find out how far the Redoubts between Delaware and Schuylkill are apart, and whether there are lines or abatis between the redoubts.

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Headquarters, Thursday night, 7 o'clock, 12th Nov. 1777-

Sir,

His Excellency has received your favour of 4 o'clock this afternoon and observes what you say respecting the mode pursued by the Enemy, to obtain provision from the country. He approves of your detaining the Horses and Servants which are sent out upon this business, immediately sending up the former to the Quarter Master General, for public use.

I am Sir, Your most ob. Serv.

John Fitzgerald, Aide de Camp

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

I am this day informed that multitudes of women (some of them British soldiers wives) come out daily beyond our guards and sentries, and carry back provisions into the City. You will recollect the Gen'l Orders to you, were to suffer no body to carry provisions into the city, nor were any persons be permitted to come from the City into the Country, unless they meant to stay or were able to give material intelligence – you will pay attention to the orders.

Your Humb. Serv. Tim. Pickering, A. G.

[HSP]

Head Quarters 20 November 1777

Sir:

I have certain information that Lord Cornwallis returned from Jersey yesterday and tis said they intend an attack upon this Army with their joint force before Gen. Green joins us. I therefore depend on you keeping a very good look out upon line, and gaining every intelligence from people coming out of town (Phila), that I may have the very earliest notice of their movements and intentions.

I am Sir

Y most ob' Serv'

G WASHINGTON

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Headquarters, 23 Nov. 1777

Sir,

I have this moment received your letter containing the proposals of some of the Inhabitants, near the Enemy's lines. I will undoubtedly accept their offers of service, provided they give in a list of their names, and engage to be under the absolute command, for the time specified, of such officer, as I shall appoint. This precaution is necessary, for otherwise they may receive the public money, without performing the duty expected from them.

I am, Your Humbl. Serv.

Geo. Washington

[McLane Papers]

\*\*\*\*\*

Headquarters, 2 O'Clock, 4th Dec. 1777

Sir: His Excellency received your letter containing intelligence, and thanks you. He has only to request your most active exertions in making the earliest discoveries of the Enemy's intentions and give him notice.

I am, Sir, Your most Hbl. Serv. R. K. Meade. A. G.

[HSP]

Instructions for Capt. McLane

Sir,

You are hereby directed to proceed immediately to the Delaware State, for the purpose of securing deserters belonging to the Continental Army, and for the removal and securing the stock and provisions in Kent County. All officers civil and military are requested to afford you every assistance, which may be found necessary upon this occasion. Forward your collections under a proper guard by way of Wilmington. Genl. Smallwood will give you any support you may stand in need of. Given at Headquarters

By order of the Commander in Chief, Jany 8th, 1778

John Fitzgerald, A. D. C.

[HSP]

Wilmington, Feb'y 11th, 1778

Sir

I received your favors the 29th of Jan'y with the prisoners' beef and pork and am much obliged by your vigilance and attention in your pursuits which I hope will still be crowned with success.

I am glad to hear you are in away to get more of your deserters and should be glad to hear further how you've succeeded in apprehending them and whether there is a prospect in getting any more cattle under the Resolution of Congress transmitted to you, or whether Mr. McGarmont can supply any more beef or pork. Give my compliments to him and tell him that the knucklehead scoundrel Huggins will station the troops here without he can forward supplies to us now and thereafter.

Let me know your sentiments xxxxx

Yr Obedient Serv  
Gen. Smallwood

Capt. McLane

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

AT NINE O'CLOCK

(undated, believed to be Spring of 1778 while British are occupying Philadelphia)

Dear Sir

I have just now received your letter and wish that you could come down immediately so that I might speak with you of several things. Inquire if you please if the people believe there will be a market day tomorrow. I wish also you would see if some man to be (a) \_\_\_\_\_ dragoon of some credit among the enemy (who) could go in and go out \_\_\_\_\_, promising him twelve to fifteen guineas – in general, don't keep any idea of saving expense whenever you hope to get intelligence – I desire you could throw somebody else into the town, and above all, don't have him to join me. I'll be upon the left in the front hotel.

I am sir,

Yours

The M. de Lafayette

Inquire if they knew towards the lines that a detachment was ordered out of our army

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Headquarters Valley Forge, 16th May (1778)

Dear

I received your by your orderly sergeant who brought up one of the young men mentioned by you. He is very intelligent and confirms the account mentioned by you of the intended evacuation of the City. If any of the people who come out for protection can give you an intelligent account of the movement of the Enemy it will be well to send them up to head quarters. If they cannot, you had better let them pafs into the Country. Continue your good vigilance, and be pleased to communicate what is material.

I am, Your most Ob... Serv.

Tench Tilghman A.D.C.

[HSP]



Woods near Barnhill Church, 9 o'clock, AM, 18th May, 1778

Dear Sir,

I have just now received your letter and wish you would come down immediately, that I might speak to you of several things, - inquire if you please, if the people thinks there will be a market tomorrow. I wish also you would see, if some man to be depended on, and of some credit among the enemy, would go in, and go out, in promising him twelve guineas. Is it known towards the British lines that a detachment was ordered out of our army.

Yours

M. De La Fayette

[McLane Papers]

\*\*\*\*\*

To MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE\*

Head Quarters, May 18, 1778.

Sir:

The detachment under your command with which you will immediately march towards the enemy's lines is designed to answer the following purposes: to be a security to this camp and a cover to the country between the Delaware and Schuylkill, to interrupt the communication with Philadelphia, obstruct the incursions of the enemy's parties, and obtain intelligence of their motions and designs. This last is a matter of very interesting moment, and ought to claim your particular attention. You will endeavour to procure trusty and intelligent spies, who will advise you faithfully of whatever may be passing in the city; and you will without delay communicate to me every piece of material information you obtain.

A variety of concurring accounts make it probable the enemy are preparing to evacuate Philadelphia. This is a point, which it is of the utmost importance to ascertain; and if possible the place of their future destination. Should you be able to gain certain intelligence of the time of intended embarkation; so that you may be able to take advantage of it, and fall upon the rear of the enemy in the act of withdrawing, it will be a very desirable event. But this will be a matter of no small difficulty, and will require the greatest caution and prudence in the execution. Any deception or precipitation may be attended with the most disastrous consequences.

You will remember that your detachment is a very valuable one, and that any accident happening to it would be a severe blow to this Army. You will therefore use every possible precaution for its security, and to guard against a surprise. No attempt should be made nor any thing risked without the greatest prospect of success, and with every reasonable advantage on your side. I shall not point out any precise position to you; but shall leave it to your discretion to take such posts occasionally as shall appear to you best adapted to the purposes of your detachment. In general I would observe that a stationary post is unadvisable, as it gives the enemy an opportunity of knowing your situation and concerting plans successfully against you. In case of any offensive

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\* Note: On May 17, Lieut. Col. John Laurens wrote to Col. Stephen Moylan of the Fourth Continental Dragoons that the Commander in Chief desired a select party of 50 dragoons, fully equipped, under active officers, to proceed to Whitemarsh to join a detachment of infantry. This was Lafayette's detachment, though no mention of it is made in the letter. Laurens's letter is in the Washington Papers. To protect the young Lafayette, Gen Washington assigned both Dan Morgan and Allen McLane to be on the lookout for trouble and to assist the Marquis if problems arose.

movements against this army, you will keep yourself in such a state as to have an easy communication with it and at the same time harrass the enemy's advance.

Our parties of horse and foot between the rivers and to be under your command and to form part of your detachment.

As great complaints have been made of the disorderly conduct of the parties which have been sent towards the enemy's lines, it is expected that you will be very attentive in preventing abuses of the like nature and will inquire how far complaints already made are founded in justice.

[From the papers of Gen. Washington. Note: The draft is in the writing of Alexander Hamilton. ]

\*\*\*\*\*

Camp Valley Forge, May 20th, 1778

Dear Captain,

I am happy you have with your brave little party, conducted on so much honour to yourself. The Marquis effected owing to your vigilance a glorious retreat, as well as a difficult one. One of the British Prisoners, you sent under guard pretends that he is a deserter. I wish you would inform me the particulars of the Prisoner's being taken. The Hessions' horses and accoutrements shall be appraised and paid for by the Quarter Master General.

Your very Humbl. Serv.

Capt. McLane

Alex. Scammell, Adj. Genl.

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Camp Valley Forge, 23rd May, 1778

Dear Captain,

I am proud to hear you are still doing something to distinguish yourself in the eyes of your country. I have the pleasure to inform you that your conduct with the Marquis has been very pleasing to his Excellency and the whole army.

I am, Your ob... Serv.

Charles Scott, Off. Of the Day

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Captain

I am much obliged by the information of last night. The bearer Mr. H. Clair, has been a Lieut. In foreign service. He comes to join your party as a volunteer. He bears good character, appears very sensible, and I believe will be ambitious to distinguish himself. I lament poor Claypool's fate but hope he is not mortally wounded. I wish you may escape the snares of the Enemy. Sure I am they will endeavor by all pofsible methods to catch you. I have ordered Major Minger to send you an officer in Claypool's place from the German Battalion, who is well acquainted with the Country and who I expect will join you tomorrow.

Camp, May 23, 1778

I am,

Sincerely yours

Alex. Scammell, A. G.

[HSP]

Dear McL

I am going to scribble a word or two. I have spoke to the Gen'l about what you spoke to me about and all is right. The Gen'l declares that he would not do without you in the Light Corps no not for one 1000 pounds. Claypoole will also go with him if he chases for news we have one thing but believe me.

Dear Capt

Inviolably yours

Wm Johnson

Camp, May 24, 1778

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Headquarters 24th May 1778

Dear Sir

Your favor of 7 o'clock last night was handed to his Excellency this morning. He has no additional orders to give and only desires you continue your vigilance and give him the earliest notice of everything of moment which may come to your knowledge.

I am Ob Ser

John Fitzgerald

[McLane Papers]

Head quarters, 27th May, 1778

Sir

I have received your letter and communicated its contents to His Excellency. Intelligence becomes every moment more interesting. The grand fact of the Enemy's design to evacuate the City being ascertained, no pains should be spared to discover, if possible, the precise moment when the event is to take place and the rout which their army will pursue, whether they mean to cross the Delaware and march through Jersey or cross the Schuylkill and march down to Chester to embark there on account of the tedious navigation through the Cheever defile, and because they may cover their real march by a pretended attempt on this Army, endeavor to discover the number of transports, their situation in the River, as well as that of the ships of war. Whether the horses that have been embarked were really Dragoon horses, or only those that are superfluous, as their heavy artillery and baggage is embarked and they would march as light as possible thro' Jersey, provided they go that way. What are the bridge boats that you speak of? Do you mean those that may be put together for facilitating the embarkation on board the transports. His Excellency desires that if you have sufficient ground for suspecting ?? & ?? of what you mentioned in your letter, that you will immediately secure them, and send them up to Camp. I will endeavor to come and pay you a visit. Meantime I remain,

Your most ob...Serv.

John Laurens, A. D. Camp

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*



Headquarters Valley Forge 31st May 1778

You have his Excellency's permission to employ the Dragoons on your special command.

No doubt you have properly considered how far you may trust to the intelligence of your spies and by comparing their notes found out the most faithfull.

You will continue to watch the enemys motions with your usual industry and forward your discoveries as soon as possible to headquarters.

I am yours,  
James McHenry  
9 o'clock

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

From: *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources: Volume 12*

To BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM SMALLWOOD

Head Quarters, Valley Forge, June 1, 1778.

Dear Sir:

I received yours of the 30th. May: A person, who I sent down to Chester to observe the movement of the Fleet, left that place on Sunday at dusk, he informs me that upwards of one hundred Sail had come down from Philadelphia and that they had not stopped near Wilmington, but proceeded towards the Capes. If this is so, it is a plain proof that they have no design to land any body of Men to molest our Stores. Captn. McLane who commands a scouting Party upon the Enemy's lines has been this Morning as near Philadelphia as Kensington, from whence he has a full view of the Harbour, he says very few ships remained and those chiefly armed Vessels. If therefore, upon sending an Officer to Chester and another to Wilmington, you find that the Vessels have gone down and are below New Castle, you are immediately to join me, with your whole continental force. I am &ca.

P. S. Bring up your Tents with you and your lightest Baggage, as you will probably march immediately Northward.

[The Papers of George Washington]

\*\*\*\*\*

Head-quarters, Valley Forge, 6th June, 1778

Dear Sir,

I received yours dated Germantown, this morning, 10 o'clock and immediately communicated it to his Excellency. We felicitate you upon your succefs, and wish you a continuance of the same good fortune. You will continue your vigilance and send on the earliest intelligence of what you collect.

I am,

James McHenry, A. Sect'y

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Valley Forge Camp 12th June 1778

Dear Sir

I have just received your letter concerning the Indians and am sorry to inform you that the greater part of them is going home to oppose the Seneca whose intentions they don't \_\_\_\_ upon. However, some stay with us, but his Excellency wants to send them to Colonel Morgan. They may join you there in some days.

I give you joy, sir, for your escape of the other day and the \_\_\_\_\_ with which you have dispatched the \_\_\_\_\_ English dragoons. I have felt a great pleasure in hearing that your wound is a slight one.

With the most sincere esteem and attachment I have the honor to be

Dear Sir Your Most Obedient Servant

The M de Lafayette

[McLane Papers]

Head-quarters, Valley Forge 6 o'clock am, June 18th, '78

Sir,

Your letter of yesterday came to hand last night. I hope you will soon have the pleasure of entering the City. All good fortune attend you.

I am, Sir, Your ob. Serv.

James McHenry, A. Sect'y

[HSP]

Head-quarters, near White Plains on the Banks of the River Brunks, Sep. 8th

Sir,

Your Corps being intended for an advance party to the main Body of Light Infantry, you will conduct it in a manner as to be able to give me the earliest information, of any movements of the Enemy, and effectually to prevent the incursions of small parties into the Country;

The better to enable you to do this, you must make yourself perfectly acquainted with the roads and strong grounds in their neighborhood.

That you may not fatigue your Corps with excess of duty, you will move every evening to the rear of the party, who will be completely ready to cover you, and allow your men to refresh without danger of a surprise.

All intelligences and discoveries of the Enemy's motions must be conveyed to me in the most perspicuous manner.

When in want of provisions you will retire within a few miles of our encampment and an officer being sent with a return, you shall be immediately supplied.

Above all you will take care, by posessing the avenues leading to your posts, that you may prevent surprise and give us the earliest notice of any thing worth communication.

Being assured you are perfectly equal to this undertaking, I make no doubt of your giving satisfaction to the Commander in Chief, and doing essential service to your Country.

I am, ???

Charles Scott, B. G.

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Head-quarters, Valley Forge, 2 o'clock pm, 18th June, 1778

His Excellency has received yours of this morning, dated in the City, 8 o'clock. He congratulates you on your success and wishes your party to join their several brigades immediately. You are to send them under proper officers, and remain in the City till Gen'l Arnold arrives. Receive your orders from him.

I am, Sir

Your very Humbl. Serv.

James McHenry, A. Sect'y

[HSP]

(Undated, believed to be June 19, 1778)

Sir:

I am very glad you made a narrow and lucky escape. I hope they will ever fail in the same manner. However, as you can't but be sensible they'll use every method to trap you possible. I nothing doubt you will keep up your usual good look out.

Alex.Scammell

Capt. McLane

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Camp Valley Forge

June 19th 1778

Dear Capt.

You, I hope are in (illegible) possession of the City (Phila). I would wish to remind my old Friend of the plates I desired the favour of you to get

This will be handed to you by a brother of Genl. Woodfords, a worthy gentleman. You will do me honour in paying attention to him.

Two divisions of the Army marched last night. The whole moves of this morning at rollock. I am with all Palpable respect Yr Ob' Serv'

Chas. Scott

(General and Aide de Camp)

Capt. McLean

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Philadelphia, Headquarters, June 20, 1778

The Gen'l would be glad of your attendance here, with the bearer.

M. Clackson, A. D. Camp

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Whereas by the purchasing of Goods and necessities for the public sundry articles not wanted for that purpose may be obtained, it is agree by the subscribers, that all such goods and merchandize which are or maybe bought by the Clothier General or persons appointed by him, shall be sold for he joint equal benefit of the subscribers, and be purchased at their risk.

Winesss our Hands this 23rd day of June 1778.

B. Arnold

James Mease

William West, Junior

[HSP]



(Undated, but believed to be August 29th, 1778)

Sir,

You will take charge of the party of Indians annex'd to the Light Corps and you will endeavor to render them as serviceable as possible.

You will proceed with them to such place as you may think most opportune for the purpose of annoying the enemy and preventing their landing or making incursions into the Country.

You will send all intelligence to me in the most full and \_\_\_\_\_ manner.

In all other matters you will conduct yourself in such a manner as your prudence and discretion may point out.

Given under my hand at

Philips Borough Aug. 29th '78

Chs. Scott B. Gen

Capt. Allen McLane

Camp Middle Brook Dec. 21st, 1778

This may certify that Capt Allen McLane commanded a detachment from the grand army in and near Germantown, during th course of last Spring and till the British Army evacuated Philadelphia. His instructions were to annoy and harass the enemy , and as far as possible prevent any Intercourse between the enemy, and the Inhabitants of the United States. If by the way of encouragement whatever effects or articles were taken by his party from the enemy or those actually aiding and assisting them, were to be condemned by a commissioned officer or officers of said party, to their use and benefit.

Alex Scammell, Adj. Genl

[McLane Papers]

\*\*\*\*\*

Peck's Hill, Jan'y 5th, 1779

Sir

Yours of yesterday this morning came to hand. Upon showing Col. Scammell' s letter to the Gen'l he readily consented to your having a furlough, but did not choose to limit the time, as he did not know how long would be necessary. He has put it in the power of Col. Burr, to give it (to) you for such time as he thinks it necessary for the settlement of your affairs. The Gen'l is confident from your character you will not ask an unreasonable time of absence, when you are conscious there are many officers in similar situations, craving the like indulgences.

I am, Your Humbl. Serv.

Rich. Platt, A.D.C.

Capt. McLane

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Raratan, May 9th, 1779

Dear Sir,

It is the Adj. Gen'l's desire that you take the command in Trenton, until your company arrives in Camp. It will be next Monday night before the relief comes. The enclosed general order I send for your perusal. I wish you an agreeable tour.

Sincerely yours

Jno. Stagg, as Adj. Gen'l

[HSP]

[Note: General Washington is sending Allen McLane to a new assignment near West Point, NY. McLane has balked at this assignment. This note from Washington is pleading with a reluctant officer, who feels he is being punished by having to lose his independent command and now report to Lighthorse Harry Lee, a man for whom he has little respect.]

Smith's Tavern in the Clove June 9th 1779

Sir,

On the receipt of this I request that you will proceed with your company by the nearest route towards Suffrans near the entrance of Smith's Clove, where or in the neighborhood you will meet with Major Lee, and place yourself under his command.

I am sir

Yr Mo Hum Servt

G Washington

Capt. McLane

[From the papers of Gen Washington]

\*\*\*\*\*

From: *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources*

MAJOR HENRY LEE

June 9, 1779.

Sir:

I recd your favor of yesterday's date and am happy to find you are in the neighbourhood of the enemy and make no doubt but you will fully answer the purposes of your being placed there. The Stores you mention to have been at Kekiat 78 were there without my knowledge, and I much approve the removal of them. As to the live stock being driven off as you mention, within a certain distance, tho' a desirable circumstance, Yet I would not have you to undertake it without the approbation of the Officers commanding the Militia, and the well affected inhabitants; when if you gain their approbation I should wish the measure to be put into execution immediately. [Note:Kakiat (Kakeate) was 5 or 6 miles east of Suffern's on the road leading to Haverstraw, and a mile or so less than that below Haverstraw. ]

Capt McLane I fully intended to have joined you before this and thought he had received orders for that purpose, but owing to some mistake I find it was not done; he is however now ordered to march and place himself under your command with his company. Your Letter of this date is just come to hand. I am, &c.

[Note: The draft is in the writing of Richard Kidder Meade.]

[From the papers of George Washington]

\*\*\*\*\*

Camp \_\_\_\_\_, July 12th, 1779

Sir:

You will accompany Mrs. Smith with a flag to the enemy lines, for the purpose of serving the delivery of some necessaries for her two sons.

Henry Lee —

Maj. Cmdr. Light Horse

Capt McClane

[McLane Papers]

D. Sir

The General desires you will do every thing in your power without delay to collect all the teams and wagons about the Country in this neighborhood – to remove the wounded, cannon and stores. There is no time to be left in doing it.

I am Yr. Obed. Serv.  
A Hamilton

July 17, '79, 8 o'clock am  
[McLane Papers]

\*\*\*\*\*

Sir,

There is an encampment of the Enemy, or a demonstration of one, which appears on the other side of the North River, considerably on this side of Tarrytown. You will be pleased in consequence to have patrols kept from this till morning, seven or eight miles down along the shore and on the road leading from this place on our right. This may be a critical night and demands the greatest vigilance.

I am, Sir Your most ob.. serv.  
A. Hamilton, A.D.C.

July 17, (1779) 4 o'clock pm

(to Capt. McLane - sent to Major Lee in the absence of Capt. McLane)

[HSP]

Extract from General Orders, July 22, 1779

The Quarter Master General will have a reasonable estimate made of the value of the stores taken at Stoney Point, and received by him for the use of the Army and will pay the amount thereof to Gen'l Wayne, or some other person of his appointment, for the benefit of the Troops employed in the assault of that Post. Gen'l Knox will cause the same to be done with the ordinances, arms and military stores... (incomplete)

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*

Camp, Haverstraw, July 30th, 1779

Capt. McLane,

You will move with your Infantry to the vicinity of Bergon Town, the object you are to have in view is the interruption of the correspondence and Trade now subsisting between the enemy and the disaffected of the Country. You are to communicate with Capt. Payton daily. You are to keep with you two expresses from the militia, who will know the country.

Necessary guides to be procured. Conduct yourself as usual, with perfect caution or you meet with sure loss and disgrace. Wishing you success.

I am,  
Your most ob.. Serv.  
Henry Lee, Jun., Maj, Com of L

[HSP]

\*\*\*\*\*



HQs More's House August 3rd, '79

I am much obliged to you for the newspapers and your letter containing Intelligence. It is just reported in Camp that Count d'Estaing has defeated Byron, destroyed five capital ships and drove the British Fleet to Jamaica. I hope the news is true. Should be much obliged to you if you continue writing to me every opportunity.

Yours truly

Alex Scammell

Capt McLane

PS Has the Sword arrived yet?

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Hdqtrrs Office

June 23, 1780

It being the desire of His Excellency Genl Washington, that the men under your command, should rejoin the Cavalry of the Corps, now with the main army as early as possible. You will immediately upon the receipt of this \_\_\_ set out on your return to Philadelphia or the main Army wherever it may be, by the most expeditious route, by land or water, as you shall judge proper, consistent with the safety of your party.

I am Yr. Most Obed. Serv.

By order

Ben Stoddard

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

By the House of Delegates December 1, 1780

RESOLVED

That this State furnish sixty dragoons Horses for Major Lee's Legions with the utmost dispatch and that Captain Allen McClean or such other officer as Major Lee shall appoint to purchase the said horses be authorized to contract in Specie for the purchase of sixty good strong and able horses fit for the Service of the said Legion in behalf of this State and that he engage payment of the purchase money in Specio or the value in the now Bills of Credit at the time of ;payment with the Interest of Six per cent in two (2) months from the purchase and that he give his Certificate to the person from where he shall purchase exc (?) pressing the time and sum agreed to be paid and that the price to be paid and that the value thereof be paid by the Treasurer with Interes on the Order of the Governor and Council and charged to the United States.

By the Senate

By Order

T. Greene

Dec. 2, 1780

Read and \_\_\_ to Jc Mausubbin C

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

[Note: The draft of this letter from General Washington is in the writing of James McHenry.]

To MAJOR HENRY LEE

Headquarters, Morristown, January 30, 1780

Dear Sir: I have received your favor of the 26th, inclosing one from Capn. McLane to you of the 15th. However Capn. McLanes services may entitle him to consideration, yet he is neither singular in his sacrifices nor situation. There are numbers in the line, who have been as long Captains and without promotion as himself. This is one of those circumstances incidental to all services. But with regard to his request the formation of new corps rests by no means with me, nor if it did I could not recommend the proposal to Congress at a time when the separate corps now in service experience so many inconveniencies, and are supposed too numerous. Capn. McLane however may be assured that my opinion of his military merits would induce me to do every thing in his favor consistent with propriety. I wish you an agreeable winter and am Dr Sir &c

[From the papers of Gen. Washington]

\*\*\*\*\*

Williamsburg 9 March 1781

Major McLane being ordered on business of great consequence, all quartermasters and civil and military officers, are directed to give him all possible assistance with respect to procuring Boats, horses, men, and anything else he may stand in need of to accomplish his business.

Signed,

Steuben

Major Gen'l.

[Note: Major McLane commanded a party under the secret instructions the remainder of this campaign, by water as well as by land, until the siege of Yorktown]

[From Hagley Museum and Library]

\*\*\*\*\*

Williamsburg 16 March 1781

Dear Sir,

I received yours of the 14th instant containing the agreeable intelligence of the fleets being out of reach of the Enemy's ships for which I acknowledge myself obliged, and must also thank you for the celerity with which you conveyed my orders.

Major McPherson is ordered to Col. Ennis's post on particular business in which from your knowledge of the Bay, etc. I am conscious you can be of great service.

I wish you to join him and after being acquainted with his orders act together as circumstances may require.

It may be of importance that M. McPherson should be acquainted with the force of the two frigates which have passed up the bay.

I am yrs —

Signed

Lafayette, M.G.

Major McLane

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

To Major McLane

Sir,

I request that you will proceed with all possible expedition in your boat to the Capes, and reconnoiter as nearly as is consistent with your safety, the British fleet, in order to ascertain their strength and disposition, and particularly whether they have any transports under convoy.

If circumstances make it more desirable to make your observations from the shore, you will apply to any militia officers, and request their assistance, either for your personal safety and accomplishing your object, or for transmitting intelligence to me. You will likewise communicate such discoveries to Count de Grasse as you think deserve his attention.

Geo. Washington

Given at Head Quarters  
the 29th Oct 1781

[From the papers of Gen. Washington]

Capt. McLane

Il est ordonne a tous battiments Francois actuellement dans le Baye de Chesapeake de ne donner aucune depechement, a la commission de Mons. Mac Lane de lui a donner tout assistance sout tout fois montre et a reveler de sa mission.

Le Comte De Grasse

On borde la *Ville de Paris*, 30th Oct 1781

[*Translation*]

Capt. McLane

It is ordered to all French warships now in the Chesapeake Bay, to allow passage to Mr. MacLane's commission and to give him all assistance under everyone's watch and to further his mission.

The Count de Grasse

On board the *Ville de Paris*, 30th Oct 1781

[From Hagley Museum and Library, translated and transcribed by Patricia Welch]

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I do certify that on the fourteenth day of February, Seventeen hundred and eighty eight, I did administer to Allen McLane, Ssq. As a Member of the Privy-Council and as a Justice of the Peace for the Delaware State, the Oath of Allegiance to this State, and the Oath of Office as a Justice of the Peace for the Delaware State, and that he took and subscribed the Declaration of faith in my presence.

Nicholas Ridgely

United States

[From the papers of Allen McLane]]

\*\*\*\*\*

Sept. 30, 1789

Sir

I have the pleasure to inform you that you are appointed Marshal of the District of Delaware and you



commifion is enclosed accompanied with such laws as have pafsed relative to the Judicial Department of the United States.

The high importance of the Judicial system of our National Government made it an Indispensible Duty to select such proved characters to fill the several officers in it as would Discharge their respective trust with Honour to themselves and advantage to their Country.

I am Sir

Your Most Obt. Serv.

(Signed)

Geo. Washington

Allen McLane \_\_\_\_

[From the papers of Pres. Washington]

Letter to Pres. G Washington

State of Delaware Kent County,  
June 9, 1794

Respected Sir

From a conviction that you have bene much exersiseed and troubled from applications and concerns that respect your important duties as president I have omitted to state my objections before this time to the office of Marshall your ware pleased to Commission me to. a strong attatchment to the Genl Government in addition to the regard I have for you Patronage determined me to except. Given up Some State advantages I then had and prospects of more not Doubting but Congress would have made provision for the Expences of the offisors Under the Government. four years Experience has Convinced me that I have nothing to Expect from Congress and has determined me to State the fact to you that the office Under the provision I have acted better than four years. taking all things in to Consideration brings me in Debt. I Cannot Get men of integrity to assist me as Deputy marshall if I would give them all the fees for the Constitution and laws of the State Bars all offisors Under the Genl Government from holding any office of Trust or profit Under this Government .

I have to neglect all other Concerns to attend to the duties of the office which laies at Extream parts of the State it is an office of Considerable trust but no profit.

I am Sensable you Cannot alter the law but if you Could add Some appointment of profit that in your opinion I might be Capable of filling with reputation it would lay me Under fresh obligations Should their be no opening in this State and one offer in Penselvania it would sute me to meove their that being my place of nativity. I am

Sincearly your friend

A. McLane

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Philadelphia Feb. (27)1797

D... Sir

I have the pleasure to inform you are Appointed with the advice of the Senate of the United States Collector of the Customs of the District of Delaware.

I have selected you from a conviction that you will fill this important office with Honour to yourself and advantage to your country, and sincerely wish you may find it your interest to abandon your other pursuits for

the support of your family.

Wilmington will be your place of residence \_\_\_\_\_ by law which I apprehend you will find more healthy situation than you have resided since the peace.

I am your Most  
Obt. Sert.  
(Signed) Geo. Washington

Col. Allen McLane

[From the papers of Pres. Washington]

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*[Letter from President Thomas Jefferson to John Dickinson asking for a character reference on McLane re: keeping him in the post as the Port Collector of Wilmington, June 21, 1801]*

[From President Thomas Jefferson in John Dickinson papers, Box 5, folder 17, BC 531500, original held by Historical Society of PA]

Washington June 21, 1801

Dear Sir

I received with great pleasure, as I do every thing from you, your letter by Dr. Vaughan, and am thankful to you for making me acquainted with him. It is extremely important to the administration of the public affairs, for me to be on terms of confidence with some persons of dispassionate judgment of integrity in every state, through whom I can obtain a knowledge of such matters within their state as it is essential should be known and most particularly on a knowledge of characters. The real business of our government is a manageable thing, and when I reflect on the sort of men in Europe to whom public affairs there are confided, I have no fear of feeling with such coadjutors as I have, but it is the business of removal and appointment which presents the serious difficulties; all others compared with these are as nothing. There is no object I have so much at heart as to see that the interests of my fellow citizens are confided to honest men, with understanding enough for their station, my principles, and those always avowed by the Republicans, do not admit the removing of any person from office merely for a difference of political opinion. Malversations in office, and the exerting official influence to control the freedom of election, are good causes for removal. The interests of Mr. McLane the collector of your district had been warmly espoused to me by some weighty and worthy members of Congress and his character so represented that I turned a deaf ear to propositions for his removal as long as they were made on no specific charge. Latterly, however, they are brought forward on the ground of malconduct in office, and electioneering activity. An enquiry is instituted as to the former but the dead letter of written testimony will not enable us at a distance to decide with that satisfaction which intuition enables you to do, who are on the spot.

You would indeed render me a great private favor as well as public service if you could inform me confidentially, what judgment you form on the question whether this man ought or ought not to be removed from office? Asking it for my own personal information only, your tranquility of all. Never be disturbed by a communication of your opinion to any other person. It is to satisfy my own conscience I ask it, fearful of being led astray by the opinions of others not so well known to me as you are. A Mr. Mendenhall is better recommended than any other as a successor if it be proper to remove McLane. Is he the best Republican character to whom it can be given? I hope when you consider the difficulty and the duty of procuring good information in cases where I must lean altogether on the information of men, you will excuse my soliciting the aid of a judgment on which I can rely implicitly, and if you should find it not too disagreeable and would spontaneously favor me from time to time

with your opinions and information as to persons or things, as they arise, in your own state, or on the broader scale of the Union, I should consider the acquisition of such a counselor, as among the most precious safeguards to the public interests confided to me. Accept I pray you the homage of my constant and affectionate friendship and veneration.

Th Jefferson

John Dickenson, esq.

[Transcribed by T.W. from handwritten letter, March 29, 2013.]

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#### RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CORPS IN DEFENSE OF WILMINGTON, June, 1812

We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, citizens of the borough of Wilmington, and its vicinity, above the age of forty-five, and by law exempted from requisition to perform military duty, anxious for the welfare of our beloved country, and apprehensive that the crisis may arrive, when the young and active may be called into distant service, do here by agree to form ourselves into a military corps, to be devoted solely to the defense of the Borough aforesaid, against invasion, and in obedience to the constituted authorities, to endeavor to preserve order, promote harmony, and maintain the authority and efficacy of the Laws.

Allen McLane

Peter Jaquett  
Edward Roche

Dr. James Tilton  
Dr. George Monro

\*\*\*\*\*

#### ORDER ISSUED BY COL. McLANE, May 13, 1813

The members of the Veteran association shall be ready to march at a moment's notice, at the alarm post in Wilmington, fully equipped. The savage enemy, the British, approach with fire and sword. After sinking, burning and otherwise destroying the craft of your fellow citizens in our waters \*\*\*\* they have burned the store houses and merchandise on the Elk River – they have wantonly distressed by fire the beautiful village of Havre de Grace on the Susquehanna and threaten us here in our habitations with death and destruction of property. You require no stimulus to duty. Have your arms in complete order and your ammunition prepared for action. Your officers pledge themselves to do their duty and rely on your individual and collective support.

[From the papers of Allen McLane]

\*\*\*\*\*

Wilmington Delaware  
Sept 4, 1824

My D du Pont

Your favor of yesterday was brought to my room where I was confined last night. I am unhappy because I cannot be one of the party at New York on Monday. The malady which has occasionally attacked me, for the last twenty years, appeared yesterday, and I suffer more than I can patiently bear. My son calls it a rheumatic gout. It is now in my kidneys and loins. Present me most affectionately to our Dear Friend General LaFayette. I should



have been with him the moment he landed, but I dread a return of my enemy. I have not seen the General since he handed me Genl. Washington's instructions on board the Ville de Paris in Oct 1781. How happy I should be to gaze on the Patriot, before I sink with my infirmities. I am now in my 79 year, favored with great vigor of mind, when not broken down with suffering. I have conversed with a number of our Cincinnati, and several members of Congress who all agree that when the General visits France, he must visit that oppressed country as a Major General and that the constituted authorities of the United States of America, must place him in an independent situation, as the one thing needful in this world, as he was in when he volunteered to fight our battles. Write me after you have had an interview with the Genl and inform me how he stands the fatigue, to which he must be exposed. I will see him should I live, when he arrives in Philada. I have to be carried on a litter.

Ever yours  
Allen MacLane

[From Hagley Museum and Library]

## APPENDIX E: WHAT PEOPLE HAVE SAID ABOUT ALLEN McLANE

"Allen McLane was a man in such close contact with George Washington and was so trusted by the General, a fact readily ascertained from a cursory study of McLane's military career, that it has been deemed proper, in the bi-centennial year, to bring to the attention of Delawareans General Washington's military relationships with this son of Delaware, and to show how McLane fulfilled the trust placed in him."

*(From "George Washington and Delaware"; Prepared for the Delaware State George Washington Bicentennial Commission by the Public Archives Commission of Delaware, Dover; DE, 1932, p.39.)*

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"There was no more active, brave and in every sense distinguished Delaware soldier in the Revolution than Captain Allen McLane. ...His was a dashing career of personal adventure. He served Washington in many ways, and his courage, intelligence and adroitness saved more than one situation of peril for some part of the American forces."

*(From Christopher Ward, The Delaware Continentals, 1776-1783, The Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, DE, 1941, p. 526.)*

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"I know of no individual, of his rank in the army, who engaged in such a variety of perilous adventures, or who, so invariably brought them to a happy issue, as Allen McLane."

*(From Major Alexander Garden, Anecdotes of the American Revolution, Vol. III, 1828, pp. 71-78.)*

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"It was not until the patriots had lost their capital city of Philadelphia, not until the grim winter of 1777-78 had clamped its icy hand on the snow-shrouded misery of Valley Forge, that Washington began to employ cavalry as it should be used. Then one of the most dashing figures of the war became, almost overnight, the hero of the army. He was Allan McLane, the first great cavalryman of the Revolution. ...Allan McLane was the kind of man whose fire and fervor still stir the pulses. He was one of those rarities in any time, a dedicated idealist – a man so enwrapped in a cause that he sacrificed to it both personal fortune and personal glory."

*(From Fred J. Cook, What Manner of Men: Forgotten Heroes of the American Revolution, Wm. Morrow & Co., New York, 1959, p.20.)*

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"The life of a great Delawarean has ended its earthly existence. He was a GREAT man, a devoted son of our blessed soil – a patriot whose exploits contributed enormously to victory for the American cause in the Revolutionary War – a hero unsung and nearly forgotten today....The name of Allen McLane should be passed to our children- to the sons and daughters of our beloved Delaware – as a precious part of their heritage – a name shining in all its glory: ALLEN McLANE THE GREATEST UNSUNG HERO OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR."

*(From his obituary in the May 30, 1829 issue of the Delaware Register, as cited in Charles E. Green, Masonic Potpourri, Wm. M. Cann, Wilmington DE 1962, p. 123.)*

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# ALLEN McLANE, DELAWARE'S UNKNOWN HERO OF THE REVOLUTION

*Patriot, partisan leader, soldier, spy during eight years of Revolutionary War, Member of the Privy Council, State Legislator, appointed by President George Washington as Delaware's first federal marshal, and later as Collector of the Port of Wilmington.*



*"The Ambush of Captain Allen McLane" by James Peale, depicts a well-known episode in McLane's military career. While scouting in the countryside near Philadelphia on the early morning of June 8, 1778, Captain McLane, then commander of a partisan cavalry company, and two of his troopers were ambushed by British infantry and a troop of dragoons. His troopers retreated under fire, and McLane was chased into the woods by two of the dragoons. As his horse faltered, McLane engaged both of his pursuers. He shot and wounded one, and, while grappling with the sword of the other, he clubbed him unconscious with his discharged pistol. Though severely wounded in the hand, McLane escaped to a nearby stream where he hid and staunch his wound until joined by his men. The original of this painting is now in the collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, through whose courtesy it is reproduced here.*



The Delaware Heritage Press  
121 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard North  
Dover, Delaware 19901

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