

The 8th or Lower Regiment of Delaware Militia

Col. Thomas Rodney

Lt. Col. Nehemiah Tilton

Major John Clayton

Light Infantry

Capt. John Bullen

1 Lt. Simon W. Wilson

2 Lt. Jonathan McKinst

3 Lt. Charles Nixon

Infantry

1 Capt. Richard Lockwood

1 Lt. Thomas Gheers

2 Lt. Williams Aliband

Ensign William Rockly

2 Capt. John Gray

1 Lt. Thomas White

2 Lt. Thomas Davis

Ensign John Green

3 Capt. Thomas Hales

1 Lt. Thomas Wallace

2 Lt. Henry Guilden

Ensign Moses Jackson

4 Capt. William Morris

1 Lt. Edward Dyer

2 Lt. Menet. Boyce

Ensign Amwell Lockwood

5 Capt. John Morris

1 Lt. Caleb Sipple

2 Lt. Daniel Boyer

Ensign Caleb Furber jr.

6 Capt. David Maxwell

1 Lt. Solomon Dill

2 Lt. Absalom Anthow

Ensign Isaac Verden

7 Capt. Wm Meredith

Arthur Wheatly

John Fisher

Joseph Purden



A Muster Roll of Capt. Thomas Rodney's Company of Militia Volunteers of the  
 first Battalion of Kent County on Delaware, whereof Brigad. Gen. Isaac Rodney is Br.

Commissioned Officers	Sergeants	Corporals
Capt. Thomas Rodney + 1 Lieut. Mark M. Cole Ensign Simon M. Willson	Jonathan M'Natt. George Rowan	John Dawson Elijah Pennington
Privates  Nehemiah Tilton John Bullen + Martinus Sipple Robert M. Garmont + Whittenton Draper + Mark Coudrat • James M' Clements James Fraige Major Taylor James Millis Thomas Taylor John Crockett + Jonathan Lowber William Maxwell Stephen Horn Thomas White Richard White Edward Dyer John Warren Benjamin Warren Peter B. Ferry + John Davis Peter Meredith	B	Drummer Phillips Wheeler Fifer Boice Emmergy

Richard White did on his way home in ferry, after the war returned - His letter book  
 was in the second crate at French Town, and the crate  
 at Prince Town, or rather near Prince Town -

These men & their + were not in the actions at Pointe...



This is to Certify that the Light Infantry Company of Dover, Mustered by the name of Capt<sup>l</sup> Thomas Rodney's Company of Militia Volunteers of the first Battalion of Kent County on Delaware whereof W. G. Casar Rodney is Col: 1 marched from Dover the fourteenth day of December 1776. and joined Brigadier General Cadwaladers Brigade at Bristol on the 22<sup>d</sup> day of the Instant December, and continued with the same Brigade till the 14<sup>th</sup> day of January 1777. when the whole Company except my self and one Private left the Army at Morris Town and came Home, except also Martinus Sipple one of the Privates who Deserted at the <sup>second</sup> Battle of Trent Town and Jonathan Lowbar & Mark Goodrich two other Privates who Deserted <sup>next morning</sup> at the Battle of Princeton — That the said Company consisted of ~~the~~ Capt<sup>l</sup> one Ensign, two Sergeants, two Corporals, a Drum & Fifes and Twenty three Privates as by the Muster Roll may appear. —

Thomas Rodney Capt<sup>l</sup>

Muster Roll - Rodney's  
 Infantry - also - Dover  
 Light Infantry, which with  
 4 Companies of the City of  
 Philadelphia formed a Regiment  
 of Light Infantry under  
 the Command of said Capt<sup>l</sup>  
 Rodney - This Regiment had  
 the Van of the American Army  
 in Dec<sup>r</sup>: 1776 & Jan<sup>y</sup> 1777, and  
 acted as a 2<sup>d</sup> Guard, to the  
 Commander in Chief at  
 Morris Town; where the Army  
 was defeated in Triumph after  
 their victorious March -

Mustered then in Capt<sup>l</sup> Rodney's Company: The Capt<sup>l</sup> one Lieutenant  
 one Ensign Two Sergeants Two Corporals one Drummer one Fife  
 & Twenty three Privates This Muster is Taken from 8  
 Fourteenth of December to 2<sup>(th)</sup> Twenty first Do. both Days Inclusive  
 Nath<sup>l</sup> Donnell Dep<sup>y</sup> - Nath<sup>l</sup> Mearl



# A Muster Roll of the Dover Troop S. Harris

Persons Names	When joined		When absent		Absent with or without Leave
	Month	Day	Month	Day	
Pt. Isaac Carter	Aug.	28			
Sr. J. Carson	Do	21			
Adj. Benj. Brooks	Do	21	Sep.	7	with Leave for 3 Days
2 <sup>d</sup> Mar. Chas. Eustace	Do	28			
Saml. Freeman	Do	28			
Wm. Fowler	Do	21	Sep.	5	with leave being sick
Wm. David	Do	28			
Benj. Hubbard	Do	21	Sep.	6	with leave for 2 Days
Benj. Hunt	Do	21			
Alph. Wood	Do	21			
Benj. Coombs	Do	21			
Thos. Murphy	Do	28	Sep.	6	with leave for 2 days
Chas. Caboon	Do	28	Sep.	7	with leave for 5 days
Wm. Berry	Do	28			
Jno. Freeman	Do	21			about 10 days & returned
Wm. Frazer	Do	28			
Thos. Golsboro	Sep.	3			
Thos. Skelington	Sep.	3	Sep.	7	with leave
Wm. Bartlett	Sep.	5			
J. Bell	Sep.	2			
Chas. Jones	Sep.	5			
Benj. Dising	Sep.	7			



at Widge Capt: Rodney & Officers of the <sup>Company</sup> ~~Company~~  
 We whose are hereto Subscribed, Do hereby promise and  
 engage to the Service of the United States, and to serve  
 them till the Tenth day of January next, unless sooner  
 discharged; and to observe and obey the Orders of Congress  
 and the Orders of the Generals and Officers set over us by them.

- |          |                    |
|----------|--------------------|
| Capt.    | Thomas Rodney      |
| 1 Lieut. | Mark M. Call       |
| 2 Lieut. | Peter Forbert      |
| 3 Lieut. | Simon M. Hillson   |
| 1        | Robt. Myermand     |
| 2        | John Bullen        |
| 3        | James Crago        |
| 4        | James M. Clement   |
| 5        | Jas Jordan         |
| 6        | George Rowan       |
| 7        | William Miller     |
| 8        | Nehemiah Stone     |
| 9        | Thomas North       |
| 10       | John Dawson        |
| 11       | Whittington Draper |
| 12       | Ben Bell           |
| 13       | Hugh Roe           |
| 14       | Mark Loudret       |
| 15       | Stephen Mills      |
| 16       | Peter B. Tury      |
| 17       | Elija Pennington   |
| 18       | Jonathan Knott     |
| 19       | William Maxwold    |
| 20       | Jonathan Lowber    |
| 21       | John               |
| 22       | Thos.              |
| 23       | Richd              |



That they wished I might not be laid under the necessity of leaving the Congress at a time so Interesting. Which I must do if chose in Convention &c—These Gentlemen then Said that the Inhabitants of Newcastle County had not Considered to the matter in that light for they had chose both their delegates, In answer to this; it was said, they, the people of Newcastle had done verry wrong &c By such little Cunning are the people to be cajoled—I saw a man from Mispillion who left there a day or two before my letter could have reached it. Who told me that yours and Captain Adam's famalies were well, but they were in much distress for the Delawares who, (from all accots. they had Received) were at least two thirds cut off—That almost all the officers were killed particularly you. He told me the people were generally distressed, having most of them some friend or Relation in the Battalion—My letter I am Sure has set that Matter Right—

I wrote a week ago to Mr. Montgomery the Chaplain not knowing then whether you were among the Dead or living. Should be glad to know whether the letter got safe hand—be pleased to Enquire of him an let me know, in your next which I hope will be soon—Make my compliments to Doctr. Tilton, and tell him I forwarded his Brothers letter—That you may have a happy deliverance, and your Battalion be crowned (if possible) with still more Honor in Every Combat is the Sincere wish of sir

Yr. Real friend & Humble Servt

CAESAR RODNEY

Colo. John Haslet

P. S. I Remembered you as desired, to Messrs. Killen & Rodney

---

CAESAR RODNEY TO CAPTAIN RODNEY.

Dover Decr. the 29th 1776.

Dr. Brother

This is intended by Mr. Burtle Shee who proposes to Set out for the Camp to morrow morning—We still continue here, to be in the most anxious uneasy situation you can possible conceive—Seldom a day passes but we have some Inteligence both of our Army and that of the English, and nothing we hear to be depended upon. By some accounts Howe is Retreating, and General Washington about to repass the Delaware, again it is soundly asserted that there can be no doubt but that Howe will keep his ground in the Jersey till the Spring, when he will be Strengthened by a large fleet up the Delaware. Thus the mind anxious for the Salvation of America is held in Suspence. I think it absolutely necessary that Howe should be routed from the Jersey this Winter, and the sooner it is done the better. But am afraid our General has not yet got force enough to do it—Ever Since you left . . . . . I have been doing every thing in my power to draw . . . . . the militia of this County to Join the Army, But to verry . . . . . as yet—Some days ago I proposed marching mys . . . . . with such as should be willing, and have appoint . . . . . such as are to meet prepared for that purpose . . . . . on Thursday next, what Effect this may have that day will determine. However be that as it may I shall be in Readiness, or at least as much so, as so short time admit of—Some people are of opinion that many will turn out. Some others that they will not—Mr. Collins is determined it seems to march with

me—The major talks of it—It would have given me much pleasure to Receive from you a letter dated some few days after your arrival at the camp, because I suppose you would in that time be able to form some torearable Judgment of the Real s . . . . . tion of affairs there—I am Just now, while we . . . . .made happy by a piece of news which is Repor . . . . . to be depended upon—That General Washington has Regained possession of Trention—Tha. . . . killed and wounded many—and taken a great . . . . . Number of Prisoners, with ten or Eleven Brass Field pieces and a verry considerable quantity of Stores—and that He is in a fair way to Drive the English Army before him, God of his Infinite mercy Grant it may be true—If our people turn out I shall be with you Quo General, if not Quo private gentleman. My present determination to come at all Events—Our families are both well, and I believe Betsey will write by this opportunity—The Interesting situation of our public affairs will point out to you the propriety of writing me by every opportunity in stronger terms than any other arguments I can make use of—Therefore hope you will not neglect to do it—With mine and the good wishes of all your friends for your success I am yrs &c

CAESAR RODNEY

By a Letter from Lieutenant McCall to his father, I am Informed that your Company is Stationed at the House of Mr. Andrew Allen. Where Mrs. Allen continues to reside with her children, and that she applied to you as commanding officer of the company, for protection & Civil usage—This, I much pleased to hear, you readily Engaged to afford her, so far as was consistent with your Duty—I am verry sorry Mr. Allen has taken a Part so unfriendly, or Rather in direct opposition to that Cause in which all the Free men of America are so deeply interested. And for which all who think as I do would sooner spill the last drop of their Blood than Even Stand Nuter—But as Mrs. Allen has allways Supported, and I am convinced verry deservedly the character of a most amiable good woman, and as her situation at this time must be Extremely Delicate—It will be unnecessary to Recommend to you, the treating her with all the Tenderness and decent Respect due to her Character and in your power consistant with a proper discharge of your duty—So far as I am acquainted with your people. I am persuaded they will be disposed to Treat her Rather with complisance than the least degree of rudeness—

CAESAR RODNEY TO WILLIAM KILLEN. (Draft)

Trenton Jany 27th 1777—

Most Honbl Councilor

At a time when Every Sensible mind is filled with the greatest Anxiety for the Fate of America, When the Sons of Freedom have drawn their Swords and Nobly Stepped forth, in this inclement season, to defend their most Invaluable Rights and priviledges At a time of deep distress and danger—You whose first and greatest Temporary wish is for the Freedom of the States are (no doubt) Desirous to know the state of things in this land of Tryal—This scene of Action—this Frosty Warfare—Be it so—I'll Endeavour to amuse if not Inform the Eager Ear—You have heard (sad Inteligence) of your Mercer and Haslet, Slaine, They fell, but nobly fell tho Butchered, and so long as the Inhabitants of this American world shall



**B**TUESDAY  
JULY 8, 2008The NewsJournal  
SERVING DELAWAREUpdates and latest news:  
www.delawareonline.com

# Local & Business

News tips: 324-2377 or newsdesk@delawareonline.com •

**ONLINE POLL**

www.delawareonline.com

**Q. Have you visited a national park in the past two years?**

YESTERDAY'S QUESTION

Q. Do you think young children should take cholesterol drugs?

**Yes: 13% No: 87%**

UNSCIENTIFIC POLL. TOTAL VOTES: 775

## After centuries in Caesar's shadow, the younger Rodney gets recognition

**C**aesar Rodney is famous for riding to Philadelphia to cast Delaware's deciding vote for American independence, signing the Declaration of Independence and holding many public offices, including the governor's post.

No one in state history tops his name recognition.

But the state never adequately recognized the contributions of his younger brother, Thomas Rodney, whose legacy is overshadowed by his brother, says Delaware Public Archives Director Russ McCabe.

The younger Rodney, however, gained some recognition with the unveiling of the Dover Light Infantry Monument at Legislative Hall. "It's overdue," McCabe said, hosting its dedication on the Fourth of July. While most folks

### DELAWARE BACKSTORY

robin brown

think of the holiday for fireworks, barbecues and cold drinks, he said, "it is very appropriate for us to be doing this today."

The Dover Light Infantry, led by Capt. Thomas Rodney – mustered in April 2, 1776 – proved vital in the fight for independence, McCabe said.

In the winter of 1776, many believed the war was lost. After a run of defeats, troops were spent, poorly equipped, some starving and shoeless, as death and desertion thinned their ragtag ranks.

When fresh troops were needed, few came. But Rodney and 31 others in his unit did. They "responded to Gen. George Washington's call-to-arms for militia during the darkest days of the

American Revolution," McCabe said. Joining Rodney were a lieutenant, ensign, two sergeants, two corporals, a fifer, drummer and nearly two dozen infantry – all named on the monument.

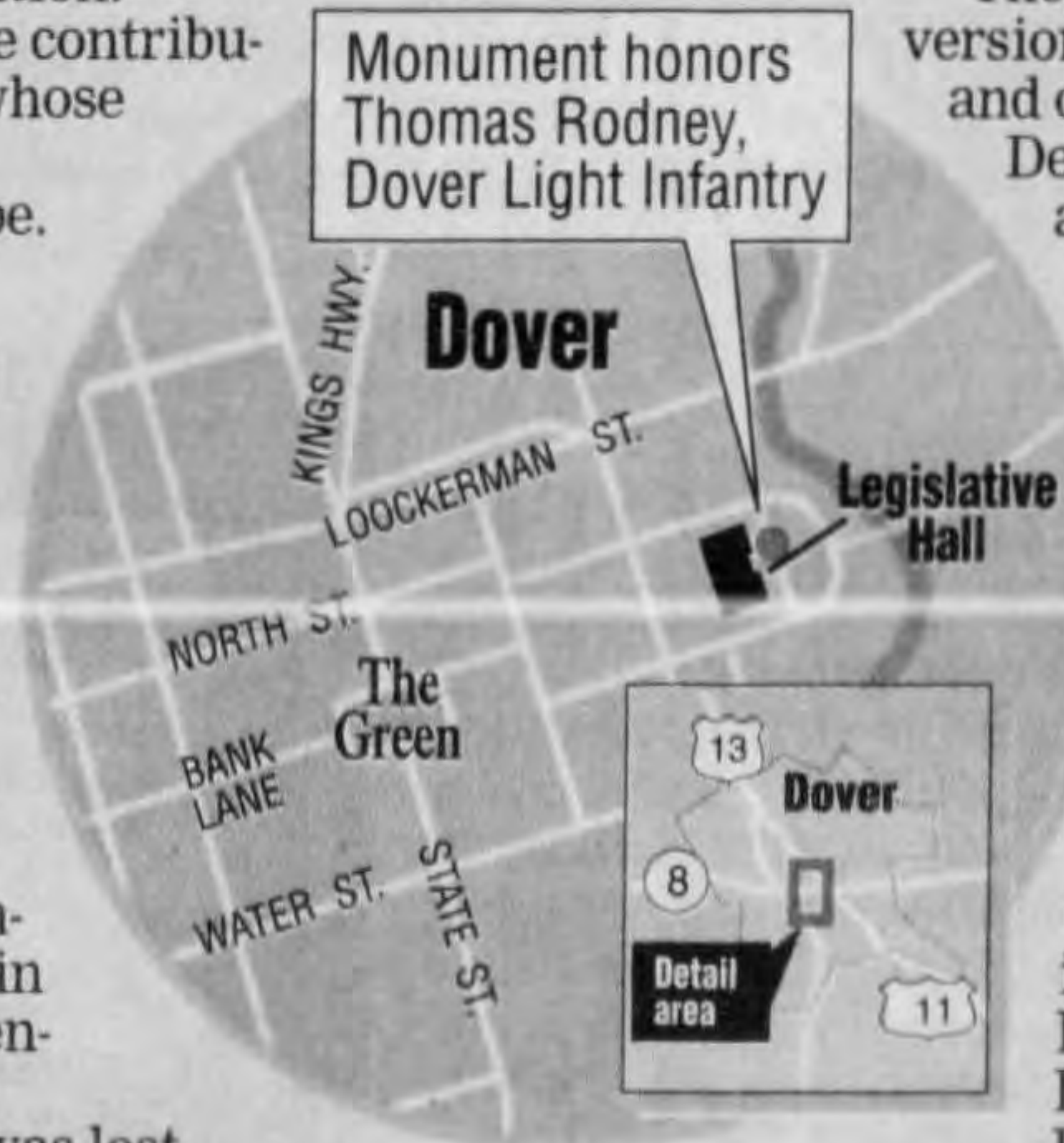
They engaged the British in a diversionary battle before Washington and other troops crossed the Delaware River to New Jersey – and victories turning the war's course, McCabe said at the event. Rodney and his troops served so well, Washington made them "his own guard," he told the crowd of about 100.

Actors Stanley Petraschuk as Thomas Rodney and Dick Pack as Caesar told of the troops' hard times, losses and dedication to independence. Also offering praise were John C. Lewes, past president of the Delaware Sons of the American Revolution; Mollie Revels, chaplain of

the Delaware Daughters of the American Revolution, and Delaware native Larry Layton of Hilton Head, S.C.

Layton, who decades ago organized the "Bicentennial Reactivated Dover Light Infantry," said that, earlier, "nobody really knew too much about this small, obscure unit." Joining other re-enactor alumni as guests of honor at the dedication, Layton

Monument honors Thomas Rodney, Dover Light Infantry



Special to The News Journal/**EMILY VARISCO**  
Larry Layton (left) and Dick Pack, dressed as Caesar Rodney, unveil the Dover Light Infantry Monument on Friday at Legislative Hall. Thomas Rodney was part of the unit that responded in 1776.

said the monument will help Delawareans avoid leaving Thomas Rodney unheralded in Caesar's shadow.

A young historic re-enactor, drummer Andy Cohee, of Milford, 15, and soon to start 10th grade at Milford High School, rattle-tatted, Colonial-style, for the monument's unveiling.

The young history buff and Civil War re-enactor said the event was an interesting history lesson, adding, "I never really knew Caesar Rodney had a brother."

**ONLINE EXTRAS**

At [www.delawareonline.com/backstory](http://www.delawareonline.com/backstory):

\* View more photos

\* Get more on Del. troops

\* Find links to learn more

Check out the blog at [www.delawareonline.com/blogs/backstory.html](http://www.delawareonline.com/blogs/backstory.html)



**LOTTERIES**

<b>DELAWARE</b>	
Play 3 Night	0-6-9
Play 4 Night	8-2-8-9
Lotto (drawn June 27)	16-17-20-25-26-30
Powerball (drawn June 28)	14-26-32-34-44
Power	06
Power Play	3
Hot Lotto (drawn June 28)	05-12-22-33-34
Hot Ball	12

<b>MARYLAND</b>	
Pick 3 Day	5-4-6
Pick 4 Day	9-8-2-1
Pick 3 Night	4-5-8
Pick 4 Night	0-1-2-0
Bonus Match 5	05-06-11-29-33
Bonus Ball	38
Mega Millions (drawn June 27)	08-14-22-39-50
Mega Ball	44
Multi-Match (drawn June 28)	05-07-09-13-23-39

<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	
Pick 3 Day	4-1-5
Pick 4 Day	1-6-1-7
Pick 3 Night	6-7-2
Pick 4 Night	2-9-5-9
Cash 5	07-17-23-29-33
Pick 6 (drawn June 26)	17-18-20-24-26-37
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>	
Daily Day	2-9-7
Big 4 Day	9-9-5-1

<b>DAILY NIGHT</b>	
Daily Night	8-5-0
Big 4 Night	9-8-2-1
Cash 5	07-19-22-28-38
Mix & Match (drawn June 26)	01-09-05-12-15
Match 6 (drawn June 27)	18-35-37-39-43-47
Treasure Hunt	03-14-18-21-25

For a recording of numbers drawn, call:  
 Delaware (800) 338-6200, (302) 736-1436 (out of state)

# Delaware

## AND THE REGION

# Light Infantry gets a nod on July 4

## Caesar Rodney tribute, monument planned

By J.L. MILLER  
 The News Journal

DOVER — The Delaware Public Archives will celebrate Independence Day with the dedication of a monument honoring the Dover Light Infantry on the grounds of Legislative Hall, and a dramatic presentation about the life of Declaration of Independence signer Caesar Rodney.

The first event, the unveiling of the monument, will be at 1:30 p.m. on the east side of Legislative Hall. The 5-foot-tall granite monument will bear two bronze plaques.

One plaque details the Dover Light Infantry's distinguished service during the winter of 1776-77, and the other lists the names of the 32 members of the unit who volunteered to join Washington's troops during the Trenton-Princeton Campaign. That campaign, in which Washington's troops defeated Hessian mercenaries to retake Trenton from British control, prevented an American defeat and the premature end of the war.

Members of local Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution organizations will participate in the unveiling, as well as surviving members of the Dover Light Infantry Reenactment Company, a Dover-area group that was active in the 1970s.

The second event, which has become an annual tradition in recent years, will consist of a living-history tribute to Rodney, one of the foremost figures in Delaware history. Delaware actor Dick Pack will portray Rodney, who in addition to making his famous ride to break the state's deadlocked vote for independence also served as Delaware's governor and commander of militia during the Revolutionary War.

"Caesar Rodney Rides" will begin at 2:30 p.m. at the archives, 121 Duke of York St., across the street from Legislative Hall and the new monument. Seating is limited, so people are encouraged to come early. Actor Pack (as Rodney) also will attend the dedication of the monument, which coincidentally honors the services of Rodney's brother Thomas Rodney, captain of the Dover Light Infantry.

For additional information, contact Russ McCabe at 744-5049 or Tom Summers at 744-5047.

Contact J.L. Miller at 678-4271 or jlmiller@delawareonline.com.





LIGHT  
INFANTRY  
*L & L* COMPANY  
OF  
DOVER

*1st  
Battalion  
of  
Kent County  
on  
Delaware*

A  
BICENTENNIAL  
PROJECT OF  
THE CITY OF  
DOVER, DELAWARE

*Larry Layton*



# THE DOVER LIGHT INFANTRY

by  
William P. Frank

The snow lay on the ground, several inches deep, December 14, 1776 when about 35 young Kent Countians formed their lines on the Dover Green. They were nervous because they were on their way out of their home county to the big city, called Philadelphia that was 80 miles away. More than that, it was the capital of a young country engaged in a war against the greatest military might of the world - England. Most of them had never been away from home, except for a few days hunting or a trip down the Delaware River. But this was the big adventure. They were going away to war and their leader was the superconfident, self assured Thomas Rodney, brother of the already famous Caesar Rodney.

At the command from Captain Rodney, the company snapped to attention and amid cheers from the ladies, tears from mothers, sisters, wives and sweethearts, applause from the old men, the Dover Light Infantry Company moved northward.

Let us pause here, to think about what a light infantry company was 200 or more years ago. In the British army, a light infantry was composed of specially selected men known for their endurance, their fighting qualities and their vigor in action. Their chief duties were scouting, skirmishing, hitting the enemy, dodging back, and outpost service. The light infantry companies were usually the elite. The dependable. The valiant ones who scorned danger.

This was the kind of a light infantry company Captain Rodney had in mind. Mark McCall was his lieutenant; Simon W. Wilson, his ensign; two sergeants, two corporals, drummer and fifer and the remainder privates. As long as the Dover Light Infantry on the march was within the confines of Dover the men must have maintained orderly lines but once out in the country, it is taken for granted, they loped along in irregular frontier style.



On they went to Duck Creek Cross Roads, now Smyrna; then over to the villiage of Christiana which was one of the best known staging areas for American military. There, Captain Rodney learned that Congress had skeedaddled out of Philadelphia, afraid the British might capture the city.

But the Dover Light Infantry was not to be deterred.



Natchez, Mississippi on January 21, 1811. In honor of this outstanding Delawarean, the town of Rodney, Mississippi bears his name.

It was men like Thomas Rodney who stood firm, at the risk of life and fortune for a cause that has given to all of us the right to be a new nation and to be free men.

### **OTHER EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIGHT INFANTRY CO. OF DOVER**

**June, 1776** - "Black Munday". When local Royalists approached Dover with an armed force, the Dover Light Infantry under Thomas Rodney prepared to defend the town. Two ministers kept the opposing sides from engaging in battle, however, and Rodney subsequently glorified the event with a poem and song, stating the Royalists "fled like sea fowl from the shore."

**July 1776** - Burning of the King's Portrait. When the news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence reached Dover, the local celebration included a solemn ceremony presided over by the Speaker of the Assembly, aided by the Dover Light Infantry. They marched around The Green, and cast the portrait of George III into the flames, saying "Thus we destroy even the shadow of that King who refused to reign over a free people."

**April, 1778** - Cheyney Clow Rebellion. When Cheyney Clow, a local Royalist, built a stockade and garrisoned it with a force of armed men, the Dover Light Infantry marched from Dover to Hartley and skirmished with the Royalists, then withdrew. Returning in force, the Infantry discovered the stockade hastily abandoned, and the Royalists gone. Cheyney Clow was eventually apprehended and, in a controversial case, hanged for treason.







## ABOUT THE COMPANY— 1975-76

The idea to form a Revolutionary military unit was conceived as early as September 1974. And while only a possible Bicentennial project at that time, initial planning was readied for future implementation.

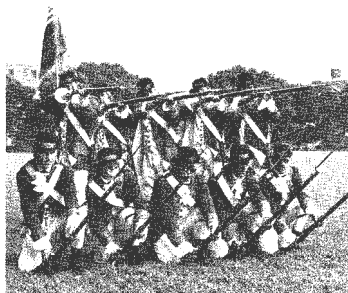
In December, 1974, a formal presentation was made to the Dover Bicentennial Central Committee, which unanimously approved the military reactivation as an official Dover project.

The first "Call to Arms" went out to the people of Dover and Kent County in January, 1975 calling for volunteers to join the Dover Light Infantry. The first meeting of the company was held on February 11, 1975 at the Dover Army Reserve Center, where the major objectives of the project were identified.

In March, those individuals who had given the project much thought, and felt a deep desire to make it successful, signed the muster roll just as the original soldiers of this unit once did. The recruits at the muster were read the "Instructions for Enlisting Men in Service of the Delaware Government" (March 22, 1776) and the original company mustering document (April 2, 1776). As was customary in the 1700's each volunteer who signed was given a token payment in good faith, one British Penny, representing the Kings Shilling probably used at that time to seal the contract, making the transaction legal and binding.

The Dover Light Infantry Company, 1st Battalion of Kent County was officially re-activated on April 20, 1975 by General Order signed by His Honor, Mayor Crawford J. Carroll as an official City of Dover Bicentennial Project.

We are endeavoring through this militia unit to portray a part of our local heritage, demonstrate military life as it existed then, and serve the towns and communities of Delaware and our neighboring States as the Bicentennial representative from the Capital of the First State.

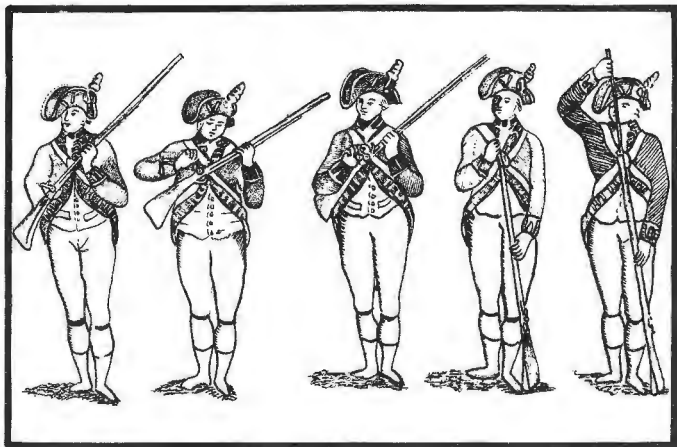


### TO SCHEDULE THE COMPANY

Contact:  
*Dover Light Infantry Co.*  
*Dover Bicentennial Committee*  
*408 S. State Street*  
*Dover, Delaware 19901*

ATTN: *L. L. Layton, Chairman*





## Baron Von Steuben's Drill

They were on their way in response to a call from General George Washington for troops. The Dover unit passed through Wilmington and on December 18, 1776, it reached Philadelphia. The men were in good spirits and health except for "a few blistered feet". Captain Rodney reported to General



Israel Putnam. Later, learning that there was scarcely any American military in the city, Captain Rodney stationed his men to guard the city. It is difficult to believe but Captain Rodney stated it was true, the Dover Light Infantry guarded the nation's capital all by itself. From then on until January 14, 1777, the Dover Light Infantry was involved in the campaigns of Trenton and Princeton. Serving in the van on the Princeton march, they held a key position, supporting two artillery placements which helped stop the British pursuit and ultimately led to the British retreat from Princeton to New Brunswick. For their distinguished service General Washington appointed them "to be his own guard". By January 14, most of the men had gone home and Captain Rodney followed on January 18. For months and even years later, the veterans of the Dover Light Infantry probably regaled their friends and relatives with exciting stories of their 30 days service in the American Continental Army at a most critical period of the American war for national independence.



They had suffered the rigors of a bitterly cold winter. They had maintained unusually good discipline. They earned the gratitude and thanks of high ranking Continental officers. They were proud of their experience and their service to the cause of freedom and independence.

## CAPTAIN THOMAS RODNEY (1744-1811)

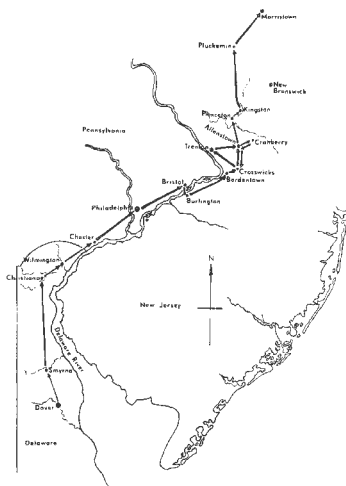
Thomas Rodney was the youngest brother to the historically famous General Caesar Rodney one of Delaware's signers of the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Rodney was a prominent political leader of his day and a man with deep convictions for the cause of American Independence. He, like his brother Caesar Rodney, was a leader, and spokesman of the politics of Kent County.

Thomas Rodney was born near Dover on June 4, 1744. He spent most of his youth and early adulthood in the Kent County area. Before the Revolution Thomas Rodney held the offices of Register and Judge of the Probate of Wills and the Clerk of the Orphans' Court. Many times he served as a member of the General Assembly of the State and was President of the Committee of Inspection of his native county.

During the Revolution, he was elected as Captain commanding a small militia unit from Dover identified as the Dover Light Infantry Company, 1st Battalion of Kent County. He later became Colonel of the Eighth Regiment of the Delaware militia. He saw active service with Dover Light Infantry at the battles of Trenton and Princeton.

After the Revolution, Thomas Rodney served as judge of the Admiralty Court and of the Court of Common Pleas of Delaware. In 1781, he first became a delegate to the Continental Congress, a position which he twice held. Later in 1803 he was appointed to the post of chief-justice of the Mississippi Territory. He served in that capacity until his death at

### LINE OF MARCH DOVER LIGHT INFANTRY from 14 Dec 1776 to 14 Jan 1777



The  
Delaware Continentals  
1776-1783

---

*by*  
CHRISTOPHER L. WARD

---

The Historical Society of Delaware  
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE  
1941



being covered with snow several inches deep," his little company set out from Dover and that night reached "the Cross Roads," now Smyrna. At Christiana Bridge, his men were "fitted out with knapsacks, canteens &c." There he met Thomas McKean and several other members of Congress on their way from Philadelphia to Baltimore. McKean "sat late" with him and gave him all the news, observing that "everything was very gloomy and doubtful and that the chief hope that remained was that Gen. Lee, who was on the mountains in the rear of the enemy, would be able to effect some lucky stroke that would prevent the enemy's crossing the Delaware, but if nothing of the sort happened, Congress would be obliged to authorize the Commander-in-Chief to obtain the best terms that could be had from the enemy." Lee had been captured by the British two days before this conversation took place.

On the way from Christiana Bridge to Wilmington, "we saw the road full of citizens of Philadelphia, who had fled with their families and effects, expecting the British army would be there in a few days."

On the 18th, the little troop reached Philadelphia. "All the company were in good health and spirits, but some have blistered feet." The town "made a horrid appearance, more than half the houses appeared deserted . . . nobody appeared in the streets. There was no military of any kind in the City, only General Putnam, who was there to give orders to any militia that might come in. I had a sentinel placed at the General's door and others to guard the City that night."

There was no one else in the coffee-house, where he had "a bowl of punch and some biscuit." The keeper of the house said "they expected the British in every moment and were afraid. I told him they need not be afraid, I would engage to guard the City that night." But the coffee-house man did not seem to be so sure about that.

In the morning, he saw Putnam and received orders to get ready to march to join Washington. The next morning, the 19th, orders were issued to all the militia to appear at the General's house on the following day. That night, Rodney supped with friends, the Fisher family, "quakers and very great Tories," who

tried to induce him "to relinquish all further opposition," promising protection for him, his brother Caesar and their friends. Rodney withstood their blandishments and the next morning attended, with his men at Putnam's house, "but found no other companies paraded." Putnam gave him orders to march.

The town that day was "almost deserted by the inhabitants and looking as if it had been plundered . . . but to our great joy we saw streets full of militia and hundreds pouring in every hour."

The next morning, the 21st, his company marched, "but, the roads being very deep, we only got to Red Lion . . . 13 miles from Philadelphia." At Bristol, the next afternoon, he reported to General Cadwalader and was assigned quarters in two houses on the banks of Neshaminy Creek. One of these was the residence of Andrew Allen, who, as has been said, had gone over to Howe. Mrs. Allen was grateful for the protection thus afforded against insults because of her husband's apostasy. "But nothing of this sort happened afterwards, as I would scorn to insult a woman, or permit it to be done, for the offence of her husband," so the gallant captain avers.

Cadwalader told Rodney that Lee's capture "had damped the spirit of the army very much, and everything looked very gloomy." Rodney replied that he "did not view his capture as unfavourable, but as an advantage; that too much confidence had been put in General Lee, that this must have greatly embarrassed the commander in chief, as he was afraid to do anything without consulting Gen. Lee, but now he would be at liberty to exert his own talents."

Cadwalader asked him "What could be done?" Rodney answered that "in an enterprise a small number was best, that 500 men was enough to surprise any of the British posts on the Delaware."

Cadwalader then said that Washington "intended some enterprise of that sort, but was waiting for men to make him strong enough," to which Rodney objected that "there was no occasion for more men" and that the business "ought not to be delayed a moment on that account."

"Upon this Gen. Cadwalader's face began to flame and he



ing with Sullivan, Mercer, Stirling, Knox and some other officers, including Colonel Glover, the details of the plan were arranged.

The principal objective was to be Trenton. The river was to be crossed at three different places by three separate divisions. Lieutenant Colonel Cadwalader, as a temporary brigadier-general, was to command one, composed of about 900 men from Hitchcock's Rhode Island brigade, a thousand of the Philadelphia Associators and other Pennsylvania militia, including two artillery companies, each with a six-pounder, and Captain Thomas Rodney's little Dover Company. This corps was to cross the river at or near Bristol and engage von Donop's forces at Mount Holly, so as to divert their attention from the principal attack, on Trenton, and prevent them from going to the aid of the garrison there. The second division, under Brigadier General James Ewing was made up chiefly of Pennsylvania militia, with a few from New Jersey, about 700 in all. It was to cross at Trenton Ferry, take up a position south of Assanpink Creek and hold the bridge so as to close that avenue of escape of the Hessians in Trenton after the attack on that town from the north by the principal division.

The third and principal division was to be commanded by Washington. It was made up of about 2,400 men selected from the brigades of Brigadier Generals Stephen, Mercer, Stirling, St. Clair, Glover, Sargent and Roche de Fermoy, each of whom was to lead his own men. It was to be divided into two divisions under Major Generals Greene and Sullivan. The artillery, 18 field-pieces, was to be commanded by Colonel Henry Knox. Each man was to be provided with cooked rations for three days and 40 rounds of ammunition. This division was to cross at McKonkey's Ferry, about nine miles above Trenton, and take the roads leading down to that town.<sup>6</sup>

When his own and Ewing's division had converged upon and taken Trenton and Cadwalader had driven von Donop from his cantonments, Washington planned that the three bodies should join and, if circumstances favored, should push on against the military stations at Princeton and Brunswick.

Provided and equipped as ordered, the various elements of the main division were paraded in the valley behind the hill at

poured on the ground. The casualties on the American side were two officers and two privates wounded.

But, it may be asked, why was not General Ewing's division on hand south of the bridge, as ordered, and what part in the events of the day was played by Colonel Cadwalader's force further down the river? The answer to the first question is short. General Ewing, having seen the condition of the river thought a crossing impossible. He did not try it. Concerning the other, there is more to be said.

Cadwalader considered that the floating ice above Bristol offered too great an obstacle. He marched his 1,800 men from the Neshaminy Ferry a few miles to Dunk's Ferry, where five large bateaux and three scows were assembled. A battalion of four companies of Philadelphia city militia and Captain Rodney's Dover company were "formed into a body," Captain George Henry of Philadelphia in command, Rodney second. This detachment was the first to embark, at about 8 o'clock in the evening, with orders to land on the Jersey shore and cover the disembarkation of the two brigades making up the rest of that expeditionary force. They landed "with great difficulty through the ice," having to walk on it a hundred yards before they got ashore. At about two hundred yards back from the river's edge, they formed and awaited the others.<sup>2</sup>

At about nine o'clock, the 1st and 3rd battalions of Philadelphia Associators, with two field-pieces, started to cross. They could get no nearer the land than the advance party. But they all scrambled ashore, 600 of them. Then the field-pieces were to be landed, but the Colonel did not see how that could be done. So the former commander of the Philadelphia Silk Stockings gave up and ordered his men back to the Pennsylvania side.

"It was as severe a night as ever I saw" wrote Rodney to his brother a few days later. "We had to stand six hours under arms—first, to cover the landing, and till all the rest had retreated again; and by this time, the storm of wind, hail, rain and snow was so bad that some of the Infantry could not get back till the next day." <sup>3</sup> So that part of Washington's plan failed of execution.

Captain Rodney wrote in his diary that the order to retreat "greatly irritated the troops that had crossed the River and they



On the morning of December 26, Colonel Cadwalader, dry, warm and unfatigued in his quarters at Bristol, wrote a letter to Washington, telling him why he did not get his force across the river. "I imagine the badness of the night must have prevented you from passing, as you intended." <sup>4</sup> Then he heard the thunder of the guns at Trenton, but could hardly believe his ears. The firing, he thought, must have been on the west side of the river. Two or three hours later, General Ewing disabused his mind with the news of the victory. "Such was the exhilaration produced by this intelligence," that Cadwalader ordered his men to be ready to cross the next morning. <sup>5</sup>

At daylight the division was assembled at the ferry landing; at 10 o'clock, they embarked. Thomas Rodney's company, with other light troops, covered the landing as before. At about 3 o'clock, they were all on the other side, and the colonel got word of Washington's return to Pennsylvania; he was alone in New Jersey. "Cadwalader was now in a dilemma." <sup>6</sup> Von Donop's force, he supposed, was at Mount Holly, but might soon return to its old post at Bordentown. What Washington would do next, Cadwalader did not know. Among his officers there was "much perplexity and a great variety of opinions. It was contended that the motives which had caused the advance movement had now ceased . . . that Donop was equal, if not superior in numbers and might soon march back from Mount Holly," and that it was best to return to Pennsylvania at once.

"Such, too, was Colonel Cadwalader's opinion." Colonel Joseph Reed, however, thought otherwise. He urged that the militia wanted action, without any more fooling, that if this movement proved to be a fiasco, "a general desertion might be apprehended." <sup>7</sup> The thing to do was to follow up Washington's success at Trenton. But the other officers were afraid of Bordentown; von Donop might be there again at any time. So Reed proposed a compromise, a march on Burlington, where they were pretty sure no Hessians would be found. The other officers agreed to this, and the bewildered Pennsylvania colonel gave orders accordingly. <sup>7</sup>

Rodney's company and the rest of the light infantry, flanked by a rifle battalion, led the column. They reached Burlington at 9 o'clock in the evening and found no enemy there. Also they got

tillery. But, as Washington put it "a providential change of weather" occurred; a cold north-west wind sprang up and froze the ground; the roads were hard again.

Preparations for the movement began at once. The camp-fires were heaped high with fence-rails. A party of 400 men was detailed to dig entrenchments at certain points, whence the sound of pick and spade would be audible to the enemy. They were also to keep the fires briskly burning and to make much of a show of patrolling at the bridge and elsewhere. Finally, they were to steal away before daylight and follow the army as speedily as possible. The baggage and stores of the army and three of its heaviest guns were then started for Burlington under a strong guard. At one o'clock in the morning of January 3, the march to Princeton began, no one under the rank of brigadier general having any knowledge of its destination or its purpose. "Some thought we were going to attack the enemy in the rear; some that we were going to Princeton . . . but no one knew what the Gen. meant to do," take Captain Thomas Rodney's word for that.

The van was led by the Dover light infantry company and the Red Feather Company of Philadelphia, followed by General Mercer's brigade, Mercer riding and Colonel Haslet on foot trudging beside him. St. Clair's brigade came next, with Washington and his staff and then the rest of the army. Captain Henry with the other three companies of Philadelphia light infantry militia brought up the rear.<sup>4</sup>

The wheels of the gun-carriages had been wrapped with strips of cloth to deaden their sound on the frozen road. "Orders were given in a whisper; muskets were gingerly handled and footfalls lightly planted."<sup>5</sup> So, as silently as possible, the army set out past the left flank of the enemy and took the road to Sandtown.

The road ran through dense woods and had been newly cut. It was rugged and rutted; stumps had been left in it, which "stopped the movement of the guns and caused many a fall and severe bruise to some of the weary, sleepy soldiers."<sup>6</sup>

At Sandtown, they took the road to Quaker Bridge. At some time on this march "great confusion happened in the rear," among Henry's Philadelphia militia. "There was a cry that they



were surrounded by Hessians and several corps of Militia broke and fled towards Bordentown, but the rest of the column remained firm and pursued their march without disorder, but those who were frightened and fled did not recover from their pains until they reached Burlington." 7

At Quaker Bridge the column swung toward the north-west on a road leading directly to Princeton. At about two miles from that town, it came to Stony Brook. It was then daylight. "The sun rose as we crossed the brook on a clear frosty morning." Rodney's vanguard had crossed when the column halted; it was ordered to file off to one side of the road. Here the army was divided.<sup>8</sup>

Mercer, with his brigade, including Cadwalader's Associators, was split off to the left to secure the stone bridge on the direct road from Trenton, so that, if Cornwallis were pursuing on that road, he might be held, or at least delayed there, or, as Rodney tells it, "to surround the town on that side and, as they went, to break down the Bridge and post a party at the mill on the main road to oppose the enemy's main army, if they should pursue us from Trenton." Rodney's two companies and those of the rear-guard, who had not run away, were now joined to Mercer's force, composed otherwise of about 300 Continentals and Cadwalader's troops.<sup>9</sup> On this march Rodney's command "flanked the whole brigade on the right in Indian file, so that my men were very much extended. I marched in front and was followed by Sargent McKnatt and next to him was Nehemiah Tilton." Mercer was still on his horse at the head of the column and Haslet still on foot by his side. Sullivan, with three brigades, took a road to the right so that he might enter the town on the east.

The British force in Princeton consisted of three regiments, the 17th, 40th and 55th, with three troops of dragoons. They had lain there for the night, under orders for the 17th and 55th to march to Trenton in the morning, leaving the 40th to guard the military stores. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood, commanding the 17th, mounted on a small brown pony, with two favorite spaniels bounding about in front of him, had left Princeton with his regiment, part of the 55th and a troop of the 16th

mentals, Hand's Pennsylvania riflemen and the 7th Virginia came hurrying over from Sullivan's division and the defeated men took heart. Cadwalader's men rallied and a part of Mercer's.

Meanwhile, Captain Moulder's two-gun battery, in a farmyard on the ridge above the British line, had held its position and continued to pour grape upon the enemy. While the retreating Americans were re-forming for an advance, Rodney was ordered to support Moulder. With a handful of his men he "crossed the enemy's fire from right to left and took position behind some stacks just on the left of the artillery and about 30 of the Philadelphia Infantry were under cover of a house on my left and a little in the rear.

"About 15 men came to this post, but I could not keep them all there, for the enemy's fire was dreadful and three balls . . . had grazed me; one passed within my elbow nicking my greatcoat and carried away the breech of Sargeant McKnatt's gun, he being close behind me, another carried away the inside edge of one of my shoesoles, another had nicked my hat and indeed they seemed as thick as hail.

"From these stacks and buildings we, with the two pieces of artillery, kept up a continuous fire on the enemy, and in all probability it was this circumstance that prevented the enemy from advancing, for they could not tell the number we had posted behind these covers and were afraid to attempt passing them; but, if they had known how few they were, they might easily have advanced while the two brigades were in confusion and routed the whole body before they could be reorganized again, and indeed many, that were panic struck, ran quite off."

At last the retreating troops were re-formed and, led by the Virginians yelling lustily, they came on to where the battery was posted and "began a very heavy platoon firing on the march,"<sup>14</sup> Hand's riflemen went against Mawhood's left, and St. Clair's brigade attacked the rest of the British 55th regiment coming to support that part of their own men, who had marched with the 17th. They gave way and retreated across the fields and then along the road to Brunswick.

Mawhood was now almost surrounded, but he fought on. The action increased in intensity. The Americans' fire was so hot and



black mark from his captain, on the 12th. He had just come up, with a story that he had remained behind to bury Colonel Haslet's body, but was frightened off by the sight of some American officers, whom he took to be British light horse, and fled without stopping until he crossed the Delaware, whence he had now returned. But there was another report from some of the regiment: that "as soon as the bullets began to fly, he ran as hard as he could for the woods."

On the 14th, "most of all my company set off home" in spite of their captain's urging that they remain, and on the following day, all the rest, but one, left the camp. On the 18th, Rodney followed them. And so ended the exciting 30 days' service of the little company of Dover light infantry.<sup>5</sup>

And so ended, too, for the purposes of this narrative, the Campaign of 1776, which had ignored the calendar and lapped over a few days into 1777. Washington's army was safely established in Morristown. Hackensack and Elizabeth-Town had been taken by the Americans by January 6, and so Washington had swept the Jerseys clear of the enemy, except at Amboy and Brunswick, where Howe still held on, with a force of 5,000 at each place, harmless posts, "out of all opportunity for striking a blow against the enemy."<sup>6</sup> And all that had been accomplished by an army of less than 5,000 ragged, shoeless, ill fed, poorly equipped, often defeated, amateur soldiers, operating against twice their number of veteran professionals, abundantly supplied with all martial equipment, and within the space of eleven days in the depth of winter.

# REVOLUTIONARY DELAWARE

*Independence in the First State*



KIM ROGERS BURDICK

*Kim Burdick*



## Chapter 5

# CHOCK-FULL OF LIES AND STORIES

**P**aranoia was growing. Loyalist Thomas Robinson was traveling to the General Assembly meeting when Dover militia officers stopped him and threatened him with jail. After his colleague Jacob Moore drew his sword at them, offering to defend Robinson's life, both men were jailed. Kent County members of the assembly urged for their immediate release. In September 1775, Moore had, in fact, been appointed colonel in command of a battalion of Sussex County Militia.

Like Thomas Robinson, Dover's Vincent Loockerman fit the standard profile of a Loyalist almost perfectly. He was a wealthy Anglican, engaged in overseas trade and made his home in southern Delaware, a place where social unrest instigated by Tories was never far from the government's concerns. His family, with connections in shipping and trade from Philadelphia to London and Bristol, could not ignore the growing conflict. In spite of potential Loyalist leanings, Vincent Loockerman Jr. joined the Militia Light Infantry Company of Dover under Thomas Rodney, and according to a note in Thomas Rodney's private log, he brought his own gun "in good order." On May 12, Thomas Rodney wrote, "Loockerman is frightened almost out of his wits & seems half at least on the other side of the question—his late conduct has been so particularly penurious that he is abused by almost everybody—There was much fun with him last night but it is too long to tell."

Both Vincent Loockerman Jr. and his father served as members of the Delaware Assembly for several terms. As early as July 1775, Loockerman Sr. was one of the people involved in choosing the design of the flags that would



*Dear Sir:*

*Yesterday morning I had orders from Lord Sterling to evacuate my post at Amboy with the troops there—about five hundred men—and the remainder of the stores, cattle, etc., and to join him about three miles off. This I did by sunrise, and then proceeded, with the main body, to Brunswick, where we arrived about two o'clock the whole about nine thousand men, with a good train. But this place is miserably dirty—Many of our men lay out without even tents—most distressing to the campaign and future success of recruiting. Our men many of them sick, hardly a place to put their heads in. Here are Generals Washington, Putnam, Mercer, Green, Stevens, and Beal with their brigades. General Washington has wanted the “flying camp” to stay two weeks, but such proposal will not do with any. I do not much wonder at this, as no place many times to put their heads in. We must do better for the future, or give up our army. Was I in Philadelphia, and an inhabitant, I should remain, in my opinion, secure this winter. Colonel Bedford is here, very poorly, but I think mending; is pleurisy.*

*I am in haste, yours, etc., Samuel Patterson.*<sup>63</sup>

## WHEN GEORGE WASHINGTON CROSSED THE DELAWARE

When the terms of the Flying Camp expired in early December, George Read Sr. bemoaned that the men “have left the General in whole brigades... tho’ ever more wanted in the field.”<sup>64</sup> Enlistments were to run out at the end of the year, and Colonel Haslet had ordered many of his officers to go back to Delaware to begin the recruiting process once more.

The British advance from New York to the Delaware River had a chilling effect on Patriots. Recognizing that his army was dispirited and fading, Washington decided on a bold move to reinvigorate his men. He organized a strike into New Jersey to surprise and capture the garrison of British-held Trenton. The New Castle Militia had displayed some interest in going to Trenton, but the men were unwilling to sign up for six weeks when no provision for pay or other necessary supplies had been mentioned. Part of Kent County’s militia stepped up to the task. Thomas Rodney’s journal explained their decision:

## INDEPENDENCE IN THE FIRST STATE



*Washington Crossing the Delaware, Evening Previous to the Battle of Trenton, Dec. 25th, 1776.* T. Sully, artist. Etched by W. Humphrys and engraved by G.S. Lang, 1825. *Library of Congress.*

*Congress had determined to move from Philadelphia to Baltimore...I felt my mind anxious and uneasy, and went over to my brother [Caesar Rodney] and he was much concerned; said everything appeared gloomy and unfortunate...When I left him, I consulted the [militia] officers and several of the company, and they voluntarily agreed to turn out...And thirty-five of the infantry, including several others, entered into the association to go, and this company marched from Dover the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1776 at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>65</sup>*

In response to Washington's request, thirty-five Kent County militiamen marched north from Dover on the afternoon of December 14, 1776, stopping at Duck Creek (now Smyrna) and meeting up with the baggage wagon and Caesar Rodney's younger brother, Thomas Rodney, at the Trap (McDonough). Their march continued through Red Lion and Christiana, where they stopped at Samuel Patterson's to be fitted out with knapsacks, canteens and more. They then continued past Wilmington to Philadelphia

## REVOLUTIONARY DELAWARE

and beyond, joining Washington's army in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Rodney noted that the road along the way was "full of citizens from Philadelphia, who had fled with their families and effects, expecting the British army would be there in a few days."

In his diary, Rodney described Washington's crossing:

*Our light Infantry Battalion [composed of the Dover company and four companies of Philadelphia militia under Captain George Henry] were embarked in boats to cover the landing of the Brigade. When we reached the Jersey shore we were obliged to land on the ice, 150 yards from the shore. The River was also very full of floating ice and the wind was blowing very hard, and the night was very dark and cold, and we had great difficulty in crossing but the night was very favorable to the enterprise...About 600 of the light troops got over...there was so much floating rain and sleet, and there was so much floating ice in the River that we had the greatest difficulty to get over again, and some of our men did not get over that night. As soon as I reached the Pennsylvania shore I received orders to march to our quarters, where I arrived a little before daylight very*



*Washington at Princeton, January 3, 1777. D. Brückner, artist. D. McLellan, lithographer, 26 Spruce Street, New York. Colonel John Haslet (1727–1777) of Milford, Delaware, was killed at the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777. Library of Congress.*



## INDEPENDENCE IN THE FIRST STATE

*cold... [On the twenty-sixth] about 12 o'clock the remainder of my company came in, and in the evening we heard of General Washington's success at Trenton and that he had captured 900 Hessians.<sup>66</sup>*

In the course of the crossing, the Delaware Continental Regiment's Colonel John Haslet fell in the icy river but managed to cross, marching ten miles through the wintry blasts to fight the Hessian troops garrisoned in Trenton.

Lieutenant Enoch Anderson of Newport, Delaware, observed with pride, "Our Regiment, although many of the men's enlistments were up, stuck to." The Continentals came back across the river to the Pennsylvania side on December 27, 1776, and the soldiers began to go home. By the end of Delaware's enlistment term, December 31, 1776, only Colonel Haslet, two other officers, a surgeon, two privates and some of Thomas Rodney's Kent County Militia remained. John Haslet was killed on January 3, 1777, at the Battle of Princeton.

## 1777

Activity in the Delaware River and Bay area continued. A member of the House of Assembly received a message from Jacob Bennett (who had been admonished by the Wilmington Friends Meeting the previous September for joining the war effort) that he had been taken by a British ship of war to the southward of Cape Henlopen and there saw five persons arrive in a boat with some livestock for the British. Bennett claimed that one of these was Daniel Dingee, a member of the House of Assembly. Being informed that John Trip and Levi Potter were prisoners at the same time, a summons was issued to Jacob Bennett, John Trip and Levi Potter to attend the next council meeting, on January 17 at 11:00 a.m., to give evidence. The Speaker of the assembly, with a number of the members of that house, and Mr. Dingee attended the hearing. The council decided that the accusations were groundless and "ordered that Mr. Dingee take his seat as a member of this body."<sup>67</sup>

The next public officials accused of cooperating with the British did not escape censure. On January 27, 1777, the house resumed, and orders for arresting Boas Manlove and Thomas Robinson of the county were read and laid on the table. Minutes from the February 18 meeting of the assembly

## REVOLUTIONARY DELAWARE

and beyond, joining Washington's army in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Rodney noted that the road along the way was "full of citizens from Philadelphia, who had fled with their families and effects, expecting the British army would be there in a few days."

In his diary, Rodney described Washington's crossing:

*Our light Infantry Battalion [composed of the Dover company and four companies of Philadelphia militia under Captain George Henry] were embarked in boats to cover the landing of the Brigade. When we reached the Jersey shore we were obliged to land on the ice, 150 yards from the shore. The River was also very full of floating ice and the wind was blowing very hard, and the night was very dark and cold, and we had great difficulty in crossing but the night was very favorable to the enterprise...About 600 of the light troops got over...there was so much floating rain and sleet, and there was so much floating ice in the River that we had the greatest difficulty to get over again, and some of our men did not get over that night. As soon as I reached the Pennsylvania shore I received orders to march to our quarters, where I arrived a little before daylight very*



*Washington at Princeton, January 3, 1777. D. Brückner, artist. D. McLellan, lithographer, 26 Spruce Street, New York. Colonel John Haslet (1727–1777) of Milford, Delaware, was killed at the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777. Library of Congress.*

## INDEPENDENCE IN THE FIRST STATE

*cold... [On the twenty-sixth] about 12 o'clock the remainder of my company came in, and in the evening we heard of General Washington's success at Trenton and that he had captured 900 Hessians.<sup>66</sup>*

In the course of the crossing, the Delaware Continental Regiment's Colonel John Haslet fell in the icy river but managed to cross, marching ten miles through the wintry blasts to fight the Hessian troops garrisoned in Trenton.

Lieutenant Enoch Anderson of Newport, Delaware, observed with pride, "Our Regiment, although many of the men's enlistments were up, stuck to." The Continentals came back across the river to the Pennsylvania side on December 27, 1776, and the soldiers began to go home. By the end of Delaware's enlistment term, December 31, 1776, only Colonel Haslet, two other officers, a surgeon, two privates and some of Thomas Rodney's Kent County Militia remained. John Haslet was killed on January 3, 1777, at the Battle of Princeton.

## 1777

Activity in the Delaware River and Bay area continued. A member of the House of Assembly received a message from Jacob Bennett (who had been admonished by the Wilmington Friends Meeting the previous September for joining the war effort) that he had been taken by a British ship of war to the southward of Cape Henlopen and there saw five persons arrive in a boat with some livestock for the British. Bennett claimed that one of these was Daniel Dingee, a member of the House of Assembly. Being informed that John Trip and Levi Potter were prisoners at the same time, a summons was issued to Jacob Bennett, John Trip and Levi Potter to attend the next council meeting, on January 17 at 11:00 a.m., to give evidence. The Speaker of the assembly, with a number of the members of that house, and Mr. Dingee attended the hearing. The council decided that the accusations were groundless and "ordered that Mr. Dingee take his seat as a member of this body."<sup>67</sup>

The next public officials accused of cooperating with the British did not escape censure. On January 27, 1777, the house resumed, and orders for arresting Boas Manlove and Thomas Robinson of the county were read and laid on the table. Minutes from the February 18 meeting of the assembly



## REVOLUTIONARY DELAWARE

noted that Boas Manlove, late of Sussex County, "doth retain in his hands the sum of three hundred and eighty pounds, part of the Sussex County quota of the Bills of Credit ordered to be emitted by an Act of Assembly that had been deposited in his hands as one of the signers of the bills."<sup>68</sup> In March, after evading several arrests, Manlove, with fellow Tories Thomas Robinson and John F. Smyth, fled to the British ship *Preston*, moored in the Delaware Bay.

That month, John McKinly of Wilmington became the president of Delaware. Thomas Rodney wrote to Caesar Rodney that the Delaware Assembly had been "very exact in their choice as he [McKinly] is the only man that could so fully represent the Whig and Tory complexion of the State." David Hall of Lewes, who had served as captain in the 1<sup>st</sup> Delaware under Colonel John Haslet at the Battles of Long Island and White Plains, was now asked to lead the Delaware Continental Regiment.

In Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Executive Committee, in cooperation with the Continental Congress, made a survey of the Pennsylvania side of the river, making special note of places where the enemy might land. The survey—ordered to be done "with as much secrecy and dispatch as the nature of it will admit" so that Tories would not learn of it—was to extend "down the river as far as Christina Creek" in Delaware. Blocking the Delaware River below Philadelphia began with the construction of a series of underwater obstacles called chevaux-de-frises, as well as the construction of forts at Billingsport and Red Bank in New Jersey and, in the middle of the river itself, Fort Mifflin on Mud Island.

The British warships *Liverpool* and *Roebuck* had been patrolling the river and bay for a long time, but in early April, the Continental Congress advised Delaware to prepare for an attack. In response, the Delaware Assembly was moved away from the river at New Castle to Dover. State president John McKinly asked Caesar Rodney to "plan a guard at Lewes Town...to protect the persons employed as pilots & such property of the good subjects of the United States." On April 10, English men-of-war were in the bay, and on the following day, a volunteer in the Delaware Militia, Samuel Lockwood, witnessed an encounter between the *Roebuck* with British sixth-rate ship the *Perseus* and American ship the *Morris*.<sup>69</sup>

On June 4, Sussex County resident William Adair noted in his diary, "*Roebuck* blowed off her guns in ye road, 2 ships came up the Bay." On the ninth, "The ships blowed off their guns today." In July, he added, "Tories have robbed ten cattle in Mr. Kollock's vessel, clothing, houses at Indian River."<sup>70</sup>

# Light Infantry Co. of Dover

## DECLARATION OF COMMISSION

### Kent County, Delaware

We the subscribers, being the Militia Light Infantry Company of Dover, do hereby associate and bind ourselves by every tie of Honor, Virtue and Goodfaith, to adhere, and stand firm together, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, in the Defense and Protection of American Liberty: And we do further hereby submit ourselves, when on duty to the due and proper orders and commands of our officers according to the customs of Military Discipline, and to the Laws, Articles and Rules, already enacted, made or ordered, or hereafter to be enacted, made or ordered by the House of Assembly of this Government, for the better Regulations of the Militia within the same: And also where called into actual service, to the Laws, Articles and Rules made or to be made by the Continental State Congress for the Government of the Continental Army.

To whom it may concern, be it known that I certify, on pain of perjury, that Thomas Rodney has been officially commissioned, on this occasion of our 200th Anniversary of American Independence, to the temporary rank of Second Lieutenant in the Light Infantry Company of Dover, First Battalion of Kent County on Delaware this 10th day of April AD, 1977

Thomas Rodney Capt.  
Commanding

Levy L. Lipton  
Sergeant

