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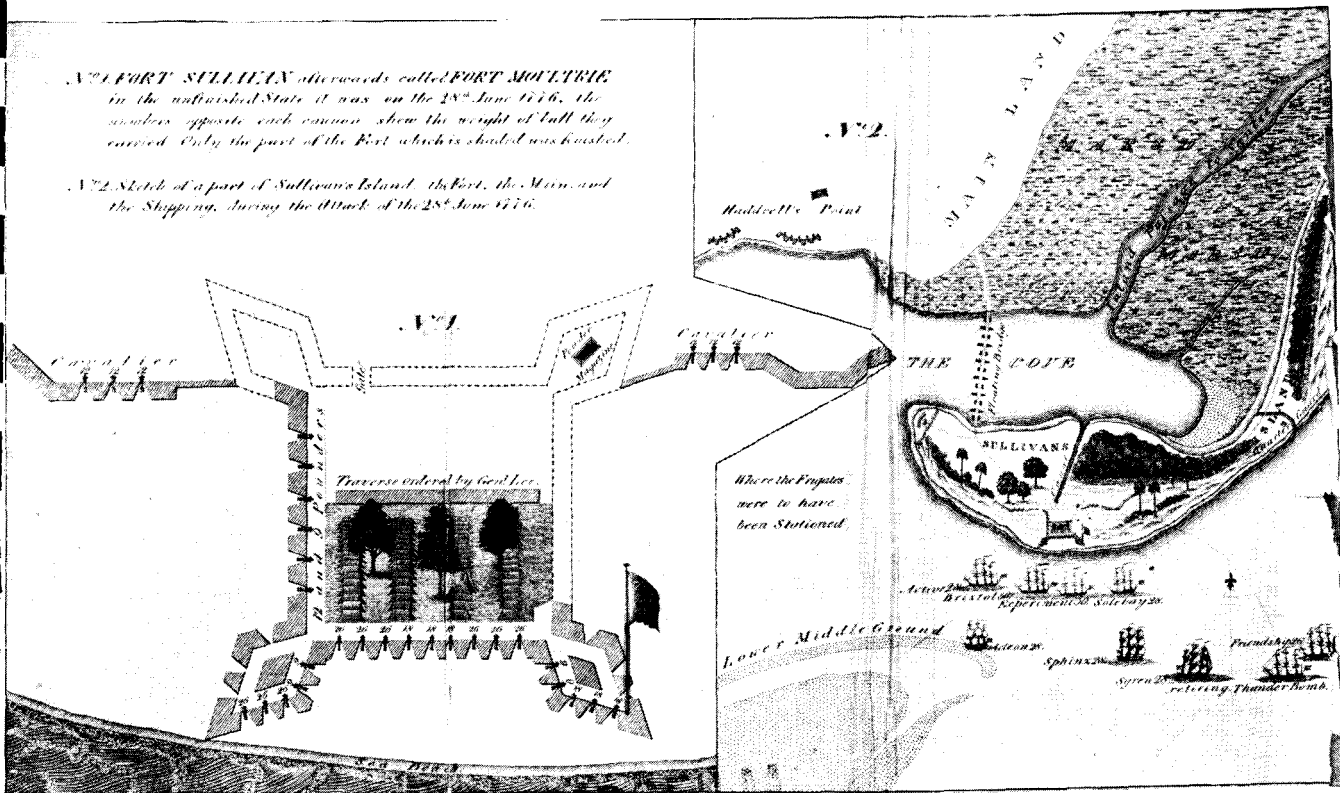
# THE BATTLE OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

JUNE 28, 1776

(FORT MOULTRIE, SOUTH CAROLINA)

1776. FORT SULLIVAN afterwards called FORT MOULTRIE in the united States it was on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1776, the soldiers opposite each cannon show the weight of ball they carried. Only the part of the Fort which is shaded was hoisted.

1772. Sketch of a part of Sullivan's Island. the Fort, the Mains and the Shipping, during the Attack of the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1776.



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# **The Battle Of Sullivan's Island and The Capture Of Fort Moultrie**

**A Documented Narrative and Troop Movement Maps  
Fort Sumter National Monument**

**South Carolina**

**by**

**Edwin C. Bearss**

**DIVISION OF HISTORY  
Office Of Archeology And Historic Preservation**

**June 30, 1968**

**National Park Service**

**U.S. Department of the Interior**

## FOREWORD

This report has been prepared to satisfy the research needs as enumerated in Historical Resource Study Proposal, FOSU-H-5, Troop Movement Maps, Battle of Sullivan's Island. As proposed by Superintendent Paul C. Swartz, this report is designed "to provide documentary detail of troop (and ship) dispositions in the Battle of Sullivan's Island and other Revolutionary War engagements aimed at the capture of Fort Moultrie." In addition, this study is directed at explaining why the British failed in 1776 to capture Sullivan's Island and why they succeeded in capturing Fort Moultrie and Charleston in 1780.

A number of persons have assisted in the preparation of this report. Particular thanks are due Superintendent Paul Swartz and Historian John Dobrovolny for their assistance at the site; to Dr. William James Morgan and Robert I. Campbell of the Naval History Division of the Navy Department for permitting me to examine and make use of unpublished source materials collected for the monumental *Naval Documents of the American Revolution Series*; to Frank Sarles for reading the report and his valuable editorial suggestions; and to Dorothy Junkin for the hours she spent typing this manuscript.

Edwin C. Bearss

Washington, D. C.  
October 1968

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## CHAPTER I

### The British Move Against Charleston

As early as the summer of 1775, the British Government had been led to believe by its Royal Governors, especially Josiah Martin of North Carolina and Lord William Campbell of South Carolina, that the Loyalists in the Southern Colonies could destroy the Rebels with the aid of several regiments of British Regulars. They wrote the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the American Department, urging him to champion this course of action. Dartmouth was impressed by what he read, and, in September 1775, he suggested that Sir William Howe, who in October was named the British Commander-in-Chief in North America, dispatch an expedition from his base at Boston to assist the Southern Loyalists.

The force to be committed to this enterprise was soon increased. When Dartmouth informed King George III of his plans in mid-October, the King was asked to sanction an expedition which was to include not only troops from Howe's army but also additional units to be transported direct to the Southern Colonies from Great Britain. George III approved Dartmouth's proposal and ordered five regiments (the 15th, 37th, 53d, 54th, and 57th Regiments of Foot) to be readied to assist the Loyalist in North Carolina. These units were to be commanded by an officer designated by General Howe and were to be reinforced by such regiments as Howe could spare from Boston.

The regulars to be dispatched from the British Isles were to rendezvous at Cork in Ireland, and the Government hoped that they would be ready to embark by December 1. They were to sail for the mouth of the Cape Fear River in North Carolina, where they would join their general and the force embarked at Boston. The Ministry trusted that, with the aid of these soldiers, North Carolina first and then the other Southern Colonies in turn would be restored to their loyalty to the Crown.

Like many plans this one looked to its sponsors, who were armchair strategists, as if it must succeed. But, in the final analysis, it was dependent on the cooperation of the Loyalists in large numbers. Dartmouth recognized this. If the Tories did not rise en masse, all the British could hope to accomplish was to land and occupy a base on the coast from which to make raids into the hinterland.

Dartmouth had reason to expect success. The Royal Governors' reports were optimistic; the long, cold New England winter would curtail military operations around Boston. General Howe could therefore spare several of his veteran regiments, and Dartmouth hoped that these, in addition to the ones assembling at Cork, could reduce the South and rejoin Howe before the summer campaign commenced.

The diversion of a force, respectable in point of numbers, to the Carolinas can scarcely be defended on military grounds. Lord North's Ministry, as has been pointed out, had been induced to undertake it by the expectation of support from the Loyalists of that region. That there were large numbers of these in the Carolinas cannot be disputed; but while military operations must take into consideration political conditions, the latter should not be permitted to overbalance sound strategic doctrines.

Nevertheless, in October, Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, named Commodore Sir Peter Parker to command the naval force assigned to the expedition.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the army's commitment had been increased by two regiments, making a total of seven. Because of these additions, fears were voiced that it might prove impossible to land all the troops at Cape Fear. The officer in charge of the soldiers would accordingly determine if the regulars were to be disembarked in North Carolina, or if they should be diverted to one of the harbors in South Carolina, Charleston or Beaufort.

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1. Eric Robson, "The Expedition to the Southern Colonies, 1775-1776," *English Historical Review*, LXVI (Oct., 1951), pp. 538-548; George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats* (New York, 1959), pp. 145-146; William L. Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 5 vols. (London, 1898), Vol. 3, pp. 371-372; Joseph Allen, *Battles of the British Navy* (London, 1842), Vol. 1, p. 224.



On December 1 the fleet was not ready to sail from Cork. Another month was needed to assemble the regiments, ordnance, transports, stores, and the warships Parker needed as escorts. Preparations, however, continued to drag, and it was February 12, 1776, before the fleet hoisted anchor and stood out to sea. This delay was to be costly, because the expedition reached the American coast too late to subdue the Southern Colonies and still join General Howe for the beginning of his summer campaign.<sup>2</sup>

The passage from Cork was to take three months. Though lengthy, the trip across, one of the officers reported, "was not disagreeable, after we got out of the Bay of Biscay, where we met with the worst weather ever known at sea, and continued in that situation for sixteen days." Thereafter the weather had improved, although they were becalmed four or five days.<sup>3</sup>

General Howe in the meantime had selected Maj. Gen. Henry Clinton to command the Southern Expedition. Clinton, born into an aristocratic

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2. Robson, "The Expedition to the Southern Colonies, 1775-1776," *English Historical Review*, LXVI, pp. 538-548. The two additional regiments assigned to the expedition were the 28th and 46th Regiments of Foot. John S. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London, 1902), Vol. 3, p. 180.

3. William Falconer to Anthony Falconer, July 13, 1776, found in Robert W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (New York, 1853-57), Vol. 2, pp. 19-20.

family, had gained his military experience on the Continent during the Seven Years' War.<sup>4</sup>

In 1775 he had been ordered to Boston, where he had participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill. Having had several disagreements with Howe on strategy, Clinton welcomed an escape from the immediate supervision of his superior.<sup>5</sup> Just before the expedition sailed, however, Clinton began to have reservations about Dartmouth's plan and seemed to dread shouldering responsibility for its success.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these doubts, Clinton sailed from Boston on January 20, 1776, with a small force numbering not more than 1,500 soldiers. Reaching New York on February 4, Clinton remained there for over a week before resuming the southward voyage. He stopped in Virginia to discuss the military situation with the royal governor, the Earl of Dunmore, who had been compelled by the Patriots to flee Williamsburg and live aboard a warship in Hampton Roads. Dunmore had scant information for Clinton. Before the fleet could sail on, high winds

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4. *The American Rebellion, Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782, With an Appendix of Original Documents*, edited by William B. Willcox (New Haven, 1954), xiii-xvi. (Cited hereinafter as Clinton, *American Rebellion*.)

5. *Ibid.*, xvii-xviii.

6. *Ibid.*, xviii.

damaged one of the transports, making repairs necessary. The small fleet finally cleared Hampton Roads on February 27.<sup>7</sup>

Clinton did not reach the Cape Fear until March 12. There he was surprised to discover that Parker's fleet had not arrived, as he still believed it had sailed at the beginning of December.<sup>8</sup> He also received evil tidings from Governor Martin. In January, Martin had called on the Highlanders in the North Carolina Piedmont to assemble under Donald McDonald near Cross Creek. They would then march for the coast and assist the troops coming from Ireland in crushing the forces of rebellion in the colony. When organized, about February 15, there were about 700 Highlanders, 700 Loyalists, and 100 Regulators. On February 27, at Moores Creek, the Highlanders engaged a Patriot force led by Col. Richard Caswell. The Americans routed the Loyalists, who fled leaving 30 killed or wounded on the field and 85 prisoners, while the Patriots suffered only two casualties. British hopes for the assistance of a large number of Loyalists had been dashed, and Clinton was compelled to re-evaluate the situation. North Carolina, the original goal of the expedition, could not be returned to obedience to the Crown at this time.<sup>9</sup>

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7. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25. Among the units accompanying Clinton was the 33d Regiment of Foot, two companies of light infantry, and a few Highlanders.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

9. Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, edited by John R. Alden, 2 vols. (New York, 1952), Vol. 2, pp. 662-664.

There was nothing Clinton could do now but wait for the fleet from Ireland. He had been at the Cape Fear for more than a month before the first transport from Cork arrived on April 18.<sup>10</sup>

On May 3, 1776, Sir Peter Parker reached Cape Fear with three warships (Bristol, Acteon, and Solebay), the storeship Sybella, and 16 transports, ordnance ships, and victuallers. While the ships anchored off the bar, Parker, who flew his broad pennant from Bristol, established contact with those ashore and learned, much to his relief, that the frigate Sphinx, the hospital ship Pigot, two transports, and a victualler had crossed the bar and had anchored in the Cape Fear River on the 1st. There they had found His Majesty's sloops Falcon, Cruizer, and Scorpion, the schooner St. Lawrence, and several transports. Five transports, one ordnance ship, and two victuallers that had become separated from the fleet during the stormy passage across the Bay of Biscay were missing, however. Two vessels, Syren and Mercury, had been detached by Parker on May 2 to search for the missing ships. Syren would cruise three to 15 leagues off Frying Pan Shoals, while Mercury would cover the sea from Frying Pan Shoals to Cape Romaine.

Parker by mid-May had succeeded in getting all his ships, except his flagship, across the bar and into the river. For

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10. Clinton, *American Rebellion*, p. 28.

convenience in communicating with General Clinton, Sir Peter transferred his pennant to the frigate Solebay.<sup>11</sup>

As supplies were short, Parker put the squadron on two-thirds rations of bread, beef, and pork. A week's provisions were transferred from the army's victuallers, which carried stores to last for 12 weeks, to the fleet. John Read, Bristol's purser, was able to purchase flour and rice from several of the prizes, which helped alleviate the situation. General Clinton had brought with him a large quantity of rum purchased in Virginia, a few hogsheads of which he promised to share with the navy.<sup>12</sup> To assist Parker, Clinton organized a large foraging party. A battalion of light infantry and the 33d and 37th Regiments of Foot were embarked in flat-bottomed boats. Some provisions were secured by this force, but not as many as anticipated.<sup>13</sup>

As if these were not troubles enough, Lord Charles Cornwallis, who was in charge of the troops embarked at Cork, notified Clinton

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11. Parker to Stephens, May 15, 1776, English Records, Admiralty I, Vol. 486, p. 105. Copies of the records of the British Admiralty cited in this study are on file at the Naval History Division, Department of the Navy.

12. *Ibid.*

13. John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (Charleston, 1821), Vol. 2, p. 278.

and Parker that six companies of the 46th Infantry had been stricken "with a very bad fever." Clinton accordingly had these soldiers disembarked and segregated some distance from the camps of the troops he had brought with him from Boston.<sup>14</sup>

While the fleet was anchored off the bar, General Clinton had written Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the Colonies. From a letter dated December 6, the General had learned that the expedition which was arriving from Cork would have with it, in addition to the infantry, two companies of Royal Artillery armed with ten battalion guns and as many howitzers and light 3-pounders as they could efficiently serve.

Germain had emphasized that Clinton was to cooperate with the "well affected inhabitants" and when these operations were terminated he was to "join Genl. Howe with the Forces under [his] command as early in the spring as possible." Because of the disaster at Moores Creek, Clinton reported, nothing could be accomplished by His Majesty's troops in North Carolina. Reviewing for his superior the situation in South Carolina, he observed that the "well affected have some

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14. Clinton to Howe, May 18, 1776 (Sir Henry Clinton Papers, MSS Collection, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.). Cornwallis had joined the British army as an ensign in 1756 and had seen service in Europe in the Seven Years' War. As a member of Parliament, he opposed the tax measures which helped bring on the Revolution. When the war came, however, he placed himself at the King's service.

time since assembled in arms, and are now totally dispersed." Although Charleston could be captured, its reduction, if the latest reports concerning its defenses were true, would be "exceedingly difficult," and, in his opinion, contribute "little to the establishment of order in that Province" at this season of the year. In South Carolina, as well as the other Southern Colonies, the Loyalists lived principally in the Piedmont. If they were to rendezvous with His Majesty's troops, these "unarmed peasants" would be compelled to force their way across "a Province in arms."<sup>15</sup>

Several days after General Clinton had written Lord Germain, the sloop-of-war Nautilus arrived from Halifax with a letter from General Howe. This was the first message he had received from Howe in four months. Howe in this letter outlined his plans for a summer's campaign aimed at giving the British possession of New York harbor and the Hudson River Valley. After studying Howe's communication, Clinton was satisfied that his superior would not call upon him for "any immediate assistance at the opening of his campaign." No date or place of rendezvous had been named by Howe. Indeed, he gave the impression that he wished Clinton to take some

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15. Clinton to Germain, May 3, 1776 (English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776).

action in the "Southern Colonies, and pointed out Charles Town . . . as an object of importance to his Majesty's Service."

Previous to the receipt of this message, Clinton had planned to return to Chesapeake Bay. Information also reached him at this time that the "works erected by the Rebels on Sullivan's [sic] Island (the key to Charles Town harbou) were in an imperfect and unfinished state."

General Clinton accordingly was not unprepared, when Sir Peter Parker proposed "to attempt the reduction of that Fortress by a coup de main." He was of the opinion that the capture of Charleston "would prove of great advantage to his Majesty's service."<sup>16</sup>

Two of the missing transports had anchored in the Cape Fear River by May 18. Still missing were three of the transports, the man-of-war Hawk, two bombers, an ordnance storeship, and a victualler. Parker, on the arrival of these vessels and as a result of his discussions with Clinton, sent two vessels the frigate Sphinx and Pensacola Packet to patrol off Charleston Bar and to reconnoiter the harbor defenses. He had heard that the Rebels were fortifying Charleston, putting Fort Johnson in a "posture of defence, and erecting a Fort of considerable strength on Sullivan's Island." An officer of the Royal Engineers (Captain Moncrief) and a naval

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16. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776 (English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776).



lieutenant had taken passage aboard the packet with orders to reconnoiter the works the Americans were erecting on Sullivan's Island, at Cummings Point, and the Lighthouse on Morris Island to command the entrance to the harbor. Charleston Bar would be sounded. <sup>17</sup>

Writing Howe of Sir Peter Parker's plan to attack Charleston, Clinton on May 18 assured his superior that he would attempt "little more than putting his troops on shore for a few days," although he was satisfied that with "sufficient force operations of consequence might be carried on."<sup>18</sup>

Sphinx and Pensacola Packet rejoined the fleet in the Cape Fear River on the 26th. Besides examining the passes through Charleston Bar, the British ships had sent out a small boat expedition which entered the harbor and burned St. James, a vessel which had succeeded in running the blockade.

After listening to the favorable reports of Captain Moncrief and the naval officer, Sir Peter ordered the captains to get their

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17. Parker to Stephens, May 15, 1776 (English Records, Admiralty I, Vol. 486, p. 105); Journal of the Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book. For a list of His Majesty's ships, transports, victuallers, etc., which had sailed from Cork and were anchored in the Cape Fear River on May 15, 1776, see Appendix A.

18. Clinton to Howe, May 18, 1776 (Sir Henry Clinton Papers).

ships ready for sea. Water was taken aboard on May 28 and 29. General Clinton chafed at the delay, and on the 30th he dropped a note to Parker, suggesting that as time was passing the fleet should put to "sea immediately" with the master of each transport having sealed orders not to be opened until the pilots had been sent ashore. The vessels would then proceed to Bull Bay.<sup>19</sup>

In response to Clinton's goading, the fleet weighed anchor on May 30 and crossed the bar. Two vessels, Sphinx and Delegate, were detached during the night and proceeded down the coast "to look in" at Bull Bay and "to gain intelligence." The next morning, the fleet took advantage of a fair wind and beat its way toward the southwest. While running down the South Carolina coast, it encountered the sloop-of-war Ranger with the missing transports and victuallers. From the captain of Ranger, General Clinton received a letter written by Lord Germain on March 3. Clinton, on studying this dispatch, learned

if upon the arrival of the armament at Cape Fear . . . [he] should be of the opinion upon a mature consideration of all circumstances, that nothing could be soon effected that would be of real and substantial service and advantage, or that the making any attempt would expose the troops to great loss from the season being too far advanced, and that there should be a hazard of disappointing the service to the Northward that . . . [he would] in that case proceed immediately

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19. Clinton to Parker, May 30, 1776 (Clinton Papers); Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Sir Peter Parker Papers).

to join Maj. General Howe with . . . [his] whole Force, leaving however a Regiment or two if the purpose therein referred to could be affected.

Clinton, on discussing the subject with his staff and generals, concluded that the projected attack on Charleston fit the guidelines laid down by Lord Germain, and he determined to continue.<sup>20</sup>

On June 1 the fleet hove to and anchored off Bull Bay, where Parker was disappointed to learn from Capt. Anthony Hunt of Sphinx that, although his frigate had been off Charleston Bar since the 31st, he had been unable to discover any additional information regarding the harbor's defenses. Clinton, from his quarters aboard the transport Sovereign, now proposed that the shallow draft transports be sent into Bull Bay. Earlier Parker had cautioned the General that if the ships remained where they were, they would be endangered by the first storm. Parker, however, felt it unwise to take the fleet into Bull Bay, and that if an attack were made the fleet should go over Charleston Bar. Orders had been issued for the captains to have their ships prepared to weigh anchor in the morning. Meanwhile, Sphinx and the armed schooner St. Lawrence would sound the bar and, if any obstructions were encountered, remove them.<sup>21</sup>

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20. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776 (English Records ER 4, 1775-1776).

21. Parker to Clinton, June 1, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

Charleston Bar was not abreast the mouth of the harbor, but some distance beyond it. Inside the bar and paralleling the coast from a point opposite the Lighthouse to Cummings Point was an anchorage known as Five-Fathom Hole. The channel leading from Five-Fathom Hole into the harbor passed near the southwestern shore of Sullivan's Island.

Clinton had been thinking along similar lines. He told Cornwallis that he would "not attempt anything blindfolded," and "I must reconnoiter the object before I attempt it." If the ships could not anchor in safety in Bull Bay, he would propose that the fleet go over Charleston Bar and "there lay till the Plan of attack can be formed."<sup>22</sup> Captain Hunt reported Clinton's feelings to Sir Peter.

Sphinx and St. Lawrence spent the night anchored off Charleston Bar, as small boat crews sounded and dragged for obstructions. On the 2d they were joined by the frigate Active, while Ranger and Delegate stood in close to The Breach, separating Sullivan's and Long Island. (Long Island is now known as Isle of Palms.) Small boats were lowered and manned, and the coast of Long Island sounded as far as Rattlesnake Shoal.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Clinton to Cornwallis, June 1, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

23. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Sir Peter Parker Papers). The fleet's most experienced pilot had been aboard Ranger.

The Royal Governor of South Carolina, Sir William Campbell, who had accompanied the expedition, was familiar with the area, and he had some interesting information for Clinton and Parker. He assured them that Sullivan's Island was "a Post of the last consequence." For almost four months, during the previous year, the warships Tamar and Cherokee had prevented the Americans from taking possession of the island. If it were recaptured, Campbell forecast that with their naval power the British could keep possession. Two battalions of infantry and a detachment of artillery would be sufficient to hold Charleston, if supported by two frigates in the harbor.

Should it become necessary to bombard Charleston, he added, most of the buildings belonged "either to friends of Government or people entirely innocent of the present disturbances. Many Orphans & Widows . . . [have] their all vested in Houses," but he added, "many of the principal Rebels have considerable property."<sup>24</sup>

Whereas on June 1 the winds had been "fair," they shifted at 4 a.m. on the 2d and became "contrary." This led Parker to fear that should the fleet get under way for the bar, the transports

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24. Campbell to Clinton, June 2, 1776 (Germain Papers, MSS Collection, William E. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.).

would fall to the leeward. As the major guarantee of success at Charleston appeared to rest on a "coup de main," Sir Peter suggested to Clinton: (a) that the troops, covered by Ranger, St. Lawrence, and the armed ship Friendship, be landed on Sullivan's Island, near The Breach; (b) the frigates and Bristol would then cross Charleston Bar and make a diversion by bombarding the small batteries the Americans had reportedly thrown up at the Lighthouse and Cummings Point; (c) the mortar-ketch Thunder would take position at Cummings Point; and (d) if the situation were favorable the fleet would then cooperate with Clinton's regiments in an attack on the Sullivan's Island batteries. Should they reject this plan, Parker cautioned the generals, "a great deal of time may be lost, by anchoring the Transports within Charles Town Bar in Five-Fathom Hole."<sup>25</sup>

Clinton was astounded by Parker's proposition, because he had "marked out" for the navy "little more than reducing any insignificant Batteries that may be found" at the Lighthouse or Cummings Point. He believed that if the batteries on Sullivan's Island were to be taken, the warships must play the major role. It would be impossible for the army to disembark at or near The

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25. Parker to Clinton, June 2, 1776 (Germain Papers). Parker on the 3d had Friendship armed. 1st Lt. Charles Hope of Bristol was placed in command of the newly commissioned warship. There was no truth to the reports reaching the British that batteries had been erected at the Lighthouse and Cummings Point.

Breach, unless there was assurance: (a) that there was no surf; (b) that armed vessels could take position close enough in to cover the beach with their guns; and (c) that a naval landing force be held ready to cooperate with the army.

The General reiterated his view that the sooner the frigates crossed the bar, the better it would be for His Majesty's forces. The transports would follow.<sup>26</sup>

It was Parker's turn to be aroused, because he felt that the ships in his plan would "bear a very considerable Part." Not being tied down to reducing any major batteries, they would be ready to cooperate in the attack on the Sullivan's Island works. To insure there would be no further misunderstandings on this point, Parker assured Clinton, "His Majesty's Ships . . . shall during the course of the whole Expedition give every assistance in their Power."

If the ships sent to sound Charleston Bar and to reconnoiter the coasts of Sullivan's and Long Islands found conditions satisfactory, Parker promised that the navy would put the army ashore without a musket being fired.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Clinton to Parker, June 2, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

27. Parker to Clinton, June 2, 1776 (Germain Papers).

The Parker-Clinton dialogue was interrupted on the morning of June 4 when the fleet, except Ranger, made sail and got under way. Taking advantage of a fair wind, the ships ran down the coast from their anchorage in Bull Bay and at noon anchored off Charleston Bar. While the ships beat their way into position, Delegate, covered by Friendship, sounded the bar and buoyed Ship Channel. From the fleet anchorage off the bar, the sailors looked northwest and saw the graceful spire of St. Michael's Episcopal Church.<sup>28</sup>

Early in the afternoon, Parker had his barge lowered and manned and went aboard Sovereign for a conference with General Clinton. He felt that in this way agreement might be reached for joint-action by the army and navy. Out of this discussion, Parker had hoped that a meeting of the minds would be effected regarding a landing by the army on the northeastern shore of Long Island, as the first step in reducing the Sullivan's Island batteries. Although Clinton expressed interest in such an undertaking, Parker did not press the matter. Clinton, however, proposed that Ranger and St. Lawrence be sent across the bar and into Spence's Inlet.<sup>29</sup> Sir Peter was agreeable.

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28. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers), Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

29. Spence's Inlet is now known as Dewees Inlet.



As Parker was getting ready to reboard his barge, preparatory to returning to Bristol, Clinton repeated his view that the fleet should cross Charleston Bar, as soon as possible.

Back aboard Bristol, Parker signaled St. Lawrence and Friendship to join Ranger off Spence's Inlet. Orders were also issued alerting his captains that if the winds were favorable on the 6th, the frigates would get under way, go over the bar, and "make such attacks as may be necessary to possess themselves of the Harbour as far to the northward" as Cummings Point. By this action, the frigates would clear the way for the transports.

There were only three pilots in the fleet willing to carry the frigates over Charleston Bar, but they differed "so much among themselves" that Parker was afraid to place much dependence on them. Moreover, he was unable to secure information on how many ships could anchor in Five-Fathom Hole, or whether the water was deep enough to allow the vessels to take position within range of the American batteries.<sup>30</sup>

After Parker had departed, Clinton discussed the situation with his staff. They agreed to take possession of the north end of Long Island, as Parker suggested. The seven transports with the shallowest drafts would proceed to Spence's Inlet and take station there, provided they could anchor in safety.

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30. Parker to Clinton, June 5, 1776 (Germain Papers).

While Sir Peter had been aboard Sovereign, he had suggested that in the interest of inter-service harmony Clinton might transfer his headquarters to Bristol. Clinton, after reflection on Parker's invitation, declined, as he was subject to sea sickness. In relaying this information to Parker, the General pointed out that until such time as Five-Fathom Hole was sounded, and the fleet anchored safely inside the bar, he did not believe "any plan of consequence can be adopted." In the meantime, he would have Sovereign anchor as near Bristol as possible.

Clinton now requested that Friendship or some other vessel of light draft be stationed near the southwestern point of Long Island. This vessel would have a dual mission: she would engage any American ship that might debouch from The Breach, and she would cover the disembarkation of Clinton's redcoats on the Long Island beaches.<sup>31</sup>

Their exchanges on the 5th satisfied Clinton that he and Parker were now in general agreement "upon every measure that is necessary to be taken previous to the fleets [sic] going into safety within the Bar." Information had reached Clinton which satisfied him that there was "ample room for the whole fleet"

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31. Clinton to Parker, June 5, 1776 (Clinton Papers). Soundings taken by the crew of Ranger on June 4 had shown that vessels with a draft not exceeding 11 feet could cross the bar at Spence's Inlet. Parker to Clinton, June 5, 1776 (Germain Papers).

to anchor between the Lighthouse and Cummings Point. If he were mistaken, the light-draft transports could be ordered to Spence's Inlet, as soon as Ranger and St. Lawrence had secured that anchorage. The victuallers could be sent to Stono Creek, which would leave 30 ships to be anchored in Five-Fathom Hole.<sup>32</sup>

The wind was unfavorable on the 6th, so the fleet remained at anchor. On the following day, June 7, the wind had picked up and was blowing from the southeast. Satisfied that conditions were favorable, Parker signaled the ships to make sail. Successfully navigating Ship Channel, the frigates and most of the transports anchored in Five-Fathom Hole. One vessel, the victualler Prince of Piedmont, ran into trouble. She grounded hard and fast on North Breaker and bilged. Working parties were able to salvage her cargo but not the ship.

Meanwhile, the seven light-draft transports had joined Ranger and St. Lawrence at Spence's Inlet, while Friendship maneuvered herself into position off The Breach.

Bristol and a few of the deeper-draft transports had remained outside Charleston Bar. From the flagship's quarterdeck, Parker

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32. Clinton to Parker, June 6, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

had been studying through his glass the fort on Sullivan's Island. What he saw convinced him that if the fort were to be reduced, the 50 guns of Bristol would have to be brought to bear. He accordingly assembled all the captains of the squadron, and called before them all the masters and pilots to secure their opinions as to the possibility of taking Bristol over the bar. The pilots, as well as the masters familiar with Charleston Harbor, were in agreement that if she could be lightened to draw no more than 17 feet, six inches, Bristol could make the passage through tortuous Ship Channel.

Parker, satisfied that it could be done, ordered Captain John Morris to turn his crew to dismounting the guns of the flagship and transferring them to lighters.<sup>33</sup>

It took the tars two days to lighten Bristol. On the 9th the sailors cheered as the remaining transports and Thunder crossed the bar. The next day, at 11 a.m., the big ship-of-the-line weighed anchor and beat her way toward Ship Channel. Bristol touched on the bar, but she slid off and sailed into Five-Fathom

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33. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

Hole, where she was received by three cheers from the rest of the fleet.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, General Clinton with 500 soldiers on the 9th had made an unopposed landing on the beaches at the northeastern end of Long Island. As soon as the patrols which were pushed out returned with news that there were no Americans on the island, Clinton had his men establish an entrenched camp and bring in supplies in small boats through the booming surf.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

35. *Ibid.*; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers).

## CHAPTER II

### The Americans Gird for the Test

South Carolina, with the aid of the Continental Congress, by the time the British fleet hove to off Bull Bay had nearly completed plans for the defense of Charleston Harbor. By the beginning of 1776, the Continental Congress had recognized that "it appears the British ministry and their agents have meditated and are preparing to make attacks upon Charleston . . . and several places in Virginia and probably in North Carolina" and recommended that the committees of these colonies make a "vigorous defense."

These words were hardly necessary for South Carolina. Charleston had a long Whig tradition, and from the first clash with Royal Governor Campbell, its leaders recognized its exposed position. The town had enjoyed its own tea party and the Whigs had spirited away public gunpowder and royal arms under cover of darkness. In June 1775 the province had raised two regiments, the 1st and 2d, of a thousand men each, and a regiment (the 3d) of rangers for the frontier. It had taken possession of Fort Johnson, established a Rebel Government, and for President had elected John Rutledge, the influential dean of the Charleston bar.

By the time the Continental Congress succumbed to the pressure of its Southern members, and on March 1, 1776, designated

Maj. Gen. Charles Lee to command the newly created Southern Department, fatigue parties were already fortifying the city and harbor. With Lee in command, the Congress believed that Charleston would be secure, for next to General George Washington the legislators considered him America's ablest general.

Lee headed south and established his headquarters in the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia, prepared to direct the defense of that colony. He concluded that since North Carolina had little strategic importance, the British Southern Expedition would land either in Virginia or South Carolina.

Because of the extended absence from Charleston of Col. Christopher Gadsden of the 1st South Carolina Regiment, who was a member of the Second Continental Congress, the direction of the city's defense rested on the colonel of the 2d Regiment, William Moultrie.<sup>1</sup> Moultrie was of medium height, stout, and red-faced. He had served in the militia for years and had been in combat against the Cherokees.<sup>2</sup>

Charleston, which had a population of about 3,500, was located at the point of the peninsula formed by the confluence

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1. Scheer and Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats*, pp. 148-150; Ward, *War of the Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 665-670.

2. Scheer and Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats*, p. 150.

of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers. Two islands faced each other across the entrance to Charleston Harbor, Sullivan's Island to the northeast and Morris Island to the southwest. Sullivan's Island lay northeast and southwest, its western one-third curving in like a cupped hand toward Charleston. One and one-half miles southwest of the southernmost point of Sullivan's Island was the northernmost tip of Morris Island, Cummings Point. Fort Johnson, the fort guarding the southern entrance to the harbor, was on James Island, two and one-eighth miles southwest of the western tip of Sullivan's Island. The anchorage between Fort Johnson and Sullivan's Island was known as Rebellion Road. Because of a large shoal, upon which Fort Sumter was subsequently erected, ships entering Charleston Harbor had to navigate a course that skirted the southwestern shore of Sullivan's Island. The entrance to the harbor in turn was shielded by Charleston Bar, which was not abreast the mouth of the harbor, but some distance south of it. There were six passes through the bar. From north to south they were: Five Feet Channel, Eight Feet Channel, Middle Channel, The Swash, Ship Channel, and Lawford's Channel. Only the last two could be navigated by deep-draft vessels. A lighthouse on Morris Island was located opposite Ship Channel. Between Charleston



Bar and the entrance to the harbor was a large anchorage, Five-Fathom Hole.<sup>3</sup>

Colonel Moultrie on March 2, 1776, had been ordered by President Rutledge to proceed to Sullivan's Island to take command of the force engaged in building a "large fort" designed by the engineers to be defended by 1,000 men. When he reached the island, Moultrie found a "great number of mechanics and negroe laborers" had been turned out to complete the works, as it was looked upon as the key to Charleston Harbor.<sup>4</sup>

Several officers had preceded Moultrie to the island, one of whom was Capt. Peter Horry. His company had been given the mission of preventing the British warships Tamar and Cherokee from putting ashore landing parties. Horry and his people had not been there very long before Moultrie and his regiment arrived. In the following weeks thousands of palmetto logs to be used in building the fort were rafted over from the mainland by Negro work gangs. Horry likened the fort to an "immense pen, 500 feet long, and 16 feet wide, filled with sand to stop the shot."

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3. "Map of the Clinton Collection, 302, Charleston, the British Attack of 1776"; "An Exact Plan of Charles-Town-Bar and Harbour, from an Actual Survey," Cartographic Branch, Library of Congress.

4. William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* . . . 2 vols. (New York, 1802), Vol. 1, p. 124.

For their platforms, the soldiers used two-inch plank, nailed down with spikes.<sup>5</sup>

Word was soon received that the British at Boston were outfitting an expedition to send against Charleston. This news caused Moultrie to call for round-the-clock fatigue details. All the mechanics and laborers in and about Charleston were turned out. A great number of Negroes were brought in from the country. To Colonel Moultrie it seemed that "every one was busy, and everything went on with great spirit."<sup>6</sup>

Then in mid-May there were reports that Sir Peter Parker with a formidable squadron had arrived in the Cape Fear, and that either Virginia or Charleston was his goal. The Charlestonians' morale soared when they learned that General Lee was en route to their assistance with 1,300 Virginia troops, who had been reinforced along the way by 700 North Carolinians.<sup>7</sup>

The activities of the frigate Sphinx and Pensacola Packet caused tremendous excitement in late May. It was common knowledge among the defenders that they had been sent down from the Cape

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5. Peter Horry and Mason L. Weems, *The Life of General Francis Marion* . . . (Philadelphia, 1866), pp. 36-37.

6. Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 124.

7. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 277-278.

Fear to reconnoiter. Five of Moultrie's bargemen had gone out to the frigate. Their barge was "hoisted with sails standing athwart the Bowsprit of the Man of War & to hang there for a whole day." Many people ashore believed it was a "way of Bravado or prehaps [sic] as an innuendo of what they would do with the Owner if they could lay their lands on him." The Americans were dismayed, when a small boat party from Sphinx burned the prize, St. James. When the two ships vanished, there was a realization that they would soon return with the fleet.

On May 31 several couriers reached Charleston from the President of Christ Church Parish with word that a large fleet had been sighted off Dewees Island. The next day several ships appeared off Charleston Bar, while it was said that between "38 and 40 sail" had anchored off Bull Bay. The appearance of the fleet threw the city into the wildest confusion. President Rutledge and the Council dispatched express riders to all parts of the Province with calls for the militia. Men dashed about Charleston looking for horses, carriages, and boats to send their families into the country. As refugees fled the town, they encountered the militia from the parishes marching in. Barricades were erected in the principal streets, while flèches were thrown up at any point where it was believed the British might disembark. In accordance with an appeal from the Council,

the lead was removed from the windows of churches and dwellings to be cast into musket balls. Nothing was left undone to receive an attack, which was expected within the week.<sup>8</sup> At least one member of the militia, Richard Hutson, was unimpressed with the troops that had rallied to the Patriot cause. Since his arrival in Charleston, all that he had seen caused him to "have less and less opinion of our soldiery and I expect that when it comes to the push we shall be obliged to do all ourselves."<sup>9</sup>

The alarm gun was fired on the 2d, and the fortifications were inspected by President Rutledge and Brig. Gen. John Armstrong, and "preparations for the most vigorous defence ordered."<sup>10</sup> That evening the frigate Active was seen to beat her way up from the windward and anchor off the bar.

Colonel Moultrie and his troops on Sullivan's Island watched on June 3 as Ranger and Delegate put in toward shore. The smaller vessel spent most of the day sounding the approaches to Long Island

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8. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 40; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 279-280.

9. Hutson to Hayne, May 27, 1776, Hutson Papers, University of North Carolina MSS Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

10. General Armstrong had been sent to Charleston in late April by General Lee in response to a call for help from President Rutledge. Scheer and Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats*, p. 149; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 279.

and The Breach. Moultrie therefore concluded that the landing would be made in the area for which he was responsible. When he relayed this information to President Rutledge, Moultrie wrote:

Our fort is now enclosed. It is the opinion of everyone, that we should have more men at this post; but, as I know they cannot be spared from the capital, I must make the best defence I can with what I have got; and doubt not, but that I shall give 4 or 500 men a great deal of trouble before they can dislodge me from this post.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, Capt. Barnard Beekman had been placed in charge of the four 18-pounders emplaced at Haddrell Point. No reinforcement could be spared for Sullivan's Island. As if this weren't serious enough, Moultrie was notified by President Rutledge that if Beekman called for reinforcement, "you will send it, if it can be spared."<sup>12</sup>

Work continued to be pushed on strengthening the defenses. Every male Negro in the area had been pressed into service by the 6th. A battery was erected on Gadsden's Wharf. Should the fleet succeed in passing the bar, the Americans believed, the fort on Sullivan's Island would be attacked on Sunday, the 10th.

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11. Moultrie to Rutledge, June 3, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 146-147.

12. Rutledge to Moultrie, June 4, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

Preparations to defend the city were pushed. Detachments from the parish militia continued to arrive. General Lee was momentarily expected with 700 Continentals.<sup>13</sup>

Charles C. Pinckney, whose regiment was posted at Fort Johnson, wrote his mother that on the 4th the fleet had anchored off Charleston Bar. Fifty-two vessels had been counted, but many of them were very small. He did not believe that there were more than seven warships and a few tenders; the rest would be transports--some with troops and some with provisions. As the wind was out of the northwest on the 6th, they could not cross the bar, so there would be no "fighting today."<sup>14</sup>

General Lee reached Charleston on the 8th and took command of the troops.<sup>15</sup> His presence caused morale to soar, as he enjoyed a reputation as "an able, brave, and

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13. Hutson to Hutson, June 7, 1776, (Hutson Papers). Captain Mowat had arrived from North Carolina on the 4th with a dispatch from General Lee that he was hurrying to the defense of Charleston with several regiments of Continentals.

14. Pinckney to Mother, June 6, 1776, found in R. W. Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 1.

15. The force assembled by the Americans for the defense of Charleston numbered 6,500 officers and men. Included were: 1,400 North Carolina Continentals; 500 Virginia Continentals; 1,950 South Carolina Continentals; 700 Charleston militia; and 1,972 Parish Militia. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 281-282.

experienced officer, though hasty and rough in his manners." Many, including Colonel Moultrie, felt that Lee's arrival was equal to a reinforcement of 1,000 men, because he taught them to "think lightly of the enemy," while he infused them with vigor. Charles Pinckney allowed that while General Lee was "very clever," he was a strange animal, but as Samuel Adams had written, "we must put up with ten thousand oddities in him on account of his ability and his attachment to the rights of humanity."<sup>16</sup>

Lee's effect on the rank and file was electric, however. Richard Hutson trusted that the General would be the "Instrument in the Hands of Providence of Saving Charles Town." The soldiers cheered when he told them that he had served under General Clinton, and he knew "him to be a dam'd fool and that he will now make him sensible of it himself." If Clinton did not attack soon, Lee boasted, he would send him a challenge.<sup>17</sup>

After reporting to President Rutledge and discussing the plan of defense, Lee mounted his horse and inspected the works. He was blunt and to the point in ordering changes. He was

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16. Pinckney to Mother, June 15, 1776, found in Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 4; Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 141.

17. Hutson to Benjamin Stone, June 24, 1776 (Hutson Papers).

unimpressed with the site of the "New Battery," and his first question on seeing it was, "What damn fool planned this Battery?" A bystander replied that it had been located by Chief Justice John Drayton. "Well," Lee retorted, "he may be a very good Chief Justice but he is a damn bad Engineer, for if the enemy had the planning of it, they could not have fixed it in a better place for the reduction of Fort Johnson." The work was accordingly demolished, and the three guns transferred to Fort Johnson.<sup>18</sup>

Lee was omnipresent as he made the rounds. He spent hours in the saddle or in boats checking on the defenses and overseeing the construction of new and strengthening of old fortifications. He was unimpressed with the Sullivan's Island defenses. At the time of his arrival, the parapet at the rear of the work was not more than "a few feet high," and the main gate was unfinished. The troops of the 2d South Carolina were camped behind the works "in huts and booths covered with palmetto leaves." The only men posted in the fort were those assigned to the guard. "Mechanics and laborers were so numerous, in pressing on the work, and in lifting and fitting the heavy palmetto logs, which walled in the fort"

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18. Hutson to Stone, June 24, 1776 (Hutson Papers).



that Moultrie feared that posting his regiment in the fort would "inconvenience the public service."<sup>19</sup>

Lee was disturbed to see that the Sullivan's Island fort was sited so that a bend in the island would permit an approach to its right flank by ships passing around the western tip of the island and into The Cove. Once the ships had anchored in The Cove, they would be able to enfilade the fort's front platform on which most of the heavy guns were mounted. To cope with this situation, he ordered Moultrie to have screens erected on the platform to shield the gun crews and a traverse thrown up to divide the fort. The traverse would enable the Americans to hold on in the forward portion of the fort, in case the British stormed the rear parapet, which had not been raised to its planned height, and secured a lodgment in the unfinished section of the fort. When built, the traverse consisted of a breastwork of sand, behind which soldiers armed with pikes and muskets could take shelter.<sup>20</sup>

Before returning to the mainland, General Lee complained to Moultrie that he had no line of retreat and that the garrison would be destroyed. Calling the fort a "slaughter pen," he wished to

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19. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 282-283; C. C. Jones, *Sergeant William Jasper* (Albany, 1876), p. 13. Work on the rear parapet had been commenced on June 4.

20. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 284-285; Jones, *Sergeant Jasper*, pp. 13-14.

withdraw the garrison and abandon the work without a fight.<sup>21</sup> President Rutledge, however, refused. Whereupon, Lee urged the necessity of positioning a bridge of boats to enable the troops to escape across The Cove to the mainland should the need arise. There were not enough small craft, as the distance to the mainland was nearly a mile. A floating bridge was accordingly constructed of empty hogsheads anchored by grapnels. Planks were laid from hogshead to hogshead. To test the floating bridge, Lt. Col. Thomas Clark with 200 men was ordered down from Haddrell Point. Before the troops were halfway across, the bridge became so overloaded that it started to sink, and the soldiers scrambled back to the mainland.

The absence of a secure line of retreat continued to plague Lee, and he bombarded Moultrie with words of caution. Moultrie was unconcerned, for as he recalled, "I never imagined that the enemy could force me to the necessity; I always considered myself as able to defend that post against the enemy."<sup>22</sup>

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21. At the time of Lee's arrival in Charleston there were about 1,200 men on Sullivan's Island, but he soon reduced the garrison to about 600, as he stated in public that the "fort could not hold out half an hour, and that the platform was a slaughtering stage." Drayton MSS, June 28, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

22. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 141-142.

On checking with President Rutledge, General Lee learned that the force charged with the defense of Sullivan's Island included, in addition to Colonel Moultrie's Regiment, 300 Rangers of the 3d South Carolina under Col. William Thomson of the Orangeburg District, Col. Clark with 200 North Carolina Continentals, Capt. Peter Horry with 200 South Carolinians, and the Raccoon Company of 50 riflemen. Thomson's regiment was encamped at the northeastern end of Sullivan's Island behind the dunes and myrtle. His people were responsible for manning the "Advance Guard," a work behind which were emplaced an 18-pounder and a brass 6-pounder. These pieces were sighted to command The Breach. If the British established a beachhead in this area, Thomson's riflemen were to hang on their flanks as they pushed down the beach toward the fort.<sup>23</sup>

Before attacking the defenses of Charleston Harbor, General Clinton insisted that a proclamation calling on them to lay down

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23. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 142-143. When information was received that Clinton was organizing a Southern Expedition, Thomson's regiment had been ordered to the coast. Thomson had been born in 1727 in Pennsylvania and, while still a child, he had moved with his family to South Carolina. The Thomsons had settled on the west side of the Congaree River. Thomson had held the office of Sheriff of the Orangeburg District and had served in the Provincial Legislature. When it was determined to raise three regiments for the defense of South Carolina, he was elected Colonel of the 3d. Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences, Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* . . . (Charleston, 1851), pp. 90-91.

their arms be handed to the Rebel leaders. In addition, he believed the party sent with the proclamation could avail itself of the "opportunity of squinting" at Sullivan's Island. On June 7 as soon as the frigates had crossed the bar, a small boat cast off, hoisted a white flag, and pulled toward the strand. A sentry, who misunderstood his orders, fired on the craft as it approached the island. The boat put about and would not return, notwithstanding that the officer sent to receive the flag waved his handkerchief and called on the British to come ashore.<sup>24</sup>

President Rutledge was understandably distressed to learn that the flag had been fired upon, and he directed Moultrie to "send off a flag immediately, by a discreet officer, with a proper letter to the commanding officer of the British fleet, acquainting him, that this act was committed by mistake." He was to assure the British that a messenger would be properly received. Moultrie

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24. Moultrie to Rutledge, June 7, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 147-148. Clinton to Parker, undated (Clinton Papers); *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776. The officer in charge of the boat, to facilitate his intelligence gathering mission, was to steer a course toward the angle of the fort's left bastion, and then row up toward the right bastion before landing. Thus, he would be able to ascertain if the Americans had erected an abatis and the conditions of the defenses.

at the same time was cautioned not to let the British take advantage of the flag to reconnoiter the works.<sup>25</sup>

Captain Francis Huger was entrusted by Moultrie with visiting the fleet to apologize to Sir Peter Parker for the blunder. This he did on the morning of June 8. General Clinton was satisfied with the explanation. That afternoon the British flag of truce boat delivered Clinton's Proclamation, which exhorted an immediate return to duty, and offered in His Majesty's name pardon to all who would lay down their arms and submit to the laws. President Rutledge and the Council rejected the British demands.<sup>26</sup>

On the 7th, the day that most of the fleet crossed Charleston Bar and anchored in Five-Fathom Hole, Moultrie's scouts sighted the light-draft transports as they beat their way up the coast toward Spence's Inlet. Moultrie relayed this news to President Rutledge. General Lee, on his arrival the next day, ordered Moultrie to have Long Island reconnoitered to see if the ground

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25. Rutledge to Moultrie, June 7, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 148.

26. Horry and Weems, *Life of General Marion*, pp. 16-17; *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776.

afforded the Americans any opportunity to embarrass the British if they came ashore.<sup>27</sup>

Information that the British had landed on Long Island reached Lee's command post at 8 p.m. on June 9. The aggressive Lee, having been told that the island's ground cover and terrain were favorable for sharpshooters, messaged Moultrie to rush Thomson's and Sumter's regiments, reinforced by Alston's, Mayham's, and Coutirier's companies to Long Island. This force would attack and drive the British into the sea. Two field pieces were to be positioned in the Advance Guard to cover The Breach and the column's line of retreat should it suffer a repulse.<sup>28</sup>

It was the afternoon of the 10th before Lee's order was delivered to Moultrie, who, on reading it, decided that his General had desired him to send off the column early that morning. As it was now late in the day, Moultrie threw Thomson's force into the Advance Guard. Their boats were secreted until nightfall, when they would cross The Breach and make a forced reconnaissance.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Lee to Moultrie, June 8, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 149-150; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 288.

28. Lee to Moultrie, June 8 [sic], 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 150-151. Lee on the 9th was placed by President Rutledge in command of all the troops, both Continentals and militia in South Carolina.

29 Moultrie to Lee, June 10, 1776, found in *Ibid*, p. 153.

The crossing of the bar by the ship-of-the-line Bristol caused General Lee to have a change of heart. Moultrie was directed to forget about dislodging the British from Long Island and to concentrate his efforts on completing the bridge connecting Sullivan's Island with the mainland.<sup>30</sup> Lee was understandably disappointed to learn from Colonel Moultrie that the floating bridge was impracticable, especially as he had been assured on his arrival from Virginia that it was. As he was of the opinion that the Americans' position on Sullivan's Island would be strengthened if a large force of riflemen was posted on the mainland, he called on Moultrie to return 400 of the reinforcements ordered to him on the 9th. These people on their return were to take position with their right at Haddrell Point and their left extending along Sullivan's Island Narrows Creek toward Long Island. Besides covering Moultrie's retreat, they could prevent the British from erecting works on Sullivan's Island, provided they secured a beachhead. This force was to be on the alert, and if there was an absence of natural cover, the troops were to entrench.<sup>31</sup>

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30. Lee to Moultrie, June 10, 1776, found in *Ibid.*, p. 153.

31. Lee to Moultrie, June 11, 1776, found in *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

Forty-eight hours later, Lee notified Moultrie that he was satisfied that the security of the fort on Sullivan's Island was dependent "entirely on the strength or weakness of the corps stationed on the other side of the creek." Consequently, as soon as the works on the mainland had been finished, Moultrie was to detach another 100 men to bolster the 400 previously sent.<sup>32</sup>

The crossing of Charleston Bar by Bristol and the landing by Clinton's soldiers on Long Island caused Moultrie to break up the camp of his 2d South Carolina. After striking their tents and razing their huts, the regiment moved bag and baggage into the works. Most of the mechanics and laborers now returned to the mainland. Capt. Ferdinand DeBraham, an engineer, was rushed over to Sullivan's Island to oversee the construction of some breastworks adjacent to the fort and at the Advance Guard.<sup>33</sup>

In Charleston, orders were issued on June 10 to tear down a number of buildings along the wharves to clear fields of fire. Fatigue parties of whites and Negroes were turned out at this

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32. Lee to Moultrie, June 13, 1776, found in *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

33. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 288.



time to erect earthworks on the approaches to the town, while the principal streets were barricaded.<sup>34</sup>

Colonel Moultrie, unlike General Lee, kept his cool. Captain Lamperer, an experienced sailor who had commanded a privateer, visited the fort. While he was walking alongside Moultrie on the platform he pointed to the fleet and exclaimed, "Well Colonel what do you think of it now!"

Moultrie replied coldly, "We should beat them."

"Sir, when those ships . . . come to lay along side of your fort, they will knock it down in half an hour!"

"We will lay behind the ruins and prevent their men from landing," Moultrie answered.<sup>35</sup>

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34. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776.

35. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 143-144.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Americans Man Their Battle Stations

Gen. Henry Clinton on June 11, 1776, while the Americans rushed work on their fortifications, ordered the troops that had remained with the fleet to proceed to Spence's Inlet. Several hours were spent transferring the soldiers and their equipment to the lighter draft transports (Nancy, Pallifor, Myrtle, Earl of Derby, and Saville). Before the ships could recross Charleston Bar, the wind picked up and veered around to the northeast. There were severe afternoon squalls, and the vessels were unable to make sail.

By the next morning, the wind had gathered strength and fears were voiced by Sir Peter Parker and his captains for the safety of the fleet. A distress signal was hoisted early in the afternoon by the schooner Lady William, and a sloop with rum and stores for the army was driven ashore near the Lighthouse. To escape the blow, the big East Indiaman Harcourt and the armed ship Friendship, which were still outside the bar, put out to sea. Along toward evening, much to the sailors' delight, the storm abated.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book; *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776. Lord William Campbell was aboard *Lady William*.

On the 13th Sir Peter sent a small boat expedition to recover the cargo from the sloop, but she had disappeared. The crew hailed the boats from the shore, calling that their ship had drifted free during the night and had been taken in tow by one of the Americans' pilot boats. General Clinton, who had returned from Long Island, had accompanied the expedition. Landing through a heavy surf, the General and his party examined the Morris Island beaches near the Lighthouse.<sup>2</sup>

The storm taught the British a lesson in regard to communications. Clinton on the 13th proposed that a system of signals be fixed upon to be employed in the operations against Sullivan's Island. On the morning of the attack (every circumstance of wind, weather, and tide favoring the undertaking), Parker would notify the captain of Friendship, who would relay the intelligence to Clinton.

Unless he encountered unexpected difficulties, Clinton proposed to have his footsoldiers seize the north end of Sullivan's Island to serve as a staging area for an assault on the Rebel works. The landing on Sullivan's Island would probably take place before the fleet had changed its position, while the attack on the fortifications "probably would not." Should some unforeseen

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2. *Ibid.*

development cause him to attack sooner, red flags would be brandished from the Sullivan's Island hummocks. If the assault were successful, the Union Jack would be displayed on the battery, but if it failed the red flags would be lowered and replaced with yellow colors.<sup>3</sup>

Parker, on receipt of Clinton's letter, replied that on the morning that he was to bombard the Sullivan's Island fortifications, he would have hoisted a blue flag at Bristol's mainmast. Clinton was to acknowledge by having the captain of Friendship run up the Union Jack. Should Clinton desire the fleet to commence bombardment, he was to have Friendship loose her main top gallant sail. But if he wished the attack postponed one day, she was to hoist her ensign at the main top gallant masthead.<sup>4</sup>

These arrangements perfected, Generals Clinton and Cornwallis on the 14th boarded a schooner which ran them up the coast and put them ashore at the base camp on the northern tip of Long Island. The next day, the five troopships followed. It took three days, June 16-18, for the small boats to land all the soldiers and their gear through a heavy surf. By nightfall on

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3. Clinton to Parker, June 13, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

4. Parker to Clinton, June 13, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

the 18th, all the Redcoats, except a few recruits left aboard the transports to confuse the Americans, were ashore.<sup>5</sup>

Clinton and Cornwallis were in agreement that the army could best cooperate with the fleet by taking possession of Long Island. Their decision had been influenced by reports that The Breach could be forded by infantry at ebb tide. Their informants also told them that the creeks separating Long and Sullivan's Islands from the mainland were navigable by light-draft vessels.<sup>6</sup>

Charles Pinckney, like most Americans, was unable to understand why the British delayed attacking. Writing his mother on the 15th, he informed her that one warship and seven transports had left their anchorage in Five-Fathom Hole and had stood up the coast. He was confident the British were "much weaker than they are generally reputed to be, or their councils are much divided," because they had failed to act in "resolute manner." If there was no attack before Monday, the 17th, the Patriot defenses would be ready. Even if they attacked as early as the 16th, he forecast, they would "repent it," as

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5. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776; Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

6. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776.

you would scarcely know the environs of the town again, so many lines, bastions, redans, and military mince-  
pie have been made all around it, that the appearance  
of it is quite metamorphosed. All the houses on the  
wharves are pulled down, so that the town looks from  
the water much handsomer than it ever did. Every  
person there is obliged to work; and the tories,  
(reluctantly I believe) now work with the rest.<sup>7</sup>

As if in answer to Pinckney's letter, there was action  
ashore and afloat on June 16. About the time that Pinckney  
was writing his mother, a sloop commanded by Capt. Francis  
Morgan was approaching Charleston Bar. She had sailed several  
weeks before from St. Eustatius with powder and shot for the  
Patriot forces. Captain Morgan accordingly did not know of  
the arrival of the British Expedition. When his lookout reported  
a forest of sail in Five-Fathom Hole, Morgan altered course and  
made for Stono Inlet. Her pilot was unfamiliar with these waters,  
and the vessel went hard aground.

The sloop was not sighted by the British until the next  
morning, when Sir Peter Parker ordered out a small boat expedition  
under Lieutenant Molloy of Bristol to capture her and secure her  
cargo as a prize. Although his vessel was armed with ten 4-pounders,  
Captain Morgan, seeing the size of the approaching force, felt  
resistance would be hopeless. He and his 26-man crew, after opening

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7. Pinckney to Mother, June 15, 1776, found in Gibbes'  
*Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 4.

the seacocks, abandoned their vessel and escaped ashore. The British on boarding the sloop found that she carried, in addition to the ordnance stores, rum and sugar. After satisfying himself that the vessel could not be salvaged, Molloy set her afire and returned to the fleet. When the fire reached the hold in which the 300 barrels of powder were stored, the explosion was "prodigious."<sup>8</sup>

On the morning of June 16, Colonel Thomson was at the Advance Guard and sighted about 200 grenadiers and a light infantry battalion coming down the Long Island beach. The Redcoats halted and took position about three-quarters of a mile from The Breach. As soon as they had deployed across the island, small boats began coming through the surf and put ashore an estimated 1,700 British regulars. After the last of the soldiers had landed, they formed and marched up the beach toward Dewees Island. Through his glass it looked to Thomson as if the British had brought along their tents in expectation of establishing a camp.

Thomson carried this news to Moultrie. On doing so, he urged that the rest of his regiment be ordered to join him from the

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8. Hutson to Stone, June 24, 1776 (Hutson Papers); *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776; Parker to Clinton, June 16, 1776 (Germain Papers). Besides the 300 barrels of powder, the sloop's cargo included: 20 chests of cartridges, several hundred stands of arms, 90 hogsheads of rum, and a quantity of sugar.

mainland. Unless he were reinforced, he questioned his ability to repulse the foe should they cross The Breach. Moultrie contacted General Armstrong. (On the 15th Lee had placed Armstrong in command of the American defenses covering the northern approaches to Charleston Harbor.) "It might prove interesting," Moultrie wrote, "if Armstrong visited Sullivan's Island and took a look at the expanse of ground for which Thomson was responsible."<sup>9</sup>

General Armstrong, after studying Moultrie's letter, promised to comply with Thomson's request. The troops called over to the mainland on the 10th would be returned. But unless Moultrie could provide the boats it would be impossible to cross the men before the next day. Unlike Moultrie, Armstrong was disturbed by the failure of the floating bridge, for he complained, "I wish the situation of the bridge may not be fatal to us, as we must assist each other." The movement of the British column toward Dewees Island indicated to Armstrong that General Clinton might be planning to establish a beachhead on the mainland, probably at Bolton's Landing.<sup>10</sup>

Thomson, upon the return of his men, undertook to ascertain the intentions of the British. A number of Thomson's Rangers,

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9. Lee to Moultrie, June 15, and Moultrie to Armstrong, June 16, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 156-157, 176. Armstrong had established his headquarters at Haddrell Point.

10. Armstrong to Moultrie, June 16, 1776, in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 157-158.



encouraged by President Rutledge's offer of 30 guineas for the first prisoner, crossed to Long Island under the cover of darkness. They were unsuccessful. On the morning of the 21st, a British patrol tracked them to The Breach. As soon as the sentries at the Advance Guard sighted the British, they opened fire with artillery. The British halted and replied by "Platoons of Musketry." The schooner Lady William and pilot boat Raven had anchored in Hamlin Creek, while small boat crews sounded with lead lines. Turning their cannon on the ships, the Americans registered several hits on them before they were able to weigh anchor and get out of range. After several hours, both sides ceased fire. In this skirmish three Americans were wounded, two by small-arms fire, and the other had a hand blown off. As he was loading a field piece, there was a premature discharge caused when one of the gunners neglected to sponge the cannon.<sup>11</sup>

This skirmish returned General Lee's attention to Sullivan's Island. He was dismayed to learn at this time that the traverse he had ordered Engineer DeBraham to throw up within the fort was so "illy executed as to threaten a speedy fall." He urged Moultrie to have it corrected before it was too late. He was also concerned

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11. Hutson to Stone, June 24, 1776 (Hutson Papers); *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776.

by information that Colonel Thomson's cannoneers had employed their cannon at ranges too great to be effective. Moultrie was to caution his artillerists that in the future no cannon, "great or small, should be fired at a greater distance than 400 yards." Words would have no effect, he wrote, unless Moultrie made an example of the first man to disobey. Moreover, as the bridge connecting Sullivan's Island with the mainland had not been completed, the aide who carried this message was to remain with Moultrie until it was.<sup>12</sup>

To facilitate the construction of the bridge across Sullivan's Island Narrows Creek, it was necessary to dispatch a man to Charleston to requisition planking. By the 23d, he was back with the necessary materials. Col. Peter Muhlenberg reached Charleston that evening with his regiment of Virginia Continentals, thus greatly strengthening the American force in the city. On relaying this information to Moultrie, Lee promised to be down in the morning with a "body of workmen, and put you, I hope, in a state of great security." If Moultrie's people would just do their duty, Lee believed that Charleston could be held.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Lee to Moultrie, June 21, 1776, in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 158-159. In addition, Lee wanted the two guns at the Advance Guard moved to a more secure position.

13. Lee to Moultrie, June 23, 1776, found in *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 164.

As the days passed, Lee was able to evaluate Colonel Moultrie's strength and weakness. He realized that Moultrie was not a strict disciplinarian, and that when the South Carolinian issued orders he should not "suffer them to be trifled with." While all spoke of Moultrie's spirit and zeal, all accused him of being "too easy in command." Lee urged Moultrie to "let your orders be as few as possible but let them be punctually obeyed." Before he gave DeBraham any more assignments, Moultrie should satisfy himself that "he understands the principle of the work he undertakes, and the mode of executing it." If DeBraham did not, Lee would send another officer with experience as an engineer, Mr. Atway Byrd.<sup>14</sup>

This letter had been triggered by the discovery that the platform screens had not been erected, nor the traverse in the fort completed. Besides pushing work on these projects, Moultrie and his engineer were to lay out an "advanced fleche" northwest of the fort, designed to cope with an attacking force approaching from The Cove.<sup>15</sup>

Priority was given to the traverse and, accordingly, work dragged on the Advanced Fleche and the screens for the platform.

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14. Lee to Moultrie, June 22, 1776, found in *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 160-162.

15. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 284-285.

These two projects were far from completed on June 28-- the day of the attack.

Despite Lee's complaints Moultrie failed to push his men hard. This led to a fresh exchange on the 25th, when at daybreak the cannon emplaced in the Advance Guard opened on the British schooners, which had entered Hamlin Creek and were sounding the channel between Long Island and the mainland. The Americans' fire came too close for comfort, and the ships were obliged to retire.

General Armstrong, on hearing the distant booms, sped a messenger to inquire of Moultrie the nature of the firing. At the same time, he expressed an opinion that the British would not attempt a landing on Sullivan's Island "until the armed vessels" took position before the fort.

The bridge, which had just been completed across Sullivan's Island Narrows Creek, would plague the Americans, Armstrong warned. Already there had been difficulty. Men of Colonel Horry's regiment, when ordered to cross over to the island, had "refused until the passage between the two places is safely passable." This difficulty had been compounded, when one of Moultrie's sergeants sent to meet Horry's people and stake out a route through the marsh on the Sullivan's Island side of the bridge had not shown up. Moreover,

Horry's troops had been unable to locate the boards that were supposedly laid to facilitate their crossing of the swamp.<sup>16</sup>

When Lee learned of this difficulty, he sent Lt. Nicholas Massenburg to replace Captain DeBraham as Moultrie's chief engineer. In view of the refusal of some of Horry's men to serve on Sullivan's Island, Armstrong was directed to send 100 volunteers to strengthen Colonel Thomson's command. Lee hoped, he wrote, that "we may live to thank that part of Horry's regiment which has most magnanimously refused to take this duty."<sup>17</sup>

Despite the arrival of a new engineer and Lee's chiding, work on the vital bridge and its approaches continued to drag. By the morning of June 28, it was still unsatisfactory, for at 6 a.m. Lee wrote Moultrie, "If the bridge cannot be finished without taking down the old . . . take it down without ceremony."<sup>18</sup>

While Lee continued to fret about Moultrie's ability to hold Sullivan's Island and his lackadaisical attitude, Moultrie briefed Colonel Thomson as to his actions should the British cross The Breach. He was to abandon the Advance Guard and, with his troops, take cover in the fort. The addition of Thomson's command would

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16. Armstrong to Moultrie, June 25, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 162-163; Journal of Expedition to Charleston; S. C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

17. Lee to Moultrie, June 25 and 27, 1776, found in Moultrie *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 164-165.

18. Lee to Moultrie, June 27 and 28, 1776, found in *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 165-167.

increase the garrison to about 1,000 effectives. Moultrie was strengthened in his resolve to hold on to the fort by knowledge that General Armstrong was within one and one-half miles with 1,500 men. But Armstrong's people, in view of the bridge difficulties, would have to cross The Cove in small boats.

Moultrie, after discussing the situation at length with Lee, expressed himself as satisfied that he could cope with any landing force the British might bring against him. As for the fleet, he argued that His Majesty's navy would let the army spearhead the attack. One day while Lee was at the fort, he took Moultrie aside and inquired, "Colonel . . . do you think you can maintain this post?"

"Yes, I think I can," was the reply.<sup>19</sup>

On the morning of June 28, 1776, the defenses of Sullivan's Island consisted of the Advance Guard, armed with one 18-pounder and a 6-pounder, defended by Colonel Thomson's command--780-strong.<sup>20</sup> From the Advance Guard, a range of barren dunes fronted by a hard beach extended as far as Moultrie's fort. About one-fourth mile east of the fort, at the island's narrowest point, a breastwork,

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19. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 142-143.

20. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 289; Johnson, *Traditions*, pp. 90-91. The Advance Guard was constructed of palmetto logs, with merlons, on a brick foundation. The brick foundations were seen by Dr. Johnson shortly before 1850, when they were uncovered by shifting sands.

designated the "Quarter Guard," had been thrown up. A small force commanded by a lieutenant was posted at this point.<sup>21</sup>

The fort (which had no official designation at this time) was a square, with a bastion at each angle, large enough to contain, when finished, 1,000 men. It was built of palmetto logs laid one upon the other, in two parallel rows at sixteen feet apart, bound together at intervals with timber dove-tailed and bolted into the logs. The space between the two lines of logs was filled with sand. The merlons were walled entirely by palmetto logs, notched into one another at the angles, well bolted together, and strengthened with pieces of timber. They were sixteen feet thick, filled in with sand, and ten feet above the platforms. The platforms were supported by brick pillars.

The fort was finished only on the front or southeastern curtain and bastion, and on the southwest curtain and bastion; the northeastern curtain and the northwestern curtain and bastions were unfinished, being logged up to a height of about seven feet. Necessity, however, devised an expedient for making the unfinished parts tenable against an escalade by placing thick, long planks upright against the unfinished outside wall. These were inclined

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21. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 289. In 1850 the Moultrie House was located on the site of the Quarter Guard.

and projected over it, which increased the height by 10 or 15 feet and through which loop-holes had been bored.

The platforms, as finished, only extended along the southeastern front of the fort, and its southwestern side. Upon these platforms the cannon were mounted. In the southeast bastion the flagstaff was raised, bearing a blue flag with a white crescent on which was emblazoned the word, "LIBERTY." Three 18- and two 9-pounders were mounted in this bastion. Along the southeast curtain six French 26-pounders and three English 18-pounders were placed. There were three French 26-pounders and two 9-pounders in the southwest bastion. In the southwest curtain there were six cannon: 12- and 9-pounders. Connected with the front angle of each rear-bastion of the fort were cavaliers extending a short distance to the right and left of the main work. Three 12-pounders were mounted in each of them. All told there were emplaced in the fort and cavaliers 31 cannon, of which only 25, at any possible moment, could bear upon an enemy fleet anchored abreast the fort. Even so, the four 9-pounders on the two inner sides of the front bastions could be scarcely used. Narrow banquettes were placed along the walls, where the plank was raised against them, for the soldiers to stand upon to fire through loop-holes.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Jones, *Sergeant William Jasper*, pp. 14-15.



The fort was garrisoned by 344 officers and men of the 2d South Carolina Infantry and 20 members of the 4th South Carolina Artillery Regiment. Colonel Moultrie, who was suffering from an acute attack of gout, was in overall command of the stronghold; Lt. Col. Isaac Motte was in charge on the right and Maj. Francis Marion on the left.<sup>23</sup>

Midway between the fort and the northwest point of Sullivan's Island was the Advance Fleche or Rear Guard. Although this work had not been completed, it was manned by a small detachment.<sup>24</sup>

If the British captured Sullivan's Island and its fort, they would be able to proceed against the other American works in Charleston Harbor. The strongest of these was Fort Johnson, which was armed with 20 big guns--French 26's and English 24's. Fort Johnson was occupied by 380 officers and men of the 1st South Carolina and a detachment of artillerists. There was a 12-gun

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23. Other officers posted in the fort on June 28 were: Adjutant Andrew Dellient; Captains Peter Horry, Nicholas Eveleigh, James McDonald, Isaac Harleston, Charles Mott, Francis Huger, Richard Ashby, Richard Shubrick, William Oliphant, and John Blake; and Lieutenants William Charnock, Thomas Lesseesne, Thomas Moultrie, Daniel Maryck, Jacob Shubrick, Thomas Dunbar, William Moultrie, Jr., Thomas Hall, Henry Gray, Isaac Dubose, Richard B. Baker, Adam Provcaux, Richard Mayson, Peter Gray, Basil Jackson, and Gad Marion. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 183; Horry and Weems, *Life of Francis Marion*, p. 41.

24. In 1850 the Episcopal Church was located on the site of the Advance Fleche. Johnson, *Traditions*, p. 95.

battery on James Island, and these pieces were sighted to rake the channel approaching Charleston from Fort Johnson. Capt. Thomas Pinckney's Company of the 1st South Carolina was posted in this work.

At strategic points from South Bay to Gadsden's Wharf on Cooper River, batteries, fleches, and redoubts, armed with cannon, had been constructed. These works were garrisoned by the 4th South Carolina Artillery Regiment, and units of the Charleston militia. The remainder of the Charleston militia was to form at the State House, while the Parish militia was to take position in Lynch's Pasture. The North Carolina Continentals were to form 200 yards in rear of the County militia. This force which was to constitute a ready reserve was to look to General Lee for orders.<sup>25</sup>

General Armstrong had about 1,500 troops available for the defense of the mainland opposite Sullivan's and Long Islands. Along the four miles of front held by Armstrong's people, small works had been erected at selected points. Armstrong's command post was at Haddrell Point.<sup>26</sup>

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25. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 281, 294. The number of troops in Charleston was about 3,670, consisting of the 4th South Carolina Regiment of Artillery, 200; the Charleston militia, 200; the Parish militia, 1,970; and the North Carolina Continentals, 800.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 294. The troops reporting to Armstrong were 500 Virginia Continentals; 600 North Carolina Continentals; the 5th South Carolina Infantry, 268; the 6th South Carolina Infantry, 160; and the militia artillery, 40.

Fire vessels had been prepared by the Americans and were moored in the Ashley and Cooper rivers, ready to be cast loose should the fleet succeed in forcing its way into the harbor.<sup>27</sup>

On the evening of June 27, General Lee who was becoming increasingly disenchanted with Colonel Moultrie, summoned Col. Francis Nash to report to his headquarters in the morning. Lee at that time planned to give Nash written orders to take charge of the fort on Sullivan's Island. Nash had started to see his General, when it was reported that the British warships were under way, and he wheeled his horse about and rejoined his command.<sup>28</sup>

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27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

## CHAPTER IV

### Sir Peter Parker and General Clinton Have Their Disagreements

Commodore Sir Peter Parker on June 15, 1776, had distributed to his captains his plan for attacking the Sullivan's Island battery, and the next morning he notified General Clinton that he would like to know the army's plan of operations. While initially he had felt that the best time for attacking would be on the first flood, he had determined after discussing the situation with a pilot who had just arrived from Savannah and had sailed in and out of the harbor for years, that the proper hour to close with the battery would be on the "pitch of high water." If the Rebels opposed Clinton's landing at The Breach, and it was impossible to land at any other point, the tide within two hours would ebb sufficiently to enable the army to wade the inlet.<sup>1</sup>

Clinton, when he reconnoitered The Breach, was "mortified" to discover that the inlet instead of being 18 inches deep at low tide was covered to a depth of seven feet. Along the Sea Island Coast, he was told, it was a common occurrence for the inlets to shift, to open, and to close.

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1. Parker to Clinton, June 16, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

As there were only enough flat-bottomed boats to accommodate 600 to 700 soldiers, Clinton had now lost most of his freedom of action. Heretofore, he had had three options: (a) from his base on Long Island he could either land on the mainland; (b) attack across The Breach; or (c) undertake a combination of these two. Now he was reduced to making one thrust, without being able to support it by a diversion.<sup>2</sup>

Clinton, accompanied by his engineers and other staff officers, had spent the past several nights reconnoitering "every creek and channel" leading to Sullivan's Island from Long Island. The British officers were dismayed to discover that the shore of Sullivan's Island Narrows Creek was bordered by an "impassable swamp." All agreed that an "attempt upon Sullivan's Island" from their base on Long Island would be extremely hazardous, because: (a) the army would be compelled to march two miles across flats at low water, within easy range of the American guns emplaced in the Advance Guard; (b) they would have to wade a number of channels subject to rapid changes in depth and location; (c) The Breach was commanded by the guns in the Advance Guard; (d) because of a shortage of landing craft, the army could cross no more than 500 men at a time; and (e) there

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2. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776.

were currently with the army no vessels mounting sufficient armament to neutralize or knockout the Rebel guns commanding the beachhead area.

On the 18th, after receiving Parker's letter of the 16th, Clinton discussed his dilemma with his generals--Lord Cornwallis and Brig. Gen. John Vaughan. The latter officer was told to board a schooner in the morning for Five-Fathom Hole. There he was to explain to Sir Peter that Clinton wished the fleet to open the attack, after giving the army ample notice. Clinton would hold his Redcoats ready to cooperate. If Parker objected, Vaughan was to explain that it was Clinton's desire that the attack take place at flood tide. He was to inquire if Parker had any other mission for the army and to explain that "disasters" had reduced its fleet of flat-bottomed landing craft to 15, with a capacity of 400 soldiers. Unless the situation improved, the army would be of slight assistance to the navy in the forthcoming attack.<sup>3</sup>

With him Vaughan carried a plan of attack drafted by Clinton, which he discussed with Sir Peter. Clinton's proposal called for the Redcoats to "make some little demonstration towards Mount

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3. Clinton to Vaughan, June 18, 1776 (Clinton Papers); Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

Pleasant." To cover this thrust, Parker would be asked to have his frigates pass the Sullivan's Island fort, and take position off Mount Pleasant or Haddrell Point. Once they had gained this anchorage, the ships would be able to sever communications between the American force holding the Haddrell Point defenses and those posted in Charleston and on Sullivan's Island.

The army, Vaughan was to inform Parker, had been disappointed to find that the surf beat against the north end of Sullivan's Island with such force that a landing was impracticable, while the breakers on the southern beaches, when the wind sets on shore, were almost as formidable. But if Parker were satisfied that the troops could be landed in safety and his ships could cover the landing, Clinton would raise no objection to sending two battalions to effect a lodgment under the guns of the Rebel fort. As he was impatient to rejoin General Howe, Clinton trusted Parker would not delay much longer. If Parker were agreeable to the demonstration toward Mt. Pleasant, he was to send the army all the long boats he could spare.<sup>4</sup>

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4. Clinton to Vaughan, June 18, 1776 (Clinton Papers); Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776; Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

Vaughan spent most of the 20th on the flagship, talking with Parker. Sir Peter was surprised to learn that the generals were in agreement that as The Breach could not be forded, it would be impossible for the army to force a landing on the northern beach of Sullivan's Island. On checking with his captains, Parker found that aboard the transports were 15 flat-bottomed boats, capable of transporting an additional 600 troops. With these, he asked, why can't the army make a landing across The Breach, while the bombardment is in progress? Parker, however, refused to press the issue; he would leave the decision up to Clinton.

If the army were ready, Parker would attack at noon on the 21st. Should Clinton object, the fleet would delay its attack until 12:30 on the following day.<sup>5</sup>

When he returned to Long Island on the 21st to brief Clinton on his meeting with Parker, Vaughan found that during his absence Cornwallis' brigade, reinforced by the Light Infantry and Grenadiers, had marched southwestward and had camped within sight of The Breach.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Parker to Clinton, June 20, 1776 (Germain Papers).

6. Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book. The baggage had been loaded aboard the schooner Lady William, which succeeded in passing through Spence's Inlet, navigating tortuous Hamlin Creek, and landing its cargo near the camp site. When he returned to Long Island, Vaughan was accompanied by Captain Hope of the navy.



The wind on the 21st was unfavorable, so Clinton requested that the fleet delay its movements until Sunday, the 23d. Although he had hoped that the navy would have attacked on the first flood, he promised that the troops would "co-operate as far as my very particular situation . . . will admit." On the day the fleet moved against the fort Parker should have the previously agreed on signal hoisted as early as possible.<sup>7</sup>

The roar of the American cannon in the Advance Guard on June 21 was audible aboard the warships anchored in Five-Fathom Hole. Misinterpreting the cannonade, Parker concluded that the army had misunderstood his signal and had attacked. He accordingly had the signal for his fleet to get under way hoisted, although the wind was contrary. Before any damage could be done, the mistake was discovered and the signal canceled.<sup>8</sup>

On the 22d Vaughan's 2d Brigade and the artillery broke camp and joined Cornwallis' brigade near the southern end of Long Island. During the day, the Americans, taking cognizance of this build-up, withdrew from an exposed position they had taken up near the Advance Guard. Clinton and his officers,

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7. Clinton to Parker, June 21, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

8. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers).

through their glasses, were able to study the Advance Guard, which was about 500 yards south of The Breach. It had a more extended front than the one abandoned, with a battery on the east and its left flank anchored on a swamp. The abandoned work was razed by a fatigue party and converted into a "glacis or esplanade to that more retired." Clinton was impressed by the Americans' skill in erecting fortifications.<sup>9</sup>

In making preparations for the bombardment on the 23d, Parker notified Clinton that the naval officers assigned to his headquarters would be able to judge the gauge of the wind and to inform the army whether it would enable the fleet to make sail. If it were, Parker planned to be abreast the fort by 1:30 p.m. Friendship, if there were any chance of a fair wind, would run-up a blue flag and keep it flying until the ships weighed anchor. Parker hoped that by tomorrow evening, "I shall . . . have the Honor of taking you by the Hand on Sullivan's Island and congratulating you in the success of His Majesty's arms by land and Sea."<sup>10</sup>

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9. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776; Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book. Clinton was distressed by this development, because heretofore he had planned to employ his light artillery to neutralize the Advance Guard, preparatory to making his amphibious assault.

10. Parker to Clinton, June 22, 1776 (Germain Papers).

Clinton and his generals had their troops formed and ready to advance by mid-morning on the 23d. As the hour for the ships to get under way approached, the wind, which had been favorable, shifted, and Parker at 11 a.m. ordered the signal "Prepare for Action" lowered. On doing so, he sent Lieutenant Caulfield to explain the situation to the army. Sir Peter wanted Clinton to know that if the wind is not fair tomorrow, "the tide at ebb will not fall out so luckily for us as we could wish." As Clinton had concluded it would be more convenient for him if the attack were made on a high tide, Parker had determined to take "the chance of weather and begin on either the Flood or Ebb as the wind may serve." Regardless of the tide stage, provided the winds would permit, he would get abreast the fort with his ships.<sup>11</sup>

Clinton was disappointed, but he could only reiterate to Parker that "whenever circumstances shall concur to make the attack practicable, I shall do my utmost to cause a diversion and to cooperate with you."<sup>12</sup>

June 24 dawned, and the weather took a turn for the worse. The sky was overcast; there were frequent squalls. On the 25th the ship-of-the-line Experiment of 50 guns, out of Boston, hove

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11. Parker to Clinton, June 23, 1776 (Germain Papers).

12. Clinton to Parker, June 23, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

to off Charleston Bar, and Parker signaled her captain to lighten ship and cross as soon as possible. Parker and his staff believed the newcomer would be of great assistance. But as Sir Peter believed he could silence the Rebel battery without her, he promised Clinton not to "delay a moment, in putting our Determination to begin the instant the wind and &c. will suffer us into Execution."

Now that Clinton had drawn the Americans' attention to the Advance Guard, Parker voiced the opinion it might be possible for the army to effect a landing on the mainland, under the cover of the bombardment, and push on to Mount Pleasant.

When he had matured his plans, Parker had proposed to enfilade the fort from the ships stationed to the westward and to cut off the Americans' retreat across The Cove. This could be of assistance to the army, provided Clinton still planned to attack Mount Pleasant. After he had silenced the battery, and if it were an enclosed work, a landing force of sailors and marines would storm ashore. They would attempt to enter the work through the embrasures, and if successful they would hold on until the redcoats arrived. If, however, the fort were not enclosed, the army might be able to enter it from the rear.<sup>13</sup>

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13. Parker to Clinton, June 25, 1776 (Germain Papers).

Clinton's soldiers during the day were active. A detachment of Highlanders occupied the oyster bank opposite the Advance Guard and opened fire on Thomson's pickets with their Brown Besses. Colonel Webster with the Light Infantry Battalion crossed Hamlin Creek and took position on Green Island.<sup>14</sup> The tender Roebuck in the meantime had joined Lady William and Raven in Hamlin Creek. Under the cover of darkness, the Highlanders threw up two small works and were ready and waiting when the American guns in the Advance Guard shelled them on the 26th.<sup>15</sup> General Clinton on June 26 notified Parker that his scouts had collected scant information that would be of use to Parker in planning his attack. From the observation posts on Oyster Bank, his engineers had been examining the works on Sullivan's Island. It appeared to Clinton, although several of his engineers differed, that the fort was "a complete square and finished." At the northern end of Sullivan's Island, the Rebels were "every where intrenching themselves in the strongest manner." A bridge of boats had been moored in position across Sullivan's Island Narrows Creek to "favor their retreat."

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14. Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

15. *Ibid.* On the 27th Clinton and Cornwallis visited the Light Infantry on Green Island. One of the works was designed for mortars and the other for cannon. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 289.

As yet, it was impossible for him to outline what the army could do to support the navy. His movements would depend on "different circumstances, subject to a variety of changes as occasions may arise, and make them necessary." All he could do was repeat, "the troops under my command will cooperate with you to the utmost for the good of His Majesty's Service." When the fleet attacked, Clinton urged Parker to have his frigates advance as deep into the harbor as possible.<sup>16</sup>

By the morning of the 27th Experiment had been lightened, crossed the bar, and joined the fleet in Five-Fathom Hole. Meanwhile, arrangements for the bombardment had been perfected. The winds, which were out of the southeast, were "flattering," and Parker ordered the prearranged signal hoisted. Hardly had the fleet got under way before the wind veered to the northward, and the ships were obliged to anchor.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Clinton to Parker, June 26, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

17. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

## CHAPTER V

### The Battle of Sullivan's Island

Colonel Moultrie on the morning of June 28, 1776, rode up to the Advance Guard. There he sighted a fleet of small boats moving down Hamlin Creek to the west of Long Island. The Redcoats in these vessels seemed intent on effecting a landing on Sullivan's Island. As he and Colonel Thomson were discussing how best to cope with this threat, a cry was raised by the lookouts that the men-of-war had loosened their topsails. Remounting, Moultrie galloped back to the fort. By the time he arrived the ships were under sail, and Moultrie shouted for his drummers to beat the "Long Roll," and the officers and men hurried to their battle stations to the roll of the drums.<sup>1</sup>

During the four weeks that the ships had been anchored off Charleston, the crews had been on two-thirds rations. No fresh meat had been issued to the messes since the fleet had left the Cape Fear. Because of this situation, many of the sailors had sickened and were too weak to man their battle stations. A call for volunteers was made, and the crews of the transports almost to a man stepped forward. Of these 50 were selected for duty

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1. Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 174.

aboard the ships. As the sailors retired on the night of the 27th, rumors circulated that "no quarter would be given the Americans, and that £ 5,000 had been offered for General Lee."<sup>2</sup>

At 9:30 a.m. on the 28th, Sir Peter Parker signaled General Clinton that he would weigh anchor at 10:30 and move to the attack. The bomb-ketch, Thunder, and armed ship, Friendship, soon got under way and anchored within one and one-half miles of the fort. At 10:30 a signal gun was fired aboard Bristol, and the warships set sail and advanced up the channel. Active took position in front of the three guns emplaced in the east bastion; Bristol off the five guns in the curtain and the two on the flank of the east bastion; Experiment against the four remaining guns in the curtain and the two on the flank of the west bastion; and Solebay abreast the three guns on the face of the west bastion.<sup>3</sup> Sphinx, Syren, and Acteon formed a second line outside the first. So leisurely were the movements of the British ships that it appeared to the Charlestonians that Sir Peter was

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2. Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 11-12.

3. Bristol and Experiment were anchored within 480 yards of the fort, and Active and Solebay about 550 yards. Subsequently, Solebay lay outside the others, abreast the interval between the two 50-gun ships. All the ships were too far from the works to employ grape effectively. The sides of the ships were weaker than the fort, but the total weight of their broadsides was much heavier. To score a success, Parker's ships should have closed to a range where they could have overwhelmed the Americans with a multitude of projectiles.



satisfied his men-of-war would be able "to knock the town about our ears, notwithstanding our batteries." As a precautionary measure, however, Parker sent his chief pilot, Sampson, below deck, before clearing for action.

Colonel James aboard Thunder opened the bombardment at 11:30, by having his gunners loft several bombs from their XIII-inch mortar into the fort. One of these projectiles struck the magazine, but it did not explode.<sup>4</sup>

The Americans manned their guns, as the ships sailed up, "as if in confidence of victory." As soon as they closed within range, Colonel Moultrie's people commenced firing. Four or five projectiles struck Active as she came up under sail. These shots she seemed to disregard until within 550 yards of the fort, when she dropped anchor and let go a broadside. Her example was followed by Bristol, Experiment, and Solebay. To control their position, the British tars fixed spring lines to the anchor cables. Covered by the fire of these four ships, the frigates Acteon, Syren, and Sphinx now advanced to take position in Rebellion Road, near the entrance to The Cove. If successful they would be able to: (a) prevent fireships

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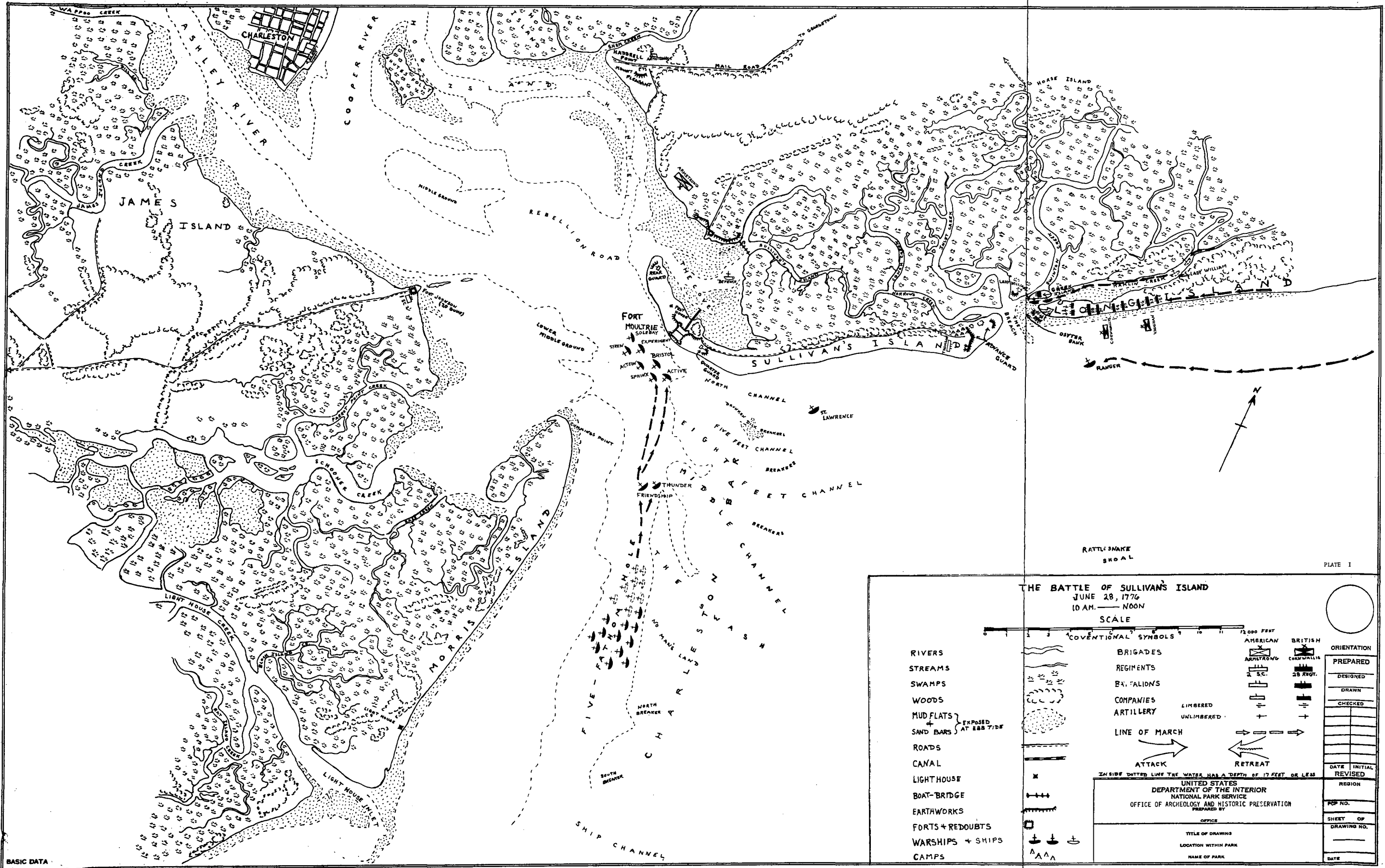
4. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776; Pinckney to Mother, June 29, 1776, found in Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 7-10; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 293. The ketch and Friendship were anchored so that the XIII-inch mortar would bear on the angle of the east bastion from the northwest by north.

or other vessels from annoying the vessels dueling with the fort; (b) enfilade the gun platforms in the fort; and (c) prevent the Rebels, once they were driven from their guns, from escaping to the mainland. The pilots aboard the frigates were unfamiliar with the harbor and held a course too far out toward the Lower Middle Ground. They had hoped to tack and pass clear of the four ships engaged with the fort. In doing so, they grounded the frigates.<sup>5</sup>

It was mid-afternoon before the British succeeded in refloating Sphinx and Syren. The first was freed with the loss of her bowsprit, but, despite the efforts of Captain Hope and the crew of Friendship, Acteon remained hard aground. Meanwhile, the gunners aboard Thunder had continued to pound the fort with their XIII-inch mortar. Most of the bombs fell within the works, but as there was a morass in the middle, they were "swallowed . . . up instantly, and those that fell in the sand . . . were immediately buried, so that few of them bursted amongst us." Soon after the bombardment began, the three 12-pounders in the curtain west of the fort were abandoned, when it was found that the parapet

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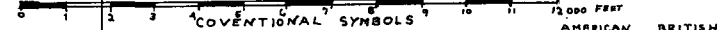
5. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 294; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Pinckney to Mother, June 29, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 7-10.



BASIC DATA

**THE BATTLE OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND**  
 JUNE 28, 1776  
 10 AM. — NOON

SCALE



- RIVERS
- STREAMS
- SWAMPS
- WOODS
- MUD FLATS  
SAND BARS } EXPOSED AT EBB TIDE
- ROADS
- CANAL
- LIGHTHOUSE
- BOAT-BRIDGE
- EARTHWORKS
- FORTS + REDOUBTS
- WARSHIPS + SHIPS
- CAMPS

- BRIGADES
- REGIMENTS
- BATTALIONS
- COMPANIES
- ARTILLERY
- LIMBERED
- UNLIMBERED
- LINE OF MARCH
- ATTACK
- RETREAT

CONVENTIONAL SYMBOLS	AMERICAN	BRITISH	ORIENTATION
			PREPARED
			DESIGNED
			DRAWN
			CHECKED
			DATE
			INITIAL
			REVISED
<small>IN THIS DOTTED LINE THE WATER HAS A DEPTH OF 17 FEET OR LESS</small>			REGION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PREPARED BY			POP. NO.
OFFICE			SHEET OF
TITLE OF DRAWING			DRAWING NO.
LOCATION WITHIN PARK			DATE
NAME OF PARK			

PLATE I

was of insufficient height to protect the cannoneers.<sup>6</sup>

About the time that the two frigates were freed, Colonel James aboard Thunder called for his people to cease fire, as the shock from the discharge of the giant XIII-inch mortar had started the seams. A crew was turned to caulking the ketch. The fire of the bombardment squadron, however, was augmented, as Syren and Friendship now closed to within 500 yards of the fort.<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Moultrie had called for his gun captains to concentrate on Bristol. The springs on Bristol's cable were shot away, and the flagship swung around, exposing her stern to the fort. All guns that could be brought to bear were turned on her. Along the platform the cry was raised, "Mind the Commodore, mind the two fifty gun ships!" This call was heeded. Shot after shot crashed into Bristol and Experiment, especially the former. Moultrie recalled that he was certain Sir Peter Parker "was not at all obliged to us for our particular attention to him." Three attempts were made by a team headed by

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6. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 174-175; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 297.

7. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776, (Parker Papers). The gunners manning the XIII-inch mortar had fired about 60 rounds before ceasing fire.

Lt. James Saumarez to replace the spring, before the ship was again brought into line. At one time, when the quarterdeck was cleared, and Sir Peter Parker stood alone on the poop ladder, Saumarez shouted for him to come down, but Sir Peter answered, "You want to get rid of me, do you?" and refused to move.<sup>8</sup> An exploding shell "ruined" Sir Peter's "Britches . . . quite torn off, his backside laid bare, his thigh and knee wounded."<sup>9</sup>

As it was very hot, a number of Moultrie's people pulled off their coats and flung them onto the merlons. An exploding shell hurled one of the coats into a small tree behind the platform. Aboard Bristol, the tars posted in the tops, their vision obscured by the smoke, mistook the coat for a man hanged from a tree. It was rumored aboard the ships that the man had fled and as a warning to his comrades had been executed.<sup>10</sup>

The major problem confronting the Americans was a powder shortage. At the beginning of the fight, they only had enough powder in the magazine to allow for the discharge of 28 rounds

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8. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 175.

9. *The American Heritage Book of the Revolution*, Richard M. Ketchum (ed.) (New York, 1958), p. 128.

10. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 176.

each from the 26 guns emplaced in the fort. Aboard Captain Tuft's schooner (Defence), anchored in The Cove, was another 200 pounds of powder.<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Byrd was dispatched early in the afternoon to alert General Lee to the powder shortage. From his command post on Haddrell Point, Lee relayed this information to President Rutledge.<sup>12</sup> The President promptly dispatched a wagon with 500 pounds of powder. On doing so, he cautioned, "Do not make too free with your cannon. Cool and do mischief."<sup>13</sup>

Moultrie believed if his cannoneers could have expended all the powder they wished "that the men-of-war must have struck their colors, or they would certainly have been sunk, because they could not retreat, as the wind and tide were against them; and if they had proceeded up to town, they would have been in a much worse situation."

The guns of the fleet at the same time were unable to make any impression on the palmetto log fort. (The logs constituted the exterior and interior slope of the parapet, while the superior slope was sand.) The 16-foot thick merlons were high enough to cover the men from the fire of sailors and marines posted in

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11. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 177.

12. Lee to Moultrie, June 28, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 167.

13. Rutledge to Moultrie, June 28, 1776, found in *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 167.

the tops. Most of the casualties suffered by the Patriots were caused by shots passing through the embrasures.

Subsequently, Moultrie questioned Parker's report that "the guns were at one time so long silenced, that it was thought the fort was abandoned." If this were true, he reasoned, Parker was derelict in not putting ashore a landing force.<sup>14</sup>

Reports reached Moultrie about 3 o'clock that Clinton's Redcoats had established a beachhead on Sullivan's Island midway between the fort and the Advance Guard. Until he could verify this story, Moultrie had his cannoners cease fire, so they could reserve their powder for the small-arms to be used in repelling the footsoldiers. This report was soon found to be in error, and Moultrie called for his people to resume fire, but to hold it down in view of the powder shortage. The British, observing that the fire from the fort had ceased and that the gunners were taking cover, assumed that they had gained the upper hand. "The Yankees have done fighting," some of the tars shouted. Others echoed, "By God, we are glad of it, for we never had such a drubbing in our lives. We had been told they would not stand two fires, but we never saw better fellows."

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14. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 177.

Their cheers ceased, when the American guns again roared into action, and the battle continued. Three or four of the men-of-war's broadsides now struck the fort at the same instant, "which gave the merlons such a tremor" that Moultrie became "apprehensive that a few more such would tumble them down."<sup>15</sup>

The first man killed in the fort was Corporal Samuel Yarbury of the Grenadiers. As his comrades rolled him off the platform with their handspikes, they shouted, "Revenge, let us revenge our comrade's death!"<sup>16</sup>

While the bombardment lasted, thousands of Charlestonians assembled on the Battery to watch with anxious hopes and fears. Some of them had fathers, brothers, and husbands on Sullivan's Island. When a projectile from one of the ships carried away the flagstaff, there was a collective moan, and they gave the fort up as lost.

Among the fort's defenders was Sergeant William Jasper. When he saw the flag fall, he called to Colonel Moultrie, "Col. don't let us fight without our flag."

"What can you do? The staff is broke," answered Moultrie.

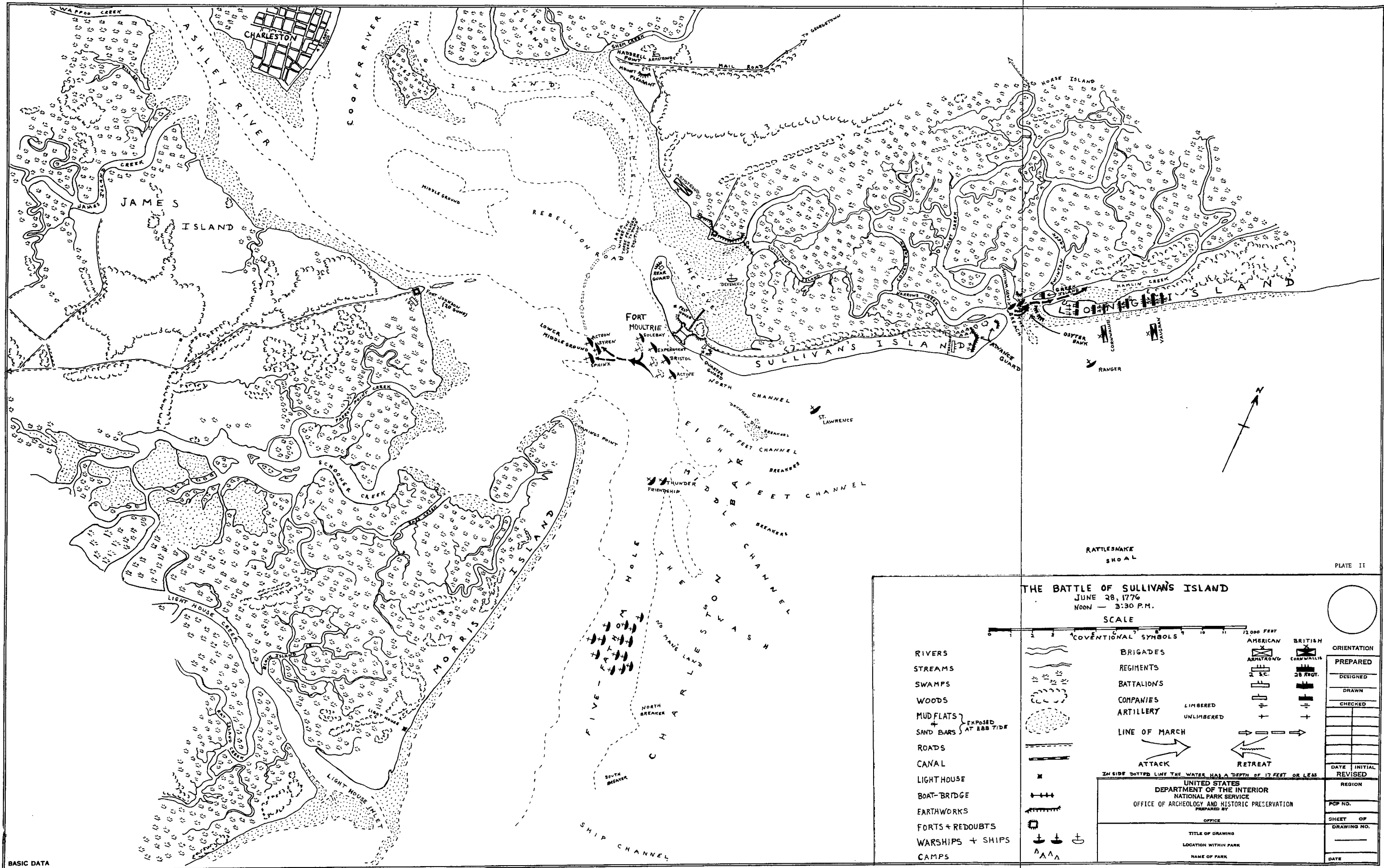
"Then, sir," Jasper cried, "I'll fix it to a halbert, and place it on a merlon of the bastion, next to the enemy."

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15. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 178; Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 11-12.

16. Pinckney to Mother, June 29, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 10.





BASIC DATA

PLATE II

**THE BATTLE OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND**  
 JUNE 28, 1776  
 NOON — 3:30 P.M.



- RIVERS
- STREAMS
- SWAMPS
- WOODS
- MUD FLATS
- SAND BARS
- ROADS
- CANAL
- LIGHT HOUSE
- BOAT-BRIDGE
- EARTHWORKS
- FORTS + REDOUBTS
- WARSHIPS + SHIPS
- CAMPS

- CONVENTIONAL SYMBOLS
- BRIGADES
- REGIMENTS
- BATTALIONS
- COMPANIES
- ARTILLERY
- LINE OF MARCH
- ATTACK
- RETREAT

- AMERICAN
- BRITISH
- ORIENTATION
- PREPARED
- DESIGNED
- DRAWN
- CHECKED
- DATE
- INITIAL
- REVISED
- REGION

IN SIDE DOTTED LINE THE WATER HAS A DEPTH OF 17 FEET OR LESS

UNITED STATES  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 PREPARED BY

OFFICE

TITLE OF DRAWING

LOCATION WITHIN PARK

NAME OF PARK

PCP NO.

SHEET OF

DRAWING NO.

DATE

Whereupon he sprang from one of the embrasures, and walked the entire length of the fort's front. Reaching the fallen colors on the extreme left of the work, he detached them from the mast, called to Captain Horry for a sponge staff, and with a heavy cord lashed the colors to it. He then returned to the fort amid "a shower of balls" and planted the staff on the superior slope of a merlon. This done, he waved his hat, gave three cheers, and shouted, "God save Liberty and my country forever." He then rejoined his gun crew.<sup>17</sup>

When Sergeant Jasper planted the flag upon the ramparts, it revived the drooping spirits of the onlookers on the Battery. They continued to watch until night closed in and hid the fort.

General Lee had spent the morning of the 28th in Charleston, and before leaving the city for Haddrell Point, he had told President Rutledge of his decision to replace Colonel Moultrie with Colonel Nash, unless Moultrie carried out his orders.<sup>18</sup> About the time the ships came tacking up the channel from Five-Fathom Hole, Lee was endeavoring to reach the island in a small boat, but the wind

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17. Jones, *Sergeant William Jasper*, 20; Elliott to Elliott, June 29, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 6. The flagstaff had been a ship's mast, while the flag had been designed by Colonel Moultrie.

18. Drayton MSS, June 28, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

and tide drove him back to the mainland. He watched as the four men-of-war anchored within "less than half musket shott" of the fort and commenced one of "the most furious and incessant fires I ever saw or heard." As the garrison was composed of "raw troops," short of powder, and the bridge by which they could be reinforced or retreat was unfinished, Lee was understandably anxious. Orders were sent to Moultrie that if he exhausted his ammunition without beating off the foe, he was to spike his guns and evacuate the fort. Shortly thereafter, Lee was cheered by the arrival of several wagons loaded with powder and shot sent from Charleston by President Rutledge. Before determining his next move, General Lee sent his aide, Lieutenant Byrd, back across The Cove in a canoe to check the garrison's spirit. On his return, Byrd's reported the troops' morale high, so Lee determined to order the fort defended.<sup>19</sup>

About 4 p.m. Lee crossed The Cove in a small boat to encourage the garrison by his presence. He could have saved himself the ride, because on his arrival he found the troops "determined and cool to the last Degree, their behavior would in fact have done honors to the oldest troops."<sup>20</sup>

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19. Lee to Washington, July 1 and 2, 1776, Washington Papers, Vol. 29, Library of Congress; Lee to Moultrie, June 28, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 166.

20. Lee to Washington, July 1 and 2, 1776, Washington Papers, Vol. 29, Library of Congress.

Colonel Moultrie at 5 o'clock received word that General Lee was approaching, and sent Capt. Benjamin Marion with eight or ten men to unbar the gateway (the gate not being finished). The gateway was barricaded with timbers 8- or 10-inch square, which required three or four men to remove each piece. Aboard the ships, the men in the tops, seeing these men run from the platform, shouted, "They are quitting the fort."<sup>21</sup>

Moultrie and several of his officers were smoking their pipes when Lee entered the works. In deference to his rank, they laid them aside. Climbing onto the platform, Lee walked about with great "coolness and self possession" as he complimented the men. He exclaimed that in his career he had seen "many Bombardments and Cannonadings, but none comparable to this in one day." Never had he seen veterans behave better. After pointing several guns, he turned to Moultrie and said, "Colonel, I see you are doing very well here, and you have no occasion for me, so I will go up to town again." With this, he left the fort and recrossed The Cove.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 176.

22. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 176; Hutson to Brother, June 30, 1776 (Hutson Papers).

On returning to the mainland, Lee ordered Muhlenberg's Virginia Continentals to cross over to Sullivan's Island and reinforce Colonel Thomson at the Advance Guard.<sup>23</sup>

The day was hot and humid, Moultrie recalled, and we were served along the platform with grog in firebuckets, which we partook of very heartily: I never had a more agreeable draught than that which I took out of one of those buckets at the time; it may be very easily conceived what heat and thirst a man must feel in this climate, to be upon a platform on the 28th of June, amidst 20 or 30 heavy pieces of cannon, in one continual blaze and roar; and clouds of smoke curling over his head for hours together; it was a very honorable situation, but a very unpleasant one.<sup>24</sup>

The fire of the ships had taken a toll. The 18-pounder next to the shattered flagstaff had a large piece of its muzzle torn away, while the next 18-pounder to its right, commanded by Captain Ashley, lost half its crew. As the six-man crew, three to a side, was handspiking the cannon into battery, a projectile crashed through the embrasure, and cut down three of the men-- Luke Flood, Richard Rodgers, and Isaac Edwards.<sup>25</sup> Sergt. McDaniels was terribly wounded, and just before he died shouted "My brave lads, I'm just expiring, but for Heaven's Sake let not sweet liberty expire

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23. Lee to Moultrie, June 28, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 167.

24. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 178-179.

25. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 302.

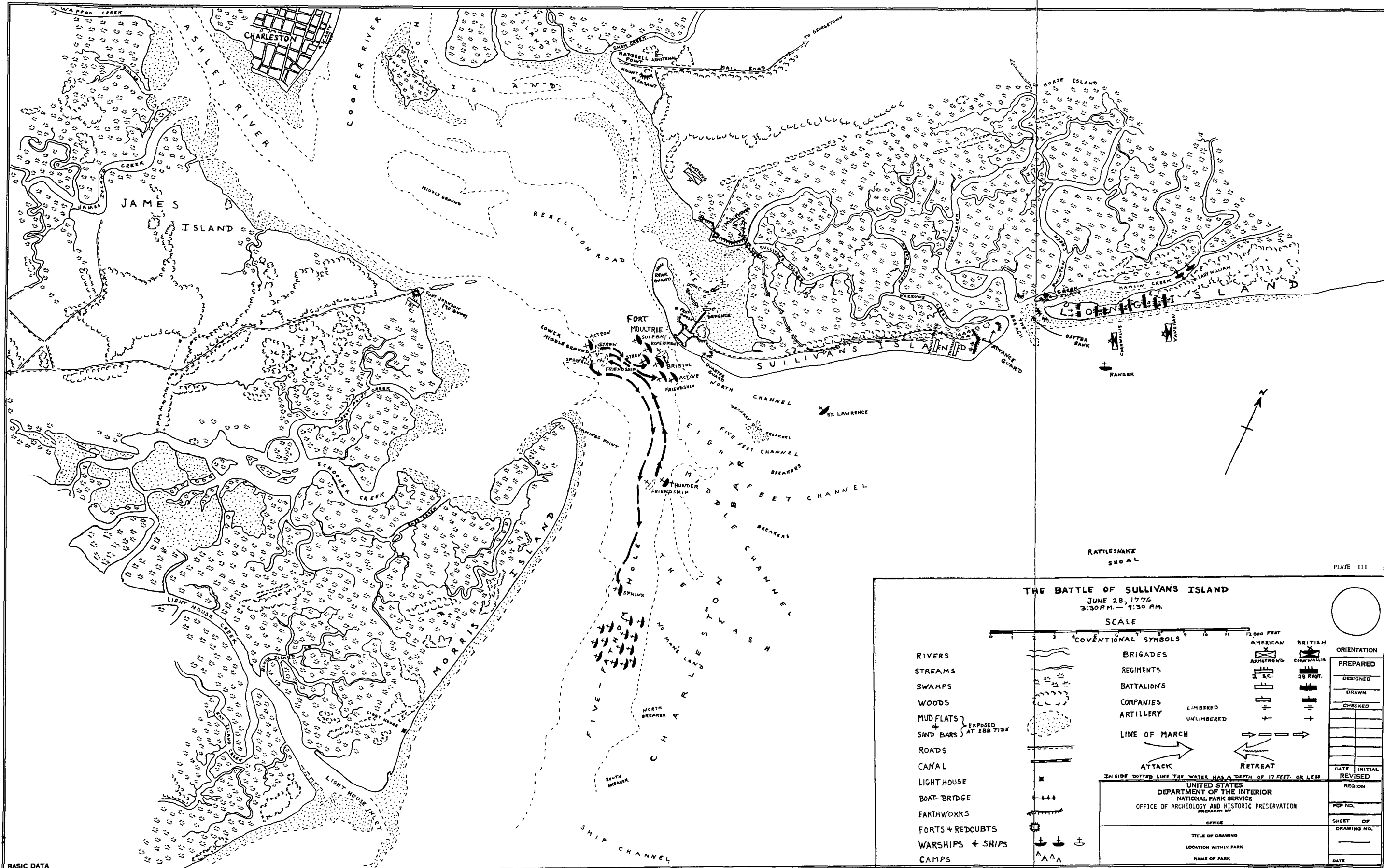
with me." As Sergeant Jasper removed McDaniels' body from the blood-stained platform, he called, "Revenge this brave man's death." Two officers were wounded--Lt. Henry Gray received a spent swivel ball in the chest, while Lt. Thomas Hall was struck on the cheek by a piece from a handspike that had been shattered by a ball.<sup>26</sup>

About the time of Lee's visit, 200 pounds of powder reached the fort from the schooner Defense and soon thereafter the 500 pounds of powder sent by President Rutledge was turned over to Moultrie. Thus the Americans were able to maintain a slow and deliberate fire after darkness closed in. Although visibility was poor, they could hear the crash and a splintering of timber whenever one of their projectiles struck a ship.

At 9 p.m. Sir Peter Parker took stock of the situation: (a) it was now very dark; (b) a great quantity of ammunition had been expended; (c) his people were exhausted; (d) the tide had ebbed; and (e) Clinton's footsoldiers had been unable to effect a lodgment on Sullivan's Island. In view of this situation, he determined to withdraw. The ships, except Acteon which was still hard aground, cut their cables and dropped down with the tide, and

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26. Hutson to Brother, June 30, 1776 (Hutson Papers); Jones, *Sergeant William Jasper*, p. 21.

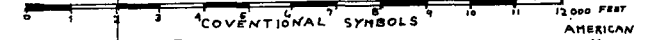


BASIC DATA

**THE BATTLE OF SULLIVANS ISLAND**

JUNE 28, 1776  
3:30 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.

SCALE



- RIVERS
- STREAMS
- SWAMPS
- WOODS
- MUD FLATS
- SAND BARS EXPOSED AT EBB TIDE
- ROADS
- CANAL
- LIGHT HOUSE
- BOAT-BRIDGE
- EARTHWORKS
- FORTS + REDOUBTS
- WARSHIPS + SHIPS
- CAMPS

- BRIGADES
- REGIMENTS
- BATTALIONS
- COMPANIES
- ARTILLERY
- LINE OF MARCH
- ATTACK
- RETREAT

AMERICAN ARMYSTRONG 2 S.C. LIMBERED UNLIMBERED		BRITISH CORNWALLIS 28 REGT. LIMBERED UNLIMBERED	
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PREPARED BY		ORIENTATION PREPARED DESIGNED DRAWN CHECKED DATE INITIAL REVISOR REGION	
OFFICE TITLE OF DRAWING LOCATION WITHIN PARK NAME OF PARK		POP. NO. SHEET OF DRAWING NO. DATE	

PLATE III

were soon out of range of the Americans' guns. When the firing ceased, the Patriots in Charleston were uncertain of its implications. They were overjoyed when the dispatch boat Moultrie had sent up arrived with word that the British had retired, and the Americans were victorious.<sup>27</sup>

General Clinton at 10 a.m. on June 28 had observed that the fleet was making sail. The flood tide was running very strong, as Clinton ordered his artillery and mortar battery to be prepared to fire on signal.<sup>28</sup> When the ships anchored and commenced the bombardment, Clinton was apprehensive, as it appeared to him that they had failed to close "within such a distance, as to avail themselves of the fire from their tops, grape shot, or musquetry." He was disappointed to see that the frigates that were to cut the Rebels' communications with the mainland and to cover his landing on Point Pleasant had grounded.

Clinton, to support the navy, had his artillery open fire. But with the tide rolling in, he realized that his gunners out on Oyster Bank would soon be compelled to abandon their forward position at The Breach or see their cannon engulfed. As the

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27. Pinckney to Mother, June 29, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 7 - 10; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers).

28. June 29, 1776, Observations (Germain Papers).



artillerists limbered up their pieces, Clinton ordered down the sloops and schooners, and the Redcoats were formed in such "a manner as to be a party to attempt a landing either" on Sullivan's Island or the mainland, as circumstances warranted.<sup>29</sup> An armed schooner (Lady Williams) and a sloop, accompanied by a flotilla of small boats from the fleet, manned by sailors and marines, made their way down Hamlin Creek. The two armed vessels were to take position to rake the Advance Guard. Covered by this fire and that of the artillery and mortars emplaced on the Oyster Bank, Clinton's soldiers would effect their bridgehead. The boats kept abreast of Clinton's vanguard, as it marched toward The Breach.

The flotilla, as it approached Green Island, took the lead. Clinton's soldiers began to cheer, and Colonel Thomson, seeing that the boats were now within range, told his men to open with their 18-pounder. So well-directed was this fire that the sailors aboard the schooner and sloop had to clear the decks. The officers had difficulty keeping their people at their battle stations. Every ball seemed to rake the decks. Repeated efforts by the flotilla were made to close with the Advance Guard. When they finally worked their way within grape shot range, the two bigger vessels grounded,

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29. From front to rear the column of assault was formed: The battalions of Light Infantry and Grenadiers, 28th, 37th, 54th, 57th, 46th, 33d, and 15th Regiments of Foot.

and the officer in charge protested that they had sounded and "found a Bar across their head." As soon as they had worked their way free, the two ships retired up Hamlin Creek. This deprived Clinton of the ships to cover his landing on Sullivan's Island, and until such protection could be secured, he and his officers deemed it "rash . . . to attempt it."

Parker, having agreed to send several frigates to "show themselves between Sullivan's Island and Haddrell Point," the footsoldiers felt their way cautiously toward The Breach, while the artillery was ordered "to land on the sands as soon as they could be placed there." Several guns were positioned on Green Island.<sup>30</sup>

It was fortunate for the Americans that the armed vessels sent to cover the landing retired early in the fight, because Thomson's cannoners soon exhausted most of their ammunition. At 5 p.m., when they were reinforced by Muhlenberg and his 700 Virginia Continentals, they had only one charge left for the 18-pounder and three each for the 6-pounders. A combination of factors--the failure of the British to close; poor fire

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30. Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences*, pp. 91-94; Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records, E.R. 4, 1775-1776; June 29, 1776, Observations (Germain Papers); *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776.

control on the foe's part; and a breastwork kept the American casualties to a minimum. Thomson for the day listed his losses as one man wounded.<sup>31</sup>

The landing craft, with Lady William and the sloop checkmated, were withdrawn, and the Redcoats dawdled as the afternoon slipped by. General Clinton at dusk rode over to where Cornwallis had formed the soldiers. There he learned that "the only thing that could give us the least feeble protection was gone adrift, and anchored under the enemy's fire." Clinton assembled the field officers of the 1st Brigade, and told them that although the "attack was such a one as he lamented to be obliged to send troops to, he believed it would be necessary to attempt it." He inquired "Are your men steady enough to make a night assault or should they wait for morning?"

They answered, "Our soldiers would be more steady in the day, and that they should dread night attacks with such young troops."<sup>32</sup>

Clinton accordingly determined to wait until daybreak, and the soldiers were permitted to return to their advance camp. At daybreak on June 29, Clinton dispatched one of his aides, Captain Evelyn, to ascertain Sir Peter Parker's plans. Evelyn would also acquaint

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31. Drayton MSS, June 28, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

32. June 29, 1776 Observations (Germain Papers).

Sir Peter with the army's situation. As yet, Clinton did not know of the navy's repulse.<sup>33</sup> Upon learning that the fleet had been compelled to return to Five-Fathom Hole, leaving a frigate aground, Clinton canceled his attack.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the sailors disagreed with Clinton's argument that the depth of the water had kept his troops from crossing The Breach. Alexander Forrester, a crewman aboard Lady William, wrote:

it was impossible for any set of men to sustain so destructive a fire as the Americans poured in upon them on this occasion; that it was the destructive fire from Colonel Thomson's fort which prevented the flotilla from advancing, and not the shoals and sand bars, as was alleged; that it was the repulse of the flotilla which prevented General Clinton from fording the inlet, and not the depth of water.<sup>35</sup>

Richard Hutson reached Fort Johnson about one hour after the British ships had opened the bombardment. From there he watched

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33. Clinton to Parker, June 29, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

34. June 29, 1776 Observations (Germain Papers).

35. Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences*, p. 95. In Great Britain one of the opposition newspapers, the *Saint James' Chronicle*, printed a parody in verse describing Clinton's repulse. It read:

By the Red Sea, the Hebrew host detained,  
Through aid divine the distant shore soon gained;  
The waters fled, the deep a passage gave,  
But this God wrought, a chosen race to save.

Though Clinton's troops have shared a different fate,  
'Gainst thee, poor me! not chosen sure of heaven,  
The miracle reversed, it still is great--  
From two feet deep, the water rose to seven. *Ibid.*

the action, and "a more awfully pleasing sight I never saw." When the frigates grounded, the cannoneers opened fire with one of their French 26-pounders on the nearest vessel, Syren. The range was too great, and after three rounds, Colonel Gadsden called, "Cease Fire!"

"If we just had more handspikes and the strength, we would have moved the fort a little nearer," was the complaint.<sup>36</sup>

The British sailors spent the night of June 28 effecting temporary repairs to their ships. As soon as his vessels had dropped anchor in Five-Fathom Hole, Sir Peter Parker contacted his captains and the leaders of the damage control parties. Preliminary reports were not encouraging. It was said that the ships were in the most miserable mangled situation. About 70 projectiles from the Americans' guns had struck Bristol, killing 40 men and wounding 71. The next morning, the mizzenmast fell overboard, while the ships' carpenters were compelled to cut away 22 feet of the mainmast, "and to case and fish the remainder." The foremast also had to be fished, while the head of the main topmast, and the caps of the bowsprit and the top gallant mast had been shot away. In addition, she had been "much damaged in

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36. Hutson to Brother, June 30, 1776 (Hutson Papers); Gadsden to Moultrie, July 1, 1776, Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 171.

her Hull, Yards and Rigging." Now instead of Sir Peter's broad "pendent soaring on a lofty mast, it is now hardly to be seen on a jury mainmast considerably lower than the foremast." Two of the flagship's lower deck guns had been put permanently out of action by having their trunnions torn off.

Not a man stationed on the quarterdeck of Bristol at the beginning of the bombardment escaped being a casualty. Captain John Morris lost his right arm; the master was wounded in the right arm; and Parker received several contusions. Courage was a common virtue aboard Bristol. Lord William Campbell, who had volunteered, was placed in charge of a division of guns on the lower gun deck. His Lordship had received a contusion on his left side.<sup>37</sup>

Experiment had 23 dead and 56 wounded, and she had suffered much in her hull, masts, yards, and rigging. Her mizzen gaff had been shot away. On Active there was one killed and six wounded, while Solebay reported eight wounded.<sup>38</sup>

Dawn on June 29 revealed to the Americans that Acteon was still hard aground on the Lower Middle Ground. Colonel Moultrie

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37. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Falconer to Falconer, July 13, 1776; Pinckney to Mother, June 29, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 7-10, 19-20; William Bull to John Pringle, August 13, 1776, British Records, Intercepted Letters.

38. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers).

ordered his gunners to load their French 26-pounders with maximum charges of powder, and they gave the grounded frigate a few rounds. Acteon replied. Capt. Christopher Atkins, after checking with his officers, was satisfied that he could not free his ship, so he determined to destroy her. She was set afire and abandoned.

Capt. Jacob Milligan saw the British abandon the doomed frigate, and he and a number of volunteers took three small boats out and boarded her. Several guns were pointed at Bristol and discharged. Milligan and his people, seeing that the flames were spreading rapidly, brought off the ship's bell, and as many sail as his boats could carry. Moments after they had pulled clear the frigate blew up, and from "the explosion issued a grand pillar of smoke, which soon expanded itself at the top, and to appearance, formed the figure of a palmetto tree." Acteon now burst into an inferno that continued to rage until she burnt to the waterline.<sup>39</sup>

During the day, a number of officials visited Sullivan's Island to congratulate the defenders. President Rutledge presented Sergeant Jasper with a sword for his gallant behavior. William Logan sent the garrison a hogshead of rum with a card reading:

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39. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 180; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers). A court of inquiry was convened by Sir Peter Parker to investigate Captain Atkins' conduct, and he was "honorably acquitted."

Mr. William Logan, presents his compliments to Col. Moultrie, and the officers and soldiers on Sullivan's Island, and by their acceptance of a hoghead of old Antigua rum, which being scarce in town at this time, will be acceptable.<sup>40</sup>

Colonel Moultrie, on mustering his command and checking his rolls, found that the defense of the fort had cost the Americans 37 casualties: 12 killed and 26 wounded.<sup>41</sup> (See Appendix B for Return of Troops Posted in the fort on June 28, 1776, and a list of the casualties.) The fort had suffered little damage in the bombardment, although the merlons were riddled. The native palmetto had withstood the assault of foreign oak. Hardly a hut or tree on the island in the vicinity of the fort escaped.<sup>42</sup>

In the engagement the Americans had expended 4,766 pounds of powder and about 600 shot. As a comparison the crew of Bristol had expended 150 barrels of powder and that of Experiment 70 barrels.<sup>43</sup>

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40. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 182-183.

41. Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 5.

42. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776. The materials of which the fort was constructed, the British reported, "form no inconsiderable part of its strength. The Piemeto [sic] Tree, of a springy substance, is used in framing the Parapet and the interstices filled with sand. We have found by experience that this construction will resist the heaviest fire. "Observations upon the Attack made by Sir Peter Parker upon Fort Sullivan," June 28, 1776, British Museum, MSS, Vol. 25, p. 490, folio 31.

43. Drayton MSS, June 28, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 10; Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 296.



After the battle in policing the area about the fort, Moultrie's people "gathered up more shot, from 24-pounders down to the smallest size, than they had fired" in the engagement.<sup>44</sup>

General Lee, on evaluating the reports of his subordinates, was unable to forecast the foe's next move. He was inclined to believe that the fleet would recross the bar and proceed to Chesapeake Bay to refit. But "shame and rage" might prompt Clinton's footsoldiers to attempt something before they re-embarked. For his part, he would "spare no pains to discover their intentions and baffle their schemes."

Lee would commend to Congress in highest terms, Colonel Moultrie and the entire garrison as "brave soldiers and excellent citizens." The conduct of Colonel Thomson's command at the Advance Guard also was deserving of mention.<sup>45</sup>

Lee reported to General Washington on July 1 that the British had now lost an opportunity of capturing Charleston, which on his arrival had been "utterly defenceless."<sup>46</sup>

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44. Bull to Pringle, August 13, 1776, British Records, Intercepted Letters.

45. Lee to Hancock, July 2, 1776, Washington Papers, Vol. 29, Library of Congress.

46. Lee to Washington, July 1, 1776, Washington Papers, Vol. 29, Library of Congress.

Congress on July 20, on learning of the victory, passed a resolution thanking General Lee, Colonels Moultrie and Thomson, and the officers and men under their commands who "repulsed, with so much valor, the attack which was made on the State of South Carolina, by the fleet and army of his Britannic majesty."<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, the South Carolina Assembly had passed a resolution naming the fort on Sullivan's Island, Fort Moultrie, in honor of the officer who had commanded its defense on June 28, 1776.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, p. 183.

48. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER VI

### The British Withdraw From the Area

General Lee on June 30, 1776, reviewed Moultrie's troops on Sullivan's Island and told them that he was "happy" to congratulate them for "their gallant defence of the fort, against a fleet of eight men of war and a bomber; during a cannonade of eleven hours, and a bombardment of seven hours."<sup>1</sup> The Americans attention again focused on the British on July 1. Five deserters from the fleet had reached Fort Johnson in a small boat during the night. They told Colonel Gadsden that if the British attacked again, they would get "as close to the forts as possible . . . to command . . . [them] more easily from their tops."<sup>2</sup>

Huger's regiment on the 1st volunteered to go over to Sullivan's Island as a fatigue party and help strengthen the

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1. Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 305-306.

2. When Colonel Gadsden relayed this news to Moultrie, he congratulated him "on the drubbing you gave those fellows." Gadsden to Moultrie, July 1, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 170-171. The deserters were: Thomas Bennett, Daniel Hawkins, Robert Scott, Edmond Allston, and James Scott. They had been impressed into His Majesty's navy, when their ship had been stopped at sea. Two had served on Bristol and three on Acteon during the recent engagement. Drayton MSS, June 28, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

works. Lee would have preferred to send a corps of Negroes, but he was overruled by President Rutledge. Moultrie was to have these people throw up a redoubt on the beach designed to resist a landing, while a team of carpenters finished the gate to the fort.

The deserters having told Lee of the heavy casualties aboard the ships, he forwarded to Moultrie a "list of the murders your garrison have now to answer for, but I hope it will sit light on their conscience."

Meanwhile, the garrison should remain vigilant, as it was "proverbial in war, that we are never in so great danger as when success makes us confident."<sup>3</sup>

On July 2 General Lee sent a boat with a flag of truce to propose an exchange of prisoners for Col. Ethan Allen of Green Mountains fame, whom the Americans had heard was aboard one of the ships. The officer in charge took with him fresh meat and vegetables as a gift for Parker's and Clinton's messes. Clinton was on Long Island, so several days passed before an answer was received. When he replied, Clinton informed Lee that Allen was

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3. Lee to Moultrie, July 1, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 171-172. The bodies of five sailors killed in the action had washed ashore on Sullivan's Island, and they had been buried by the Americans on the 29th.

not present, and in return for the gifts he forwarded the Americans some porter and cheese.<sup>4</sup>

The American officer, while he was in Five-Fathom Hole, had kept his eyes open. He observed that there was plenty of work for the ships' carpenters. What he saw supported the stories of deserters that the Americans need not "expect another visit at present." Officers had been overheard to say that the two ships-of-the-line would go to English Harbour in Antigua to get refitted; the transports, with the troops, to New York, under convoy of some men-of-war, to join General Howe; and that two frigates would be left to cruise between North Carolina and Georgia.<sup>5</sup>

General Lee continued to fret, because the Province was slow in providing materials needed to complete the works on Sullivan's Island. He believed Negro work gangs could be employed to "fill up the merlons which are not yet full," and palisade the "low and most assailable parts" of the embrasures and angles.<sup>6</sup>

On the 5th the Americans suffered a blow, when a sloop bound from the West Indies and laden with 3,000 pounds of powder, 350

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4. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Lee to Moultrie, July 6, 1776, found in Moultrie's *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, pp. 172-173.

stands of arms, blankets, osnaburg, and sails grounded as she ran into Stono Inlet. A detail of soldiers from the 1st South Carolina, reinforced by the Johns and James Island militia, was rushed to salvage the cargo. The soldiers were able to save the stores, but the vessel broke up before she could be refloated.<sup>7</sup>

The British also had their problems. Casualties among his senior officers made it necessary for Sir Peter Parker to reorganize his fleet. Lt. Caulfield of Bristol on the 2d was assigned to command Thunder, in place of Capt. James Reid, who was reassigned to Sphinx, whose captain (Anthony Hunt) had been appointed to Active. Capt. William Williams of Active had been ordered aboard Experiment to replace Capt. Alexander Scott, who had lost his left arm on the 28th. On July 3 Captain Morris of Bristol died, and Caulfield was assigned to command the flagship.<sup>8</sup>

As soon as General Clinton was satisfied that the navy had no intention of renewing the attack, he proposed to Sir Peter that he re-embark his troops so they could head northward to reinforce General Howe. At the moment, the Redcoats were in good health,

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7. C. C. Pinckney to Mrs. E. L. Pinckney, July 7, 1776 (Pinckney Papers); *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776.

8. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers).

but he feared that if they remained much longer on the Carolina coast this situation would change.<sup>9</sup>

Parker, in acknowledging Clinton's note (which had been drafted on July 7), reported that as soon as the transports assigned the 1st Brigade had been watered, they would recross Charleston Bar and proceed to Spence's Inlet.<sup>10</sup>

On the evening of the 11th, a detachment of Royal Marines went ashore at the Lighthouse to cover the fatigue detail sent to secure water. General Lee, on learning of this, dispatched Col. Alexander Martyn with 320 men to attack the British. Martyn was unfamiliar with the area, and most of his men lost their way. Two companies sent ahead with a guide established contact with the British pickets. The alarm was sounded, and the Marines and fatigue party took cover in the Lighthouse. Seeing that they were outnumbered, the two companies retired and joined Colonel Martyn. The colonel determined not to press the issue, and the British were allowed to fill their casks and return to their ships. This action on the part of the Americans surprised Parker, because,

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9. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776, English Records E.R. 4, 1775-1776.

10. Parker to Clinton, July 8, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

except for the action on June 28, "their defense had lacked activity and vigilance."<sup>11</sup>

By the 12th the transports had been watered. Six of them crossed Charleston Bar, and stood up the coast to Long Island, where they took aboard the four regiments of the 1st Brigade.<sup>12</sup>

The Redcoats on Long Island were eager to get away from the "infernal" South Carolina coast. William Falconer on July 13, wrote his brother, Anthony:

We have been encamped on this island for this month past, and have lived upon nothing but salt pork and peas; we sleep upon the sea-shore, nothing to shelter us from the rains, but our coats, or a miserable paltry blanket--there is nothing that grows upon the island, it being a mere sand-bank, and a few bushes, which harbor millions of musketoes, a greater plague than can be hell itself.

Thomson's people, he reported, "were entrenched up to their eyes, behind a small battery . . . all loaded with grape shot," and if His Majesty's footsoldiers should attempt to force their way across The Breach, they would be cut to pieces.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Parker to Clinton, July 12, 1776 (Clinton Papers); Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 312-313.

12. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers). Several of the frigates and armed vessels crossed the bar at the same time.

13. Falconer to Falconer, July 13, 1776, found in Gibbes' *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 19-20.



The British sailors on July 14 attempted to get Bristol over the bar but failed. Before another 72 hours had passed, the soldiers of the 2d and 3d Brigades had re-embarked. As soon as the few transports still anchored in Spence's Inlet shifted their anchorage, the army would be ready to go to sea. Notifying Parker of this situation, Clinton asked that the frigates detailed to convoy duty be alerted to join him. If they could not sail immediately, he reasoned that the transports had better proceed without them. The water supply aboard several of the vessels was already running short, and Lieutenant Knowles had cautioned, if a gale came up, the fleet would be in trouble. In addition, the date for the rendezvous with Howe at New York was approaching. As the entrances to Chesapeake and Delaware Bays were blockaded by British frigates, there would be little danger from American privateers.<sup>14</sup>

The wind on July 20 was "fair," and the few vessels anchored in Spence's Inlet were ready to sail. Relaying this news to Sir Peter, Clinton, who was chaffing to be under way, warned that the hurricane season is approaching. He again urged that it was imperative for the transports to put to sea, although the ships-of-the-line were not ready. When he sailed, the only transports that were to remain behind would be Pallister and Peace & Plenty.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Clinton to Parker, July 17, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

15. *Ibid.*, July 20, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

Clinton, without awaiting an answer, ordered the transports to get under way. Glasgow Packet, as she had some small guns aboard, was scheduled to be the last to cross the bar at Spence's Inlet, because Lord Cornwallis desired her to cover the transports. By the time Glasgow Packet was ready to cross the bar, the wind died and she dropped anchor. The captain signaled that he would need assistance in getting his ship out to sea. General Clinton replied that he would acquaint Sir Peter with the situation of Glasgow Packet.<sup>16</sup>

At 5 a.m. on the 21st, the transports conveyed by Solebay stood out to sea, bearing on a "southward course." Five hours later, a favorable breeze picked up, and Glasgow Packet weighed anchor and set sail. When within a cable's length of the bar, she grounded. Distress signals were hoisted; the guns fired. A yawl was launched, and a small boat party sent to contact Parker, whose flagship was anchored 12 miles down the coast.

Before the relief party returned, an American 10-gun row-galley hove into view. It was now 4 p.m., and Glasgow Packet had taken "a heel to one side, and leaked very much." Her head was to

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16. Campbell to Parker, July 21, 1776 (Clinton Papers). Captain Tompkins of Friendship was entrusted with communicating these orders to St. Lawrence. Tompkins, however, saw that as "the fleet was to sail directly if the wind continued fair, he could not afford any other Assistance, neither was he sure the Commander of the St. Lawrence would comply with the order."

the bar and her stern to the shore, so it was impossible for the crew to bring her guns to bear upon the galley, "who fired repeatedly both grape and round shot." After throwing their small-arms overboard, Glasgow Packet surrendered. Seven of the crew escaped in the long boat, but their shipmates--30 officers and men--were captured, along with 50 Highlanders. After stripping Glasgow Packet, the Americans, the next morning, set her afire.<sup>17</sup>

The crew succeeded in getting the flagship Bristol over Charleston Bar on the 18th. She was joined on July 25 by Experiment. While the sailors remounted Experiment's lower tier of guns, which had been removed to lighten ship, she anchored near Bristol, Syren, and three transports. On the 28th Syren headed southward. Active, Sphinx, and a large transport crossed Charleston Bar on August 2 and, after rendezvousing with Bristol and Experiment, stood out to sea, steering in an east-northeast direction. Thus for the first time in two months, the South Carolina coast was clear of British warships.<sup>18</sup> The first battle for Charleston had ended, but the shouting continued.

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17. Campbell to Parker, July 21, 1776 (Clinton Papers). The commander of the row-galley was Lieutenant Pickering of Piscataway. Robert Cockran to Langdon, August 1, 1776 (Capt. G. M. Stone Collection).

18. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 2, 1776.

The Americans were understandably jubilant. So far in 1776 General Washington had accomplished little beyond hurrying Howe's evacuation of Boston. The American army sent to overrun and occupy Canada had collapsed. Now came word of a victory from the south. Not only had the British been repulsed before Sullivan's Island, but they had given up their initial attempt to carry the war to the southern colonies. A victory had been won, and American morale soared. News of the success reached Philadelphia shortly after the Declaration of Independence had been proclaimed. Now independence might become something beyond the bold statements set forth on parchment.

On the British side, the shouts had a harsher sound. The hopes of George III and the Ministry that the south would be quickly restored to its allegiance to the crown were deflated. In the attempt to place the responsibility for the defeat, some pinned the blame on Clinton.<sup>19</sup> Many of those who blasted the General believed they were correct; the army had accomplished little and had suffered few casualties, while the navy had closed with the foe, and had lost heavily. Boldness was not one of General Clinton's virtues. Technically his defense of his actions was correct. He had notified Sir Peter that he was unable to land his soldiers on Sullivan's Island. He had also written Parker that he would not attack Mount Pleasant

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19. Edward McCrady, *History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780* (New York, 1901), p. 153.

and Haddrell Point unless supported by the frigates. As the frigates failed to get into position, the army could not act. He was under orders not to expose his men to unnecessary danger. But his defense indicates his cautious nature. His decision to stay off the mainland was probably wise; had the infantry advanced to Mount Pleasant without supporting fire from the frigates, it might have been encircled by forces from the works facing Sullivan's Island Narrows Creek acting in conjunction with a column coming out from Charleston. Clinton, however, might have made an attempt to land troops on Sullivan's Island. Such a move was fraught with danger, but the object was worth some risks. No test of the American position at The Breach was made. The British army was useless during the fight.

That the British plan of attack was defective is obvious. Cooperation between the army and navy was never good, and on this occasion it was frightful. This engagement was the beginning of Clinton's poor relations with naval officers. When he returned to Charleston in 1780, he again worked with a naval officer whom he disliked and with whom he had difficulty in maturing a joint-plan of attack.

Clinton, who seemed to have suffered from a persecution complex, believed himself the victim of a conspiracy. He was uncertain as who

was behind the plot. Perhaps it was the entire Ministry, perhaps it was Lord Germain, perhaps it was Sir Peter Parker. He was especially angry with Parker, because the naval commander in his report to the Admiralty had neglected to mention that the army had offered to assist the navy in undertaking an amphibious assault. Parker had also failed to say anything about the army's offer to effect a lodgment on the mainland, if supported by the fire of the frigates. Parker appeared to be blaming the army for the disaster at Charleston.<sup>20</sup>

Germain, too, received a share of Clinton's wrath. The General had sent a report on the army's activities before Charleston, and had given detailed reasons for his failure to act. Before releasing Clinton's report for publication, Germain had deleted certain parts, apparently to avoid a confrontation with the Admiralty. The report as released said nothing about Clinton's plan to attack Haddrell Point. Indeed, Germain's editing furthered the implication conveyed in Parker's report that the army had done nothing, after it had been ascertained that it could not land on Sullivan's Island.<sup>21</sup>

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20. Clinton, *American Rebellion*, p. 36. Parker, in his first report to the Admiralty, had blamed his failure to silence the fort on: (a) the grounding of the three frigates; (b) the shooting away of the spring lines; while (c) "the tide would not suffer us for a long time to carry out an anchor."

21. *Ibid.*

The battle on June 28, 1776, was the first serious engagement in which ships participated in the American Revolution. In certain aspects it was similar to the battle of Bunker Hill. Both engagements illustrate the difficulty and danger of a frontal attack upon a fortified position, and the advantage conferred upon untrained volunteers, provided they are resolute and intelligently led. Although there was in Parker's dispositions nothing open to serious criticism and nothing that can be ascribed to underestimating the foe, it is probable that he was very much surprised, not only at the tenacity of the American resistance, but at the accuracy of the fire. Parker, in making his plans, undoubtedly was plagued by the natural instinct to underrate the Americans.

## CHAPTER VII

### The British Capture Fort Moultrie and Charleston

The autumn of 1779 found Maj. Gen. Henry Clinton, who had been knighted, in command of His Majesty's troops charged with crushing the American armies opposed to the Crown. Learning of the failure of the Franco-American force to recapture Savannah, Georgia, in October, Clinton determined that the time was ripe to attempt the subjugation of the southern colonies with a campaign to begin in South Carolina and to sweep through North Carolina into Virginia. Ignoring the lessons learned in 1776, Sir Henry hoped that he could rouse the Tories in the Carolinas, and they would rally to the King's colors. Reinforced by these people, he would sweep all before him and snuff out the forces of rebellion in that region. His plan was to capture Charleston and establish a base there, and then drive inland and northward.

Recent developments seemed to favor the project. Examining his returns, Clinton found that his army mustered almost 25,000 officers and men, so he could detach a considerable force to participate in the expedition. General George Washington's army had gone into winter quarters at Morristown, and in view of its small size, there was scant possibility that many men could be rushed to the defense of Charleston to oppose the British thrust. According to reports from South Carolina, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln's command,



which was charged with the defense of Charleston, was anything but formidable. The Carolinians had been disheartened by the defeat at Savannah and the disappearance of Comte Charles H. T. d'Estaing with his fleet and soldiers. They felt alone, because they had been left to oppose the British, with little aid from the North. They could recall that in 1777 all the Virginia and North Carolina Continentals had been called into Pennsylvania to reinforce Washington's army. The Tories had been so elated by the success scored by British arms at Savannah that they could be expected to rally to the aid of invading columns. Then, too, the season was favorable. While operations in the north were suspended because of inclement weather, the winter and early spring were the best seasons for campaigning in the coastal regions of the deep south. Sir Henry Clinton could expect to accomplish much.

On December 26, 1779, Clinton turned over command in New York to his ranking subordinate, Lt. Gen. Wilhelm von Knyphausen. Accompanied by his second in command, Lord Cornwallis, Sir Henry went aboard ship. Crowded aboard the transports were eight British infantry regiments, five regiments of Hessians, five corps of Tories, and a number of detachments of artillery and cavalry--8,500 effectives. The 90 transports and victuallers were convoyed by five ships-of-the-line and nine frigates commanded by Adm. Marriot Arbuthnot.

The voyage was stormy. Off Cape Hatteras gales came near wrecking the expedition. Most of the cavalry and artillery horses were lost; the stores were damaged; and the fleet scattered. One transport crowded with Hessians was driven across the Atlantic and went aground on the coast of Cornwall. Thirty days had passed before the ships began to rendezvous off Tybee Island at the mouth of the Savannah River. After repairs to the rigging, they sailed for Charleston on February 10. The next day, the transports entered North Edisto Inlet, and the troops were put ashore on Johns Island, 30 miles south of Charleston.<sup>1</sup>

History had taught Clinton one lesson--he would avoid the narrow barrier islands to the northeast of the entrance to Charleston Harbor, where he had been checkmated by the Americans in June and July of 1776. This time he would push forward across the large sea islands to the south of Charleston, where, if he encountered the Americans, there would be space for the British to maneuver.

As soon as the troops and their gear were ashore, Arbuthnot proceeded to blockade the harbor with part of his fleet. Clinton then put his army in motion. The advance was lethargic. The troops seized Stono Ferry connecting Johns Island with James Island. After occupying James Island, the British bridged Wappoo Creek, which

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1. Ward, *War of the Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 695-697.

separated it from the mainland. It was March 7 before Sir Henry had his troops across Wappoo Creek, and his artillerists and engineers erecting batteries on the right bank of the Ashley, north of Charleston.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, units of Arbuthnot's fleet took position off Charleston Bar. It was vital for the Americans to prevent the warships from crossing the bar, and General Lincoln had intended to do so. At the end of January, Lincoln had been warned by several pilots that it might be impossible for his ships to anchor near the passes through the bar with their broadsides to command them, if the winds were easterly and there was a flood tide running. What made this serious was that these were the conditions needed by Admiral Arbuthnot to get his ships across Charleston Bar. Lincoln accordingly ordered Commodore Whipple to sound the entrances to the harbor and channel, and ascertain if these reports were true.<sup>3</sup> On making the soundings, Whipple's people confirmed Lincoln's fears. It would be impossible for the American ships to defend the passes without risking being cut off from Charleston by the British fleet coming in under full sail.<sup>4</sup>

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 697.

3. *City of Charleston Year Book, 1897* (Charleston, 1892), p. 365.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-366.

Lincoln, however, was willing to chance the loss of the ships, for he believed that "the safety of this town lies in reducing the enemies [sic] attempt on it to a land attack." He therefore directed Whipple to anchor his ships so that they would command Charleston Bar.<sup>5</sup>

There was foul weather for several days, and Whipple was unable to proceed down the harbor with his small fleet. When he finally reached the bar, he found that the water before the passes was too shoal for his ships to take position to command them. This was a new problem. Lincoln had the naval officers sound the channels once more, and study the danger to which the ships would be subjected, if the British erected land batteries on Morris Island. Lincoln spent two days in a small boat testing the depths.<sup>6</sup>

The reports submitted by his captains confirmed Whipple's fears. They assured him that the nearest point where the vessels could be anchored in safety was Five-Fathom Hole, which was several miles from Charleston Bar and well beyond the range of the supporting batteries on Sullivan's and James Islands. Whipple now argued that his people could best protect Charleston by lying off Fort Moultrie. Here the channel which passed between Sullivan's Island and the Lower Middle Ground was narrow. He thought that, if his ships operated in

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5. *Ibid.*, pp. 366-367.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 367-368.

conjunction with Fort Moultrie, they could prevent Arbuthnot's fleet from entering Rebellion Road, while his smaller vessels were to be given the mission of preventing British small boat parties from sounding the bar and channel to Five-Fathom Hole. General Lincoln was agreeable, and the ships took position off Fort Moultrie. This was a terrible mistake on the Americans' part, because it would permit the British to make an unopposed crossing of Charleston Bar. But, if their reports were correct, Whipple and his people had no other choice.<sup>7</sup>

While the Americans were arguing the question of whether or not to contest the passage of the bar, Arbuthnot's fleet lay in Charleston Roads, preparing to force its way into the harbor. The larger ships-of-the-line that drew too much water to cross the bar were sent back to New York and to Beaufort, South Carolina. To hinder the British in taking bearings from known landmarks, the Americans destroyed the Lighthouse on Morris Island and blackened the steeple of St. Michaels.

Arbuthnot was hesitant about entering the harbor until Sir Henry's army had invested Charleston and had occupied Mount Pleasant. American guns emplaced at Mount Pleasant could prevent the British ships from navigating Cooper River, east of Charleston. General

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7. *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369.

Clinton, according to Arbuthnot, had agreed that the ships should not enter the harbor until Mount Pleasant was in friendly hands.<sup>8</sup>

General Clinton was upset by Arbuthnot's views. His army was not large enough to occupy both Charleston Neck and the countryside east of the Cooper down to Mount Pleasant. He believed Mount Pleasant could be occupied by a small amphibious force and then be supplied by boat, so there should be no need for him to commit a large number of soldiers to this undertaking. The occupation of Mount Pleasant had been broached initially, when it was believed that several French frigates had taken refuge in the harbor. Now that it was known that they had departed prior to the arrival of the British fleet, any naval units Arbuthnot might encounter could be coped with. In addition, His Majesty's ships would have no fear from American shore batteries, because Clinton had learned from deserters that they had none at Mount Pleasant.

Clinton on February 19 requested that Arbuthnot meet with him at Fort Johnson to discuss the problems to be encountered by the fleet in forcing its way into the harbor.<sup>9</sup> Arbuthnot agreed; the conference was held on the 28th.<sup>10</sup> At this meeting, Sir Henry

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8. Arbuthnot to Clinton, February 19, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

9. Clinton to Arbuthnot, February 19, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

10. Arbuthnot to Clinton, February 27, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

announced that the ships must pass Fort Moultrie and enter Rebellion Road, if Charleston were to be closely invested. Arbuthnot admitted that the fleet could enter the harbor before Mount Pleasant was occupied, but he raised a new question: His ships, he stated, could not anchor off Fort Johnson, as they would be endangered by American fire ships. Clinton could see that Arbuthnot was looking for excuses, so he agreed to leave the decision on when the fleet would move to the Admiral. Arbuthnot then yielded, and announced that he would enter the harbor whenever Clinton was ready to attack Charleston.<sup>11</sup>

Clinton, in accordance with a request from Arbuthnot, detailed three companies of the 71st Foot to Morris Island, where they threw up a battery near the demolished Lighthouse. Their mission was to provide cover for the small boats sounding and buoying Ship Channel from the bar to Five-Fathom Hole. Until this action was taken, the people in the small boats had been troubled by American vessels.<sup>12</sup>

To cross Charleston Bar, Arbuthnot would have to lighten his deeper-draft ships. This task was fraught with difficulties. On March 12 Arbuthnot complained that he had been "eight days riding

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11. Clinton, "Journal," Folio 6 (Clinton Papers).

12. Russell, "Journal," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 4, p. 489; "Journal of William Jennison," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 15, p. 106.

in the open sea, without guns, provisions, &C., and in one word a wreck, in order to bring the ships to a proper depth of water to go over the bar, which hitherto we have not been able to accomplish."<sup>13</sup>

Arbuthnot shifted his flag from Europe, a ship-of-the-line, to Roebuck, a 44-gun frigate, which with Renown and Romulus, was lightened of her guns, provisions, and water.<sup>14</sup> The smaller vessels, soundings had demonstrated, would be able to cross the bar and enter the harbor without being lightened.

March 20 dawned with favorable conditions for the British--a wind out of the northeast and a flood tide. Arbuthnot had the signal to get under way hoisted. At 7 a.m. the ships (three two-deckers, four 32-gun frigates, and two 20-gun ships) crossed Charleston Bar at Ship Channel, and made their way into Five-Fathom Hole, where they dropped anchor.<sup>15</sup> When Renown came over the bar, it caused consternation in Charleston, because her passage was "contrary to the expectations of every body, as there was a general and full persuasion, founded on the declaration of all the pilots

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13. Arbuthnot to Clinton, March 12, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

14. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781* . . ., (Dublin, 1787), p. 50.

15. Russell, "The Siege of Charleston," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 4, p. 491; Clinton to Arbuthnot, March 20, 1780 (Clinton Papers).



and others who were acquainted with the channel, that the water was so shallow that such a large ship could not possibly get over."<sup>16</sup> At the same time, General Clinton was understandably elated. "Joy to you, Sir," he wrote Arbuthnot, "to myself, and to us all upon your passage of the infernal bar."<sup>17</sup>

The Americans were understandably dismayed at the appearance of the British ships in Five-Fathom Hole. William G. Simms complained that he was sorry "our opposition was not made at the entrance of the bay, where the large ships entered divested of . . . [their] guns." He bitterly added, "I believe it is not the lot of many naval officers to alter any plan they heard formed, [or] to adopt it to occasional circumstances."<sup>18</sup>

General Washington, on learning that the bar had not been defended, complained that this decision "amounts to the loss of the town and the garrison . . . . It really appears to me that the propriety of attempting to defend the town depended on the probability of defending the bar."<sup>19</sup>

General Lincoln boarded Whipple's flagship on the morning of the 20th, soon after Arbuthnot's ships had anchored in Five-Fathom

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16. Samuel Baldwin, "Diary of Events in Charles Town, S.C., from March 20 to April 20, 1780," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society (1846-1847)*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 78.

17. Clinton to Arbuthnot, March 20, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

18. *A Southern [William G. Simms] South Carolinian in the Revolutionary War . . .* (Charleston, 1851), p. 89.

19. Washington to Laurens, April 16, 1780, *Writings of Washington*, John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.) (Washington, 1931-34), Vol. 18, p. 299.

Hole.<sup>20</sup> The number and size of the British ships anchored in Five-Fathom Hole shocked the Americans. Whipple explained to Lincoln that the navy was unable to sink obstructions in the fast-flowing current between Sullivan's Island and the Lower Middle Ground. He also cautioned the General that the British might surprise the American fleet under the guns of Fort Moultrie. The cannoners manning the guns in the fort would then be unable to fire, and the British could destroy at will the American vessels. It was therefore determined to withdraw the ships into the mouth of Cooper River, in the main channel between Charleston and Shute's Folly. There their guns were removed, and five of the warships (Bricole, Truite, Queen of France, General Moultrie, and Notre Dame) with several merchantmen had chavaux-de-frise fitted to their decks and were scuttled there and in the channel on the far side of Shute's Folly. A boom composed of cables, chains, and spars secured to the ships' masts was thrown across the river to obstruct passage up the Cooper. This boom was covered by a number of guns emplaced behind palmetto parapets. General Lincoln and his engineers were satisfied that these obstructions would keep open the Cooper, thus preserving it a means of access to the upper country and keeping open an avenue for reinforcements and retreat.

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20. Baldwin, "Diary of Events in Charleston," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. 2, p. 78.

The guns from these vessels were emplaced in the town's defenses, while the sailors were assigned to the garrison. The remaining vessels, five warships (Providence, Boston, Ranger, L'Avanture, and Polacre) and a like number of row-galleys, were stationed in the Cooper behind the boom.<sup>21</sup>

In retrospect a defence should have been attempted by Whipple's fleet near Sullivan's Island. General Moultrie believed that the British would have suffered some loss, provided the ships had remained near the fort. Charleston Harbor was thus given up without a fight, because American naval power had been found wanting.<sup>22</sup>

On the evening of March 20, after the withdrawal of Whipple's fleet, the guns of Fort Moultrie fired several rounds at the nearest ships anchored in Five-Fathom Hole. The gun captains saw that the projectiles, even when the pieces were loaded with their maximum charges of powder, fell short, so they called for a cease fire to conserve ammunition.<sup>23</sup>

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21. *Charleston Year Book, 1897*, pp. 370-371; Ward, *War of the Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 699-700. L'Avanture and Polacre flew the flag of France, while the others were American warships. Bricole was pierced for 60 guns and mounted 44 24- and 18-pounders. The other American ships mounted from 32 to 16 guns, while the larger of the French ships, L'Avanture, was armed with 26 guns, 9- and 6-pounders. Arbuthnot to Admiralty, June 15, 1780, found in Tarleton's *History*, pp. 52-53.

22. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, p. 60.

23. *Charleston Year Book, 1897*, pp. 347-348.

On March 27 General Lincoln called a council of war to discuss how best to deploy his available manpower. He asked the council if it would not be wise to pull the troops out of Fort Moultrie and bring them over to Charleston. The council vetoed this suggestion, as the majority believed that the fort could prevent the British fleet from forcing its way into Rebellion Road.<sup>24</sup>

Two days later, on March 29, Clinton's infantry crossed the Ashley in force and broke ground within 1,800 yards of the American fortifications on Charleston Neck. Work on the 1st Parallel was pushed by the British engineers during the early days of April. While the fatigue parties toiled away with pick and shovel, Clinton anxiously waited for Arbuthnot's ships to pass Fort Moultrie and enter Rebellion Road. He anticipated no difficulty in this respect, as he believed all the difficulties had been settled at his February 28 meeting with Arbuthnot. The Admiral had turned his sailors to sounding the channel between the fort and the Lower Middle Ground to see if it had been obstructed. To allay Clinton's fears, he wrote George K. Elphinstone that the ships would provide the army with all the help possible.<sup>25</sup> When Clinton was shown this letter,

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24. *Charleston Year Book, 1897*, pp. 347-348.

25. Arbuthnot to Elphinstone, April 2, 1780 (Keith Papers, Vol. I, p. 157).

he thought Arbuthnot must be waiting for a specific request for the fleet to enter the roadstead.<sup>26</sup>

The admiral answered that he was still investigating the channel, and when he was certain that there were no hidden obstructions, the ships would pass Fort Moultrie. He added, however, that he did not believe his vessels would be of any assistance to the army, once they had entered Rebellion Road, except for transporting soldiers across from James Island to Mount Pleasant.<sup>27</sup>

Sir Henry shrugged off Arbuthnot's objections, but the navy's delay made him impatient. On April 6, he complained, "if the service is done, I care not how . . . I wish he [Arbuthnot] was here as our first parallel is now finished."<sup>28</sup>

Learning on the 7th that the Americans had been reinforced by 750 men under Brig. Gen. William Woodford, who had arrived via the Cooper River, Clinton blamed Arbuthnot. "Had the admiral passed . . . [Fort Moultrie] the first fair wind after he passed the bar, he might have been in possession of that communication long since."<sup>29</sup>

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26. Clinton's "Journal," Folios 6-6v (Clinton Papers).

27. Arbuthnot to Clinton, April 5, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

28. Clinton's "Journal," Folios 8-9v (Clinton Papers).

29. *Ibid.*, Folio 9v (Clinton Papers).

Clinton did not have much longer to wait. On the afternoon of April 8, the ships began slowly moving up the channel with the tide, preceded by sailors in small boats sounding with lead lines. The day was hazy with a fresh breeze. Soon the ships loosened their sails and set a course for the channel separating Sullivan's Island and the Lower Middle Ground. Arbuthnot in Roebuck led the fleet--the supply ship Aeolus brought up the rear. As the ships approached Fort Moultrie, the American guns roared. Roebuck replied with her starboard broadside at a range of 800 yards and passed safely. Seven other ships ran by the fort singly and steered a course toward Fort Johnson. Arriving off the fort, they dropped anchor, while damage control parties were turned out. Several of the vessels, it was found, had suffered damage to their masts and rigging. Richmond had lost her foretop mast, but otherwise damage was not serious. Seven sailors were killed and 14 wounded aboard the fleet in the 75-minute engagement. The supply ship Aeolus, her rudder damaged by a projectile from the fort, was seen to sheer off and fall into toward the land west of Fort Moultrie.

Colonel Charles C. Pinckney saw the vessel come ashore, and he turned out a detail with two field guns. These were emplaced on the beach. A well-aimed fire was opened by the Americans on the stricken ship, which had grounded on a bank called "The Green," near the Half-Moon Battery. Captain Knowles, realizing it would be

a useless waste of life, ordered Aeolus fired and abandoned. The flames from the burning ship could be seen in Charleston, and the Patriots cheered as they heard a number of explosions that seemed to them like her guns going off as the flames reached them. Over 40 reports were counted, which convinced the Americans in Charleston that Fort Moultrie had destroyed a 44-gun frigate. On the 10th they learned the truth. The dull booms they had counted were the reports of Pinckney's cannon firing on the supply ship.

In the fight on the 8th, Fort Moultrie suffered little damage, while Colonel Pinckney listed no casualties in the garrison. Four days later, on the 12th, three small vessels made a run up the channel from Five-Fathom Hole. Once again the guns of Fort Moultrie went into action. Although the gunners maintained a brisk fire, they were unable to obtain any hits as these vessels, being of shallow draft, held a course which took them close to the Lower Middle Ground and at extreme range from the fort.

Soon after the fleet had passed the fort, General Lincoln determined to reduce his force posted on Sullivan's Island. Colonel Pinckney with most of his command, the 1st South Carolina Infantry,

was ordered to Charleston, and Lt. Col. William Scott was left in charge on the island.<sup>30</sup>

With the fleet anchored off Fort Johnson, the investment of Charleston was nearly completed. The only route into Charleston now open was across the Cooper above Shute's Folly to the mainland east of the river and then north to the position at Monck's Corner held by Brig. Gen. Isaac Huger's command.<sup>31</sup>

General Clinton was delighted with the navy's success and thought Arbuthnot's passage was accomplished "in the handsomest way possible."<sup>32</sup> He undoubtedly contrasted Arbuthnot's success with

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30. *Ibid.*, Folio 11 (Clinton Papers); Arbuthnot's Report in Tarleton's *History*, p. 57; Franklin B. Hough, *The Siege of Charleston by the British Fleet and Army* . . . (Albany, 1867); Lincoln to President of Congress, April 9, 1780, Papers of Continental Congress, CLVIII, pt. 2, pp. 369-370; Baldwin, "Diary," *Proceedings of New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. 2, pp. 82-83; Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, pp. 63-64; Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 130; Russell, "Journal," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 4, p. 496; Simms, *South Carolina in the Revolutionary War*, pp. 114-115; Bernard Uhlendorf, ed., *Siege of Charleston* . . . (Ann Arbor, 1938), pp. 51-53, 241-243, 383-385. About the time the ships anchored off Fort Johnson, the wind shifted to the southwest and it began to rain. In addition to the 44-gun frigate Roebuck, the ships which passed Fort Moultrie on the 8th included; Richmond 32 guns, Romulus 44 guns, Blond 32 guns, Virginia 28 guns, Raleigh 32 guns, Sandwich 10 guns, and the ship-of-the-line Renown 50 guns. The ships passed the fort as named. Archibald Robertson, *His Diaries and Sketches in America, 1762-1780* (New York, 1930), p. 221.

31. Ward, *War of the Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 700.

32. Clinton, "Notes on the Southern Campaign," p. 2, filed in Vol. 1 of undated manuscripts written by Clinton (Clinton Papers).



Sir Peter Parker's failure of June 28, 1776. Even the Americans were impressed with the ship's movements. "They made a most noble appearance," one wrote, "and I could not help admiring the regularity and intrepidity with which they approached, engaged and passed Fort Moultrie; it will reflect great honor upon the admiral and all his captains, but 'tis pity they are not friends."<sup>33</sup>

On April 10, 1780, with the completion of the 1st Parallel and a number of breaching batteries, Clinton and Arbuthnot called on the Americans to surrender. Lincoln refused, and the siege began. Three days later, on the 13th, the British batteries on the Neck and James Island opened fire on Charleston. Bombs, red-hot round shot, and carcasses rained on the town for two hours. Fires broke out, and were only brought under control by the volunteer fire-fighting brigades of citizens after several hours. Many of the non-combatants took to their cellars, so there were very few casualties. The bombardment was resumed and lasted until midnight, inflicting considerable damage on the buildings.

Lincoln now called together his general officers, and explained to them that he regarded the situation as desperate and that he planned to evacuate Charleston, moving his troops across the Cooper under the cover of darkness, and then making a forced march to Monck's Corner.

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33. Timothy, "Journal of Observations," April 8, 1780.

Brig. Gen. Lachlan McIntosh agreed and urged that not an hour be lost in getting the Continentals across the river. Lincoln, however, moved slowly. He dismissed his officers with a request that they give the subject mature consideration and report their conclusions, when he again assembled them. Before he had the opportunity to do so, the chance to escape was lost.

Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton at the head of his Legion, reinforced by Maj. Patrick Ferguson's American Volunteers, at daybreak on April 14 struck Huger's camp at Monck's Corner. Huger's vedettes on the main road were driven in by the British, who pursued them into their main camp. A slashing charge upon the American cavalry by Tarleton's dragoons decided the issue, as the Patriots were routed. The British infantry attacked with the bayonet a meeting house where Huger's militia was quartered and scattered all that were not cut down.

The Americans suffered heavy losses. Five officers and 15 enlisted men were killed or wounded; seven officers and 60 men were captured. The rest, including Gen. Isaac Huger and Col. William Washington, fled into the swamps and escaped. In addition to 42 loaded wagons, 102 draft horses, and 83 dragoon horses were taken. The British lost only two men.

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Lt. Col. James Webster, with the 33d and 64th Regiments of Foot, joined Tarleton on the April 15. Their columns, with additional reinforcements, soon gained possession of the countryside east of the Cooper and down to within six miles of Charleston, severing that town's communications with the north and leaving General Lincoln without an avenue of retreat.

By April 19 Clinton's approaches were within 250 yards of the Americans' works on the Neck. Satisfied by now of the hopelessness of the situation, Lincoln summoned a council of war. The possibility of evacuation and retreat or surrender on favorable terms was discussed. Lt. Gov. Christopher Gadsden attended the council and strongly opposed the evacuation of Charleston. This dispute between the civil authorities and the military, who were convinced of the necessity of giving up the fight, caused an adjournment of the council to the next day. When it reconvened, Gadsden brought with him the rest of the members of the Governor's Council, who stood with him in opposition to the intentions of the military to yield. One of the councillors even went so far as to threaten that, if the Continentals showed any sign of withdrawing, the Charlestonians would fire their boats, open the gates to the British, and assist them in attacking the American troops before they could get away.

Gadsden and his people had carried the day in the council of war, but on April 21 Lincoln took matters into his own hands. He proposed

a capitulation on terms allowing the withdrawal of his army with the honors of war, with their arms and baggage, and an unmolested march up the left bank of the Cooper River to whatever destination they chose, also the unhindered withdrawal of Whipple's fleet. Clinton, as to be expected, curtly rejected this proposal. The siege continued.<sup>34</sup>

Admiral Arbuthnot, to assist the force under Tarleton and Webster operating east of the Cooper, organized an amphibious brigade of 500 sailors and marines to be commanded by Capt. Charles Hudson of Richmond. This brigade was landed at daybreak on April 29 and occupied Mount Pleasant. Here they learned that the Americans were evacuating their redoubt at Lemprieres, and Captain Hudson sent a column to cut off the Rebels' retreat. As the sailors and marines closed in, they found the Americans escaping in small boats to Charleston. The appearance of the naval brigade, however, prevented the Americans from carrying off their cannon and stores, or from leveling their works. Picket boats put out by the fleet intercepted several of the small craft, as they fled toward Charleston, and captured several officers and 80 enlisted men.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Ward, *War of the Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 700-702.

35. Arbuthnot to Admiralty, June 15, 1780, found in Tarleton's *History*, pp. 50-52.

Upon being relieved at Lemprieres on May 2 by Major Ferguson's Tories, Captain Hudson and his brigade returned to Mount Pleasant. They were accompanied by Ferguson and a detachment of his people, as the army operating east of the Cooper wished to draw provisions from the navy. While the supplies were being put ashore, Ferguson investigated the bridge of boats connecting Sullivan's Island with the mainland. On doing so, he found that the redoubt at the mainland end of the bridge had been evacuated by the Americans. He posted 30 of his men in the redoubt, and awaited additional instructions from Lord Cornwallis, his immediate superior.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, Captain Hudson had learned from American deserters fleeing Sullivan's Island that the garrison of Fort Moultrie had been greatly reduced. Hudson relayed this news to Arbuthnot, who determined to attack Sullivan's Island. So as not to interfere with the operations being carried on by the army on Charleston Neck and east of the Cooper, Arbuthnot would not call on Clinton for assistance. The landing on the island would be carried out by Hudson's brigade.

From the deserters it was learned that Colonel Scott's attention was directed toward the south and east faces of Fort Moultrie, which were more open to attack. The Americans, it was said, were paying scant attention to the west face and northwest bastion. Arbuthnot therefore believed that if Hudson's brigade assailed these sections

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36. Andrew Hamond to Elphinstone, May 2, 1780 (Keith Papers).

of the fort, supported by the fire of the fleet, that there was a good chance of success. At the same time, a landing party would be put ashore near The Breach and occupy the Advance Guard. This movement, Arbuthnot believed, supported by the ships he already had in Spence's Inlet and Sewee Bay, would terminate any communications the Americans might have through the inland waterway between Charleston and Georgetown.<sup>37</sup>

Two hundred sailors and marines under Capts. Hudson, Gambier, and Knowles were embarked in small boats on the night of May 3, and at daybreak the British made an unopposed landing at The Breach. Pushing forward they occupied the Advance Guard, which had been abandoned by the Americans. On May 5 a small party of Americans sallied from Fort Moultrie. They failed to dislodge Hudson's people and fell back with the loss of 20 prisoners.<sup>38</sup>

Hudson's people followed the Americans as they pulled back. To expedite his advance, another small boat expedition was fitted out at Mount Pleasant. The remainder of the naval brigade, 250 strong, under Capt. Orde embarked, while the fleet awaited for the flood tide to move in and begin the bombardment.

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37. *Ibid.*; Arbuthnot to Clinton, May 3, 1780 (Clinton Papers).

38. Arbuthnot to Clinton, May 6, 1780, and Knowles to Clinton, May 10, 1780 (Clinton Papers); Arbuthnot to Admiralty June 15, 1780, found in Tarleton's *History*, p. 55.

Captain Hudson, having invested the stronghold, called on the fort to surrender, and Colonel Scott answered, "Tol, lol, derol, Fort Moultrie will be defended to the last Extremity."

The next day, May 6, as the fleet was preparing to get under way, Captain Hudson sent Scott word that he had given him time enough to consider his surrender demand and make his counter proposals. If he did not send an answer in 15 minutes, the British would storm the works, and "put every man to the sword." Whereupon, Scott sent a message, begging a cessation of hostilities, and announcing that the fort would surrender on these terms:

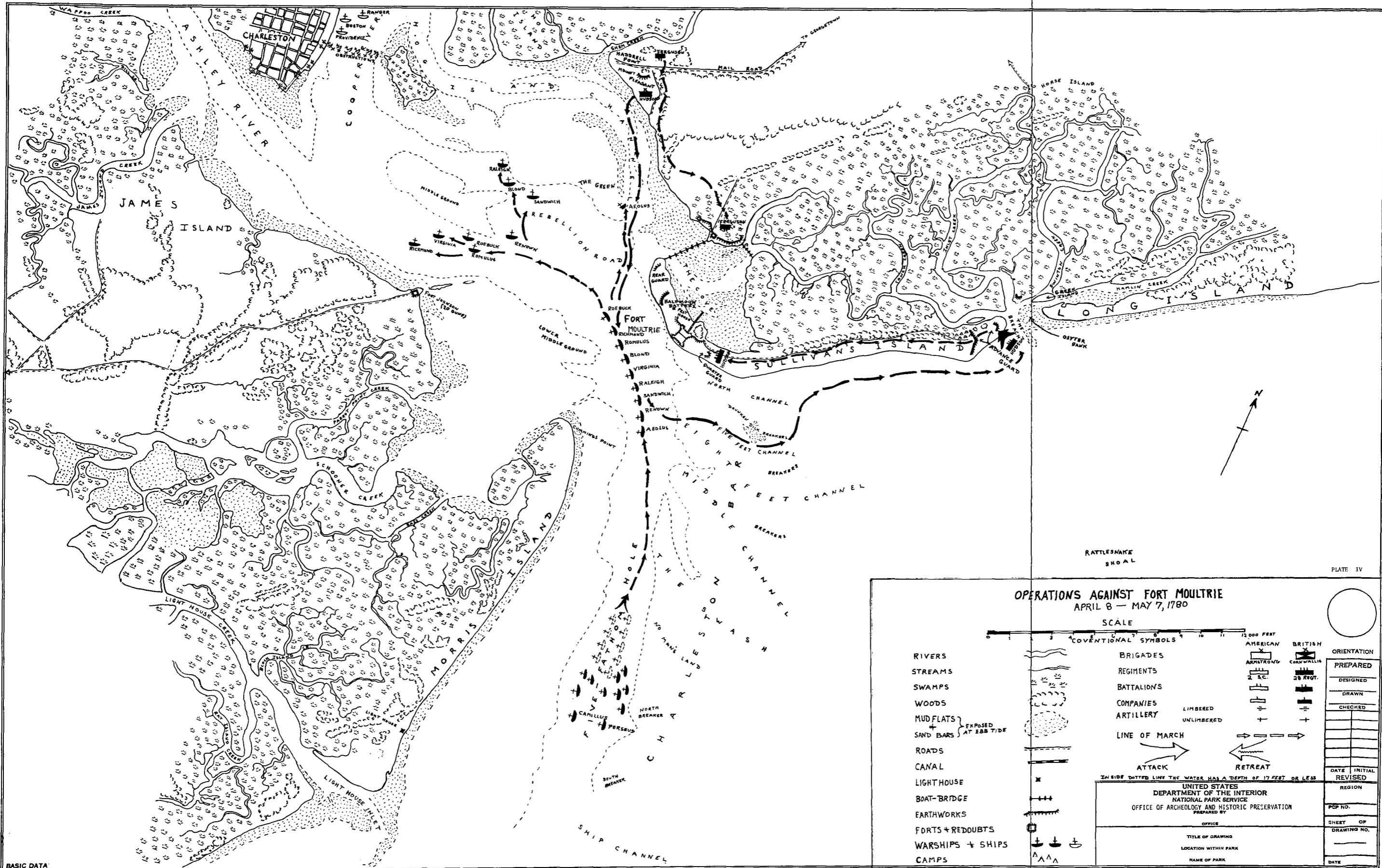
The officers, Continental and Militia, to march out with the Honors of War, and be allowed to wear their side arms; the commissioned officers to be allowed Paroles, and militia officers and soldiers to be allowed Paroles, to remain at their respective homes till exchanged.

These terms were granted by Captain Hudson, and on May 7 the garrison, 160 strong, marched out and laid down its arms. The British marched in, and Captain Hudson "leveled the 13 Stripes with the Dust, and the triumphant English flag was raised on the staff."<sup>39</sup> (See Appendix C for tabulation of men and material surrendered by Colonel Scott to Captain Hudson.)

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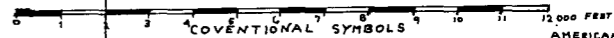
39. "A Journal of the Operations before Charleston, to the Day of its Surrender to the British Forces," pp. 127-128; Tarleton, *History*, pp. 55-56; Knowles to Clinton, May 10, 1780 (Clinton Papers); Robertson, *Diaries*, p. 227. Robertson made a drawing of Fort Moultrie as it appeared on June 3, 1780, but this sketch has disappeared.





**OPERATIONS AGAINST FORT MOULTRIE**  
 APRIL 8 — MAY 7, 1780

SCALE



- RIVERS
- STREAMS
- SWAMPS
- WOODS
- MUD FLATS
- SAND BARS (EXPOSED AT EBB TIDE)
- ROADS
- CANAL
- LIGHTHOUSE
- BOAT-BRIDGE
- EARTHWORKS
- FORTS + REDOUTS
- WARSHIPS + SHIPS
- CAMPS

- BRIGADES
- REGIMENTS
- BATTALIONS
- COMPANIES
- ARTILLERY
- LINE OF MARCH
- ATTACK
- RETREAT

IN SIDE DOTTED LINE THE WATER HAS A DEPTH OF 17 FEET OR LESS

UNITED STATES  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
 OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 PREPARED BY

OFFICE

TITLE OF DRAWING

LOCATION WITHIN PARK

NAME OF PARK

ORIENTATION	PREPARED
DESIGNED	DRAWN
CHECKED	DATE
INITIAL	REVISED
REGION	PCP NO.
SHEET OF	DRAWING NO.
DATE	

BASIC DATA

PLATE IV

The British were understandably jubilant. "Fort Moultrie the Great, has fallen!" a diarist wrote. When he landed and inspected the fort, Admiral Arbuthnot called it "the strongest fortress of its size I ever beheld."<sup>40</sup> The fort, which had served no useful purpose after Arbuthnot's fleet had passed it, was now in British hands.

Major Ferguson on May 7 had received permission from General Clinton to attack Fort Moultrie. While effecting last minute preparations, word was received that the fort had surrendered to the navy. One of the soldiers was led by his curiosity to see "this Fort that has done us so much mischief, and which the Rebels boasted we could never take." Crossing over to Sullivan's Island he described it as

the strongest Fort ever built by Hands. No labour has been spared to complete it. You can have no Idea of its strength without being Inside it; therefore it would be needless for me to describe it. They [the Rebels] have moved some of their Cannon to Town since we have invested their lines. Still there remains thirty-one Cannon mounted, a Number of shells, a 10-inch Brass Mortar, sixty Casks of Powder, three thousand Cannon cartridges, forty thousand Musket Cartridges, and a large Quantity of Provisions. It would be impossible to storm it; and none but cowardly Rascals would ever give up so strong a post.<sup>41</sup>

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40. Arbuthnot to Germain, May 15, 1780 (Germain Papers).

41. "Journal of the Investment of Charleston on the Land Side" (Clinton Papers).

Meanwhile, Clinton's people on Charleston Neck had been inching their approaches ever nearer the Americans' lines, and a sap had drained the ditch across the Neck. All was in readiness for an assault, provided Lincoln rejected Sir Henry's final call for the surrender of Charleston.

Escape for the Americans was now impossible. They were hemmed in by 14,000 British. But Lincoln procrastinated; he asked for a truce while terms were discussed. This was granted, and a lengthy correspondence between the two generals took place on May 8 and 9. There were two points on which no agreement could be reached. These were: (a) Lincoln's demand that the militia in the town not be held as prisoners of war; and (b) that upon surrender the garrison should march out with the honors of war, colors unfurled and drums beating a British march. Clinton and Arbuthnot refused to budge.

At 8 p.m. on May 9 hostilities were resumed. The Americans fired the first gun, and then all the guns along the investment line commenced a fierce bombardment. Nearly 200 guns and mortars were in action. To General Moultrie "it appeared as if the stars were falling to the earth."<sup>42</sup>

It was a night of terror, and it broke the townspeople's will to resist. They now petitioned for a surrender. Lincoln now accepted

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42. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, pp. 108-111.

the British terms. The Continentals were to be prisoners of war. The militia were to be allowed to go to their homes, being regarded with the armed citizens as prisoners on parole. At 11 o'clock on May 12, all the Continentals marched out, with colors cased, and drums beating a Turkish march, and piled their arms near the citadel. They were followed by the militia. Charleston had fallen, and the British had taken 5,466 Continentals, militia, and armed citizens, 391 guns, 5,916 muskets, 15 stands of colors, 33,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, over 8,000 round shot, 376 barrels of powder, the remaining American ships, and a great quantity of military stores, at a cost of 76 killed and 189 wounded. American battle casualties were also slight. The surrender of Charleston was one of the great disasters, if not the greatest disaster, suffered by American arms during the war.<sup>43</sup>

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43. Ward, *War of the Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 702-703.

APPENDIX A

List of "His Majesty's Ships, Transports, Victuallers, & c., which sailed under convoy of Commodore Sir Peter Parker, including also those which sailed afterwards from Cork, and on May 15, 1776, anchored in the Cape Fear River."

<u>SHIP'S NAME</u>	<u>CAPTAIN</u>
<u>Ships-of-War</u>	
<u>Sphinx</u>	Anthony Hunt
<u>Solebay</u>	Thomas Symonds
<u>Acteon</u>	Christian Atkins
<u>Bristol</u>	John Morris
<u>Carcass</u> , Bomb Tender	
<u>Lt. Tompkins' Transports</u>	
<u>Harcourt</u>	Thomas Price
<u>Juliana</u>	Wm. Johnson
<u>Ocean</u>	John Mallam
<u>Mercury</u>	John Chalimers
<u>Peace</u>	Elisha Preston
<u>Army Victuallers</u>	
<u>Sovereign</u>	Phillip Flin
<u>Thomas &amp; William</u>	James Smith
<u>Sea Nymph</u>	John Levitt
<u>Prince of Piedmont</u>	F. Harman
<u>Nancy</u>	Paul White
<u>Armed Ship</u>	
<u>Friendship</u>	Robert Lumley
<u>Navy Storeship</u>	
<u>Sibella</u>	G. Robinson

SHIP'S NAME

MASTER'S NAME

Lt. Knowles' Transports

Myrtle  
Nancy (1st)  
Emanuel  
Blessing  
Saville  
Earl of Oxford  
Union  
Jenny  
Nancy (2)  
King George  
Rachael & Mary  
Ann & Isabella  
Golden Rule  
Good Interest  
Aurora  
Clibborn

Lt. Knowles  
Chas. Yarrel  
Daniel Spencer  
John Atkinson  
Thomas Brown  
James Johnson  
William Wallis  
William Pigg  
Samuel Labe  
Peter Kelly  
F. Rowbottom  
G. Read  
Isaac Thompson  
John Wiely  
John Wetherall  
W. Thomas

Hospital Ship

Pigot

Ordnance Vessels

Earl of Derby  
Noble Bounty

John Habberson  
John Duckman

APPENDIX B

Return of Troops in Fort, June 28, 1776

2d Regiment

Commissioned officers 30, staff officers 6,  
non-commissioned officers 38, rank and file fit  
for duty 306; sick present 33; absent without  
leave 5: Total 344

Total effectives 374

Wounded--subalterns 1; sergeants 1; fifers 1;  
privates 20; Total 23

Killed --sergeants 1; corporals 1; privates 8;  
Total 10

Gibbes, *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 5

4th Regiment Artillery

Commissioned officers 2;  
Rank and file--fit for duty 17; sick present 3;  
Total 20

Wounded--privates 2; Total 2

Killed--privates 1; Total 1

The quantity of ammunition in the fort was 26 rounds for  
each cannon, and 20 rounds of small-arms ammunition per man.

*Ibid.*, p. 5.

List of Killed and Wounded

in Engagement with the Fleet, June 28, 1776

<u>NAME</u>	<u>KILLED</u>	<u>WOUNDED</u>	<u>COMPANY</u>
Samuel Yarbury	1		Grenadier's
Josiah Stone and Samuel Gale		2	P. Horry's
John Taylor and Andrew Nelson		2	Eveleigh's
Sergeant Young and John Keel		2	McDonald's
John Long		1	Harleston's
Sergeant McDaniel	1		Huger's
John Fleming and James Hunter	2		Huger's
George Mason and John Sawyer		2	Huger's
Robert Black and William Jones		2	Huger's
Henry Peters and Nathaniel Beck		2	Huger's
Lt. Henry Gray, wounded by splinter in thigh		1	Motte's
Lt. T. Hall, wounded by splinter in temple		1	Mason's
Robert Wade		1	Motte's
John Boxall and John Hickie	2		Ashby's
Luke Flood and Richard Rogers	2		Ashby's
Isaac Edwards	1		Ashby's
John Proby, Owen Hinds, and John Griffin		3	Ashby's
John Ryan	1		Blake's
Jim Downing, Thos. Smith, and Benj. Reeves		3	Blake's
John Campbell, fife-major		1	Blake's
2d Regiment	10	23	
 <u>Regiment of Artillery</u>			
Rowley Purdy, matross	1		
David Weatherspoon and Josiah Niblet		2	
A mulatto waiting boy, belonging to Lt. Dunbar	1		
	12	25	



APPENDIX C

List of Men and Material surrendered at Fort Moultrie on  
May 7, 1780, by Colonel Scott to Captain Hudson.

Continentals

1 lieutenant colonel  
3 captains  
4 lieutenants  
110 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men

Militia

2 captains  
7 lieutenants  
91 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men

Ordnance

9 24-pounders  
7 18-pounders  
10 12-pounders  
9 9-pounders  
2 6-pounders  
4 4-pounders  
1 10-inch brass mortar

41

Ammunition

	<u>Round Shot</u>
24-pounders	539
18-pounders	613
12-pounders	960
9-pounders	1,334
6-pounders	264
4-pounders	369
	<u>3,809</u>

Bar Shot

24-pounders	50
18-pounders	47
12-pounders	49
9-pounders	9

148

Grape Shot

24-pounders	82
18-pounders	50
12-pounders	42
9-pounders	9

224

Canister

12-pounders	13
9-pounders	56
6-pounders	30
4-pounders	34

133

Explosive Shells

10-inch	120
6-pounders	32

Ordnance Stores

Lintstocks	54
Barrels of powder	46
Worms, laddles, & sponges	193
Lanthorns	10
Handspikes	256
Flannel cartridges for field pieces	98
Muskets cartridges	6,032

Beds spare	35
Quoins spare	39
Stand of arms	520
Cartridges filled	2,706
Blank cartridges	1,994
Port fires	250
Spare fuses	300
Hand grenades	120
Bits and prickers	80
Reams of paper	2
Spare tubes	100
Spare gun carriages	9
Barrels of turpentine	40
Wagons	3
Sling cart for great guns	1
Gin	1
Fall and slings	1
Water engine	1
Coil of 3-inch rope	3

Arbuthnot to Admiralty, June 15, 1780, found in Tarleton's

*History*, pp. 52-53.

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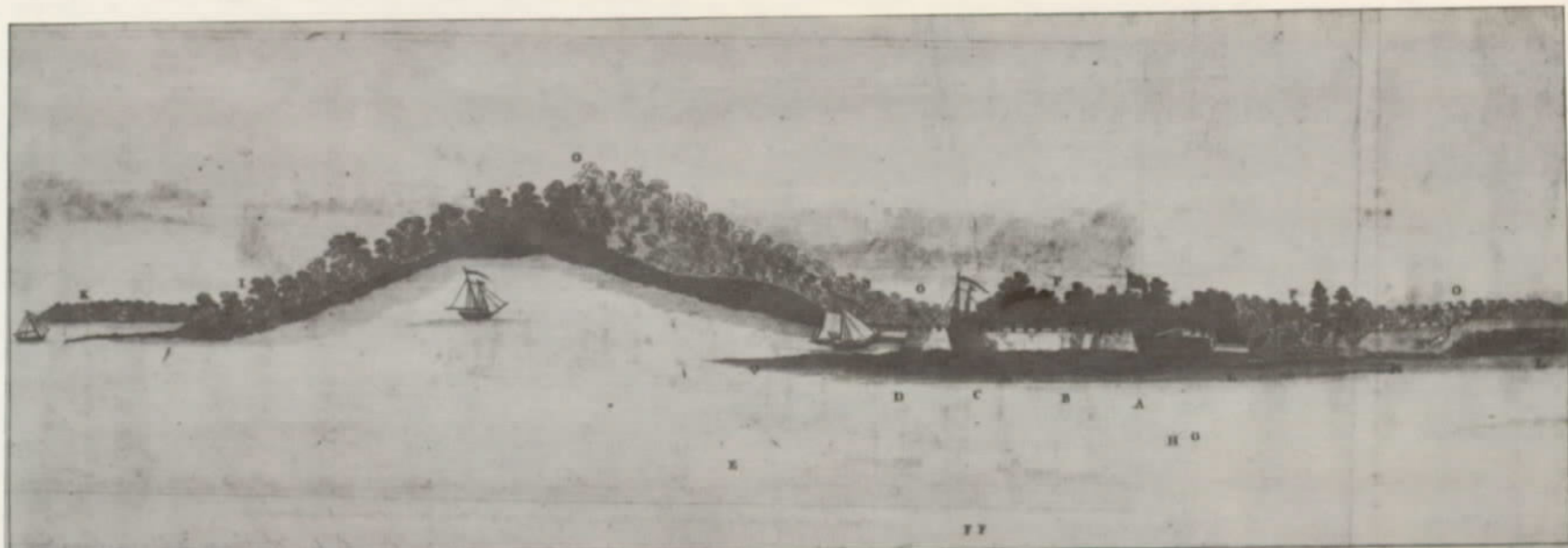
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PLATE V

"A N.b.E. View of the Fort on the Western End of Sulivans [sic] Island with the Disposition of His Majesty's Fleet commanded by Commodore Sir Peter Parker, during the Attack on the 28th of June 1776, which lasted 9 hours and 40 minutes." From National Archives, RG 77, U.S. 234, Atlas, p. 5.





*An Engraving of the Fort on the Western end of Sullivan's Island with the Disposition of His Majesty's Fleet Commanded by Commodore Sir Peter Parker Kt. &c. &c. &c. during the Attack on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1776. which lasted 9 hours and 30 minutes.*

A. The Active 28 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Williams. B. Bristol Commodore Sir Peter Parker Kt. &c. &c. &c. of 50 Guns, Capt<sup>o</sup> Morris. C. Experiment 20 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Bent. D. Solebay 28 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Simons. E. Syren 28 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Fourman. F. F. The Arsen of 28 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Atkins and Spherys of 20 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Hater on a Shoal the latter got off but the Arsen was burnt by our selves the next Morning as it was impossible to get her off. G. H. The Thunder Bomb Capt<sup>o</sup> Reed with the Friendship Armed Vessel of 28 Guns Capt<sup>o</sup> Hope. I. Mount Pleasant. K. Hog Island. L. Sullivan's Island and Fort. M. A Narrow Illinois. N. An Armed Hulk to defend the Illinois. O. The Continent. P. The Myrtle Grove. Q. The Western end of Sullivan's Island & Fort Erected upon a Peninsula.

*Engraved by W. B. Smith according to an Act of Parliament Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 1776 by W. B. Smith Engraver of St. Martin's Lane Charing Cross.*

*To Commodore Sir Peter Parker Kt. &c. &c. &c. This View is Most humbly Dedicated and Presented by A. Colonel The James R. Mifflin Artillery Jun 30<sup>th</sup> 1776*

PLATE VI

"A N.W.b.N. View of Charles Town from on Board the Bristol  
Commodore Sir Peter Parker . . . taken in Five Fathom Hole  
the day after the Attack upon Fort Sullivan [sic] by the  
Commodore & his Squadron, which Action continued 9 hours  
& 40 minutes." National Archives, RG 77, U.S. 234, Atlas,  
p. 5.



*L. OGDEN. Engraver it is Publish'd according to Act of Parliament Aug<sup>o</sup> 1776. by W<sup>m</sup> Paden Printer of St. Martins Lane Charing Cross.*

*A. V. W. & X. View of CHARLES TOWN from on board the Bristol Commodore, Sir Peter Parker K<sup>t</sup>. &c. &c. taken in Two Fathom  
Hole the day after the Attack upon Fort Sullivan by the Commodore & his Squadron, which Action continued 9 hours & 40 minutes.*

*J. Charles Town, B. Ashley River, C. Fort Johnston, D. Cummins Point, K. Part of Tree Fathom Hole where all the Fleet rode before & after the Attack of Fort Sullivan, F. The Station of the headmost Frigate the Sabley.  
M. & N. three quarters from Fort Sullivan situated to the Northward of G. N. Cummins Point D. & E. Johnston, C. towers nearly S. & N. H. Part of Mount Pleasant, I. Part of Hog Island, A. Wando River, L. Cooper River  
James Island, at the Southern Point is Fort Johnston opposite the Center of Mount Pleasant Three Miles and a 1/2 distance. V. Breakers on Charles Town Bar, O. Rebels Schooner of 12 Guns.*

*To Commodore Sir Peter Parker K<sup>t</sup>. &c. &c. This View is Most humbly Dedicated and presented by  
S<sup>t</sup>. Colonel Tho: James R<sup>t</sup>. R<sup>t</sup>. of Artillery, Two Fathom Hole, South Carolina June 24<sup>th</sup> 1776.*

PLATE VII

"A Sketch of the Environs of Charlestown in South  
Carolina." Showing operations from February 11 -  
May 10, 1780. National Archives, Reference Collection.



ENCIPHERED  
BY STAFFS  
TOP SECRETARY

A SKETCH OF THE ENVIRONS OF CHARLESTOWN IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

- A Landing of the British Troops at Edisto River on the 29th July —
- B March on the 30th from the Landing to Johns Island —
- C The Kings River on the 31st being waiting for the Spring Tides —  
to cross the River which being effected the 1st March they advanced  
to the Indian Hill where having through a heavy fog from Fort  
Mifflin and the batteries of Johns Island dropped anchor to  
join the Town on the 2nd April.
- E Redoubt to protect the Transport in Stone River
- F Stone Redoubt erected near Fort Johnson
- G Battery to secure the Enemy's ships of 4 on Ashley River —
- H Ships made out before
- I March of 1000 men from Laurens to Moultrie on 29th March when a  
heavy fog on Ashley River halted the march night at X —
- K Encampment of the Army on the 30th March on Charleston Neck
- L March of a strong Detachment to Old Mifflin under the command of  
Lieut. Colonel Mifflin and of the Enemy's communication to Cooper River
- M Fort Mifflin & Mifflin on Johns Island with the Enemy's Ships  
to establish the Channel Command on June the 17th July to the harbor  
and Bayou of the River
- N Stone River Landing
- O Ships in Cooper River and Stone to obstruct the navigation —
- P Ship on Wood River
- Q Ships Landing
- R Redoubt & Batteries to establish the 1st Parallel before the 1st April
- S Second Parallel finished 17th April
- T Third Parallel completed 29th May when having by day advanced  
and seized the Enemy's canal Mifflin was carried on board —  
the 20th of the 2nd and the Garrison consisting of several  
of these Men surrendered to the British Arms under the command  
of Lieut. Col. Mifflin & Co. and the 10th March a Detachment  
on the 29th July 1780.

PLATE VIII

"A Sketch of the Operations before Charlestown, the  
Capital of South Carolina. Sir Henry Clinton's Map  
1780." Insert show Operations on Sullivan's Island.  
National Archives, Reference Collection.

