



The Battle of Point Pleasant

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began to interpose an objection to such a sweeping remark, but he was abruptly cut off by Brown. "You needn't deny it. I used to make fun of the statement, but now I know you have a right to say so. In the many days that I have been a prisoner in this jail, hundreds if not thousands of your people have been to look at me, every one of them believing me guilty of all the crimes with which I am charged. Of them all, only a single person has been in the least uncivil to me. He was drunk, and was immediately ordered off by the authorities. You have a right to think it and say it of yourselves, for it is the truth."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE BATTLE OF POINT PLEASANT.

(Contributed by J. T. McALLISTER, of Hot Springs, Bath county, Va.)

The importance of this battle has not received due attention from the historians of the American Revolution. It has even been classed by some of them as fruitless, and by others it has been passed over in silence. Even some of Virginia's historians do not mention it. And yet, it is the one battle of which a president of the United States has used this language:

"Had it not been for Lord Dunmore's war (of which this was the sole battle), it is more than likely that when the colonies achieved their freedom they would have found their western boundary fixed at the Alleghany Mountains. Its results were most important.

"The battle of the Great Kanawha was a purely American victory, for it was fought solely by the backwoodmen themselves. Both because of the character of the fight itself, and because of the result that flowed from it, it is worthy of being held in especial remembrance."

And in another place he says:

"Lord Dunmore's war, waged by Americans for the good of America, was the opening act in the drama whereof the closing

scene was played at Yorktown. It made possible the two-fold character of the Revolutionary war, wherein on the one hand the Americans won by conquest and colonization new lands for their children, and on the other wrought out their national independence of the British king. Save for Lord Dunmore's war we could not have settled beyond the mountains until after we had ended our quarrel with our kinsfolk across the sea. It so cowed the northern Indians that for two or three years they made no further organized effort to check the white advance. In consequence, the Kentucky pioneers had only to contend with small parties of enemies until time had been given them to become so firmly rooted in the land that it proved impossible to oust them. Had Cornstalk and his fellow chiefs kept their hosts unbroken, they would undoubtedly have swept Kentucky clear of settlers in 1775—as was done by the mere rumor of their hostility the preceding summer. Their defeat gave the opportunity for Boone to settle Kentucky, and therefore for Robertson to settle middle Tennessee, and for Clark to conquer Illinois and the Northwest; it was the first in the chain of causes that gave us for our western frontier, in 1783, the Mississippi and not the Alleghanies." (Roosevelt's *Winning of the West*.)

This places this battle in a most important and interesting light. The first battle of the Revolution. The first and the indispensable step which won for us the Northwest.

In addition to this, there is another feature in which this battle was highly important. It lies in the fact that while the army which fought and won this battle, accomplished these things, that army was not expected to win, but was left in its position for the purpose of having it destroyed. The same high authority which has ranked this battle as above stated has taken issue with this position, which all Virginia writers, who have touched on this subject, have taken. They with one accord believe that Lord Dunmore acted treacherously.

Let us therefore examine the surrounding facts with this question in mind.

Lord Dunmore, the British Governor of Virginia, nominally the leader in this war, directs General Andrew Lewis to raise troops from Augusta, Botetourt, Bedford, and the settlements of the Holstein and to march to and meet him at Point Pleasant,

where he will be on the 20th of September, with 1,500 troops, which he will bring with him by way of Pittsburg (then Fort Pitt). Lewis goes to Point Pleasant, which he reaches on the 6th of October. He sends messengers to find Lord Dunmore and ascertain the cause of delay. Meanwhile Dunmore holds a treaty with the Indians. (Staunton letter of November 4, 1774.) On the 10th the army of Lewis is saved from a surprise only by the merest chance, and a battle ensues which lasts from sunrise 'til sunset, in which the choicest soldiers of the army are killed or wounded. The Indians who fought this battle were furnished with supplies from the British. (*American Archives* iv, Vol. I, p. 684.) And in response to Lewis' message, an answer reaches him after the battle that his Lordship has gone on to a place near the Indian towns, and that Lewis must follow him there. The men, after the battle, press forward to inflict severe chastisement on the Indian towns, only to be met with orders to go home; that Dunmore had concluded a treaty with them. Are these not in themselves facts which demand some explanation of the clearest kind? Let us look at the attitude of the British, represented by Dunmore and of the colonist, whose army this was.

On the 12th of March, 1773, the Virginia Legislature had adopted unanimously a resolution appointing a standing committee of correspondence and inquiry, and requesting that the other colonies do the same.

The people of Boston having thrown into the sea that noted vessel load of tea, an Act of Parliament was passed, which closed their port from and after the first day of June, 1774.

On the 24th of May, 1774, the Virginia Legislature (in view of this) set apart the first day of June as a day of "fasting, humiliation and prayer," not so much as a means of grace, I fear, as a means of calling the attention of the people to this odious act of Parliament. In consequence of this resolution of the Virginia Legislature, Dunmore on the 25th of May dissolved it, and the members immediately withdrew to the Raleigh Tavern, and formed themselves into a committee to consider the most expedient and necessary measures to guard against the encroachments which "are so glaringly threatened." This committee called for deputies from the several colonies, to meet in a general congress, to deliberate on "those general measures,

which the united interests of America may from time to time require."

The counties elected delegates who met at Williamsburg on August 1, 1774, and appointed deputies to the General Congress, which was to meet in Philadelphia on the following 4th of September. Those deputies were Peyton Randolph, Richard H. Lee, George Washington, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Benjamin Harrison, and Edmund Pendleton.

The resolutions of the counties, and those of the Williamsburg meeting, showed in unmistakable tones the temper of this people. While through them all an expression of hope that England would retrace her steps is discernable, in each there rings out clear and loud a note of defiance if she did not retrace them.

The Williamsburg resolutions had called attention to the odious proclamation of General Gage, in Massachusetts, declaring it treason for the people to assemble and discuss their wrongs, and this Williamsburg meeting had solemnly announced "that the executing, or attempting to execute, such proclamation will justify resistance and reprisal."

On the 4th of September, 1774, the Continental Congress met for the first time at Carpenters Hall, in the city of Philadelphia.

On the 8th of September the army of General Andrew Lewis left Camp Union (now Lewisburg, W. Va.). It arrived at Point Pleasant on 6th of October.

But it must be borne in mind that during ten days of this time it was camped on the banks of the Kanawha river making canoes.

On the first day of the Congress, Patrick Henry addressed it in a speech, which placed him in the front rank of American orators.

Whatever may be said of other members of that Congress, no student of the life of Patrick Henry will hesitate to declare that nothing short of the Independence of the Colonies would have satisfied him. Nearly ten years before he had thrown prudence to the winds, and so startled the Virginia House of Burgesses by his declarations, that its speaker had warned him with a cry of "Treason."

In a private conversation at Colonel Samuel Overton's, when

asked "Whether he supposed (in this matter) Great Britain would drive her Colonies to extremities?" he had said: "She will drive us to extremities, no accommodation will take place, hostilities will soon commence, and a desperate and bloody touch it will be."

To use the words of William Wirt: "He (Henry) had long since read the true character of the British Court; and saw that no alternative remained for his country but abject submission or heroic resistance. It was not for a soul like Henry's to hesitate between these courses. He had offered upon the altar of liberty no divided heart. The gulf of war, which yawned before him, was indeed fiery and fearful; but he saw that the plunge was inevitable. The body of the convention, however, hesitated. It required all the energies of a mentor like Henry to push them over the precipice."

Was there any mistaking the attitude of Virginia when she chose such a man to represent her in the halls of the first Congress.

Nor can it be said that Lord Dunmore was not aware of the sentiments of Henry. He knew him as well then as he did a short while later when, at the head of the Virginia militia, he forced him to pay for the powder which his lordship had taken from the powder house at Williamsburg.

But more than this, Lord Dunmore knew that England would not retrace her steps. While others might hope that Gage's proclamation was not directed by the court; that the British parliament was not prepared to follow up the acts which they had begun, he was better informed than the colonists. We have seen the attitude of the colonists. What, now, was that of Great Britain?

The inveterate design of the colonists to become independent continued to be a leading topic in the British parliament, notwithstanding the evidence furnished in their conduct on the repeal of the stamp act in 1766. A specimen of the manner in which this charge was supported is to be found in the argument of Sir Richard Sutton, who said in the House of Commons on the 22d of April, 1774: "If you ask an American who is his master, he will tell you he has none, nor any governor but Jesus Christ." Lord Mansfield was quite sure the Americans

meditated a state of independency, particularly since the peace of Paris, and upon this ground chiefly he rested his celebrated declaration in the House of Lords: "*If we do not kill the Americans, the Americans will kill us.*"

In one of his speeches on the same point, Devanant is brought forward as having "foreseen that America would endeavor to form herself into a separate and independent state, *whenever she found herself of sufficient strength to contend with the mother country.*"

Percy Gregg, the English historian, in speaking of this matter, says (p. 107), "that they, the colonies, would at the first opportunity throw off their allegiance to the mother country was the conviction of nearly every statesman who had united long colonial experience to clear-headed common sense."

And again, in speaking of the necessity for having a hostile power in the neighborhood, he says (p. 109): "The warmest champion of the colonies was warned by statesmen on the spot and at home, by friends and foes, that the retention of Canada might prove fatal to the English power in America; that the northern colonies at least, inveterately disaffected, were retained in their allegiance *by the salutary pressure of a hostile power in their neighborhood.* The imperfect obedience, the formal allegiance they had hitherto rendered, was enforced by interest rather than inspired by affection. When once emancipated from dependence on the military and naval power, they would be prompt to shake off the mild control of the mother country."

In a letter written 27th of April, 1775, by Paul Jones to Joseph Hewes, of which copies were sent to Thomas Jefferson, Robert Morris and Philip Livingston, he says:

"*I have long since known that it is the fixed purpose of the Tory party in England to provoke these colonies to some overt act which would justify martial law, dispersion of the legislative bodies, by force of arms, taking away the charters of self-government and reduction of all the North American colonies to the footing of the West India Islands and Canada.*"

Here we have then the attitude of Virginia, well defined. An attitude in which she had said: "unless you retrace your steps, I am your sworn enemy."

On the other we have the attitude of the British court, recog-

nized fully by some, and surely not hid from Britian's own representative in this hot bed of secession, one of the "Statesmen on the spot."

Thus matters stand when Lewis' army marches into the jaws of death. Let us see what thoughts were, doubtless, passing through the mind of the British governor. He knew that in this army which was led by Lewis were embraced the picked men from the best armed section of Virginia. (*Randall's Life of Jefferson*, p. 294.) It had in it the choicest troops from Augusta, Botetourt (then embracing Rockbridge and part of the Southwest), Fincastle county, which was formed in 1772 embracing all Southwest Virginia, and also Kentucky, and which four years later passed out of existence to give birth to the counties of Montgomery, Washington and Kentucky, and the troops from the Watagua settlements.

Not only were these men the best armed in the State, but their training from childhood had been a never ending warfare with the Indians.

Moreover it was in many respects diverse from the section east of the Blue Ridge and decidedly less influenced by feelings of loyalty to the British crown.

The Established church pressed her exclusive pretensions harder and harder against her Presbyterian and Independent allies. To proscription and affront the descendants of the Scottish settlers of Ulster, the Cromwellian conquerors of the Southern provinces, the grandchildren of the defenders of Londonderry and Enniskillern, were little likely to submit. (Gregg, p. 119.) The flower of the Presbyterians followed the aristocracy of Catholic Ireland into exile. The eastern districts were peopled. These Scotch-Irish, boldly pushed past these settled regions and plunged into the wilderness, as the leaders of the white advance, the first and last set of immigrants to do this. (Roosevelt.) Everywhere the Presbyterian exiles were among the loudest spokesmen of colonial disaffection, a chief supporter of that party which looked to independence as the proximate if not the immediate goal of colonial progress. (Gregg.)

In this war of Independence the fiercest enemies of King George were the descendants of the same Scotch-Irish who had

held the North of Ireland against James the second. (Henderson's *Life of Jackson*.)

While to some writers the lives of these people seemed grim and harsh and narrow, yet they are admitted to have been strangely fascinating, full of adventurous toil and danger, such natures as were strong, freedom loving and full of defiance. Lacking as its militia may have been in discipline, it was rendered most formidable by the high courage and prowess of the individuals composing it. It was from this same people and section that came the men who waded for days with Clarke through the drowned lands of the Wabash. It was from this same stock, yes it was some of these very men, who were to deliver that telling blow at Kings mountain. Some of the leaders of these troops, passing with Lewis down the Kanawha, led victoriously their men in some of the most important battles in both the Northern and the Southern campaigns, and helped to hem in Cornwallis at Yorktown, and were in at the death.

To even a stronger man than Dunmore the thought must have suggested itself, that to conquer the Indian tribes would remove that "salutary pressure of a hostile power in the neighborhood," and the thought would have suggested itself that the destruction of the army led by Lewis would have removed from the problem some of the "loudest spokesmen of disaffection."

How opportune a time! How would he best serve England? By aiding Lewis to overcome these foes would help the Colonist in the approaching struggle. To cripple him or have him exterminated, would render a service of lasting benefit to his principal across the sea. For himself, the situation offered every chance for escape from the blame. He had only to fail to keep his engagement, or at the best, but to have his agent, Connolly, to direct the attention of the Indians in that direction, and he was safe.

But says some one, this using of savages against white men would have required a brutality beyond belief.

Let us see if such tender compassion animated the then governor. In 1777 the Earl of Chatham said: "Your ministers have gone to Germany; they have sought the alliance and assistance of every pitiful, beggarly, insignificant, paltry prince, to cut the throats of their legal, brave and injured brethren in

America. They have entered into mercenary treaties with those human butchers, for the purchase and sale of human blood. But, my lords, this is not all; they have entered into other treaties. They have let the savages of America loose upon their innocent, unoffending brethren; loose upon the weak, the aged, and defenceless; on old men, women, and children; on the very babes upon the breast; to be cut, mangled, sacrificed, broiled and roasted; nay to be literally eaten. These, my lords, are the allies Great Britain now has; carnage, desolation, and destruction, wherever her arms are carried, is her newly adopted mode of making war."

The reply of the Earl of Suffolk to this was, "*that we are fully justified in using whatever means God and nature has put into our hands.*"

On the 5th of December, Dunmore said "he heartily wished that more Indians were employed."

In 1778 Mr. Burke said: "The imperfect papers already before the House demonstrated that the King's ministers had negotiated and obtained alliances (with the Indians) from one end of the American continent to the other."

If, therefore, we find that Dunmore approved in 1777 that policy of the King's ministers by which these savages were turned loose against the unarmed and defenceless men, women and children, some great change must have taken place in him if he would hesitate to employ them against armed and trained soldiers.

It was only six months later, when his private agent was captured on the frontier, and on him was found written authority from Lord Dunmore to induce the Indians to rise and massacre the Virginians. Later on he wrote to Lord Dartmouth that he would require but few English troops to put down the rebellion, since he would raise such a force of negroes and Indians as would soon bring the Virginians to terms. (*Maurys History of Virginia.*) The Indians were prevented from rising because of the victory won by Lewis. The attempt to incite the negroes in the eastern part of the State is a matter of history.

Let us turn now to *the troops which comprised the army of General Lewis.*

These troops rendezvoused at Camp Union (now Lewisburg,

W. Va.) about the 1st of September, and consisted of two regiments, one of which was from Botetourt county, and was commanded by Colonel William Fleming, and the other from Augusta, by Colonel Charles Lewis. The Augusta troops numbered 600, the Botetourt troops about 450. (*Winning of the West*, p. 11). It must be remembered that Augusta and Botetourt then divided between them practically all of the territory west of the Blue Ridge, except what was then in Fincastle county, and that what is now Bath and Highland were largely parts of Augusta (the dividing line between Augusta and Botetourt passing one mile north of Hot Springs), and that Rockbridge then was included in the limits of Augusta.

The home of Colonel Charles Lewis was on the Cowpasture river, near Williamsville, in what is now Bath county. The captains who commanded the companies in his regiment are usually given as Capt. Alexander McClenachan, Capt. John Dickson, Captain John Lewis (son of Thomas),* Captain Benjamin Harrison, Captain William Paul, Captain Joseph Haynes and Captain Samuel Wilson, and those of the Botetourt regiment as Captain Mathew Arbuckle, Captain John Murray, Captain John Lewis (son of Andrew), Captain James Robertson, Captain Robert McClenachan, Captain James Ward, Captain John Stewart and Captain — Love. (Foote, 2d s., p. 161.)

It will be noted that there are but seven captains usually assigned in this list to the Botetourt regiment, and eight in the other, which would give only 350 men and 400 men, respectively, by allowing fifty men to the company.

The company of Captain Alexander McClanachan assembled in Staunton the latter part of August. Of this company William McCutcheon was lieutenant, and Joseph Long was an ensign. William Wilson (afterward known in Augusta as Major William Wilson) was a volunteer in this company.

The company of Captain George Mathews was also raised in Staunton, in the latter part of June. William Robertson was first lieutenant of this company, George Gibson was second

* This is usually given as "son of William." This is a mistake. William Lewis' son John was then but sixteen years old. See Peyton's History, p. 287.

lieutenant and William Kennerly was a member of it. The last named company marched from Staunton to Fort Warwick, in what is now Pocahontas, where a company of Augusta militia, under the command of Captain George Moffett, were engaged in building said fort. Sixteen men, under the command of William Kennerly, were left at that fort, and remained there until the troops returned after the battle. Captain Moffett and Captain Mathews marched thence with their other men for Point Pleasant.

The company of Captain John Lewis (son of Thomas Lewis) was raised at the Warm Springs, in what was then Augusta, now Bath county. Of this company Samuel Vance was lieutenant, and Jacob Warwick was ensign.

The company of Captain John Dickinson was raised on Cowpasture river. Dickinson's home was near Millboro Springs, in what is now Bath county. Robert Thompson, of that section, and Joseph Mayse, also of that section, were members of this company.

The company of Captain Alexander McClanachan joined the companies commanded by Captain John Morrison, Captain Samuel Wilson, Captain George Mathews, and Captain John Lewis at the Great Levels, in now Greenbrier county. Captain Morrison, mentioned above, was killed in the battle.

Among the names preserved, as being in the Augusta regiment and in the first of the action, is the name of Captain ——— Lockridge. This was Captain Andrew Lockridge, whose home at that time was on the Bullpasture river, then in Augusta, but now in Highland.

At Camp Union, Lewis' army was joined by an independent volunteer company of 40 men, under Colonel John Field, of Culpepper county; a company from Bedford, under Captain Buford, and two from the Holstein settlement, under Captain Evan Shelby and Captain William Herbert. In Shelby's company his son Isaac was a subaltern, and James Robertson was sergeant. With this force, which aggregated about 1,100 men, Lewis began his march for Point Pleasant to keep his engagement with Lord Dunmore. Colonel Charles Lewis' division marched the 8th, and General Andrew Lewis' on the 12th.

The distance was 160 miles, and the march occupied nineteen

days. Captain Mathew Arbuckle acted as guide, and the name of one of his assistants has been preserved. This was Jacob Persinger, who in his youth had been captured by the Indians, returned and lived at that time in what is now Alleghany county.

Smyth, an English officer who happened to be travelling through Virginia and who joined this army more to find an opportunity to criticise than anything else, has described the appearance of the men, from which it appears that these troops formed a typical back-woods army, both officers and soldiers.

They wore fringed hunting shirts, dyed yellow, brown, white and even red; quaintly carved shot-bags and powder-horns hung from their broad ornamented belts; they had fur caps or soft hats, moccasins, and coarse woolen leggings reaching half-way up to the thigh. Each carried his flintlock, his tomahawk, and scalping knife.

But for all that, a distinguished writer, whose opportunities for comparing men of this mould are unsurpassed, has said that "Although without experience of drill, it may be doubted if a braver or physically finer set of men were ever got together on this continent." (Roosevelt.)

On the 21st they reached the Kanawha, at the mouth of Elk creek, and after halting to build dug-out canoes, part of the army went down in these while others followed down the river. While halting here General Andrew Lewis with the Botetourt troops, the company of Captain William Russell, and the company of Captain Evan Shelby overtook them.

On the 1st the army started down the river, but the day being very wet they camped opposite the mouth of Elk. From the 21st to the 1st was spent in building canoes. (Foote, p. 161.)

The army reached Point Pleasant on October 6th.

Colonel Field had reported to General Lewis that Lord Dunmore would be at Point Pleasant on the 20th of September. In order to ascertain the cause of Lord Dunmore's delay, Lewis sent two runners in the direction of Fort Pitt to obtain tidings of Dunmore. These messengers were William Sharp, who was a member of the company of Captain Andrew Lockridge and had previously served as an Indian spy, and a certain William Mann. These messengers did not return until the morning of

Thursday the 13th, when they brought with them the written orders from Lord Dunmore stating that he was to march to Old Chillicothe, and ordering Lewis to meet him there. These orders, it will be noted, were not received for three days after the battle. (See unpublished letter of William Christian.)

(TO BE CONCLUDED IN JULY NUMBER.)

VIRGINIA IN 1637-'8.

HARVEY'S SECOND ADMINISTRATION.

(Abstracts by W. N. Sainsbury, and copies in McDonald Papers, Virginia State Library, from the British Public Record Office.)

(CONTINUED)

GOVERNOR HARVEY TO SECRETARY WINDEBANKE.

(Abstract.)

James City, Feb. 20, 1637-'8.

Governor Sir John Harvey to Secretary Windebanke: Beseeches leave to second Mr. Kemp's petitions now to be presented to the King by his honor's fav'r. Must attribute much to his desert and labour in his Maj. Service at present, and solely give it to his faithful care and endeavour, that in the late times of tumult all order and government was not utterly confounded to the overthrow of the Colony, when he alone with an untainted zeal stood firm for the King's honor. Entreats him so to inform his Maj. & so incline his Maj. favour to Kemp's suit, the equity whereof appears in this, that there is no stipend or fee yet allowed for any part of his public service, which being considered, deserveth a gracious encouragement, could heartily wish there were more of the same ability and endeavour in the Colony.

(*Colonial Papers*, Vol. 9, No. 84.)