



SEPTEMBER 28

PRIVATE BAYLOR'S DRAGOONS

1778

The Massacre of Baylor's Dragoons

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
The Discovery, <i>D. Bennett Mazur</i>	3
Historical Background, <i>D. Bennett Mazur</i>	7
Conclusions and Recommendations, <i>D. Bennett Mazur</i>	11
Bibliography, <i>D. Bennett Mazur</i>	14
Introductory Comments, <i>Wayne M. Daniels</i>	15
Archeological Procedures and Techniques, <i>Wayne M. Daniels</i>	16
Site Review, <i>Wayne M. Daniels</i>	17
Appendix, <i>Wayne M. Daniels</i>	22

ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of Baylor's Massacre Site	4
Sketch of Tanning Vats Location	5
Dragoons #3, #4 and #5	6
Millstone at Holdrum School	10
Excavation Site	11
Map of British Expedition into Bergen County	12, 13
Volunteers at Work	15
Tannery Artifacts	18
Buttons from Baylor's Dragoons	20
Regimental Button and Stock Buckle	23
Skull of Dragoon #4	24

Photographs by:
Albert Cattin & Christian H. Grube

D. BENNETT MAZUR

THE DISCOVERY

On the evening of September 28, 1778, approximately 120 Dragoons of the Continental Army, under the command of Col. George Baylor, were bivouacked in six barns and out-buildings along what was then called Overkill Road and now known as River Vale Road. These men were attacked by a vastly superior force of British troops during the night in which some 54 of the Americans were killed or taken prisoner. The incident became known as "Baylor's Massacre."¹

An unknown number of these men, reported to be between 40 and 60 were alleged to have been buried in tanning vats in the neighborhood, the location of which was lost to history by the removal of the millstone which once marked the site.

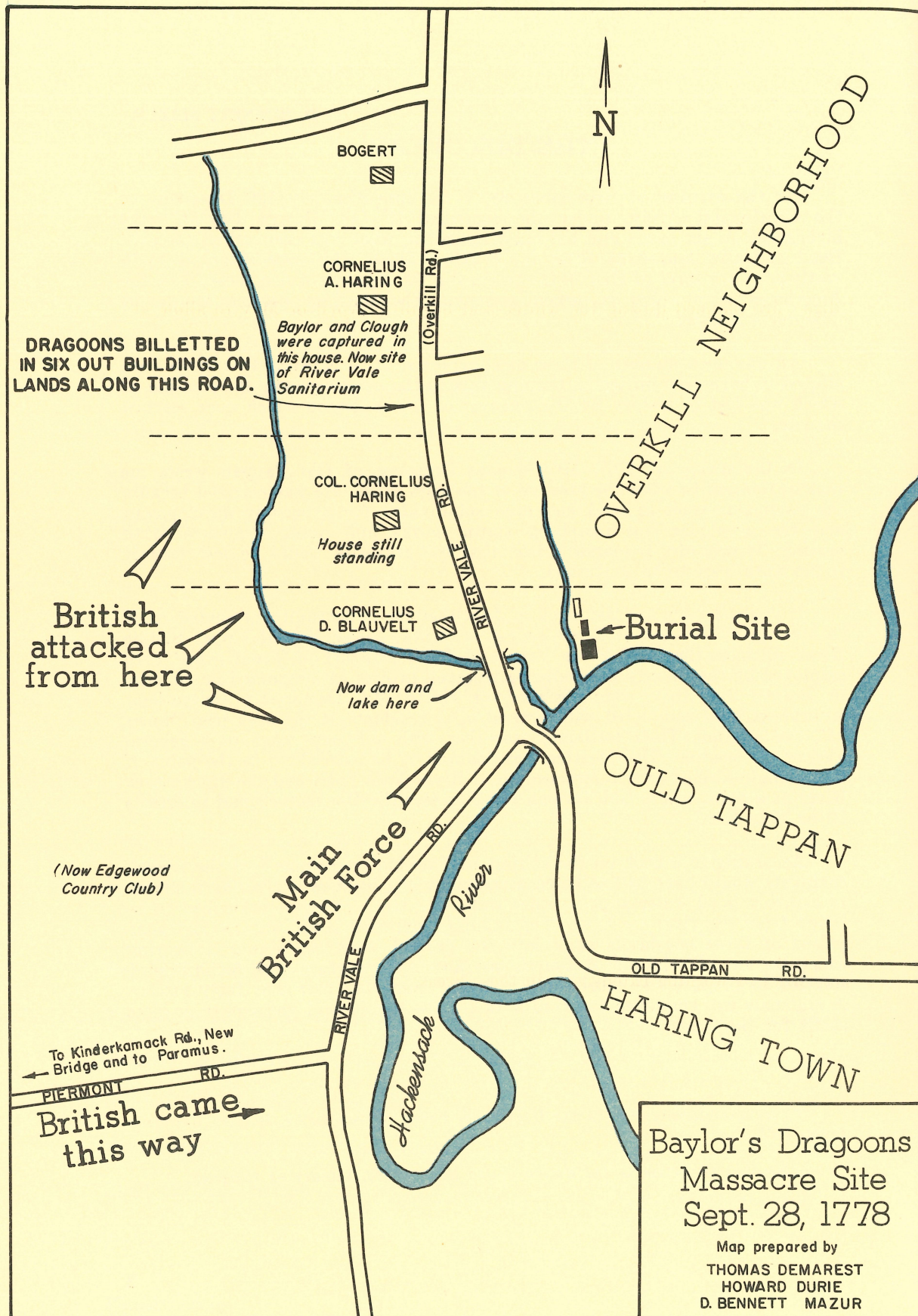
In the spring of 1967, Mr. Thomas Demarest of Old Tappan wrote me that he thought he knew the location of the mass grave. He was alarmed because the particular tract of land had been sub-divided for a housing development and the developer was installing storm sewers and doing extensive earth moving. It was Mr. Demarest's fear that the gravesite would be lost forever if the work were to be continued.

It was not until the last week in July that the opportunity presented itself to investigate the matter. Three college students; James Fay of Upper Saddle River, Richard Siegel of River Vale, and Brett Dankoff of Tenafly had been employed by the County to conduct a research project cataloguing historic sites in Bergen and they were assigned to verify Mr. Demarest's contentions. Interviews were conducted with several aged residents of the area who "knew of" the location. Their testimony, together with old maps gave us a general idea of the location. This location was deduced to be somewhere in the point of the triangle formed by the intersection of River Vale Road and the Hackensack River at a point where Old Tappan Road crosses the Hackensack and intersects River Vale Road.

According to a book on the subject of Tanning operations² of the period, such vats would have had to be constructed on the bank of a river or a stream to assure a good water supply, since water for the tanning solution had to be lifted from the river by hand. The tanning operation itself was usually comprised of three hogsheads sunk into the ground, each containing a varying concentration of solution. A fourth vat above the surface was for a liming solution to prepare the skins for tanning by removing hair and fatty matter. A millstone was employed to grind bark for the tannic acid and oyster or clam shells for the lime.

¹ *The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley*, Adrian Leiby, Rutgers University Press, 1962

² *Tanning Operation in the United States Before 1840*, Library of Congress



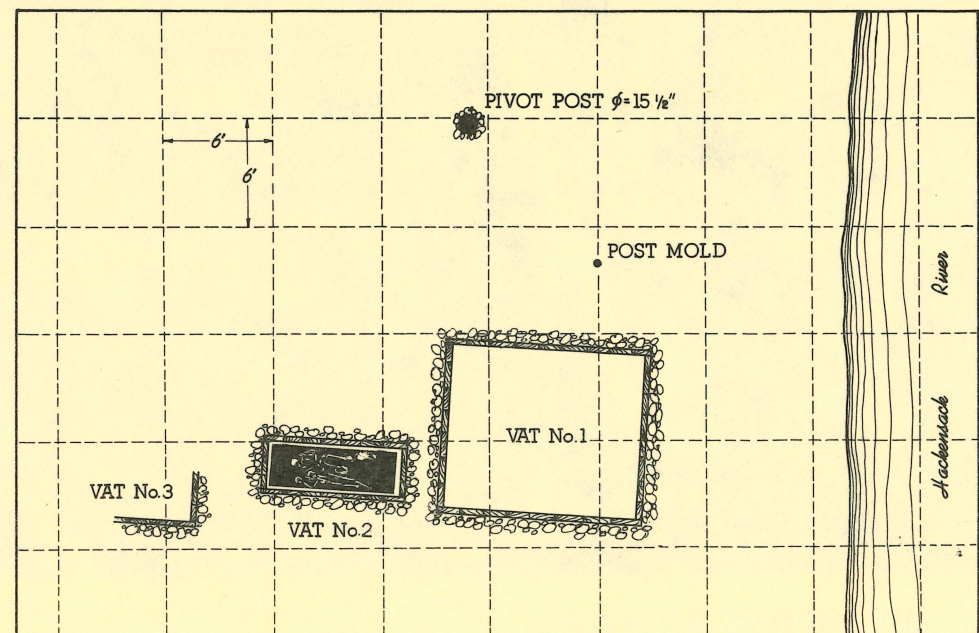
It was assumed that the chore of carrying as many as 60 bodies any distance would have overwhelmed those few Americans available to perform the task³, and that the vats would have been ready-made graves close at hand. On Thursday, July 20th, the young men, together with Thomas Demarest, began exploratory digging. They dug trenches along the banks of the river and made experimental test holes in search of disturbances of earth strata which might indicate an earlier excavation.

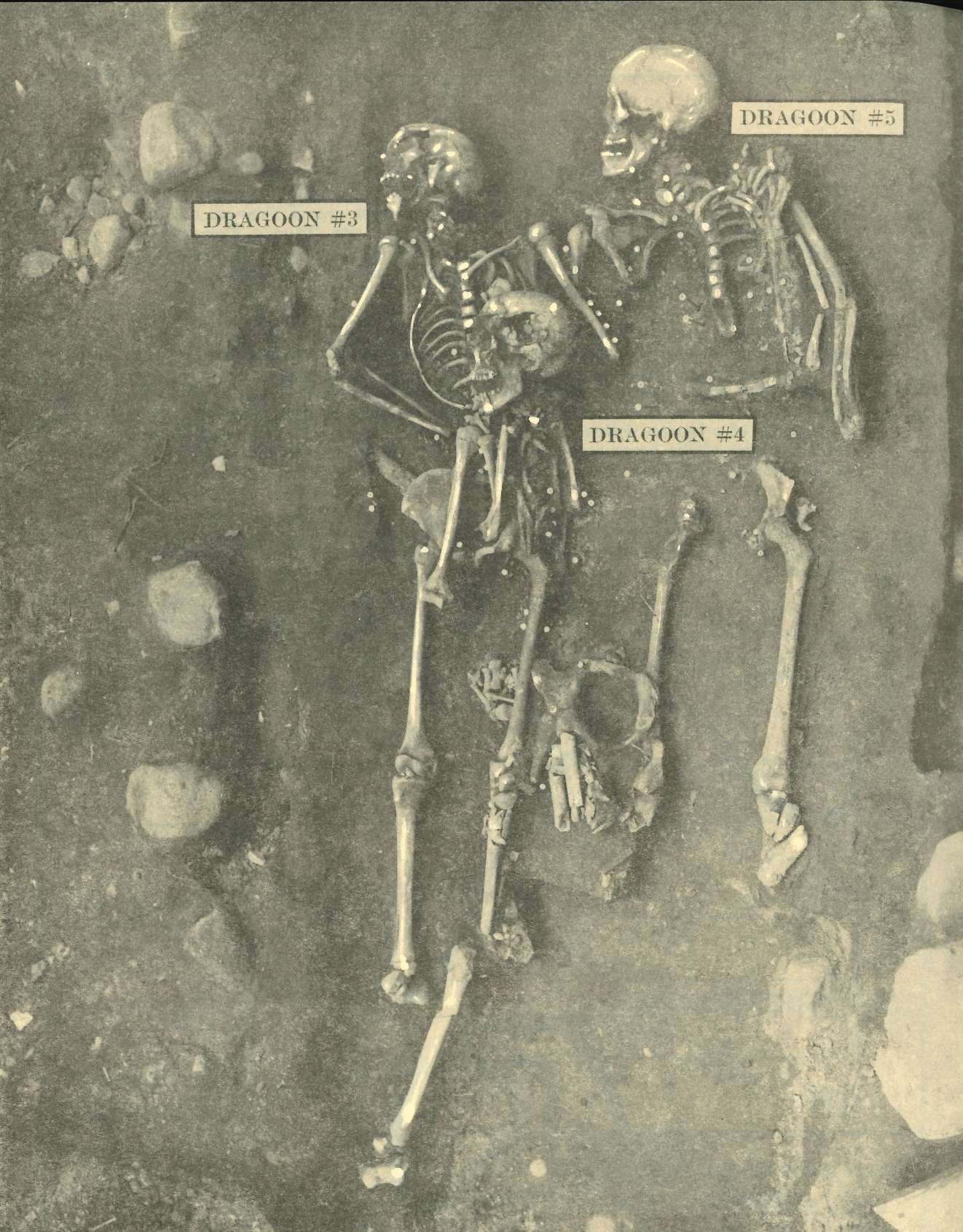
Plagued by insects, heat and skepticism, they continued for two weeks until on August 7th after directions had been given to abandon the search at the close of the day, one last experimental hole was tried and it revealed a human thigh bone about two feet below the surface. I had this identified by the County Medical Examiner, Dr. Lawrence Denson and by nightfall the better part of a human skeleton, lying on its back was revealed. The next day the remainder of the bones were revealed along with some very fine artifacts, an assortment of buttons and a silver stock buckle.

The discovery received wide publicity, and, as a result, a curious public was crowding the site making work difficult and creating risks to discovery, so I directed that all digging be stopped until we could avail ourselves of professional assistance.

At this juncture the Bergen County Historical Society asked us to continue with the excavation and recommended Mr. Wayne Daniels, their museum director, as the project archeologist. He was retained and two weeks later work was resumed. His report is included in this paper.

³ Pension records indicate that militia Capt. John Haring said he was detailed to help bury the men.





DRAGOONS #3, #4 #5

The positions of the bodies shows the hasty nature, typical of burials in the field. The East and West walls of the vat have been partially delineated by profiling to the margin of the wood walls. The backfilled stones intended to brace the vat walls are evident. The Dragoons were laid in the bottom of vat #2.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The discovery focused attention of local historians on the background of the massacre and research has evolved a fascinating story of human failure and military tragedy. *Baylor at Old Tappan*, a lengthy paper by Edward O. Mills of New York City, which will soon be published by K-S Publications of P.O. Box 155, Saddle River, New Jersey, tells the story in all its details. I will summarize it here.

Col. George Baylor was only 26 years old in the summer of 1778. He had no military experience other than his short service as an aide to General Washington before he was given command of a regiment. As his second in command, Washington assigned Major Alexander Clough, a seasoned soldier who was one of Washington's intelligence officers. The regiment, — the Third Light Dragoons, the Third Continental Dragoons, or Lady Washington's Guards, was assigned light duties — reconnaissance and escort. It was lightly armed. The men carried sabers and there were a few pistols — but no muskets at this early date. Both Baylor and Clough performed these intelligence functions and the regiment at this particular period at times kept outposts as far south as Fort Lee. The regiment itself was often at the outpost in Paramus.

During the summer of 1778, the Dragoons were stationed at New Bridge where Major Clough was instructed to question any and all going into New York City. He was further requested by Washington to recruit spies to gather information in New York. This created some conflict with local patriot militia who resented Clough's dealings with shady characters and were suspicious of his motives. Washington, himself, had to request local militia to cease interfering with Clough's mission.⁴

In September of 1778, the British sent foraging expeditions into New Jersey, Westchester and Long Island to provision the British Army in New York and also to provide for an expeditionary force being sent by Clinton to the West Indies. The area between the Hackensack River and the Hudson River was selected since it offered the opportunity of keeping both flanks covered by a river while moving from South to North. Five thousand troops under Cornwallis were sent over from New York on the 22nd. They took up entrenched positions from New Bridge (River Edge) to Liberty Pole (Englewood) and began sending out their foraging parties.

The Continentals immediately set up a perimeter of troops from Newark to Clarkstown on the Hudson. The Third Dragoons at Paramus were part of that arc.

On September 27th, Baylor moved to Haringtown where he felt he could better watch the British. He took quarters with Clough in the home of Cornelius Haring, a known Tory, while his men with their mounts were

⁴ G W 417, *Papers of George Washington*, Library of Congress.

quartered in six buildings along the road. He posted a guard at the bridge across the Hackensack and set out a small patrol, but posted no sentries to the west. He allowed his men to remove the saddles from their mounts and to undress, hardly the sort of security measures to take in enemy territory. The son of the farmer also warned Col. Baylor of the proximity of the British, but he paid no further heed.

When word reached Cornwallis of the proximity of Continental troops to the north and west, he decided to move immediately, since his foraging parties would be in danger. His object was to attack four hundred Americans at Tappan, under Lt. Col. Gilbert Cooper and took his troops up Schraalenburg Road, (the militia, unknown to him, had withdrawn) while Major General Grey with four regiments proceeded up Kinderkamack Road to attack from the west.

The personality of Major-General Charles Grey had a great deal to do with the events of the night. He was known as the "ugliest man in America," and evidently did not earn this sobriquet for his physical appearances alone.⁵ At Paoli a year earlier, he had led his Light Infantry in a night attack with the flints removed from their rifles to keep them from accidentally firing and alarming General Anthony Wayne's troops and forcing them also to rely on the bayonet. For the massacre that resulted, he gained a new nick-name, "No-Flint" Grey.

Out of the massacre of Paoli came a bitter rivalry. Shortly afterwards, Wayne's troops sent word to the British Light Infantry to "be on their guard as no quarter would be shown them." The Light Infantry or "Light Bobs" as they were known, stained the white feathers on their helmets red to spare other units from the Continental's revenge. The light infantry battalions were formed from the light companies of each regiment in the army. They were very fast and provided great flexibility.

At Germantown, Wayne's troops were merciless against the Light Infantry and had to be restrained from killing prisoners by their officers. This stirred the Light Infantry still further so that at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, when ordered to charge, they outran their support and had to be rescued — much to their embarrassment — by Grenadiers. Their hatred of rebels became so great that when the British Peace Commission arrived in Philadelphia, they rioted in the streets in protest, and hung Lord North and Lord Germaine in effigy.

It was these same light infantrymen who were in the vanguard of General Grey's column as it proceeded north, unaware of the inexperienced, poorly armed dragoons sleeping in their path. When the word reached Grey of their presence he decided to attack them immediately.

⁵ "After his (Grey's) arrival in New York, his first act was to advise his superiors that, in any engagement in which he was the commanding officer, the assignment would be carried out with the maximum cruelty permitted by the then recognized rules of warfare. One of the maxims of that code . . . was that in a night attack, no quarter would be given." *Baylor at Old Tappan*, unpublished paper by Edward O. Mills.

In Grey's column were the Second Battalion of Light Infantry, the second Battalion of the Grenadiers, the 33rd and 64th Regiments of Foot, and a small detachment of cavalry. Grey ordered his Light Infantry to attack from two sides. Major John Maitland with six companies continued along the road to kill or capture the entire patrol stationed at the bridge. Major Turner Straubenzee, with the remaining six companies was led by Tory guides along pathways and narrow lanes to the dragoon encampments from the west where the Edgewood Country Club now stands. At 2:00 A.M. the attack was launched.

The cry of "Kill Him!, Kill Him!" and "Skiver Him!" went up as the Light Infantry surrounded the barns and went to work. A few shots were fired from pistols and a feeble defense with sabers was made. Some of the dragoons attempted to hide under the hay in the barns but were bayoneted and bayoneted until the blood was said to have run through the floor boards and collected in puddles on the ground below. Some men were taken prisoner, some escaped. Many were wounded, some as many as sixteen times.⁶ Accounts indicate that about fifteen were killed on the spot and some died later. The British clubbed their prisoners and bayoneted them but few of the wounds were fatal.

Colonel Baylor and Major Clough were backed into the chimney of the farmhouse in which they were billeted and eventually cut down with bayonets. Clough died of his wounds several days later and Baylor of his wounds two years afterwards. Both were released by the British before their death. The prisoners and wounded were taken before daylight to Tappan (by way of Orangetown) where the church was converted into a hospital.⁷

On October 6th, after reports reached Philadelphia of the tragedy, Congress decided to investigate. A resolution was passed that the Governor of New Jersey, William Livingston, be directed to inquire. Both Livingston and Washington requested Major General Lord Stirling, Commanding Officer of the area to direct the investigation. Stirling sent Dr. David Griffith, surgeon and chaplain of the Virginia Brigade to get affidavits from some of the troopers and officers who had escaped. Accounts of the number killed or taken prisoner kept rising and word of the massacre spread both throughout the Colonies and to England. It was reported that any credit due to the Light Infantry "was entirely buried in the barbarity of their behavior."⁸

Dr. Griffith's account became the official version of the losses actually incurred. Out of 104 enlisted men, 67 were killed, wounded or taken prisoner, the remaining 37 apparently escaped unhurt. Eleven were killed outright, four were left behind and died later. Thirteen were left behind wounded and subsequently recovered. Thirty-nine were prisoners in New York, eight of whom were wounded. This would indicate, then that somewhere between 11 and 15 were buried in the tanning vats, not the 40 or 60 figure originally believed.

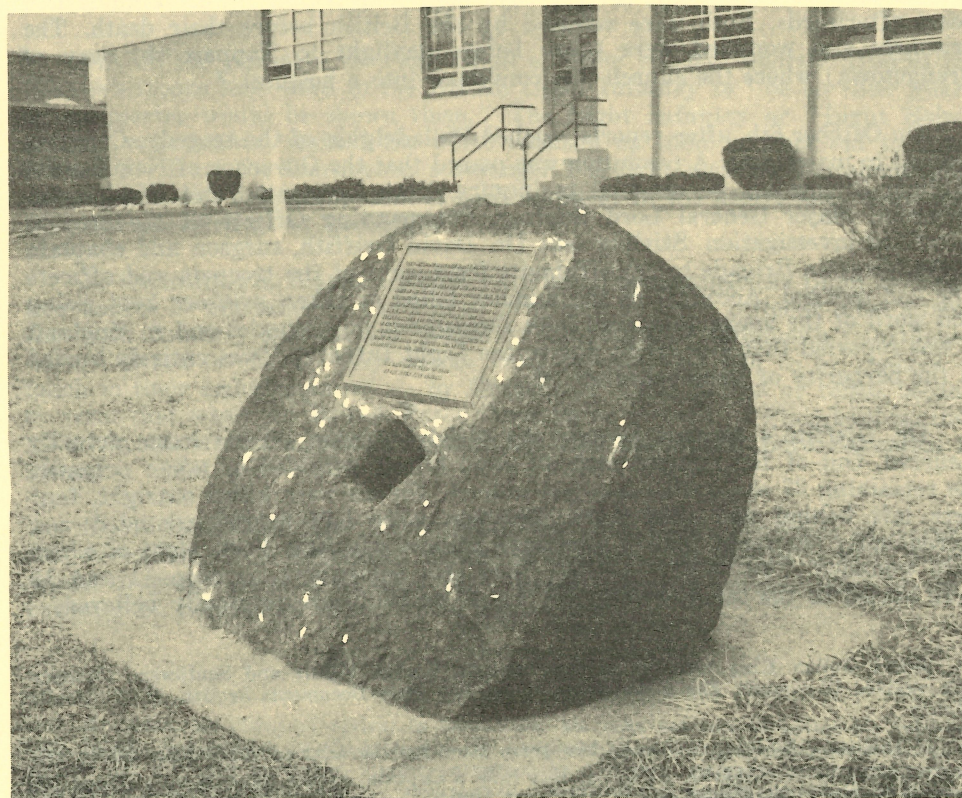
⁶ Pvt. Julian King received 16 stab wounds, George Wyllis and Southward Cullency each received 12 wounds. *The Remembrancer*, pg. 294, Rare Documents Section, N. Y. Public Library

⁷ This same building was used two years later for the trial of Maj. John Andre and his sentencing to be executed. André, at this time a Captain, helped guide Grey's troops. He was well known to the Tories and spoke fluent Dutch

⁸ From a letter from Col. Charles Stuart to his father, the Earl of Bute

Research by Mr. Howard Durie of Woodcliff Lake indicate that the tanning vats and some of the barns used for billets were not on the property of the Harings, but on the property of Cornelius Blauvelt, a patriot. Blauvelt's father was a cordwainer and in addition to farming, made leather during the summer and leather goods during the winter months. There is nothing to show that Cornelius had followed in his father's footsteps and Mr. Daniels' excavations indicated that the vats were not in use at this particular time. It, therefore, presented an ideal place for the burial of 11 or 15 bodies by militiamen who feared the sudden re-appearance of the British.

The land across the road from the barns was in use as a cornfield and wheatfield at the time and for many years afterwards. Local legend has it that a later Blauvelt desired to have the stone removed because it interfered with cultivation of the land. A neighbor, William Holdrum, was one day boasting of the prowess of a new team of horses and Blauvelt bet him that the team couldn't move the stone with the stone as the prize. It took Holdrum three days to get the stone out of the hole it had made for itself and to drag it down the road to his house. Holdrum dropped it on his lawn. The millstone was donated to the River Vale Board of Education by a Holdrum descendent and lies embedded in the lawn of the Holdrum School. Cultivation of the field was abandoned about the turn of the century and the area is now covered with second growth.



MILLSTONE AT HOLDRUM SCHOOL

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary thing accomplished was the location of the grave site. Having found this, speculation now has arisen as to the accuracy of Dr. Griffiths' reports. Only six bodies are accounted for and the vats have all been located. Either Dr. Griffiths is wrong, or there is a second burial site.

The second benefit derived from the project has been the interest aroused both in the history of Bergen County and in the particular undertaking. As Mr. Daniels states in his report, somewhere in excess of a thousand school children from Bergen and Rockland Counties visited the site and saw the work being carried on.

Work at the site ceased in early November. As I stated to members of the Board this summer, the artifacts have been turned over to the Historical Society and the remains of the Dragoons have been lifted from the earth and placed in boxes preparatory to reinterment.

It is my recommendation that the County acquire a strip of the land along the riverbank and convert it into a small park. It would be possible to construct a parking lot for five to ten cars along the road and then build a path with occasional benches along the riverbank to the site, a distance of about 75 yards.

It seems to me that the skeletons should be reinterred at this site and some sort of small monument or marker be placed there. Both the County Historical Society and Pascack Chapter of the D.A.R. have expressed interest in having this done and have offered assistance.

I am sure that the County of Bergen can accomplish these things promptly and can promote a little interest in the history of the area, a responsibility with which Statute 40:32-6 charges it.



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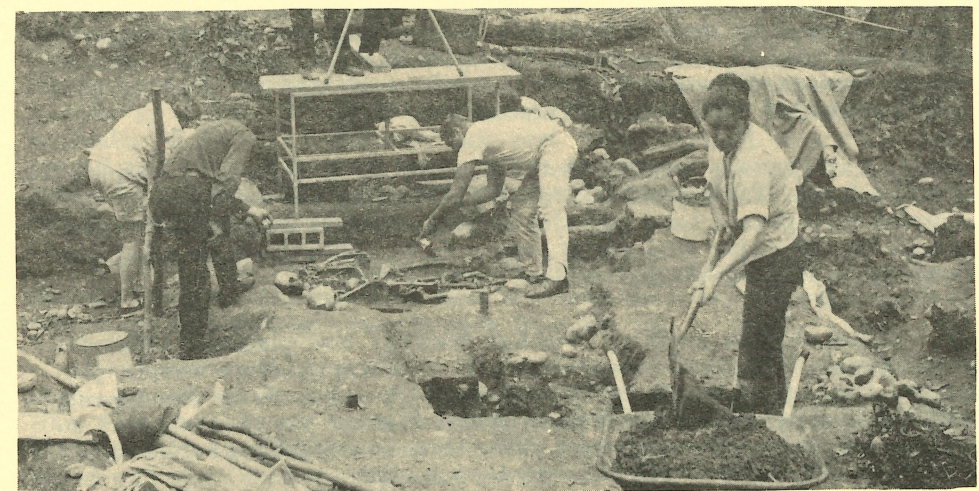
WAYNE M. DANIELS

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

After two weeks of exploratory excavation the first human remains at the Blauvelt Tannery-Baylor's Dragoons Burial Site were unearthed on August 7, 1967. On August 22nd, Mr. Thomas Demarest, Archeological Associate, and myself, Archeologist, began the concentrated archeological site excavation. In view of the special and unusual nature of the project, several practices were instituted.

The first was a voluntary seven day week because of the approach of fall, and to provide security for the site which rapidly became well known throughout the County. The second was the acceptance and selection of a voluntary work force of adults and young people, partly because of an unprecedented local interest in the project, but primarily because completion of the project would have been impossible any other way. These volunteers were extensively schooled in stratigraphy, excavation techniques, and artifact identification. As they became more proficient, they were advanced to more responsible positions. A conservative estimate of the total number of work hours expended by these volunteers is from 3,500-5,000 hours. Our "Regulars" who stayed with the project despite all adversities number about 35, with periodic help from about 50 more. The value of these good people is obvious from the above figures. The project would have been impossible to complete without their efforts and good will.

An educational program was also instituted because of the unprecedented volume of visitors to the site. A portable display of artifacts in clear plastic boxes was created and a special weather-proof housing and framework erected to allow the three intact dragoons in tannery vat #2 to be viewed. School groups and Scout groups came from as far away as Hackensack and Suffern. One group from Hillsdale included more than 200 fourth graders. No count was kept of visitors but there could not have been less than 3600 adults and children and the number may have been as high as 7000. In this manner, many were allowed to witness an experience in living history enacted before their eyes, an event that may never again come to Bergen County.



ARCHEOLOGICAL PROCEDURE AND TECHNIQUE

At the outset a grid pattern was superimposed on the probable area of excavation. In the interests of time and because of the negative probability of excavation in adjacent or related areas, a master grid system consisting of a surveyed one thousand foot square subdivided into decimal units was rejected in favor of a simple grid divided into six foot squares. The base line of the grid was projected at the waters' edge on the river bank parallel to the immediately adjacent portion of the Hackensack River. Each square within the grid is identifiable by alphabetical-numerical co-ordinates to give the whole area a frame of reference. A plot map was drawn and a record of the area kept on that map as work progressed. A supplementary map showing the original topography of the area at the time of colonial occupation will be prepared.

Stratigraphy of the area was explored as the first step of actual excavation. Test holes dug by the exploratory party were examined and the site excavation began with digging out squares C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4. This accomplished the standard technique of individual grid square exploration and a type of large scale trenching at the same time. Since C-1 spanned the concrete culvert laid in about July, 1966, we were assured of beginning our excavation in back-filled soil and gradually working into the original soil. In this manner the specific stratigraphy of the area could be most safely profiled and studied so that disturbed areas would be readily recognizable when encountered.

Throughout the excavation six 3' by 6' screens of $\frac{1}{4}$ " mesh were used to sift all surface soil (humus and topsoil) and all soil from disturbed areas, regardless of the chronological period of disturbance. This technique produced a significant percentage of the artifacts recovered, virtually all of the shell, and, in the case of Dragoons #2 and #6, the majority of their skeletal remains. (see: descriptions of skeletal remains)

Excavation techniques varied considerably, depending on the circumstances. In the case of formerly plowed ground encountered upstream from the tannery vats and back-filled soil placed below and around the culvert, the stratigraphy had been destroyed by those disturbances. Consequently the soil was removed carefully with shovels and screened for artifacts. The same was done in peripheral testings of presumably undisturbed areas, and in checking presumably undisturbed areas below disturbed areas.

Fine excavation was accomplished with small 5" trowels, clay sculptors' tools, and brushes. Whisk brushes, normally used as an aid in fine excavation were useless since the soil has a high clay content and such brushing only served to burnish the soil rather than gently remove it. Sculptors' tools of metal wire and wood more than adequately replaced the stiff brushes.

A mixture of both profiling (vertical planing) and planing (horizontal planing) was used to "read" the soil and its stratigraphy. For example, profiling was the only practical way to delineate the vat walls or the bracing around the fulcrum post of the tannery stone. Planing was the only way to disinter the Dragoons who were intact. Since these men had been buried within vats, both techniques were used adjacent to each other.

SITE REVIEW

The first occupants of this site were the Amerinds, Tappan Indians of the Leni-Lenape. This is adequately testified to by the quantities of flint chips, fire broken and discolored stone, projectile points, jasper hide scrapers, a stone knife, and a stone gorget. Earthenware fired pottery shards were found throughout the area and are exclusively of the Bowman's Brook type, stamped, impressed, and incised. These artifacts point to the Woodland period, before contact with Europeans, with the exception of one Lamoka projectile point, made of clear quartz. The areas bearing Amerind artifacts were all disturbed during various later periods of occupation, with the exception of the south bank of the stream replaced by the culvert. There is no opportunity to extensively excavate this area, so it will be left with as little disturbance as possible for future potential excavation.

The American colonial period was marked by the erection of a tannery, presumably built and operated by Arie Blauvelt during or before 1758, when he was listed as a cordwainer (shoemaker). Considerable specific data was obtained by profiling the tannery vats and the molds or stains of their structural members, and the positioning of their nails.

The three vats were built by digging a hole larger than the desired size of the vat and constructing a rectangular vat of upright posts covered on the inside with boards 1" to $1\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. The vat was then back-filled around the outside with care taken to place as many stones as possible directly against the vat wall for bracing, since the vat was to be filled with water.

The tannery stone, handcut from sandstone about $4\frac{1}{2}$ ' in diameter and 16" thick served to crush oak and hemlock bark into powder called tannin. Alternate layers of tannin and hide were placed in the vats which were then filled with water and the long tanning process began. Evidence of the stone's former location was a depression on the rise upstream from, and adjacent to the vats. According to tradition, the stone was removed at about the turn of this century, but the depression it made as it settled for a century and a half was the most important clue to locating the entire site. (The stone now rests in front of Holdrum School, Rivervale, N. J.). The large vertical fulcrum or pivot post hole was found intact except for about one foot of its depth which was removed by cultivation, the area having been a corn field until about 30 years ago. Originally a horizontal boom or axle was attached to this post and ran through the center of the tannery stone which stood upright on edge and was drawn in a circle by a draught animal to crush the tan bark. The fulcrum post was originally 15 inches in diameter, and very heavily braced with stone below ground and extended perhaps $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet below ground level. An additional post mold approximately eight feet from the fulcrum post mold has been found and is unexplained at this time.

Artifacts from the tannery include half of a curved hide scraping or fleshing knife, an iron hide hook used to remove the heavy, soaked hides in the vats, and about 40 hand wrought nails from the vat.

Hides were normally washed in linewater to loosen hair and flesh. Evidence of this practice was found in the large quantity of oyster shell fragments (about 10 to 15 pounds) found at the site. None were found on the immediate surface of the ground, but where the vats were filled in, the soil was invariably heavily mixed with shell, preserved by being buried.



TANNERY ARTIFACTS (Actual Size)

- ① HIDE HOOK—Originally mounted on pole, used to re-move or rotate wet hide in vats.
 ② IRON STAPLE—
 ③ IRON NAIL—Used to construct vats.
 ④ HIDE SCRAPER—About one-half of blade missing, used to scrape flesh from hides before tanning.

We believe that the tannery was abandoned, possibly when the property came into the hands of Cornelius D. Blauvelt, later a Lieutenant in the Bergen County Militia. This was confirmed archeologically by a thick (1" to 3") layer of leaf mold found at the bottom of one corner of vat #1. If abandoned, the drifting leaves would have collected in the empty vat. This helps to clarify the presence of the skeletal remains of six men in the vats. This improvised burial is a product of Baylor's Massacre, and the abandoned vats must have offered a ready made grave for a field burial by the Bergen County Militia, especially with the British only 4 miles away.

The remains and the artifacts found with them are described in the Appendix, but it should be mentioned that many of the pewter buttons from vat #2 bore an "LD" monogram, of a style used by American Light Dragoons after the Revolution. A few buttons, identical to those found at the Overkill site have been excavated elsewhere, and have been tentatively identified as also being post-Revolutionary, for lack of a specific event or date with which to associate them. Now, however, we are reasonably sure that this particular "LD" button was worn by the enlisted men of Colonel Baylor's Regiment at the time of the Massacre in 1778, and probably at about the time of the raising of the Regiment in 1777. Whether the button was also worn by other Light Dragoons in the Continental army remains to be determined. The presence of this button not only identifies the bodies as soldiers, but also very specifically proclaims them to be dragoons.

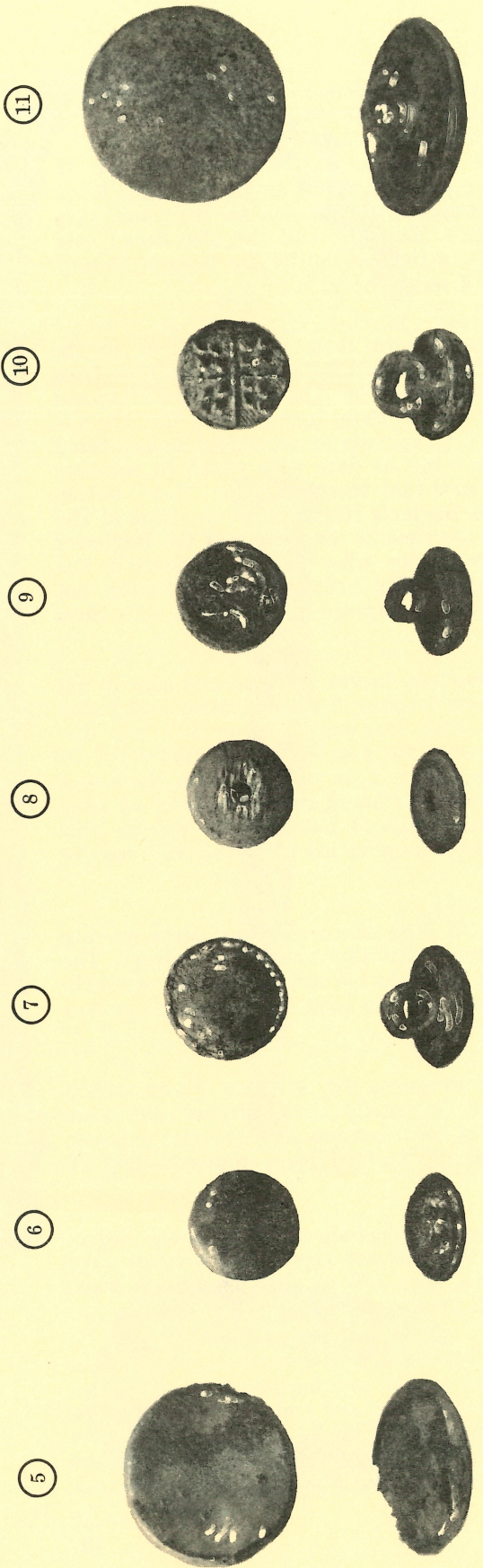
Two men were found in vat #1, three men in vat #2, and one man in vat #3. They were arbitrarily assigned numbers for ease of identification and frame of reference. There is reason to believe that dragoon #2 (vat #1) was disinterred in about 1916 by a boy then about ten years old, and reinterred by that same lad upon the order of his irate father. This would explain the sound but scattered condition of that body, which was found below the level of later disturbance, and the presence of a twentieth century pocket knife near it. This story was brought to us by the man himself, now in his 50's, and will require further study and interviews.

Dragoon #6 and indeed all of vat #3 were scraped up by earth moving machinery and backfilled around and even partially under the culvert. The only means of recovering this body was to excavate the entire area and carefully screen it. Even so, less than 50% of dragoon #6 has been found, and all of that badly broken and crushed.

It was possible to carefully excavate dragoons #3, #4, and #5 in such a manner that their remains were exposed in exactly the positions they were buried, and to mark the position of each of their buttons as they were exposed. This aspect of the excavation took a specially trained team approximately 30 days to complete.

Artifacts found with the skeletal remains include shirt, breeches, waistcoat, and regimental coat buttons of several distinct types, and a silver stock buckle. As previously mentioned, the vats were full of shell fragments which tended to sweeten the soil and aid skeletal preservation.

At this time there is every reason to believe that there are no more vats or bodies at the Tannery Site. Test trenching around the periphery is being concluded with no result other than sterile, undisturbed soil and Amerind artifacts. Since the tannery is the southerly most point affected by the Massacre, which actually took place in an area about 1/2 of a mile long, it seems likely that there is another burial somewhere along Rivervale Road in a northwesterly direction.



BUTTONS FROM BAYLOR'S DRAGOONS (Actual Size)

- 5 REGIMENTAL COAT BUTTON—Flat faced, Sheffield type silver formed around Wood Backer (now decomposed)—Dragoon #1 in vat #1.
 6 WAISTCOAT BUTTON—Convex face, Sheffield type silver formed around Bone Disk Backer (intact)—Dragoon #1 in vat #1.
 7 BREECHES BUTTON—Pewter with loop on back, border in imitation of "Rope" style, used on many British Military Buttons—Dragoon #1 in vat #1.
 8 SHIRT BUTTON—Bone originally covered with matching fabric (now decomposed)—Dragoon #1 in vat #1.
 9 REGIMENTAL COAT AND WAISTCOAT BUTTON—Pewter with loop on back—no border, edges beveled as in button #5. Script initials "LD," co-joined in cypher—Dragoons #3, #4 and #5 in vat #2.
 10 REGIMENTAL COAT CUTTON—Pewter with loop on back—No border—Button quartered with diamond or lozenge design in each quarter, which has in turn been quartered into lozenges—Dragoon #4 in vat #2 on coat tail under body.
 11 BUTTON—(placement uncertain)—Brass with loop on back, two found—Dragoon #3 in vat #2.

Within modern times the northerly area of the site has been plowed and planted as a cornfield, eliminating the possibility of studying the upper stratigraphy of the area.

Installation of a culvert to channel the stream, act as a storm drain, and tap local springs severely disrupted portions of the site, desecrated one of the dragoons and seriously reduced the productivity of the excavation from the archeological viewpoint, after the site had been comparatively undisturbed for 187 years.

Conditions at the outset of excavation were not promising. Most such "digs" are planned during the winter and begun in April or May to allow at least 5 months for actual excavation. However, as field work approaches its conclusions it can be said that things have gone better than we dared hope. The most critical areas have been properly excavated and the information extracted is highly rewarding.

Until this time, no eighteenth century farm tannery had ever been excavated in America. All information of this critical aspect of colonial life came solely from documents and European precedents of the period. We now know a great deal about how leather was made here in Bergen County. It is interesting to note that the Tappan-Hackensack area was a major producer of leather for the Continental Army during its formation.

The attack upon Colonel Baylor's Dragoon's was not a massacre in the conventional sense, and perhaps it has been misnamed. Certainly documentary evidence referring to as many as twenty bayonet wounds in survivors and the evidence of the cause of death of dragoon #4 (see: Appendix) indicate that a more carefully chosen term might be "atrocious".

The fact that the men were located and identified as troopers of Baylor's Dragoons is of considerable historic importance. The fact that at least five bodies were not found is frustrating by answering some of our questions with more questions. While dragoon #1 has every appearance of being an officer (see: Appendix) from his buttons and stock buckle, the only officer recorded as having been killed in the action is Major Clough, Washington's Chief of Intelligence for the west bank of the Hudson River. Supposedly, Clough died of his wounds after the massacre, presumably with the other wounded who were taken to Orangetown.

There are still areas that should be excavated at the site. We do not now believe them to be critical, but cannot be certain unless they are explored. These include what is left of the bank itself, the rise above the tannery vats, the previously mentioned area of Amerind occupation and the area 100 to 200 feet inland from the river. The advanced state of the weather precludes any possibility of working extensively in these areas.

Taken as a whole, the archeological excavation has been a success. Local historians have stated that they consider it to be the most historically important enterprise undertaken in their memory. The public and certainly many school children have been afforded a remarkable opportunity to witness and involve themselves in the re-discovery of men who gave their lives to give life to their country. Of equal importance is the fact that a governmental unit, the Bergen County Board of Freeholders, has endorsed a project to keep alive our local heritage, for perhaps the first time.

It is to be hoped that this site with its multiplicity of historic importance can, in one fashion or another, be preserved, and a serious effort be made to find the other five slain dragoons.

APPENDIX SUMMARY OF HUMAN REMAINS AND ASSOCIATED ARTIFACTS

DRAGOON #1 (vat #1)

Skeletal Remains approximately 90% complete
Estimated Age at time of death, 40-50 years
Estimated Height, 5'6"
Regimental Coat Buttons, Sheet Sheffield Silver with wood backer (decomposed), 1 1/8" diameter, flat faced.
Waistcoat Buttons, Sheet Sheffield Silver with bone backer (intact), 3/8" diameter convex face
Breeches Buttons, Cast pewter with traces of silver gilt, 3/8" diameter
Shirt Buttons, Bone (originally fabric covered), 1/2" diameter
Stock Buckle, Sterling Silver, Hearts & Flowers decorative motif, marked "Z.B." (Zachariah Brigden, Boston Silversmith)
Comments: It seems virtually certain that this man was an officer by reason of the nature of the clothing buttons and the stock buckle.

DRAGOON #2 (vat #1)

Skeletal Remains approximately 50% complete
Comments: This body was scattered and incomplete (see: p. 19) and may have been unclothed at the time of burial.

DRAGOON #3 (vat #2)

Skeletal Remains approximately 95% complete
Estimated Age at time of death, 16-17 years
Estimated Height, 5'4"
Buttons, Cast Brass, 1 1/8" diameter
Regimental Buttons, Cast Pewter, 3/8" diameter, monogrammed "LD" in intertwined script, bear traces of silver gilt. Also, Sheet Brass foil, bone backer, 3/8" diameter
Comments: The large brass coat button was one of two found in vat #2, and is atypical. The smaller pewter and brass buttons were apparently worn on both breeches and the upper garment which may have been a short regimental coat, sleeved waistcoat, coatee, or stable jacket. The same buttons were found with Dragoons #4, & #5 in quantity.

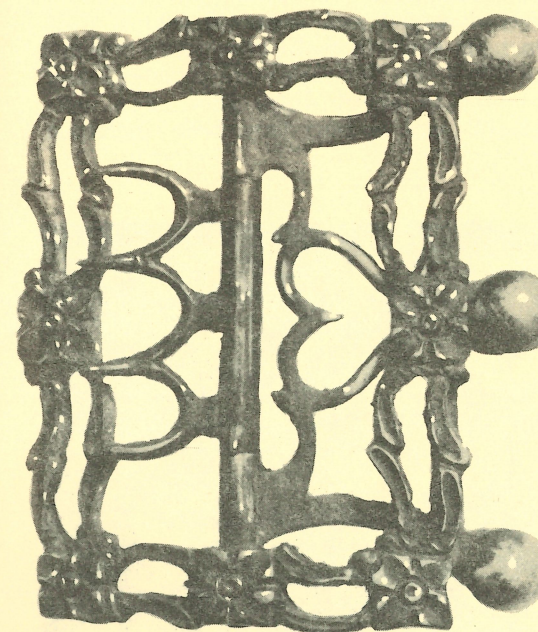
DRAGOON #4 (vat #2)

Skeletal Remains approximately 35% complete
Estimated Age at time of death, 18-19 years
(height unknown)
Buttons, same as #3; also Pewter, 3/8" in diameter with a lonzenge design in each of the divided quarters. (see #10 P. 20)
Fabric: Beneath the pelvis, under two of the pewter buttons on the tail of the coat were found two roughly circular scraps of white wool fabric from the regimental coat. These are the only fabric artifacts from the site. They were preserved by the comparatively constant moisture level, and by chemical salts leaching from the buttons.
Comments: The lower quarters, with the exception of the pelvis of this dragoon, have decomposed. His skull is in excellent condition and bears a sharply outlined oval fracture. The portion of the skull within the fracture lines has been neatly punched into the cranial cavity and is partly

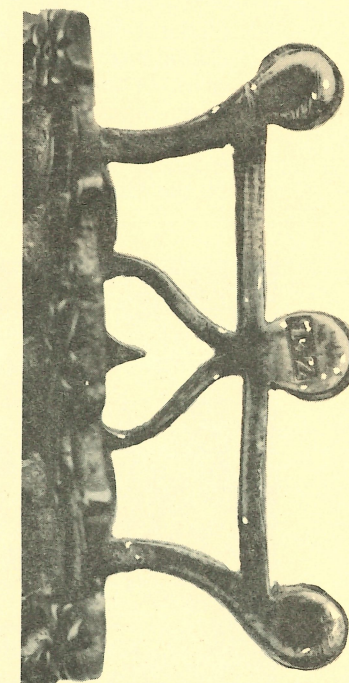


9

12



12a



- 9 REGIMENTAL BUTTON—(enlarged four times)—Pewter with "LD" cypher—Dragoons #3, 4 and 5 in vat #2.
- 12 STOCK BUCKLE—(enlarged two times)—Silver, used to fasten a stock or neck cloth, a piece of apparel not unlike a cummerbund worn over the collar of a shirt—Dragoon #1 in vat #1.
- 12a STOCK BUCKLE—(enlarged two times)—Reverse side shows makers mark "Z*B" of Zachariah Brigden, Boston Silversmith.

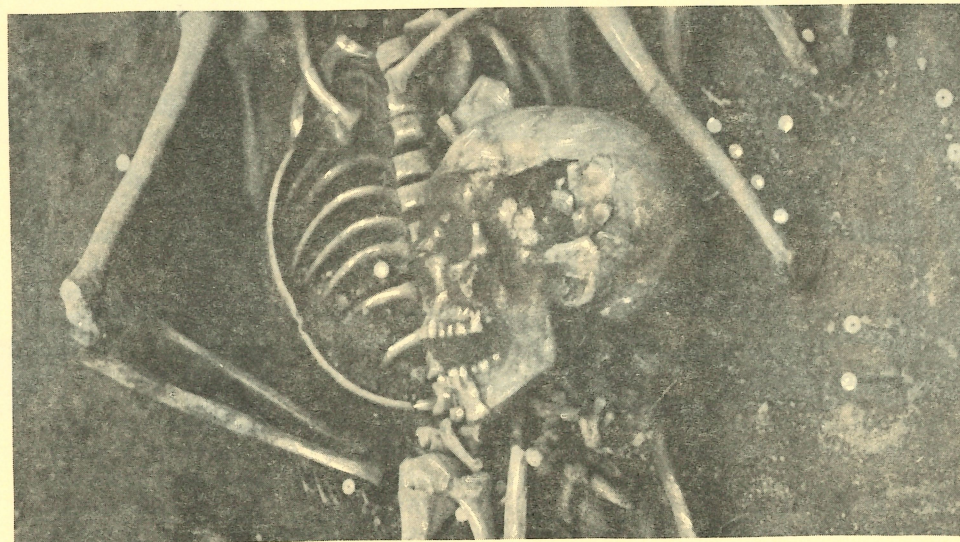
visible. The suspicious nature of this fracture prompted an experiment with a British Short Land Musket (2nd model Brown Bess), a typical military shoulder arm of the English infantry during the American Revolution. Comparison of the musket butt to the fracture showed that the butt's toe perfectly fitted the puncture. Further experimentation showed that the wound was not likely to have been produced while the victim was standing. The musket is too awkward to strike with a jabbing motion at that height. This was confirmed at the time of disinterment when examination of the reverse side of the skull revealed a fracture of lesser intensity, but the same shape opposite the first fracture. This effect is sometimes called an "echo". He would have almost certainly been prone with his head turned to his right, resting on a firm surface to produce both the wound and the echo as described. He was probably bayoneted first, and then killed with the musket's butt in the efficient and time honored military technique, still in use today.

DRAGOON #5 (vat #2)

Skeletal Remains approximately 35% complete
Estimated Age at time of death, 20-30 years
(height unknown)
Buttons, same as #3

DRAGOON #6 (vat #3)

Skeletal Remains approximately 25% complete
Comments: This soldier was severely damaged and scattered over a wide area. It was necessary to reconstruct his skull to make sure there was not more than one body in vat #3. As noted, his remains were damaged and scattered by an earth moving machine in about July, 1966. Few conclusions can be drawn from his remains, and he may have been unclothed at the time of his burial.



DRAGOON #4—Note fracture in left side of skull. Nail heads indicate position of excavated buttons—vat #2.



Designed by: Albert Cattan