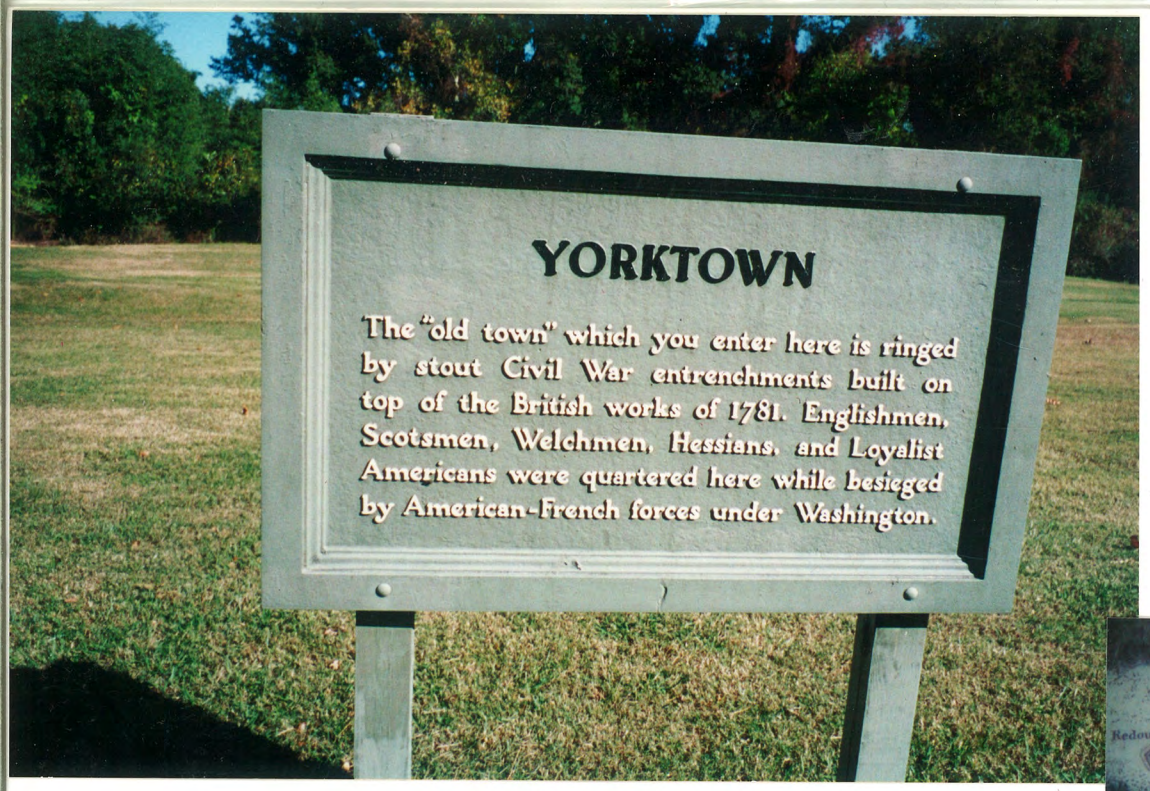
Hessian Soldier Uniforms 1776-1783

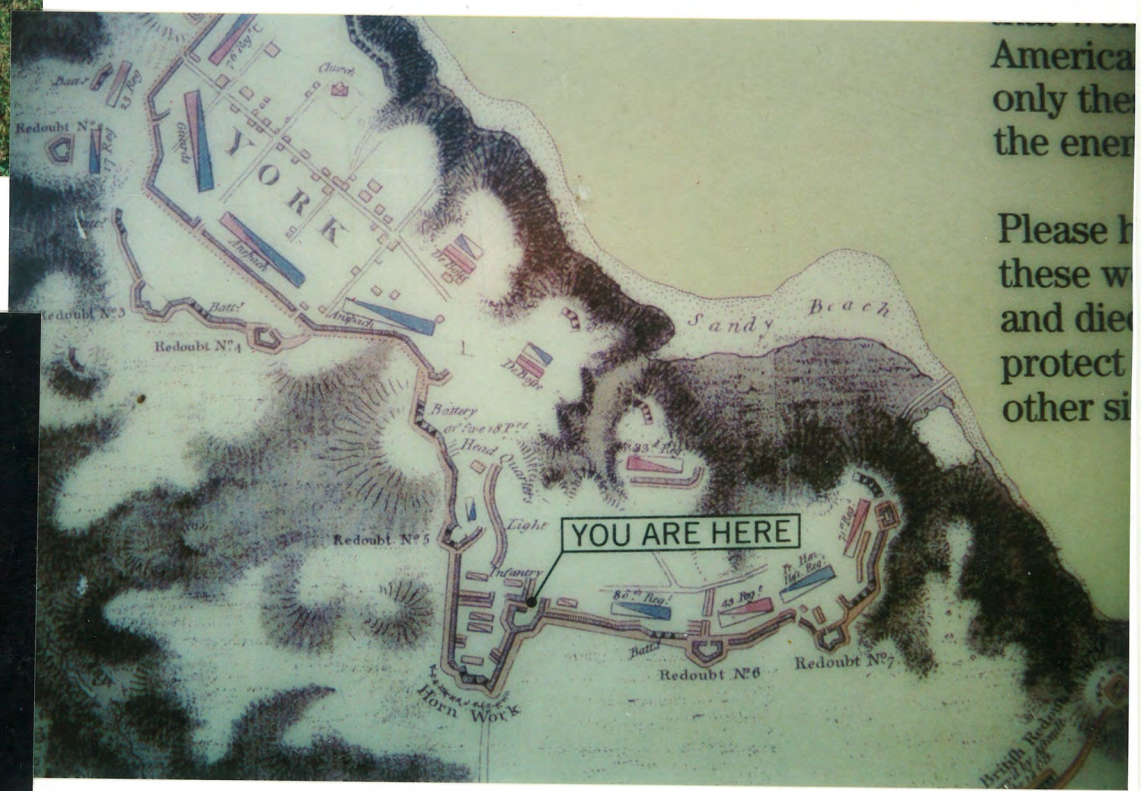
Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer probably looked like this!







Location of the Ansbach Regiment's Camp and Front lines, where Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer fought at Yorktown.





9 October. At noon I went to help in the defenses. Until today the enemy had not fired a single cannon shot at us, but continued working on the entrenchments, night and day, for nine or ten days, even though we fired at them the whole time, by day as well as by night, with cannon, bombs, and howitzers. Nevertheless, they continued to work on their positions.

Dohla's Diary









At night, at tattoo, the enemy began, first on our left wing, then against our entire line, to fire bombs, cannon, and howitzers. This removed the belief, which we held previously, that they had only their regimental cannon there and could not bring up heavy weapons because of the many forests and swamps.

Dehyle's Diary, P.166





Dohla's Diary, P.170

14 October. Today in the city, below the bank at the water's edge, a cannonball of more than one hundred pounds was found, which had been fired by the enemy. Between seven and eight o'clock at night the enemy attacked the outer redoubts, Numbers 7 and 8,[38] on the left flank, in which were assigned one captain and two lieutenants with one hundred English and Hessian privates. The enemy, under the cover of a thick fog, crept up to the abatis completely unnoticed, and before anyone was aware, they had quickly and silently made a few openings.





was an alarm in our entire camp. During this incident, there and onto the wall. The entire left wing fired their small arms. It was believed they would break in our left wing in order to storm our entire line. However, after taking the two redoubts, they were completely quiet during this night, except that the exchange of fire continued heavy from both sides.

Dohla's Diary, P.171



A LOOK AT THE AMERICAN SOLDIERS





AMERICAN SOLDIERS– UP CLOSE!













17 October. At daybreak the enemy bombardment resumed, more terribly strong than ever before. They fired from all positions without letup. Our command, which was in the Hornwork, could hardly tolerate the enemy bombs, howitzer, and cannonballs any longer. There was nothing to be seen but bombs and cannonballs raining down on our entire line.

Dolya Diary, P. 172



Tonight two men of the Bayreuth Regiment, namely, Privates Bimerth and [Viet] Hundshammer of the Colonel's Company, and three men from the Ansbach Regiment deserted from picket duty. Every day, in all the regiments, there are many dead and wounded, and especially among the Light Infantry, which is in the Hornwork, or the middle of our line, as this is heavily engaged by the enemy.

Dohla Diary, P. 170





Location of the French Side of the first Allied Siege line.



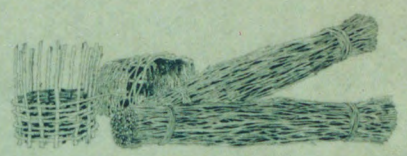


Second Allied SIEGE LINE

Sieges-*18th century style*

Eighteenth century military commanders conducted sieges according to formal step-by-step procedures perfected over centuries of European warfare. The siege of Yorktown followed the principle of digging successive trenches ever closer to the enemy fortifications. This tactic was still being used in World War I.





To the troops seige warfare meant hard work. They dug hundreds of yards of trenches, built artillery positions, and made scores of fascines, gabions and other siege supplies. But it wasn't all just labor; enemy sorties had to be repelled and enemy positions taken in hand-to-hand assault.





Location of the American Side of the second Allied Siege line.







A great number of French grenadiers, of which part had long storming pikes, made an assault with the greatest determination, sprang into the trenches, tore out the palisades, and after a hard-fought defense, and heavy small-arms fire from the command in the positions, successfully entered the two redoubts without firing a shot. A few of the command fled during the attack and came into the lines. The others were captured, and also some killed and wounded. The enemy also had many dead and wounded. He immediately occupied these two positions, made them secure, and planted the French white flag on which there were three lilies.

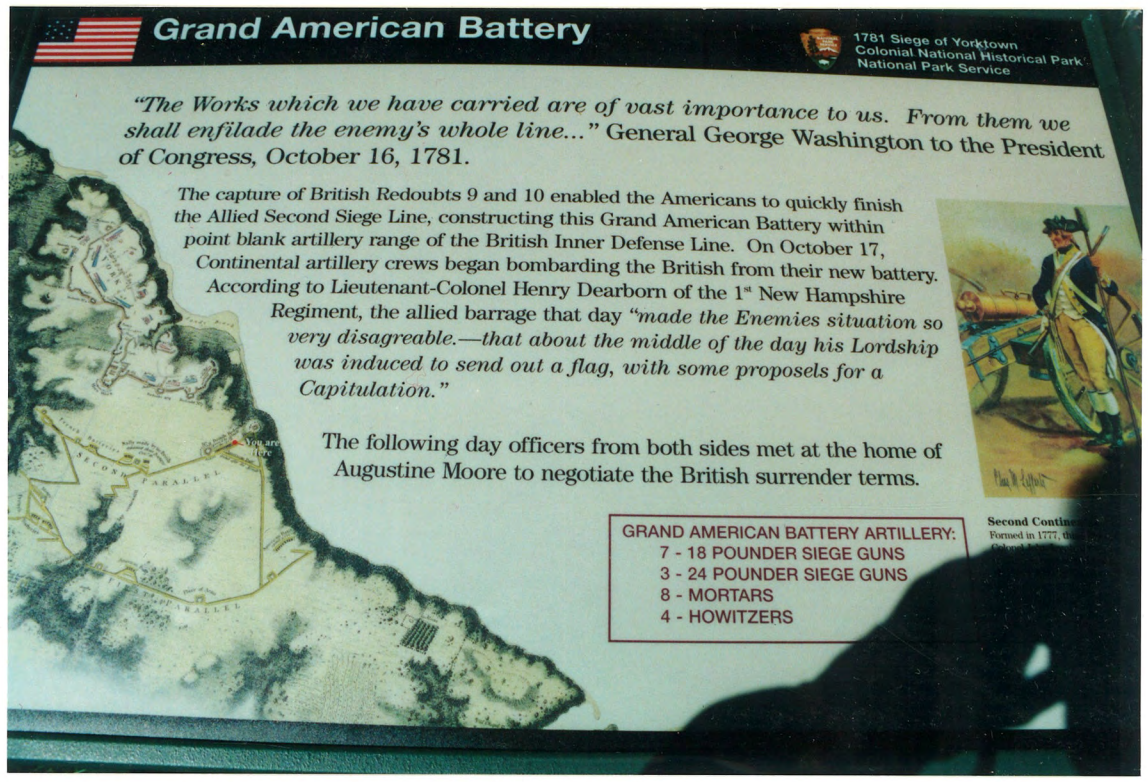
During this attack they made such a terrible screaming and loud hurrah shouting that there was nothing otherwise to believe than that all hell had broken loose.

Dolya's Diary, P.170



French Capture Redoubt 9









Americans Capture Redoubt 10

12









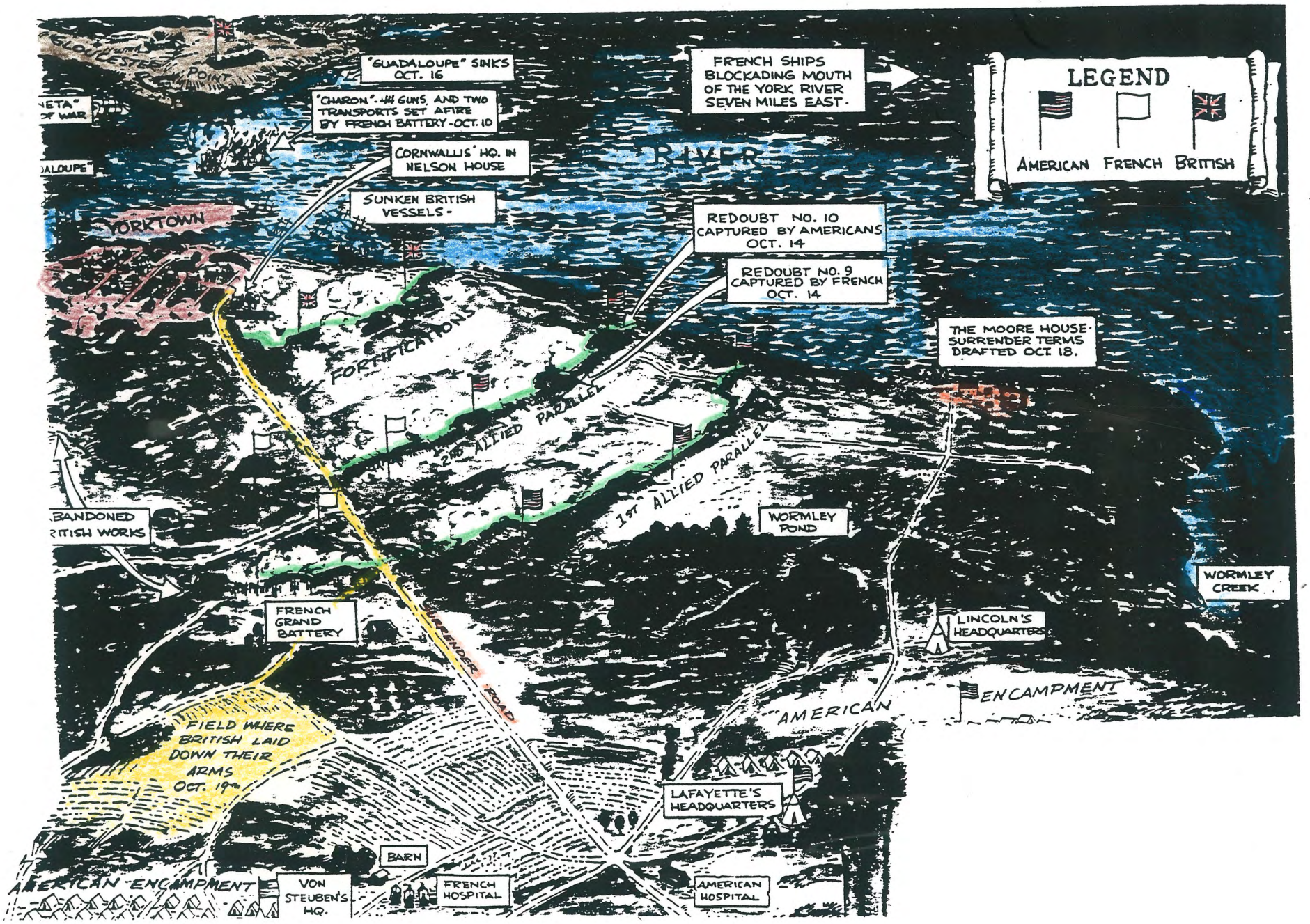
10 October. We had to change our camp this morning and set up our tents in the communication trenches, because of the enemy's heavy cannonade. He threw bombs at us of 100 and 150 pounds, also of 200 pounds, and his howitzer and cannonballs were of 18-, 24-, 36-, and, a very few, of 12 pounds. It was impossible to avoid the frightfully many balls in or outside the city.

11 October. I went on boat watch on the water. Today there was exceptionally heavy firing by both sides. Thirty-six hundred shots by the enemy were counted in this twenty-four hours. These were fired at the city, into our lines, and against the ships in the harbor. These ships were completely ruined and shot up. The bombs and cannonballs also killed many inhabitants and Negroes from the city and marines and sailors, and soldiers. People were to be seen lying everywhere, fatally wounded, with heads, arms, and legs shot off. Also to be seen, by the water, were wounded being dragged and carried, who had been wounded on watch, at posts in the lines, on defense, and on work details, by the terribly heavy cannonade; and also, the burial in the sand, near the river, of soldiers and sailors.

13 October. I went on watch in our lines. Today a bomb fell so unfortunately into the camp of the Ansbach Regiment that it killed four men in a tent and fatally wounded two others. Private Stützel II, of our regiment, while on a command in the defenses, had his left foot shot off by a piece of shrapnel, so that three days later his leg had to be amputated at the thick part of the calf.

Dolya Diary
P.167-171

MAP OF THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN
OCTOBER, 1781



Throughout the war (since Boston, in fact) both sides felt that Nature favoured the Americans, and the siege of Yorktown was no exception. On the evening of 16 October, Tarleton sent over 16 boats, each capable of holding 100 men. Dividing his force into three groups, Cornwallis prepared to abandon Yorktown, leaving the 76th and the Anspachers as a sacrificial rearguard. Around 11:00pm, Cornwallis's first wave, 1,000 men of the Guards and Light Infantry, reached Gloucester between midnight and 1:00am, but a storm prevented further crossings until 2:00am. By then, it was too late for Yorke's brigade to cross without exposing Dundas to a dawn attack. Reluctantly, Cornwallis recalled the first group, which arrived back at 6:00am.

Yorktown 1781, P. 71







SITE OF GENERAL WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS

Dolyd's Diary P. 172-173

This morning also, just after reveille, General Cornwallis entered the Hornwork to observe the enemy and his preparations. As soon as he was again in his quarters, he sent a *flag of truce* with a white flag to the enemy. The Light Infantry in the Hornwork began to cut up their new tents, and in general, much was destroyed, as it was believed there would be a surrender soon.

19 October. The unfortunate day for England when the otherwise so famous and brave General Lord Cornwallis, with all his troops and the ships in the harbor, had to surrender to the united French and American troops under the command of General Washington, and the Marquis de Lafayette.

Each side sent two commissioners to the Moore House on 18 October. Around midnight, their efforts were sent to Washington for approval; he agreed that the garrison would march out to lay down their arms and colours; the cavalry could ride with drawn sabres; and all officers would be paroled. In addition, Cornwallis could use the *Bonetta* (which would not be searched) to return his possessions to New York. In retaliation for the humiliation of the Charleston garrison, the British could not play a French or American tune, and must keep their colours cased. The terms were agreed by Cornwallis, who signed the capitulation documents, as did Symonds, the senior Royal Navy officer. The documents were returned to the Allied lines, where they were also signed by Washington, Rochambeau and de Barras (for de Grasse).

Yorktown 1781, P. 73

WALKING TO SURRENDER FIELD ON OCTOBER 19, 2001 – 220 YEARS AFTER JOHANN WOLFGANG ODOERFER WALKED THE SAME PATH AS A HESSIAN SOLDIER AND PRISONER.



At 2:00pm on 19 October 1781, Cornwallis's army marched out of Yorktown on the Hampton Road, past the French and Americans. The British pointedly looked front, acknowledging only the colours of the French regiments to their right. A French officer noted the 'very fine looking' grenadiers and strong Scots, but felt the English troops were small; the Germans displayed order and discipline, while the British were arrogant and haughty towards the Americans.

Yorktown 1781, P. 71



After we had passed through the two lines, we came to a level place, or a great heath, on our right, where a squadron of French Hussars had formed a closed circle. One regiment after the other marched into this circle, stacked arms, and laid down all weapons. When our Colonel von Seybothen led his regiment in the middle therefore, he formed us in line facing front, took a position in the middle, and commanded, "Present arms!!" Then, "Ground your weapons and lay down cartridge boxes and sabers!" at which we executed the command, but not without his and our tears. All officers of Cornwallis's army, English as well as German, were allowed to keep their swords, as an honor from the French, which is a custom of war with them. All of the high enemy generals were present in the circle and showed their goodwill and best wishes toward the captured troops. Our two regiments were especially well received by them.

Dohla's Diary, p. 178





SURRENDER FIELD, WHERE THE BRITISH AND HESSIAN SOLDIERS LAID DOWN THEIR ARMS IN SURRENDER TO THE AMERICAN AND FRENCH VICTORS.







THE VICTORY MONUMENT IN YORKTOWN

