



JOHANN WOLFGANG ODOERFER BEGINS HIS MARCH FROM YORKTOWN TO WINCHESTER, VA.

21 October. This was the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity and the day we left Yorktown and began the march into captivity. We broke camp at three o'clock in the afternoon. The Virginia militia, under command of General [Robert] Lawson, escorted us.⁸

All of us walked with canes, and with knapsacks, camp kettles, and canteens hanging on us. Our first march was five or six Virginia miles, of which one makes one German hour. We camped overnight under the open sky in a meadow and had very little food to divide and eat.⁹

Dohla Diary, P. 182

The 21st - At twelve o'clock noon the prisoners were escorted out of Yorktown by the American militia consisting of five hundred men with two cannons. Halfway to Williamsburg, night camp was made under the open sky.

Prechtel Diary, P. 229



KINGS CREEK IS JUST HALFWAY FROM YORKTOWN TO WILLIAMSBURG- A MARCH OF 6 MILES. THE PRISONERS AND THEIR ESCORTS PROBABLY STAYED HERE!



22 October. We resumed our march and arrived at Williamsburg. We marched through the city and one English mile beyond. We camped on a height under open skies. We made large fires from the fences, which were plentiful and not protected from us. We also had much freedom, which allowed us to go into the city for food and water. Here, for the first time, we received American rations. These consisted of the following: one pound of meal from Indian corn, as well as one Scille, or one-eighth, of salt, for six men. Instead of flour, we received Indian bread here for the first time, which was very unfamiliar to us. For good hard cash, which we had, and which was rare here, we could get all kinds of foodstuffs, but everything was rather high-priced.

*Dohla
Diary
P. 183
Prechtal
Diary
P. 229*

The 22nd - Night camp was made at Williamsburg.

DAY 2

JOHANN MAY HAVE CAMPED ON THIS SITE, EXACTLY ONE MILE NORTH OF THE CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG. WE ATTENDED THIS METHODIST CHURCH ABOUT 220 YEARS AFTER THE HESSIAN PRISONERS MARCHED THIS ROUTE.

DAY 3

THIS TOWN OF LANEXA IS ON THE ROUTE FROM YORKTOWN NORTH TO WINCHESTER, 15 MILES NORTH OF WILLIAMSBURG. THE HESSIAN PRISONERS MAY HAVE CAMPED HERE AT THE END OF THEIR 3RD DAY OF MARCHING.

23 October. We moved out from here and marched several miles through heavy forests.

Dohla Diary, P. 184

The 23rd - The third march was fifteen miles beyond Williamsburg, where night camp was made.

Prechtal Diary, P. 229





DAYS 4,5,AND 6

WE FOLLOWED THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU ROUTE, REASONING THAT IN 1781 IT WAS PROBABLY THE ONLY ROUTE FROM YORKTOWN TO FREDRICKSBURG. ALSO, IT MADE SENSE THAT WASHINGTON WOULD SEND THE LARGE GROUP OF PRISONERS BACK UP THE SAME ROUTE HIS TROUPS HAD MARCHED DOWN ON THEIR WAY TO YORKTOWN ONLY A FEW WEEKS BEFORE. WE PASSED THE TOWN OF HANOVER, JUST AS DESCRIBED IN THE DIARY.

24 October. We continued our march. Today Private Hof, of Quesnoy's Company, remained behind and was missing.

On the march some English soldiers resisted the command of the escorting Americans, and it went so far, since they would not give in, that the militia had to fire on them, which resulted in one English prisoner being killed and three men wounded.

25 October. We made a march of eighteen to twenty Virginia miles along a sandy road and through many forests. We passed New Germantown on our right and **Hanover Town on our left**, two small cities. The latter is a small city on a creek or river that empties into the York River. In this region much Virginia tobacco is grown, and a hundredweight sells for five or six Spanish dollars.

26 October. Rainy weather set in and we had a long and difficult march to Newcastle, a beautiful, pleasant place, which lay to our right. One mile from there we set up our night camp under the open sky and dried ourselves a bit by the many fires that we made.

Dohla Diary, P. 184-185

The 24th - The fourth march was past Longcastle and the troops camped 45 miles beyond York.

The 25th - The fifth march took us sixty miles beyond York.

The 26th - The sixth march was past Newcastle and night camp was made four miles beyond this place; 78 miles from York.

Prechtel Diary, P. 230



DAYS 7, 8, AND 9

WE CONTINUED ON TOWARD FREDRICKSBURG ON THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU ROUTE, NOTING SEVERAL PLACES, AT THE DISTANCES MENTIONED IN THE DIARY, WHERE A LARGE GROUP OF PRISONERS AND THEIR ESCORTS COULD HAVE CAMPED. WE COULD IMAGINE JOHANN WOLFGANG ODOERFER, ALREADY USING THE AMERICANIZED NAME, JOHN ODORFER, MARCHING OVER THESE TRAILS, MANY HOURS EACH DAY.



27 October. Again, a long march in unpleasant weather.

28 October. We continued our march farther.

29 October. We marched to within one and one-half miles of Fredericksburg, where we camped in an opening in the forest. During our march today, we saw many individual houses built in a poor manner of wood and covered with clay and patched together. But inside they were richly and well appointed, and in part furnished with the finest articles.

Dohla Diary, p. 185

The 27th - The seventh march, night camp was made one hundred miles from York.

The 28th - The eighth march, night camp was made 114 miles from York.

The 29th - The ninth march, night camp was near Fredericksburg, still ninety miles from Winchester.

Prechtel Diary, p. 230

DAYS 10 AND 11

WE FOLLOWED THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU ROUTE, THROUGH FREDRICKSBURG, AND CAME UPON THIS WONDERFUL SPOT ON THE RHAPPAHANOCK RIVER, WITH THE TOWN OF FALMOUTH JUST ACROSS, AS DESCRIBED IN THE NOVEMBER 1ST DIARY ENTRY. IT HAD TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE PRISONERS CAMPED ON THE 10TH AND 11TH DAY OF THEIR MARCH. WE TOOK A PICTURE OF THE FALMOUTH BAPTIST CHURCH, TO SYMBOLIZE THE TOWN.



30 October. At four o'clock in the afternoon we moved out from here.¹⁰ Our march passed through the small city of Fredericksburg and two miles beyond that place to a main river, the Rappahannock, where we camped. This river contains sweet water and was hardly 100 to 150 feet wide here, and also so shallow that it could be waded across. It had received its name from the savages. The local inhabitants also call it the North Hannah River.

31 October. We had a day of rest.

*Dohla Diary
P. 186*

The 30th - Underway at four o'clock in the afternoon and we marched two and one-half miles beyond Fredericksburg to the Rappahannock River and made night camp.

The prisoners of war from Gloucester were taken on another route and joined us again at Fredericksburg.

The 31st - We remained at the Rappahannock River.

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DAYS 12 AND 13

WE CONTINUED NORTH OF FREDRICKSBURG ON THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU ROUTE, AND WERE SURPRISED HOW ACCURATE THE DIARIES WERE ABOUT THE MILEAGE BETWEEN FREDRICKSBURG AND FAIRFAX, VA. WE EXPERIENCED THE HEAVY FORRESTED AREAS DESCRIBED IN THE DIARY. AN OLD COURT HOUSE HAD BEEN RESTORED ON THE ORIGINAL SITE IN FAIRFAX, AND WE HAD FOUND THE SPOT WHERE JOHN ODORFER AND HIS FELLOW PRISONERS HAD CAMPED!

1 November. We broke camp and had to wade through the Rappahannock River. Some crossed in their shoes and socks; however, I and most of the others took them off and crossed barefoot. The water was very cold and reached up to our thighs. Our route went through **Falmouth**, a small but beautiful village of about thirty to forty houses on the left bank of the Rappahannock, with a German church and two prayerhouses, and **we made a march of twenty Virginia miles**. Today Private Hass-further, of Quesnoy's Company, remained behind in Falmouth and took employment as a journeyman with a German shoe-maker.¹¹

2 November. Again, **a long march of about eighteen miles** through a steady rain, so that by evening, when we halted, we no longer had a single dry rag on our bodies. Today a part of the captive troops, Scots and English, were separated from us. These were escorted to Fort Frederick in Maryland. Also, the two Hessian regiments, Hereditary Prince and Bose, were separated from us, and our Jaegers. We proceeded to Fairfax Courthouse, a small place with one mill and a beautiful court and legislative building. We made our night camp adjacent to this place. Here several hundred English captives remained lying under guard, also.

Dolha Diary, p. 187

November 1781

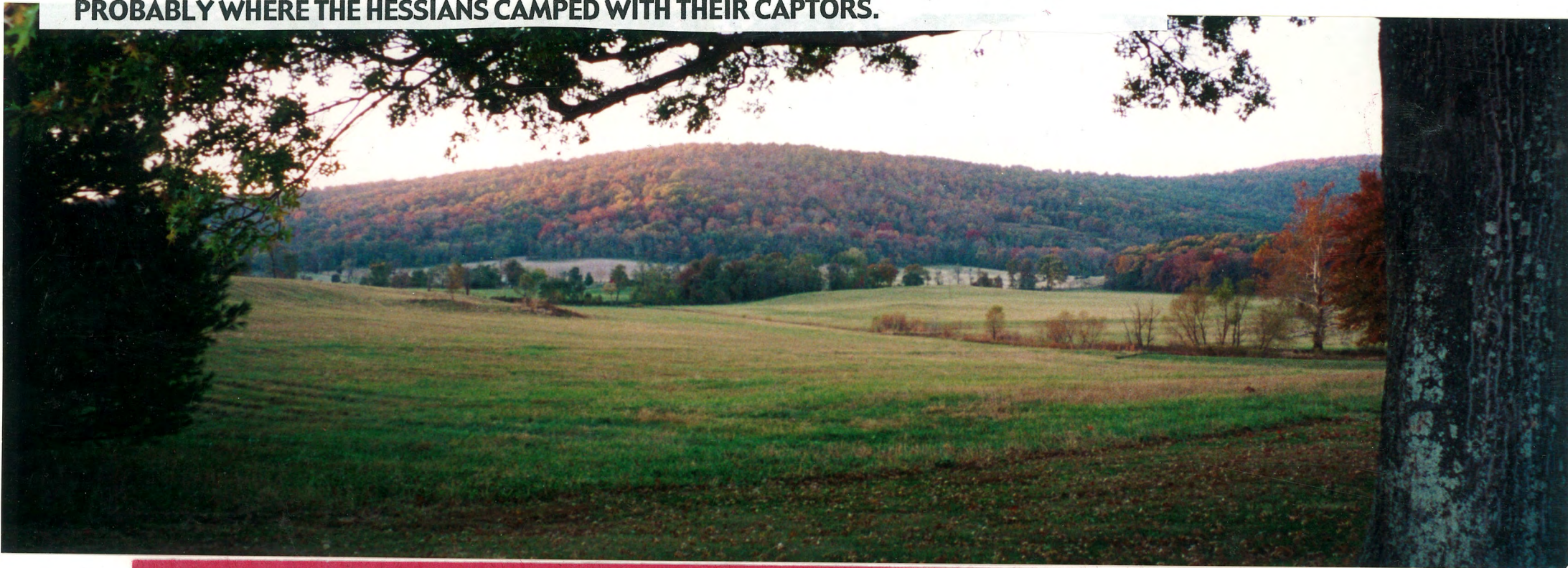
The 1st - We crossed the Rappahannock River. The water reached only to the knees of the troops. **Just across the river lies Falmouth**. Today night camp was made twenty miles beyond Fredericksburg.

Those troops which were to enter captivity at Fort Frederick marched away today without an escort.

The 2nd - We marched twenty miles to the Frak-Weiler Courthouse, from here it is still forty miles to Winchester.

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DAYS 13 AND 14 WE DROVE FROM FAIRFAX TO THE SHENANDOAH RIVER, AND WERE AGAIN AMAZED AT HOW ACCURATE THE MILEAGE GIVEN IN THE DIARIES WAS. WE, TOO, SAW THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS, AND FOUND A SPOT ON THE RIVER THAT WAS PROBABLY WHERE THE HESSIANS CAMPED WITH THEIR CAPTORS.



The 3rd - We made night camp thirty miles from Winchester.

The 4th - We passed the Blue Ridge, or the Blue Mountains, and the River Shenandoah and camped for the night fourteen miles from Winchester.

3 November. We made a long march. At evening we noticed the so-called Blue Mountains, of an astonishingly great height and covered with heavy forests. Here, in the middle of a forest and undergrowth, we made our night quarters.

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4 November. We arrived at a main river, the Shenandoah, which, because we were captives, and in spite of the cold, we had to wade across. We took off our gaiters, shoes, and socks, and entered the water, which was ice cold and at places reached to our chest. We had to take careful steps and not raise the legs, but move only with the feet. Otherwise the water would carry us away, as it ran very swiftly.

It would have been no wonder if we had caught cold, because this march through the river lasted nearly a quarter of an hour. This great cold later caused all sorts of sickness. The escorting militia, just like us, had to cross the river, but their and our officers rode their horses. Nevertheless, they found it necessary to have half of their legs in the water, and in many places the water splashed over the backs of the horses.

Dohla Diary, p. 188



DAYS 15

AT LAST, EXACTLY 4 MILES ON PAST WINCHESTER WE FIND ROUND HILL, SHOWN ABOVE, AND LOCATE THE SPOT, NEAR A SPRING THAT PROVIDES FRESH WATER, OF THE NEW FREDERICK BARRACKS WHERE THE HESSIAN PRISONERS, AND JOHN ODORFER, WERE KEPT. JOHN STAYED HERE OVER A YEAR UNTIL HE DEFECTED TO THE AMERICAN ARMY IN 1982. MORE PICTURES OF THE SPOT ARE SHOWN ON THE NEXT FEW PAGES.

5 November. We arrived in Winchester.

We marched through the place and another four Virginia miles, over two hours farther, to an old and large barracks with two levels, called the New Frederick Barracks, where both our regiments were lodged on the lower level. The English troops still with us were placed on the upper level.

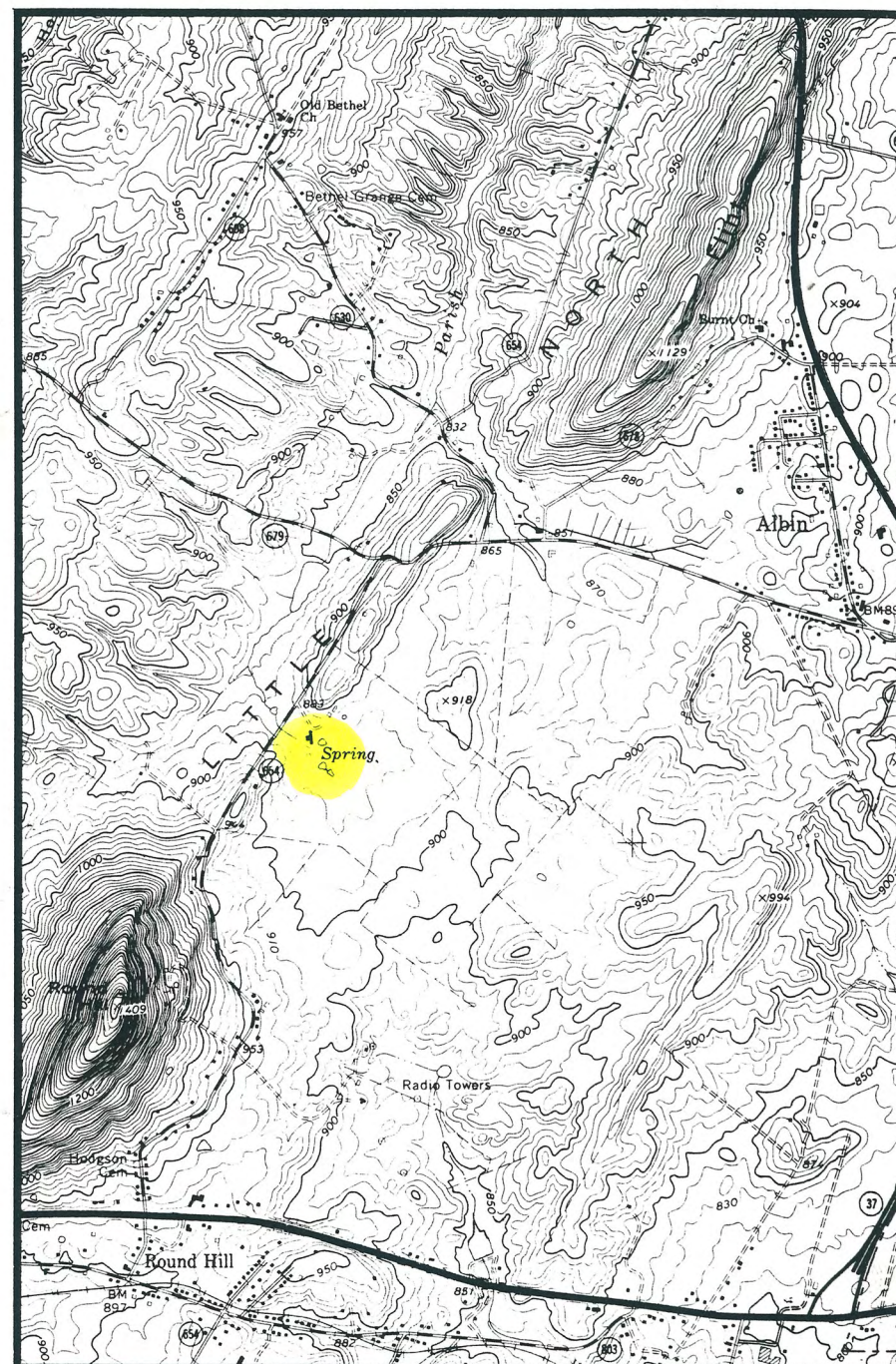
If this is to be our winter quarters, may God have mercy upon us: numerous wretched huts built of wood and clay, most of which have no roofs or poor roofs, no cots, only poor fireplaces, neither doors nor windows, and lie in the middle of a forest. We already had many sick and fatigued people, which was not surprising.

During this move we spent sixteen days and made a march inland of 240 Virginia miles.

Dohla Diary, p.189

The 5th - We arrived at Winchester. The prisoners of war were transported four miles further into a woods where already two barracks for captive troops had been built. These were truly very poorly put together and as they were not half adequate for quartering the troops, the men had to build new barracks later on, but already at this time it was very unpleasant and as cold as in winter.

Prechtel Diary, p.231



Somewhere in this area, west of Albin and north of Round Hill, lies the site of the camps where the Hessian and British prisoners of war were kept.

**THE PROBABLE LOCATION, NORTH OF ROUND HILL AND
SOUTHWEST OF ALBION, OF THE NEW FREDERICK BARRACKS
WHERE JOHN ODORFER STAYED AFTER SURRENDERING TO
THE AMERICANS IN THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN. THE POND
VISIBLE IN THE PICTURE IS PROBABLY FED FROM THE SPRING
SHOWN ON THE TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP ON THE PRECEEDING
PAGE. WHAT A BEAUTIFUL LOCATION FOR SUCH A TERRIBLE
PLACE!**



THE YORKTOWN PRISONERS (1781-1782)

Except for 125 prisoners sent from the Carolinas, the Winchester barracks remained empty during the summer and early fall of 1781.¹²⁰ Not until November did the third and largest body of prisoners arrive from Yorktown, Virginia. On October 19 Cornwallis surrendered his army of 7,000 British and German regulars. General Washington ordered half the prisoners to Fort Frederick, Maryland, and half to Winchester. According to the returns of Cornwallis' army, 2,924 men would go to Maryland and 3,026 to Winchester, the latter group broken down as follows:¹²¹

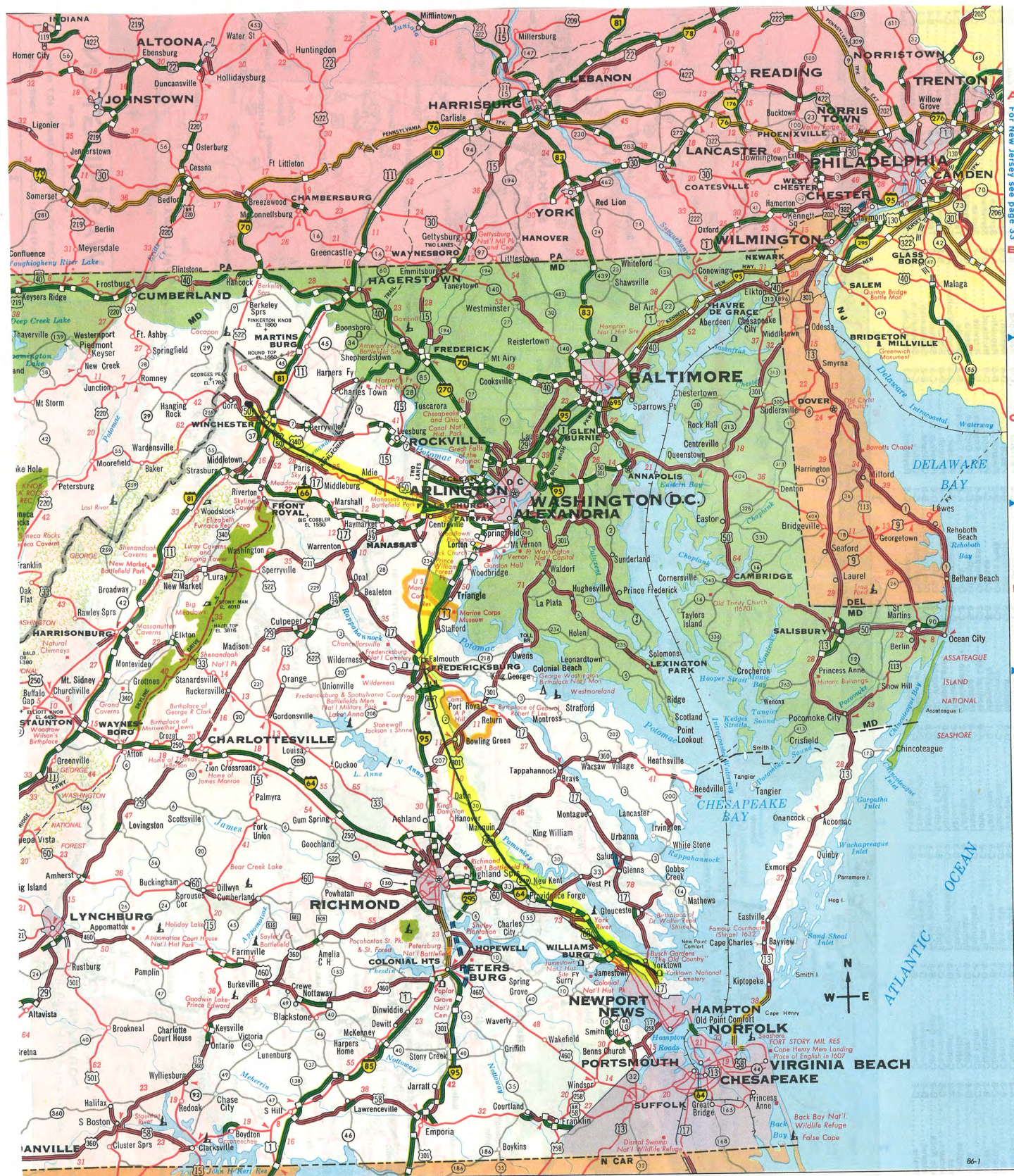
British	
Royal Artillery	193
1st Regiment of Guards	467
23rd Regiment	205
43rd Regiment	307
76th Regiment	625
German	
<u>2 Ansbach battalions</u>	<u>948</u>
Tories	
Queen's Rangers	248
Pioneers	33

These figures include rank and file soldiers only and would increase to a total of approximately 3,300 with the addition of more than 200 non-commissioned officers and musicians, plus 65 officers. However, the frightful conditions during the siege of Yorktown had left the British with 1,933 men sick and unfit for duty.¹²² Many of those soldiers could not make the march, so in actuality, only 2,100 reached Winchester initially, accompanied by 40 officers.¹²³

The prisoners marched under a guard commanded by Brig. Gen. Robert Lawson, whose brigade of Virginia militia had fought at Yorktown. Gov. Thomas Nelson ordered Lawson to conduct half of them to Winchester, where Col. John Smith was to provide a militia guard from Frederick and the adjacent counties.¹²⁴ The sick and wounded remained behind at Gloucester Point. The able-bodied prisoners departed Yorktown on October 21 and marched via Williamsburg to Fredericksburg, where the two divisions separated. Those going to Winchester crossed the Blue Ridge at Ashby Gap and entered the town on November 5. At the outset, the old problems repeated themselves for the barracks were insufficient to hold such a large number of men. More than 2,000 prisoners had arrived and

the huts built in the spring could hold but about 800 "with convenience." This meant that only 60 or 70 huts were completed. Colonel Holmes reported to the Governor that the local workmen would not build additional cabins because they had not received any pay for those already erected. He suggested that the best way to build them would be to have the prisoners do it themselves.¹²⁵ One of the Germans, Pvt. Johann Conrad Döhla of the Bayreuth Regiment von Seybothen, described the huts as "built most miserably of wood and lime, most of them with no or very poor roofing, no resting places, bad fireplaces, neither door nor window, and lying in the middle of a forest." The militia guard, he added, "had small huts which were as bad as ours." The prisoners crowded "20-30 men to a hut, where we had hardly room to stand."¹²⁶ Colonel Holmes reported that about 1,000 of them were "oblig'd to camp out" and they needed 100 more cabins,¹²⁷ indicating that only ten men per hut was considered the ideal situation. Another German soldier, Pvt. Stephen Popp of the Bayreuth Regiment, complained that the barracks was "a wretched place . . . everywhere going to pieces, nowhere protected from rain and dew, — snow and wind drove in, — the open fire filled it with smoke," with each cabin holding "from 32 to 36 men."¹²⁸

MAP OF THE ROUTE FOLLOWED BY JOHN ODORFER AND THE HESSIAN PRISONERS FROM YORKTOWN, VA TO THE BARRACKS IN WINCHESTER, VA. IT TOOK THEM 15 DAYS OF MARCHING TO MAKE THE TRIP OF OVER 240 MILES. THIS IS THE ROUTE WE FOLLOWED IN RETRACING THE STEPS OF MY GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER, JOHANN WOLFGANG ODOERFER (JOHN ODORFER).



IT WAS REPORTED THAT THE HESSIAN SOLDIERS THAT SPENT QUITE A WHILE AT THE BARRACKS PLANTED APPLE TREES, AND THAT THE LOCAL WOMEN WOULD OFTEN CONVENIENTLY LEAVE A FRESHLY COOKED PIE ON THE WINDOW SILL FOR THE SOLDIERS PASSING BY. THE PICTURE BELOW SHOWS APPLE TREES STILL GROWING VERY CLOSE TO THE SITE OF THE BARRACKS.

