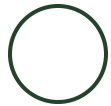




Third Waldeck Regiment (Hessian) in Revolutionary War



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During the War of Independence, England secured, from some of the smaller principalities of Germany, auxiliary troops which fought on the English side. There was no political alliance between these principalities and England; it was traffic in human flesh, pure and simple. England rented these troops to fight for her, paid a good rental for them, and a fixed price for every soldier killed or wounded.

To the honor of the great majority of the German monarchs, be it said that they strongly disapproved of this traffic, and that the King of Prussia openly favored the American cause and forbade the English auxiliary troops to march through

his kingdom. Hesse Cassel furnished 16,992 men and lost 6,500; Brunswick 5,723 and lost 3,015; Hanau 2,422 and lost 981; Ansbach Bayreuth 1,644 and lost 461; Waldeck 1,225 and lost 720; Anhalt Zerbst 1,160 and lost 176. The total Hessian auxiliaries numbered 29,166 of which 11,853 were lost.

The very great loss in men was due in part to the fact that a number of these German soldiers came into contact with the Germans living in America, loyal Americans of whom many thousands fought in the revolutionary army under Washington, being hence persuaded to desert the English cause and to settle in this country.

At the time of the outbreak of the American War of Independence, Waldeck had nearly a century-old tradition of hiring mercenary troops. In contrast to the Kassel contract for troops, the Waldeck document contained a paragraph establishing reimbursement of the ruler of Waldeck for every soldier killed or wounded in action. Lord Cambden, a speaker for the King's loyal opposition alluded to this blood money in a debate in the House of Lords. 'The whole is a mere mercenary bargain for the hire of troops on one side, and for the sale of human blood on the other; and... the devoted wretches thus purchased for slaughter are mere mercenaries in the worst sense of the word.

A decree of 1755 had ordered conscription procedures in Waldeck which allowed only university students exemption from service, but in 1776, the ruler of Waldeck attached great importance to sending only volunteers to America. At the beginning of the War of Independence, two Waldeck regiments were stationed in Holland. A part of the officers and men transferred to the newly-formed Third English-Waldeck Mercenary Regiment. Nevertheless it was difficult to acquire recruits in the time allotted. Even the poor of Waldeck were not

especially anxious to subject themselves to the American adventure. Therefore recruitment abroad, i.e., in other German territories, was required to hire the necessary troops. Instead of a bounty, recruits were offered a daily cash payment. The Waldeck regiment arrived at the port of Bremerlehe in 30 May 1776 with a two-week delay. Therefore the Second Division could not set sail for America until 2 June.

Originally scheduled to be sent to Canada in 1776, the Waldeck Regiment was sent instead to New York to join the army of General William Howe. Recalled from Holland and brought up to strength by forcible conscription, it was sent to America, arriving in New Rochelle in Oct. 1776.

The regiment wore medium blue coats with yellow facings and white small clothes.. It fought in Brooklyn, White Plains, and Fort Washington.

Their first contact with the enemy occurred at Fort Washington on 16 November and resulted in seven killed and 13 wounded. Following the battle the regiment marched back to New York. After a short stay in Perth Amboy it was quartered in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. On 9 January 1777 it returned to Perth Amboy. It was then moved to a camp on Staten Island when it was ordered to cover the right flank against American units positioned near Morristown. The unit remained in camp until 20 October 1778.

After service in the New York-New Jersey area, during which time men from the Regiment who were captured were sent to prison facilities in Pennsylvania and Maryland and some entered the American Army, the Regiment was ordered to West Florida.

Five ships of the line, 12 frigates and about 110 transport ships set sail on 3 November 1778, stopping once en route at Kingston, Jamaica. The armada arrived at Pensacola on 17 January 1779.

In May 1779, hostilities broke out between Spain and England. The boundary line between the English and the Spanish possessions in America, the Mississippi River, Bayou Manchac, the Amite River, and Lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain, became a scene of war, where some of the principal actors were German troops.

The English held Fort Panmure, where Natchez now stands; a post on Thompson's Creek near the present Port Hudson; Fort New Richmond, now Baton Rouge; Fort Bute on the Mississippi at the entrance into Bayou Manchac (near the current site of LSU); a post on the Amite River, presumably French Settlement below the confluence of Bayou Manchac and Amite River, and Big Colyell Creek and Amite River; Mobile and Pensacola. In order to strengthen these positions, the English sent some of their auxiliary troops, the German Waldeck regiment, from New York by way of Jamaica to Pensacola where they landed on the twenty ninth of January, 1779. Here the Waldeckers met a company of German recruits belonging to the 16th regiment, eight companies of the Royal American Regiment on Foot, also known as the 60th English regiment, and some royalists from Maryland and Pennsylvania.

The 60th regiment was raised by order of the Parliament in 1755. The men were chiefly Germans and Swiss who had settled in America. They were all zealous Protestants and in general strong hardy men, accustomed to the American climate and from their religion, language and race, particularly proper to oppose the French. As they could not speak English, however, it became necessary to grant commissions to a number of foreign Protestants who had served abroad

as officers or engineers and spoke the German language. On the fifteenth of June 1756, forty German officers came to America to serve in this regiment. The Rev Michael Schlatter, the head of the Reformed German Church in America, was the chaplain of this regiment from 1756 to 1782. While in Pensacola, the 60th regiment still consisted mainly of Germans.

The English forces on the Mississippi consisted of only 500 men under Lieutenant Colonel Dickson, who urgently called for reinforcements. Part of the 60th regiment and the grenadier company of the Waldeckers left Pensacola for the Mississippi 19 June 1779. On the second of August, Major von Horn with his company of Waldeckers and fifteen men of the company of Colonel Hanxleden followed, and on the thirtieth of August another company of Waldeckers, that of Captain Alberti. They went by way of Lake Pontchartrain, Amite River, and Bayou Manchac. The Spanish in New Orleans succeeded in capturing some of the English transports on Lake Pontchartrain, among which was the vessel which carried the company of Captain Alberti, who with his officers, three sergeants, one drummer, and forty nine privates, was taken prisoner and brought to New Orleans, where he died of fever on the twenty first of July, one day after Lieutenant von Goren had died of the same disease.

The first Waldeckers to be taken prisoner had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards on Lake Pontchartrain because they were ignorant of the state of war between Spain and England.

Lieutenant Colonel Dickson was charged with the defense of the Baton Rouge district, which included Fort Bute, Baton Rouge, and Fort Panmure (modern Natchez). The British had begun sending larger numbers of troops to the area following George Rogers Clark's capture of Vincennes, which had exposed the

weak British defenses in the area. At Dickson's disposal in August 1779 were 400 regulars, including companies from the 16th and 60th Regiments, a recently-arrived company of Waldeck grenadiers, and about 150 Loyalist militia. Fort Bute was located on Bayou Manchac, about 115 miles (185 km) up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, on the far western border of British West Florida. Fort Bute was an older stockade fort built in 1766. It was in such disrepair that Dickson judged it to be indefensible.

On the 22 August 1779, the Spanish Governor Galvez left New Orleans with a force of 1430 men and a small gun fleet to attack the English posts on the Mississippi. On his approach, the main force of the English withdrew towards Baton Rouge, leaving in Fort Bute Captain von Haake with a detachment of twenty Waldeckers. A recent history of Louisiana says that Galvez took this post by assault and even gives the name of the first Creole to enter the fort. There cannot have been much fighting at Fort Bute. From the fact that only eight prisoners were taken by Galvez, and the further fact that Captain von Haake later fought in Baton Rouge, it seems probable that this officer, on hearing of the large force marching against him, withdrew from Fort Bute leaving a few men behind to make a show of resistance, and hereby detain Galvez for a few days on his march to Baton Rouge. In this they seem to have succeeded, as Galvez waited five days before ordering the assault.

Then he pressed on to Baton Rouge, which he also intended to take by assault. But after losing 500 men in the first and 140 in a subsequent assault, in which he was even compelled to withdraw his batteries, he concluded to invest the post. Lieutenant Colonel Dickson was not prepared to resist a regular siege, and as many of his men were sick, an honorable surrender was arranged. The English left Baton Rouge with all the honors of war, drums beating and banners flying

The prisoners were to be taken first to New Orleans, and thence transported to New York, and were not to fight again within eighteen months. Every officer retained his sword, and every man his private property. Of the Waldeckers, two captains, three lieutenants, three surgeons, eight sergeants, six drummers, three servants, and 176 privates surrendered in Baton Rouge. Ensign Nolting and one private fell. Lieutenant Leonhardi, who had distinguished himself during the two assaults of the Spaniards, died of his wounds on the Mississippi while being conveyed to New Orleans. One surgeon, two non commissioned officers, and nineteen privates died of their wounds, and one officer and six privates were slightly wounded.

When Baton-Rouge capitulated, the first 53 Waldeck prisoners were joined by nearly half of the 400-man garrison.

From letters written by German officers, then prisoners of war in New Orleans, and from published diaries, we learn that many of the Waldeckers died in this city, and that many were still sick. Lieutenant Strubberg, in a letter to a brother officer in Pensacola, speaks very highly of Governor Galvez, who often invited the German officers to dinner and even allowed them to visit their comrades in Pensacola. The people of New Orleans too, he says, were very friendly and kind.

After the subsequent fall of Pensacola to Galvez, the rest of the Waldeckers were sent to New York, having pledged never to fight the Spaniards again (May 1781). These Waldeckers encamped during September 1781 in Newtown, Long Island, in October 1782 in New York and on 4 November went into winter quarters in Flatbush. A transport of recruits stayed in Halifax, Nova Scotia. On 21 January 1783 the regiment received new flags. The Waldeckers remained in Flatbush

until the summer of 1783. The return voyage from New York began on 25 July 1783.

Some of the men held prisoner in New Orleans deserted, went up the Mississippi river and joined George Rogers Clark, who was fighting against the English in the Illinois country. There have been 30 Waldeck soldiers identified who had escaped from the Spanish in 1779 and 1780, and may have joined General Clark: 20 of them left in July and August of 1779 from Manchac in Louisiana, a British Fort (captured by Spanish under Galvez, Sep 7 1779): Christian Bauer, Franz Karl Beck, Christian Berlin, Johannes Braun, Peter Buseck, Johann Franz Eisen, Friedrich Fischer, Christoph Graebes, Konrad Herold, Henrich Hufeisen, Georg Kruhm, Peter Licht, Friedrich Mercker, Franz Meyer, Wilhelm Meilig, Peter Oppenhauser, Friedrich Ritter, Henrich Schmidt, Georg Wissemann, Peter Zipp. Another 8 men departed in July 1780 from New Orleans and supposedly went up the Mississippi River to join up: Friedrich Wilhelm Pique, Christian Schoenfeld, Eberhard Stoessel, John Wagner, Gottlieb Weiss, Ludwig Welcker, Gottfried Wiegand.

Other escapee Ludwig Ruppert joined Gen.Clark's troops and served in Captain John Girault's Company of the Illinois Regiment. With him served escapee Balthasar Kaltwasser, a Waldecker who was taken prisoner on the Amite River in Sep.1779. He assumed the name John Coldwater.

The following summary of the Illinois Regiment is transcribed loosely from various published sources and complete accuracy is probably not achieved.

The Illinois Regiment, which existed for about 10 years 1774-1784, provided protection to the settlers who were migrating west along the Ohio River Valley and surrounding territories. This westward movement was in violation of a 1763

British proclamation prohibiting further westward expansion of the colonies beyond the Appalachian Mountains. The native American tribes of the area were harassing these settlers and the British were fanning the flames and hoping to create a western battle front of opposition to the colonists' settlements, as well as to their revolutionary forces. General Clark was the right man to lead this regiment in opposition to the native tribes and their British allies. He was a talented field commander with ability to motivate his troops. His regiment disrupted the British plans for the western frontier.

George Rogers Clark was never fully recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia nor the Republic for his accomplishments and their strategic value to the newly born nation. He never received enough men, supplies, nor money to completely defeat the British and capture their Fort Detroit. He had to scavenge for every resource, and only his considerable leadership qualities could account for the level of loyalty among his men as they left their settlements and families and ranged far and wide with the Illinois Regiment, at great discomfort and peril to themselves.

While the Commonwealth governors and most frontier settlers wanted to keep the militia close to their settlements and maintain defensive forces against attacks by native tribes, George Rogers Clark was one of the few who recognized that purely defensive postures would never provide for safe expansion of the colonial population westward. This could only be achieved by going on the offensive against the native tribes to clear them from areas being colonized and to provide leverage with them in negotiations. As had been known from the earliest settlements at Plymouth, the native American populations respected power, and its judicious use would much more likely yield peaceful times than would purely defensive postures.


George Rogers Clark financed much of the campaign of the Illinois Regiment from his own wealth, and ended up in debt. But the Commonwealth deemed that he had gone well beyond his authorized plan of action, and so would not repay him. He died a poor and somewhat bitter man, living with his sister in Clark Co, IN.

General Clark is credited with founding the town of Louisville KY; Clark County IN, just across the river, was named after him. He was the older brother of William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame). He was also initially responsible for persuading Patrick Henry, governor of VA, to annex KY as a county of VA. KY became a state of its own in 1792.

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