

Camp at Majabigwaduce 23 August 1779

Sir

By my last letter of the 26th June I had the honor to acquaint your Excellency that we were then employd in the necessary Preparations for constructing a Fort, to contain about Four Hundred Men; Major Craig informs me he acquainted your Excellency with the difficulties which prevented our beginning the Work before he sailed from hence, these continued, so that it was the 2^d of July before the Engineer had mark'd it out; The Fort was designed to be a square of two hundred feet interior side, with four Bastions; On the 21st I received intelligence that a Fleet and Army of considerable Force, had sailed from Boston for this place; at this time tho we had exerted every Effort we were Capable of to forward our Work, Your Excellency will easily conceive it was far from being in a Situation to afford us any security against a vigorous Attack such as the strength of the Enemys Armament gave us reason to expect, Two of the Bastions were untouched, the other two with the Curtains were in general, from

Camp at Majabigwaduce 23 August 1779

Sir

By my last letter of the 26th June I had the honor to acquaint your Excellency that we were then employed in the necessary Preparations for Constructing a Fort, to contain about Four Hundred men; Major Craig informs me he acquainted your Excellency with the difficulties which prevented our beginning the Work before he sailed from hence, these continued, so that it was the 2^d of July before the Engineer had mark'd it out. The Fort was designed to be a square of two hundred feet interior side with four Bastions; On the 21st I received intelligence that a Fleet and Army of considerable Force, had sailed from Boston for this place, at this time tho we had exerted every Effort we were Capable of to forward our Work, Your Excellency will easily Conceive it was far from being in a Situation to afford us any security against a Vigorous Attack such as the Strength of the Enemys armament gave us reason to expect; Two of the Bastions were untouched, the other two with the Curtains were in general, from

Contributed to Maine Memory Network by the Maine Historical Society (Local Code: Coll. 112 Box 1/6)
Date: August 23, 1779
Description: Letter from Francis McLean to Henry Clinton about the Penobscot Expedition forces.

four to five feet high, and twelve thick, the ditch in many places, not more than three in depth, And no Artillery mounted, or Platforms laid; I had however some time before thrown up a Battery of four Twelve Pounders on a Height near the River for the protection of the Ships, And had entrenched the border of the Swamp, so that I had no Apprehension of the Enemy's getting a footing on the Peninsula from that Side.

From the moment I received intelligence of the sailing of the Enemy's fleet from Boston; I laid aside all thoughts of finishing the Fort, and I can scarce do justice to the ardor, and diligence with which I was seconded by all ranks in my Endeavours to put ourselves into some tolerable posture of defence. On the 25th the Enemy's fleet to the Number of Thirty seven Sail of all Sizes, made their appearance, and at two in the afternoon began a heavy canonade, tho from a good distance on the Ships, and Battery; The warm return that was made them by both, soon obliged them to retire, and Anchor opposite the West point, the 26th the Attack was renewed with the same Success; during both these days, and on the 27th they made several

four to five feet and twelve thick, the ditch in many places not more than three in depth, And no Artillery mounted or Platforms laid; I had however some time before thrown up a Battery of four Twelve Pounders¹ on a Height near the River for the protection of the Ships, And had entrenched the border of the Swamp, so that I had no Apprehension of the Enemy's getting a footing on the Peninsula from that Side.

From the moment I received intelligence of the sailing of the Enemy's fleet from Boston; I laid aside all thoughts of finishing the Fort, and I can scarce do justice to the ardor, and diligence with which I was seconded by all ranks in my Endeavours to put ourselves into some tolerable posture of defence. On the 25th the Enemy's fleet to the Number of Thirty seven Sail of all Sizes, made their appearance, and at two in the afternoon began a heavy canonade, tho from a good distance on the Ships, and the Battery; the warm return that was made them by both, soon obliged them to retire, and Anchor opposite the West point, the 26th the Attack was renewed with the same Success; during both these days, and on the 27th they made several

¹ Pounder: gun firing a shell of a specified number of pounds

attempts to land their Troops on the West Point, but were constantly repulsed by our Picquet (which consisted of a Captain and Eighty Men) And a party of seventy Men who were in a Fleche near the point, and at hand to support the Picquet, however, on the morning of the 28th they, to my great surprize, effected their purpose under cover of a heavy canonade from their Shipping, and forced the Picquet under the command of Captain Archibald Campbell of the 74th Regiment, to retire to the Fort, before I had received the least intelligence of their being landed, owing to the Serjeant who was sent by Captain Campbell to inform me of it, having missed his Way in the Wood; It now became necessary to withdraw the Posts, we had along the Swamp, And the Enemy having erected a Battery on an Island at the entrance of the Harbour, which the Captains of the Men of War, as well as Lieut Colonel Campbell and myself, were of Opinion made it necessary for the Ships to move higher up the River; I brought the four twelve Pounders from the Battery on the River, into the Fort, and replaced them with three six Pounders out of Nine which Captain Mowatt

attempts to land their Troops on the West Point, but were constantly repulsed by our Picquet¹ [sic] (which consisted of a Captain and Eighty men) And a party of seventy Men who were in a Fleche² near the point, and at hand to support the Picquet [sic], however, on the morning of the 28th they, to my great surprise, effected their purpose under cover of a heavy canonade [sic] from their Shipping, and forced the Picquet [sic] under the Command of Captain Archibald Campbell of the 74th Regiment, to retire to the Fort, before I had received the least intelligence of their being landed, owing to the Serjeant [sic] who was sent by Captain Campbell to inform me of it, having missed his Way in the Wood; It now became necessary to withdraw the Posts, we had along the swamp. And the Enemy having erected a Battery on an island at the entrance of the Harbour, which the Captain's of the Men of war, as well as Lieut. Colonel Campbell and myself were of Opinion made it necessary for the Ships to move higher up the River; I brought the four twelve Pounders from the Battery on the River into the Fort, and replaced them with three six Pounders out of nine which Captain Mowatt

¹Picket [sic picquet]: a detached body of soldiers serving to guard and army from surprise, and to oppose reconnoitering parties of the enemy.

²Fleche: arrowhead shaped fortification, with two guarded faces and an open rear

had at my request, landed from the Ships for our use; The Enemy's Shipping made several other Attempts during their Stay to anchor within the River, but were constantly prevented by the fire from our Shipping and Batteries.

On the 30th the Enemy opened a Battery in the Wood of two eighteen Pounders and one twelve Pounder with a 5¹/₂ inch Mortar at the distance of 750 yards from the Fort, and a few days after another about 50 yards nearer, of two Eighteen Pounders from whence they fired on us with great briskness, notwithstanding which our Men continued their work with such unremitting diligence that Platforms had been early laid in the Bastions, by which we were enabled to return their fire; And we every moment increased in strength, the canonading continued on both sides, together with several Skirmishes without the Fort, (Occasioned by the Necessity we were under of supporting our Battery, and keeping up the communication with the Ships of War, which we did the whole time) until the 12th when a deserter came in and assured us the Enemy intended to attack the Ships and storm the

had at my request landed from the Ships for our use; The Enemy's Shipping made several other Attempts during their Stay to anchor within the River, but were constantly prevented by the fire from our Shipping and Batteries.

On the 30th the enemy opened a Battery in the Wood of two eighteen Pounder and one twelve Pounder with a 5- inch Mortar at the distance of 750 yards from the Fort, and a few days after another about 50 yards nearer, of two Eighteen Pounders from whence they fired on us with great briskness, notwithstanding which our Men continued their work with such unremitting diligence that Platforms had been early laid in the Bastions, by which we were enabled to return their fire; And we every moment increased in strength, the canonading continued in both Sides, together with several Skirmishes without the Fort, (Occasioned by the Necessity we were under of supporting our Battery and keeping up the Communication with the Ships of War, which we did the whole time) until the 12th when a deserter came in and assured us the Enemy intended to attack the Ships and storm the

Fort the ensuing day, from the latter we were under no apprehensions but as we thought that their great superiority in point of numbers might engage them to hazard another attempt on the former: I threw up a small work about 150 yards from the Post towards the River on which I mounted five six Pounders for the assistance of the Shipping supported by 100 Men for whom there was a good position under cover from the Enemy's fire, with these, and from the experience we had already of the resolution of the Officers and Seamen of our little fleet; I should have been under no apprehension for the success had they carried their design into Execution, which however they did not, And to our great astonishment on the morning of the 14th about 4 o'clock being without the Fort reconnoitring we observed an unusual degree of Quiet in the Enemy's Works, and on a closer examination found them abandoned; About 80 Men which had been appointed from the two Regiments to act as Light Infantry under the command of Lieut. Carthrae of the 82^d Regiment were immediately ordered

Fort the ensuing day, from the latter we were under no apprehensions but as we thought that their great superiority in point of numbers might engage them to hazard another attempt on the former: I threw up a small work about 150 yards from the Post towards the River in which I mounted five six Pounders for the assistance of the Shipping supported by 100 men for whom there was a good position under cover from the Enemy's fire, with these, and from the experience we had already of the resolution of the Officers and Seamen of our little fleet; I should have been under no apprehension for the success had they carried their design into Execution, which however they did not. And to our great astonishment on the morning of the 14th about 4 o'clock being without the Fort reconnoitring [sic] we observed an unusual degree of Quiet in the Enemy's Works, and on a closer examination found them abandoned; About 80 men which had been appointed from the two Regiments to act as Light Infantry under the Command of Lieut. Carthrae [?] of the 82d Regiment were immediately ordered

into the Wood and another party was sent across the Swamp in hopes of cutting off their rear but to no purpose. They had embarked during the night, and carried off all the Artillery except what was on the Island at the Entrance of the Harbour Viz.¹ 2 Eighteen and One twelve pounder, these were spiked but will be soon rendered serviceable again, one of the Eighteen Pounders being so already.

At the time the Enemy fled, and for some time before we had increased our Strength so as to be under no apprehension of their attempting to storm us, the damage they did us in the day time, we repaired every Night, One of the Gorges of the unfinished bastions was fitted up with logs, And the Well for the Fort being in the Other, it was enclosed with a Work of earth and fascines ten feet thick, a sort of cheveau de frise had been carried round the Fort, and a tolerable Abbatis without that again.

From the point we were observing the Confusion of the Enemys fleet which we were endeavouring to increase by bringing down two twelve pounders to play on them when

into the Wood and another party was sent across the swamp in hopes of cutting off their rear but to no purpose. They had embarked during the night, and carried off all the artillery except what was on the Island at the entrance of the Harbour Viz.¹ 2 Eighteen and One twelve pounder, these were spiked but will soon be rendered serviceable again, one of the eighteen Pounders being so already.

At the time the Enemy fled, and for some time before we had increased our Strength so as to be under no apprehension of their attempting to storm us, the damage they did us in the day time, we repaired every Night, One of the Gorges of the unfinished bastions was fitted up with logs. And the Well for the Fort being in the Other, it was enclosed with the Work of earth and fascines¹ ten feet thick, a sort of cheveau de frise² had been carried round the Fort, and a tolerable Abbatis³ without that again.

From the point we were observing the Confusion of the Enemys fleet which we were endeavouring to increase by bringing down two twelve pounders to play on them when

¹Fascines: long bound bundle of brushwood used as makeshift defenses

²Cheveau de Frise: a large log with spikes used to supplement fortifications

³Abbatis: a military obstacle of dead trees with their but ends facing the enemies

The appearance of His Majesty's fleet under Commodore Sir George Collier, of which we had as yet no Intelligence, informed us of the true reason of the Enemy's flight, as soon as the Tide would permit they attempted to escape up the River, but being closely pursued by His Majesty's Ships (in which the Activity of Captain Mowatt, Farnham and Selby in getting their Ships ready enabled them to join) I am happy to inform your Excellency that their destruction has been compleat not one having escaped being either taken or burnt.

On the 15th at the desire of Sir George Collier I embarked 200 Men on board a Transport who proceeded up the River after the Shipping. The Light Infantry were already on board the three Ships that joined Sir George from this Harbour, the whole were intended to land in case the Enemy had made any Stand.

I have nothing to add to the above account but the inclosed List of Killed and Wounded, And to endeavour to do justice to the Chearfullness with which the Officers, and Men underwent the excessive fatigue required to make

the appearance of His Majesty's fleet under Commodore Sir George Collier, of which we had as yet no Intelligence, informed us of the true reason of the Enemy's flight, as soon as the Tide would permit they attempted to escape up the River, but being closely pursued by His Majesty's Ships (in which the activity of Captain Mowatt, Farnham and Selby in getting their Ships ready enabled to join them) I am happy to inform your Excellency that their destruction has been compleat [sic] not one having escaped being either taken or burnt.

On the 15th at the desire of Sir George Collier I embarked 200 Men on board a Transport who proceeded up the River after the Shipping. The Light Infantry were already on board the three Ships that joined Sir George from the Harbour, the whole were intended to land in case the Enemy had made any Stand.

I have nothing to add to the above account but the inclosed [sic] List of Killed and Wounded, And to endeavour to do Justice to the Chearfullness [sic] with which the Officers, and Men underwent the excessive fatigue required to make

our post tenable. The greatest part of our Work was carried on after the Enemys Batteries were erected, and with a Spirit and Alacrity that would have done credit to the oldest Soldiers, indeed from the time the Enemy opened their Trenches to that of their Departure, the Mens Spirits, and Contempt of their Opponents increased daily, so that our Chief difficulty was to restrain them. — To Lieut. Colonel Campbell, I am much indebted for the most unwearied diligence in every part. And I must request the liberty of also mentioning to your Excellency the great service I received from the particular Activity and Conduct on every Occasion of Lieut. Carthrae of the 82nd Rt. Permit me likewise to acknowledge the readiness with which Captain Mowatt, and under him, Captains Selby, and Farnham, assisted us on every Occasion; The greatest Harmony has subsisted the whole time between the Navy, and Army, there being no other contest between them, but which should contribute most to their Mutual safety.

Most of the Inhabitants on both Rivers notwithstanding their Oath of Allegiance, and fidelity to His Majesty were compelled to join the

our post tenable. The greatest part of our Work was carried on after the Enemys Batteries were erected, and with a Spirit and Alacrity that would have done credit to the oldest Soldiers, indeed from the time the Enemy opened the Trenches to that of their Departure, the Men's Spirits and Contempt of their Opponents increased daily, so that our Chief difficulty was to restrain them. To Lieut. Colonel Campbell I am much indebted for the most unwearied diligence in every part. And I must request the liberty of also mentioning to your Excellency the great service I received from the particular Activity and Conduct on every Occasion of Lieut. Carthrae of the 82nd Rt. Permit me likewise to acknowledge the readiness with which Captain Mowatt and under him, Captains Selby and Farnham, assisted us on every occasion. The greatest Harmony has subsisted the whole time between the Navy and Army, there being no other contest between them, but which should contribute most to their Mutual safety.

Most of the Inhabitants on both Rivers notwithstanding their Oath of Allegiance, and fidelity to His Majesty were compelled to join the

Enemy on their Arrival here; most of them were employed in working tho some of them were in Arms; inclosed I have the Honor to send your Excellency General Lovells Proclamation Your Excellency is too well acquainted with the nature of those Publications, and the Purposes the Chiefs of the Rebellion usually put them to. to be surpris'd at the falsehoods contained in it only I must beg leave to assure you, that the Compulsion, and Violence insinuated to have been made use of by us is particularly so, not an Article having been taken by either the Navy or Army since our Arrival, without payment, not the smallest Injury offer'd to any Inhabitant: However on the Enemys flight, being inform'd, that the dread of our resentment for their conduct had induc'd many of them to withdraw from their habitations with an Intention of going to the Westward: Sir George Collier concurr'd with me in Opinion to issue another Proclamation a copy of which is also inclosed, which together with the conduct observed by the Rebels in their flight, we are in hopes will undeceive the People, and prevent the breaking up of the Settlement

Enemy on their arrival here, most of them were employed in working tho some of them were in arms; inclosed [sic] I have the Honor to send your Excellency General Lovells Proclamation Your Excellency is too well acquainted with the nature of those Publications and the Purposes the Chiefs of Rebellion usually put them to- to be surpris'd at the falsehoods contained in it only I must beg leave to assure you that the Compulsion and Violence insinuated to have been made use of by us in particularly so, not an Article having been taken by either the Navy or Army since our Arrival without payment not the smallest Injury offer'd to any Inhabitant. However on the Enemys flight, being inform'd that the dread of our resentment for their Conduct had induc'd many of them to withdraw from their habitations with an intention of going to the Westward. Sir George Collier concurr'd with me in Opinion to issue another Proclamation a copy of which is also inclosed [sic], which together with the conduct observed by the Rebels in their flight we are in hopes will undeceive the People, and prevent the breaking up of the Settlement

As I have received no provisions since my arrival here, and a part of what we brought was destroyed by the Enemies fire, we are now reduced to about the Quantity necessary for four Weeks. Sir George Collier has sent a Sloop of War to Halifax by whom I have wrote for a Supply sufficient for the Garrison that will remain here for ten Months, but as we have no account of the Victuallers being arrived there, I am afraid they will Not be able to send us anything near that Quantity. And as the supplying them during the Winter will be impossible; I must still request you would order some from New York.

I propose leaving here under the command of Lieut Colonel Commandant Campbell, that part of his Regiment now here as inclosed return, unless I receive directions to the contrary from your Excellency before I leave this which I propose doing with the part of the 82^d here and returning to Halifax as soon as the Fort which we are hard at work on, is in such a posture of defence as to be secure against any future attempts.

I beg leave to return your Excellency

As I have received no provisions since my arrival here, and part of what we brought was destroyed by the Enemies fire, we are now reduced to about the Quantity necessary for four weeks. Sir George Collier has sent a Sloop of War to Halifax by whom I have wrote for a supply sufficient for the garrison that will remain here for ten months but as we have no account of the Victuallers being arrived there, I am afraid they will Not be able to send us anything near that Quantity. And as the Supplying them during the Winter will be impossible, I must still request you would order some from New York.

I propose leaving here under the Command of Lieut. Colonel Commandant Campbell that part of his Regiment now here as [?] inclosed return, unless I receive directions to the Contrary from your Excellency before I leave this which I propose doing with the part of the 82^d here and returning to Halifax as soon as the Fort which we are hard at work on is in such a posture of defence as to be secure against future attempts.

I beg leave to return your Excellency

Thanks for your attention to our Wants by sending
£3,500 by Mr. Finucane which I have received.
I have the Honor to be with the great-
est Respect

Sir

Your Excellency

Most Obedient

most humble Servant

Thos^r McLean

P.S. As Sir George Collier informs me that
he proposes sending a Frigate to Europe im-
mediately I presume your Excell^y will think
my duty to inform His Majesty's Sec^y of State of
the Events that have taken place here since I
had the honor of Writing to you last as he will
by that opportunity receive the information so
much earlier; In this presumption I shall take
the liberty of writing him an Account of them
of which I shall send your Excell^y a copy
by the first Opportunity

T. M.

His Excellency
Sir Henry Clinton
see see see

thanks for your attention to our Wants by send-
ing £3,500 [pounds]¹ by Mr. Finucane which I received.

I have with Honor to be with the great-
est Respect

Sir

Your Excellency

Most Obedient

most humble Servant

Fra^s. McLean

P.S. As Sir George Collier informs me that
he proposes sending a Frigate² to Europe im-
mediately I presume your Excell^y will think
my duty to inform His Majesty's Sec^y of State of
the Events that have taken place here since I
had the honor of Writing to you last as he will
by that opportunity receive the information so
much earlier. In this presumption I shall take
the liberty of writing him an Account of them
of which I shall send your Excell^y a copy
by the first opportunity.

F.M.

His Excellency

Sir Henry Clinton

fca fca fca (copies)

¹ £ [Pound]: British currency

² Frigate: naval escort vessel