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## A FRENCH ACCOUNT OF THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTON, 1780

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD K. MURDOCH \*

Among the military disasters during the struggle for independence from England, the loss of Charleston in May 1780 was one of the worst. When General Lincoln surrendered the town with several thousand continental and militia troops the enemy held much of the coastal area south of Virginia in a firm grip and were in a position to threaten the Old Dominion. After receiving the news of the loss of the Virginia troops serving with Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, then beset by the problems of the governor's office, informed General George Washington that "though Charlestown has now been in the hands of the enemy a month, we hear nothing of their movements which can be relied on. Rumors are that they are penetrating northward. . . . There is nothing to oppose the progress of the enemy northward but the cautious principles of the military art."<sup>1</sup> Disagreement still exists about Lincoln's decision to yield so readily after what appeared to some to be a half-hearted defense of a well-nigh impregnable position. There is the question whether his decision was influenced unduly by the hostile attitude of the townspeople who adamantly opposed a military withdrawal to the north while such action was still possible. Was it pique or wisdom that led the Massachusetts general to terminate hostilities and sign the surrender document? Or was this another case of lack of cooperation between continental and militia forces?

Over the years a number of accounts of the siege, some by military men and some by civilians—some enemy and some patriot—have been published. Although varying widely in details, facts, and names, all generally agree on the basic story leading to the surrender on May 12, 1780. Possibly the most informative and certainly the most detailed accounts were written by officers of the mercenary German troops employed by the English. Bernhard A. Uhlendorf translated a selection of these Hessian diaries and published them under the title of *The Siege of Charleston*.<sup>2</sup> They contain numerous technical details of the siege

\* The author is Professor of History at the University of Georgia.

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson to Washington, June 11, 1780, as quoted in Marie Kimball, *Jefferson: War and Peace 1776 to 1784*, New York, 1947, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> This book was published as volume XII in the University of Michigan Publications in History and Political Science, Ann Arbor, 1938. Hereinafter cited as Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*. For other accounts of the siege, see this *Magazine*, LXVI (1965), 147-182.

weeks to cross the ocean and that her husband died ten days after they reached Charleston. Had he lived, he would have had to earn the balance of their travel cost. Two weeks earlier two of her children died on board the ship. She is going to stay here with the remaining four children as long as it pleases God to let her. One should bear her lovingly in mind.

Elizabeth Meier was here with her sister yesterday. They are both here as servants in order to pay for their trip. They also send greetings to all and ask for your prayers. I also ask that you fight for us and for other poor souls, and I'd like to know how things are with you and if it's true that the Emperor and the French have blocked the pass and have attacked you from Cross-Hüningen.<sup>24</sup>

Make out the address as follows:

To  
Mr. Lewis Timothy  
Printer in South Carolina  
to be left at In  
the Post-Office Charles-town

With this letter, the only known personal document from Giezen-danner's hand, the European phase of his life comes to an end. The rest of his life as a religious leader belongs to the history of Orangeburg and the colony of South Carolina.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> By April the blockade had been lifted, but the rumor was wrong in mentioning an attack and including the German Emperor. For a complete history of this incident, see C. Wieland, "Der Kleinhüninger Lachsfangstreit, 1736," *Basler Jahrbuch*, 1889, pp. 37-85.

<sup>25</sup> See Alexander S. Salley, *The History of Orangeburg County, South Carolina*, Orangeburg, 1898, pp. 30, 35-48, 91f.

tactics employed by the English and of the counter efforts of the Americans.

Assisting the patriots at Charleston were a small group of French volunteers, some of them suffering from wounds or fever, abandoned in Georgia by Admiral d'Estaing after the unsuccessful attack on Savannah a few months earlier. Others were residents of Charleston who had been forced to enlist as a result of Lincoln's proclamation of February 23.<sup>3</sup> Among the veterans of the Savannah campaign was Louis-Antoine Magallon de la Morlière, son of Alexis Magallon de la Morlière, who had served under d'Estaing as captain of the corps of volunteers from Saint Domingue. Permission had been granted the young officer to volunteer for service against the English to clear his record of a serious charge of misconduct when stationed in the Auxerrois regiment at St. Pierre de la Martinique.<sup>4</sup> The French admiral had given him command of the small force of wounded Frenchmen in South Carolina. Apparently the captain sent several letters and possibly a diary to his family in France where an older brother, André-Louis Florent de la Morlière, captain in the Regiment d'Auvergne, converted his brother's comments on the siege into the present account. No doubt the report was forwarded to the War Ministry in hopes of currying favor for Louis-Antoine and of clearing his name. That the present report was basically the work of Louis-Antoine is attested by the statement across the top of the first page in the same hand giving a dossier or file number to the document: "*rédigé par le Vic[om]te de la Morlière.*"<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The proclamation declared that "all the French people, in Charlestown, who do not belong to, or who have not regularly done duty in some company anterior to the 1st of January, last, are ordered to join the Marquis de Brétigny's corps, and the commanding officers of other companies are forbid to inroll them." *Orderly Book of General Lincoln, 1779-1780*, University of Georgia Library, Athens, Georgia.

<sup>4</sup> The young man apparently returned to Paris from Martinique before going to North America for among the papers of Benjamin Franklin there is a letter from the Count de la Morlière, the father of Louis-Antoine, dated St. Germain-en-Laie, October 1778, requesting the American diplomat to grant his son an interview to discuss enlistment in the service of the United States. *Calendar of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin . . .*, ed. I. M. Hays, Philadelphia, 1908, I, 524. The Secretary of State for War, the Prince du Montbarrey, agreed to permit Louis-Antoine to join the forces of Admiral d'Estaing. André Lasseray, *Les Français sous les treize Etoiles 1775-1783*, Paris, 1935, I, 294.

<sup>5</sup> Lasseray indicates that when the present document, dated at Nimes, October 26, 1781, was sent to Paris it was the work of the older Morlière brother for the benefit of the younger man. He declares that "it seems that the document preserved in the archives may be a copy of the original." Lasseray, *op. cit.*, I, 293-297. The holdings at the Château de Vincennes may well consist of the original and the copy. There is no evidence to support the view of Heitman that it was André-Louis who

During a recent visit to the Château de Vincennes, near Paris, the editor discovered two copies of the following document among numerous eighteenth-century military reports on North America, in the files of the Service Historique de l'Armée, Section Ancienne. The copies contain unimportant differences in spelling and punctuation, and both show signs of editing. The spelling of proper names such as Washington, Laurens, Moultrie, Savannah, New York, etc., have been corrected, not always accurately, in pen and ink, sometimes in the body of the document and at other times in marginal notes. The same corrections do not always appear in both documents. Lasseray suggests that a map, perhaps prepared by the younger Morlière during the siege, may have accompanied the original document.<sup>6</sup> Apparently it was removed at some time in the past with no positive reference to its present location.

In preparing the document for publication, an effort has been made to render the English version more readable by altering sentence structure and employing punctuation where none existed in the French original. Certain of the military terms employed by the writer have no exact English equivalent, and therefore some alteration in the wording has been made. Spelling of proper names is in accordance to accepted present day usage. The editor wishes to thank a colleague, Dr. Lee Boone Kennett, Professor of French History, for suggestions for improving the English translation, but any mistakes and misinterpretations are the sole responsibility of the editor.

Permission to publish the following document, a small fragment of which appeared in Lasseray, was kindly granted the editor by General (C. D. R.) de Cossé Brissac, Chef du Service Historique de l'Armée, État-Major de L'Armée de Terre, Ministère des Armées. Gratitude should also be expressed to Mlle. L. Smactens, archivist at the Château de Vincennes, for her invaluable assistance in establishing the authorship of the document and in unearthing the service records of the de la Morlière family.

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#### Summary of the Siege of Charleston, Capital of South Carolina in North America, attacked by the English February 21 and taken May 12, 1780.<sup>7</sup>

served in America and who "was in the attack on the redoubt," presumably referring to Charleston. F. B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution, 1775-1783*, Washington, 1893, p. 503. The service record of Louis-Antoine definitely outlines his service under d'Estaing beginning on August 14, 1779.

<sup>6</sup> Lasseray, *op. cit.*, I, 294.

<sup>7</sup> The two copies of this document examined at the Château de Vincennes are located in the series, "Mémoires et Reconnaissances," carton 248.

Charleston, capital of South Carolina, is much stronger because of its location than because of its fortifications. This town is on a peninsular connected to the mainland only by a neck of land a quarter of a league<sup>8</sup> in width. On its right there is the sea into which flow two rivers, the first called the Stono<sup>9</sup> flows along the left and the rear of the town; the second called the Cooper passes by on the right. These two rivers in approaching the town stretch out, one toward the other, several swampy arms that permit entry only through the space we have mentioned;<sup>10</sup> those bordering the Stono River render the left portion of Charleston inaccessible. One can land more easily from the other two sides where the water washes the defenses that consist simply of a parapet supported from place to place by batteries.

The harbor is one of the most secure in New England;<sup>11</sup> the access is very difficult and one that ought not to be risked without having a pilot who knows well a sand bar which almost entirely encloses the opening of the harbor and which permits only a very narrow passage for frigates or at the very best for ships of fifty [guns] that are obliged to land their artillery and await the high tide which occurs only with the full moon or its waxing and that covers the bottom with twelve or thirteen feet of water.<sup>12</sup> After having passed this bar vessels are obliged to sail close to a shoal of gravel<sup>13</sup> that leads them within easy cannon range of Fort Moultrie<sup>14</sup> built on the tip of Gisaelen<sup>15</sup> that is the most advanced into the sea. From there they enter the harbor that is defended by several batteries on the shore facing toward the sea.

<sup>8</sup> *La lieue commune* is equivalent to 4.444 kilometers or approximately 2.5 English miles.

<sup>9</sup> The author confuses the Ashley and Stono Rivers.

<sup>10</sup> This may be a reference to information contained in an earlier dispatch, information that the older de la Morlière brother does not include in the précis.

<sup>11</sup> The term New England differentiated all of British North America from the mother country.

<sup>12</sup> According to Edmund M. Blunt, *The American Coast Pilot . . .*, New York, 1842, p. 229, the main channel over the Charleston Bar had twelve feet of water at low tide.

<sup>13</sup> Apparently a reference to the Middle Ground.

<sup>14</sup> Fort Moultrie was erected on the southern tip of Sullivans Island.

<sup>15</sup> The term Gisaelen appears at times in the two copies of the document as Gipsaelen and Gibsaelen and there are obvious indications that at some date subsequent to the writing of the précis, an effort was made to correct all spellings to Gisaelen. According to an authority on 18th century French this could be the Gallic approximation of Gibbes Island. No convincing argument other than ignorance of geography and the English language can be advanced as to why the author of the précis used this term in reference to Sullivans Island.

February 17, 1780. General Lincoln, Governor of Charleston, received the news from Congress that an English army embarked on a squadron had left New York to come to attack by sea and by land.<sup>16</sup>

The 21st. The English squadron arrived before the harbor. Three American frigates then anchored outside were pursued and obliged to re-enter.<sup>17</sup> A gust of wind the night before had forced an English ship of 64 [guns] and a frigate of 36 [guns] to run aground. This contretemps delayed the landing a little.

The 24th. The enemy squadron sent 2000 men ashore on Gipsaelen or St. Johns Island.<sup>18</sup> The remainder of their army landed at Stono Fort situated at the mouth of an arm that joins the Stono River opposite the center of the left of the town.<sup>19</sup>

The 28th. The English worked to build a battery on a small height on Gipsaelen that dominates the center of the harbor and under which all vessels that entered there were obliged to pass.<sup>20</sup> The English army marched from Stono Fort to seek a ford over the Stono River about 10 miles above the town. M. Moultrie,<sup>21</sup> the American general, left the town in order to harass them en route.

The 4th of March. The town took fire at eleven in the evening. The enemy had fired several rockets at nightfall that were believed to be a prearranged signal to attack. The militia was sent to the fire and the rest of the troops were transported to the bank of the Stono River

<sup>16</sup> Sir Henry Clinton and a large fleet conveying approximately 8,500 English, Tory, and Hessian troops left New York on December 26, 1779. The first news of this event apparently reached Charleston by way of Baltimore. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, January 19, 1780. As early as February 13, General Lincoln declared that a more careful watch would be necessary "as the enemy approached." Two days later he ordered some of the outlying garrison to be withdrawn into the town. *Orderly Book of General Lincoln, 1779-1780*, University of Georgia Library, Athens, Georgia.

<sup>17</sup> According to English reports, these were the *Providence*, *Ranger*, and *Eagle*, a portion of the fleet under the command of Commodore Abraham Whipple. *Rivington's New York Royal Gazette*, March 25, 1780.

<sup>18</sup> Johns Island lies to the southwest of the Stono River which separates it from James Island. Robert Gibbes owned Peaceful Retreat plantation on Johns Island, and the Hessians who occupied the house in 1780 referred to it in German as Gibsons Hauss. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 196; and "Epitaphs, the Gibbes Family Cemetery, Johns Island," ed. Richard J. Bryan, this *Magazine*, XLIX (1948), 68-70.

<sup>19</sup> Possibly a reference to Wappoo Creek.

<sup>20</sup> According to Captain Johann Hinrichs of the Jaeger Corps, this battery erected near the ruins of Fort Johnson was merely a blind. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 195. There is no explanation as to why the author refers to James Island as Gipsaelen.

<sup>21</sup> Col. William Moultrie.



facing the enemy. They extinguished the fire and the rest of the night was considerably quieter than they had expected.

The 8th. Ten English warships anchor'd at some distance from the bar; their movements appeared to indicate that there was among the number a ship of 50 [guns]<sup>22</sup> that could not pass over without discharging its artillery.

The 10th. A brigantine and a galley anchored at Fort Moultrie set sail to go bombard the enemy boats that had come to sound the channel.

The 12th. Daylight revealed a battery of 6 cannon that the enemy had unmasked on the shore of the arm that joins the Stono River opposite the left of the town;<sup>23</sup> it seemed constructed to prevent anyone from harassing a large number of vessels that were seen since morning anchored at the mouth of the arm.

From the 14th to the 16th. The enemy worked on outworks near their new battery. This spot seemed to be the storehouse for their heavy artillery and their munitions for the siege.

The 20th. The high tide and the favorable wind that the squadron awaited below the bar having arrived, it [the squadron] passed [the bar] at 9 o'clock in the morning in the number of 8 [vessels]; to wit 1 ship of fifty [guns]; 1 frigate of forty-four [guns]; 3 of thirty-two [guns] and 3 of 22 [guns];<sup>24</sup> the rest comprised merchant vessels that carried the cannon of the ship of 50 [guns] and of the first frigate that immediately after having anchored inside the bar, went to work to take them [guns] on board again.

The 23rd. Two English galleys came to anchor at the opening of the arm of the Stono River; a third came to join them there in the evening.

The 26th. The Americans sank several frigates and vessels to close the entrance to the Cooper River. This operation prevented the enemy vessels after having entered the harbor from taking possession of this river by which supplies and assistance sent from the north reached us.<sup>25</sup>

Note the 22nd. Five frigates and several American galleys had landed their cannon with greatest dispatch to be transported to the batteries on the seashore that lacked them and that were manned by the crews of these vessels.

<sup>22</sup> HMS *Renown*.

<sup>23</sup> Hinrichs states that this battery was to prevent American shipping from using the Ashley River. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 207.

<sup>24</sup> Among the enemy vessels were the *Renown* (50), *Roebuck* (44), *Blond* (32), *Perseus* (20), and *Camilla* (20). Letter from Charleston, March 19, 1780, as printed in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, April 27, 1780.

<sup>25</sup> The swift current prevented sinking vessels to block the narrow channel between Sullivans Island and James Island.

The 28th. Two dinghies loaded with troops left the arms of the Stono River to make a test landing a quarter of a league above the town. A detachment that guarded the post forced them to retire.

The 29th. The English army crossed the Stono River a dozen miles above the town. M. Laurens,<sup>26</sup> a Colonel, left the same day with two hundred men to guard the approaches to the town.

The 30th. Colonel Laurens was attacked by the advance guard of the enemy army that made a lively fire and seized a little work that barred the road about a quarter of a league from the town. They sent two hundred men as reenforcements who at bayonet-point drove the English out of the work.<sup>27</sup> Firing went on the rest of the day across the thickets. The main body of the English army having arrived before the end of the day, the Americans were forced to retire into the town. From the moment when General Lincoln learned of the departure of the English squadron from New York, we had time to build the defense lines around the town that previously had had only a hornwork<sup>28</sup> that defended the entrance, and we also worked on the batteries on the seashore. In advance of our lines we dug three rows of pits and at ten paces from them there extended an abatis of trees that bordered the advanced trench that could be filled at will with water. At the enemy's first gunshot the alarm was sounded in the town and the troops repaired to the lines where various posts were assigned to them.

Vicomte de La Morlière at that time was the commander of 60 men attached to the expedition of M. Count d'Estaing at Savannah with whom this general had sent him to Charleston. At the time of the alert he repaired with 50 men to the lines. Since the very recent wounds of a portion of his soldiers did not permit them to pitch tents, he requested General Lincoln to give him a lodging near the post that he asked him [Lincoln] to assign him and to which he would repair every time that it was necessary to take up arms. The American general granted him a house opposite a part of the rampart that he defended during the siege.

The 31st. The English were camped to the number of ten thousand men on a level plain hidden from the town by a little wood. Two hundred cavalrymen and some detachments of American Infantry were left behind to harass them.

<sup>26</sup> Col. John Laurens, the son of Henry Laurens.

<sup>27</sup> According to Hinrichs, the mile or so of open country between this deserted fortified line and the town had been cleared of all trees, buildings, and fences. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 217.

<sup>28</sup> The hornwork constructed of stone and facing the main road to the north was the major fortified point in the American defense line.

The 2nd of April. At daylight we perceived a parallel opposite the right of our line on which the enemy had worked all night with the greatest vigor. Many cannon shots were fired at them during the day.

The 3rd. The enemy had commenced a work during the night facing the extreme left of our lines. They had advanced those of the day before to within an easy musketshot of our lines.

The 4th. Daylight revealed a work that the enemy had begun on the right of our lines and that could outflank them. The Americans soon built a new battery to destroy it, and they employed there 24s and 12s that were so expertly used that several embrasures in the enemy work were unmasked and the merlons <sup>29</sup> were to a great part destroyed.

The 6th. In the morning the English unmasked a battery opposite the center of our right. At 10 o'clock in the evening the battery on the arm of the Stono River and two galleys that were anchored there bombarded the town.

The 7th. In the morning the enemy began to fire several cannon shots at our lines. They had worked during the night on communication trenches to their various batteries. In the evening 800 men sent by General Washington entered the town. They arrived by way of Gisaelen and crossed the Cooper River and then went to take up their posts in the lines.<sup>30</sup>

The 8th. The English squadron which had been occupied in re-loading its artillery since it had anchored within the bar, profited by the fair wind that it had awaited for some time, to move forward toward Fort Moultrie. A ship of 50 [guns] commanded by Admiral Arbuthnot <sup>31</sup> advanced first, then came a frigate of 44 [guns], three of 32 [guns], three of 22 [guns], a bomb-vessel, and two transport ships. The 1st vessel was preceded by several open boats that sounded the bar. One of these was sent with a blue flag to the point of the shoal opposite the fort. The ships were to pass as close as possible to it to be less vulnerable to the cannon of Fort Moultrie that soon began a very vigorous fire to which the ship of 50 [guns] replied with its entire battery when it had arrived

<sup>29</sup> A merlon is that portion of a parapet that extends between two gun embrasures.

<sup>30</sup> 750 Virginia Continentals, commanded by Gen. William Woodford, reached Charleston after a forced march of four weeks. A British map of 1780 locates a "Gibsons" on the Cooper River a short distance above Daniel Island on what may have been the route taken by Woodford's troops.

<sup>31</sup> For a brief sketch of the career of Vice-Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot (1711?-1794), Commander of the North American Station, see DNB. During the siege of Charleston he flew his flag from HMS *Roebuck*, 44 guns, Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond.

opposite the shoal. The frigate that followed it did likewise, and had her mizen topmast cut away.<sup>32</sup> After a quarter hour of very vigorous fire, the ship continued its route followed by the frigate, all making the same maneuver as the first before the fort. The squadron did not suffer any additional losses except the topmast of the frigate of 44 [guns] and a flute that having her rudder carried away went aground at the extremity of a bay located at the right of the fort.<sup>33</sup> The vessels came to anchor in the harbor within easy cannon range of the town, and under the battery that the enemy had built upon landing on the island of Gipsaelen in spite of the vessels that had been sunk at the mouth of the Cooper River. It was feared lest the admiral send several ships from his squadron to take possession of it. The Americans worked on a battery on a point of Gisaelen that stretched out into the river toward the town and whose fire was to criss-cross the entrance with that of the batteries in the town.<sup>34</sup>

The 9th. The Commander of Ft. Moultrie<sup>35</sup> informed General Lincoln that he had had only a few men wounded in his combat with the squadron. The English ship of 54 [guns] was busy repairing the havoc that several cannon-balls had made in her hull.

The 10th. The enemy unmasked various batteries on the left, center and right of our lines. General Clinton, Commander of the English Army, called upon General Lincoln to surrender the town. The latter replied that if it had been his intention to abandon the town, he would have had time to do so during the two months after he had been informed of his [Clinton's] departure to come to give siege; but that he had decided to defend it [town] to the last extremity.

The 11th. The enemy sent several bombs into our works.

The 13th. At ten o'clock in the morning the enemy directed all their batteries on the town. The fire was at first very vigorous and we replied to it with all the artillery in the town. They sent a great quantity of bombs and carcasses<sup>36</sup> that set fire to the quarter nearest the lines. The houses being separated one from another, the fire extinguished itself

<sup>32</sup> Apparently HMS *Richmond*, 32 guns, Captain Charles Hudson, received considerable damage.

<sup>33</sup> An eyewitness to the battle stated that the flute, HMS *Aeolus*, was burned to prevent capture by the Americans. Letter from Charleston, April 10, 1780, as printed in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, May 3, 1780.

<sup>34</sup> Reference presumably is to the battery at Hobcaw. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 245.

<sup>35</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Scott.

<sup>36</sup> A carcass was a hollow iron shell filled with combustible material that was ignited before firing.

after having consumed seven or eight. There were several persons killed in the town.

The 14th. During the night the enemy had pushed his furthest works so close to ours, that daylight revealed to us a line from which they fired on all who showed themselves on our parapets. They unmasked a battery on Gipsaelen that faced the right and rear of the town.<sup>37</sup>

The 15th. The enemy made a constant musket fire on our lines. They chose particularly to fire on our embrasures when we reloaded the cannon.

The 17th. There was a very brisk mortar and howitzer fire which wounded about thirty of our men.

The 18th. The English sent twelve hundred men to Gisaelen to cut off our supplies.<sup>38</sup>

The 19th. M. Laurens left the city with two hundred men to reinforce the post that the Americans had on Gisaelen.

The 20th. The enemy works were entirely completed and there was a very brisk fire on both sides.

The 21st. General Lincoln sent an emissary to the enemy to propose a capitulation in which he requested that the troops that garrisoned the town march out with all the honors of war and be free to retire where they thought fit. This capitulation having been refused, hostilities began again in the evening.<sup>39</sup>

The 24th. We expected an attack during the night on the part of the enemy. The troops remained under arms until daylight. We made a very brisk artillery fire on their trenches. At five o'clock in the morning the Americans made a sortie with 150 men against the enemy trench. They approached it with the greatest silence and [were] very close without being seen by the sentinels. They charged the troops that guarded it. The surprised English fired several musket shots and tumbled one over the other in taking flight. The Americans killed about thirty and brought back a dozen prisoners. They lost only a captain and two men.

<sup>37</sup> This reference may be to the battery on Fenwick's Point, across the Ashley River from Gibbes Creek. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 249.

<sup>38</sup> According to an entry for April 18, 1780, in the diary of General Van Huyn, "Lieutenant Colonel Webster has safely reached the opposite side of the Cooper River, across from the city." Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 389. Captain Ewald added that the landing was in the region known as Cainhoy's plantation which was not far from "Gibsons." *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 267.

<sup>39</sup> The dispatches exchanged by Generals Lincoln and Clinton were printed in full in Rivington's *New York Royal Gazette*, June 8, 1780. Most of them appeared later in official form in Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, London, 1785, pp. 57-67.

Daylight not permitting them to fill in the enemy works, the detachment re-entered the town. The General ordered 200 men of the garrison of Fort Moultrie into the town.

The 25th. That night the English attacked our lines in three columns, one of which moved on the right, the second on the center and the third on the left. They advanced at first on the right and worked to open a passage through our abatis and having succeeded one of their officers cried, "Here, my friends, the town is ours." They reached the second barrier and when they were within pistol shot of our works, we then made such an artillery and musket fire that they retired into their trenches. Having been rallied there, they charged again but with no more success than the 1st time. The columns which were to attack the left and the center of our lines came successively and were received the same way as on the right, without having been able to penetrate in any place. The enemy batteries during this attack made a fire as vigorous as it was sustained. They sent above all many bombs into the town. The Americans lost during this affair a colonel<sup>40</sup> and several men. Next day we found some English soldiers who had been killed at the foot of a redoubt that we held on our left and in front of our lines that they had tried to penetrate.

The 26th. An Engineer arrived from the north sent by General Washington to work on the fortifications of the town. He was named Du Portail, a French officer who had passed to the service of the Americans with whom he held the rank of Major of Engineers.<sup>41</sup>

The 27th. General Lincoln brought the troops that guarded the post that we held on Gisaelen<sup>42</sup> back into the town.

The 29th. The enemy took possession of the post evacuated two days before. A deserter from their army reported that they had water up to the waist in their trench, and that they lost many men there every day from sickness or because of their wounds.

The 30th. The enemy sent bombs that killed or wounded someone at every instant. The terrain which was a shifting sand under which was water at the depth of a foot, did not permit us to take shelter in casemates. There were about thirteen killed during the night. Supplies be-

<sup>40</sup> Possibly a Colonel Parker.

<sup>41</sup> Louis Lebique, Chevalier du Portail, was a French engineering officer who held a brigadier general's commission in the Continental Army. His report that the fortifications of Charleston were untenable may have been the major cause for Lincoln's decision that the town should be evacuated, if such a retreat were still possible by way of the Cooper River and "Gibsons." Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780* New York, 1902, pp. 484-485.

<sup>42</sup> An apparent reference to the battery near Hobcaw Point.

gunning to be short, M. Lincoln made a visit to the stores of the merchants; he found little there.<sup>43</sup> M. Du Portail had surrounded the hornwork with a parapet and a ditch to act as a retreat in case the lines were forced.

The 2nd of May. Since the start of the siege we counted fifty men killed and sixty wounded.

The 6th. The enemy continually threw bombs into the hornwork where they knew for certain that the chiefs of the army were lodged. They appeared to be working on a demi-lune opposite our hornwork.

The 7th. At daybreak Fort Moultrie fired several cannon salvos. We could soon distinguish the English flag there although no one could imagine how it had been taken since the night had been quiet. That evening two English frigates entered. They remained moored below the fort all day without hostilities on either side, something that fully confirmed the seizure.

The 8th. The enemy general sent an emissary at daybreak carrying a letter for the American general. The English unmasked at the same time several new batteries some of which were directed on our hornwork and the others on the right and the left of our lines.

Letter of General Clinton to General Lincoln at the Camp before Charleston, May 8, 1780. . . .<sup>44</sup>

General Lincoln proposed a capitulation to which the enemy general replied by another [letter] whose conditions M. Lincoln found too harsh. He then proposed a third to which M. Clinton replied by the following letter.

At Camp before Charleston, May 9, 1780:

Sir: Humanity and indulgence were the only motives that led me to propose a new capitulation to you, something that you had no reason to expect. The articles you proposed to me are utterly inadmissible. Consequently hostilities will recommence this evening at 8 o'clock.

Signed: Henry Clinton/ Mariot Arbuthnot, Commander of the Squadron.

The soldiers informed that the English general imposed as the first condition that the garrison should be prisoners of war, protested against

<sup>43</sup> Writing after the surrender of Charleston, Baron von Jungkenn, a Hessian officer, reported that "the reason for the city's capitulation was a lack of provisions, something having happened to the stores apparently." Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, p. 415.

<sup>44</sup> This letter appears in Tarleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59, and therefore it is omitted here.

it in distress and said that they would much prefer to perish rather than surrender thus. At nightfall the troops were ordered to take up their arms. The hour indicated for the recommencement of hostilities having arrived, the bells of the town gave the signal by a general chiming. The Americans then made a very vigorous fire with their batteries. The enemy replied only with bombs and carcasses.

The 10th. After the taking of Fort Moultrie each day there arrived vessels that joined the squadron; 25 entered in on the 10th. The enemy fired artillery from their trench. Their batteries being lower than ours, their cannon-balls that passed over the lines fell on the town where they did great havoc. Our fire, particularly that of the hornwork that had thirty feet elevation, plunged in on their new batteries that were almost entirely destroyed. In the evening they doubled their troops in the trench and directed against our embrasures a musket fire so well directed that it was impossible to approach them [embrasures]. They worked under the protection of this fire to raise the parapets and merlons once again.

The 11th. At daylight a carcass set fire to the same quarter of the town in which fire had already taken hold at the start of the siege. There were about twenty houses consumed there. It was very difficult to bring help because of the quantity of grape-shot, bombs, and red-hot cannon-balls that the enemy directed there. At 10 o'clock General Lincoln assembled a Council of War in which it was decided that [since] the garrison had no more supplies, [it was] decreasing considerably each day. Besides the evil caprices of the inhabitants prevented retaining the town. The troops were to embark on several vessels and longboats destined for this purpose. Orders were given accordingly to the different detachments. We were to go up the Cooper River and disembark on Gisaelen half a league above the fort that the Americans had evacuated.<sup>45</sup> Arriving on land we were to go seek a way through the 1,200 men who guarded the passage.<sup>46</sup> There was not a soldier there who did not receive with satisfaction the order to hold himself ready to march. They worked with great activity to put their arms in the best state. All was ready for this expedition when a second Council upset the plans of the first, on the reflection that the ill-intentioned inhabitants could go warn the enemy in the midst of the embarkation and [they] forcing their way into the town would have interfered with and perhaps cut the route of those who were still to be embarked. Finally things changed face so much

<sup>45</sup> This apparently is a reference to the mainland near Hobcaw Creek where the Wando River joins the Cooper. This area and Daniel Island were the last to be closed off by the English.

<sup>46</sup> The hope was to escape by way of Moncks Corner.



that at three o'clock M. Lincoln wrote the following letter to General Clinton. . . .<sup>47</sup>

Response of General Clinton to General Lincoln in camp before Charleston, May 11, 1780. . . .<sup>48</sup>

Articles of capitulation agreed to between M. Clinton, Commander of the English army, and M. Lincoln, Governor of Charleston. . . .<sup>49</sup>

The 12th. The troops were ordered at three o'clock in the afternoon to take up their arms. At half after three a company of English Grenadiers and another of Hessians took possession,<sup>50</sup> the first on the right, and the second on the left of the hornwork. They placed sentinels at all the approaches to this post. Then the garrison which was in battle formation entered the ditch and the works of the town on a front parallel to that of the enemy drawn up on the outer edge of their trenches. They [enemy] then began to enter the town by squads and in the greatest order to the number of two thousand five hundred men. At the head of his troops marched General Leslie<sup>51</sup> who was to be commander in Charleston and whom General Lincoln received at the gate. The two thousand five hundred men drew up in order of battle on a little plain between the hornwork and the main part of the town. From there they scattered to the lines and to various posts. A guard of two hundred was sent to the principal square. The officers at the head of several patrols dispersed into the streets to arrest the soldiers who had detached themselves from the main body of troops to pillage. These precautions prevented any havoc being caused. The Grenadiers who had taken possession of the hornwork had brought with them a flag that was saluted with twenty-one cannon-shots from the batteries that had fired against the town. The American troops who had until then remained in order of battle stacked their arms. M. Clinton had them told that they could retire to their barracks and that they should remain quietly until new orders. At half after five two more regiments entered that camped between the hornwork and the town.

The 13th. The enemy squadron entered the harbor. The admiral saluted the town with twenty-one guns.

<sup>47</sup> For this letter, see Tarleton, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>49</sup> The Articles of Capitulation of May 12, 1780, are to be found in *ibid.*, pp. 61-64. The copy of the articles included in the *précis* differs in quite a few minor respects.

<sup>50</sup> According to Hinrichs these were the 7th Grenadier Company commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hope and the Hessian Guard Grenadier Company, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel von Linsing.

<sup>51</sup> Major General Alexander Leslie.

The 17th. The enemy worked to fill in the works that they had built against the town. We soon found out how Fort Moultrie had been taken. The night that preceded the day on which we had seen the English flag hoisted, Admiral Arbuthnot had sent there an emissary who was followed by four hundred sailors from the squadron and who were joined by two hundred men from the troops that M. Clinton had had pass over to Gisaelen.<sup>52</sup> They halted in full view of the fort and the emissary went to summon the commander to surrender. If he did not, they were going to attack immediately and if they succeeded, there would be no quarter for any of the garrison. He [commander] asked for two hours to decide, during which [time] he assembled the captains of the various companies that comprised his troop, amounting to one hundred and fifty men, of whom half were militia. The captains of the regular troops absolutely opposed the surrender of the fort, but the commander had intimidated the militia officers by [telling them] of the threats made to him, and he succeeded in winning their voice and the fort was handed over to the enemy.<sup>53</sup> M. Lincoln exchanged the officer who commanded it [Fort Moultrie] at the end of the siege and sent him to Congress to there justify himself against the accusations that the captains of the regular troops formed against him for having listened to the voice of the officers of the militia to surrender a fort that he could still have defended.<sup>54</sup>

The 18th. The American officers gave their paroles and then passed over to Gisaelen where they were accorded a space of two leagues to take their walks.<sup>55</sup>

The 20th. An English convoy of fifty sail loaded with supplies entered.

The 23rd. A second convoy of thirty vessels entered.

<sup>52</sup> The reference is to Sullivans Island and a full account of the taking of Fort Moultrie appears in Hinrichs' diary. Uhlendorf, *Siege of Charleston*, pp. 183-185.

<sup>53</sup> There has been considerable controversy over the exact circumstances of the surrender of Fort Moultrie by Lieutenant Colonel Scott to Capt. Charles Hudson of HMS *Richmond*. According to Admiral Arbuthnot there were 118 continentals and 100 militiamen in the fort at the time of its loss. Tarleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-55. An American account claimed that the fort fell only "after 3 assaults and [after] Lord Cornwallis marched with 1500 soldiers and sailors." *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, May 31, 1780.

<sup>54</sup> General Lincoln's dispatches were conveyed to the Continental Congress by Lieutenant Colonel Jean Baptiste Ternant. Rivington's *New York Royal Gazette*, June 21, 1780.

<sup>55</sup> Some of the captured officers were allowed freedom on Sullivans Island.

The 25th. The rumor spread that a French squadron of ten vessels carrying ten thousand men for debarkation had arrived from the north.<sup>56</sup>

The 28th. The rumor of the arrival of the French squadron from the north was confirmed. The English gave out that one of theirs of fifteen vessels had arrived from New York; [one] that had left Europe at the same time as the French [one].

The 31st. The English army that had remained camped outside the town began to embark.

The 2nd of June. The English army completed reembarkation leaving three thousand men in Charleston.

The 4th. M. Clinton embarked and the English fleet put to sail for New York not without considerable fear of meeting the French squadron. The troop that Vicomte de la Morlière commanded after having performed during the siege the same service as the American troops, was treated like them after the surrender of the town. He was taken to the governor's house to give him an account of the men he had under his orders and of the reasons that had brought him to Charleston. He was received very decently but could not learn anything positive about the fate of his troop. A little later M. Plombard, the French consul,<sup>57</sup> arranged the exchange of one hundred and four French soldiers or sailors against an equal number of English prisoners that the Count d'Estaing had left at Savannah. The wounded from this expedition were the first included there. The intention of the governor at first was to send them to France. The Vicomte de la Morlière indicated to him that their very recent wounds put them beyond a condition to undertake and endure a route so long; that besides their various regiments being in our colonies, they would find themselves obliged to make a second crossing to come to rejoin them; finally he asked M. Leslie to send him with his troop to St. Domingue, in representing to him that he requested only the same treatment that the Count d'Estaing had used with the English troops in various expeditions.

<sup>56</sup> The reported French fleet consisting of 11 warships and carrying 6,000 soldiers touched first at Rhode Island.

<sup>57</sup> Plombard acted in conjunction with several French officers and agents during 1779 to prepare South Carolina for the anticipated enemy invasion. According to Doniol, the Marquis de Brétigny, one of Plombard's associates, reported that the province was "in a state of virtual defeat" with disagreements among the military and political leaders. In a report to his superiors, Brétigny wrote that "it is necessary to defend it [province] against itself and against its enemies. All here is in terrible confusion with very few regular troops, almost no help from the north, a feeble and poorly disciplined militia, and the greatest misunderstanding among the commanders." Henri Doniol, *Histoire de la Participation de la France à l'Établissement des États-Unis d'Amérique*, Paris, 1890, IV, 256-257.

The 11th of June. The governor had the French assemble and after having verified the condition of this group, he promised S. de la Morlière that he should pass to St. Domingue as he had requested of him; that he would be generous enough not to shut up his troops again but that this would be only on the condition that if some of them deserted, he would be responsible for their exchange as if they were present. S. de la Morlière gave his parole to the governor and added that he could count sufficiently on his troops to know that not a single soldier would run away; that if this happened he would ask him [governor] to shut the others up once again, being more interested than anyone in leading them back to their corps. From that moment the French were at liberty to wander about the town while the American officers were confined on the island and their troops shut up within four walls.

The 22nd. A ship was furnished to conduct S. de la Morlière to St. Domingue. They gave him the exchanged sailors and several other persons who had asked to go there on their paroles. All of them with the troops made up the number of one hundred twenty men. They set sail on the 29th.

The S. de la Morlière arrived at Cap <sup>58</sup> on July 23 where he turned over to M. de Renaud, then Commander of the island, the soldiers he had with him, and the other Frenchmen, for the most part sailors, to M. de Retz, Captain of the ship *Vengeur*, and [also] Commander of the Port.

The discharge of the Corps of Voluntary Grenadiers from St. Domingue <sup>59</sup> in which S. de la Morlière had done service as Captain in the expedition to Savannah left him nothing else to do in the colonies, and he decided to travel to Europe where he waited upon the indulgence of the Minister.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Cap Français, later Cap Haitien.

<sup>59</sup> The corps of volunteers, probably commanded by a major, the Chevalier des Français, consisted of 15 officers, 28 non-commissioned officers, and 167 privates. It left Cap Français, on August 14, 1779, on board the frigates, *Le Fier Rodrigue* and *La Fortunée*, to take part in the proposed attack on Savannah. Series XI-1, Service Historique de l'Armée, Section Ancienne, Château de Vincennes. Another report to Paris referred to this corps as "200 men raised among the refuse from St. Domingue. . . ." Doniol, *op. cit.*, IV, 269.

<sup>60</sup> Philippe Henri, Marquis de Ségur, assumed the office of secretary of state for war in December 1780. For the later career of Louis-Antoine Magallon de la Morlière, see Lasseray, *op. cit.*, I, 297.