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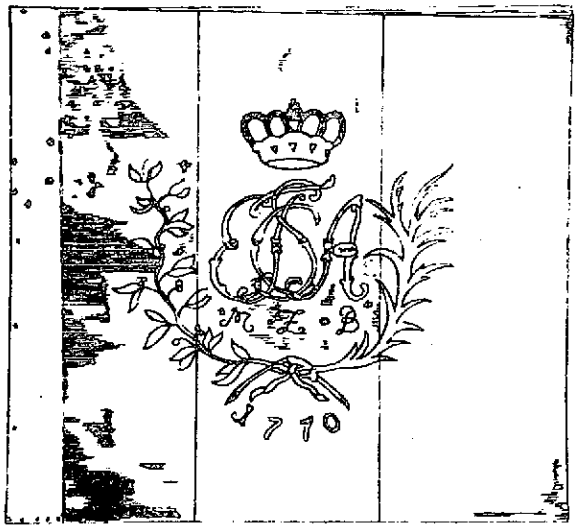
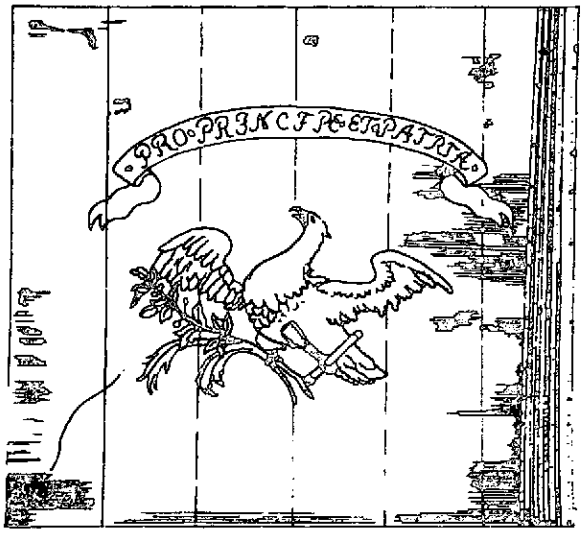


A YORKTOWN SURRENDER FLAG – SYMBOLIC OBJECT



James W. Lowry

A YORKTOWN SURRENDER FLAG – SYMBOLIC OBJECT

by

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INTRODUCTION

On October 19, 1781, the British forces under General Cornwallis surrendered to the Americans and the French at the close of the last major engagement of the Revolutionary War. Although no one knew at the time, the war was over.

General Washington had desperately needed a decisive victory, of which he had had so few. Because of quarreling in the British high command and some poor decisions on their part and because of some astute decisions on the part of the Americans, Cornwallis and a major segment of the British forces in North America had been bottled up in the Yorktown peninsula. The British position at Yorktown was indefensible.

General Washington with his ragged American troops and General Rochambeau with his well equipped French troops had isolated the British at the end of the Yorktown peninsula. A fleet of French warships under Admiral de Grasse came up behind the Yorktown peninsula, and the trap was closed. The British could not escape by sea, nor could they receive supplies or reinforcements from that direction.

Washington dug in before the British earthworks at Yorktown and began to destroy the town and its defenses. Step by step he proceeded with the siege, moving closer and closer, silencing all the big guns of the British. With the town in ruins and swept by continuous gunfire, Cornwallis was left no choice. He had to surrender.

This was the decisive victory Washington needed to give the Americans a strong position when negotiating a peace treaty. The surrender of Cornwallis made it possible for the thirteen colonies to become independent of Great Britain and to form a new nation.[1]

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[1] Alvin F. Harlow, "Yorktown Campaign," *Dictionary of American History*, ed. James Truslow Adams, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), V, 509.

FLAGS SURRENDERED

Of the British forces surrendering at Yorktown, roughly 5,000 were actually British and 2,000 were German.[2] These proportions are interesting to compare with the number of flags surrendered at Yorktown. Cornwallis's forces surrendered six British regimental standards and eighteen German standards. So for every five British soldiers, there were two Germans; but for every single British flag, three German flags were surrendered. Defeat at the hands of the ragtag Americans went hard for the British. Accordingly, the British were reluctant to give up their flags. It is known that at least some British flags were smuggled out of the battle area without being surrendered.[3]

Of the eighteen German flags surrendered, only four are known to exist at present – all from Ansbach-Bayreuth. Soldiers carrying those flags could be called Ansbachers or Ansbach-Bayreuthers. Ansbach and Bayreuth were two small German states, not contiguous, but still under the control of one prince, Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander.

ANSBACH-BAYREUTHERS AT YORKTOWN

How did this contingent of soldiers from Ansbach-Bayreuth, the domain of Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander, happen to be present among the German troops surrendering with the British at Yorktown?

When hostilities began between Great Britain and the American colonies, the princes of a number of small German states saw their opportunity to make money. The rulers of Hesse had been renting out their troops to foreign sovereigns since 1676. They and rulers of other petty German states liked to imitate the luxury and extravagance of the French court. This required more money than the small German states could produce in taxes. So in 1775 Great Britain

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[2] *Orderly Book of the Siege of Yorktown, from September 26th, 1781, to November 2nd, 1781* (Philadelphia: Antique Press, 1865), frontispiece.

[3] Erwin N. Thompson, *The British Defenses of Yorktown, 1781, Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia*, Historic Resource Study (Denver: National Park Service, 1976), p. 135.

Figure 1. Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander (1736-1806) of Ansbach-Bayreuth. On his coat just below the wide ribbon, he is wearing the Order of the Red Eagle. See page 51. He became the Margrave of Ansbach in 1757 and of Bayreuth in 1769, but he abdicated in 1791. After that, he moved to England, where he lived until his death. This painting was made around 1770. Reproduced in Städtler, *Die Ansbach-Bayreuther Truppen*, p. IV.

was offered troops for hire by several German states including Ansbach-Bayreuth, which had never before rented troops to a foreign power.[4]

At the time, the British did not think the American conflict would require many troops, nor last long. Although the British accepted troops from some German states, they refused the offer of Ansbach-Bayreuth. However, by the beginning of 1777 the need for outside help was perceived to be greater, and so the British began negotiations with the German states again. In all, six German states supplied soldiers for the British in the following time order: Hesse-Cassel, Hesse-Hanau, the Duchy of Brunswick, Ansbach-Bayreuth, Waldeck, and Anhalt-Zerbst.[5]

During the Revolutionary War more than 30,000 German soldiers fought on the side of Great Britain. Such German soldiers have often been called Hessians without regard to point of origin. More than half of the Germans serving Great Britain were from Hesse, but the rest were from the other German states we just mentioned. However, of those who surrendered at Yorktown, less than half were from Hesse-Cassel, the majority coming from Ansbach-Bayreuth.

The authorities of Ansbach-Bayreuth were approached by a British representative, Sir William Faucitt, on January 30, 1777.[6] Already on February 1 Faucitt and Carl Freiherr von Gemmingen, representative of the Margrave of Ansbach-Bayreuth, had signed a treaty for the supply of troops.[7] Ansbach-Bayreuth was to provide two regiments of infantry, a company of sharpshooters, and artillery – altogether 1,200 men.[8] As compensation Great Britain was to pay 45,000 Bancothaler each year, payments continuing until three months after the troops had

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[4] Erhard Städtler, *Die Ansbach-Bayreuther Truppen im Amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg, 1777-1783*, Freie Schriftenfolge der Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in Franken, vol. 8 (Nürnberg: Kommissionsverlag Die Egge, 1956), p. 21.

[5] Ernest Kipping, *The Hessian View of America, 1776-1783* (Monmouth Beach, N.J. : Philip Freneau Press, 1971), p. 5.

[6] Oskar Bessel, "Ansbach-Bayreuther Miettruppen im Nordamerikanischen Freiheitskrieg 1777-1783," *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, vol. 8 (1935), p. 189.

[7] Friedrich Kapp, *Der Soldatenhandel deutscher Fürsten nach Amerika* (Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1874), p. 122.

[8] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

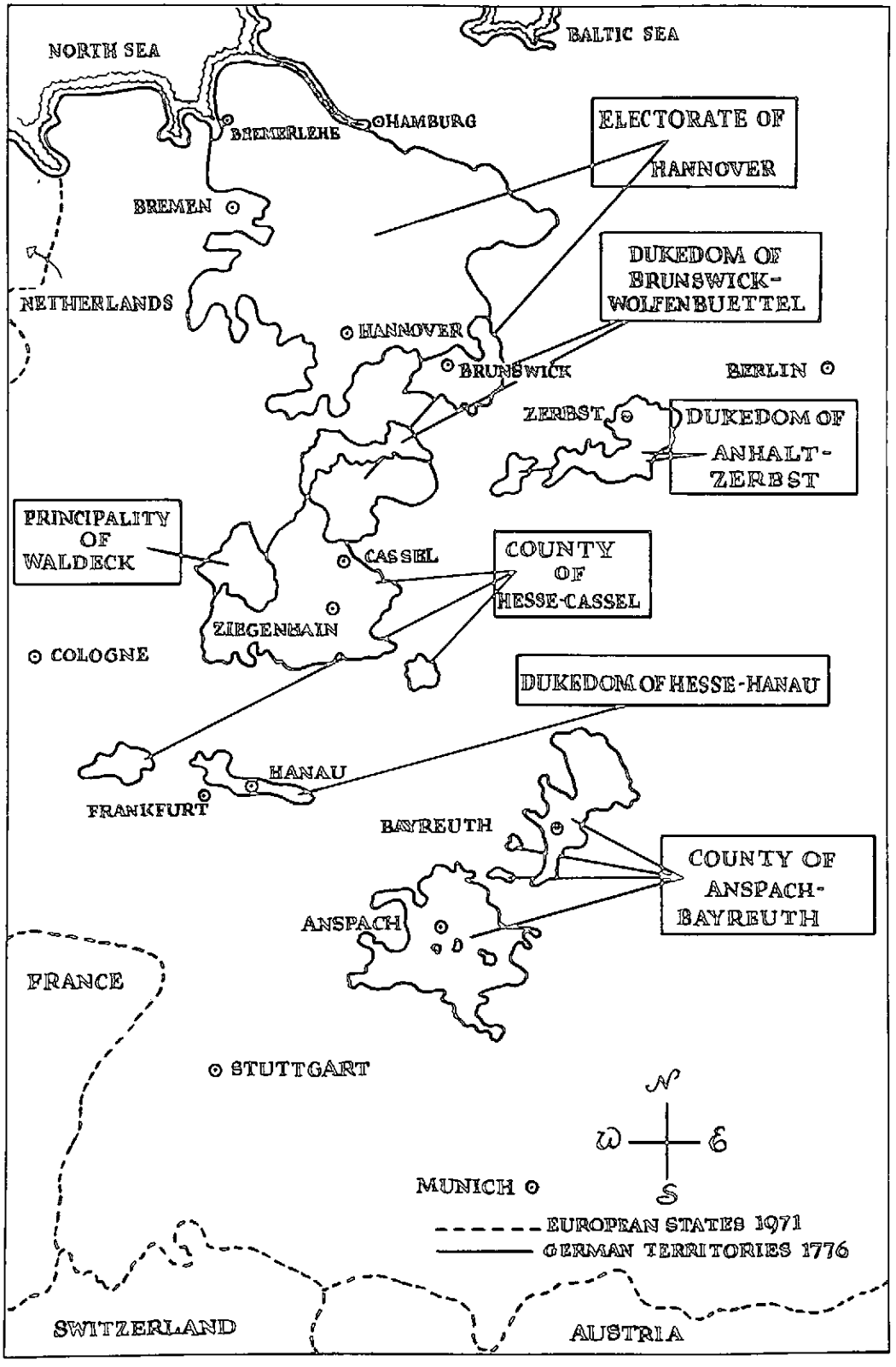

Figure 2. Map of German states supplying troops for the British during the Revolutionary War. Reproduced from Kipping, *The Hessian View of America*, p. 6.

each year, payments continuing until three months after the troops had returned home.[9] In addition Great Britain would pay 30 Bancothaler for the recruitment of each soldier and transportation costs. The so-called blood money clause, in which some of the other German states were awarded a sum for each soldier killed and a lesser sum for each soldier wounded, was omitted in the treaty with Ansbach-Bayreuth.[10] The soldiers themselves also were to receive a direct payment for service from the British.

WHY DID ANSBACH-BAYREUTH NEED MONEY?

Why did Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander embark on this course, new for his state, of raising money? The compelling reason was the very large debt inherited from his father, Carl Wilhelm Friedrich, called the "wild margrave." The father was one of those German princes mentioned before who imitated the extravagances of the French court and ran up large debts, which he could not pay.[11] His nickname, the "wild margrave," seems appropriate in view of Carl Wilhelm Friedrich's violent temper and his harsh methods of administering "justice." For example, once he learned his dogs were not being well fed. He rode to the house of the man responsible for the dogs, called him to the door, and shot him down on the spot.[12] So absolute was the power of the petty German prince that apparently he could not be called to account. The violence of the father and his lack of regard for others help us to understand how the son could sell his young subjects for service to a foreign power.

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[10] Edward Jackson Lowell, The *Hessians and Other German Auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War* (1884; reprint ed., Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1965), p. 20. *Cf.* Kapp, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 125 and Städtler, *op. cit.*, pp. 81, 83, 84.

[11] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 81; *Maler und Poeten: Bürger und Markgrafen aus Ansbachs Geschichte* (Ansbach: Wiedfeld und Mehl, 1978), p. 10; Hans-Otto Keunecke, ed., *Markgraf Alexander von Ansbach-Bayreuth* (Erlangen: Universitäts-bibliothek, 1980), p. 26; Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[12] Lowell, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

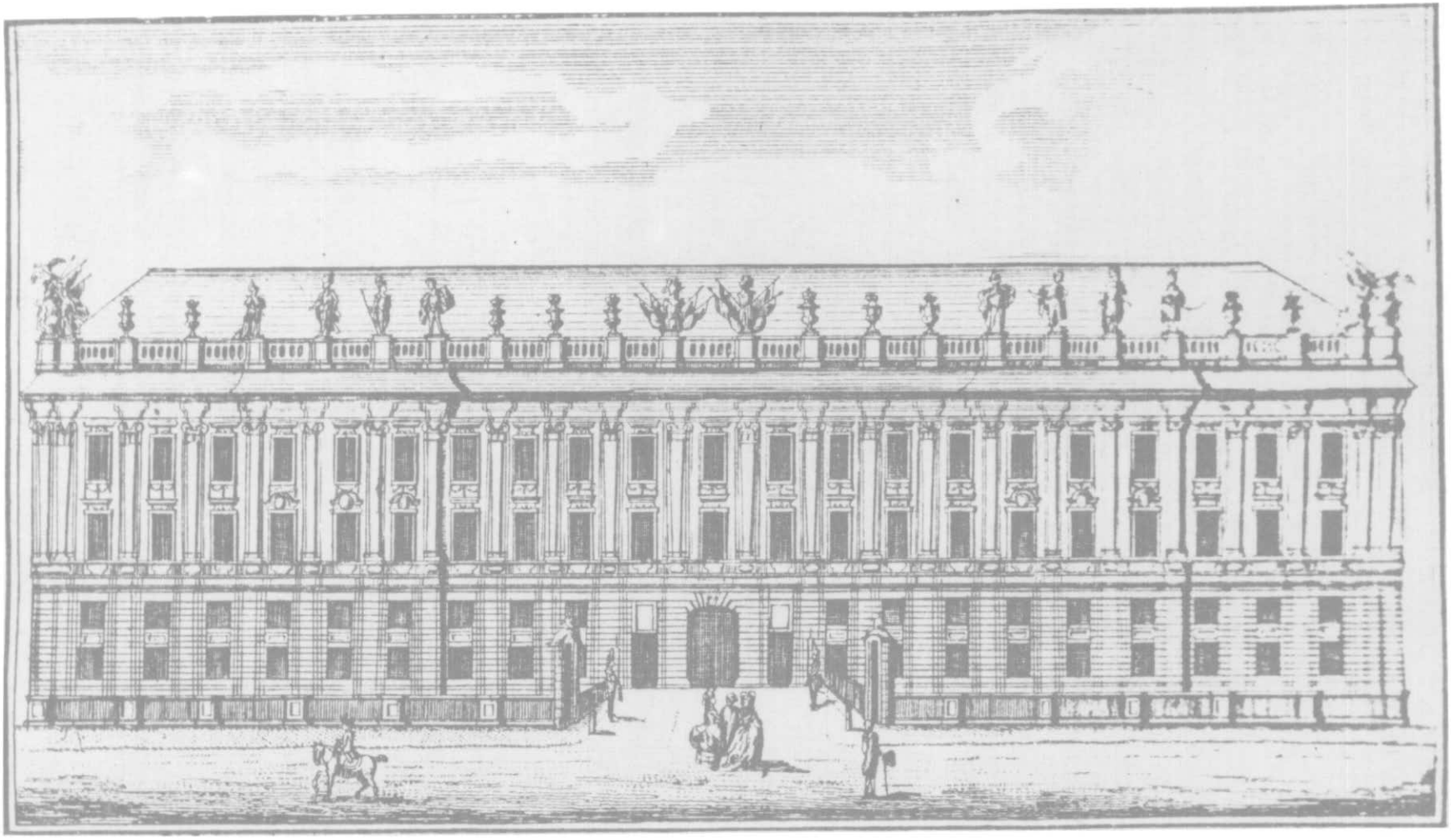

Figure 3. The palace where the Margraves of Ansbach lived. Reproduced from Fischer, *Geschichte und ausführliche Beschreibung . . . Anspach*, opposite p. 36. See footnote 47.

THE MORALITY OF RENTING OUT SOLDIERS IN THE EYES OF CONTEMPORARIES

So Carl Alexander felt compelled to use this means of raising money to pay off the huge debts left by his father. Was this means in any way morally reprehensible? After all, other German princes had been renting out their young men and the practice had wide acceptance in Europe. So also slavery, was widely accepted in the British colonies. Was slavery morally reprehensible? Oskar Bezzel, a German author writing in 1933 on the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops in America, says this:

> In no way did they feel the renting out of soldiers was unworthy of mankind.[13]

In the face of this statement let's take a look at some reactions of those who lived at the time. It must be granted that the practice was not viewed as strange or unusual; otherwise the young men could not have been so easily taken from their home communities and sent to America. But there were those who expressed qualms of conscience.

In our survey of troubled consciences and expressions of disgust at sending out armies for hire, let's begin, of all places, with George III, King of Great Britain! He said, "To give German officers license to go out to recruit soldiers for me actually means, in good English, to make me nothing other than a kidnapper, which is a business I cannot in any way view as honorable."[14] George III's connections with Germany, the home of his ancestors, were close enough that he knew very well about the recruitment of soldiers at pistol point.[15] Or was his conscience awakened by reading of one of his own English authors, Jonathan Swift?

Jonathan Swift had first published his famous satire, *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726. In this book Swift tells about a land of noble-minded horses, where Yahoos, creatures of a degenerated human race, are kept as slaves. Swift says:

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[13] Bessel, *op. cit.*, p. 187. The original says, "Sie empfanden in keiner Weise das Menschenunwürdige des Vermietens." Other remarks by Bessel somewhat soften this statement; nevertheless, the statement is extreme. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the text are by the author.

[14] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-17.

> . . . a soldier is a Yahoo hired to kill in cold blood as many of his own species, who have never offended him, as possibly he can.
>
> There is likewise a kind of beggarly princes in Europe not able to make war by themselves, who hire out their troops to richer nations for so much a day to each man; of which they keep three fourths to themselves, and it is the best part of their maintenance; such are those in many northern parts of Europe.[16]

If George III had not read *Gulliver's Travels*, very likely some of the members of the British Parliament had. Among those in Parliament who expressed doubt about hiring German troops was the Duke of Richmond. On March 5, 1776, in the House of Lords he called a treaty with a German prince "a downright mercenary bargain, for the taking into pay of a certain number of hirelings, who were bought and sold like so many beasts for slaughter. . . ."[17] Several others in Parliament, who were opposing the policy of the King and the majority, made similar statements.

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, on June 18, 1776, wrote Voltaire that the Landgrave of Hesse sold his subjects like cattle.[18] (Frederick, by the way, was also the uncle of Carl Alexander, Margrave of Ansbach-Bayreuth.) At other times Frederick spoke approvingly of the use of hired soldiers and even urged the Duke of Brunswick to sign a treaty with Great Britain for the hiring of troops. Frederick's condemnation or approval seems to have depended on whether Prussia would derive any political advantage from the matter or not.[19] Benjamin Franklin's statement in a letter on May 1, 1777, that Frederick charged the same toll for soldiers passing through his lands as cattle because they were sold like cattle was probably a bit of anti-British propaganda invented by Franklin.[20]

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[16] Jonathan Swift, *The Annotated Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Isaac Asimov (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., Publishers, 1980), pp. 236-237. This is Part 4, Ch. 5 ("A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms").

[17] Lowell, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[18] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Kipping, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[19] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[20] Benjamin Franklin, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (1907; reprint ed., 10 vols. New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1970), VII, 58. Franklin also wrote a satire on the subject of the sale of German troops as a letter from a fictitious Count de Schaumbergh. In reference to the "blood money" clause in treaties between Great Britain and some German princes, the count complains that not enough of his men were killed to bring him as much money as he wants. *Ibid.* , VII, 27-29.

The Count de Mirabeau, French nobleman who later became a leader in the French Revolution, in a pamphlet appearing in 1777 rebukes the German princes with these words: "Has it come to the place that you traffic in men, depopulate your cities, and your lands are drained out in order to support proud lords in their devastation of another hemisphere?"[21]

Now let's turn from the statements of political leaders to the comments of literary men. Schubart (1739-1791), German poet and musician, views the German troops hired by the British like this:

> There, behold Europe's slaves,
> They rattle their chains!
> She [Europe] needs a driver, a tyrant,
> For cattle that can be throttled.[22]

Herder (1744-1803), important German philosopher and poet, is filled with indignation about the matter:

> And still they are in their service to their lords
> So true in dog-like fashion! Willingly they let themselves be
> sold for use
> At the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers . . .
> If the slave dies, the lord grasps
> His wages and meanwhile his widow famishes;
> The orphans pull the plow and go hungry--
> But that doesn't matter: the lord needs a treasure.[23]

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[21] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 190; Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[22] *Teutsche Chronik* of 1777 as cited in Philipp Losch, *Soldatenhandel* (1933; reprint ed., Kassel: Hamecher, 1974), p. 44.

[23] In the poem, "Der deutsche Nationalruhm," in Herder's *Werke*, 18, 211, as cited in Losch, *ibid.* , p. 51.

I.G. Krauseneck of Bayreuth itself wrote a play which appeared in the city of Bayreuth in 1776, the year before Carl Alexander made the treaty with England. The play, called *Recruiting for England*, criticizes princes who sell their young men to England as soldiers. The remarks were directed, however, against Hesse, Brunswick, and Anhalt-Zerbst, states that had already signed treaties with Great Britain.[24]

A poet from Colmar, Gottlieb Conrad Pfeffel, actually makes a connection between German soldiers hired out in America and black slaves (a connection in moral problems we referred to earlier) in his "Song of a Negro Slave."

Good for you, dear Africa,
    Now you may keep your children,
Already sells Germania
    Her heroes like cattle. . . .
Thrice blessed I must, indeed,
    Regard myself before German slaves;
I have to raise tobacco;
    They have to slaughter men.
The blood of a Hessian
    Is reckoned half so dear
As they value my venal sweat
    In Connecticut.[25]

A play by the much more famous author, Schiller, also touches this same theme. The play, *Intrigue and Love*, appeared in 1784, which is of course after the time when German troops were sent to America. In the play Lady Milford, the English mistress of a German prince, receives from him a gift of precious jewels. She rejects them in horror when she learns they have been paid for by the sale of 7,000 soldiers to fight in America. Lady Milford's valet describes the departure of the soldiers thus:

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[24] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[25] In the *Voss'schen Musenalmanach* of 1779 and on p. 192 of Pfeffel's *Poetischen Versuchen* 3,2 (1791) as cited in Losch, *ibid.* , p. 45.

> . . . wailing orphans pursued a living father . . . as bridegrooms were torn from brides with sabre blows, and we greybeards stood there in despair and finally tossed our crutches after the lads into the new world. . . . Oh, and all the while the deafening roll of the drums, so the All-knower would not hear us praying. . . . At the city gate they turned around once more and shouted: "God be with you, wives and children!. . . . Long live the father of our country . . . On Judgment Day we will be back!"[26]

Friedrich Kapp, who wrote a thorough study on German troops in the Revolutionary War, feels that Carl Alexander of Ansbach-Bayreuth served as a model for the prince in this play because Carl Alexander had an English mistress, Lady Craven,[27] and because of similar incidents that occurred when his troops were departing.[28] However, Charles Passage, editor and translator of *Intrigue and Love*, believes that Duke Charles Eugene of Württemberg served as the model.[29] In any case, the play is a protest against the use of German troops in America.

Now that we have reviewed the remarks of some literary and political figures on the sale of troops, let's come nearer to the heart of the matter, to direct participants themselves. Gemmingen, who negotiated the treaty with the English on behalf of Carl Alexander, wrote to his agent in London, Seckendorff, "It seems very hard to me to bargain about troops."[30] Later, on the day after the treaty was signed[31] he again wrote to the same agent:

> The matter naturally will be seen in the most unfavorable light possible. . . . . But as soon as people see how foreign money will flow into our poor land . . . they and the whole world will be in ecstacy! and will recognize that the troops, whose duty it is to battle the enemies of the country, have defeated the worst enemy, namely, our debts. . . . In general I am a sworn enemy of such traffic with men; however there

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[26] Friedrich von Schiller, *Intrigue and Love*, trans. Charles E. Passage (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 31-32 (act II, scene 1).

[27] Carl Alexander first visited Lady Elizabeth Craven in Paris in 1783, and she came to Ansbach in 1786. Keunecke, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 33.

[28] Kapp, *op. cit.*, pp. 202, 203; Curt Jany, "Militarische Erinnerungen an Ansbach-Bayreuth," *Hohenzollern-Jahrbuch*, vol. 14 (Berlin, 1910), p. 22.

[29] Schiller, *op. cit.*, pp. viii, xiv.

[30] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 124 (February 2, 1777).

> are cases in which something bad is transformed into a good deed; that is how it is, if I am not mistaken, in this case.[32]

Gemmingen was troubled by his part in the sale of troops, but rationalized his way out of the difficulty. Among Gemmingen's papers was found an anonymous letter to Carl Alexander with this address, "Most serene highness-barbarian, gracious seller of men." This letter, which arrived on April 20, 1777, not quite three months after the treaty was signed, continues:

> Just as the oxen drover is careful to bring his herd without mishap to the market, so your serene highness, you have a concern to deliver to England in good condition the men you have sold in order that you might come into the affluence of 39,588 pounds sterling promised you. . . .
>
> Already in England and France they are writing comedies about the sale of human beings by German princes; so also they will soon be performing tragedies about the matter. Subject matter for such plays will not be lacking long. Those downtrodden by such princes are becoming too intelligent not to remove and drive away such tyrants who sell them like animals. . . .[33]

Gemmingen was outraged by the letter and traced its origin through the postal officials as far as Bordeaux, France, but gave up at that point.

This array of statements objecting to the sale of German troops is only a selection from similar statements of contemporaries which could be quoted. But now let's turn our attention to the prime mover in the matter, Carl Alexander himself. We will examine his actions rather than his words.

There is justification for this. Aside from Gemmingen, the persons we have quoted are merely observers of what occurred. They could comment, but did not have the power to determine what happened in the matter. What happened depended on Carl Alexander's decisions and actions. So we will examine what he did.

Carl Alexander was among those German princes who saw their opportunity to gain advantage from the fighting in America. Apparently Carl Alexander was eager to get his share of the money. Gemmingen in the letter to Seckendorff quoted earlier complains about the unpleasantness of selling

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[32] Bezzel, *op, cit.*, p. 190.

[33] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

troops but says, "The Margrave is determined to accomplish the matter at any price."[34] Gemmingen further tells how Carl Alexander is pulling strings behind the scenes. "The Margrave has approached the widowed dutchess of Saxony-Hildburghausen, who is an aunt to the Queen of England, that she might introduce his concern to the King. He hopes a great deal will come from her intercession." In trying to influence Suffolk, an English official, Carl Alexander wrote him on December 13, 1776, "Nothing in the world compares with the zeal with which I wish to be useful to His Majesty [the King of England], and nothing will be like my thankfulness if Your Excellency will put me in a position to deliver proof for this, my zeal."[35]

THE PRINCE AND HIS SOLDIERS

If others had doubts about delivering troops, Carl Alexander seemed to have very few at this point. Let's notice one further example of his zeal for supplying troops to the King of England in an incident during the troops' departure.

The ardently desired treaty with Great Britain had been signed, and almost immediately troops were ready to go. (Of course, the troops had been prepared beforehand.) The troops marched to Ochsenfurt on the Main River, where they were placed on boats on March 9, 1777.[36] Here, a mutiny broke out, ostensibly, because the quarters aboard ship were too crowded. However heavy drinking by the soldiers probably played the largest role.[37] Instead of remaining aboard the ships to go down the river the soldiers disembarked and some were deciding to go home. With great difficulty the officers and Jäger corps (sharpshooters) got the men under control. One man was killed and two were wounded.[38]

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[34] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[35] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

[36] Johann Conrad Döhla, *Tagebuch eines Bayreuther Soldaten, des Johann Conrad Döhla, aus dem Nordamerikanischen Freiheitskrieg von 1777 bis 1783*, ed. W. Freiherr von Waldenfels (Bayreuth, 1913), p. 8.

[37] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

[38] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

As soon as word of the mutiny came to the palace at Ansbach, the Margrave rode post haste through the night to the scene of the trouble.[39] The troops were lined up for review. Carl Alexander threatened any deserters with confiscation of property, but then spoke warmly with each man, urging him to go on with the undertaking. The men were easily overawed by the presence of the prince himself. To make sure everything went well, the Margrave sat on a ship with his loaded gun in hand.[40] He accompanied the troops downstream to Holland where they were handed over to English officers. He did not want to lose any troops by desertion because payment was made according to the number of men actually delivered.[41]

Yet at the actual moment of departure, March 29, 1777, in Dortrecht, Holland, another side of the Margrave comes to the fore. Johann Conrad Döhla, a soldier from Bayreuth who kept a diary of his service in America, says, "Very early in the morning the Margrave bid us farewell with weeping eyes. . . . It struck us very hard that the very dear paternal prince of our country departed from us.[42]

So Carl Alexander's attitude toward his soldiers seems to have been a mixture of exploitation, severity, and tenderness. So divided is the human heart.[43]

Or can we see a reaction by Carl Alexander to the criticisms directed against the selling of soldiers? Seven months after the tearful farewell just mentioned, the Margrave issued a decree providing food and money for needy dependents of soldiers in America. In fact, a fat bundle of requests[44] from aged parents and needy wives exists among Ansbach archival material.[45] Almost

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[39] George Washington Green, *The German Element in the War of American Independence* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1876), p. 205; Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

[40] Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[41] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p., 197: Städtler, *op. cit.* p. 23.

[42] Döhla, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[43] We will later notice ambiguity in the soldiers' attitude toward the Margrave.

[44] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

[45] Foreign Copying Project, Historischer Verein für Mittelfranken, Ms. hist. 487, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

all of these Carl Alexander personally approved. He later provided housing and food for soldiers' wives and gave attention to the welfare of returned soldiers, especially the disabled. Erhard Städtler says, "These social services of the Margrave's government were new for the princedom."[46] So Ansbach-Bayreuth "with regard to public social welfare [became] one of the first parts of Germany" to move in this direction, thanks to Carl Alexander.[47]

Was Carl Alexander's unusual social concern his reaction to the critical remarks about selling troops? We may be sure that Carl Alexander did not learn of all the criticisms made, but he must have heard some criticism, and it would have had some influence on his generosity toward the soldiers.

We cannot here examine other moral aspects of Carl Alexander's life – his relationships with his wife and other women, his feeling of obligation to pay the large debts amassed by his father, his sale of his country to the King of Prussia for a pension fifteen years before his death.[48] Surely much of what Carl Alexander did was influenced by the model his father provided for him and the conditions in the margraviate when he received it at his father's death. To have a full picture of Carl Alexander, it would be necessary to explore the life of his father, too.

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[46] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 80. However, according to a description of Ansbach written in 1786 by J.B. Fischer some institutions for social welfare in Ansbach had been established by the government before Carl Alexander's time. See Johann Bernhard Fischer, *Geschichte und ausführliche Beschreibung der Markgräflich-Brandenburgischen Haupt- und Residenz-Stadt Anspach, oder Onolzbach* (Anspach, 1786), p. 114.

[48] Keunecke, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

THE SOLDIERS AND THEIR FLAGS

The flags the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops carried symbolized their country and their ruler, to whom initials embroidered on the flags referred. After the troops had left the presence and authority of Carl Alexander behind, the flags reminded them of him. Since the flags' significance originated in Ansbach-Bayreuth, Lossing's suggestion that the flags were made in England does not seem valid.[49] John M. Carson says, "Regimental colors were regarded with even more importance in those days than they are now, and it is hardly probable that the Germans would have been permitted to leave their country without their distinctive standards."[50] Furthermore, article two of the treaty specified that the troops were to be sent into service fully equipped by Carl Alexander.[51] Regimental flags would have been part of their equipment.

The treaty reserved for Carl Alexander the right to clothe the troops while they were in America.[52] This meant a great deal of business for weavers, tailors, shoemakers, and related tradesmen in Ansbach and Bayreuth. In his description of Ansbach in 1786 Johann Bernhard Fischer lists among various tradesmen who could have helped supply the soldiers in America: 79 shoemakers, 79 tailors, 21 weavers of linen and wool, 24 clothmakers, 3 dyers of silk and wool, and 2 workers with upholstry, tapestry, and wallpaper.[53] Possibly among the 79 tailors or 2 workers with upholstry and tapestry were craftsmen who made the flags carried to America.

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[49] Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, 2 vols. (New York, 1859; reprint ed., 2 vols. Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1972), II, 207.

[50] J.M. Carson, "Trophies and Flags in the Chapel," *Bulletin U.S. Military Academy*, Association of Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy Bulletin no. 2 (West Point, N.Y., January 1902), p. 82.

[51] Charles Rainsford, "Transactions as Commissary for Embarking Foreign Troops in the English Service From Germany, With Copies of Letters Relative to It, For the Years 1776-1777," *Collections of the New York Historical Society* (New York, 1880), XII, 361. For the French original of this article see Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

[52] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[53] Fischer, *op. cit.*, pp. 186, 188. In 1786 Fischer lists far more tailors and shoemakers than any other tradesmen in Ansbach. He lists only 40 bakers, whose goods could have been in large demand daily. If the number of tailors and shoemakers had been swollen because of providing clothing for soldiers, what had they done since the return of the troops from America in 1783? Is there merely a time lag in his statistics?

Figure 4. Bookplate of Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander from a book in his library. Within the oval, his initials C F C A are artistically intertwined, with the princely crown above. Reproduced from Keunecke, *Markgraf Alexander von Ansbach-Bayreuth*, p. 8.

Carl Alexander's troops must have carried flags with them when they departed from Ansbach on March 7, 1777.[54] Whether they were carrying the very same flags at the surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, we do not know for sure. The travels of Ansbach-Bayreuth troops and their flags in America were as follows:

June 1777: Arrival at New York
November 1777 – June 1778: Service at Philadelphia
July 1778 – October 1779: Rhode Island
October 1779 – May 1781: New York
May 1781 – October 1781: Virginia[55]

Replacement troops and supplies, including uniforms, were sent from Ansbach-Bayreuth in three shipments which actually reached Carl Alexander's units in America on the following dates:

1) October 12, 1778 (Some uniforms from this shipment left behind in England by mistake did not arrive until April 25, 1779.)
2) November 3, 1779
3) October 15, 1780[56]

Flags could have been included in these shipments, but that does not seem likely. No flags had been captured from the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops before Yorktown, and there had been no reorganization of the units which could have caused a need for new flags. So the flags surrendered at Yorktown very probably came with the initial movement of troops from Ansbach-Bayreuth to America in 1777.

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[54] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

[55] Philip Katcher, *Encyclopedia of British, Provincial, and German Army Units, 1775-1783* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1973), p. 108. For more details of operations in America see Bezzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-214, 377-405. For an account in English see Professor [Gustav Joseph] Fiebeger, "The Franconian Regiments in the Revolutionary War," November 20, 1916, West Point Museum, U.S. Military Academy, West Point. N.Y.

[56] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 383, 387-388, 394.

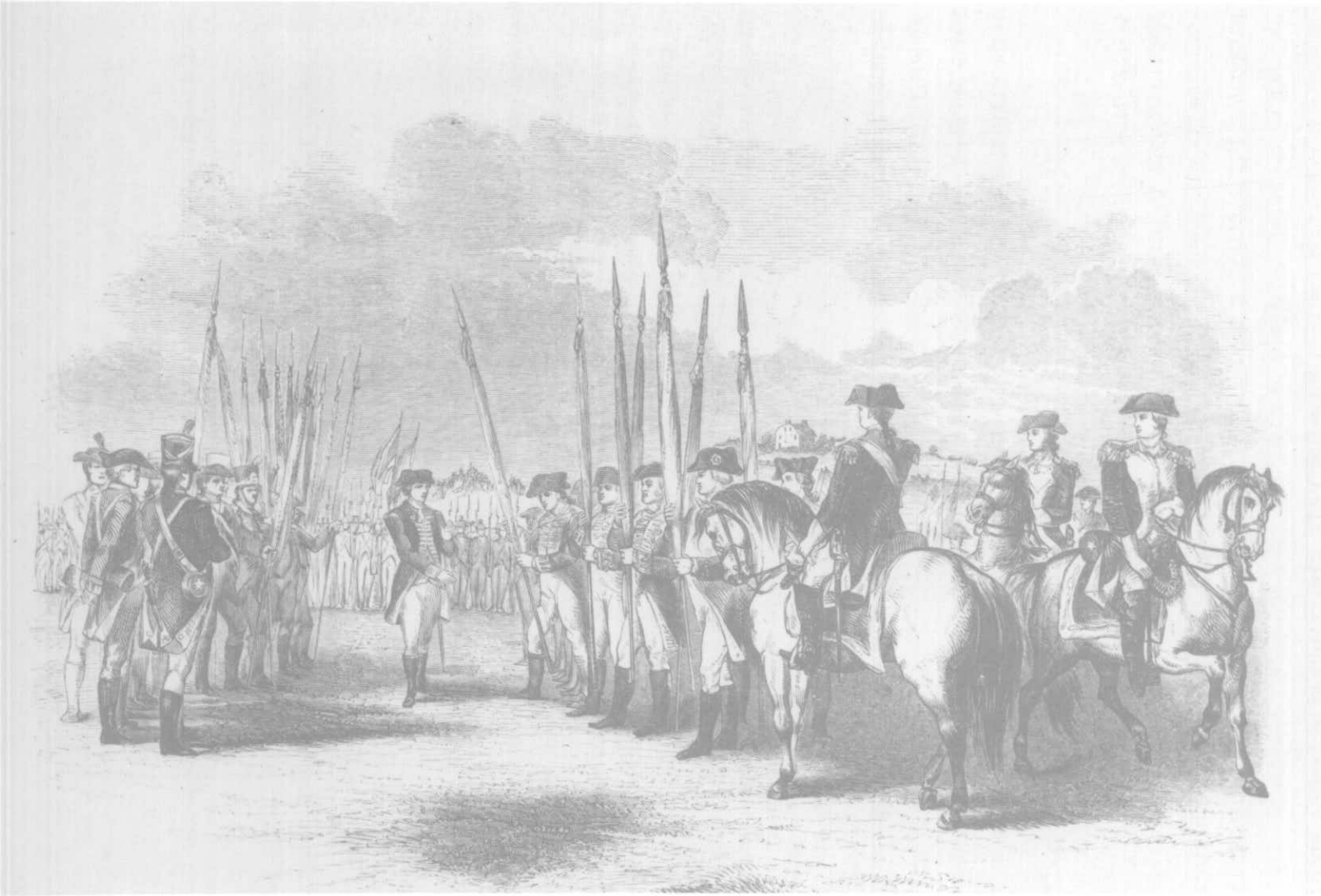

Figure 5. Surrender of flags to the Americans at Yorktown as depicted in a book published in 1859. Reproduced from Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book*, vol. 2, p. 320. See footnote 49.

THE SOLDIERS PARTED FROM THEIR FLAGS

Most of the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops in America were present at Yorktown and surrendered along with the British on October 19, 1781.[57] A smaller number were not at Yorktown and never surrendered. A group of Jägers (sharpshooters) had been left on Long Island. A fourth group of replacement troops, sent off just before the news of defeat reached Ansbach, arrived at New York on August 11, 1782, many months after the fighting was over.[58]

According to the terms of the agreement, the surrendering troops marched out between ranks of American and French soldiers to a designated field, where they handed over their arms and cased flags (that is, flags furled or not flying). The British troops came first, followed by the Germans from Hesse-Cassel, and at the end those from Ansbach-Bayreuth.[59] Those at the end surrendered the most flags.

The irony in the number of flags surrendered we noticed earlier. The British surrendered six flags, the Germans from Hesse-Cassel eight, and the Ansbach-Bayreuthers ten, totaling twenty-four.[60]

The number of flags from Ansbach-Bayreuth can be accounted for in this way: Besides the small number of Jägers and artillery men, there were two regiments:[61] the 1st Ansbach Regiment (sometimes called the Regiment Voit after its commanding officer, or the Ansbach Regiment because most of its men were from the princedom of Ansbach) and the 2nd Ansbach Regiment (sometimes called the Regiment Seybothen after its commanding officer, or the Bayreuth Regiment because

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[57] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 122ff.

[58] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 398, 403, 404-405.

[59] Howard C. Rice, Jr., and Anne S.K. Brown, eds. and trans., *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783*, 2 vols. (Princeton and Providence: Princeton University Press and Brown University Press, 1972), I, 147-148.

[60] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

[61] For an overview of the subdivisions and officers of the regiments see Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

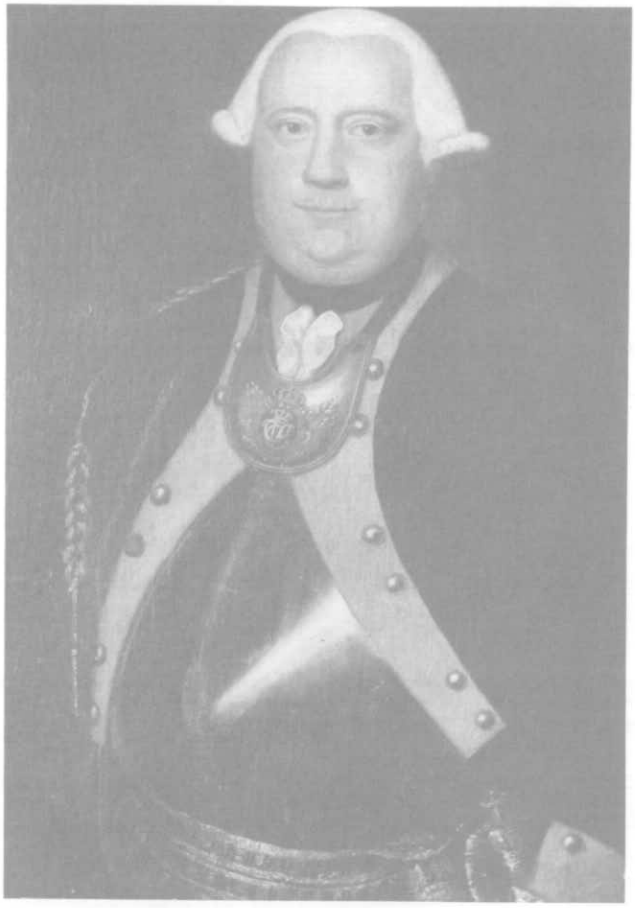

Figure 6. Friedrich August Valentin Voit von Salzburg, commander of the Ansbach Regiment that surrendered at Yorktown. Resting on his chest is a gorget with the intertwined initials C F C A of the Margrave and a five-arched crown. The gorget was originally a piece of armor intended to protect the throat. See Haarmann, *op. cit.*, p. 49. Painting from Bayerisches Armeemuseum, Ingolstadt, West Germany.

most of its men were from Bayreuth).[62] Each of these two regiments was divided into five companies, and each company carried a flag. Two regiments times five companies equals ten. That would account for the ten flags surrendered.[63]

Some disagreement about the number of flags surrendered exists, but the numbers just given seem to be the most reliable. Johann Döhla, the Bayreuth soldier who later became a school teacher, in an entry of his diary for October 19, 1781, lists the German regiments at Yorktown and further says, "From these four German regiments the enemies received eighteen beautiful flags."[64] Again, this would be ten from Ansbach-Bayreuth and eight from Hesse-Cassel. However, from the opposing army comes a different total. The Comte de Clermont-Crevecoeur, a French noble who was an officer in Rochambeau's army also kept a journal. His entry for October 18-19, 1781, refers to "the twenty-two flags captured from the enemy."[65]

Stephen Popp, a fifer in the Bayreuth Regiment, was another diarist present at Yorktown. In his diary entry dated October 19, 1781, he says that they marched out "with flags covered"[66] and that they surrendered twenty-four flags,[67] agreeing with the earlier total given. From the conflicting evidence a reasonable conclusion is that the number was twenty-four. For further discussion of the number of flags see Appendix I.

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[62] Katcher, *op. cit.*, p. 108; A.W. Haarmann, "The Anspach-Bayreuth Troops in North America, 1777-1783," *Military Collector and Historian*, XIX, 48.

[63] Ottfried Neubecker, *Heraldry, Sources, Symbols, Meaning* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), pp. 10, 26; Gherardi Davis, *Regimental Colors in the War of the Revolution* (New York: Privately printed, 1907), p. 43.

[64] The original says, "18 schöne Fahnen." Döhla, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 150.

[65] Rice and Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 61. This is their translation of the *Journal of the War in America During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783* by Jean-Francois-Louis de Clermont-Crevecoeur.

[66] "mit verdeckten Fahnen" Foreign Copying Project, Historischer Verein für Oberfranken, Ms. 85, diary of Stephan Popp, p. 207, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Figure 7. Finial, or spear point, from one of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags with the initials C F C A, standing for Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander. This is a copy at Yorktown, reproduced from an original in the West Point Museum. Courtesy of Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia.

In a note written along the edge of page 208 of his diary Popp makes a further interesting statement. He says, "One of our flags had the staff broken by a cannon ball." At the top of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flagstaves was a finial, or spear point, with a monogram of the intertwined initials of the Margrave, Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander, CFCA. Could Popp, or one of his comrades, have hidden away his spear point when they gave up their flags? With the flags gone it would have given them a tangible symbol of their prince to hold on to, an expression of their loyalty to Carl Alexander.

Gherardi Davis, writing in 1907, says that there is a damaged spear point of a flagstaff existing in the military museum in Munich[68] exactly like the spear points on the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags surviving in America. Davis says it is "described as a spear-head of the Ansbach Regiment *Voit* . . . '"shot off at the battle of Jamestown, July 6, 1786.'"[69] Of course there was no such battle. Jamestown must refer to Yorktown. But the presence of the spear point must be accounted for some way. Possibly the spear point in the Munich museum is from the flagstaff referred to by Popp.

This brings up another interesting possibility. The Ansbach-Bayreuth flag on exhibit at the Colonial National Historical Park at Yorktown has the spear point missing. We notice in the old Gherardi Davis photographs from 1907 this flag has its worst tear next to the staff. (See Davis, *op. cit.*, plates XXVI and XXVII.) This could be the flag that had its staff damaged by the cannon ball. We can come to this conclusion by the process of elimination.

Of the four surviving Ansbach-Bayreuth flags, one is on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution which has the complete flagstaff with finial or spear point attached. Two of the flags are in the West Point Museum: one has the complete staff with spear point and the other has only the staff. So the flag exhibited at Yorktown could have had its staff broken during the bombardment and have lost its spear point (then easily detachable) in a secret act of loyalty by a soldier. This, however, is only interesting speculation. We will return to the broken flagstaff later.

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[68] In 1935 Bezzel, *op. cit.* , p. 194, wrote that there was a spear point of an Ansbach-Bayreuth flag from the Revolutionary War in the "A.M." in Munich. I have not been able to learn to what museum he was referring.

[69] Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

After the surrender at Yorktown the captive Ansbach-Bayreuth troops were marched by way of Fredericksburg to Winchester, Virginia, and detained there. Later the prisoners were moved to Fredericktown (now Frederick), Maryland. After the peace treaty was signed, their captivity was somewhat relaxed. On August 7, 1783, they sailed from America for Germany.[70]

We want to notice an incident among the prisoners at Fredericktown, Maryland, before they returned to their fatherland and their prince. But first let's get some background in Germany.

Conditions existing in a state with an absolute ruler, such as Carl Alexander, produce a psychology unfamiliar to us who live in a twentieth-century democratic society. In the south-central German state of Ansbach at the time of a death in the Margrave's family, his subjects were expected to refrain from any public expressions of happiness. Throughout the whole land dances and dance music were forbidden. Festivities at regular holidays during such a year were cancelled or kept to great moderation. The whole state was expected to sorrow with the princely family. If there was a wedding or birth, the subjects were commanded to give suitable expressions of joy. When a new Margrave took up his office, his subjects were expected to present him with gifts, and the Margrave in turn distributed small gifts of money widely.[71] So the prince and his family loomed large in the minds of his subjects.

Johann Bernhard Fischer, to whose description of Ansbach in 1786 we have already referred, gives a further example of the relationship between subject and prince. In his description he gives a table listing seven rulers of Ansbach with their year of birth, the year when they began ruling, and the year of death. The last Margrave on the list, the one ruling at that time was, of course, Carl Alexander. His year of birth is given as 1736, the beginning of his reign 1757, but in the column where his year of death would be entered Fischer writes, "Oh, that he would live forever."[72] Such unabashed flattery was common under an absolute ruler.

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[70] Bezzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 408-409, 414.

[71] Karl-Sigismund Kramer, *Volksleben im Fürstentum Ansbach und seiner Nachbargebieten (1500-1800)*, Eine Volkskunde auf Grund Archivalischer Quellen (Würzburg: Kommissionsverlag, 1961), pp. 135-136.

[72] Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

With this as background, let's notice the birthday celebration the prisoners arranged for Carl Alexander at Fredericktown on February 24, 1783.[73] One of the prisoners, we may presume, had the flag's spear point with the initials CFCA hidden away in his pack somewhere. Döhla writes in his diary:

> The birthday of our most serene Margrave was celebrated here in our barracks. . . . [We] prepared an illumination of the princely name, Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander with four large letters, C.F.C.A. , in fire works. In the night it was beautiful to see. The inhabitants of the city and also the guards came running and marveled greatly at it. Perhaps many of them had never seen any thing like it in their lives.

Döhla breaks into an interesting form of English when he gives the very words the prisoners shouted in front of the curious observers:

> Hyroh for Alexander, God save our Prince, Hyroh for Prisoners! Hyroh to Germany![74]

Their flags had been taken away, but the Margrave's initials were still an important symbol for these Ansbach-Bayreuthers.

Yet we recall these same soldiers had mutinied before they had even left Germany as they boarded their boats on the Main River. And all through the war there had been a steady number of desertions. After they became prisoners of war at Yorktown, the desertion rate went up because their officers no longer had as much control over them. Also, sometimes they, as prisoners, worked outside the prison camps for farmers and had friendly contact with the many German-speaking people who had already settled in America. For one reason or another[75] more than one fourth of the Ansbach-Bayreuth soldiers decided to stay in America when the others returned to prince and fatherland.

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[73] Städtler, *op. cit.*, p. 59: Bezzel, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

[74] Döhla, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[75] Städtler, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 65.

The following table of Ansbach-Bayreuthers is based on Städtler:[76]

	679	remained in America
	401	were killed or died
	1,384	returned home
Total	2,464	Ansbach-Bayreuth soldiers in America

THE FLAGS REMAIN IN AMERICA

Now soldiers and flags have been parted permanently. The symbols of prince and fatherland remained in America. The main body of the soldiers returned to the real prince and fatherland symbolized by the flags. From here on, we will attempt to trace the further fortunes of the flags alone.

By nightfall of October 19, 1781, Washington had completed enough of the pressing details of the surrender to turn his attention to sending the news to Congress. He sent news with his aide-de-camp, Colonel Tench Tilghman. The French Admiral de Grasse had already sent out word of Cornwallis's defeat on October 18, the day before the surrender actually occurred.[77] Tilghman went in great haste. He wanted to reach Congress with official word before an unofficial report arrived. He reached Philadelphia and gave news of the surrender after midnight of October 23. Also, he verbally reported that British and German flags had been taken.[78]

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[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93; *cf.* Clifford Neal Smith, *Mercenaries from Ansbach and Bayreuth, Germany, Who Remained in America After the Revolution* (Thomson, Ill. : Heritage House, 1974), pp. 1-2; Lowell, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 300; Max von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops in the North American War of Independence, 1776-1783*, trans. J.G. Rosengarden (Albany, 1893; reprint ed. , Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. , 1969), p. 257.

[77] Burke Davis, *The Campaign That Won America: The Story of Yorktown* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), pp. 276-277.

[78] Rice and Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 61 in note.

On October 27-29 Washington sent a fuller report of the surrender with returns, or official lists, of men and equipment captured.[79] Included was a statement that twenty-four captured standards were being sent to Congress at Philadelphia.[80]

Before the captured standards could arrive with Washington's written report, a grateful and enthusiastic Congress decided to give two of them to Washington. On Monday, October 29, Congress passed the following motion:

> *Resolved*, That two stands of colours taken from the British army under the capitulation of York, be presented to his excellency General Washington, in the name of the United States in Congress assembled.[81]

Washington sent another aide-de-camp, Colonel David Humphreys, with the letter of October 27-29, the returns, and the twenty-four flags. The flags arrived at Philadelphia on Saturday afternoon, November 3, fifteen days after they had been captured at Yorktown. A newspaper describes the arrival of the flags as follows:

> They were received by the volunteer cavalry of this city at Schuylkill and conducted into town, displayed in a long procession, preceded by the American and French colours at a proper distance. They were paraded through the principal streets of the city, midst the joyful acclamations of surrounding multitudes, to the state-house....[82]

By now it must have been late Saturday afternoon, and apparently Congress must have just adjourned. However, when Humphreys appeared, the president of Congress resumed his chair, and Humphreys delivered his letter from Washington. The *Journal* of Congress says,

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[79] "Returns," *The Magazine of American History*, VII (1881), 451-453.

[80] George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols., Vol. XXIII, *Aug. 16, 1781-Feb. 15, 1782* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937), p. 294.

[81] U.S. Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), XXI, 1081.

[82] *The Connecticut Gazette*, November 23, 1781, as given in *The Magazine of American History*, VII (1881), 61; *cf.* J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Wescott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*. 3 vols. (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Co., 1884), I, 416.

Figure 8. David Humphreys presents the flags surrendered at Yorktown to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. No German flags are visible. David Humphreys's biographer, Francis Landon Humphreys, attributes the painting to Colonel Trumbull of Philadelphia, who asked to do it in 1786. The painting was given to Yale University by David Humphreys's widow and later was owned by his biographer. See volume I, pp. 235-237, of the *Life and Times of David Humphreys* where conflicting statements are made about the origin of this painting. Reproduced from the plate facing p. 236 of this biography.

". . . he also laid before Congress 24 standards taken [at Yorktown.]"[83] The previously quoted newspaper says, ". . . the hostile standards were then laid at the feet of Congress and his Excellency the Ambassador of France."[84]

David Humphreys, who later went on to a career as a statesman and a writer,[85] describes in a poem the surrender of the flags at Yorktown and his presentation of the flags to Congress. The pertinent section of the poem, with its pompous diction, is as follows:

Here stand the conqu'ring bands; the vanquish'd throng Through the long lines in silence move along: The stars and lillies, here in laurels drest, And there, dark shrouds the banner'd pride invest; These twice twelve banners once in pomp unfurl'd, Spread death and terror round the southern world:	[The Surrender]
In various colours from the staff unroll'd, The lion frown'd, the eagle flam'd in gold; Hibernia's harp, reluctant, here was hung, And Scotia's thistle there spontaneous sprung:	[British and German Flags Described]
These twice twelve flags no more shall be display'd, Save in the dome where warlike spoils are laid: Since, where the fathers in high council meet, This hand has placed them prostrate at their feet.	[Presentation to Congress]

"The lion frown'd" must refer to a symbol on the Hessian flag,[86] of which eight were surrendered at Yorktown. The "eagle flam'd in gold" could refer to nothing but the eagle on the reverse of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag. The eagle on the Ansbach flag is reddish with gold lettering above. Interestingly, the poem also notes the number of the flags was twenty-four.

The phrase "the eagle flam'd in gold" gives us the earliest known verbal description of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags. The poem also gives the only information about the appearance of other German and British flags surrendered at Yorktown, which have long since disappeared. We may

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[83] U.S. Continental Congess, *op. cit.*, XXI, 1099.

[84] *The Connecticut Gazette, loc. cit.*

[85] *Dictionary of American Biography, s.v.* "Humphreys, David."

[86] Edward W. Richardson, *Standards and Colors of the American Revolution* (n p.: The University of Pennsylvania Press and the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution and Its Color Guard, 1982), p. 238.

assume that Humphreys's descriptive notes are accurate since he must have handled and examined the flags personally. These lines from his poem, "Address to the Armies," appear in an edition of his works from 1804.[87]

Around November 1, 1781, Congress directed the Secretary of War, Benjamin Lincoln, to present the two flags to Washington. Lincoln did this on December 28,[88] and on December 30 Washington wrote Lincoln acknowledging the receipt of the "Trophies" without specifically mentioning the flags.[89]

THE OLDEST PICTURE OF THE FLAGS

The oldest known picture of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags is an oil painting of George Washington, showing him standing with his hand resting on a cannon with two such flags among the captured colors lying at his feet. One flag shows a crown with the letters ESCT of the monogram on the obverse, and the other shows the Brandenburg eagle on the reverse. This painting is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.[90]

Earlier this painting was thought to be a kind of variant of a portrait done by Charles Willson Peale in 1779.[91] In that year the Supreme Executive Council, the governing body of Pennsylvania,

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[87] Francis Landon Humphreys, *Life and Times of David Humphreys*, 2 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), I, 234-238. This book quotes these lines of poetry from David Humphreys's *Miscellaneous Works*, edition of 1804, p. 18. There is also a painting of David Humphreys's presentation of the flags to Congress by a Danish or Spanish artist made under Humphreys's supervision while he was in Europe from 1784-1786. The only captured flag recognizable in the picture is British. This picture appears in the plate facing p. 236 in *Life and Times of David Humphreys*.

[88] Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933; reprinted. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), VI, 254 and note.

[89] Washington, *op. cit.*, XXIII, 414.

[90] John Hill Morgan and Mantle Fielding, *The Life Portraits of Washington and their Replicas* (Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1931), plate 18 facing p. 32; Albert Ten Eyck Gardener and Stuart Feld, *American Paintings*. Vol. I: *Painters born by 1815*, A Catalogue of the Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1965), p. 66.

[91] Morgan and Fielding, *op. cit.*, plate 5, frontispiece; *cf.* Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

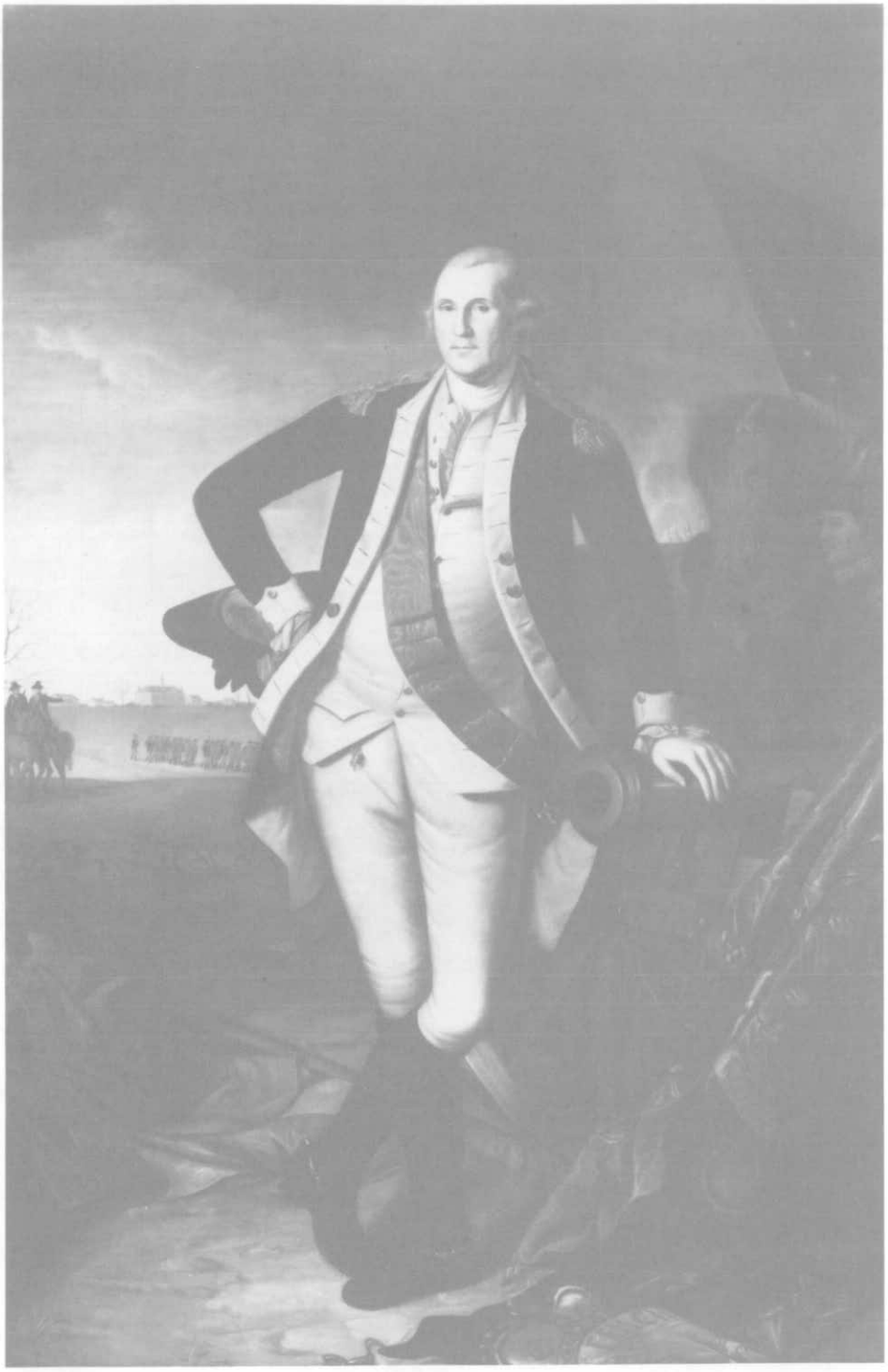

Figure 9. George Washington at Princeton with captured Hessian flags at his feet, painted by the noted American painter, Charles Willson Peale in 1779. On the German flags can be seen crowns, a lion (inverted) holding a sword, and part of the Hessian motto with the work "pericula" misspelled "percu...". The buildings of Princeton College stand in the background. A copy of this painting is in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Reproduced from the collection of the Architect of the Capitol by the Library of Congress.

commissioned Peale to do a painting honoring Washington's victories at Trenton and Princeton. This 1779 painting, now in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, also shows Washington standing, the battlefield and college buildings of Princeton at his back, and captured British and German flags at his feet. But these German flags, captured at Trenton, are from Hesse. The Hessian rampant lion, the crowns, and part of the motto with the word *pericula*, can be seen in the painting.

This painting by Charles Willson Peale immediately was popular. Visiting foreign officials and others ordered replicas and sent them to France, Spain, and Holland. This painting later became known as the "Continental Type" portrait of Washington. Peale had reached a high point in his career because American paintings had never before been sent to hang in the palaces of European royalty. Peale and his assistants painted many replicas of this portrait for sale.[92]

Peale was painstakingly accurate with the details in his paintings. His son, Titian Peale, writes concerning this 1779 painting, "The trophies at Washington's feet I know he painted from the flags then captured [at Trenton], and which were left with him for that purpose.[93]

Most of these "Continental Type" portraits of Washington do show the Hessian flags captured at Trenton. However, the very similar portrait of Washington we mentioned earlier shows Ansbach-Bayreuth flags. Milton Terry, formerly curator at the West Point Museum, realized the "manifest anachronism"[94] of the attribution of this painting. The "Continental Type" portrait of Washington was painted in 1779, but the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags were not captured until 1781. The Ansbach-Bayreuth flags seem to appear in the picture three years before the artist would have seen them. To be sure, not all of the many replicas would have been painted in 1779. But would Peale have thrown away his principle of historical accuracy?

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[92] Charles Coleman Sellers, *Portraits and Miniatures by Charles Willson Peale, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s. , vol. 42, pt. 1 (Philadelphia, 1950), pp. 225-226.

[93] Charles Allen Munn, *Three Types of Washington Portraits* (New York: Privately printed, 1908), p. 25.

[94] [Milton Terry], "The Yorktown German Flags in the West Point Museum," West Point Museum, West Point, N.Y., p. 2. This entire article is quoted in Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 318-321.

The Washington portrait with the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags was referred to by Morgan and Fielding in their authoritative book, *The Life Portraits of Washington and their Replicas*, as a "Continental Type" portrait and attributed to Charles Willson Peale in 1931.[95]

But shortly after the book appeared, in a letter of February 9, 1932, (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives) J.H. Morgan indicated he had changed his mind and then attributed it to James Peale[96] – and with good reason.

We have already noticed that the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags do not fit into the 1779 victory at Trenton and Princeton. If we turn our attention to the scenery behind Washington, we no longer see Princeton with its college buildings as in the painting with the Hessian flags. Instead, we see a town, fortifications, a river with ships floating on it, and masts of sunken ships protruding from the water. The background actually depicts Yorktown, not Princeton. The Metropolitan Museum now calls its painting "George Washington at Yorktown," and attributes it to the brother of Charles Willson Peale, James Peale.[97]

James Peale came to live with his older, famous brother Charles in Philadelphia shortly after the 1779 "Continental Type" portrait was finished. He worked in his brother's studio. James helped his brother in copying paintings Charles had already done, including the "Continental Type" portrait of Washington.[98]

Soon after Cornwallis's surrender James Peale visited Yorktown to record the background of the important historical event. His painting called "Generals of the French and American Armies at Yorktown after the Surrender" shows Yorktown in the distance. This view of Yorktown matches

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[95] Plate 18, p. 32.

[96] Gardener and Feld, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

[97] *Ibid.* , p. 66. It is reported that copies of the Washington portrait with the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags are owned by the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, Maryland, and by Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Va.

[98] Sellers, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

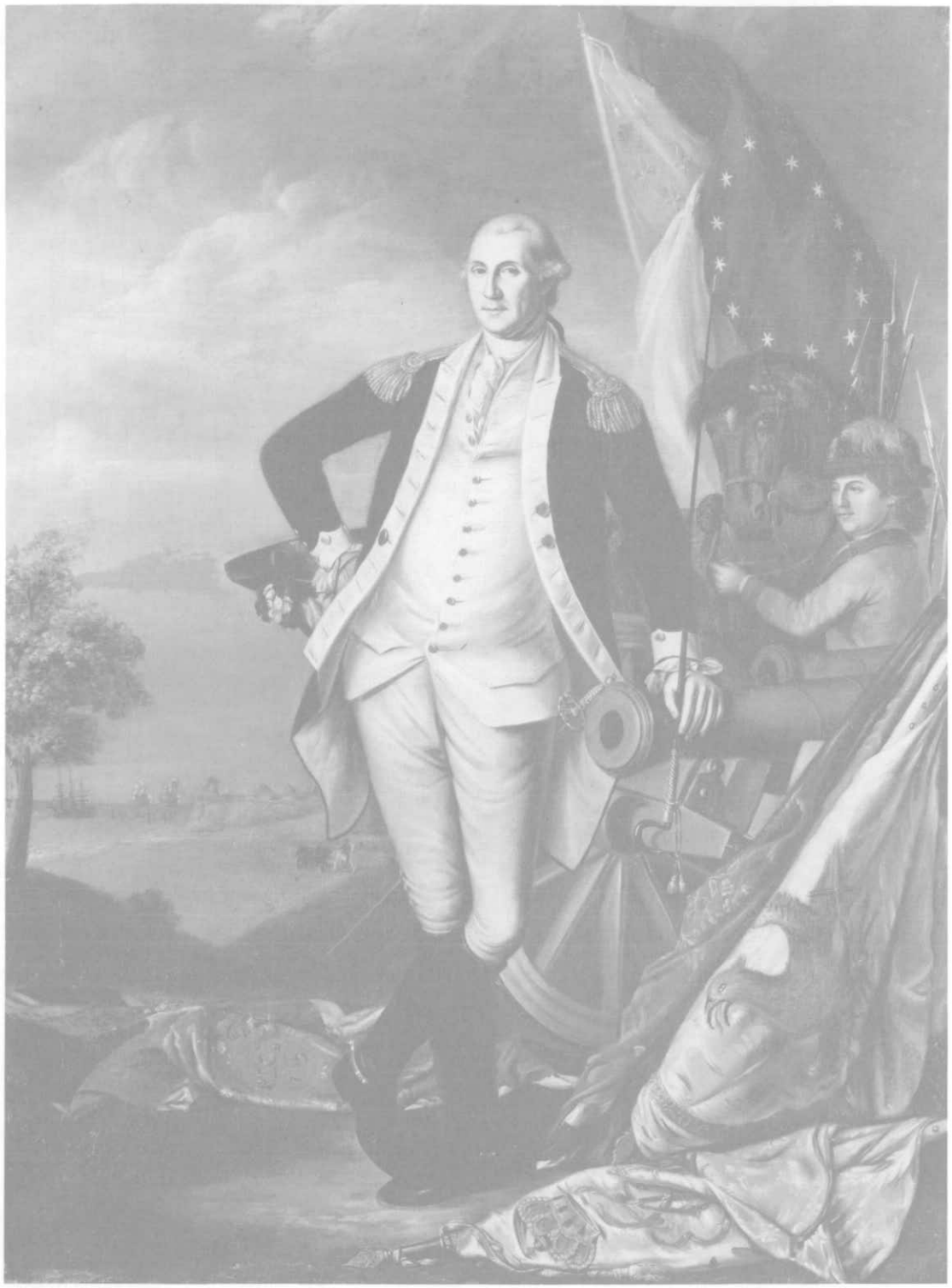

Figure 10. Washington at Yorktown with Ansbach-Bayreuth flags at his feet. Yorktown and the York River are in the background. James Peale, brother of Charles Willson Peale, painted this portrait with the earliest documentation of the appearance of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags. Peale has depicted the flags rather accurately, showing the crown, initials, eagle, and even part of the motto "pro pr...." The finials, the manner of nailing the flags to the staves, and a hint of the pattern of the damask can be seen. Painting from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of William H. Huntington, 1885. (85.1)

contemporary maps of Yorktown and is like the background of the portrait of Washington with the Ansbach flags.[99]

Depending on how soon James Peale arrived after the October 19 surrender, he could have seen the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags at Yorktown. The flags remained there until Washington sent them to Philadelphia with his letter of October 27-29, about ten days later.

It is also possible that James Peale saw the flags in Philadelphia where his brother's studio was located. He could have glimpsed the flags as they were paraded through the streets on November 4 and asked to borrow them for closer study. The Ansbach-Bayreuth flags in the Peale portrait of Washington, although folded and draped, are accurately painted and give us our earliest historical documentation of their appearance.

THE FLAGS VANISH

We know that David Humphreys took the eighteen German and six British flags from Yorktown to Philadelphia. Congress gave Washington two flags. From an account of Benson J. Lossing, which we will take up later, we know that one of these flags was British and one was from Ansbach-Bayreuth.

Washington, with no children of his own, felt especially close to his step-grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, who became his adopted son. Custis received the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag along with the British flag at the death of George Washington in 1799. Washington is said to have bequeathed the flags to Custis[100] but Washington's will makes no mention of a formal bequest.

By this time we know of the whereabouts of only one German flag for sure – the one in the possession of Washington at Mt. Vernon and later in the possession of Custis. The rest of the flags disappear from view.

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[99] Rice and Brown, *op. cit.*, II, 166 and plate 101.

[100] Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

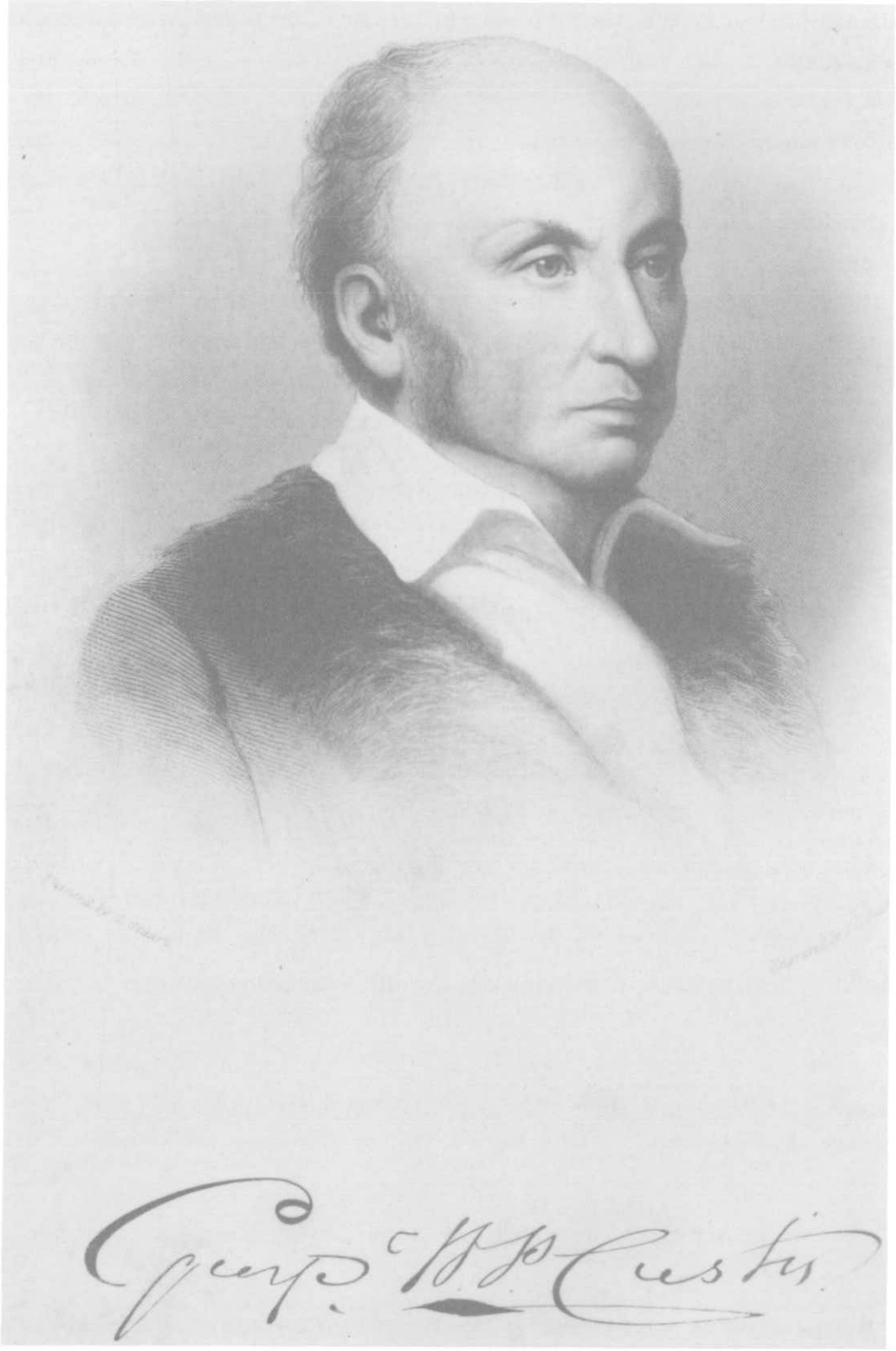

Figure 11. George Washington Parke Custis, step-grandson of George Washington. From the frontispiece of his memoirs of George Washington. See footnote 106.

During the War of 1812 the British captured an American flag at Detroit. Congress was greatly chagrined to learn that the captured American flag was on public display in London. Congress began to wonder where were all the flags we captured during the Revolution. If the British could display flags, we could too.

The House of Representatives sent an inquiry to John Armstrong, the Secretary of War. In a letter of January 13, 1814, he answered as follows:

> Of the standards and colors taken by the army of the United States, during the war of the Revolution, six remain in this office; others, it is understood, were deposited in Philadelphia, while Congress sat in that city. Whether they were, or were not, brought to this place with the public offices, cannot be ascertained.

Mr. W. Seybert, chairman of the committee chosen to investigate the matter, reported to the House on February 4, 1814. Mr. Seybert was chagrined to learn that all trace of captured Revolutionary War flags had been lost, aside from the six mentioned. Seybert proposed that such captured flags as could be found should be displayed in the building where Congress met.[101]

As a result, the Senate and the House of Representatives on April 18, 1814, enacted a law that the Secretaries of War and Navy collect captured flags and give them to the President for display in a public place. Congress evidently had serious intentions since they appropriated $500 to carry out the law.[102] But none of the $500 was ever spent.[103]

Just four short months after the passage of this law, on August 24 and 25, 1814, British troops seized Washington, D.C., and burned many public buildings. By noon of August 25 the

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[101] U.S. Congress, *American State Papers*: Class V. Military Affairs: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States . . . Ending March 3, 1817, ed. Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Claire Clarke (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), I, 488-490. This is the 13th Congress, 2nd Session, House Report 128.

[102] United States, *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, ed. Richard Peters (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1861), III, 133. This is Chapter 78, Statute II.

[103] In August of 1984 Mr. William F. Sherman of the Judicial, Fiscal, and Social Branch of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., tried to find out how the $500 was spent. After a considerable and challenging search, Mr. Sherman reported on August 21 that none of the money was spent. It probably was later returned to the Treasury.

Capitol and the building housing the War Department lay in ruins.[104] The six flags mentioned by John Armstrong could have been destroyed at this time, whether they had already been moved to the meeting place of Congress, that is the Capitol, or whether they had remained in the War Department. Carson believes it is "probable"[105] that most of the flags from the Revolution were destroyed at this time. Perhaps those authorized to spend the $500 felt the same way.

Yet we know that three Ansbach-Bayreuth flags turned up later. The flags must have been somewhere at the time. And of course G.W.P. Custis was holding his two Revolutionary War flags safely outside the city, presumably just across the Potomac River in Arlington, Virginia, his home.[106]

The upsurge of national feeling that came with the Mexican War again set Congress to thinking about flags. Mr. Hammett introduced a joint resolution into the House of Representatives for the preservation of captured foreign flags on January 2, 1845.[107] Mr. Pratt reported to the House about the matter on January 28. Mr. Pratt asked a rhetorical question about missing Revolutionary War flags. "Where are they now? Either mouldered into dust, or rotting in some obscure place, at this time *unknown*!"

For the most part Mr. Pratt's report relies heavily on the research and language of the earlier 1814 report. Congress does not seem to have been so greatly stirred at this time as in 1814. Mr. Pratt refers to the six flags of the earlier report as though they still existed, but gives no evidence

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[104] Ray W. Irwin, "Washington Burned," *Dictionary of American History,* v, 417.

[105] Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[106] George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*, by his adopted son . . . a memoir of the author by his daughter and . . . notes by Benson J. Lossing (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1860), pp. 52, 513.

[107] U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 28th Cong., 2d Sess., 1845, XIV, 65.

of having bothered with checking on them.[108] Hammet's joint resolution was never voted on and the matter died.[109]

SOME FLAGS REAPPEAR

On December 8, 1848, Benson J. Lossing[110] was visiting Washington in his pursuit of American history. He spent the late forenoon visiting President Polk at the White House, asking about the activities of Polk's family during the Revolution. At noon he crossed the mile-long bridge over the Potomac and rode to Arlington House, the mansion of George Washington Parke Custis.

> Mr. Custis, the last survivor of Washington's immediate household, is enjoying the blessing of a green old age. He has been present at the inauguration of every president of the United States (now numbering thirteen). . . . It was almost sunset when I left Arlington House and returned to the Federal city. Before breakfast the next morning I rode down to Alexandria.[111]

At Alexandria Lossing wanted to see the relics of George Washington which Custis had placed in the Masonic[112] museum there. The museum was closed to the public, but Lossing got permission

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[108] U.S. Congress, *Reports of Committees*, 28th Cong., 2d Sess., House of Representatives, Report No. 80.

[109] Interview with Mr. James Harwood, Diplomatic and Legislative Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C., on August 15, 1984. Mr. Hammet's joint resolution did raise a new issue, interesting from a conservationist's viewpoint. In the manuscript version appear some phrases omitted from the resolution printed in the *Congressional Globe*. The President was to collect the flags to have "them all safely deposited in a suitable apartment to be prepared and reserved. . . ." This seems to hint that old objects need special care, whereas the 1814 report was only concerned with patriotic display. This is in the National Archives, Washington, D C. , Record Group 233, 28th Congress, Bills and Resolutions Originating in the House, 28A-B2 (Report 80) (H. Jt. Res. 55), Preliminary Inventory 113, vol. I, entry 335.

[110] Lossing, *op. cit.*, II, 206-209. Benson J. Lossing made a unique contribution to the study of American history. In the late 1840's he got the idea of visiting places associated with the American Revolution, talking with a rapidly dying older generation who still remembered the Revolution, and making sketches of places and objects connected with that time. He traveled 8,000 miles and interviewed thousands of people. In this way he produced his huge two-volume work of 1550 pages with 1100 engravings made from his own drawings.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[112] Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

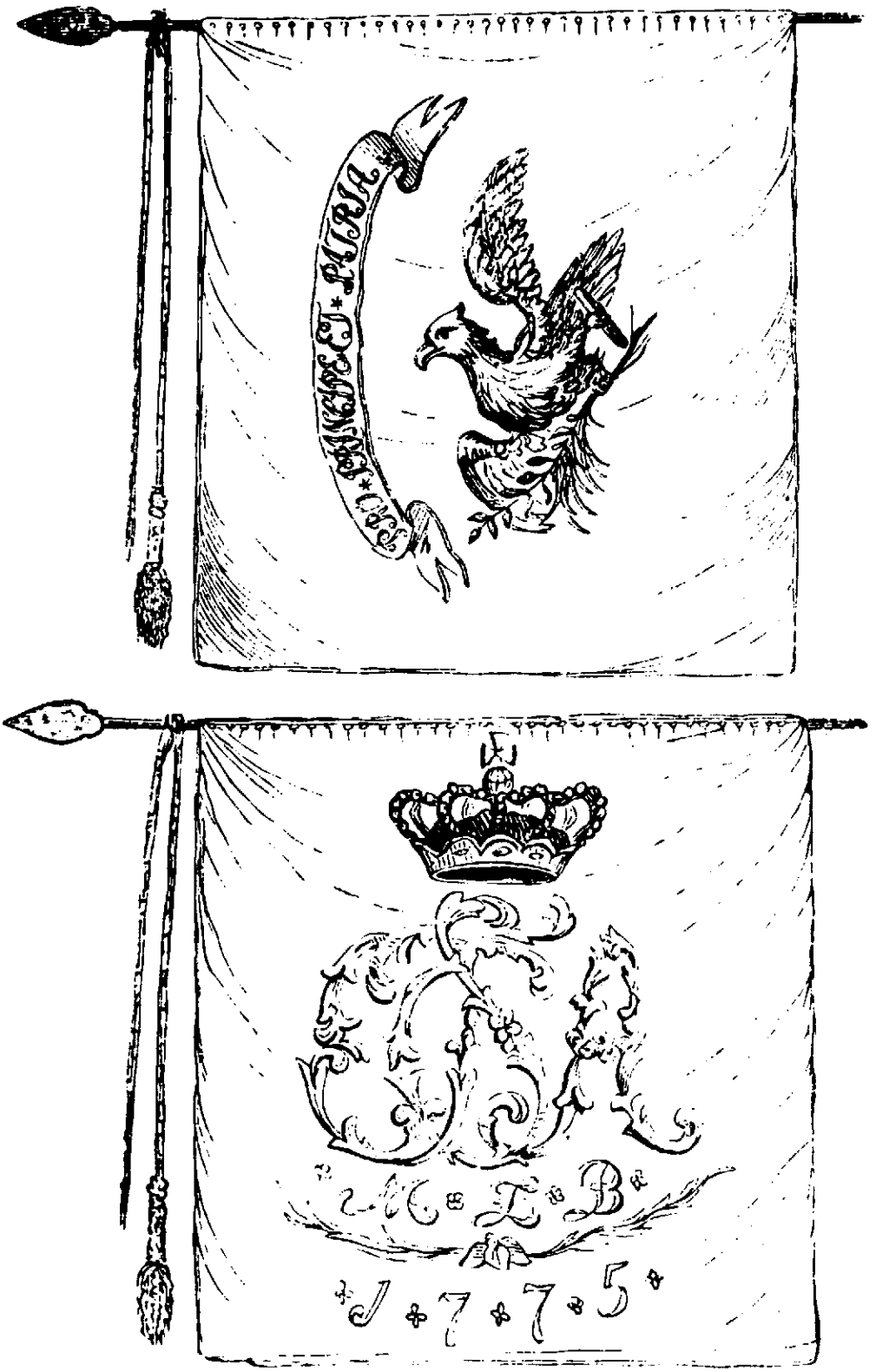

Figure 12. Benson J. Lossing made these sketches of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag at the Alexandria museum on December 9, 1848. Reproduced from Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book*, vol. 2, p. 207.

from the mayor to visit it. In the museum he saw the British flag and the Ansbach flag which Congress had given to Washington. He dryly remarks that the words on the Ansbach flag, "For Prince and Fatherland," form "a curious motto for the flag of mercenaries."

Lossing spent that morning of December 9 sketching the British and the German flags. His engraving of the reverse of the Ansbach flag in his book is rather accurate; however, the obverse with the date 1775 is attached to the staff incorrectly, being rotated 90°. The engraving in Lossing's book is the second known picture of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags.

Lossing says of the many relics in this museum that "neglect is allowing the invisible fingers of decay to destroy them." But Custis was planning to move his relics to the National Institute in Washington. That was December 1848.

On December 26, 1848, President James Polk ordered the Secretary of War to deposit flags captured during the Mexican War in the Military Academy at West Point. He cited the Act of April 18, 1814, as his authority.[113]

Sometime between December 1848 and his death on October 10, 1857, George Washington Parke Custis decided to give the two flags from the Alexandria museum to the President.

But before Custis gave the flags to the President someone else saw and sketched them. *Ballou's Pictorial* of July 7, 1855, has an article called "Revolutionary Relics," largely devoted to objects that once belonged to George Washington. Among the illustrations is an engraving of the British flag and the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag, which Lossing saw in 1848. The unsigned article makes the same mistake Lossing does in saying the German flag is Hessian and was captured at Trenton.

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[113] Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

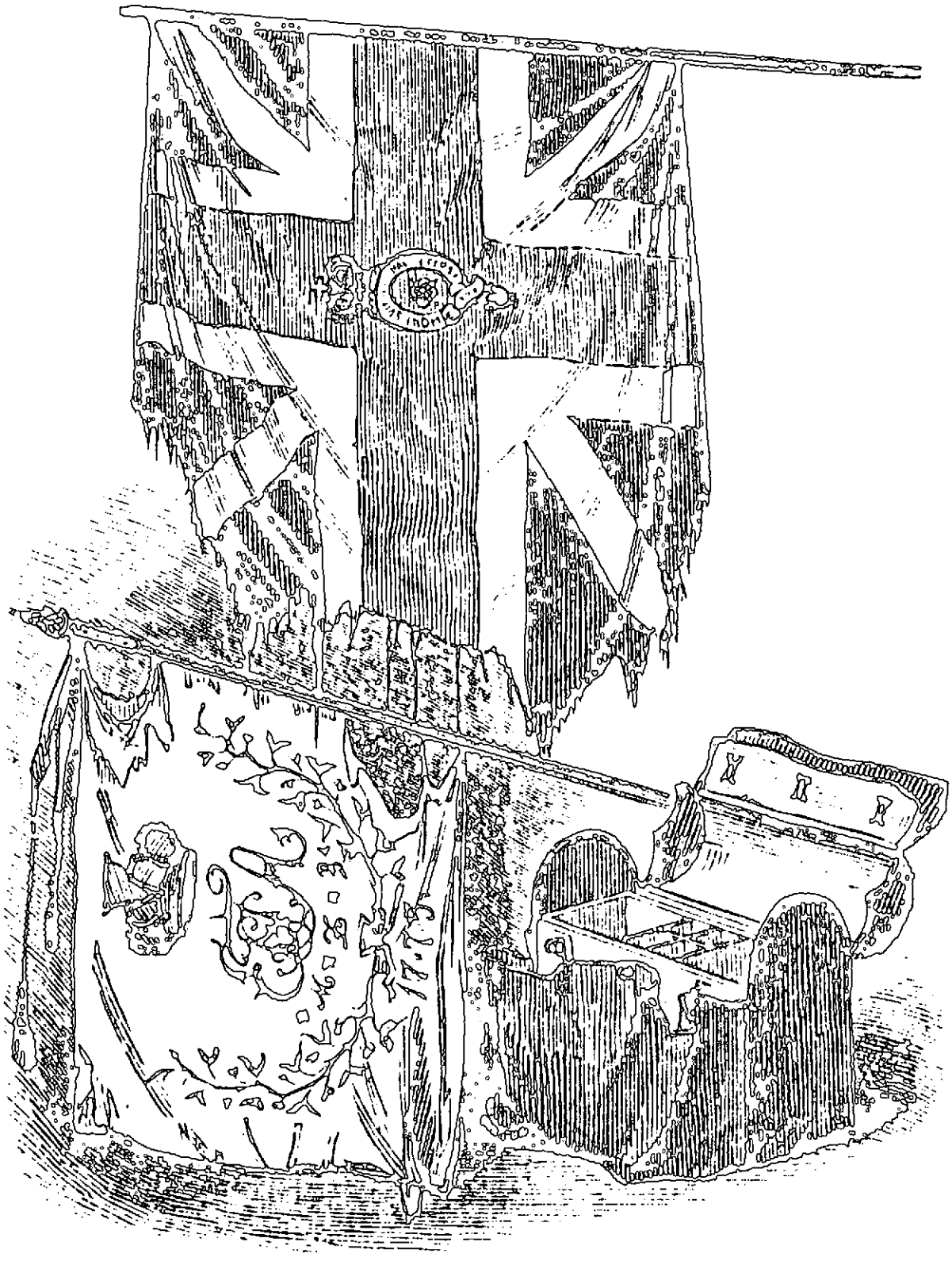

Figure 13. Drawing of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag from *Ballou's Pictorial* of July 7, 1855. Courtesy of Dr. Harold Langley, the Smithsonian Institution.

Although Ballou's artist was not quite so careful with details as was Lossing, the general appearance of the Ansbach flag is more correct, the monogram being smaller, the wreath larger, and the staff properly attached. Also we learn something quite interesting from Ballou's drawing. Already in the 1850's the flag was torn away from the staff at the top and bottom[114] somewhat as it appears in the photograph in Gherardi Davis's book in 1907. Lossing's drawing of 1848 shows no tears in the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag. Possibly Lossing was trying to show the flag as it was in new condition rather than it actually was when he saw it.

George Washington Parke Custis gave the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag and the British flag to the President. Robert E. Lee, son-in-law of Custis, wrote following letter about Custis's gift of the flags to the government:

Arlington, Alexandria P.O., Va.
8 September 1858

W.B. Lee, Esq.
Librarian W.D.
Sir:

I have just received your letter of the 3rd instant. My recollection is that the flags you mention came into the possession of the late G.W.P. Custis at the death of Gen. Washington, & were for a number of years deposited by him in the Alexandria museum. Of late years, when the museum began to decline, he, fearing for the security of the flags, withdrew them from the museum & determined to present them to the Government, & placed them in the hands of the President, who deposited them for the time in the War Office. I was absent from home at the time & only knew of the circumstance from family letters. I presume Mr. Custis transmitted no letter with the flags, as that was not his habit, but, as far as my recollection serves me, presented them in person.

My family is now absent from home, but as soon as I can ascertain the facts it will give me pleasure to communicate them to you.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R.E. Lee[115]

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[114] "Revolutionary Relics," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* (Boston), July 7, 1855, p. 4. This illustrated magazine was published from 1851 through 1859. *Ballou's Pictorial* says the flags are in a room over the market house of the city of Alexandria and mistakenly implies that the flags belong to the corporation of Alexandria. So Custis probably removed the flags from the museum and gave them to the President in the time from 1855 until his death in 1857. Lossing said he received permission to see the flags from "Mr. Vietch, the mayor of Alexandria, under whose official charge the corporation has placed the collection" (Lossing, *op. cit.*, II, 207). Dr. Harold Langley of the Smithsonian Institution located this article in *Ballou's Pictorial* for me.

[115] The letter is slightly edited. It was discovered in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., with the help of Mr. Charles Shaughnessy of the Archives in August 1984. It is from Record Group 107, Letters Received, L86 (92).

W.B. Lee, Librarian of the War Department, had been planning to take some flags to West Point in accordance with President Polk's directive. He had the two flags from Custis and one from the Mexican War. Before he left for West Point, he tried to get more information about the Revolutionary War flags, but Robert E. Lee was not able to help.[116]

W.B. Lee journeyed to West Point, N.Y., and personally presented the flags to officials there on September 11, 1858.[117]

John Carson assumes that three Ansbach-Bayreuth flags and two British flags from the Revolution were presented to West Point at this time,[118] all ultimately tracing back to George Washington. But close examination of the accompanying documents reveals the mention of only two flags from Washington--one British and one Ansbach-Bayreuth flag. All of the references to Yorktown surrender flags say Washington had two of them, those awarded by Congress. It is not impossible that Washington had more than one Ansbach-Bayreuth flag, but documentation for only one flag has been found.

Where did the idea originate that the three Ansbach-Bayreuth flags and the two British flags held by the West Point Museum had once belonged to George Washington? Apparently the idea came from these five flags being together in one display case at West Point.[119]

The earliest known reference to the five flags in one case is in a letter from John M. Wilson of West Point in 1891. In answer to a request for information about the British flags in the case he says, "I did not dare open the case which has been sealed for so many years, fearing that if I

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[116] In his letter of September 8, 1858, Lee promises more information. A search in the National Archives and in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress failed to produce more letters on the subject. Robert E. Lee's letter, however, does establish certain facts. Custis received the flags from Washington at his death. Custis did not will the flags to the government, but gave them in person to the President in concern for their preservation.

[117] For copies of letters and documents directly connected with the September 11 presentation, see Carson's article, pp. 83-85.

[118] Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

touched the colors, they might be injured beyond repair." He assumes they have been in the case since 1858.[120]

We do not know when the flags were put into the case. But here, suddenly out of oblivion, the second and third Ansbach-Bayreuth flags appear! It has been 110 years since the eighteen German flags were given to Congress in Philadelphia and seventeen of them vanished from historical scrutiny. But now in 1891 we know the location of three of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags.

John M. Carson, who wrote the authoritative article on the flags to which we have often referred, was at West Point at the time. More resolute than Wilson, Carson had the case opened by 1895 and had examined the flags closely.[121] But he did make the assumption they were all of the same origin, apparently since they were all in the same case.

Carson had written his article by October 1895,[122] but it did not appear in print till 1902 when the West Point bulletin published it. Gherardi Davis was also studying flags about this same time. His carefully researched book, *Regimental Colors in the War of the Revolution*, appeared a little later in 1907.

What both Carson and Davis did not realize was that West Point owned another Ansbach-Bayreuth flag at the very time. A fourth Ansbach-Bayreuth flag had appeared out of the darkness of oblivion, arriving suitably labeled "unknown" from the War Department in 1900. Its identity was not learned "until it was transferred some years later from Memorial Hall [at West Point] to the West Point Museum.[123]

Since that time, no more of the ten Ansbach-Bayreuth flags (nor any of the eight Hesse-Cassel flags) have been found. Gherardi Davis, musing on the mystery of the location of

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[120] Wilson to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, August 19, 1891, Record Group 94, Box 187.

[121] Carson to F.B. Heitman, Adjutant General's Office, October 4, 1895, Record Group 94, Box 187.

[122] *Ibid.*

[123] [Terry,] *op. cit.*, p. 3.

these flags, says, "What has become of the other colors, no one seems to know. The disappearance of the heavy embroidered squares of silk of the Ansbach flags is not easy to explain."[124]

In his book Gherardi Davis thanks Carson and a certain Mills of West Point for the photographs they made of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags.[125] These photographs appear in Davis's book, the oldest known photographs, which show the flags as they were before any restoration was done.

By the time Davis and Carson were studying the flags, West Point had a rather large collection of trophy flags, many in poor condition. West Point officials began a program of restoration around 1895.[126] During the years 1911 through 1914 the West Point Museum made extensive inquiries among European countries to learn how their museums preserved flags. The West Point Museum, unfortunately, decided on a system of covering flags with black, silk netting, which made the flags hard to see.[127] In 1914 one of the Ansbach flags was restored, the work being paid by the Colonial Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Priscilla Chapter of the D.A.R. paid to have another of the Ansbach flags restored two years later. The museum itself restored the remaining two flags later as part of its regular restoration program.[128]

Miss Erna Kohlhaase of New York City had restored at least one of the four Ansbach flags by October 1914, probably the one with the date missing.[129] She worked seventy days at $3.00 per

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[124] Gherardi Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[125] *Ibid.*

[126] Howard M. Madaus, "A History of Vexillological Conservation Practices in the United States: A Curatorial Perspective." (Address given to the Harpers Ferry Regional Textile Group, Division of Conservation, Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, September, 1982).

[127] Carl A. Schopper, December 22, 1916, to Edmund Banks Smith, West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

[128] [Terry,] *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2; Schopper, May 31, 1916, to W.H. Tschappat, West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

[129] Schopper, October 27, 1914, to Mrs. W.P. Edgerton, West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

day enclosing the flag with black netting.[130] Although officials at West Point believed her training in art and her skill with the needle qualified her more than others, Miss Kohlhaase had to be dropped from the restoration work because she was not an American citizen.[131]

In 1958 the West Point Museum gave one (with the date 1775) of the four flags to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The National Park Service asked to have a flag for display at Yorktown, Virginia, in the Colonial National Historical Park. An outright gift was refused, but the West Point Museum did place the flag with the date 1770 at Yorktown on indefinite loan in September 1959. Two of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags remain at West Point, one with the date missing and one with the date 1775, which can be traced back to the Washington family.[132]

Fonda Thomsen, Textile Conservator at the Harpers Ferry Center of the National Park Service, briefly treated the 1770 flag from Yorktown in 1976. In spring of 1984 Fonda Thomsen did a major restoration of this flag. In her report on this restoration she completely describes each step of her work.

FIGURES ON THE FLAGS AND THEIR MEANINGS

The four known Ansbach-Bayreuth flags are very much alike. The figures, or designs, on both sides of the flags are embroidered with deliberate care. The embroidery makes them different

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[130] "Cost of preservation of flags at the U.S.M.A. Ordnance Museum," n.d., Restoration File, West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

[131] Schopper to Edgerton, *loc. cit.* ; Schopper, November 12, 1915, to Kohlhaase, West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

[132] [Terry,] *op. cit.*, p. 3.

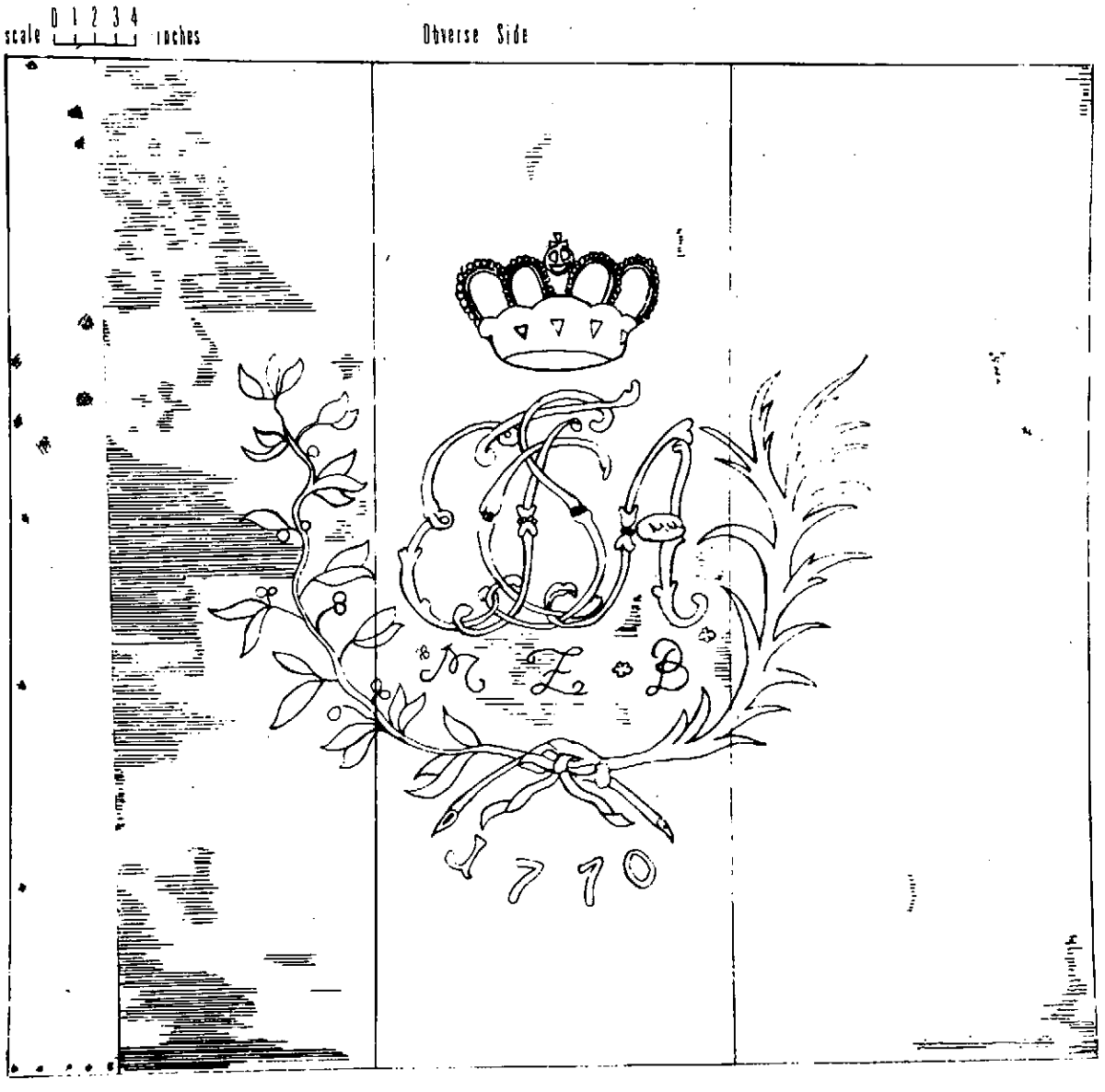

Figure 14. Scale drawing of the obverse of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag at the Colonial National Historical Park at Yorktown, Virginia, made by Fonda Thomsen in 1984.

from most German flags of the period, which were merely painted.[133] These Ansbach-Bayreuth flags in their original, new condition must have been quite striking. This helps account for the fact that these were preserved, while many other flags of the time have been destroyed.

The two sides of each flag are made of heavy silk damask with a pattern in the weave. The two sides of damask are sewed together, back to back, to form one flag.

The obverse, or front, of the flag makes two references to Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander. The letters "MZB" stand for *Markgraf zu Brandenburg*, meaning "Margrave of Brandenburg," a title of the ruler of Ansbach-Bayreuth. The letters intertwined in the large monogram should be read in this order: "SETCA."[134] The letters stand for SINCERE ET CONSTANTER ALEXANDER. The first three words are the Latin motto of the Order of the Red Eagle. The Latin words are translated into German as *aufrichtig und standhaft*,[135] meaning in English "upright and steadfast."

The Order of the Red Eagle (then of Ansbach-Bayreuth, later of Prussia) was a society to which certain persons were admitted as an honor. Carl Alexander was automatically a member of the order by virtue of his princely position. He seems to have taken a special interest in the order since he reorganized it and rewrote its rules in 1777.[136] Most existing portraits of Carl Alexander show him wearing a star of this order on his coat.

The last word of the motto, ALEXANDER, of course refers to the Margrave. His complete monogram, CFCA, appears in the same style of lettering in the finial, or spearhead of the flagstaff,

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[133] Gherardi Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[134] Dr. Julius Meyer, "Markgräfliche Regimentsfahnen," *Onoldina* (Ansbach: C. Brügel und Sohn, n.d.), vol. II, part 2, p. 86. Dr. Meyer wrote this article after he had received photographs and an inquiry about the flags from Gherardi Davis. Dr. Meyer reports that the material in Davis's book was first made public in a lecture to a historical society in New York in the winter of 1906-1907 (*ibid.*, p. 94).

[135] *Meyers Grosses Konversations-Lexikon: Ein Nachschlagewerk des allgemeinen Wissens*, 6th ed., *s.v.* "Adlerordnen," ["Orders of the Eagle"].

[136] F.W. Höftmann, *Of Red Eagles and Royal Crowns*, trans. William E. Hamelman (Dallas: Matthäus Publishers, 1978), pp. 2-3.

as mentioned before. A somewhat different arrangement of his initials appears in the bookplates of the books in his library, but with the same ornate, broken letters.[137]

Above the monogram hovers an embroidered crown of heavy applique. This represents the crown, or elector's hat (*Kurhut*),[138] of Brandenburg, which in actual life was edged below with ermine and above had arches set with pearls and an orb with a cross.[139]

Partly encircling the monogram is a wreath of green branches with laurel leaves and berries on the left and palm on the right. The branches are tied with reddish ribbon. Below is the date – 1770 on one flag, 1775 on two, and missing from the fourth. Except for the wreath, the figures on the obverse are made with gold and silver threads and sequins and with other materials.

Concerning these dates Carson says they "refer to the years in which the particular organizations that carried them originated." However, a more likely possibility is that given by Dr. Julius Meyer. He says that 1770 and 1775 were the years when the flags were bestowed (*verliehen worden*) on the regiments by Carl Alexander.[140] It is likely, then, that these were the years when the flags were made.

The reverse of the flag has an eagle, embroidered with red and of course is associated with the Order of the Red Eagle. The eagle is less rigidly stylized than the usual heraldic eagles,

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[137] Keunecke, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 48; Städtler, *op, cit.*, p. iii. Similar monograms of various German rulers appear on the coinage of that time. See William D. Craig, *Germanic Coinages* (Mountain View, California, 1954), pp. 228-229.

[138] Julius Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[139] The Margrave of Brandenburg was one of the electors, or *Kurfürsten*, who elected the German King, also Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. See *Meyers Grosses Konversations-Lexikon*, *op. cit.*, *s.v.* "Fürstenhut," "Krone," and "Kurfürsten." Contemporary drawings of this elector's hat in varying forms can be found in Carl Alexander's bookplates (referred to before), on the insignia of the Order of the Red Eagle, and on porcelain made in Ansbach. Höftmann, *op. cit.*, plates I-IV; Adolf Bayer, *Die Ansbacher Fayence-Fabriken* (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1959), pp. 33, 36.

[140] Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 82; Julius Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 86. Dr. Harold Langley of the Smithsonian Institution also concurs with Julius Meyer's opinion.

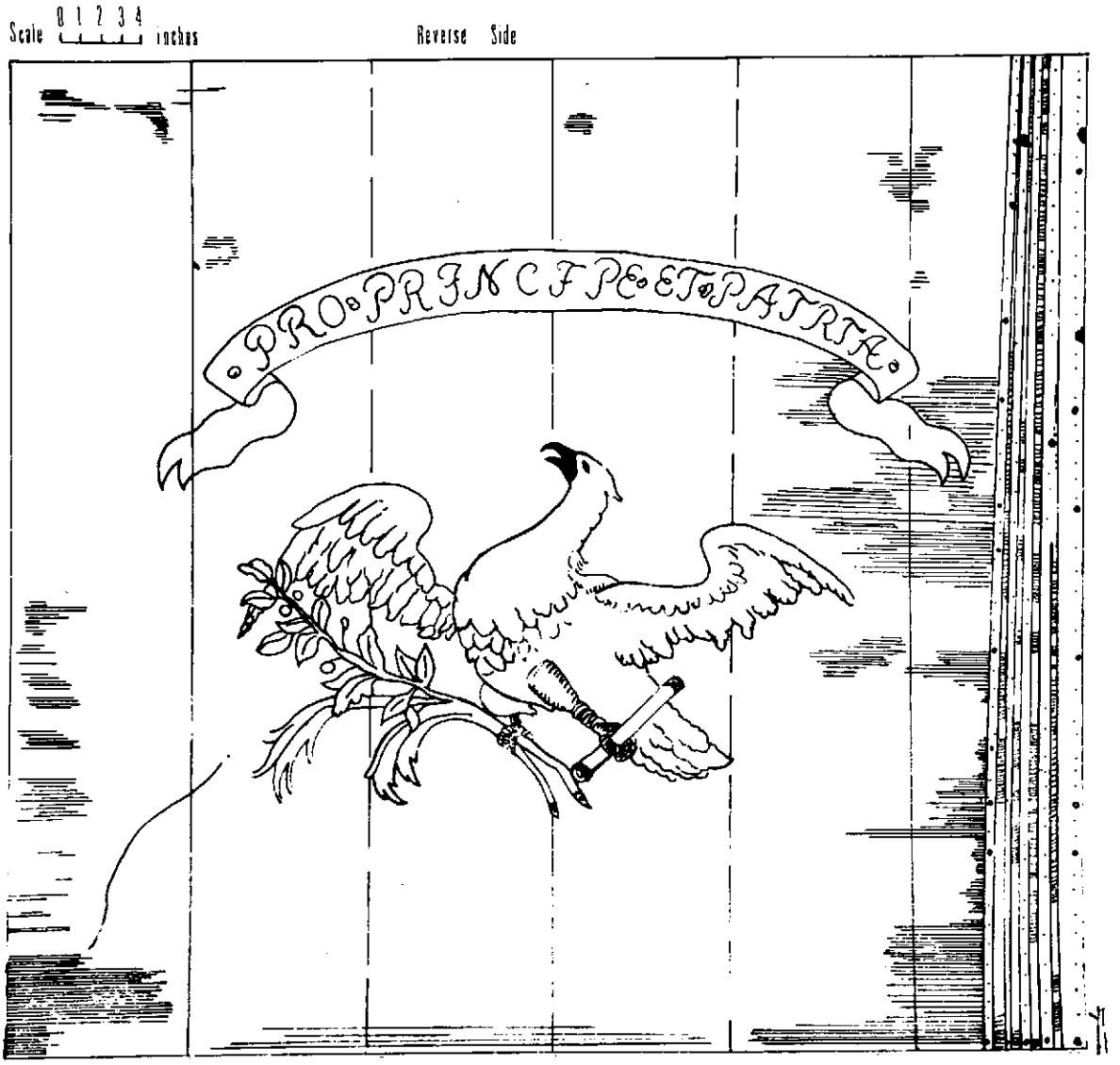

Figure 15. Reverse of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag drawn by Fonda Thomsen in 1984.

perhaps more realistic. The eagle extends its tongue and spreads its wings, ready to fly.[141] In its right talon the eagle holds branches of laurel and palm; in its left talon it holds the baton of a general or field marshal.[142] Above the eagle is a silver scroll with letters of gold, giving these Latin words: *Pro principe et patria.* These words mean, "For prince and fatherland."

BROADER SYMBOLISM OF SURRENDERING THE FLAGS

In heraldry a shield with its designs symbolizes the actual presence of the owner of the shield. So the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag symbolized the prince and fatherland to the soldiers and commanded their loyalty. The words, *Pro principe et patria*, were well chosen in this regard.

We have noticed earlier some ambiguities of the soldiers and their ruler in their attitudes toward each other. We may suppose the soldiers showed a customary respect for their flag. Yet in the pressure of the surrender at Yorktown, the Ansbach-Bayreuthers did not find yielding their flags to the Americans was so hard. Various factors may have been involved.

Merely being hired, the Ansbach-Bayreuthers did not feel such great enmity for the Americans as did the British. Also, German-speaking troops fought on the other side and the American army had been trained by a German, von Steuben. Von Steuben was present at Yorktown. But the willingness of the Ansbach-Bayreuthers to give up their flags may have had an element of aversion for their prince, part of the ambiguity we noticed in the mutiny at Ochsenfurt even before they left German soil.

This is in marked contrast with the British soldiers. Their antipathy for their rebellious American cousins was very great by the time of Yorktown, and, no doubt, feelings of loyalty to the British King were strong. Many direct and indirect expressions of British scorn for the

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[141] Similar flying eagles are found in contemporary symbolism connected with Carl Alexander in Keunecke, *op. cit.*, p. 78; and on Prussian flags in Ottfried Neubecker, *Fahnen und Flaggen* (Leipzig: L. Staackmann, 1939), pp. 31, 37.

[142] A painting of Landgrave Friedrich II of Hesse-Cassel completed in 1773 shows him as general with a very similar baton in his hand. This painting is in the State Art Collection, Castle Wilhelmshoehe, Kassel, Germany. See Kipping, *op. cit.* , p. 12.

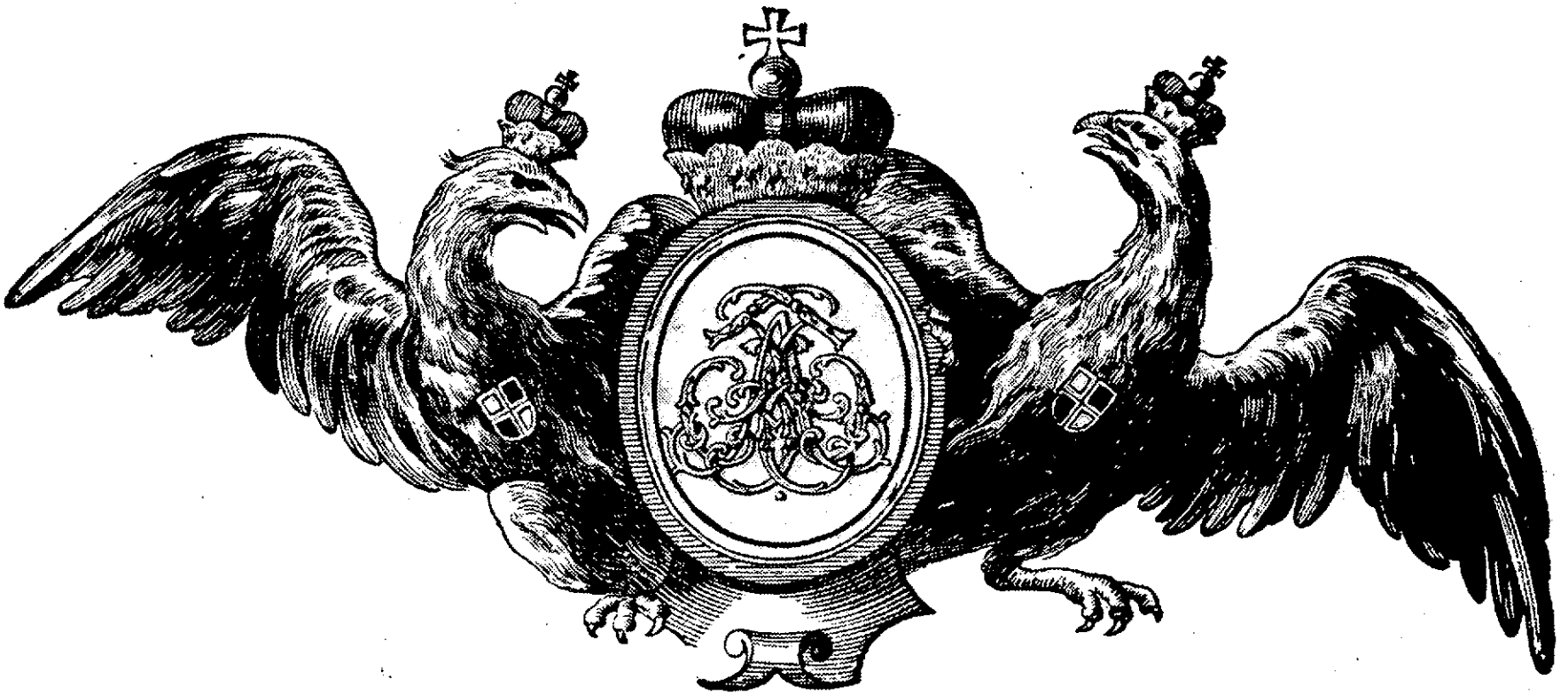

Figure 16. Vignette from the title page of a book printed in 1754, commemorating the marriage of Carl Alexandeer. Again the crown and the intertwined initials appear, but here with two eagles symbolizing the House of Brandenburg. These eagles somewhat resemble the eagle on the Ansbach-Bayreuth flag. Reproduced from Keunecke, *Markgraf Alexander von Ansbach-Bayreuth*, p. 78.

Americans (and vice versa) are documented.[143] This was also expressed in their unwillingness to surrender their flags to the Americans. As Mr. Seybert later said in his report to Congress, "They [flags] have been at all times regarded as the *insignia* of fame and power; their surrender is the act of submission."[144] The British had to submit; but did it grudgingly.

Right after the surrender, the *Americans*, the French, and the Germans were able to fraternize in a relaxed way with one another.[145] The *British*, the Germans, and the French were able to do this, too. But a real hatred existed between the Americans and the British. The last instance of bloodshed occurred *after* the surrender when a British soldier bayonetted an American to death. Although the Americans did not bother with recording it, historians assume that British soldier became the last fatal casualty at Yorktown.[146]

We may conclude that the surrender of the flags symbolized in a meaningful way the complicated relationships among the British troops, their King, and the Americans and the relationships among the German troops, their Margrave, and the Americans.

PRESENT MEANINGS OF THE FLAGS

The Ansbach-Bayreuth flag now at the Colonial National Historical Park at Yorktown, Virginia, is a symbol associated with the American Revolution and all the history we have reviewed. Its excellent workmanship causes it to be regarded as a piece of art. Further, the flag is an example of object conservation.

The gradual growth of an idea of conservation of the flags may be traced through their history. At the very first the Continental Congress regarded the flags captured at Yorktown as

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[143] Jerome A. Greene, *The Allies at Yorktown: A Bicentennial History of the Siege of 1781, Colonial National Historical park, Virginia*, Historic Resource Study (Denver: National Park Service, 1976), pp. 332-333, 335.

[144] U.S. Congress, *American State Papers, op. cit.*, I, 489.

[145] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[146] Jerome A. Greene, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

prizes to bestow on General Washington. The Congress of 1814 looked at the display of flags captured during the Revolution as a patriotic answer to British inroads on American pride during the second war with Great Britain. The Congress of 1848 viewed the flags with some of the same nationalistic fervor, but also with an inkling of the need to keep them as museum objects. George Washington Parke Custis also had patriotic intentions concerning the flags coupled with a personal devotion to Washington, but also an awareness of need for preservation.

After the turn of the last century as the flags continued to deteriorate, the West Point Museum made them objects of a deliberate program of restoration. Although the methods were crude, the intention was preservation.

In 1984, Fonda Thomsen of the Harpers Ferry Center again restored one of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags, undoing as much as possible the earlier, crude attempts at restoration and employing present science and technology to make it an object future generations of Americans can view as a reminder of their historic past.

APPENDIX I: THE NUMBER OF FLAGS SURRENDERED AT YORKTOWN

The journal entry for October 18-19, 1781, of the Comte de Clermont-Crévecoeur referred to in footnote 65 in full says:

> The 22 flags captured from the enemy have been sent to the Court of France as a gift from Congress, delivered by the Marquis de La Fayette. This gentleman departed for France immediately after the siege, taking with him the flags that Congress had presented to the King.[147]

However, it is known that Lafayette did not leave for France until December 25, 1781. The editors of Clermont-Crévecoeur's journal have found no evidence of Lafayette's having taken any flags with him, nor of any resolution of Congress to present these flags to the King of France.[148]

Colonel Tench Tilghman, Washington's French-speaking aide,[149] was sent to Philadelphia with news of the surrender. In a verbal report to Congress he said that "22 stands of colors" were received "under the capitulation."[150]

The Connecticut Gazette of November 23, 1781, in an article headed "British Standards Captured at Yorktown--Philadelphia, Nov. 7" says:

> On Saturday afternoon last, between the hours of three and four, arrived 24 regimental standards, taken with the British and German forces under Lord Cornwallis . . . the hostile standards were then laid at the feet of Congress and his Excellency the Ambassador of France.[151]

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[147] Rice and Brown, *op. cit.*, I, 61.

[148] Louis Gottschalk, *Lafayette and the Close of the American Revolution* (Chicago, 1942), pp. 341-347 as referred to in Rice and Brown, *op. cit.*, I, 61, 62.

[149] Thomas J. Fleming, *Beat the Last Drum: The Siege of Yorktown, 1781* (St. Martins Press, 1963), p. 144.

[150] Rice and Brown, *op. cit.*, I, 61.

[151] *The Connecticut Gazette, loc. cit.*, VII, 451.

George Washington wrote in a letter to the President of Congress on October 27-29 that"24 Standards . . . are ready to be laid before Congress. [152]

Along with this letter Washington sent a "Return of Ordnance and Military Stores taken at York and Gloucester in Virginia, by the surrender of the British Army, on the 19th of October, 1781" signed by "H. Knox, Commanding the Artillery of the United States." This return lists "Regimental standards, German 18, British, 43rd 2, 76th 2, 80th 2, 6. Total 24."[153]

The following table summarizes the conflicting numbers reported:

Döhla*	18	German flags			
Clermont-Crévecoeur	22	German and British flags			
Popp*	24	"	"	"	"
Tilghman	22	"	"	"	"
*Connecticut Gazette**	24	"	"	"	"
Washington*	24	"	"	"	"
Knox*	24	"	"	"	"

The five witnesses marked with an asterisk support the number 24, and the other two support 22. The sources supporting 22 are originally French, or in the case of Colonel Tilghman able to speak French; sources supporting 24 are English or German.

There is one further problem concerning the flags surrendered at Yorktown. After listing the 24 regimental standards H. Knox goes on to list as surrendered, "British union flags 4.--Camp colours, German 32, British 41. Total 73."[154] These 73 mysterious camp colors are not known to be mentioned at a later time.

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[152] *The Magazine of American History, op. cit.*, VII, 451.

[153] *Ibid.* p. 452. Tarleton makes a similar statement but it seems to have been based on this return by H. Knox. See [Banastre] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: T. Cadell, 1787, reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1968), pp. 390-391, 453.

[154] *The Magazine of American History, loc. cit.*

The relationship between regimental standards and camp colors is somewhat like the relationship between dress clothing and everyday clothing. Regimental standards were more impressive in appearance and made of better materials.[155] Perhaps because the 73 union flags and camp colors were of inferior appearance, they tended to be ignored and eventually were destroyed.

Benson Lossing in *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, published much later in 1859, gives yet another number of flags. He says, ". . . twenty-eight British captains, each bearing a flag in a case, were drawn up in line. Opposite to them, at a distance of six paces, twenty-eight American sergeants were placed in line to receive the colors.[156] The British captains balked at handing over the flags to Americans of inferior rank. So the flags were handed to Ensign Robert Wilson, youngest commissioned officer in the American army, and he in turn handed them to the sergeants.[157] Lossing says there were "twenty-eight regimental standards (ten of them English, and eighteen German)."

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[155] Interview with Dr. Harold Langley, Curator, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., August 7, 1984. *Cf.* Richardson, *op. cit.* , pp. 276, 279.

[156] Lossing, *op. cit.*, II, 318.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 320. Lossing got this story from surviving relatives.

APPENDIX II: PROVENANCE AND HISTORY OF THE ANSBACH-BAYREUTH FLAGS

All 10 flags leave Ansbach, Germany, March 7, 1777

1770 Flag

(West Point accession no. 2431)

Surrender of German forces at Yorktown, Va., Oct. 19, 1781

↓

American and French forces under George Washington Oct. 19-29, 1781

↓

David Humphreys

↓

Continental Congress Philadelphia, Pa., Nov. 3, 1781

↓

UNKNOWN

↓

West Point Museum West Point, N.Y. in 19th Century (before 1891)

↓

Colonial National Historical Park Yorktown, Va. September 1959

↓

Present (1984)

1775 Flag

(West Point accession no. 2433)

↓

SAME

↓

Benjamin Lincoln, Sec. of War

↓

George Washington Mt. Vernon, Va., Dec. 28, 1781

↓

George W.P. Custis, 1799 Mt. Vernon, Va. Arlington, Va.

↓

Museum of Corp. of Alexandria Alexandria, Va. ← Lossing draws flag on Dec. 9, 1848

← Ballou's artist draws *ca.* 1851-1855

↓

George W.P. Custis gives to the President of U.S., Washington, D.C. *ca.* 1851-1857

↓

War Department, Washington, D.C. *ca.* 1857-1858

↓

West Point Museum West Point, N.Y., Sept. 11, 1858

↓

Present (1984)

1775 Flag

(West Point accession no. 2434)

SAME

UNKNOWN

West Point Museum
West Point, N.Y. in 19th Century
(before 1891)

Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 1958

Present (1984)

Flag with date missing

(West Point accession no. 2432)

SAME

UNKNOWN

War Department, Washington, D.C.

West Point, N.Y. 1900

West Point Museum
West Point, N.Y. by 1914

Present (1984)

APPENDIX III: A COMPARISON OF THE FLAGS

An attempt was made to compare three of the Ansbach-Bayreuth flags. (The available photograph of the fourth flag, the one with the date missing, was not clear enough for comparison.) The actual 1770 flag was compared with sharp photocopies of photos of the two 1775 flags.

The flags are alike in a great many exact details. Only the following differences were noted between the 1770 flag on the one hand and the 1775 flags on the other.

In the shading of the ribbon which ties the branches on the obverse and in the shading of the ends of the scroll on the reverse the 1770 flag differs from those of 1775. On the obverse the points before and after the date and between the two 7's apparently were never present on the 1770 flag, but are present on the 1775 flags.

Gherardi Davis already noticed in his study that the pattern in the damask of the 1770 flag differs from that of the 1775 flags.[158] The damask of the 1770 flag has a pattern of flowers, vines, and lattice or basketwork. The 1775 flags have a small spray of flowers and leaves.

These slight differences in the flags could be accounted for by the flags having been made at different times. Perhaps five flags for one regiment were made in 1770 and five flags for the other regiment in 1775.

[158] Gherardi Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural and cultural resources. This includes fostering wise use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The department also promotes the goals of the Take Pride in America campaign by encouraging stewardship and citizen responsibility for the public lands and promoting citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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