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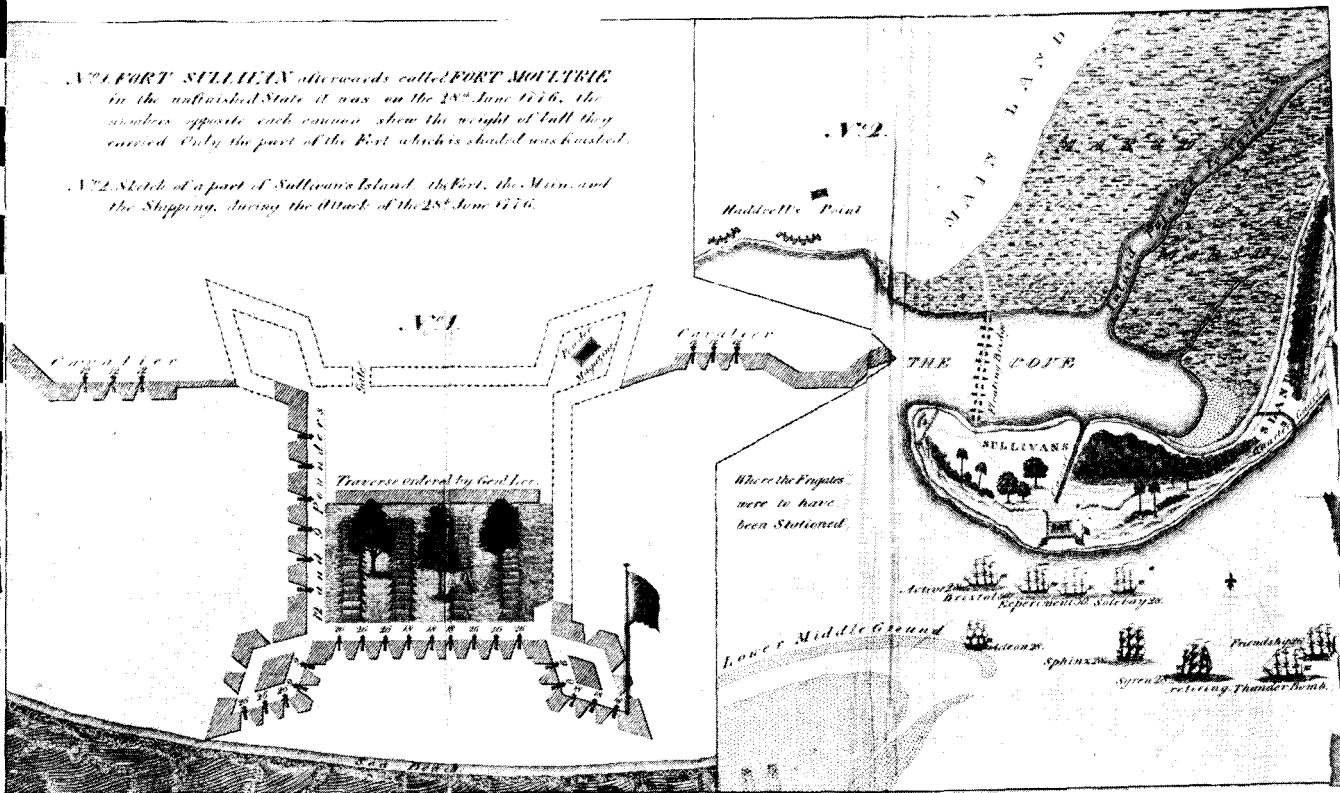
THE BATTLE OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

JUNE 28, 1776

(FORT MOULTRIE, SOUTH CAROLINA)

1776. FORT SULLIVAN afterwards called FORT MOULTRIE in the united States it was on the 28th June 1776, the soldiers opposite each cannon show the weight of ball they carried. Only the part of the Fort which is shaded was hoisted.

1772. Sketch of a part of Sullivan's Island. the Fort, the Mains and the Shipping, during the Attack of the 28th June 1776.



June 30, 1968

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The Battle Of Sullivan's Island and The Capture Of Fort Moultrie

**A Documented Narrative and Troop Movement Maps
Fort Sumter National Monument**

South Carolina

by

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**DIVISION OF HISTORY
Office Of Archeology And Historic Preservation**

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National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

FOREWORD

This report has been prepared to satisfy the research needs as enumerated in Historical Resource Study Proposal, FOSU-H-5, Troop Movement Maps, Battle of Sullivan's Island. As proposed by Superintendent Paul C. Swartz, this report is designed "to provide documentary detail of troop (and ship) dispositions in the Battle of Sullivan's Island and other Revolutionary War engagements aimed at the capture of Fort Moultrie." In addition, this study is directed at explaining why the British failed in 1776 to capture Sullivan's Island and why they succeeded in capturing Fort Moultrie and Charleston in 1780.

A number of persons have assisted in the preparation of this report. Particular thanks are due Superintendent Paul Swartz and Historian John Dobrovolny for their assistance at the site; to Dr. William James Morgan and Robert I. Campbell of the Naval History Division of the Navy Department for permitting me to examine and make use of unpublished source materials collected for the monumental *Naval Documents of the American Revolution Series*; to Frank Sarles for reading the report and his valuable editorial suggestions; and to Dorothy Junkin for the hours she spent typing this manuscript.

Edwin C. Bearss

Washington, D. C.
October 1968

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CHAPTER I

The British Move Against Charleston

As early as the summer of 1775, the British Government had been led to believe by its Royal Governors, especially Josiah Martin of North Carolina and Lord William Campbell of South Carolina, that the Loyalists in the Southern Colonies could destroy the Rebels with the aid of several regiments of British Regulars. They wrote the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the American Department, urging him to champion this course of action. Dartmouth was impressed by what he read, and, in September 1775, he suggested that Sir William Howe, who in October was named the British Commander-in-Chief in North America, dispatch an expedition from his base at Boston to assist the Southern Loyalists.

The force to be committed to this enterprise was soon increased. When Dartmouth informed King George III of his plans in mid-October, the King was asked to sanction an expedition which was to include not only troops from Howe's army but also additional units to be transported direct to the Southern Colonies from Great Britain. George III approved Dartmouth's proposal and ordered five regiments (the 15th, 37th, 53d, 54th, and 57th Regiments of Foot) to be readied to assist the Loyalist in North Carolina. These units were to be commanded by an officer designated by General Howe and were to be reinforced by such regiments as Howe could spare from Boston.

The regulars to be dispatched from the British Isles were to rendezvous at Cork in Ireland, and the Government hoped that they would be ready to embark by December 1. They were to sail for the mouth of the Cape Fear River in North Carolina, where they would join their general and the force embarked at Boston. The Ministry trusted that, with the aid of these soldiers, North Carolina first and then the other Southern Colonies in turn would be restored to their loyalty to the Crown.

Like many plans this one looked to its sponsors, who were armchair strategists, as if it must succeed. But, in the final analysis, it was dependent on the cooperation of the Loyalists in large numbers. Dartmouth recognized this. If the Tories did not rise en masse, all the British could hope to accomplish was to land and occupy a base on the coast from which to make raids into the hinterland.

Dartmouth had reason to expect success. The Royal Governors' reports were optimistic; the long, cold New England winter would curtail military operations around Boston. General Howe could therefore spare several of his veteran regiments, and Dartmouth hoped that these, in addition to the ones assembling at Cork, could reduce the South and rejoin Howe before the summer campaign commenced.

The diversion of a force, respectable in point of numbers, to the Carolinas can scarcely be defended on military grounds. Lord North's Ministry, as has been pointed out, had been induced to undertake it by the expectation of support from the Loyalists of that region. That there were large numbers of these in the Carolinas cannot be disputed; but while military operations must take into consideration political conditions, the latter should not be permitted to overbalance sound strategic doctrines.

Nevertheless, in October, Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, named Commodore Sir Peter Parker to command the naval force assigned to the expedition.¹ Meanwhile, the army's commitment had been increased by two regiments, making a total of seven. Because of these additions, fears were voiced that it might prove impossible to land all the troops at Cape Fear. The officer in charge of the soldiers would accordingly determine if the regulars were to be disembarked in North Carolina, or if they should be diverted to one of the harbors in South Carolina, Charleston or Beaufort.

1. Eric Robson, "The Expedition to the Southern Colonies, 1775-1776," *English Historical Review*, LXVI (Oct., 1951), pp. 538-548; George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats* (New York, 1959), pp. 145-146; William L. Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 5 vols. (London, 1898), Vol. 3, pp. 371-372; Joseph Allen, *Battles of the British Navy* (London, 1842), Vol. 1, p. 224.

On December 1 the fleet was not ready to sail from Cork. Another month was needed to assemble the regiments, ordnance, transports, stores, and the warships Parker needed as escorts. Preparations, however, continued to drag, and it was February 12, 1776, before the fleet hoisted anchor and stood out to sea. This delay was to be costly, because the expedition reached the American coast too late to subdue the Southern Colonies and still join General Howe for the beginning of his summer campaign.²

The passage from Cork was to take three months. Though lengthy, the trip across, one of the officers reported, "was not disagreeable, after we got out of the Bay of Biscay, where we met with the worst weather ever known at sea, and continued in that situation for sixteen days." Thereafter the weather had improved, although they were becalmed four or five days.³

General Howe in the meantime had selected Maj. Gen. Henry Clinton to command the Southern Expedition. Clinton, born into an aristocratic

2. Robson, "The Expedition to the Southern Colonies, 1775-1776," *English Historical Review*, LXVI, pp. 538-548. The two additional regiments assigned to the expedition were the 28th and 46th Regiments of Foot. John S. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London, 1902), Vol. 3, p. 180.

3. William Falconer to Anthony Falconer, July 13, 1776, found in Robert W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (New York, 1853-57), Vol. 2, pp. 19-20.

family, had gained his military experience on the Continent during the Seven Years' War.⁴

In 1775 he had been ordered to Boston, where he had participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill. Having had several disagreements with Howe on strategy, Clinton welcomed an escape from the immediate supervision of his superior.⁵ Just before the expedition sailed, however, Clinton began to have reservations about Dartmouth's plan and seemed to dread shouldering responsibility for its success.⁶

Despite these doubts, Clinton sailed from Boston on January 20, 1776, with a small force numbering not more than 1,500 soldiers. Reaching New York on February 4, Clinton remained there for over a week before resuming the southward voyage. He stopped in Virginia to discuss the military situation with the royal governor, the Earl of Dunmore, who had been compelled by the Patriots to flee Williamsburg and live aboard a warship in Hampton Roads. Dunmore had scant information for Clinton. Before the fleet could sail on, high winds

4. *The American Rebellion, Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns, 1775-1782, With an Appendix of Original Documents*, edited by William B. Willcox (New Haven, 1954), xiii-xvi. (Cited hereinafter as Clinton, *American Rebellion*.)

5. *Ibid.*, xvii-xviii.

6. *Ibid.*, xviii.

damaged one of the transports, making repairs necessary. The small fleet finally cleared Hampton Roads on February 27.⁷

Clinton did not reach the Cape Fear until March 12. There he was surprised to discover that Parker's fleet had not arrived, as he still believed it had sailed at the beginning of December.⁸ He also received evil tidings from Governor Martin. In January, Martin had called on the Highlanders in the North Carolina Piedmont to assemble under Donald McDonald near Cross Creek. They would then march for the coast and assist the troops coming from Ireland in crushing the forces of rebellion in the colony. When organized, about February 15, there were about 700 Highlanders, 700 Loyalists, and 100 Regulators. On February 27, at Moores Creek, the Highlanders engaged a Patriot force led by Col. Richard Caswell. The Americans routed the Loyalists, who fled leaving 30 killed or wounded on the field and 85 prisoners, while the Patriots suffered only two casualties. British hopes for the assistance of a large number of Loyalists had been dashed, and Clinton was compelled to re-evaluate the situation. North Carolina, the original goal of the expedition, could not be returned to obedience to the Crown at this time.⁹

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25. Among the units accompanying Clinton was the 33d Regiment of Foot, two companies of light infantry, and a few Highlanders.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

9. Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, edited by John R. Alden, 2 vols. (New York, 1952), Vol. 2, pp. 662-664.

There was nothing Clinton could do now but wait for the fleet from Ireland. He had been at the Cape Fear for more than a month before the first transport from Cork arrived on April 18.¹⁰

On May 3, 1776, Sir Peter Parker reached Cape Fear with three warships (Bristol, Acteon, and Solebay), the storeship Sybella, and 16 transports, ordnance ships, and victuallers. While the ships anchored off the bar, Parker, who flew his broad pennant from Bristol, established contact with those ashore and learned, much to his relief, that the frigate Sphinx, the hospital ship Pigot, two transports, and a victualler had crossed the bar and had anchored in the Cape Fear River on the 1st. There they had found His Majesty's sloops Falcon, Cruizer, and Scorpion, the schooner St. Lawrence, and several transports. Five transports, one ordnance ship, and two victuallers that had become separated from the fleet during the stormy passage across the Bay of Biscay were missing, however. Two vessels, Syren and Mercury, had been detached by Parker on May 2 to search for the missing ships. Syren would cruise three to 15 leagues off Frying Pan Shoals, while Mercury would cover the sea from Frying Pan Shoals to Cape Romaine.

Parker by mid-May had succeeded in getting all his ships, except his flagship, across the bar and into the river. For

10. Clinton, *American Rebellion*, p. 28.

convenience in communicating with General Clinton, Sir Peter transferred his pennant to the frigate Solebay.¹¹

As supplies were short, Parker put the squadron on two-thirds rations of bread, beef, and pork. A week's provisions were transferred from the army's victuallers, which carried stores to last for 12 weeks, to the fleet. John Read, Bristol's purser, was able to purchase flour and rice from several of the prizes, which helped alleviate the situation. General Clinton had brought with him a large quantity of rum purchased in Virginia, a few hogsheads of which he promised to share with the navy.¹² To assist Parker, Clinton organized a large foraging party. A battalion of light infantry and the 33d and 37th Regiments of Foot were embarked in flat-bottomed boats. Some provisions were secured by this force, but not as many as anticipated.¹³

As if these were not troubles enough, Lord Charles Cornwallis, who was in charge of the troops embarked at Cork, notified Clinton

11. Parker to Stephens, May 15, 1776, English Records, Admiralty I, Vol. 486, p. 105. Copies of the records of the British Admiralty cited in this study are on file at the Naval History Division, Department of the Navy.

12. *Ibid.*

13. John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (Charleston, 1821), Vol. 2, p. 278.

and Parker that six companies of the 46th Infantry had been stricken "with a very bad fever." Clinton accordingly had these soldiers disembarked and segregated some distance from the camps of the troops he had brought with him from Boston.¹⁴

While the fleet was anchored off the bar, General Clinton had written Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the Colonies. From a letter dated December 6, the General had learned that the expedition which was arriving from Cork would have with it, in addition to the infantry, two companies of Royal Artillery armed with ten battalion guns and as many howitzers and light 3-pounders as they could efficiently serve.

Germain had emphasized that Clinton was to cooperate with the "well affected inhabitants" and when these operations were terminated he was to "join Genl. Howe with the Forces under [his] command as early in the spring as possible." Because of the disaster at Moores Creek, Clinton reported, nothing could be accomplished by His Majesty's troops in North Carolina. Reviewing for his superior the situation in South Carolina, he observed that the "well affected have some

14. Clinton to Howe, May 18, 1776 (Sir Henry Clinton Papers, MSS Collection, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.). Cornwallis had joined the British army as an ensign in 1756 and had seen service in Europe in the Seven Years' War. As a member of Parliament, he opposed the tax measures which helped bring on the Revolution. When the war came, however, he placed himself at the King's service.

time since assembled in arms, and are now totally dispersed." Although Charleston could be captured, its reduction, if the latest reports concerning its defenses were true, would be "exceedingly difficult," and, in his opinion, contribute "little to the establishment of order in that Province" at this season of the year. In South Carolina, as well as the other Southern Colonies, the Loyalists lived principally in the Piedmont. If they were to rendezvous with His Majesty's troops, these "unarmed peasants" would be compelled to force their way across "a Province in arms."¹⁵

Several days after General Clinton had written Lord Germain, the sloop-of-war Nautilus arrived from Halifax with a letter from General Howe. This was the first message he had received from Howe in four months. Howe in this letter outlined his plans for a summer's campaign aimed at giving the British possession of New York harbor and the Hudson River Valley. After studying Howe's communication, Clinton was satisfied that his superior would not call upon him for "any immediate assistance at the opening of his campaign." No date or place of rendezvous had been named by Howe. Indeed, he gave the impression that he wished Clinton to take some

15. Clinton to Germain, May 3, 1776 (English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776).

action in the "Southern Colonies, and pointed out Charles Town . . . as an object of importance to his Majesty's Service."

Previous to the receipt of this message, Clinton had planned to return to Chesapeake Bay. Information also reached him at this time that the "works erected by the Rebels on Sullivan's [sic] Island (the key to Charles Town harbou) were in an imperfect and unfinished state."

General Clinton accordingly was not unprepared, when Sir Peter Parker proposed "to attempt the reduction of that Fortress by a coup de main." He was of the opinion that the capture of Charleston "would prove of great advantage to his Majesty's service."¹⁶

Two of the missing transports had anchored in the Cape Fear River by May 18. Still missing were three of the transports, the man-of-war Hawk, two bombers, an ordnance storeship, and a victualler. Parker, on the arrival of these vessels and as a result of his discussions with Clinton, sent two vessels the frigate Sphinx and Pensacola Packet to patrol off Charleston Bar and to reconnoiter the harbor defenses. He had heard that the Rebels were fortifying Charleston, putting Fort Johnson in a "posture of defence, and erecting a Fort of considerable strength on Sullivan's Island." An officer of the Royal Engineers (Captain Moncrief) and a naval

16. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776 (English Records, ER 4, 1775-1776).

lieutenant had taken passage aboard the packet with orders to reconnoiter the works the Americans were erecting on Sullivan's Island, at Cummings Point, and the Lighthouse on Morris Island to command the entrance to the harbor. Charleston Bar would be sounded. ¹⁷

Writing Howe of Sir Peter Parker's plan to attack Charleston, Clinton on May 18 assured his superior that he would attempt "little more than putting his troops on shore for a few days," although he was satisfied that with "sufficient force operations of consequence might be carried on."¹⁸

Sphinx and Pensacola Packet rejoined the fleet in the Cape Fear River on the 26th. Besides examining the passes through Charleston Bar, the British ships had sent out a small boat expedition which entered the harbor and burned St. James, a vessel which had succeeded in running the blockade.

After listening to the favorable reports of Captain Moncrief and the naval officer, Sir Peter ordered the captains to get their

17. Parker to Stephens, May 15, 1776 (English Records, Admiralty I, Vol. 486, p. 105); Journal of the Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book. For a list of His Majesty's ships, transports, victuallers, etc., which had sailed from Cork and were anchored in the Cape Fear River on May 15, 1776, see Appendix A.

18. Clinton to Howe, May 18, 1776 (Sir Henry Clinton Papers).

ships ready for sea. Water was taken aboard on May 28 and 29. General Clinton chafed at the delay, and on the 30th he dropped a note to Parker, suggesting that as time was passing the fleet should put to "sea immediately" with the master of each transport having sealed orders not to be opened until the pilots had been sent ashore. The vessels would then proceed to Bull Bay.¹⁹

In response to Clinton's goading, the fleet weighed anchor on May 30 and crossed the bar. Two vessels, Sphinx and Delegate, were detached during the night and proceeded down the coast "to look in" at Bull Bay and "to gain intelligence." The next morning, the fleet took advantage of a fair wind and beat its way toward the southwest. While running down the South Carolina coast, it encountered the sloop-of-war Ranger with the missing transports and victuallers. From the captain of Ranger, General Clinton received a letter written by Lord Germain on March 3. Clinton, on studying this dispatch, learned

if upon the arrival of the armament at Cape Fear . . . [he] should be of the opinion upon a mature consideration of all circumstances, that nothing could be soon effected that would be of real and substantial service and advantage, or that the making any attempt would expose the troops to great loss from the season being too far advanced, and that there should be a hazard of disappointing the service to the Northward that . . . [he would] in that case proceed immediately

19. Clinton to Parker, May 30, 1776 (Clinton Papers); Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Sir Peter Parker Papers).

to join Maj. General Howe with . . . [his] whole Force, leaving however a Regiment or two if the purpose therein referred to could be affected.

Clinton, on discussing the subject with his staff and generals, concluded that the projected attack on Charleston fit the guidelines laid down by Lord Germain, and he determined to continue.²⁰

On June 1 the fleet hove to and anchored off Bull Bay, where Parker was disappointed to learn from Capt. Anthony Hunt of Sphinx that, although his frigate had been off Charleston Bar since the 31st, he had been unable to discover any additional information regarding the harbor's defenses. Clinton, from his quarters aboard the transport Sovereign, now proposed that the shallow draft transports be sent into Bull Bay. Earlier Parker had cautioned the General that if the ships remained where they were, they would be endangered by the first storm. Parker, however, felt it unwise to take the fleet into Bull Bay, and that if an attack were made the fleet should go over Charleston Bar. Orders had been issued for the captains to have their ships prepared to weigh anchor in the morning. Meanwhile, Sphinx and the armed schooner St. Lawrence would sound the bar and, if any obstructions were encountered, remove them.²¹

20. Clinton to Germain, July 8, 1776 (English Records ER 4, 1775-1776).

21. Parker to Clinton, June 1, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

Charleston Bar was not abreast the mouth of the harbor, but some distance beyond it. Inside the bar and paralleling the coast from a point opposite the Lighthouse to Cummings Point was an anchorage known as Five-Fathom Hole. The channel leading from Five-Fathom Hole into the harbor passed near the southwestern shore of Sullivan's Island.

Clinton had been thinking along similar lines. He told Cornwallis that he would "not attempt anything blindfolded," and "I must reconnoiter the object before I attempt it." If the ships could not anchor in safety in Bull Bay, he would propose that the fleet go over Charleston Bar and "there lay till the Plan of attack can be formed."²² Captain Hunt reported Clinton's feelings to Sir Peter.

Sphinx and St. Lawrence spent the night anchored off Charleston Bar, as small boat crews sounded and dragged for obstructions. On the 2d they were joined by the frigate Active, while Ranger and Delegate stood in close to The Breach, separating Sullivan's and Long Island. (Long Island is now known as Isle of Palms.) Small boats were lowered and manned, and the coast of Long Island sounded as far as Rattlesnake Shoal.²³

22. Clinton to Cornwallis, June 1, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

23. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Sir Peter Parker Papers). The fleet's most experienced pilot had been aboard Ranger.

The Royal Governor of South Carolina, Sir William Campbell, who had accompanied the expedition, was familiar with the area, and he had some interesting information for Clinton and Parker. He assured them that Sullivan's Island was "a Post of the last consequence." For almost four months, during the previous year, the warships Tamar and Cherokee had prevented the Americans from taking possession of the island. If it were recaptured, Campbell forecast that with their naval power the British could keep possession. Two battalions of infantry and a detachment of artillery would be sufficient to hold Charleston, if supported by two frigates in the harbor.

Should it become necessary to bombard Charleston, he added, most of the buildings belonged "either to friends of Government or people entirely innocent of the present disturbances. Many Orphans & Widows . . . [have] their all vested in Houses," but he added, "many of the principal Rebels have considerable property."²⁴

Whereas on June 1 the winds had been "fair," they shifted at 4 a.m. on the 2d and became "contrary." This led Parker to fear that should the fleet get under way for the bar, the transports

24. Campbell to Clinton, June 2, 1776 (Germain Papers, MSS Collection, William E. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.).

would fall to the leeward. As the major guarantee of success at Charleston appeared to rest on a "coup de main," Sir Peter suggested to Clinton: (a) that the troops, covered by Ranger, St. Lawrence, and the armed ship Friendship, be landed on Sullivan's Island, near The Breach; (b) the frigates and Bristol would then cross Charleston Bar and make a diversion by bombarding the small batteries the Americans had reportedly thrown up at the Lighthouse and Cummings Point; (c) the mortar-ketch Thunder would take position at Cummings Point; and (d) if the situation were favorable the fleet would then cooperate with Clinton's regiments in an attack on the Sullivan's Island batteries. Should they reject this plan, Parker cautioned the generals, "a great deal of time may be lost, by anchoring the Transports within Charles Town Bar in Five-Fathom Hole."²⁵

Clinton was astounded by Parker's proposition, because he had "marked out" for the navy "little more than reducing any insignificant Batteries that may be found" at the Lighthouse or Cummings Point. He believed that if the batteries on Sullivan's Island were to be taken, the warships must play the major role. It would be impossible for the army to disembark at or near The

25. Parker to Clinton, June 2, 1776 (Germain Papers). Parker on the 3d had Friendship armed. 1st Lt. Charles Hope of Bristol was placed in command of the newly commissioned warship. There was no truth to the reports reaching the British that batteries had been erected at the Lighthouse and Cummings Point.

Breach, unless there was assurance: (a) that there was no surf; (b) that armed vessels could take position close enough in to cover the beach with their guns; and (c) that a naval landing force be held ready to cooperate with the army.

The General reiterated his view that the sooner the frigates crossed the bar, the better it would be for His Majesty's forces. The transports would follow.²⁶

It was Parker's turn to be aroused, because he felt that the ships in his plan would "bear a very considerable Part." Not being tied down to reducing any major batteries, they would be ready to cooperate in the attack on the Sullivan's Island works. To insure there would be no further misunderstandings on this point, Parker assured Clinton, "His Majesty's Ships . . . shall during the course of the whole Expedition give every assistance in their Power."

If the ships sent to sound Charleston Bar and to reconnoiter the coasts of Sullivan's and Long Islands found conditions satisfactory, Parker promised that the navy would put the army ashore without a musket being fired.²⁷

26. Clinton to Parker, June 2, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

27. Parker to Clinton, June 2, 1776 (Germain Papers).

The Parker-Clinton dialogue was interrupted on the morning of June 4 when the fleet, except Ranger, made sail and got under way. Taking advantage of a fair wind, the ships ran down the coast from their anchorage in Bull Bay and at noon anchored off Charleston Bar. While the ships beat their way into position, Delegate, covered by Friendship, sounded the bar and buoyed Ship Channel. From the fleet anchorage off the bar, the sailors looked northwest and saw the graceful spire of St. Michael's Episcopal Church.²⁸

Early in the afternoon, Parker had his barge lowered and manned and went aboard Sovereign for a conference with General Clinton. He felt that in this way agreement might be reached for joint-action by the army and navy. Out of this discussion, Parker had hoped that a meeting of the minds would be effected regarding a landing by the army on the northeastern shore of Long Island, as the first step in reducing the Sullivan's Island batteries. Although Clinton expressed interest in such an undertaking, Parker did not press the matter. Clinton, however, proposed that Ranger and St. Lawrence be sent across the bar and into Spence's Inlet.²⁹ Sir Peter was agreeable.

28. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers), Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

29. Spence's Inlet is now known as Dewees Inlet.

As Parker was getting ready to reboard his barge, preparatory to returning to Bristol, Clinton repeated his view that the fleet should cross Charleston Bar, as soon as possible.

Back aboard Bristol, Parker signaled St. Lawrence and Friendship to join Ranger off Spence's Inlet. Orders were also issued alerting his captains that if the winds were favorable on the 6th, the frigates would get under way, go over the bar, and "make such attacks as may be necessary to possess themselves of the Harbour as far to the northward" as Cummings Point. By this action, the frigates would clear the way for the transports.

There were only three pilots in the fleet willing to carry the frigates over Charleston Bar, but they differed "so much among themselves" that Parker was afraid to place much dependence on them. Moreover, he was unable to secure information on how many ships could anchor in Five-Fathom Hole, or whether the water was deep enough to allow the vessels to take position within range of the American batteries.³⁰

After Parker had departed, Clinton discussed the situation with his staff. They agreed to take possession of the north end of Long Island, as Parker suggested. The seven transports with the shallowest drafts would proceed to Spence's Inlet and take station there, provided they could anchor in safety.

30. Parker to Clinton, June 5, 1776 (Germain Papers).

While Sir Peter had been aboard Sovereign, he had suggested that in the interest of inter-service harmony Clinton might transfer his headquarters to Bristol. Clinton, after reflection on Parker's invitation, declined, as he was subject to sea sickness. In relaying this information to Parker, the General pointed out that until such time as Five-Fathom Hole was sounded, and the fleet anchored safely inside the bar, he did not believe "any plan of consequence can be adopted." In the meantime, he would have Sovereign anchor as near Bristol as possible.

Clinton now requested that Friendship or some other vessel of light draft be stationed near the southwestern point of Long Island. This vessel would have a dual mission: she would engage any American ship that might debouch from The Breach, and she would cover the disembarkation of Clinton's redcoats on the Long Island beaches.³¹

Their exchanges on the 5th satisfied Clinton that he and Parker were now in general agreement "upon every measure that is necessary to be taken previous to the fleets [sic] going into safety within the Bar." Information had reached Clinton which satisfied him that there was "ample room for the whole fleet"

31. Clinton to Parker, June 5, 1776 (Clinton Papers). Soundings taken by the crew of Ranger on June 4 had shown that vessels with a draft not exceeding 11 feet could cross the bar at Spence's Inlet. Parker to Clinton, June 5, 1776 (Germain Papers).

to anchor between the Lighthouse and Cummings Point. If he were mistaken, the light-draft transports could be ordered to Spence's Inlet, as soon as Ranger and St. Lawrence had secured that anchorage. The victuallers could be sent to Stono Creek, which would leave 30 ships to be anchored in Five-Fathom Hole.³²

The wind was unfavorable on the 6th, so the fleet remained at anchor. On the following day, June 7, the wind had picked up and was blowing from the southeast. Satisfied that conditions were favorable, Parker signaled the ships to make sail. Successfully navigating Ship Channel, the frigates and most of the transports anchored in Five-Fathom Hole. One vessel, the victualler Prince of Piedmont, ran into trouble. She grounded hard and fast on North Breaker and bilged. Working parties were able to salvage her cargo but not the ship.

Meanwhile, the seven light-draft transports had joined Ranger and St. Lawrence at Spence's Inlet, while Friendship maneuvered herself into position off The Breach.

Bristol and a few of the deeper-draft transports had remained outside Charleston Bar. From the flagship's quarterdeck, Parker

32. Clinton to Parker, June 6, 1776 (Clinton Papers).

had been studying through his glass the fort on Sullivan's Island. What he saw convinced him that if the fort were to be reduced, the 50 guns of Bristol would have to be brought to bear. He accordingly assembled all the captains of the squadron, and called before them all the masters and pilots to secure their opinions as to the possibility of taking Bristol over the bar. The pilots, as well as the masters familiar with Charleston Harbor, were in agreement that if she could be lightened to draw no more than 17 feet, six inches, Bristol could make the passage through tortuous Ship Channel.

Parker, satisfied that it could be done, ordered Captain John Morris to turn his crew to dismounting the guns of the flagship and transferring them to lighters.³³

It took the tars two days to lighten Bristol. On the 9th the sailors cheered as the remaining transports and Thunder crossed the bar. The next day, at 11 a.m., the big ship-of-the-line weighed anchor and beat her way toward Ship Channel. Bristol touched on the bar, but she slid off and sailed into Five-Fathom

33. Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers); Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

Hole, where she was received by three cheers from the rest of the fleet.³⁴

Meanwhile, General Clinton with 500 soldiers on the 9th had made an unopposed landing on the beaches at the northeastern end of Long Island. As soon as the patrols which were pushed out returned with news that there were no Americans on the island, Clinton had his men establish an entrenched camp and bring in supplies in small boats through the booming surf.³⁵

34. Journal of Expedition to Charleston, S.C., Germain Papers, Secret Dispatch Book.

35. *Ibid.*; Parker to Stephens, July 9, 1776 (Parker Papers).

