

“For the Defense of the Liberties and Independence of the United States”: Remembering a Forgotten Militia Post and Quasi-War Cantonment in Plainfield, New Jersey (Part 1 of 2)

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The area around Green Brook Park in Plainfield, New Jersey, was the site of two significant military encampments during the American Revolution and the new nation’s first international conflict, the Quasi-War. This is part one of a two-part article arguing the significance of the site in both conflicts through an analysis of surviving primary source material. Part one concerns the Vermeule militia post during the American Revolution. In late December 1776, a militia post was established on the property of Cornelius Vermeule, a well-known Patriot and significant landholder. This militia post is examined in the context of the forage war, the petite-guerre that raged in the New Jersey countryside between January and late June 1777. Various aspects of the post are interpreted, including its role in defending the countryside from Crown depredation, what life may have been like at the post, and what impact the militia and the post at Vermeules had on the course of the forage war and raising American military skill and morale. Part two, which is forthcoming, concerns the reuse of the site as a winter cantonment by Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Ogden, William S. Smith, and three regiments of the “New Army” during the winter of 1799–1800.

Introduction

A unique military site spanning two conflicts was situated within Green Brook Park and the adjacent neighborhood in present-day Plainfield, New Jersey. It went by various names: “Vermeule’s,” “Van Mulins,” “Van Mulers,” and later, the “Union Camp.” It began as a Patriot militia post on the property of Cornelius Vermeule during the American Revolution between late

1776 and early 1777, and was utilized over the following six months (a violent period known as the forage war).¹ After the revolution, the site was resurrected during the first international conflict of the early republic, the Quasi-War. While the Quasi-War was fought entirely at sea, Alexander Hamilton and other staunch Federalists used a turbulent national climate (where the possibility of a French invasion was a real fear) to push for the establishment of a provisional army. This “New Army” consisted of 12 newly raised regiments. In 1798, George Washington was called back into service to lead this force, though Hamilton secured the post of inspector general. This made him second only to Washington, and effectively in charge of directing the “New Army.”² As the cold months of 1799 approached, three new regiments recruited from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and New England were in need of winter quarters. After a period of searching and deliberation, the site for a large winter cantonment was chosen along the Green Brook, the same site as the earlier Revolutionary War militia post, and on land purchased from Cornelius and Eder Vermeule.

Much like the forage war during the revolution and the Quasi-War at the turn of the eighteenth century (which sometimes appear as minor compared to larger campaigns and historical events in American history), this militia post and its later incarnation as a cantonment are worthy of serious scholarly examination. The purpose of this article is to argue that this Revolutionary War militia post was strategically valuable during the violent six-month forage war waged in the New Jersey countryside. A Winter 2023 *NJ Studies* article will follow this and discuss how the later Quasi-War cantonment provides an excellent opportunity to study the experiences involved in raising an army during the United States’ first international conflict after the revolution. It is

¹ Jared C. Lobdell, “Six Generals Gather Forage: The Engagement at Quibbletown, 1777,” *New Jersey History* 102, Nos. 3–4 (1984), 35.

² Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783–1802* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 219–239.

apparent that those in charge largely fell back on their Revolutionary War experience, though they also innovated. The cantonment itself provides the best evidence of this, as it was fashioned along the same lines as earlier cantonments at Middlebrook, Morristown, and New Windsor. Many of those in command during the Quasi-War, like Alexander Hamilton, had of course experienced those earlier cantonments firsthand.³

“Nothing can prevent it [plunder] but their keeping within their Hive”: The Vermeule Militia Post

In mid-December 1776, Thomas Paine penned those iconic words: “These are the times that try men’s souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.”⁴ Paine resolved to write this famous pamphlet, *The American Crisis*, by November 22, 1776, as the Continental Army crossed the Passaic River in retreat following defeats in and around New York City. As the army retreated toward the Delaware River, it began to wither away. Enlistments expired, men returned home, the number of disaffected increased.⁵ As if the sight of Washington and what remained of the army retreating hastily was not dispiriting enough, the depredations of the pursuing British and Hessian (Crown) forces only made the situation worse. The countryside encompassing much of present-day Bergen, Essex, Union, and Middlesex Counties was subject to plunder as these forces traversed it.

The problem of plunder and foraging is crucial to understanding why a local militia post was established on the property of Cornelius Vermeule. While there are many instances of plunder

³ Steven Elliott, *Surviving the Winters: Housing Washington’s Army during the American Revolution* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 173.

⁴ Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis* (1776), Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005694599/>.

⁵ David Hackett Fisher, *Washington’s Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 144.

and mistreatment of the local inhabitants that could be cited, one particularly notorious incident occurred quite close to the Vermeule property (in present-day Plainfield). Today, within Oak Ridge Park (Clark), stands the Homestead Farm, a prominent home that dates back to the early eighteenth century. In early December, as Crown forces moved through the area, an infamous incident occurred in which the daughter of the house, Isabel Smith, was attacked by a Hessian. The incident was widely reported as far as Pennsylvania in broadsides and newspapers. According to those reports, William Smith, hearing the cries of his daughter, found a Hessian officer “attempting to ravish her, in an agony of rage and resentment, he instantly killed him.” Apparently, the rest of Hessian’s party heard the commotion, rushed into the room, and grievously injured William. One source reported that he was mortally wounded, another that he was shot twice and languishing under his wounds. The Hessians then plundered the house. Remarkably, William Smith survived the trauma of his wounds and lived until 1790. In the short term, however, this event had the effect of inciting fierce hatred of the Crown forces, and motivating many into service, especially the New Jersey militia.⁶

Following Washington’s surprise victories at Trenton and Princeton, what remained of the Continental Army marched to the Morristown area and went into winter quarters in the Lowantica Valley, behind the natural fortress of the Watchung Mountains.⁷ The Crown forces did likewise, in New York City, Staten Island, and New Brunswick, New Jersey. New Brunswick was the main post in the field for Crown forces from January 1777 until late June, and was, as historian Thomas J. McGuire describes, “an island of British control in a sea of uncertainty and danger.”⁸ Lord

⁶ William T. Fidurski, “Homestead Farm at Oak Ridge Park,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995), Section 8, 18.

⁷ Harry M. Ward, *General William Maxwell and the New Jersey Continentals* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 51.

⁸ Thomas J. McGuire, *The Philadelphia Campaign: Volume One, Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 9.

Cornwallis commanded at New Brunswick. Hessian Captain Johann Ewald described the post as consisting of “about four hundred houses, partly deserted and partly destroyed.”⁹ The winter of 1777 proved a great campaigning season for the farmers turned citizen-soldiers who composed the New Jersey militia. Not only were they reinvigorated by the victories at Trenton and Princeton, they turned out largely due to their infuriation at the occupation and plundering of New Jersey. John Adams famously remarked that General Howe would “repent his mad march through the Jerseys.” Of New Jersey’s inhabitants, Adams wrote, they “begin to raise their spirits exceedingly, and to be firmer than ever. They are actuated by Resentment now, and Resentment coinciding with Principle is a very powerful motive.”¹⁰ A *petite-guerre* (as it is often referred) defined by small skirmishes, foraging, plundering, and asymmetrical warfare was waged on the plain between the Watchung Mountains, Perth Amboy, the Raritan River, and Elizabethtown.¹¹ Though aggressive by nature, Washington avoided drawing his army into pitched battle, instead using the winter of 1777 to replenish the ranks and reorganize the army.¹² To give the appearance of numbers that he did not possess (and to keep pressure on Crown forces), Washington and his subordinates dispersed a mix of militia and Continentals in the New Jersey countryside.¹³ The militia post at Vermeule’s operated within this larger strategy.

The Vermeules hailed from Bergen County, and were early settlers of the area that became present-day Plainfield. Descendent and local historian Cornelius C. Vermeule (writing in the early twentieth century) asserted that Cornelius and his brother Frederick settled in the area in 1736, and held land encompassing about 1,200 acres. He estimated their properties extended from the

⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰ Letter, John Adams to Abigail Adams (February 17, 1777), National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-02-02-0118>.

¹¹ McGuire, 17.

¹² Edward G. Lengel, *George Washington: A Military Life* (New York: Random House, 2005), 214.

¹³ McGuire, 7–10.

Watchung Mountains in the west, possibly as far as present-day Eighth Street to the east, the area of Spooner Avenue to the north, and the area of Rock Avenue to the south. Cornelius, a prominent elder at the Raritan Church, was also elected a member of the Somerset Committee of Correspondence in 1775 (the same committee on which John Witherspoon, signer of the Declaration of Independence served).¹⁴ His patriotic leanings were well known, and that was likely a factor in the establishment of a militia post on his property. His property was also of strategic value. It was situated right along the Scotch Plains–Quibbletown road, a main route through the countryside. It lay just beneath the Quibbletown Gap in the Watchung Mountains, the defense of which the militia post enabled. It also lay within reasonable distance of other important towns like Scotch Plains, Westfield, Rahway, Springfield, Metuchen, and Bound Brook, where militia could be deployed to respond to the incursions of Crown forces.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cornelius C. Vermeule, “The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey,” An address delivered before Continental Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, January 9, 1923. Green Brook Historical Society.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*



Close-up of map drawn by Robert Erskine in 1779. The map shows the area around Quibbletown. A dwelling in the center marked “Widow Vanmulin” likely refers to the home of Cornelius’s son Adrian, a scout and dispatch rider who died in British captivity (per an accompanying explanation by the Green Brook Historical Society). The home was on present Rock Avenue, and the militia post on Vermeule land nearby. Quibbletown Gap, which the post guarded, is also marked on the map. Courtesy of the New York Historical Society.

The Vermeule militia post was established in late December 1776, prior to American victories at Trenton and Princeton, to guard against the depredations of Crown forces in the countryside. General William Winds commanded the post and was likely headquartered in the home of Cornelius Vermeule. The men stationed there were primarily from regiments of Essex County, Morris County, and Somerset County militia. The postwar pension applications of those former militiamen are indispensable to understand the post at Vermeule’s. Most militiamen who

recalled the post reported that they were stationed at “Van Muler’s,” “Van Muliner’s,” “Van Mulin’s,” or (only rarely) “Vermule’s.” According to Cornelius C. Vermeule (descendent and author of perhaps the only complete summary of the site’s history), the correct Dutch pronunciation of Vermeule, *fairmerla*, was quite difficult for many.¹⁶

While the spellings are wildly inconsistent, what the men reported about when, and why, they were stationed there, are quite the opposite. Based on their applications, it is clear that the post’s period of significance lines up well with the forage war. Most men reported that they were stationed there during a tour of duty within the six-month window from January 1777 through June (after which the Crown forces evacuated New Jersey). One former militiaman, Robert Young, wrote:

After the retreat of Genl. Washington through N. Jersey, and whilst the British held N. Brunswick and Amboy, a large body of militia was stationed under the mountain at Van Muliners, or Vermule’s near Quibble town, to watch the enemy in N. Brunswick, and to afford protection to the Country in that quarter. Genl. Winds had command of this force and I was upon that station with many others of the Morris militia, as well as from Somerset.¹⁷

Like many others, he reported that he was there in the “cold season” or the “winter of 1776–7.”¹⁸ Nathaniel Whitaker also recalled that in December 1776 (a few days after Washington retreated across the Delaware, he stated), he “marched across the mountains to Van Muliners, near Plainfield Essex Co., where Col. Frelinghuysen had command of our Regiment. A large body of militia was here collected and embodied under General Winds, who had his head quarters at Van Muliners, or Vermule’s.”¹⁹ Likewise, he remarked that the purpose of the militia post was “to

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Daniel Skellenger, Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, Record group 15, Roll 2194 (Accessed through fold3.com, 10/12/21).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nathaniel Whitaker, Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, Record group 15, Roll 2549 (Accessed through fold3.com, 10/12/21).

suppress the depredations of the enemy and to protect the inhabitants.” He and his fellow militiamen were stationed there until late spring or early summer. He stated, “We were kept embodied there under Genl. Winds all winter, until warm weather, late in the following spring, sometime after the season of corn planting was over.”²⁰

The Vermeule post belonged to a larger network of American troops, dispersed among the towns within reach of British incursions. Militiamen reported serving rotations, or being called out on alarm, to Rahway, Elizabethtown, Newark, and Paulus Hook, among many others.²¹ Men were stationed at Vermeule’s for variable lengths of time (some report two months or less, others the duration of the winter, and some all the way into early summer). Essentially, this string of posts formed a kind of salient, which kept Crown forces hemmed in at their strongholds of New Brunswick, Amboy, and Staten Island, and provided a means of early warning and defense for Washington. As Major General John Sullivan wrote to Washington, “Nothing can prevent it [plunder] but their keeping within their Hive.”²² Interpreting the significance of the Vermeule post in veterans’ experiences, it is notable that these former militiamen rank Vermeule’s as worthy of mention alongside other significant posts like Rahway, Elizabethtown, and Newark.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Luke Covert, Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, Record group 15, Roll 0666 (Accessed through fold3.com, 10/12/21).

²² Letter, Major General John Sullivan to George Washington (May 23, 1777), National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-09-02-0506>.

While some Patriots like Sullivan saw themselves as the beekeepers (as far as the Crown forces and their “hive” in Brunswick were concerned), the Crown forces frequently used the same analogy of bees or hornets to describe the Continentals and militia that swarmed them each time they left the relative safety of their stations. On March 8, 1777, a force of roughly 2,000 British troops advanced from New Brunswick only to be sent back in retreat following a short, fierce skirmish with a body of Continentals and militia under Brigadier General William Maxwell. Writing afterward, one British officer described his experience as having met with “a nest of American hornets.”²³



Close-up of a 1781 map created by Andrew Skinner. It depicts the road network, towns, and terrain of the countryside, which proved so important during the forage war. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Captain Johann Ewald, a Hessian Jäger and prolific diarist of the American Revolution, made similar observations after being surrounded while out guarding a forage party toward

²³ Ward, *General William Maxwell*, 56–7.

Quibbletown (probably today's New Market).²⁴ He wrote, "Toward three o'clock in the afternoon the foraging was completed and I received orders to retreat, which, in full view of the enemy, was very disagreeable. I had hardly begun the movement when I was so heavily attacked from all sides by a vast swarm of riflemen that only a miracle of bravery by my men could save me."²⁵

Though establishment of a defensive network of posts speaks to a clear strategy from the top, the operation of the network proved more troublesome. The frequent arrival and departure of militia (both from New Jersey and other states) was common in early 1777 and a source of constant frustration for Washington. Various bodies of troops coming and going from Vermeule's on their way to neighboring towns and stations or responding to emergencies is also attested to by pensioners who served there.²⁶ New Jersey's own insufficient militia laws contributed to Washington's and Governor William Livingston's frustration. It was not until March that New Jersey's State government (simultaneously struggling to reestablish systems of law and order) finally implemented more effective militia laws.²⁷ Coordination of militia outposts appears to have taken place largely at the ground level. Continental officers such as Stirling, Sullivan, Stephen, Lincoln, and Maxwell defended sectors stretching from Somerset County to Elizabethtown. As such, they played a role in utilizing those militia troops allotted to the major towns or posts within their respective areas. Washington generally encouraged those officers on the plain below the Watchung Mountains to be aggressive in harassing Crown forces, and gave them a measure of freedom in their operations.²⁸ Toward Bound Brook for example, Washington ordered "The two

²⁴ Lobdell, "Six Generals Gather Forage: The Engagement at Quibbletown, 1777," 36.

²⁵ Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, Translated and Edited by Joseph P. Tustin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 53. For a full account of this engagement, see Jared C. Lobdell, "Six Generals Gather Forage: The Engagement at Quibbletown, 1777," previously cited.

²⁶ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

²⁷ Carl E. Prince, et al., *The Papers of William Livingston: Volume 1* (Trenton: NJ Historical Commission, 1979), 131–132.

²⁸ Ward, 53–54.

Companies under Command of Col. Durkee, aided by the militia of that Quarter should be constantly harassing the Enemy about Bound Brook and the westroad side of Brunswick.”²⁹ General Winds appeared in this plan, as Washington wrote, “I recollect of my approving of Wind[s]’s waylaying of the Roads between Brunswick and Amboy.”³⁰ Winds also had the authority to summon militia for duty from neighboring counties, and is recorded as doing so in April at the behest of Governor Livingston.³¹ Frequent collaboration between militia and Continental troops in these operations is also a significant aspect of the forage war and the role of the Vermeule militia post.³²

This collaboration is clearly present in the pension records of those who served at Vermeule’s, especially those who mentioned participating in a severe skirmish at Ash Swamp. Ash Swamp encompasses an area roughly from Lake Avenue in Scotch Plains (in the north) to North Edison (in the south), and between Raritan Road (in the west) to the low-lying areas of Oak Ridge Park (in the east, right below the aforementioned Homestead Farm, site of the infamous Hessian incident of 1776).³³ An engagement at Ash Swamp appears in the pension records of a number of former militiamen, including John Hall, Daniel Swayze, and James Kitchell, all of whom were stationed at Vermeule’s through the winter. There were a number of engagements of varying severity near the Ash Swamp in 1777, culminating in the most famous, which occurred during the Battle of Short Hills in June.³⁴ But the engagement these men were likely referring to

²⁹ McGuire, 10.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Letter, William Livingston to George Washington (April 4, 1777), *The Papers of William Livingston: Volume 1*, 292.

³² Ward, 54.

³³ Frederic C. Detwiller, *War in the Countryside: The Battle and Plunder of the Short Hills, New Jersey, June 1777* (Plainfield, NJ: Interstate Printing Corporation, 1977), 1–5.

³⁴ Ibid., 8–12.

occurred on February 23, 1777.³⁵ That morning, a force of 2,000 British troops under Colonels Mawhood and Campbell left Perth Amboy and trudged through mud and snow toward Woodbridge and Rahway. Between the Ash Swamp and Rahway, the British encountered an American force under Brigadier General William Maxwell. This force was made up of the New Jersey brigade, various militia troops, as well as regiments from Pennsylvania (Hand and Brodhead) and Maryland (Stricker).³⁶

Mawhood sent the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment (the Black Watch) forward at the head of a force to outflank Maxwell. But in a surprising turn, troops who Maxwell had concealed in the woods began to fire, and actually outflanked the Highlanders commanded by Captain John Peebles. Peebles, as he said, “took to his heels” and retreated after suffering heavy casualties. Maxwell continued to bring troops forward, who pursued the British “in small parties keeping up a constant fire from all quarters.”³⁷ The British were forced to make the long retreat back to Perth Amboy while being continually harassed by the Americans. Once they reached safety in Perth Amboy (near eight o’clock that night), the British had suffered more than 60 men killed and wounded. The Americans lost five killed and nine wounded.³⁸ This engagement demonstrates not only asymmetrical warfare typical of the forage war, but also the effect of this defensive system of posts throughout the countryside on Crown operations. The sheer size of Mawhood and Campbell’s force is a prime example. Constant skirmishing with Continental and militia troops, who could be summoned from posts throughout the countryside, necessarily led to the increasing size of forage parties. In addition, forage parties required the use of skilled, mobile troops, to patrol

³⁵ Revolutionary War Pension Deposition made by Joseph Barnett (copy from microfilm), <https://sites.google.com/site/josephbarnettfamily/genealogy/pension> (accessed 10/18/21).

³⁶ Ward, 55.

³⁷ Fischer, 357.

³⁸ Ward, 55–6.

and guard them as they foraged.³⁹ Captain Johann Ewald and his Hessian Jägers are a great example, and his account of the skirmish at Quibbletown demonstrates what it was like to fill that role.

All through the winter, the militiamen stationed at Vermeule's skirmished with Crown forces. Recalling his time at Vermeule's, Daniel Skellenger wrote, "It was after the battles of Trenton and Princeton and there were frequent skirmishes and fights between the militia and the enemy in the neighborhood of Quibble Town, Woodbridge, Martin's Woods and Amboy."⁴⁰ The skirmishes that men like Daniel Skellenger and others refer to were so frequent that they were often left unnamed. The old adage "you win some, you lose some" is apt for the skirmishes of the forage war. Though both sides won some and lost some, the frequent skirmishing had the effect of sharpening the skills of less-experienced militia and Continentals. Lieutenant Colonel William Harcourt of the British 16th Regiment of Light Dragoons commented on the improved skills of his American adversaries, writing that they "possess some of the requisites for making good Troops, such as extreme cunning, great industry in moving ground and felling of wood, activity and a spirit of enterprise upon any advantage . . . they are now become a formidable enemy."⁴¹

One of the lingering questions about the Vermeule post concerns its size and what kind of shelters the men were living in. The post itself was somewhere on the very large tract of property owned by Cornelius Vermeule. Local historian Abraham Van Doren Honeyman claimed in 1923 that the militia camp covered approximately 95 acres between West End and Clinton Avenues, and between the Green Brook and the line of the Central Railroad to the east.⁴² The origin of this

³⁹ McGuire, 17–18.

⁴⁰ Daniel Skellenger, Pension Application.

⁴¹ Ward, 54.

⁴² Abraham Van Doren Honeyman, *History of Union County, New Jersey, 1664–1923: Volume 1* (Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York: 1923), 373.

figure is dubious, as Honeyman cites no sources here. Other documents that would corroborate this figure have not been found. Another possibility is that the post was situated nearer to Cornelius Vermeule's homestead, the site of the Van Derventer-Brunson House (Cornelius's eighteenth-century house no longer stands).⁴³ As General Winds was headquartered there, the militia may have occupied ground in the immediate vicinity. One other possibility includes an area of high ground on the eastern border of the Green Brook Park, much of it a modern neighborhood. C. C. Vermeule places it in a similar area, which he seems to suggest is the same area that was reused during the Quasi-War.⁴⁴ Based on fieldwork done at encampment sites in Morristown, hillsides (especially south-facing when available) were often chosen by Revolutionary War soldiers for building shelters. Hillsides offered the advantage of good drainage, and in the case of south-facing slopes, more available sunlight.⁴⁵ Pinning it down with any more specificity is difficult. Archaeological fieldwork has the potential to provide suggestions about where the post was located, and what types of shelters the militiamen were living in. The pensioners who served at Vermeule's did not describe their shelters when recalling their experiences. Ultimately, there were three options: tents, civilian homes, or huts the men built. Tents are the least likely. In the three months leading up to Washington's entering winter quarters after the Battle of Princeton, his men had suffered exposure to the elements and lack of proper shelter.⁴⁶ If tents were initially used (and that is indeed an *if*, as tents were in short supply, and much of Washington's army lacked them⁴⁷), tenting for the winter would have been very unhealthy and uncomfortable for the men at Vermeule's.

⁴³ Dennis Bertland and Melody Lee-Imhof, "Van Derventer/Brunson House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Dennis Bertland Associates: 2001), Section 8, 7.

⁴⁴ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁴⁵ Elliott, *Surviving the Winters*, 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Quartering troops in civilian homes was another option, as both the Crown forces and Washington's army did so that winter. The Crown forces occupied civilian homes (some of which were abandoned due to the fighting) in New Brunswick, and also other buildings including barracks from the Seven Years' War (like those in Perth Amboy and Elizabethtown) whenever possible.⁴⁸ Washington situated his troops in the Lowantica Valley, the area of Chatham and Morristown, where they were quartered in civilian homes. This created a number of problems, not least of which was an outbreak of smallpox that led Washington to order the inoculation of his soldiers.⁴⁹ Quartering among civilians, however, was not a viable option at Vermeule's. While neighboring towns like Scotch Plains and Westfield were more populous, the area of present-day Plainfield was sparsely settled by the time of the revolution, and there simply would not have been enough homes to quarter militia regiments.⁵⁰

Log huts or improvised shelters are the most likely to have been employed at Vermeule's. The Vermeule property would have been rich in timber.⁵¹ It is uncertain what these shelters looked like, what their dimensions were, or how many men were in each one. Though Vermeule's predates Valley Forge and the beginning of the "log hut city," some in Washington's army had already built crude shelters, mostly out of desperation. For example, while Washington's army lay on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware prior to the Battle of Trenton, Washington ordered his officers to "quarter their brigades in houses or huts as compactly as possible." In some cases, this took the form of hastily built shanties. Major General William Alexander, Lord Stirling, described how three of his regiments lay "compact and well-covered with boards."⁵² Improvised shelters made

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 58–60

⁵⁰ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁵¹ It still was in 1799, which is one reason it was reused as a cantonment.

⁵² Elliott, 49.

from brush, lumber, fence rails, and more were used and described by both Crown and American forces in 1777 and beyond. Sometimes described as shanties, they went by other names such as wigwams, sheds, and booths. Shapes varied, from tepee-style to A-frame, lean-to, and more. These hastily built structures were prone to burning down, and often proved inadequate to shelter the men from harsh winter weather.⁵³ It is possible that the men at Vermeule's constructed crude shanties or log huts using available supplies of timber. However, like those built by Stirling's men, they probably lacked the strict specifications that characterized later cantonments like Middlebrook and Morristown. Crown forces found themselves in a similar predicament. With some 10,000 men stationed at Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, and nearby locales like Piscataway and Bonhamton, Crown forces also had difficulty finding adequate quarters.⁵⁴ For example, light infantry and Jägers on picket duty lived in rough huts on the roads between Hillsborough and Bound Brook.⁵⁵ Captain John Peebles and the 42nd Royal Highland Regiment, the same who were outflanked by Maxwell on February 23, lived onboard filthy, fever-ridden troop transports anchored in the Raritan River.⁵⁶

Another important question about the post concerns the presence of a fort. Vermeule descendent and historian C. C. Vermeule asserted in 1923 that General Wins constructed a large fort at the militia post. He asserted that his father and uncle (born on the property in 1817 and 1820, respectively) remembered seeing remains of an old fort and entrenchments as late as 1825.⁵⁷ Abraham Van Doren Honeyman wrote that there was a fort about 200 yards square along the east bank of the Green Brook, midway between present West End and Clinton Avenues.⁵⁸ The idea

⁵³ John U. Rees, "'We are now . . . properly . . . enwigwamed': British Soldiers and Brush Shelters, 1777–1781," *The Brigade Dispatch* (Journal of the Brigade of the American Revolution), vol. XXIX, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 2–9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁵ Fischer, 350.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 50–1.

⁵⁷ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁵⁸ Honeyman, *History of Union County*, 373.

that there was an actual fort at the Vermeule camp has become part of local tradition. While it is possible that there was a physical fort, there are a few issues with that interpretation. The first is the lack of any mention of a physical fort in the pension records of those stationed at Vermeule's. Other aspects of the post were generally described, such as where General Winds was headquartered, that large bodies of militia were there, and the general location; a physical fort however was not mentioned.⁵⁹ To date, no period maps have been found that depict any physical fortification in the area of Vermeule's. It is possible that there may have been positions established for defensive purposes, something that C.C. Vermeule asserts.⁶⁰ Examples of small redoubts survive from Washington's Middlebrook encampment, and provide context for what defenses of this kind looked like in 1777. The Spring Run redoubt near the Middlebrook encampment site has seen recent archaeological work and surveying. It is small (157 by 77 feet), trapezoidal in shape, and shallow with earthen walls that rise only about 3.5 feet above the ground surface.⁶¹ Surviving examples like the Spring Run redoubt provide context for the type of defenses that would have been feasible at the Vermeule post, though there is little documentary evidence that anything like this was ever constructed there.

Another interpretation of both C.C. Vermeule's and Honeyman's accounts is that they are describing features of the later Quasi-War cantonment of 1799–1800. In Honeyman's description of the Revolutionary War camp, he states that it was about 95 acres, between West End and Clinton Avenues, and between the Green Brook and the line of the Central Railroad to the east.⁶² The

⁵⁹ Summation of the collective pension applications of Luke Covert, Nehemiah Day, John De Camp, John Hall, Job Loree, John B. Osborne, Daniel Skellenger, Captain Recompense Stanbery, Daniel Swayze, and Nathaniel Whitaker.

⁶⁰ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁶¹ Geoffrey Fouad and Richard Veit, *A Preliminary Cartographic and Archaeological Investigation of the Middlebrook Encampments* (Performed for the Bridgewater Township Engineering Department: August 2020), 80–84.

⁶² Honeyman, 373.

Quasi-War cantonment was roughly 85 acres and was within the same boundaries.⁶³ Where Honeyman places the Revolutionary War fort would roughly have been the situation of the Quasi-War cantonment as well. Honeyman does not cite his source regarding a 200-yard-square fort and 95-acre militia post, and it appears that he may have conflated the Revolutionary War post with the later cantonment of 1799–1800. His description of a 200-yard-square fort is also strange. With those dimensions, his fort would have been comparable in size to Fort Mifflin on the Delaware River.⁶⁴ The idea that militia would have built something that large, without the presence of trained military engineers, is problematic. Questions could also be raised about how such a large fort would have been garrisoned considering all of the documented issues involved in raising militia during that period. The vast difference in size between his description and the small dimensions of local contemporary examples like the Spring Run redoubt also calls his description into question.

C. C. Vermeule's account may also be a reference to the later cantonment. He claimed that his father and uncle (both born in the nineteenth century) saw the remains of entrenchments and a fort on the property. While it is possible that it was from the revolution, another explanation is that they were viewing remains and features of the Quasi-War cantonment. Vermeule seems to suggest that the militia post and Quasi-War cantonment occupied essentially the same ground. If that is the case, the later cantonment would have consumed earlier remains of the Revolutionary Period, and any remaining features of the later cantonment would have been the most visible in the early nineteenth century. The common use of the word *fort* interchangeably with *post* or *camp* to refer

⁶³ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁶⁴ Murray H. Nelligan, "Fort Mifflin, Pennsylvania," The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings Special Report (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service: 1969), 29.

to a place where large numbers of soldiers are assembled may also have something to do with the presence of a physical fort in local tradition.

The Militia in the Battle of the Short Hills

The culminating moment for the Vermeule post occurred in late June 1777. As the weather improved and the traditional campaign season approached, it was clear that the two armies were in a stalemate. Washington remained in his strong position behind the Watchung Mountains, a position that allowed him to choose combat if it was advantageous and to avoid it otherwise. General Howe, isolated in New York City and surrounds, did not have the same option to bide his time. He explored a number of options, including luring Washington out of the mountains to the plain below for a pitched battle, securing mountain passes and attacking him at Morristown, capturing Philadelphia, assisting General Burgoyne in his invasion down from Canada, and even expanding the war to the southern states.⁶⁵ On April 13, some 2,000 Redcoats and Hessians under Cornwallis attempted to take Bound Brook from General Benjamin Lincoln. Though Lincoln retreated, Crown forces failed to follow up and eventually withdrew, ending the prospect of a Crown attempt toward Morristown. The strategy then shifted to luring Washington out of the mountains. By late May, Howe massed his forces in New Brunswick and began construction of pontoon bridges to give Washington the impression that his army was preparing for an attempt on Philadelphia. This was a feint, and was intended to lure Washington out of the mountains. Washington did not cooperate. By June 22, Howe evacuated his troops from New Brunswick, pulling back to Perth Amboy. This was intended to give Washington the impression that Crown forces were pulling out of New Jersey altogether.⁶⁶ With Crown forces appearing to evacuate to

⁶⁵ Ward, 59.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 59–62.

Staten Island, Washington brought his army (then at Middlebrook) down to the plain below the Watchung Mountains: to the immediate vicinity of Vermeule's.

By June 24, Washington and the army were encamped in the vicinity of the militia post. Most sources report that Washington was at Quibbletown. Since Quibbletown generally refers to what is now the New Market section of Piscataway, some have placed Washington there. However, these place names were often relative, and "Quibbletown" or "near Quibbletown" were frequently used to describe the broader surrounding area. At the time of the revolution, the term "Quibbletown" often referred to the whole stretch of countryside between present-day New Market and the gap in the Watchungs above Plainfield.⁶⁷ Brigadier General Samuel Holden Parsons reported the Continental Camp at Quibbletown was "two miles in front of the mountain where the army is posted, on the road to Quibbletown and one and one-half miles north of that town, two and one-half miles northwest of Samptown [present South Plainfield], three miles west of Browsetown [the mountain gap at Scotch Plains], six miles from Middlebrook, and one mile from Bound Brook."⁶⁸

While these distances are also relative, the description suggests the area around the Vermeule property. Furthermore, it is now generally accepted that Washington was headquartered in the home of Nathaniel Drake, which still stands as a museum at its original location, just a short distance to the north of the property of Cornelius Vermeule.⁶⁹ Luke Covert, a neighbor close to Cornelius Vermeule who also served at the post, reported that "Genl. Washington's Head Quarters was at the Deponents uncle Cornelius Vermula, about one mile from Deponent's father's house."⁷⁰ Though the Drake house is the generally accepted location of Washington's headquarters, Covert's

⁶⁷ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁶⁸ Detwiller, *War in the Countryside*, 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Luke Covert, Pension Application.

account supports Washington's army as being encamped near the Vermeule militia post in late June 1777.

Washington was cautious in this forward position, and on June 24 issued the following order:

In case of an alarm, the army is to be drawn up in two lines on the northern side of the brook—Genl Greene's division on the right—Genl Lincoln's on the left of the front line; Genl Stephens's division on the right of the second line, and Brigd. Genl Parsons's brigade on the left of the second line; to be joined by Genl Varnum's, when he comes up. The troops to make the best shelter they can, with boughs of trees. An alarm will be made by the firing of two field pieces, at the park of Artillery, upon which the whole army is to muster and take the ground shewn to the Brigadiers General, with all possible dispatch—The park of Artillery to form in the Centre of the first line.⁷¹

The brook referred to here is likely the Green Brook, and suggests that Washington's army was temporarily encamped in the vicinity. Washington also deployed troops to forward positions. Lord Stirling's division with Maxwell and Conway's brigades deployed in the area of Ash Swamp and Metuchen Meetinghouse, along with an advanced picket of Daniel Morgan's rifle corps and Ottendorf's riflemen just west of Woodbridge.⁷² Howe appeared to withdraw, and then made a dramatic reversal and went on the offensive. Crown forces, some 12,000 men, marched from Perth Amboy before dawn on June 26, splitting into two columns. The southern column was led by Cornwallis, and the northern by General Vaughan (accompanied by Howe). They marched for Scotch Plains via Woodbridge and Metuchen Meetinghouse to execute a surprise attack on Washington's left flank in the Quibbletown area.⁷³ At about six o'clock that morning, Crown

⁷¹ George Washington, General Orders (June 24, 1777), National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0119#GEWN-03-10-02-0119-fn-0002-ptr>.

⁷² Brooke Blades and Wade Catts, *The Short Hills Battlefield Study* (West Chester, PA: John Milner Associates Inc., 2011), 14–15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

forces bushwhacked an advanced picket of Stirling's men in the area just north of present-day Oak Tree Road and Plainfield Road, initiating the Battle of the Short Hills.⁷⁴

Stirling and Maxwell were drawn up at the Short Hills, the area of present-day Plainfield Country Club, near the junction of Old Raritan Road and Woodland Avenue, with Conway's brigade extending farther to the west.⁷⁵ There, a fierce fight ensued over four brass cannon belonging to Stirling's division. These brass cannon were among the first newly made French arms sent overseas to aid Washington's army. Three of them were captured and left behind as the Americans retreated.⁷⁶ Retreating in two directions, Conway moved west toward the main Continental force in the vicinity of Vermeule's at Quibbletown. Stirling and Maxwell retreated to the north, toward Scotch Plains and Westfield, where they ascended through passes in the Watchung Mountains.⁷⁷

Washington was informed of the invasion at his headquarters near Vermeule's as follows:

About 7 in the morning a light horseman brought word to the General that the enemy were at hand, within two miles and a-half. The General ordered the alarm guns to be fired. The men ran briskly to arms. Next, a light horseman of the enemy was brought in a prisoner, taken by some of our light horse who also rescued 3 others of their brethren. This prisoner said he was taken not more than 2 1/2 miles from Headquarters at Quibbletown.⁷⁸

The account of the enemy approaching within roughly two and a half miles of the Drake house, and vicariously the Vermeule post, is significant. Washington's headquarters at the home of Nathaniel Drake is roughly three miles from where the main fighting took place on the property of present-day Plainfield Country Club. With the enemy close, Washington immediately began to withdraw his army through the gap in the Watchungs above Quibbletown, back to Middlebrook.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Ward, 62.

⁷⁵ Blades and Catts, 16.

⁷⁶ Detwiller, 11.

⁷⁷ Blades and Catts, 16.

⁷⁸ Detwiller, 9.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Washington continued to observe the fighting and directed troops from only a short distance away. A promontory above the Vermeule property provided an excellent vantage point for Washington to do so. This spot, today's Washington Rock State Park, is just behind the Vermeule property, which extended to the Watchung Mountains. The famous portrait painter Charles Wilson Peale had made an agreement with Washington to sit for a miniature at his headquarters on June 25. In his diary, Peale recorded the retreat of Washington into the mountains, and his observing the action from Washington Rock. He described the incredible view afforded by this rocky outcrop just above the Vermeule post:

The Troops ordered to st[r]ike their Tents, and we expected to moove down towards Amboy, but early in the morning we understood that the Enemy were mooving toward us . . . I thought it prudent to moove off toward the Mountain as I could not get the Horse along but with difficulty. I moved on with the Waggon, and when I had Reached the Top of the Mountain, I went to [a] Rock which afforded one of most sublime prospects I have ever seen—overlooking the country as far as my Eyes could see—Brunswick Amboy and Statten Island—and even beyond the Bay at Amboy.⁸⁰

Peale continued, describing the opportunity to observe the Battle of the Short Hills as it unfolded before himself and Washington, who observed and directed his subordinates.

The Enemy burnt 3 Houses in their progress and I could also distinguish their Course by the Dust. and we soon see that there was some Engagement at about 6 miles distance. This I have since understood was Genl. Stirlings Brigade which had like to have been Surrounded, he lost 3 pieces of Cannon, by Reason of the Artillery men being without Small arms, they were taken by the Enemys Light Horse . . . I had been but a short time here before Genl. Washington came to this spot and where I spent the whole day. I made a Slite sketch with my pensil of this View on the Back leaf of this Book.—Genl. Washington gave me an Invitation [to] Dine with him the Next Day—I went to a farmers House between the Mountains and got my Horse to the Continental pasture and took my Lodgings.⁸¹

Peale's sketch of Washington at this spot survives, and helps to place him during the action. The militia are admittedly more difficult to place in the Battle of the Short Hills. On June 23,

⁸⁰ Excerpt of Peale diary, Footnote 1, George Washington General Orders (June 25, 1777), National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0122>.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Washington issued an order dismissing the New Jersey militia. This followed the initial evacuation of Howe.⁸² However, militia must have been present at the battle, though the number and exact units remains undetermined. The personal account of Jonathan Freeman, only 14 years old when he took part in the battle, attests to the presence of militia. The young resident of Woodbridge volunteered in 1777 to serve as a scout and postrider for Maxwell and the assorted troops who patrolled the area between the Short Hills and Perth Amboy. He recalled that his method “was to get upon some high ground near the British, from which he could watch their movements, and in case of danger, he being a boy, would not excite as much suspicion.”⁸³ Freeman attested to the presence of militia at the Battle of the Short Hills when he applied for a pension in June of 1832, almost 55 years after the battle. His application states:

During the time he acted as a post rider, he did other service as a volunteer—that in 1777—he thinks in June, the British sallied out in strength from Amboy towards the Short Hills. That [sic] after giving notice as usual he volunteered among the militia collected, and with about a Regiment of Regular troops engaged the British about four miles Northwest of Woodbridge village.⁸⁴

Freemen recalled being part of a group of militia, “about 800 strong, and they attacked a party of the British of about the same number from Amboy, close by the house in which he now lives, about one mile west of Woodbridge village, and after a considerable engagement the British retreated to Amboy having several of their number killed.”⁸⁵ Based on the description of where the fighting took place, and the strength of both parties, this may be a reference to the Battle of the Short Hills. Regarding the collection of militia, historian Frederic C. Detwiller asserts that the early warning provided by the advanced guard allowed time for local militia to assemble.⁸⁶

⁸² Detwiller, 3.

⁸³ Johnathan Freeman, Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, Record group 15, Roll 1023 (accessed through fold3.com, 10/27/21).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Detwiller, 10.

Understanding the exact role of the Vermeule post in the battle, which units were engaged, and where is further complicated by the disorganized nature of operations during the forage war period, as well as the tendency for militia and Continentals to cooperate without always noting the distinctions when reporting after an engagement. As noted earlier, historian Harry Ward marks this tendency of both forces to cooperate as one of the most significant features of the forage war. Maxwell's New Jersey brigade was known for this cooperation with New Jersey militia (which can be seen in Freeman's account above, as he served under Maxwell).⁸⁷ Because of the proximity of Vermeule's to the main action, it is very likely that militia connected to Vermeule's were involved in the fighting. Some militiamen, who recorded in their pension applications that they were stationed at Vermeule's, also attested that they were present at an engagement at the Short Hills.⁸⁸ C. C. Vermeule states that General Wins and a militia force gathered at Vermeule's reinforced Colonel Cooke's 12th Pennsylvania Regiment.⁸⁹ More research is necessary to verify that assertion. Despite uncertainty regarding specific units and organization, primary sources suggest that militia in the area of Vermeule's participated in the Battle of the Short Hills.

Unable to trap Washington's army at Quibbletown and Short Hills, Crown forces advanced toward Westfield on a plundering expedition. Detwiller notes that the Crown forces' line of march can be traced from the damage claims filed by Scotch Plains' and Westfield's inhabitants. Broken fences, plundered dwellings, robbed tools, and stolen livestock all testify to Crown activity in the aftermath of the battle.⁹⁰ It is notable that many of the damage claims were filed by local men whose homes were affected while they served in local militia units that day, another important piece of evidence regarding the role of those units in the battle. Jonathan Terry, whose home and

⁸⁷ Ward, 54.

⁸⁸ Detwiller, 18, and John Hall, Pension Application.

⁸⁹ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁹⁰ Detwiller, 17–24.

well near the junction of Rahway and Cooper Roads in Scotch Plains figure heavily in local tradition (soldiers on both sides reportedly drank the well dry over the course of that scorching June day), served in the battle under Captain Benjamin Laing.⁹¹ Laing's company of Essex County militia was composed of local men, and was frequently posted at Vermeule's.⁹² Other local pensioners who served at Vermeule's and the Battle of the Short Hills did so in the Essex militia under Captain Laing, such as John B. Osborne.⁹³ When Crown forces entered local homes on their march toward Westfield, they reported that, "Most of the houses were abandoned; what were not had only women and children."⁹⁴ Terry's report, along with the absence of local men reported by the British, suggests that they were off serving in the militia during the battle. In this instance, local men were directly fighting for their homes, which in some cases were still severely impacted by Crown forces. Taken as a whole, these accounts emphasize the significance of local militiamen and posts like Vermeule's as the enemy advanced into the countryside that final time in June.

The Battle of the Short Hills represents the culminating point of the forage war, and, consequently, the post at Vermeule's. Following the battle, Crown forces remained in Westfield until the following day, where they caused great damage. One of the most infamous acts was the desecration of the Presbyterian meetinghouse. Jacob Ludlow, an Essex County militiaman who participated in the battle, claimed that "The British filled the church with sheep, and placed a ram's head in the pulpit and killed a great number of hogs, sheep, and cattle."⁹⁵ The Presbyterian meetinghouse of Westfield, like many Presbyterian assemblies, was a vocal center of revolutionary sentiment and was singled out accordingly for desecration by Crown forces. While characteristic

⁹¹ Ibid., 21.

⁹² Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

⁹³ John B. Osborne, Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, Record group 15, Roll 1850 (Accessed through fold3.com, 10/30/21).

⁹⁴ Detwiller, 17.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 23.

of the vandalism common to the forage war, this incident demonstrates the sectarian strife that characterized the revolution as a whole.⁹⁶ Crown forces continued the next day to Rahway, and then back to Perth Amboy by June 28.

The following day, Crown forces were ferried to Staten Island. Due to the grinding *petite-guerre*, they were unable to achieve their objective of holding on to New Jersey. In only six months, the Crown went from chasing Washington out of New Jersey to being forced out by fatigue, stalemate, and lack of a decisive battle. On June 30, British Captain John Montresor reported that at “1/2 past 3 this afternoon, the Province of New Jersey was entirely evacuated by the King’s Troops.”⁹⁷

The combined efforts of the Continental Army and local militia units operating from posts like Vermeule’s had the effect of boosting Patriot morale from one of its lowest points. Crown forces experienced the opposite. Historian Harry Ward quotes one Philadelphia newspaper that aptly summed up the forage war: the British “left us in entire possession of New-Jersey, in a small part of which they had been pen’d up for six months, unable to do any great matters, except stealing a few cattle, and making Whigs of the wavering and diffident.”⁹⁸ Major Crown operations had effectively ended in New Jersey following the Battle of the Short Hills. Leaving 7,000 men behind in New York City with General Sir Henry Clinton, Howe boarded 16,498 soldiers onto naval transports in mid-July, in preparation for the next stage of the war, the Philadelphia campaign.⁹⁹ With Crown operations foreseeably finished, Washington turned his focus to confront the threat in the next theater. The post at Vermeule’s fades from the historical record following the Crown’s

⁹⁶ Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution 1763–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 46–52.

⁹⁷ Detwiller, 29.

⁹⁸ Ward, 63.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

evacuation of New Jersey. A few pensioners reported being there again in 1778, which could indicate it was still used occasionally by local militia.¹⁰⁰ Vermeule's had served its purpose by the end of the forage war. At that time, we might assume Cornelius Vermeule Sr. took stock of all that transpired concerning his property, his family, and his country in such a short time. Besides his land and resources being used to support a large militia post, he had suffered grievous personal loss. All four of his sons served actively in the New Jersey militia. His eldest, Adrian, served as a dispatch rider and scout, and was captured by the British in early January 1777. Imprisoned in the infamous Sugar House in New York City, he died of disease on March 9.¹⁰¹ Cornelius's three other sons survived the war (he also lived to see the final victory, but only by a bit, dying on March 15, 1784).¹⁰² With these sons, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Ogden negotiated to begin the next and final military use of the Vermeule property during the new nation's first international conflict, the Quasi-War. More on that in part two of this piece, in the Winter 2023 issue of *NJ Studies*.

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¹⁰⁰ Nehemiah Day and Job Loree, Pension applications.

¹⁰¹ Vermeule, "The Revolutionary Camp Ground at Plainfield, New Jersey," Green Brook Historical Society.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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