A Short History of the 2nd Regiment Continental Light Dragoons, as it Relates to Durham, Connecticut, 1778-1779

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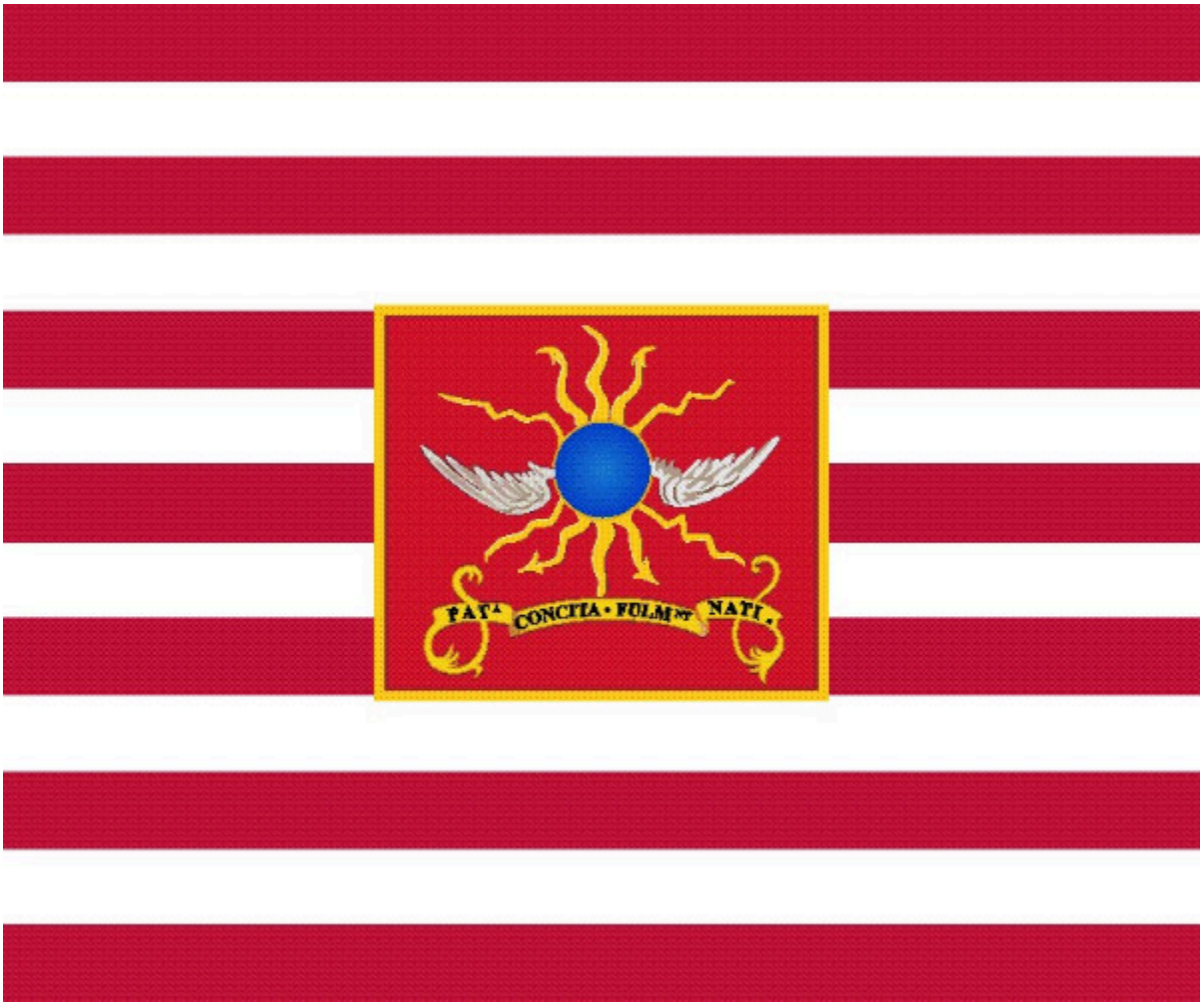

At the time when the Second Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons entered Durham, Connecticut in the fall of 1778, the American Revolutionary War had been going on for 3 years. During this time there had been a handful of important events in the Northern Theatre, each of which had a direct impact on the unit. All of these must be understood in order to better understand the situation of the unit when it entered Winter Quarters in Durham.

The Conflict Thus Far

Since 1775, the Thirteen Colonies had been in armed rebellion against the British crown. The issues of taxation, representation, as well as continued abuse of their rights as Englishmen and Citizens had taken its toll on the colonies. New Englanders were the first to take up arms and did so on April 19th, 1775 at Lexington and Concord. This became known as the Army of New England and was commanded by Generals Artemas Ward(MA) and Israel Putnam(CT). Durham, being a part of Connecticut, was doubtlessly wrapped up in the fervor that swept puritan New England in the wake of this battle.

The Army of New England would become the Continental Army on June 14th, 1775 and General George Washington would relieve Ward and Putnam of command on July 3rd of the same year. Under Washington, the British Army, under General Thomas Gage, would be pushed out of Boston on March 17th, 1776. They would repair to Canada and prepare for a summer assault on New York.

The British landed in New York that same year. Now under General William Howe, the British Army gradually made their way from Staten Island in July, to Long Island in August, and finally into Manhattan in September. The 1776 New York Campaign was a loss for Washington’s

fledgling Continental Army. They were pushed out of New York City (then simply called York City) in a matter of months. Had the British been more aggressive in their plans, it wouldn't have taken nearly that long. Howe's reticence for bloodshed, and his opting for out-maneuvering his enemy, gave many young inexperienced colonial officers the training and battlefield experience they would need later in the war. Among these young officers were Elisha Sheldon, and Benjamin Tallmadge, later of the Second Dragoons.

After losing New York, a line was drawn between the firmly British controlled New York City, and Patriot Connecticut. A no-man's land known as the "Neutral Ground" was created in the area between Westchester and Fairfield Counties. Connecticut reaffirmed its dedication to the Patriot cause, and under the only Royal Governor turned Patriot, Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, it became known as the "Provision State." Connecticut would provide not only men, but uniforms, food, and cannon barrels for the war effort. Being a farming community, Durham would have participated in sending supplies of food to the Continental Army.

During the years of 1777-1778, four major events took place that resulted in Sheldon's Horse wintering in Durham. The first was the April 1777 Danbury Raid; where the Royal Governor of New York, General William Tryon, personally led a raid on Danbury Connecticut to destroy a large supply cache there. This showed the importance of having mounted soldiers patrolling the coast for British raids. In October of that same year, Continental Generals Arnold and Gates won a decisive victory over British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga, New York. This event proved to the French that the United States had a chance of winning this war. This new-found trust resulted in the Treaty of Alliance with France in January of 1778. Over the winter of 1777-1778, the Continental Army wintered in the infamous Valley Forge Encampment in Pennsylvania. Here it became very apparent that cavalry, like the Second Dragoons, needed

more space and supplies for their men and horses. This lesson would result in the cavalry being sent away from the main army over the subsequent winters. Finally, in June of 1778, the Continental Army won a victory at the Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey. Though the battle was technically a draw, the Americans performed well and fought on the same level as the British Regular troops for the first time since the war began.

It is with this in mind that the 2nd Reg. of Dragoons would be sent to spend the winter of 1778-1779 in Durham. It was in Durham that the beginnings of a new chapter for the men of the 2nd would begin. The question now becomes, who were the men who spent that winter in Durham? As it relates to Durham, the two most important men were Elisha Sheldon and Benjamin Tallmadge.

The Men of the Second

The Second Regiment Continental Light Dragoons began its life in service to the State of Connecticut as the 5th Connecticut Horse Militia. Raised in May of 1776, the 5th Horse was composed of men taken from the 13th, 14th, 15th, 17th, and 18th Connecticut Militia regiments. These units often had horsemen attached to them for various reasons.[1] Each regiment would be commanded by a Major and answer to a Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel who oversaw all five of the Conn. Light Horse regiments. Major Elisha Sheldon would be put in command of this regiment.

Elisha Sheldon (1740-1805) was born in Lyme, Connecticut to a prosperous and connected family. His father was a Yale graduate, and merchant by trade. He also served in the colonial government and was close with the then-Royal Governor, Jonathan Trumbull. Elisha

[1] Public Records From May 1776, pp.284-285.

attended Yale for a short time, but dropped out before he could finish his studies. He married Sarah Bellows of Salisbury and settled there with her. Sheldon ran a modest farm where he employed both free and enslaved labor. By 1770, he was an established member of the community and had six children; three sons and three daughters. Though reasonably well-regarded in Salisbury, Sheldon held ideas that were unorthodox in his puritan community. Sheldon often broke sabbath and participated in activities that the church found unpalatable. He was twice charged with lascivious conduct and breach of sabbath. For these charges he was suspended from the church in April of 1776. Being out of step with his fellow townsfolk did not bother Sheldon as much as it might have if he was not also involved in the Connecticut government and the militia. Commissioned as a Captain of horse in the 14th Reg. Connecticut Militia, Sheldon was often in Hartford sitting on committees and training his men. When hostilities broke out between Britain and her colonies his duties increased. After being suspended from the church, Sheldon threw himself totally into military affairs. As commanding officer of the 5th Sheldon played in many supporting roles in 1776. He acted as a messenger, for the Connecticut militia, a mounted guard for VIP prisoners, as well as was tasked with transporting the pay wagons, a job that only the most trustworthy of men could be tasked with. Sheldon thought he would finally get to see battle when the 5th was sent to York City to help with the defense. After his men refused to do manual labor, though, General Putman exercised his power as the commander of all the Connecticut militia and ordered the 5th to return to Connecticut. Despite this setback, Sheldon and his troop of horse were looked upon favorably by Gen. Washington.

The other important officer was Benjamin Tallmadge, he was almost the complete opposite of Sheldon. Benjamin Tallmadge (1754-1835) was born in Long Island to a community

of Puritans originally from Connecticut. He was educated at Yale's Divinity School, but unlike his father, decided to go into education as a career instead of preaching. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1775, he was the Superintendent of Wethersfield High School, and had settled nicely into the upper-class, educated, merchant class of that town. Unlike his future commanding officer, he was very well-liked amongst the community and was a family friend of most all the top families in Wethersfield. He would enlist with Chester's Connecticut Regiment in time to march to the defense of New York with Washington in 1776. He was commissioned as a Lieutenant under Capt. Chester at the age of 21. Tallmadge would see action in the Battles of Long Island and New York. While there he would be promoted to Brigade Major of the Connecticut Militia after the position was vacated. This field promotion gave him command for the first time in his life. In this position he performed admirably, and so caught the attention of Washington himself, who personally helped to recommend him for a commission in the Continental Army.

As a result of the Battle of New York Washington reassessed some of his stances on the Army, specifically his stance on cavalry. Washington was an infantry officer during the French and Indian war, a conflict where cavalry was almost never used. Though an avid horseman himself, Washington believed that cavalry were too expensive, and that he would rather spend his military funding elsewhere. During the Battle of New York, all cavalry units were operated and funded by their state legislatures. This changed when he saw how the British employed their cavalry during the battle. The ability to scout, harass, and generally out maneuver the enemy became all too visible as Washington retreated from New York. In the late autumn of that year, Washington wrote to Congress requesting that they finance and raise four regiments of Light Dragoons.

“Dragoon” is a term that dates back to the 16th century. It originated from the French usage of the word “Dragon,” which itself was derived from the name for their early cavalry pistols. As mounted troops with firearms, dragoons were very useful to any battlefield commander. Their speed and maneuverability was invaluable. Classically, dragoons would ride to a battle, dismount, and then fight on foot, with a few men kept behind the lines to hold the horses. As time went on, though, “dragoon” became a distinction of light cavalry. These troops could fight both on foot and on horseback. When mounted they acted as a harassing force, scouts, and messengers. When dismounted, they acted more like light infantry. In Europe, these cavalrymen often took a back seat to the heavy cavalry which saw its hay-day in the time of Frederick the Great of Prussia(1712-1786), who was known to use his heavy cavalry to great effect. While Frederick was taking advantage of Europe’s plentifulness of horses, as well as its wide-open fields and farmlands to maneuver his large armored men and horses, this was not possible in North America.

The North American continent was not a friendly one for cavalry. Unlike Europe which had a horse culture dating back to antiquity, horses were relatively new in the Americas. The closest ancestor to the horse had gone extinct in the New World about 12,000 years before any European set foot on the continent. It was the Spanish who returned horses to America, as part of their colonial campaigns. By the time of the revolution, a massive population of horses, wild or domestic, didn’t exist. Horses were expensive to keep and feed, especially for the average British colonist, many of whom were subsistence farmers. The terrain itself was also not conducive to cavalry. Europe, Africa, and Asia, all had large swaths of wide open spaces of all different biomes. The biomes of eastern North America were anything but open. Swamps, rivers, dense forests, and mountain ranges like the Appalachians, made cavalry use difficult, though not

impossible. Heavy cavalry, like those employed by Frederick the Great, were too big and heavy to be effective on the North American battlefield. It was also almost impossible to find any horses big enough and fast enough, as most large horses were used for farm work and so were bred for strength, not speed. Instead light cavalry became synonymous with North America. Smaller, faster, and more agile horses were available in the Thirteen Colonies. Though never in the numbers either army would have liked, these light horses did exist and so were employed in military capacities. The reliance on light cavalry changed the classic European doctrine.

While armies in Europe had clear and sharp delineations of different types of cavalry, and rarely mixed them, American light cavalry had to serve all of these functions. The American Dragoon was used as a messenger, a scout, as well as to patrol large contested areas of land, such as the Neutral Ground. On the battlefield, they were mounted skirmishers, as well as dismounted skirmishers and light infantry. In a very untraditional manner, they also took part in cavalry charges, when the opportunity arose. This last role was the largest departure from European tactics, as light dragoons would rarely, if ever, be utilized in such a fashion. Their relatively small horses were thought too small to really break though enemy lines like larger horses could. The availability of heavy cavalry horses also made this an unreasonable tactical decision. It would be like trying to use a claw-hammer to pry open something when you also had access to a full-sized crowbar. In America, however, commanders had to make do with what they had available, in this case Light Dragons.

Congress agreed to the General’s request for cavalry, but reserved the title of First Dragoons for Washington's home state of Virginia. The other three regiments were largely up to Washington’s discretion. On December 12th, 1776, Washington officially commissioned the Second Regiment of Light Dragoons. With Governor Trumbull's permission, Washington

promoted Maj. Sheldon and his 5th CT Light Horse to national service in the Continental Army. They were to be now known as the 2nd Regiment of Light Dragoons and be answerable only to a select few, including Washington himself. Sheldon was promoted to Lt. Col, which gave the regiment the moniker of "Sheldon's Horse", and Tallmadge was commissioned a Captain of the 2nd Troop. There would be six troops in all, but they would not all serve in the same capacity. Over the course of the war, supply and recruitment issues would keep the regiment from serving all together or at full strength. From 1776-1783, Sheldon's 2nd Regiment would act as spies, state troopers, whaleboat raiders, post riders, both mounted and dismounted cavalry, and serve as Washington's mounted life guard. It was in the midst of all of these duties that they wintered in Durham, Connecticut.

The Close of the 1778 Campaign Season

The campaign of 1778 was very standard for the Continental Army. They were involved in many battles in the Northern Theatre, and so too were Sheldon's Horse. This was made all the harder by the lack of supplies and equipment. In spring of that year, Tallmadge wrote about how they had very few horses that were suitable for combat, and that the men were malnourished, and ill-equipped. These problems lessened as supply lines opened and forage became more available to feed men and horses, but did not disappear entirely. It is for this reason that it was decided to send the dragoon units away from the regular army when it entered Winter Quarters. 1778 saw Sheldon dealing with numerous personal issues, so his inferiors were left in command of the regiment. Lt. Col. Samuel Blagdon was the nominal field commander of the 2nd, but the real administration was left to Major Benjamin Tallmadge. Tallmadge is the subject of numerous

biographies, drawing mainly from his memoirs published in 1858. It is Tallmadge who best tells the story of the 2nd Dragoon's time in Durham.

In the fall of that year, Tallmadge was very excited to know where the regiment would spend the winter. It was clear after Valley Forge that the dragoon regiments would not be spending the season with the infantry. The lack of forage and shelter for their expensive horses meant that there could be no competition with the infantry for said resources. With the war moving south, it was deemed acceptable to allow the 2nd to winter in a different location.

Anxious to know that location, Tallmadge wrote to Jeremiah Wadsworth, whom he called "Jerry." Tallmadge tried to use his close relationship with the Wadsworths to get advanced notice on their Winter Quarters. *"I know you must be in the secret if there is one, and if you wish to have it continue so, I believe I can retain it without getting help.* [I] *wish to know what part of the world will be our destination this winter."* In this letter Tallmadge also discusses the poor shape the regimental mounts are, saying that if they do not purchase new horses, and have suitable resources for them over the winter, *"we shall have but few mounted dragoons in the spring, and the devil I may command them for all of me, as I do not intend to disgrace myself with so scurvy a set of horses as we at present have."*[2] Three weeks later Tallmadge learned that Durham would be their Winter Quarters.

[2] Tallmadge to Wadsworth, Nov. 4, 1778, Wadsworth Correspondence, Connecticut Historical Society.

Dragoons in Durham

Washington's directions for the 2nd's winter in Durham were issued on November 26th, 1778. He was very specific in his regulations for that winter, mostly as it related to the horses. None of the men were allowed to use the horses for any personal business, and every precaution was to be taken to ensure the horses would be ready for the spring offensive. In addition to that, a small squadron of dragoons under an NCO would be tasked with short stints of winter patrols in the Connecticut portion of the Neutral Ground. This would ensure that the horses and men were lightly worked, while still guarding a notorious theatre of operations.

The regiment did not arrive in Durham until early December. The then President of Yale, Ezra Stiles, wrote in his diary on December 4th, 1778 that "A Regiment of American Lighthorse came to town on their way to Winter Quarters in Durham." Based on this date it can be assumed that the 2nd arrived in Durham as early as the 4th, or as late as the 6th of December, depending on which route the unit took. Colonial maps show an old Native American route that leads from what is now New Haven to what is now Middletown, this roughly follows Route 17, which would be the most direct route into Durham. All roads were not made equally though. Should the regiment have decided to take the better maintained Boston Post Road, now Route 1, they may have followed what is now Route 79 up into Durham. With cavalry being able to ride roughly 20-30 miles a day, it can be safely assumed that the 2nd Dragoons were in Durham by December 6, 1778.

When cavalry encamps for an extended period of time, such as Winter Quarters, it is very different from the infantry. The popular image of a tent-city in neat rows, or small log-cabins, like what were built in Valley Forge, would be totally unfit for cavalry. Unlike the infantry where

the men themselves were the primary concern, in the cavalry the horses come first. Despite their martial use throughout history, horses are actually very fragile creatures. Any modern equestrian will tell you that there are many ways that horses can become seriously ill, or die if not properly cared for. Damage to their legs and hooves, colic, malnutrition, and exposure were always of great concern to cavalrymen. For this reason, cavalry units were rarely if ever billeted close together over the winter.

Shelter was the greatest determinant in where a unit would stay. Unlike the infantry, horses and their riders needed to stay in enclosed areas for warmth. If horses get too cold they can suffer serious health risks. Modern horse barns do not let the temperature drop below 50°F and will almost certainly never let horses out of the barn without horse blankets. The difference between modern horses and cavalry horses of the American Revolution, was that horses today receive much better medical care and food. The overall health of a horse is what determines how much cold they can stand. Without the advent of germ theory, and the noticeable lack of food and supplies, the horses that the 2nd regiment rode into Durham needed good places to keep warm during the winter. The horses would have stayed in barns, stables, sheds and outbuildings, as well as any structure with enough space in the bottom floor to accommodate the animal. Durham must have seemed to Washington to have enough structures to provide adequate shelter for the horses of the regiment.

This was also a boon for the dragoon as each man was expected to sleep close by to his horse, oftentimes in the same stall. While this may not be appealing to modern people, in comparison to the crowded, cold, and wet tents and huts the infantry used, a relatively dry, warm, and enclosed shelter was the best way to spend a New England winter. In order to achieve this, the regiment would have been spread over miles in and around Durham. It is almost impossible

to pinpoint every location where the Second were billeted, but any location that could have housed a horse has a good chance at being one of these locations. It would be easier to find the quarters of officers as they would have stayed with the wealthiest families of Durham.

It was a matter of pride for families to play host to officers of a visiting regiment. They would use this occasion to hold social gatherings that would increase their local standing, as well as to try and lobby for their sons to receive better positions within the military, usually as officers. The officers of the regiment would likewise use this opportunity to spend the winter in relative luxury. They would eat and drink well, have a full social calendar, flirt with local women, and lobby local wealthy gentlemen to make generous donations to the regiment. All of these were attractive to young gentlemen who were looking to make a name for themselves after the war.

When not socializing, Tallmadge had his hands full rebuilding the unit during the winter in Durham. He spent the winter overseeing what horses the regiment already had, and trying to make deals with the locals to buy more. After these purchases, the horses and their riders would need to be trained. Riding in formation with other horses, desensitization to gunfire and saber usage were very important, and building trust between horse and rider was paramount. In addition to this, the issue of manpower was ever-present. Unlike the previous winter in Valley Forge, there were fewer desertions, most likely due to the aforementioned better living conditions in Durham. Still, new men needed to be recruited. One of these was David Buckley who enlisted with the regiment, in Durham, on February 11th, 1779. He was approx. 28 and would serve for three years under Captain Edgar before leaving military service in 1782.[3] In total forty-eight new troopers were enlisted into the regiment while in Durham. It was also in

[3] National Archives- https://catalog.archives.gov/id/54093926?objectPage=15

Durham where the 2nd Dragoons entered a new chapter in their service to the Revolution: espionage.

A New Chapter for the 2nd Dragoons

As a result of the 1777 and 1778 Campaigns, the war was moving to the Southern Theatre. With Burgoyne's army defeated at Saratoga in 1777, and the evacuation of Philadelphia in 1778, not to mention the American victory at Monmouth, the British command thought it was better to focus their war efforts on the Southern Colonies. Along with tactical reasons, it was thought that a less zealously Patriot population might be easier to subdue. This resulted in the main British force re-organizing in York City before shipping out for Georgia in late 1778. In the meantime, small skirmishes and raiding took place in and around New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Though not major battles, Washington was weary of this new strategy that focused on targets other than his Continental Army. It was for this reason that Washington asked Maj. Tallmadge to increase his espionage activities.

For the past few years, Tallmadge had been leveraging his connections on Long Island to help keep track of the British movements in and around New York City. Tallmadge was originally from Setauket, a small village on the north shore about half way between Queens and the Hamptons. He had enlisted his friends from home Abraham Woodhull, Anna Strong, Caleb Brewster, and Austin Roe. He also enlisted help from Robert Townsend, a merchant and printer at Rivington's Gazette; a Loyalist newspaper. Together they formed the Culper Spy Ring, which up until 1778 was an informal intelligence service run by Tallmadge. The group was sanctioned

by the Continental Congress and Gen. Washington, but until 1778 they were left to their own devices.

It was a simple system to start. The three most important members, Tallmadge, Woodhull, and Townsend all had code names; Tallmadge was “John Bolton”, Woodhull was “Samuel Culper Sr.”, and Townsend was “Samuel Culper Jr.” Culper Sr. and Culper Jr. would use their regular careers as socially connected merchants to gain intelligence from the British. Woodhull would focus his efforts on Long Island where the British army kept military stores. He would also keep track of the comings and goings of British naval and supply ships. Townsend on the other hand would frequent coffee shops and taverns where he would strike up conversations with the British officers there. He would use his job as a writer and printer for Rivington’s as an excuse to ask probing questions about the war effort. These men would then leave the information in a predetermined location for a rider, like Roe, to come along, pick it up, and bring it to a second predetermined location on the north shore of Long Island. There Lieutenant Caleb Brewster would pick up the messages and row them back across Long Island Sound. Once safely in Patriot Connecticut he would give the secret messages to trusted military riders, oftentimes members of the 2nd Dragoons, who would deliver them to Tallmadge. Tallmadge would finally deliver these messages to Washington’s camp. This system had many moving parts which caused it to be very inefficient. Messages were prone to delay, sometimes arriving after the event they were warning of. This was made all the more difficult when Washington moved his command to New Jersey. Now the messages would go from New York City, to Long Island, across the Sound to Connecticut, and then brought by various post riders through New York state, and finally down to New Jersey. Despite the inefficiencies, Washington knew the value of having spies inside York City. In 1778, with the changes to the British strategy, Washington wanted

intelligence now more than ever. For this he approached Maj. Tallmadge in the fall of that year about how to improve the Culper Ring.

In November of 1778, Washington's head of intelligence, Brigadier General Charles Scott, was furloughed. Scott had been in charge of keeping tabs on New York as well as a unit of light infantry. The aging Virginian had little success in this position, and so was relieved of this duty at just about the time when the Dragoons were being sent to Durham. Washington looked to the much younger and much better connected Tallmadge to take Scott's place as intelligence officer.

Washington wanted to improve on the work that Tallmadge had already done. First he wanted a better understanding of how the Culper Ring worked. Next he wanted to know the full capabilities of the agents on Long Island. Lastly, the general wanted a more efficient route for the information to reach his Head Quarters in New Jersey. In the established manner, a request for an official report from Culper Sr. (Woodhull) on their operations came in the fall of 1778. Washington received said report and was impressed saying "[Woodhull's] report has the appearance of a very distinct and good one, and makes me desirous of a continuance of his correspondence."[4] This letter was sent on November 29th, after the 2nd had departed for Durham.

The winter spent in Durham was largely uneventful. Tallmadge often made trips to Wethersfield to visit his friends, and met Brewster in Fairfield to personally accept the messages. These too were few and far between. From January to March only one message per month was sent from Long Island to Connecticut. These stated things like British troop strength and any information that could be gleaned in the taverns of York City. Tallmadge and Washington correspondent once or twice a month while the regiment was in Durham. In March Washington

[4] *Washington's Writings*, XIII, 355-356, To Major Benjamin Tallmadge, Nov. 29, 1778.

wrote to Tallmadge that he wanted the young cavalryman to focus more on the Culper Ring. He also sent along fifty guineas to reimburse Culper Sr. for the expenses he incurred on missions. He also gave orders to the agents to stay close to British officers and command by playing the part of an ardent Loyalist. This was not the only change that was made to the Culper Ring that spring.

While encamped in Durham, Tallmadge had the time to experiment with ways to improve the Culper Ring. The first change came in the form of invisible ink. Sir James Jay, brother of Founding Father and first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Jay was a chemist living in England. He created a type of ink that would dry clear and therefore be illegible. Referred to by Washington as "White Ink," the mixture used lemon juice as the primary ingredient. Tallmadge sent Culper Sr. two vials: one for writing, and one for decoding. The agents would write their messages in the White Ink of the first vial and then send the messages out for eventual delivery to Washington. Oftentimes these secret messages would be written in blank sections of letters or documents written in normal ink. Should the rider be stopped and his papers searched, the soldiers would only see personal letters or business documents. When the messages arrived at their destination, the second vial was used. When brushed onto the page, a chemical reaction would occur and the White Ink would turn black, allowing the recipient to read the secret message.

Tallmadge would not spend his entire winter in Durham, though. By his own choice he would travel back and forth between Durham and Greenfield[5], now part of Fairfield. From here he could easily slip across the Sound to Long Island with one of his messengers. He did this in order to check up on his agents there. He never encountered any problems while he was behind enemy lines in Long Island, and so was never concerned about making these trips. Tallmadge

[5] Benjamin Tallmadge, *Eye Witness Accounts of the American Revolution: Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge* (New York Times & Arno Press, 1968), 30, (Thomas Holman, Book and Job Printer, Corner of Centre and White Streets, 1858).

would also travel to Boston, Hartford, and Philadelphia on behalf of the regiment. He knew that while they were relatively comfortable in Durham, the Second would need more supplies and funding in order to be combat effective come spring. Not all of these trips were fruitful. On returning from Philadelphia, Tallmadge wrote to a friend calling Philadelphia "that American Sodom" and that unlike Lott's wife, he had no desire to ever look back on the "sink of America." He would go on to call the Continental Congress a name which would shock modern readers.[6]

Once More into the Breach

The regiment would stay in Durham until the late spring. As the war moved south, it became even more important for the Second to patrol the Neutral Ground. The Continental Army would not be able to monitor New York City like it had been. Now that the main British force, now commanded by General Sir James Clinton, was engaged in the south, only small parties of British were left in the North to harass the citizenry. These were mostly loyalist irregulars as well as "skinners" who according to Tallmadge were little more than untrustworthy bounty hunters. Some regular British troops stayed in and around York City, but not enough to conquer or occupy Patriot territory. Still, though, these groups posed a threat to the Patriot war effort and the state of Connecticut. For this reason in early June the Second Regiment Light Dragoons would mount up and depart Durham. They were to rendezvous with Col. Sheldon in Westchester County, New York. From here, they would have a very busy summer. In July alone the Dragoons would see action at the Battle of Pound Ridge on the 2nd, and then be called back to Connecticut in time to fight General Tryon in the Battle of Norwalk on the 11th. Both of these battles are considered by many to be British victories, but both times Sheldon's Horse escaped in relatively good shape.

[6] Tallmadge to Wadsworth, March 20, 1779, Wadsworth Correspondence Connecticut Historical Society.

Had it not been for their restful and healing winter in Durham, it is doubtful the regiment would have fared so well.

Tallmadge would continue the espionage work he started while wintering in Durham. Though he never found a more efficient means of sending messages to Washington's Head Quarters, the information he would gain from Long Island would lead to some of his greatest personal victories. In September of 1779, Tallmadge would personally lead a raid against a British fort in Lloyd's Neck, Long Island. They would capture many prisoners and burn the fort before again slipping into their whaleboats and back across the Sound. He would follow this up with another raid on Fort St. George on the southern shore of Long Island in November of 1780. The latter is seen by many historians as Tallmadge's greatest military achievement. None of the actions aforementioned would have been possible without the restful winter the 2nd Dragoons spent in Durham, Connecticut.