

## TWO JETTS AND MORE IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

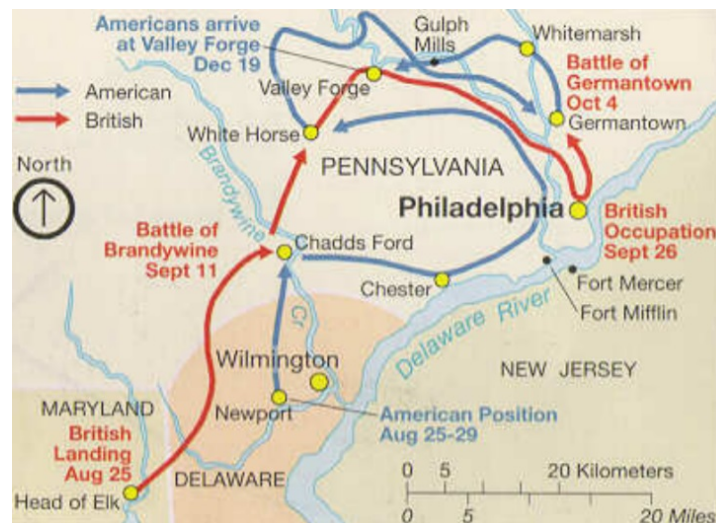
As we study the history of our family, it is important to remember that we were present at the birth of our country. In this chapter, we will look at one Jett who was present at Valley Forge. Valley Forge was the winter encampment of George Washington outside of Philadelphia between December, 1777 and June 1778. This was a great time of suffering for the nascent U.S. Army and was the crucible in which it became a true fighting force. We will look at John Jett who was a private at Valley Forge.

Secondly, we will briefly mention two Jetts who died serving their country during the Revolutionary War.

Thirdly, we will briefly look at another John Jett who served as a sailor during the Revolutionary War. The soldiers which we are dealing with in this chapter are not the only Jetts who served as revolutionary soldiers. There are others. For instance, we have already mentioned in another chapter the important role served by Thomas Jett and by his son who served as a soldier in Virginia, William Jett.

### John Jett and Valley Forge

As mentioned above, George Washington wintered a large portion of his army about eighteen miles outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania which had been taken by the British. The encampment at Valley Forge is generally considered to have been from December 19, 1777 to June 16, 1778. About 12,000 soldiers were encamped at Valley Forge. During that winter somewhere between 1700 to 2000 of the soldiers died from the cold, disease and malnutrition (14-16.6% fatality rate).



Washington had his men construct a number of shelters made out of logs. Many of these shelters had their floors built several feet below ground. Roofs were made from canvas tents, brush, clapboards and straw. George Washington commanded that the huts be about 14 by 16 feet and it is estimated that there were about 1500-2000 log huts built. There weren't enough blankets for all the soldiers and the straw was used for bedding.

Many of the soldiers did not have winter clothing and amazingly many of them did not have shoes. In fact in one letter Washington stated that 2898 men at Valley Forge were unfit for duty because they had barefoot and poor clothing. Due to a lack of funds and logistical problems, food was a terrible problem at Valley Forge. Perishable food rotted and winter roads and the British disrupted the food supply leaving soldiers underfed, malnourished and susceptible to disease.

General Lafayette who was present at Valley Forge wrote that the soldiers needed everything including coats, shoes and the like and that feet and legs had to be amputated due to the cold and frostbite.

Despite the horrible conditions at Valley Forge, Washington's Army trained and became a cohesive fighting force.

John Jett was present at Valley Forge. He was not an officer but was a private and likely experienced the deprivations and training that molded the Revolutionary Army into a true fighting force.

Apparently, John Jett began his military service in the Third Virginia Regiment where he served from October 18, 1776 to January 1777. Many of us are familiar with the story about how Washington crossed the Delaware to surprise the Hessian troop at the famous Battle of Trenton on the morning of December 26, 1776.



The Third Virginia Regiment was present at the Battle of Trenton under Col. George Weedon with 181 men being present.. However, John Jett "may or may not have been there because his first enlistment in the Third Regiment in one record is shown as having ended on December 17, 1776. In another he is shown as being in the Company led by Gustavous B. Wallace and with his service ending in January 1777.

Apparently John Jett of Westmoreland County either reenlisted or was drafted later into the First Virginia Regiment on February 10, 1778 and spent the winter being trained and suffering with the soldiers at Valley Forge. The First Virginia is shown as entering Valley Forge with 234 men and 94 fit for

service. The Third Virginia Regiment also was at Valley Forge and began with 309 soldiers and 71 fit for duty.

John Jett survived the winter but is shown as being sick but present in July 1778. He reenlisted on July 10, 1778 and probably participated at a battle at White Plains, N.Y and at an action at West Point. He was in William Cunningham's Company when he re-enlisted on July 10, 1778 and under the Regimental Command of Richard Parker.

John Jett probably participated in the Battle of Monmouth on June 28, 1778. At this battle George Washington and the Continental Army fought the British led by Sir Hilary Clinton. This was the last battle of the Philadelphia Campaign and evidenced that the Continental Army was a real fighting force. It was also important in that the battle solidified Washington's position as the true commander in chief of the Continental Army and put an effective end to campaigns to replace him with General Gage.

Many of John's group were listed as dead, in the hospital or fatigued in October 1778 and John was listed on the role as "fatigued." We know little else of John Jett's service except that it was as a private and that he was one of the soldiers who experienced the great suffering in the crucible known as Valley Forge.

Both the Third and First Virginia Regiments were shown as participating in Battles at Chesapeake Bay, New York City, Northern New Jersey, Trenton-Providence, in the Defense of Philadelphia and Monmouth.

#### One Example of a Casualty in the Revolutionary War

Although there were a number of Jett's participating in the Revolutionary War we know of several who gave their lives for their country.

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#### **PRIVATE JAMES JETT**

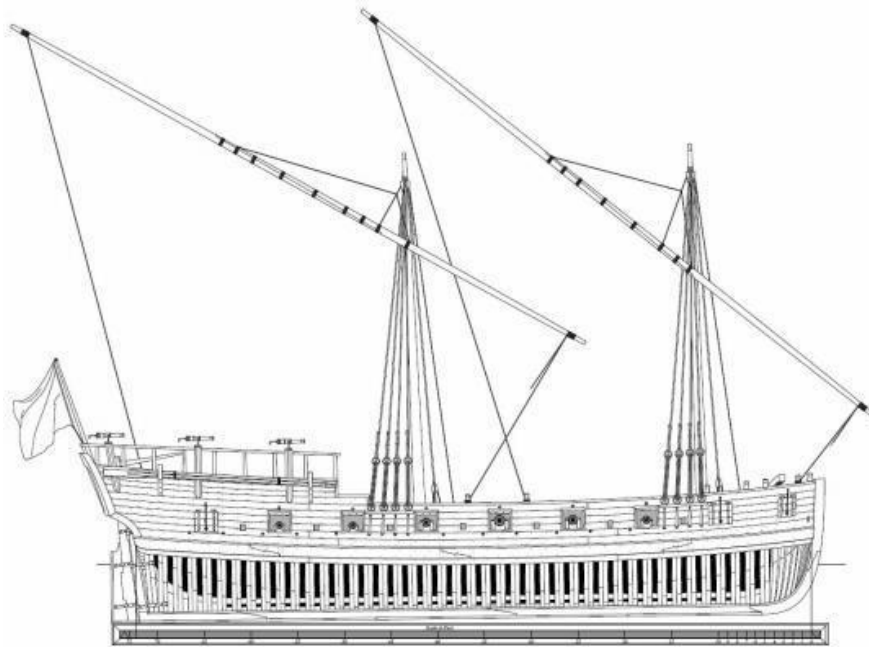
One was Private James Jett. James Jett was from Fauquier County, Virginia. He enlisted August 24, 1776 in the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment commanded by Col. David Morgan. He gave his life for his country on March 25, 1777 at Bound Brook, New Jersey. This battle occurred when 4,000 British and Hessians under General Charles Cornwallis conducted a surprise attack on the 500 man Continental Army at Bound Brook. The British defeated the American commander, General Benjamin Lincoln, overran the Continental Army Fort killing a number of persons and capturing cannons and other supplies. The Continental Army later recaptured the Fort under General Nathan Green. About 60 of the 500 men defending the fort were killed and one of those was James Jett who gave his life that his country might be free.

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## SEAMAN JOHN JETT

We know that John Jett from Virginia served as a seaman for three years on different vessels in the Virginia State Navy. Most of the colonies had navies in addition to the Continental Navy commanded by George Washington. The purpose of these state navies were to defend the colonies, ferry soldiers, and to run blockades. Tobacco and other products could be sold in the West Indies and cargoes could be paid for in supplies, powder, armaments and the like. State navies used a number of different types of vessels including brigs, frigates, sloops and galleys. England had a number of large warships and troop ships. Generally these large ships were to be avoided. Sometimes, the English ships could be lured into coastal regions where they might be grounded. The state navies would often use schooners and sloops which were light and fast to run blockades.

John Jett was a seaman in the Virginia Navy called a row galley. A row galley often had sails, but it also had oars allowing it to be powered when the wind was not available.



Drawing of the Washington Row Galley

Virginia had a number of row galleys in its Navy, including the Manley, Safeguard, Protector, Hero, Lewis and Page. Although we do not know all of the ships on which John Jett sailed, we do know that in 1779 he was a lieutenant on the Manley Galley. We know that at various times John Harris and William Saunders, who in 1783 signed the pension application of John Jett, served as Captains of the Manley. William Saunders was recommended for appointment as Captain of the Manley Galley by the Virginia Navy Board on May 5, 1777. Harris died in the Revolutionary war and William Saunders died in 1787 about four years after the Revolutionary War. We also know that William Saunders commanded the schooner Adventure which was sent with cargo to be sold in either St. Eustatius or Martinique; however we can be certain whether this voyage was ever made. He also captained a ship called the Tartar. We also know that Captain William Saunders was sent on July 16, 1777 from Manleys Galley to relieve another captain (who is believed to be a relative of William Saunders, Celey Saunders (who also later die in the Revolutionary War)).

We also know that the Manley was one of the two “row-galleys” which patrolled the mouth of Rappahannock River both to defend the area and to provide warning of the incursions of British ships. One report discusses the use of a red flag on a long pole which would be raised in the day time if British were in the area. At night, if British ships were in the area, a lantern would be hoisted on a long pole to warn people.

Records indicate that Edward Travis, who was then Captain of the Manley, was directed to seek, destroy and sink vessels belonging to the enemy on August 6, 1776.

Various records indicate that the Manley did such actions as ferry soldiers and marines. In another instance, the Manley was at Portsmouth and ordered to transport troops from Carolina to the head of the Elk River, Maryland who were marching to New Jersey.

Ships, including the Manley, also disrupted the actions of Tories seeking to flee the Colonies and assist the British

On another occasion as the British were in the process of trying to take Philadelphia in 1777, they sent a large number of ships including the 64 canon Raissonable. A number of the ships of the Virginia Navy, including the Manley which was stationed on the York River at the time, were instructed to avoid the large British war ship.

On July 5, 1779, Virginia ordered that the Manley, Safeguard, Hero, Lewis and Page Galleys be dismantled, and their men, canons and supplies be transferred to other vessels.

Apparently, John Jett was transferred to The Tempest. The Tempest was a larger vessel with 21 guns and was captained by Celey Saunders and generally operated in Chesapeake Bay. In 1781, the Tempest was blockaded by the Royal Navy. The crew fled from the ship so as not to be captured by the British Navy. The Tempest was destroyed or captured by General Benedict Arnold on the James River on April 27, 1781 but John Jett was not one of the killed and captured having left the ship in order to avoid capture. Captain Celey Saunders and his crew stayed in Hanover County and then marched to Yorktown in 1781. The siege of Yorktown began on September 28, 1781 and continued until there was a victory by Continental Forces on October 19, 1781.

John Jett served on several ships but we only have information on The Manley where he spent the majority of his time and the Tempest. John Jett’s pension application was made shortly after on or about April 21, 1782.

John Jett, as part of his pay and/or pension, received 500 acres of land in the Military District of Ohio. The new country did not have money and so gave land. Most of the land was never seen by those who were awarded it and most grants were sold to land speculators.