

American Rebels Show British Prisoners Great Humanity at the Battle of Great Bridge



Battle of Great Bridge

The Battle of Great Bridge was fought on December 9th of 1775 was a decided victory by the Continental Army and militia forces led against Governor Lord Dunmore. Dunmore had recruited troops early in the war and engaged in a struggle for military supplies at Norfolk, Virginia where Dunmore had taken refuge aboard a Royal Navy vessel. He succeeded in fortifying one side of a critical river crossing south of Norfolk at Great Bridge, while Whig forces had occupied the other side. In an attempt to break up the Whig gathering, Dunmore ordered an attack across the bridge, which was decisively repulsed by William Woodford, the Whig commander.

The Great Bridge was built over the southern branch of the Elizabeth River, twelve miles above Norfolk. Colonel William Woodford commanded the Virginia militia on this occasion. The Virginia militia was known to have shown the greatest humanity and tenderness towards the wounded British prisoners.

Several of them ran through a hot fire to lift up and bring in some of the bleeding prisoners, whom they feared would die if not speedily assisted by the surgeon. The prisoners had been told by Lord Dunmore that the Americans would scalp them, and they cried out, "For God's sake do not murder us!"

One of them who was unable to walk called out in this manner and one of the Americans answered: "Put your arm about my neck and I'll show you what I intend to do." Then taking him, with his arm over his neck, he walked slowly along, bearing him with great tenderness to the breastwork."

[Pennsylvania Evening Post, January 6th, 1776]

"The scene closed with as much humanity as it had been conducted with bravery. The work of death being over, every one's attention was directed to the succor of the unhappy sufferers, and it is an undoubted fact that Captain Leslie was so affected with the tenderness of our troops towards those who were yet capable of assistance that he gave signs from the fort of his thankfulness for it." [Pennsylvania Evening Post, Jan. 6th, 1776].

The first mention found of a British prison ship was published on the 11th day of April, 1776: "Captain Hammond Ordered Captain Forrester, his prisoner, who was on board the Roebuck, up to the prison ship at Norfolk in a pilot boat." [New York Packet] Night Watchman Announced the Capture of Cornwallis How to Revolutionary War Affected those at Home This is the time for War! Patrick Henry, the Eloquent Patriot 1776.

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