

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S 3rd CONTINENTAL LIGHT DRAGOON REGIMENT NOTES

In the Spring of 1777, George Washington formed four dragoon regiments from existing units and newly recruited horsemen as part of the Continental Line. The 1st Continental Light Dragoon Regiment consisted of the Virginians under Major Theodorick Bland that Virginia transferred to the Continental army at the request of Congress, some of which had earlier been serving near Philadelphia. The 2nd Continental Light Dragoon Regiment, commanded by Col. Elisha Sheldon, consisted mostly of Connecticut men who had joined his cavalry. The **3rd Continental Light Dragoon Regiment formed under the command of Col. George Baylor in Morristown, New Jersey, and consisted mostly of troopers from Virginia and Maryland.** The 4th Continental Light Dragoon Regiment organized under Col. Stephen Moylan in Philadelphia and Baltimore, and consisted of horsemen from several rebel colonies. Although many problems faced the dragoon regiments, including the inability of recruiting to bring the units to authorized strength, shortage of suitable cavalry weapons and horses and their forage, and lack of uniformity among troopers in dress and discipline. Washington and his staff believed the proper role of dragoons was reconnaissance, not combat, but Congress appointed the Polish revolutionary and professional soldier Count Casimir Pulaski to train them as an offensive strike force during winter quarters of 1777-8 at Trenton.

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"Baylor's Massacre -- September 28, 1778" - Notes on Fated Regiment -- The history of the **3rd Regiment of Light Dragoons** begins differently from many regiments in the way the personnel of the unit were selected. From the formation of the Regiment, the unit received favors and considerations directly from George Washington. The young officers and many men in the "ranks" were from the **finest family connections in Virginia and Maryland.** This unit, initially raised and paid for by Virginia, came to contain men enlisted and commissioned from Massachusetts Bay colony down to the Carolinas and was a true cross section of the individuals who fought for independence. However, in a twist of fate, British light troops, ready to ply the cold steel, surrounded the barns and houses where the unsuspecting American dragoons were soundly sleeping. The guard at the bridge under Sergeant Davenport was quickly dispatched and, though an alarm was given, the Redcoats were still able to catch the dragoons unawares. Samuel Houston (who narrowly escaped) denounced the **British actions as wholesale butchery without regard to the rules of warfare!** Miraculously, though, while the slaughter was still under way at the other locations, American **Lieutenant William Barrett succeeded in making good an escape. Since Barrett authorized Branham's service pay voucher, it is presumed that William Branham (Brannon) also escaped!**

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1784 Voucher, William Branham, Soldier -- Will. Barret (Late) Capt., Army: I do certify Will. Branham enlisted for the War in Col. Baylor's Dragoons 1778 & has faithfully served the term of his enlistment. /s/ Will Barret, Capt., Baylor's Dragoons: Know all men by these presents that William Branham, soldier, belonging to the third Regt. Light Dragoons commanded by Col. George BaylorIn witness whereof have hereunto put my hand this fifth day of March 1784. /s/ Will. Branham

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Resources:

- 1) ancestry.com;
- 2) SC Dept. Archives & History;
- 3) Library of VA;
- 4) <http://www.answers.com/topic/dragoon>;
- 5) http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/2008_winter_spring/prelude-to-massacre.html