Did Ned Hector Supply Knox's Artillery Brigade from Tredyffrin Farms?

Justin B. Clement

In 2021, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) commissioned me to write a Historic Resource Study examining African American participation during the Valley Forge encampment of 1777 to 1778. The National Park Service funded the project, and we expect publication of the study this next year. In the course of research, I identified 112 African American civilians with a connection to Valley Forge, and 521 soldiers identified by name (out of over 720 Black soldiers present during the encampment with the Continental Army). The project resulted in over 600 biographies and military service histories, which will become part of an online database, hosted by the Valley Forge Park Alliance. Many intriguing discoveries resulted from this research, including further research into Private Edward "Ned" Hector, a noted artilleryman and teamster during the American Revolution.

Ned Hector enlisted in Captain Hercules Courtenay's Company of the Pennsylvania State Artillery Regiment.[1] Colonel Thomas Procter commanded the regiment, which received its beating orders on February 6, 1777.[2] On June 10th, the regiment transferred to the Continental Establishment, becoming the 4th Continental Artillery Regiment. Some months later, Ned led a four-horse team, attached to Captain William Augustus Patterson's Company.[3] Famously, during the Battle of Brandywine, he saved his wagon team and Continental Army supplies from falling into the hands of the British Army.[4] His military service would have brought him to the Valley Forge encampment, beginning December 19, 1777.

When Crown Forces passed through Tredyffrin the previous September, British and Hessian soldiers captured horses, oxen, and wagons, preventing civilians from harvesting and transporting grain. By February 1778, several acres of wheat and rye remained standing, unharvested. As Commissary General, Colonel Clement Biddle ordered the division of farming fields for use of the Continental Army at Valley Forge, including acres of meadow reserved for pasturage of army livestock, as well as grain purchased for army use. Brigadier-General Henry Knox received a greater proportion of the acreage, given the large number of livestock required to haul the artillery and related munitions under his supervision. Biddle assigned five farming properties in Tredyffrin to Knox's Brigade.[5]

As a teamster attached to Knox's Brigade, Ned Hector would have assisted in transporting bushels of wheat and rye to the brigade commissary. Interestingly, Ned's route would have taken him past the home of Samuel Havard, where Major-General Lafayette was headquartered during the encampment. Samuel's sisters Ann and Sarah lived with him. The household also included an enslaved African American woman named Judith. Ann Havard made provisions to free Judith in her will, dated July 22, 1784.[6] Tradition describes Ned Hector's wife as "Jude," indicating they had been together for about fifty years (1784 to 1834).[7] If Ned's wife Jude was also the same woman living with the Havards in 1778, they may have met as early as the Valley Forge encampment!

Owner	*Field Size*	*Notes*
Chrisman, Elijah	20 acres wheat, 6 meadow	[Tenant, not a landowner]
Davi[e]s , William	20 acres meadow, 27 wheat	[William Davis likely managed the estate of Sampson Davis; with property leased to John Brown]
Havard, Dd. [David]	19 acres meadow, 6 rye, 14 wheat	[Lee & Bradford's HQ]
Havard, John [Jr.]	4 acres rye, 2 wheat, 6 meadow	[Duportail's HQ]
Mitchell, Joseph	17 acres rye, 12 wheat	

Agricultural resources in Tredyffrin allocated to Brigadier-General Henry Knox's Artillery Brigade

1. "Roll of Capt. Hercules Courtenay's Company" [3rd Company, Colonel Thomas Proctor's Pennsylvania State Artillery Regiment], Mar. 10, 1777 in: Thomas Lynch Montgomery, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, Ser. 5, III (Harrisburg, Pa.: Harrisburg Publishing Co., 1906), 1054–57, esp. 1056.
2. Resolution for raising a Regiment of Artillery for the State of Pennsylvania, commanded by Colonel Thomas Proctor, In Council of Safety, Feb. 6, 1777 in: *Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, From Its Organization to the Termination of the Revolution*, XI (Harrisburg, Pa.: Theo. Fenn & Co., 1852), 116.
3. "A Return of the Ammunition and [Foraging Waggons in]...Col. Thomas Procter's Ridgment of Artillery under the [Command of] ye. Conductor of Waggons," in: Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783, M246, Roll 120, Folder 58, fol. 6, The National Archives, Washington, D.C., <**https://www.fold3.com/image/9588442**>. This return is undated, but had to fall between the dates April 1777 and July 1778, when Captain William Augustus Patterson served as an engineer in Procter's Regiment, by order of General George Washington.

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4. For biographical information on Ned Hector, visit the website hosted by Noah Lewis, character interpreter: <**https://www.nedhector.com**>.
5. "Clement Biddle's Return in April 1778 Shows Use of Wheat and Rye Fields During Valley Forge Encampment," *The Picket Post* (April 1948), 17–19.
6. Will of Ann Havard, [July] 22, 1784, in: Ancestry.com, *Pennsylvania, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1683–1993*, <**https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8802/images/005547237_00303**>, fols. 303–08, esp. 305.
7. Theodore Bean, ed., *History of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania*, II (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1884), 717; Noah Lewis, "Being Edward Hector—The Life and Times of a Black Revolutionary War Hero," *Bulletin of the Historical Society of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania*, XXXVI, No. 4, (1913), 29.

Justin B. Clement completed a graduate degree in Early American History at the College of William and Mary. His Master's Thesis explored a postwar Loyalist "trade diaspora," following the American War for Independence. Mr. Clement's graduate work at the University of California is on hiatus, with his forthcoming dissertation entitled: "'On both sides by turns' – Violence, Protectionists, and the American Revolution." Mr. Clement is in the final stages of completing a Historic Resource Study, centered on African American participation during the Valley Forge encampment of 1777–78, and is currently the Historic Site Supervisor at Pottsgrove Manor.



Ned Hector as portrayed by Noah Lewis.
Courtesy of John Hurst
www.nedhector.com

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