

November. As roads became mired with mud supply wagons were increasingly hindered from reaching his headquarters. Shoes and clothing were desperately needed, and yet they were either not available or people were unwilling to sell them at a reasonable price. In the words of General Smallwood, who was in command of the Maryland battalions: "The Troops in general are bare, but the two Maryland Brigades are more so perhaps than any in the Army." Governor Thomas Johnson and the Maryland General Assembly as well as Congress did what they could to secure the supplies necessary for the army, even to the extent of authorizing confiscation, but their efforts were to a large extent in vain.

Supplying the army was not the only issue confronting Marylanders during November 1777. On November 15 Congress finally adopted the Articles of Confederation that it had debated for nearly two years. Two days later copies were forwarded to the various states, and Marylanders had ample reason to question portions of that document. Of more immediate concern were dissidents within the state and a shortage of funds to procure supplies required by Maryland troops in the field. These were but a few of the issues that faced the General Assembly that sat during the month, and with the onset of winter these problems must have dampened the spirits of many members, despite the defeat of Burgoyne.

FORT MIFFLIN

Burgoyne's capitulation at Saratoga was a direct result of Sir William Howe's fervent desire to capture the rebel capital of Philadelphia. To accomplish that goal, Howe had violated explicit instructions from the War Office that ordered him to march toward Albany and join forces with Burgoyne, thus severing New England from the remainder of the states. Instead, Howe had wasted the summer in transporting his men and supplies from New York down the Atlantic coast, then up the Chesapeake Bay. From Head of Elk in Cecil County he had marched overland, finally occupying Philadelphia in October. Now all that remained was to clear the Delaware River of American fortifications so that his brother, Lord Richard Howe, could have free access to the city with the ships under his command.

American efforts to prevent the British fleet from reaching Philadelphia centered on three fortified positions a few miles below that city and two lines of chevaux-de-frise (wooden beams tipped with metal that rose from the riverbed to a few feet from the surface of the water). The first American fortification was at Billingsport, and although it was intended to protect the first line of chevaux-de-frise it was so poorly manned and fortified that the fort was abandoned before the British fleet arrived. The second and most crucial fortification was on Mud Island. Called Fort Mifflin, the bastion was an imposing one for ships coming up the river, because it was built of stone and its batteries were well supplied with large cannon. The third American fortification, Fort Mercer, was located at Red Bank on the Jersey shore. Its main purpose was to