

Tories, who taking us for English Troops immediately came up, and enquired for General Howe, when they were immediately conducted to General Smallwood, and they taking him for Howe, said, now we are safe; we took the Hint, and asked them if they saw any of the Rebels about or near that Place; ay, ay we have seen too many of them for they have not left us one Fence Rail, but we have kept a Quantity of Poultry, some good Mutton and fine fat Hogs, which are at your Service; upon which we told them to come to Town with us; they did but soon found to their great Surprise, we were those Rebels.

Disappointed though the Tories of Wilmington must have been, Smallwood and his men without doubt enjoyed feasting on the livestock that had been carefully preserved for the enemy commander!

On December 29, General Washington wrote Smallwood that "if the Weather should continue as severe as it promises, Vessels will not be able to go up to Philadelphia on account of the Ice, [and] perhaps they may be obliged to put into Reedy Island." Washington's hope that British ships would fall within Smallwood's grasp unexpectedly came true on December 30 when a transport named the Symmetry, armed with 18 guns, ran aground near Wilmington. After Smallwood's men had fired a few shots at her, the ship's captain surrendered his vessel and a large store of goods. Among the items captured by Smallwood were "the Baggage, Stores, cloathing, marque's & Equipages of the Officers of 4 Regiments, but not near [enough] Soldier's cloathing for one," over 1,000 stand of arms, as well as meat and butter. Due to this fortuitous capture, Smallwood's men stationed at Wilmington suffered less severely than their fellow men-at-arms at Valley Forge.

#### MARYLAND AT THE CLOSE OF 1777

Having secured the Delaware River to Philadelphia, Lord Richard Howe was able to deploy a larger portion of his fleet for patrolling the Eastern seaboard and blockading the rivers and bays that were vital supply routes for the Americans. As one of the largest and most important waterways emptying into the Atlantic, the Chesapeake Bay received special attention, with Lord Howe dispatching several vessels to patrol the mouth of the Bay and the lower shores of Maryland and Virginia.