

have been, Sergeant Lee must certainly be regarded as one of the bravest men our Army ever had. Sealed in a pitch black vault that at any minute might prove to be his coffin, Lee was surrounded by a maze of cranks, pedals, pumps, levers, wheels, and instruments that needed constant attention. Nonchalantly, Lee took the Turtle beneath the waves and set off for his goal, aided by a strong tide. In fact, the tide was so strong, that when the sergeant surfaced his boat at what he figured would be the proper time, he found himself being carried rapidly out to sea past the English fleet. Due only to his industrious paddling for more than two hours, Sergeant Lee got back to a favorable position to attack Admiral Howe's flagship, H.M.S. Eagle, and submerged under its stern. The Turtle's magazine was a wooden chest, filled with a charge of 150 pounds of gun powder, with a timing device for igniting it. The charge was carried aft of its conning tower and at the opportune moment was to be released and attached to the hull of an enemy vessel by means of an auger, operated from within the submarine. At least that was the way it was planned, but when Lee tried to affix his bomb below the water line of the Eagle his drill was powerless against the copper sheathing of the hull.

Discouraged, he rose to the surface and found to his dismay that it was now daylight. Discovery would be disastrous, so down he went again and with what must have been limitless energy, swung around and started back for New York as fast as he could twirl his propeller. Then he noticed that his compass was no longer working and when he came to the surface to get his bearings he saw himself to be only a few hundred yards from Governors Island. An alert Redcoat sentry spotted the unusual-looking Turtle, and a barge was speedily manned and sent out to investigate. Lee once more submerged, but had presence of mind enough to release the bomb and trip its timing device, craftily hoping that the Englishmen might be prompted to seize it. They, however, viewed the fatal bait with definite skepticism and allowed it to float away from them into midstream, where it eventually exploded with a tremendous roar. Lee, in the meantime, actually managed to buck the tide successfully back to the wharf in New York, where Putnam and Bushnell had been awaiting his return

with understandable anxiety.

On Sept. 13, Governors Island fired its last shots in the Revolution, and ironically enough, they were discharged against New York itself, by the newly arrived British inhabitants of the late Yankee stronghold. This topsy-turvy situation was brought about when three English frigates and a 40-gun ship stood up the East River towards Hell Gate, firing as they came, as if they meant to undertake an all-out attack on the city. The last American troops remaining in New York returned a few salvos from the shore batteries, at which Governors Island went into action, with a roaring volley across the channel. The shots killed three innocent bystanders, one shot striking within six feet of General Washington as he was riding into the fort. Two days later the British marched into New York.

Beyond the fact that Governors Island was kept fully garrisoned and fortified by the Redcoats, very little is known of this era of the island's history. Such data as has survived show that the ruined fortifications abandoned by the Americans were repaired with the help of some 300 Tory civilians from New York who volunteered for the task. They refused all financial remuneration for their labors, but did accept pay in terms of food, beer, and rum, and there is no record of any complaint or dissatisfaction with the wages. There is also evidence to indicate that on the Sept. 1, 1779, the island was used for an army hospital. In December of the same year, a guard room was erected to house a special squad of men, whose sole duty was to protect the guns in the bastions from being spiked by infiltrating Yankees. Otherwise, life on the island seems to have returned to its former idyllic state of rural peace, now ignoring the war, which roared off up the Hudson and down into Virginia, and finally ended when Cornwallis gave up his sword in a green meadow in Yorktown.

Following the British surrender, preparations were immediately started to remove King George's troops from Governors Island. Most of them left with the formal British evacuation of New York on Nov. 25, 1783, and on Dec. 3 Governor George Clinton of New York received from Rear Admiral Robert Digby, of the Royal Navy, the official surrender of the island garrison with all fortifications and buildings intact.