

Hessian Flags in the American War for Independence, 1776–1783

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AS many as seventy-five flags were brought to North America by the Hessian regiments that served with the British armies in the American War for Independence. Of these, possibly twenty-five were captured. Two fairly complete flags captured at Trenton in 1776, and fragments of at least five others, have survived and are currently at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. In addition, the First City Troop of Philadelphia, a unit predating the Revolution and still active in the Pennsylvania National Guard, owns a large section of another of the Trenton flags along with one of its red and gold tassels.

Photographs of the Trenton flags were first published in Gherardi Davis, *Regimental Colors in the War of the Revolution* (New York: privately printed, 1908); the same photos were republished in Edward W. Richardson, *Standards and Colors of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). The flags themselves were inspected and conserved in 1990. There has been no entirely satisfactory reconstruction drawn of these flags, however; even Davis and Richardson use drawings that are at variance with the photos published side by side with them, and other secondary sources rely on very poor contemporary drawings that do not accurately show the size, shape, or details that can be seen in the originals.

In general

Each of the field service regiments sent to North America by Landgraf Friedrich of Hesse-Kassel in 1776 and 1777 carried five flags: a Leibfahne, literally Life flag, carried by the

first, or Leib company in each regiment; and four Kompaniefahnen, one per each of the remaining line companies.¹ As in the Prussian service, the grenadier companies of the Hessian regiments were not authorized flags and, in any case, these companies were detached from their parent regiments and combined to form grenadier battalions on the British model.

Four of the Hessian regiments sent to America were *Garrison* (Garrison, or Home Guard) regiments. It has been suggested that the garrison regiments carried no colors in America, but records of the period indicate that these regiments carried the full complement of flags. An order dated 5 February 1776 for the Garrison regiments Stein, Wissenbach, Huyne, and Bünau explains how the soldiers are to present arms and then come immediately to the ready when the colors are formed in front of the center company of the battalion in line of battle.² The names of four of the expected five Freicorporals (color-bearers) of the Regiment von Huyne have also been found in Hessian genealogical records.³

Some authorities assert that by this period the Hessian regiments were following the British and French practice of carrying only two flags per battalion, and it is possible that this was the case when deployed in line of battle, but records of captured flags suggest that all the Kompaniefahnen were with the regiments in the field. At Trenton the greater part of three regiments was captured, and Gen. Philip von Heister, commander of all Hessian forces in America, wrote to Landgraf Friedrich that he had lost three regiments and fifteen flags. At Yorktown, eighteen flags were taken from the German regiments: ten from the two Hessian regiments of five companies each, and eight from the two Anspach regiments, which had only four line companies each.

Regiment Rall seems to have been treated as a special case in several ways. It was technically one of the Garrison regiments, so some historians have concluded that Rall carried no flags at all. In addition, it was created as a grenadier regiment, the only one on the Hessian establishment, and as noted above, grenadier companies did not carry Fahnen. Nevertheless, this regiment was generally treated like the musketeer and fusilier regiments of infantry—one company was detached to the combined grenadier battalions and the other five fielded as a single battalion. Orders for America, dated 14 January 1776, state: “The strength of Rall will not be changed and is in all respects the same as for all the other field regiments.” And on 2 February 1776 an order for the first

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division of thirteen battalions, including Regiment Rall, enjoins, "The regiments to take care, as possible, to replace the missing Fahnenjunkers [another name for Freicorporals or flag-bearers].... Due to the short time before the forthcoming march, the vacant places of the Fahnenjunkers must be filled with corporals, so that the regiment is complete."⁴ Rall was one of the three regiments captured at Trenton and, as mentioned, Heister reported that these regiments had lost a total of fifteen flags; if his report was correct, Rall must have carried five flags. In addition it was reported that due to its gallant conduct at Stono Ferry in 1779, the reconstituted Regiment (by then titled Regiment d'Angelelli) was "restored to the Landgraf's 'gracious favour'" and on its return to Kassel in 1783 was presented by Friedrich himself with new colors.⁵ Yet another order, dated 4 March 1783, mentions both Angelelli and the Garrison regiments: "The necessary accoutrements, such as musket and bayonet, also leatherwork, the same as flags and drums, also axes for the carpenters, should be issued from the arsenals."⁶

Fellow Donald V. Holst, writing in *Zeitschrift für Heereskunde*, makes a case for Rall having no flags in America, or at least at Trenton.⁷ He cites several American reports from the Trenton campaign that mention the captured flags, all of which taken together yield a total of only nine flags actually falling into American hands. If Regiment Rall carried no flags, then the number lost should have been ten, and there is nothing at all to suggest what happened to the tenth. But why should it be easier to posit just one flag unaccounted for than six? Surely General Heister would have known, even in a very general way, how his Grenadier Regiment was equipped, and it seems he would have made inquiries, if just to soften the blow, before admitting to his prince that he had lost not only three regiments comprising almost a thousand men, but *fifteen* of his force's flags.⁸

Reconstruction of the Hessian flags

Hessian flags used in North America closely followed the Prussian style of the period. This should hardly be surprising given Landgraf Friedrich's background as an officer serving in the Prussian military and his subsequent organization and equipping of his own military establishment on the Prussian model. Friedrich's insistence on local manufacture or procurement of all items practicable also suggests that the Hessian flags would have come from a single local source and been quite regular in appearance. The remnants of the flags captured at Trenton are virtually identical in their materials and stitching, and the details of the painted designs on all suggest they were applied using the same stencils. Internal details of some parts of the designs varied, however. On the two fairly complete flags—and one fragment with a portion of the lion's tail—the outlines of the red and white striped lion of Hesse are identical, but the red and white stripes are painted in different positions.

The accompanying reconstruction of the Hessian flags is based on careful inspection of the remnants of the captured

colors and on comparison with contemporary Prussian flags. Reference to secondary sources is noted.

1. The Hessian flags are not square. Like the Prussian flags of the period, they are taller on the pike than they are wide. The two originals both measure approximately 55 inches on the pike by 45 to 46½ inches on the fly, a proportion of about 5:4.
2. The flags are only a single thickness of silk, so all parts of the painted design as seen on the obverse are overpainted as a mirror image on the reverse. Each flag is made of three panels of silk about 18½ inches wide, sewn selvedge to selvedge, with a medium-dark blue oval of silk approximately 26 x 22 inches sewn into the center. The blue color is considerably darker than most post-contemporary sources would suggest. See illustration. The center panel is also a single thickness; the seams that hold it into the flag are painted over by the gold or silver wreath. The *Eckflamen*, or corner blazes, on those flags that have them, are sewn onto the front of the flag and the excess of the field cut away on the back so that, except for the seams, all parts of the flag remain a single thickness.
3. The corner blazes come to a point where they meet the central oval panel. They are all cut to the same shape but two are reversed and sewn in so that the left and right (sinister and dexter) of the flag are reversed, or mirror images of each other.
4. Both of the surviving originals have been torn off the staff, so the original pole sleeves are absent. Some modern drawings show the colored corner blazes being continued around the staff, while the drawings from the 1780s show separately attached sleeves. Surviving Prussian flags from the period have a separate sleeve sewn onto the leading edge of the flag. The sleeve is the same color as the field of the flag. Two rows of nails through reinforcing strips of matching color hold the flag in place.⁹
5. The corner cyphers are painted in the Prussian style with two of them reversed, so that two read correctly and two are backwards on each side of the flag, and both sides of the flag appear identical. Since the blazes are also mirror image shapes, all the cyphers on both sides of the flag fit into the curves of the blazes in the same way.

Of the eight corner cyphers on the two Philadelphia colors, only one is still intact. It is in the upper corner on the pole side of the flag. This can be determined from the raw edge of the silk where it was torn from the staff—the outer, or fly, edge is hemmed top to bottom. Hessian and Prussian colors of the period are generally portrayed with the staff on the left, the flag itself "reads" from left to right. With the original flag laid out with the pole sleeve on the left, the one remaining cypher is reversed. While it has been suggested that this flag was somehow made "backwards" with the pole to the right, it seems much more likely that it is simply made like well-documented Prussian flags of the period. (An alternative way of looking at German flags is to think of them as having the pole to the

front, or towards the enemy. The obverse and reverse of the flag are then thought of as being the left and right faces. In this conception the lion on the Hessian flags is always walking toward the enemy, and the other details of the flag are identical as viewed from either side.)

6. Like Prussian flags of the period, but unlike most drawings of the Hessian flags, the wreaths surrounding the corner cyphers overlap the seams of the corner blazes and extend into the field of the flag.
7. Judging from contemporary drawings of these flags, and from other representations of the Hessian crown (*Fürstenhut*), the small crowns above the corner cyphers ought to be red inside. But there is no evidence of red paint in the white silk of the one remaining original corner cypher. It is also not evident how many arches the crown had or, indeed, if there were any, but since the globe and cross remain, there must have been. The lower portion of the surviving crown has five raised sections, to represent in a simplified form trifoliate leaves, and it appears from Davis' 1907 photograph that there were once pearls in between. This is a version of the traditional Germanic *Fürstenhut*, which would represent Friederich as *Landgraf*. It is represented with three arches, rather than the five arches of the king's crown as seen on the Prussian flags after which these flags are modeled. This *Fürstenhut* is also seen in the spear points of the Hessian flags.
8. Except for a few of the pearls on the arches and the globe and cross, the large *Fürstenhut* above the central oval is virtually invisible on both of the surviving flags. In part the silk itself is torn out, but mostly it is that whatever paint had once been there has now entirely flaked or rubbed away. However, in Charles Willson Peale's portraits of George Washington at Trenton, both the black flags of Knyphausen's regiment and the green flags of Rall's have crowns of the Germanic style, very similar to those on Prussian flags, but with pearls (which can be seen in the Davis photographs, and only very slightly on the originals) rather than diamonds on the arches. Peale depicts the crowns with only three arches, as one would expect given Friederich's rank. The interiors of the crowns Peale depicts as gold; contemporary sources show the interiors of the crowns red. There is no hint of red (or gold) on either of the surviving flags, but at least it is easier to believe red paint lost from green silk than from white (the corner blazes). On Prussian flags, the interiors of the crowns are left unpainted and the color of the silk shows through. Peale had the original captured flags in his possession as models for his paintings, but since the details of all flags were hand painted, it is possible that the interiors of the *Fürstenhut* were red on some and gold on others at the whim of the artist. Then again it is possible that Peale showed them as gold simply because it made for a better composition than a large splash of red at the bottom of his painting.

Peale also depicts the large trifoliate leaves issuing

from the lower portion of the crown as being on rather long stems, like those on the Prussian flags of the period, and unlike most contemporary depictions of Hessian *Fürstenhut*. It is unlikely that Peale invented this detail; if he were simply painting a crown from memory or imagination, one would expect it to look more like the British types he would have been familiar with. It is highly unlikely that a crown drawn without a model would just coincidentally look so much like the contemporary Prussian flag. It seems eminently likely, on the other hand, that the designer or maker of the Hessian Fahnen would have copied such a flag, making of course the necessary corrections for rank. It is also uncertain whether there were pearls between the leaves on the lower portion of the crown. I have drawn them as they appear on the Prussian Fahnen—partly because most features of the Hessian Fahnen are certainly modeled on the Prussian, and partly because there appear to be pearls between the leaves on the small crowns in the corner blazes of the Hessian flags, and it is reasonable that all the crowns would be drawn more or less in the same style. It is admitted that these pearls do not appear in Peale's painting, so their inclusion is at best only a guess.

9. There is no flaming grenade in the upper quadrant above the crown. Since the oval center of the Hessian flags is proportionally larger than the center on Prussian flags, there is simply not room for it.
10. The red and white striped lion of Hesse is depicted with his head turned to the rear, in heraldic terms he is *rampant regardant*. He wears a ducal coronet, or possibly the simplified version of the crown associated with German knights, on his head. Neither is a specific reference to rank. This crown has neither arches nor a red interior. There is no physical evidence of either, nor enough room between the top of the lion's head and the bottom of the motto scroll, for a crown with arches to fit into. The Hessian lion depicted with this type of coronet can be seen in the arms of Hessian cities as early as 1623.¹⁰ From the little remaining of the originals it can be seen that the various shaggy tufts of long hair as depicted on traditional heraldic lions are very simplified on the Hessian flags. The face of the heraldic lion has been depicted in many different styles, and Hessian lions on coins, documents, and even the grenadier cap plate of this period, have longer, more doglike snouts. The rather squashed face in this reconstruction is necessitated by what is (or was in 1907) left of the originals. Oddly, there is considerable difference in the divisions of red and white stripes on the lions. (This can be seen in the Davis photos. At the time this author had an opportunity to inspect the originals in 2001, virtually no paint at all remained on the lions.)
11. Spear points of Hessian flags were among the Napoleonic treasures at the Invalides in Paris prior to 1940, when most of the French trophies were carried off by the Germans. Fortunately, drawings were made in 1904 and published



FIG 1. Hessian spear point, from *Les Trophees de la France*, 1907. Courtesy of Patrice Mengy.

in *Les Trophees de la France* in 1907.¹¹ The drawings show spear points very similar to the Prussian, slightly more teardrop shaped, with a three-arch *Fürstenhut* and the cypher *FL* with foliated ends. The interior of the crown is inscribed with diagonal lines, suggesting the red velvet cap in the interior of an actual crown. The corresponding crown in Prussian spear points is pierced through, indicating no color in the interior of the crown, the same as the crowns on the Prussian flags. Peale shows spear points

of a very unusual design on the flags captured at Trenton; perhaps the originals were broken or bent, or had already been taken as souvenirs. It is pure speculation as to whether the spears were all brass, all gilt, all silver, or followed the metal of the regimental uniforms.

12. The Latin motto on the scroll above the striped lion is "Nescit Pericula." This would be loosely translated as "Ignorant of Fear" or "[They] know no fear."
13. The tassels on Hessian colors are predominantly red and suspended from a woven tape. This is variously drawn as tied in a bow or simply knotted about the base of the finial. Contemporary as well as modern illustrations seem to show the tape and tassels as red with silver highlights. However, the tassel in the collection of the Philadelphia Light Horse is red and gold, suggesting the metallic thread details of the tassels follow the color of the metal of the regiments' buttons and cap plates.

Colors of the Hessian flags

There is much disagreement among authorities on the colors used for the flags of the different Hessian regiments. Three reasonably contemporary sources exist, each with its own problems. The Museum Friedericianum in Kassel, cited by Gherardi Davis in 1908 and 1910, had a series of water color paintings which were made of the flags returned with the Hessian regiments in 1783. The paintings were rather crudely done in opaque colors that had chipped and undoubtedly faded a good deal. The motto on the only one pictured in Davis' book is misspelled as "Nescit Percula."¹² In some cases, according to Davis, the cypher *FL* for *Friedrich Landgraf* had been

overpainted with a *W* to update the flags to Friedrich's son and successor Wilhelm IX (1785). Flags captured in America were not recorded. It is not known what became of this book, it apparently did not survive World War II.

The second important listing, supposedly dating from 1784, is from the Staatsarchiv in Marburg. Frederick Todd and Herbert Knoetel, among others, consulted it for their military research done in the mid-twentieth century. This list, along with general descriptive information on the Hessian flags and drawings of the Trenton flags in Philadelphia, was published by Frederick Schirmer and Fritz Dietrich in the German modeling magazine *Zinnfigur* (Tin Figure) (date unknown). There are several discrepancies between this list and the Kassel water colors. The *Zinnfigur* article also states that the large crowns are gold, lined with red (*rotgefutterte*) and notes that the wreaths and other details, which are incorrectly identified as embroidery (*Stickerei*), are gold for some regiments and silver for others.

The third source is a collection of water colors from the library of Schloss Fasanerie in Fulda, attributed by Frederick Todd and presumably Herbert Knoetel, with whom he corresponded, to "Koch" and supposedly dating from 1781. However, in some printed versions of these paintings they are accompanied by titles of the regiments they represent, including regimental name changes that occurred through 1783 or later. These paintings are apparently the same as a collection in the Staatsarchiv Marburg "Abbildung und Beschreibung des Fürstlich Hessen-Kassel'schen Militär-Staats unter der Regierung Landgraf Friederich des Zweiten bis zum Jahr 1786, gezeichnet von G.F. Thalmann." (Pictures and descrip-

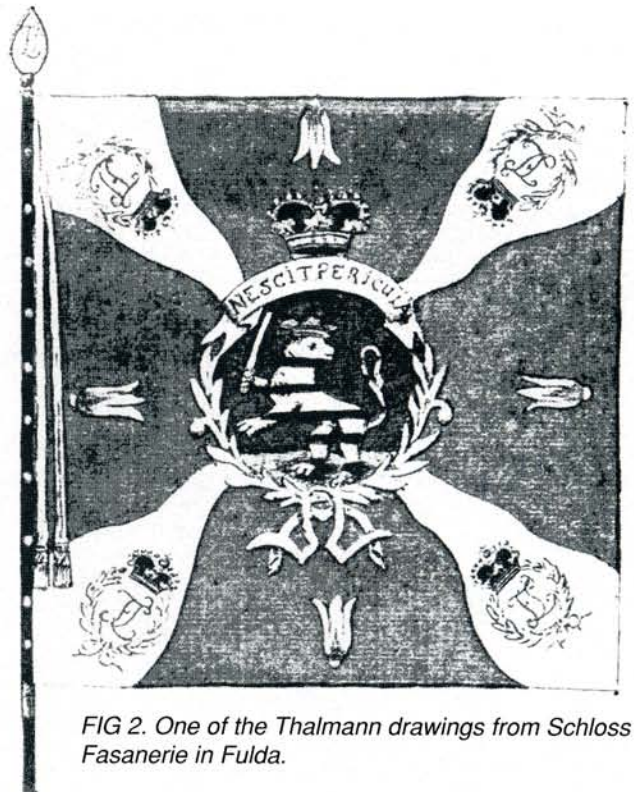


FIG 2. One of the Thalmann drawings from Schloss Fasanerie in Fulda.

tion of the Principality of Hessen-Kassel Military Forces under the reign of Friederich the Second through the year 1786, compiled by G.F. Thalmann.) They were republished in Kassel in 1977 by Hans-Enno Korn, under the title *Fahnen und Uniformen der Landgräfllich Hessen-Kasselischen*

*Truppen im Amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskreis 1776–1783.*¹³ The paintings are all based on a single drawing with the component parts of the flags done in different colors. The listing of regiments is not complete and, as there is only one flag represented for any given regiment, no distinction is

Table: Colors of the Hessian flags in North America, 1776–1783

The upper listing in each box is the Leibfahne, the lower listing the Kompaniefahnen. The first color given is the color of the field, the “w/—” indicates the color of the *Eckflammen*, or corner blazes. Gold or silver after the semicolon indicates the color of the wreaths and the grenades. Note that although there is no clear relationship between uniform colors and flag colors, the metal used for the wreaths and grenades on the Marburg list always corresponds to the white

or yellow metal of the uniform buttons and metal fronted caps. As discussed in the text, it is not certain whether the crowns and cyphers were always gold or changed with the color of the wreaths. Details of the uniforms are from Charles M. Lefferts, *Uniforms of the American, British, French, and German Armies in the War of the American Revolution, 1775–1783* (New York, 1926; reprint, Old Greenwich, CT: W.E., Inc., n.d.), 265.

Regiment	Kassel List, 1783 (Davis)	Marburg List, 1784 (Dietrich, <i>Zinnfigur</i>)	Fulda List, Thalmann	Uniform
Leib Regiment Regt du Corps Regt Erbprinz, 1783	Yellow w/wine red Wine red w/yellow	Deep burgundy red (<i>Pfirsichblut</i>) w/yellow; silver Yellow w/brick red (<i>Karmesin</i>); silver	Yellow w/red	Collar, cuffs, lapels yellow; buttons wht, wht buttonhole, vest & breeches yellow, silver fusileer cap
Regt Erbprinz Prinz Friedrich Inf, 1783	not listed; captured at Yorktown	Brick red w/blue; silver Red w/med blue; silver	Red w/lt blue	Collar, cuffs, lapels crimson; buttons wht, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches wht, silver fusileer cap
Regiment Prinz Carl	Green w/wine red All green	All green; gold Same	All green	Collar, cuffs, lapels red w/yellow tape; buttons gilt, vest & breeches white, hat bound white
Regt von Ditzfurth	Dk yellow w/brick red Dk yellow w/lt blue	Yellow w/wht; silver All yellow; silver	All yellow	Collar, cuffs, lapels yellow w/wht tape; buttons wht, vest & breeches white, hat bound white
Regt von Donop	All lt yellow Lt yellow w/lt blue	All straw; gold not listed	not listed	Collar, cuffs, lapels straw; buttons gilt, plain buttonhols, vest & breeches straw, hat bound white
Regt von Lossberg Alt von Lossberg, 1780	not listed; captured at Trenton ^A	Orange w/green; gold Same	Orange w/turquoise green	Collar, cuffs, lapels orange; buttons gilt, plain buttonhols, vest & breeches wht, brass fusileer cap
Regt von Knyphausen	not listed; captured at Trenton ^B (fragments of 3 flags in Phila; black w/white, gold paint)	Black w/straw; gold Black w/white; gold	Black w/wht	Collar, cuffs, lapels black; buttons gilt, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches straw, brass fusileer cap

Regt von Rall von Woellwart, 1778 von Trumbach, 1779 d'Angelelli, 1781	not listed; captured at Trenton (2 flags in Phila; green w/white, 1 wht & blue frgmnt, gold paint, prob. Rall) ^C	probably none in America, but poss. dk blue w/red (ref to new flags presented 1783?)	not listed	Collar, cuffs, lapels red; buttons gilt, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches straw, brass grenadier cap
Regt von Trumbach von Bose, 1779	not listed; captured at Yorktown	White w/blue, gold Blue w/ white, gold ^D (illustrated with silver in <i>Zinnfigur</i>)	Dk blue w/white	Collar, cuffs, lapels white; buttons gilt, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches wht, hat bound white
Regt von Mirbach Jung von Lossberg, 1780	All Orange Orange w/lt blue	All red; silver Orange w/lt blue, silver	Orange w/lt blue	Collar, cuffs, lapels red w/wht tape; buttons wht, vest & breeches white, hat bound white
Regt Wutginau Regt Landgraf, 1778 Regt du Corps (Leib), 1783	Dk red w/lt blue Lt blue w/dk red	All orange; gold All red; gold	All red	Collar & cuffs red; no lapels, buttons gilt, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches straw, hat bound white
Regt von Wissenbach von Knobloch, 1781	not listed; Garrison Regt	not listed; Garrison Regt	not listed; Garrison Regt	Collar, cuffs, lapels white; buttons wht, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches blue, hat bound white
Regt von Huyn von Benning, 1780	“	“	“	Collar, cuffs, lapels yellow; buttons wht, plain buttonholes vest & breeches blue, hat bound white
Regt von Büнау	“	“	“	Collar, cuffs, lapels crimson; buttons wht, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches blue, hat bound white
Regt von Stein von Seitz, 1778	“	“	“	Collar, cuffs, lapels orange; buttons wht, plain buttonhole, vest & breeches blue, hat bound white

A. Holst suggests that the green w/white flags now in Philadelphia belonged to Regiment v. Lossberg. Peale's paintings of Washington include two green flags, one white, and three or more black. Since Holst argues that Regiment Rall had no flags, and it is clear that the black flags are Knyphausen, he concludes the green and white flags must be Lossberg. The white flag he suggests as the Leibfahne of Knyphausen. Other authorities contend that the Lossberg flags were orange and Knyphausen's black. If that is the case, and Rall *did* have flags, the green and white flags must be Rall's. The white flag could also have had colored Eckflammen, but there is nothing to prove it one way or the other, nor any way to guess what color they might have been. Three Hessian regiments merely reversed the colors on their Leib- and Kompaniefahnen (Prussian style) so it is *possible* that this flag, most likely belonging to Regiment Rall, had green Eckflammen. Eight other Hessian regiments, however, had little or

no logical relation between the colors of the component parts of their Leib- and Kompaniefahnen.

- B. Sgt. Elisha Bostwick described the capture of the “flag or Standard of the richest black silk & the devices upon it & gold lettering in gold Leaf” from Hessian soldiers in uniforms of blue with black facings—Knyphausen's. Quoted in Atwood, *The Hessians*, 97.
- C. These are the flags that Holst assigns to Lossberg and Knyphausen. The white fragment also has a bit of the blue central cartouche, the seam painted over in gold.
- D. Some drawings, including *Zinnfigur*, show the blue flags with white blazes as also having a white central oval, suggesting the Prussian system of reversing the colored parts of the flags. None of the three lists above suggests that the central oval containing the Hessian lion was ever other than blue.

made between the Leibfahne and the Kompaniefahnen. For each listed regiment, however, the flag shown is the same as the Kompaniefahne described by Schirmer and Dietrich from the Marburg list. In all of these drawings the wreaths and grenades appear to be silver while the crowns and cyphers are gold. The crowns, wreaths, and cyphers are all very poorly executed, and the flaming grenades, of which there are four, are made to look like tulips.

Some of the discrepancies among these lists may be due to different interpretations of the much-faded colors used on the paintings; some to different curators over the years reidentifying the unmarked paintings with different regiments. It appears that in some cases the identity of the Leibfahne and the Kompaniefahnen have been reversed. It is also possible that some regiments were given new flags when renamed and transferred to a new *Chef*, or colonel-in-chief, and that the makers of the different lists were simply looking at different flags. This might best explain the great discrepancies in the descriptions for the Regiments von Wutginau and Rall, both of which went through several changes of title during the war. Regiment Rall lost both its flags and its *Chef* (Col. Johann Gottlieb Rall himself) at Trenton, and was presented new flags, apparently of different colors from the originals, under the title Regiment d'Angelelli in 1783.

It is unknown whether the crowns and cyphers followed the metal color used for the wreaths, which in the Marburg list mirrors the metal used on the regimental uniforms. Prussian flags of the period used only one metal color per flag, either gold or silver, for wreaths, crowns, cyphers, and grenades. This metal was supposed to be the same as the metal of the uniforms, though this apparently was not always the case in practice. The German uniform illustrator Knoetel shows the crowns and cyphers on Hessian flags matching the color of the wreaths. Yet two of the three Hessian lists noted suggest that the crowns, at least, were always gold, and the third list—cited by Davis—does not say one way or the other. All the surviving fragments of original flags have gold wreaths and grenades, which of course match the gold crowns and cyphers, but tell us nothing about those regiments with silver as their metal.

A set of watercolors illustrating the uniforms of the Hessian regiments in 1785 also includes regimental flags. These, however, appear to be of an entirely new pattern, and in each case the Leibfahne is all white, which was not the case in 1776 to 1783. There are also a few representations of Hessian flags of the period on German cigarette cards of the early twentieth century and a few other unsourced or questionable drawings.

Notes

1. Contemporary spellings vary greatly among French, German, and English. Some of the German military terms of the period were of a Frenchified German, or Germanized French, such as *Leibcompagnie*. For purposes of this article I have generally stayed with German spellings of proper names and military flag terms.
2. "Wann das Bataillon en front aufmarschiert steht, presentiert, und, wann die fahnen hirbei vor die mittelste Compagnie aufmarchiert sind." ("When the Battalion forms into line of battle, [arms] are presented, and

when the flags are formed before the center company.") Staatsarchiv Marburg, courtesy of Marcus Jae. The author wishes to specially thank Herr Jae for his assistance in compiling this and other cited information from hitherto untapped sources in the Staatsarchiv in Marburg. Although secondary works on Hessian participation in America are very thorough in many respects, no author has heretofore looked specifically at the topic of flags. Herr Jae's contributions should put an end to many years of speculation among scholars unable to make the journey to Hesse.

3. Ibid.
4. "Der Etat von Rall leydet keine Abänderung und ist den übrigen feldregimentern in allem gleich.... Dass die Rgte soweit wie möglich Sorge zu tragen haben, die fehlende fahnenjunkers ... auch die Zeit wegen des nehen Marsches dazu zu kurz fallen, so müssen die vacante fahnenjunkers durch Corporals einweilen werden." Ibid.
5. Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians, Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 235.
6. "Die nöthige Armaturstücke, als Ober- und Untergewehr, auch Lederwerk, desgleichen Fahnen und Trommeln, auch Äxte für die Zimmerleute, ... aus den Zeughäusern verhadreicht werden." *Regelement für das Angelillische Grenadier-, das Wilckische Creis-Infanterie und die Garnisons Regimente vom 4ten Martii 1783*; Staatsarchiv Marburg, courtesy of Marcus Jae.
7. Donald V. Holst and U.P. Böhm, "Hessische Fahnen im Gefecht von Trenton 1776," *Zeitschrift für Heereskunde* (November, December 1990): 141–51. The article itself was written by Holst, an American. U.P. Böhm, Holst's German editor for the article, added a comprehensive critique. Some of this was aimed at Holst's portrayal of Rall's defeat at Trenton, but he also says flatly that Holst had erred in believing that the Garrison Regiments carried no flags, citing a 1783 painting of the returned regiments at an unveiling of a monument to Frederick on 14 April 1783, and suggesting that Holst must then prove that the flags in the painting were not those the included garrison regiments had carried and brought back from America. However, it is also known that at least one garrison regiment, Rall/Angelelli, was presented flags *after* its return. See note 5.
8. Holst dismisses the missing tenth flag as no great problem, suggesting that it was not unusual for a regiment to be short a flag or two. To bolster this he cites Yorktown, where eighteen flags were taken from four German regiments. But Anspach regiments only had four line companies, so the total of eighteen flags means that all the German line companies had flags with them. In addition, Holst ignores the question of what happened to thirteen of *those* eighteen flags—only five Anspach flags still exist. In any event, it remains that *some* German flag or flags reasonably supposed to be at Trenton cannot be accounted for.
9. E-mail correspondence, 7 August 1999, between the author and Dr. Gunter Dirrheimer, Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna, Austria. To the author's inquiry, Dr. Dirrheimer stated that all Prussian flags of the period had separately attached pole sleeves of a single color.
10. Hans-Enno Korn, *Die hessischen Städtewappen aus Wilhelm Wessels Wappenbuch von 1623* (Kassel: n.p., 1984).
11. Drawings from *Les Trophees* were very kindly sent to the author by Patrice Menguy of Paris.
12. Peale shows this same mistake on one of the flags in his first painting of Washington done in 1779. Peale worked from the originals and would not have seen the book in Kassel, which was not even compiled until 1783. It is possible that Peale and the artist in Kassel made the same mistake, but unlikely. It seems that the motto on some of the flags really was misspelled. This would hardly be a unique occurrence. Battle honors on American flags of the Civil War are often misspelled and on one flag from Pennsylvania—one of more than a hundred purchased from the same maker—the word "Independence" in the Pennsylvania state motto is misspelled "Independence." Interestingly, none of the numerous copies Peale and his sons and assistants made of the Washington painting show the same mistake in the motto.
13. This may in fact be the source cited by Schirmer and Dietrich, but if so, it is by no means clear how they came up with the colors for both Leib- and Kompaniefahnen, since the Thalmann drawings only show one flag per regiment. Böhm also cites this problem in his commentary on Holst.

Colors of the Hessian Flags in North America, 1776–1783

Reconstructions of Hessian colors used in North America were drawn by the author.



Leibfahne of Regiment Erbprinz. As noted in text, it is not entirely clear whether small crowns and cyphers were always gold or followed the color of the uniform metal. It seems reasonable that the spear point would be silver or gold to match the regimental metal in buttons and cap plate. Illustration by the author.

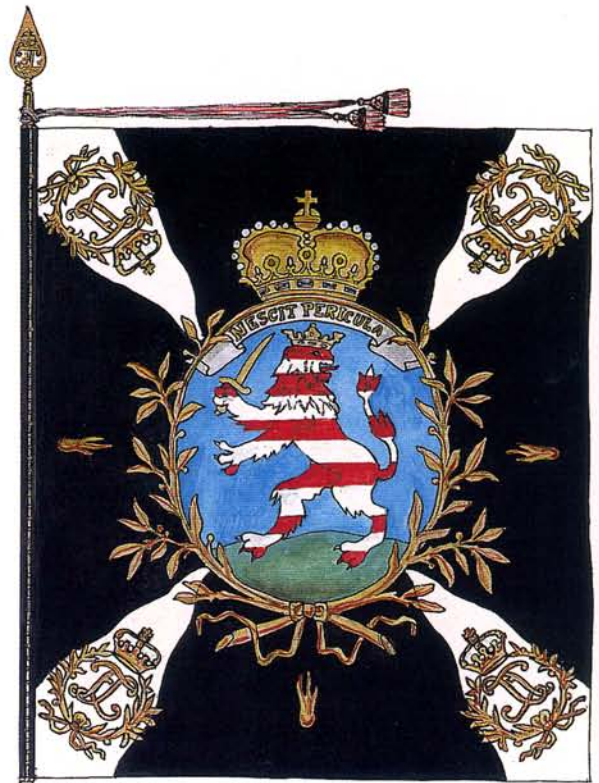


Plate 1. Kompaniefahnen, Fusileer Regiment von Knyphausen. Captured at Trenton, 1776. Fragments of one or more originals in Philadelphia.



Plate 2. Leibfahne, Fusileer Regiment Erbprinz, Prinz Friederich Infanterie, 1783.



Plate 3. Kompaniefahnen, Lieb Regiment/Fusileer Regiment Du Corps, Regiment Erbprinz, 1783.

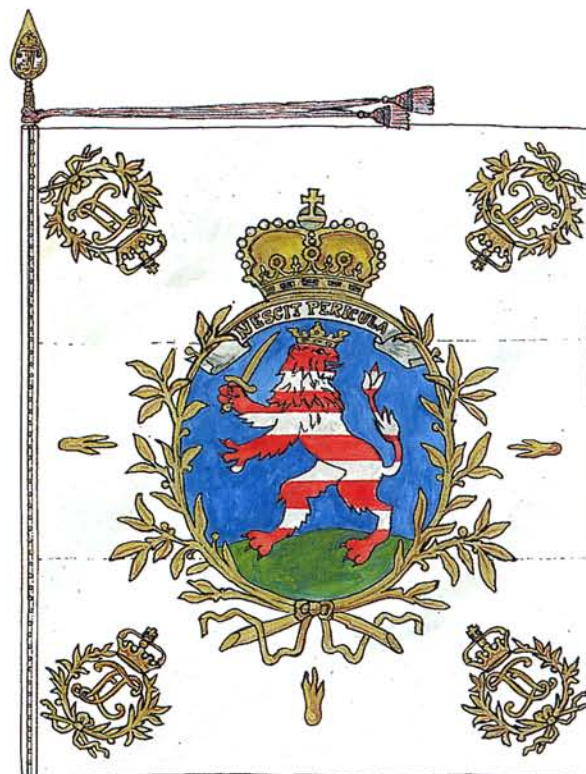


Plate 4. Liebfahne, Grenadier Regiment von Rall; von Woellwarth, 1778; von Trumbach, 1779; d'Angelelli, 1781. Captured at Trenton, 1776. Fragments of original in Philadelphia. It is possible that this flag had corner blazes of green or some other contrasting color.



Plate 5. Kompaniefahnen, Grenadier Regiment von Rall; von Woellwarth, 1778; von Trumbach, 1779; d'Angelelli, 1781. Captured at Trenton, 1776. Fragments of two or more originals in Philadelphia.

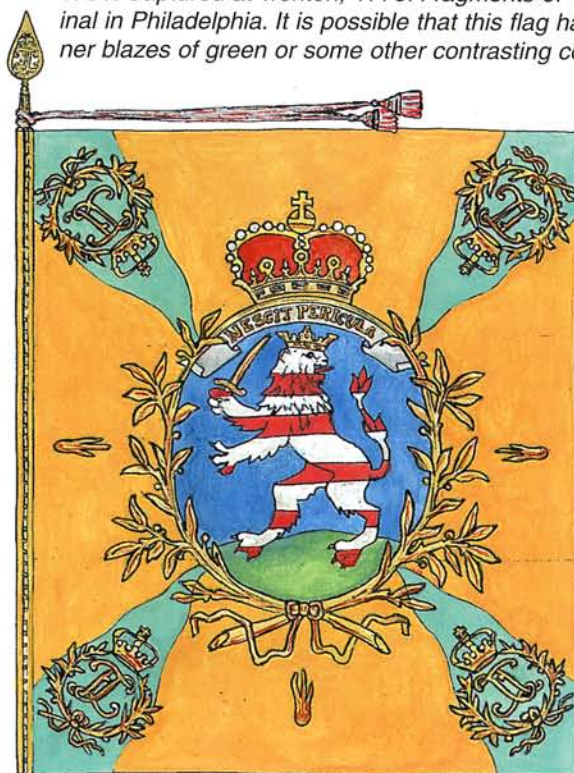


Plate 6. Liebfahne, Fusileer Regiment von Lossberg (Alt). The Kompaniefahnen of this regiment were the same as the Leibfahne. All five flags were reported as captured at Trenton, 1776, but what became of them thereafter is unknown.



Plate 7. Liebafahne, Musketeer Regiment von Donop.

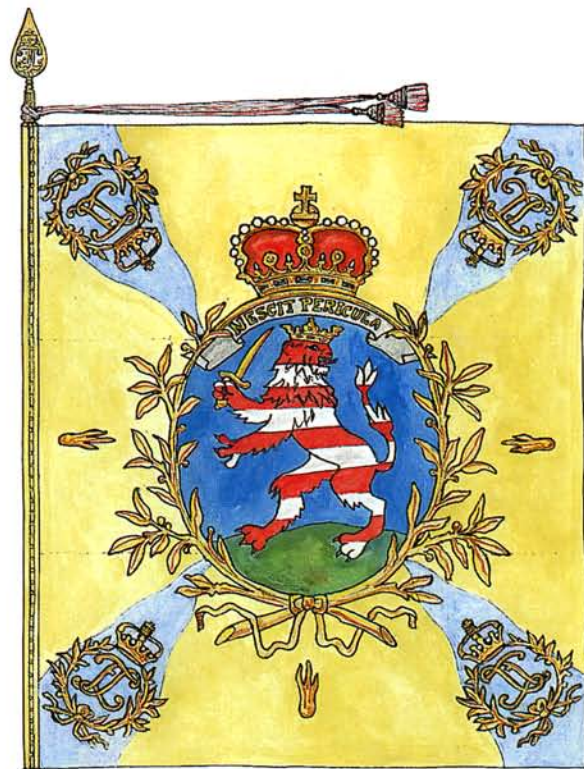


Plate 8. Kompaniefahnen, Musketeer Regiment von Donop.



Plate 9. Liebafahne, Musketeer Regiment Prinz Carl.



Plate 10. Kompaniefahnen, Musketeer Regiment Prinz Carl.

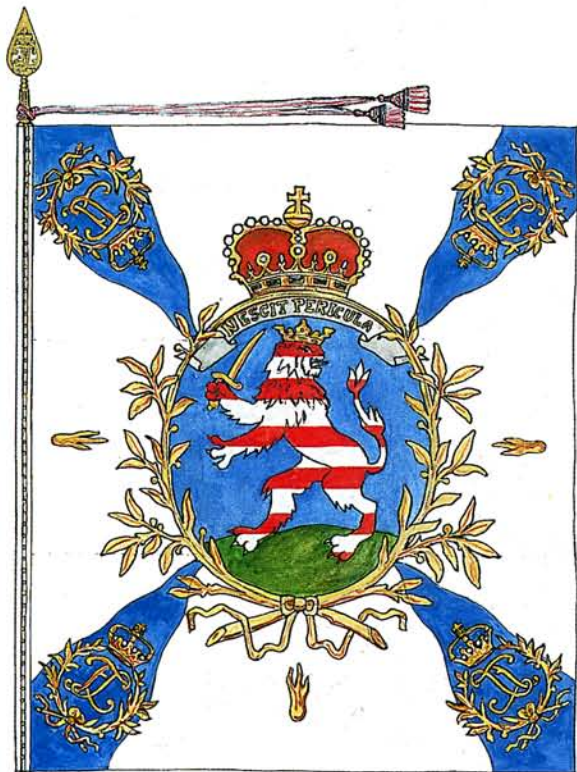


Plate 11. Leibfahne, Musketeer regiment von Trumbach; von Bose, 1779.



Plate 12. Kompaniefahnen, Musketeer regiment von Trumbach; von Bose, 1779.



Plate 13. Leibfahne, Regiment von Wutginau; Regiment Landgraf, 1778; Leib Regiment Du Corps, 1783.

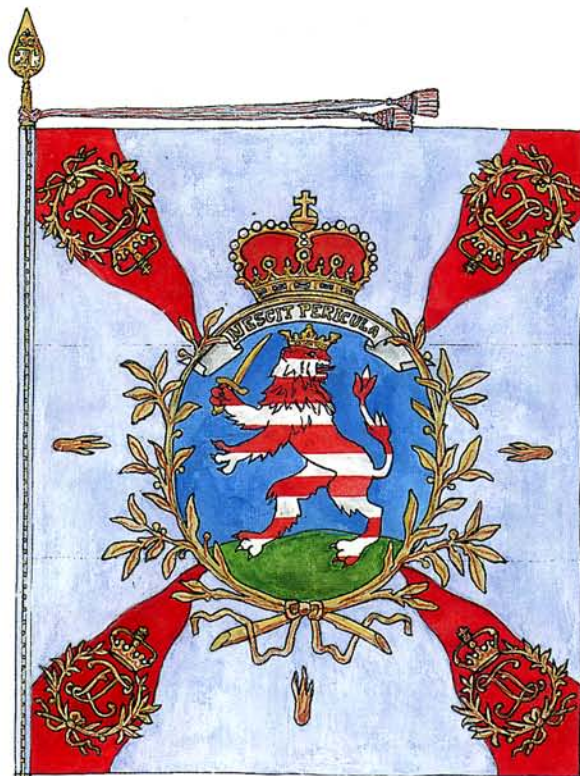


Plate 14. Kompaniefahnen, Regiment von Wutginau; Regiment Landgraf, 1778; Leib Regiment Du Corps, 1783.



Charles Willson Peale's Washington at Princeton, showing the Hessian flags taken at Trenton. Peale did at least thirteen copies of this famous work. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.



Tassel from a Hessian color captured at Trenton. Photo courtesy of Fellow J. Craig Nannos, Colonel, Pennsylvania National Guard.



Fragment of a Hessian flag captured at Trenton, showing the center portion of the lion's tail. Note that the red and white stripes are in different positions than in the flag shown in the Davis photograph below, left. Previously unpublished photographs by author, with the permission of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



Photograph by Gherardi Davis, taken in 1910, of one of two green colors in Philadelphia. Courtesy of the Massachusetts State Library, Special Collections.



Fragments of the white Leibfahne, probably belonging to Regiment Rall, captured at Trenton. Previously unpublished photographs by author, with the permission of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



Fragment of the black flag of Regiment von Knyphausen, captured at Trenton. Photographs by author, published with the permission of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

