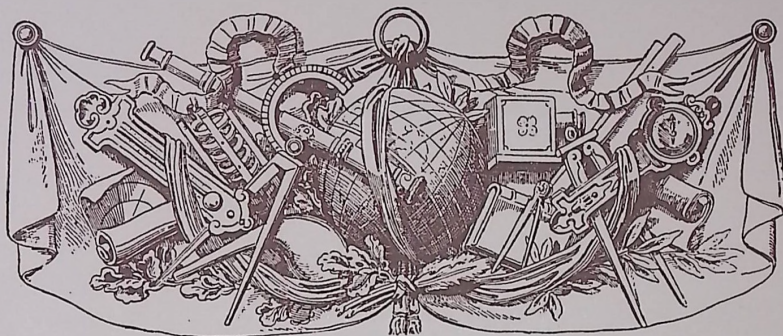


A MAP OF YORKTOWN

A MAP OF
YORKTOWN

By Joachim du Perron, Comte de Revel

WITH NOTES BIOGRAPHICAL, NAUTICAL
& CARTOGRAPHICAL ON THE JOURNALS & MAPS OF DUPERRON, 1781-1782
BY GILBERT CHINARD, ROBERT G. ALBION,
AND LLOYD A. BROWN



PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY
THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
1942

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE siege of Yorktown was a spectacular combination of efficient strategy, good timing, and admirable cooperation. This brochure, which presents some facts about the contribution of one of the French participants in that decisive event, is appropriately enough the result in miniature of a similar combination of circumstances. Its publication is the outcome of several happy conjunctions of personal friendships, scholarly interests, and stimulating ideas. But there the similarity to the event which it celebrates comes to an end. For this brochure lays siege to nothing unless it be to indifference or apathy regarding our historic backgrounds.

First of all, we extend our gratitude to Mr. Stuart W. Jackson for providing the opportunity and the gracious permission to reproduce du Perron's charming map of Yorktown. At the time this brochure was first projected, Mr. Jackson was the fortunate owner of two manuscript volumes in the handwriting of Joachim du Perron, Comte de Revel. The first is a vellum-bound quarto volume of 105 unnumbered pages entitled "brouillon Du journal De ma Campagne sur Le Languedoc 1781." This is du Perron's rough draft and notes. The second is a folio volume of 154 pages, bound in boards, entitled "journal particulier D'une Campagne aux indes occidentales." This volume includes the Yorktown map and ten other four-page inserts of some twenty-eight separate maps and charts, together with twelve figures and drawings of ships in the text. Since the beginning of our venture to reproduce the Yorktown map, Mr. Jackson has generously presented the two du Perron manuscripts to the Library of Princeton University as a tribute to his friend Dr. Gilbert Chinard. This additional act of generosity on the part of Mr. Jackson places the du Perron manuscripts in company with the Berthier journals and maps, which they admirably supplement. It is to be hoped that these journals, which on the one hand portray the French participation in the Yorktown campaign by land under Rochambeau and which on the other hand reflect the French naval cooperation under de Grasse, will at some not distant day be published with adequate reproductions of their highly interesting and informative maps.

Original manuscripts such as the du Perron journals require scholarly interpretation. We are fortunate in securing for this brochure the commentaries of three outstanding American experts. Dr. Gilbert Chinard, Pyne Professor of French Literature at Princeton University and author of many books and monographs on eighteenth-century Franco-American cultural relations, contributes a summary of the career and personality of du Perron. Dr. Robert G. Albion, Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Princeton University and well-known authority on maritime and naval history, places the journal of du Perron in its proper historical background and gives us pleasant glimpses into the diary of this army lieutenant who went to sea. Mr. Lloyd A. Brown, Curator of Maps at the William L. Clements Library and one of the leading students of cartography in America, comments on du Perron's ability at drawing

maps. To these scholars for the time and knowledge which they have so generously shared, we express our sincere gratitude.

This occasional publication and its interesting map would not have come into existence if it had not been for the exceedingly cooperative attitude and the equally generous response of Mr. E. Harold Hugo of the Meriden Gravure Company and Mr. Datus C. Smith, Jr., Director of the Princeton University Press. Both of these gentlemen, whose interest in scholarly publication is well known and widely appreciated, have given to this brochure not only its high quality of printing but their respective houses have printed the map and the text as a gesture of good will toward the Princeton University Library and The American Friends of Lafayette. In doing this they have shared the feeling of all the others who have taken part in this pleasant little enterprise that the du Perron journals should be published in full. They hope, as we do, that this brochure will be a means of acquainting historians and friends of history with this significant Revolutionary manuscript and that this brief acquaintance may awaken a general desire for a more complete publication.

A few generous friends have helped the Meriden Gravure Company and the Princeton University Press to defray a part of the actual cost of production. Mr. Robert S. Bright, Mrs. Alfred V. duPont, Mr. Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., Mr. John H. Scheide, Mr. John W. Whiteley, Jr., Mrs. Jacques Leon Stern, who is a collateral descendant of Marshal Berthier, and an anonymous contributor have thus given material assistance. We take pleasure in acknowledging their generous cooperation.

July 25, 1942

JULIAN P. BOYD
Librarian, Princeton University

JOACHIM DU PERRON, COMTE DE REVEL

By GILBERT CHINARD

THE *Journal Particulier d'une Campagne aux Indes Occidentales* (1781-1782), by Joachim du Perron, Comte de Revel, Sous-Lieutenant au Régiment d'Infanterie de Monsieur, was published—poorly published, it must be said—in Paris in 1808. It was issued in a limited edition, for distribution among members of the family. Its paper, its typography, and its printing were of low quality. Its maps were not facsimiles, but crudely redrawn outlines, bearing little resemblance to the charming and accurate originals. If its purpose was to rescue from oblivion the name of an able French officer, it failed lamentably. Joachim du Perron, mentioned only once by Vicomte de Noailles as serving among the infantry officers on board the *Languedoc* in the fleet under de Grasse, still remains in undeserved obscurity. The manuscript journals kept by him and recently presented to the Princeton University Library deserve a better fate than this inferior and partial publication. They should be translated into English and given the scholarly interpretation that they merit as documents of great interest for students of the American Revolution.

His life was comparatively uneventful. The descendant of a noble family of Dauphiné, tracing back its origin to the twelfth century, the son of Christophe-Joachim de Revel, seigneur de Vergeron, and "mousquetaire rouge" in the King's guard, du Perron was born in 1756. For reasons nowhere indicated, this son and grandson of cavalrymen became an infantry officer. In 1772, at the very normal age of sixteen, he entered as an "élève-officier" the Régiment d'Infanterie de Monsieur, stationed in the gloomy city of Metz, and soon received his regular commission as a second-lieutenant. If he had not belonged to a somewhat inferior branch of the service, he might have met there, two years later, a petulant and dashing cavalry officer, only one year younger than himself who, thanks to his marrying into the Noailles family, had just been appointed a captain in the Noailles Dragoons. But cavalry and infantry never mixed in those days, and it does not appear that Lafayette and du Perron became even chance acquaintances. Nine years after entering the army, du Perron was still a second-lieutenant with a none too brilliant future, for promotions were more easily gained at the Court and in the salons of the capital than in remote garrisons on the Eastern frontier. His first opportunity to see active service and to distinguish himself came only in 1780.

Early in the Spring, orders came from the Court for the regiment to send a detachment of 400 men to embark on one of the ships then gathered at Brest under the command of Lieutenant-général Comte de Grasse. As the oldest second-lieutenant, du Perron was designated with four captains, four lieutenants and four other second-lieutenants to take charge of the detachment. They arrived at Le Conquet, near Cape Saint-Mathieu, at the extreme end of Brittany, on June 28, 1780, and remained there

digging trenches and building fortifications until the end of September. On October 7, they embarked on the *Languedoc*, and there again marked time, getting familiarized with their new abode, until March 23, 1781, when Comte de Grasse gave the signal to sail to the 25 warships, 3 frigates, 2 cutters and 200 merchant vessels to be convoyed to America.

Du Perron was to return to Brest on the much battered *Languedoc*, on August 22, 1782. During these seventeen months, to quote from his "états de services," he had participated in two campaigns, seven naval battles and had seen service during the *blocus* of Gloucester and the siege of Yorktown. This record was probably not considered as sufficient ground for promotion. While higher officers, particularly staff officers, divided crosses, cordons, decorations and promotions among themselves, du Perron had to wait until October 1, 1785, to receive a first-lieutenancy. In June 1789 he was made a captain, and six weeks later he resigned from the army.

He was then thirty-three. Two years before, he had received title to the family fief of Vergeron and had attended the Etats de Dauphiné where he met Baron de Vesc, a former lieutenant-colonel, whose charming daughter, Marie-Diane, Comtesse de Béconne, he married at the beginning of 1789. He had served in the King's army and the King's navy for seventeen years and had little hope of ever reaching the higher ranks. Far better would be the life of a gentleman farmer on the pleasant estate of Vergeron and, curiously enough, in spite of the Revolution, civil troubles and foreign wars which afflicted France during the next twenty-five years, he succeeded in achieving this unambitious program. Something of a philanthropist, he was loved by his tenants and the people of the commune of Moirans. Resisting the entreaties of his wife and trusting his good neighbors, he refused to emigrate, and was left undisturbed in the peace of his ancestral acres during the remainder of his life. His wife gave him two sons and a daughter who survived him, and he died painlessly and almost suddenly, at peace with himself and the world, in his castle, on October 17, 1814, at the age of fifty-eight.

Before leaving the army he had his portrait painted, in the white coat of his regiment, without a single decoration, against the faint outline of the good ship *Languedoc*, on which he had spent a year and a half. As a memento of his military career, he took with him a much thumbed notebook kept during the campaign, and the beautifully calligraphed manuscript enriched with elaborate colored maps, plans and diagrams drawn after his return to Metz and containing a full account of the events he had witnessed.

In many respects, this manuscript is an unusual and perhaps unique record. Being of a curious and conscientious nature, du Perron had noted details to be found nowhere else in the diaries of the time. It took a "landlubber," with an inquisitive mind and good mathematical training, to study the navigation of the fleet, the sea maneuvers, to record all the signals and the position of every ship during the battles in the West Indies and at the entrance of the Chesapeake. Navy men of the eighteenth



THE DU PERRON MAP OF YORKTOWN AND ENVIRONS, 1781
From the original in the Princeton University Library



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century have taken little trouble to describe the life of the common sailors aboard a warship and, in fact, knew little and cared even less about the life of the crew. It took an infantryman and a subaltern, sharing the work and privations of his men, to note how they were fed, the quality and preparation of their food, what kind of quarters they were given and what was their daily routine. The so-called "reine des batailles" was also the Cinderella of the army. While the cavalrymen of Lauzun were given all sorts of privileges and even foraged at will, the infantrymen were kept in the mud and the dust, digging trenches, killed by misdirected shots from the artillery, restricted to their encampment, unsung and unknown heroes for whom du Perron, without any rhetorical effusion, is simply demanding some recognition. All the glory went to the men who took Yorktown; against the traditional picture of the capitulation of Cornwallis, it is not entirely superfluous to be reminded by du Perron of the English hospital at Gloucester with fifteen hundred sick or wounded soldiers, dying in such large numbers that the bodies were thrown out of the tents and left unburied on the sand of the beach. But in spite of many such realistic and profoundly human touches, du Perron should not be mistaken for a pacifist or a philosopher. Above all, he is every inch a soldier, with a stoical resignation, a high sense of duty and responsibility, and even when feeling free to criticize the lack of training of the navy officers, he ungrudgingly admits that infantrymen and naval men have in common "one essential merit, without which there can be no soldier, a complete readiness and willingness to risk limb and life" in the performance of duty.

AN INFANTRYMAN'S NAVAL JOURNAL

By ROBERT G. ALBION

ANYONE planning to write an historical novel touching on French aid in the Revolution or desiring "atmosphere" to enliven a more serious study will find the du Perron journal a real treasure. The general strategy and major tactics are already available in the works of Mahan, Fortescue and many other authorities: one does not expect new light on these matters from an infantry lieutenant. But this temporary marine does manage to give us the "feel" of de Grasse's famous cruise which, in the autumn of 1781, saw the French navy in its moment of greatest achievement and six months later saw it get one of its periodic smashings from the British.

A naval officer would not have given us so thorough and so objective a picture of the fleet; he would have taken for granted most of the things which du Perron eagerly investigated and recorded. He described the clumsy sailing from Brest, before a crowd of cheering thousands, with dozens of collisions between the warships and the merchantmen they were convoying. He recorded his lessons in boxing the compass. He reflected the impotent rage of the reserve officers from the merchant marine and of the infantry officers at the clannish superiority of the regular naval officers, at the humiliation of forcing an army captain to ask permission of a sixteen-year-old before he could go ashore. In investigating navigation, which was in rather a crude stage, du Perron found that the regular officers scorned it as something beneath them, to be handled by the sailing masters; one of the very few regulars who studied its mysteries was derisively dubbed "The Astronomer" by his colleagues. The infantry apparently had an inferiority complex anyway; even in the army, it was snubbed by the cavalry, and du Perron vigorously voices the constant sense of humiliation.

His journal is at its best during the twenty-four days of October 1781, when he was ashore with 800 soldiers from the fleet engaged in besieging Gloucester, across the river from Yorktown. Only at second hand does he offer a grisly atrocity story; the French troops who occupied Jamestown found the houses pillaged by the British and filled with corpses, among them, "celui d'une femme qui avoit la ventre ouvert, et sur elle cette inscription, tu n'enfanteras plus des rebelles." But he saw much at first hand, receiving his baptism of fire on patrol duty. One night the officers all dined with the Duc de Lauzun, drinking "groog" and eating "ross bif"; but the soldiers, who had come ashore only with some hard and moldy biscuits, were foraging and could not be checked; their months on shipboard had wrecked their discipline. Some had to be roughly handled before they would stand guard. An American outfit which relieved his patrol he regarded as a sorry lot of "poor peasants" with few bayonets, no uniforms and no tents. After the surrender, he told that the British officers fraternized with the French and drank toasts to them, but would not speak to a single American; several British officers even offered their sabres and fowling pieces to the

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Frenchmen, saying they would rather break them in a thousand pieces than let them fall into American hands. The men of Virginia did not impress him much; he found the women more free in their manners than the French, but "pas moins sages"; he discovered that one kissed them upon the mouth rather than the cheek.

The journal ends on a sombre note, six months later. After triumphantly securing American independence, de Grasse sailed for the West Indies where Rodney inflicted a stinging defeat upon him at the Saints. Du Perron told of the *Languedoc*, hit by 1677 shot during the fight, with 15 men killed and 110 wounded, slipping away during the night, blacked out, watching the burning *Cesar* blow up with all its wounded aboard. Months of humiliation at the hands of the haughty regulars found vent in his comments on the battle: "So ends this terrible day, eternal monument of the fundamental vices of the French navy, of ignorance and insubordination." De Grasse, he observed, deserved to be put in a class with "l'amiral bing." The defeat at the Saints, however, has failed to dim those all-important hours off the Virginia Capes six months before, when du Perron had played his humble role in a most striking example of the influence of sea power upon history.

DU PERRON AS CARTOGRAPHER

By LLOYD A. BROWN

IN January 1782, Sir Henry Clinton, Commander-in-chief of the British Army in North America, wrote to a friend in London, telling him that Captain Edward Fage of the Royal Artillery, who was present at the siege of Yorktown, had made the only survey of that post and the surrounding country. In this as in other details concerning the Chesapeake campaign, Clinton erred.

Surveys and plans of the Yorktown campaign, in fact, are more numerous than those made of any other campaign or action in the Revolution, for reasons which are not difficult to find. In the first place it was a campaign conducted on a grand scale, involving two seasoned armies which were large for that day. Also engaged were two naval fleets, one of which proved to be the decisive factor in the ultimate surrender of Lord Cornwallis. In the second place the Yorktown campaign was the only full-fledged siege conducted during the course of the Revolutionary War. Here for the first time the terrain and situation of the opposing forces made it practical for the allied armies to employ their sappers and miners according to the best traditions of tactical warfare. The siege turned out to be one of those infrequent military stratagems which are as effective in reality as they are on paper. It was a military engineer's dream, and every phase of the campaign was mapped in minute detail.

Over forty manuscript surveys were made of the posts at York and Gloucester during the latter part of 1781, in connection with the siege laid against Lord Cornwallis by the combined American and French forces under the command of His Excellency George Washington. To be sure, many of these were only partial surveys or hastily drawn field sketches, but several are amazingly complete and accurate. Lieutenant John Hills of the 23rd Regiment and Captain Edward Fage of the Royal Artillery made excellent surveys for the edification of Parliament and the British general staff. But the majority of the maps and plans of Yorktown and Gloucester were made by French engineers and officers attached to the command under Washington and Rochambeau.

Joachim du Perron made an unusual contribution to the documentary record of the Yorktown campaign. His post on the *Languedoc* during the cooperative action of the French fleet and the allied armies gave him an opportunity to watch the development of the siege as land operations progressed, and to follow closely the naval action between the French and British fleets as well. The young naval officer made three surveys of the Yorktown campaign which are bound into his "Journal." The first, which is here reproduced in facsimile, is a plan of the British posts occupied by Cornwallis at Yorktown and Gloucester. It is well executed and carefully tinted, depicting the salient features of the siege and the works erected by the opposing forces in the vicinity of the two posts. The permanent defensive works erected by

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Cornwallis are indicated by solid black lines; the parallels and redoubts thrown up by the allied armies are shown by dotted lines. Considerable attention has been paid to the disposition of the smaller British force defending the Gloucester peninsula.

The second plan, made by du Perron at the same time, which he labeled "Environs de Gloucester," is perhaps the most detailed plan of that part of the campaign in existence. It is approximately the same size as the Yorktown map. It, too, is well executed and tinted, and includes a table of lettered references. Shown in remarkable detail are the dispositions of the allied troops under Lieutenant General de Choisy and Brigadier General George Weedon, with their outposts so placed that every possible avenue of retreat into Gloucester county was blocked. Also indicated is the "maison particuliere" which de Choisy used as his headquarters, and General Weedon's headquarters at "Saul's-tavern." The details of the skirmish between the British troops under Colonel John Graves Simcoe and Colonel Banastre Tarleton, who were out on a grand forage, and the allies under de Choisy and the Duc de Lauzun, are faithfully portrayed, including the woods and the lane where the brush occurred.

Du Perron's third map of the Chesapeake campaign is a general chart of the Virginia Capes and the entrance of Chesapeake Bay, uniform in size with the first two. Lettered references indicate the important points in the vicinity of the York peninsula including Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown and Gloucester. Also indicated, by figures representing ships, is the disposition of the French fleet under de Grasse, during the blockade of the sea approaches to the Chesapeake. On the verso of this chart are five "plans" showing in detail the maneuvers of the French and British fleets and the successive stages of the engagement off Cape Henry which began on September 5, 1781.

Du Perron's journal of the West Indian campaign, of which these three maps are only a small part, is an unusually important historical document. The *Languedoc* saw considerable action during the West Indian cruise in 1781, and Lieutenant du Perron faithfully recorded all of it. His log or journal is interspersed with fourteen double-page maps plotting the movements of the French fleet from the time of its departure from Brest on the coast of France throughout the course of the extended cruise among the islands of the West Indies. It represents the painstaking attention to detail characteristic of an ambitious young lieutenant who conscientiously recorded minute data which his superior officers might well have overlooked or ignored. It would be difficult to find a better or more comprehensive account of French naval activities which occurred at this crucial phase of the Revolution. Thanks to the industry of Lieutenant du Perron, a well-trained observer, we have in his journal a concise record of an important chapter in the War of Independence, illustrated with accuracy and artistic ability.

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