

**MAJOR
NATHANIEL
SQUIRREL AND HIS
EXCELLENCY**

BY

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Jockey
Hollow is a
wonderful park in
Morris County and a
beautiful place to take a
long walk on a warm
summer day. The trees
are tall, over a hundred
feet tall, so that air is
cool and breezy
beneath them.

1 MEETING A FRIEND

My wife and I decided to take a break from the heavy task of working the nursery plants and walk quietly through the park, a break from my friends, and the constant talk with my little furry acquaintance. We were ten miles from the house and felt a sense of separation from the almost constant demands of the summer nursery work, a simple day off.

We walked down the paths towards the huts, which were built in the style of those used by Washington's troops. The path was cool and dry and the woods were all dark green with midsummer growth. Then after about a mile we came upon the open field with the hill filled with the huts, before going any further we sat down and rested in the breeze coming off the meadow.

I laid back and looked up into the tall ash trees when what to my surprise, I see Antnee and about twenty squirrels, sitting on branches as Antnee was lecturing them in his inimitable manner. I was now terrified that my quiet afternoon would suddenly become a lecture on some ancient squirrel and how he changed humanity.

I looked to my wife and said in a whisper"

"Sara, let's go quietly, now."

Apparently, she was snoozing and she replied in a rather loud voice:

"What did you want!"

At which point I could see Antnee's ears pop up and he looked down. He

had that squirrel smile to which by now I had become accustomed. He shouted, as best as a squirrel could shout and said to the two of us:

"Ah Sir, so nice to see you and Lady Sara here as well. Why I was just starting to tell my nephews and nieces about old Major Nathaniel Squirrel and the adventures. You Sir, will clearly want to hear this, you're being here and all, let me get a bit closer. And how are you today Lady Sara, you look so fine in your hiking attire."

My wife responded as if she were communicating with one of her friends from the Equestrian Federation, very classy and so solicitous!

Before I knew what had happened, Antnee had jumped to a branch just above my head and in front of where I was resting. My wife had sat upright

and it was clear that she was to be delighted to hear the tale firsthand, having only heard them from me after the many lectures by Antnee.

Yet she and Antnee were close friends for she was the provider of the sunflower seeds, which had plumped up my fat furry friend. In fact, in the morning if we were both home and eating breakfast it was Antnee who jumped on the deck and knocked on the door to remind her to fill the feeder. She would stop her breakfast, retrieve the seed, fill the feeder and then return to eat! It was as if she poured his cereal each day, a grown squirrel, somewhat extreme if one asks me, yet no one ever did.

So back to Antnee. In his moving down, the now thirty or more other squirrels, I gather his family, moved ever so close. It was clear that they

were not as acclimated as he was, and in fact, they were all lean trim woods like squirrels. Antnee then began his tale:

"Sir, let me begin, Sir. Today is a fine tale, a tale Sir about one of my own ancestors. That is important to us squirrels as well as you humans, you see Sir, we hold our ancestors in great esteem. This ancestor was Major Nathaniel Squirrel, a member of the officer corps of the great George Washington. For you see Sir, it was here and many other places where Major Nathaniel assisted the great General Washington."

At this point, I knew I was in for it. This was most likely going to be one of his longest tales. My wife was at this point totally absorbed in this story telling. Hopefully she would follow, for some time he did digress.

2 NATHANIEL MEETS HIS EXCELLENCY (JANUARY 1777)

Antnee continued:

"It was the winter of 1777, January to be exact, and like now, it was a cold winter. General Washington had just won the battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton and had come to Morristown to spend the remainder of the winter. You see Sir, and Lady Sara, in those days the winter camp was required during both the cold months of January thru March and the wet months of April and even May. It was necessary to have freedom of movement on the roads."

"You see Sir, in 1777, Morristown was safe and secure on the west side of the

Watchung Mountains, between here and New York, where the British had hidden themselves. So the General decided to stay in Morristown, which had about 70 homes and farms and the town itself was almost like today, a small green in the middle, the same old church, and stores, just a few. There was Arnold's Tavern, which down stairs had a goodly tavern with fine ale and whisky and up above there were a few rooms for travelers. The General, you see Sir, was in need of a place to stay and plan for the coming year of fighting with the British. And Sir, Mr. Arnold, and in fact Sir, all those in the Morristown area, were true patriots, not British loyalists as they were in New York. They like the General Sir sought freedom!"

I looked at my wife and she was now captured by this storyteller. Yet she had not been through as many as I

had. I on the other hand now suspected that this was going to be not only a history lesson and another example of how squirrels save humanity but would be a morality tale, for Antnee was moving in that direction as he regaled me over the past few months!



Figure 1 General Washington, His Excellency

He continued:

"Well Sir, it was a cold morning in January 1777, and the General, oh Sir in those days he was called his Excellency, that is the way he was addressed, well his Excellency was out early walking the square about Morristown, as he was an athletic man, and he enjoyed the exercise. He was pondering what chances the troops would have against General Howe and his British forces. He sat beneath a large oak in the green, for they had places to sit, and the sun was shining brightly. He spoke softly but audibly to himself and said:

"What will Howe do? How will I know, whom can I trust?"

When out of nowhere came Nathaniel. He jumped on the ground in front of the General and the General said:

"Ah my hungry little friend. Here, I have some walnuts from last night, they will fill you up."

Upon which Nathaniel ate the nuts and then looked up to the General and said:

"Your Excellency, I will help you. I mean we will help you. You need scouts your Excellency, and we can deploy them. You need information and we can gather it for you. We can serve you your Excellency."

For a moment, Washington thought he had lost his mind, recounted Antnee, but he quickly looked at Nathaniel and asked:

"Without my sounding too insane my small friend but whom am I addressing? And how did you know me?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, you are well known, and I know you well since you sleep on the second floor of the Tavern and I use the rafters on the third floor these cold winter nights. I am Nathaniel Squirrel, and I propose that me and my many squirrel friends can assist you as scouts. We too want freedom. For your Excellency did you know that the British cook squirrels and eat them, they are barbarians, they even have squirrel cookbooks? The British I am told cook and eat squirrels and Irish children, so says Jonathan Swift, one of their great writers! We are devoted to you your Excellency, and I can lead your scouts!"

Washington sat there a bit befuddled for he had never spoken to a squirrel before. Especially one who was so

strong a patriot. Either he was losing his mind or perhaps this was a solution to his problems. He indeed needed to get better intelligence on the whereabouts of the British and he saw in this fine furry friend a way to do so that the British would never suspect.

Washington replied:

"Nathaniel, allow me to sleep on this request. It is most interesting but it comes with many issues, and as you very well know if my officers found that I was using a squirrel to spy on the British they may very well decide that I should retire early."

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, I truly understand. We do not, as a matter of course, enter into such conversations. But alas, your Excellency it is important for the

future of all that you are successful in your mission. Perhaps I could communicate with a confidant?"

Washington thought for a moment and he considered who was both most loyal and most discreet. He replied:

"Nathaniel, speak with Billy Lee, my servant, for he is both loyal and discreet. I shall send him out later today and he shall meet you here. If he finds this workable, then we shall proceed further."

They parted for the day.

3 CONVERSATIONS WITH BILLY LEE

Later in the day, Nathaniel returned to the park, and sat on a branch above the seat that his Excellency had sat upon in the morning. After a while, a tall man arrived, dressed in a blue

trousers and blue coat with a red scarf about his head and neck. He was tall, yet not as tall as his Excellency.

The man sat down where his Excellency had been in the morning. His head turned back and forth, looking somewhat nervous. Thus, Nathaniel jumped down to the ground and looked up. He said nothing. The man spoke:

"You the animal that his Excellency sent me to speak to, Oh God, please don't speak to me. The poor man is just working too hard, speaking with animals, next he will want me to speak to the Lord himself."

The man sat there just looking at Nathaniel and Nathaniel said nothing. The man then said:

"So speak animal, I am getting cold out here!"

Thus, Nathaniel felt he had to speak, he had sized the man up and felt he could communicate. He said:

"I suppose you are the one Billy Lee that his Excellency had told me about this morning. Shall we begin our talk?"

Billy Lee jumped almost three feet in the air. He screamed:

"You, you, talk! You, what are you, a devil, a beast!"

Nathaniel said nonplussed:

"I Sir am a squirrel; perhaps you have seen a few of us in your lifetime. I am volunteering to assist his Excellency in obtaining intelligence about the British and his Excellency asked that we

Speak, perhaps that is what you were told."

Billy Lee just sat there with his red scarf now all askew and his mouth wide open his big white teeth glistening in the late setting winter sun. Then Nathaniel said:

"Speak Billy Lee, for both you and I shall be cold soon."

Billy Lee came back from his sheer surprise and said:

"All right my friend, let us talk. What is it you propose?"

Nathaniel said:

"First Billy Lee, I suspect you are one of his Excellency's senior officers, so we can talk strategy, correct?"

Billy Lee laughed. He replied:

"I am his Excellency's servant, a slave, he owns me, I am no officer, no slave will ever be any officer. We are not free to be so."

Nathaniel was confused. He asked:

"Billy Lee what is a slave. How can one man own another? No squirrel owns another squirrel; we could not survive that way. We need to work with each other, there are many dangers in the forest and we need each other to stay protected from the coyotes, wolves, bobcats, and even the hawks from time to time. What is a slave?"

Billy Lee replied:

"Slaves are people who were taken from our homes in Africa and sold to people here in your land. We have

always had slaves, sometimes the Arabs take people and sell them in the east, sometimes the people from the north sell us here in this land. We are sold like shoes, like corn. We have no freedom, no family. His Excellency owns me and he has educated me, I read and I help him, yet I am still a slave. Slaves are Africans; cannot you not see our skin?"

Nathaniel replied:

"No Billy Lee, see we have black squirrels, brown squirrels, red squirrels, and grey squirrels, like me, but we are all squirrels! Such a strange thing. If we need something done we do it ourselves or we help each other. There are times when I find you humans strange. Can you buy your own slave?"

Billy Lee laughed, he laughed so loud that one could hear him across the green to Arnold's Tavern. He looked at Nathaniel and said:

"Young man, I can see now why his Excellency wants you to help, you are honest and direct, yet you ask interesting questions, the ones that look through man's ways. So tell me, what do you propose to do?"

The two of them spent two more hours discussing Nathaniel's plan. The conversation was quite intense and at the end they two clearly had become close friends. Then Billy Lee said:

"Nathaniel, I will tell his Excellency that you are a good person, I mean squirrel, no, I mean person. You can be of great help. Tell your friends we will use them. I will be your channel if you need to tell his Excellency something

and he is not around. We can work with each other. I will find this most interesting. Farewell Nathaniel, we can meet again in a week, same place my friend."

They departed and the sun had set.

4 NATHANIEL RECEIVES HIS COMMISSION

At this point I could see that my lovely wife was totally taken by this wandering storyteller. But for a brief moment I wondered if it was a story or based in fact. It was bad enough that I had become the Boswell to this squirrel dynasty. I thus interrupted and said:

"My dear friend Antnee, are you now telling us that this relative of yours was to become a part of the Revolutionary War and had a personal

knowledge of George Washington? This may be a great story but what proof do you have?"

My dear wife looked a bit askance since one did not need to be so blunt, after all she was from Boston and I from New York, but alas I pushed on:

"Yes Antnee, how complex does this tale get?"

Antnee, I suspected, would be irritated, but this time he took a different tack. He jumped down from his branch and skipped over to my lovely wife and looked at her in the face, his eyes, placed more to the side of his head than the front, pulled together to look into my wife's eyes, his deep brown and large globes of persuasion and said:

"Lady Sara, do you have any doubts?"

And my wife said:

"No Antnee, clearly Nathaniel was a great patriot; perhaps my fine husband being from Staten Island has residual loyalist feelings."

Then the two of them, and about sixty of pairs of squirrel eyes looked at me, the loyalist! At that point I knew I had lost and replied:

"Oh well, I am overpowered, please continue."

They all smiled and Antnee cuddled himself aside my lovely wife for comfort and she fed him select peanuts she had brought, and now, with a stuffed mouth my fat furry friend continued:

"Well Sir, Nathaniel waited a week, and returned to the same location. The snow was falling and the green in Morristown was covered with a few inches of snow. Nathaniel, Sir, was freezing, for you must recall Sir that despite the fact that we have fine fur Sir, very fine fur indeed, that we must move about, but Nathaniel did not want to miss his Excellency. Then he heard feet approaching across the green, two pairs of feet. He jumped atop a branch and saw his Excellency and Billy Lee. His Excellency had a thick blue cape and a three-cornered hat, trimmed in shiny gold, and Billy Lee wore the same red scarf, and it wrapped his head and blew like the flag on some great sailing ship. They approached."

"Then, Sir, his Excellency spoke."

"Captain Nathaniel Squirrel, come forth."

And Sir Nathaniel did not know what was being said, he jumped down at the feet of his Excellency and sat upright on his legs and looked forward, staying at a full brace salute. Then his Excellency said to Nathaniel:

"Captain, for I hereby give you a commission as a captain in the Continental Army, you are hereby commissioned to seek out and perform such scouting as we may require and further you are hereby ordered to assemble other such scouts as you may need from time to time and order them in like manner to seek out and report such information as we may find useful and necessary for the prosecution of this war. Furthermore Captain Nathaniel, you are ordered to report to me and if I am not available

then to Billy Lee, my servant, who I trust fully, and he shall in turn report to me."

Nathaniel never expected this much but he was ready. He replied:

"Your Excellency, I am honored and I assure you that we squirrels will be the best scouts you will ever have. We shall be truthful, diligent, timely and will cover all as may be needed. My many thanks your Excellency."

Then Washington bent down and patted Nathaniel on the head. He said:

"Captain Nathaniel, you must ready your forces for the spring engagements, we must know what Howe is doing and we must have eyes and ears in New York and on Staten Island. That shall be your first mission. I suspect that the British will in the

spring move towards Morristown. Off with you now!"

Billy Lee also replied:

"See you soon Captain Nathaniel!"

And Nathaniel ran off to the trees, hopping from branch to branch, seeking out his friends and relatives, rapidly building his band of scouts, the Squirrel Scouts of General Washington, and their leader Captain Nathaniel Squirrel!

5 BATTLE OF SHORT HILLS (JUNE 1777)

Antnee now settled into the telling of the tale. At this point I could see he was approaching a portion which he was most proud of. It soon became clear what he was to tell. He continued in a most intense fashion and the

collection of his friends and family, who must clearly have heard this many times before, settled down for the intensity of his presentation. He said:

"Now Sir, we come to the first battle. You see Sir, Nathaniel had formed his contingent, many of his associates were drawn together gathering information in the local area, around these parts. You see Sir, we normally just range over say a half mile radius, but since January 1777, Nathaniel had personally covered a radius of over thirty miles, from tree to tree, through the cold of the winter, for Sir it was a long and cold winter, like that of last year Sir, not a day above twenty degrees, and Nathaniel went from Morristown to Perth Amboy, to Princeton, to the west, almost half way to the Delaware, and north Sir, to what is now Patterson, telling all who would listen to join him in his mission. They

were to watch for the British, those evil eaters of squirrels, and that they would serve the good Patriots and his Excellency. It was easy in places and difficult in others, but day after day he persevered. By early June he had a network which was well organized, sending information back and forth to his Excellency."

"It was late June in 1777, and General Howe of the British forces was seeking out Washington. Nathaniel had scouts in Perth Amboy and had also gotten across to Staten Island. Sir, you were born on State Island and you may remember how rural it was Sir, a forested island, part of New Jersey at the time Sir, and the British occupied all of it. They used it as a protective resting area and they could easily move between the southern tip across to Perth Amboy on the mainland. Sir, General Howe set out to capture

Washington. But as fate would have it Nathaniel was warned by his scouts. He rushed to Morristown and warned Washington. Then Washington had him go forth, with Billy Lee, to tell General Alexander, who was guarding the eastern part of the Watchung, down where Scotch Plains is now Sir, you know, down on the plain just east of the Watchungs. So off goes Nathaniel and Billy, off to tell Alexander. Well Sir, you could imagine Alexander, for he Sir did not know Nathaniel and he knew Billy only as the servant of Washington, and Sir, servants, or slaves, were never considered as important, but time was short Sir, and Washington sent his two most trusted men."

"As Nathaniel and Billy approached the Metuchen Meeting House in Scotch Plains, Nathaniel got news from his scouts from Perth Amboy, they had

travelled all night and all day Sir, they were truly devoted scouts, and they told Nathaniel that the British General Howe was on the way to capture Washington, a dreadful thing Sir, a truly dreadful thing. Nathaniel was quite concerned Sir quite concerned indeed. The two reached Alexander and Billy approached the General. He said:"

"General Alexander, his Excellency has sent me to tell you of the approach of General Howe, and he asks that you take actions to stall him here so that his Excellency can move the troops."

Alexander was somewhat of a British person in attitude and he sometimes did not take instructions from a servant well. He then said to Billy:

"And who has provided that information, I am not aware of such

movements, and I am here and his Excellency in Morristown. From where did this great piece of intelligence come from?"

Billy was a bit concerned because he did not want to say that it was from Nathaniel and his squirrel scouts, no indeed, for the General would not believe it. Nathaniel sat on the tree next to Billy and whispered in his ears:

"Tell the General that you got the information from a network of reliable slaves in New Jersey that you have befriended."

Billy told Alexander which seemed to put the General at some level of ease.

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, Nathaniel left Billy with General Alexander and he set out to

scout General Howe's advancement. The best they could do was to delay Howe so that Washington could harass the other British troops and avoid capture. Nathaniel ran back and forth, communicating with his fifty scouts who followed Howe and his forces, and Nathaniel would come back and tell Billy who would tell Alexander. Then Sir, on June 26th 1777 Howe and Alexander clashed!"

At this point Antnee was in a near frenzy, he told of the battle, the bullets whizzing by, some men falling, and how Nathaniel was hit almost three times as he was overseeing Howe's forces, and running back and forth, it was a real fight.

Antnee said:

"Nathaniel was above the fray when the British started firing on Alexander,

Sir, a volley of bullets, lead balls, flying past the men. Nathaniel was on a branch one time when from the British ranks a lead ball went over his head and smashed into the tip of his tail slicing off almost an inch at the end, wham, and splat! Sir, poor Nathaniel had never seen it coming, and the blast knocked him down onto the head of Billy Lee, and that was when General Alexander saw him! Sir, the General was shocked, and Nathaniel spoke:"

"General, so sorry, but I see them, the British, I see General Howe, Sir, we must retreat back to the ash swamp, Sir, I will tell his Excellency!"

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, poor General Alexander was so terrified, a talking squirrel, but he had the good sense to see that Billy

Lee was composed so he too listened and replied:

"My little friend, time is not right for my surprise, action is essential. I agree, I will move my forces to that ash swamp, you tell his Excellency and I will hold off the British and allow him to regroup, God's speed my new friend, God's speed!"

Antnee continued:

"At that point Sir, Nathaniel sent out a message to his scouts and then headed west hopping from tree top to tree top, at a record speed, almost twenty miles an hour Sir, a tremendous speed, faster than any squirrel had ever gone before, his stubby tail now being of less help in the balancing which was so important. Then Sir, in about thirty minutes he reached Middlebrook

where his Excellency was and scampered to his side. He said:"

"Your Excellency, your Excellency, General Alexander has moved to the ash swamp, west of Metuchen Meetinghouse, General Howe was in pursuit but he has stopped, you must move west!"

Antnee took a breath and then continued again:

"Washington looked at Nathaniel, saw his now crimped tail, some blood still dripping and said:"

"Well Captain, it appears as if you have been struck by the British, but you look fine, many thanks we will move quickly. Can you let me know what Howe is about, then we can reform and see what to do next."

Antnee, now almost exhausted from his tale, came to a closure:

"Sir, Nathaniel, exhausted from his trip to Middlebrook, took some water, spoke to his scouts who would accompany his Excellency west, and he proceeds back to the ash swamp. When he got there General Alexander was now safe, and he spoke to his scouts, Howe had retreated back to Perth Amboy. Sir, not a victory but a well-played move Sir, for Howe would not return, and Washington Sir, Washington was secure. Nathaniel Sir was exhausted, and Alexander protected him in his tent as he slept and recovered. A great day Sir, and the scouts performed gloriously, Sir, indeed, gloriously!"

**6 MEETING LT. JEAN PIERRE
MENARD**

July had arrived and it was hot and humid. Nathaniel has lost his winter coat and they were pleased with the success of the Battle of Short Hills. He had developed a spying mission on Staten Island and was providing reports back through Billy Lee to his Excellency.

He and Billy Lee were becoming the best of friends. They told jokes to each other and often were amused as to the manners of some of the older men who were more formally British in their way of dealing with others. Almost no one knew of the relationship between his Excellency, Billy Lee and Nathaniel, yet the information was flowing. Some of the junior officers under Washington had suspected that it was Billy Lee who had the intelligence network. Few if any suspected that Billy Lee ran the network through Nathaniel.

A new young General arrived one day when Nathaniel was in the back of the Tavern speaking with Billy Lee, it was a Frenchman, one Lafayette. He was young, well-dressed, well spoken, and apparently, his Excellency wanted him as part of his general staff. Nathaniel and Billy Lee just sat in the shadows and watched. They just sat and the two of them munched on a few walnuts, for Nathaniel enjoyed them every time he visited Billy Lee. Apparently Billy Lee would always find a new batch to be sure they had plenty.

Now it was one day in late July, Nathaniel and Billy Lee sat on the back porch of the Tavern and were talking about their varying life experiences when from nowhere came a well-groomed squirrel, a red squirrel, who even had a hint of lilacs exuding from his fur. He walked out into the shade

of the back porch, looked at the two of them, and asked:

"Monsieur, and are you Le Capitain Nathaniel?"

Nathaniel was shocked and he was silent but Billy Lee answered:

"And who my little friend are you and why do you inquire."

The little red squirrel replied:

"I Monsieur am Jean Pierre Menard Ecureuil Compte des Chenes, aide to Monsieur Le General Lafayette. I am, Monsieur, looking for Capital Nathaniel Squirrel, for I have been appointed a Lieutenant in his forces. Perhaps you may be of some assistance?"

Billy Lee burst out laughing, and slapped Nathaniel on the back, which sent Nathaniel rolling across the wooden planks of the Deck at the Inn. Nathaniel recovered and replied:

"Lieutenant, huh, well I am Captain Nathaniel and I did not know about any red furry Lieutenant. We have a real army here young man, what do you propose to do. Oh, and just to remind you, smelling that way will let even the British know you are on the way, not good for a spy, eh Billy Lee?"

Billy Lee looked a bit concerned after the back slap but he was happy Nathaniel was not hurt and he replied:

"Yes Captain Nathaniel, even I can smell the sweet scent of our new friend here."

Jean Pierre was a bit ruffled. Then Billy Lee said:

"Want some walnuts?"

Jean Pierre tried a few and declared:

"Somewhat primitive but one could say it is tasty."

Billy Lee and Nathaniel looked at each other and laughed. Billy Lee then said:

"Perhaps you may have liked the elephant brains my mother made back in Africa?"

Jean Pierre was somewhat startled and he replied:

"Ah you are from Africa? I am from France. There seems to be a growing number of countries here helping

these colonists against their British oppressors. Yes?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Yes Jean Pierre and you are now with us. So you are to report to me as part of the scouts? What experience do you have?"

Jean Pierre replied:

"Ah Capitain Nathaniel, I was part of the Court of Louis XV, and spy from a long line of royal spies. Why my family spied for Louis XIV and Louis XIII. We were experts!"

Nathaniel then said:

"Well Jean Pierre, I need to have someone get into Philadelphia, we fear the British are going to settle there and we need a network. Can you do that?"

Jean Pierre smiled and replied:

"Capitain Nathaniel, I am deeply honored, you shall honor me and I shall make you proud with my efforts. Now Monsieur Billy Lee, some more of those wonderful treats, eh?"

The three of them spent the afternoon on the porch talking strategy and bringing Jean Pierre up to date. There was now a growing contingent of intelligence officers.

7 SCOUTING THE BRITISH AT PHILADELPHIA (AUGUST- SEPTEMBER 1777)

Antnee slowly curled himself into a more comfortable position. It was clear that this was to be a long tale and his

audience above and around us was clearly acclimated to the great storyteller, in fact it was apparent that his telling of tales was often the high point of their lives. I will have to admit they let me see events in history from a totally different perspective for I had never know how much of fox and hare existence that Washington led during the Revolution.

Antnee now returned with some vigor to his tale:

"Sir, this was a dark time Sir, for the Americans, their very government and existence were in Philadelphia, Sir, and there was fear that Howe and the British would march on Philadelphia. The questions was how, where, and when, Sir, not if. So Washington met with Nathaniel and asked him to scout for the British, to find where they were

and how they would attack, a mighty task Sir, a truly mighty task!"

"This meant Sir, getting his scouts in New York and Staten Island, to watch the departure of the fleet, then having scouts watch, as best they could Sir, all down the New Jersey coast, why Sir there were hundreds of scouts and messengers, and Washington had Nathaniel stay in Philadelphia and Nathaniel Sir, he sent Jean Pierre to be with Washington, so that the lines of communications were kept open, Sir, a truly monumental task."

"Then Sir, he for a moment thought from reports that Howe was to come up the Delaware, but his scouts at Cape May said Howe continues south. Then a message from scouts in Chincoteague, the Pine Tree Scouts of Virginia, a fine a brave band of squirrel scouts sir, truly brave, they sighted

Howe's forces off the coast, and followed them down to the mouth of the Chesapeake, why Sir Howe was to sail north and approach from Delaware, a truly difficult task Sir, the heat, the warmth of the summer still oppressive."

"Nathaniel received intelligence from his scouts that the British had landed at the head of the Elk River, a tributary to the Chesapeake. This was about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. He immediately ran to Washington and they met in Philadelphia. He said to Washington:"

"Your Excellency, my scouts say that Howe and his Hessian troops have landed and are marching from the Elk River along the roads. Sir, I have scouts along the road and I fear they are coming directly to Philadelphia. You

must move to stall them. Should I go south?"

Washington replied:

"No Nathaniel, I need you here in Philadelphia to coordinate the intelligence. I will take Billy Lee with me and Lieutenant Jean Pierre as well. We will go and try to stop their advance. If there is any news that they are splitting it is necessary that you notify me or Billy Lee immediately. I will work with Lieutenant Jean Pierre and he will be with General Lafayette. I see great things in that young man, I have known him for a brief period, but he has become like a son to me. Nathaniel, I suspect we may be able at best to stall them and then they will come here to Philadelphia. Be sure you establish a good network in the city, for when it is captured we need good intelligence, your job is critical."

Nathaniel replied:

"Yes your Excellency. I will speak with Lieutenant Jean Pierre. Good luck and stay safe your Excellency."

Antnee continued:

"Then Washington took some of his troops and marched to meet Howe and his army. It led to the battle at Brandywine, in Chadds Ford. Washington lost many men and had to retreat. Generals Howe and Cornwallis managed to defeat the troops of Washington. Nathaniel wondered why he did not get the intelligence he needed and he later found that the British were shooting the squirrels as fast as they could, over 200 were lost! Sir the British were butchers! Abominable men Sir, those British. Also it was in that Battle that

Lieutenant Jean Pierre, a heroic squirrel Sir, with Washington, received a wound in his hindquarter, serious but he soon recovered, but he had a limp from then on. Billy Lee took care of him, at Washington's direct command. They became a wonderful team, Billy Lee and the scouts! Billy Lee it was said cried all night after he heard of the British atrocities, he was a great man Billy Lee Sir, a great man!"

"Then Sir, the British went marching to Philadelphia. Nathaniel stayed fast, strengthening his network, and now warning them of the British murders. The British now knew of the scouts. On September 24th the British entered and took Philadelphia. Nathaniel just hid from them in attics of the many buildings still standing. Sir this was a dark day, Sir, a dark day indeed."

8 BATTLE OF GERMANTOWN (OCTOBER 4, 1777)

Antnee now moved to what was in his opinion one of the turning points, albeit not a victory. It was the fall of 1777, and the results of the war to date had been mixed to say the least. Washington wanted to take one more opportunity to attack the British. They were encamped at Germantown, a small town about ten miles from Philadelphia. There was a large contingent and they were settled in anticipation of a winter encampment.

Antnee now continued his tale:

:Sir, by this time Sir, Nathaniel had established a close watch on the British in Philadelphia. The Loyalists, Sir, they were the ones who wanted to stay with England, well Sir they welcomed Howe and his men. In fact

Sir, Nathaniel could report to Washington that the officers with Howe were not only welcomed but had begun to enjoy the comforts of Philadelphia, as they had in New York. Howe, Sir, a cautious man, very cautious Sir, stayed in Philadelphia and left his troops in Germantown, aside the Schuylkill River. You know that area Sir, somewhat flat farm land, like a great deal of Pennsylvania, not like us up here Sir, why we are more like New England."

"On the 2nd of October, Sir, Washington and Nathaniel spoke. It was late and they spent hours talking of the British. Nathaniel said:"

"Your Excellency, Howe is comfortable in Philadelphia. The Loyalists entertain him, they have dinners, even the officers of Howe put on plays and other entertainment for the Loyalists.

It is quite comfortable. The settlement here at Germantown is filled with his troops, your Excellency. They are strong but they are encamped. The senior officers are in Philadelphia resting. Germantown your Excellency is filled with junior officers and the troops. But your Excellency, beware, they are heavily armed."

Antnee spoke:

"Then Sir, into the room came Lafayette and Jean Pierre. Poor Jean Pierre was still recovering from his wounds. But he was brave and ready to fight again. Then Washington spoke"

"We have an opportunity to deal the British forces a blow at their camp, a victory like Trenton and Princeton. We can attack them when their leaders are at rest, not expecting our attack. I suggest that we attack with four

columns, one from the south with General Armstrong. To the north we use Smallwood and Forman, with Greene inside between the main center and the north attack. In the center, a direct attack, we use Wayne and Sullivan, and there Nathaniel I suggest you assist Wayne because he thinks highly of you. It is a strategy which allows us to surround and defeat. What do you think. And General Lafayette I want you to assist General Greene, a fine man, but he has General Stephen, and I am told, by you Nathaniel and others, that he has a problem with the drink. We leave at dawn on the 6th of October. Do you have any concerns?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, this is a very complex plan, and if it works, then we have a great victory. But your

Excellency, it all depends on the five thrusts combining at the center, and any delay, any confusion, why your Excellency, it could expose each and every thrust with a direct attack from the British. Our enemy, here at this battle, will be delay possible confusion."

Lafayette also said:

"Your Excellency, I agree with Nathaniel, but I am also concerned that we have militia and Continentals. The militia are good woods fighters but have no training to match the British. The Continentals have likewise no training. This action demands coordination, considerable coordination."

Washington replied:

"I trust my generals, and we must deal with the British on their own ground, we must show that we can be more than just a group of rebels attacking from the bush. I accept your concerns, however, the men need to learn and succeed. This will be a success no matter what we do, it is necessary, one last action before winter. I will inform the Generals and we leave then just before dawn. God speed to all."

Antnee then spoke:

"Sir, Nathaniel and Lafayette were aware Sir of the weakness of the troops, their ways were still confused. Washington Sir had news that General Steuben, a great Prussian General would be joining them in winter camp but he could not wait. No matter what Sir, the men needed to try, to show that they could behave as an army, not just a collection of ragged troops, ill

trained and ill equipped. You see Sir Nathaniel was also concerned that they had too little ammunition and their cannon was too light for a true battle, but the General Sir had ordered and all the men prepared."

"So then they attacked Sir, the forces of Washington, a direct attack Sir. But that morning there arose a ghostly fog, Sir, a fog of the like that you rarely see here Sir, but in the farm fields around Philadelphia Sir, quite a common occurrence, quite common indeed Sir. Nathaniel and Jean Pierre were with the troops Sir, and you see, we squirrels, well we see what you do not, you see Sir, we see in the infrared better than in what you see, thus we can see the others better in fog. And Nathaniel and Jean Pierre were critical to guiding some of the troops. Unfortunately General Green refused scouts and thus he wandered about,

with no direction, in the fog. They tried to warn him but he just refused. He became useless."

"Washington, a brave man indeed, why Sir he took the brunt of the British fire, out in front Sir,, a true leader, a leader of men and squirrel, Sir. That is what a leader does, a leader is out there showing his men what they too must do. At that point Sir, Nathaniel rejoined Washington, and told him the bad news of Green, and the General, Sir, he decided to attack the stone house which contained British soldiers between his forces and the main British line, the Chew House Sir. He said to Nathaniel:"

"Nathaniel, the Chew House sits on my path to the British. I cannot allow it to remain occupied while I go past, it threatens my rear troops. Go with Jean

Pierre and ascertain what its defenses are, I must subdue it."

"The two went off and jumped from tree to tree across the edge of the field leading to the house. Musket rounds were flying all about and they both were fearful of being hit again. Jean Pierre had just recovered from his wounds and poor Nathaniel had not had his tail re-grow from the last time he was struck. They approached the house, scrambled to the roof, saw an opening atop the kitchen fireplace and scampered in. Why Sir, the house was full of British soldiers, dozens and dozens, and with weapons and ammunition Sir. A veritable fortress. The walls were solid stone, and well stacked by its builder, and reinforced like a castle. They assessed the total threat and then scampered back to Washington. Nathaniel said to him;"

"Your Excellency, this is a true fortress, cannon cannot penetrate, and they have a great many weapons and men. Your Excellency perhaps one may just march around it and leave a small force to harass and contain it. I fear your Excellency that any attempt to overcome and neutralize it will be for naught."

Then Washington replied:

"No Nathaniel, we cannot take the risk of them being at our rear as we attack and at our front when we return, if we were to use the same path. We must attack."

Thus did Washington give the orders, and he personally took command as the forces of Generals Sullivan and Wayne repeatedly attacked the house. Attacked again and again, but to no

avail, and then, Sir, an awful thing Sir, they ran out of ammunition!

The fog now covered the field Sir, it was a scene of fog and flashes from the muskets, a true sense of pandemonium Sir, true chaos. Washington withdrew his men after the British had killed a young Lieutenant under a flag of peace, true brutes Sir, those British."

"At his point Sir, neither side had truly won. Washington retreated, he made Lafayette a full Lieutenant General with command, for he Sir would not make the mistake again of choosing the older and less competent over the younger and better. Yet Sir, this was a victory, Sir, the men had fought and fought equally with the British. It was not just a hit and run skirmish, it was a true battle Sir with a great army. More importantly Sir, the French when

they heard how well the Colonists did they signed a treaty and sent forces, a true turning point Sir, a true turning point."

9 WINTER AT VALLEY FORGE (DEC 1777 TO MAY 1778)

Antnee now had a smile on his face, he was in his stride, a true storyteller, holding the attention of his listeners now with bits and pieces of true history. He slowed the pace a bit, as it appeared it was the mid game stretch, and recalled Valley Forge. He said:

"Winter in Philadelphia is not as bad as here Sir, it is warmer and there was flatter land and many sources of food. Washington decided to encamp in Valley Forge, a way from Philadelphia while Howe and his replacement Clinton stayed comfortably in

Philadelphia. The men Sir in Valley Forge built small houses to stay in and they had food, some new clothing, and were able to stay put. In February von Steuben arrived and he immediately began to train the troops. Sir, it was amazing, these bands of untrained Colonials were responding to this Prussian General and taking it all in Sir, they really became an Army, rather than just a lot of uncoordinated farmers. Why Sir it was glorious. And Sir, Nathaniel and Jean Pierre, who now were close allies, were sent to Philadelphia to spy on the British. They ensconced themselves in General Howe's residence, a fine Philadelphia abode, and they ate the Generals food, delighting in his taste in nuts! Sir, it was a fine winter."

"But Sir it was not to last. Clinton who took over from Howe realized that he had not captured Philadelphia but that

Philadelphia had capture him. For he had a stronghold in New York but here in Philadelphia he was like a prisoner. Thus Sir in June of 1778 he decided to march the troops back to New York. Sir, at that point Nathaniel and Jean Pierre saw a great opportunity, to engage the enemy on Continental turf, back again in New Jersey. They rushed back to Washington and Lafayette Sir and presented their proposal, follow Clinton and then attack on the flat lands of central New Jersey, before they could get off to New York. Well Sir Washington agreed, and they set off to meet destiny!"

10 BATTLE OF MONMOUTH (JUNE 1778)

Antnee now was back to his histrionic story telling. He continued:

"Sir, as Nathaniel had reported, Clinton left Philadelphia and marched towards Sandy Hook, right across the center of New Jersey. Washington decided to attack them at Monmouth, a large area of rolling hills and farms, very much like Virginia, with hedgerows and the like. The day of the battle was Sunday June 28, 1778. It was very hot Sir, you know like what we may get here in July, Sir, but worse. The large farms were plowed and growing wheat and corn, acres and acres Sir. The temperature was well into the 90s Sir, some say it was 100! And the humidity Sir, beastly, and then the sun. We can hide in trees Sir, but there were no trees! No trees Sir, the sun was unbearable. It was early when they started. Yet even then the heat had begun!"

"The British Sire were encamped across several farm fields. The fields had

been planted a month prior and now the crops were all destroyed, thousands of men marching."



Figure 2 Field of Attack at Monmouth, Sutfin Farm

"The British Sir also had cannon with them and had them deployed for safety on the surrounding hills, not true hills Sir, rather small inclines above the well plowed fields."



Figure 3 Forman's Hill at Monmouth

"Running from east to west were several tributaries of the Spotswood Brook, a north, middle and south branch of the Spotswood Brook Sir, small, muddy, with much vegetation, but truly little water. That would be a problem later in the day as the heat burned down on the men! The brooks provided some protection from advancement of the enemy but they also blocked any retreat or fast movement."



Figure 4 Spotswood South Brook Crossing

"Well Sir the day started with General Lee, he was one not for taking advice. As you father told you Sir, "*Prior planning prevents poor performance*", well Sir General Lee was one for poor performance indeed. He did no prior planning Sir."

Antnee then went through the Battle, the attack by Lee, its failure, the berating by Washington of Lee, the presence of Washington on the battle field, the exhausting heat, how

Nathaniel and Jean Pierre ran back and forth with messages and information on the enemy. Antnee described how the two little officers would arrive soaked to their fur, but turn about and repeat their tasks!

Antnee was now almost breathless. He looked at us and above at his remaining audience and then stated:

"Perhaps Sir you have heard of Molly Pitcher, the famous heroine at the Battle. Why Sir, let me tell you what really happened. You see Sir, her husband was a cannonier for a Pennsylvania militia and he was wounded Sir, a severe wound. And she stood forth and manned the cannon, from the very hill in the fight. Well Sir, she could load the cannon but she could not fire and aim it all at once. So who do you think did those two things, who Sir, well I tell you it was Nathaniel

and Jean Pierre. Jean Pierre held the wick for firing in his teeth, and Nathaniel mounted the cannon and as any good squirrel could see how to aim it to hit the targets. Molly Pitcher cleaned the bore and loaded the charge and cannon ball or grapeshot. Then Sir, a dire moment. The British targeted them on that hill, the three of them Sir, with a great cannon. In a moment, Nathaniel and Jean Pierre were thrown into darkness, they were engulfed with a loud sound and then slammed to the ground, totally dark, and for a brief moment Sir, they thought they had joined their ancestors. The next thing they heard was Molly screaming and cussing, a cussing of the like they never heard from any man. They soon realized that the darkness was from the cloth over their heads, and the cloth was, well Sir, to be a bit discrete, it was Molly's skirt! You see sir the cannon ball aimed at

the three of them went through Molly's legs, tore off her skirt and jumbled Jean Pierre and Nathaniel in a rumped mess! The two of them climbed out of the cloth, looked briefly at Molly who stood madder than all get out, cannon ball in hand and she screamed at them."

"Get back to your post boys, we got to get those British bastards!"

"Well Sir, Jean Pierre and Nathaniel did not know whether to laugh or jump to. They went back to their posts, and Sir it was Nathaniel's best aim, and Molly loaded and Jean Pierre fired, and Sir, out went the British cannon in a large explosion that almost took their lives just moments earlier. They rejoiced and danced around, Molly still in her bloomers, and Nathaniel then suggested that perhaps Mrs. Molly would care to reassemble her skirt!"

Antnee took a rest. I thought for a moment that this may have been a bit of an exaggeration but as I later learned most of it is true.



Figure 5 Von Steuben

Antnee slowed down to take a break. He looked out over the now fully attentive crowd and said:

"Well, as you all may know, Clinton retreated to Sandy Hook and from there by ship to New York. More men were lost that day to the heat than to the gun fire. A truly hot day."

11 INTERLUDE YEAR AND THE BATTLE OF PAULUS HOOK (AUGUST 1779)

Antnee proceeded now at a somewhat casual pace:

"Well Sir, there was now the winter of 1778-1779, and during that winter Washington let most of his troops spread out at many places, and the militia as usual went home. You see Sir

Monmouth was a victory of sorts, it finally got the French into the War and Steuben was training the men and Washington was getting a real Army. But Sir, there was still a long War ahead, a long War indeed."

I then asked,

"What did the British do? What was going on? It seems that there were a few big battles and lots of skirmishes. This was not like World War II or even World War I. It looked like things were just happening when they did and otherwise people went back to normal."

Antnee replied:

"Indeed Sir, I guess that we see wars differently now, on your television each day, something must happen. But it was not that way. Just look at the

battles Sir, just a few, just a few, and even then very few men died Sir. Remember more than half of the dead at Monmouth were from the heat Sir! And more men died of disease at Valley Forge than in all the battles, almost 2,000 men Sir."

"Well Sir, Antnee went back to Morristown and settled down to start a family, you see Sir it was that time and his mother, Abigail, that was her name, wanted to have grandchildren, you know mothers Sir, oh I apologize Lady Sara but we all have mothers. The old adage, I believe you say it Lady Sara, the hand that rocks the cradle, well Lady Sara it is the same for us squirrels, yes indeed. Thus Nathaniel went home and Jean Pierre stayed with Lafayette."

I then asked:

"Antnee what happened at winters end?"

He replied:

"Well Sir, the summer of 1779 was somewhat slow for General Clinton kept his British forces in New York. But there was a small battle, for Colonel Lee got permission from Washington to attack the British Fort at Paulus Hook, now where Hoboken is, you know Sir, across from Manhattan."

"Well Sir it was a small fort, and about only 250 British soldiers. Nathaniel was assigned to scout out the territory, and this was easy. He snuck in late on the 16th of August 1779 and determined their strength, looked at their fortifications and returned to Colonel Lee to provide the details. That Sir is also "Light horse Harry" Lee to

many, Sir. Oh and Sir he was to be the father of Robert E Lee of the Civil War fame, and the Colonel Sir was a fine Virginia Gentleman, but Sir, like so many from the south he was a slave owner and Nathaniel and Billy Lee often spoke of this issue."

"But I linger Sir, the Paulus Hook battle happened on 16th August 1779, and Lee attacked the fort. It was a true skirmish Sir, and Nathaniel spent time watching from the trees nearby, he had over twenty scouts deployed. It was a mild victory Sir, but it was more of an embarrassment to Clinton. Well Sir no sooner had Clinton seen the loss at Paulus Hook then he heard that Spain had entered the War on the side of the Colonists, this was truly becoming a great War Sir, so many nations, and it was now the British against many others. It seems Sir that no one likes the British. I apologize Lady Sara but I

do not mean to offend, you ancestors were on the British side, but alas, they did have a heavy hand."

"But Sir, Nathaniel did have a quiet summer after that to start his new family. He chose a large tree on the Ford Mansion, for he knew that Washington wanted to return and he would stay there. It was a large oak, quite a nice place for a home and he and the lady built a massive nest, high in the crook of the tree, packed with sturdy oak leaves, minute after minute, day after day, back and forth, building a sturdy nest, working on true squirrel instinct. Then November 1779 came."

12 FIRST MORRISTOWN WINTER (DECEMBER 1779 TO MAY 1780)

Antnee now turned and looked at his audience, with a bit of a sense of

seriousness, and then looked at us and said:

"Now we come to the winter of 79-80. Sir, a winter unlike so many others. It was October, late October 1779 and Washington had decided upon Morristown to rest his troops. He had over 10,000 Sir a very large number. The Militias Sir went home, but the Army was to stay. Washington was to use the Ford's home in Morristown, you know the one Sir.



Figure 6 Ford Mansion Morristown

Well, he met with Washington, Lafayette and Billy Lee, he and Jean Pierre. You see Sir he was now home and he had started a family. When he and Jean Pierre entered the room Washington said:"

"Nathaniel, Jean Pierre, what has happened to you two?"

Antnee continued:

"You see Sir Washington spoke with great concern but the two of them felt normal, they wondered what had happened. So Nathaniel said:"

"Your Excellency, I believe we are fine, what your Excellency can be the matter?"

Washington replied:

"Your fur, the both of you, it is thick and standing up as if you took part in one of these crazy electricity experiments of the good Benjamin Franklin. Look here my friends, in this mirror."

Antnee then half laughing to himself said:

"Well Sir, the two of them walked over to the mirror and at first Nathaniel

said nothing but as Jean Pierre looked at himself he screamed:"

"Sacre bleu, what has happened, I look like some wild animal, my fine fur, it has grown like some bear, some wolf, why I am a fine Frenchman, I have culture, what is this?"

At which point he scratched his now full red coat of squirrel hair. Nathaniel then replied nonchalantly:

"Ah, your Excellency, General Lafayette, Lieutenant Jean Pierre, it is just a heavy winter coat. We squirrels always get them before a severe winter. Why Jean Pierre you look so rustic now!"

Jean Pierre replied:

"Rustic, rustic, I look like an animal!"

Billy Lee said:

"Ah Jean Pierre, you are an animal."

At which point Lafayette said:

"Monsieur Billy, be kind, for he is French, yes a French animal, but Monsieur French above all, and one must look right to be French."

Poor Jean Pierre just sat there in a state of distress. He no longer groomed nor did he use lilac water, but this, this was just too much. Lafayette laughed but Washington looked stressed. He then said:

"Gentlemen, this is a concern. We have troops here for the winter and it will be cold, very cold. Thus we must be certain they have provisions and clothing. We dare not repeat Valley Forge. I want you two to set out and

see that General Green gets the provisions. I want you also to report daily if at all possible as to the status of the troops, to me or Billy Lee. Oh and one last thing, I have some good news. Jean Pierre you have been promoted to Captain, and you Nathaniel are promoted to Major. My congratulations. And there is not more pay, just a few nuts when Mrs. Ford can get them. Now be off, we all have work to do."

The Antnee continued:

"An amusing interlude but this foresaw a brutal winter. I can remember my grandfather..."

I stopped Antnee and said:

"Ah Antnee, I think we may lose the sun, so keep family tales until we get

back home. Now you bring us to where we are. What happened next?"

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir they built many huts for the men, but in November it was already very cold, and the snow came early. I recall my grandfather telling me of the winter of 1993-1994 I believe, heavy snows up to 4 feet deep, your hose was weighted down that year Sir, remember, well this winter was as bad, and some say worse, snow and snow. For us squirrels that can become a problem too, we have warm nests but we run out of food, the nuts we buried were below the ground, too deep to dig. And for the troops, they started well Sir but alas they ate too much too fast and there were other problems as well."

"You see Sir the senior officers stayed at Ford's Mansion, the junior officers and men at Jockey Hollow. There were good kitchens at Fords, and none at Jockey Hollow."



Figure 7 Kitchen at Morrystown

"Alas Sir there were other problems as well. The men were not paid Sir, Congress, well Sir it has not changed, still and squabbling group of people who do not understand the true needs, and packing their own pockets with

across, I mean gold Sir, truly an unruly group. Poor Washington had to write memos, reports, and all the while the men were starving and freezing."



Figure 8 Jockey Hollow Huts

"For what can one do in the huts? Nathaniel had his home atop the oak behind the mansion and he could go to the kitchen and Billy Lee would always have some corn and nuts to take to his family. He would gather corn on the cob, dry from the summer last, and carry it up the oak to the family. He

had not been driven by the cold and his new family was secure."



Figure 9 Nathaniel with Corn from Billy Lee

"Nathaniel kept going back and forth to Jockey Hollow, a few miles atop the ash trees, the tallest and easiest to get

to, for the pines had been covered in snow, otherwise he would have used them in his path. Each time he returned he saw the men getting weaker, madder, and he was concerned. He would return and speak with Billy Lee and then report to Washington. Then in May 1780 there was the first Mutiny!

Antnee then told the sad tale of the first mutiny. He said:

"Sir the winter was long and cold, the snow was at times to the tops of the huts. There was no food, the men had not been paid for almost six months, the clothes was worn and they were freezing. Spring did not come until mid May, the rains just added to the stress. Then on the morning of May 25th 1780 the Connecticut brigade assembled, and then Sir a dreadful thing, they attacked their officers,

killed a colonel, and they threatened to just leave. The ground was wet, muddy, they had little if any food, the wood was still scare for fires, and they were wet through and through. Nathaniel was watching from above and he scurried back to Ford's Mansion and interrupted Washington. He said:"

"Your Excellency, a mutiny, your Excellency, a mutiny. The Connecticut Brigade has mutinied, you must send reinforcements!"

Washington turned and sent the Pennsylvania Brigade, and managed to get some food, scraping up what was left in Ford's Mansion, having Billy Lee lead the effort. Then Washington said to Nathaniel:

"Major, back to the troops, make certain they know we are responding, send a message to the Pennsylvania

Brigade, they will reassemble the men, use no guns, we do not want any further injury. Quick my friend, this is dreadful!"

And Nathaniel went down through Morristown, tree by tree, flying over them almost like a bird, until he approach Jockey Hollow, and he spoke with the Colonel in the Pennsylvania Brigade. They formed and placed the Connecticut Brigade in place. Three hours later the food arrived, small as it was, but it was all they could assemble.

Antnee then spoke softly:

"Sir, they sentenced the men to death, a reasonable sentence, but Washington gave them mercy. A truly brave thing to do Sir, a truly brave thing. But it is said it was Nathaniel who spoke with the General and told him that the men

had just gone beyond their limits. Nathaniel is said to have told Washington:

"Your Excellency, the men were just turned into wild beasts. I see this all the time, and this winter I have seen rabbits eating the carcass of other rabbits your Excellency, loving rabbits turned into beasts. Into scavengers of what little there is to survive. Without Billy Lee your Excellency and his corn my family would not have survived. I plead your Excellency to give the men mercy. They were trapped, dying of hunger, and frankly Sir, they became wild animals. Mercy is what they need and your Excellency is the only one who can give it."

And indeed that is what Washington did.

13 BATTLE OF SPRINGFIELD (JUNE 1780)

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir, another battle, and this one Sir near our very home Sir, our very home. You know the gap Sir, by what is now Short Hills Mall, Lady Sara knows it well, do you not Madame?"

My lovely wife then replied, a dangerous thing to do with Antnee for it may very well lead to a divergence:

"Oh yes Antnee, a lovely mall, I have gotten many things, there, that small bird bath, the one you like."

Antnee replied:

"And a fine bird bath it is Lady Sara..."

"Stop" I shouted, you two, back to the tale, we will be in complete darkness before it ends and I have never heard of this battle. Please, Antnee, keep it focused, we have not even gotten to Yorktown..."

Antnee replied:

"Very well indeed Sir, very well indeed, Lady Sara we can talk off line, I will focus, focus, focus, as I am told."

I guess I had hurt his feelings but we had but one day to tell this tale. I kept thinking how long it would take to write and who would in the end believe any of this, but alas it was for posterity not the scribe to judge. Thus Antnee regained his composure and said:

"Well Nathaniel had his scouts on Staten Island, Lieutenant Robert and

Lieutenant William, distant cousins who live on Staten Island, not as some people would say "in Staten Island", only worms live in Staten Island, squirrels live on Staten Island...."

I cried:

"Antnee, the tale, the tale..."

He replied:

"Oh yes, well you see William was sent to Nathaniel who met him in Elizabeth Town across the Kill Van Kull, and reported that General Knyphausen was to move his troops from Staten Island to Morristown in an attempt to take Washington, and he was to take Galloping Hill Road, what you call Morris Avenue and what is now almost Route 24, the highway. Well Nathaniel told William to remain observant and he scurried back to Washington. He reported:

"Your Excellency, my scouts report that General Knyphausen and 2500 troops are in march from Staten Island via the Gap, Hobart Gap and on to Morristown. I believe that they can be stopped short at Springfield if we can assemble a force now."

Washington replied:

"I will get General Greene and his men, we can meet them in a day, the 23rd of June precisely. Tell Billy Lee to prepare and I will inform General Greene. He is a great General and he should be able to blunt those Hessians."

By mid day they had assembled over 2000 troops and started the march east. From Morristown, through Madison, Chatham and over the slight hill at Hobart Gap and then to the east of Springfield. Nathaniel was in the

lead with General Greene and he had a total of fifty scouts all fanning out to survey the progress of the enemy. They saw them coming down Galloping Hill Road and Vauxhall Road, 2500 strong, and the battle would soon be engaged. Green positioned his men and Nathaniel was feeding in reports of the enemy moves. Then the battle was engaged, In a mere forty minutes there were five attacks by the Hessians, but Green held. The musket balls were flying fast and Nathaniel was almost struck six times as he came back and forth to General Greene. The Hessians did not know how the Colonists had such good knowledge of their positions, each time they moved the cannon from the Colonists were re-aimed precisely, for it was the fifty scouts who did the sighting, they were the forward fire control specialists, often being so close that they themselves were covered

with the dust from the cloud of the cannon ball explosion.

"The battle lasted for a few hours but the Hessians made no progress and more than 50 were killed, a much larger number than what Green lost, which was about a dozen. It was the targeting of Nathaniel's men which won the day. The Hessians retreated and went back to Staten Island. William later reported to Nathaniel that Knyphausen was said to believe that the Colonials had some new secret weapon in their targeting of cannons. They did, Nathaniel's men!"

14SECOND MORRISTOWN WINTER (DECEMBER 1780-MAY 1781)

Antnee was now clearly getting a bit tired or perhaps it was his histrionic way of telling us all that winter was approaching in his tale. I could tell

now after many of these episodes how he would present himself as the master story teller setting the scene for the next presentation. For Antnee knew how to combine everything from the words to the movements and even to the scene itself to enhance his tale, a true master story teller that he was. He thus moved on to the winter of 1780 and 1781. He started:

"Sir, during the remainder of 1780 there were many skirmishes and the war was taken to the south. The French Sir now were here as was the support of the Spanish, it was indeed Sir a great War. Clinton had taken rest in New York and on Staten Island Sir, your old home, and the people on Staten Island Sir, I am sorry to say, welcomed the British, not very good patriots Sir, not very good indeed. True Tories as they say Sir."

"The men went back to Jockey Hollow for the winter of 1780-1781 Sir, and not as severe winter as the one before. But there were to be bad omens Sir, bad omens. The Congress was still late in paying and, even more so, men who had signed up for three years were now well beyond their commitments. They desired to return home, yet they were kept."

"Thus Sir on January 1, 1781 the Pennsylvania troops mutinied, a second mutiny Sir. They demanded to be released and they wanted their pay, a very nasty scene Sire quite nasty."

"Nathaniel was at Fords Mansion eating in the kitchen with Billy Lee talking about the future, a good conversation Sir, for they had become fast and true friends. Washington was away at West Point and would return shortly."

which he had accomplished many times before."



Figure 10 Kitchen at Morristown with Billy Lee

"The colonel from the New Jersey troops rushed in with a message for General Wayne who wanted to warn Washington immediately. Nathaniel agreed to take the message to Washington and he prepared to leave immediately, for it was a long trip of almost 100 miles! Off he went to West Point, tree to tree, a trip the like of

"Why Sir it took Nathaniel three days to get there and when he did he told Washington immediately, who showed both fear and sorrow in his eyes, for they had accomplished so much but the Congress was always causing this problem, for he had so little control, yet so much responsibility. Congress it would Sir always be such a roadblock."

"Washington returned with Nathaniel and the mutiny was resolved by a meeting in Princeton, but alas another mutiny on January 20, 1781 Sir, by the New Jersey regiments Sir. This time Washington, such a great man, and with a heavy heart had to deal it a swift blow. Why Sir they court martialed the three leaders, and Sir, a sad yes very sad day, Washington had the two leaders executed, a very sad

day. From then on there was peace until spring. But then things began to improve greatly, yes sir they improved greatly!"



Figure 11 Lafayette's Table at Morristown

15 ONTO THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN (JULY - OCTOBER 1781)

Antnee was now geared up for his great moment of a great battle, I could

see his true actor character emerging, now that we had dealt with the unsavory winter of the mutinies. He now began:

"Sir, it was now the summer of 1781, a truly momentous time Sir. The French had placed some 5000 troops with Washington north of New York and they were led by General Rochambeau. Nathaniel was there and on August 14th 1781 Rochambeau received a letter from French Admiral de Grasse that the French fleet was to sail and meet the British in Yorktown Virginia Sir, not New York. Washing wanted to recapture New York, but it was so fortified. Nathaniel knew that as did Rochambeau. Jean Pierre had told Nathaniel that Rochambeau would follow Washington but that New York was too heavily fortified. Thus on the afternoon of 14th August Washington went outside to think what was the

next move, march to Yorktown in hopes of meeting deGrasse or stay and hope he can find a way to defeat the British in the heavily fortified New York. He was joined by Nathaniel, just the two of them. Washington said:

"Nathaniel, New York is so important, a symbol, that it must be defeated. Yet the French fleet is powerful and we can with Rochambeau defeat Cornwallis, we have such a mighty set of forces, yet it all depends on the French fleet getting there when we do. What do you suggest?"

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, you have a conundrum, a choice between two less than ideal options. Your risk in New York is great, it is fortified, surrounded by water, many troops with ground they know well. Your

choice in Yorktown your Excellency is to meet Cornwallis who is on shaky ground, and even if the French fleet does not arrive you have Rochambeau. Why your Excellency General Lafayette is already softening up Cornwallis with his quite successful attacks. You must your Excellency join him and bring this to a conclusion. Clinton here in New York your Excellency, why he is going nowhere, he is now a prisoner in New York just as if you jailed him, you do not want to enter that prison, you want to defeat Cornwallis, this is your chance your Excellency."

Washington replied:

"Nathaniel, well put, action is better than anticipation. We go to Yorktown!"

Antnee continued:

"Well Sir it was a mighty sight, 3000 Continentals and 4000 French, marching as a combined army, three abreast marching south, through Philadelphia, then Baltimore and then down through Virginia and out the peninsula towards Yorktown at the mouth of the York River, a long march Sir, but a march to destiny, yes indeed Sir, a true march to destiny!"

"On September 28th Sir, Washington marched all of his army, the French and the Continentals into formation at Yorktown, a true feat Sir, 400 miles march in 40 days and the men were ready Sir, indeed they were ready. The stars as they say Sir came together, for deGrasse had his fleet there and they blasted the British in a mighty battle. That Sir left Cornwallis stranded on the spit of land at Yorktown, his escape route blocked by the French

fleet Sir, a mighty victory in the offing Sir a mighty victory."

"The battle lasted many days Sir, back and forth and the French and the Continentals were mighty together, sending cannon balls to the British hour after hour."

"Well Sir on the 17th of October, after almost three weeks of this bombardment, well Sir it was the end for Cornwallis. Nathaniel and Jean Pierre had been scouting the British positions and they reported their growing weakness. That was when the British sued for peace Sir, it was victory. It was on the 19th of October 1781 Sir, a truly great day, that Cornwallis surrendered under terms of peace, a glorious moment."

"Yet Sir even at that moment, as Nathaniel and Jean Pierre scampered

about the British to make certain there were no assassins afoot they heard the British officers say how poor the Colonials were dressed and how rough they appeared."

"Nathaniel then said to Jean Pierre:"

"My friend, I hear the British tell with scorn how they see us as a rag tag team of Yankee Doodles, poor uniforms, men in shoes, tattered squirrel scouts, but we have what they do not, we have Liberty my friend, we have freedom from an oppressive government and leader, we have his Excellency, a man who leads in the front, who knows and understands what it means to be a leader and in battle. That my friend is what makes us different from the English with their King!"

Jean Pierre replied:

"And that my friend is why I intend to remain here in your country!"

The two embraced and sat and watched as the troops of Cornwallis marched away in defeat.

16 FRAUNCES TAVERN (DECEMBER 4, 1783)

As much as I enjoyed the detail, for Antnee went on and on in detail, I was getting a bit tired. The ground was hard, the battles I knew were over, my lovely wife, ever the patient and proper one, sat there with a look of continued amazement as the tale was unfurled. I had been through many of these before, and I knew we were approaching some form of climax. Antnee in his best histrionic mode, sat back with his tail wrapped around his head and started:

"Well Sir, the British left Manhattan on November 25, 1783. That was it, they were gone, sailed away and left whatever was there as it was. Just gone Sir, just gone! Washington marched in and took command, what there was to command. The Royalists had left, gone to Canada or back to England, and there was no military efforts to take at all. The War was over."

"Washington wanted to return to Mount Vernon before Christmas so he arranged a farewell for his officers at Fraunces Tavern, you have been there Sir, it still stands. It was December 4th 1783, Sir at noon. A luncheon farewell. Many officers were there. The fire was burning, the place was warm, despite the cold New York harbor air. You know Sir that the air at the tip of Manhattan Island can be the coldest in

the world, the water, the wind, why Sir it just blows through the fur and..."

I interjected watching the sun begin to drop:

"Antnee, back to the story, I know about your fur and how cold it gets...we had this talk many times before, focus Antnee, the story..."

My lovely wife then interjected telling me that I should allow him a bit to be personal about, that I was being too blunt. Yet she had not sat through his many tales as I have, oftentimes with diversions into areas which I have deliberately failed to record for posterity. But alas he refocused:

"Well Sir the gathering was mixed, some old friends, many recent friends, many were not there because of their death, in battle and just age, and some

because well Sir because they just had not performed. It was a mix. Nathaniel was invited as was Jean Pierre and several other of their officers. The nuts were great Sir, truly great, just like what Lady Sara sets out for us..."

I again interjected:

"Antnee, focus, focus, focus..."

He continued:

"Oh sorry Sir, I do digress sometimes. But yes, and Washington stood and spoke:"

"With a heart full of love and gratitude I now take leave of you. I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable....I cannot come to each of you but shall feel obliged if each of

you will come and take me by the hand."

Antnee said:

"Why Sir, they not only came and took his hand many men came and embraced him, and there were a great many tears. Nathaniel and Jean Pierre waited on the rafter across from the fireplace, its flames roaring as the warmth of friendship spread throughout the room. Why Sir the man was loved, truly loved. Unlike many of today's politicians, this man was one of a kind Sir, a true gentleman, a true father of the country, and someone who should never be forgotten, we certainly do not. Well Sir at the end Nathaniel and Jean Pierre came down and Washington gave them both a warm hug. He remarked:"

"You too do not appear as furry as a few winters ago, perhaps we shall have a mild winter, say you so gentlemen?"

Antnee continued:

"They smiled and went with Washington as he crossed the Hudson on his way home. Washing did not look back at Manhattan but west to New Jersey. He sat there talking with Antnee as the boat was rowed across. He said:"

"Nathaniel, the future of this country will be there in the west, it will grow, and I truly pray we have given it a sound foundation, a foundation of freedom, equality, and strength."

Nathaniel replied:

"Your Excellency, on that note there is a point I would like to make. My friend,

and indeed he is my friend, Billy Lee, he is a slave, which means you own him, and well Sir, not to be too blunt, I ask that somehow you free him too, for as we mere squirrels aided you and are free, then another man such as Billy Lee who helped me and helped this country, he too should be free. Is that not possible Sir, is that not even demanded of this new country."

Washington looked as if the truth was before him from the mouth of this little major, and he replied:

"Nathaniel, I will do so, I promise you. I will set him free."

Nathaniel they went on:

"Sir this new country will be meeting many challenges, unlike no other country. Freedom is one, and all slaves must ultimately be free. They are not

property, for I have been reading John Locke and..."

Washington laughed out loud and said:

"My little major, a scholar indeed, John Locke no less, I suspect you and General Hamilton were also talking..."

Nathaniel replied:

"Well yes Sir but that is another issue. Yet we agree, the ownership of property, property based upon our labor, is a cornerstone of our freedoms."

As the boat moved slowly across the Hudson in the darkening light they spoke on and on. For Washington was not a true intellect like Hamilton or Locke, he was a man of duty and honor and this was to be an important talk. Indeed it was.

When they reached the ferry terminus at the point just below Paulus Hook, they spoke one last time. Washington said:

"Nathaniel, what are you off to now?"

He responded:

"Your Excellency, I now have a family and have my duty as well. I depart west back to Morristown and to them. And you Sir, back to Mount Vernon by Christmas?"

Washington replied:

"Indeed my good friend, back home, after so many years. Farewell my good friend, perhaps we shall meet again, and my felicitations to your family, and yes I shall remember our talks, and Billy Lee."

The two embraced and Washington took to his horse and headed south towards Philadelphia and Nathaniel scurried along the tree tops on his way to Morristown crossing the gap in the Watchungs he used so many times before. Both were home for Christmas.

17 PRESIDENT GEORGE (APRIL 30, 1789)

Antnee started again:

"Washington had returned to his farm in Mount Vernon aside the Potomac River. There he farmed again and he prepared his will as he had promised Nathaniel and insured that Billy Lee would be freed. He knew that Nathaniel would never forget the promise and he would hone that."

Antnee now settled back on his spot and it appeared as if he was nearing the end of his tale. He began:



Figure 12 Mount Vernon



Figure 13 View of Potomac from Mount Vernon

"News had come to Morristown that his Excellency had been elected the first President of the new United States. He would be inaugurated on April 30th on the steps of the building on Wall Street in New York. Nathaniel was now quite old but he decided that he and his fellow squirrels from the War would all go to honor the new President. Thus, Nathaniel set out from Morristown; it would be a long trip, for he was quite aged. They went to Bottle Hill, then Chatham, over the pass of the Watchungs at Short Hills,

remembering the Battle those many years ago now. Then across the plain to Paulus Hook, again memories. There was a ferry, which took them, and hundreds of others who were going across the Hudson to the west bank, a somewhat sloppy bank of the Hudson before it opened into the harbor. They walked across the terrain to Trinity Church, and then down Wall Street. The crowd was immense."

"Nathaniel was helped up a large sycamore tree just across from where the oath would be given. Then the moment came. Hundreds of people, crowds, and mass numbers! The sycamore was filled with well over a hundred of Nathaniel's scouts, for they came not just for Washington but to honor Nathaniel as well. This was more than just one ceremony. Nathaniel was given a wonderful perch atop the sycamore."

"Then Nathaniel noticed Billy Lee, who also saw him and walked over to the tree. Billy Lee said to Nathaniel:"

"Good old friend, I am so pleased to see you here. You look well. How is the family."

"They spoke for a while as the crowd and dignitaries gathered. For no one really paid attention to an old grey squirrel and a slave. Nathaniel said:"

"Billy Lee, we are so fortunate that his Excellency is the first President, he is a fine and glorious man, a leader of men, and a true friend. I am told he will free you Billy, and I will speak with him one more time to be certain, you hear Billy, he is a good man and he will honor his word."

Billy Lee replied:

"Indeed Nathaniel he has told me such and it is written. I want to thank you."

Nathaniel then replied:

"What will you do Billy, and your family, what will they do?"

Billy replied:

"Oh I will farm in Virginia, I can do that as a freeman, and my oldest son, he is to be freed to, why Nathaniel he wants to go back to Africa, and go east there to a land called Kenya, some place just south of Egypt, a young man of adventure I guess."

Nathaniel continued:

"Well Billy, we are getting old, and I older than you, and such travels are all behind us now. You be well my friend,

and my best to your family and especially to that son of yours, I remember the days of my travels, glorious days, yes glorious days. Perhaps Billy your son, or your son's son may become President someday like his Excellency?"

Billy Lee laughed and replied:

"Nathaniel, you joke well my friend, imaging an African as President, next my friend we will have squirrels!"

The two of the laughed heartily awaiting the new President to be. They then embraced and stood aside awaiting Washington.

"Then his Excellency came out, the oath was administered and he spoke kindly to the crowd."

"Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives: Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my Country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years--a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being

sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence one who (inheriting inferior endowments from nature and unpracticed in the duties of civil administration) ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own personal lacks. In this conflict of emotions, all I dare aver is that it has been my faithful study to collect my duty from a just appreciation of every circumstance by which it might be affected. All I dare hope is that if, in executing this task, I have been too much swayed by a grateful remembrance of former instances, or by an affectionate sensibility to this transcendent proof of the confidence of my fellow-citizens, and have thence too little consulted my incapacity as well as disinclination for the weighty and untried cares before me, my error

will be palliated by the motives which mislead me, and its consequences be judged by my country with some share of the partiality in which they originated.....

Having thus imparted to you my sentiments as they have been awakened by the occasion which brings us together, I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the benign Parent of the Human Race in humble supplication that, since He has been pleased to favor the American people with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquility, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of government for the security of their union and the advancement of their happiness, so His divine blessing may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise

measures on which the success of this Government must depend."

Antnee continued:

"Then Nathaniel smiled and Washington looked across the street and the crowd, for he was quite tall and stood atop the steps, and he saw Nathaniel, they smiled and waved at each other. Two veterans of a long war. Two comrades in arms, one the President the other a now old squirrel. The new President waved and motioned for Nathaniel to join him for a moment. Nathaniel came down from the sycamore and Washington walked over amidst the swelling crowd. They met in the shade of this great tree. Washington said:"

"Nathaniel, so good to see you again my friend. How are you?" For Washington knew that he was ill, Jean

Pierre had told him as had Billy Lee. They spoke for a while and Nathaniel said"

"Your Excellency, did you remember the promise about Billy Lee and his family?"

Washington replied:

"My friend, I certainly did and I will free all in my keep. You are a very thoughtful and dear friend. I leave now for my many ceremonies but we can talk for a few moments. How is everyone and my friend how are you?"

Nathaniel replied:

"All are well your Excellency, and alas as you may know I am aging, it comes to all, and I am not surprised, and I am happy for the many years I had to serve with you your Excellency,

wonderful years, warm with friendship."

Washington replied:

"Thank you Nathaniel. But I fear that I face new battles as President. I have John Adams as Vice President, the old irascible man from Massachusetts and Jefferson as Secretary of State. I fear Jefferson is quite duplicitous and not all that competent. I spoke with him about the slave issue, and he may say certain things in his writings but in his actions is speaks all too differently. He has acquired the ways of court from France, say one thing and do another. He cannot seem to overcome slavery, I told him I was freeing all my slaves, yet he will not even look at the issue. He wants to be President, more than anyone, but he had such a lackluster experience as Governor in Virginia and at War he was comfortable in Paris

while you and I slogged our way from battle to battle. I pray that my successors are men of wisdom but I fear that they will be men like Adams and Jefferson, obstinate opinion and blind personal ambition."

Washington turned and Nathaniel could see the burden he had in his face. Nathaniel knew that his Excellency was about to venture into a battle as weighty as was the war. He was sorry that he would not be by his side, his life was just too short. The Washington turned and embraced Nathaniel one more time and said:

"Farewell my old friend. Go safely; I will see that your way back to Morristown is made easy."

Washington then rubbed Nathaniel's head and they smiled again at one another. Then Washington had ordered

a carriage to take them back, all the way to Morristown, for now, as President he had the ability to use some of his power, and his first application of that power was the transport of Nathaniel back to Morristown. In grand style!

That night, in the cool of the April spring, in his nest atop an ash tree in the front of the Ford mansion, Nathaniel passed on. He was quite old for a squirrel but he had lived well, making friends, and seeing his friend now President Washington, and of course his best friend, Billy Lee, who would soon be free. He had done well for a squirrel, and it is always good to pass when you have done your best, and Nathaniel had done his.

18EPILOG

Now Antnee sat back and was truly exhausted. For this was one of his most intense and also most personal of stories. He continued but in a somewhat somber tone:

"George Washington died in 1799 and as he had promised Nathaniel he had freed his slaves including Billy Lee. Billy Lee had heard that Nathaniel had passed and that he was buried in the lawn in front of the old Ford house in Morristown. Billy Lee was driven to visit the site where his old comrade was to pay tribute."

"Thus Billy Lee took a horse that the President had given him and set north, through Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey. He reached Morristown; I believe it was October of 1801. In his pocket he had carried several acorns from the tree on Mount Vernon that the President himself had planted

years ago, well before Billy Lee himself was born back in Africa. Billy Lee walked up to the lawn of the great Ford house, tears in his eyes, wondering where his old friend was buried. He thought he would never find him. But, as fate would have it along came George and Billy Squirrel, the two grand children of Nathaniel. They immediately recognized Billy Lee and ran up to him."

I could see that my lovely wife had a tear in her eye. The sixty squirrels above and around me were also moved, some were actually crying about this tale of great friendship. This was one of Antnee's best tales indeed. Antnee took a pause, I suspect he had told this many times before, and then he continued:

"Billy Lee looked down at the two and asked:"

"Would you perhaps know where Major Nathaniel Squirrel is buried? I am here to do him honor. We served together under his Excellency?"

The two squirrels stood before him, bolt upright on their legs and saluted. They said:

"We are George and Billy Squirrel, grandsons of Nathaniel, your old friend. We have heard many tales of you two sir and are so glad to make your acquaintance."

Billy smiled and they spoke for more than an hour. After that time, there were almost a hundred squirrels in the large patch of lawn. Billy Lee said:

"I have brought these acorns from Mount Vernon, from a tree planted by his Excellency, and want to plant them

at the site of old Nathaniel. Perhaps you may all help?"

They all agreed and like a sea of grey fur, the now almost two hundred squirrels and Billy Lee walked to where Nathaniel had been resting and they each buried an acorn. For you see, said Antnee, the great oaks at Ford's Mansion are the result of the trees of George Washington and the deep friendship of Billy Lee and Captain Nathaniel!

He finished by saying:

"And every year since we squirrels take the acorns from those trees and the trees from those trees and spread them far and wide to remind all squirrels of the great man George Washington and the meaning of true friendship, as exemplified as that between Major Nathaniel and Billy Lee."



Figure 14 The Oaks at Ford Mansion