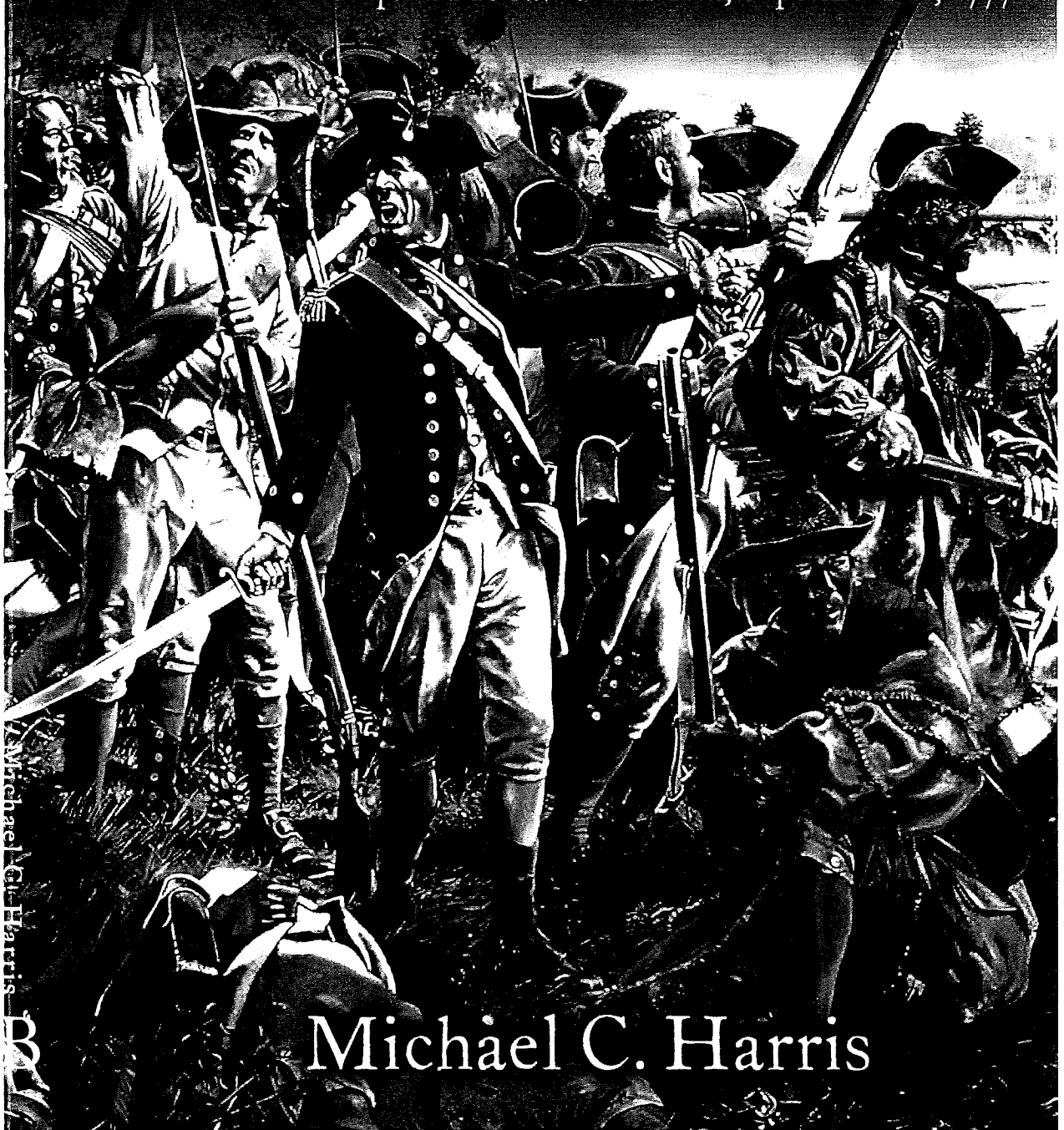
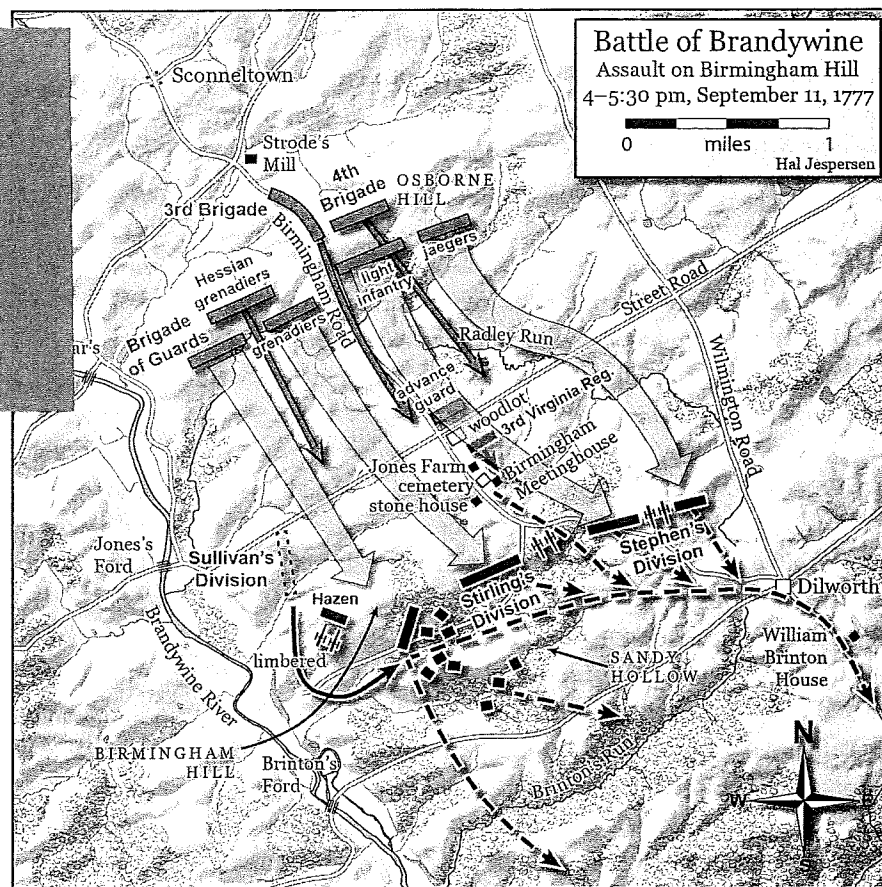


A Military History of the Battle that
Lost Philadelphia but Saved America, September 11, 1777



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Battalion on the far right and the 2nd Battalion on the left next to the grenadiers. The Guards light company spread in front of the two battalions, with the Guards grenadier company holding the position of honor on the right of the line. The British light infantry and the Guards were about 200 yards farther advanced than the British grenadiers.¹⁴

Behind this first line of the right wing was a second line of battle (or reserve) comprised of the Hessian grenadiers under the overall command of 45-year-old Col. Carl von Donop, the son of a noble family and distinguished veteran of the Seven Years' War. The von Minnigerode Battalion tramped behind the Brigade of Guards, with the von Lengerke Battalion and the von

14 McGuire, *Philadelphia Campaign*, vol. 1, 205.

Linsing Battalion stretching the line eastward behind the British grenadiers (with the von Linsing on the left closest to the road). Cornwallis's right wing, about 3,700 veteran troops, would attack south about one mile and strike Lord Stirling's and John Sullivan's divisions, some 3,200 strong, deployed atop Birmingham Hill.¹⁵

Behind these lines marched the deep reserve comprised of the 3rd British Brigade under Maj. Gen. Charles Grey, the 42nd Regiment of Foot under Lt. Col. Thomas Stirling, and the pair of squadrons of the 16th Light Dragoons. Although the historical record is unclear, it is reasonable to assume that these commands remained in column on the road for ready movement and rapid deployment, as circumstances dictated. The squadrons of the 16th Light Dragoons would later be ordered to assume a reserve position behind the Brigade of Guards.

One of the most impressive scenes to ever play out on the North American continent was unfolding on these Chester County farm fields. "Put on your caps," yelled Lt. Col. William Medows to his grenadiers west of the Birmingham Road, "for damned fighting and drinking I'll match you against the world!" The grenadiers took off their cloth forage caps, pulled their bearskin caps from their packs, brushed the fur, and placed them atop their heads. The imposing headgear added more than a foot to the already physically imposing men. Buttressed between the two battalions of British grenadiers were 62 drummers and British fifers. Drums, trumpets, whistles, and small brass hunting horns sounded the advance from both ends of the British lines. One historian painted the scene thusly: "Drumsticks dropped in one crisp motion, and a visceral thunder of drums rumbled out as 1,200 grenadiers stepped off together in a mesmerizing, glittering mass." After a few steps, the impressive array of drummers and fifers began playing "The British Grenadiers," which "shrilled across the once peaceful Quaker landscape, above the relentless, reverberating throb of drums." Lieutenant William Hale of the British 45th's grenadier company long remembered the impressive scene and would live through the day to write about it: "Nothing could be more dreadfully pleasing than the line moving on to the attack; the Grenadiers put on their Caps and struck up their march, believe me I would not exchange those three minutes of rapture to avoid ten thousand times the danger." Yet another British officer recalled that the

15 *Ibid.*, 204. At this time, Sullivan's division was moving back to take a position on Birmingham Hill.