

## Skirmish at James's Plantation

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In early 1781, the British military forces under the command of Benedict Arnold occupied Portsmouth and established a base of operations there. He intended to restore British Crown authority in Norfolk and Princess Anne Counties. One of his main obstacles was the Princess Anne County Militia led by Captain Amos Weeks. Arnold dispatched two of his trusted commanders to defeat the local militia and kill or capture Weeks. Captain Johann Ewald, a Hessian officer led one unit, and Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe, a British officer, led the second.

Loyalists provided intelligence to Arnold and his commanders. Weeks countered with his own Patriot intelligence network to keep him informed of British activities. As Capt. Ewald maneuvered his unit on February 15, 1781, crossing to the east side of West Neck swamp, his men surrounded a house and forced the occupant to divulge Week's location, which was presumably at Jamison's Plantation. That would place the Patriot force near Brock's Bridge, and right between Simcoe's Rangers and Ewald's Hessians. It was not long before they realized that Weeks and the militia were much closer – at James's Plantation just a short distance away.

Capt. Ewald devised a plan to surprise Weeks and his men. His cavalry remained on the road to act as a diversion while Ewald moved his infantry under cover of the woods around to the exposed flank of the militia. Weeks' men fixed their attention and fire on the cavalry. Ewald moved out of the woods and, crossing a fence line, opened fire on the Patriot flank. The militiamen scattered while Ewald's cavalry and infantry managed to kill, wound, or capture a number of Weeks' men. Ewald reported his men had killed or wounded 60 and captured an equal number. Five of his men were wounded during the skirmish.

The next day, the combined force of Hessians and Queen's Rangers headed south toward Pungo Chapel, having learned from one of the captured soldiers of a predesignated rendezvous point in route to the Northwest Landing. They encountered remnants of the Patriot militia near Pungo Chapel, at the intersection of Princess Anne Road and West Neck Road, where Capt. Weeks narrowly avoided capture.

After searching south on Pungo Ridge for more stragglers, Ewald and Simcoe headed north, later camping at the Cornick Plantation not far from London Bridge. Despite the victory, Arnold's forces failed to capture Weeks or break the spirit and will of the Princess Anne County Militia.