

Lamb, Gideon ^[1]

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Lamb, Gideon

by Alan D. Watson, 1991

20 Feb. 1741–8 Nov. 1781

Gideon Lamb, soldier, was the seventh and last child of Thomas (31 Jan. 1702–ca. 1761) and Sarah Beckwith Lamb (b. 1 July 1701 in Lyme, Mass.). Thomas married Sarah on 5 Nov. 1723 in Springfield, Mass., sold his home in that town on 3 Mar. 1732, and settled in Salisbury, Conn., by 1734. He speculated in land, dabbled in ironworks, and owned a saw- and gristmill. He supposedly left Salisbury in 1746 to become a mariner, after which he resided successively in New Jersey, Maryland, and finally North Carolina.

Gideon Lamb was born in Salisbury, Conn., and eventually moved with his father to [Pasquotank County](#) ^[2], N.C. Little is known about Lamb's career until he evidenced support for the American cause in the [Revolutionary War](#) ^[3]. In August 1775, at Hillsborough, he represented [Currituck County](#) ^[4] in the Third [Provincial Congress](#) ^[5], which appointed him a member of the [Committee of Safety](#) ^[6] for the [Edenton](#) ^[7] District. In April 1776 Lamb represented [Currituck County](#) ^[4] in the Fourth [Provincial Congress](#) ^[5] at Halifax. At that time he became major of the Sixth Regiment, North Carolina Continental Brigade.

Lamb, whose reputation rests principally on his contribution to the North Carolina military effort, advanced to colonel of the Sixth Regiment by March 1777. The promotion aroused discontent because other ranking officers in the North Carolina Brigade felt that promotions should come from the state line as a whole. A board of field officers of the brigade contested the validity of Lamb's promotion and prevailed upon General [Francis Nash](#) ^[8] to submit the matter to General [George Washington](#) ^[9], who asserted that Lamb's appointment was valid.

The North Carolina Brigade remained in the state until late 1776, when it was ordered to reinforce troops in Georgia. Lamb moved with the brigade as far as Charles Town, S.C., where it remained until March 1777. At that time it was ordered to join Washington's army. Lamb moved north with the North Carolina Continentals, joined Washington, and participated in most of the major battles of 1777 including Brandywine, which again embroiled him in controversy. By order of Brigadier General [Jethro Sumner](#) ^[10], Lamb was court-martialed for abandoning his regiment on the field at the Battle of Brandywine. A court of inquiry, however, determined that "the Charge is not Supported and that [Lamb] be Acquitted with Honour."

The next three years witnessed Lamb in his best—though most thankless—tasks, which were recruiting and supplying troops. In late 1778 he rallied two hundred Continentals in eastern North Carolina and worked in the Charlotte area, and in April 1779 he led a large contingent of troops from eastern North Carolina to Camden, S.C. In January 1781 Lamb was one of several officers placed on waiting orders at half pay. By July, he had become so exasperated with his situation that he wrote Sumner that he seemed "neither to be in the service nor out of it" and asked the general "to let me know Where, Who, and What I am." But Lamb saw little service after that. He had been troubled by "a low state of health" in early 1781 and almost immediately after writing to Sumner was confined to his home by a "bilious fever" from which he died. Lamb and his wife, Mary Burgess, had at least one child, Abner, who was commissioned lieutenant in the First North Carolina Continental Regiment.

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