



This dragoon of Lee's Partisan Legion, depicted during the early part of 1780, is armed with a captured Potter saber. *Courtesy of Don Troiani, www.historicalartprints.com.*

Rethinking the Potter: The Truth behind the Revolutionary War's Ultimate Sword

By Erik Goldstein

Complacency with long held and extensively published notions has all too often stood in the way of the true understanding of a particular weapon and its importance to history. While the arms student has been aware of the swords created in the New York City shop of James Potter at least since Peterson's *Arms & Armor in Colonial America* appeared in 1956, few have recognized the tremendously significant context surrounding the production of these weapons.

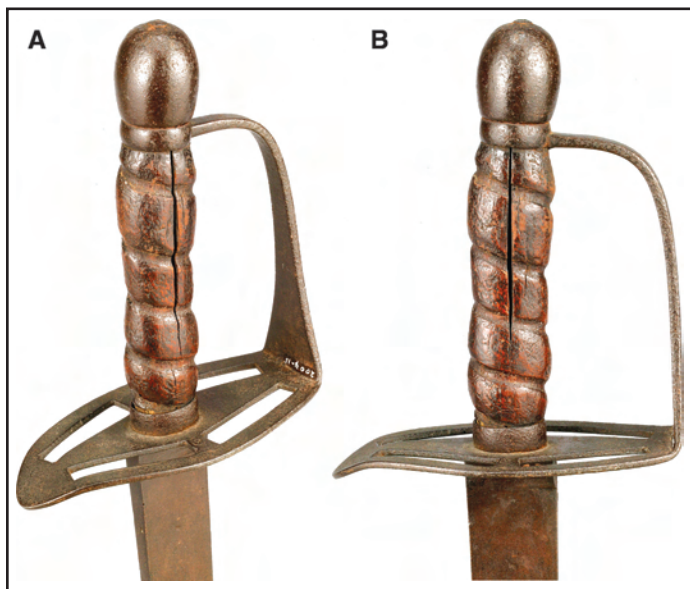


Figure 1 (A & B). The classic Potter saber, c.1778–1781, with a $35 \frac{1}{2} \times 1 \frac{9}{16}$ " blade, a $7 \frac{1}{4}$ " hilt and an overall length of $42 \frac{3}{4}$ ". Its walnut grip was originally covered in dark leather bound with a strand of twisted brass wire spiraling down the channel. It is loosely based on the British Light Dragoon saber often referred to at the "Pattern 1756," illustrated in George Neumann's *Swords and Blades of the American Revolution*, on page 154 as number 279.S. Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Accession number 2004–15).

Instead, the Potter sword, in achieving legendary status, has simply become universally accepted as an unquestionable example of an American-produced Revolutionary War weapon. With not much else to go on, the commonly accepted impression is that since the sword was American-made, then of course it must have been produced for the benefit of the patriot cause.

Let's start fresh, by stripping away the assumption and lore and looking at the cold hard facts. Given: James Potter, a sword cutler working on Maiden Lane in lower Manhattan, produced a large number of virtually identical horseman's swords during the Revolutionary War period. He had the audacity to boldly strike or have his name struck into nearly



every blade. Each printed mention of one of these swords agrees, and the primary source documents fully support this. However, that is where the harmony ends.

Immediately after the Declaration of Independence was publicly read in New York City on 9 July 1776, an angry



Figure 2. Potter's mark on the inboard ricasso was created by stamping a punch into the metal of the blade while it was hot. This tool contained his entire surname, thus creating the signature with one or two blows. In the case of this sword, the mark wasn't evenly struck resulting in the loss of the "R." As observed on other Potter swords, the foot of the second "T" is chipped off the punch. Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Accession number 2004–15).



Figure 3. A map of Lower Manhattan as it appeared in the mid 1760s. Maiden Lane is shown in yellow. From Bernard Ratzer's *Plan of the City of New York, in North America; Surveyed in the Years 1766 & 1767*. Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Accession number 1986-52).

mob demolished the gilt-lead statue of George III recently installed in Bowling Green, at the foot of Broadway. The broken chunks of the king were carted off and cast into tens of thousands of musket balls, vital munitions to the escalating patriot war effort. Shortly thereafter, the war indeed came to the city, first manifesting itself as a floating forest of masts spotted off of Long and Staten Islands.

In short order, the British Army and Navy clobbered George Washington and his fledgling Patriot forces, and beat them back all the way up and across the Hudson River to New Jersey by the fall of 1776. Despite a valiant defense, the city fell relatively easily and remained in the hands of the British until they decided to leave late in November of 1783.

With New York City firmly in British hands for the lion's share of the war, it is obvious that Potter wasn't making his swords for the Patriot cause. While one could make the argument that Potter did so before the British occupation, there is no evidence to support the idea. Besides, the Continental Army didn't yet know they would have a huge need for dragoons, let alone dragoon sabers, that early in the war. Since



Figure 4. Although it reads "POTTEER", this sword's mark doesn't reflect a misspelled punch. It was created by the offset of two uneven strikes, with parts of both visible. As observed on other Potter swords, the "O" has been damaged on the punch, resulting in the letter looking more like a "C." Additionally, the left side of the foot of the second "T" is also chipped off the punch. *Private Collection*.

the documents don't support Potter as a patriot sword maker, what do they tell us?

The earliest documentary appearance of James Potter is in the fall of 1776, when his name appeared on a long list of "inhabitants of the city and county of New York" who endorsed a loyalty oath on 16 October 1776 (which was printed in the 4 November 1776 *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*). While no mention of his profession is made, it tells us that he was a New Yorker and fiercely loyal to the Royal Government. Had Potter been in business as a sword cutter in New York City before the fall of 1776, surely he would



Figure 5. Another variant of Potter's mark has taller, thinner letters and can be identified by an elliptical center to the letter "O." On the other mark, this feature is more ovoid. This blade is surmounted by an 18th c. British cavalry hilt, and may be a refurbished sword brought to England by a Loyalist refugee. This isn't the only Potter sword from a British context, as others have been auctioned in sales rooms in Great Britain over the years. *Richard Ulbrich Collection, photograph by Don Troiani*.

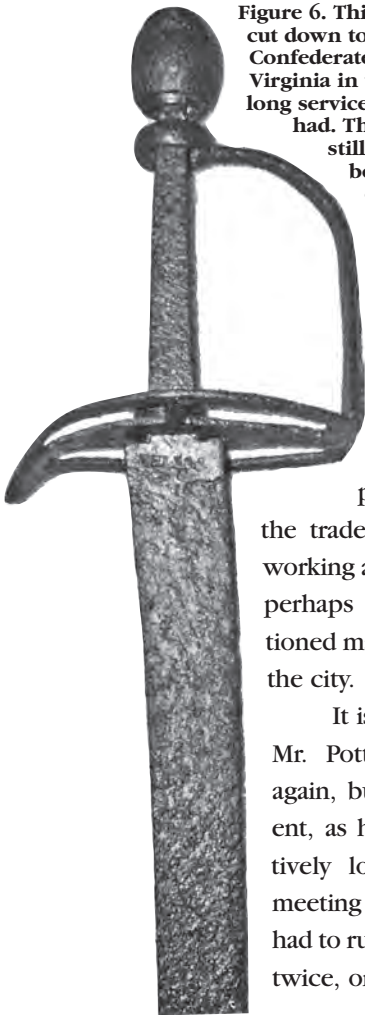


Figure 6. This Potter saber, with its blade cut down to around 31", was found in a Confederate campsite near Richmond Virginia in the late 1980s, illustrating the long service life some of these weapons had. The fact that a Potter sword was still in use during the Civil War can be taken as a testament to its quality. *Author's photograph.*

have run advertisements alongside those placed by other local cutlers like John Bailey, James Youle, Charles Oliver Bruff and Richard Sause. As he was probably not a newcomer to the trade, it seems likely Potter was working as a journeyman sword cutler, perhaps for one of the abovementioned masters, before the British took the city.

It is almost two years before our Mr. Potter appears in the records again, but this time things are different, as he is out on his own and actively looking for help. Obviously meeting with quick success, he only had to run this ad in the *Royal Gazette* twice, on 13 and 17 June 1778;

Wanted
A FORGER,
 That perfectly understands his Business, to whom
 good Wages will be given, also two or three
FILERS,
 Who are well skilled in that Branch, they will meet
 with very generous encouragement, by applying to
JAMES POTTER; Sword Cutler in Maiden-Lane.

While one might wonder why Potter waited so long under the protective wing of the British military machine to begin producing his swords, the answer is simple. Much like the rebel forces, there was little need for horsemen's swords by the Crown forces during the first few years of the Revolution. All of this changed in 1778 and 1779 as the war moved South and the numbers of Loyalist units exploded. In 1776, there were less than a dozen and a half Provincial regiments (exclusive of militia) and almost 80 (from Florida to Nova Scotia) by 1781. Most prominent among these units were the 5 regiments officially put on the newly-created American Establishment:

- Queen's American Rangers (Simcoe's), or 1st American Regiment (1779)
- Volunteers of Ireland, or 2nd American Regiment (1779)
- New York Volunteers, or 3rd American Regiment (1779)
- King's American Regiment, or 4th American Regiment (1781)
- British Legion (Tarleton's), or 5th American Regiment (1781)

Others bore intrepid names like the King's American Dragoons or the American Legion, commanded by the much-hated Benedict Arnold. With the dramatic expansion of the American forces fighting alongside the British, many of these units began to add mounted companies or converted to entirely mounted units to meet the need for such highly mobile, fast and effective troops. While firearms, such as

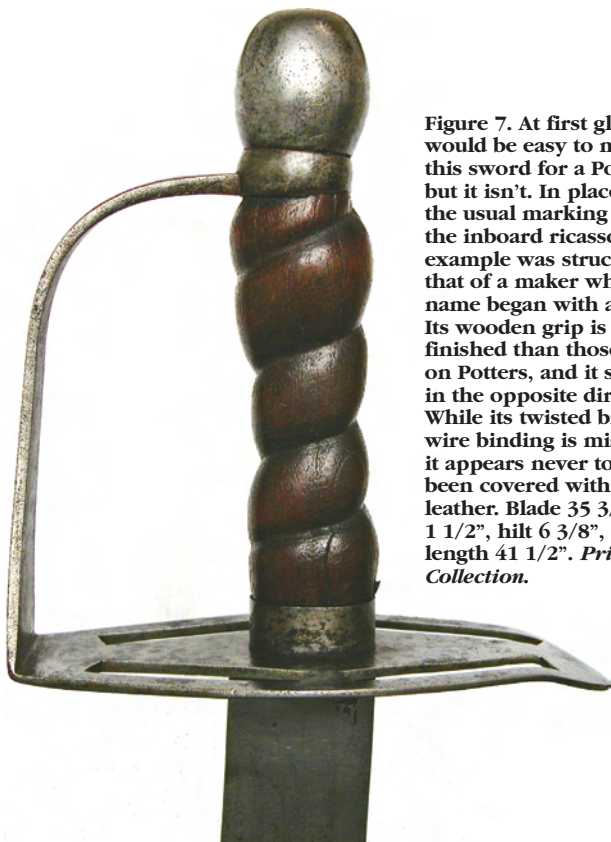


Figure 7. At first glance, it would be easy to mistake this sword for a Potter, but it isn't. In place of the usual marking on the inboard ricasso, this example was struck with that of a maker whose name began with an "M." Its wooden grip is better finished than those found on Potters, and it spirals in the opposite direction. While its twisted brass wire binding is missing, it appears never to have been covered with leather. Blade 35 3/16" x 1 1/2", hilt 6 3/8", overall length 41 1/2". *Private Collection.*



Figure 8. The "M" maker's mark on the outboard ricasso of the above sword. As of yet, no known candidates have surfaced as the maker of this sword, but it seems likely that it is an American imitation of the Potter-type made for the Continental Light Dragoons c.1779-1781. *Private Collection.*

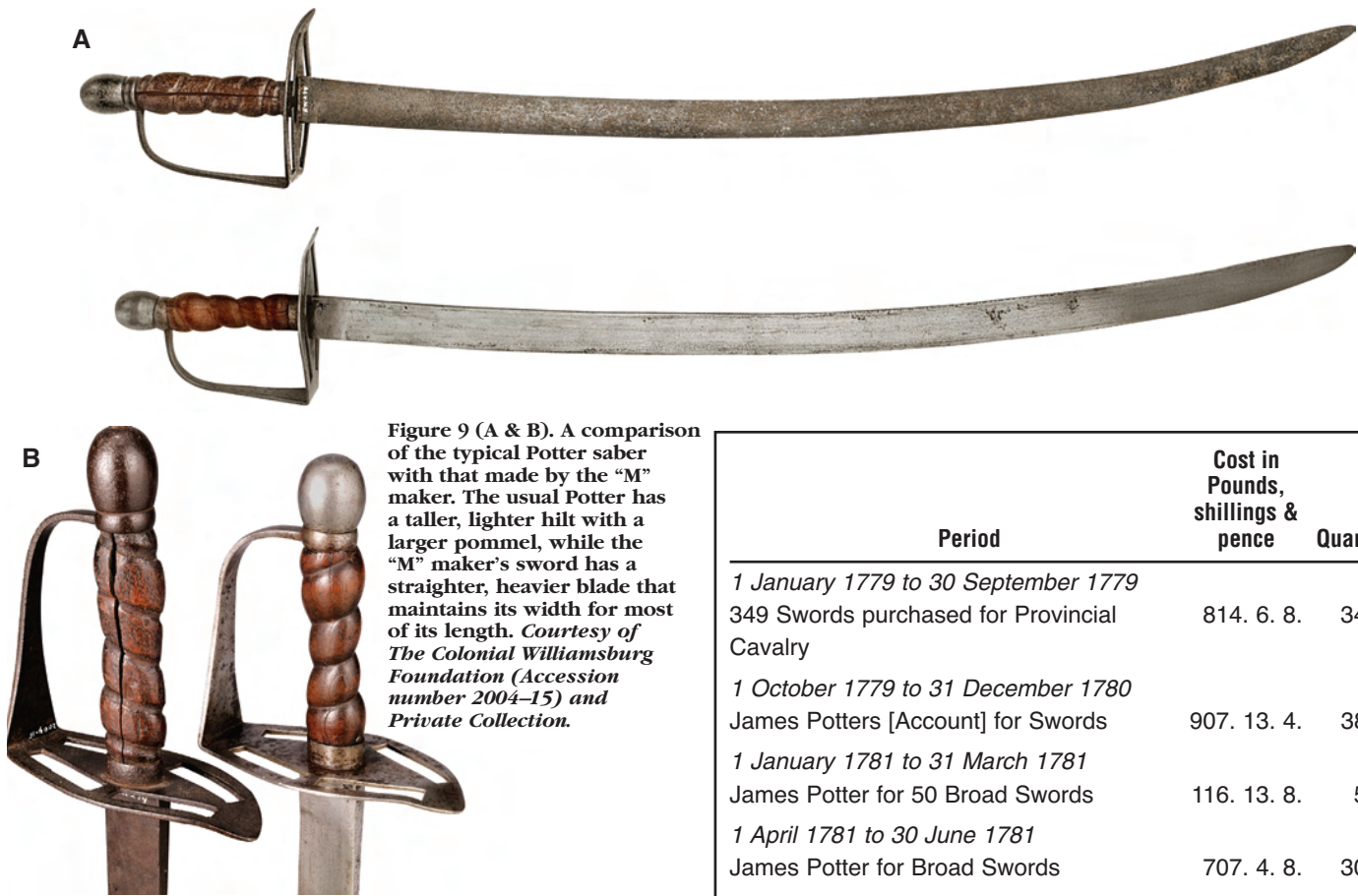


Figure 9 (A & B). A comparison of the typical Potter saber with that made by the “M” maker. The usual Potter has a taller, lighter hilt with a larger pommel, while the “M” maker’s sword has a straighter, heavier blade that maintains its width for most of its length. *Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Accession number 2004–15) and Private Collection.*

pistols and carbines, were certainly useful to the 18th century American dragoon, those serving both sides in the late 1770s and early 1780s preferred to use swords as their primary arm.

Firearms for these Provincial dragoons, or “hussars” as they often called themselves, were supplied by the Board of Ordnance headquartered at the Tower of London. Much like the regular units of the British army, responsibility for the provision of swords fell to the units themselves and were not issued from government stores back in London.

Instead, responsibility fell on Col. Alexander Innes, appointed to the post of Inspector General of Provincial Forces in early 1777. Rather than contract for the supply of swords through an agent 3,000 miles away, Innes’ office sought to procure the needed weapons locally and found their man in James Potter. It is the lucrative contract with Innes that spawned Potter’s need for workmen in mid 1778—and today’s famous cavalry saber.

All of the expenditures Innes’ office incurred on behalf of the Provincial forces are documented in his official 16 February 1785 summarized account to the government, covering the entire period he held the post, 29 January 1777 to 30 September 1782. Now preserved in the Public Record Office, Kew, England (AO 3/118), and the following payments for swords are recorded within:

Period	Cost in Pounds, shillings & pence	Quantity
1 January 1779 to 30 September 1779		
349 Swords purchased for Provincial Cavalry	814. 6. 8.	349
1 October 1779 to 31 December 1780		
James Potters [Account] for Swords	907. 13. 4.	389
1 January 1781 to 31 March 1781		
James Potter for 50 Broad Swords	116. 13. 8.	50
1 April 1781 to 30 June 1781		
James Potter for Broad Swords	707. 4. 8.	303
1 July 1781 to 30 September 1781		
Sundries for Broad Swords	850. 14. 8.	364
1 October 1781 to 31 December 1781		
James Potter for Broad Swords	291. 13. 4.	125
Total	£3688. 6. 4.	1580

The “Rosetta Stone” of the Potter sabers is now illuminated! Not only does this account book prove just for what side of the Revolution these weapons were made, but it also tells us that in the short span of late 1778 though the end of 1781, some 1,580 were produced, and they cost £2.6.8 per sword!

Adding this knowledge to the pile of facts already on hand, an interesting question now arises. Other than Potter himself, his shop on Maiden Lane apparently employed a tiny labor force of only one forger and two or three filers, as per his 1778 help-wanted ad. So one is forced to ask, did Potter’s shop make his swords and their scabbards from tip to pommel, or were certain components made elsewhere?

In the absence of any further documentation or proof, there is the possibility that Potter’s blades were made for him in England. With New York in British hands, the importation of such blades would have been no problem. Further intimating this is the fact that Potter’s blades are far and above the quality of anything known to have consistently been produced in large numbers in America, either before or after the Revolution. One just can’t say for sure. Regardless, he deserves a spot in the pantheon of early American industrial giants.



Figure 10 (A & B). This unsigned sword, unlike the “M” maker’s saber, is identical to the classic Potter in all details, and may rightly be attributed to Potter’s shop. Perhaps it was overlooked during the marking process, or it was wrought earlier in Potter’s production run when he wasn’t yet fully tooled up. One of the few Potter swords with a provenance, it was carried during the Revolutionary War by Richard Mead of Greenwich, CT, a partisan leader noted for defending the area against the hated Loyalist “Cowboys.” Mead’s sword survives with its original leather and iron scabbard, of the pattern provided with all of Potter’s sabers. While the top mount with the frog stud is original, the crude chape is a working-life replacement. *Courtesy of Don Troiani.*



During the period in question, Potter’s neighborhood was one of small, mostly wooden buildings that were occupied as either businesses or residences, with a few small manufactories here and there. Since the property records of occupied New York City are scarce, it has not been possible to locate Potter’s property on Maiden Lane, which ran from Broadway to the Fly Market at the East River. Today it follows the same course, but runs another few blocks east due to subsequent landfill.

A check of the Manhattan land records, now kept at the Register’s Office of New York County, turned up no real estate transactions involving James Potter as either the seller (grantor) or the buyer (grantee) during the last half of the 18th century. Therefore, we may conclude that Potter was either renting his premises or he only owned them for the duration of the British occupation. Could he have perhaps been granted confiscated Rebel property on Maiden Lane?

Since there was no running water on Maiden Lane, Potter’s sword factory couldn’t have had the water-wheel-powered trip hammer needed for large-scale iron and steel production, although he could have used horses for some of the heavy labor via a horse gin. However he did it, at the least Potter’s small shop produced almost 1,600 swords, and with most mounted contingents of Provincial regiments numbering less than a hundred, it would seem that there were enough to go around.

One letter, written to Gen. Cornwallis as Commander in Chief of the British land forces in the South (PRO 30/11/6, pp. 162-3), by Col. Innes on 31 May 1781, gives the rate at which Potter could normally produce swords (not his maximum capacity, however). Amongst other equestrian supplies desperately needed to equip 300 horsemen serving with Tarleton’s Legion (then campaigning in Virginia under Cornwallis), Innes advises that, “67 Swords are now in Store. 50 more are at the Cutlers, he can finish 25 P(er) week and shall go on Compleating Swords.”

Certainly Innes and Potter were scrambling to get swords ready to be shipped south to replace those lost in action and to equip British Legion troopers, be they new recruits or the ad-hoc mounted infantry (men from the 23rd, 63rd, 76th and 82nd Regiments, along with the North Carolina Volunteers) created to swell the contingent. Since the production period of the swords coincides with the drastic expansion of mounted Provincial forces (those American regiments loyal to Britain), it can be stated that they were also issued to other units like the Queens Rangers, Benedict Arnold’s (American) Legion and the King’s American Dragoons, among others higher in the food chain of Provincial forces.

Another unit is almost certain to have been issued with Potter’s swords. Raised in East Florida in 1778 from disaffected South Carolinian loyalists persecuted by their rebellious neighbors, the South Carolina Royalists had two troops of rifle dragoons and became an all-mounted regiment in the spring of 1781. Since their Commanding Officer was the same Col. Innes who contracted for the swords as Inspector General of Provincial Forces one can guess what he issued to his own troops.



Figure 11. A view of New York City from the southwest, from Bernard Ratzler's *Plan of the City of New York, in North America; Surveyed in the Years 1766 & 1767*. Courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Accession number 1986-52).

Sometimes when you do your job well, or make an especially effective “thingy,” there are unintended consequences, some of which are pleasant. Others are shocking, and such was the case with Mr. Potter’s sabers. In war, one of the many goals attempted by combatants is the capture of necessities, be it food, clothing, ammunition or arms. By doing this, you not only deprive your enemy of his vital supplies, but you improve the situation of your own troops.

Effective cavalry sabers were a scarcity in the Continental Army, and with the increasing need for mounted troops by Washington’s forces, the Potter saber became a sought-after prize, in a fashion similar to the German Luger of WWI and WWII fame, but with one difference: a Potter sword wasn’t just a nifty souvenir; it became the primary arm and a potential lifesaver in the hands of the American dragoon!

In a sea of swords purporting to be “Revolutionary War”, those made by Potter were celebrated by the soldiers who actually used them in combat, not just by modern arms collectors. Furthermore, they are unique in that they were actually mentioned by name in a number of early accounts in crystal-clear, unmistakable language.

Before Robert E. Lee was a glimmer in his father’s eye, “Light-Horse Harry” Lee’s Legion was thundering through the south, clashing with British and Provincial troops from Georgia to Virginia. Lee was known as a top-notch cavalry commander who went to great pains to see to every need of his corps, and insured that his men were equipped as well as possible. In memorializing Light-Horse Harry in his 1822 *Anecdotes of the Revolutionary War in America . . .*, one of Lee’s subalterns, Lt. Alexander Garden, wrote,

every individual of the corps was armed with a **Potter’s sword**, the weapon most highly estimated for the service, **taken in personal conflict from the enemy**.

Often fighting alongside Lee’s Legion were the mounted men serving under Brigadier General Francis Marion, the “Swamp Fox.” In Weems’ fictionalized biography of Marion published in 1809, a trooper named Macdonald, in being

regaled as a superhuman Patriot, was said to have had such strength that

with one of **Potter’s blades** he would make no more to drive through cap and skull of a British dragoon, than a boy would, with a case-knife, to chip off the head of a carrot.

Regardless of how handy Macdonald really was with a saber, one Potter sword (with an altered grip & pommel) now in the Charleston Museum, was purportedly carried by Serjeant Ezekiel Crawford of Marion’s Brigade, adding credence to Weems’ statement.

Banastre Tarleton himself tells us about the largest cache of Potter swords that fell into American hands at one time. In his 1787 *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, Tarleton transcribes Henry Knox’s return of military stores surrendered at Yorktown (pp. 451-4), which included 273 “horseman’s swords” amongst other sorts. With the only cavalry at the siege being Tarleton’s Legion, the Queen’s Rangers, some North Carolina Volunteers (often serving with the Tarleton’s mounted contingent) and a few 17th Light Dragoons, it can be surmised that a lion’s share of those 273 must have been Potter swords.

If the use of captured Potter sabers wasn’t enough, the Patriots took it one step further by attempting to copy them. James Hunter’s iron works on the Rappahannock River in Virginia was producing armaments in large quantities for the Continental Army, when Maj. Richard Call of the 3rd Regiment of Light Dragoons wrote the following to Virginia’s Gov. Thomas Jefferson on 29 March 1781:

I have received Express from Lieut. Colo. Washington one Horseman’s sword taken in the late action at Guilford Court House, which he directs me to send Mr. Hunter as a pattern and have swords made for the men.

Further along in the letter, Call states:

. . . *the sword is the most destructive and almost only necessary weapon a Dragoon carries.* (Calendar of State Papers [Jefferson], Vol. I, p. 606.)

Light Infantry Man and Hussar of the Queen's Rangers.



Figure 12. This watercolor, titled *Light Infantry Man and Hussar of the Queen's Rangers*, was included in the copy of Lt. Col. Simcoe's *A Journal of Operations of the Queen's Rangers, From the End of the Year 1777, to the Conclusion of the Late American War (1787)*, presented to King George III in 1789. Although only the blade of the hussar's sword is visible, it is almost certainly a Potter, which were the only sabers known to have been supplied to that unit. *Courtesy of the British Library, Department of Printed Books, 194.a.18.*

Since the only Loyalist (or British) cavalry at the battle of Guilford Courthouse who had Potter sabers was the mounted contingent of Tarleton's Legion, the example sent to Hunter for replication was certainly a Potter, having been lost by said unit. However, it wasn't until after combat had effectively ceased (late November of 1781) that Hunter's swords—numbering 1000—were ready for delivery.

While Col. Innes was well aware of those swords lost in combat to the enemy (since he had to replace them), he may never have known how well they served his intended victims. Potter probably didn't know either, but ostensibly the loss of his products in combat was good for business.

As the last entry for swords coming into the inventory of the Provincial forces takes place between the first of October of 1781 and the last day of that year, one can conclude that no more Potter sabers were needed. Also occurring during that span of three months was the disastrous surrender of Cornwallis' forces at Yorktown, more or less bringing the war to a halt—and obviously the need for more horsemen's swords. Potter continued repairing swords, and

no doubt producing a few for private customers after his employment with the Provincial forces ended.

The handwriting was then on the wall for the Loyalist citizens of New York City. The war was lost, and recognized peace was just on the other side of some diplomatic wrangling and parchment scribing. With the formal ratification of a peace treaty, these New Yorkers knew their protectors—the British Army—would be leaving, and they would have to make a choice. Should they stay, and endure the wrath of the victorious and vindictive Americans, or should they get out of town?

By the spring of 1782, either business took a turn for the worse (no surprise), or Potter became restless in his home town. In an attempt to sell what may have been the family homestead (and workshop), he ran an ad in the 27 April 1782 *Royal Gazette* reading:

TO BE SOLD

A *HOUSE* near Maiden-Lane, in good repair, and very convenient for a small Family. The Price is One Hundred Guineas. Apply to James Potter, *Sword Cutler*, Maiden-Lane.

The fact that Potter is indeed selling property (for gold coin, nonetheless) shows he wasn't just a renter. No matter how he came to own it, the lack of officially filed deeds almost certainly has to do with the low priority such civil matters held in a city run by a military government. Furthermore, Potter must have been aware that his claim to the property would not have been honored by the Americans once the British left New York. A clue to the location of Potter's property may also be gleaned from this ad. Since the house was "near" Maiden Lane, it is likely that it stood in the central part of the block, perhaps adjoining his workshop on the street front proper (i.e., 'in Maiden Lane').

Six months later came further proof of Potter's decision to remain under the protective wing of King George III, when he was preparing to shut down his business. Appearing in the 2 October 1782 issue of the *Royal Gazette*, Potter ran the following plea:

The Subscriber intending for England very soon, Desires those to whom he is indebted to call and Receive payment; and requests those indebted to him to Discharge the same without further notice.—Those Gentlemen who have left Articles in his hands to repair, Are desired to take them away, otherwise he will be Under the necessity of disposing of them to pay the expences of repairing.

JAMES POTTER,

Sword Cutler, *Maiden-Lane.*

New-York, 1st October 1782.

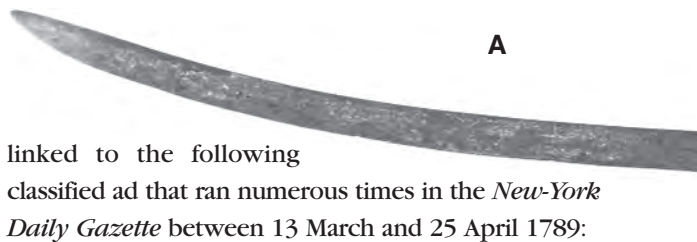
One must wonder what sort of business Potter was conducting during the first nine months of 1782. While it is certain he was repairing edged weapons, he was likely repairing other articles as well. But was he peddling breast milk too? Apparently so! Our final evidence of James Potter in New York City appears with his ad of 16 November 1782, placed in his favorite paper, the *Royal Gazette*;

A WOMAN with a good breast of Milk would be glad to take a Child to nurse; she can have an unquestionable character by applying at Mr. Potter's, Sword-Cutler, Maiden Lane; any person wanting her will be waited on by enquiring at the above place.

James Potter never left for England as he advertised in October 1782, but shortly after the wet-nurse ad ran, he and his family left for good. Some time the next year, he reappears in the burgeoning Loyalist settlement of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, where his family of eight has settled. In recognition of his service to the Crown, Potter is generously rewarded with land. He is granted one farm, one lot in town, and one lot on the waterfront. While we lose him in post-war Nova Scotia, one thing is for sure—he didn't stay in New York to carry on his trade. Considering the notoriety of his swords and the horrible deeds committed with them, he could have paid for his skill and loyalty to the king with his life had he remained in his hometown.

As such, the notion that Potter worked in New York City after the British evacuation in late November 1783 is simply ludicrous. This commonly accepted misconception is probably

A



linked to the following classified ad that ran numerous times in the *New-York Daily Gazette* between 13 March and 25 April 1789:

Light-Horse Swords,
Of **Potter's make**, to be sold Cheap by the Quantity, by W. Fosbrook, Surgeon's Instrument Maker, No. 58, Queen-Street, near Peck's-Slip.
N.B. Country Produce will be taken in Payment.

This ad has apparently been misinterpreted for years, due to the lack of other available facts concerning Potter. It is clear from Innes' records that Potter was paid for the sabers supplied to the Provincial forces. When the need for arms evaporated with the cessation of most hostilities after the capitulation of Yorktown in late 1781, there would have been no reason for Potter to produce these extremely plain but serviceable weapons for private Loyalist customers in the New York City area.

Figure 13. One of a number of non-standard Potter swords known, this sword was created after the Revolutionary War, perhaps in the 1790s, by mounting a new brass hilt on a typical saber blade. Other Potter blades have been reduced & re-hilted as short sabers or hangers. As with the POTTEER marked sword, this blade has been double-struck by the punch with the broken "O." *The Late William H. Gutbman Collection, photograph by Don Troiani.*



Clearly, what Fosbrook was peddling was the inventory of unissued sabers left behind by Innes' office when the city was evacuated. Once the victors reclaimed the city, Loyalist and British Governmental property was confiscated and sold at auction, which is probably how Fosbrook (who was not a sword cutler) came into a supply of Potter swords, and was willing to flog them off for vegetables, meat or perhaps some dairy goods. The true value of this ad is in its terminology, proving that "Potter's"

B

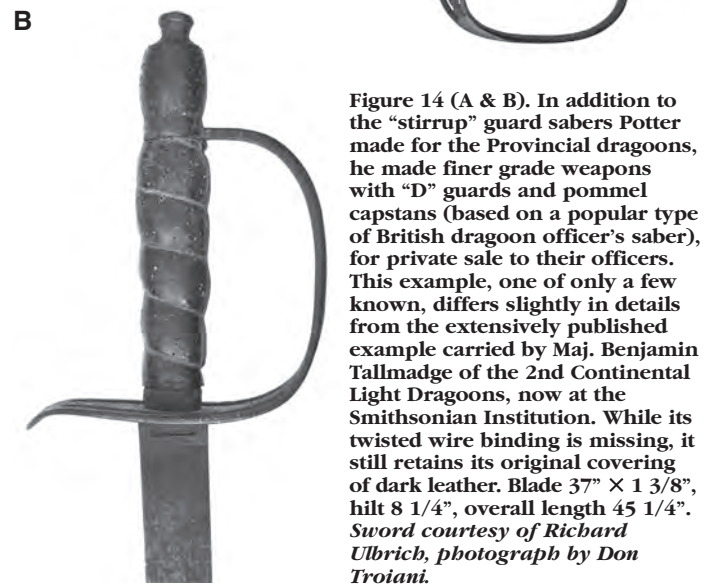


Figure 14 (A & B). In addition to the "stirrup" guard sabers Potter made for the Provincial dragoons, he made finer grade weapons with "D" guards and pommel capstans (based on a popular type of British dragoon officer's saber), for private sale to their officers. This example, one of only a few known, differs slightly in details from the extensively published example carried by Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge of the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons, now at the Smithsonian Institution. While its twisted wire binding is missing, it still retains its original covering of dark leather. Blade 37" x 1 3/8", hilt 8 1/4", overall length 45 1/4". *Sword courtesy of Richard Ulbrich, photograph by Don Troiani.*



Maiden Lane, looking northwest from South Street, as it appears today. The only remnant of James Potter's New York is the course followed by Maiden Lane. Author's photograph.

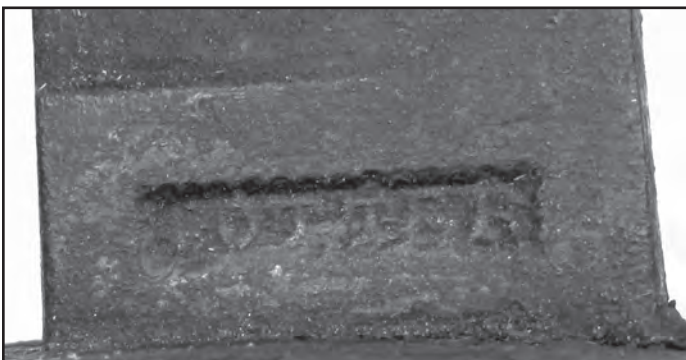


Figure 15. The marking on the blades of the officer's swords contains Potter's name in relief within a sunken cartouche embellished with crenellated edges. *Sword courtesy of Richard Ulbrich, photograph by Don Troiani.*

swords were widely recognized as being of superior quality and desirability in the 1780s.

In conclusion, we now know that the Potter sword, produced in New York City for the Provincial forces, became an exceedingly prized weapon by both sides and was contemporarily renowned. Unlike others produced in America during the war, like the fine silver hilts of Bailey and Brasher, Potter swords were real combat weapons that saw very heavy service. Therefore, the Potter sword truly is the ultimate sword of the American Revolution!

Many thanks to Todd Braisted, who generously opened up his library of transcribed Loyalist papers and shared the all-important account information from Col. Innes. Additionally, I'd like to thank Jim Mullins, Ken Schwarz, Master Blacksmith at Colonial Williamsburg, Will Tatum, Don Troiani, Richard Ulbrich and Stephen Wood.