

THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF JOHN CHAMPE 1752-1798

Painting of John Champe, Revolutionary War Hero
While the Powells and the Masons, the Lees, the Claphams, the Nolands, and the Rusts, the Chinns, the Peytons, the Mercers, the Ellzeys and others of her natural leaders and large landowning families of the time, had abetted and supported, in one capacity or another, the Revolutionary cause, it was, in the end, the simple, homespun, backwoodsman class that bred Loudoun's most romantic figure in the Revolution. Sergeant Major John Champe of Lee's Partisan Legion, mighty of bone and sinew, stout-hearted, resourceful and of such boundless devotion and loyalty to his country and his commander-in-chief in its hour of travail that he consented to incur the scorn and hatred of his fellow-soldiers when along with hard path lay his duty, deserves to have his fidelity, his courage and his exploits commemorated at length in every story of his native county.

John Champe was born in what was soon to become Loudoun in the year 1752. Little or nothing is known of his boyhood. His family was too humble and his early life too obscure to have challenged the pen of his scattered neighbors. When the American Colonies revolted against the mother country, he at once enlisted in Virginia's forces and in 1780 was serving as a dragoon in Light Horse Harry Lee's cavalry Legion in which he had by sheer merit attained the rank of sergeant major and, through the esteem he had earned, was in line for promotion to a commission. The morale of the American Army had been profoundly shaken by Arnold's recent treason and escape; the courageous but unfortunate young British officer André was a prisoner in Washington's hands as a result of his part in the affair and Washington was deeply troubled lest the treason which had corrupted Arnold had spread its vicious poison elsewhere among his soldiers. Henry

Lee of Virginia, famous enough in his own right but also destined to be known as the father of General Robert E. Lee as well, was afterward, in the War of 1812, commissioned a major general; but then, as a cavalry major of twenty-three in command of an independent partisan corps of Dragoons, had already achieved his magnificent capture of the British-held fort at Paulus Hook and for that and many another daring exploit enjoyed no small military distinction. At the time our story opens, Lee and his corps were with Washington along the Hudson River. Many years later he was to write his famous Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States, an important source-book of American history. It is to this work that we are principally indebted for our knowledge of Champe's exploit and from it I shall quote largely the story, condensing but the less essential parts. Only thus can be taken the true measure of Champe's heroism, now too generally forgotten in Loudoun.

There had fallen into Washington's hands in anonymous papers which appeared to involve other of his soldiers in treason, and particularly one of his generals. He had sent for Lee and handed him the papers. Lee studied them carefully and when asked his counsel, said he thought they represented a contrivance of Sir Henry Clinton, the British commander-in-chief, to destroy confidence between Washington and his men and purposely had been permitted by the British to fall into Washington's hands. Washington rejoined that the idea was plausible and had already occurred to him, but the danger involved in the possible defection of one of his highest officers was so great that the truth must be ascertained at once.

"I have sent for you" Lee quotes Washington as saying, "in the expectation that you have in your corps individuals capable and willing to undertake an indispensable, delicate and hazardous project.



Whoever comes forward upon this occasion, will lay me under great obligations personally, and on behalf of the United States, I will reward him amply. No time is to be lost: he must proceed if possible this night. My object is to probe to the bottom the afflicting intelligence contained in the papers you have just read; to seize Arnold, and by getting him, to save Andrè. They are all connected. While my emissary is engaged in preparing means for the seizure of Arnold, the guilt of others can be traced; and the timely delivery of Arnold to me, will possibly put it into my power to restore the amiable and unfortunate Andrè to his friends. My instructions are ready, in which you will find my express orders that Arnold is not to be hurt; but that he be permitted to escape if to be prevented only by killing him, as his public punishment is the sole object in view. That you cannot too forcibly press upon whomsoever may engage in the enterprise, and fail not to do. With my instructions are two letters to be delivered as ordered and here are some guineas for expenses.'

"Major Lee, replying, said that he had little or no doubt but that his legion contained many individuals daring enough for any operation, however perilous; but that the one in view required a combination of qualities not easily to be found, unless in a commissioned officer to whom he could not venture to propose an enterprise the first step in which was desertion. That though the sergeant-major of the cavalry was in all respects qualified for the delicate and adventurous project, and to him, it might be proposed without indelicacy, as his station did not interpose an obstacle before stated; yet it was very probable that the same difficulty would occur in his breast, to remove which would not be easy, if practicable." Washington became at once interested in this hitherto unknown sergeant major and asked his name, his country, his age, size, length of service, and character.

"Being told his name," continues Lee "that he was a native of Loudoun County in Virginia; about twenty-three or twenty-four years of age—that he had enlisted in 1776—rather above the medium size—full of bone and muscle; with a saturnine countenance, grave, thoughtful and taciturn—of tried courage and inflexible perseverance, and as likely to regret an adventure coupled with ignominy as an officer in the corps; a commission being the goal of his long and anxious exertions, and certain on the first vacancy—the general exclaimed that he was the very man for the business; and that going to the enemy by the instigation and at the request of his officer, was not desertion though it appeared to be so. And he enjoined that this explanation, as coming from him, should be pressed on Champe."

Leaving Washington, Lee hastened to the camp of his cavalry corps where arriving about 8:00 o'clock at night, he sent for Champe and placed the matter

before him, stressing "the very great obligation he would confer on the commander-in-chief" and all else Lee could think of to ensure acceptance of the assignment; concluding with an explanation of the details of the plan, so far as they had been developed, and an expression of his personal wish that he would enter upon its execution instantly. "Champe listened with deep attention, and with a highly excited countenance; the perturbations of his breast not hiding by his dark visage. He briefly and modestly replied, that no soldier exceeded him in respect and affection for the commander-in-chief, to serve whom he would willingly lay down his life; and that he was sensible of the honor conferred by the choice of him for the execution of a project all over arduous; nor could he be at a loss to know to whom was to be ascribed the preference bestowed, which he took pleasure in acknowledging, although increasing obligations, before great and many."

As for the plan itself, Champe thought it excellent and understood at once how great might be the benefits resulting from its success. "He was not deterred by the danger and difficulty which was evidently to be encountered but he was deterred by the ignominy of desertion, to be followed by the hypocrisy of enlisting with the enemy; neither of which comported with his feelings, and either placed an insuperable bar in his way to promotion. He concluded by observing, that if any mode could be contrived free from disgrace, he would cordially embark on the enterprise. As it was he prayed to be excused."

Thus Champe's reaction to the project justified Lee's prior opinion expressed to his general and shewed his knowledge and understanding of the man. But the plan, with the tremendous results involved, pressed for immediate action and Lee exerted his utmost power of persuasion. He pointed out that Washington himself had declared that, in this case, the desertion was not a crime; adding that if

Champe accepted, Lee would consider the whole corps highly honored by the General's call but that if it failed, at such a critical moment, to furnish a competent man it would reduce Lee to "a mortifying condition."

It was a long and arduous task to overcome Champe's repugnance to become involved, even seemingly, in a situation repellant to his every standard of honor to which his soldier's life had been trained; but slowly Lee overcame his scruples and obtained his consent. Then the detailed instructions, already prepared, were read to him, covering not only his behavior procedure when once safely away but also the very difficult matter of the desertion itself which must be so managed as to leave no doubt in his companions' minds as to his treachery but also to ensure far as possible, his safety from their inevitable wrath. Obviously, very little help could be given by Major Lee at this point "lest it might induce a belief that he was privy to the desertion, which opinion getting to the enemy would involve the life of Champe." So that part of the matter was left to the young sergeant, Lee promising, however, that if his escape were discovered before morning, he would seek to delay the pursuit "as long as practical."

Giving Champe three guineas as initial expense money, Lee urged him to start without delay and to let him hear from him, as promptly as possible, after he had arrived in New York. Champe, again urging Lee to delay pursuit, returned to his camp "and taking his cloak, valise and orderly book, he drew his horse from the picket and mounting him, put himself upon fortune."

His anticipation of rapid discovery and pursuit proved only too well-founded better than he the alertness and efficiency of his fellow dragoon's positive discipline maintained in Lee's command. Less than half an hour had passed since he escaped

the camp, before his absence, under what appeared highly suspicious circumstances, was discovered and promptly reported. "Captain Carnes, Officer of the day, waited upon the Major and with considerable emotion told him that one of the patrols fallen in with a dragoon, who being challenged, put spur to his horse and escaped, though instantly pursued."

Lee, mindful of the value to Champe of every minute of delay which his ingenuity could devise, simulated a lack of understanding of his report, and when that had been repeated and clarified, appeared to doubt Carnes' deduction and sought to persuade him that he was mistaken. The latter, however, was a competent officer, and moreover, his suspicions had been thoroughly aroused. Arnold's treason had raised mistrust of loyalty which, perhaps, normally would not have been entertained. Therefore on leaving Lee, Carnes at once returned to his men and ordered them to assemble, thus quickly learning that Champe, "his horse, baggage, arms and orderly book" were missing. His worst fears thus confirmed and, greatly affected by the supposed desertion in his own command, he hurriedly arranged a party for pursuit and returned to Lee for written orders. Again Lee played for the delay. While appearing to approve of Carnes' zeal, he told him that he had already planned certain other and particular service for him that night and that another officer would have to lead the pursuit. For that purpose, after apparent deep and protracted consideration, he chose a younger officer, Cornet Middleton, being moved to do so, writes Lee by "his knowledge of the tenderness of Middleton's disposition, which he hoped would lead to the protection of Champe, should he be taken;" but he was, at the end, obliged to issue orders in the customary form upon such occasions and those delivered to Middleton, duly signed by Lee, read ominously enough: "Pursue as far as you can with safety Sergeant Champe, who

is suspected of deserting to the enemy, and has taken the road leading to Paulus Hook. Bring him alive that he may suffer in the presence of the army, but kill him if he resists or escapes after being taken."

And still, Lee procrastinated. With one device or another, he contrived to hold Middleton, giving him instructions in such detail that they bordered on the trivial. Yet rake his imagination as he would, he at length was obliged to dismiss the youthful Cornet, with an expressed wish, however insincere, for his success.

In the meanwhile, and soon after Champe's departure, the rain had begun to fall, almost wrecking the carefully contrived plan; for Champe's horse was shod in a manner peculiar to the Legion and Middleton's party was thus better able to follow Champe's course than otherwise would have been possible on a dark night through the deserted country. Middleton and his men had finally succeeded in leaving the American camp soon after midnight, something over an hour after Champe had made his escape; but to examine the ground for shoeprints and the prints themselves, on a rainy night, meant the frequent dismounting of troopers, the striking of a light and thus an ever-growing delay. With the break of day, however, the shoeprints were clear enough and better time could be made—and then on a rise before reaching Three Pigeons, some miles north of the Village of Bergen, Middleton's men caught sight of the fugitive, not more than half a mile ahead, Champe seeing his pursuers at the same time.

The pursuit was now so grimly close that Champe knew a mistake by him or taking any but the most essential risks meant quick capture and no gentle treatment, if, indeed, he should survive that unpleasant event. Therefore he quickly abandoned his first plan to reach Paulus Hook (now part of Jersey City) and instead, with all possible speed

and by changing his course, sought immediate refuge in the British galleys which he knew lay a few miles to the west of Bergen "in accordance with British custom." Again, on the new course, he was sighted, his determined pursuers coming within two or three hundred yards of their quarry; but Champe, coming abreast of the galleys "dismounted and running through the marsh to the river, plunged into it, calling upon the galleys for help." This was readily given; "they fired upon our horse" writes Lee "and sent a boat to meet Champe, who was taken in and carried on board, and conveyed to New York with a letter from the captain of the galley, stating the circumstances he had seen." Escape had been achieved by the narrowest of margins and in the gravest danger; but it had created a realistic background for Champe's introduction to the British, difficult indeed to have better the slightest doubt was entertained by either group that it had witnessed daring desertion most narrowly achieved.

Greatly chagrined as were the Americans, they were not obliged to return entirely empty-handed. The fleeing Sergeant's horse with its equipment, his cloak, and scabbard fell into their hands and was carried back by them; but Champe held onto his sword until he plunged into the river and the British made it too hot at that point for a prolonged search. Dejectedly the dragoons returned to their camp to report their failure; giving Lee, quite unknowingly, a very bad moment when he saw Champe's riderless horse being led back until he was apprised of what had really happened; thereupon he lost no time in presenting himself to General Washington and reporting the complete success of the first part of the hazardous adventure.

Four days slowly passed, and then an unsigned letter, in a disguised hand, was received by Lee from his sergeant, telling of his further

adventures. He had, it seems, been kindly received on the galley and taken at once to the British Commandant in New York who was deeply interested in the story of his escape. The keen-witted Champe did not fail to take full advantage of his sympathetic audience and the good impression he was making. He assured the British officers "that such was the spirit of defection which prevailed among the American troops in consequence of Arnold's example, that he had no doubt if the temper was properly cherished, Washington's ranks would not only be greatly thinned but that some of his best corps would leave him." This did not seem, to a reflective mind, wholly consistent with the fire and spirit of the pursuit which the sergeant had so narrowly eluded, but his circumstantial narrative gave such welcome news to the British that they appear happy to have succumbed to the very human inclination to believe what they most wished was rue. Their enthusiasm, however, did not cause them to forego recording a very careful description of their new ally: "his size, place of birth, form, countenance, hair, the corps in which he had served, with other remarks in conformity with the British usage." Delighted as were his new friends with the sergeant and his story and inclined to accept both as offered, they apparently had not wholly failed to profit from their long contact at home with their canny northern neighbors. And now Champe was taken before His Majesty's Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Clinton himself. Nothing was wanting to shew the importance attached by the British to this latest deserter and the causes believed by them to have impelled him to his course. Clinton closely cross-examined the fugitive as to the possibility of the encouragement of further desertions from the American forces, the effect of Arnold's treason on Washington, and the treatment being given Andrè. Although there were moments when Champe's ingenuity and presence of mind appear to have been sadly taxed, yet, on the

whole, he succeeded in so well and convincingly deporting himself that Sir Henry, at the close of his examination, gave him a couple of guineas and assigned him to the service of General Arnold, with a letter telling the latter who and what he was. Arnold also received Champe cordially, expressed much satisfaction on hearing from him the manner of his escape and the fabulous effect of Arnold's example; and concluded his numerous inquiries going to him similar quarters to those occupied by his own recruiting sergeants.

Nothing could have developed more favorably to the American's plot. Of a surety, fickle fortune appeared, at last, to be broadly smiling on him. Arnold's next move was to seek to persuade Champe to join his legion; but that was a step so repugnant to the sergeant's spirit that even devotion to Washington failed, in his mind, to justify it; so he told Arnold, with some surliness, that for his part, he had had enough of war and knew that if he ever were captured by the rebels he would be hung out-of-hand which for him made further military service doubly hazardous. Arnold had reason to appreciate the sergeant's point and permitted him to retire to his quarters where at once he devoted himself to the consideration of how and when he could make contact with the American friends within the British lines who were to get for him the information sought by Washington as to the loyalty of certain of his officers. This contact, with fortune's aid, he was able to establish the next night and his new friend not only pledged himself to procure the information he sought but engaged to send out Champe's reports to Major Lee as well.

Thus was communication established between Champe and Lee and promptly word came from the latter urging expedition; for Andrè's situation had become desperate and further delay by Washington

increasingly difficult. And then Andrè himself destroyed his own last chance and ruined the hopes and efforts of his well-wishers. Disdaining pretense or defense, he freely acknowledged the truth of the charges against him and sealed his own doom. By his acknowledgment, Washington's hands were tied and Andrè was promptly condemned as a spy and duly executed.

Andrè's tragic fate did not diminish Washington's desire to lay his hands on Arnold. Champe was duly informed by Lee of the fatal event and again urged to bring the plot in which he was engaged to a successful outcome.

But Champe needed no urging. With such alacrity had he and his confederates been working, that soon he was able to send a report to Lee completely vindicating the American general officer toward whom Washington's doubts had been directed, which report Lee duly transmitted to his chief; with the result that "the distrust heretofore entertained of the accused was forever dismissed."

And now Champe had but to secure the person of Arnold to crown his task with success and to wholly justify the confidence reposed in him by Lee and Washington. On the 19th of October 1780, Major Lee received from him a full report of his progress toward that end and the plan he had made. Again Lee laid his communication before his general, from whom he received the following letter in Washington's own handwriting, showing carefully the latter sought to guard the secret and protect his emissary:

"Headquarters October 20, 1780

"Dear Sir: The plan proposed for taking A—d (the outlines of which are communicated in your letter, which was this moment put into my hands without date) has every mark of a good one. I, therefore,

agree to the promised rewards; and have such entire confidence in your management of the business, as to give it my fullest approbation; and leave the whole to the guidance of your judgment, with this express stipulation and pointed injunction, that he (A—d) is to be brought to me alive.

"No circumstance whatever shall obtain my consent to his being put to death. The idea which would accompany such an event would be that ruffians had been hired to assassinate him. My aim is to make a public example of him and should be strongly impressed upon those who are employed to bring him off. The Sergeant must be very circumspect—too much zeal may create suspicion, and too much precipitancy the project. The most inviolable secrecy must be observed on all hands. I send you five guineas, but I am not satisfied with the propriety of the Sergeant's appearing with much species. The circumstance may also lead to suspicion, as it is but too well known to the enemy that we do not abound in this article.

"The interviews between the party in and out of the city, should be managed with much caution and seeming indifference; or else the frequency of their meetings, etc., may betray the design, and involve bad consequences; but I am persuaded that you will place every matter in a proper point of view to the conductors of this interesting business, and therefore I shall only add that

"I am, dear sir, etc., etc.

"G. Washington."

Written communications between Champe and Lee continued. In ten days Champe had added the final touches to his plan for the abduction and so informed Lee, asking that on the third subsequent night a party of dragoons meet him at Hoboken to whom he hoped to deliver Arnold.

Our sergeant was by this time familiar with Arnold's habits and movements. He knew that it was Arnold's custom to return to his home about midnight and to visit the garden before retiring. It was at that time that Champe and the allies he, through Lee's letters, had obtained, planned to seize and gag the renegade and remove him by way of an adjoining alley to a boat, manned by other trusted conspirators, at one of the wharves on the nearby Hudson.

When the appointed day arrived, Washington directed Lee to himself take command of the small detachment of dragoons who were to meet Champe and his prisoner. "The day arrived," quoting Lee again "and Lee with a party of dragoons left camp late in the evening, with three led horses; one for Arnold, one for the sergeant, and the third for his associate; never doubting the success of the enterprise from the tenor of the last received communication. The party reached Hoboken about midnight, where they were concealed in the adjoining wood—Lee with three dragoons stationing himself near the river shore. Hour after hour passed—no boat approached. At length, the day broke and the major retired to his party and with his led horses returned to camp, where he proceeded to headquarters to inform the general of the disappointment as mortifying as inexplicable."

Deeply concerned as were both Washington and Lee over the failure of the plan, they were also very apprehensive as to Champe's fate, but in a few days, one of the sergeant's associates succeeded in getting through to them an anonymous letter explaining the failure of their plans. On the day preceding that fixed for the abduction, Arnold most unexpectedly removed his quarters to another part of the town to facilitate the supervision by him of the embarkation of troops on a special mission to be commanded by him and wholly unforeseen by the

conspirators—an expeditionary force made up largely of American deserters. "Thus it happened" Lee explains "that John Champe, instead of crossing the Hudson that night, was safely deposited onboard of the fleet of transports, from whence he never departed until Arnold landed in Virginia! Nor was he able to escape from the British Army until after the junction of Lord Cornwallis at Petersburg, when he deserted; and proceeding high up into Virginia, he passed into North Carolina near the Saura towns, and keeping in the friendly districts of that State, safely joined the army soon after it had passed the Congaree in pursuit of Lord Rawdon.

"His appearance excited extreme surprise among his former comrades, which was not a little increased when they saw the cordial reception he met with from Lieutenant Colonel Lee. His whole story soon became known to the corps, which reproduced the love and respect of officer and soldier, heightened by universal admiration of his daring and arduous attempt.

"Champe was introduced to General Green, who cheerfully complied with the promises made by the commander-in-chief, so far as in his power; and having provided the sergeant with a good horse and money for his journey, sent him to General Washington, who munificently anticipated every desire of the sergeant, and presented him with a discharge from further service lest he might in the vicissitudes of war, fall into the enemy's hands, when if recognized, he was sure to die on a gibbet."

Here ends Lee's account, apparently as first written; but subsequently he seems to have acquired some further information of his sergeant's later life which he appends in a note, as will appear later.

When Champe was with the British in New York, he,

according to Lee and as appears above, refused to enlist in the enemy's forces; but there is another account which says that when he arrived in New York "he was placed in the company of Captain Cameron." In the Champe family is the tradition that he wrote to Lee of this:

"I was yesterday compelled to a most affecting step, but one indispensable to the success of my plan. It was necessary for me to accept a commission in the traitor's legion that I might have uninterrupted access to his house."

This Captain Cameron, after the termination of the war, married in Virginia and fortunately kept a diary, a part of which was published in The British United Service Journal. From it we learn, through Howe, that Cameron had occasion to traverse the forests of Loudoun with a single servant and—familiar touch—was caught in one of those violent thunderstorms so characteristic of upper Piedmont. Night came on, no habitation or shelter of any kind was discernible to our travellers in that wilderness and, believing themselves in grave peril, they were becoming really alarmed when they saw through the woods a faint light. Riding toward it, they discovered it came from one of the typical log-houses of a frontier clearing and they lost no time in seeking shelter. The owner of the little home received them with true backwoods hospitality. And now quoting from Captain Cameron's journal:

"He would not permit either master or man to think of their horses, but insisted that we should enter the house, where fire and changes of apparel awaited us, he himself led the jaded animals to a shed, rubbed them down, and provided them with forage. It would have been an affectation of the worst kind to dispute his pleasure in this instance, so I readily sought the shelter of his roof, to which a comely dame bade me welcome, and busied herself in preventing my wishes. My drenched

uniform was exchanged for a suit of my host's apparel; my servant was accommodated in the manner, and we soon afterward ourselves seated before a blazing fire of wood, by the light of which our hostess assiduously laid out a well-stocked supper table. I need not say that all this was in the highest degree comfortable. Yet I was not destined to sit down to supper without discovering the still greater cause for wonder. In due time our host returned and the first glance which I cast towards him satisfied me that he was no stranger. The second set everything like doubt at rest. Sergeant Champe stood before me; the same in complexion, in feature, though somewhat less thoughtful in the expression of his eye, as when he first joined my company in New York.

"I cannot say my sensations on recognizing my ci-devant sergeant were altogether agreeable. The mysterious manner in which he both came and went, the success with which he had thrown a veil over his own movements, and the recollection that I was the guest of a man who probably entertained no sense of honor another public or private, excited in me a vague and indefinite alarm, which I found it impossible on the instant to conceal. I started, and the movement was not lost upon Champe. He examined my face closely; and a light appearing to burst all at once upon his memory, he ran forward toward the spot where I sat.

"'Welcome, welcome, Captain Cameron' said he 'a thousand times welcome to my roof; you behaved well to me when I was under your command, and deserve more of hospitality than I possess the power to offer, but what I do possess is very much at your service, and heartily glad am I that accident should have thus brought us together again. You have doubtless looked upon me as a twofold traitor, and I cannot blame you if you have. Yet I should wish to stand well in your estimation too; and

therefore I will, if you please, give a faithful narrative of the causes which led both to my arrival in New York, and to my abandonment of the British Army on the shores of the Chesapeake. You are tired with your day's travel; you stand in need of food and rest. Eat and drink, I pray you, and sleep soundly; and tomorrow, if you are so disposed, I will try to put my character straight in the estimation of the only British officer of whose good opinion I am covetous.'

"There was so much frankness and apparent sincerity in this, that I could not resist it, so I sat down to supper with a mind perfectly at ease and having eaten heartily I soon afterward to rest, on a clean pallet which was spread for me on the floor. Sleep was not slow in visiting my eyelids; nor did I awake until long after the sun had risen on the morrow, and the hardy and active settlers, to whose kindness I was indebted, had gone through a considerable portion of their day's labor.

"I found my host next morning the same open, a candid and hospitable man that he had shown self on first recognizing me. He made no allusion, indeed, during breakfast, to what had fallen from him overnight than he heard me talk of getting my horses ready, he begged to have a few minutes' conversations with me. His wife, for such my hostess, was immediately withdrawn, attending to her household affairs, upon which he took a seat beside me and began his story."

After the war and, it is said, on the personal recommendation of General Washington, Sergeant Champe was appointed to the position of doorkeeper or sergeant-at-arms of the Continental Congress, then meeting at Philadelphia, but obliged, on account of rioting, to remove to Trenton. His name appears on a roll of the 25th August 1783, as holding that position. Soon afterward he returned

to Loudoun, married, and acquired a smallholding near what is now Dover, between the later towns of Aldie and Middleburg, close by the present Little River Turnpike. The State of Virginia has erected one of its excellent road markers adjacent to the spot, bearing the following words:

"A Revolutionary Hero

"Here stood the home of John Champ, Continental soldier. Champ deserted and enlisted in Benedict Arnold's British Command for the purpose of capturing the traitor, 1780. Failing in this attempt Champ rejoined the American Army."

Nearby there is a pool of water still known locally as "Champe's Spring."

According to local tradition, he later lived in a log cabin on the Old Military Road near the old Ketoctin Baptist Church and on lands afterward owned by Robert Braden. Thence he in turn moved to Kentucky where it is believed he died in or about the year 1797.

And now we may return to General Lee's narrative for the note he appended thereto:

"When General Washington was called by President Adams to the command of the Army prepared to defend the country from French hostility, he sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Lee to inquire for Champe, being determined to bring him into the field at the head of a company of infantry. Lee sent to Loudoun County, where Champe settled after his discharge from the Army and learned that the gallant soldier had removed to Kentucky, and had soon after died." Of the sergeant's children, one son, Nathaniel, was born in Virginia on the 22nd December 1792, and in 1812 enlisted in Colonel Duncan McArthur's regiment at Dayton, Ohio, that command comprising a part of Hull's Army sent for the relief of Detroit. He was in the battle of Monguagon, was among those captured at Detroit, and subsequently, in the

regular army, saw further fighting and was with General Arthur's advance guard reoccupied. After the war, he engaged in business in Detroit, was a buyer and seller of real estate, and built Detroit's first "Temperance Hotel" of which he acted as landlord and in which he was succeeded by his son William. Later he moved to Onondago, Ohio, where he died on the 13th February 1870.

Source: Legends of Loudoun: An account of the history and homes of a border county of Virginia's Northern Neck by Harrison Williams
<https://www.loudounhistory.org/history/revolutionary-war-john-champe/>
<https://www.lcps.org/Domain/11814>

Link available to Members of GeorgiaPioneers.com (8 Genealogy Websites)
<https://georgiapioneers.com/restricted/SE/vault/C/johnchampe.pdf>