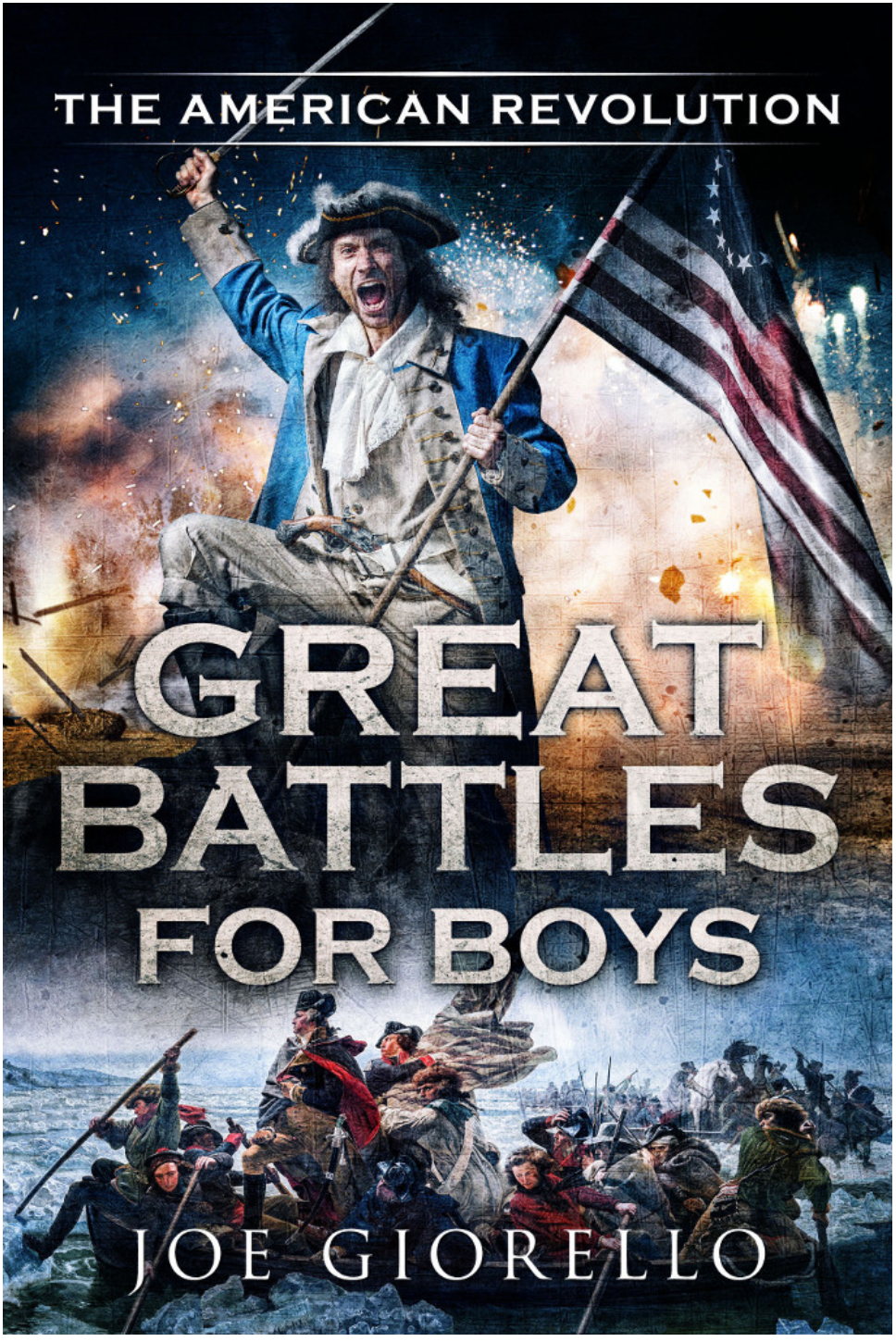

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
GREAT BATTLES FOR BOYS
JOE GIORELLO

The American Revolution

Great Battles for Boys

Joe Giorello

with

Sibella Giorello

Great Battles The American Revolution

PDF Edition

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION produced some stunning military battles.

But before we get into those clashes, you need to know about some events that triggered this war.

So, let's imagine this:

You and your family live in one of thirteen American colonies. Maybe Massachusetts. Or Vermont. (By the way, a "colony" is any land ruled by another country, often a country far away.)

One day, your mom gives you some British money and says, "Go to the store and buy some tea and sugar."

The colonists drank a lot of tea. After all, they considered themselves British citizens.

But when you get to the store, the prices for tea and sugar have skyrocketed—so high that you can barely afford to buy them. You wonder why the prices suddenly went up. The store owner explains that King George III—the ruler of England and the American colonies—needs more money.

Why does the King need money?

Because of his wars.

King George III.

Before the Revolutionary War, there was another war in North America. It was called the French and Indian War. It was part of a larger war between England and France that was also called the Seven Years' War.

The French and Indian War was fought mainly in Canada and the northern American colonies—such as Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

In 1763, King George signed a peace treaty—an official document that ends a conflict. The treaty said England would control the thirteen colonies. France could have some land further west, in what was then the wilderness.

Here's a map of that division of land.

The thirteen British colonies are in the darkest color, with French-controlled territory to the west. Note, too, Spain controlled lands even further to the west.

Wars are very expensive. The French and Indian War created huge financial problems for England, and King George decided the

American colonists should cough up money for his debt. The King started imposing higher taxes—a lot of higher taxes.

Here's an example (and I promise, this information is essential to the battles that follow).

In 1765, two years after the French and Indian War ended, England added a new law called the Stamp Act. It added taxes to just about every piece of paper used by colonial Americans, from newspapers to playing cards.

Official mark of the Stamp Act with the English royal crown.

Two years later, in 1767, more taxes were added—on paint, glass, metals … the list went on and on.

The British government insisted these taxes were fair because British soldiers lived in the colonies to protect them from Native American Indian attacks. Many colonists disagreed.

Let's return to your imaginary trip to the store.

When you get home, there's a knock on the front door. Some British soldiers are standing on the stoop. They're going to stay at your house. For as long as they want. For free. And your mom has to cook and clean for them. For free.

That bullying was becoming common in the colonies. Laws demanded that people "quarter" the British troops in their homes.

The bullying combined with the taxes were making the colonists poorer. Just as bad, they had no voice in the British government, known as Parliament. The colonists started saying this phrase: "No taxation without representation."

That meant that England's politicians couldn't just make rules for American colonists without listening to their wants and needs.

American colonists started gathering to protest the British taxes and the quartering of soldiers.

To fight back, the colonists refused to pay the taxes. They also boycotted—refused to buy—any British goods.

Other colonists formed groups to coordinate a rebellion against the British King and his government. Among the most famous of these groups was the Sons of Liberty. These men were passionate

about America breaking away from England. They wanted an independent country—even if that meant war.

The colonists drank a lot of tea. Some estimates are that they drank about a million pounds of tea—every year! In 1773, the Sons of Liberty organized a famous rebellion known as the Boston Tea Party.

On a cold winter night in December, the men disguised themselves as Indians and snuck aboard some English ships anchored in Boston Harbor. The men threw chests of tea overboard. One of them described this sneak attack:

"We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders, first cutting and splitting the chests with our tomahawks [Indian axes] so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water."

Artist's rendering of the Boston Tea Party.

In today's figures, that tea was worth about a million dollars. Naturally, King George was furious. In response, the British Parliament passed the Intolerable Acts. These new laws closed

Boston Harbor until the colonists paid for all the tea dumped in the water.

The Intolerable Acts also placed the citizens of Massachusetts under "martial law." That's when the military rules as the government. Under martial law, British soldiers were now in charge of everything. They could pretty much do whatever they wanted to the colonists and not suffer any consequences.

In 1774, the year after the Boston Tea Party, the Americans who wanted to change things formed a Continental Congress. They sent representatives from twelve colonies—Georgia didn't want to participate—and met in Philadelphia in Carpenters' Hall. Their goal was to convince King George to get rid of these unpopular laws. The Continental Congress wrote out their concerns and sent the letter to England.

The King never replied.

But he did declare the colonies "open and avowed [or certain] enemies."

Join, or Die was a political cartoon possibly drawn by Benjamin Franklin. It became a symbol of colonial freedom during the American Revolution. Can you name the colonies represented by their initials? (Hint: "N.E." stands for several colonies.)

Now it was war.

The colonists then formed a Second Continental Congress in 1775—Georgia sent a representative this time. Congress voted to create an army. It was called the Continental Army and was mostly made of colonial militia units. Congress also appointed a commanding general: George Washington.

That's the basic background. You'll find out more as we explore the American Revolution and discover what happened next.

THE BATTLES OF LEXINGTON AND CONCORD

April 17, 1775

Battle of Lexington, a painting by William Barnes Wollen. British soldiers in the distance stand in formation. The colonists try to hold their line.

IN THE SPRING of 1775, the British soldiers were struggling to keep control over the rebel colonists. Skirmishes broke out throughout the colonies.

People could sense a severe battle was just around the corner.

One of the British military leaders stationed in the colonies was Major John Pitcairn. He sent a letter to an English nobleman and described how he thought the rebellion could be stopped.

"I am satisfied one active campaign, a smart action, and burning two or three of their towns, will set everything to rights."

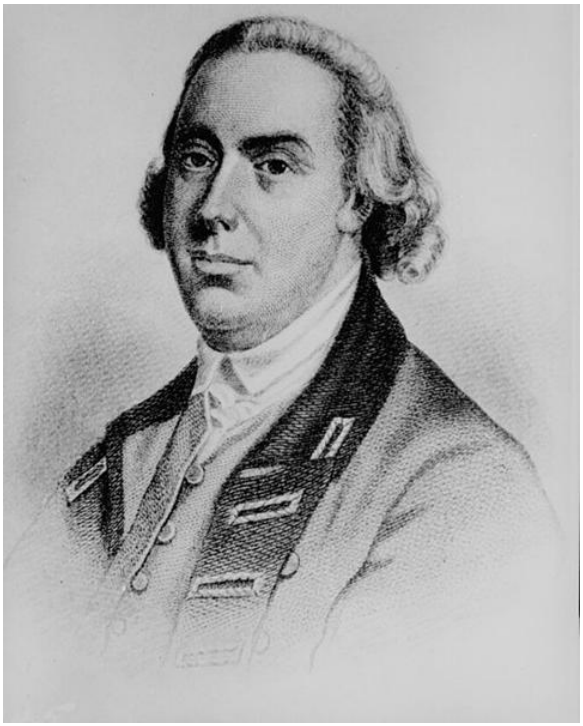
The British government wasn't listening to the colonists' complaints or even trying to negotiate with them.

But as the British Redcoats—named for their bright red military uniforms—grew more violent, the colonists only ratcheted up the fight.

In various villages throughout the northern colonies, people began to stockpile—build up—reserves of weapons and ammunition. The colonists wanted to be prepared for battle with the Redcoats.

One large stockpile was located in the town of Cambridge, Massachusetts. In September, 1774, British General Thomas Gage heard about the stockpile and ordered his British soldiers to destroy it.

The following spring, in April 1775, Gage learned of another stockpile. This one was located in the town of Concord, Massachusetts.



British General Thomas Gage.

Gage gave his soldiers the following orders:

"Having received intelligence that a quantity of ammunition, provisions, artillery, tents, and small arms have been collected at Concord, for the avowed purpose of rising and supporting a rebellion against his majesty [the King of England], you will march with a corps of grenadiers and light infantry, put under your command, with the utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord, where you will seize and destroy all military stores whatever."

The British didn't want the colonists to know they were coming. In the dark of night on April 18, British officers secretly marched 700 Redcoats to Concord. The British also sent out patrols into the countryside to stop any colonists from alerting the rebels.

The British failed on that last count.

Paul Revere's Ride, April 19, 1775, drawing by Charles G. Bush.

You've probably heard of the poem "Paul Revere's Ride." It begins:

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year …

Written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the poem tells the thrilling story of Paul Revere, who galloped on horseback at breakneck speed to alert the American colonial militia that "The British are coming! The British are coming!"

The poem takes some liberties with facts. For instance, since Paul Revere was on a secret mission, he probably didn't shout. Also, Revere wasn't the only American sounding the alarm. William Dawes and Samuel Prescott also galloped their horses through the night to warn people. The British captured Revere and Dawes. Only Samuel Prescott reached Concord.

Around 4 a.m. on April 19, the British soldiers reached the village of Lexington, about six miles outside Concord. They found about seventy armed colonists waiting for them.

The colonists were led by Captain John Parker, a farmer who'd fought in the French and Indian War. With him were militiamen and minutemen.

Although the names "minutemen" and "militiamen" sound similar, there were some fundamental differences. Militiamen were ordinary colonists—young and old alike—who formed units to protect their families and towns. The militiamen often had very little military training.

Minutemen, on the other hand, were chosen by militia commanders. They operated like a small elite fighting unit.

British Major Pitcairn saw these rebels and unleashed his anger.

"Disperse, ye rebels!" Pitcairn yelled. "Disperse!"

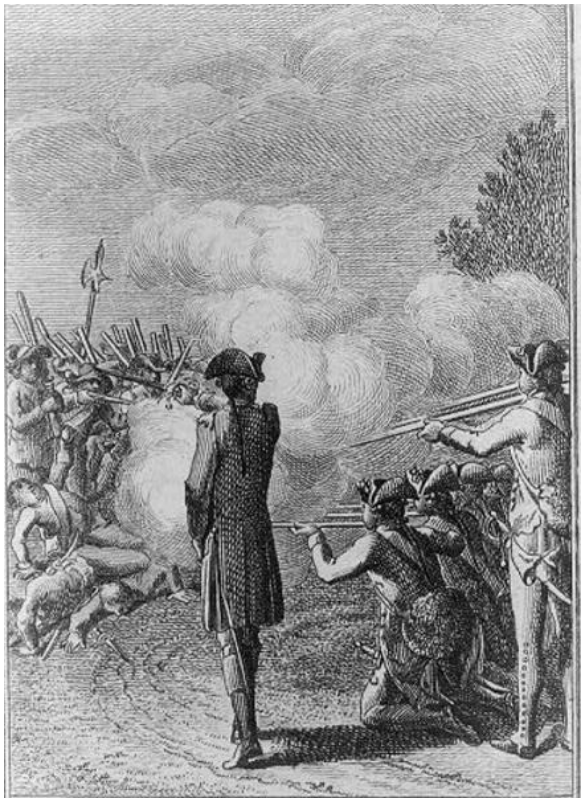
Imagine what these colonists were feeling on that cold and windy morning. Just a few years earlier, men like Parker had fought alongside these British soldiers in the French and Indian War.

Now the Redcoats were their deadly enemies.

"Stand your ground," Parker told his men. "Don't fire unless fired upon. But if they want to have a war, let it begin here."

But Parker soon realized the British outnumbered them by about ten to one. Not wanting to see his men slaughtered, Parker ordered them to slowly back away from Lexington Green, the town square.

But in the pre-dawn darkness, someone fired a musket.



British troops firing into American militiamen at the Battle of Lexington.

Suddenly, more shots rang out. Before anyone could duck for cover, the British opened fire with a full volley—all guns firing at once. Gunsmoke billowed into the windy darkness. Wounded men cried out.

When the smoke cleared, eight colonists were dead. Ten more were wounded. And one British soldier was also dead.

The Battle of Lexington, though not large, was the first official battle of the American Revolution.

But it was only the beginning of this fateful day in April.

The British relaunched their march for Concord and that stockpile of weapons.

Captain Parker and his remaining men also raced for Concord.

At Concord's North Bridge, a gunfight broke out. The militia decided to retreat to a nearby hill overlooking the village.

The Battle of Lexington.

The British burst into the house containing the stockpile—only to find the weapons were gone!

Alerted by Paul Revere and the others, the colonists had worked through the night. All the guns, ammunition, and tents were hidden somewhere else.

Enraged by being outsmarted, British soldiers set fire to several houses. Flames leaped into the air and soon spread to other Concord buildings.

Around 9:30 a.m., the colonial militia returned to the North Bridge. Now it was guarded by about 100 Redcoats. No one knows for certain who fired the first shot, but within minutes, two colonists and three British soldiers were dead.

All this commotion—the boom and crack of gunfire, flames leaping into the air—alerted more colonists. They grabbed their guns and raced into the fight until the colonists outnumbered the British. They gained control of the bridge.

The Redcoats began to retreat from Concord, but the colonists launched an attack about a mile outside town.

Rules of warfare in those days dictated that columns of soldiers should line up in order and shoot at each other. That's how military battles were fought.

But the colonists didn't do that. They'd learned some tactics from the French and Indian War in which Indians would hide behind trees and snipe at the enemy.

Now the colonists did just that, skirting around houses, staking out barns, and staying hidden as they fired guns from every direction on the strictly formed columns of Redcoats.

A reenactment of colonial soldiers engaged in battle.

This type of fighting is called “irregular warfare” or “guerrilla tactics.” (Guerrilla is pronounced “guh-rill-ah.”) It’s when armed civilians use ambushes, raids, and hit-and-run strikes to fight a larger, less-mobile military force.

This guerrilla warfare only infuriated the Redcoats even more—the American rebels weren’t fighting according to the rules! Worse still, the tactics were working. Suddenly, the British retreat from Concord turned into an all-out race—until the Redcoats reached Lexington.

Colonists (on the right) fire on the British columns.

But British officer General Lord Hugh Percy was waiting in Lexington. He had about 1,000 British soldiers with him, and they were already in battle formation. Percy brought cannons, too, and ordered the guns to fire on the Americans. That action stopped the colonial advance.

Now the British took their revenge.

Percy ordered his men to plunder—steal personal items—from Lexington homes and then burn the houses.

Percy might have felt victorious at that point, but the Americans weren't giving up the fight. As the British renewed their march for Boston, the militia followed, hiding behind trees and barns and firing on the Redcoats.

But when the British reached the town of Menotomy, they exacted even more revenge.

This time they burned houses *with people inside*. More than twenty colonists died in this vicious attack.

The British marched on to Boston, and the Battles of Concord and Lexington were over.

The British killed or wounded about 100 colonists.

The Lexington Minuteman, sculpture by Henry Hudson Kitson.

However, the Patriot rebels managed to kill seventy-three Redcoats and wounded 174 more. Twenty-six British soldiers were missing.

Those numbers were remarkable.

At that time, the British Army was the world's most powerful military force. Everyone agreed on that point. And yet, these colonial militiamen and minutemen had pursued the Redcoats back to Boston and didn't give up the fight.

That accomplishment was a kind of victory for the rebels and was later called "the shot heard round the world," based on the poem "Concord Hymn" by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,

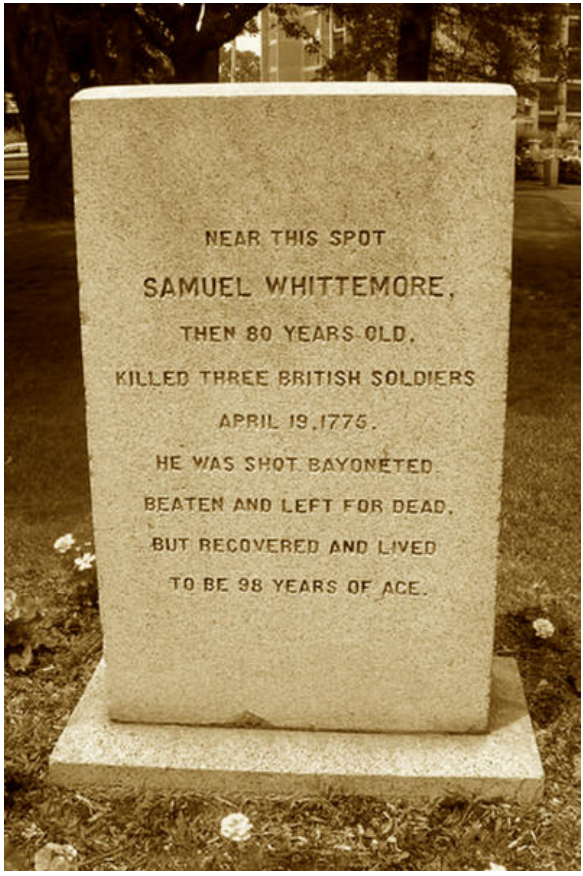
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

News of these battles spread from village to village, along with stories about the wicked actions taken by the Redcoats in Menotomy. Many colonists didn't want a war with England, but these battles changed their minds.

Now more men joined the colonial fight for independence.

On April 20, the day after these two battles, about 15,000 Massachusetts militiamen and minutemen surrounded the city of Boston.

And Boston is the site of our next battle.



Memorial to Samuel Whittemore in Massachusetts.

SAMUEL WHITTEMORE WAS born in England in 1696. He sailed to North America as a captain in the British Army's dragoons, or light cavalry.

Whittemore fought in the French and Indian War. In fact, Whittemore continued to lead British troops on expeditions until he was quite old—in his sixties.

Whittemore settled down on a Massachusetts farm. But he began actively resisting the King's rising taxes and the quartering of British soldiers in colonial homes.

One day, when Samuel Whittemore was almost eighty years old, he was farming his land and saw British troops. They were retreating from the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Hiding behind a stone wall, Whittemore loaded his musket and fired on the Redcoats. He killed one soldier, then drew his dueling pistols and killed two more.

As the old man was drawing his sword for another strike, a British detachment reached his position and shot him—in the face. The Redcoats then bayoneted Whittemore *six times* and left him for dead.

When some American militiamen found Whittemore in a pool of blood, he was still trying to load his musket!

Miraculously, Samuel Whittemore recovered from his injuries and lived to age ninety-eight, passing away from natural causes.

BOOKS

The Battles of Lexington and Concord: First Shots of the American Revolution (Spotlight on American History) by Stephen Whitwell. A well-written description of the battles with color images.

The History of the American Revolution: A History Book for New Readers by Emma Carlson Berne. An easy read containing good sources of material.

The Split History of the Battles of Lexington and Concord: A Perspectives Flip Book by Brenda Haugen. This book offers both American and British perspectives on the battles.

INTERNET

Did you know "the shot heard round the world" is celebrated every year in Lexington, Massachusetts? Here is a video of the annual reenactment: rumble.com/vdzrkp-did-you-know-that-the-shot-heard-around-the-world-is-celebrated-every-year-.html

MOVIES

The American Revolution (2015). This 30-minute documentary covers the "shot heard round the world" and more from the War for Independence. More information here: www.imdb.com/title/tt4327600

THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

June 17, 1775

The Battle of Bunker Hill by artist E. Percy Moran. Redcoats climb the hill where Patriot rebels wait. Note the British ships in the distance.

RIGHT AFTER THE Battles of Lexington and Concord, the American colonial militias surrounded the city of Boston. We're going to call those people "Patriots," which means people who love their country.

The Patriots wanted to cut off British access to the city.

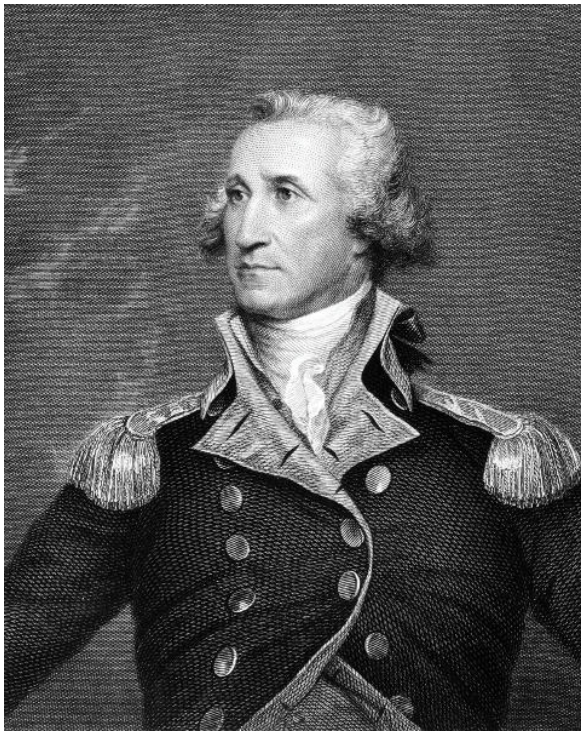
Why?

This tactic is known as siege warfare. The goal is to remove an enemy's access to an area, which eventually forces them to either surrender due to the general misery and the lack of supplies, or leave.

While this siege of Boston was taking place, some colonial political leaders gathered in Philadelphia to figure out what to do next, now that they were at war with Great Britain.

During this meeting—which was called the First Continental Congress—a formal army was created for the Patriot rebels. It was named the Continental Army and was mainly composed of the various colonial militias and minutemen.

The new Congress also appointed the commander-in-chief for this army—a Virginian recognized for his courage and leadership, a soldier with military experience from fighting alongside the Redcoats in the French and Indian War. His name was George Washington. As we go forward into the American Revolution, you'll find out more about him.



George Washington led the Continental Army and would go on to be nominated America's first president.

Now, let's return to Boston.

After a year of siege warfare, the British still hadn't left the city. British ships remained anchored in the harbor. And reinforcements were coming from England.

The colonists decided it was time to send a stronger message.

On the night of June 16, 1775, colonial leader Israel Putnam led 1,200 Patriots through the darkness. Their goal was to reach the highest hill above Boston Harbor, a place called Bunker Hill. The British naval ships were anchored in the harbor below.

The plan was for the Patriots to creep up the hill under cover of darkness, build some fortifications, and open fire on the ships at the first light of day. They believed that an assault of this kind would drive the British out of Boston.

But as they crept through the darkness, some Patriots got lost. They completely missed Bunker Hill! They wound up on nearby Breed's Hill, which sits in front of Bunker Hill.

Colonel William Prescott leads the Americans on the night of June 16, 1775.

There was no time to go back and find Bunker Hill. But the mix-up wasn't a total disaster; Breed's Hill also faced Boston Harbor.

The Patriots worked through the night under the direction of Colonel William Prescott. They dug a breastwork—a fort made of dirt and other materials, such as rocks and tree limbs—and set up military positions.

The following morning, as the sun rose in the east, a British officer stationed on the warship HMS *Lively* glanced up at Breed's Hill and sounded the alarm.

One of the British warships fired its cannons. On the HMS *Somerset*, an officer ordered every gun to fire—plus all the guns within the British batteries on nearby Copp's Hill.

These first volleys were hit-or-miss, partly because the Americans had staked out the high ground above the harbor. But

the Patriots still struggled. Most of these men didn't have any formal military training. Others were better suited for farming or trades such as blacksmithing. This ragtag volunteer force was hardly prepared to exchange fire with the world's most powerful navy!

An American private later described their situation this way:

"Fatigued by our Labour, having no sleep the night before, very little to eat, no drink but rum, the danger we were in made us think there was treachery, and that we were brought there to be all slain."

Map of the siege of Boston. Bunker and Breed's Hills in the upper middle. Mystic River below to the right. Gage's ships were anchored in the harbor.

What the Americans lacked in discipline, they made up for in passion. They were determined to push the British Army out of Boston.

As deafening booms and gun smoke filled the air above the harbor, the citizens of Boston climbed onto their rooftops to watch the action. It was a terrible sight, as British cannons blasted arms and legs off the rebel colonists.

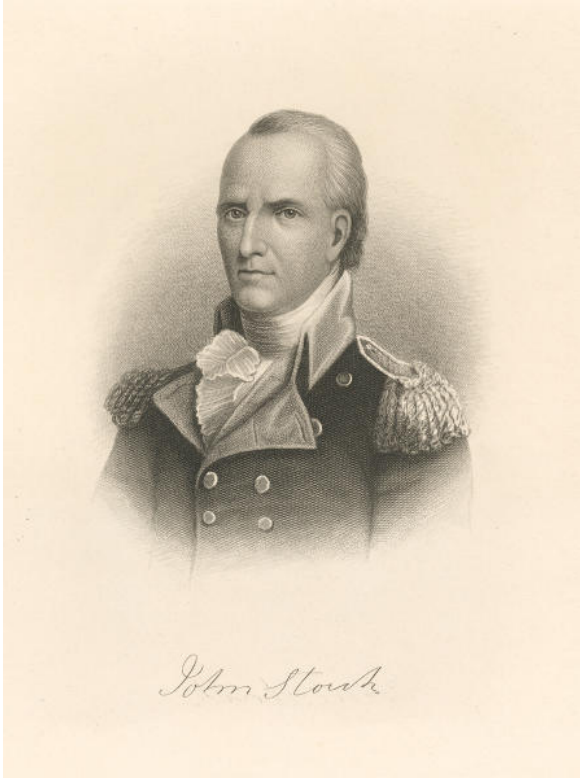
American Colonel William Prescott soon realized their position on Breed's Hill presented a problem. British forces could flank the hill on both sides.

Quickly, Prescott ordered the building of another breastwork on the east side of the hill, stretching down to a peninsula on the Mystic River. Prescott also sent another regiment to Bunker Hill with two cannons and ordered them to build more fortifications.

By one o'clock in the afternoon, Prescott's extended breastwork was hindering the enemy, but the Redcoats had landed soldiers at the bottom of Breed's Hill. More British troops were on the banks of the Mystic River.

Around three o'clock, American Colonel John Stark arrived with reinforcements. Stark told his men to form three separate firing lines. Then he walked out fifty yards from the battle's front and drove a stake into the ground. Stark ordered his men not to fire until the British troops reached that marker.

Some historians believe Stark's exact words were: "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."



Colonel John Stark.

The Patriots needed to conserve their ammunition.

The British soldiers were trained to march forward in three orderly rows. British General Howe ordered the first line forward. The Redcoats reached that stake in the ground.

Stark shouted, "Fire!"

The colonists slaughtered the first British line.

General Howe then ordered the second line forward.

Once again, Stark waited until the enemy reached the stake in the ground.

"Fire!" he shouted.

Another slaughter.

General Howe ordered the third line forward, which met the same terrible fate.

The hilly terrain wasn't helping the British either. Tall grasses hid obstacles such as stone walls and ditches, tripping up the marching soldiers. But the worst problem for the British was tactical. Their six-pound cannons were trying to fire twelve-pound shots—the wrong size ammunition!

All the while, the Patriot rebels kept up a near-continuous volley of fire.

British General Howe reorganized his troops for another assault. This time, he wisely shifted his infantry into deep columns rather than orderly, stretched-out rows that exposed each man in the line.

The Americans continued to fire on the British but soon ran out of ammunition. The decision was made to "retreat in order"—that's when an army continues to fire on the enemy as it leaves a battlefield, thereby protecting its rear guard and other troops.

The British were able to take control of Breed's Hill. Therefore, they could call this battle a victory.

But what did they gain, really?

One grassy hill above Boston Harbor.

Their losses far outweighed that "gain." More than 1,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded in this battle—nearly half the British forces in the immediate area.

The Americans didn't fare much better. They lost about 450 men killed or wounded.

However, in terms of the objective, the Battle of Bunker Hill could almost be counted as a victory of sorts.

The ragged band of colonial rebels had attacked and counterattacked the world's most powerful army and navy—and most of their force lived to fight another day. If the rebels hadn't run out of ammunition, they may have won the battle.

The Battle of Bunker Hill filled the Patriot rebels with much-needed confidence. But none of these men could've foreseen the toll this war would take on them.

Many more deadly battles lay ahead.

WHO FOUGHT?

ANYONE WHO KNEW Israel Putnam as a boy would not have been surprised to hear of his courage during the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Israel's family lived in Massachusetts. By colonial standards, his family enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle. When Israel's father passed away, Israel inherited a large amount of money.

With his wife, young Israel ventured into the Connecticut backcountry—what was then the American wilderness. He bought a parcel of raw land, tamed it, built a house, and farmed the acres with his growing family. Israel Putnam soon gained a reputation for hard work and integrity. He also became legendary for some of his brave actions.

During the winter of 1742, people started talking about Israel Putnam and the wolf.

Putnam and five men went hunting for a wolf that kept attacking their dogs and livestock. They tracked the wolf to a hollowed-out cave and tried to scare the animal out using smoke and musket shots.

When those tactics didn't work, Putnam entered the cave—alone—armed with only a torch and a rope around one foot. If the wolf was about to attack, Putnam could yank the cord and the men could drag him out.

Crawling through the darkness, he found the wolf crouched for an attack. Putnam gave the signal. The men pulled him out.

He then re-entered the cave—again alone—but now armed with a musket.

Putnam killed the wolf with one shot.

During the summer of 1755, France and England were squabbling over who should control North America—later known as the French and Indian War. Putnam enlisted as a private and later was recruited by the British as a ranger and scout. His bravery in battle became as legendary as his wolf-hunting.

After the French and Indian War, Putnam returned to farming his land and running a tavern. But when he heard about the Patriot battles at Lexington and Concord, he joined the rebels.

After the Battle of Bunker Hill, Putnam was named Major General in the Continental Army. His men called him "Old Put" and talked about how he seemed undisturbed even when there was great danger around him. His courageous leadership helped his men feel more confident.

In the winter of 1779, Israel Putnam was home on military leave when he suffered a stroke. It left him partially paralyzed and ended his military career.

On May 29, 1790, after years of illness, Israel Putnam died at home.

At his funeral, a chaplain—the religious clergy attached to an army—described Israel Putnam this way:

"Ever attentive to the lives and happiness of his men … he dared to lead where any dared to follow."

BOOKS

Israel Putnam (Old Put), A Story for Young People. Written nearly 100 years ago, this book is still a good read and can be found online. It tells the story of Israel Putnam's life, beginning with his boyhood.

Rush Revere and the First Patriots: Time-Travel Adventures with Exceptional Americans by Rush Limbaugh. Fun but historically accurate telling of the Revolution.

Woods Runner by Gary Paulsen. Thirteen-year-old Samuel is growing up on the frontier of the British colonies, far from the American Revolution. But soon, the war reaches him and his family.

The Battle of Bunker Hill: An Interactive History Adventure by Michael Burgan. A choose-your-own-adventure story.

INTERNET

History.com offers some reenactments of Bunker Hill, with information about leaders and heroes of the Revolutionary War: history.com/topics/battle-of-bunker-hill

MOVIES

The Battle of Bunker Hill (2009). First in a series of DVDs that teaches American history. This episode offers an exciting, mostly accurate reenactment of the battle with comments by historians.

THE OTHER FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

While fighting in the American Revolution, French artist Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger kept an illustrated journal. This watercolor shows (left to right): a Black soldier of the First Rhode Island Regiment, a New England militiaman, a frontier rifleman, and a French officer.

THE DECLARATION OF Independence announced to the world that the colonies were breaking away from the King of England.

The Declaration said: "All men are created equal."

But at this time in history, most Black people in both England and the colonies were slaves. They weren't treated as equals. They were the "property" of their owners.

Virginia's governor was loyal to King George and wanted to stop this rebellion. To gain fighting men, he made an offer: Any enslaved person who joined the British Army would be declared a

free man. (However, the governor didn't free his own slaves.) Many slaves snuck into British camps and took up that offer.

But thousands of Black men—free and slave alike—chose to fight for the American Patriots.

Why?

The answer is complicated. Some enslaved people were surely forced to fight by their owners. Others might've hoped their service would gain their freedom later—and for thousands upon thousands of slaves, it did. Black men who were already free fought for the same reasons as White men—they believed the words in the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal."

Today we take that idea for granted. But at the time of the American Revolution, the world was structured like a staircase.

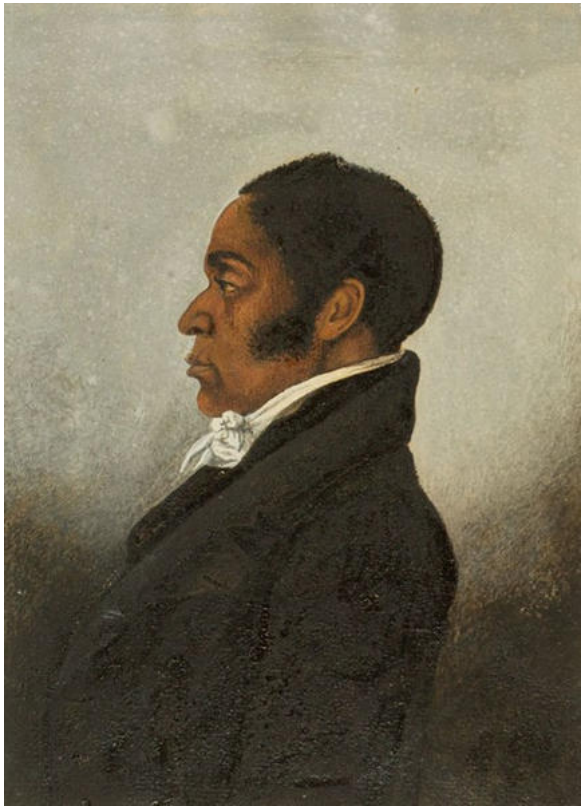
Rich and powerful people stood on the upper stairs. The poor and powerless people stood on the bottom stairs. It was very rare—almost impossible—for poor people to climb the stairs and become powerful. Wealthy people often looked down on the poor, and some even felt entitled to treat the poor very badly.

But here came this new idea—written down in an official document, no less!—and it said nobody was automatically better than anybody else. Not the rich. Not the powerful. Not even a king.

The Declaration of Independence said: "All men are created equal." In 1776, that equality was, well, revolutionary.

During the American Revolution, many Black Patriots fought for that idea, and for the future of America.

Here are several stories about these brave men.



James Forten.

James Forten was just fourteen years old when the war broke out. His family lived freely in Philadelphia. James wanted to fight in the war.

He became a "powder boy" aboard a ship named *Royal Louis*.

In those days, ships were made of wood and could catch fire during a naval attack. For safety, gunpowder was stored belowdecks. But when fighting broke out, powder boys had to retrieve that gunpowder by running up and down the ship's decks and ladders. Powder boys had to be fast and fearless. Their job meant running through fiery cannon explosions and dodging wounded men who cried out or fell overboard into the water.

During one engagement, a British ship surrounded the *Royal Louis*, captured all 200 sailors aboard, and took them prisoner.

As a Black person, James Forten was a special prisoner. The British often sold Black prisoners into slavery—even if they were already free like James.

One day aboard the prison ship, James was playing marbles when he and the captain's son became friends. The boy asked his captain-father to bring James back to England and keep him free.

The captain agreed—on one condition: James must renounce his country. That meant James had to formally declare that he didn't support the American Patriots.

James refused.

"I shall never prove a traitor to my country!" he said.

James Forten spent the next seven months packed into a prison ship with grown men who were sick, dying, hungry, and thirsty. During the Revolutionary War, thousands of men and boys died on these prison ships. James survived and was eventually freed.

Inside a British prison ship.

After the war, James Forten became a wealthy and well-respected businessman in Philadelphia. He donated much of his money to help struggling Black Americans.

Crispus Attucks was a slave.

Everything about slavery was wrong. *Everything.* During the 1700s, however, slavery mainly was accepted because it had become a crucial part of an economic system, and it made farming large parcels of land less expensive.

When Crispus turned twenty-seven, he ran away from his slave owner and sailed away on a whaling ship. Crispus worked as a sailor for more than twenty years.

Then one day—March 5, 1770—Crispus was working on the docks at Boston Harbor. He walked over to the State House, where all the political events happened. Crispus saw people throwing snowballs at British soldiers! Church bells started ringing. People

came running to the sound because the bells usually meant a fire was raging somewhere.

As the crowd grew, it became more hostile toward the Redcoats. These colonists didn't hold back their feelings about British tyranny—cruel government rule.

But what happened next isn't perfectly clear. Some witnesses said Crispus Attucks hit a British soldier with a stick. Others claimed that it never happened. Another group insisted somebody yelled "FIRE!" and British guns suddenly opened fire on the crowd.

However the commotion began, it ended with five colonists killed, including Crispus Attucks.

The Boston Massacre.

One of the Sons of Liberty, Samuel Adams, dubbed the shooting "the Boston Massacre." The name stuck. When the funeral was held for the massacre's victims, thousands of people came to pay their respects.

Some people say the first Americans who died in the Revolutionary War included a runaway slave: Crispus Attucks.

WILLIAM "BILLY" LEE saw as much action in battle as George Washington.

Billy Lee was Washington's slave and his closest personal assistant.

Lee took care of Washington's horses, uniforms, and weapons. During battles, Lee stayed close to Washington so that he could immediately hand the army's commander his sword or deliver an urgent message to officers.

Powerfully built and a fearless horseback rider, Lee never fled Washington's side, even under the worst artillery fire.

Washington had inherited slaves from his family and gained still more when he married his wife, Martha Custis. But Washington began to hate the practice. Many of the Founding Fathers did.

After the war, Washington refused to buy or sell any enslaved person. And upon his death, Washington freed all his slaves. Billy Lee, however, chose to stay with Washington's family for the rest of his life.

"If Billy Lee had been a white man," wrote historian Fritz Hirschfeld, "he would have had an honored place in American history because of his close proximity to George Washington during the most exciting periods of his career. But because he was a black servant, a humble slave, he has been virtually ignored by both black and white historians and biographers."

BOOKS

Black Heroes of the American Revolution by Burke Davis. This book is an outstanding read about the almost forgotten fighters who helped win America's independence. The book also includes interesting pictures and documents.

INTERNET

This article from History.com provides fascinating profiles of prominent Black Americans, “Seven Black Heroes of the American Revolution”: history.com/news/black-heroes-american-revolution

BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

August 27, 1776

The Battle of Long Island, 1776, by Domenick D'Andrea.

AFTER THE BATTLE of Bunker Hill, the siege of Boston continued. The Patriot rebels also harassed the British with hit-and-run tactics, sudden raids, and skirmishes. Their goal was to slow down the delivery of British supplies. If the Redcoats didn't have food and ammunition, they couldn't fight.

Most Americans hoped this fight would be settled with negotiations. Very few people wanted an all-out war.

War is miserable for everyone, including civilians.

But King George rejected every request for negotiations and denied all diplomatic measures for peace.

In October 1775, the British government declared war on the American colonies.

In response, Commander-in-Chief George Washington made it his mission to make the Redcoats in Boston even more uncomfortable.

Washington's plan involved a humble bookbinder. His name was Henry Knox.

Knox was tasked with delivering about sixty tons of artillery, including cannons and other armaments, to Boston. The cannons had been captured from the British in upstate New York.

Colonel Henry Knox, portrait by Gilbert Stuart, 1806.

After being appointed a colonel in the Continental Army, Knox and his men loaded the guns and mortars onto ox-drawn sleds and made the 300-mile journey from upstate New York to Boston. To avoid detection, they didn't take a direct route and often traveled at night. The trip took fifty-six days.

Washington then placed the cannons atop Dorchester Heights, which overlooks the city of Boston and its harbor. The guns were aimed straight at the British ships.

Seeing the possible bombardment and recognizing the supply problems he was already having, British General Howe pulled up anchors and sailed his navy for Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

The Patriots won the siege of Boston.

On July 4, 1776, a remarkable group of American men gathered in Philadelphia and signed a truly amazing document. Later these men would be known as the Founding Fathers of the United States of America.

The document they signed was called the Declaration of Independence. It explained why Americans needed to go to war against King George III of England.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident," the Declaration stated, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Declaration of Independence, by artist John Trumbull.

The Declaration listed King George's offenses against the American colonists, such as, "He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people."

And by signing that Declaration, these men also signed their death warrant—King George could have them executed for treason, the high crime of betraying one's country.

Despite that death threat, General George Washington led his men into the first epic battle after signing the Declaration: the Battle of Long Island.

British warships in the Battle of Long Island.

Long Island isn't an island. It's a peninsula—a stretch of land surrounded by water, but not completely surrounded like an island.

Long Island is very close to New York City. The military commanders on both sides—George Washington for the Americans and William Howe for the British—both wanted to control New York City.

Like Boston, the city was home to a large harbor. Washington wanted to seal the harbor and cut off the British Navy from delivering supplies.

Howe planned to cut off New York City from the rest of the colonies, claim the city for the King, and then, he believed, forge a quick end to this rebellion.

The British Army was the mightiest military force in the world at that time. The British Navy was equally powerful and was even referred to as the greatest naval force ever known.

Meanwhile, the Patriot rebels had no formal navy. The army consisted of some cobbled-together militias with no formal training, and Washington struggled to find experienced soldiers to lead his raw fighters. Worse still, the siege of Boston had strained their force in both manpower and finances. American soldiers were desperate for supplies—from food and clothing to ammunition and weapons.

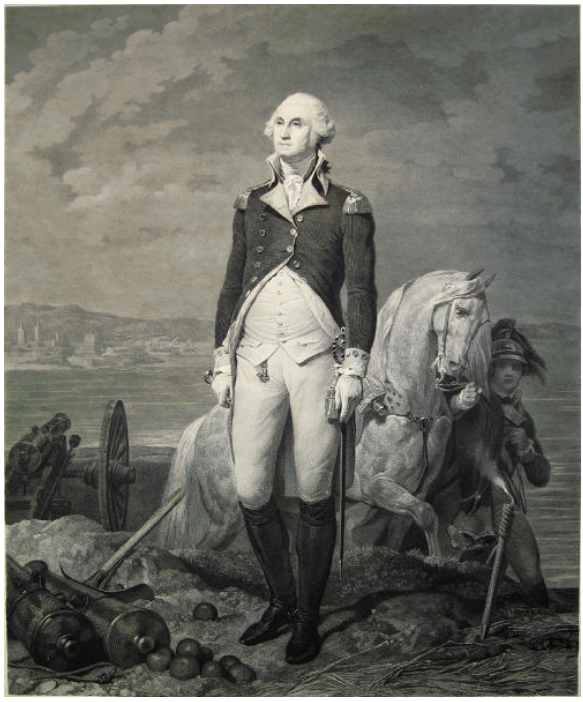
To many people, including colonists, the idea that these rebel Americans could take on the British military was laughable. Many colonists sided with England. They were known as Loyalists because they remained loyal to King George.

Before this battle, Washington addressed the Continental Army. Fight now, he said, or be forever controlled by the King.

"Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance or the most abject submission," Washington told his soldiers. "We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die."

By mid-April, Washington had marched about 10,000 soldiers into lower Manhattan, the island containing New York City. Over the next several months, he set up defensive positions and fortifications. The largest positions were placed in Brooklyn Heights, which overlooks New York City.

Howe was no fool. Seeing Washington's positions, he moved his men to the least-expected place—Staten Island. It was miles away from New York Harbor. But the location allowed Howe to continue receiving reinforcements and supplies. Eventually, the British would amass about 30,000 soldiers. Now they outnumbered the Patriot force by about three to one.



General George Washington.

In response, Washington shifted his men. He moved one-third of his force to lower Manhattan Island, on one side of the East River. Another portion remained with the fortifications on Brooklyn Heights, on the other side of the East River.

On August 22, Howe's ships sailed troops from Staten Island and blocked the East River waterway. This clever move closed off the best escape route for Washington's men.

Howe, still hoping to avoid an all-out battle, offered the rebels a pardon—a formal forgiveness for committing a crime.

Washington quickly replied to Howe's offer: "Those who have committed no fault want no pardon."

Imagine hearing that response! Howe had just extended a peace offering to the much-weaker army—and they kicked it away.

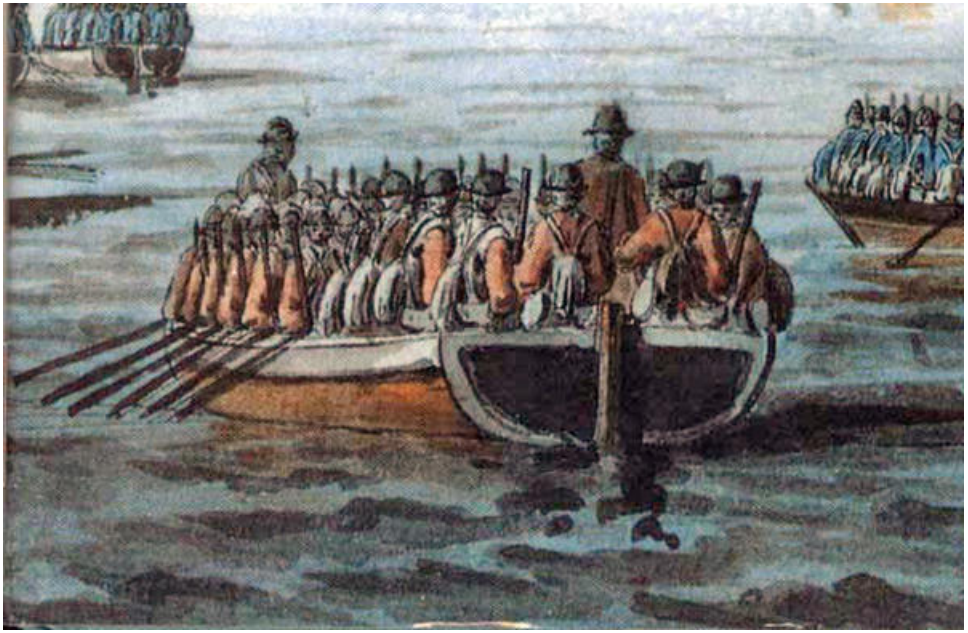
While Howe had closed off the East River, Washington remained certain he'd secured every road. He'd posted his American forces in and around New York City and partly on Long

Island. He also placed strong leaders in charge—Israel Putnam leading the Americans in Brooklyn, General John Sullivan commanding an area south of Brooklyn Heights, and General William Alexander stationed with his men further southwest of the heights. (Alexander was also known as Lord Stirling.)

These positions meant the British controlled the water, but the Americans held the land.

But Washington had overlooked a barely used road called Jamaica Pass. The road led straight to where the Americans were hunkered down for battle.

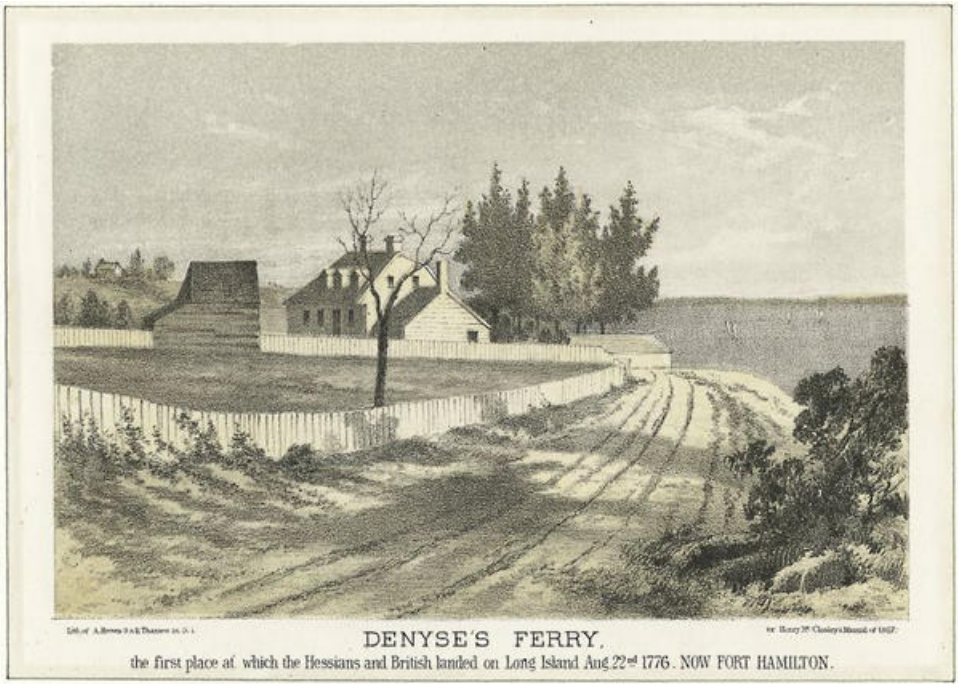
At dawn on August 22, the British launched a bombardment of one American artillery portion on the Long Island peninsula. Howe then crossed the water to the peninsula. Five days later, on August 27, he marched about 10,000 soldiers through Jamaica Pass.



An example of the flat-bottomed boats the British (center) and Hessian (upper left and right) forces rowed to Long Island.

After the landing, the British forces attacked three American positions—Putnam's men, Sullivan's men, and Alexander's men.

Washington didn't realize Howe's forces had found the weak point at Jamaica Pass until he heard the boom of gunfire. Helpless to get there and fight himself, he rushed from his Manhattan base only to watch—from afar—an all-out battle.



Artist's depiction of where the British and Hessian forces first landed on August 22.

Sullivan's forces battled bravely, but they faced Hessians, German soldiers paid to fight on the British side. These hulking Hessians charged forward with bayonets while Sullivan's men were also getting attacked from the rear.

To save his men, Sullivan ordered a retreat to Brooklyn Heights. While his forces fled for cover, Sullivan stayed behind to ensure every man escaped. That was authentic leadership—a commander who puts the lives of his soldiers ahead of his own. Unfortunately, the British captured Sullivan.

Alexander (Lord Stirling) also led a fight against the British, but after several hours, he realized the enemy was about to surround his men. Alexander ordered a retreat. He and 400 of his men took a

defensive position at a place called the Old Stone House. From there, they engaged the enemy, which allowed the rest of the force to escape. Like Sullivan, Alexander was captured by the British.

General Alexander (Lord Stirling) leads his force in the Battle of Long Island.

Washington, watching these terrible events unfold, is said to have exclaimed: "Good God, what brave fellows I must lose!"

By early afternoon, the Americans were fully routed.

Howe called off the battle.

Then he ordered his men to prepare for siege warfare. The British dug ditches and trenches around the rebel positions to cut off supplies.

However, Washington quickly ordered his men to escape. From August 29 to 30, helped by a cloaking fog that smothered the land and gave the Americans cover, Washington and his remaining men returned to Manhattan Island. Eyewitnesses claimed Washington was the last man to leave Brooklyn—a true leader.

The British fleet in New York Harbor just after the Battle of Long Island.

Although Washington lost the Battle of Long Island, his plan was solid thinking. He placed guns and 10,000 men in and around New York City.

His mistake was splitting up his forces and focusing too keenly on a British naval attack. Howe outsmarted Washington by finding that little-used road and attacking the divided Americans on land.

But even the mighty British general made a significant error.

By ordering his men to dig ditches and trenches for siege warfare instead of bombarding the Americans, Howe allowed the rebels to escape. He missed the crucial opportunity to capture the American commander, too.

The devastating defeat at Long Island taught Washington some important military lessons.

- **Know the terrain.** Washington *thought* he knew every road leading to his position. But if you don't know the terrain, your enemy might—and he might win because of it.

- **Inspired leadership matters.** Despite the devastating British attack, Washington did not panic. He reorganized his troops and led his men to a successful escape. They would live to fight another day.
- **No two battles are the same.** Howe made the mistake of replaying the siege warfare following the Battle of Bunker Hill. He should've destroyed the rebels instead. His poor choice allowed Washington and his men to escape.

American artillery retreat from Long Island.

Going forward, these lessons would prove helpful for Washington. But his military was now in even worse condition than before the battle. He'd lost many soldiers—300 killed, about 700 wounded, and 1,000 captured, including two of his best leaders, Sullivan and Alexander. He would struggle to find replacements, especially for the leaders.

Sadly, it would later be learned that only about half of his captured men survived. Held captive on prison ships, the men

were transferred to a church where many starved to death and were denied medical attention.

These problems were only the beginning of the troubles that Washington and the Continental Army would face in this war for independence.

WHO FOUGHT?

HESSIANS

Hessian Grenadiers.

The Declaration of Independence listed King George's many offenses against the American colonists. One of those offenses read:

"He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat [complete] the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty &

perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation."

Those "Mercenaries" were mostly the Hessians.

Mercenaries are dangerous soldiers. They don't go to war for the love of country or family or even principles. Mercenaries fight—ruthlessly—on behalf of whoever pays their salary.

The Seven Years' War greatly reduced the size of King George's army through injuries and deaths. When the American Revolution broke out, the King needed to rebuild his military force. He turned to Germany for help, and paid money to six German princes and "rented" their soldiers.

The German princes ruled some areas called "Hesses." The German soldiers were called "Hessians."

On the battlefield, Hessians showed no mercy. Big and brutal warriors, they arrived in America intent on destroying the Patriot rebels.

At first, British Colonel William Fawcett described the Hessians as an "exceedingly fine body of men… fit for any service whatever."

The Hessians would serve through the entire American Revolution. They became both feared and respected for their fighting ferocity.

But, like the British, the Hessians were trained for European combat in which soldiers fought in strict formations. The Hessians weren't prepared for the Americans, who sniped at them from behind fences and walls or jumped out for sudden ambushes.

As the war dragged on, deaths and injuries depleted the Hessian forces. And it was more challenging for the German princes to find well-trained soldiers. But the princes still wanted that money from England, so they started sending over any man who would fight in the new frontier of North America.

By April 1778, British officer Fawcett changed his tune.

"The Hessian recruits as usual appeared raw and undisciplined; some few of whom, moreover, I found it necessary to reject, on account of old age and other infirmities."

More than 30,000 Hessian mercenaries came to America to fight on behalf of the British. About half of them never returned to Germany. Although many were killed in the war, others wanted to stay in North America.

After the war, many German mercenaries became citizens of the United States of America. Some of them just wanted a fresh start. But others realized this new country offered them freedom and opportunity, a place in which "all men are created equal." That idea was barely recognizable in their homeland of Europe.

BOOKS

Boys of Wartime: Daniel at the Siege of Boston, 1776 by Laurie Calkhoven. When his father leaves to fight with the Patriots, twelve-year-old Daniel spies on Redcoat officers and soon learns to slip vital information across British lines to his father and General Washington.

By the Sword by Selene Castrovilla. Young Benjamin Tallmadge and his beloved horse, Highlander, fight at the Battle of Long Island.

DK Eyewitness Books: American Revolution by Stuart Murray. The DK books are excellent visual tools for understanding history.

INTERNET

Want to see more of the Battle of Long Island? A wealth of pictures and links can be found here: kids.kiddle.co/Battle_of_Long_Island

THE BATTLE OF TRENTON

"Crossing the Delaware"
December 25–26, 1776

Washington crossing the Delaware on Christmas Eve.

BY NOVEMBER 1776, George Washington was feeling desperate.

The humiliating defeat in the Battle of Long Island only led to more losing battles. Things looked grim for his military.

Consider this: The Continental Army had about 20,000 soldiers when the war began. That force had dwindled as men were killed in action, wounded, or captured. And with each defeat, the

American army lost more of its artillery and ammunition, along with other essential supplies such as food and clothing.

Washington's men were exhausted, hungry, and wondering if this war could be won.

And soon, at the end of December 1776, Washington would face yet another challenge: enlistments.

Enlistment is the act of joining the armed services. An enlistment is usually for a specific amount of time. Most men who had joined the Continental Army signed up to serve for eighteen months, which meant their enlistment would expire on December 31, 1776.

During a bitterly cold November 1776, Washington led his worn-out Continental soldiers across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania. He wanted to use the Delaware River as a natural defense against any British attacks.

These Americans were truly bedraggled. Their army uniforms were mostly makeshift clothing—whatever the men already owned. Some men had worn out their only pair of shoes. They strapped rags around their feet to protect their bare skin from snow and ice. Other men had no tents for shelter and no blankets for warmth.

Charles Willson Peale, a famous artist, traveled to see Washington's force in Pennsylvania. Peale was shocked by the army's condition.

"A man staggered out of line and came toward me," Peale later recalled. "He had lost all his clothes. He was in an old, dirty blanket jacket. His beard long and his face full of sores …"

Peale did not recognize this ravaged man—until he spoke. It was his brother, James!

In late November, the British government twisted the war knife.

They offered the colonists amnesty—which was like a full pardon for all "crimes" against King George.

This offer was significant. Many American rebels faced execution—a death sentence—for "treason" against England. But if they would sign an oath of loyalty to the King, their "crimes" would be pardoned.

Thousands of Americans accepted this offer, including some wealthy colonial congressmen.

"Thomas Paine, Esqr., The spirit of the American Revolution."

But Patriot Thomas Paine saw things differently. In the early stages of this rebellion, Paine wrote a pamphlet titled *Common Sense*. His powerful words fired up the Patriot movement.

Now, as the Continental Army was facing possible destruction, Paine wrote another pamphlet. He directed his words at every despairing American, anyone who felt ready to surrender and give up this fight for freedom.

"These are the times that try men's souls," Paine wrote. "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink

from the service of their country, but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

Paine's soaring words lifted the morale of American rebels, especially the men in Washington's army.

While Washington moved his men across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania, he was pursued by British General Howe and his forces. By early December 1776, Howe was close enough to cross the Delaware River, and his well-fed, fully supplied soldiers could've wiped out the suffering American fighters.

But on December 13, 1776, Howe decided to halt the chase, allowing his men to rest and resupply. Howe himself set up quarters in New Brunswick, New Jersey. As a precaution to protect Trenton, he placed Hessian troops at different posts along the Delaware River.

With the enemy at his doorstep, Washington was desperate. And desperate times call for desperate measures.

Washington needed to take action in a way that was so daring, so aggressive, so unthinkable that his army might—*might*—beat the enemy.

Washington decided to launch a surprise attack on the British.

When?

Christmas Day!

The Hessians defending Trenton were under the command of British Colonel Johann Rall. Trenton was then a tiny village with about 100 homes and no solid fortifications. Yet Rall felt very confident of his situation, especially with the Hessian force of about 1,500 men. Although his officers said the Continentals might attack them, Rall replied, "Let them come … we will go at them with the bayonet."

German Colonel Johann Rall.

But some British Loyalists arrived in Trenton and told Rall that Washington's troops were indeed planning an attack—at some point. Nobody knew when. Rall then asked his higher-ups for reinforcements.

His request was denied.

Unbeknownst to Rall and his officers, Washington had also dispatched a spy into Trenton. The spy was a man named John Honeyman. His mission was to enter Trenton and pretend to be a British Loyalist, then convince the Hessians that Washington's army was finished—flat broke, confused, starving, exhausted, and so disorganized that the American soldiers couldn't even attack a fly.

On December 24, the Hessians started celebrating Christmas Eve. They played musical instruments, sang songs, danced, and drank a lot of wine and beer. They were having a very good time.

Washington, meanwhile, was preparing to launch the Durham boats.

Washington prepares to cross the Delaware.

Durham boats were sort of like floating freight wagons, measuring anywhere from 25 to 65 feet long and about eight feet wide. Their bottoms were flat, and the insides were shallow. That construction allowed the Durham boats to float on as little as two or three feet of water. Also, the boats were double-ended—either end could unload men and supplies, making it unnecessary to turn the boat around to invade land. Sometimes Durham boats were fitted with sails, but they could also be rowed or "poled" as men walked a narrow deck ledge and drove a pole into the water to push the boat forward.

Washington placed Colonel Henry Knox—remember him from Bunker Hill?—in charge of moving the Durham boats across the Delaware River. The boats would carry infantry, horses, and cannons to the other side in the dark of night.

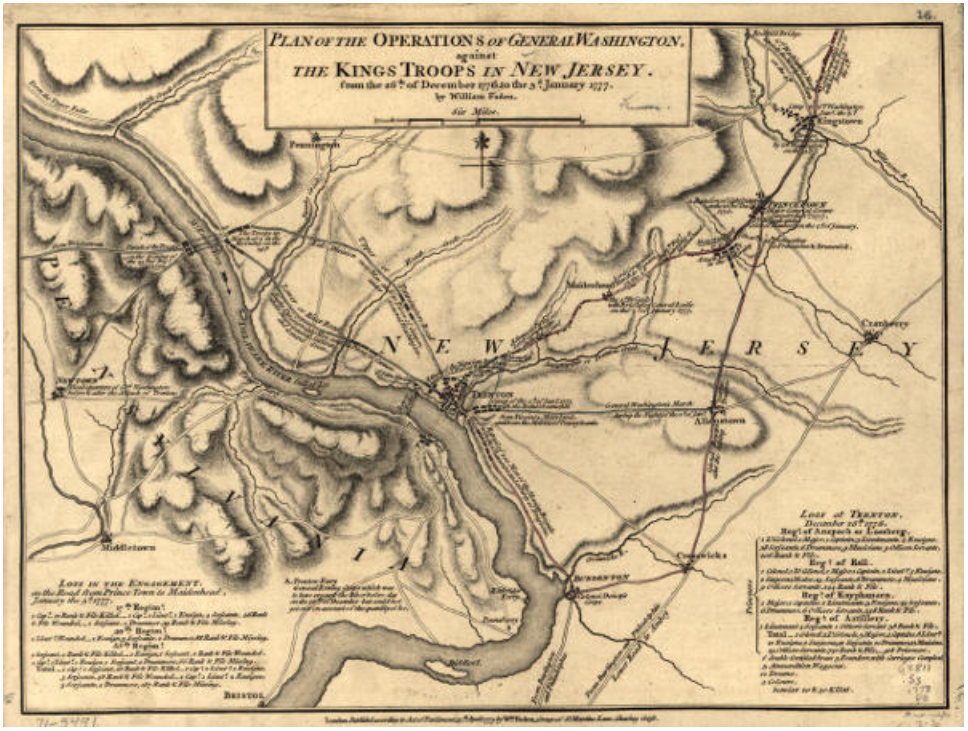
This mission was near impossible. The wicked winter weather only grew worse as the men launched the Durham boats. Temperatures hovered around 30 degrees, and a freezing wind

blew ice needles into the men's eyes. Hands and fingers froze on the oars and poles. Chunks of ice choked the water and clonked into the wooden boats.

"It blew a hurricane," one soldier later recalled.

The weather was so terrible that it blocked two of Washington's forces from crossing the water. Only Washington's main force—about 2,400 men—managed to cross the Delaware.

At 4 a.m. on Christmas morning, Washington began his secret march for Trenton, about ten miles away.



Historical map of Washington's march from Princeton (upper right) to Trenton (center). The Delaware River snakes between New Jersey (right) and Pennsylvania (left).

Throughout this trek, civilian volunteers supportive of the American rebels helped guide these Continental soldiers down New Jersey's dark and winding roads. Washington himself rode up and down the line on his horse, encouraging his men—some of

whom marched barefoot and left red splotches of blood on the icy ground.

As they neared Trenton, Washington split his main force into three groups. Washington himself would command one group, while Major General Nathanael Greene's men would attack Trenton from the north. A third group, under Major General Sullivan, would attack Trenton from the west.

But soon after this split, a messenger reached Washington with bad news. The miserable wet weather had soaked the gunpowder in Sullivan's group.

Wet gunpowder cannot be fired.

Washington sent a message back: "Tell General Sullivan to use the bayonet. I am resolved to take Trenton."

Around 8 a.m. on Christmas Day, Washington and his army were about a mile outside Trenton when Rall's forward outposts spotted them.

"*Der Fiend!*" cried the Hessians.

Translated, that meant: "The enemy!"

Washington's men face off with Hessians at the Battle of Trenton.

The Americans opened fire with three volleys—all guns firing three times in a row.

The outpost Hessians—still recovering from their late-night partying—fired back with a volley of their own. And they soon realized this wasn't just some skirmish. This was a full-fledged assault!

The Hessians retreated in an orderly fashion, firing as they moved back. They met up with other Hessians behind them and yelled, "The Americans are attacking!"

The Hessians slipped into Trenton houses for cover. That shift opened up a road leading to the town of Princeton.

Washington sent men to block the road. He would have no enemies escaping this battle.

Washington's artillery set up weapons on Trenton's high ground, known as King and Queen Streets. The Americans now had a full view of the Hessians' movements.

Ba-boom!

The Battle of Trenton launched into its next phase.

Other regiments of Hessians—all of whom had celebrated too much the night before—hurried to prepare for this fight. And Colonel Rall also was just waking up in his quarters.

Rall ordered his men to King and Queen Streets. He planned to advance on the Americans, capture their cannons, and take the high ground.

Washington ordered the cannons to open fire on the approaching Hessians.

Artillery explosions blasted through the Christmas air. Walls shook inside Trenton's houses. Heavy gun smoke clouded the streets. The battle raged on. The Americans were holding back the Hessians.

But Rall still felt confident about his experienced soldiers.

He ordered another attack on the American cannons.

The Hessians were met by one volley after another—both cannon and rifle fire.

Washington's men took the initiative and moved forward, firing on the houses where the Hessians were hiding. In this attack, the Americans' relentless fire pushed the German mercenaries further and further back until it was a Hessian retreat.

Rall ordered two cannons forward. He would fight fire with fire.

But this action was too little too late.

The American cannons bore down full force, and Rall's cannons only managed to fire off a few rounds before Washington's gun crew had killed almost all of Rall's gun crew.

Taking advantage of the faltering enemy, Washington pressed forward again. The Americans even captured Rall's cannons—then turned the barrels on the Hessians!

Over on Queen Street, Rall's men tried to advance, but the blistering shots of muskets and cannons forced them into yet another retreat.

Seeing little chance for victory in this battle, one group of Hessians fled into an open field. American Colonel John Stark led a bayonet charge in another part of town and rousted out still more Hessians.

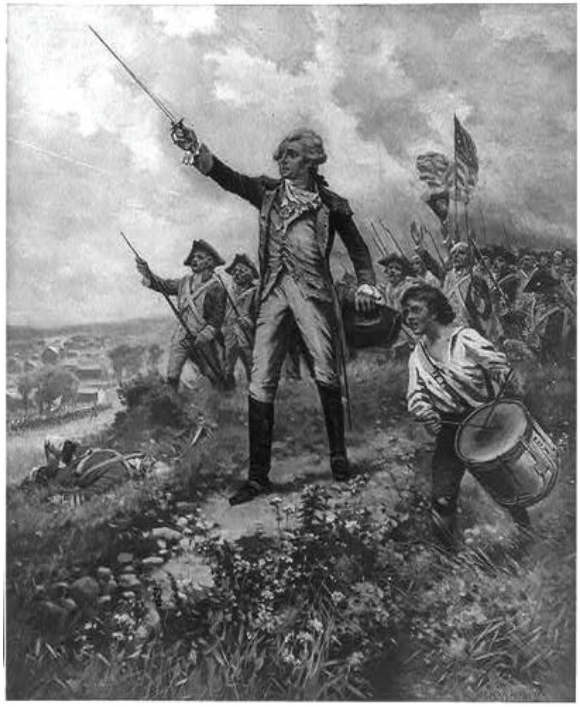
And now, the brilliance of Washington's decision to block the road to Princeton was revealed.

The enemy had no escape.

However, the Battle of Trenton wasn't over.

In that open field, Rall tried to rally his remaining men.

In those days, musicians traveled with the army. The drummer kept a marching beat; buglers translated orders, including a signal for morning rise and launching an attack.



Example of a drummer boy in battle.

Rall wanted one last charge to take Trenton. He ordered his musicians to play some uplifting music to raise his men's morale.

Washington watched every movement as it unfolded.

When Rall's men pushed forward, Washington ordered his forces into battle formations. With the excellent covering positions of the cannons on high ground, the Americans fired on Rall's men from three different directions.

Although some Hessians managed to retake one cannon on King Street, Knox saw them preparing to use it and ordered his men off the position. Regrouping after a brief firefight, Knox's men retook that cannon—and once again turned it on the Hessians!

The unending and all-out attack scattered the Hessians from the battlefield. During the retreat, Rall was wounded and died of his injuries.

Seeing the Hessians on the run, Washington didn't let up.

"March on, my brave fellows," he yelled, "after me!"

In a nearby orchard, the Americans surrounded the Hessians. Washington offered terms of surrender, and the Hessians accepted.

The Battle of Trenton was over.

The Americans had won—very, very decisively.

About twenty-two Hessians were killed, including Rall. Another eighty-three men were wounded. And about 900 were captured by the Americans.

The Americans lost two Continental Army soldiers killed in action. Five men were wounded.

Winning the Battle of Trenton lifted the American army's morale. They also gained cannons, guns, ammunition, flour, meat, shoes, boots, and bedding—plus the enemy's horses, which would help both in battle and in moving the army's supplies from place to place.

The Battle of Trenton also eased Washington's enlistment problem.

Rather than abandoning a defeated Continental Army, more men signed up to fight with the American commander who had launched such a stunning and brilliant surprise attack on the British.

But the Revolutionary War was far from over.

In fact, after this battle, the British retook Trenton.

Washington pressed on.

WHO FOUGHT?

THE MARBLEHEADERS

The Marbleheaders rowing Washington in a Durham boat across the icy Delaware River. The boat behind them carries horses and artillery.

General George Washington is rightly recognized as the leader who crossed the Delaware River on Christmas Eve, 1776.

But do you know who transported him across that icy river?

The Marbleheaders.

The Marbleheaders hailed from Marblehead, Massachusetts, about fifteen miles north of Boston.

Rough-hewn men, they were experienced mariners and fishermen who made their living from the sea.

Before the American Revolution, Marblehead was one of the most active ports in all of the colonies. Men grew rich trading goods and dispatching ships carrying goods back and forth across the ocean.

But the leaders of Marblehead, such as Elbridge Gerry, broke with England over King George's unfair actions.

Even before the Revolution broke out, the Marbleheaders were seizing British ships and establishing their own colonial supply lines.

Many Marbleheaders fought in the early battles of the Revolution, including at Lexington and Bunker Hill. Hundreds signed up as Continental soldiers and fought with Washington at the Battles of Long Island and Trenton.

It was the experience of seafaring men of Marblehead who got Washington across the Delaware that night. And after beating the British at Trenton, these same Marbleheaders rowed Washington and the Continental soldiers back across the Delaware—only this time they were carrying about 900 Hessian prisoners, too.

Marbleheaders were known for their attire: leather boots, vests, and trousers. But they were a highly diverse group. Some of the men were White, others Black or Hispanic, and even Native American. However, all of them fought together as one unit. Skin color did not divide them. (This diversity is even more remarkable considering it would be another 150 years before the U.S. Army integrated—put together units of—different races.)

Like many Continental soldiers, the Marbleheaders enlisted for eighteen months. When that period expired, most Marbleheaders returned home to Massachusetts, where they continued to harass British ships. Only a few stayed with Washington.

Despite their short service, the Marbleheaders became a legendary unit because of their discipline, courage, and strength—

and, of course, for being the men who transported Washington across the Delaware on a cold, dark, and stormy Christmas Eve.

Modern military historian Patrick O'Donnell researched the Marbleheaders for several years. He wrote an excellent book about these men, titled *The Indispensables: The Diverse Soldier-Mariners Who Shaped the Country, Formed the Navy, and Rowed Washington Across the Delaware*.

"Indispensable" means "absolutely necessary."

The Marbleheaders were absolutely necessary to the American Revolution.

If Washington had not crossed the Delaware that night, the entire army could've been killed or captured. And the Revolution would be finished.

BOOKS

The Crossing: How George Washington Saved the American Revolution by Jim Murphy. A highly rated retelling of Washington's courageous journey.

INTERNET

The series *Liberty's Kids* explains American history with cartoons, but it takes a serious look at significant historical events, including the American Revolution. youtube.com/watch?v=t2BkcZm-JAM

MOVIES

The Crossing (2000) is a historical drama made for television starring Jeff Daniels as George Washington.

THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON

January 3, 1777

Washington leads the Battle of Princeton.

DESPITE WASHINGTON'S STUNNING victory at Trenton, the American general still faced desperate straits.

About 3,000 Continental soldiers agreed to continue serving in the army, but they only signed up for another six weeks. If Washington didn't turn things around soon, he would lose those men, too.

Also, thousands of New Jersey's citizens had switched their loyalties to the King by signing the agreement pardoning them of "crimes against the crown."

Given these hardships and the bleak outlook of facing the world's most formidable military, Washington didn't feel that he could ask his soldiers to stay beyond the short term.

But, he added, service was a heroic commitment, and life didn't offer such a thing often to ordinary men.

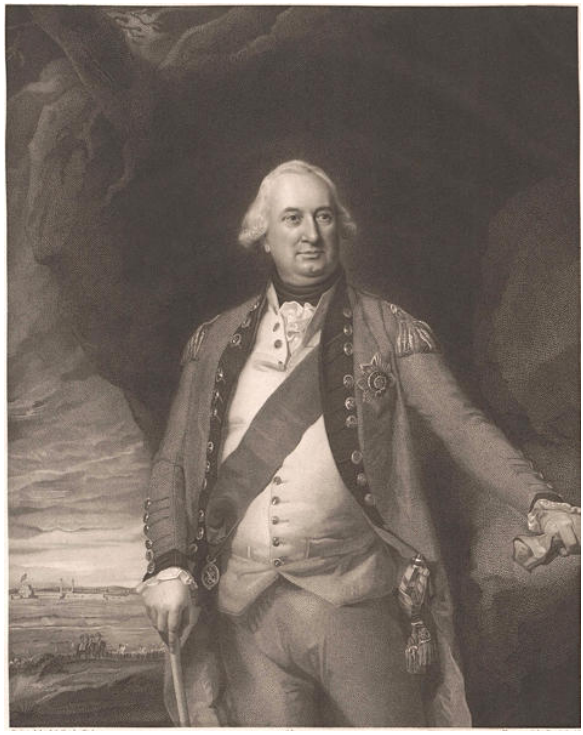
"If you will consent to stay one more month longer," Washington told them, "you will render that service to the cause of liberty and to your country which you can probably never do under any other circumstances."

After the Battle of Trenton, the British reoccupied the town.

Washington planned to attack them there a second time. With reinforcements from Colonel John Cadwalader, Washington's force now numbered about 5,000 men, with about forty artillery pieces.

His plan to reoccupy Trenton included setting up defensive positions along Assunpink Creek and a nearby bridge. Washington placed cannons to cover the bridge and sent about 1,000 cavalry—horseback soldiers—to ride to the city of Princeton. The cavalry's mission was to delay or prevent any British forces from attacking Washington's troops from the rear.

When British General Howe heard of Washington's move on Trenton, he ordered General Charles Cornwallis to take command of the British forces in New Jersey and attack Washington's army.



British General Charles Cornwallis.

As you can imagine, the British were furious about Washington's victory at Trenton. The Redcoats wanted deep revenge. They planned to destroy the Americans.

Cornwallis' force consisted of about 7,000 soldiers. While his main force marched for Trenton, Cornwallis placed about 1,200 men as a rearguard to protect the town of Princeton.

Now, remember, Washington had sent about 1,000 cavalry to protect that same area.

On January 2, Cornwallis' advance force ran into Washington's cavalry.

American Colonel Thomas Hand took control of the cavalry unit and used hit-and-run tactics to delay the British force from advancing any further. Hand eventually was forced to retreat. The cavalry made it back to a position just northeast of Trenton, where Patriot artillery now covered his men.

The British pushed on, sending the Patriots into an even deeper retreat. Hand and his force made it to the bridge over the Assunpink Creek. But in the confusion of battle, all of Hand's force tried to cross the bridge at once—imagine a stampede of soldiers and horses galloping over the bridge. And right behind them were the British.

The Redcoats attacked the bridge three times. They suffered many, many casualties due to that solid defensive line Washington had established before the battle.

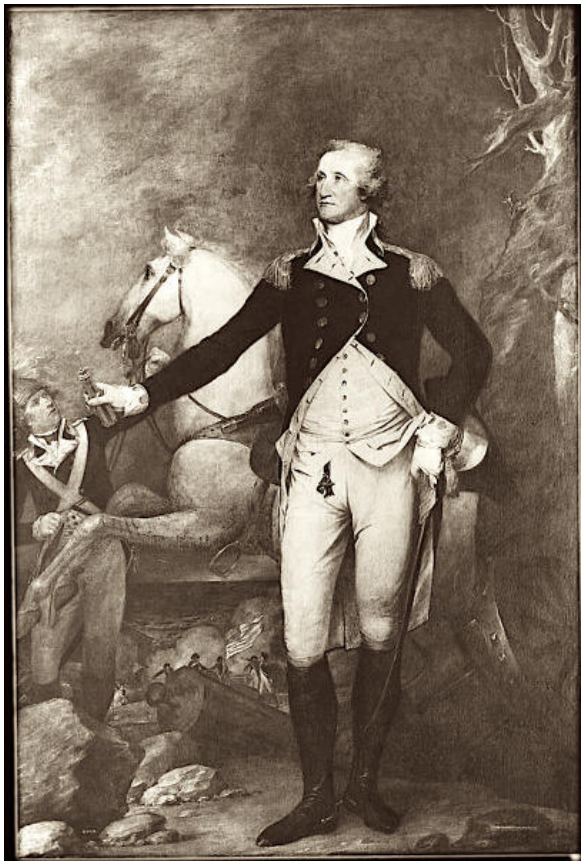
But Washington noticed Cornwallis was maneuvering some of his soldiers toward the Americans' right flank. Suddenly Washington realized this bridge assault was only a diversionary attack! The main attack was heading for the right flank. And because the Americans were outnumbered almost two to one, the Redcoats now had a chance to destroy Washington's entire force.

However, feeling confident of the end result, Cornwallis decided to hold back the full attack until the next day. He felt sure his men could trap Washington's army by holding their position at the bridge overnight, getting some rest, and attacking the Patriots the following morning.

Some of Cornwallis' officers disagreed with this idea. Washington, they said, was proving to be a clever and sly enemy.

"If Washington is the general I take him to be," one officer said, "he will not be found there in the morning."

They were right.



Portrait of General George Washington.

During the night, Washington had decided to pivot his battle plan. He had quickly reviewed all available options.

Escape across the Delaware River?

No. The crossing required many boats, and the trip itself was risky.

March away down the banks of the Delaware River?

No. That movement risked exposure to British guns.

This second attack on Trenton, Washington realized, might wipe out that first victory, and with it any hope for a newly independent America.

"Our situation was most critical and our force small," Washington later wrote to Congress. "To remove immediately was

again destroying every dawn of hope which had begun to revive in the breasts of the Jersey militia."

So what did Washington eventually decide to do?

The unexpected, of course.

First, he created a deception to fool Cornwallis.

Washington left about 500 men behind at Trenton. He ordered them to make plenty of noise with picks and shovels. He also told them to light huge campfires. All of this activity was to make the British think the Americans were preparing to attack.

But at the same time, Washington was secretly moving his main force out of the area. To further ensure this fake-out worked, Washington ordered his men to wrap rags around the wheels of the departing wagons and cannons to silence their movements.

As fate would have it, the weather cooperated with the secrecy. That night, a freeze cloaked the land in ice. Formerly muddy roads froze into hard surfaces that eased the movement of wagons and cannons.

In another bit of good fortune, an unidentified Patriot informed Washington about a back road—Sawmill Road—which led into Princeton.

This information was vital. The British had not set up sentries on Sawmill Road. Washington headed that way.

But as his force made its way through the dark, some Pennsylvania militiamen heard rumors that a Hessian force was headed their way for an attack. The militiamen fled for their lives.

Washington was down to about 4,000 soldiers.

Cornwallis now ordered those 1,200 soldiers left behind in Princeton to come forward and move on Trenton. Cornwallis wanted even more power for this main attack.

Washington's army was moving on Princeton at the same time. And just outside of the town, the Americans' advance force and Cornwallis' rear force spotted each other.

British Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood ordered his soldiers to retreat into the town of Princeton. But a firefight broke out, and Mawhood realized he was not facing the entire Patriot army, just Washington's advance militia.

At this point in the war, most American militiamen were not well equipped. Most were using their own guns, including hunting rifles. And they lacked bayonets.

Mawhood suddenly changed his plan. Rather than retreating, he ordered his men to attach bayonets and charge into the militiamen.

American Brigadier General Hugh Mercer was leading the militiamen. When they saw the British charging with bayonets, some of Mercer's men fell into a panic and ran.

The death of Mercer at Princeton.

Mercer refused to leave the battlefield.

When the British saw that a brave general was refusing to retreat, they mistook Mercer for Washington and demanded his surrender.

Mercer refused and kept fighting. Unfortunately, Mercer was later bayonetted and killed on the battlefield.

Now Washington's main force arrived and opened up with a powerful rifle volley.

The British returned fire.

Washington himself fought on the open battlefield to direct the rifle fire on the enemy. His aide-de-camp—the military officer who acts as a confidential assistant to a senior officer—feared for Washington's life. Some reports are that the aide-de-camp threw his hat over his eyes, terrified that he might see Washington killed.

Washington and his troops charged forward on the British.

"It's a fine fox chase, my boys!" Washington yelled.

Washington on the battlefield at Princeton.

The Patriot force fought its way into Princeton.

Most of the British forces retreated, but about 200 men holed up in Nassau Hall at Princeton University. After a skirmish, those men

surrendered—to a young Patriot captain named Alexander Hamilton.

The Battle of Princeton was over, and it was another victory for the Americans.

Following the battle, the British pulled most of their forces back to a defensive position on the Hudson River. That shift removed British control from most of New Jersey. Washington moved his men to winter quarters near Morristown, New Jersey.

The Battle of Princeton was another nasty surprise for the British. The war's momentum seemed to be changing as the Americans went on offense—and started winning.

WHO FOUGHT?

HENRY KNOX WAS the seventh of ten children, born in Boston on July 25, 1750. When Henry was nine years old, his father passed

away. The family was very poor. Henry had only three years of schooling. To support his mother and younger siblings, young Henry was forced to leave home.

Henry was apprenticed to a local bookbinder. Apprentices worked for various tradesmen, often for very little money. The bookbinder that Henry worked for also encouraged his reading. Henry was especially interested in the bookbinder's many volumes on military history. Henry read about artillery, tactics, and strategies.

At age twenty-one, Henry Knox opened his own bookbindery.

In 1770, he joined the Sons of Liberty and was present at the Boston Massacre. Knox tried to convince the British soldiers to leave peacefully.

In 1772, Knox founded a militia unit called the Boston Grenadier Corps. (A grenadier is a soldier armed with grenades or one who throws them.) Although Knox had a deep book knowledge of weapons and artillery, he accidentally shot off two fingers on his left hand.

Knox joined the Continental forces as a volunteer when the American Revolution broke out. And as you know, Knox fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill. But what you probably didn't know is that his wife's family were British Loyalists—they sided with King George. Knox's wife's family fled the city when the Americans took control of Boston.

Among Washington's forces, Knox marched across New Jersey. In the surprise Christmas attack on Trenton, Knox oversaw the army's crossing of the Delaware River. After Trenton, Knox was promoted to brigadier general.

Knox's artillery expertise played an important role throughout the war, including some decisive action at the final Battle of Yorktown.

After the war, Knox became the senior officer of the Continental Army. When George Washington became the first President of the

United States, Knox became the first Secretary of War. He oversaw the creation of the new nation's first military—including a permanent navy, a national militia, and the country's coastal fortifications.

In 1795, Knox resigned to spend time with his family and run his businesses.

On October 22, 1806, Henry Knox accidentally swallowed a chicken bone.

Three days later, he died from internal injuries.

BOOKS

The Revolutionary War: 1775–1783 by Alan Axelrod. This book includes the paintings of Mort Künstler, America's foremost historical artist. The images bring history to life with vivid, high-action portrayals of the primary events that won Americans their freedom from Britain.

DK Eyewitness Books: American Revolution by Stuart Murray. Be an eyewitness to the American struggle for independence. Discover how a few brave Patriots battled a great empire, see the armies' muskets and cannons, learn how soldiers were drilled, and discover why Yorktown was not the end of the Revolution.

INTERNET

Fort Knox is a famous military fort in Kentucky named after General Henry Knox.

Established in 1918 as a training camp for soldiers deployed to fight World War I in Europe, today Fort Knox includes a fortified vault. More than half of the United States' gold reserves are inside the vault.

The fort also has a museum dedicated to General George S. Patton, a fascinating World War II military leader. You can visit the museum online: history.army.mil/museums/TRADOC/fortKnox_genPatton/index.html

GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON

February 22, 1732 – December 14, 1799

Washington and His Generals, by A. H. Ritchie.

BEFORE WE DIVE into our next battle, let's take a moment and find out more about this remarkable commander who was leading the American Patriots.

George Washington was born in 1732 in what was then the colony of Virginia. He was the first of ten children in a family that grew wealthy from owning and farming land and from business in tobacco. But when George was eleven years old, his father passed away.

George's mother, Mary Ball Washington, raised the family. Mary Ball was a stern woman. She disciplined George harshly, hoping he would value respect, honor, dignity, and the very important difference between right and wrong.

One familiar tale about young George is that he cut down a cherry tree and confessed to the crime. "I cannot tell a lie," he is supposed to have said.

Historians now believe this tale was mostly legend—not wholly accurate. But when George was fourteen years old, he wrote down 100 "rules of civility" in his notebook. These rules of behavior seemed to have run deep in George Washington. Decades later, as commander of the American military, he conducted himself according to these rules.

Here are some of those rules, with the capitalization of common words at the time:

- "Show not yourself glad at the Misfortune of another though he were your enemy."
- "Associate yourself with Men of good quality if you Esteem your own Reputation; for 'tis better to be alone than in bad company."
- "Let your Countenance be pleasant but in Serious Matters Somewhat grave."

As a young man, Washington's first job was as a surveyor—someone who measures and maps land. This work familiarized Washington with different terrains, particularly in areas considered the American frontier.

George Washington working as a surveyor. Notice the Indians watching his work.

In 1751, Washington traveled to the Caribbean island of Barbados with his half-brother. He was hoping the island's warm climate would heal his half-brother's tuberculosis—a severe disease of the lungs.

Unfortunately, his half-brother later passed away, and while on this trip, Washington contracted the sometimes deadly virus of smallpox. However, many years later, that same infection proved lifesaving. During the American Revolution, many soldiers died of smallpox. But because Washington had already suffered a prior infection, his body was immunized—blocked from getting the virus again.

In Washington's life, times of trouble often turned into blessings.

His half-brother's passing meant Washington could inherit a large Virginia plantation named Mount Vernon. Though Washington did not have his own children, he married a widow, Martha Custis, and raised her children at Mount Vernon.

One artist's version of Mount Vernon.

While France and England were fighting over who would control the Ohio Valley, Virginia's lieutenant governor appointed Washington commander of one of Virginia's militias. At the time, France and England were both building forts along Ohio's major waterways. Both countries wanted control of the area, because rivers and lakes are crucial for moving soldiers and supplies from place to place. Washington's mission was to demand that some of the French forces leave a specific area that the British claimed was theirs. Washington's other task was to make peace with the six Indian tribes known as the Iroquois (ear-oh-Kuh-woy). Most of the Indian tribes hated the English and sided with the French. But the Iroquois hated the French.

A young George Washington.

On this mission, Washington's militia was caught by a French patrol near the Ohio River and taken to a French fort. Washington informed them that the British were demanding they leave. Naturally, the French refused. But they must've appreciated something in George Washington, because after giving him an official response in a sealed envelope, they also supplied his men with food and warm clothing for the trip back to Virginia. It took seventy-seven days, there and back, through winter storms and freezing temperatures.

Washington visits Queen Aliquippa of the Seneca tribe. She helped the British during the French and Indian War.

But perhaps that kind of cold-weather trekking prepared Washington to cross the Delaware on Christmas Eve. And later, the French would come to help the struggling American Patriot rebels.

Washington attributed his good fortune to "Providence," by which he meant God's blessings. Though private about his faith, Washington was a Christian who regularly read his Bible.

Washington was promoted to lieutenant colonel and second-in-command of the Virginia Regiment. Once again, he was tasked with orders to deal with the French forces along the Ohio River.

But on this second trip, Washington and his 150 militiamen were ambushed by a French scouting party. Ten Frenchmen were killed—and that ambush launched the French and Indian War!

Skirmish during the French and Indian War.

During the war, Washington served with the British Army—remember, the colonists at that time saw themselves as English citizens. Washington's service taught him about military tactics and strategies. For example, he noticed that the bright red uniforms worn by the English soldiers and the colorful blue coats worn by the colonial soldiers only made them better targets for the Indians, who wore animals skins and feathers for camouflage.

Washington also witnessed how the British armies marched in strict formations, one line of soldiers following another, each man toting an awkward musket. Yet the Indians, who were far outnumbered by the British, were much more effective fighters because they hid behind trees and sniped at their enemies. That was "irregular warfare," which worked well against larger military forces.

Washington had several horses shot out from under him. Bullets ripped through his blue coat. But he never wavered in

battle. However, he said the British forces "broke and ran as sheep pursued by dogs."

Later, these valuable lessons would help Washington lead the American colonial army to victory over the British in the Revolutionary War.

In 1775, when many Americans no longer considered themselves British citizens and wanted to free themselves from King George III, they needed someone to lead the colonial military against the British Army. Washington was the first choice of many.

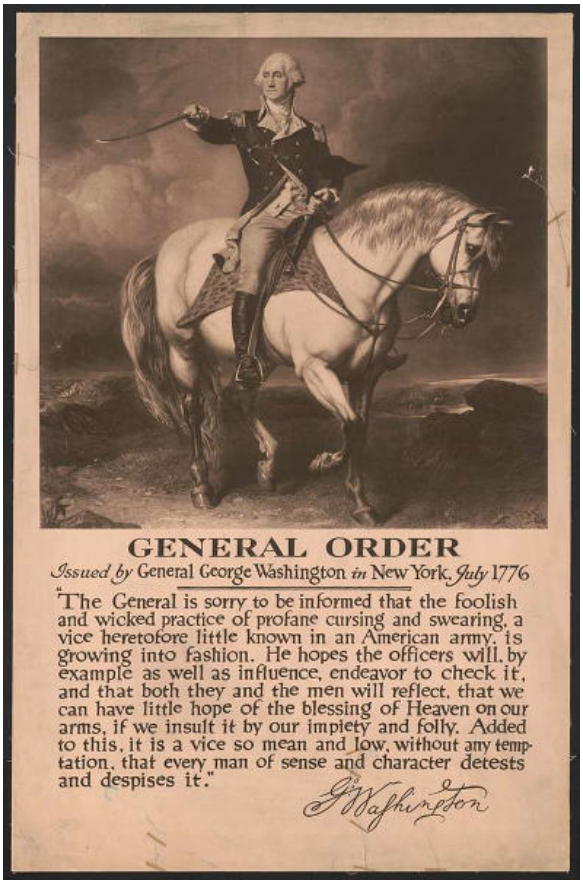
"There is but one man in my mind for this important command," said Founding Father John Adams. "[His] skill as an officer… great talents and universal character would command the respect of America and unite … the colonies better than any other person alive."

John Adams proposes to Congress that Washington become commander in chief of the American forces.

Washington's qualifications for leadership were many. Here are a few:

- Humility. Washington did not view himself as superior to any other man.
- Sacrifice. Washington often suffered the same terrible conditions as his soldiers and sometimes put himself in harm's way to lead a battle from the front lines.
- Respect. Great leaders do not demand their subordinates—people beneath their position—do something they would not be willing to do themselves. Washington's humble yet strong attitude earned great respect from his men.
- Teachable. Washington made several mistakes during the French and Indian War and in the early stages of the American Revolution. But he always learned his lesson from those errors, and he refused to allow any mistake to stop his progress.
- Wise. Washington would evaluate a circumstance before communicating with his men. He did not hold back if the situation called for a harsh response. But his response was soft-spoken and gracious if the case called for it.
- Self-Aware. Washington realized an enormous responsibility was on his shoulders. His leadership could mean life or death for many men—and even for this new country of the United States. He conducted himself carefully under that responsibility.

All these character traits were evident when Washington accepted his role as military commander of the colonial forces. He refused to take a salary.



Washington issues a General Order demanding his men stop cursing.

Washington believed this fight for freedom was so critical that he volunteered his service. He also thought leading this army of shoemakers, blacksmiths, farmers, and bookbinders—most of whom had no military training—was a near-impossible mission.

He told another Patriot, Patrick Henry, "Remember, Mr. Henry, what I now tell you: from the day I enter upon the command of the American armies, I date my fall, and the ruin of my reputation."

His service didn't ruin his reputation, but it did wipe out his finances. Washington was nearly broke by the end of the war. He resigned as commander in chief.

While the new country of the United States of America figured out what sort of government it would have, many people begged Washington to become king.

Washington refused. He didn't want this new country to be a monarchy—a form of government in which a king or queen is the ultimate ruler.

Instead, Washington supported the ideas put forth by other Founding Fathers, such as James Monroe and Thomas Jefferson. They believed America should be a republic with representatives who gave voice to people's concerns. Washington wanted the United States of America to set an example for the rest of the world. The rights of the people came from God, not the government. Among these rights are freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom to protest the government when it didn't serve these needs. (Someday, you should read the Constitution and Bill of Rights. You will be very thankful for such brilliant and thoughtful founders.)

In 1789, Washington was elected as the United States' first president. He never joined a political party. Instead, he worked hard to unite the new country recovering from its long, complex, and painful war.

After serving two terms as president, Washington retired to his home at Mount Vernon.

Two years later, on December 12, 1799, Washington was riding on horseback at Mount Vernon when snow, hail, and freezing rain began to fall. He returned home, ate dinner, but didn't change out of his wet clothes.

The following day he woke up with a sore throat. But he rode into the winter weather to work his land.

The next day, Washington woke up struggling to breathe.

In those days, a medical procedure called "bloodletting" was very common. People believed that draining a sick person's "bad blood" would improve their health. Washington's bloodletting

didn't make him better. In fact, it removed too much blood and left him even weaker.

George Washington on his deathbed.

Doctors rushed to Mount Vernon, but George Washington died around 10 p.m. on December 14, 1799. He was sixty-seven years old.

A man present at Washington's passing wrote down his final words: "'Tis well."

Washington left orders in his will. One order called for the emancipation—freedom—of all Mount Vernon's slaves after the death of his wife, Martha. But Martha didn't wait for her death. She freed the family's slaves. Washington's will also set aside money for his slaves' education—to the third generation, so that even their grandchildren could pay for schooling.

In the minds of many historians, George Washington remains the greatest president of the United States of America. After winning the Revolutionary War, he enjoyed enormous popularity and could have become king. His refusal changed the course of history.

Now let's get back to the battles for Independence led by General George Washington.

BOOKS

George Washington: Life Stories of Extraordinary Americans (TIME Heroes of History #2). A biography perfect for middle-age readers that includes artwork, illustrations, and artifacts to bring George Washington's story to life.

George Washington: Frontier Colonel by Sterling North. Focuses on Washington's younger years, including his time in the Virginia militia.

George Washington: The Man Who Would Not Be King by Stephen Krensky.

INTERNET

You can visit George Washington's home of Mount Vernon online: www.mountvernon.org

MOVIES

The First American (2016). A well-researched and well-presented documentary.

Washington (2020). Stars actor Jeff Daniels and opens with Washington's 1754 ambush that launched the French and Indian War. The film continues through significant events in Washington's life until his death in 1799.

THE BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE CREEK

September 11, 1777

Drawing by F. C. Yohn titled *Battle of the Brandywine*. The caption reads, "Many of the Americans were unskilled militia but they repelled charge after charge of the infantry, chasseurs and grenadiers."

WHICH CITY IS the capital of the United States?

If you answered, "Washington, DC," you are correct. The capital is named after George Washington, and the "DC" stands for "District of Columbia."

But in 1777, the capital of the colonies was Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was the largest city in the colonies. It's where the Continental Congresses and Founding Fathers signed their death warrant—the Declaration of Independence from King George III.

In those days, Philadelphia seemed very modern. Boston's roads were narrow and winding like the streets of old Europe. But Philadelphia's streets were laid out in a grid pattern of rectangular blocks—just like what you see today in most American cities. Philadelphia also paved its dirt roads using bricks and cobblestones.

And because Philadelphia was big and modern and the colonial capital, the city was an important military objective for the British.

Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, the meeting place of the Continental Congress.

Capture the enemy's best city?

What a score!

In September 1777, General Howe planned to force George Washington into an all-out battle to defend Philadelphia.

Howe was confident that a deadly clash would crush the Continental Army and frighten enough people in Philadelphia that they would then demand an end to this war.

Imagine what those people in Philadelphia were thinking. They were living in the most important city, and they suspected a British invasion would come. But they were pinning their hopes on George Washington and his armed forces to protect the city's 7,000 houses, thirty-three churches, two theaters, one museum, a university, and many, many businesses.

As rumors of the British invasion floated through Philadelphia, the citizens waited—days, weeks, months …

Then, on September 10, 1777, General Howe and his troops arrived at a settlement called Kennett Square, about forty miles outside Philadelphia. The British Army set up camp.

General Howe, commander in chief of the British forces.

For his defensive stand, Washington chose Brandywine Creek. It was about twenty-five miles outside Philadelphia and provided high ground with rolling hills covered with trees that could offer

cover for his riflemen and other artillery. The creek was also difficult to forge, or cross, except at a few select locations.

The Battle of Brandywine Creek would later become the largest single-day engagement of the American Revolution.

The British forces outnumbered Washington's men. When General Howe learned of Washington's plan to defend Philadelphia at Brandywine Creek, he divided his army into two forces.

One force would be led under the command of Hessian Lieutenant General Wilhelm von Knyphausen (pronounced: "Niff-faw-zen").

Hessian General Wilhelm von Knyphausen.

British General Charles Cornwallis would lead the second and larger force.

Knyphausen's men were to move forward and attack Washington's troops at a place called Chadds Ford. This head-on attack was supposed to convince Washington that it was the main attack.

But secretly, Cornwallis' force would be moving upstream through the Brandywine Creek to attack the unsuspecting right flank of the Continentals.

Washington, meanwhile, felt confident about his placements. His men were positioned at about a half-dozen locations to stop the British from crossing the creek and marching into Philadelphia. The Americans also assumed that the British, with their heavy, slow-moving pack trains, wouldn't be able to get there quickly, and the weighted-down movements would make any flanking maneuver very difficult.

Unfortunately, Washington's scouts made a mistake. They did not travel out far enough into the surrounding territory to get good reconnaissance—knowledge of the enemy's location.

And Howe's men, with some help from local Tories—colonists loyal to the King—discovered two locations where they could cross the creek and attack Washington's right flank.

Now the British had the element of surprise. They also far outnumbered the Continentals. Howe had about 8,000 British and Hessian troops to attack Washington's right flank, defended by about 3,500 Continentals.

Near dawn on September 11, von Knyphausen's Hessian forces engaged in multiple skirmishes with Washington's scouts. The Americans harassed them and used hit-and-run tactics to delay the Redcoats' approach.

Annoyed by the ambushes, Knyphausen set up a battle formation and artillery along the Brandywine Creek that could move forward and attack at Chadds Ford.

Later, around 8 a.m., the people of Philadelphia were going about their regular morning routines when the thunder of warfare

fractured the air as British forces started firing their guns. The American rebels countered with their own artillery—cannons versus cannons—each boom seeming to shake the sky itself.

The Battle of Brandywine Creek had begun.

British infantry confronts Americans in the Battle of Brandywine.

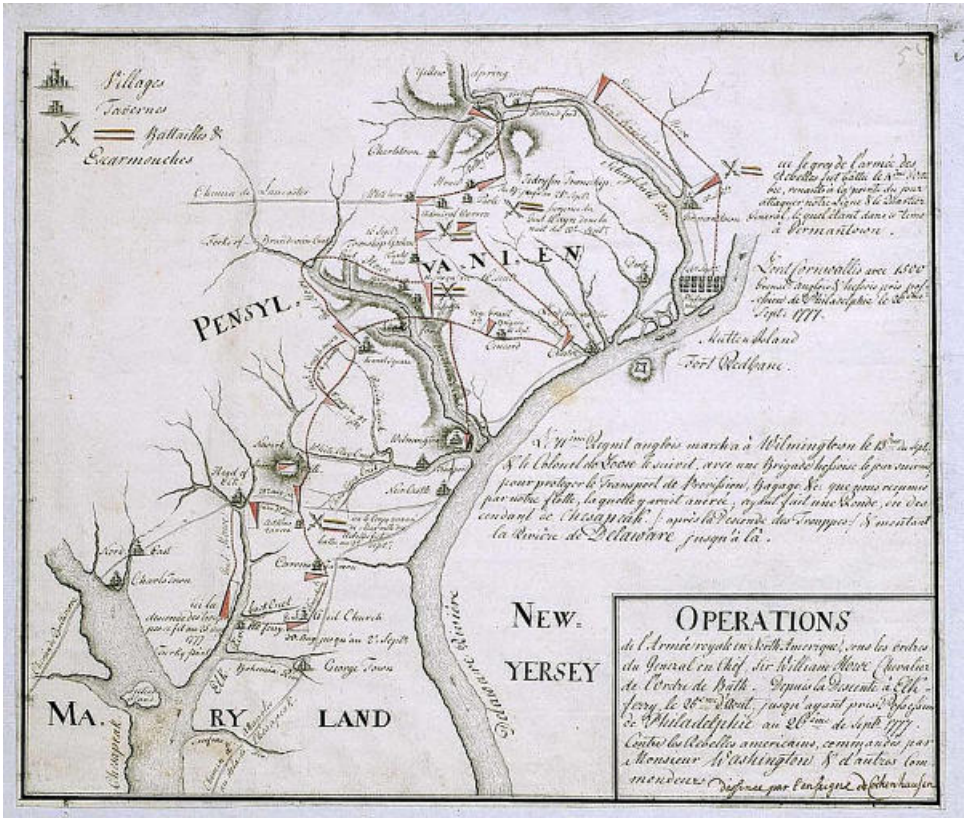
The artillery duel at Chadds Ford continued until about noon, with Knyphausen cleverly fanning out his men so it looked like a larger attack force. Meanwhile, Howe ordered Cornwallis to move his troops to attack the right flank.

Around 2:30 p.m, after marching nearly twenty miles in what was now blistering heat, Cornwallis decided his men needed to rest. He let them eat some salt pork and biscuits. But during this rest period, some of Cornwallis' men spotted the Continental Army dug into a defensive position below them.

Due to the Patriots' poor reconnaissance scouting, Washington wasn't entirely sure what was happening on his right flank. Several reports insisted the entire British force was attacking Chadds Ford. Other reports insisted that about 7,000 Redcoats were moving on the right flank.

Finally, Washington received information that, indeed, his right flank was under attack.

With polished bayonets glittering in the sun, the British pressed forward for the right flank, kicking through split-rail fences that were the only thing standing in their way. If this attack succeeded, Washington's army would be slaughtered and encircled with no way of escape.



Hessian map of the Battle of Brandywine showing the creek running between the British and American forces.

Quickly, Washington sent reinforcements to his right flank. The Continentals also brought up small cannons. But the British countered with their own guns.

To avoid a total massacre, Washington's men were forced to retreat. One retreating militiaman later described the terrible race to save their lives.

"Our way was over the dead and dying, and I saw many bodies crushed to pieces beneath the wagons, and we were bespattled with blood. As we marched directly under English cannon, which kept up a continual fire, the destruction of our own men was very great."

But the fight was not over.

At Chadds Ford, Knyphausen's troops weren't crossing the river, but they were gaining the upper hand. And because Washington had sent as many reinforcements as possible to plug holes in the right flank, the Hessians were now overwhelming his front.

Outnumbered and outgunned, Washington's men defending Chadds Ford also fell into retreat.

The Battle of Brandywine turned into a humiliating defeat for Washington.

And yet, the American commander still exhibited his excellent leadership.

Regrouping his soldiers, he set up a holding force that allowed his main army to retreat in good order. Among this force was a French general who was fighting with the Americans—before France had formally joined the war. His name was the Marquis de Lafayette (pronounced "mar-KEE deh law-FIE-et"), and he was fighting with the Americans because, during the French and Indian War, the British had killed his father.

As darkness fell over the battlefields, the Redcoats showed their exhaustion. That morning, the soldiers had marched fast then fought hard all afternoon. Perhaps due to that exhaustion, Howe decided not to pursue the retreating Patriots.

The Battle of Brandywine was complete.

Despite the heavy attack, Washington had saved his army to fight another day. But the American forces suffered a bloodbath. About 1,000 soldiers were killed—men the Continental Army couldn't afford to lose.

The British, however, lost only about 100 men. And within two weeks, on September 26, they captured the colonial capital of Philadelphia. Congress fled the city.

The citizens of Philadelphia now feared for their lives. British soldiers occupied both the city and nearby surrounding areas. And they did not show kindness. Redcoats looted homes and farms, taking whatever items they wanted. Many farmers belonged to the Quaker faith, which refuses to participate in violence. The Quakers did not take sides in this war—they were called "neutral." But the British plundered their homes anyway.

Joseph Townsend was one such Quaker farmer. After witnessing the British plunder, he joined the Continental Army.

"We had the full opportunity of beholding the destruction and wanton waste committed on the property of the peaceful inhabitants of the neighborhood and on the ground of encampment," Townsend later wrote. "Those who were obliged to remain had their stock of cattle destroyed for the use of the army—their houses taken away, and their household furniture, bedding, etc., wantonly wasted and burned."

This Revolution was looking very grim for the American Patriots.

Lafayette wounded at Brandywine.

IN 1777, THE Marquis de Lafayette arrived in Philadelphia with one wish: to fight in the Continental Army.

Colonial leaders thought this French marquis was just another mercenary looking for battle action.

"No thanks," they told him.

But Lafayette persisted. He wrote a letter to John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress. Lafayette's letter made two requests: "The first is to serve at my own expense. The second is to begin my service as a volunteer."

That got Hancock's attention—the Continental Army didn't have much money to pay soldiers.

The two requests also got Washington's attention.

Lafayette proved himself worthy on the battlefield. His tactical leadership saved many lives. During the Battle of Brandywine, Lafayette was shot in the leg but continued to organize the retreat

to save men's lives. His courage earned admiration from the American soldiers. After all, Lafayette was a wealthy man who could've sat at home in France counting his money. Instead, he'd hired a ship at his own expense and sailed for America to fight for freedom.

Eventually, Lafayette was named a major general. He became one of Washington's closest staff—and one of Washington's closest friends. Many years later, Lafayette had a son whom he named George Washington.

Lafayette's skill in warfare was instrumental in the all-important battle of Yorktown, which we will get to later.

After the American Revolution, Lafayette returned to France. His home country soon faced its own revolution. When the French rebels seized control of the country, they asked Lafayette to be France's dictator—much like Americans asked Washington to be king. But like his close friend George, Lafayette refused the role. Instead, he became a commander of the National Guard.

In 1834, after a battle with pneumonia, the Marquis de Lafayette passed away. His final wish was to be buried under soil from Bunker Hill.

Today, you will find landmarks in both America and France—from schools and colleges to streets and towns—named "Lafayette," in honor of the French nobleman who risked his life helping the American Patriots gain freedom.

BOOKS

A Battlefield Atlas of the American Revolution by Craig Symonds. An atlas is a collection of maps. This atlas offers full-page battle maps for the American Revolution.

INTERNET

YouTube offers many videos about the Battle of Brandywine, such as this one: “Washington and the Battle of Brandywine.” youtu.be/_zH8BH269AU

THE BATTLE OF SARATOGA

September 19 – October 7, 1777

The Battle of Saratoga, showing wounded General Benedict Arnold fighting on his horse.

THE BATTLE OF Saratoga wasn't a single battle; it was a whole series of conflicts. But when all the clashes were added up together, they were like one big battle—one that would change the Revolutionary War.

General John Burgoyne was among Britain's most influential leaders. Burgoyne was nicknamed "Gentleman Johnny" because he liked to wear fine clothing and throw parties between battles.

However, in 1777, Gentleman Johnny wasn't having much fun. The American Revolutionary War had been going on for two years, and he was determined to stop this colonial rebellion.

Burgoyne planned to divide the rebel armies between the northern and southern colonies. Once Britain gained control of the north, Burgoyne believed the southern colonies would simply give up the fight.

To launch this plan, Burgoyne and his men would enter the northern colonies from Canada, a country friendly to the British. From there, the Redcoats would march down the Hudson Valley to the town of Albany, New York, join up with more British soldiers, and proceed to rout the Americans.

British General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne.

Albany was home to many Loyalists—the colonists who didn't want America to become independent of Great Britain.

The Albany area was also home to Mohican and Mohawk Indians. During the French and Indian War, these tribes fought alongside the British. Burgoyne assumed the tribes would once again join the Redcoats, giving him a large military force to overpower the Patriots.

Burgoyne's first military target was Fort Ticonderoga. It sat on the banks of Lake Champlain, a vast lake between Vermont's rugged Green Mountains and New York's Adirondack Mountains. At this time, the fort was held by the Americans.

After scouting the area, the British Army discovered an unoccupied mountain that overlooked the fort. Burgoyne ordered his men to haul cannons up the mountainside and hold the high ground as the colonists had done on the hills above Boston Harbor.

Inside Fort Ticonderoga, the rebel Americans watched the British soldiers moving guns to the high ground. Realizing the fort would soon become indefensible, they abandoned their position and fled into the nearby woods.

Burgoyne saw this retreat as a sign of victory. He wrote to an English noble in London:

"I have the honor to inform your Lordship that the enemy [were] dislodged from Ticonderoga and Mount Independent, on the 6th instant, and … left with the loss of 128 pieces of cannon, all their armed vessels and bateaux [boats], the greatest part of their baggage and ammunition, provision and military stores …"

While taking the fort sounded impressive, Burgoyne was about to make a horrible mistake.

The Americans were on the other side of Lake Champlain. Instead of using boats to cross the water for a surprise attack, Burgoyne tried to chase the rebels overland—with 7,500 men, forty-two cannons, and a supply train that included hundreds of horses and carts. The British struggled through thick woods, rocky roads, and hilly terrain.

Also, the colonial fighters found other ways to slow the Redcoats. They chopped down trees and used the trunks to block trails. They initiated skirmishes with Burgoyne's vanguard—the lead soldiers—which held back the rest of the British forces.

Burgoyne's progress slowed down to one mile a day.

Finally, his frustration growing, Burgoyne sent some Indians ahead to scout the territory.

The Indians reached a cabin. Two women were inside. One was an elderly widow named Mrs. McNeill. The other was a young girl named Jane McCrea. The Indians entered the cabin and started quarreling with each other over which woman to kidnap and use to demand a ransom—payment for her return.

Who would bring the most money—the old woman or the young girl?

The argument ended when one of the Indians impulsively shot then scalped Jane McCrea.

The Indians delivered the elderly Mrs. McNeil to Burgoyne at the British camp. Naturally, she was very upset. She also happened to be the cousin of a powerful British general—Simon Fraser—who was part of Burgoyne's force.

British General Simon Fraser.

Hearing his cousin's terrifying tale, General Fraser became outraged. He demanded that Burgoyne punish the Indians responsible for the violence.

Burgoyne ordered the Indian scouts to be hanged, but the Indians' leader told Burgoyne that the entire tribe would desert the British forces if anything happened to his scouts.

Burgoyne now had a dilemma on his hands. Should he appease his fellow military leader, General Fraser, or should he keep the Indians happy so they didn't desert his force?

Burgoyne pardoned the Indians.

News about Jane McCrea's murder and scalping spread throughout the colonies. People were angry that the British didn't punish anyone for such a horrific crime. Also—as usually happens with this sort of thing—the story grew with each retelling. People started saying Burgoyne planned to unleash wild Indians on the helpless colonists—they would all be scalped and killed!

The rumors even fired up some Tories, who became furious enough to join the Patriots. From older men to young boys, ordinary Americans picked up their muskets, swords, and rifles

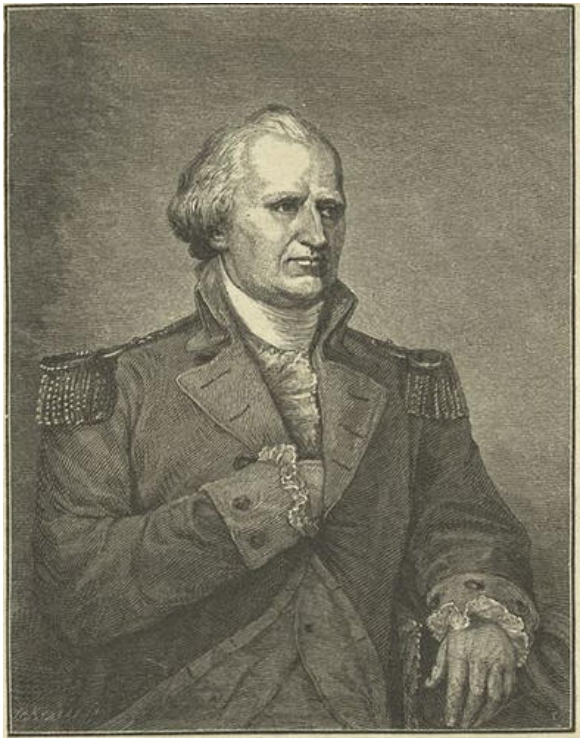
until the colonial force nearly doubled, from about 9,000 to 15,000 Patriots.

Even worse for Burgoyne, the British Army was losing men. The Redcoats were suffering from food shortages. Some of the needs were due to supply chain problems. But American farmers also destroyed crops and scattered livestock to keep the food away from the British.

Burgoyne hoped he could replenish his troops and his supplies by sending Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum and 700 soldiers to an area near Lake Champlain. Baum's force was an odd mix of Redcoats, Hessians, American Tories, and some Indians. Making matters even more confusing, Baum didn't speak English. He had to rely on an interpreter to give his orders.

Baum learned that the Patriots were planning to chase his forces through the forests around Lake Champlain. He asked Burgoyne for reinforcements, and Burgoyne agreed to send several hundred Hessians.

American General John Stark—the same colonist who fought at Bunker Hill and said, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes"—gathered 1,500 men. They marched through the woods and finally caught up to Baum's force.



American General John Stark.

Baum, meanwhile, was still waiting for the Hessian reinforcements. When he saw Stark's men, he assumed that's who they were!

Stark's men surrounded Baum's forces, and when the first shots were fired, the Indians took off. They felt no loyalty to this British force.

Stark then made a flanking maneuver, which drove Baum's men into a tight center. Then Stark launched the main attack. Baum was shot and killed. The British force fell apart.

And right about then, guess who showed up?

The Hessian reinforcements!

The Hessians tried to create a formation and fire volleys at the Americans, but the Green Mountain Boys—a New Hampshire militia—used irregular warfare to fight back. Hiding behind trees, they picked off the Germans.

Realizing he was losing men, the Hessian leader ordered his drummer boy to beat out a "slow roll," an international signal to request a truce.

But amid the thick black smoke of gunpowder, the blasts of gunfire, and the dense forest around them, the Americans didn't hear the drummer boy. They continued to fight.

The British lost 440 men, and another 700 were captured, along with four cannons.

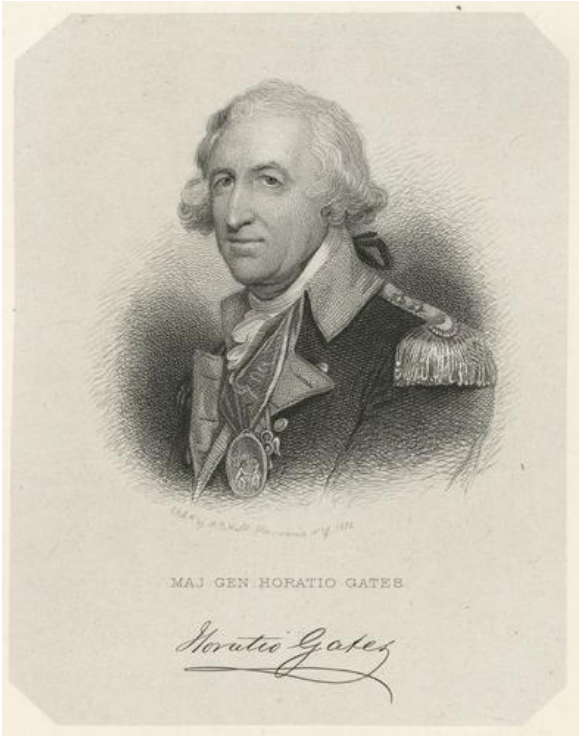
The Americans only lost ninety men. Forty were wounded.

Burgoyne heard the terrible news. But it was soon followed by even more alarming news. General Howe, having captured Philadelphia, wasn't coming to help Burgoyne. Howe needed his British forces to hold onto Philadelphia.

That left Burgoyne with only one other nearby British general who might help: Henry Clinton.

But Clinton had captured New York territory and was afraid the masterful George Washington would retake it. Clinton refused to come help Burgoyne.

Washington decided it was time to strike. He ordered Daniel Morgan, Benedict Arnold, and 1,000 riflemen to join the American troops heading for Saratoga, New York. This force was led by American Major General Horatio Gates.



American Major General Horatio Gates.

When this force reached Saratoga, the men began digging earthworks on a farm that belonged to a British Loyalist named John Freeman.

The British sent 2,000 soldiers to slip around the Americans' left flank. The Redcoats hoped to seize a hill that overlooked the rebel trenches.

American General Benedict Arnold wanted to attack the British on open ground. But Gates refused and ordered the colonial troops to wait within the trenches while the British approached.

This tense situation set up the first battle of Saratoga, also known as the Battle of Freeman's Farm, on September 19, 1777.

As the British advanced, American Daniel Morgan and 500 sharpshooters began picking off the Redcoats.

Daniel Morgan organized and recruited a company of marksmen nicknamed "Morgan's Riflemen."

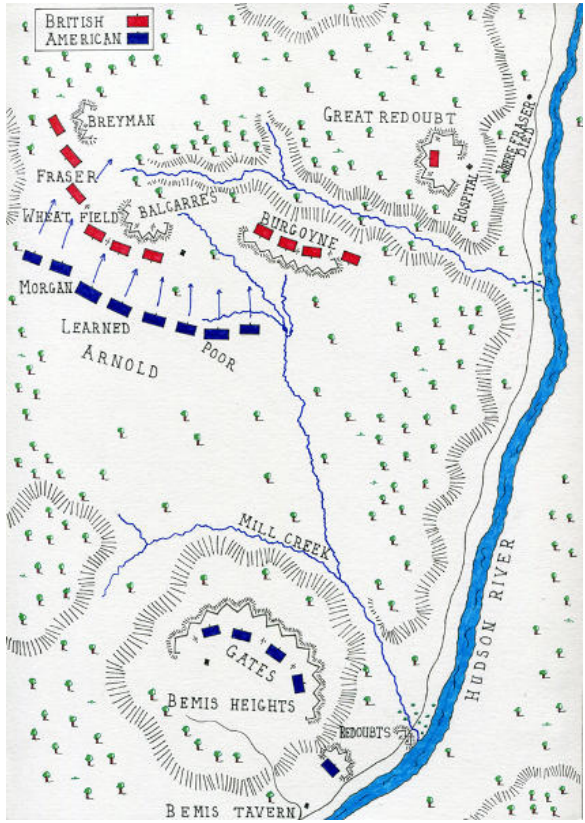
The British light infantry responded with a bayonet charge, hoping to push back the Americans. Arnold ordered two regiments to stop them, but the colonists could not overcome the decisive attack.

The British gained control of the field but suffered about 600 casualties, almost twice as many as the Americans.

Now the Americans moved south and set up defenses at a place called Bemis Heights. Hearing the boom and crack of battle, local militiamen arrived and expanded the American force.

On October 7, Burgoyne ordered his troops to advance along the American line—and kill all of them.

Benedict Arnold rode back to Gates and begged for reinforcements. Gates refused. He also ordered Arnold to be confined to headquarters! (Arnold was considered a hothead.)



Map of one portion of the Saratoga battle.

The Redcoats, aided by Hessians, managed to push back the Americans. But more bad news arrived for Burgoyne. His communications were cut off, and out on the coastal waters of the Atlantic, the Americans had captured most of the British supply ships.

Despite such dire news, Burgoyne refused to surrender. He attacked again.

Gates was so slow to retaliate. His hesitation prompted Benedict Arnold to jump on his horse and lead a charge straight into the British center.

Daniel Morgan called up his best rifleman, Tim Murphy, and ordered him to shoot the battle's leading field officer—British General Simon Fraser. A rifle-fired bullet did indeed kill Fraser, but historians dispute who fired it.

The moment Fraser went down, the British line broke.

Benedict Arnold then led the Americans on the right wing of the British forces. Arnold was shot in the leg, but the Americans forced the British into a retreat—and pursued the Redcoats for several days.

Finally, Burgoyne realized his army was surrounded. On October 17, 1777, "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne officially surrendered.

The Battle of Saratoga was over.

The American rebels had won, decisively.

"It was a glorious sight," declared one militiaman, "to see the haughty Brittons march out and surrender their arms to an army which but a little before they despised and called paltroons."

"Paltroon" was slang for "coward."

Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.

When news of this enormous surrender reached London, the proud nation was shocked. How could a bunch of untrained ragtag

rebel Americans defeat the world's most powerful army—and under the command of mighty General Burgoyne?

Even worse for England, the French were watching and would soon declare war on England, too.

That alliance would change the course of the Revolutionary War.

To this day, historians believe one of the most crucial turning points in the American Revolution was the Battle of Saratoga.

WHO FOUGHT?

Benedict Arnold.

AS A YOUNG man, Benedict Arnold enlisted with the New York militia—twice. He wanted to fight in the French and Indian War.

Both times he later deserted—left without permission.

Arnold claimed he left the military because he needed to work in his family business. And he did become a well-to-do merchant and owner of ships that traded along the Atlantic coast.

Years later, in 1775, as captain of the Connecticut Militia Company, Arnold traveled to Massachusetts. He wanted to attack the British for what had happened at Lexington.

That same year, Arnold led a force to capture Fort Ticonderoga, which was then in British hands. Along the way, he found Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys of Vermont—who were on the same mission. Together they captured the fort, which was barely guarded by the British. But Arnold and his men went even further, capturing two more forts in the same month. While Arnold was on this mission, his wife passed away.

In terms of brilliant tactics and courage on the battlefield, Benedict Arnold ranks among the best military leaders.

But Arnold was also temperamental and prideful; complained about not receiving enough recognition; and disobeyed orders from superiors. Without consulting anyone else fighting on the battlefield, Arnold would take matters into his own hands and risk lives—such as when he jumped on his horse in the Battle of Saratoga.

After a severe battlefield injury, Arnold left the Revolutionary War's front lines. During his recovery, he met and married a woman sympathetic to the British. She also put her husband in contact with British commanders.

In 1779, Arnold requested command of West Point, a strongly fortified American fort along the Hudson River in New York. (Today, it's home to the United States Military Academy.) In secret, Arnold wanted command of West Point because he was going to hand it over to the British.

If Benedict Arnold's plan had succeeded, it would've created really big problems for the Americans. But his betrayal was revealed before his secret plan was accomplished.

After he was exposed as a traitor to his country, Benedict Arnold switched sides—he became a Redcoat!

The British made him a brigadier general and he served in the King's army for many years. In 1801, while living in London, Benedict Arnold passed away.

If he had not betrayed his countrymen, Benedict Arnold would be famous for his military tactics and his valor on the battlefield.

Instead, people say the name "Benedict Arnold" to call out a traitor.

BOOKS

The Notorious Benedict Arnold by Steve Sheinkin. This book presents both the heroism and the treachery of Benedict Arnold.

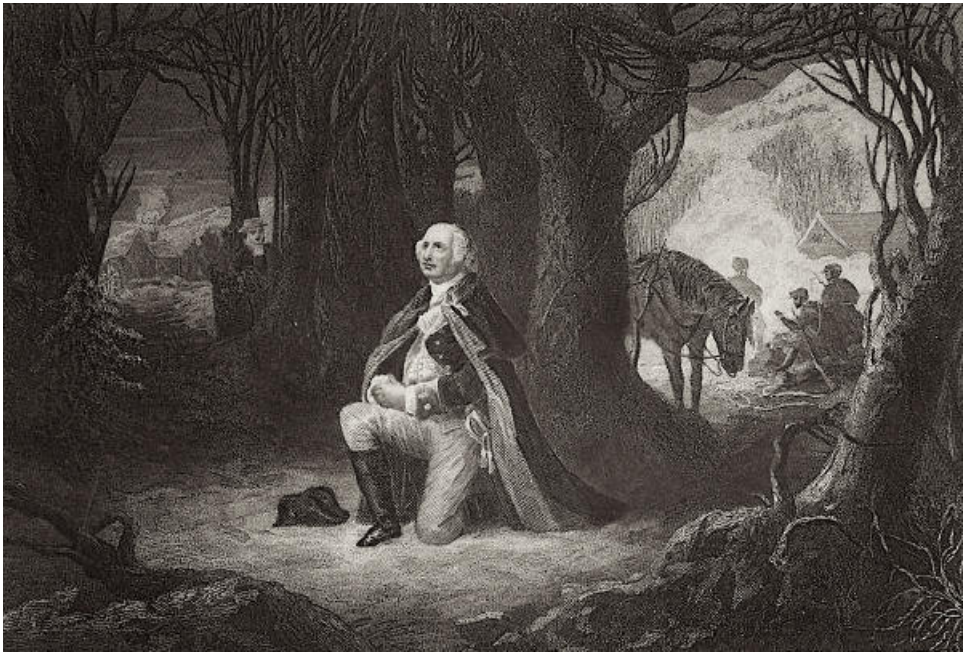
INTERNET

In 1864, a minister recorded the words and images of six Revolutionary War soldiers. Each veteran was more than 100 years old, and the United States was embroiled in the American Civil War. You can read these veterans' stories and see their pictures. Some of them fought in the Battle of Saratoga: www.varsitytutors.com/earlyamerica/rare-images/last-men-revolution

A militiaman from Daniel Morgan's rifle regiment wrote a first-person account of the Battle of Saratoga: www.varsitytutors.com/earlyamerica/early-america-review/volume-8/the-battle-of-saratoga

VALLEY FORGE

Winter 1777–78



The Prayer at Valley Forge, engraving by John McCrae.

HAVE YOU EVER heard the word "mutiny"?

Mutiny is when soldiers refuse to obey their commander's orders, or when they try to overthrow authority.

In the winter of 1777–78, George Washington faced mutiny from a group of senior Continental Army officers.

These officers were nicknamed the "Conway Cabal," after Brigadier General Thomas Conway. He wrote some letters criticizing Washington and made sure they were forwarded to the

Second Continental Congress. Conway insisted it was Washington's fault the army was struggling to win.

But while this mutiny was taking place, Washington was engaged in a famous battle. Only this battle didn't involve booming cannons and slashing swords. It was more like a spiritual battle.

The Patriots won at Saratoga, but the Continental Army was in shambles. Washington's soldiers were starving. Many men were clothed in only rags. Each day forward, morale only bottomed out further. A doctor who served with the Continentals wrote this note in his 1777 journal:

"Dec 12th. We are ordered to march over the river—it snows—I'm sick—eat nothing … Dec 14th. Poor food—hard lodging—cold weather—fatigue—nasty clothes … why are we sent here to starve and freeze."

Washington and Lafayette at Valley Forge.

On December 19, 1777, Washington led his men to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and continued writing to Congress, begging for food, clothing, and more soldiers.

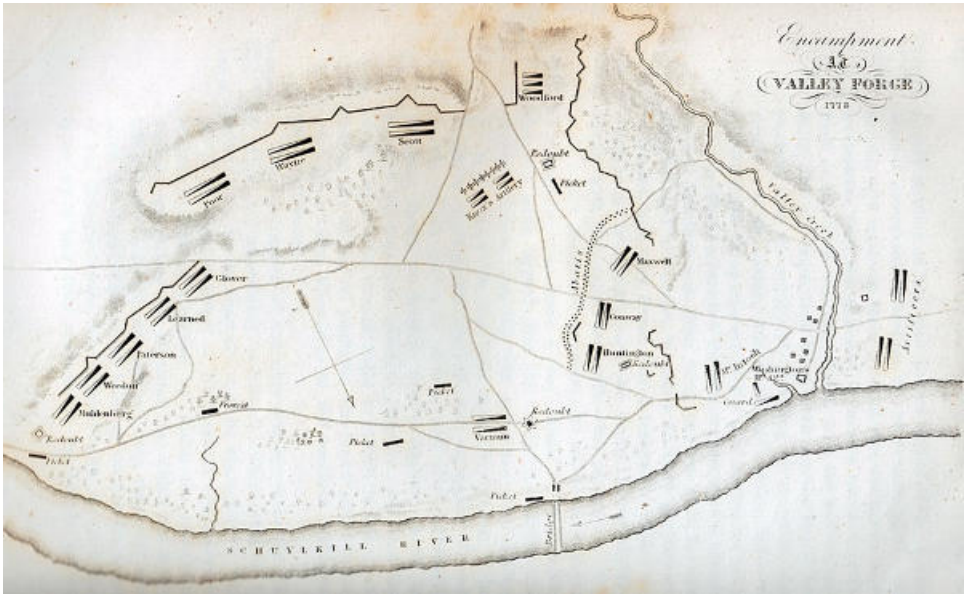
"It is not easy to give you a just and accurate idea of the sufferings of the Army at large—of the loss of men on this account," Washington wrote. "We had in Camp, on the 23rd … not less than 2898 men unfit for duty, by reason of their being barefoot and otherwise naked. Besides this number, sufficiently distressing of itself, there are many Others detained in Hospitals and crowded in Farmers Houses for the same causes…"

Congress promised to send supplies but never delivered them.

Although distressed, Washington didn't waste time complaining about what his men didn't have. Instead, he focused on what he could help fix. The Continental soldiers were scrappy fighters, but few of his men had any military training.

Valley Forge would be their training grounds.

Washington chose this location for two crucial elements: logistics and defenses.



Encampment map of Valley Forge, 1778.

Logistics: Located about 20 miles outside Philadelphia, Valley Forge was close enough to the city to keep watch over its British occupiers but far enough away that the Redcoats couldn't spring a sudden attack.

Defenses: Valley Forge provided several natural protective barriers, including two hills—Mount Joy and Mount Misery—and the Schuylkill River (pronounced "SKOO-kill"). The Continentals could keep watch and spot an approaching enemy on the high ground.

But Washington didn't rely on Mother Nature alone to protect his men.

Working with a French engineer—remember, the French had stepped up their support after Saratoga—Washington created an outer defensive line. It included fortified trenches and redoubts, enclosed defensive emplacements built from any available materials such as dirt, stones, and bricks. Washington then added an *inner* defensive line. It ran parallel to the outer defenses and protected Washington's men on the high ground.

That wasn't all.

Washington set up cannons between those defensive lines that could be moved to any other place along the lines.

And finally, if worse came to worst, Washington ensured his men had a natural route to escape. The Conway Cabal insisted otherwise, but Washington was an exceptional leader. At Valley Forge, he made sure his force was prepared for an attack, prepared to defend, and prepared to retreat.

But they still needed somewhere to sleep. Washington ordered his men to build identical huts. Each shelter was fourteen-by-fourteen feet with a solid roof, fireplace, door, and a dirt floor—which sometimes was also stained with blood from his men's bare feet being exposed to the harsh winter weather.

The Continental soldiers, hungry and shivering, built thousands of these huts.

Can you imagine being at Valley Forge? You might be surprised to learn that kids were there. Some families traveled from place to place with their soldier-father. So many Patriots arrived at Valley Forge that winter that it suddenly became the fourth-largest city in the American colonies.

Valley Forge also became a turning point for the Continental Army.

Meet Major General Baron von Steuben. He was a masterful drill instructor and a captain in the Prussian Army—a merciless German fighting force.

Von Steuben drills the Continentals at Valley Forge.

Washington recognized von Steuben's talents and tasked him with training his disorganized fighters. It was a tall order—especially since von Steuben didn't speak English!

Filled with passion for his duty, von Steuben yelled at the Americans in a mixture of German, English, French, and swear words. But his methods worked.

He divided the disorganized men into smaller training groups, then began with the most straightforward disciplines. First, he taught the men how to march, maneuver, and obey military orders.

Then, after they had mastered those elements, von Steuben taught them how to use their muskets and bayonets properly, and how to clean and maintain those weapons.

A veteran of European-style warfare, von Steuben knew that the Patriots' hit-and-run tactics might be effective in skirmishes. But once a real battle started on a real battlefield, the winner was usually the army that held its line, didn't flee, and could reload faster than the other side.

Baron von Steuben.

Von Steuben also laid down rules about hygiene. Although more than 12,000 soldiers arrived at Valley Forge, only 10,000 survived. About 2,000 men died of hunger, cold, and illnesses such as typhoid, a disease caused by eating food and drinking water contaminated with harmful bacteria.

Von Steuben redesigned the camp at Valley Forge and taught the men to place their latrines—toilets and such—on a hill so that human waste would flow away from where the men slept and ate. He also ordered the men to wash and scrub their clothing, right down to the rags wrapped around their bare feet.

Fortunately, as winter turned to spring, the Conway Cabal's mutiny failed, and the soldiers who very likely resented von Steuben's hollering now were part of a unified army. Stronger, smarter, and more confident, they left Valley Forge to be once again tested on the battlefield against the mighty Redcoats.

Would they win?

Let's find out.

BOOKS

Winter at Valley Forge (Graphic History) by Matt Doeden. A visual retelling, somewhat fictionalized, that presents general background information about the colonial period.

Valley Forge: The History and Legacy of the Most Famous Military Camp of the Revolutionary War by Charles River editors. Filled with pictures and first-hand accounts, including some written by Washington himself.

INTERNET

There are plenty of videos on Valley Forge just for kids. Here are some you might enjoy: yhoo.it/3HDaVtg

MOVIES

Save Our History: Valley Forge. A solid presentation by the History Channel.

THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH

June 28, 1778

Washington rallies the troops at Monmouth.

IN ANY PAINTING of George Washington, does he ever look angry?

Washington's usually shown as a cool, calm, and collected leader.

But in this next battle, we will see another side of the American commander.

Here's how the Battle of Monmouth began.

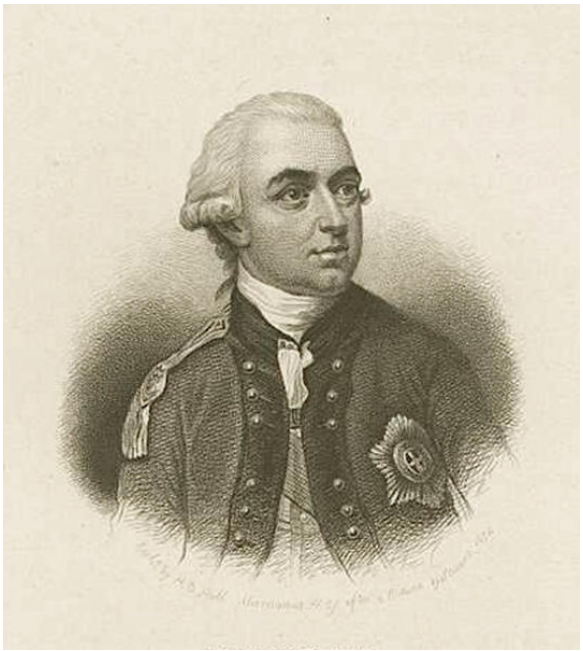
In May 1778, British commander General Howe sailed away from the American colonies and returned to England. Howe's exit marked a serious shift for the British Army. Who would take his command?

The British forces were facing other problems, too.

Before Valley Forge, the Continental Army had been losing soldiers. But after Valley Forge, Washington's force swelled to about 13,000 men.

Around this same time, France formed an alliance with the Patriot rebels—an alliance is a union that benefits both sides. France began sending supplies and soldiers to the Continental Army and added a desperately needed naval force to combat the mighty British Navy.

Amid all those changes and with Howe sailing back to England, British Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton stepped into the role of commander.



British General Sir Henry Clinton.

Clinton decided his most important goal was to maintain control of Philadelphia and New York Harbor. But it was soon apparent that Clinton didn't have enough manpower to hold both places. Britain wasn't sending Clinton more troops. Also, now that France had joined this fight, the British worried that French ships

might block the Delaware River and choke out the British occupation of Philadelphia.

Clinton was ordered to leave Philadelphia and move his entire force to New York. That city's harbor was strategically key for supplying the British Army.

Clinton planned to march his men from Philadelphia to New Jersey, then use British ships to bring them to New York. This was a long march with many men, including the Hessians and the grenadiers, the Black Watch Highlanders, and the Coldstream Guards—a formidable, well-trained army!

But the plan took some unexpected turns.

In every war, spies and rumors alter plans. And that's what happened on this march.

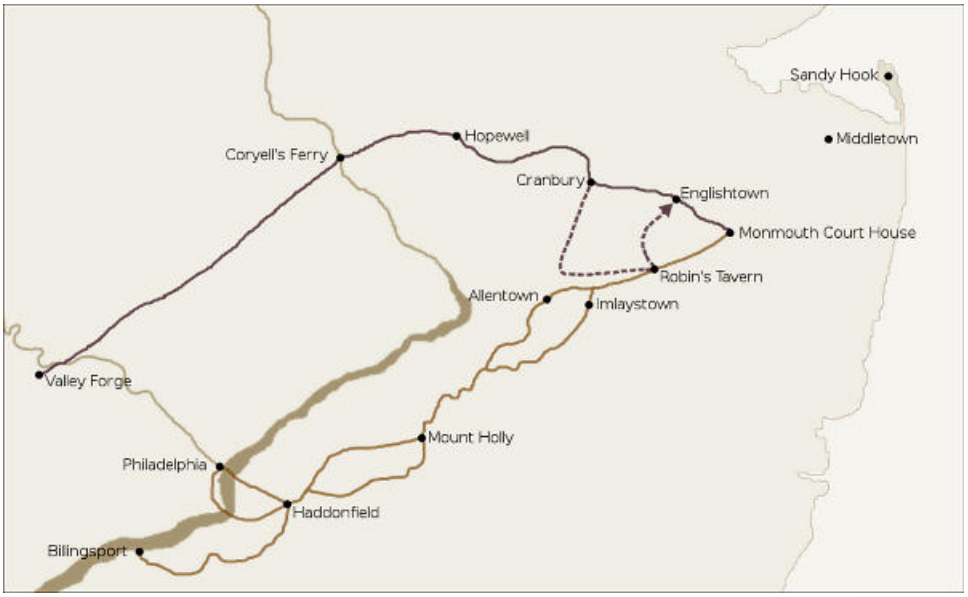
In June 1778, Washington's spies learned of Clinton's march for New Jersey. Washington gathered his generals for a council of war—that's when a military leader explains his battle plan to his officers. Two of his generals wanted to attack Clinton on his march.

But Major General Charles Lee disagreed. Lee insisted the Continental Army was no match against the British force on the battlefield.

Washington decided to send out a harassing force under Charles Lee. Their mission was to slow down Clinton's march by destroying bridges and chopping down trees that could block roads.

Washington suspected Clinton would travel to the town of Cranberry. Washington wanted to get there first and place his army on the high ground to wait for the enemy.

Now it was a race for New Jersey.



Routes taken by the British to Monmouth from Philadelphia (lower line) and by the Continentals from Valley Forge (upper line). Dashed line is Lafayette's rearguard attempt to catch the British. Cranberry ("Cranbury") is located in the upper middle.

Washington's men were traveling light. Perhaps that was one advantage of being poorly equipped—there wasn't much to carry. The British, however, were loaded down with 1,500 heavy wagons packed with all kinds of supplies. Each soldier also carried a heavy pack, some weighing as much as eighty pounds.

In six days, the British only managed to travel about thirty miles. Washington's men covered nearly twice as much ground in those same six days, close to sixty miles.

But during the march, Clinton heard a rumor that American Major General Horatio Gates was joining his force with Washington's men. Clinton then decided to change his New Jersey destination to Sandy Hook. The British had already won several battles near that town. Plus, from Sandy Hook, the British Navy could ferry his army into New York City.

In late June, Washington replaced Lee's command of the harassing military force with Lafayette, the French noble serving in

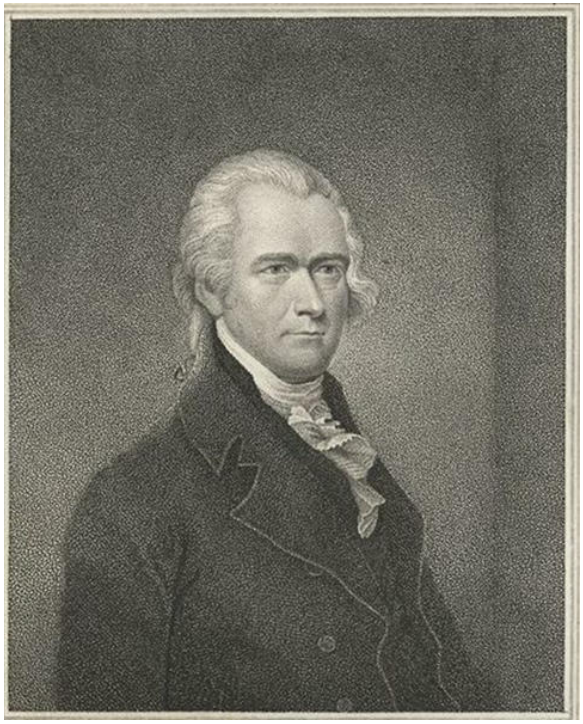
the Continental Army. Staff officer Alexander Hamilton assisted Lafayette.

The harassing force, however, had swelled in size, and Lee decided he would continue to command it.

Whenever there's confusion among military commanders, it is never a good thing.

The harassing force had other challenges, too. Summer temperatures soared above 90 degrees. Sudden rains spilled from the sky, with thunderstorms and lightning strikes. In search of Clinton's army, the harassing force scattered across the landscape, searching for Redcoats.

"We are entirely at a loss where the army is," Alexander Hamilton complained.



Alexander Hamilton—revolutionary, general, and Founding Father.

Clinton paused his march in the village of Englishtown, New Jersey. His army set up a camp at Monmouth Courthouse.

On June 27, Washington realized his harassing force was only a few miles from the courthouse. He ordered Lee to attack Clinton's force. Unfortunately, Lee bungled the attack.

The British resumed their movement for Sandy Hook. Early the next day, some skirmishes broke out, causing much confusion but not stopping the British march.

Then, around 8 a.m., Lee suddenly decided to launch a full attack.

Lee planned to encircle Clinton's force. But he was planning this maneuver without knowing the actual size of the opposing army or even understanding the local terrain—the land's physical features.

Even worse, Clinton observed Lee's movements and realized his plan. To foil the encirclement, Clinton led his men back to Monmouth Courthouse.

Unfortunately for the Continental soldiers, the situation grew even worse. Lee didn't explain his battle plan to his officers. Confusion upon confusion strained his force.

As the British neared a location called Briar Hill, Clinton decided to attack.

Lee ordered his men to set up artillery and stop the advance.

But the Patriot guns soon ran out of ammunition. As the artillerymen ran off the line to retrieve supplies, Lee's officers thought they were retreating—they had no idea about the low ammo supplies.

Battle of Monmouth.

Suddenly, all of Lee's men fell into a retreat!

Clinton, no fool in battle, moved quickly and ordered his artillery force forward. The Redcoats charged over Briar Hill.

By 1:30 p.m., Lee was still searching for a place to make a stand. Once again, he didn't inform his men of his plan. That lack of communication spread the confusion even further.

Washington's main force approached the battle. Lee's last dispatch said that his men were encircling Clinton's army, so Washington assumed that was happening—until he was met by Lee's retreating troops running for their lives!

Amid all this chaos and confusion, Washington was atop his white horse, searching for Lee's officers. When he found them, he demanded to know what, exactly, was going on. But the officers couldn't tell him—they didn't know either, because Lee kept trying to control everything by himself.

Finally, Washington spotted Lee.

History gives several slightly different versions of what happened next. But we know for certain that Washington was boiling mad.

American Major General Charles Lee.

One general overheard the conversation and later said, "General Washington stared at Lee until the leaves shook on the trees."

Can you imagine this deadly gaze?

With that expression drilling into Lee, Washington said, "I desire to know, sir, what is the reason whence arises this disorder and confusion."

Lee could only stammer excuses.

What should a leader do at that point? Scream at his officer? Flee with the rest of the retreat? Blame Lee for everything that was going wrong?

Many leaders might choose one of these options. But not George Washington.

Riding his white horse up and down the broken line, Washington hollered orders to reorganize his army.

Lafayette witnessed the moment.

"His presence stopped the retreat," Lafayette wrote. "His fine appearance on horseback, his calm courage … gave him the air best calculated to excite enthusiasm … I thought then as now, that never had I behold so superb a man."

But soon the British light dragoons attacked.

Two Continentals commanders—Walter Stewart and Nathaniel Ramsey—were fighting in the middle of this attack. Stewart was wounded and carried off the battlefield. Ramsey rose to the moment. Sword raised, he charged on horseback into an oncoming British dragoon. Ramsey cut down the soldier with his sword, grabbed the reins of that man's horse, and charged into the British line. Though startled at first by this one-man attack, the British managed to capture Ramsey and take him prisoner.

Washington still had two regiments in reserve. He sent for them and ordered all artillery forward to make a stand at a rise known as Comb's Hill.

Clinton, however, thought the rebels were still retreating. He pressed his men forward into the battlefield, unaware that Washington was turning this fight around.

It was a nasty surprise.

When Clinton launched this straightforward attack, his men were mowed down by blazing artillery fire. The British soldiers fell into a retreat.

What was Clinton's response? Bring more artillery forward.

The Battle of Monmouth descended into an artillery duel. Booming cannon fire exploded from both sides for several hours.

Unaware of the emotional, physical, and spiritual transformation at Valley Forge, the British assumed they were still facing an unprofessional army of rebels. As British artillery unleashed its fire, they expected these Americans to flee.

But thanks to von Steuben, these men were now trained soldiers. The Continentals refused to run; they were determined to win.

Washington rallies his men on the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Washington continued to ride forward—sometimes within thirty or forty feet of the British lines. For protection, Washington only had a massive camouflaging cloud of gun smoke. In fact, Washington rode into this battle so often that his white horse died of exhaustion. Quickly, Washington found another mount and continued the fight.

Clinton also refused to quit.

Sensing weakness in one line, the Redcoats surged forward and probably would've broken through, except 1,000 Continentals from

two regiments—New Hampshire and Virginia—raced out of the woods and attacked the British right flank. Among those Patriots was a lieutenant colonel named Aaron Burr, who led a wild charge that injured his horse.

Clinton decided to try another assault. This time he would attack what he thought was the weakest point—Washington's right flank.

The British soldiers moved forward in a regimented column. Washington's now-trained artillery hit them with crossfire. One story of this movement claimed that a single Patriot cannonball knocked down an entire British platoon—Redcoats falling like dominoes.

The British fell into another retreat.

By late afternoon, with temperatures climbing to 100 degrees, Clinton was ready to launch another assault. The Americans could hear him yelling, "Forward to the charge, my brave Grenadiers!"

American commanders responded. "Steady!" they told their men. "Steady! Wait for the word and then pick out the kingbirds." That meant: "Locate the officers in charge and take them out."

It wasn't until late afternoon that Clinton realized this battle was a stalemate—neither side would win.

His men were exhausted.

Daylight was fading.

Clinton halted the attacks.

Though Washington wanted to keep up the fight, he realized the effort might not produce enough reward.

During the night, the British slipped away and marched to Sandy Hook without harassment from Washington. The British Navy ferried Clinton's army to New York.

The Battle of Monmouth was a draw—neither side could claim victory. Both suffered losses, including men who died of heatstroke.

Sixty-nine Americans were killed in action, 161 were wounded, and 130 were missing.

The British lost sixty-five soldiers, 170 were wounded, and sixty-four were missing—with another fifty-nine dead from the heat.

But for Washington, this battle was a significant personal victory.

Not only did his newly trained soldiers prove themselves worthy fighters on the battlefield, but Congress also recognized Washington's courage under fire and his unwavering leadership amid chaos. Washington's enemies, such as the Conway Cabal, were silenced.

Washington would remain commander in chief of the Continental Army.

You might be wondering about General Charles Lee, who bungled so much of this battle.

Well, Lee tried to justify his actions to anyone who would listen to him complain. But Washington had him arrested and court-martialed—that's when a military judge and jury rule based on military law. Lee was found guilty of disobeying orders, conducting an "unnecessary, disorderly, and shameful retreat," and disrespecting the commander in chief.

Charles Lee would never again command an army.

WHO FOUGHT?

The 1804 pistol duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr.

YOU JUST READ about two men who fought in the Battle of Monmouth: Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton.

Both men were crucial figures in the American Revolutionary War, and both participated in the founding of the United States of America.

However, Hamilton and Burr also became avowed enemies and fought a deadly pistol duel that left one of them dead.

Here's what happened.

In 1800, Aaron Burr became Vice President of the United States under Thomas Jefferson. At that time, Alexander Hamilton was the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States (he was the first, appointed by George Washington). Hamilton helped create the new country's economic—money and banking—systems.

After the war, Burr and Hamilton stood on opposite sides politically, and there was probably some personal hatred mixed

in—Hamilton especially detested Burr. He even made public attacks, such as saying, "I feel it is a religious duty to oppose his career."

And maybe even kill him.

On July 11, 1804, Burr and Hamilton took separate boats across New York's Hudson River. They landed at a spot known as the Heights of Weehawken, New Jersey.

Weehawken was a popular place for pistol duels because New Jersey wasn't policing the crime, although the practice was banned. From 1700 to 1845, Weehawken was used for eighteen duels. And in 1801, one of those duels killed Hamilton's oldest son!

Burr and Hamilton paired off and stood facing each other, pistols in hand. In those days, it was common practice for a dueler to fire the first shot into the ground to prove they were ready to shoot to kill. Some disputes ended at that point.

But not this one.

Two shots were fired, but since the people there had all turned their backs so they could deny seeing this illegal activity, nobody could say for sure what happened. Some said only Burr fired. Others claimed Hamilton fired a shot over Burr's head and Burr returned fire.

What is undisputed is that a lead-ball bullet struck Hamilton in the stomach, ricocheted off one of his ribs, and ripped up his internal organs before coming to a stop in his spine. Hamilton collapsed and dropped the pistol.

Burr, speechless, was rushed away.

The following day, Alexander Hamilton died of his injuries. Today, his image is on the ten-dollar bill of the United States.

And Aaron Burr?

Hamilton's death ruined his political career. For the rest of his life, Burr was shunned by American society and both political parties.

BOOKS

The Boys of Old Monmouth: Annotated and Illustrated by Everett T. Tomlinson. The book contains a faithful account of the movements of the opposing armies.

The Duel: The Parallel Lives of Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr by Judith St. George. In alternating chapters, these two men come to life amid their important roles in forming the United States.

Alexander Hamilton: The Outsider by Jean Fritz. Biography of Hamilton by an award-winning author. Fritz has also written several other excellent books on the Founding Fathers and the American Revolution.

INTERNET

Watch a re-enactment of the Battle of Monmouth: youtube.com/watch?v=ZbLruILDxLU

MOVIES

Disney produced a movie, *Hamilton*, based on the acclaimed Broadway musical. Though it takes some liberties with facts, it tells an entertaining story about Alexander Hamilton though hip-hop and rap music.

THE BATTLE OF CAMDEN

August 16, 1780

The Battle of Camden.

WARS HAVE DIFFERENT phases, known as "campaigns."

Each campaign is a larger planned action, and it's designed to change the war's direction. Campaigns focus on particular goals in particular areas.

The American Revolution had three campaigns.

The first focused on New England and Canada. The goal was to force the rebel colonists to submit quickly and avoid an all-out war.

When that didn't work, the British launched a second campaign. It focused on the area known as the Mid-Atlantic. British forces tried to wipe out the Continental Army in battles throughout New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland—the colonies located near the mid-Atlantic Ocean coastline.

The third phase was the southern campaign.

As you know, General Howe sailed back to England in 1777. That left General Clinton in charge. When Clinton realized he didn't have enough soldiers to hold both Philadelphia and New York, he left for New York. It was the more crucial area to control.

British commander Clinton.

But to Clinton's surprise, he was discovering that Washington's army was no longer just a bunch of undisciplined fighters. Those winter months at Valley Forge had, well, *forged* the American rebels into authentic military soldiers.

This change was one reason Clinton turned his focus on the southern colonies, especially South Carolina.

The war had reached a stalemate up north—neither side was winning decisively. Clinton kept trying to lure Washington into an all-out battle to destroy the Continental Army, but Washington continued to foil Clinton's objective.

Clinton also learned that England wouldn't send him any more reinforcements—the King didn't have enough soldiers to share.

Meanwhile, however, the American forces were expanding with help from France and even Spain.

Clinton's solution to this problem was to head south.

The southern colonies were home to a large population of British Loyalists. Clinton believed these southerners who still supported the King would also help his army by providing food, shelter, and spies—and perhaps men to join his military force.

In December 1779, Clinton left New York and headed south with about 17,000 soldiers. And within three months, by February 1780, Clinton's army won a decisive battle in Charleston, South Carolina.

Charleston was to the south what Philadelphia was to the north—its most important city.

And now the British controlled it.

The Battle of Charleston, March 29 and May 12, 1780.

But militarily, there's a big difference between taking a city and controlling a city.

To maintain control, the British would need a supply depot for its occupying army. A supply depot stores essentials such as food and weaponry.

For their depot, the British chose the town of Camden, South Carolina. It was already home to one of their larger forts.

But in June, Clinton received terrible news.

A French naval fleet was approaching New York City. The British could not afford to lose New York, so Clinton marched north with 4,000 men. He left in his place General Charles Cornwallis to lead the southern campaign.

British General Cornwallis.

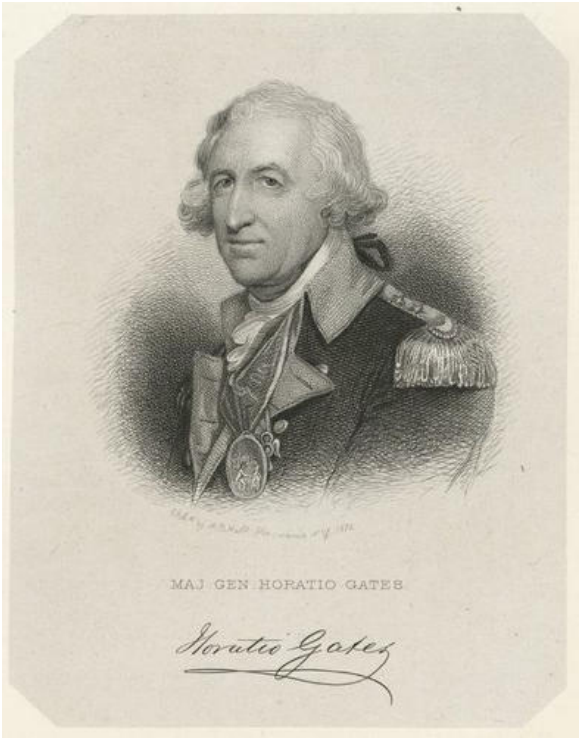
The American forces in the south also had a new commander. His name was Major General Horatio Gates.

You might remember Gates from the Battle of Saratoga—he ordered Benedict Arnold to cool his heels—but it might surprise you that Gates was not Washington's first choice for this position. Gates was considered, well, a bit of a coward, or at least not aggressive enough in battle—that's what infuriated Benedict Arnold, too.

Washington wanted to appoint General Nathanael Greene, his quartermaster general at Valley Forge—a quartermaster is in charge of supplies. Washington trusted Greene's judgment and knew he was a fierce fighter.

But Gates had many political friends. They rallied Congress, which then chose Gates over Greene.

Gates' first critical mission was to destroy the British supply depot at Camden. Under his command were 1,500 combat veterans and about 2,000 southern militiamen.



American Major General Horatio Gates.

Several veteran officers offered sound advice to Gates about this mission. They encouraged him to take a less direct route to Camden that was more secure and lined with local Patriots and supplies.

Gates ignored the advice.

Instead, he marched his men directly to Camden—right through an area loaded with hostile Loyalists. This route also didn't offer much food except summer peaches and "green"—unripened—corn.

Gates' men paid the price.

Many of these American soldiers were already suffering from dysentery, an illness that causes painful diarrhea. Now they were marching miles and miles in blistering southern heat and eating food that only caused more stomachaches and diarrhea.

Cornwallis heard about Gates' movement on Camden and left the city of Charleston with about 1,500 regulars and 600 Loyalists. Cornwallis planned to stop Gates before he ever reached the supply depot.

In early August, Gates arrived on the outskirts of Camden. He hoped Cornwallis would see his large force and simply withdraw, thus avoiding an all-out battle (his cowardice was showing again).

But despite being outnumbered two to one, Cornwallis didn't withdraw.

Gates' cowardice continued to reveal itself. He had a larger force, his men held a better field position on the high ground, and still Gates was searching for a way out. He even asked his officers if there was a way to escape.

General Edward Stevens replied: "It is too late to do anything but fight."

In those days, military convention placed the most experienced men on a force's right flank. In this case, that was Maryland and Delaware Continentals. The North Carolina militia held the center

line, while the Virginia militia held Gates' left flank. Gates also had a force of regulars in reserve.

In the early morning hours of August 16, the two armies clashed.

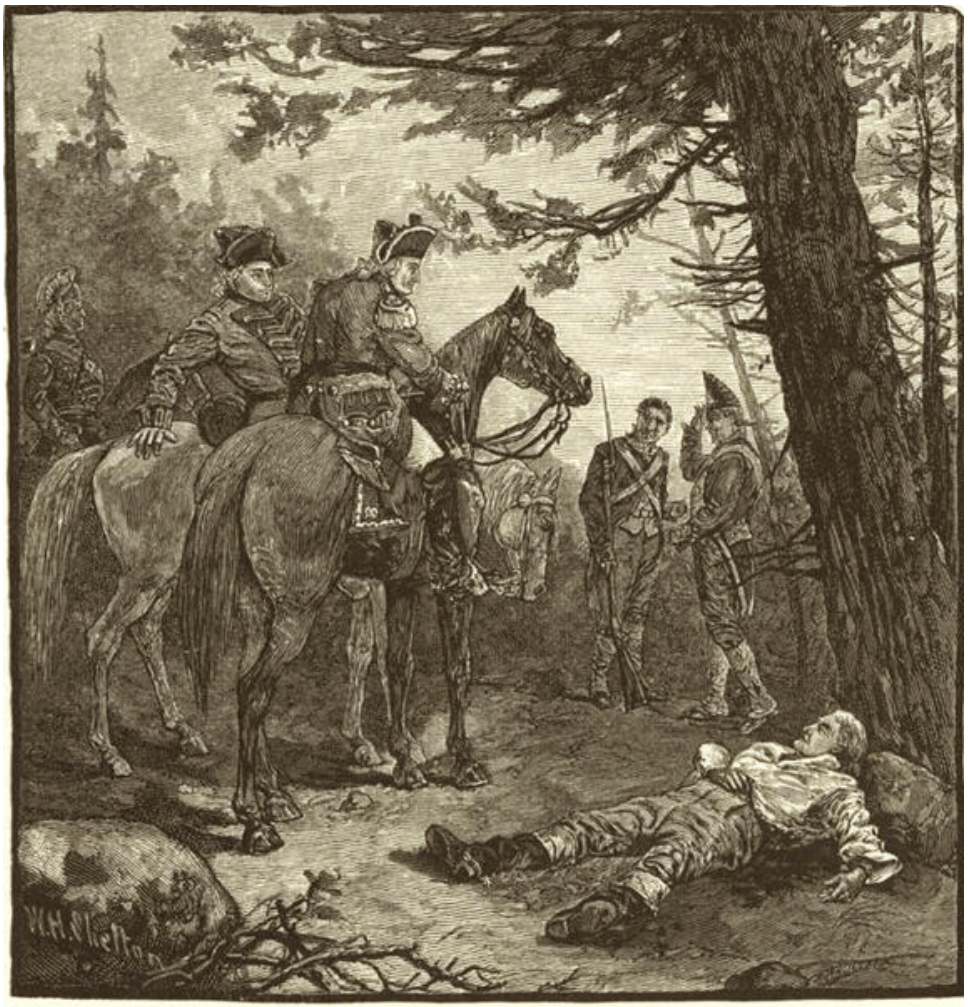
Cleverly, Cornwallis used his force of regulars to attack Gates' weakest side—the left flank. Mostly untrained militiamen, they took one look at the British Redcoats surging forward with fixed bayonets and cracking rifles—and ran for their lives. Some men even dropped their rifles to the ground without firing a shot!

Close-contact fighting at the Battle of Camden.

The British pressed forward. Musket fire burst into the humid summer air. A surging tide of Redcoats attacked the Patriots' center. Having heard the cries of those other militiamen, these soldiers also broke and ran.

Now Gates' army was in deep trouble. All that remained was the right flank and the reserve Continentals. A valiant few tried to hold the line, unaware that the militias had fled the battlefield.

American Major General Johann de Kalb tried to rally his men for a counterattack. De Kalb was a German-trained soldier in the French military. He had come to America with Lafayette. Struggling to turn around this bloodbath, de Kalb was wounded, captured, and died in a British camp several days later.



British officers discover the wounded de Kalb. Note the Hessian behind the tree wearing his distinctive uniform.

Soon the Redcoats surrounded the entire right flank of the Americans, and the Battle of Camden was finished.

It was a slaughter. More than 900 Americans were killed. Another 1,000 men were captured. The British also took possession of about twenty wagonloads of equipment, including 2,000 muskets and a large amount of ammunition.

One British officer described the aftermath this way:

"The road for some miles was strewn with the wounded and killed who had been overtaken by the legion in their pursuit. The numbers of dead horses, broken wagons, and baggage scattered on the road formed a perfect scene of horror and confusion: Arms, knapsacks, and accoutrements [personal objects] found were innumerable; such was the terror and dismay of the Americans."

The Battle of Camden was a significant victory for Cornwallis. It seemed to confirm that the southern campaign was key to winning this war.

For the Patriots, the loss was devastating on many fronts. South Carolina was cleared of all Continental troops. Now the British controlled not just the city of Charleston but the entire colony.

Are you wondering about Horatio Gates, where he was during this battle?

Well, the so-called commander placed himself in the rear—in safety. When he saw his militia break and run early, he mounted his horse and galloped away. In fact, Gates didn't stop riding until he reached Charlotte, North Carolina—about 100 miles away! Some leader, huh?

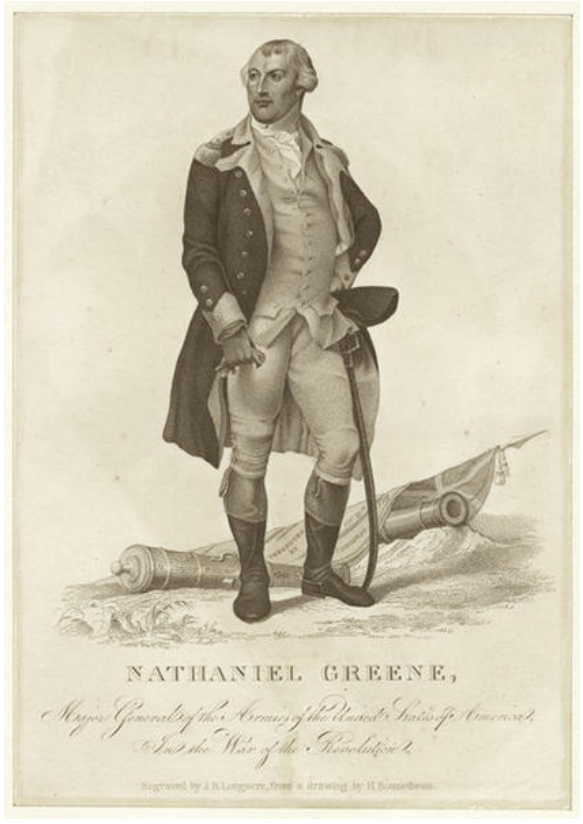
The news of Camden diminished morale among the Americans. Captain John Marshall (later Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court) said: "There never was a victory more complete, or a defeat more total."

Gates was court-martialed. But once again, his friends in Congress came to his rescue and made sure all the charges were dropped. Gates didn't serve in the military for another two years.

However, something good arose from this battle's terrible loss. Gates was replaced as commander by—guess who?—Nathanael Greene, the leader Washington wanted in the first place.

But after the bloodbath at Camden, Greene's mission to halt the southern campaign was now even more daunting.

WHO FOUGHT?



Nathanael Greene.

WHY DID GEORGE Washington think so highly of this man and soldier?

Nathanael Greene was born on August 7, 1742—one of nine children. His family belonged to the Quaker faith, which doesn't believe in participating in violence.

But as a young man, Greene witnessed the Redcoats abusing the colonists. The abuse caused him to question his faith. He didn't want to act violently, but he didn't see another way to stop the abuse and achieve lasting freedom.

Greene tried to explain his dilemma in a letter to his wife Catherine.

"But, the injury done my country," he wrote, "and the chains of slavery forging for all posterity calls me forth to defend our common rights, and repel the bold invaders of the sons of freedom."

At the beginning of the Revolution, many colonies created militias for their defense. Nathanael Greene was a founder of the Rhode Island militia, but some men doubted his ability to lead because he walked with a limp.

Greene's brave fighting in battles such as Trenton and Brandywine washed away all doubt.

Washington also observed his excellent character and his ability to complete tasks. Though Greene preferred commanding soldiers on the battlefield, he accepted Washington's request to work as quartermaster at Valley Forge. Greene's job was to ensure all the supplies—such as food, clothing, medicine, and ammunition—were in good order and never wasted.

When he was back in battle command, Greene proved a relentless raider and guerrilla-style warrior. He seemed undaunted by loss.

He once said: "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again."

Greene's command of the southern troops was challenging. He used his own money to buy food for his starving soldiers.

After the war, despite a military reputation second only to George Washington, Greene was flat broke. To compensate him for his sacrifices and service, South Carolina awarded him money. Georgia offered him free land.

In 1785, Greene moved his family to Cumberland Island, Georgia.

The following year, Nathanael Greene died from an illness. He was forty-three years old.

Only three generals served the entire eight years of the American Revolutionary War: George Washington, Henry Knox, and Nathanael Greene.

BOOKS

Divided Loyalties: A Revolutionary War Fifer's Story by Phyllis Hall Haislip. Eleven-year-old Teddy, upset by the conflicts between his Patriot father and Loyalist mother, mistakenly joins the wrong unit of his local Virginia regiment. As a fife and drum corps member, he marches to South Carolina to participate in the Battle of Camden.

Camden 1780: The Annihilation of Gates' Grand Army by David Smith. Books by Osprey Publishing are known for excellent maps and illustrations, including original artwork.

INTERNET

The American Battlefield Trust offers a wide selection of online resources for learning. Here is their site for the Battle of Camden: www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/camden

MOVIES

The Patriot. This movie starring Mel Gibson includes a depiction of the Battle of Camden. You can preview that particular section of the film here: youtube.com/watch?v=hPK5KDCGF7g

WOMEN OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

"Molly Pitcher" at the Battle of Monmouth.

ACCORDING TO THE laws of the time, colonial women could not legally fight as soldiers in the American Revolution.

But women found inventive ways to support the Patriot cause.

Some women worked as "camp followers," moving from battle to battle, sometimes with their children in tow, to support their husbands. They endured the same brutal living conditions—including freezing at Valley Forge—and worked for free as nurses, cooks, maids, water bearers, and seamstresses.

Here are some other interesting examples of the American Revolution's "women warriors."

Deborah Sampson

In 1782, Deborah Sampson wanted to join a Massachusetts army unit. She put on men's clothing and changed her name to Timothy Thayer. When a local resident realized "Timothy" was actually Deborah, he alerted the army's company commander. "Timothy" was released from armed service.

Soon after, however, Deborah re-enlisted in the army, this time under the name "Robert Shirtliff."

Deborah must've been powerful, because she joined a light infantry company. These units provided coverage for advancing regiments—forward reconnaissance and flank coverage—and the soldiers were chosen for their superior physical abilities. They were usually taller and more muscular than average, so nobody

would've ever suspected a woman was among the ranks of such masculine soldiers.

Deborah's first battle was near Tarrytown, New York. Two musket balls sank into her thigh, and she cut her forehead.

Fearing discovery, she begged her fellow soldiers—who didn't know her real identity—not to take her to a doctor. But one infantryman, seeing the seriousness of her injuries, packed her on a horse and rode her to a hospital. After the doctor first treated her head wound, Deborah escaped and later used a penknife and sewing needle to remove one musket ball. The other was too deep. She went back into the army.

More than a year later, Deborah's disguise was discovered. Rather than punish her, the army honorably discharged her, perhaps because of her brave service on the front lines.

Anna Smith Strong

Anna Smith Strong was part of General George Washington's spy ring, known as the Culper Spy Ring.

The spies kept watch on British soldiers and secretly transmitted information to Anna's neighbor on Long Island. Anna's job was to signal a fellow spy that information was ready to be picked up.

Anna devised an ingenious messaging system.

She would hang her laundry out to dry in full view of the British soldiers, but she would add a black petticoat to the clothesline with a certain number of handkerchiefs. The black petticoat meant, *Go pick up a message*. The cloths described where the message was hidden along the Long Island shoreline.

Anna's messaging system was never broken throughout the entire Revolution. And none of the Culper spies was ever caught.

Susanna Bolling

In May 1781, British General Charles Cornwallis arrived at the Bolling family's plantation in Virginia. He immediately demanded food and shelter for himself and his men.

Susanna Bolling, age sixteen, was going about her duties serving these "guests" when she overheard Cornwallis talking about his plan to capture Lafayette the following day at a halfway house outside Richmond.

Lafayette was among Washington's most trusted officers. His capture would create an almost insurmountable loss for the Continental Army.

Susanna snuck out of her house through an underground tunnel and reached the family docks on the Appomattox River. She then paddled a canoe across the water and borrowed a neighbor's horse. She rode forty miles through heavy rain to warn Lafayette that his life was in danger.

Susanna even managed to sneak back into her house before Cornwallis and his men noticed she was gone.

Thanks to Susanna's warning, Lafayette got away. His escape was significant. Lafayette would later play an important role in the Battle of Yorktown.

For that reason, some people refer to Susanna Bolling as "the girl who saved the American Revolution."

"Molly Pitcher"

Mary Ludwig also followed her gunner-husband into battle—a gunner is a man who fires the cannons.

On June 28, 1778, at the Battle of Monmouth, Mary Ludwig made countless trips to a nearby spring to fill pitchers with cold water. The soldiers would drink the water and pour some over the cannons to cool down the weapons, especially in the summer heat.

Women like Mary were nicknamed "Molly Pitcher" for their tireless efforts.

One witness claimed that when her husband collapsed beside his cannon, Mary dropped her water pitcher and fired the gun until the Americans won the battle.

Nancy Hart

One day, six British soldiers stopped by Nancy Hart's cabin. The soldiers were searching for a rebel colonial leader and demanded to know if the fugitive had visited the Hart farm.

Nancy denied ever seeing him, although he had been there. Nancy was a Patriot rebel herself.

Suspecting she was lying, the Redcoats shot and killed one of the family's turkeys and ordered Nancy to cook the bird for them.

While she prepared the meal, the Redcoats stacked their weapons in a corner. When they demanded something to drink, Nancy served them wine. The alcohol took full effect, and Nancy whispered to her daughter to run outside and find a conch shell that was kept hidden in a specific tree. The conch shell was blown whenever the Patriots needed to alert the neighbors that Redcoats were near.

Nancy then began removing the soldiers' muskets, sliding them out through an opening in the cabin wall. Suddenly the soldiers caught on to her ruse and grabbed the remaining weapons. Nancy was now armed, too, and she threatened to shoot the next man who moved.

Thinking this threat was a bluff, a soldier approached Nancy. She shot him dead. And she held off the other five Redcoats until her husband arrived with help.

Many years later—in 1912—some railroad workers were digging near the old Hart cabin when they uncovered a surprising find: a neat row of six human skeletons.

BOOKS

Women Heroes of the American Revolution: 20 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Defiance, and Rescue by Susan Casey.

Susanna's Midnight Ride: The Girl Who Won the Revolutionary War by Libby Carty McNamee.

Courageous Children and Women of the American Revolution by John Micklos.

INTERNET

An overview of both notable and ordinary colonial women during the American Revolution: www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/women-american-revolution

Kahn Academy has a lesson on "Women in the American Revolution": www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/road-to-revolution/the-american-revolution/a/women-in-the-american-revolution

BATTLE OF KINGS MOUNTAIN

October 7, 1780

Men and horses prepare to fight the Battle of Kings Mountain.

IF YOU LOOK at a map of the United States today, you can see fifty states with their boundaries, known as "state lines."

But during the American Revolution, several of those same states had different boundaries. For instance, the Battle of Kings Mountain took place in North Carolina, but today that area is part of South Carolina.

The Battle of Kings Mountain is also one of the few in which no official soldiers fought. Though a military officer led the British side, ordinary Loyalists battled ordinary Patriots.

But before we dive into this stunning clash, let's quickly recap.

At this point in the war, British General Clinton turned his attention to the southern colonies. However, hearing that a French fleet was sailing for New York, Clinton had marched north with 4,000 British soldiers. General Cornwallis was left in charge of the southern campaign.

After the British took control of Charleston, South Carolina, and slaughtered the Patriots at the Battle of Camden, Cornwallis felt confident about his mission to conquer the south.

It was now autumn of 1780, and Cornwallis wanted to move deeper into the Carolinas and control more southern territory. Cornwallis enlisted the aid of British Major Patrick Ferguson.

Ferguson was a "scorched earth" type of leader—he showed little mercy for his enemies.

Cornwallis tasked Ferguson with rallying Loyalists and convincing them to protect the Redcoats as they moved into North Carolina.

Ferguson sent a warning ahead for the Patriots living in this region.

It wasn't subtle.

The Patriots must "desist from their opposition to British arms," he said, or Ferguson would "march over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay waste their country with fire and sword."

Quite a threat.

The Overmountain Men prepare for the Battle of Kings Mountain.

And it was precisely the wrong thing to say to rugged backcountry men who loved their families, their freedom, and their way of life. Known as the Overmountain Men, these Carolina colonists weren't about to bow down to some English guy in a fancy uniform.

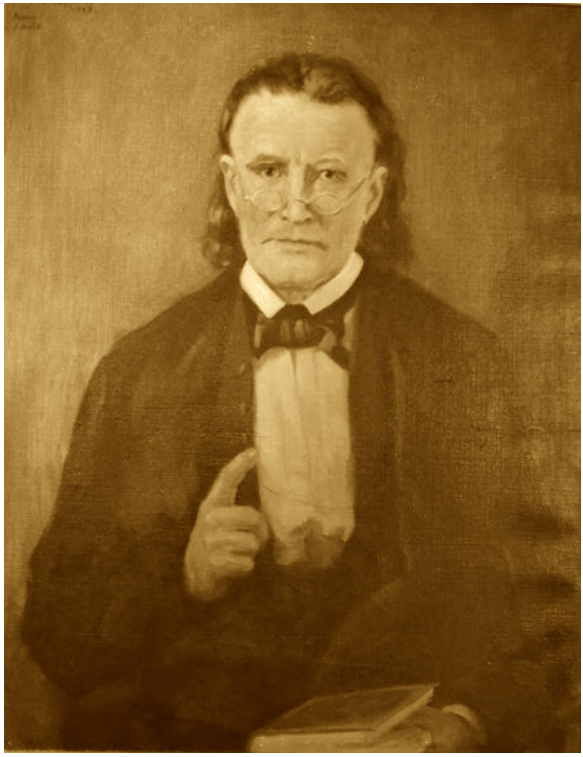
To show Ferguson who was boss, men arrived from five different southern states to join the Overmountain Men, including 400 militiamen from Virginia under the command of Colonel William Campbell.

American Colonel William Campbell.

Campbell's combined Patriot colonial force totaled about 1,400 men.

Before the battle, a minister named Samuel Doak addressed them.

"The enemy is marching hither to destroy your homes," Reverend Doak said. "Go forth, then, in the strength of your manhood to the aid of your brethren, the defense of your liberty and protection of your homes."



Reverend Samuel Doak.

In early October, the Patriots gathered at a place called the Cowpens. They chose Campbell as their overall leader and devised a plan. Moving quickly, they would spring a surprise attack on Ferguson's 1,100-man Loyalist force. However, the Patriots didn't have enough horses. So they chose 900 of their best sharpshooters who could ride all night and still have the energy to fight Ferguson.

But while on that ride, two Patriots were captured by Ferguson's scouts. Even worse, the prisoners spilled the secret plan.

The element of surprise was ruined.

Ferguson decided to get more protection. He started heading for Cornwallis' main army but soon realized he wouldn't reach it before the Patriots arrived.

His Loyalist force would need to make a stand on a sixty-foot-high hill. It was called Kings Mountain.

On October 7, after riding all night, the Patriot fighters arrived at Kings Mountain around noon. They used a wooded area as camouflage to disguise their arrival.

Campbell split the force in two—about 440 men placed on one side of Kings Mountain, another 470 on the other. Campbell also broke the two groups into multiple columns and ordered them to spread out and surround the mountain.

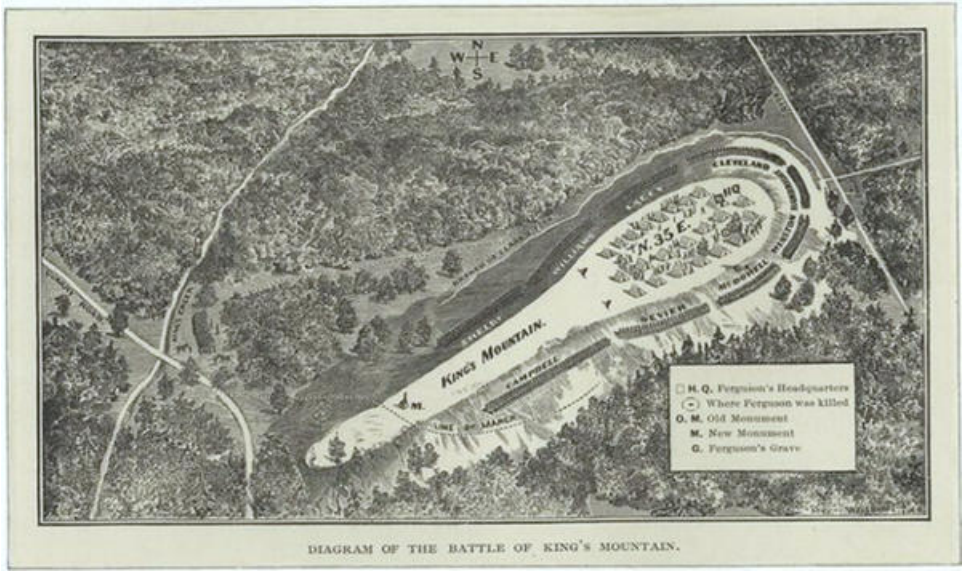


Diagram showing the location of forces. Campbell's men surrounded Ferguson's camp and headquarters.

Around 3 p.m., Campbell's men had climbed about a quarter of the way up the mountain, unheard and unseen, when suddenly some Loyalists on "picket duty"—like guard duty—spotted them.

The Loyalists sounded the alarm.

The Patriots opened fire.

From all sides, gun smoke billowed into the autumn air. But the guns sounded different.

Generally, rifles were not used in battles. But the Overmountain Men—as unofficial soldiers—only had the weapons they kept for hunting and feeding their families.

The Loyalists were firing muskets.

These two weapons were significantly different. A rifle is highly accurate. A good rifleman—and these rugged men were very good—could hit a target from 200 to 300 yards away. But rifles are difficult to reload quickly. Even a very good rifleman could only fire about one shot per minute.

A musket isn't as accurate at long distances, but it's easier to reload. A musket could fire about three times a minute.

When the gunfight broke out, Ferguson assumed the attack was coming from only one side of the mountain. Unaware that other Patriot columns were approaching, Ferguson positioned his men incorrectly.

Overmountain Men and colonial riflemen advance on the Loyalist positions.

Campbell's multiple columns began attacking like arrows rather than heavy clubs. This tactic forced the Loyalists to fire across spread-out targets, weakening their power. Even worse for the

British side, these rugged mountain men knew how to handle the hill's terrain. And when one of Campbell's columns got bogged down in a marshy area, another column shifted into position and blocked the Loyalists' only escape route.

But the Loyalists had one distinct advantage—the British Army had equipped them with bayonets. Now Ferguson saw an opportunity to drive the Patriots off the hill.

Imagine climbing this hill under gunfire, almost reaching the top, when suddenly a Loyalist force rushes over the crest and charges straight at you with a spiked fence of glistening steel blades.

Ferguson's charge worked. The Patriots broke into a retreat and ran down the hill.

But once they reached the bottom, they used the wooded area for cover and regrouped.

And now, a different Patriot column was approaching the hill's crest from another side. They aimed their rifles at the Loyalists. Ferguson ordered another bayonet charge, but the Patriots held most of their position this time.

Campbell's multiple columns continued to work like a well-oiled machine. The Patriots attacked the Loyalists from various positions. As the Patriots surged forward, hand-to-hand combat broke out across the mountain. These Overmountain Men were determined to prove that nobody ruled over their lives, especially not some king living far away in England.

Ferguson was now surrounded. He drew his men into a concentrated defensive position.

The Patriots continued firing as they moved closer. And closer.

How did Ferguson respond?

He ordered another bayonet charge.

This time, it provided only a minor delay. The Patriots continued pushing the Loyalists into a smaller and smaller ring of defense.

Death of Major Ferguson at Kings Mountain.

Ferguson realized the end was coming.

He now had three choices: make a last stand, attack to escape, or surrender.

Ferguson ordered several men to mount their horses and charge into the Patriots. But their charge proved futile. The riflemen picked off the Loyalists like sitting ducks.

The Loyalists were now running low on ammunition. To his credit, Ferguson's last act was to help his men escape. He attempted to cut a path through the Patriots, but multiple bullets cut him down. Ferguson died from the injuries.

At that point, Ferguson's second-in-command raised the white flag of surrender.

The Patriots had won the Battle of Kings Mountain.

They lost twenty-eight men killed in action, with another sixty-two wounded.

But 290 Loyalists were killed in action. Another 163 were wounded, and 668 were captured. It was a resounding defeat.

While the British believed the south would offer them widespread support, the Battle of Kings Mountain revealed the

region's passion for freedom and self-determination. They wanted American independence, and they were clearly willing to die fighting for it.

News of this victory lifted the spirits of Patriots who wondered whether Britain's southern campaign would crush the movement.

Now it was clear: The Revolutionary War was far from over.

WHO FOUGHT?

United States postage stamp honoring the Overmountain Men.

THE OVERMOUNTAIN MEN knew how to live off the land and travel lightly. They didn't carry much with them on their hunting and gathering forays—no tents, no cooking pans, and very little extra clothing. They foraged for food and slept under the stars.

Cavalry Commander Light-Horse Harry Lee, among General Washington's best officers, called them "A race of handy men who are familiar with the use of force and rifle, stout, active, patient under privation, and brave."

Privation is when essential things like food and clothing are lacking.

Living in the backcountry of the Carolinas and the Appalachian Mountains, the Overmountain Men didn't immediately take up arms for the Patriot cause.

But as the battles progressed and the British launched their southern campaign, the Overmountain Men were necessarily drawn into the war to protect their families—especially after Major Ferguson issued his threats.

Going into the Battle of Kings Mountain, these men had no official authorization from the Continental Army. That's why they had to use their own rifles and horses. Some of these men traveled more than 300 miles to fight Ferguson, riding up mountains and down valleys, passing through the present-day states of Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Today, the National Park Service maintains an Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. It includes almost ninety miles that you can walk, plus a commemorative motor route with trail markers that tell stories about these rugged individuals who made Revolutionary War history.

BOOKS

Divide and Conquer, Major Battles of the American Revolution: Ticonderoga, Savannah and King's Mountain Fourth Grade History by Baby Professor. This book delves into some of the personalities in these three battles.

INTERNET

Tour the historic battle sites on Kings Mountain:
kimo.oncell.com/en/index.html

Visit the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail online:
www.nps.gov/ovvi/index.htm

THE BATTLE OF COWPENS

January 17, 1781

The Battle of Cowpens, painted in 1845, shows Lieutenant Colonel William Washington (cousin of George) fighting atop his white horse and protected by an unnamed Black soldier (left).

HAVE YOU EVER heard the expression, "Pride goes before a fall"?

The phrase comes from the Bible's book of Proverbs. It means that being too sure of yourself can cause you to make big mistakes.

That's what happened to one British colonel in the Battle of Cowpens.

Cornwallis had planned to take control of the Carolinas, but the southern mountain men militias had thwarted that campaign at the Battle of Kings Mountain.

Now the Americans planned to ruin the southern campaign even further.

American Lieutenant Nathanael Greene was the commander in charge of the southern Patriots. Following the Battle of Kings Mountain, Greene sent Brigadier General Daniel Morgan to attack British supply lines and harass any of Cornwallis' forces in the area.

American Brigadier General Daniel Morgan.

Morgan's force included 600 Continental soldiers and 400 militiamen. As they moved through the Carolinas, they were joined by another eighty cavalry soldiers.

Cornwallis soon realized Morgan's force would create a severe problem for his army's left flank. To counter them, Cornwallis sent 300 cavalry, 550 British soldiers, 280 Loyalists, and a substantial amount of artillery. Leading that force was Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton.

If you thought Ferguson was a hard-charging officer, Tarleton might've had him beat.

Tarleton pushed his men very hard but without many strategies. Tarleton's only real tactic on the battlefield was to charge into the sound of the guns. He had played an active role in many battles, particularly in the southern campaign. And although he was considered brave, he was also cruel. His reputation as a villain in the eyes of the Patriots was secured at the Battle of Waxhaws that took place in May 1780. The Continental soldiers had surrendered, even dropping their weapons and raising their arms, but Tarleton's dragoons ignored the surrender and slaughtered them all.

The Battle of Waxhaws, when Tarleton and his men slaughtered the surrendering Patriots.

The Patriots referred to Tarleton as the "butcher." That accusation became a rallying cry in the Battle of Cowpens.

Tarleton felt very confident due to his past achievements in battle. He also did not believe Morgan's men were any match for his force.

When Tarleton's scouts discovered the direction in which Morgan's men were traveling, he ordered them to move out fast to destroy the enemy.

On January 16, the Patriot scouts reported to Morgan that Tarleton's men were quickly approaching. Morgan decided to make a defensive stand at a place called Cowpens. An open range in South Carolina, Cowpens was where local settlers grazed their cattle.

Morgan chose carefully. His men would have their backs to the Broad River. The water would protect them from a rear attack. On either side of his force were two small hills for further protection. Although this setup also meant his men were boxed in, Morgan was determined to win this battle.

He devised a brilliant plan of attack based on what he'd learned over the years fighting the Redcoats.

Often the American militiamen who weren't properly trained broke and ran once the British opened fire. Morgan decided to use this problem as an advantage.

He set up three lines. In the front line, he placed his best marksmen. They would be under the command of Brigadier General Andrew Pickens. Morgan hoped these men could fire off three shots and take out as many men as possible, especially officers. That first line would then drop back and join the second line, which was populated with more militiamen, who would then fire on the oncoming British. Then they would fall back.

By the time the British fired on the third line, the surprise would be that it was stocked with fresh Continental Army soldiers.

Morgan also held eighty cavalrymen in reserve.

Meanwhile, Tarleton planned to charge straight ahead. He was fully confident the American militiamen would fall into retreat.

British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Even the horse seems afraid of him.

Tarleton's force had marched most of the night to catch Morgan's men at Cowpens. Rather than allowing his weary soldiers to rest, Tarleton launched an attack at the break of daylight on January 17.

First, Tarleton sent in his Legion Dragoons—his cavalry.

Cavalry attack at Cowpens.

Imagine being an American militiaman fighting in that first line. Powerful, muscular horses gallop straight at you, nostrils flaring, dirt flying from under their hooves, and above you, an enemy's sword glints in the morning light. But you're also a sharpshooter. Bracing your nerves, you stand steady, fire your weapon, and hit your target.

Along Pickens' first line, the crack of rifles sent back many riderless horses. Pickens' men managed to get off two shots each, a rare achievement in such battles.

When this first line dropped back, Tarleton ordered his infantry forward with their bayonets.

The second line of militiamen fired on them. The British continued to charge forward. Tarleton then sent out his remaining cavalry. These soldiers clashed with Morgan's third line of Continentals.

But Tarleton was also attempting a flanking movement. He sent some of his dragoons to circle around the right side of Morgan's

men. They were greeted by Virginia riflemen sending out a wall of fire.

However, when one of Morgan's officers ordered a new line of defense to block the flanking movement, some men thought it was a retreat.

Tarleton spotted his opening. He ordered his men to charge—victory, he believed, was close at hand.

The Battle of Cowpens by Don Troiani, courtesy of National Guard Bureau Heritage Series.

But Morgan's men regrouped under new orders and straightened their line. Tarleton's men continued to race forward. Morgan's center dropped back.

The British charged in even closer—Tarleton could see he was winning!

However, Morgan's men were flanking the British force from both sides, like a claw slowly pinching closed. In military terms,

this movement is known as a "double envelopment," when an army closes around the enemy, leaving no way out.

This tight battle descended into hand-to-hand combat. Swords. Knives. Fists. Guns spent of all bullets. Everything became a weapon for survival.

All the while, Morgan's men continued to create a circle of death for the British.

The only way out was to bolt.

Tarleton escaped with a few of his men, but the victory clearly belonged to Morgan and his harassing Patriots.

Morgan lost twelve men killed in action. Another sixty were wounded.

The British losses were tremendous: 110 men killed in action, 200 wounded, and 700 taken prisoner.

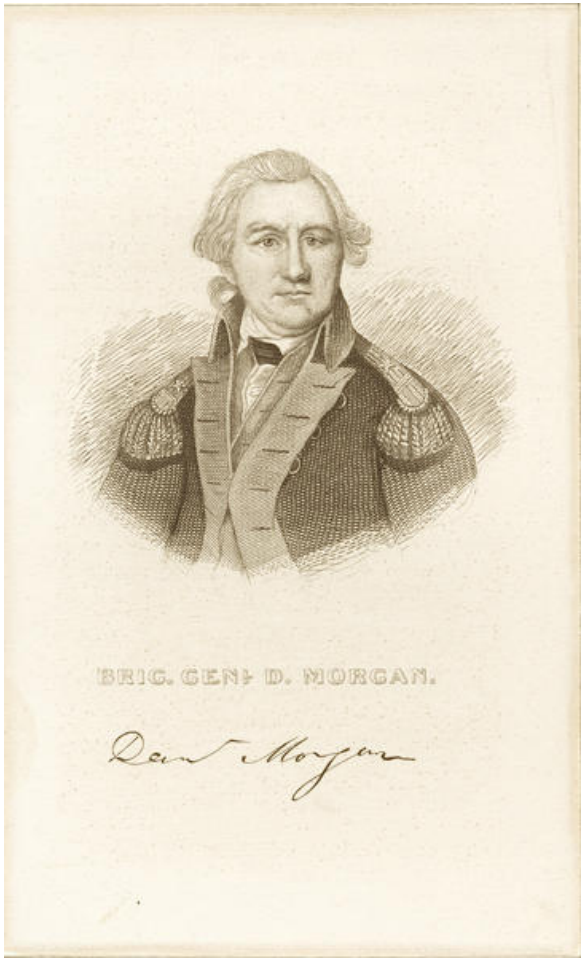
The Battle of Cowpens was a stunning—and brilliantly executed—victory. It further boosted the southern Patriots' morale. Cowpens also told the tale of how the British "butcher" was humiliated in defeat.

Later, one British Loyalist said, "We suffered a total defeat by some dreadful bad management."

At this point in the war, almost ten years had passed since the Boston Tea Party. The Patriot side had suffered severe losses during those years. Yet under Washington's leadership, combined with his army's determined attitude and clever tactics, the rebels were beating what was then the world's most powerful military force.

But many battles lay ahead.

And the British were still out for blood.



American Brigadier General Daniel Morgan.

DANIEL MORGAN RARELY talked about his childhood. Maybe his silence was because his childhood wasn't a happy one. As a teenager, Daniel ran away from his parents' home in New Jersey.

When he arrived in Virginia, he could barely read and write. He also liked to fistfight. A tough young man, he found work in a sawmill and became a wagoner—a person who drives horse-drawn wagons.

During the French and Indian War, Daniel Morgan worked as a wagoner for the British Army. His reputation for toughness

expanded in the spring of 1756. Morgan delivered supplies to a British fort and somehow annoyed a British lieutenant. The officer struck Morgan with the flat of his sword. Morgan replied by punching the officer and knocking him out cold.

Morgan was court-martialed for the assault and sentenced to 500 lashes—a whipping that few men survived.

Morgan survived. Later he claimed the British miscounted—he'd only been flogged 499 times.

In 1757, after that whipping, Morgan joined the British Army. But Indians ambushed his company, and several men were killed. Morgan was seriously wounded. One bullet struck the back of his neck, bored through his mouth, knocked out his teeth, then exited through his left cheek. Morgan's face became as disfigured as the whipped skin on his back.

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, Morgan joined the Continental Army as a rifle company captain. Among his strengths as commander was his ability to think unconventionally. He was an expert at harassing the British with hit-and-run maneuvers, sometimes with his men dressed in Indian disguises.

In 1775, the British captured Morgan and his riflemen. Eight months later, they were paroled, and Morgan got his revenge by defeating the British in the Battle of Saratoga. Many historians believe Morgan deserved much more credit for his actions that led to a Patriot victory.

Perhaps that's one reason why, in 1779, after being passed over for a promotion, Morgan resigned from the Continental Army.

The following year, however, Congress offered Morgan a commanding role in fighting the British in the south. At first, Morgan declined. But after hearing about Gates' humiliating defeat at Camden, Morgan rejoined the army and was promoted to brigadier general.

Morgan's reputation expanded after the Battle of Cowpens. He brilliantly outsmarted the enemy with his double envelopment

maneuver. It's also notable that on the night before the battle, Morgan rallied his men by revealing his heavily scarred back, courtesy of a British flogging. It was as if Morgan was telling them, *If you don't defeat these guys, they might do the same thing to you.*

After Cowpens, however, Morgan was forced to retire due to extreme back pain that kept him from riding a horse.

In 1779, he built a house in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, which he named "Saratoga."

BOOKS

The Declaration: Tales from a Revolution—South-Carolina by Lars D. H. Hedbor. Marauding British forces threaten everything a South Carolina man holds dear. He takes up arms in support of the Revolution but cannot guess that his actions will stretch across centuries to his descendants' lives.

INTERNET

The National Parks Service maintains an online resource supporting the Cowpens Battlefield. Take a tour here: www.nps.gov/cowp/index.htm

Photo gallery here: www.nps.gov/cowp/learn/photosmultimedia/photogallery.htm

America's Battlefield Trust offers an exciting 15-minute video of the southern campaign: rumble.com/verk7z-the-southern-campaign-of-the-revolutionary-war-animated-battle-map.html

MOVIES

The Patriot (2000). Andrews Pickens, who led Morgan's first line, served as one of the models for the movie's fictional character Benjamin Martin. In a scene before the Battle of Cowpens, Benjamin Martin asks the militia to try to fire two rounds before they retreat, reminiscent of what happened at the Battle of Cowpens.

THE BATTLE OF GUILFORD COURT HOUSE

March 15, 1781

Battle of Guilford Court House by H. Charles McBarron.

DO YOU KNOW the meaning of a "pyrrhic" victory?

This odd word—pronounced "PIRR-ik"—refers to an ancient battle where King Pyrrhus triumphed over the Romans. But the battle destroyed so much of his army that Pyrrhus was forced to end the war.

Today, a pyrrhic victory means any win that creates bigger losses than gains.

The Battle of Guilford Court House was a pyrrhic victory in the American Revolution. Here's what happened.

By the spring of 1781, British commander Cornwallis was boiling mad. His army had lost two crucial southern battles at Kings Mountain and Cowpens, and the Patriot movement was only growing stronger.

Cornwallis decided to capture Nathanael Greene. Surely losing the commander would make the rebels less effective.

Greene was on the move from the Carolinas with about 2,100 Patriots. His goal was to reach Virginia, resupply his forces, and gather reinforcements.

Cornwallis hoped to catch Greene on the move. But Greene evaded capture and managed to cross into Virginia, where he could strengthen his forces.

American General Nathanael Greene, commander of the southern forces.

Cornwallis also needed to resupply and reinforce his army. Since England wasn't sending him more soldiers, Cornwallis decided to find Loyalists to join his army. He moved his force to Hillsboro, North Carolina, but found only a few colonists were willing to fight alongside the Redcoats.

On February 23, Greene headed out of Virginia and crossed into North Carolina. On the way, he picked up reinforcements until his force grew to about 4,400 men.

Meanwhile, not only was Cornwallis not gaining supporters, but by early March, his force was dwindling from sickness, lack of food, and desertions. The British force whittled down to about 2,000 men.

On March 14, Cornwallis learned that Greene was just outside the town of Greensboro, North Carolina. Specifically, his men were camped at Guilford Court House.

Cornwallis raced his army to Greensboro.

On March 15, advance guards of both armies accidentally clashed. After a brief skirmish, both forces retreated.

That afternoon, Cornwallis' main body of soldiers arrived in the area. He saw the rebels on the other side of a field. A road ran down the middle, with two more roads off that and some wooden fences.

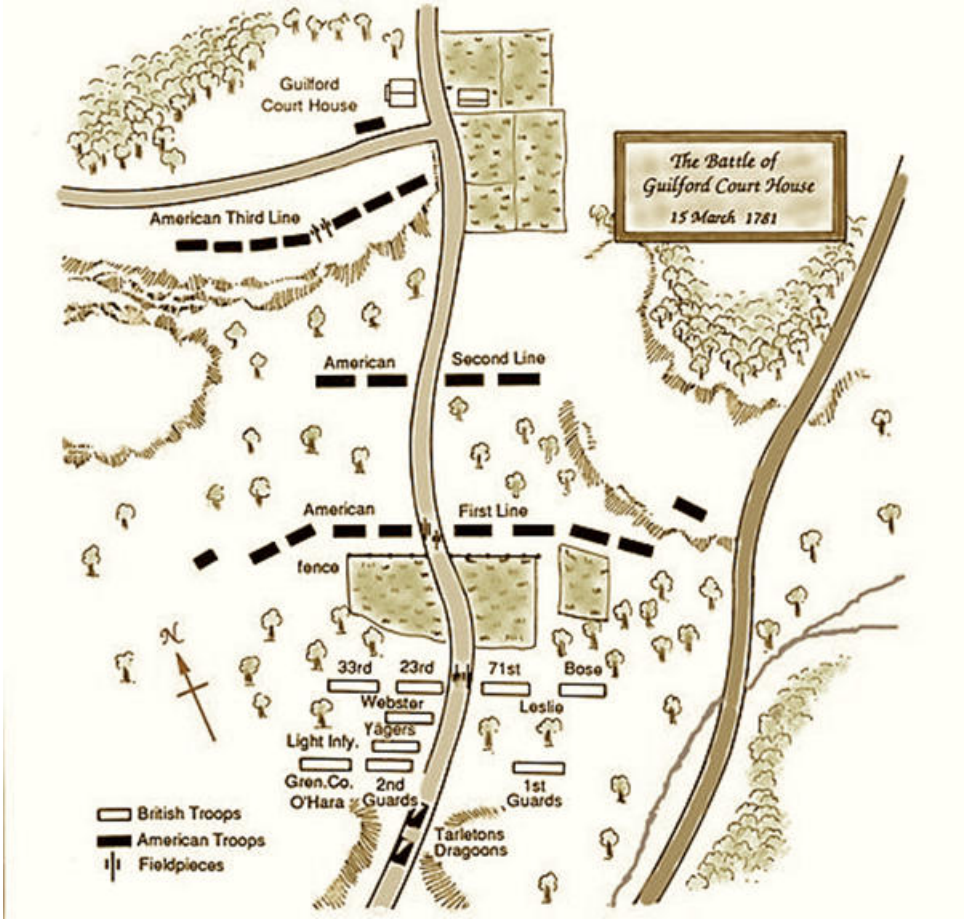
Cornwallis immediately came up with his battle plan. However, he made this plan without really knowing this new terrain or the strength of Greene's forces.

Cornwallis placed some of his most highly trained soldiers on his left wing, including riflemen armed with flintlock muskets, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, and grenadiers—experts at throwing grenades.

British grenadiers.

On Cornwallis' right wing, he set up the Hessians and the 2nd Battalion of Highlanders from Scotland. In his center, he placed three cannons. He also held some men in a reserve force, including the villainous Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton, whom you will remember from Cowpens.

Meanwhile, Greene decided to use the same strategy that brought Daniel Morgan such success in the Battle of Cowpens. He set up his men in three lines.



Greene's three lines (dark dashes in middle). Map courtesy of Richard Harvey.

Greene's first line contained North Carolina militiamen and mountain men with excellent marksmanship skills.

His second line contained the Virginia militiamen and two cannons. The third line consisted of the professional army, trained Continental soldiers, including the First Maryland Regiment.

SOLDIER *of the* FIRST MARYLAND REGIMENT
Guilford Court House, March 15, 1781

For the Patriots, it looked like a sure victory. Greene had picked the battlefield. He had twice as many men as the British force. And his battle plan had already worked brilliantly in another conflict.

But Greene made several critical errors.

At Cowpens, Daniel Morgan had placed his lines about 100–150 yards apart. Each line had enough distance to fight the enemy but remained close enough to the following line that the men could run back and support them.

Greene separated his first two lines by 350 yards. His third line was about 500 yards back—the length of five football fields! That was a long way to run under fire.

Greene also held no units in reserve.

At about 1:30 pm, Cornwallis launched the battle with cannon fire. As his men moved forward, Cornwallis noticed the right side of the field was open ground—a killing ground without cover for his men. He wisely chose to attack to the left, where woodlands could protect his forces.

As the British soldiers approached the first line of militiamen stationed behind a fence, they were met by a volley of musket fire. The Redcoats kept going.

"Within forty yards of the enemy's line," wrote British Sergeant Roger Lamb, "it was perceived that their whole line had their arms presented, and resting on a rail fence. … They were taking aim with nice precision. At this awful moment, a general pause took place … then Colonel Webster rode forward in front of the 23rd Regiment and said … 'Come on my brave fusileers!' These words inspired the British forward."

The advancing British opened a volley of musket fire. The North Carolina militia replied with one more volley of fire, then turned and ran for the second line.

North Carolina militiaman.

The Virginia militia put up a good fight, but the enemy was attacking from all sides and closing in. The second line retreated in good order.

Still pushing forward, the British then met their toughest challenge: the third line of Continental soldiers.

The British attacked the center. At first, the Continentals held the line and repelled them. But the British regiments started attacking from the right and left flank—fighting in every direction!

Tarleton's reserve legion entered the fray, and both armies resorted to hand-to-hand combat. As men slashed swords, the wounded dropped to the ground or staggered off the battlefield. But both armies continued to surge toward each other.

Cornwallis watched this confused and bloody struggle and realized his army was outnumbered. His men were dying on the battlefield.

Did Cornwallis decide to retreat?

No.

He ordered cannons to fire directly into the fight—inflicting many casualties on his own force. However, the cannon fire also caused both sides to pause. The British regrouped for another attack.

Due to Cornwallis' deadly desperation to win, Greene ordered his men to retreat.

"The engagement was long and severe, and the enemy only gained their point by superior discipline," Greene later said.

Technically, the British won the Battle of Guilford Court House.

Technically.

However, Cornwallis lost ninety-three men killed in action. More than 400 of his men were wounded, and twenty-six were missing in action. So he'd lost about one-quarter of his force. Clinton had 4,000 men in New York but wouldn't send them south. And no British reinforcements were sailing over from England.

News about the Battle of Guilford Court House reached London. One British statesman replied, "Another such victory would ruin the British army."

It was a true pyrrhic victory. The gain wasn't worth the loss.

Greene, however, retreated with most of his men. They lived to fight another day.

Cornwallis later said of this battle: "I never saw such fighting since God made me. The Americans fought like demons."

Since he couldn't drum up Loyalist support in the Carolinas, Cornwallis moved his men to Virginia.

Why did he pick Virginia?

For one, Clinton had ordered him out of the Carolinas. The region wasn't working in their favor. Secondly, Cornwallis needed

a safe place to establish camp, preferably near a waterway that could supply his men.

Cornwallis chose the village of Yorktown.

He would regret that decision for the rest of his life.

WHO FOUGHT?

The Swamp Fox, Lieutenant Colonel Francis Marion.

ALTHOUGH FRANCIS MARION didn't fight in this particular battle, he was essential to the Patriot victories in the south.

Nicknamed "the Swamp Fox," Marion was a deft expert in irregular warfare. In fact, the U.S. Army Rangers still use Marion's tactics to this day.

In 1776, the Continental Congress commissioned Marion as a lieutenant colonel. He fought throughout the south in many battles and skirmishes. But in 1780, when the most significant battle struck

the city of Charleston, South Carolina, Marion was not involved. He was recovering from a broken ankle and was outside the city. His absence might've saved his life.

Though still nearly crippled from his ankle injury, Marion organized a small unit soon after the Battle of Charleston and set out to oppose any British forces in South Carolina.

But just before the Battle of Camden, Horatio Gates sent Marion out to gather intelligence on the enemy. (Gates didn't like Marion. And the feeling was probably mutual.)

Because of that assignment, Marion once again missed an important battle—which, once again, may have saved his life, and kept alive the Patriot resistance in the south.

Marion and his "irregular" militiamen were known to terrorize Loyalists or anyone else they viewed as traitors to the cause of American independence. "Marion's Men," as they were called, was a diverse group that included farmers, Indians, and African Americans. Every man served without pay, used their own horses and weapons, and often had no food to eat except what they could forage.

Marion rarely sent his men into frontal warfare. Instead, he relied on surprise attacks, raids, and quick withdrawals from the battlefield. The word to describe his fighting style was "elusive"—difficult to catch. And that elusiveness infuriated the British.

"Colonel Marion had so wrought the minds of the people," Cornwallis said, "partly by the terror of his threats and cruelty of his punishments, and partly by the promise of plunder, that there was scarcely an inhabitant between the Santee and the Pee Dee [rivers] that was not in arms against us."

In November 1780, Colonel Tarleton was sent out to capture—and kill—Marion. But even the cruel Tarleton wondered if the mission was possible. Tarleton chased Marion's troops more than twenty-five miles through a southern swamp. Finally, the British officer gave up.

Tarleton said, "This … old fox, the Devil himself could not catch him."

And that's how Francis Marion earned his famous nickname: the Swamp Fox.

BOOKS

Guilford Courthouse 1781: Lord Cornwallis's Ruinous Victory by Angus Konstam. Though written for an adult audience, this book offers highly visual descriptions that appeal to younger audiences.

The Swamp Fox of the Revolution by Stewart Hall Holbrook. Published in 1959, but used copies are available.

Francis Marion and the Legend of the Swamp Fox by Kate Salley Palmer. Best for readers in grades 3 and 4, this book offers excellent illustrations and well-researched history.

INTERNET

You can watch a reenactment of the Battle of Guilford Court House here: youtube.com/watch?v=5NEWEq3AKjY

MOVIES

The Swamp Fox. Walt Disney Productions produced an eight-episode miniseries about Francis Marion. The series aired from 1959 to 1961 and starred actor Leslie Nielsen. Copies are available on eBay.

The Patriot (2000). Francis Marion was an inspiration for the movie's main character, Benjamin Martin.

THE BATTLE OF YORKTOWN

September 28 – October 19, 1781

The Taking of Yorktown.

THE REVOLUTION WAS more than six years old, and the British were no closer to restoring order over the rebellious American colonists.

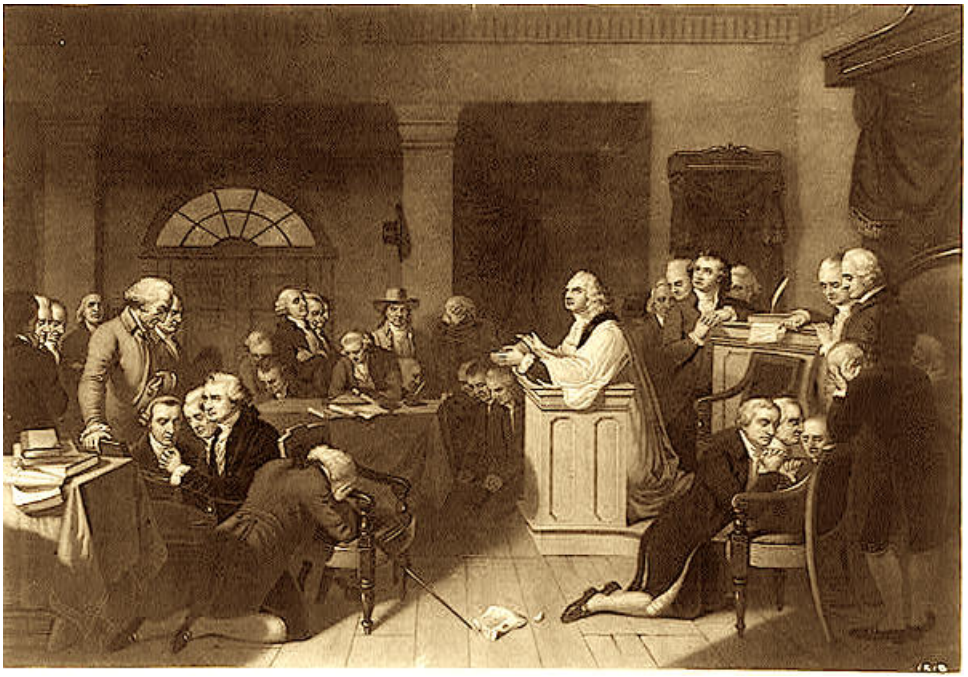
If anything, the situation had only grown worse—for both sides.

In London, riots broke out as English citizens protested this expensive war happening far across the ocean—a war that the citizens were paying for through higher taxes.

Also, France and Spain had now joined the fight. The Americans were receiving supplies and reinforcements that would likely extend this war even further.

However, the American side was struggling, too.

The thirteen colonies were politically and emotionally divided between Patriots and Loyalists. Economically, the new money printed by the Continental Congress had become worthless. And Washington's army was still suffering from illnesses, malnutrition, and supply shortages. It wasn't something Washington wanted the enemy to know, but he wondered if his army could continue fighting.



The Continental Congress prays over desperate circumstances.

In April 1781, Washington said, "We are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come."

You are about to find out how that deliverance arrived.

About 5,500 French soldiers had landed in Rhode Island. They were under the command of a French nobleman, Count de

Rochambeau ("roe-sham-bo"). Other French ships would soon be arriving in the Caribbean—islands off the southeast coast of North America where the British and French were fighting for control of the fertile land.

However, those ships weren't sailing for New York. Instead, their naval commander decided they should sail for the Chesapeake Bay, a large body of water between Virginia and Maryland.

That decision also changed Washington's plans. Instead of attacking Clinton in New York, he turned his focus to Virginia.

And you know who else was in Virginia: Cornwallis.

British General Cornwallis.

General Clinton had ordered Cornwallis to build a deep-water defensive port near Yorktown, Virginia. The village sits on the York River, which feeds into the Chesapeake Bay.

Washington left New York, leaving behind about 2,000 soldiers. Accompanied by Rochambeau, he marched his main army south toward Virginia. Their combined force was some 15–17,000 troops.

French commander Count de Rochambeau. Look closely: "Yorktown" is written on the papers behind him.

On their way south, Washington cleverly led several diversionary skirmishes to fool the British into thinking the primary battle would still happen in New York.

By the end of August, the French ships arrived in the Chesapeake Bay. Their arrival was excellent news for the Continentals because the ships carried additional troops and brought a small fortune in silver coins to pay off the Continental Army's debts. Most strategically important, the French vessels formed a naval blockade of Yorktown. The British Navy couldn't enter the waterway without a firefight.

By late September, Washington and Rochambeau arrived in the area with their combined American and French forces. Seeing the ships in the water must've relieved some of Washington's concerns. He believed this war could only be won through combined land and sea power.

"No land force can act decisively unless it is accompanied by maritime superiority," Washington said.

Cornwallis' base in Yorktown included about 9,000 Redcoats and about 2,000 Hessians. Cornwallis was still expecting British ships from the Caribbean, and he had no idea that Washington had just marched his army more than 200 miles south in just fifteen days.

The combined American and French forces set up camp right outside Yorktown. On the water, the French ships sealed off the bay and held back any British ships. Cornwallis was on his own.

Washington and Rochambeau prepare for battle at Yorktown.

On October 6, Washington ordered his men to dig a trench in the dark of night. Historians estimate the length of this trench stretched to about 2,000 yards—twenty football fields! The cloudy sky hid the waning moon as Washington's men dug toward the York River.

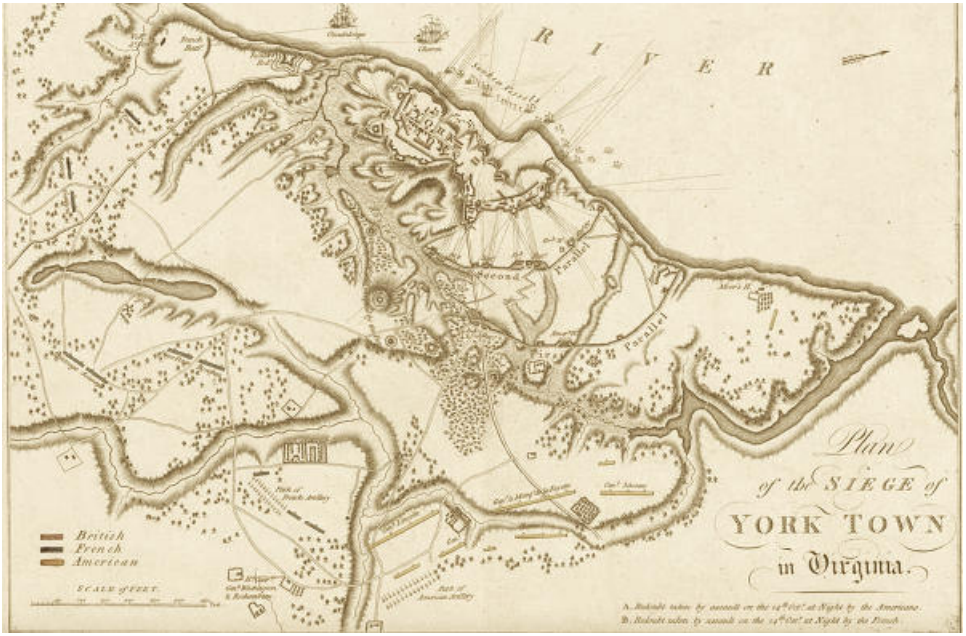
The next morning the British troops woke up to find the allied forces close enough for trouble but also just out of their musket range.

By October 9, Washington had artillery in place, including twenty 4-pounder cannons, three 18-pounders, two 8-inch howitzers, and six mortars.

That afternoon, French guns launched a barrage so brutal that it drove one of Cornwallis' frigates—warships—across the York River.

Around 5 p.m., the Americans inside the trench opened fire—with Washington firing the first cannon. Legend says his round smashed into the table where the British officers were eating dinner.

Washington then ordered the cannons to fire all night. The constant barrage kept the British from being able to rest or repair damages being done to their camp. Flying cannonballs also smashed into the British ships in the York River and set their wooden decks on fire. Under such a barrage, the British struggled to fire back.



Battle map of Yorktown. Look for the drawn straight lines: British lines (upper middle) along the York River; Washington's lines (lower middle); French lines along the map's left side.

Making matters worse for Cornwallis, his soldiers were suffering from malaria—a severe illness carried by mosquitoes bred in the marshlands of eastern Virginia. Estimates are that nearly half of Cornwallis' force had contracted the crippling disease.

Meanwhile, the American and French forces had almost no malaria. Many of them had built up immunities from previous infections. Others had only recently been infected—and malaria infections don't reveal symptoms until about a month later.

On October 12, Cornwallis received good news from General Clinton in New York: British ships were coming to help!

Cornwallis replied in a way that said, *They'd better hurry up*. He didn't know how long his men could hold out against Washington's unrelenting attack.

Cornwallis was right to be worried.

Two of the many cannons that blasted the British lines at Yorktown.

On the night of October 11, Washington ordered his troops to dig a second trench. This trench was shorter than the first—about 400 yards long—but it came closer to the British lines.

The next morning the British opened fire—on the first trench! They didn't realize Washington had moved his soldiers into new positions.

On October 14, Washington ordered every cannon within firing range to blast the British redoubts—the fortifications. During this barrage, Washington sent out French soldiers to stage a diversionary attack while Washington himself led a night-time surprise assault.

To maintain the element of surprise, Washington ordered complete silence. No soldier could even load his musket before they reached the British fortifications. Then, bayonets fixed, the Americans quietly marched through the dark toward the British redoubts. Other Continental troops snuck around the back of the fortifications to prevent any British escapes.

When they reached the redoubts, the Americans hacked axes through the wooden defenses as the British fired on them.

When the Americans charged forward, the British threw hand grenades.

At the same time, the French were attacking some Hessians—and forced them to surrender.

Washington gained control of two redoubts.

Now he moved in his artillery. He began shelling the village of Yorktown from three directions.

Cornwallis turned every one of his cannons on the Americans and French. He also ordered 350 British troops to storm enemy lines. Although the British managed to sabotage several cannons—plugging the touch hole with an iron spike—the French troops still managed to drive them back into Yorktown. By the next morning, the guns were repaired.

The siege bombardment continued.

On October 16, Washington intensified the firing even further, and Cornwallis realized his situation was hopeless. He attempted an escape by sailing across the York River. But the unrelenting firepower forced him to turn around.

The following day, October 17, a British drummer appeared. He was followed by a British officer waving a white handkerchief—the signal for surrender.

British (on left) surrender to Washington at Yorktown.

The Americans blindfolded the British officer and led him behind their lines to Washington. Although the officer informed Washington that the British were ready to surrender, Cornwallis was still trying to make demands—he refused to accept unconditional surrender. That's when a defeated army allows the victor to decide what happens next.

Washington refused every one of Cornwallis' requests.

Two days later—on October 19, 1781—Cornwallis finally agreed to an unconditional surrender.

British surrender ceremony at Yorktown.

When the formal surrender ceremony began, Cornwallis didn't come. He claimed he was too sick to attend. Instead, he sent his second-in-command, who offered Cornwallis' sword to Rochambeau, the French commander.

Rochambeau shook his head "no." He pointed to Washington.

Washington also refused Cornwallis' sword. They were showing their lack of respect for Cornwallis and his absence. Washington let his second-in-command take Cornwallis' sword.

The British soldiers then marched forward and laid down their weapons between the French and American armies.

The Battle of Yorktown was over—and there was no question who'd won it.

After Yorktown, Washington moved his army back to New York. And although minor skirmishes broke out in the colonies, the British never regained superior control.

For British rule in America, the Battle of Yorktown was the beginning of the end. An official peace treaty was signed about two years after the battle, on September 3, 1783.

It was a shocking victory—another shot heard round the world.

The ragtag rebels, who were so ill-equipped that they fought barefoot, had beaten the world's best-trained military and strongest navy, and broken away from one of history's most powerful empires.

The American colonies no longer belonged to the King of England. And that freedom resulted from the brilliant and steadfast leadership of General George Washington, his soldiers, and the militiamen who sacrificed everything, along with help from France.

All of them turned America from a British colony into an independent nation, the United States of America.

BOOKS

The World Turned Upside Down by Richard Ferrie.

The Guns of Independence: The Siege of Yorktown by Jerome Greene.

Who Was George Washington? by Roberta Edwards.

George Washington's Socks (Time Travel Adventure) by Elvira Woodruff.

INTERNET

Here's an "animated" retelling of the Revolutionary War with maps, troop movements, and portraits of leaders:
www.revolutionarywaranimated.com

In particular, check out the Battle of Yorktown, listed on the homepage's lower left column. It shows how troops converged in Yorktown and what a vital role the French navy played in the battle's victory.
www.revolutionarywaranimated.com/index.php/Yorktown

MOVIES

The Revolution, History Classics (produced by the History channel).

THE AFTERMATH OF VICTORY

General Washington says goodbye to his military officers.

TWO MONTHS AFTER the peace treaty was signed with Great Britain ending the American Revolution, General George Washington bid farewell to the Continental Army.

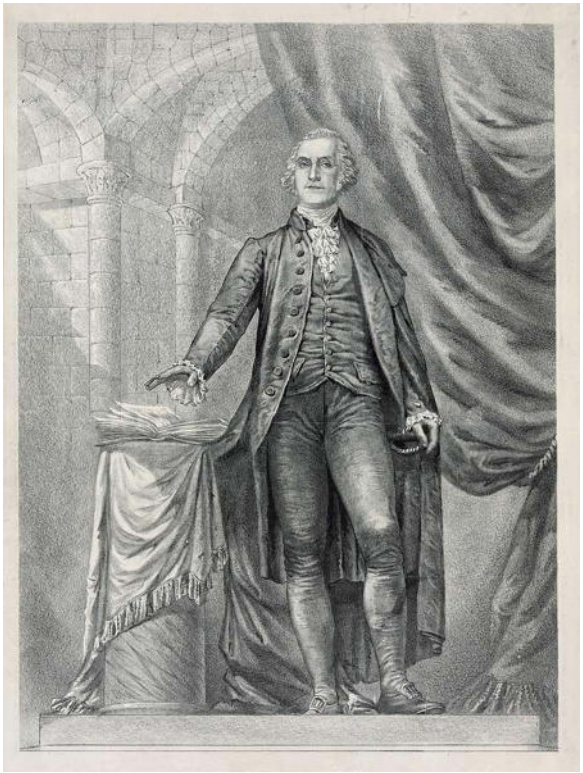
Washington's farewell speech was filled with gratitude—for the men who served and for the victory that once seemed almost impossible.

Washington said, "The unparalleled perseverance of the army through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight long years, was little short of a standing miracle."

But many hurdles remained for the new country of the United States of America. The thirteen colonies—now states—each held separate ideas about how to live and work. Some states wanted new laws; others wanted the same laws as before. In particular, some states demanded there would be no slavery, while others insisted slavery would continue.

The new country had a complicated start. But everyone realized the individual states needed to work together to become a truly "united" set of states. Resolving that tension between "states' rights" and a central government wasn't easy. And the tension continues to this day.

But Washington proved to be an excellent uniter. For instance, when he was nominated to become the first President of the United States of America, Washington refused to join any political party. He believed that choosing a side would create more division.



George Washington taking the oath as the first President of the United States of America.

Another problem for the new United States was the continuing war between France and Great Britain. Although the conflict ended in 1783, about ten years later a man named Napoleon Bonaparte came along.

Napoleon was a masterful military commander who believed France should rule the world. Napoleon reignited the war between England and France.

This time, America remained neutral—not taking sides—and sent supplies to both countries during the war.

But in 1807, England created a rule that said if you wanted to trade with France or its colonies, you needed a license from Britain.

This new law sparked resentment in the United States—*here comes the King of England again, telling us what we can and can't do …*

Also, England encouraged Native American Indians to harass any White people moving out west—beyond the boundaries of the thirteen states. England wanted to hold that land for itself and keep the French away. They also hoped the harassment would stop any Americans from moving out there.

All of these actions upset the Americans. But what really triggered rage was when the British Navy started kidnapping American seamen and forcing them to serve in their navy!

Battle of New Orleans, part of the War of 1812.

In 1812, American President James Madison signed a declaration of war against Great Britain. It became known as the War of 1812. And it started badly.

More than 9,000 British soldiers were already in North America, including Canada. The American military attacked Canada—home of many Loyalists—and lost many battles.

But further west, the war wasn't such a disaster.

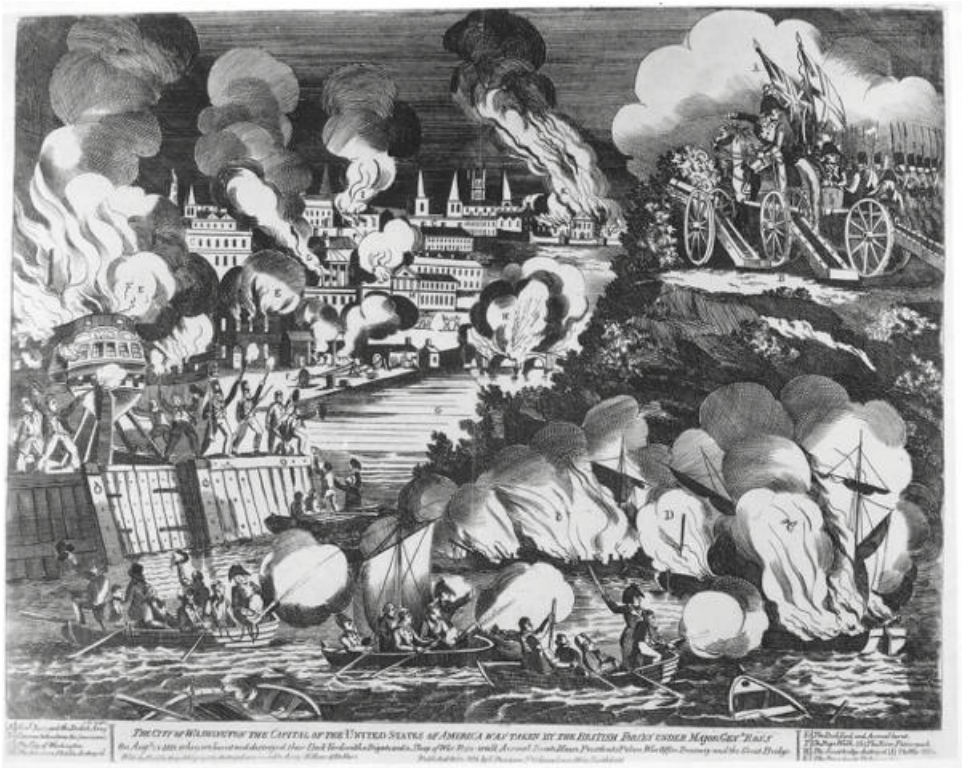
In 1813, American Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry won a decisive victory in the Battle of Lake Erie. That victory gave the United States control of an area then known as the Northwest Territory.

Later, the United States gained control of the city of Detroit, and defeated the British Navy in several important battles.

But in April 1814, the balance of power shifted again.

Britain defeated Napoleon. Now it could use all its military might to fight the United States.

Soon, large numbers of British troops were landing in America. British soldiers attacked along the Chesapeake Bay of Virginia and burned down government buildings in Washington, DC, including the White House.



This drawing, titled "The Taking of the City of Washington in America," shows British soldiers setting fire to Washington, DC.

On September 13, 1814, the British bombarded Fort McHenry in Maryland. It was a devastating attack.

But the following morning, the Americans still alive inside the fort raised an enormous flag decorated with stars and stripes—the flag of the United States of America.

Francis Scott Key, a lawyer and poet, witnessed the bombardment of Fort McHenry. The sight of that flag-raising inspired him to write a poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." The words are now part of the United States' national anthem.

You are probably familiar with the first verse:

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Two months later, on December 24, 1814, the United States and Great Britain signed an-other peace treaty.

Since then, these two countries have not gone to war against each other. In fact, they became very strong allies and fought together in World War I and World War II.

No country is perfect. And some people only focus on the negatives—a country's divisions and problems. But after reading about the hard-fought battles of the American Revolution, I hope you understand that woven into the very fabric of the United States are the principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and the idea of "justice for all."

You now know what was required to win this war. Brave men and women with a burning passion to end tyranny risked everything—from their lives to their treasure—to win freedom.

The need for that fierce struggle is why people say, "Freedom isn't free." As you now can see, American freedom was bought with the blood and sacrifice of Patriots.

Thank you for reading this book. History is a journey of discovery, and there's no telling where that journey will take you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOE GIORELLO GREW up in a large Italian family in Queens, New York. After hearing firsthand stories of relatives who served in World War II and Vietnam, he took an interest in military history. He teaches a popular class for boys called "Great Battles." Joe's goal is to remind young people that "freedom isn't free" and that history is anything but boring.

You can contact him through his website:
www.greatbattlesforboys.com

And on Facebook:
facebook.com/greatbattles

Find all of Joe's books here:
greatbattlesforboys.com/books