

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION INSTITUTE

News, Events, and Commentary
from the American Revolution Institute
of the Society of the Cincinnati

today

August 1, 2022

[Calendar of Events](#)

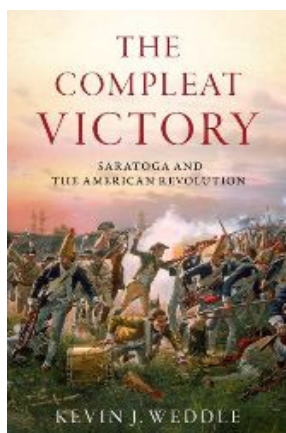
This Month in Revolutionary History - The Origins of the Purple Heart



The first American military decoration for enlisted men, the Badge of Military Merit, was created by George Washington on August 7, 1782. The award recognized distinguished conduct and was intended to encourage “virtuous ambition” and “every species of Military merit.” Soldiers honored with the award, his orders said, “shall be permitted to wear on his facings over the left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth, or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding.” Washington’s orders concluded with the declaration that the “road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all.” Only two Badges of Military Merit survive today, including this one awarded to Sgt. Elijah Churchill of the Second Continental Light Dragoons that is now owned by the New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site. The decoration fell out of use after the

Revolutionary War but was revived in 1932 as the Purple Heart Medal, which bears Washington’s portrait.

Our Featured Story - The 2022 Society of the Cincinnati Prize Goes to...



The Institute is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2022 Society of the Cincinnati Prize is Col. Kevin J. Weddle for his book *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2021), a vivid and deeply researched examination of the Saratoga campaign of 1777. Unraveling the web of circumstances and personalities on both sides, Colonel Weddle reveals how British plans to take control of the upper Hudson Valley were undone by a combination of distance, geography, logistics, and an underestimation of American leadership and fighting ability. General Burgoyne’s surrender to the Americans at Saratoga on October 17, 1777—described by one general as “the Compleat Victory”—captured the attention of the world and changed the course of the war.

Colonel Weddle is professor of military theory and strategy and Elihu Root Chair of Military Studies at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. A West Point graduate, he served in the U.S. Army for twenty-eight years on active duty in command and staff positions in the United States and overseas, including operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom. Colonel Weddle holds master’s degrees in history and civil engineering from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. He conducted significant research for his book in our library as the recipient of the Society of the Cincinnati Scholars’ Grant in 2007. The Society of the Cincinnati Prize is presented annually for an outstanding

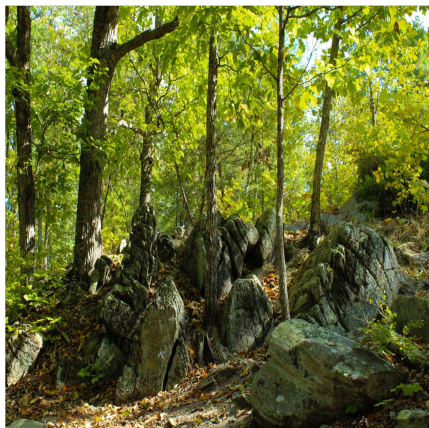
book on the American Revolution and its legacy, selected by a committee of scholars, educators, and writers.

[Learn more about the prize](#)

[Watch the author's presentation on his book](#)

EVENTS

Save the Date for our Next Battlefield Tour!



We are excited to announce the next installment in our new battlefield tour series! Save the date and plan to join us on September 30 through October 1, as we explore two important battles of the Revolutionary War's southern campaign: Kings Mountain and Cowpens. Launching from our base of operations in Spartanburg, S.C., this two-day experience will consist of a Friday evening dinner and lecture on the two engagements given by Dr. Melissa Walker of Converse College, and guided tours of Kings Mountain National Military Park and Cowpens National Battlefield Park on Saturday.

COLLECTIONS

A Captured British Weapon Tests the Leadership of the Continental Army



In May 1776, just two months after the British had evacuated Boston, a Massachusetts privateer captured an armed British transport ship, the *Hope*, near Boston Harbor. The enemy ship was filled with arms and equipment meant for the king's troops, including one thousand carbines, several cannon, and nearly fifteen hundred barrels of gunpowder. This windfall for the Continental Army—which, one year into the war, still struggled to supply its troops with enough suitable weapons—would test its leadership, as generals began fighting over the captured cargo while George Washington tried to assert his authority in the matter. One of the carbines captured from the *Hope*—distinguished by the cherry stock and other alterations made by Continental armors after these weapons arrived in America—is in the Institute's collections. This firearm—made in 1762 for British light dragoons, altered in 1775 for use by

Crown forces in America, captured in 1776 by an American privateer, issued to Continental Army troops, and altered by American armors for use against the British in the Revolutionary War—helps to tell broader stories of the tools and leadership required to win American independence. Learn more in the latest addition to Masterpieces in Detail on our website.

[Read the article](#)

EVENTS

Austria and the American Revolution?

The Revolutionary War was a global affair, but not many people associate the Habsburg monarchy with the conflict. For our next author's talk, on Tuesday, August 16 at 6:30 p.m. EST, we welcome Jonathan Singerton, lecturer and research fellow at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, to discuss his new book, *The Habsburg Monarchy and the American Revolution*. During the war, the Habsburg monarchy, the largest continental European power of the eighteenth century, never formally recognized the United



States, but its ruling and mercantile elites saw opportunity, especially for commerce. Bringing together materials from nearly fifty international archives, Singerton reconstructs the full sweep of relations between the nascent United States and one of the oldest European dynasties during and after the American Revolution and offers a reexamination of the Revolution by highlighting how the American call to liberty was answered across the furthest reaches of central and eastern Europe.

This talk will be held in-person at Anderson House and will last approximately 45 minutes, followed by a book signing. Copies of the book will be available to purchase at the event. Virtual options are available. Registration is requested.

[Learn more and register](#)

MUSEUM

Docent Training is in Full Swing!



Last month we welcomed our latest class of docents in training with a series of sessions designed to equip our trainees with all they need to know before they begin leading tours of our headquarters, Anderson House, in the coming months. Over the course of three evening classes, members of our staff provided an introduction to the American Revolution Institute, its mission, and its programs; presented overviews of the histories of the Society of the Cincinnati and Anderson House; discussed tour interpretation techniques; and displayed a selection of original photographs, inventories, and other materials from the library collections documenting the construction and use of Anderson House through the years. Meet our expert docents on your next tour of Anderson House.

[Visit Anderson House](#)

EVENTS

The Lesser-Known Side of Revolutionary War Medicine



On August 25 at 6:30 p.m. EST, join us and historian Meg Roberts, a doctoral candidate at Cambridge University, for a lecture on the labor of caregivers during the Revolutionary War. Alongside the surgeons and physicians, the medical care of the thousands of sick and wounded Continental soldiers relied upon the tireless work of army nurses, camp followers, housewives, cooks, laundresses, and local families. In contrast to the voluminous records of soldiers' and military leaders' wartime experiences, the contribution of women has often been summarized fleetingly with three verbs: washing, cooking, and nursing. The rich detail of this everyday and mundane labor—the changing of linens, the preparation and feeding of medicines, the sourcing of heat and water, the emptying of chamber pots—is not immediately apparent from written sources alone. By turning to Revolutionary-era objects

and material culture, we can begin to recover some of this invisible labor and reconstruct each element of nursing a sick or injured person in the Revolutionary War. This program accompanies the exhibition [*Saving Soldiers: Medical Practice in the Revolutionary War*](#), now on display through November 27, 2022.

This lecture will be held in-person at Anderson House and will last approximately 45 minutes. Virtual options are available. Registration is requested.

[Learn more and register](#)

LIBRARY

A Visit from the French Scholar



Our library recently welcomed the 2022 Society of the Cincinnati French Scholar, Romeo de Montrichard, to research his Revolutionary ancestor, Pierre Dimas, marquis de La Prevalaye (1745-1816)—who served under admirals d’Estaing and de Grasse during the war and became an original member of the French branch of the Society—in the reading room. The French and American Scholars Program promotes the lasting ties of friendship among French and American members of the Society of the Cincinnati and their families and includes a reciprocal visit from a young French scholar to the United States and a young American scholar to France.

During Romeo’s visit to the library he studied the bound manuscript “Journal critique de l’escadre de Mr. d’Orvilliers, 1772” which bears a bookplate with the La Prevalaye coat of arms and was owned by the marquis de La Prevalaye. The manuscript itself describes and analyzes an account of naval maneuvers and operations under the command of the comte d’Orvilliers in 1772 along the coasts of Spain and Portugal, carrying out trials in signals and formations.



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The American Revolution secured our independence, created our republic, established our national identity, and expressed ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship that have defined our history and will define our future. The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati promotes knowledge and appreciation of those achievements, fulfilling the aim of the Continental Army officers who founded the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 to perpetuate the memory of that vast event. The Institute supports advanced study, presents exhibitions and other public programs, advocates effective classroom instruction, and provides resources to teachers and students to enrich understanding of the American Revolution and the principles of the men and women who secured the liberty of the American people.



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