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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION INSTITUTE

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

today
February 1, 2023

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This Month in Revolutionary History - The French Alliance



On February 6, 1778, in Paris, “a Treaty of amity and Commerce” was signed between representatives of France and the United States of America. After the best part of three years of conflict between America and Great Britain, Americans had finally gained official support from Britain’s rival and fellow superpower, France—suddenly everything changed.

Of the thirteen articles in the Franco-American treaty, three stand out as being of the greatest importance to the outcome of the Revolutionary War: article one, “if War should break out betwan france and Great Britain, ... his Majesty and the said united States, shall make it a common cause;” article two, “the present defensive alliance is to maintain effectually the liberty, Sovereignty, and independance absolute and unlimited of the said united States;” and article eight, “Neither of the two

Parties shall conclude either Truce or Peace with Great Britain, without the formal consent of the other first obtain'd.”

Great Britain received a copy of the Franco-American treaty on March 17, 1778, and as a result declared war against France. French forces both on land and at sea would be brought to bear arms against the British and their assets in North America, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, and even India. It was the French naval victory at the Battle of the Chesapeake on September 5, 1781, that precluded the British navy’s evacuation of Lord Charles Cornwallis’ army at Yorktown, in part contributing to its capitulation to a combined Franco-America army five weeks later, on October 19.

Our Featured Story - Affairs of State Exhibition Opens February 24

Diplomacy and entertaining have always gone hand in hand in the nation’s capital. Our headquarters, Anderson House, has played a historic role in that story during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—but one that has largely gone untold. Since its opening in 1905, the mansion has been the site of



hundreds of diplomatic, patriotic, philanthropic, and cultural events—establishing Anderson House as a uniquely sought-after destination in Washington, D.C., for heads of state, government officials, diplomats, and society leaders wanting a place to form relationships, consider challenges, and share common values. Winston Churchill, Thurgood Marshall, Charles de Gaulle, Marjorie Merriweather Post, Jacqueline Kennedy, and nine American presidents are among the guests who were feted within its doors. Our new exhibition, *Affairs of State: 118 Years of Diplomacy and Entertaining at Anderson House*, chronicles more than a century of the people and events that have given Anderson House its place in the diplomatic and cultural history of the American republic and its capital city.

Affairs of State draws on our rich collections and those of several generous lenders—some items being displayed for the first time. Larz Anderson’s diplomatic uniform, records of Isabel Anderson’s Red Cross activities, and pieces from the couple’s dinner settings document the first era of public service at Anderson House in the early twentieth century. Menus, invitations, photographs, and media coverage illuminate the scope and style of the wide range of special events held at the mansion in the decades since. Historical film footage of notable events that took place at Anderson House over more than a century illuminates the importance of this house in American history. The exhibition opens on February 24 and will remain on view through December 31, 2023.

[Learn more](#)

EVENTS

The First Rhode Island Regiment and the American Revolution



Join us on Thursday, February 16 at 6:30 p.m. for a lecture featuring historian Robert Geake discussing “In League with Liberty: The Persistence of Patriots of Color and the Formation of the First Rhode Island Regiment of the Continental Army.”

As states struggled to fill enlistment quotas in late 1777, the Rhode Island General Assembly, drawing from a proposal from Rhode Island general James Varnum, voted to allow the enlistments of indentured servants, indigenous peoples, and former slaves. With that, the First Rhode Island Regiment, known as “the black regiment,” was formed. Although met with controversy, the regiment fought with distinction in numerous battles during the Revolutionary War. To celebrate Black History Month and mark the anniversary of the vote on February 14, 1778, in the Rhode Island general assembly that

allowed African Americans and Indigenous peoples to enlist for service, this lecture highlights the important story of the “black regiment,” from its formation, heroism, and misfortune, to the legacy left by those who enlisted to earn their freedom.

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

[Learn more and register](#)

EDUCATION

Now Online: Continental Army Traveling Trunk Lesson Content



Since they began touring the United States in 2016, the demand for our free Continental Army traveling trunks has steadily increased to the point where teacher requests outnumber the weeks we can make them available! Our solution ... making the curriculum that travels with the trunks available to educators anytime as part of our online suite of classroom resources. Lessons about diversity in the Continental Army, George Washington's challenges as commander in chief, Baron von Steuben's "Blue Book," America's first purple heart, and more are now online.

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COLLECTIONS

Toast One of our Recent Acquisitions



The most recent acquisition for our museum collections is a pair of silver camp cups owned by Anthony Walton White, an officer in the Continental Army, and made in Philadelphia about 1776 by silversmith Richard Humphreys. White joined the Revolution in August 1775 as a volunteer aide-de-camp to Gen. George Washington, then spent a year with the Third New Jersey Battalion in New York and Canada before receiving his most important promotion in 1777, as a lieutenant colonel of the Continental Light Dragoons. Washington later ordered White to take command of all the cavalry serving with the southern army, and White led Lafayette's cavalry on the campaign to Yorktown.

Camp cups like Anthony Walton White's were commonly part of an officer's equipment in the field. Each small cup was designed to hold about two ounces of strong spirits or wine and to be replenished often in social settings, as officers gathered in one of their campaign tents or a building they were using as a headquarters. Originally from a set of twelve, the pair of White's camp cups now in our collections bears his initials on the side of each cup. Their purchase was supported by gifts from the New York, South Carolina, and New Jersey branches of the Society of the Cincinnati—the three state societies to which White belonged at various points before his death in 1803.

[Read more](#)

LIBRARY

Meet our Class of 2023 Fellows



Since 2007, our library has been welcoming research fellows to spend an intensive week using our vast collections of rare books, manuscripts, maps, and prints to support their in-depth study of topics relating to the Revolutionary era and the art of war. This year, we are welcoming a record number of eleven fellows researching a variety of topics including the emergence of women printers in America, the collaboration of French and American military leaders, the role and practice of caregiving in the Continental Army, and the impressions and reactions of Revolutionary War combatants to slavery in North America.

[Meet the class of 2023 fellows](#)

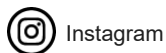
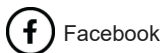
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The American Revolution secured our independence, created our republic, established our national identity, and expressed ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship that have defined our history and will define 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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