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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION INSTITUTE

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

today
January 1, 2024

[Calendar of Events](#)

This Month in Revolutionary History - The Battle of Princeton



In war, outcomes can come down to bold decision making. In January 1777, American forces would be rewarded by Gen. George Washington's decision to attack from what could easily have been perceived as a place of weakness.

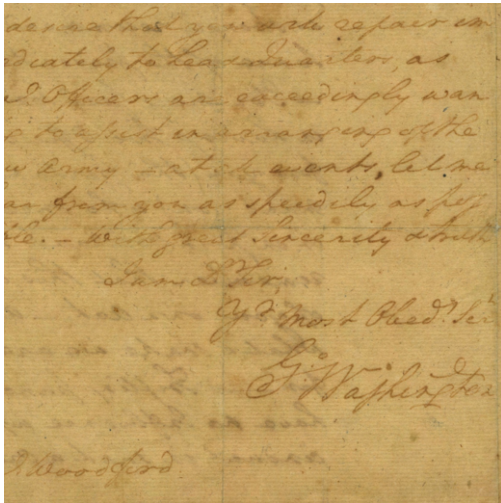
After the success of the First Battle of Trenton on December 26, 1776, which saw American forces cross the ice-ridden Delaware River to strike and decisively defeat the German force at Trenton, New Jersey, the Continental Army found themselves on the defensive against a force under the command of British Gen. Lord Cornwallis. With the Americans held at Assunpink Creek, it was conceivable that they would be forced to retire, perhaps even back across the Delaware into

Pennsylvania. But intelligence showed Cornwallis's rearguard at Princeton to be thinly held, so Washington decided to circumvent the main British force and strike at its rear.

However, things often do not go as planned. Unbeknownst to the Americans, Cornwallis had ordered two of three British regiments at Princeton to join him to attack the Americans at Assunpink Creek. Meanwhile, American troops under Brig. Gen. Hugh Mercer moving up to Princeton bumped into that British force. In the ensuing chaotic fight, Mercer was killed and Washington himself took command to prevent the Americans from being routed, even though at times he found himself just thirty yards from the British line. Washington's presence combined with fresh soldiers forced the majority of the British troops to withdraw from Princeton. The remnants of the British garrison took to Nassau Hall which formed part of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), and after a brief siege, surrendered.

The victory at Princeton, combined with that of the First Battle of Trenton, provided a much-needed morale boost to the cause of American independence. After what had been a dismal 1776, the Americans could look towards 1777 with the knowledge that they could face the British and defeat them.

Our Featured Story - A Gift of Three Washington Documents



We are grateful to Mr. George Miller Chester, Jr., a member of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Connecticut, for his recent gift to the library of three documents signed by George Washington. These manuscripts reflect different aspects of Washington's leadership during and after the war: his understanding of the patriot cause, logistics of supplies, and his leadership as president general of the Society of the Cincinnati.

The first letter is from George Washington to Brig. Gen. William Woodford. Written in Washington's familiar hand from Morristown, New Jersey, on March 3, 1777, the letter acknowledges Woodford's lower-than-expected promotion while encouraging Woodford to remain devoted to the Revolutionary cause. The second letter is in the hand of

Washington's aide-de-camp Samuel Blatchley Webb and signed by Washington, addressed to Brig. Gen. James Clinton on October 5, 1776, at Hudson Highlands, New York. In the letter Washington acknowledges Clinton's report on the interception of supplies, including butter, en route to the British Army, and informs Clinton that he needs to apply to "the several Committees in the Country or send an Officer to pick up" intrenching tools needed. And lastly, the third document is one of the first provisional membership certificates of the Society of the Cincinnati, issued to French captain Augustin Brissault of the Continental Army's First Partisan Legion. Before returning to France after the war, Brissault secured this certificate attesting to his membership in the Society—signed by George Washington and Henry Knox, the organization's first president general and secretary general—even before the French Society was formed.

These three documents are part of the George Miller Chester, Jr. (Connecticut Society) Collection of General Washington Documents and will help us continue to interpret and expand understanding of the American Revolution and the founding of the Society of the Cincinnati. Join us on Friday, February 9 for a [Lunch Bite presentation](#) on these new acquisitions.

EVENTS

Announcing our Spring Programs



Our spring calendar of historical programs kicks off on January 9! Highlights from our programs include an author's talk by Abby Chandler of the University of Massachusetts Lowell discussing her new book, *Seized With the Tempers of the Time: Identity and Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary America*, on January 9; a lecture by historian Larry Nelson discussing the American Revolution in the West on February 28; a lecture by Matthew Skic, curator of exhibitions at the Museum of the American Revolution, exploring the life of James Forten, a free Black Revolutionary War veteran, on March 5; a battlefield tour exploring the Battle of Saratoga on April 12-13; and a Lunch Bite given by the Institute's historical programs manager, Andrew Outten, highlighting a map created for King Louis XVI by the Marquis de Lafayette's aide-de-camp on April 19.

Most programs are held in-person at Anderson House, but virtual options are available unless otherwise

specified. To view our spring calendar of historical programs in its entirety, visit the [events page](#) of our website.

[Explore our spring programs](#)

MUSEUM

Lafayette is Coming!



In 2024, the Institute will mark the bicentennial of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to the United States in 1824-1825 with the exhibition *Fete Lafayette: A French Hero's Tour of the American Republic*. Opening on March 2, this exhibition will explore Lafayette's farewell tour and its role in highlighting the country's revolutionary origins and ideals for a new era.

On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the American Revolution, Lafayette embarked on a tour of the United States, returning for a final time to the country he helped establish and whose democratic experiment he saw as a model for the rest of the world. In August 1824, the Frenchman sailed into New York Harbor, beginning a thirteen-month tour that took him to all twenty-four states of the union. He was celebrated in each city and town, and the routes along the way, with processions, banquets and receptions, worship services, and visits to important sites. His presence was commemorated with a flood of souvenirs that met the intense demand for a memento of the French hero. Lafayette's farewell tour revived an interest in and appreciation for the Revolution, its ideals, and its veterans in popular American culture, even while his arguments for abolition and universal liberty exposed ways in which the ideals of the Declaration of Independence had not yet been fully applied.

[Learn more](#)

EVENTS

Save the Date: Art in Bloom Returns



Join us on March 14-17 as Art in Bloom DC returns to Anderson House for its fourth year! This popular event fills our historic headquarters with floral arrangements inspired by the art and architecture of Anderson House and created by dozens of Washington's most innovative floral designers. Explore the floral sculptures and tour the museum during public viewing hours, participate in special demo sessions with featured floral designers, and join us and the premier local florists who created the displays for an evening reception exploring these floral artworks and the collections that inspired them.

Anderson House is the exclusive venue for Art in Bloom DC, which is co-produced by the Institute, Margo Fischer of Bright Occasions, and Ashley Greer of Atelier Ashley Flowers.

[Learn more about this unique event](#)

EDUCATION

Educator Workshops Feature our Master Teachers



We have been busy hosting and attending a number of workshops and conferences this academic year featuring our Master Teachers and their experience working with our library and museum collections. In December we appeared at the National Council for the Social Studies Conference in Nashville as both an exhibitor and presenter with Tennessee Master Teacher Will Kelley ('22). In February we will host a free, day-long workshop for Virginia educators at George Mason's Gunston Hall with Virginia Master Teacher Anne Walker ('23). And in March, we again will welcome Ms. Walker to help us network with teachers and highlight her ARI lesson plans at the National Council for History Education conference in Cleveland and the Virginia Council for the Social Studies conference at Longwood University. If you know an educator who is interested in joining our mission to spread the word

about the enduring legacy of the American Revolution, encourage them to apply to our Master Teachers Seminar.

[Learn more and apply](#)

EVENTS

Explore the Battle of Saratoga



Join us in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., as we explore one of the most important battles of the American Revolution: the Battle of Saratoga. This two-day experience includes a Friday evening dinner and lecture given by the Institute's historical programs manager, Andrew Outten, discussing the campaigns of 1777, political and military mistakes made by the British leadership, and other key events that led to the eventual surrender of British general John Burgoyne and his army. On Saturday, historian and National Park Service ranger Eric Schnitzer will lead a day-long guided tour exploring Saratoga National Historical Park and other key locations associated with the battle.

[Learn more and view the itinerary](#)



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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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