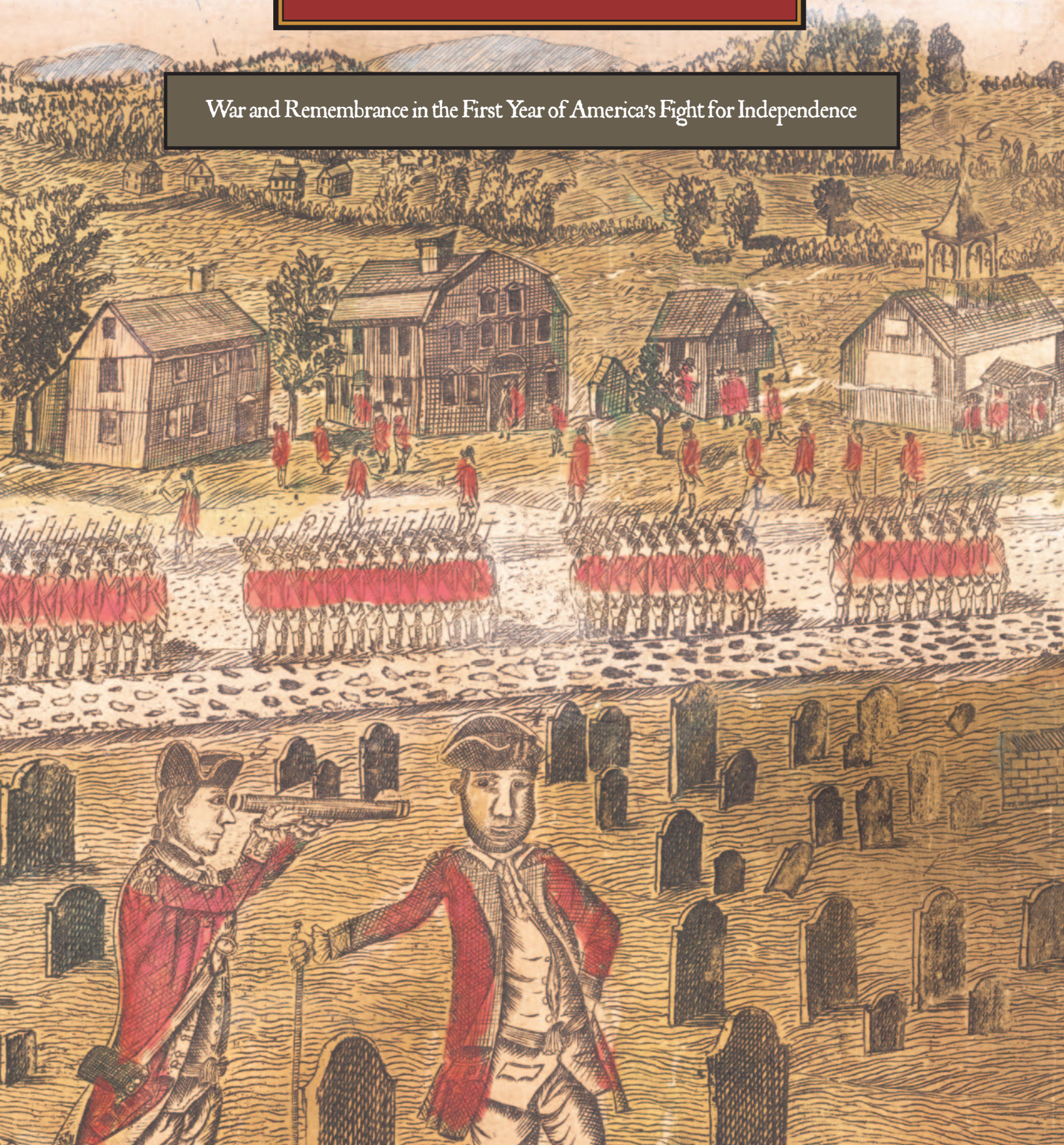


# REVOLUTIONARY BEGINNINGS

War and Remembrance in the First Year of America's Fight for Independence







**The American Revolutionary War began on April 19, 1775, when several years of tension between Great Britain and its American colonies erupted in the Battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. Far from being a local rebellion in Boston, the outbreak of the revolution inspired Patriots across the colonies to seize military supplies, recruit soldiers, and even pass resolutions for independence. Over the first year of the war, Patriot, Loyalist, and British forces clashed in most of the thirteen American colonies, as well as in Canada and the Caribbean. They fought at Fort Ticonderoga, New York; Montreal, Canada; Great Bridge, Virginia; Moore’s Creek Bridge, North Carolina; Yamacraw Bluff, Georgia; Nassau, Bahamas; and Block Island, Rhode Island—events that few Americans know today, but each contributed to the movement that would lead to American independence.**

**Three battles of the first year of the war were especially significant, strategically as well as for influencing public opinion. The Battle of Bunker Hill, fought just outside Boston on June 17, 1775, was the first major engagement of the revolution—a British victory that nonetheless bolstered Americans’ belief in their capabilities against the well-trained regulars. The Siege of Quebec, culminating in an attack on the city on December 31, 1775, was the centerpiece of the American invasion of Canada—a stunning defeat that saw leading American officers killed, wounded, or captured. The Battle of Sullivan’s Island, fought in Charleston Harbor in South Carolina on June 28, 1776, was the first British attack on the largest city in the South—a decisive American victory that proved Patriot troops could defeat the superior Royal Navy. Four days later, on July 2, 1776, Congress declared American independence from Great Britain, changing the nature of the revolution and the course of American history.**



## THE BATTLES OF LEXINGTON AND CONCORD APRIL 19, 1775

At dawn on April 19, 1775, about 250 British light infantry soldiers faced some 70 local militiamen on the town common of Lexington, Massachusetts, just

northwest of Boston. It's unknown who fired the first shot. After both sides fired volleys across the green, eight militiamen were killed—the first casualties of the Revolutionary War.

Lexington was not the British army's target that day. More than seven hundred redcoats had left Boston the night before bound for Concord—seven miles west of Lexington—where Gen. Thomas Gage, royal governor of Massachusetts and commander of the British army in North America, knew that Patriots had hidden cannons and other military supplies. Riders William Dawes and Paul Revere warned communities as far west as Lexington, where Patriot leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock were spending the night. Militiamen gathered in Lexington to prevent what they assumed was a British attempt to arrest the two men.

After the unexpected bloodshed at Lexington, the regulars joined the rest of the British force at Concord. During their search for hidden weapons—which found little—four hundred local militiamen approached the North Bridge, which was guarded by about one hundred British soldiers. The royal troops fired, starting a brief fight that killed three British soldiers and two Patriots.

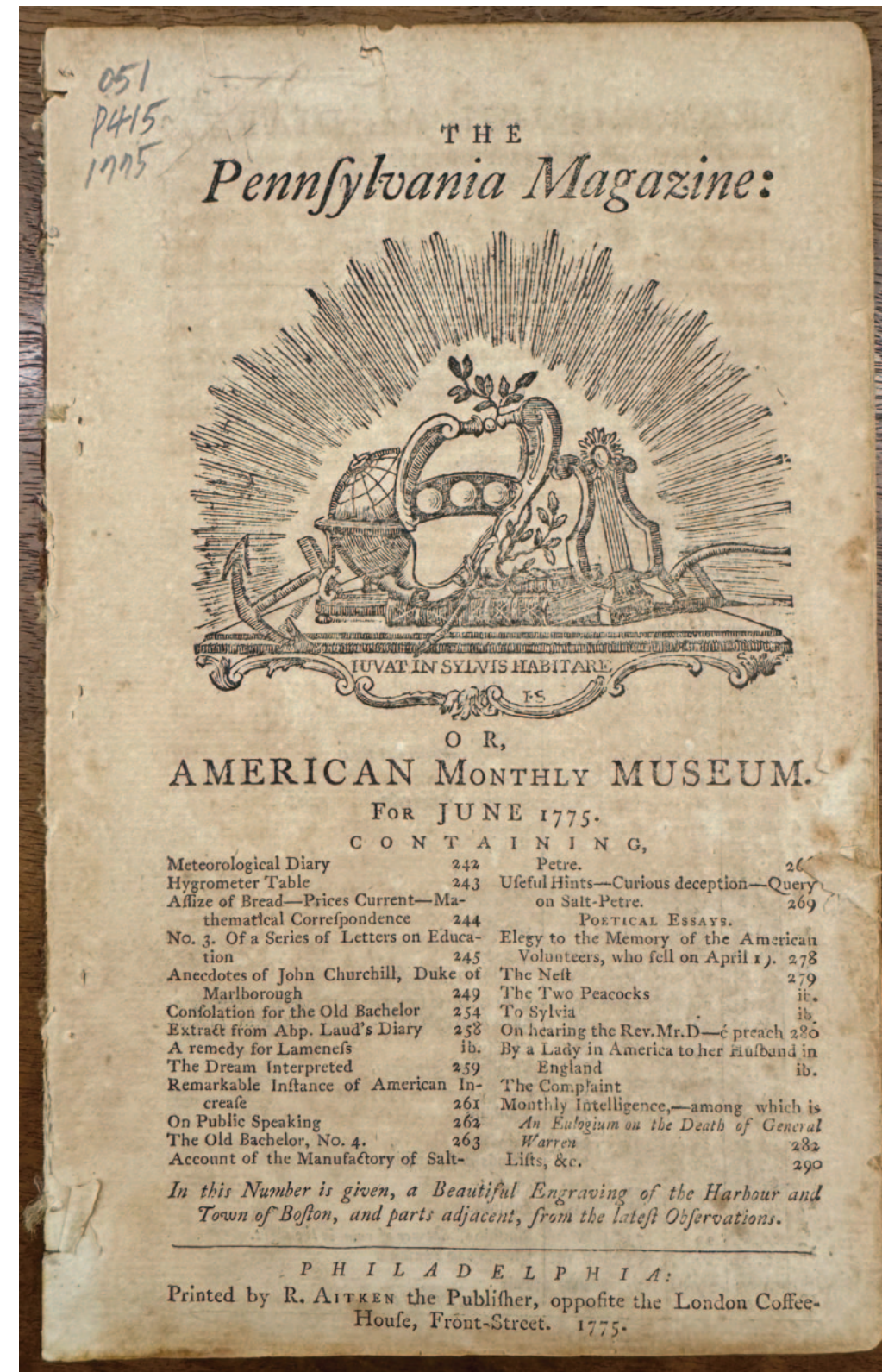
The sixteen-mile march back to Boston turned into a massive running battle, as militiamen fired on the British columns from hillsides, trees, and fences. In response, the British burned buildings and attacked militiamen and civilians alike. The exhausted and battered royal troops finally reached Boston that evening. The day's battles had claimed the lives of 73 British regulars and 49 colonists.

James Taylor of Pelham in western Massachusetts carried this hanger sword when he answered the Lexington Alarm as an ensign in Capt. David Cowden's company of minute men. The fighting at Lexington triggered an alarm spread by the Committee of Safety networks in Massachusetts and surrounding colonies, to alert "all the Friends of American Liberty" to the battle and to call for aid. Taylor and his company, who learned of the battle later in the day on April 19, marched the seventy-five miles to Lexington as part of Col. Benjamin Ruggles Woodbridge's regiment. Taylor also carried this short sword—a secondary weapon for infantrymen—when he fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill two months later.



**Hanger sword**  
American  
ca. 1750-1775  
Steel, brass, and cherry

The Society of the Cincinnati, Purchased with a gift from Dr. J. Phillip London of the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati and Dr. Jennifer London, 2020



"An Elegy to the Memory of the American Volunteers" who fell on April 19 appeared in the June 1775 issue of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, a major American periodical that was edited by Thomas Paine. The poem, written by Anna Young Smith of Philadelphia under the pseudonym "Sylvia," mourned the beginning of war and blamed the British for the violence. Honoring the fallen Patriots, Smith wrote, "Your memories dear to every free-born mind, Shall need no monument your fame to raise."

### *The Pennsylvania Magazine: or, American Monthly Museum*

June 1775

Philadelphia: Printed by R. Aitken, 1775

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection



# THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL JUNE 17, 1775

In the two months after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, twenty thousand American militiamen descended on the towns surrounding Boston, establishing a siege to contain the British troops inside the city. In late May 1775,

British reinforcements arrived for an attempt to break the siege. They planned to take two heights overlooking the city—Dorchester to the south and Charlestown to the north.

Patriot leaders rushed to fortify the Charlestown Heights, which boasted the highest hill in the area, Bunker Hill. On the night of June 16, American soldiers fortified the fenced pasture lands of Breed's Hill, a smaller hill nearby. Under the command of Gen. Israel Putnam of Connecticut and Col. William Prescott of Massachusetts, they built a redoubt (an earthen fort) at the top of the hill. In the morning, British ships began firing at the new redoubt, while Gen. William Howe prepared to lead redcoats to attack from land.

Howe's troops attacked Breed's Hill from the front, twice marching up the hill into devastating American musket fire. The final British assault reached the redoubt as the Patriots were running out of ammunition, culminating in a bloody bayonet fight. The American militiamen fled, leaving the Charlestown Heights in

British control. After two hours of battle, the British suffered more than 1,000 casualties and the Americans about 450.

The Battle of Bunker Hill—mistakenly named for the larger hill—was the first major engagement of the revolution. The British victory came at a devastating cost. Almost one hundred royal officers were among the casualties, and the victory failed to end the siege of Boston. For the Patriots, news of the casualties their inexperienced troops inflicted bolstered Americans' belief in their capabilities. The militiamen's efforts helped unite colonists behind the Patriot cause and inspire enlistments in the newly created Continental Army.

Each year, the British army published a list of its officers organized by regiment. The owner of this army list for 1773—presumably a British officer, who has not been identified yet—annotated the book during the Revolutionary War with updates on individual officers, whether they were promoted, wounded or killed, or resigned. On page 106, he noted four officers killed at Bunker Hill from the Fifty-Second Regiment of Foot, which suffered especially high casualties in the battle.

106 Fifty-second Regiment of Foot, America.			
Rank.	Name.	Regiment.	Rank in the
Colonel	John Clavering	1 Apr. 1762 L.G.	
Lieut. Colonel	Valentine Jones	4 Mar. 1760 Col. 2	
Major	Arthur Williams	20 Apr. 1771	
	Nicholas Addison	22 Apr. 1762	
	William Davison	3 May 1765	14 Jan
	Fr. Richm. Humphreys	25 Dec. 70	17 Oct
Captain	Thomas Stubbs	6 Mar. 1771	
	William Browne	24 June	
	George Amos Smith	3 Mar. 1772	
	Richard Symes	6 July	
Captain Lieut.	Andrew Neilson	27 Apr. 1768 Capt.	
	John Dinfield	31 Dec. 1759	
	Henry Crawford	6 Nov. 1765	

*Handwritten notes:* "Bunker Hill" written vertically on the left. "Killed" written next to Nicholas Addison, William Davison, Fr. Richm. Humphreys, and Thomas Stubbs. "Promoted" written next to Arthur Williams. "Resigned" written next to Valentine Jones.

## A List of the General and Field-Officers, As they Rank in the Army

London: Printed for J. Millan, [1773]  
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection



**British Pattern 1738 flintlock sea service pistol**  
Haskins, London  
1760  
Walnut, iron, and brass  
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

On May 19, 1775, the Massachusetts Bay Colony appointed Artemas Ward—who owned this pistol—general and commander in chief of all the American troops assembling outside Boston “for the defense of this and the other American colonies.” Ward organized and directed the troops besieging Boston and gave the order in mid-June 1775 to fortify Bunker Hill, leading to the battle. He did not participate in the fighting, with tactical command on the field resting on Gen. Israel Putnam and Col. William Prescott.

## A Plan of the Battle, on Bunkers Hill

Robert Sayer and John Bennett  
London: Printed for R. Sayer & J. Bennett, 1775  
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

This British map of the battle published five months later offers a detailed view of Bunker and Breed's Hills on a peninsula north of Boston, across the Charles River from the city. The map locates the American and British positions, including the royal ships on the southeast side of the peninsula, and includes an account of the battle by British general John Burgoyne.



The following Description of the Action near Boston, on the 17th of June, is taken from a Letter written by General Burgoyne to his Nephew Lord Stanley.

“BOSTON is a peninsula, joined to the main land only by a narrow neck, which as the first night Gen. Gage fortified with a line, and the harbor, toward the north: on the other side one of these arms, to the North, is Charlestown, a peninsula: to the South of the town is a hill larger than the town, containing three hills, joining all to the main by a narrow neck, and called Bunker Hill: the heights as above described, both North and South, (to the latter's point) command the town, and give an opportunity of sending batteries above any that you can make against them, and consequently are much more advantageous. It was absolutely necessary we should make use of these heights of this height, and we proposed to begin with Bunker Hill, because from particular Reasons of Ammunition and Shipping, (too long to describe, and intelligible to you if I did) it would certainly be effected without any considerable loss: everything was accordingly disposed; my own colleague and myself (who, by the way, have never differed in one part of military treatment) had, in concert with Gen. Gage, formed the plan: Howe was to lead the main body on the west of Charlestown, where the strength of the enemy lay; he had under him Burgoyne, General Pigot, Clinton, and myself took our stand (for we had not any fixed post) in a large battery directly opposite to Charlestown, and commanding it, and also reaching to the heights above it, and thereby facilitating Howe's attack. Howe's disposition was according to this: in my opinion it was perfect. As his first aim advanced up the hill, they met with a thousand impediments from strong works, so were much engaged. They were afterwards completely cut by another party from Charlestown, though Clinton and I did not perceive it, till Howe was upon a hill, and ordered us to fire for the town, which was immediately done. We threw a great part of shells, and the whole was instantly in flames. Our heavy afterwards kept us incessant fire on the heights: it was attended by a number of signals, being batteries, and our ship of the line.

“And now related one of the greatest scenes of war that can be conceived: if we look to the height, Howe's army ascending the hill in the face of counter-batteries, and in a very disadvantageous ground, was much engaged; and so the left the enemy pushing in with temerity by thousands, over the land; and in the rear of the first army there was a second army, who were engaged in the rear of the first.

“Howe was unopposed, but his aid-de-camp Sherman was killed; Jones, a friend of Howe's, who joined, engaged the enemy, so for the campaign, (a high name of ours on board the Centurion, and who acted as aid-de-camp) is badly wounded. Pigot was unhurt, but he behaved like a hero. You will see the list of the left.



***Bunkers Hill or America's Head Dress***

Engraved by Matthew and Mary Darly  
[London]: Published by M. Darly, [1776]

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles  
Lawrence Fergusson Collection

On April 19, 1776, English husband-and-wife engravers Matthew and Mary Darly published an unusual version of the events at Bunker Hill, picturing them within an exaggerated woman's hairstyle. The caricature features three circular redoubts at the top, where soldiers fire at each other from nearly point-blank range under flags bearing an ape, two women holding lightning bolts, and a goose. The etching provided a mockery of the elaborate fashion trend and a commentary on current events.



**William Thompson (1748-1816)**

By Cephas Thompson (1775-1856)

Early 19th century

Oil on canvas

The Society of the Cincinnati, Museum purchase, 2019

William Thompson—a native of Middleboro, Massachusetts, about forty miles south of Boston—was an ensign in the town's First Company of Minute Men at the outbreak of the revolution, when they responded to the Lexington Alarm. Two months later, Thompson commanded a company of militiamen at Bunker Hill. During the battle, William's wife, Deborah, was pregnant with their second child, who was born on July 1, 1775. Cephas Thompson would become an artist and painted this portrait of his father later in life.



## THE BATTLE OF QUEBEC DECEMBER 31, 1775

In late June 1775, ten days after the Battle of Bunker Hill, the Continental Congress authorized an invasion of Canada, which sought to take control of the region from the British and to secure the colonies' northern border. Patriot leaders also hoped French

Canadians would join the Americans in a common fight against the British Crown.

The invasion began in late August, when Brig. Gen. Richard Montgomery led an American force from Fort Ticonderoga into Canada. The Continentals waged a successful campaign over the next several months, capturing Fort St. John's and Montreal. At the same time, more American troops under Col. Benedict Arnold marched through New England to meet Montgomery outside Quebec City, the primary target of the invasion. The two forces joined in early December and began a siege of the walled city.

After several weeks of the siege, General Montgomery ordered an assault on the city's fortifications to try to force its surrender. On December 31, Montgomery and Arnold led the attack in a blinding snowstorm.

Cannon fire from within the city killed Montgomery, wounded Arnold, and scattered their men, with four hundred captured. Arnold

resumed the siege until May 1776, when British reinforcements forced the Americans to retreat.

The failed campaign created considerable doubt around the idea of adding Canada as a fourteenth colony in the rebellion against Great Britain.



### *Plan of the City and Environs of Quebec*

Engraved by William Faden  
London: Published ... by Wm. Faden, 1776  
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

This British map of Quebec locates "the American Forces under Genl. Arnold" to the west of the walled city as well as the Continentals' attempts to besiege the city through the spring of 1776.



### British Pattern 1769 Short-Land musket

ca. 1769-1777

Walnut, iron, and brass

The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of John Sanderson du Mont,  
New York State Society of the Cincinnati, 1994

This British musket, known as the Short-Land pattern, was ubiquitous on both sides of the Revolutionary War. Introduced in the British army in 1769, it was the standard-issue weapon for royal infantrymen at the start of the American war. The Short-Land pattern musket also became the most common firearm used by American troops in the revolution, who seized them from colonial storehouses and captured them from the enemy. These British land pattern guns are also known as Brown Bess muskets, a nickname given to the weapon by soldiers in the eighteenth century.



### Journal

James Melvin

1777

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Massachusetts soldier James Melvin kept this journal recording his participation in the Canadian campaign—possibly writing in this volume afterwards from notes he kept while in the field. He marched with Col. Benedict Arnold to Quebec, leaving Cambridge, Massachusetts, on September 13, 1775. His journal records the attack on Quebec on December 31, when he was captured, and ends on August 5, 1776, when he was released in a prisoner exchange.



7 The Artillery and several others in the town, all these circumstances together with Capt. Montgomerie and Lewis partly in their rear obliged them to lay down their arms and surrender. We took 32 officers & 252 private Soldiers, the killed were about 100 besides Officers. The Governor ordered the whole after Daylight from the Ramparts over the land de Wallat. We lost one Capt & 4 private killed and few wounded.

On the first of January the Body of M<sup>r</sup> Montgomery was found, together with his Aid de Camp, & several other Officers which were all brought to Town & buried. The first both his Right Cheek and was shot thro' the head by the Grenadier shot from Capt. Barnsfair to whom the Governor publicly gave thanks the next day. On the 7 Colonel M<sup>r</sup> Lewis led 90 of the Rebel Cavalry who were mostly Irish, they continued doing duty for some days, but at length they began to desert in twos and threes which raised such a clamour in Town, that on the 16 Feb<sup>y</sup> the Governor ordered them all to be confined again. Nothing material happened in that time, but burning the suburbs of St Johns by the Rebels, and what of St Marc remained after M<sup>r</sup> Desj<sup>ne</sup> when the Salute & all its Embarcations were burnt by us at which time we also brought in all their Mortars and a piece of Cannon. The moat now about six feet deep and the Men of the Garrison of duty employed in shoveling off the Platforms Ramparts; and from this day the 16, all the Garrison laid down in their Cloaths at the Volunteer Regiment excepting such as were for Guard the day following till the Siege was raised. The Enemy made several attempts to get down by flags of Truce, but they were always

**Account of the Siege of Quebec**

Thomas Ainslie  
 May 12, 1776  
 The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Thomas Ainslie, a Scottish-born customs officer in Quebec and captain in the militia, helped defend the city on December 31, and wrote an account of the siege and assault in this lengthy letter addressed "Dear Jamie." Ainslie took note of General Richard Montgomery's death and burial, as well as Governor Guy Carleton publicly giving thanks to Captain Barnsfair, who commanded the battery in the Lower Town that fired the shots that killed Montgomery.

*A Pay Roll of Col James Livingston's Regiment Canadian Forces, now in the service of the United States, commencing until the 20<sup>th</sup> Novem<sup>r</sup> 1776, both Days included.*

Officers Non Commissioned Officers & Privates Names	Time of entry	Went left the service & what Reason	Months & Days in Service	Wages & Month	Total Amount of Wages	Money adv <sup>d</sup> by M <sup>r</sup> Gen <sup>l</sup> & Master Gen <sup>l</sup>	Amount of (blank) Items all by M <sup>r</sup> Gen <sup>l</sup> & Non Commissioned have received	Total Amount of what they have received	Money Due the Regiment	Money due the Regiment to the Cont <sup>l</sup>
Rich Livingston Major	May 20		6	£13. 6. 8	£80. 0. 0	£13. 6. 8		£13. 6. 8	£66. 13. 4	
Abraham Livingston Cap <sup>l</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>		6	10. 13. 4	64. 0. 0	10. 13. 4		10. 13. 4	53. 6. 8	
Augustin Lussica D <sup>o</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>		6		64. 0. 0	21. 6. 8		21. 6. 8	42. 13. 4	
Robert Waight Cap <sup>l</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>		6		64. 0. 0	10. 13. 4		10. 13. 4	53. 6. 8	
John Allen D <sup>o</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>		6		64. 0. 0	21. 6. 8		21. 6. 8	42. 13. 4	
Anthony Maynard D <sup>o</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	Died Nov <sup>r</sup> 11	5. 24		61. 17. 4	21. 6. 8	£4. 10. 0	25. 16. 8	36. 0. 8	
Van Heer Adjutant	9 <sup>th</sup>	in service	6	7. 6. 8	44. 0. 0	67. 8. 8		67. 8. 8		£23. 8. 0
Joseph Cone Lieut	9 <sup>th</sup>		6	7. 4. 0	43. 0. 0				43. 0. 0	
Francis Monty D <sup>o</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>		6		43. 0. 0	14. 8. 0		14. 8. 0	28. 16. 0	
John Bateman D <sup>o</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>		6	7. 6. 8	44. 0. 0	14. 13. 4	4. 10. 0	19. 3. 4	24. 16. 8	
Pierre Maillet Lieut	9 <sup>th</sup>		6	7. 4. 0	43. 0. 0	14. 8. 0	7. 5. 3 1/4	21. 13. 3 1/4	21. 10. 8 1/4	
Captain Labontie	June 6		5. 11	10. 13. 4	58. 6. 2	10. 13. 4	5. 10. 3	10. 3. 7	42. 2. 7	
Captain Chester	8 <sup>th</sup> 7		5. 13		57. 19. 4	10. 13. 4	5. 0. 0	15. 13. 4	42. 5. 9	
Captain Marney	8 <sup>th</sup> 7		5. 13		57. 19. 4	21. 6. 8	3. 10. 0	24. 16. 8	33. 2. 5	
Bapt. Radoux S <sup>erj</sup>	May 26		5. 25	3. 4. 0	18. 13. 4	3. 4. 0	11. 15. 3 1/4	14. 19. 3 1/4	3. 14. 0 1/4	
Peter Gronie D <sup>o</sup>	June 1		5. 20		18. 2. 8	6. 8. 0		6. 8. 0	11. 14. 8	
Robert Labontie D <sup>o</sup>	6		5. 11		17. 9. 10	6. 8. 0	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 13. 3 1/4	3. 16. 6 1/4	
Peter Hebert D <sup>o</sup>	7		5. 13		17. 7. 8	6. 8. 0	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 13. 3 1/4	3. 14. 4 1/4	
Lewis Marney D <sup>o</sup>	7		5. 13		17. 7. 8	6. 8. 0	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 13. 3 1/4	3. 14. 4 1/4	
Peter Jammari D <sup>o</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup> 1		5. 20		18. 2. 8	6. 8. 0	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 13. 3 1/4	4. 9. 4 1/4	
Corporal Rouvet	8 <sup>th</sup> 1		5. 20	2. 18. 8	16. 12. 5	5. 17. 4	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 2. 7 1/4	3. 9. 9 1/4	
Joseph Enoué Cap <sup>l</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup> 7	Died Nov <sup>r</sup> 11	4. 27		14. 6. 5	5. 17. 4	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 2. 7 1/4	1. 3. 9 1/4	
Peter Robarge D <sup>o</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	in service	5. 13		15. 18. 5	5. 17. 4	7. 5. 3 1/4	13. 2. 7 1/4	2. 15. 9 1/4	
Michael Labontie D <sup>o</sup>										

**"A Pay Roll of Col. James Livingston's Regiment Canadian Forces, now in the service of the United States"**  
 1776  
 The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Col. James Livingston, a New York-born Patriot living in the Province of Quebec when the revolution broke out, recruited Canadian residents for what would become the First Canadian Regiment of the Continental Army. Livingston's regiment fought in the assault on Quebec in December 31, then remained with the Americans besieging the city into the spring of 1776. This pay roll of the unit, beginning on May 20, 1776, lists 67 soldiers—mostly French Canadians.



## FIRST MARTYRS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

By the end of 1775, two of the American army's highest-ranking officers were killed in battle, becoming the first American martyrs of the Revolutionary War: Joseph Warren at Bunker Hill and Richard Montgomery at Quebec.

Their deaths shocked their fellow soldiers and citizens, reinforcing one of the harshest realities of war. Their sacrifice also forced Americans to grapple with how to memorialize their fallen heroes.

Ten years after the Battles of Bunker Hill and Quebec, the Connecticut-born soldier and artist John Trumbull began "to take up the History of Our Country, and paint the principal Events particularly of the late War" in what would become a series of eight history paintings of the revolution. He had served in the war himself, briefly—as an officer in the Continental Army he witnessed the Battle of Bunker Hill from camp south of Boston. Trumbull's scenes of Bunker Hill and Quebec focus on the deaths of Warren and Montgomery, emphasizing the emotions of the events and the figures' humanity, bravery, duty, and devotion to their country more than a historical depiction of battle.

Trumbull commissioned engravings of his paintings of Bunker Hill and Quebec to be published and sold, allowing his work to find broader audiences. Italian print publisher Antonio de Poggi signed on to the project in 1786, but the works were not published until 1798, due to delays in finding other business partners in Europe. Trumbull's views of Bunker Hill and Quebec remain the most common depictions of those battles and some of the most enduring images of the entire war.



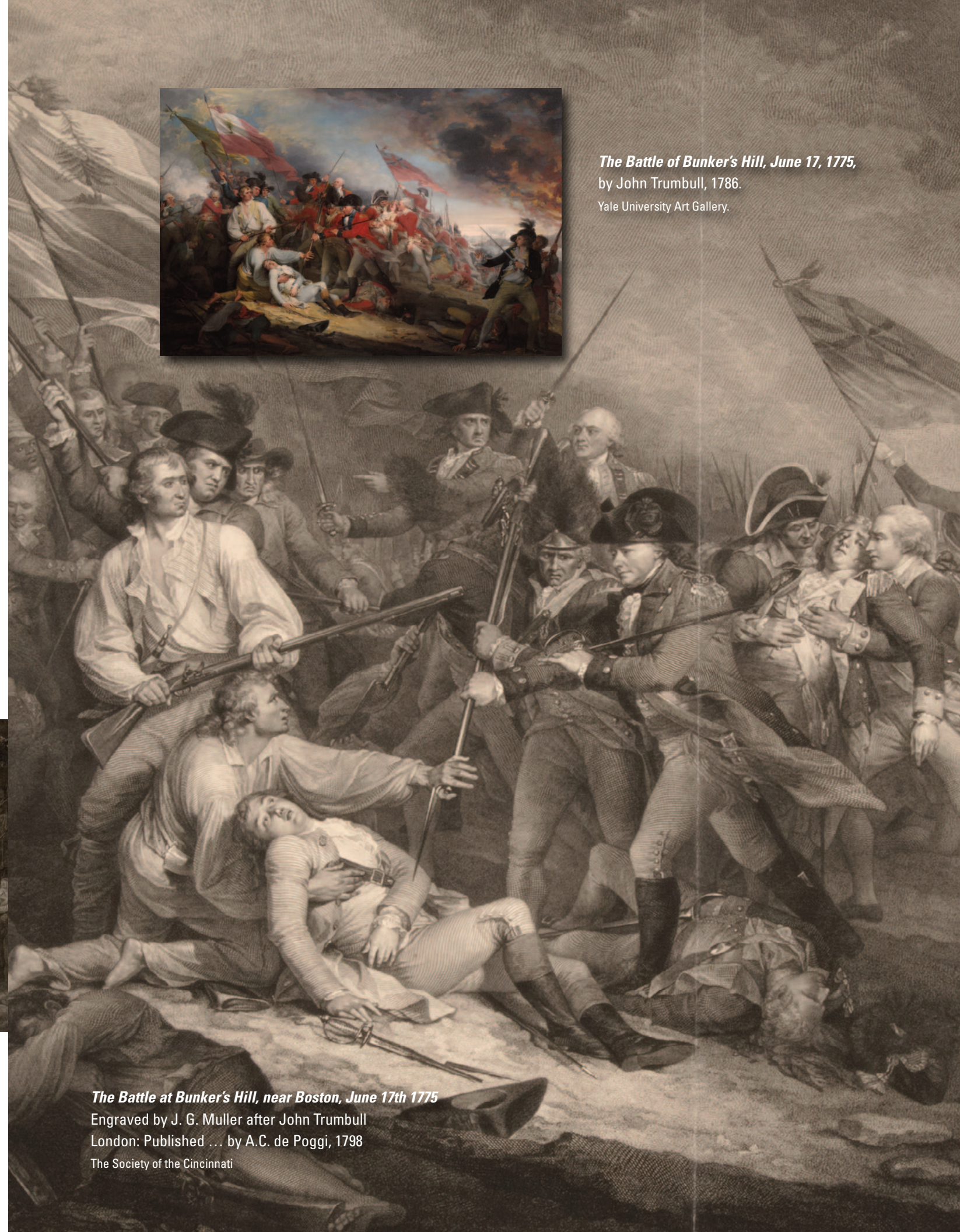
*The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec, December 31, 1775,*  
by John Trumbull, 1786.  
Yale University Art Gallery.



*The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack at Quebec Dec.r 1775*  
Engraved by J. F. Clemens after John Trumbull  
London: Published ... by A.C. de Poggi, 1798  
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of the Society of the Cincinnati of Maryland, 2008



*The Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775,*  
by John Trumbull, 1786.  
Yale University Art Gallery.



*The Battle at Bunker's Hill, near Boston, June 17th 1775*  
Engraved by J. G. Muller after John Trumbull  
London: Published ... by A.C. de Poggi, 1798  
The Society of the Cincinnati



## THE BATTLE OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND JUNE 28, 1776

Residents of Charleston, South Carolina, watched anxiously as events unfolded in New England and prepared for British forces to turn their attention south.

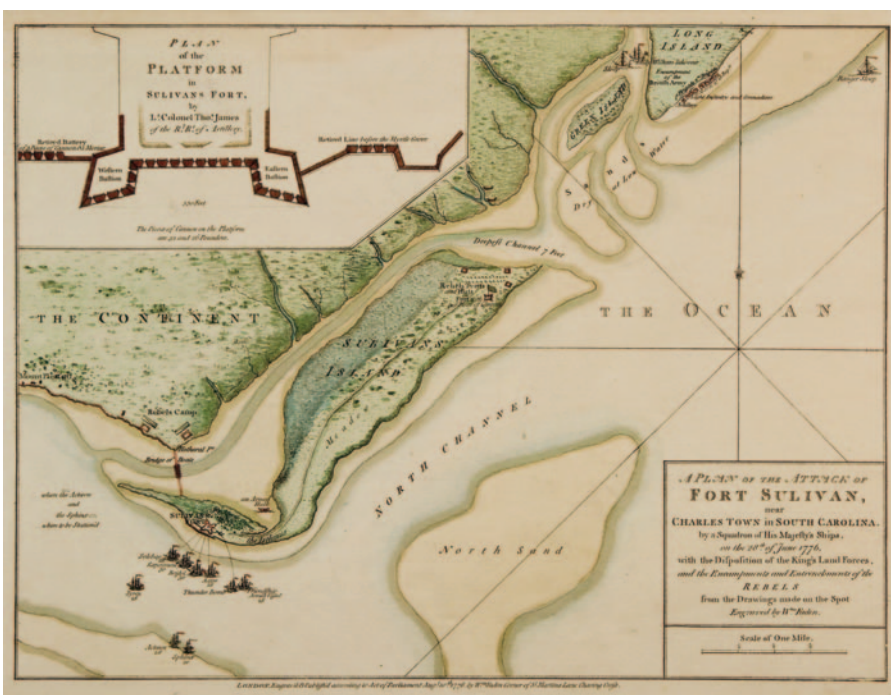
In January 1776, Patriot leaders decided to build a fort on

Sullivan's Island, which sat on the north side of the entrance to the harbor.

The hope of aiding a Loyalist uprising in the South lured British forces to Charleston, the largest city in the region. By early June, Commodore Sir Peter Parker's Royal Navy squadron appeared offshore, carrying four thousand redcoats commanded by General Sir Henry Clinton. Having received intelligence of the British campaign, 6,500 Patriot troops waited for them, a combination of Continental Army soldiers, South Carolina regulars, local militiamen, and a company of Catawba Indians.

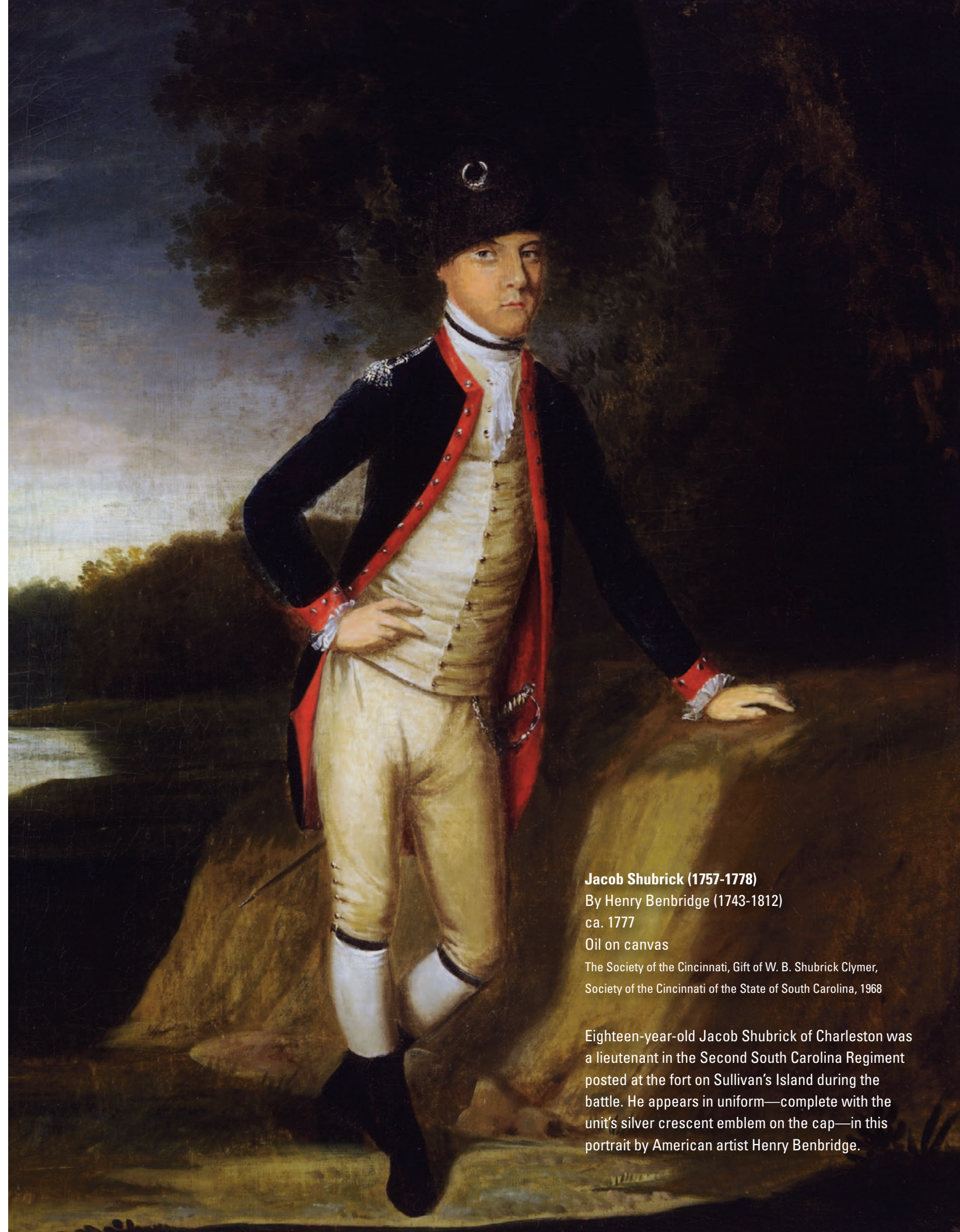
The British bombardment of the unfinished fort on Sullivan's Island unfolded on June 28. About four hundred South Carolinians garrisoned the fort under the command of Col. William Moultrie. For ten hours, the British and American guns exchanged fire in a thunderous bombardment. Despite less men and gunpowder, the Americans successfully defended Sullivan's Island—a victory aided, in part, by the fort's walls made of spongy palmetto logs that absorbed and deflected enemy fire. The unlikely American victory

in the face of British aggression galvanized support for independence in the South.



***A Plan of the Attack of Fort Sullivan,  
near Charles Town in South Carolina***  
Engraved by William Faden  
London: Publish'd . . . by Wm. Faden, 1776  
The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles  
Lawrence Fergusson Collection

The American fort built on the southern end of Sullivan's Island was a square shape with a bastion, or angular projection, in each corner, with sixteen-foot-thick walls with two rows of logs filled with sand. In addition to the garrison at the fort, the Patriots stationed almost 800 men led by Lt. Col. William Thomson at the north end of the island and some 1,500 troops at Haddrell's Point under Continental Army Brig. Gen. John Armstrong. (Haddrell's Point jutted out from the mainland into a cove on the west side of the island.)



**Jacob Shubrick (1757-1778)**  
By Henry Benbridge (1743-1812)  
ca. 1777  
Oil on canvas  
The Society of the Cincinnati, Gift of W. B. Shubrick Clymer,  
Society of the Cincinnati of the State of South Carolina, 1968

Eighteen-year-old Jacob Shubrick of Charleston was a lieutenant in the Second South Carolina Regiment posted at the fort on Sullivan's Island during the battle. He appears in uniform—complete with the unit's silver crescent emblem on the cap—in this portrait by American artist Henry Benbridge.



Dear Brother,  
 Town, 10 o'clock at night, 28 June 76  
 The Staff going up gave me an opportunity of expressing  
 (as none else had time to do) that the loss of our freedom, or subject  
 Slavery, commenced this day at 11 o'clock. At 11 o'clock the British  
 10 ships on the Island as a signal for Clinton's Troops to land on the beach  
 of Haddons point, as they attempted but was repulsed twice with loss.  
 while the 50, 44, 36, & 28, & 20. Gun ships made up for the Island, where  
 at a 1/4 mile distance, a most violent Cannonade ensued, which continued  
 without intermission until 1/2 after midnight. The Staff went up after  
 3 o'clock giving each that our weather was no more to be depended on but the Staff  
 Carr. away by the 4 o'clock, & 1 Gun dismounted: & 2 further on  
 the bursting of a shell the 50 Gun ship much damaged, & as well the other,  
 as appears by the remaining shavings, which, you see, were shot to  
 pieces, & some lodged in the exchanges as Trophies of the day, 3 Shots in  
 5 of ours took place: it computed the ships for 10000 shot & 50000 lb  
 powder. The Iron of 28, & a frigate of 20 Guns, in making up to the Island, got  
 aground on the beach, & the remains, it says for here, or they would  
 have been in the line of battle, the Boon & fuel played all day, but to no great  
 effect. A Dragoon of 1000 men was sent down this morning with Schuyler,  
 & this morning about noon from the cause that the number sent arrived from  
 from N. Carolina, in which of some to replace them. The whole Town  
 is under arms this night. It is expected, or thin what level forces will  
 be in arms before their land tomorrow, & vigorous fresh made by Clinton, the  
 fate of the Island, Town & province will be determined & they'll make  
 the best of their way out of from whence they came. As soon as the  
 Engagement began, the Crown Officers, & Tories were carried to Roupels  
 House, under a guard, a seizure was made on their papers &c. The money  
 in the Treasury &c. sent out of Town this afternoon & the proceeds for  
 from the same. Supply also sent down to the Island this evening.  
 The a... and Mr. How... this day. Notwithstanding a report  
 that a... men in the fort was killed, I hope  
 the... is not true, unless he was to have  
 & Kott, his post being on the Weather flank, & most of the  
 down, a Treasury belonging to the fort, but I shall not find my  
 Daughter in Town, it being intended to carry her  
 out of the way when danger approached, which shall tomorrow if I can  
 obtain a pass, as none is now left to quit. It is said this is the greatest  
 Cannonade that has been in America, before. May the God of Heaven  
 give us the victory to our Arms.

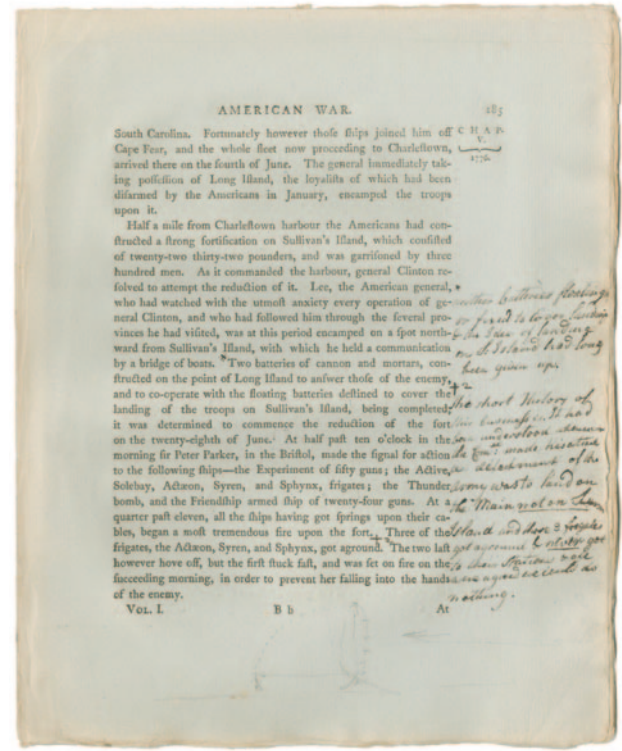
**Benjamin Mazyck to Daniel Ravenel**  
 June 28, 1776  
 Collection of Daniel Ravenel, Society of the  
 Cincinnati of the State of South Carolina

South Carolina Patriot Benjamin Mazyck wrote this letter from Charleston at "10 o'clock at Night" as the Battle of Sullivan's Island came to an end. "The Contest of our freedom or abject Slavery commenced this day," he declared to his brother-in-law Capt. Daniel Ravenel. After recounting the course of the fighting, Mazyck related some of the activities in the city during the battle. "As soon as the Engagem't begun, the Crown officers & Tories were carried to Roupels House under a guard, a seizure made on their papers &c. The monies in the Treasury &c. sent out of Town to Dorchester this afternoon."



**Henry Clinton (1730-1795)**  
 By John Ramage (1748-1802)  
 ca. 1778-1782  
 Watercolor on ivory  
 The Society of the Cincinnati, Purchased  
 with a gift from a private foundation, 2015

**The History of the Origin,  
 Progress, and Termination of  
 the American War**  
 Charles Stedman  
 London: Printed for the Author;  
 and Sold by J. Murray, 1794  
 The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert  
 Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection



Twenty years after Sullivan's Island, Clinton's failed role in the battle still weighed on his mind enough that he wrote his own commentary and corrections in the margins of a popular history of the Revolutionary War.

**The Attack on Fort Moultrie**  
 By William Elliott (active 1774-1794)  
 Late 18th century  
 Oil on canvas  
 Historic Charleston Foundation Collection



The Royal Navy warships positioned themselves in two lines to attack the fort on Sullivan's Island from the east. The *Bristol* (Commodore Parker's flagship), the *Experiment*, and the *Active* were part of the first line—and are depicted in the middle of this contemporary view of the battle, guns firing at the fort on the right side of the canvas. William Elliott, a British navy officer and artist who was not present at the battle, painted this view from a perspective northeast of the fort.



## A PANORAMA OF AMERICAN HISTORY

The American Revolution has remained part of our nation's popular memory, although which events are most discussed and best remembered has changed over the decades and across regions. A popular toy produced

just after the Civil War offers one look at what Americans thought was important to know about their nation's origins.

The "Historiscope" was created by the iconic game maker Milton Bradley & Co. to teach children about history through play. Sold from 1868 into the 1890s, the toy consists of a scrolling set of twenty-four scenes of colonial and revolutionary America set into a theatrical background. A child would gather family or friends and present the Historiscope by turning the cranks at the top of the box to make the scenes come into view. The toy came boxed with a script, an advertising poster, and two tickets of admission to the "show."

Half of the scenes in the Historiscope chronicle events of the American Revolution. Some of them are still well known today, including the Boston Tea Party, Valley Forge, and Yorktown. Others are not, like Israel Putnam's escape at Horseneck, Connecticut.

The Historiscope includes the battles at Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill, Quebec, and Sullivan's Island—evidence that, nearly one hundred years later, they were still well remembered in American popular culture.

### Left inset:

*Art Sacrificed to the Public! The Historiscope!*  
Springfield, Mass.: Samuel Bowles & Co., [1868]

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

With a playful and sarcastic tone, this advertising poster for the Historiscope promised "twisted doughnuts and cheese passed round after the Battle of Bunker Hill" and required "boys with tin whistles ... to deposit them in the safe."

*"The Historiscope: A Panorama & History of America"*  
Milton Bradley & Co., Springfield, Massachusetts  
ca. 1868-1890

Paper, ink, cardboard, wood, and metal

The Society of the Cincinnati, The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection



This scene of the Siege of Quebec—one of twenty-four hand-colored lithographs in the Historiscope—was copied after a conjectural engraving published in the 1850s. The "Historiscope Lecture" that accompanied the toy described the event briefly and bluntly:

*Near the close of the year 1775, Congress sent two expeditions under the command of Montgomery and Arnold, to attack and take Quebec, in order to secure to the colonists the Province of Canada. ... On the 31st of December 1775, after a siege of three weeks an attempt was made to take Quebec by assault, in which General Montgomery was killed, the assailants defeated, and many killed and taken prisoners.*





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**This catalog accompanies the exhibition *Revolutionary Beginnings: War and Remembrance in the First Year of America's Fight for Independence*, on view March 1, 2025 - January 4, 2026, at Anderson House, headquarters of the American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati, Inc., 2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008.**

**Curated by Emily L. Parsons. Designed by Glenn A. Hennessey.**

**Front and back cover:**

**Detail of *A View of the Town of Concord*,  
engraved by Amos Doolittle after Ralph Earl  
[New Haven: Amos Doolittle, 1775].**

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints  
and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library

The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati, Inc., promotes knowledge and appreciation of the achievement of American independence, 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 preservation and provides resources to teachers and students to enrich understanding of our War for Independence and the principles of the men and women who secured the liberty of the American people. Exhibitions such as this are only possible thanks to philanthropy. Please consider scanning the QR code to support our future museum exhibitions and projects. It will take you to our secure website.

