

# The Revolution in September

1775

## London

On September 1<sup>st</sup> Richard Penn and Arthur Lee, representing the Continental Congress, present the Olive Branch Petition to the Earl of Dartmouth. King George III refuses to receive the petition. Then on September 24<sup>th</sup> the British Cabinet gives notice that it is their intention to "carry on the war against America with the utmost vigour; and to begin the next campaign as early as possible in the spring. The outlines of the plan to be pursued, are, an army of eighteen thousand men to be employed in New-England, and another army of twelve thousand men are to act in Virginia and the middle Provinces."

## Naval Forces

September 2<sup>nd</sup> Washington appoints Captain Nicholas Broughton to take command of the armed schooner Hannah for the purpose of seizing vessels carrying soldiers, ammunition, weapons, and supplies to and from Boston. As if in retaliation on Sept 13<sup>th</sup> British Admiral Graves in Boston orders Captain Vandeput of the Asia to seize and keep in safe custody any delegates to the Continental Congress and any "Rebel General Officers, or the chief radical leaders in New York.

## The Carolinas

On September 5<sup>th</sup> the South Carolina Council of Safety adopts a more proactive program for the defense of the province, calling on the militia to stand "in readiness as in time of Alarm." On September 12<sup>th</sup> Lord Dartmouth announces that 10,000 stand of arms and 6 light artillery pieces would be sent to North Carolina where Governor Martin claims a large body of loyalists would oppose the rebels with force. Two days later South Carolina Patriots capture the strategically important Fort Johnson, on James Island near Charleston. Then, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, William Drayton and loyalist leader Colonel Thomas Fletchall sign a treaty of neutrality in the interior community of Ninety-Six.

## And Pass the Ammunition

September 6<sup>th</sup> Washington writes to the residents of Bermuda defending the American struggle to secure its rights and urging them to deliver to him the contents of their powder magazines. In return he promises to ask the Continental Congress to release the provisions needed by the inhabitants of the islands. On September 15<sup>th</sup> The British charge d'affairs in Paris protests the shipment of 30 tons of powder to Philadelphia by the Governor of St. Domingo, a French possession. Three days later The Continental Congress resolves to appoint a Secret Committee to import up to 500 tons of gunpowder, 20,000 musket locks, 10,000 stand of arms, and 40 brass six-pounders. Then on September 19<sup>th</sup> The British government halts the practice of using flintstones as ballast in ships sailing to America. Admiral Graves is ordered to search all incoming ships, dump all flintstone ballast in deep water, and confiscate all flints suitable for use in firearms.

## Winter is Coming

On September 21<sup>st</sup>, while still besieging Boston Washington Washington writes to Continental Congress president John Hancock describing the problems facing the army. These include the need for winter quarters and clothing, the expiration of soldiers' enlistments, and the lack of funds. Hancock receives Washington's letter and on the 26<sup>th</sup> writes on the behalf of the Continental Congress asking Washington to prepare winter quarters for his men around Boston.

The British are equally concerned and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Admiral Graves advises the British Admiralty against relying on America for supplies and provisions for the fleet during the coming winter. All necessary items would have to be shipped from England.

## Canada



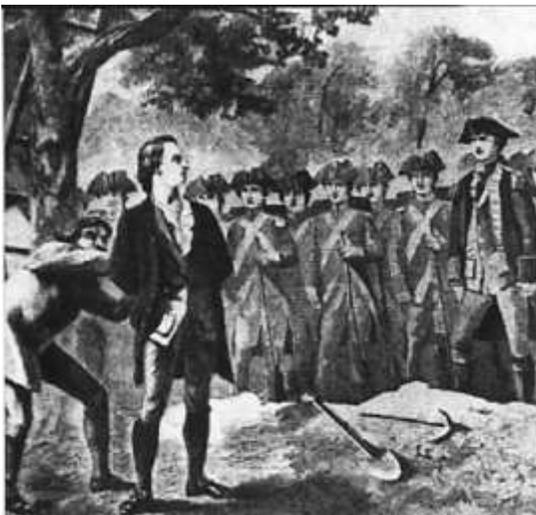
On September 8<sup>th</sup> American forces unsuccessfully assaulted the British garrison at Saint Johns, Canada: the beginning of a two month siege. Nine days later American forces also began besieging Ft Chambly on the Richelieu River. Ethan Allen then decides to move towards Montreal. He had told American General Montgomery On September 20<sup>th</sup> that he had recruited 250 Canadian militia and had more awaiting him closer to Montreal. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> he crossed the river to Montreal with only 96 men (half French Canadians) expecting to quickly take the small British garrison of 34 men. Instead he was confronted with the garrison, 80 British militia, and 120 French Canadian. On seeing the forces coming against Allen, his French Canadian militia fled, leaving him with only 50 men against the British 240. Allen was quickly captured on Sept 25<sup>th</sup>.

## 1776

### New York

Sept 1<sup>st</sup> General Washington reorganized his army into three divisions under Putnam; Heath and Spencer. Putnam's troops occupied the lower part of the city, Heath's the northern end of the island at Kin's Bridge. Spencer's division was considered a mobile force, prepared to reinforce the other divisions. The following day Washington wrote Hancock "Our situation is truly distressing." The militia, "dismayed, intractable and impatient to return (home)," were deserting in droves and "with the deepest concern I am obliged to confess my want of confidence, in the generality of the troops. Only a permanent, standing army can now guarantee our liberties." On hearing this Congress immediately directs Virginia, North Carolina and Rhode Island to send troops to reinforce Washington. A second resolve directed Washington to refrain from any damage to New York if obliged to retire.

As Washington was reorganizing in New York, on September 4<sup>th</sup> Lord Dunmore was explaining his failure to London. Following his arrival in New York, he wrote Lord Germain that the lack of watering places and the ravages of disease had reduced his force to 108 effective rank and file. Having then to be forced to abandon Virginia he now offered to provide intelligence on the southern states to the Howe Brothers. London was not amused, viewing Dunmore's conduct as Governor of Virginia as a major cause for the rebellion. On Sept 29<sup>th</sup> Lord Germain ordered the suspension of all shipments to Loyalists still in Virginia.



On Sept 5<sup>th</sup> The State Convention in New York, requested that Washington arrange for the removal of all the bells in the various churches and public buildings and to transport the same to Newark, New Jersey, so that they not fall into the hands of the enemy. If required, the bells were to be recast into cannons. On the 7<sup>th</sup> A Council of War recommended to Washington that the American Army remain in New York and fight to hold the city. Washington ordered Col. Thomas Knowlton to organize a picked unit of rangers, to be used chiefly on scouting duties. Among the volunteers was a genteel, young officer named Nathan Hale who on September 22<sup>nd</sup> would be hanged for espionage by the British.

## Reconciliation

With Staten and Long Island firmly in British hands, General Howe continued to push for a meeting with Congress. On Sept 6<sup>th</sup> Congress elected John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Rutledge as a committee to confer with Lord Howe. Adams wrote his wife, Abigail, "This day, I think has been the most remarkable of all." He doubted whether the conference would produce any tangible results but felt obliged to undertake the assignment since the same committee "will be directed to inquire into the state of the Army, at New York."

Howe met the committee on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> in the Billop Mansion. Howe urged peace, but admitted he could not recognize Congress or an independent America. Franklin and Adams replied that independence was now an established fact from which the states would not retreat. Aware of the mood of the King and the Ministry, Howe refused to transmit to London their proposals regarding independence. The next day a petition, signed by 7 generals, urged Washington to summon a Council to reconsider the earlier decision to stay and fight for possession of the city. He did so and the Council of War voted that withdrawal was "not only prudent but absolutely necessary."



Four days later on Sept 15<sup>th</sup> the ceasefire ended with 4,000 British troops landing on Kipp's Bay.



Washington withdrew to the Harlem heights where the following day he prevented Howe's troops from advancing further north. On Sept 19<sup>th</sup> Washington praised the conduct of his troops in the skirmish at Harlem Heights, while assuring Congress that a strong defense line was being constructed north of New York to withstand an impending attack. The British in the mean time released a declaration which urged the inhabitants of New York to return to their former loyalty to the King and in return the King would revise all obnoxious orders to his royal governors and concur with any reform measures by Parliament. By September 28<sup>th</sup> both sides are digging in along the Harlem Heights.

## Censorship

On September 5<sup>th</sup> It was reported in Boston that the Governor of Nova Scotia banned publication of the Declaration of Independence, except one excerpt from the final clause. He feared that it may gain over converts, and inflame the minds of his Majesty's loyal and faithful subjects of the Province.

## Europe

On Sept 4<sup>th</sup> British Ambassador to Versailles, Lord David Stormont, sent a gloomy report to London that a powerful French fleet would soon sail for the West Indies. The capable, energetic Governor of St. Domingo, M. Denery, had agreed to serve one more year and would no doubt continue his pro-American policies. On Sept 9<sup>th</sup> William Lee in London, informed C.F.W. Dumas in Paris, that the Declaration of Independence had "totally changed the nature of the contest" and for Britain military effort, the Americans required more military stores and experienced officers. On September 17<sup>th</sup> Silas Deane in Paris promised Robert Morris that in October he would forward to America vast quantities of military stores, including clothing for 20,000 troops.



On Sept 21<sup>st</sup>, A letter arrived in London from Paris describing the debate in the French Cabinet on the question of entering a treaty with America. Many Ministers were opposed to the idea but the Queen (Marie Antoinette) sided with the rebels. In America, on Sept 26<sup>th</sup> Congress elected Franklin, Jefferson and Silas Deane commissioners to France and ordered the strictest secrecy to be observed on all aspects of Franco-American negotiations. On Sept 30<sup>th</sup> Spanish authorities expressed concern over reports of an increase in British naval strength, which indicated to them a possible war with countries other than the Colonies.

## Canada

On Sept 14<sup>th</sup> Congress finally focused its attention on the northern military department and voted to



send large quantities of flints, lead and cartridge paper to General Gates. General Schuyler was ordered to erect suitable winter quarters for the soldiers. Ten days later In Newbury, NH, a deserter from the Canadian Royal Emigrants Regiment informed Colonel Bayley and Governor Carleton that he had assembled an army of regulars, French-speaking Canadians and Indians to assist the Colonists. On Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, Washington transmitted to Congress intelligence on the British military forces in Canada, which included a reference to 100 of the finest cannon ever sent from England.

## Learning about the Militia

While at New York Washington had to deal with the militiamens strict adherence to term of service. On Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>, in a letter to his brother, Washington wrote: "The Dependence which the Congress had placed upon the Militia, has already greatly injured, and I fear will totally ruin our Cause." On September 30<sup>th</sup> in a letter to Lund, his nephew, he blamed the reliance on the militia as the chief root of his problems. Washington complained that the militia were not "worth the bread they ate...I tell you that I never was in such an unhappy, divided state since I was born." In the following months he would learn how to use militia to its strengths.

## Foreigners in Federal Service

As Congress was still trying to bribe Hessians into deserting, it was also working to recruit trained foreign officers. On Sept 18<sup>th</sup> Congress granted commissions to two French volunteers as officers in the Continental army. As this was happening the Pennsylvania Gazette reported that several other French officers had arrived from Martinique to offer their services to America.

Then on Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress ordered the "German Battalion" raised in Maryland and Pennsylvania to join Washington immediately in New York. The German Battalion, made up specifically of recent German emigrants would see service until the end of the conflict.



### Indian Attacks

On Sept 1st, while leading a relief force towards Fort Henry, American Major Samuel McCulloch becomes separated from his troops and then chased by Indians. To escape he rides his horse down a 300-foot cliff into Wheeling Creek and survives. The Indians left the next morning after burning several nearby farms.

### Philadelphia

On September 3<sup>rd</sup> American Brigadier General William Maxwell's Light Infantry Brigade, which has been sent to delay Howe's advance against Philadelphia, engages Howes vanguard Hessian units at Iron Hill. The Americans were first forced from the Hill and then from Cooch's Bridge on the road to Newport. Washington moved his forces to Newport to await the full attack, but Howe simply camped on Iron Hill for five days. Then he moved North towards Pennsylvania and Chadds ford over the Brandywine River. There on September 11<sup>th</sup> Washington's troops engaged Hessians as they tried to cross the river.

But like so many times before it was a diversion by Howe. As his Hessians fell at Chadd's ford, Cornwallis and the regulars crossed the river to the North to fall on the unsuspecting American right flank. Washington tried to reinforce his units, but all that could be done was to slow the British advance. The Americans lost 250 men to Britain's 93. But the worst was the wounding of the Marquis de Lafayette.



Washington withdrew behind the natural defense of the Schuylkill River. He needed time and he needed supplies from Reading Pennsylvania. But by September 15 he re-crossed the river to determine why Howe had stopped. It wasn't a trap, Howe simply didn't have the wagons and horses to rapidly pursue Washington. But when Howe learned Washington was vulnerable he moved to the road junction at White Tavern. There it appeared a second major battle was at hand if a Nor-Easter didn't then hit, soaking both armies and their powder. The only major engagement was when a Hessian unit attacked the Americans with bayonets and

swords in the middle of a Thunderstorm.

With Howe within striking distance of the rebel capital, Congress now flees to York on September 18<sup>th</sup> (the Liberty bell is moved to Allentown). On the 19<sup>th</sup> Washington is again behind the Schuylkill awaiting Howe's next move. But he left Anthony Wayne behind to monitor British movements. The next evening British commander Charles Grey attacked Wayne's camp near Paoli Pennsylvania. The night action decimated Wayne's unit, forcing its withdrawal back to Washington's camp near Valley Forge. Howe advanced North and on Sept 22 the now blind Washington was told a British attack was commencing at Gordon's Ford on the road to Reading.

Washington rushed forces North, only to learn the main British force was actually assaulting Flatland and Richardson Ford. Washington barely returned in time to defend Valley Forge and was now completely out of position to defend Philadelphia. Cornwallis entered the city on September 26<sup>th</sup>.

## Saratoga

A month after the Battle of Bennington the armies are beginning to move again. On Sept 8<sup>th</sup> Gates moves his army to a location some 10 miles south of Saratoga. A few days later on Sept 13<sup>th</sup> Burgoyne moves his army to the west bank of the Hudson River. In five days he is four miles north of Saratoga.



As Burgoyne approached Saratoga he was being cut-off from Canada. On Sept 18<sup>th</sup> General Lincoln was literally rounding up every British force from Burgoyne's rear back to fort Ticonderoga. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Burgoyne was effectively cut-off from Canada. The same day Burgoyne's forward units are engaged by Patriots under the command of Benedict Arnold and riflemen under Henry Morgan (depicted). Morgan's riflemen would get their reputation for shooting British officers and artillery men at Freeman's Farm. Burgoyne halts his advance and digs in, hoping British General Clinton can move North from New York to link-up with him.

1778

### Native attacks

On Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, over 400 Shawnee under the leadership of Chief Blackfish placed Boonesborough under siege. Daniel Boone, who had just escaped the Shawnee, led the defense of the town over ten days. While this was happening, on Sept 13<sup>th</sup> Chief Joseph Brant, who leads a force of 150 Indians and 300 Loyalists raids the town of German Flats New York. The residents, being forewarned of the attack, took refuge in Fort Herkimer. Brant's warriors then burned nearly 70 farms, ignoring the fort and its defenders. Chief Blackfish learned this lesson the hardway as his siege of Booneborough cost him almost 40 warriors until he withdrew on Sept 17<sup>th</sup>.

### General Grey

After being sent to Newport to relieve the garrison, on Sept 5<sup>th</sup> Major General Charles Grey is given orders to raid the nearby towns of New Bedford and Fairhaven. Bedford is taken unopposed with 11 homes and 21 shops being burned. Fairhaven however was warned of the British approach on Sept 7<sup>th</sup> making it too costly to raid. Grey then sailed to Martha's Vineyard where by Sept 14<sup>th</sup> he had stolen some 10,000 sheep and 300 oxen. He then sailed back to New York, arriving on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

With only ten days of rest General Cornwallis then sends Grey orders to attack American Col George Baylor who was at River Vale, New Jersey. The goal was to provoke Washington into sending his main troops forward to defend the area and thus be trapped into a major battle with General Clinton's Army. General Grey's troops, using only bayonets, went house to house in the community killing the men of Col Baylor who were asleep. Of Baylor's 100 men, 15 were killed and 54 wounded (including Col Baylor). Devastating though the raid was, Washington stayed behind his defenses.

Just days after this, across the Hudson River, a Hessian unit rode up to the home of Peter Post. When asked if he had seen any rebels, Post directed them to a nearby road called Edgar's Lane. The 80 Hessians rode out expecting an easy victory. Instead they ran into an ambush by 120 dragoons under the command of light-horse Henry Lee. 23 of the Hessians were killed and the rest captured to no American losses. Lee's men quickly returned to Washington's lines.

1779

## Savannah

After driving the British back from Charleston, on Sept 3rd General Lincoln receives word that Admiral d'Estaing was sailing for Savannah with 4,000 troops and over 30 ships of the line. Lincoln quickly raised 2,000 troops and began marching south on Sept 11<sup>th</sup>. The very next day d'Estaing began unloading his troops south of the city. By the 18<sup>th</sup> the city was surrounded with the French to the South and the Patriots north.



### **New Spain**

As the French were besieging Savannah, Don Bernardo de Galvez begins military operations against British forts and posts near New Orleans. On Sept 7<sup>th</sup> he captures Fort Bute near Baton Rouge. Five days later he lays siege to Baton Rouge which holds out until Sept 21<sup>st</sup>. British posts on the Mississippi then surrender quickly.

### **I have Not Yet Begun To Fight.**

On Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>, An unseaworthy former Merchant ship named The U.S.S. Bonhomme Richard engages the 50-gun H.M.S. Serapis. As the fight rages Captain George F. Pearson of the Serapis calls on Patriot captain John Paul Jones to surrender. Jones' response is now Naval legend as he succeeds in storming the Serapis before the Bonhomme Richard sinks.

## **1780**

### **The South**

*As Cornwallis advances into North Carolina he sends forces after the patriot units in his rear. On August 20<sup>th</sup> Francis Marion and 52 of his men free some 150 prisoners being held on Thomas Sumters burned plantation. This alerts local Tories who follow Marion to Port Ferry on the Pee Dee River. While resting Marion learns over 250 Loyalists, under the command of Maj Ganey were moving towards him.*



Ganey led a forward unit of 45 men, followed by 200 men commanded by Capt Barfield. On **September 4, Marion ambushes Ganey's unit, killing or wounding some 30 Tories. Marion then withdrew to Blue Savannah to await the arrival of the main force. This second ambush is also**

**successful with Barfield's men fleeing into the swamp. Word of these victories quickly spreads and by September 6<sup>th</sup> some 60 volunteers had joined Marion's force.**

As Marion causes trouble in Cornwallis's rear another patriot force was assembling to the west. On Sep 10<sup>th</sup> British Maj Patrick Ferguson, commanding 1,000 Tories, had issued a threat against the "Over Mountain" communities in Tennessee. In response close to 1,400 Patriots under the command of Col Shelby begin moving east. On Sept 30<sup>th</sup> they were at Quaker Meadows in North Carolina, pursuing Ferguson who was now retreating towards Cornwallis.

### **September 23, 1780**

Major John André captured On Sept 23, near Tarrytown NY, three American militiamen confront a Mr. John Anderson. The man was actually British Major John André, Chief of the British secret service in America. He had just left American General Benedict Arnold and was carrying information about the

defenses at West Point on the Hudson River. When word of a spies capture reached Maj Tallmedge, head of continental intelligence, he immediately took André into custody.

Arnold learns of André's capture two days later and flees to the safety of the British warship HMS Vulture in the Hudson River. When Washington learns of this he states "Arnold has betrayed us!.....Whom can we trust now?"

## 1781

### Yorktown

Since the end of August Cornwallis had been watching as the French fleet of Admiral Francois de Grasse unloaded men and cannons, reinforcing the troops of Lafayette. But in the morning of Sept 5<sup>th</sup> British sails were spotted at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The French cut their moorings and made a dash out of the bay. At 4:00 PM both fleets were exchanging fire as they moved into the Atlantic.

The British had the advantage in ships, plus many of the French ships had left men on shore given the haste in their departure. But the British ships were in poor condition having been rushed to sea to aid Cornwallis. The battle raged until night fall, with the French escaping into the darkness.



As British Admiral Graves chased de Grasse into the Atlantic, a second French force under Admiral Barras sailed into the bay. De Grasse then turned around and returned to the Bay, dragging Graves with him. On Sept 13<sup>th</sup> Graves learned that the French had returned to the bay and had been reinforced. All he could do now was sail for New York and hoped reinforcements: Cornwallis was on his own.

As the British and French fleets were fighting, on Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> General Clinton learned Washington was moving south. Clinton needed a diversion to draw back as many of Washington's troops as he could. Thus he ordered Benedict Arnold, who had just returned from Yorktown, to raid Patriot supply depot's at New London. Only 24 soldiers commanded by Captain Adam Sharpley at Fort Griswold guard the supplies. Arnold burns the town on Sept 6<sup>th</sup>, causing \$500,000 in damage. But the Patriot militia comes out in force and won't surrender forcing Arnold to storm the fort. Patriot losses are approximately 240 killed and wounded to about 200 for the British. Numerous Americans are reported to have been bayoneted after their surrender adding to the blighted reputation of the turncoat Arnold. But though the raid is a success, it has no effect on Washington's movement.



After stopping at Mount Vernon for the first time in years, Washington then proceeds to Yorktown. On Sept 17<sup>th</sup> he arrives to inspect the troops and the construction of the gun emplacements. By Sept 28<sup>th</sup> a combined French and Continental army of 17,000 troops have arrived to surround the town.

#### **To the south,**

After receiving reinforcements, Nathanael Greene resumes offensive action towards Charleston S. Carolina. On Sept 8<sup>th</sup> his troops encounter foragers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Stewart who is encamped at Eutaw Springs. The two forces are near equal in number and Stewart has not fortified his camp.

The battle was a slugging match costing Greene almost 600 men while Stewart lost nearly 900. The next day Stewart withdrew towards Charleston under heavy rain. Thus ended the hardest fought battle, and last major engagement, of the war in the South. American control of the southern section of the country is virtually assured. The only black mark is the capture of Col William Washington by the British.

On Sept 12<sup>th</sup> Tory militia, in a bold raid on Hillsborough N. Carolina, capture the governor and 13 other officials. As they were being moved to Willmington to be surrendered to the British, patriot militia intercepts them at Lindley's Mill. The attempted rescue fails however and after four hours the Patriots have to withdraw. Governor Thomas Burke is imprisoned on James Island.

## **1782**

### **September, 11 - 13, 1782**

Siege of Ft. Henry (Wheeling), West Virginia

A force of 40 Loyalists and 250 Indians besieges a group of Americans. According to some sources, when the Patriots begin to run short of powder, Elizabeth Zane races outside the fort to fetch a keg of powder from a nearby cabin. She returns safely before the surprised Indians can react.

## **1783**



### **September 3, 1783**

Peace Treaty is signed in Paris ending the war. The British delegates refused to sit for the painting. In the same regard some provisions of the treaty were immediately violated (by both sides).