

# **Washington's Life Guards**

**Conquer or Die**

**by Raymond C. Wilson, ...**

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## Introduction

Illustration:

Washington's Headquarters (Hasbrouck House) in Newburgh, New York

While stationed at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York from 1981 to 1985, I lived at Stewart Army Subpost in nearby Newburgh. When not on duty, I enjoyed visiting local historic sites. One of my favorite places to visit was General George Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh located approximately six miles from my military quarters.

Illustration:

## Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh, New York (highlighted in red)

General George Washington lived in the Hasbrouck House overlooking the Hudson River in Newburgh while he was in command of the Continental Army during the last sixteen months of the American Revolutionary War. The Hasbrouck House, used by General Washington as his headquarters from April 1782 until August 1783, had the longest tenure of any place he had used. For twelve of these months, Washington's wife, Martha, lived with her husband in the house. At this point in the war, the Continental Army had recently triumphed at the Battle of Yorktown in Virginia, and an American victory was nearly guaranteed, but many British troops still occupied New York. The Hasbrouck House was chosen as Washington's headquarters for its comparatively safe location north of the strategically important West Point.

### Illustration:

Washington's headquarters in Newburgh was north of West Point

The original house was built by militia Colonel Jonathan Hasbrouck in 1750. It underwent two significant enlargements before it was completed in 1770. The home has an original "Dutch Jambless" fireplace. A temporary kitchen was built by the Continental Army upon their arrival in 1782. Other changes were made inside the house including the addition of an "English" style fireplace in General Washington's bedroom. Existing buildings such as stables and barns were also enlarged and improved on the site. Most Army buildings were removed by the Quartermaster-General's Office at the end of the Revolutionary War.

### Illustration:

Washington's Headquarters Historical Marker

In the critical sixteen months that General George Washington spent at Newburgh, he made some of his most important contributions to shaping the American republic. It was here that Washington rejected the idea of an American monarchy; ended the Newburgh Conspiracy, preventing potential military control of the government; created the Badge of Military Merit, forerunner of the Purple Heart; and circulated an influential letter to State Governors outlining the key principals he felt necessary for the new republic.

In 1850, Hasbrouck House was acquired by the State of New York and became the first publicly operated historic site in the country. Today, it is a museum furnished to recreate its condition during the Revolutionary War.

### Illustration:

Hasbrouck House is now a museum

This historic site covers an area of about seven acres, with three buildings: Hasbrouck House, a museum (built in 1910), and a monument named the "Tower

of Victory", which was completed in 1890 after four years of construction in order to commemorate the centennial of Washington's stay. Housed inside the tower is a statue of General George Washington.

Illustration:

"Tower of Victory" in Newburgh features statue of General Washington

Also on the property is the grave of Uzal Knapp, one of the longest-lived veterans of the Continental Army. It is believed that he served as one of Washington's personal guards.

Illustration:

Grave of Uzal Knapp who served as one of Washington's guards

While researching the Fisher branch of my family tree, I discovered that my 6th great-grandfather George Fischer served as one of General Washington's Life Guards when the Commander-in-Chief was living at the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh. This discovery prompted me to learn more about the soldiers who served as General George Washington's personal guards during the Revolutionary War.

## Formation of Life Guards

Illustration:

Washington's Life Guards (a.k.a. Commander-in-Chief's Guards)

When the eleven month stalemate around the besieged City of Boston came to an end on 4 March 1776, General George Washington (Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army) realized that the entire complexion of the war was about to change. No longer would he be commanding an army maintaining a static siege line, but a mobile army, marching to meet the next British threat. With movement came additional dangers—there were a number of Tories spread over the countryside that were determined to assist the British and of course there was the British Army itself. Therefore, a surprise raid on his headquarters was a serious possibility. To counter that possibility General Washington decided to form a personal guard.

The Commander-in-Chief's Guards, officially designated "His Excellency's Guards," or "The General's Guards," was popularly called by the soldiers "The Life Guards," "Washington's Life Guards," or "Washington's Body Guards." When Congress decreed that these appellations were improper and ordered the practice stopped on 15 April 1777, General Washington began referring to them as "My Guards." General Washington's elite unit of soldiers would be responsible for

protecting his own person and household, as well as the official papers of the Continental Army.

On 11 March 1776, General Washington sent a general order to each regiment surrounding Boston, requesting that 4 soldiers be selected for the unit, which would meet for the first time the next day at noon. The letter requested that the men be selected based on their "sobriety, honesty, and good behavior," and that they be "from five feet, eight inches high, to five feet, ten inches; handsomely and well made."

Washington's Life Guard was organized precisely at the hour of twelve (noon), 12 March 1776, pursuant to a general order issued by General Washington the previous day.

The Guard normally had around 180 men who guarded Washington's headquarters, ordered and prepared his food, escorted his personal baggage and the papers of his office on journeys, delivered messages and looked after Washington's personal staff.

Caleb Gibbs, of Massachusetts, and George Lewis (a nephew of General Washington), of Virginia, were commissioned captain and lieutenant, respectively, of the Guard, to whom were entrusted with the details of the organization. Captain Gibbs frequently referred to his title as "Commandant C-in-C Guards."

General Washington instructed Captain Caleb Gibbs to go to the Clothier General and secure uniforms for his personal guard. He specifically stated that he wanted his guard to wear uniform similar to his own, buff colored breeches and vest, regimental coats of dark blue faced (lapels, cuffs and turnbacks) buff colored. The details as to equipment were left up to Gibbs and what was available. The only word of caution given to Captain Gibbs was "no red."

When Gibbs arrived at the Clothier General's headquarters he soon ran into problems. Most of the uniforms available were captured British and Hessian. Gibbs did manage to secure blue uniform coats, but the only breeches available were white. That was remedied by using coffee to dye them.

The next problem was the waistcoats (vests). The only ones available were captured by an American Privateer and were destined for the British 5th Regiment of Foot. They were red! These red waistcoats became symbolic of the C-in-C Guard for the duration of the war.

The next problem encountered was buttons. In the 18th century, each Regiment had distinctive buttons, marked with the Regiment's designation, such as illustrated below:



Each Regiment had distinctive buttons

What button would a "body guard" of one hundred and fifty men use? We do not know who thought of it, but the Continental Congress had just minted one of our

earliest coins - a penny, and it had a cipher on it - "USA". Either someone in the Clothier General's Department or Captain Caleb Gibbs thought of using the "USA" cipher on the Life Guard buttons. The Department cast new buttons in pewter. The button is displayed below:



"USA" cipher was chosen as official button of Washington's Life Guard

Next came the head gear. The most common hat of the day was the tricorn. But, the Clothier General had several barrels of British Dragoon helmets, which had been captured at sea by a Privateer. The British had sent them to Colonel Banastre Tarleton's Legion. Obviously, Gibbs wanted Washington's Life Guard to stand out. He chose the helmets. He removed the green turban and replaced it with blue, and added a white feather plume, tip in royal blue. He also added a white cockade, known as the French Alliance cockade. This unique head gear did make the Life Guards stand out and they were worn for an undetermined amount of time—at least three years.

Lastly came the weapons. Captain Gibbs was given brand new French made Charleville muskets and bayonets. It is unclear whether or not the short swords used by the Guards were already in their possession or were secured by Gibbs at this time. They were captured Hessian, taken when General Washington took Trenton.

The first record of the Commander-in-Chief Guards having their own unit banner is mentioned at Valley Forge, along with General Washington using his personal Headquarters Flag. The Commander-in-Chief Guards flag is depicted below:

Illustration:

Flag of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard

The colors of the "Flag of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard" are listed as "White field, horse, coat facings, waistcoat, breeches, sword and crossbelt. Green ribbon and ground. Liberty in light blue, also pennant. Blue coat. Brown American eagle with white head and yellow beak. Union shield: blue at top, red and white stripes, yellow fringe. Brown boots, black half-gaiters, blue and white feather in the cocked hat." The unit motto was **Conquer or Die**.

On 11 December 1776, General Washington wrote to the Continental Congress, "From the experience I have had in this [the New York] campaign of the utility of horse, I am convinced there is no carrying on the war without them and I would therefore recommend the establishment of one or more Corps ... In addition to those already raised in Virginia." On 1 January 1777, Lieutenant George Lewis was promoted to captain and given command of one of the new troops of Light Horse. Because some the Guards enlistments had expired the day before, they decided to reenlist but this time in Lewis's troop. Even though the troop was

assigned to Lieutenant Colonel George Baylor's 3rd Dragoon Regiment, they were detached to serve as the Cavalry of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard. Thereafter, cavalry detachments from each of the Continental cavalry regiments operated as part of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard whenever required.

The size of Washington's Life Guard was increased on 1 March 1778. In addition to Captain Caleb Gibbs, who remained Commandant, Lieutenant Henry Philip Livingston was selected to permanently replace Lieutenant George Lewis. 1st Lieutenant Benjamin Grymes of Grayson's Continental Regiment, 2nd Lieutenant William Colfax of the 1st Connecticut Regiment, and Surgeon Samuel Hanson (son of Continental Congress President John Hanson), were assigned to the Life Guard. The rank and file included four Sergeants and three Corporals, two drummers, a fifer and 136 privates.

Under the watchful eye of General (Baron) Friedrich von Steuben, these men were trained to rival the best in Europe. In a General Order issued on 16 May 1778, the Guard was not to pay any honors except to the Commander-in-Chief. The records do not explain why this action was necessary, but obviously it was important enough to address in a General Order.

During the winter of 1779–80 the strength of the unit was increased from 180 to 250, the next spring it dropped back to 180, and in 1783 it numbered 64 enlisted men (including my 6th great-grandfather George Fischer).

Today we think of a headquarters detachment as a collection of clerical types, usually noncombatants. Such was not the case of the Commander-in-Chief Guards. General Washington frequently employed them as light infantry.

## **Plot to Assassinate Washington**

Illustration:

New York Governor William Tryon

When we think about the American Revolution, we think about the colonists here who are fighting the British coming from over there. In reality, there were lots of people in the colonies who took the side of the British, and lots of people from England who joined the colonial side. Some people changed allegiances back and forth. This created an environment of distrust and fear. It also led to lots of double-crossing and espionage.

At the start of the Revolutionary War, William Tryon (the royal governor of New York) and David Mathews (the mayor of New York), both British loyalists, successfully managed to turn some of Washington's Life Guards against him. They were ready to strike, but General Washington found out.

The New York Provincial Congress had established the Committee on Conspiracies, a top-secret team of civilians whose mission was to gather information about the enemy and detect and thwart the enemy's intelligence operations. As the plot against General Washington got bigger, people started to talk, and this little committee—led by lawyer and Continental Congress delegate



John Jay—wound up bringing the whole thing down. It was the beginning of America's counterintelligence efforts.

By January 1776, New York Governor William Tryon was running an intricate spy network throughout the colonies, and building his own army by paying colonists to switch sides. General Washington was horrified. Seeing that New York was rife with loyalists sympathetic to Governor Tryon's cause, Washington came to believe they were as dangerous to the new nation as the British Army.

In February 1776, it was revealed that a hat maker named Thomas Vernon had been meeting with William Tryon aboard the floating Governor's mansion, and had bribed around 50 or 60 of the Washington's soldiers to switch sides.

Around this time, a gunsmith named Gilbert Forbes heard that Governor Tryon was paying handsomely for guns, and arranged to deliver 20 to him for a fee equivalent to around \$10,000 today. Soon, Forbes was receiving money from emissaries including David Mathews, a British loyalist appointed by Tryon to replace Whitehead Hicks as New York City's mayor. In May 1776, Mathews delivered 115 British pounds from Tryon to Forbes, some of which allowed Forbes to "brib[e] rebel soldiers to join the British cause."

In mid-June 1776, Thomas Hickey and another Life Guard, Michael Lynch, were arrested and imprisoned for passing counterfeit money. While in jail, they told a fellow prisoner, Isaac Ketcham, that they—along with several other members of Washington's Life Guards—were involved in a plan to undermine the Patriot cause on behalf of the British. It should be noted that the Irish born Hickey had been a British regular soldier who had deserted and then joined the Continental Army in Cambridge. Despite his past position with the enemy, he was selected to join Washington's Life Guards. In April 1777, when the Life Guard was reformed due to expiring enlistments, General Washington required that no foreigners be part of the team, required that all or most of them be loyal Virginians and forbade any British deserters from being part of the army.

Seeking leniency for himself, Ketcham told authorities what Hickey and Lynch had said. Acting on this information, as well as the testimony of other witnesses who had come forward separately, the committee tracked the conspiracy, arresting and interrogating David Mathews, (mayor of New York City), along with dozens of other suspects.

#### Illustration:

New York Governor William Tryon took refuge aboard  
British ship DUCHESS OF GORDON

What role David Mathews played in the conspiracy is still somewhat ill-defined. New York Governor William Tryon, the ringleader, had fled the city for the safety of the British ship DUCHESS OF GORDON and, during a visit from the mayor, enlisted Mathews to deliver funds to Tryon's co-conspirators. Whether Mathews understood the ultimate purpose of the money is not entirely clear. Regardless, he was deemed a "principal Agent", subject to an investigation by a New York Provincial Congress committee.

On 26 June 1776, Thomas Hickey faced a court-martial. After four witnesses testified against him, including Ketcham, he was found guilty and sentenced to

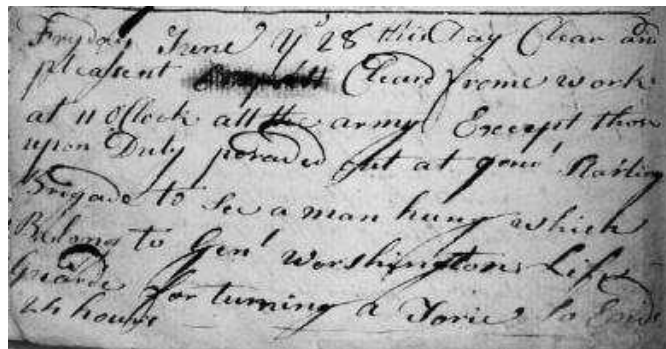
death for “sedition and mutiny, and also of holding a treach’rous correspondence with the enemy, for the most horrid and detestable purposes,” according to the general orders issued from Continental Army headquarters the next day.

In the transcript of Court Martial for the Trial of Thomas Hickey and Others on 26 June 1776, Hickey is referred to as a "private sentinel" in Washington's Life Guards, under the command of "Maj. Gibbs". There is reason to suspect this transcript is a copy made shortly after the end of the Revolutionary War when many official papers were being copied for preservation. In Harry Ward's *George Washington's Enforcers* (2006), he gives Hickey's rank as sergeant, and notes that Captain Caleb Gibbs was not promoted to major until 29 June 1778, two years after Hickey's trial. When enlisted soldiers are convicted, it is normal for their punishment to include a reduction to the lowest rank, private. A postwar transcript would explain why Hickey is listed at his lowest rank (private) and Gibbs is identified at his highest rank (major).

#### Illustration:

#### Large crowd gathered to watch hanging of Thomas Hickey

Just a few days before the Declaration of Independence was signed in July 1776, a large group of spectators estimated at 20,000 gathered in a field where Manhattan’s modern-day Chinatown lies. All together, soldiers and citizens alike, they amassed the largest crowd to watch a public execution in the colonies at the time. Thomas Hickey, a member of the elite Life Guards responsible for protecting General George Washington, was hanged for his crimes on the morning of 28 June 1776. That sent a clear message to the Loyalists without revealing the plot.



Excerpt from the journal of Solomon Nash, 28 June 1776

Solomon Nash, an American soldier from Massachusetts, references the event in his journal: “Cleard frome work at 11 o’clock all the army except those on duty paraded out at Genrl. Starling [sic] Brigade to see a man hung which belong to Genl Washington’s Life Guarde for turning a Torie to Ende his hours.”

William Eustis (the future Massachusetts governor), then an army surgeon who was in the crowd at Hickey’s execution, wrote to Dr. David Townsend that the Hickey conspiracy was “the greatest and vilest attempt ever made against our country... the plot, the infernal plot which has been contrived by our enemies.” To describe the unthinkable—a plot against the life of the revered General

Washington by the very people he most trusted. Eustis even coined a new word, "sacricide," from the Latin words meaning "slaughter of the good."

By that time, rumors were swirling about the conspiracy, horrifying Eustis and many others. In the most sensational (false) story, Thomas Hickey had attempted to kill Washington by feeding him poisoned peas.

In fact, the details of the Loyalist plot foiled by the Secret Committee's investigations remain vague. Washington himself never mentioned a threat to his own life, even in the letter he wrote to John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, on the very morning of Hickey's execution. Nor do any of the official examinations of the committee mention a plan to kill General Washington.

Nevertheless, the evidence suggests the plotters intended to kill (or at least kidnap) Washington, and that Washington and the committee likely kept this under wraps to avoid causing panic—and betraying weakness—just as the British were preparing to invade.

David Mathews (the mayor of New York) was also found guilty of treason and subversion. He was sentenced to death and was to be executed on 25 August 1776. He was first sent to Hartford, Connecticut under the care of Abraham DePeyser, and then sent to Litchfield, Connecticut on 21 July 1776 and placed under house arrest in the home of Major Moses Seymour (a relative of David Mathews' wife Sarah Seymour).

Mathews, in a letter to a college classmate written during his imprisonment, denied his involvement in the plot against General Washington. However, in his claim for compensation to the Royal Commission in London for the forfeiture of his estate in the colonies, had it written that "He had formed a plan for the taking of Mr. Washington and his guard prisoners, which was not effected by an unforeseen discovery that was made."

Mathews later took advantage of a greater level of freedom from a minor parole to meet with other Loyalists, including Joel Stone, who helped Mathews escape. On 27 November 1776, Major Seymour placed the following notice in the *Connecticut Journal* seeking help in recapturing Mathews for the reward of \$50. The notice read as follows:

#### FIFTY DOLLARS reward

On the night after the 20th instant escaped from Litchfield David Mathews Esq., late Mayor of the City of New York, who was some months since taken from hence, on being charged with high crimes against the American States, but on giving his parole was admitted to certain limits, which he has most basely and perfidiously deserted. He is well made, about 6 feet high, short brown hair, about 39 years old, and has a very plausible way of deceiving people. It is supposed he will endeavor to get to Long Island, where his family now resides. Whoever shall take him up and return him to the subscriber in Litchfield, shall receive the above reward and necessary charges.

David Mathews subsequently resumed his office as mayor in late 1776, returning on December 2nd, during which time New York was firmly in British control. His house was located on Water Street.

General Howe, in late 1776, awarded Mathews all of the profits from the city's ferries, markets and slips, for his own personal use. Previously these funds were reverted to the corporation of the City of New York.

David Mathews was also given command of two military units, the Loyal Volunteers of the City of New York and the Mayor's Independent Company of Volunteers, and was often referred to as Colonel.

The New York Assembly, on 22 October 1779, in an Act of Attainder (Confiscation Act), declared David Mathews to be one of 59 state felons who was to be executed if found in the state. His property, which totaled nearly 27,000 acres, was confiscated. In his father Vincent Mathews' will, he was not mentioned and only his children were listed as inheritors.

It is likely that Mathews was at least complicit in the handling of colonial military prisoners, who were not considered Prisoners of War until months after the British defeat at the Battle of Yorktown. Over 10,000 colonial soldiers died as prisoners during the American Revolutionary War, most of them in New York and on prison ships in the East River, more than the men who died in combat.

#### Illustration:

#### British prison ships in New York

Mathews is on record as a visitor to colonial prisoners and in fact helped to produce affidavits denying allegations of abuse and neglect from half a dozen British officials swearing that American prisoners were fed and comfortable.

Mathews' character was considered questionable not just by Patriots but by fellow Loyalists as well. Former Chief Justice of the Province of New York and fellow Loyalist William Smith wrote that Mathews "sends out Parties to the Country to plunder & he has a Share of it," even alleging that he had clearly lied about magnanimously sending stolen goods on the Poor House. Smith then contemplated that "If these Charges are true this Man must dread the restoration of the Peace of his Country & the Re Establishment of order." Thomas Jones described Mathews as "a person low in estimation as a lawyer, profligate, abandoned, and dissipated, indigent, extravagant, and voluptuous as himself." Peter Dubois, fellow magistrate of Mathews, spoke of him as a "profligate and villain" who took advantage of his status and position by taking possession of stolen household goods and even goods that were destined for people in poorhouses.

It is unknown when David Mathews and his family left New York. There is a record of his presence in England in 1784. In November 1784 Mathews arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Failing to gain an appointment as that province's attorney general, he traveled to Cape Breton Island, which in 1786 was administered as a separate colony. There he was appointed Attorney General and a member of the Executive Council by Lieutenant Governor Joseph Frederick Wallet DesBarres. Although an elected house of assembly was to have been established, this did not occur, and Mathews became a leading and divisive figure in the small colony's politics.

David Mathews died on 28 July 1800, and was buried in Sydney, Cape Breton Island. His funeral was well attended.

With regard to the ringleader William Tryon, he came off the British ship DUCHESS OF GORDON and resumed his governorship when New York was officially placed under British martial law in November 1776. But with the war raging, Tryon wanted to be in on the action. He was made a general.

By July 1779, however, Tryon's hubris and cruelty was too much even for the British. He led a series of diversionary raids along the Connecticut coast in which he instructed his men to target unarmed residents and raze inhabited villages. The raids are brutal, with Tryon's soldiers allegedly slaughtering civilians, including women and children. After these controversial raids, the American army accused Tryon of committing war crimes. However, Tryon was never prosecuted for these atrocities.

Suffering from bad health, William Tryon left America finally in 1780 and sailed back to England. Tryon stayed active with the military from London until his death on 27 January 1788.

## **Deployment of Life Guards**

Illustration:

General von Steuben training American troops at Valley Forge

During the winter at Valley Forge of 1777-78, General (Baron) Friedrich von Steuben was tasked with training the Continental Army in European battle techniques. He chose the Commander-in-Chief's Guard as his model for training the troops. Von Steuben trained the Guard with his techniques and they in turn trained the rest of the army, turning it into a formidable fighting force. To reduce the possibility of inter-colony rivalry, the Guard was augmented with soldiers from all the other colonies for the training.

In May of 1778, General Washington attached Captain Gibbs and 100 Life Guards to the force led by Major General, the Marquis de Lafayette. The combined force numbered 2,400 men. Their primary mission was to gather intelligence on the British positions around Philadelphia. Several severe skirmishes resulted, and the Life Guard proved their worth in the line of battle.

With the defeat and loss of the entire British Northern Army commanded by General John Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga, General Howe felt he did not have sufficient forces necessary to keep either New York City or Philadelphia from being overwhelmed by the Americans. He simply couldn't defend both cities. He, therefore, ordered Philadelphia evacuated. General Howe elected to march across New Jersey to New York City. General Washington ordered the entire Continental Army at Valley Forge to pursue, overtake and defeat the rear guard and 1,500 wagon baggage train of the retreating British. On 23 June 1778, General Washington ordered Colonel Daniel Morgan "to take the most effectual means of gaining the enemy's right flank and giving them as much annoyance as possible in that quarter." General Washington ordered Captain Gibbs and eighty men of the Life Guard to support Colonel Morgan's riflemen.

Illustration:  
Colonel Daniel Morgan's riflemen

A detachment of Morgan's riflemen and the Commander-in-Chief Guards, under joint command of Captain Gabriel Long of the "Rifles" and Captain Gibbs of the Guards encountered a unit of British Grenadiers near Squaw Creek. The Guards attacked, killing and wounding several British soldiers and taking 39 prisoners. Hearing the musket fire, a large force of British Light Infantry attempted the rescue of their captured comrades. A pursuit through the swamp ensued, but the British were unable to catch the Americans. Arriving back at Colonel Morgan's position, prisoners still in tow, it was recorded in a private soldier's journal ... "the elegant Life Guards had been splattered with mud as they dashed through the swamps and then Morgan indulged himself in a stentorian laugh that make the woodlands ring."

Illustration:  
General Washington arrived with rest of American Army

A few days later, General Charles Lee commanding the vanguard of the American Army, ordered a retreat at the first signs of battle. General Washington arrived with the rest of the Army, and by sheer weight of his presence rallied the retreating Continentals. To do so, he was riding up and down in front of the line of battle that was being formed. The British Army was closing fast, and General Washington was between the two antagonistic forces. Fearing for his safety, his aides-de-camp and Captain Gibbs rode through the American lines to make General Washington retire to the rear.

The advancing British regulars were discharging volley after volley as they approached. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander was the first to fall, severely injuring his leg as his horse was shot out from under him; next came Lieutenant Colonel John Fitzgerald, with a musket ball to his shoulder; Lieutenant Colonel Richard Meade, went down, his black mare shot out from under him and in the spill rolled over him causing a painful injury; then Captain Caleb Gibbs, as his horse was shot dead; lastly was Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, whose father was President of the Continental Congress, went down with what proved to be a minor wound. General Washington personally supervised the soldiers who helped his entire staff to safety—as for General Washington—not a scratch. To their credit none of these wounded, battered and bruised officers left the field of battle.

The Life Guards were involved in some of the heaviest fighting that day, and unfortunately sustained casualties. Among them Sergeant John Wilson was wounded in the right arm. He tried to stay with the Guard but by December it was clear that his arm would not properly heal and he was discharged.

For a full year following the Battle of Monmouth Court House, the Life Guards and the Army stood ready for the assault on New York City—that attack never came. They were never strong enough to successfully attack the well defended city.

On 4 December 1779, the Army arrived at Morristown, New Jersey for their winter camp. General Washington selected the stately home of Mrs. Jacob Ford, the widow of Colonel Jacob Ford, as his headquarters. The Guard set up its winter

camp in the meadow southeast of the mansion. The winter of 1779 proved to be the severest in the memory of anyone living at the time; accordingly, the season passed relatively uneventfully, as everyone was "snowed in."

On 7 June 1780, General Washington received intelligence that a large expeditionary force, led by Hessian General (Baron) Wilhelm Knyphausen, had crossed from Staten Island to Elizabeth, New Jersey and was proceeding inland. Washington ordered the whole of the Continental Army to march and meet the challenge.

Illustration:

Expeditionary force led by Hessian General (Baron) Wilhelm  
Knyphausen

The local New Jersey Militia had been fighting an effective delaying action all the way to Connecticut Farms, near Springfield. The dreaded Hessian "Jaegers" were making headway against the stubborn American defenses. As the Continentals approached, General Washington ordered Caleb Gibbs, now a Major, and the Rhode Island Regiment forward to form a line of defense and to hold until the main army could get into position. Major Gibbs moved forward with the entire 152 man C-in-C Guards. Smartly uniformed and well disciplined, they formed their line of battle, concealed by the smoke of the battle. Gibbs waited until the Hessians were right on top of them and launched a bayonet charge. The Hessians immediately broke. They had been fighting militia and the last thing they expected was to encounter "regulars" and bayonets. The Guards then delivered eight volleys into the fleeing Hessian. The mark of the Hessian advance into New Jersey was the position held by the Commander-in-Chief Guards.

Illustration:

The charge of the Guards at Connecticut Farms

When the charging Guards erupted through the smoke of battle, what General Knyphausen saw was soldiers as well uniformed and trained as any in Europe.

Unfortunately, the Guards suffered casualties. Jacob Ford, Jr. son of the late colonel, received two musket balls through the thigh. Private Solomon Daley, Stephen Hetfield and William Jones were slightly wounded. Sergeant John Slocum received a musket ball in the knee. Later that day his leg was amputated.

Arriving back at headquarters the next morning, Major Gibbs reported to General Washington: "I had the happiness to give the Hessian lads a charge just before sunset and drive them thoroughly. We gave them after they gave way about eight rounds." As a result of the Battles of Monmouth Court House and Connecticut Farms, Sir William Howe was reluctant to confront Washington's Army. He turned his attention to the Southern States and holding onto New York City.

The situation in New York City was not good. Almost all supplies had to be brought from England. One report stated that there was not a single tree standing on Manhattan Island, as all had been chopped down for fortification or firewood. It

was necessary for the British to launch large scale forging parties into the "no-man's land."

Illustration:  
Historic King's Bridge

On 3 July 1781, General Washington accompanied by an escort of fifty Life Guards was reconnoitering the British fortifications near King's Bridge—the northern passage from Manhattan Island to the mainland. They encountered one of the British forging parties, consisting of 1,500 men. The British immediately attacked. The Life Guards made a stand at the bridge and were determined to hold it until General Washington was safely back to the American lines. The bridge, just ten feet wide, prohibited the overwhelming or the flanking of the small, but determined Life Guards. The battle for the bridge was ferocious. Braving volley after volley from the Life Guards, the British charged with bayonets and were met by bayonets and forced back with heavy losses. It became painfully clear to the British that they would endure severe casualties and the most they could attain was a limited objective. When American reinforcements came into view, the British broke off the action.

Lieutenant Levi Holden was in command of the Life Guards that fateful day and filed his official report. Unfortunately he did not write the descriptive accounts as did Major Gibbs. His report simply read:

11 July 1781

To Captain Pemberton:

Returned of killed, wounded and missing of His Excellency's Guard in them late skirmish at King's Bridge. One Lieutenant and one sergeant wounded; fourteen rank and file wounded, one missing and three of the wounded since dead.

Levi Holden, Captain, C-in-C Guards

From the surviving reports on the wounded, recounted in the attached roster of men who served in the Life Guard, the injuries conjure up an image of close combat with bayonets being much employed.

Illustration:  
Washington and the Army march toward Yorktown

On 14 August 1781, General Washington and the majority of the Northern Army left the Hudson Highlands and marched toward Yorktown, Virginia. They arrived there on 28 September 1781, and started the siege.

On 14 October 1781, General Washington assigned the Marquis Lafayette's Division of Light Infantry to assault a key defensive position of Lord Cornwallis' line, Redoubt 10. The French would simultaneously assault Redoubt 9. If these fortifications could be overtaken, Cornwallis' position would be hopeless. A night attack with bayonets only was ordered. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton, formerly an Aide-de-Camp to General Washington, volunteered to lead the assault



on Redoubt 10. Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, also an Aide-de-Camp, would lead a party to maneuver behind the fortification and cut off any possibility of retreat.

Illustration:

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton led assault on Redoubt 10

No surviving record tells us that the Commander-in-Chief's Guard was selected to *go in with the Light Infantry*; however, the casualty lists show members of the Guard as having been wounded at Yorktown. Major Gibbs received a slight musket ball wound to his ankle and one of the Life Guards, a saber cut to his face, and two other men "wounded." Redoubt 10 was the only hand-to-hand combat experienced by the American Army at Yorktown, therefore we can safely conclude that members of Washington's Life Guards were there—participating in the final assault. That victorious night assault forced Cornwallis to surrender—directly leading to the end of the war and to American Independence from Great Britain.

Illustration:

British forces surrender at Yorktown

The Battle of Yorktown marked the collapse of the British war efforts. Later, it is said that the British band played the tune *The World's Turned Upside Down* during the surrender at Yorktown—an apocryphal story that has become part of American folklore. But the world truly changed that day as the military operations of the War for Independence cease.

When news of Cornwallis' surrender reached London on 25 November 1781, the Prime Minister, Lord North, declared, "Oh God. It is all over. It is all over." On 5 March 1782, British Parliament passed a bill authorizing the government to make peace with America. Lord North resigned 15 days later. Although it took the Americans two more years of skillful diplomacy to formally secure their independence through the Treaty of Paris, the war was won with the British defeat at Yorktown.

## Headquarters in Newburgh

Illustration:

Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh

Following the American victory at Yorktown, General George Washington established his headquarters at Jonathan Hasbrouck's fieldstone farmhouse in Newburgh, New York from 1782 to 1783. It was in Newburgh that Washington issued an order for a "cessation of hostilities." General Washington spent more time there than any other place during the Revolution and made some of his most important contributions to shaping the American republic during those critical

months which included creating the Badge of Military Merit (now the Purple Heart), writing key principles for the Constitution, rejecting the idea that he should be king, preventing military control of the government, and dealing a fatal blow to the Newburgh Conspiracy.

In 1783, with the Revolutionary War nearly over, the American dream of an independent republic almost died at the hands of the army that fought for it. While Continental Army officers waited in camp at Newburgh, New York, for negotiators to end the conflict, their long-simmering frustration with Congress finally boiled over. Anger swept through the corps from the lieutenants to the generals. These men had had enough—enough of inedible rations, inadequate clothing and supplies, and, most important, years of foregoing pay. A coup was in the making. Even the British knew it. As one of their spies reported, military contempt for congressmen meeting in Philadelphia was so fierce that the army was “ripe for annihilating them.”

Just eighteen months earlier, in October 1781, American troops and their French allies won a great victory at Yorktown, leading to peace talks in Paris. Now, a formal treaty ending the war and recognizing American independence was expected from Europe any day. Yet, with success now tantalizingly near, the officers of General George Washington (the Army’s Commander-in-Chief) were flirting with mutiny. Some were eager to march on Congress in demand of their back pay. Others wanted to abandon the cause, disappear into the wilderness, and leave the bickering politicians in Philadelphia to the mercies of the British Army. Either course would bring disaster. Attack Congress and the government would collapse. Desert and the British could renew the fight and win the war. Do either and a dangerous precedent would set the military above civilian control, perhaps forever.

It was at this dangerous time that General Washington decided to do something he had not done in eight years of war—address so many Continental Army leaders at one time, in one place. As he surveyed the officers before him, he saw battle-hardened veterans who had led the troops at New York, Trenton, Valley Forge, Monmouth, and Yorktown.

Still, the Army’s Commander-in-Chief was troubled as he studied his audience. The men were respectful. Military courtesy demanded nothing less. Yet, on this afternoon of 15 March 1783, an air of sullenness, skepticism, and hostility pervaded the Temple of Virtue, a rough-hewn meeting hall near his headquarters in Newburgh, New York.

**Illustration:**

Temple of Virtue at New Windsor Cantonment near Newburgh

For General Washington, the crisis was yet another hammer blow, one of thousands endured since the war began in 1775. All took their toll. He began the war a vigorous man in his early forties. Now fifty-one, he was exhausted and, perhaps, depressed. His hair had turned gray, dental problems caused constant pain, and his eyesight was failing. In fact, he recently had ordered a pair of eyeglasses from David Rittenhouse, a Philadelphia optical expert. Before, the general was forced to borrow spectacles to read his endless paperwork.

Of the myriad problems that sapped General Washington's strength arguably the worst was Congress's inability to pay the army. This had pushed the officer corps to the brink of rebellion. Congress was all but broke, and army pay was a low priority. Legally, Congress couldn't tax anyone directly. Instead, funding requests went to the states, which had almost nothing. Money from loans went first to suppliers, foreign and domestic. Financial problems plagued the American cause throughout the Revolutionary War.

Military pay was important because, after early enthusiasm for the war waned and the militia proved unreliable, America needed a professional army with a long-term service commitment. That required financial incentives. To attract the necessary officers, Congress in 1778 offered them wartime pay plus half-pay for seven years after the war if they stayed to the end. In 1780, to stem a flood of officer resignations, Congress sweetened the deal to half-pay for life.

Complicating the pay issue was a fight between two congressional groups. Nationalists wanted a strong central government with the power to tax. Radicals wanted power, including that of taxation, to stay with the states. Nationalists' attempts late in the war to create a 5 percent federal import tax were defeated, and odds were against the tax issue being successfully revived.

Continental officers knew all this and did not trust Congress for either back pay or postwar half-pay. They understood too that once the war ended and the army disbanded, their leverage with politicians would vanish. If demobilized without money or a firm promise of payment, some officers faced ruin. They had paid all their own costs—food, uniforms, and equipment—while on duty. Some had borrowed for their basic needs; others required cash to restart long-idled businesses and farms. Many felt cheated and fearful for the future for themselves and their families.

General Washington saw trouble brewing for months. "The temper in the Army is much soured, and has become more irritable than at any period since the commencement of the war," he wrote a congressman in December 1782. Concerned about mounting tensions, he decided against a winter furlough at Mount Vernon and stayed near the army in case trouble arose. He also worried that his men would be dismissed "without one farthing of money to carry them home." Recently, he had revealed his concerns to his protégé and former staff officer Alexander Hamilton, now a New York congressman. "The sufferings of a complaining army, on the one hand, and the inability of Congress and tardiness of the states on the other, are the forebodings of evil," General Washington wrote.

And, now in March 1783, that evil became a reality. At the army encampments surrounding Newburgh, where Washington's command kept watch on British-held New York sixty miles away and waited for the war's end, the officers grew restive during the bitter winter of 1782–83. Determined to get reassurances about pay, they sent a three-man committee to Philadelphia in December 1782 to plead their case and deliver a petition. It boiled with frustration. "We have borne all that men can bear," it read. "Our property is expended—our private resources are at an end, and our friends are wearied out with incessant applications."

On 13 January 1783, the three officers met with a congressional committee, asking for an advance on back pay and firm commitments on receiving all their regular pay plus the promised lifetime half-pay. Congress mulled the requests and

directed finance superintendent Robert Morris to handle back pay. The half-pay issue, however, stirred fierce resistance. Furious, army committee chief (Major General Alexander McDougall) wrote Washington's loyal lieutenant (Major General Henry Knox) that half-pay was dead and, perhaps, the army should refuse demobilization until its demands were met. Knox (Washington's artillery chief) clearly indicated he wanted nothing to do with their intrigues. Knox wrote to McDougall: "I consider the reputation of the American Army as one of the most immaculate things on earth. We should even suffer wrongs and injuries to the utmost verge of toleration rather than sully it in the least degree."

Although Knox rejected the idea, it had adherents. Among them were nationalists who egged the officers on, hoping to use the army as a lever to create a federal tax and to begin building a strong federal government. Alexander Hamilton, a fervent nationalist, actually encouraged Washington in a 13 February 1783 letter to use the army to pressure Congress, but Washington knew this was a bad idea. The soldiers, he believed, were "not mere puppets," and the army was "a dangerous instrument to play with." An angry army easily could become a dangerous, anti-republican mob. The Continental Army already had experienced about fifty mutinies at this point. Most were caused by pay and supply issues or heavy-handed discipline. Some were little more than a few soldiers grumbling, others led to large-scale desertions, and several ended in executions. Most notably, a January 1781 revolt of New Jersey troops concluded with the shooting of ringleaders by a firing squad made up of their accomplices.

Within the army, defying the elected government had strong supporters. Among them were officers surrounding long-time Washington rival Major General Horatio Gates. The historical record is fuzzy on Gates's role in what happened next, but he was probably deeply engaged. One of his aides, Major John Armstrong, penned an anonymous letter that went to every regiment in the Continental Army on 10 March 1783. It called for defiance of Congress, a rejection of appeals to reason, a movement by the army to the frontier, and a mass meeting on the following Tuesday to air complaints. Angry at the breach of discipline, General Washington banned the gathering as "irregular" and announced that a meeting would take place on 15 March 1783 to discuss the situation in Philadelphia. The senior officer present, presumably Gates, would preside. Armstrong then sent a second disjointed, shrill letter that contained more attacks on Congress and aimed to inflame passions further.

And so, with the army in turmoil, the officers gathered at noon on 15 March 1783 in the Temple of Virtue. Nobody expected Washington to appear. In his absence, hotheads probably thought that they could push the army into openly opposing Congress. As senior officer, Gates prepared to start the meeting when Washington appeared at the door, surprising those present. Confident and dignified, the Commander-in-Chief strode into the room. As he did so, the officers stood and made a path for him as he moved toward the front. General Washington then asked Gates's permission to make a few remarks. With no other choice, Gates agreed.

Characteristically, the army's commander arrived well prepared. He apologized for coming unexpectedly and asked for their patience. With that, he opened a nine-page address and began to speak. Immediately, those present realized that

they'd never heard their leader talk as he did then. Normally, Washington prided himself on careful, correct, somewhat distant behavior in public. Today, however, he spoke to them man to man and, at times, with some heat.

He began emphatically: "Gentlemen, by an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together. How inconsistent with the rules of propriety! How unmilitary! And how subversive of all order and discipline, let the good sense of the Army decide." He attacked both letters, dismissing their author, contents, and suggestions. He argued that the officers' welfare remained a concern of his, noting his long service with them. He rejected the call to retreat to the wilderness, saying that this would leave Congress, as well as their wives, children, and farms, defenseless. If the army took their families to the frontier, then he asked, How would they survive? Becoming more strident, he likewise spoke contemptuously of refusing to disband when peace came: "My God! What can this writer have in view, by recommending such measure? Can he be a friend to the Army? Can he be a friend to this Country? Rather is he not an insidious Foe?"

Changing tone, he told them that he expected Congress to do them "complete Justice" and pledged to support their case. He urged caution, reason, and honorable behavior. "And, you will," he told them, "by the dignity of your Conduct, afford occasion for Posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to Mankind, 'had this day been wanting, the World has never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining.' " With those words, he finished. His speech was direct, honest, and heartfelt. And it failed utterly.

#### Illustration:

General Washington addressed his soldiers

His audience was unmoved. The men merely sat in silence. Some simmered, many were deaf to calls to reason, honor, or duty, so Washington opted for another tack. He pulled from his pocket a letter from Virginia Congressman Joseph Jones. It would show, he said, Congress's true intent to the army. General Washington began reading—then faltered. He stumbled over words, he squinted, and, finally, he fell silent. He had no choice but to use his eyeglasses.

"Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles," he said, drawing them from a pocket, "for I have not only grown gray but almost blind in the service of my country." The act astonished many, because few knew that his eyes were weak. Once an imposing figure, he now seemed a vulnerable, tired human. Instantly, all realized how much Washington had sacrificed for the American cause. Most men were deeply touched, and some wept openly. In seconds, with a simple, humble gesture, Washington had won over his audience. The general finished the letter, removed his glasses, and left.

The mood clearly had changed. The malcontents had lost the initiative, and General Washington's supporters seized it. Knox quickly made a motion thanking him for his remarks. Another motion passed, creating a three-man committee to frame resolutions to go to Philadelphia. Knox headed the group, which met immediately and brought several resolutions to the floor proclaiming the army's loyalty, asking General Washington to press their case, and directing Major

General McDougall to continue lobbying Congress. The officers adopted the measures, and the meeting adjourned.

Days later, reports of the 15 March 1783 meeting reached Congress. Among them was an emotional appeal from General Washington, asking that the country meet its obligations to the officers and avoid permitting them “to grow old in poverty, wretchedness and contempt.” No doubt troubled by the officers’ fury, the legislators responded by agreeing to provide five years’ full pay in lieu of half-pay for life. The largely symbolic vote was meaningless, though, perhaps even cynical. Neither states nor Congress had funds, and none would be forthcoming. However, Congress’s action defused the situation for the time being.

While important to the army, the pay vote was overshadowed by the arrival of a preliminary peace treaty from France, which Congress lost little time reviewing. The legislature ratified the agreement on 11 April 1783, declared the war over, and turned quickly to disbanding the army. Clearly, the military was a continuing expense and a potential threat, so General Washington was told to furlough men enlisted for the war’s duration.

In fact, the army was fading away. General Washington’s command had melted from about 17,000 men during the Yorktown campaign to fewer than 2,500 by mid-June 1783. Further cuts eventually dropped the count to about 1,000 troops on duty at Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania, and West Point, New York. Even as the army shrank, feelings about lack of pay ran hot. In June 1783, angry Pennsylvania troops marched to Philadelphia and threatened Congress. The legislators fled, and General Washington dispatched loyal troops to quell the insurrection. The mutiny collapsed after the rebellious soldiers learned that forces were on their way to protect the legislators.

In late-November 1783, following the British evacuation, General Washington marched into New York, where he took formal leave of the army. He then delivered his resignation to Congress in Annapolis and headed for Mount Vernon. For Washington and his army, the war was over. So was the pay issue. Many officers left with commutation certificates, basically IOUs. Desperate for cash, most men sold these at deep discounts to speculators, who did well when the first Congress convened under the Constitution provided for certificate redemption. Later, representatives tried several pension systems for enlisted men and officers. Unfortunately, these were fraud ridden and underwent several revisions.

So why should the Newburgh Conspiracy and General Washington’s actions to thwart it matter to us today? In 1783, George Washington was already held in higher esteem by his fellow Americans than anyone in our new nation. Moreover, he commanded the Continental Army and had the full respect of the officers and men in the ranks. He lived at a time when military leaders did not voluntarily surrender power. One must only look back to Oliver Cromwell or ahead to Napoleon Bonaparte to recognize the way of world in General Washington’s time.

This incredible man was essentially being offered a chance to be king. Fortunately for America, George Washington resisted this temptation. It is scary to consider what our country might look like if someone other than George Washington had been in his position.

His decision to uphold the tone and tenor of the revolutionary principles and place ultimate authority in our civilian leaders rather than the military set an

example for others to follow. While our successes on the battlefields defeated the British Army, it could be argued that General Washington's greatest victory for America happened in Newburgh on 15 March 1783. We must never forget that and be forever thankful.

## **Return to Mount Vernon**

Illustration:

George and Martha Washington Arriving at Mount Vernon

In May 1783, with peace negotiations concluded, the Congress instructed General Washington to begin furloughing members of the Army drawn from all ranks and all units. General Washington issued the order on 2 June 1783, and on 6 June 1783 the entire Life Guard was furloughed.

Between June and November 1783, the Life Guards as a unit were comprised of men on temporary assignment and drawn from regiments stationed in and around Newburgh. William Colfax assumed command of the Life Guards in 1779 after Captain Caleb Gibbs was promoted to major and transferred to another regiment. Captain Colfax was later replaced by Captain Bezaleel Howe and it fell to Howe to command the Life Guards' last mission.

On 9 November 1783, Captain Howe received orders from General Washington to "take charge of the Wagons which contain my baggage, and with the escort proceed with them to Virginia and deliver the baggage at my house, ten miles below Alexandria."

Six wagons filled with General Washington's belongings, but more importantly the official records of eight years of war, were successfully delivered to Mount Vernon on 20 December 1783. (It should be noted that upon his own retirement from the army in the summer of 1784, Caleb Gibbs gathered together the official records of General Washington's Life Guards. They were secured in a trunk and stored at the Charlestown Navy Yard where Gibbs worked after the war. Despite surviving war, weather and constant movement, the vast majority of the records were destroyed in a fire at the Navy Yard in 1815).

In December of 1783, General George Washington resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army and returned to his beloved home at Mount Vernon. Washington withdrew to the life of a private citizen but continued to maintain an interest in public affairs.

Like many others, George Washington found himself in financial trouble since the fighting ended, with a plantation that suffered from lack of production and rent from western lands left uncollected. With all of this activity waiting for him when he came home, Washington had little interest in participating in politics. He just wanted to focus on farming and getting his business back on its feet. After almost 8 months spent tending to his affairs at home, Washington planned a trip to inspect lands he owned in the west, but had not been able to visit since a 1770 trip before the war.<sup>(1)</sup>

George Washington traveled by horseback along a familiar route that followed the Potomac River west to Cumberland, Maryland. There he joined Braddock's Road, the pathway he helped to construct during the French and Indian War, in order to reach Western Pennsylvania. During his trip, Washington realized that travel in this area had improved little since his initial journey to the region in 1753, and that Potomac River navigation would be necessary to improve trade between the east coast and the lands in the west. This posed an opportunity for Washington to develop a shipping business. In turn, by developing this trade route, it would improve business within the country and hopefully create a stronger union from a financial and political standpoint. Establishing this trade would require states to work together for the business to be successful.

In order to begin the process of linking the Potomac River to the Ohio River valley and the west, Washington was in support of the creation of a limited liability company chartered by both Virginia and Maryland. Authorized by the Virginia and Maryland assemblies in January of 1785, the Potomac Company would serve this purpose and finance navigational improvements meant to push the Potomac route westward to the Shenandoah and Ohio Valleys and open up commerce into those regions.

In the spring of 1785, commissioners from Maryland and Virginia began to think about a variety of issues that increased interstate commerce along the Potomac River might bring about. On 28 March 1785, at George Washington's request, representatives from Virginia and Maryland met at Mount Vernon to discuss navigational rights on the Potomac River. This meeting is now known as the Mount Vernon Conference. The commissioners in attendance agreed on a 13-point document that would become known as the Mount Vernon Compact, which set a precedent for interstate cooperation on navigation, toll duties, commerce regulations, debt collection, and fishing rights.

Following the success at Mount Vernon, which demonstrated that two states could work together despite the tough political atmosphere that existed at the time, James Madison pushed for another convention to discuss interstate commerce with representatives from all of the states. The conference was to be held the following year in Annapolis, Maryland, and would aim to dissolve trade obstructions that existed between states and prevented economic growth. Unfortunately, representatives from only five states attended the Annapolis Convention. Due to lack of participation, the delegates in attendance agreed to meet the following year, in Philadelphia, PA, to "devise such further provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union."

Although it was intended to improve his personal finances, George Washington's 1784 trip to the west unintentionally led him back to a life of public service and ultimately leading to his involvement with the creation of the United States Constitution during the summer of 1787.

In 1787, George Washington was enticed away from Mount Vernon, back to Philadelphia to preside over the Constitutional Convention. Before attending the convention, Washington wrote to John Jay, Henry Knox, and James Madison requesting their advice on a restructured government. Struck by the similarities of their suggestions, Washington prepared an abstract comparing them. All



envisioned a national government with separate legislative, judicial, and executive branches. Most of all, they were obsessed with reining in the states. On matters of national concern, they maintained, the central government must have the power to act directly on the people and not just through the states. In his responses to Jay, Knox, and Madison, Washington embraced their proposals and made them his own.

With the outline of a new constitution in hand, Washington agreed to attend the convention. In reflection of the depth of his commitment to serve, Washington was one of the few delegates to arrive on time in Philadelphia. He went to the State House at the appointed hour on 14 May 1787 to find only Madison and the Pennsylvania representatives present. They returned daily as other delegates trickled in, but it took 10 more days to obtain a quorum.

Illustration:

Washington served as president of the Constitutional Convention in

1787

When the Convention did obtain a quorum, it promptly chose Washington as its president. The silence that engulfed the Convention limits what is known about Washington's role because, as presiding officer, he rarely spoke on substantive matters inside the hall, where Madison recorded the debate. Washington did talk privately with other members, of course, and voted with the Virginia delegation. He also supervised the deliberations and called on members when they spoke. But no one recorded these utterances and, obeying the secrecy rule, Washington did not repeat them in letters or other writings. The other members likely knew where he stood on significant matters, but beyond his oft-stated desire to create a central government with power to tax, maintain an army, and regulate interstate and international commerce—positions that he had publicly championed since 1783—the record of his specific contributions to the Constitution remains frustratingly oblique. We can only surmise those details from the clues available to us. But those clues are revealing, especially his often decisive vote within the Virginia delegation. In the end, for example, it was his vote that allowed Virginia to endorse the Constitution.

After heatedly debating and narrowly defeating a motion to limit the proceedings to amending the Articles of Confederation, the Convention accepted the Virginia Plan as the starting point for its deliberations and never looked back.

Evidence abounds for Washington's influence in shaping various provisions of the Constitution, and for securing the compromises that kept the Convention on track, but his role in crafting the executive offers as good an example as any of the part he played in Philadelphia. Since everyone presumed that Washington would become the new government's first executive, no one could conceive of the position without thinking about him in it. Indeed, within the year, South Carolina's Pierce Butler flatly stated that his colleagues at the Convention "shaped their Ideas and Powers to be given to the President, by their opinions of [Washington's] Virtue."

Two years later in 1789, George Washington traveled to New York for his inauguration as the country's first president.

On 15 March 1797, George Washington returned to Mount Vernon after serving eight years as President of the United States. He was eager to expand his economic enterprise, complete the renovations of the mansion, and maintain some semblance of privacy from the thousands of visitors who passed through his home.

As an elite southern gentleman, Washington took eighteenth-century expectations of hospitality seriously. Americans were fascinated by Washington, and pilgrimaging to Mount Vernon became a popular pastime. In 1798 alone, George and Martha Washington hosted as many as 677 guests.

Washington welcomed every excuse to escape the curious stares of visitors. He woke early and spent several hours reading and writing in his private study before breakfast at 7 a.m. He then conducted his daily inspections of his estate on horseback, before returning for dinner at 3 p.m.

Washington also sought opportunities to diversify his economic investments. During his presidency, Washington improved the technology at his grist mill and increased the quantity of grain he could process for his neighbors, in return for a portion of the profit. He employed enslaved workers making barrels to store the grain and sailing ships to port with the finished product. After his retirement, Washington built a distillery that created whiskey from rye, corn, and barley. At the time of his death, it was one of the largest, most productive distilleries in the nation.

Washington undertook these projects because he wanted to make money, but also because he wanted to employ the growing enslaved population at Mount Vernon. Grains required less labor than tobacco, often leaving workers unemployed during down seasons. Furthermore, as enslaved families had children, the population continued to grow.

With these challenges in mind, Washington wrote out the terms of his will in 1799. He left most of his estate to Martha, forgave debts owed him by extended family, granted land and stocks for the creation of educational institutions, and bequeathed his papers and books to his nephew, Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington. The most famous provision of the will immediately set free William Lee, Washington's enslaved valet from the war and arranged to emancipate the 122 enslaved individuals he owned after Martha's death.

#### Illustration:

Washington served as president of the Constitutional Convention in

1787

For two decades, William Lee accompanied George Washington nearly everywhere. As manservant, or valet, Lee assisted his master with myriad tasks, from delivering messages to laying out clothes to tying a silk ribbon around his hair. An excellent horseman who was described as muscular and athletic, Lee also rode in Washington's beloved fox hunts. During the Revolutionary War, William Lee was responsible for organizing the general's personal affairs, including his voluminous papers, and holding his spyglass. As the attendant to a prominent figure, Lee became a minor celebrity. Postwar visitors to Mount Vernon occasionally sought out the "famed body-servant of the commander-in-chief."

On 12 December 1799, Washington left the house for his daily ride. On his way back, a wet snow began to fall, but he sat down to dinner without changing, as he did not want to keep guests waiting. The next night, Washington woke Martha and said he was having trouble breathing. Over the next several hours, doctors bled Washington four times, applied several blister treatments to his throat and legs, and administered an emetic and an enema. None of the treatments worked and increased his suffering.

George Washington died between 10 and 11 p.m. on 14 December 1799. Over the next several weeks, he was celebrated and mourned with great fanfare at ceremonies and mock funerals across the country.

Illustration:

Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon

In the nineteenth century, Washington's resting place at his beloved Mount Vernon estate was increasingly popular among American citizens and, at times, as contested as his iconic image. While Washington was an affluent slave owner who believed that republicanism and social hierarchy were vital to the young country's survival, he remains largely free of the "elitist" label affixed to his contemporaries. Washington's reputation evolved in public memory during the nineteenth century into a man of the common people and the father of democracy. This memory was a deliberately constructed image, shaped and reshaped over time, generally in service of one cause or another.

## **Modern Commander-in-Chief's Guard**

Illustration:

Modern Commander-in-Chief's Guard

When I was stationed at the Pentagon from 1978 until 1980, I frequently interacted with members of the modern Commander-in-Chief's Guard who were billeted in nearby Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, Virginia.

Members of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard are officially assigned to Company A, 4th Battalion, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment. They belong to an infantry unit of the U.S. Army that also has public duties and riot control missions within the Military District of Washington. Posted at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, the Commander-in-Chief's Guard is the nominal continuation of General George Washington's bodyguard. The Commander-in-Chief's Guard is designated by the U.S. Army as a "Special Ceremonial Unit" and is part of the 3rd Infantry Regiment, the United States' presidential escort regiment.

The original Commander-in-Chief's Guard, from which Company A claims nominal lineage, was authorized on 11 March 1776 and organized the next day at Cambridge, Massachusetts as the bodyguard and personal escort to General George Washington (Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army). To the

consternation of the revolutionary government in Philadelphia, it came to be referred to as "His Excellency's Guard" and "Washington's Life Guard". In April 1777 the Second Continental Congress warned that the use of such monikers in official communications was prohibited. The Commander-in-Chief's Guard had a fluctuating strength that normally hovered between 180 and 250 men and was disbanded on 5 November 1783.

The 3rd Infantry Regiment, of which Company A is part, was activated on 3 June 1784 and deactivated in 1946. In 1948 the 3rd Infantry Regiment was reactivated and tasked with the defense of the Military District of Washington. The former "ceremonial detachment" of the Military District of Washington, a company-sized public duties unit, was reassigned to the 3rd Infantry Regiment as Company A, 4th Battalion. In December 1973, in preparation for the U.S. bicentennial celebrations, Company A was officially designated the Commander-in-Chief's Guard and took its current form.

In its public duties role, the Commander-in-Chief's Guard supports general officer retirement ceremonies, state arrivals, and the presidential inauguration. In addition to its Commander-in-Chief's Guard functions, Alpha Company also conducts memorial affairs in Arlington National Cemetery.

In my role as a Career Manager in General Officer Management Office (GOMO) at the Pentagon from 1978 until 1980, I frequently interacted with members of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard who were involved in the retirement ceremonies for U.S. Army general officers.

Posted at Fort Myer, the Commander-in-Chief's Guard is a "Special Ceremonial Unit," a U.S. Army designation for units authorized uniforms other than the Army Service Uniform when executing public duties. Its ceremonial uniform consists of blue greatcoats and white coveralls. Cover consists of black tricorne hats and white powdered wigs. It is equipped with muskets modeled on the Brown Bess (a design first developed in 1722 for service with the British Army), instead of the M14 rifle issued to the rest of the regiment for public duties.

The Commander-in-Chief's Guard advances a flag that is a modified version of the personal position standard of General George Washington.

Currently, Colonel Dave Rowland is Commander of the 3rd Infantry Regiment and Command Sergeant Major Philip D. Whittington, Jr. is the Regimental Sergeant Major.

Illustration:

Colonel Dave Roland / Command Sergeant Major Phillip D.  
Whittington, Jr.

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Thompson currently serves as Command of 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment and Command Sergeant Major Dennis R. Kirk serves as the Battalion Sergeant Major.

Illustration:

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Thompson / Command Sergeant Major Dennis  
R. Kirk

*Twilight Tattoo* is a time-honored tradition that blends the precision and discipline of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) with the superb musicianship of The U.S. Army Band *Pershing's Own*.

The history of Twilight Tattoo began more than 300 years ago as British troops were summoned from the warmth and hospitality of local pubs by a bugle and drum call to return to the barracks. The familiar tune told tavern owners “doe den tap toe,” or “time to turn off the taps.” The troops knew the call to mean “taps off,” and minutes later they were back in their tents.

The modern-day call is known as “Tattoo” and during basic training, the call signals the time to quiet down and hit the bunks. For the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, the call serves as a tribute dedicated to the vitality of our nation and to the sacrifices of those who forged America into the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The U.S. Army’s Twilight Tattoo can trace its own history back to the years before World War II. At that time, the 3rd Cavalry Regiment held military shows during the winter months on the grounds of Fort Myer in Arlington, Va. The U.S. Army Military District of Washington revived the traditional show in 1961 to showcase the talents of its ceremonial units.

Illustration:

Commander-in-Chief’s Guard

As Twilight Tattoo grew in popularity, the U.S. Army Military District of Washington began to present the show on behalf of the U.S. Army. The command adapted the show to fit the growing needs of the American people and allows for thousands of audience members to experience the ceremony and pageantry of the United States Army.

## Afterword



Fisher family coat of arms

While researching the Fisher branch of my family tree, I discovered that my 6th great-grandfather George Fischer served as one of General Washington’s Life Guards when the Commander-in-Chief was living at the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh.

George Fischer (son of Johann Herman Fischer) was born in Perkiomenville, Pennsylvania on 12 June 1739. Johann Herman Fischer immigrated to America from Freinsheim, Palatinate (current day Germany near Mannheim) in 1726. He then settled in the Goshenhoppen Region of Pennsylvania, which embraces the entire upper half of the Perkiomen Valley.

The citizens of the Goshenhoppen Region owe much to its location, its climate, its soil and the spirit and hopes of the various national and racial representatives whose decedents comprise the present population.

In 1682 William Penn, possessing a charter from King Charles II of England for certain land in the new world, landed in Philadelphia which was then inhabited by the Lenape Indian Nation. A treaty was made between Mr. Penn and Tamanend [Tammamy], King of the Lenape Nation, covering the province of Pennsylvania.

In 1684 Mr. Penn purchased other land from the Indians. One transaction in particular is significant here, and a copy of the treaty follows:

"Upon my own Desire and free Offer, I, Maughoughsin in consideration of Two Matchcoats, four pair of Stockings, and four Bottles of sider do hereby graunt and make over all my Land upon Pankehom (Perkiomen) to William Penn Prop'r and Govern'r of Pennsylvania and Territories his heirs and Assignes forever with which I own myself satisfied and promise never to molest any Christians so call'd y't shall seat thereon by his ord'rs witness my hand and seal of Philadelphia y'e third Day of y'e fourth month 1684.

(Signed) THE MARK OF MAUGHOUGHHSIN Signed, Sealed and delivered in presence of us: Philip Th Lehnman Thos. Holme Jn Davers George Emlin".

Twenty-five years after Chief Maughoughsin had deeded the Perkiomen Valley to William Penn, the Indians had left it forever and had moved westward to the Susquehanna. This movement was due largely to the great number of white families who had moved into the Perkiomen region.

The majority of the early settlers (like Johann Herman Fischer) came to the Goshenhoppen region of Pennsylvania from Germany and were members of either of the two state-protected Protestant Churches (the Lutheran or the German Reformed). The Fischer family belonged to the New Goshenhoppen Reformed Church.

Johann Herman Fischer and his wife Margaretha had eleven children: Jacob, Anna Mary, Anna Catharina, Maria Barbara, Johannes, George, Christina, Anna Margaretha, Sophia, Herman, and Wendel.

On February 18, 1777, George Fischer enlisted during the Revolutionary War as a private in Captain Thomas Craig's Company, Third Pennsylvania Regiment, commanded by Colonel Joseph Wood. Fischer wintered with the Continental Army in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Illustration:

General Washington inspecting troops at Valley Forge

On a hot and humid 28 June 1778, General George Washington and his subordinate, General Charles Lee, attacked rearguard elements of General Sir Henry Clinton's British Army. George Fischer fought in the Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey.

Although the American army outnumbered its foe two-to-one and had undergone extensive training in the art of war during its winter encampment at Valley Forge, Lee, who launched the initial attack, lacked confidence in the ability of the Continental soldiers under his command. In failing to press his advantage, Lee ceded the initiative to his British counterpart, General Charles Lord Cornwallis, who commanded the rear elements of Clinton's army.

What began as a promising opportunity devolved into a potential disaster. As General Washington approached the fighting, he encountered panic stricken troops fleeing the enemy. Enraged, he galloped ahead of his wing. In an angry confrontation on the field of battle, Washington removed Lee from command.

Illustration:

General Washington rallying troops at Battle of Monmouth

Rallying what troops he had, General Washington continued the assault on the British. The commanding general's delaying action gave time for the rest of the Continental Army to come up and join the battle.

Washington placed General Nathanael Greene's division on the right and the division of General William Alexander, "Lord" Stirling, on the left. Lee's men were turned over to the Marquis de Lafayette, who kept those troops in reserve. General "Mad" Anthony Wayne assumed command over other elements of Lee's force and manned Lafayette's front. Artillery was placed on both flanks, with the guns on the right positioned to rain enfilading fire on the British.

An American counterattack on the British right forced the Redcoats to fall back and reorganize. Cornwallis then led his men in attack on Greene's division. Supported by artillery, Greene's men stiffened their line and repulsed Cornwallis and his troops.

Illustration:

*Molly Pitcher* at the Battle of Monmouth on 28 June 1778

During the Battle of Monmouth, "Molly Pitcher", the wife of an American artilleryman, is reputed to have taken over the firing of her husband's cannon, when the crew became casualties. *Molly Pitcher* is said to have been a common nickname for the women who brought water for use in sponging out the guns between shots. The *Molly Pitcher* at the Battle of Monmouth is believed to have been Mary Ludwig Hays from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Margaret Corbyn, who took over the duties of a gunner at the Battle of Fort Mifflin, is said to have been another *Molly Pitcher*.

The fighting see-sawed back and forth under the brutal June sun for several hours. By 6:00 p.m., however, the British felt they had enough. While General Wayne wanted to press the attack, Washington demurred, believing that his men were "beat out and with heat and fatigue."

The British did not give Washington a chance to renew the fight in the morning, slipping away under the cover of darkness and resuming their withdrawal to New York City.

After the Battle of Monmouth, George Fischer participated in skirmishes with the British throughout New Jersey.

On 1 January 1782, George Fischer transferred to Washington's Commander-in-Chief's Guard, commanded by Captain William Colfax. As previously stated, General George Washington lived in the Hasbrouck House overlooking the Hudson River in Newburgh while he was in command of the Continental Army during the sixteen months of the American Revolutionary War. The Hasbrouck House, used by General Washington as his headquarters from April 1782 until August 1783, had the longest tenure of any place he had used. For twelve of these months, Washington's wife, Martha, lived with her husband in the house. At this point in the war, the Continental Army had recently triumphed at the Battle of Yorktown in Virginia, and an American victory was nearly guaranteed, but many British troops still occupied New York. The Hasbrouck House was chosen as Washington's headquarters for its comparatively safe location north of the strategically important West Point.

Beginning on 6 June 1783, Washington's Life Guards (including George Fischer) were furloughed at Newburgh until ratification of the definite treaty of peace. From that date forward, the men of the Commander-in-Chief's Guard were furnished by the various Regiments stationed in and around Newburgh.

Captain William Colfax served in the Life Guard since Valley Forge and then commanded the Life Guard ever since Caleb Gibbs was promoted and transferred to another regiment. Colfax was later replaced by Captain Bezaleel Howe of the New Hampshire Battalion, who was destined to command the Life Guard on its last mission.

On 3 November 1783, George Fischer was discharged from the army. Following the Revolutionary War, Fischer cooked in the lodging place of Mary Twist at 5th and Market in Philadelphia. While there he served not only George Washington but also Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and the New Jersey delegation to the Constitutional Convention.

#### Illustration:

#### Members of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia

George Fischer died on 11 November 1791 and is buried at the Cemetery of the New Goshenhoppen Reformed Church in East Greenville, Pennsylvania. His wife, Anna Barbara Eberhardt (daughter of Joseph Eberhardt), was born on 6 April 1743 and died on 25 October 1819. George and Anna had several children including George Fisher II (born in 1768), Herman (born in 1771), and Philip (born in 1773). George Fisher II was taken to North Carolina and reared by his uncle Jacob. He never returned to Pennsylvania. George II died in North Carolina in 1830.

A female member of the Fischer family (mostly likely one living in North Carolina) applied for membership in the Cabarrus Black Boys Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution by proving lineal, blood



line descent from her ancestor (George Fischer) who aided in achieving American independence. The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution accepts service for the period between 19 April 1775 (Battle of Lexington) and 26 November 1783 (withdrawal of British Troops from New York). George Fischer's distinguished service during the Revolutionary War meets the eligibility criteria for the Cabarrus Black Boys Chapter in North Carolina. The chart (listed below) contains the names of thirty-one Patriots (including George Fischer) who are listed for the Cabarrus Black Boys Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

Patriots of Members of Cabarrus Black Boys Chapter,  
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution:

FIRST	LAST	BIRTH	DEATH	RANK/SERVICE	ST	SPOUSE NAME
Caleb	Dodge	14 Dec 1726	X	Private	MA	Miriam Gilbert
John Paul	Barringer	4 Jun 1721	1 Jan 1807	X	NC	Catherine Blackwelder
John	Hagler	c 1740	c 1811	CS	NC	Catherine Sides
Mathias	Barnhardt	5 Apr 1752	6 Jun 1818	Soldier	NC	Anna Margaret Boshart
Van	Swearingen	1743	1808	Lieutenant	NC	Rachel/Sara
Consider	Wood	1757	25 Feb 1822	Private	RI	Mary Adams
James	Morrison	1726	30 Oct 1804	Captain	NC	Jennet Morrison
Lettice White	Melton	9 Apr 1733	22 Feb 1822	Patriotic Service	VA	William Melton
Solomon	Burris / Burroughs	1752	21 May 1845	Private	NC	Judith Taylor
Charles	Seefried	c 1732	17 Oct 1804	1st Lieutenant	PA	Margaret Haax
George	Fisher, Sr.	12 Jun 1739	11 Nov 1791	Guard for Gen. Washington	PA	Anna Barbara Eberhardt
Joseph	Shinn	27 Nov 1751	22 Jan 1805	Captain	NC	Jane Ross
George	Bost	c 1755	6 Aug 1808	Private	NC	Hannah Gregory
John	Cook	c 1740	c 1799	Captain	VA	Martha Pearson
Abraham	Tillotson	26 Dec 1756	21 Sep 1823	Private	CT	Abigail Bacus
Peter	Carpenter	1736	1817	CS	NC	Barbara Deppen
Elisha E.	Smith	18 May 1754	26 Jun 1848	Private	NY	Rachel Hughson
Hezekiah	Alexander	13 Jan 1722	17 Jun 1801	PS	NC	Mary Sample
John	Birdsong	1725	1789	PS	NC	Mary Birdsong
Archibald	White	1718	11 Nov 1800	Patriot	NC	Mary Susan Walker
George	Tucker	c 1740	22 Jan 1805	PS	NC	Maria Dorothea X
John	Ware	c 1740	c 1801	CS	VA	Mary Watson
Solomon	Stephenson	c 1747	28 May 1781	PS - Road Overseer	NC	Anna Nancy (Johnson)
Samuel	Bell	May 1749	Sept 1835	Private	NC	X
Charles	Polk	29 Jul 1732	10 Mar 1821	Captain	NC	Philipina Helms
Carler	Harrison	1729	1796	PS	VA	Susannah Randolph
Elisha	Battle	9 Jan 1723	6 Mar 1799	Patriot	NC	Elizabeth Ruth Sumner
John	Cowper	1740	1780	Captain	VA	Miss Roe
Joshua	Lee	1764	1846	Private	VA	Fannie King
George	Helig	27 Feb 1761	1828	Private	PA	Catherine Roseman
Robert	Parks	1759	17 Jun 1841	Patriot/ Soldier	X	Sarah McEwen

On 25 June 1914, sixteen patriotic young women of Concord, North Carolina, Cabarrus County, met in the home of Mrs. W. W. Flowe and organized the Cabarrus Black Boys Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. The name, Cabarrus Black Boys, honored nine patriots who became famous for a daring deed when troubles were brewing that resulted in the Revolutionary War. In 1771 Governor Tryon of North Carolina, expecting action from rebellious settlers, had a wagon train of powder and supplies shipped from the port of Charleston, South Carolina, to Hillsboro, North Carolina, where it would be ready for any uprising. Showing their determination for the cause of liberty, these nine young men blackened their faces with soot (thus the name Black Boys) and thwarted the governor's effort by destroying the whole load at what was then known as Phifer's Mill, about three miles north of Concord. When the news of the exploit reached Governor Tryon he was outraged. English pride had suffered a blow that mere replacement of the powder would not heal.

The "Black Boys" fled the vicinity, and were driven by the King's patrols as far as Georgia. They were hunted like wild beasts. For four long years, they eluded their captors, worried their pursuers, until the spirit of liberty grew and blossomed into the 1775 Mecklenberg Declaration of Independence.

The "Black Boys" gave their country an abiding pledge of their attachment to the cause of liberty, which they promptly redeemed whenever their services were needed. All through the stormy times, these brave fellows never lost an opportunity to a common cause, always faithful and earnest. This action by these heroes, who later became soldiers in the Revolution, is a proud memory in Cabarrus history.

**Illustration:**

Plaque placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution was founded on 11 October 1890, during a time that was marked by a revival in patriotism and intense interest in the beginnings of the United States of America. Women felt the desire to express their patriotic feelings and were frustrated by their exclusion from men's organizations formed to perpetuate the memory of ancestors who fought to make this country free and independent. As a result, a group of pioneering women in the nation's capital formed their own organization and the Daughters of the American Revolution has carried the torch of patriotism ever since.

The objectives laid forth in the first meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution have remained the same in over 100 years of active service to the nation. Those objectives are:

**Historical**—to perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved American Independence;

**Educational**—to carry out the injunction of Washington in his farewell address to the American people, "to promote, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge, thus developing an enlightened public opinion...";

**Patriotic**—to cherish, maintain, and extend the institutions of American freedom, to foster true patriotism and love of country, and to aid in securing for mankind all the blessings of liberty.

Since its founding in 1890, the Daughters of the American Revolution organization has admitted more than 800,000 members (including descendants of George Fischer, my 6th great-grandfather, who served in Washington's Life Guards).

The following lineage chart [ATTACHED] illustrates how the Fisher family tree connects to my Ansley family tree with the marriage of Catherine Fisher to Daniel Ansley in 1824. It also shows my relationship to John Stuchell Fisher (who served as Governor of Pennsylvania from 1927 to 1931).

While researching the Bell branch of my family's tree, I came across an interesting tidbit of information posted on one of the popular genealogical websites that briefly mentioned my 7th great-grandfather (Robert Bell, Sr.) serving in the Virginia militia in the 1750s. Further research uncovered the fact that the commander of the Virginia militia at that time was a 22-year-old lieutenant colonel by the name of George Washington. Being a military retiree and amateur historian, this snippet of information about Robert Bell, Sr. sparked my curiosity and I set out to learn more about my little-known relative.

My research soon revealed that Robert Bell, Sr. and George Washington were related to each other through marriage. Robert Bell, Sr.'s wife (Agnes Fleming) and George Washington were cousins. Their relationship is outlined in the family tree chart [ATTACHED].

It is unclear whether or not Robert Bell, Sr. and George Washington knew that they were related to each other through marriage. However, it is clear that these two colonial gentlemen were 'brothers in arms' at the Battle of Fort Mifflin in the summer of 1754.

Since my 7th great-grandmother (Agnes Fleming) and George Washington were cousins, that means I am also related to George Washington.

## **Appendix 1: Washington's Biography**

### **Commander-in-Chief of Continental Army**

Illustration:

General George Washington

"First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." These famous words about George Washington come from a eulogy written by Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee. Lee was a major general in the Continental Army, member of the Continental Congress, governor of Virginia, father of the famous Civil War general Robert E. Lee, and close friend of George Washington.

Illustration:

### George Washington's funeral procession in 1799

Following Washington's death on 14 December 1799, the Sixth Congress commissioned Lee, his brother in arms, to write a moving eulogy. Congress was unanimous in choosing Lee for the task, believing he was best suited to express "those sentiments of respect for the character, of the gratitude for the service, and of grief for the death of that illustrious personage."

Lee indeed proved an ideal choice due to his long-standing relationship with Washington. Lee first attracted the attention of Washington when he joined the Continental Army as captain of the fifth group of Virginia Light Dragoons during the Revolutionary War. Washington quickly promoted the young captain through the ranks. The men had much in common. They were both accomplished horsemen from Virginia, and each resigned his commission after the war to return to his home and family. Washington and Lee remained friends after the war. The men visited one another, shared information about their plantations, traded land in exchange for horses and comforted one another during hard times.

George Washington (son of Augustine Washington and Mary Ball) was born on 22 February 1732 in the colony of Virginia. George grew up on farms as a young boy. Augustine Washington was a prosperous farmer and owned several plantations in Virginia, and his marriage to Mary Ball after the death of his first wife (Jane Butler) enlarged the size of his land holdings. From his first marriage, Augustine had two sons (Lawrence and Augustine). George was the first child born to Augustine's second wife, Mary Ball. After his father died when George was eleven, George's mother struggled to hold their home together with the help of her two sons from a previous marriage.

From a young age and for the rest of his life, George Washington immersed himself in the land business. Washington's father had been a surveyor and George received some rudimentary education in surveying as a youth. His first practical experience in backcountry surveying came in the spring of 1748. The sixteen-year-old was invited to tag along with a surveying party as a traveling companion for his friend and neighbor George William Fairfax, the twenty-four-year-old nephew of Lord Thomas Fairfax. Washington worked as an apprentice to James Genn, a licensed surveyor.

### Illustration:

### George Washington as a surveyor

Thanks to the connection by marriage of his half-brother Lawrence to the wealthy Fairfax family, George was appointed surveyor of Culpeper County in July 1749 at the age of 17. George's half-brother had purchased an interest in the Ohio Company, a land acquisition and settlement company whose objective was the settlement of Virginia's frontier areas, including the Ohio Country, territory north and west of the Ohio River. George continued to work as a surveyor for the next two years. In between surveying trips, George studied fencing and military science with his half-brother Lawrence who was a major in the militia of Northern Virginia.

Upon Lawrence Washington's death from tuberculosis in July 1752, Robert Dinwiddie (Lieutenant Governor of Virginia) appointed George to take his step-

brother's place as a district adjutant general of the militia with the rank of major. Washington's duties as adjutant general included raising, organizing, and training the local militia when called up by the colonial government. Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie recognized that even though George Washington was young he had the ability to handle the job. Dinwiddie observed that George Washington was efficient, dependable, and courageous.

**Illustration:**

**Washington surrendering Fort Necessity to the French**

At the time, England and France were enemies in America, vying for control of the Ohio River Valley. Serving as a British military envoy, Washington led a poorly trained and equipped force of 150 men to build a fort on the banks of the Ohio River. On the way, he encountered and attacked a small French force, killing a French minister in the process. The incident touched off open fighting between the British and the French, and in one fateful engagement at Fort Necessity, the British were routed by the superior tactics of the French.

Although hailed as a hero in the colonies when word spread of his heroic valor and leadership against the French, the Royal government in England blamed the colonials for the defeat. Angry at the lack of respect and appreciation shown to him, Washington resigned from the army and returned to farming in Virginia.

**Illustration:**

**George Washington's marriage to Martha Custis in 1759**

In 1759, George Washington married Martha Custis, a wealthy widow, and thereafter devoted his time to running the family plantation. By 1770, Washington had emerged as an experienced leader—a justice of the peace in Fairfax County, a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, and a respected lay leader in his church. He also was among the first prominent Americans to openly support resistance to England's new policies of taxation and strict regulation of the colonial economy beginning in the early 1770s.

Washington was elected by the Virginia legislature to both the First and the Second Continental Congress, held in 1774 and 1775. In 1775, after local militia units from Massachusetts had engaged British troops near Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress appointed Washington commander of all the colonial forces. Showing the modesty that was central to his character, Washington proclaimed, "I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with."

After routing the British from Boston in the spring of 1776, Washington fought a series of humiliating battles in a losing effort to defend New York. But on Christmas Day that same year, he led his army through a ferocious blizzard, crossed the Delaware River into New Jersey, and defeated the Hessian forces at Trenton. In May 1778, the French agreed to an alliance with the Americans, marking the turning point of the Revolution. Washington knew that one great victory by his army would collapse the British Parliament's support for its war against the colonies. In October 1781, Washington's troops, assisted by the

French Navy, defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown. By the following spring the British government was ready to end hostilities.

**Illustration:**

British surrendering to General Washington at Yorktown in 1781

Following the Battle of Yorktown, Washington quelled a potentially disastrous bid by some of his officers to declare him king. He then returned to Mount Vernon and the genteel life of a tobacco planter, only to be called out of retirement to preside at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. His great stature gave credibility to the call for a new government and insured his election as the first President of the United States. Keenly aware that his conduct as President would set precedents for the future of the office, he carefully weighed every step he took. He appointed Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton to his cabinet. Almost immediately, these two men began to quarrel over a wide array of issues, but Washington valued them for the balance they lent his cabinet.

Literally the “Father of the Nation”, Washington almost single-handedly created a new government—shaping its institutions, offices, and political practices. Although he badly wanted to retire after the first term, Washington was unanimously supported by the electoral college for a second term in 1792. Throughout both his terms, Washington struggled to prevent the emergence of political parties, viewing them as factions harmful to the public good. Nevertheless, in his first term, the ideological division between Jefferson and Hamilton deepened, forming the outlines of the nation's first party system. This system was composed of Federalists, who supported expansive federal power and Alexander Hamilton, and the Democratic-Republicans, followers of Thomas Jefferson's philosophy of states' rights and limited federal power. Washington generally backed Hamilton on key issues, such as the funding of the national debt, the assumption of state debts, and the establishment of a national bank.

Throughout his two terms, Washington insisted on his power to act independent of Congress in foreign conflicts, especially when war broke out between France and England in 1793 and he issued a Declaration of Neutrality on his own authority. He also acted decisively in putting down a rebellion by farmers in western Pennsylvania who protested a federal whiskey tax (the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794). After he left office, exhausted and discouraged over the rise of political factions, Washington returned to Mount Vernon, where he died almost three years later.

Historians agree that no one other than George Washington could have held the disparate colonies and, later, the struggling young Republic together. To the American Revolution's last day, Washington's troops were ragged, starving, and their pay was months in arrears. In guiding this force during year after year of humiliating defeat to final victory, more than once paying his men out of his own pocket to keep them from going home, Washington earned the unlimited confidence of those early citizens of the United States.

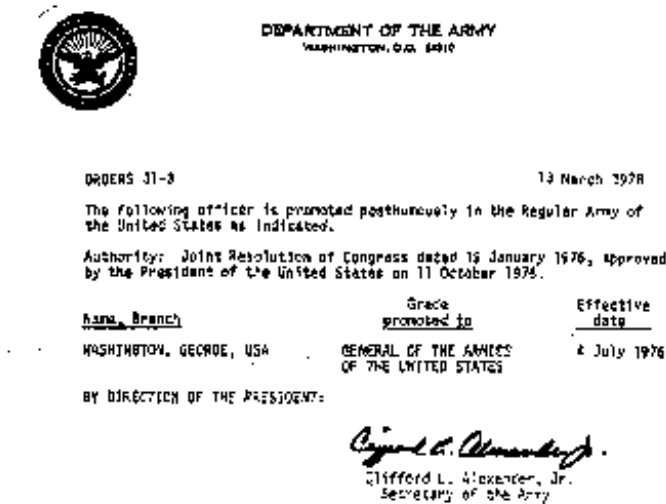
Perhaps most importantly, Washington's balanced and devoted service as President persuaded the American people that their prosperity and best hope for the future lay in a union under a strong but cautious central authority. His refusal

to accept a proffered crown and his willingness to relinquish the office after two terms established the precedents for limits on the power of the presidency. Washington's profound achievements built the foundations of a powerful national government that has survived for more than two centuries.

Of the many thousands of soldiers and seamen serving during the Revolutionary War, only a select few were singled out by the Continental Congress to receive its highest honors. Seventeen men had the distinction of being named, but of them, only seven received the ultimate award, a gold medal: General George Washington (1776), Major General Horatio Gates (1777), Brigadier General Anthony Wayne (1779), Major Henry Lee (1779), Brigadier General Daniel Morgan (1781), Major General Nathanael Greene (1781), and Captain John Paul Jones (1787). As previously stated, it was Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee (father of General Robert E. Lee) who wrote the eulogy to George Washington upon his death in 1799.

Illustration:  
Congressional Gold Medals awarded to  
General George Washington (1776) and Major Henry Lee (1779)

During the United States Bicentennial year of 1976, George Washington was posthumously appointed to the grade of General of the Armies of the United States by the congressional joint resolution Public Law 94-479 passed on 19 January 1976, with an effective date of 4 July 1976 but having rank and precedence over all other generals of the Army, past or present.



Department of the Army orders promoting George Washington to General of the Armies

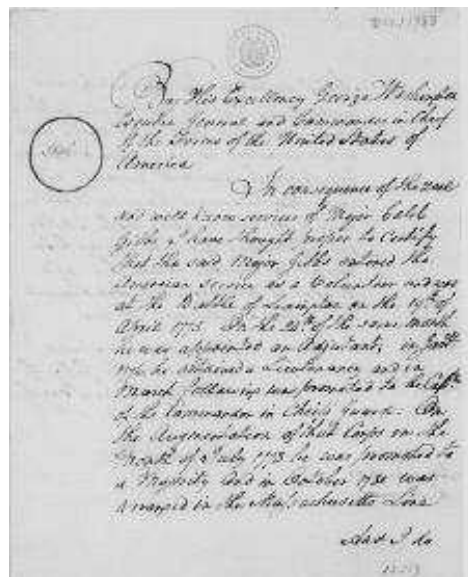
Appendix 2: Caleb Gibbs' Biography  
First Commander of Washington's Life Guards

Illustration:  
Captain Caleb Gibbs

The third child of Robert and Sarah Gibbs, Caleb was baptized on 25 September 1748, at the Second Congregational Church in Newport, Rhode Island. By 1769, he had moved to Marblehead, Massachusetts and became acquainted with local patriot leader John Glover. After turning "out a Volunteer at the Battle of Lexington," Gibbs was appointed Adjutant of Glover's regiment on 24 April 1775, with the rank of lieutenant. As the British Army prepared to evacuate Boston in March of 1776, General Washington recognized the shift in the war and saw a need to establish a guard "for himself and [his] Baggage" in the General Orders of 11 March 1776.

General George Washington was impressed with Caleb Gibb's supervisory function in one of the best disciplined units in the Continental Army and selected the New Englander to command the Life Guards the following day with the rank of captain. The young officer was initially tasked with coordinating the security of the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, but quickly and ably took on the supervision of its daily operations.

Moreover, Gibbs would command detachments for special combat missions at various times during the war. For the commendable execution of his duties, Gibbs was promoted to the rank of major on 29 July 1778. Despite a dust-up in 1779, George Washington thought well of the "good-natured" Yankee and publicly thanked him in general orders for "his Conduct while in the command of his Corps of Guards".



Letter from George Washington,  
commending the services of Caleb Gibbs during the war



Gibbs was wounded in the ankle at the Battle of Yorktown, but remained on active duty with Henry Jackson's Continental Regiment until mid-1784.

In 1798 during the Quasi-War crisis with France, Gibbs' name was put forward by George Washington to command one of the Massachusetts regiments in the Provisional Army. However, this idea was rejected by several members of Congress. Washington protested and cited his service "through the whole Revolutionary war" and lamentably concluded that a "Veto of a Member of Congress ... was more respected; & Sufficient to set [Gibbs] aside."

After the war, Caleb Gibbs settled in Boston in 1785, where he married, began a family, and struggled to establish himself in private business. After several appeals to President Washington for government employ, he was appointed first as a clerk at the Boston Navy Yard in 1794 and then superintendent in 1812. Caleb Gibbs passed away on 6 November 1818.

### **Appendix 3: William Colfax's Biography**

#### **Second Commander of Washington's Life Guards**

Illustration:

Captain William Colfax

William Colfax was born on 3 July 1756 in New London, Connecticut. He was the fifth child born to George Colfax and Lucy Avery (who had a total of ten children).

When William Colfax was 17 years old, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Continental Army leading him to be present at the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775.

Illustration:

Battle of Bunker Hill

Colfax was wounded three times in battle during the Revolutionary War; one of those times was at the Battle of White Plains in October 1776. Another was on 3 July 1781, four miles from Valentine's Hill north of New York City near King's Bridge. Upon one occasion, when he was in the act of giving the word of command to his men, a bullet struck his uplifted sword, shattering the blade, and glancing, skinned one of his fingers. On another occasion, while riding on horseback in an exposed position a bullet was sent through his body, just above the hip and below the bowels, entering in front and coming out behind. The long buff waistcoat he wore at the time is preserved by his grandchildren, and the hole is apparent, made by the almost fatal shot.

In the excitement of the battle, Colfax did not notice the wound, but still galloped from point to point over the field delivering orders. Some Hessian soldiers, who had been taken prisoners, saw the blood streaming from his side and into his boot, and gleefully exclaimed, "Mein Gott! de Captain is wounded again." As he

kept on in the fight some of his own men saw the blood flow and cried to him, "Captain! the blood is running out of your boot!" Looking down, he noticed his condition for the first time and recognized that it must be serious, and rode over toward the field hospital. Dr. Ledyard looked at the wound and bade him go at once into the hospital, and stay in, the latter order being needed to keep Colfax indoors.

The excitement over, the wounded Colfax succumbed to the loss of blood and grew faint and weak as a child. After hurriedly examining and dressing the injury, Dr. Ledyard subsequently asked, "Do you want to be cured quickly, or to let this thing linger along?" To which the Captain replied, "As quickly as possible." The surgeon promptly applied the bistoury (surgical knife), tore the wound open and dressed it, whereupon it soon healed.

However, recovery was attended by an eruption of boils, covering Colfax from head to heels. Washington, seeing the state of his captain, told him, "You are in a deplorable condition; I will give you a furlough that you may go home till you recover." Colfax persisted in staying with the army until they went into winter quarters at Morristown, in the winter of 1779-1780. During that season he went home to Connecticut on horseback through snow in March 1780 so deep that he rode over the fence-tops. He returned greatly improved in health.

#### Illustration:

Huts where soldiers in the "Life Guard" would live at Valley Forge

While the American army was encamped at Valley Forge, General Washington issued an order, dated 17 March 1778, directing that "one hundred chosen men are to be annexed to the Guard of the Commander in-Chief, for the purpose of forming a corps, to be instructed in the manoeuvres [maneuvers] necessary to be introduced into the Army, and to serve as a model for the execution of them." Colfax succeeded Caleb Gibbs on 1 January 1781, as captain (by Washington's appointment) of his Life Guard until 5 September 1783, having gone on furlough in July 1783.

During his service in the Life Guard, Colfax was promoted from second lieutenant to first lieutenant, and then finally to captain in April 1783. Colfax was present at the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis, at Yorktown and permitted by Washington to occupy a prominent position, on horseback, near Washington. Colfax retired from the army on 3 November 3, 1783.

After the Revolutionary War, Colfax was appointed by the legislature to be a Justice of the Peace for the Court of Common Pleas of Bergen County for many years. He served in the New Jersey legislature from 1806 until 1813 including General Assembly (1806, 07, 09, 10, and 11) and the Legislative Council (1808, 12, and 13).

In 1811, William Colfax was Brigadier-General of the Second Division of Infantry, Bergen Brigade where in the War of 1812 he had a command at Sandy Hook.

William Colfax died after couple days of illness on 9 September 1838. The services were held in the Reformed Dutch Church at Pompton and were led by Reverend Isaac S. Demarest. He received full military honors, the Militia of

Paterson and the whole town showed up. General Abraham Godwin and Colonel Cornelius G. Garrison commanded the martial music. Colfax was buried at his estate in Wayne, New Jersey.

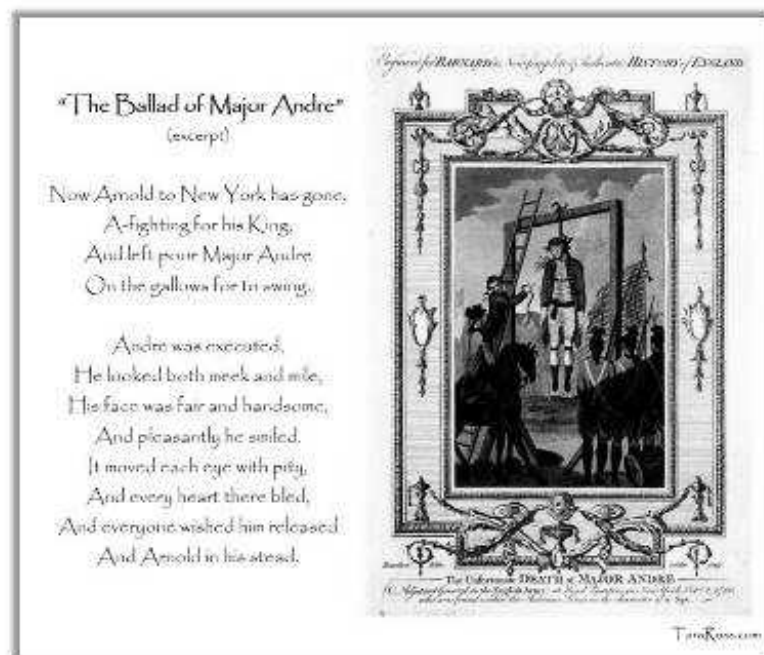
## **Appendix 4: Bezaleel Howe's Biography**

### **Third Commander of Washington's Life Guards**

#### **Illustration: Captain Bezaleel Howe**

Bezaleel Howe, was born at Marlborough, Massachusetts, 28 November 1750, son of Bezaleel and Anna (Howe) Howe. His father died when his son was only a few weeks old. As a child, Bezaleel [Jr.] eventually went to live with an uncle in Henniker, New Hampshire.

In April of 1775 Howe marched to Cambridge, and served at Bunker Hill as a volunteer. Afterward he enlisted as a private in the company of Captain Crosby, in Colonel Reed's regiment of New Hampshire troops. In the course of his service at the Battle of White Plains, and at the Battle of Long Island, Howe was promoted to lieutenant. Of the winter at Valley Forge, he wrote "we suffered intensely for want of clothing but there was no help." In the summer of 1778 Howe was at the Battle of Monmouth, and in 1779 with General Sullivan on the campaign in western New York. In 1780 Howe witnessed the execution of Major John André, whose "bearing" Howe described as "manly to the last."



The Ballad of Major Andre

In 1781 Howe was sent to New Hampshire to recruit troops, and in the summer joined Washington's march to Virginia as a member of the First New Hampshire regiment. Afterward, Howe was with Washington at Newburgh, New York, and was appointed on 5 September 1783 as commander of Washington's Life Guards, in which capacity he was promoted to captain by brevet, and oversaw the shipment of Washington's possessions to his house at Mount Vernon. Howe was present 4 December 1783 at Fraunces Tavern when Washington took leave of his officers. Howe received his discharge from the army on 20 December 1783.

Illustration:

General Washington bids his officers farewell at Fraunces Tavern

Instead of returning to New England, Howe decided to remain in the City of New York. He was an original member of the New York State Society of the Cincinnati. He started out in business as a grocer, at 86 Water Street. He also had an appointment as a captain in the New York militia.

Soon after his marriage in 1787, Howe moved to New Orleans, apparently in search of business opportunities which evidently did not work out, for the family soon moved back to Manhattan.

In early-1791, Howe received an appointment in the 2nd regiment of the United States Army, as a lieutenant ordered to go to New Hampshire to recruit troops for the Indian War in Ohio. He was successful in recruitment, and was promoted to captain on 4 November 1791.

In 1792, Howe was ordered to West Point to supervise recruits for the Ohio campaign under General Anthony Wayne.

Howe was promoted to major on 12 March 1795. He was afterwards transferred to New York where he served for about a year before resigning on 1 November 1796, to accept a post in the New York Custom House. In 1799 he was appointed "inspector of revenue," in which he remained for the rest of his life.

As a member of the New York State Society of the Cincinnati, Bezaleel Howe participated in Washington's memorial service at St. Paul's Chapel in 1799. Howe regularly attended meetings of the Cincinnati, as at the funeral of Alexander Hamilton in 1804, at the official visit of President Monroe to New York in 1817, and at the banquet for Lafayette on 6 September 1824. Bezaleel Howe died on 16 September 1825.

## Appendix 5: Listing of Life Guards

The following chart is a listing of the soldiers who served in General George Washington's Commander-in-Chief Guards (also known as Washington's Life Guards) — [CHART ATTACHED]

## Appendix 6: Badge of Military Merit



Badge of Military Merit

All soldiers know that the Purple Heart is given to those who are wounded or killed while fighting in the nation's wars. Most also know that those who are injured or die in terrorist attacks are eligible to receive the decoration, too. What most soldiers, and most Americans, do not realize, however, is that the Purple Heart is a unique military award. It is the oldest U.S. military decoration; General George Washington awarded the first purple-colored heart-shaped badges to soldiers who fought in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. What follows is a history of this unique decoration and some of its soldier recipients.

On 7 August 1782, General Washington announced the following in his Orders of the Day:

The General ever desirous to cherish a virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military Merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear...over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth... Not only instances of unusual gallantry but also of extraordinary fidelity and essential service... shall be met with a due award.

Three Continental Army noncommissioned officers were awarded the new Badge of Military Merit. Sergeant Daniel Bissell received his badge for spying on British troops quartered in New York City and then returning to American lines with invaluable intelligence. Sergeant William Brown was awarded the decoration for his gallantry while assaulting British positions at Yorktown in October 1781. Finally, Sergeant Elijah Churchill was awarded his Badge of Military Merit for heroism on two daring raids against British fortifications on Long Island.

### Illustration:

General Washington awarding Badge of Military Merit to soldier

Sergeants Bissell, Brown, and Churchill would eventually be the only recipients of the new decoration. In the years that followed the Revolution and the birth of the United States, Washington's Badge of Military Merit fell into disuse and was forgotten for almost 150 years.

When General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing and the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) arrived in Europe in 1917, the only existing American decoration was the Medal of Honor. Pershing and his fellow American officers, as well as the enlisted soldiers, soon were acutely aware that the British, French, Italian and other Allied armies had a variety of military medals that could be used to reward valor or service. The British, for example, had a Medal of Honor equivalent, the Victoria Cross, but they also had a Military Cross for junior and warrant officers and a Military Medal for enlisted soldiers, both awarded for gallantry. They also had at least one medal that could be awarded for meritorious service. Except for the Medal of Honor, which was for combat heroism only, there were no other medals for Americans.

By the end of World War I, the Army had remedied this award shortage to some extent. In 1918, Congress passed legislation creating the Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Service Medal. While giving much deserved recognition to those serving in both the United States and overseas, these new medals required such a high degree of combat heroism or service that some civilian and military leaders in Washington believed that another decoration was required -- one that could be used to reward those individuals for their valuable wartime services.

In the 1920s, the War Department began studying the issue. A few officers with knowledge of Washington’s old Badge of Military Merit suggested that it be resurrected, renamed the “Order of Military Merit,” and awarded to any soldier for exceptionally meritorious service or for any heroic act not performed in actual conflict. Ultimately, however, no action was taken on this proposal to revive the Badge of Military Merit.

With the appointment of General Douglas MacArthur as Army Chief of Staff in 1930, however, there was renewed interest in the idea for a new medal. A few months after MacArthur pinned on his fourth star and began serving as the Army’s top officer, he wrote a letter to Charles Moore, the chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, and informed him that the War Department planned to “revive” Washington’s old award on the bicentennial of his birth.

Illustration:  
Purple Heart Medal

As a result, on 22 February 1932, the Army announced in General Orders No. 3 that “the Purple Heart, established by General George Washington in 1782” would be “awarded to persons who, while serving in the Army of the United States, perform any singularly meritorious act of extraordinary fidelity or essential service.” Then, in a parenthetical in this announcement, the Army published the following sentence: “A wound, which necessitates treatment by a medical officer, and which is received in action with an enemy of the United States, or as a result of an act of such enemy, may... be construed as resulting from a singularly meritorious act of essential service.”) This meant that the Purple Heart was an award for high-level service, but it also meant that an individual serving “in the Army” who was wounded in action, could also be awarded the Purple Heart. Not

all wounds, however, qualified for the new decoration; the wound had to be serious enough that it “necessitated” medical treatment.

From 1932 until the outbreak of World War II, the Army awarded some 78,000 Purple Hearts to living veterans and active duty soldiers who had either been wounded in action or had been awarded General Pershing’s certificate for meritorious service during World War I. The latter was a printed certificate signed by Pershing that read “for exceptionally meritorious and conspicuous services.” While the vast majority of Purple Hearts were issued to men who had fought in Europe in 1917 and 1918, a small number of soldiers who had been wounded in earlier conflicts, including the Civil War, Indian Wars, and Spanish-American War, applied for and were awarded the Purple Heart.

Until World War II, the Purple Heart was exclusively an Army decoration and, with rare exceptions, only soldiers received it; the Navy and Marine Corps lacked the authority to award it to sea service personnel. Finally, the Purple Heart is the only decoration awarded without regard to any person’s favor or approval; any soldier, sailor, airman or marine who sheds blood in defense of the nation is automatically awarded the Purple Heart.

Two additional points about pre-World War II awards of the Purple Heart must be mentioned. First, the new decoration was an Army-only award. Since the War Department had used a regulation to resurrect Washington’s old badge, there was no legal basis for the Navy Department to award the Purple Heart. A small number of sailors and marines who had been “serving with” the AEF, however, were awarded Army Purple Hearts for combat wounds suffered while fighting in France, and the Navy Department permitted these sea service personnel to wear the Purple Heart on their uniforms. Nevertheless, the Navy does not seem to have ever considered adopting the Purple Heart as a Navy decoration during this time period.

Second, there were no posthumous awards of the Purple Heart prior to World War II. As MacArthur explained in 1938, the Purple Heart, like Washington’s Badge of Military Merit, was “not intended...to commemorate the dead, but to animate and inspire the living.” Consequently, said MacArthur, the Purple Heart could not be awarded posthumously. “To make it a symbol of death, with its corollary depressive influences,” insisted MacArthur, “would be to defeat the primary purpose of its being.” However, the Army was to jettison this “no posthumous award” rule after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

After America’s entry into World War II in December 1941, and the deaths of thousands of soldiers in Hawaii and the Philippines, the War Department recognized that those who had given their lives in defense of the nation must be recognized. Consequently, on 28 April 1942, the Army reversed MacArthur’s original policy and announced that the Purple Heart now would be awarded to “members of the military service who are killed... or who died as a result of a wound received in action... on or after December 7, 1941.”

Five months later, the Army made another major change in the award criteria for the Purple Heart: it restricted the award of the Purple Heart to combat wounds only. While MacArthur’s intent in reviving the Purple Heart in 1932 was that the new decoration would be for “any singularly meritorious act of extraordinary fidelity or essential service” (with combat wounds being a sub-set of such fidelity

or service), the creation of the Legion of Merit in 1942 as a new junior decoration for achievement or service meant that the Army did not need two medals to reward the same thing. The result was that the War Department announced that, as of 5 September 1942, the Purple Heart was now exclusively an award for those wounded or killed in action. About 270 Purple Hearts for achievement or service -- and not for wounds -- were awarded prior to this change in policy, which makes them exceedingly rare.

A final change in the evolution of the Purple Heart was President Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision to give the Navy Department the authority to award the decoration. This occurred on 3 December 1942, almost a year after the attack that had propelled the United States into World War II, when Roosevelt signed an executive order giving the Secretary of the Navy the authority to award the Purple Heart to any sailor, marine or Coast Guardsman wounded in action against an enemy of the United States or killed in any action after 7 December 1941.

The next major change to the award criteria for the Purple Heart occurred during the presidency of John F. Kennedy. In the early 1960s, after American military personnel serving in South Vietnam began being killed and wounded, the Defense Department discovered that the restrictive nature of the Purple Heart's award criteria precluded the award of the medal because these men were serving in an advisory capacity, not as combatants. Additionally, because the United States was not formally a participant (as a matter of law) in the ongoing war between the South Vietnamese and Viet Cong guerrillas, and their North Vietnamese allies, there was no "enemy" to satisfy the requirement of a wound or death received "in action against an enemy." Since Kennedy recognized that the Purple Heart should be awarded to these uniformed personnel who were shedding blood in South Vietnam, he signed an executive order on 25 April 1962 that permitted the Purple Heart to be awarded to any person wounded or killed "while serving with friendly foreign forces" or "as a result of action by a hostile foreign force." By 1973, when the last U.S. combat forces withdrew from Vietnam, thousands upon thousands of Americans wounded or killed in Southeast Asia had been awarded the Purple Heart.

The next major changes to the Purple Heart occurred in February 1984, when President Ronald Reagan recognized the changing nature of war and signed Executive Order 12464. This order announced that the Purple Heart could now be awarded to those killed or wounded as a result of an "international terrorist attack against the United States." Reagan also decided that the Purple Heart should be awarded to individuals killed or wounded "outside the territory of the United States" while serving "as part of a peacekeeping mission." As a result of Reagan's decision, a small number of soldiers in uniform received the Purple Heart who otherwise would have been denied the medal.

Finally, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq caused the most recent changes to the Purple Heart's award criteria. On 25 April 2011, the Defense Department announced that the decoration now could be awarded to servicemen and women who sustained "mild traumatic brain injuries and concussive injuries" in combat. This decision was based on the recognition that brain injuries caused by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) qualify as wounds, even though such brain injuries may be invisible.



Awards for these head injuries are retroactive to 11 September 2001, the day of al Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. On the issue of severity of a brain injury, a soldier need not lose consciousness in order to qualify for the Purple Heart. On the contrary, if a "medical officer" or "medical professional" makes a "diagnosis" that an individual suffered a "concussive injury" and the "extent of the wound was such that it required treatment by a medical officer," this is sufficient for the award of the Purple Heart. It is too early to know the extent to which Purple Hearts will be awarded to soldiers for these concussion injuries, but the number of awards could be sizable given the wounds inflicted by IEDs.

As war evolves, the Purple Heart will evolve as well. For example, a recent law passed by Congress permits the award of the Purple Heart for some domestic terrorist incidents. While today's Purple Heart medal looks exactly the same as it did in 1932, General MacArthur would certainly be surprised to see how much the criteria for awarding it has changed. Today, the Purple Heart may be awarded to any soldier who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with one of the Armed Forces after 5 April 1917, is killed or wounded in any of the following circumstances: (1) In action against an enemy of the United States; In action with an opposing armed force of a foreign country in which the Armed Forces of the United States are or have been engaged; or (2) While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party; or (3) As the result of an act of any such enemy of opposing armed force; or (4) As the result of an act of any hostile foreign force; or (5) As the result of friendly weapon fire while actively engaging the enemy; or (6) As the indirect result of enemy action (e.g., injuries resulting from parachuting from a plane brought down by enemy or hostile fire); or (7) As the result of an international terrorist attack against the United States or a foreign nation friendly to the United States; or (8) As a result of military operations outside the United States while serving with a peacekeeping force; or (9) As the result of a domestic attack inspired by foreign terrorist organizations.

Illustration:

General Washington's *Badge of Military Merit* transitioned into the  
*Purple Heart medal*

More than a million Purple Hearts have been awarded since General Washington's Badge of Military Merit was revived in 1932. The unique heart-shaped decoration continues to be widely recognized by Americans. It also continues to be prized by all who receive it, probably because the award of a Purple Heart does not depend on any superior's favor or approval. After all, the Purple Heart is unique as an egalitarian award in what is usually thought of as a nondemocratic, hierarchical military organization, since every man or woman in uniform who sheds blood or receives a qualifying injury while defending the nation receives the Purple Heart regardless of position, rank, status, or popularity.

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## **Appendix 2: Caleb Gibbs' Biography**

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<sup>(1)</sup> Author’s note: My 6th great-grandfather Robert Bell, Jr. accompanied George Washington on this 1770 trip on the Kanawha River. I wrote about this 1770 trip in my book entitled *Out of Necessity: George Washington’s Surrender of Fort Necessity to the French*.