



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

★ **AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.** ★

This is our moment to capture the imagination of the country and preserve the battlefields where our independence was won.

**HELP US RAISE THE FUNDS NEEDED
TO SECURE A \$10-TO-\$1 MATCH!**

Dear Friend and Fellow Battlefield Preservationist,

There is a sense of excitement and anticipation that is building among our staff and among historians. I hope you feel it too ...

In just under three years, our beloved nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

2026 may feel like a long way off, but believe me, it will be here before we know it — and we want to be prepared to make our mark at this special time for America.



Painting depicting the signing of the Declaration of Independence © Library of Congress

I'm sure those of you of a certain age (myself included) can recall the excitement we felt during our nation's bicentennial in 1976. Many of us were too young to have much of an impact on that celebration, but this time, that's not the case.

We're preparing for our nation's semiquincentennial (semiquincentennial — yes, it's a mouthful, but by July 2026, it will be rolling off your tongue with ease). This significant milestone is our opportunity ... it's our moment ... to capture the imagination of the country when interest in America's founding era is expected to be at an all-time high.

This is a tremendous opportunity for the Trust to reach a wider audience and introduce a new generation to the captivating stories of courage and valor and of overcoming impossible odds to secure American independence.

And what better place to tell those stories and bring history to life than on Revolutionary War battlefields? Tens of millions of Americans will be visiting these hallowed grounds in 2026 — some for the first time in their lives.

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An undertaking of this scale is not something we can do alone. There are scores of other organizations, local communities, and government agencies involved in these preparations. In the months ahead, I will provide more detail on the various efforts these groups are making, but for now, we have a tremendous opportunity, and I need your help.

We have the chance to save an incredible 261 acres of highly significant Revolutionary War battlefield land AND fund a project that will bring the pivotal story of the Princeton Battlefield to life. But we must act now to be ready in time for the semiquincentennial.

The total value of the battlefield land plus the project to restore and interpret the Princeton Battlefield is more than \$1.6 million, but with anticipated state and federal matching grants, private funding, as well as a special matching grant for the Princeton project, we need to raise only one-tenth of that total.

My friend, if we can raise \$171,750, we will unlock a match that will multiply this amount tenfold! Just think, for every dollar you give, you've essentially tacked on an extra zero at the end to make it worth that much more. Your gift of \$100 is valued at \$1,000, your gift of \$1,000 becomes worth \$10,000, and so on.

The ink on the Declaration of Independence was barely dry on the frigid morning of January 3, 1777. Eager to follow up on his improbable victory at Trenton, **General**

George Washington and his outnumbered forces managed to evade Cornwallis's main army in a night march. Their plan was to attack the British rear guard and baggage train at Princeton.

But as Washington's forces approached the town, the British commander spotted the American vanguard, and fighting ensued. Lines of infantry blazed away at each other, a mere 40 yards apart, until finally, the Redcoats launched a furious bayonet attack. It worked. The American line wavered.

American General Hugh Mercer — fighting off the blows with his sword — was bayoneted seven times and left for dead, as were many other American officers and men. With the army on the brink of destruction, George Washington plunged into this swirling chaos, sitting tall on his white horse.

Heedless of danger and rallying his men, he gave the order to advance across **Maxwell's Field**, and led them to within 30 yards of the British line. He ordered them to then fire. The British returned the volley. Historian W. J. Wood writes that *“Colonel John Fitzgerald of [Washington's] staff covered his eyes so that he would not see his commander blasted from the saddle. Yet when the smoke began to clear, there was Washington, standing in his stirrups, calmly waving his men forward.”*



“Battle of Princeton - Death of Mercer by Trumbull” courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery © Library of Congress

It was too much for the British, and now it was their turn to break and run. Some British soldiers retreated all the way to Nassau Hall (located on the campus of what is now Princeton University), until Continental artillery fired a few shots into the grand building. The British defenders finally waved a white flag, ending the Battle of Princeton, and closing out the Ten Crucial Days that emboldened a burgeoning nation and changed the trajectory of the American Revolutionary War.

Just imagine, if the Continental Army had been destroyed — or General Washington killed — on that day in Princeton, how very different our country (assuming there was one) could be today.

To quote Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist George Will, *“If George Washington’s audacity on January 3, 1777, had not reversed the Patriots’ retreat and routed the advancing British, the American Revolution might have been extinguished.”*

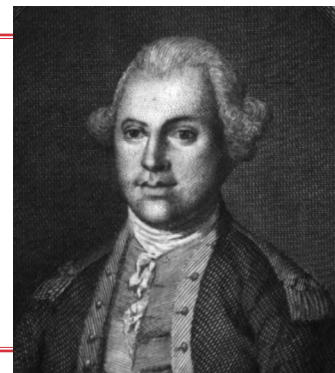
It just so happens that the hallowed ground of Princeton is also the site of one of the Trust’s most significant victories.

The longtime owner of the Maxwell’s Field area, a private independent academic institution known as the Institute for Advanced Studies, had envisioned a 15-unit faculty housing facility for the site — a plan that had faced significant opposition from other advocates even before the Trust got involved.

Initially our attempts at negotiation — even offers to buy the land at a price far above fair-market value — were all rebuffed. The situation looked dire, with court challenges filed to hold back the bulldozers and backhoes. But we kept the faith and never accepted that this was a “done deal” as others would have had us believe.

General Nathanael Greene, who himself led troops at the Battle of Princeton, once famously said, ***“We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again.”***

General Nathanael Greene © Library of Congress



The Trust embraced that spirit of resilience and relentlessness, and in time, we were able to convince the Institute to change its mind.

In 2017, in partnership with a coalition of advocates, many of whom had been opposing development of the site for long years, if not decades, we were able to purchase 15 acres at the Princeton Battlefield’s Maxwell’s Field, where George Washington rallied his troops and led a

counterattack that drove the British from the field. This land will be incorporated into the Princeton Battlefield State Park, providing current and future generations with the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of those who sacrificed all to secure American independence.

We fought, got beat, rose, and fought again. And won.

Now it's time to finish the job.

It's time to transform this state park into a national destination for millions of patriotic visitors during the anniversary period. And we need your help.

I'm thrilled to announce that over the course of the next several years, the Trust will be embarking upon a multi-faceted project to reinvigorate the interpretive and educational experience at the Princeton Battlefield, integrating the newly protected areas into the existing parkland along the way. By restoring the historic landscape and bringing the stories that unfolded there to life, this landmark initiative will better tell the story of this remarkable Patriot victory, and enhance the Park's positive impact on the community and the nation.

We have big plans to rejuvenate the Princeton Battlefield State Park and set the bar high for historic battleground restoration and interpretation. The first part of this watershed project involves developing and installing interpretive signage to help visitors make a meaningful connection with the historic landscape. These efforts will work hand-in-hand with measures like restoring historic tree lines, re-planting orchards to return the landscape to its original appearance, removing non-historic structures, and more to help fully tell the story of the battle. I've enclosed some preliminary samples of what this could look like when the work is complete.

Over the next two years, we're planning to install a new and exciting suite of innovative interpretive methods, digital tools, and interactive signage to complement the restored battlefield and create a robust experience for the modern visitor. Here history will come to life like never before.

It's going to take millions of dollars, and it's going to take a team. We are working with local groups, the New Jersey State Park Service, Municipality of Princeton, the Princeton Battlefield Society, and a host of other dedicated organizations in a true public-private partnership on this project.

Together with our partners and history enthusiasts like you, we can transform how the public experiences this incredible and formative piece of our history, helping present and future generations foster a deep appreciation of this unique American treasure.

While this tremendous effort at Princeton Battlefield is impressive, it's just one part of the work we are pursuing in our lead-up to the semiquincentennial.



Looking southeast across Princeton Battlefield State Park, the viewer sees the distant high ground from which Gen. George Washington counterattacked British forces during the Battle of Princeton, after rallying his Continental Army troops. © Eric Malave

Battlefield preservation wasn't much on people's minds at the end of the Revolutionary War. It wasn't until long after the Civil War that Americans started to appreciate the value and sacredness of the battlegrounds where our nation's history was shaped and defined. As such, opportunities to preserve critical Revolutionary War battlefield land can be hard to come by, and when we do get such an opportunity, we must not miss it! But as I mentioned earlier, we have an extraordinary opportunity to save and preserve forever **261 acres of Revolutionary War battlefield** — two small parcels at the Hobkirk Hill battlefield in South Carolina and a significant property at the Newtown battlefield in New York.

Though perhaps less well-known, the 1779 Battle of **Newtown** played a significant role in the Revolutionary War. By the late 1770s, British strategy involved working with Native American allies to attack Continental settlements on the New York and Pennsylvania frontiers. These constant raids served to divert manpower from the Continental Army, strip the Patriots of their food and supplies, and spread terror throughout the region, leading to frequent counterattacks and retaliatory actions between the Loyalist and Patriot forces and their respective Native American allies.

In the summer of 1779, General Washington ordered General John Sullivan to lead an attack against the Iroquois Nation that would remove them as a threat in the war. Because they were outnumbered 4-to-1, Loyalist and Iroquois forces planned to ambush the Continentals as they approached Newtown. However, a number of riflemen who had previously served under Daniel Morgan detected the ambush, and the Continentals were able to launch their own attack against the Iroquois and British forces.

Though the Continental plan was complex, the Patriots executed it successfully, forcing the smaller opposing force to retreat after holding the Americans off for nearly two hours. After the battle, Continental forces destroyed Iroquois crops and villages, eliminating them as a threat, but dealing the Native Americans a devastating and demoralizing blow. The land we are working to save today at Newtown will help tell the story not only of this battle, but also of the continuous conflict between the Continental forces, Loyalists, and Native American allies that characterized this complicated front of the Revolutionary War.

Turning our attention to the war's southern theater, we also have the opportunity to save two parcels of historic land at **Hobkirk Hill** in South Carolina. Even though Hobkirk Hill was a defeat for Patriot General Nathanael Greene, the battle did convince Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lord Rawdon to withdraw from Camden. This forever ended the British occupation of the interior of South Carolina. Casualties on both sides were about evenly matched, with the Americans suffering 270 casualties, and the British suffering 258. Though a victory for British forces, Greene ultimately succeeded in his campaign.

One of the parcels we are working to save at Hobkirk Hill was also the site of the Camden jail, which once held a historically significant occupant — a 14-year-old **Andrew Jackson**, who was held there as a prisoner of war. You likely know the story — one day, a British officer approached

young Jackson and demanded the boy shine his boots. In an act of defiance that was a harbinger of behavior to come, Jackson refused, and the British officer slashed Jackson across the forehead with his sword, literally scarring him for life.

Stories like these, and so many more, are what connect us to our past. The hallowed ground on the battlefields we seek to save forged the spirit of our nation. They echo with the footsteps of heroes, and they hold the stories of ordinary people who did extraordinary things. They are the heart and soul of our history.

The celebration of America's 250 years of independence is sure to be an unforgettable event. Please help us rise to this exciting occasion by preserving the incredible stories of the American Revolution and making them even more meaningful for Americans of all ages. **We need your help to raise \$171,750 and to unlock the match that will multiply your contribution tenfold.**

These and other Revolutionary War battle anniversaries will be here before we know it. The excitement that will be generated by our nation's semiquincentennial represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us to leave our commemorative legacy.

You can impact present and future generations of Americans. Together, we can inspire them. We can help them develop a deeper appreciation of this great nation's history, and we can help them become better citizens.

Please consider making a generous contribution to our revolutionary march to 2026 and beyond.



Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David N. Duncan".

David N. Duncan
President

P.S. I am enclosing three battlefield maps of the tracts I mentioned in this letter, along with some sample drawings of the project at Princeton. I hope you enjoy seeing your contributions in action and making a real difference. As a reminder, we need to raise **\$171,750 during this stage of our campaign**, and that includes a 10x matching donation for every dollar we raise. It is critical we reach the contribution level we need to activate the matching donation.

P.P.S. Please enjoy the personalized address labels I have enclosed as our gift to you. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to saving and preserving our American history.