SUMMER 2026 ★ *Vol. 27 No. 2*

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST

HALLOWED GROUND

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Plus: MANASSAS DATA CENTER THREAT DEFEATED!

NEW YORK + PHILADELPHIA

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HALLOWED GROUND
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1030 15th Street, NW,
Suite 900 East,
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 800-298-7878
info@battlefields.org

PO Box 1751
Merrifield, VA 22116-1751

THE AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST preserves our nation's hallowed battlegrounds and educates the public about what happened there and why it matters today. We permanently protect these battlefields as a lasting and tangible memorial to the brave soldiers who fought in the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Thanks to the contributions of more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide, we have preserved more than 62,000 acres at 160 sites in 25 states. For more information, call 800-298-7878 or visit our website at *www.battlefields.org*. *Hallowed Ground* is the membership magazine of the American Battlefield Trust. It is produced solely for nonprofit educational purposes and every reasonable attempt is made to provide accurate and appropriate attribution for all elements, including those in the public domain. Contemporary images are reproduced only with permission and appropriate attribution; uncredited images are courtesy the American Battlefield Trust. Feature articles reflect the research and opinion of the bylined author. ©2026 American Battlefield Trust.

COVER: A bronze statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare, crowns the Altar of Liberty monument atop Battle Hill, inside Green-Wood Cemetery, in Brooklyn, N.Y.; THIS PAGE: Gravesend Bay under the Verrazzano–Narrows Bridge in Brooklyn where the British navy anchored in 1776. Both images by JAMES SALZANO.

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST
PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE. 250



Independence Hall
Philadelphia, Pa.
DAN KOMODA

WHEN YOU VISIT many historic battlefields, like Saratoga or Shiloh, it is fairly easy to envision historic events unfolding, since the rural landscape is comparatively unchanged. At others, like my favorite, Chancellorsville, modern preservation efforts to strategically safeguard key vistas against encroaching development have paid dividends, allowing this same sort of mental time travel.

But what about the battles that were fought on the outskirts of cities that have since grown and consumed their landmarks? With the greater passage of time and other forces, it's something we as students of history must contend with, at our older battlefields in particular. Perhaps nowhere is the situation more visceral than in New York City, where once rural Long Island fields are now unrecognizably buzzy Brooklyn.



This makes it much harder to tour or study the massive and consequential August 1776 battle that happened there. To truly understand those events on the field requires lots of legwork: background study, maps and a good imagination. Quality guides are priceless in this endeavor, but hard for the casual visitor to come by. Enter: The Liberty Trail NY — the latest installment in our growing stable of state-by-state digital guides to Revolutionary War locales. Between this free app, and the snapshot guide to still-standing glimpses of the Revolution in Manhattan in this issue of *Hallowed Ground*, we hope that the city shines in a new light.

Philadelphia is another Revolutionary city that was on plenty of minds this summer as the nation paused to remember the passage of the Declaration of Independence. For those with only a passing interest in history, that political document exists somewhat independently from the rest of the Revolutionary War — the statesmen and the soldiers not interacting in their understanding of events. The perspective offered by Mark Maloy in this issue of the magazine helps all of us think in context of how the document was informed by and subsequently impacted the war unfolding outside the halls where the Continental Congress debated.

While this issue of *Hallowed Ground* includes a snapshot of what remains of landmarks that would have been familiar to delegates, I'm also thrilled to announce we've recently begun work on an app for The Liberty Trail PA. Made possible by a recently awarded Battlefield Interpretation Grant from the federal Battlefield Protection Program, the offering should debut in 2027 just in time for the Philadelphia Campaign's 250th anniversary. The product of collaboration with several partner organizations, the app will feature the monumental Battle of Brandywine, as well as information about the city itself and its fascinating inhabitants.

In talking to you about cities and what remains within them of historical events, I'd be remiss if I didn't close with a few words about how excited I am by the opportunity to protect land at the Chalmette Battlefield in Louisiana. I remember learning the words to Johnny Horton's "The Battle of New Orleans" as a child and will admit to humming them the first time I toured the park. It's a haunting place, one that feels like an island of the past besieged by modern industry. How remarkable that 40 acres outside what the national park and national cemetery have long protected should retain their historic character! And how fortuitous that our organization was able to muster the public-private partnership necessary to move quickly when the chance to preserve them emerged!

All of this is why the American Battlefield Trust exists. To showcase the historic landscapes protected by past generations, to protect what can still be saved and to use all the means at our disposal — from traditional techniques to 21st-century technology to interpret what has been lost. Your support for us in this work has always been inspirational to me, but no more so than in the past two years as we embarked on *Our Enduring Legacy: The Campaign to Preserve, Educate and Inspire*, the most ambitious fundraising effort in the history of battlefield preservation. It was the profound generosity of members like you that enabled us to exceed even our stretch goal. I can't thank you enough.



DAVID N. DUNCAN
President, American Battlefield Trust

Portrait by BUDDY SECOR

battlefields.org
THE TRUST WEBSITE

EMPIRE STATE'S REVOLUTIONARY ROOTS

Our acclaimed Revolutionary War digital tour guide continues to grow, with New York as the sixth state! The Liberty Trail NY app is now available for download, featuring tours of the Battle of Brooklyn, as well as Upstate Campaigns — with more to come. Explore at www.thelibertytrail.org/ny

AND BE SURE to check out the new season of Historically Correct videos as they crisscross New York on our social media channels.

INDEPENDENCE DAY AND WHAT CAME AFTER

The Declaration of Independence was a watershed moment, but it didn't decide the outcome of the Revolutionary War. Explore the figures and fights central to the story over the years that followed. *www.battlefields.org/Revolutionary-War*

UPCOMING TOURS AND EVENTS

Ready to learn even more about American History? Explore the Trust's unique offerings, like hikes, tours and lectures. Learn about upcoming opportunities at *www.battlefields.org/events*

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Never miss any news from the Trust — find us on your favorite social media platforms and keep up to date using our newly refurbished news page. *www.battlefields.org/news*

INSIDE THE DECLARATION

Explore the fascinating story behind the creation of our nation's most foundational document.
www.battlefields.org/declaration

EXPLORE THIS ISSUE

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Vantage point where colonial sharpshooters waited for the British troops which is now The Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, N.Y., JAMES SALZANO



Manassas National Battlefield Park
Manassas, Va.
JIM FREDLUND

PRINCE WILLIAM DIGITAL GATEWAY THWARTED!

Hallowed ground protected from data centers in Virginia

THE YEARS-LONG FIGHT to prevent the world's largest data center complex from being built on portions of the Manassas Battlefield is over! As millions of Americans prepared to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday with a three-day holiday weekend, data center developer QTS announced it had dropped its appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court, effectively ending the project that had threatened the historic landscape of Prince William County.

"This is a banner day for the historic preservation community. Our decision to fight an enormous and inappropriate data center project threatening one of America's most hallowed historic places has been completely vindicated," said American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan. "I am grateful for the stalwart determination of all who stood with us to ensure these deep-pocketed data center developers did not succeed with their plans to construct dozens of data centers next to a beloved national park and historic treasure."

The American Battlefield Trust, Oak Valley Homeowners Association and local residents, supported by the Coalition to Protect Prince William County, filed lawsuits against Prince William County and the two data center developers, Compass and QTS, challenging the rushed and unlawful Board of Supervisors vote to make way for what would have been the largest data center complex in the world. Its 37 proposed data center buildings, roughly the equivalent of 144 Walmart Supercenters, would have necessitated 14 on-site electrical substations to meet a power demand equivalent to two million homes.

On March 31, the Virginia Court of Appeals unanimously agreed with a lower court that the county's consideration of the data center rezonings was fundamentally flawed, voiding the rezonings. Just two weeks later, on April 14, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors publicly withdrew its defense by a unanimous vote, after squandering nearly $2 million in taxpayer dollars for legal expenses to defend its actions. Compass also declined further appeal, leaving only QTS to push forward with the lawsuit.

While a new rezoning for the project could be pursued, Virginia communities that once embraced data centers have had a change of heart. A recent poll conducted by the *Washington Post* and George Mason University found that only 33 percent of Virginians would support a data center being built in their community, down from 69 percent as recently as 2023.

The Trust is also actively engaged in a lawsuit to overturn rezonings for the Wilderness Crossing megadevelopment in Orange County featuring data centers, industrial and commercial zones and residential areas.★



Chalmette Battlefield – Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Chalmette, La.
GERARD PLAUCHE

MONUMENTAL OPPORTUNITY AT CHALMETTE

40 acres of undeveloped battlefield await preservation

THE AMERICAN Battlefield Trust has launched a $1-million fundraising campaign to purchase 40 acres outside New Orleans, where General Andrew Jackson won a decisive victory during the War of 1812. While portions of the iconic battlefield are preserved within Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Chalmette National Cemetery, other sections and much of the surrounding area have been lost to industrial development. But somehow, these 40 acres across which the British regiments charged — and subsequently retreated — remain open and undeveloped

The War of 1812 was winding down when British troops landed south of New Orleans in December 1814. Their goal was to capture the city, and with it, control of the Mississippi River. On the other side of the Atlantic, diplomats signed the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, but word had not reached the sugarcane field at Chalmette where Jackson hastily assembled a force on January 8, 1815. A combination of U.S. Army regulars, Choctaw Indians, pirates and volunteers of every race, language, religion and social class from across Louisiana and the southeastern United States defeated the mighty British military, cementing Jackson's hero status and setting him on a path to the White House. The unconventional story was popularized in 1959, when Johnny Horton's "The Battle of New Orleans" became a massive Billboard #1 hit, winning the Grammy Award for Best Country & Western Performance.★

BATTLEFIELDS ARE A BILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESS

Innovative study illustrates economic impact of heritage tourism

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, the American Battlefield Trust has sought to quantify the economic impact of battlefields to their surrounding communities through heritage tourism. This powerful perspective empowers preservation organizations, friends groups and site managers alike as we seek to articulate the importance of our work to elected officials and decisionmakers.

Now, thanks to *Battlefields Mean Business* — the most comprehensive and innovative study ever undertaken in this sector — we can definitively say that battlefield tourism in the United States is a billion-dollar industry. Landmark economic and visitor analysis conducted by market research firm RRC Associates on behalf of the American Battlefield Trust found that 20.3 million annual visits to national battlefield sites amounted to $1.5 billion in direct spending and $2.2 billion in total economic output, in turn supporting 15,000 jobs across the country.

"*Battlefields Mean Business* demonstrates what we have long known to be true: America's battlefield sites are more than places of historical memory. They are economic drivers and recreational destinations that collectively support their local communities," said David Duncan, president of the American Battlefield Trust. "Historic preservation fuels a 'power of place' that draws a loyal visitor base to these landscapes again and again."

The study also showed that battlefield visitation generates economic value across a spectrum of site types, from high-volume urban destinations to lower-volume rural sites. In fact, smaller sites actually pack a bigger per-visitor punch, supporting a job per every 1,155 visitors, and provide valuable economic drivers their communities might not otherwise have.

A key innovation of this study was the use of mobile location data to better understand visitation patterns at a subset of battlefield sites. Because many battlefields are open-access or have multiple points of entry, traditional visitation data face limitations in accurately reflecting usage. Local users, who skip the visitor center in favor of a favorite trail, may be undercounted, for example. But integration of this complimentary sample data enables observation of aggregate visitation patterns, including visitor origins, travel distances, trip frequency, dwell time and connections between battlefield sites and surrounding destinations.

Learn more about this groundbreaking study at ***www.battlefields.org/bmb***★



Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine
Baltimore, Md.
DAVE JOHNSON



Hanging Rock Battleground Park
Lancaster County, S.C.
MARK THORNBERRY

HANGING ROCK MARKED AS MOST ENDANGERED

National Trust list spotlights Revolutionary site

SINCE ITS DEBUT in 1988, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places has galvanized support for more than 350 sites nationwide and has become one of the country's most effective tools for raising awareness and mobilizing support for threatened historic treasures. This year, the list intentionally tells a cohesive story framed around America's 250th anniversary, with each historic place illustrating a different connection to the founding-era principle that All People Are Created Equal.

Among the 2026 listings is the Revolutionary War's Hanging Rock Battlefield in Heath Springs, S.C. The designation shines a national spotlight on ongoing efforts to protect and preserve Hanging Rock while highlighting the importance of community-led preservation initiatives, as well as the ongoing need for robust funding mechanisms to support land acquisition, interpretation, and long-term stewardship.

"This recognition underscores both the historic significance of Hanging Rock and the urgent need to protect it for future generations," said American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan. "Being included on this nationally recognized list will help elevate awareness and build momentum for preserving this important Revolutionary War site."

Hanging Rock is among the most recent recipients of matching funds from the federal American Battlefield Protection Program's land acquisition grant program. This hugely successful initiative incentivizes public-private partnerships for historic land preservation, leading to the permanent protection of 40,000 acres of hallowed ground. The program's future success is predicated on current reauthorization efforts.

On August 6, 1780, several hundred Patriot troops under General Thomas Sumter attacked British and Loyalist troops encamped near Hanging Rock along the Great Wagon Road. The battle, fought largely by militia forces on both sides, saw Patriot troops capture two of the three British camps before retreating. Although Sumter could not hold the ground, the Patriots inflicted heavy losses, boosted morale throughout the region, and strengthened support for the Revolutionary cause in South Carolina.★



ABT President David Duncan congratulating former Trust Chairman John Nau.

JOHN NAU HONORED FOR DECADES OF COMMITMENT TO PRESERVATION

as Vicksburg's Texas monument rededicated

ON MAY 21, 2026, the Friends of Vicksburg National Military Park and Campaign, in partnership with the American Battlefield Trust, officially dedicated a monument to John L. Nau III, a visionary preservationist and staunch supporter of our cause. This marker, installed on the Vicksburg Battlefield near the iconic Texas Memorial — which was itself rededicated that day — highlights Nau's decades of involvement in the field of land preservation and advocacy.

Nau, a longtime Texas resident and Civil War advocate, has been active in the battlefield preservation movement for more than 25 years. He served as chairman of the Board for the Trust's predecessor organization from 2009 to 2011 and held multiple other leadership roles, resulting in his status as chairman *emeritus* and Trustee for Life. He has generously given both time and monetary support that has enabled the creation of new battlefield parks, boundary expansions of preexisting parks and restoration efforts.

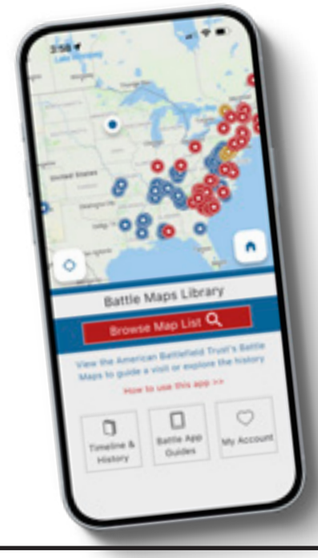
The monument itself is carved from sunset red granite, the same stone that has been used since the 19th century for symbolic and significant Texas buildings and statues. In 1961, it was used to create the Texas State Memorial at Vicksburg; other battlefield monuments have followed in a tradition that continues to this day.★



Former ABT President Jim Lighthizer with John Nau.
Photos by MIKE TALPLACIDO

INTRODUCING: NEW AND IMPROVED BATTLE MAPS

Put yourself in the action using the Trust's updated map software



JUST IN TIME for America's 250th birthday, the American Battlefield Trust launched the state-of-the-art *Battle Maps: America's Wars* app, now available for free from the App Store and Google Play. The app features more than 150 maps from 100 different engagements, creating a game-changing way to experience the power of place on a battlefield.

Drawing on the Trust's extensive collection of maps, renowned across the history sphere for their accuracy, accessibility and consistency, *Battle Maps* allows users to examine pivotal moments from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War in remarkable detail through troop movements and terrain depictions. Created by veteran cartographer Steve Stanley specifically to illustrate and enhance the Trust's land preservation work, the maps have been part of the Trust's visual identity for decades.

Developed in partnership with Neotreks Corp., the new app uses GPS to places users on Trust maps depicting America's formative military engagements. Beyond maps, the app links to other resources produced by the Trust, providing additional historical context, battle summaries, downloadable materials and other tools.

Battle Maps adds to the Trust's growing arsenal of mobile applications that utilize the latest technology to enrich history education. From in-depth tours to innovative augmented reality, the Trust's app collection is revolutionizing the way people learn and experience history.★

VISITORS EXPERIENCE A WARM WELCOME TO NORTH CAROLINA

History Explorer *provides interactive insight at N.C. welcome centers*

NORTH CAROLINA HISTORY EXPLORER invites travelers to experience sites associated with state's turbulent first century.

In celebration of North Carolina's rich history and America's 250th birthday, an interactive heritage tourism kiosk, the *North Carolina History Explorer*, has debuted in each of the state's eight active welcome centers.

The first-of-its-kind kiosk was developed by the American Battlefield Trust, in collaboration with Interactive Knowledge of Charlotte, N.C.; the North Carolina Department of Commerce; and America 250 NC, a program of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The intent is to transport users to the historic sites, events and stories that shaped the state's early history through maps, photography and other multimedia content meant to cultivate curiosity and entice travelers to seek out the places for themselves.

The *North Carolina History Explorer* is organized around three major eras of North Carolina's early history: "Our Revolutionary Journey" (1771–1783), "From Statehood to Secession" (1784–1861) and "A State Divided" (1861–1865). Within each era, the *North Carolina History Explorer* presents sites, themes and stories rooted in specific places, encouraging visitors to think deeply about the state's history. It will grow to integrate additional content and connect with several site networks, including North Carolina State Historic Sites and Parks and National Park Service units and affiliates, plus the Trust's *Road to Freedom*, which interprets African American history, and the Medal of Honor Valor Trail. Explore for yourself at *www.nchistoryexplorer.org*★



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
Rep. Bill Ward, Rep. Blair Eddins, Sen. David W. Craven, Rep. Jerry "Alan" Branson, Sen. Tom McInnis, Sen. Ted Alexander, Sen. Benton G. Sawrey, Sen. Amy Galey, Sen. Michael A. Lazzara

TRUST HITS 500,000 SUBSCRIBERS ON YOUTUBE

Milestone comes 17 years after the Trust's first video



WHEN THE FIRST VIDEO was uploaded to the Trust's YouTube channel on March 20, 2009, it was only available in 480p and the Trust was only dedicated to preserving Civil War battlefields. What a long way we've come!

Today, the Trust's YouTube channel is among the most powerful tools for education and inspiration in our arsenal. From in-depth battlefield tours led by top historians to detailed animated maps, the channel has amassed more than one hundred million views on videos covering America's formative conflicts. From the fast-paced commentary of our Chief Historian Garry Adelman and Director of Education Kris White to the eye-popping graphics on virtual reality titles created in collaboration with the team at Wide Awake Films, the name "American Battlefield Trust" has become a watchword for quality, accuracy and engagement with audiences.

The subscriber milestone arrived during a special series of behind-the-scenes video tours of Philadelphia sites to mark 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Subscribe to the Trust's YouTube channel today to join this growing community of history lovers.★

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSES MAJOR PRESERVATION BILL

ABPP reauthorization measure receives overwhelming, bipartisan support

IN A MAJOR WIN for the protection of America's hallowed ground, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the *American Battlefields Protection Program Amendments Act* (HR 7618) in early June in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 404-13. The legislation reauthorizes the nation's most effective historic battlefield preservation grant program in time for America's Semiquincentennial and the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War.

The bill reauthorizes three American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) grant programs through 2036, designating $20 million annually to battlefield preservation efforts, including historic property acquisition, landscape restoration and site interpretation. It also directs the National Park Service (NPS) and the Department of the Interior to prepare strategic studies toward possible expansion of program eligibility to French and Indian War and Mexican-American War sites.

HR 7618 was introduced by U.S. Reps. Jen Kiggans (R-VA) and Seth Magaziner (D-RI), co-chairs of the Congressional Battlefields Caucus. The Senate companion bill, S.3524, was introduced in December 2025 by U.S. Sens. Dave McCormick (R-PA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA).


Fort Donelson National Battlefield
Dover, Tenn.
MIKE TALPLACIDO

For a quarter-century, the ABPP's Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program (BLAG) has been the principal mechanism for protecting America's irreplaceable historic landscapes — with nearly 40,000 acres saved and counting. These matching grants are more important than ever as land prices skyrocket throughout the nation, driven by an explosion of data centers and related commercial development that is driving per-acre acquisition costs to record highs. Nearly $200 million in federal grants has been competitively awarded through the program, matched many times over by private donations and grants from states and localities.★



SHOWN: Phil Gaines (former State Park Director, South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism), Eric Emerson (Director, South Carolina Department of Archives and History), Cary Briggs (Executive Director, Historic Camden Foundation), David Duncan (President, American Battlefield Trust), General Will Grimsley (Chairman, SC250), Rick Wise (Executive Director/CEO, SC Battleground Trust), Vincent Sheehen (Mayor of Camden), Catherine Noyes (American Battlefield Trust).

HOBKIRK HILL BATTLEFIELD PARK OFFICIALLY OPEN

Ribbon cutting welcomes visitors to South Carolina's newest battlefield park

THE MAY 18 OPENING of South Carolina's Hobkirk Hill Battlefield Park represented the culmination of more than five years of collaborative preservation and interpretation work led by the American Battlefield Trust, SC250 and the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust. Other partners, including the American Battlefield Protection Program, South Carolina Conservation Bank, Historic Camden Foundation, Palmetto Conservation Foundation, the City of Camden, Kershaw County, Katawba Valley Land Trust and Lorna Hainesworth reflect a collaborative effort among state and national partners to preserve this legacy while expanding opportunities for education, heritage tourism and public engagement.

The new park covers more than 5 acres of battlefield. It boasts accessible parking, walking trails and a unique interpretive exhibit with a 3D topographic map developed with support from SC250 that creates an engaging experience for visitors to better understand the battle and its significance.

Fought on April 25, 1781, the Battle of Hobkirk Hill was a pivotal moment in the Southern Campaign. While British forces claimed victory on the field, their subsequent evacuation of Camden just weeks later marked a turning point in the fight for American independence.

Today, the site lies within a residential area, making its preservation and interpretation both uniquely challenging and especially meaningful. The creation of a public park ensures that this historic landscape will be accessible for education, reflection and heritage tourism for generations to come.★



SAFEGUARDING A WITNESS TO WAR

Arborists enlisted for Eutaw Springs tree

THIS SUMMER, the American Battlefield Trust and the South Carolina Battleground Trust asked history lovers to help us safeguard a remarkable witness to America's founding: a centuries-old live oak standing watch near the entrance to the Eutaw Springs Battlefield.

Estimated to be 288 years old by expert arborists, the tree was already well-established when the British camped around it and battle unfolded in September 1781. It has weathered some of the most powerful hurricanes ever to strike our shores, as well as droughts, floods and even a lightning strike roughly 50 years ago that split the tree beneath a major limb junction — scars that still tell the story of its resilience today.

Remarkably, the greatest current threat to this oak's survival isn't a storm or lightning strike, but a past, well-intentioned repair. Decades ago, steel cables and chains were installed to support the tree's massive, splitting limbs, likely in response to lightning damage. Over the years, as the tree has grown, that hardware has slowly cut deep into its bark, restricting growth and creating serious structural risk. The very support systems meant to protect the tree are now slowly endangering it.

But the arborists agree that timely intervention can give this witness tree many more years of life. The recommended care plan includes removing the old, embedded cables in favor of a modern support system, clearing encroaching vines, removing deadwood from the canopy and installing a lightning protection system.★

NEW WAYSIDES INTERPRET BRANDY STATION

Visitors explore new interpretations at Culpeper Battlefields State Park

IN TIME for the Battle of Brandy Station's 163rd anniversary on June 9, two new historical wayside markers were installed on the battlefield, adding fresh interpretation for visitors looking to explore the movements, terrain and stories that defined the first engagement of the Gettysburg Campaign.



"This is another way we aim to bring the battlefield and the stories stored in its soil to life, giving visitors a clearer sense of what happened here all those years ago," said Chuck Laudner of Friends of Culpeper Battlefields. "Our long-standing partnership with Civil War Trails makes our work of enhancing the visitor experience a constant priority."

One of the new markers is along Beverly's Ford Road, providing geographic context within the broader battlefield landscape in addition to visitor orientation. The second new marker focuses on Col. Benjamin Franklin Davis, a colorful Alabama-born Union officer killed by a bullet through his forehead at point-blank range during an early phase of the fighting.

The Trust has been involved in preservation at Brandy Station for nearly 30 years. In 2024, after a long campaign and work with partners on local and state levels, Culpeper Battlefields State Park was formally dedicated as the 43rd unit in Virginia's State Park System. Keep up with the latest news at *www.culpeperbattlefields.org*★

OUR ENDURING LEGACY: THE CAMPAIGN TO PRESERVE, EDUCATE AND INSPIRE

$165 million raised for battlefield preservation

JUST 15 MONTHS after entering the public phase of a capital campaign timed to commemorate the nation's 250th birthday, the American Battlefield Trust has declared victory in the most ambitious fundraising effort in the history of the battlefield preservation movement. *Our Enduring Legacy: The Campaign to Preserve, Educate and Inspire* was initially announced as a $125-million goal, but the generosity of Trust donors prompted an extension up to $145 million. The total amount raised by July 4, 2026, reached an incredible $165 million, surpassing even the expanded goal.

The initiative could not have come at a better time — and not just because of the milestone anniversary. Historic battlefield landscapes are disappearing at an alarming rate due to relentless development pressure and a generational shift in land-use patterns. Demand for huge swaths of raw land for massive solar farms, data centers and distribution infrastructure is driving land prices up exponentially, threatening to price preservation groups out of key markets.

"I can think of no better, more permanent or tangible legacy of our nation's Semiquincentennial than ensuring the protection of places where we can reflect upon the service and sacrifice of the Patriot ancestors who secured our independence," said Trust President David Duncan. "When our grandchildren gather to mark the nation's 300th birthday, our work will ensure they can stand in the footsteps of history to do so."

A centerpiece of the campaign was the creation of a first-of-its-kind Battlefield Readiness Fund, a targeted ready reserve of capital that gives the organization the power to act quickly and compete effectively against developers to save endangered historic land, especially at 40 top-priority battlefields. It will also foster confidence to proactively cultivate transactions that include ambitious restoration and rehabilitation projects, with the Trust confident in the ability to complete work that returns properties to more closely resemble their wartime appearance without sacrificing future acquisition efforts.

Meanwhile, the Trust also sought to create interpretive opportunities that transform fields and forests into outdoor classrooms. Important but underappreciated sites, like New Jersey's Revolutionary War Princeton Battlefield, received a customized portfolio of interpretive resources to ensure a deep, immersive experience for visitors. From mobile apps to animated maps, interactive signage and more, the package is tailored to the unique needs of each particular battlefield, making visits both inspirational and informative.★



Princeton Battlefield State Park
Princeton, N.J.
MEREDITH BARNES

"REPOSE OF THE FALLEN"

A new memorial marks final resting place of 44 Revolutionary War military personnel discovered in New York.

by McKENNA JOHNSON
PHOTOGRAPHY *by* FATIMA ESQUIVEL BENJAMIN



Scenes from the ceremony, on the shores of Lake George.

IT WAS LATE MORNING on Friday, May 22, the start of Memorial Day weekend, when visitors and residents gathered atop a hill in New York's Lake George Battlefield Park. Below them, four small, pinewood caskets were placed gently under the shade of a tree. Behind the caskets, more than 80 people mingled, most dressed as colonial-era Revolutionary War reenactors, and others solemnly in black with green ribbons pinned to their chests.

All were awaiting cannon fire from nearby Fort William Henry to signal the start of a procession to the new Repose of the Fallen memorial. The caskets — three draped in the Grand Union Flag (the first recognized flag of the United States), the last in a bright teal banner of the First Pennsylvania Battalion — held the remains of the final four individuals to be ceremonially reinterred in its individual niches.

The recent journey of those individuals honored by the memorial — 44 in all, thought to be Continental Army soldiers or associated personnel — began in February 2019, when unmarked graves were discovered during a construction project on Courtland Street in Lake George, N.Y. But in another sense, their story can truly be traced back to 1775.

The Quebec Campaign was the newly formed Continental Army's attempt to capture the French-speaking city to entice those colonies ceded by France during the Seven Years' War to join the American Revolution. It was a disaster: After a perilous journey through the wilderness, the Continentals suffered a resounding defeat at the city gates on December 31, 1775, including the death of General Richard Montgomery. The chaos of the retreat back to Fort Ticonderoga was compounded by a smallpox outbreak.

On July 7, 1776, just days after the Declaration of Independence was formally adopted about 300 miles to the south, a military hospital was established at Fort George, on the southern end of Lake George, in an attempt to control the disease's spread. Boats of sick soldiers were sent south to the new hospital. According to a late August journal entry by Dr. Lewis Beebe, who had seen the misery of the soldiers in the throes of the disease in Quebec, "Visited the hospital found the number of sick to be about 700, viewed the burying place counted upwards of 300 graves … the appearance of which was melancholy indeed, to see such desolation made in our army."

It took nearly 250 years for some of those graves to be accounted for. Seven years ago, the accidental discovery of skeletal remains halted the Courtland Street construction project. Additional intact graves were located on the site, and several more sets of remains were identified within earth that had recently been excavated. What followed was an epic collaboration that took two years and hundreds of volunteers sifting through the soil to recover and catalog the remains.

Lisa Anderson, a bioarchaeologist at the New York State Museum, ultimately identified at least 44 distinct individuals from the disturbed resting place now referred to as the Courtland Street Burying Ground. The remains stayed with Anderson and her team in Albany as they learned all they could from the bones and prepared them to be reinterred.

Although the specific identities of those now reinterred remain unknown, the archaeological evidence — including the location of the burial ground, the age and condition of the remains and the presence of uniform buttons from the First Pennsylvania Battalion (a unit that fought in the Quebec Campaign) — indicates that these individuals were likely soldiers and military personnel associated with the 1776 Fort George military hospital. At least one of the individuals was a woman, another a child.

Once it was known the remains were mostly soldiers, planning for a memorial to honor them was swift. A committee was formed to coordinate its design to ensure it would blend in with the surroundings of Lake George Battlefield State Park, which includes the archaeological remains of Fort George and the hospital, as well as the site of a 1755 battle during the French and Indian War. The Repose of the Fallen memorial was designed to offer dignity to those whose identities may be forever unknown but whose sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Its burial niches, interpretive panels and peaceful gathering space create a permanent place for visitors to honor and remember those lost during the founding of our country — and in the 250 years since — making the Memorial Day Weekend dedication most fitting.





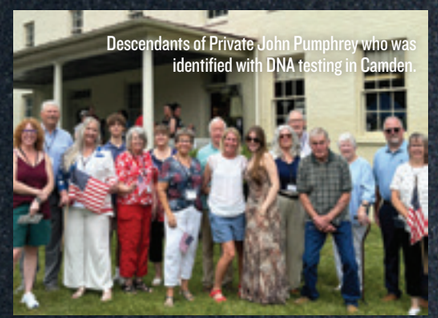


Days before the ceremonial reinterment, a two-hour procession led by New York State Police, NY-PENN Military Vehicle Collectors and the Patriot Guard Riders brought the remains back to Lake George. Most were reinterred immediately, but four were kept under vigil at a nearby church for the dedication itself.

The ceremony took place under brilliant blue skies, with Lake George sparkling in the sun. Many of the attendees, including those who carried the remains across the battlefield park on the final leg of their journey, wore green ribbons to identify that they were volunteers involved in the recovery at Courtland Street.

"It's kind of overwhelming … it's been a long time coming. We've been working pretty much nonstop on this, but knew that this day would come," said archaeologist Anderson, her own green ribbon pinned to her lapel. "It's been an honor."★

ANOTHER MAJOR MILESTONE came this summer regarding previously unmarked burials dating to the Revolution. As previously reported in *Hallowed Ground*, during the winter of 2024, archaeological work at Camden, S.C., revolved around 14 burials from that 1780 engagement, including a Scottish Highlander fighting for the British, a Loyalist likely of Native American descent and multiple members of the Maryland Line of the Continental Army. In June, a forensic analysis firm announced that one of the fallen had been positively identified as Private John Pumphrey of the Seventh Maryland Regiment, aged between 16 and 18 at the time of his death. Further testing may yield additional identifications on other sets of remains.



Descendants of Private John Pumphrey who was identified with DNA testing in Camden.



ROB SHENK

DISCOVER HISTORIC PHILADELPHIA

The nation's first capital that birthed the Declaration

NATURAL GROWTH and evolution mean that cityscapes change dramatically over the course of two and a half centuries. But modern Philadelphia retains some buildings and landmarks that our Founders would recognize.

INDEPENDENCE HALL

Host to the Second Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, Independence Hall saw the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. It later served as the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chamber and witnessed a speech from President Lincoln in 1861.



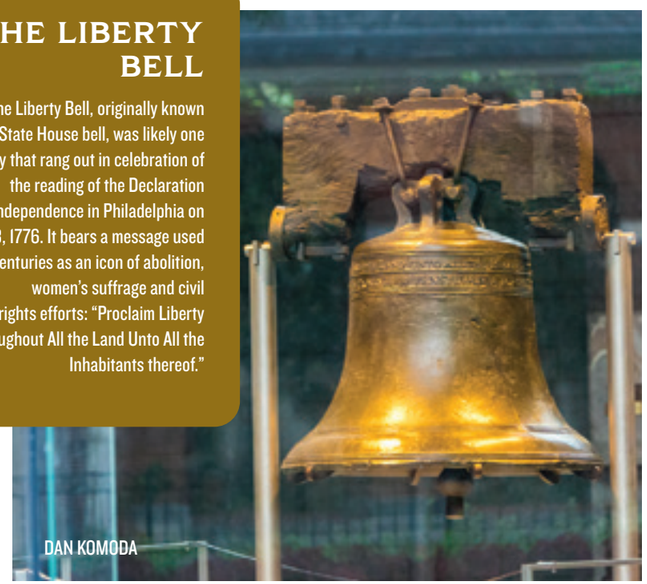


DECLARATION HOUSE

Thomas Jefferson rented rooms in a brick house on this site for the summer of 1776, and here he drafted the Declaration of Independence at a desk in the second-floor parlor. Though the original building was torn down in 1883, the National Park Service reconstructed the home to its 1776 appearance in 1975.

THE LIBERTY BELL

The Liberty Bell, originally known as the State House bell, was likely one of many that rang out in celebration of the reading of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia on July 8, 1776. It bears a message used for centuries as an icon of abolition, women's suffrage and civil rights efforts: "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants thereof."



DAN KOMODA



THADDEUS KOSCIUSZKO HOUSE SITE

Polish general, military engineer and revolutionary Thaddeus Kosciuszko lived in this house in the late 18th century after serving with the Continental Army during the Revolution. Kosciuszko is credited with fortifying Fort West Point and Saratoga, as well as proving his military intelligence against Lord Cornwallis in the Carolinas.

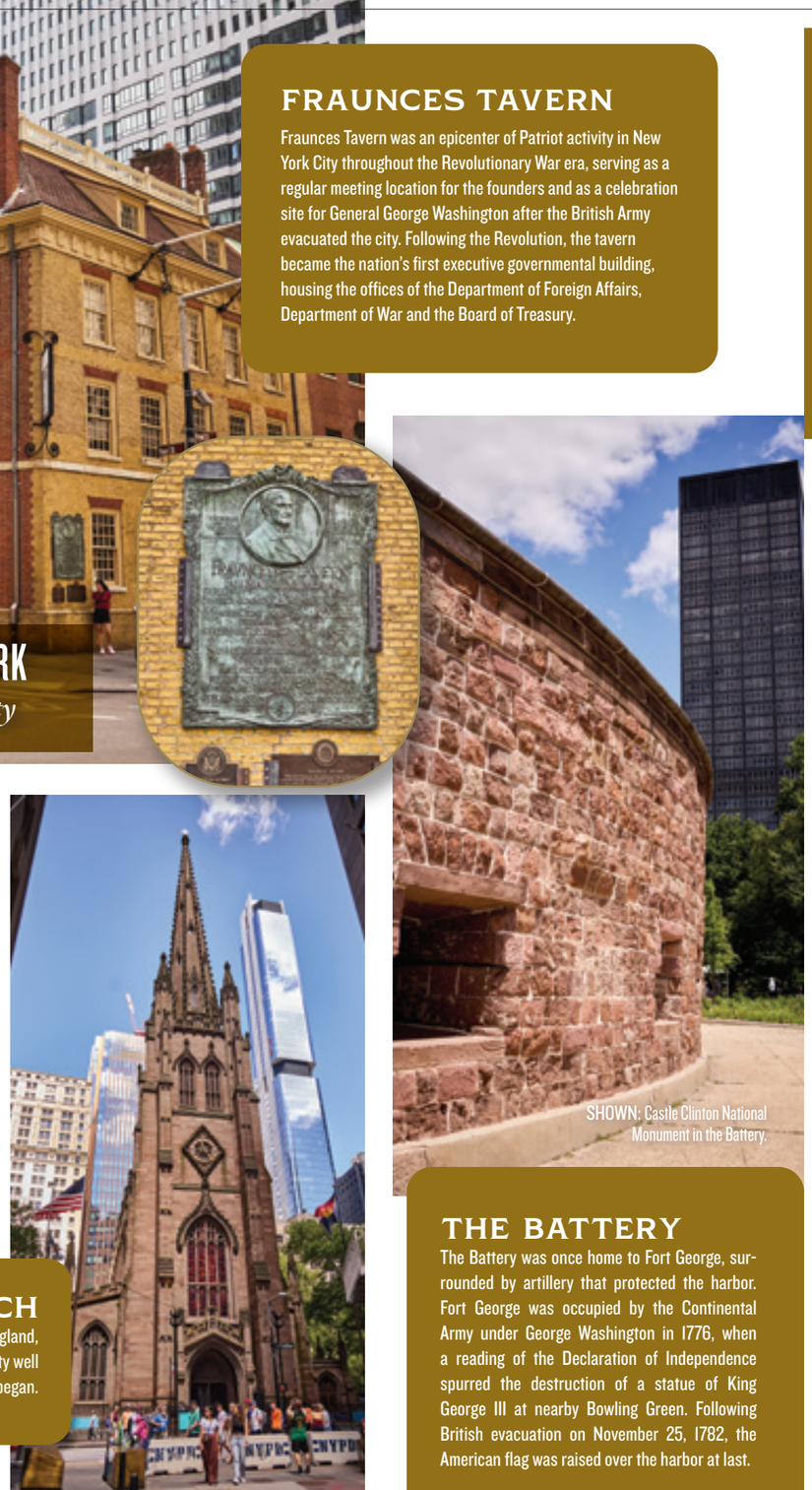


DISCOVER HISTORIC NEW YORK

Remnants of the revolutionary city

ALTHOUGH FIRES in 1776 and 1835 destroyed significant parts of lower Manhattan, the oldest part of the city, key features remain for the eagle-eyed to spot. Look for a specific tour of such places debuting soon in The Liberty Trail NY app!

PHOTOS *by* JAMES SALZANO



TRINITY CHURCH

Trinity Church was founded in 1696 by the Church of England, chartered by King William III, and served New York City well before rumblings of revolution began.

FRAUNCES TAVERN

Fraunces Tavern was an epicenter of Patriot activity in New York City throughout the Revolutionary War era, serving as a regular meeting location for the founders and as a celebration site for General George Washington after the British Army evacuated the city. Following the Revolution, the tavern became the nation's first executive governmental building, housing the offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of War and the Board of Treasury.

SHOWN: Castle Clinton National Monument in the Battery.

THE BATTERY

The Battery was once home to Fort George, surrounded by artillery that protected the harbor. Fort George was occupied by the Continental Army under George Washington in 1776, when a reading of the Declaration of Independence spurred the destruction of a statue of King George III at nearby Bowling Green. Following British evacuation on November 25, 1782, the American flag was raised over the harbor at last.

THE BARRACKS

Twice as large as Trinity Church, the Barracks were constructed in 1757 and slept 800 men who otherwise may have been quartered in New Yorkers' homes. The site served as an obvious location for Patriot citizens to protest British rule — in May 1766, the New York chapter of the Sons of Liberty erected a liberty pole in front of the Barracks until the British troops chopped it down that August. The Barracks were used for their original purpose throughout the Revolution by whichever group occupied the city.



The fragmentary remains of early New Yorkers were found by archaeologists during construction in the vicinity of City Hall Park and reinterred at this site by the City in 2010. Making the cemetery burial grounds once existed here associated with the Almshouse, a poorhouse built in 1736 where City Hall now stands; the Barracks, four structures in the north of the park built by the British in 1757 to house soldiers; the New York prison east of City Hall built in 1758; and the Bridewell, a prison to the west of City Hall built in 1775. The adjacent African Burial Ground was in use by 1712.

During subsequent excavation in the vicinity of City Hall Park and Tweed Courthouse as part of the 2010 City Hall Rehabilitation Project, additional fragmentary remains of early New Yorkers were unearthed and reinterred at this site by the City in 2013.

ALMSHOUSE SITE

The First Almshouse stood on this site from 1735 until 1796, housing residents before, during and after the British occupation of New York City. The busy city faced overcrowding as populations ballooned during the war and homelessness worsened due to refugees and the Quartering Acts.



BOWLING GREEN

Until July 9, 1776, Bowling Green, the city's first park, held a 4,000-pound statue of King George III cast out of lead. Following the reading of the Declaration of Independence to Washington's troops, a crowd of Patriots swarmed the park, toppling the statue and sawing finials depicting the royal crown off the iron fence. The statue's lead, with the exception of a few stolen pieces, was ultimately used to make 42,000 rounds of ammunition for the war effort.



Signed in Ink.



The Declaration of Independence by John Trumbull. U.S. CAPITOL.



SEALED WITH BLOOD.

How victory on the battlefield made American independence possible

The Declaration of Independence was a masterpiece of political philosophy. But without action, the promises on its pages would have meant nothing.

by MARK MALOY

ABOVE: *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775*, by John Trumbull. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

Fifty-Six

MEN SIGNED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. They knew they were signing a document considered treasonous by the King of Great Britain, yet they were determined to uphold it with their lives, fortunes and sacred honor. But the promise of American independence in that document was sealed with the blood of tens of thousands of individuals who died in camps, in prisons and on battlefields across the country during the Revolutionary War. Without this sacrifice, this Declaration would merely be elegant prose written during a failed rebellion, rather than the document that has given inspiration to millions of people yearning for freedom around the world. As the United States celebrates 250 years since its passage, it is important we remember the debt paid by those who fought and died to see it become reality.

The Fourth of July is often remembered as a grand day on which patriotic Americans declared their independence and a nation was born. This view is reinforced by images such as John Trumbull's famous painting, done more than 40 years after the fact. While the scene conveys the event as grand, solemn and orderly, the actual story is much more fraught and fragile. The Declaration was created in a harried time of war and uncertainty.

By July 1776, America had been at war with Great Britain for more than a year. There was hope among many that the war would end with the colonists' grievances addressed, while remaining a part of the British Empire. Most colonists viewed themselves as English, retaining the rights and privileges of that title. Indeed, they had profited and thrived as colonies within the empire. But the longer the war dragged on, the more the idea of independence continued to grow.

Imbued with the success of George Washington's forces in driving the British from Boston and moved by the arguments for independence (such as Thomas Paine's widely read pamphlet *Common Sense*), many of the delegates to the Continental Congress felt the time was right to declare independence in the summer of 1776. With renegade colonial legislatures acting in the place of their British-authorized colonial governments, it was becoming clear, as Thomas Jefferson noted, that the question was less if they should declare independence and create something new and more if the colonies "should declare a fact which already exists."

Practical considerations had to be considered as well. Keeping the Continental Army in the field required provisions, arms, equipment and money. The rebellious colonies needed support from other countries, especially France and Spain, who already were no friends of the British. But to engage in diplomacy and alliances, they needed to declare themselves a separate nation on the world stage.

King George III and the British Parliament had no intention of letting the colonies go. The King proclaimed that his forces were to "suppress such rebellion, and to bring the traitors to justice...."

To accomplish this, the British dispatched its largest-ever expeditionary force to the shores of America. More than 400 ships and 32,000 soldiers and sailors began arriving outside of New York City in the summer of 1776. These forces included more than 8,000 Hessian auxiliary troops, among the most professional and feared in the world. At the same time, an expedition of some 50 ships and 3,000 men were arriving off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina. In contrast, George Washington had approximately 23,000 militia and Continental troops to defend New York. In South Carolina, only about 2,000 men and a half-completed palmetto log fort stood in the way of the British forces.


King George III

It was against this menacing backdrop that the delegates in Philadelphia debated independence. Despite the clear threat from British forces, individual colonies began to push for a full break from Britain. On April 12, North Carolina directed its representatives to vote for independence if a motion were made. Rhode Island renounced King George III on May 4. On May 15, Virginia directed its representatives in Philadelphia to put a vote on the floor for independence. Finally, on June 7, Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee put forward the motion to the Congress "that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states…" They decided to hold the vote on July 1.

While the Congress debated the Lee Resolution over the next several weeks, a committee was established to write a Declaration of Independence in the event the motion passed. Among that committee were some of the most famous names in American history: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin.

While Adams and Franklin provided important edits, Jefferson wrote the first draft of the document. He began by laying out why it had become necessary that the colonies separate from Great Britain. Borrowing from hundreds of years of Enlightenment thought, the second sentence reads: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." These words have been used by revolutionaries around the world for past 250 years. Though this sentence is often taken out of the context of the time in which it was written, there is no doubt it has become one the most famous sentences in all American history.

But even more to the point is the next sentence: "[T]o secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government...." This is the central argument of the Declaration, a powerful statement on the right to self-determination.

What follows is a long list of "abuses and usurpations" claimed to be perpetrated by King George III. The King had long been viewed as the protector of the colonists from an out-of-control Parliament, but the Declaration of Independence levels its anger specifically at the King. He is blamed for abolishing elected colonial governments, restricting commerce, levying war on the colonies, enticing slave rebellions and Indian raids and ignoring their cries for justice. He is labeled a tyrant "unfit to be the ruler of a free people." The document closes with a declaration that the colonies are now "free and independent states."

Despite this, by July 1, some delegates were still not on board with independence. The Congress wanted a unanimous voice at this important moment, so the vote was postponed until July 2 to convince some colonies to vote in the affirmative or simply abstain. This included convincing Caesar Rodney to ride more than 80 miles through the night to arrive in time to swing Delaware's vote in favor of independence. The New York delegation, still with no direction from the colonial government, agreed to abstain from the vote. The vote on the Lee Resolution was held on July 2, and it passed unanimously with 12 "yes" votes and one abstention. The colonies were now officially independent. They were engaged now in a war not just for the preservation of their rights, but also for


Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth
by Emanuel Leutze
DOE LIBRARY, UC-BERKELEY

> "THE FATE *of* UNBORN MILLIONS WILL NOW DEPEND, UNDER GOD, ON THE COURAGE *and* CONDUCT OF THIS ARMY."
>
> — Gen. George Washington

King George III by Johan Joseph Zoffany, ROYAL COLLECTIONS TRUST

their political independence. Two days later, on July 4, the Congress voted and approved the text of the Declaration of Independence.

News of the signed Declaration sped throughout the Eastern Seaboard like lightning. The document was published on handbills and in newspapers, read in taverns and coffeeshops and declared to assemblies in towns and cities. George Washington had the document read to his army. After hearing the words, a large crowd of soldiers and civilians became so frenzied in patriotic ardor that they tore down the statue of King George III on the Bowling Green.

Later that July, the Congress learned that the small American force at Charleston, South Carolina, had defeated the British on June 28. With this good news, all eyes were now on Washington as his army attempted to defend New York City. To that end, he exhorted his troops that "[t]he fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army."

At the end of August, the British in New York finally attacked. In Brooklyn, Washington's army was flanked and nearly destroyed. Almost surrounded and crushed, Washington evacuated his forces to Manhattan Island. A couple weeks later, the British met with some Congressmen on Staten Island. The British would end the war if the colonials simply renounced independence. The Congressmen refused.



Pulling down the statue of King George III, New York City
by Joannes A. Oertel
NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

From September to November, the British Army thrashed Washington's troops at Kips Bay, Harlem Heights, White Plains, Fort Washington and Fort Lee. Washington and his dwindling army retreated across the New Jersey countryside, with British troops nipping at their heels. Thinking the British target was Philadelphia, the Continental Congress was forced to flee the city in December. Leaving Washington with dictator-like powers to prosecute the failing war, it was an inauspicious beginning for these "free and independent states."

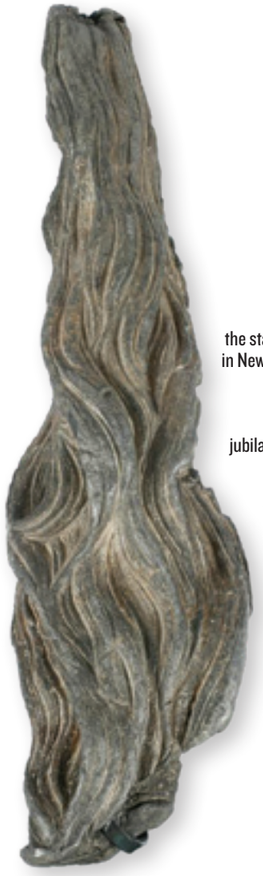


The British Landing at Kips Bay, New York Island, 15 September 1776
by Robert Cleveley
ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH

Washington's troops made it to the safety of the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River in December. His army was decimated, and the enlistments of the few who remained were about to expire at the end of the year. He believed that the "game is pretty near up." Thomas Paine wrote that "these are the times that try men's souls." With the ink barely dry on the Declaration of Independence, it appeared that the war was all but over.

In this moment of despair, Washington made one of the boldest military moves in the war. He crossed the Delaware River that Christmas night and attacked a Hessian garrison in Trenton the next day. A winter military campaign that only lasted 10 days turned the tide of the war and drove the British back to New York. The cause was saved, but the war would drag on for another seven years.

Without success on the battlefield, the Declaration of Independence meant nothing. It is important we remember those soldiers who gave up everything so that "unborn millions" would be able to benefit from the blessings of liberty.



The horse's tail from the statue of King George III in New York's Bowling Green Park was hacked off when the monument was pulled down by jubilant Patriots. Smuggled away by Loyalists in Connecticut, the tail is now housed at the New York Historical Society.

WITHOUT SUCCESS, THE DECLARATION *of* INDEPENDENCE MEANT NOTHING.

This summer, hundreds of thousands of visitors will travel to Independence Hall to be in the room where the Declaration of Independence was passed and signed 250 years ago. It is a moving experience to think of the brilliant minds and selfless individuals who came together that summer and declared independence. But a far more moving experience is to walk one block behind Independence Hall to Washington Square. This park was a potter's field before the Revolutionary War. During the war, it was used as a mass burial location of hundreds of British and American soldiers. These nameless men were casualties of battle or disease. They were also husbands, sons, fathers and brothers.

The burial ground was later turned into a park, but thousands of dead still lie beneath the ground. In the 1950s, the body of an unknown soldier was disinterred and placed in a sarcophagus in the park's center. This is the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Solider. On a wall behind the grave is the sobering statement: "Freedom is a light for which many men have died in darkness." On the sarcophagus is the inscription: "Beneath this stone rests a soldier of Washington's army who died to give you liberty." A statue of George Washington watches of the grave and an eternal flame burns next to it.

Here in this quiet park, in the shadow of Independence Hall, is the true price of the Declaration. It is emblematic of the thousands who died so that we could be free and independent. Many of these honored dead still lie in unmarked graves on battlefields across the country. The battlefields of the Revolution are often unmarked cemeteries.

In April 1777, John Adams walked through this tragic burial ground and witnessed the burial of some of these men. A few weeks later in a letter to his wife, he wrote a note to us, the "posterity," the "unborn millions" many of the founders often thought about. His words continue to reverberate 250 years later:

"Posterity! You will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom! I hope you will make a good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven, that I ever took half the pains to preserve it."★



The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776
by John Trumbull
U.S. CAPITOL

Mark Maloy is a historian currently working for the National Park Service in Virginia. He is the author of* Victory or Death: The Battles of Trenton and Princeton, December 25, 1776 — January 3, 1777 *and an active contributor to the Emerging Revolutionary War Series. He holds an undergraduate degree in history from the College of William and Mary and a graduate degree in history from George Mason University.

The Immortal 400

MORDACAI GIST AND HIS MARYLAND MACARONIS

Along the highest point of Brooklyn, the brave Marylanders held the British troops just long enough for Washington and the Continental Army to escape to fight another day. Their courage extended the Patriot fight in the American Revolution.

by JAMES PERCOCCO

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* JAMES SALZANO



View of Manhattan from Battle Hill, the highest natural point of Brooklyn, N.Y. (216 feet above sea level), and site of the Battle of Brooklyn. Now part of the Green-Wood Cemetery, this is where the Immortal 400 covered Washington's retreat.



At the CORNER

OF MEETING AND BROAD STREETS in Charleston, South Carolina, a weather-beaten bronze plaque declares "Here in the churchyard of St. Michael's lie buried two signers of the U.S. Constitution." It outlines the achievements of Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and John Rutledge and concludes "Their years of public service, 1762–1825, saw both State and nation well on the road to greatness."

But behind those mottled, red brick walls lies another carven stone recounting the deeds of a Patriot hero. "To the Memory of General Mordecai Gist," it reads. "While in command of the First Maryland Battalion he so valiantly covered the retreat of American forces at the Battle of Long Island, August 1776, that his troops became known as the Bayonets of the Revolution."

Mordecai Gist was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1743 to Thomas and Susan Gist. His grandfather, Richard Gist, had made a fortune in commercial trade in the bustling seaport, and he had even helped lay out the city. His uncle, Christopher Gist, worked alongside a young George Washington surveying the American frontier.

At the outset of the Revolution, Gist parlayed his family's wealth and prominence to help raise, recruit and equip the Baltimore Independent Company. One thing that set this force apart from other militia companies and units raised in the colonies was that Gist's men were supplied with bayonets — and well-trained in how to use them.

By the time they reached New York in the summer of 1776, they had been designated as the 5th Maryland Infantry. While Gist had been elected as the captain of his unit (a practice not uncommon in colonial militia units), Congress promoted him to the rank of major general in the Continental Army. Because they were well-dressed and well-equipped, the unit earned the sobriquet, "the Dandy 5th," and when they joined the bulk of General George Washington's command in New York, they were dubbed "macaronis," a pejorative term of the period with the same connotation.

After the British evacuated Boston in March 1776, Washington presciently deduced that the next major British attack would be made against New York City. He ordered his nascent army out of its quarters around Boston and moved to defend New York. The commander was right: In July 1776, a massive British assault force appeared on the horizon outside New York Harbor. One Continental post said from his position on Staten Island that "It looked like London all afloat." The British. encountering little resistance, disembarked on Staten Island and readied to launch their attack on New York City by way of Long Island and Brooklyn to the east of Manhattan.

Upon reaching New York, the 5th Maryland had been assigned to William Smallwood's Maryland Battalion, which was under the authority of General William Lord Stirling. Overall command of American forces should have fallen on the shoulders of Washington's most trusted general, Nathanael Greene. But Greene had fallen ill and was incapacitated, so Washington was forced to turn command of his army on Long Island over to General John Sullivan, who lacked Greene's tactical skills.

Washington's plan was to form two lines of defense: a primary one on Brooklyn Heights, and another several hundred yards ahead on Gowanus Heights, commanded by Sullivan and Stirling.

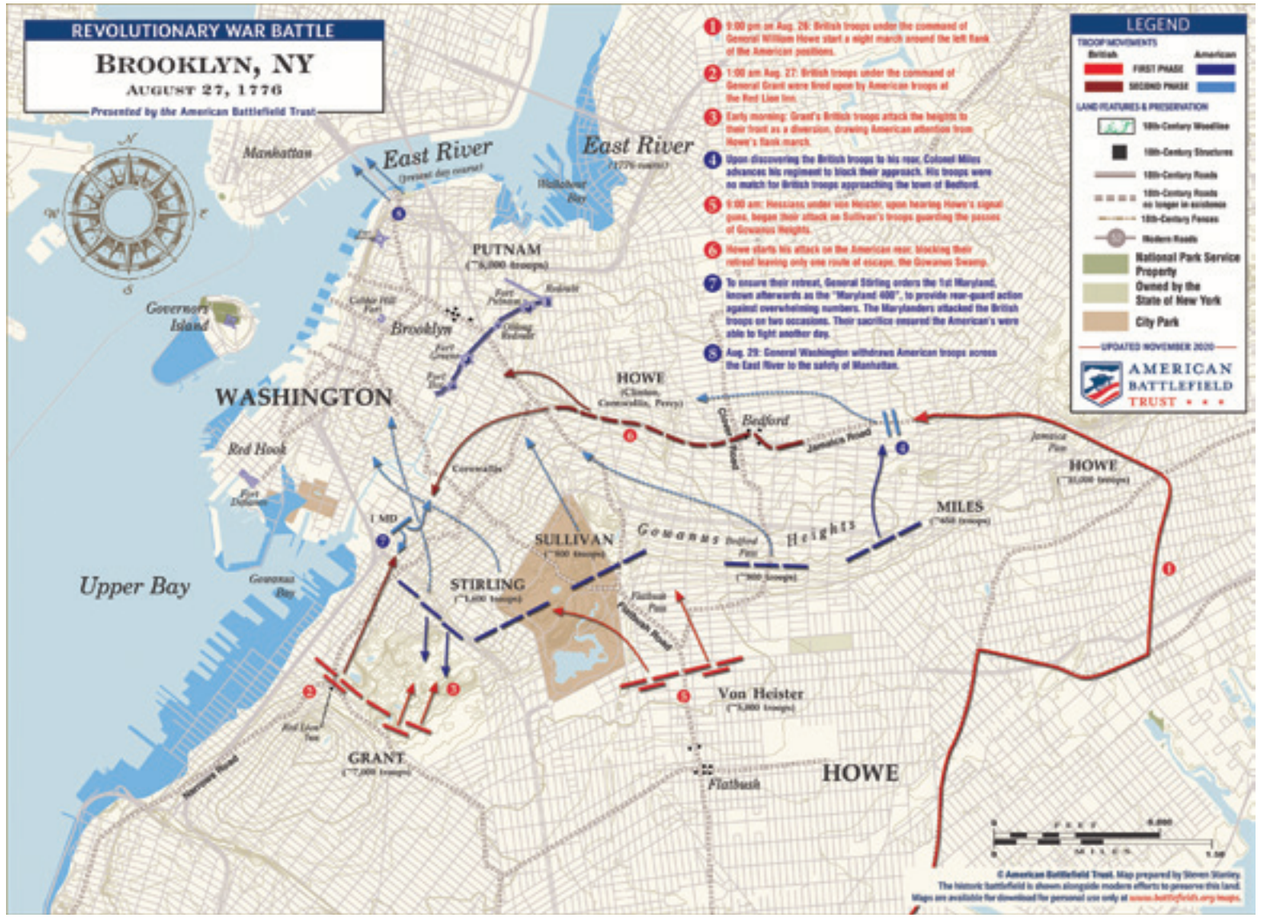
The defensive position on Brooklyn Heights was led by General Israel Putnam, the aged and grizzled hero of the French and Indian War and the Battle of Bunker Hill. Washington and Putnam hoped that Stirling and Sullivan's line on Gowanus Heights would blunt the British advance and that Putnam's men would hold their line.

As was typical of Washington's performance early in the war, he failed to reconnoiter his positions and left his flanks unprotected. This would be his army's undoing at Brooklyn; Loyalists in the area tipped off British commander General Sir Henry Clinton that one of the passes that led to Gowanus and Brooklyn Heights was lightly defended by only five members of the local American militia.

Knowing Washington's disposition toward this weakness of planning, Clinton conceived a plan to throw a feint at the American forces on Gowanus while the bulk of his army slipped through the weakly held American line at Jamaica Pass on the American left. On the evening of August 26, 1776, Clinton ordered his men to move out. By 5:00 a.m. the next morning, they had achieved tactical surprise on the Americans. In just a few short, stealthy hours, the British force of 20,000 men, including 5,000 Hessians, had almost encircled the forces on Gowanus Heights, including the Marylanders.

The opening assault on the American position held by Stirling and Sullivan on Gowanus was led by General James Grant. Sullivan and Stirling's men numbered little more than 2,000 troops. The bulk of the American army, nearly 6,000 men, defended Brooklyn Heights.

Vastly outnumbered, Stirling tried to inspire his men by reminding them of their opponent General James Grant's pompous boast before Parliament's House of Commons that he could, with 5,000 men, march




Battle of Long Island, 1776 (also known as The Battle of Brooklyn).
Painting by Alonzo Chappel
Shown is the Vechte-Cortelyou House.

Gist portrait by Charles Wilson Peale, FINE ARTS MUSEUM OF SAN FRANCISCO

across the American continent unimpeded. Addressing his men in the moments before the impending attack, Stirling exhorted, "Grant may have 5,000 men now — we are not so many — but I think we are enough to prevent his advancing further on his march over the continent than that mill pond." With Smallwood detached to court-martial duty, command of all Marylanders fell to Gist.

The feint worked to perfection, as the American commanders erroneously believed that Grant's movements were the primary attack. Intense fighting on the American left devolved into grim hand-to-hand combat, in which both the bayonet was employed and muskets were swung like clubs. Men on both sides fell in heaps as the Americans put up a stiff resistance, but the British numbers were overwhelming, and by 10:00 a.m., the American left collapsed.

An hour earlier, Washington had arrived on the battlefield to assume overall command, still believing that the attack on their left was the main British assault. Stirling's forces still held the right and center of the American position, but all of that changed at 11:00 a.m., when the British launched their main assault against Stirling, a classic anvil and hammer maneuver. The American line crumbled as the British slipped in to attack Stirling's rear.

Horrified, Gist's men recognized that they, too, had been flanked. Later, Gist recalled, "We soon heard the fire on our left, and in a short time discovered part of our enemy in our rear. Surrounded, and [with] no probability of reinforcements, his Lordship ordered me to retreat with the remaining part of our men, and force our way through our camp."

The Hessians attacked the American center on Gowanus Heights with pure German military precision. When Clinton's signal gun belched, the Germans moved out to dislodge the American position. One eyewitness recounted, "[W]ith colors flying, to the music of drums and hautboys as if they were marching across Friedrich's Platz at Cassel… They did not fire a shot, but pressed steadily forward until they could employ their bayonets."

Once breaching the American lines, the efficient German butchery began as scores of Sullivan's men were slaughtered. Stragglers in the woods were hunted down, until they, too, were skewered.

Sullivan ordered a retreat to the American lines on Brooklyn Heights, and while most of his forces made it to the safety of the American position, Sullivan himself was captured.

The only avenue of escape was across a small millpond and Gowanus Creek. Vechte-Cortelyou House (referred to as the Old Stone House), led by Charles Earl Cornwallis. After the second attack, the Marylanders retreated; their numbers significantly depleted. As they withdrew, some Stirling ordered his men, with the exception of the Marylanders, to pull back. Gist, with no more than 270 men, was asked to fight a rearguard action to buy time for the rest of the American army. In an act of bravery, Stirling remained behind to fight with Gist's men.

Rather than deploy and wait for the enemy to attack, Stirling and Gist ordered their men twice to counterattack the British, whose numbers ran close to 2,000 men. The British formed a line of battle near the



LEFT: The Maryland Monument in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, at the foot of Lookout Hill, honors the "Maryland 400." Created by renowned architect Stanford White.

RIGHT: The Battlefield Pass rock, also in Prospect Park, marking the site of a skirmish between Americans and Hessians during the battle. The Hessians killed a number of Americans in a devastating bayonet charge.

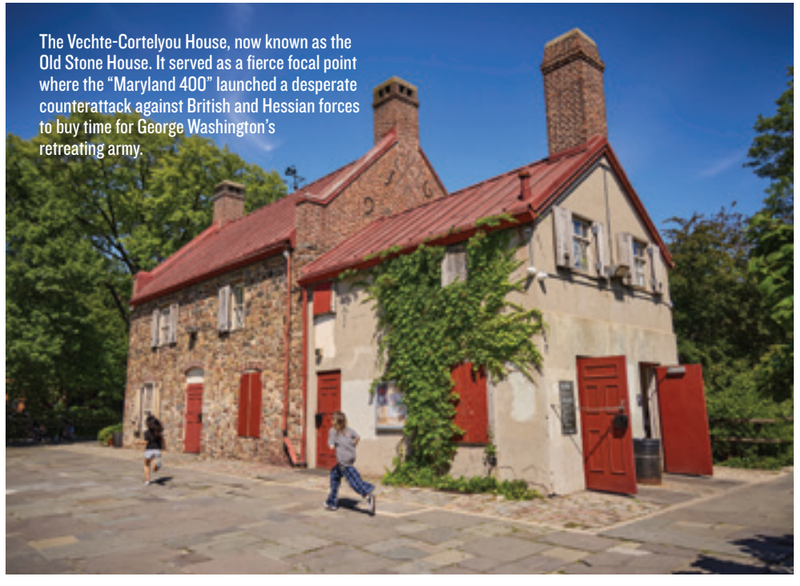




The now Gowanus Canal was just a small creek and swampland during the battle in 1776. It's to here the Patriots retreated, and many drowned or were captured or killed by the British troops. Several locations around the canal are said to be mass burial sites of the Marylanders.

IN SPITE OF THE CARNAGE

and high percentage of casualties, the Marylanders bought precious time for the rest of the American army.



The Vechte-Cortelyou House, now known as the Old Stone House. It served as a fierce focal point where the "Maryland 400" launched a desperate counterattack against British and Hessian forces to buy time for George Washington's retreating army.

of them drowned in the 80-yard-wide creek, and others got stuck in the mud only to be felled by British fire. Rather than be captured by the British, Stirling surrendered to the Hessians.

Two hundred fifty-six Marylanders were killed in the combined assaults. Only 12 managed to safely reach the American position; the rest were captured.

Of the furious melee, Captain Nathaniel Ramsay of Gist's men recalled, "Our men fought with more than Roman valor." As the British and their Hessian allies moved in as a pincer to cut them off, Gist recounted, "Surrounded on all sides by at least 20,000 men, we were drove with precipitation and confusion."

The result was a bloodbath as the Hessians and British Highlanders methodically gave no quarter or mercy. One British officer reported, "The Hessians and our brave Highlanders gave no quarters; and it was a fine fight sight to see with what alacrity they dispatched the rebels with their bayonets, after we had surrounded them so they could not resist."

Another British soldier claimed that "the Americans fought bravely, and (to do them justice) could not be broken till they were greatly outnumbered and taken in flank, front, and rear." For some Redcoats, the carnage was inexcusable, with one writing after the fight, "We were greatly shocked at the massacre made by the Hessians and Highlanders after victory was decided."

In part, the British used cunning guile to destroy the American force. Gist reminisced, "We soon fell in with a party of the enemy, who clubbed their firelocks, and waved their hats to us, as if they meant to surrender as prisoners; but on our advancing within sixty yards, they presented their pieces and fired, which we returned with so much warmth that they soon quitted their post and retired to a large body that was lying in ambuscade."

Fortunately for Gist and his men, the British overshot the Americans and killed men running in flight. One of Gist's men reported, "They entirely overshot us and killed some men away behind in our rear.



Wallabout Bay in Brooklyn, where British prison ships were moored during the American Revolution from 1776 to 1783. Thousands of American prisoners of war were kept in these ships in horrific conditions. Around 11,500 American prisoners of war were said to have died in captivity by 1783, when all the remaining prisoners were freed. The majority died due to disease; some were buried on the eroding shore in shallow graves, or often thrown overboard. This area is now the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

I had the satisfaction of dropping one of them the first fire I made." As the vortex of battle continued unabated, Gist remained on the field with his men. At one point, it seemed to one of Gist's men as if they were the only thing standing to keep the flames of the Revolution burning so the army could escape, "Major Gist [and his men] kept the ground, while the rest of the brigade crossed a creek… The major and his party were drove, and I expected never to see them again." Somehow Gist miraculously survived.

Washington watched the carnage unfold from a nearby knoll and famously mourned, "Good God, what brave fellows I must lose today."

Sixteen-year-old Connecticut soldier Joseph Plumb Martin recorded in his wartime chronicle that the survivors emerged "out of the water and mud, to us, looking like water rats."

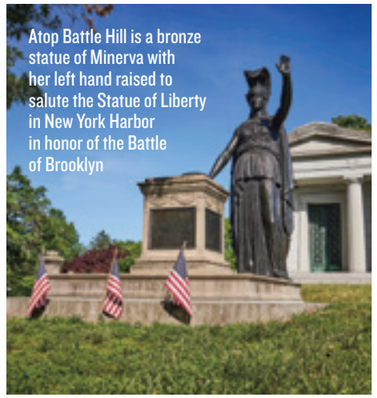
But Cornwallis offered another, more complimentary analogy: "General Stirling fought like a wolf."

Despite the carnage and high percentage of casualties, the Marylanders bought precious time for the rest of the American army. To history they became known as the "Immortal 400." According to 19th-century historian Thomas Field, Gist and his men bought "an hour, more precious to American liberty than any other in history."

For reasons that remain inexplicable today, the British never pressed their advantage. The Continental Army, badly mauled and bloodied, survived. And on the night of August 28, in requisitioned civilian boats helmed by another remarkable regiment, John Glover's Marblehead Men, they slipped across the Hudson Riber.

FOR GIST AND HIS MARYLANDERS

it had been one hell of a baptism by fire. But their work was not done...



Atop Battle Hill is a bronze statue of Minerva with her left hand raised to salute the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor in honor of the Battle of Brooklyn

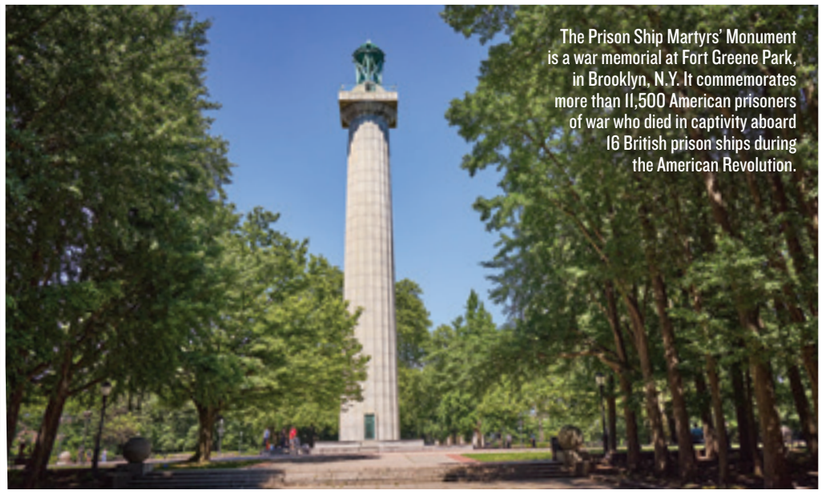
For Gist and his Marylanders, it had been one hell of a baptism by fire. But their work was not done, and they distinguished themselves on many of the war's most famous battlefields — Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth.

Appointed by Congress to the rank of brigadier general in January 1779, Gist was given command of the 2nd Maryland Brigade, which was soon ordered to the Southern Campaigns. At the Battle of Camden, he once again narrowly escaped death in a grim American defeat. By 1781, the Marylanders had fought through the Carolinas, shadowing Cornwallis and his army all the way to Yorktown. That October, Gist stood among the ranks of the American officers to accept the British surrender.

Rather than returning home to Maryland, Mordecai Gist remained in the Carolinas after the war, settling on a plantation outside Charleston, where he raised two sons whom he named Independent and States. He joined the Society of the Cincinnati, serving as first vice president of the Maryland chapter.★

James A. Percoco is a nationally recognized history educator and author of three books, including* A Passion for the Past: Creative Teaching of US History. *He pioneered the use of public history opportunities throughout his curriculum. He is a past Gilder-Lehrman Teacher of the Year for Virginia and has been inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame.





The Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument is a war memorial at Fort Greene Park, in Brooklyn, N.Y. It commemorates more than 11,500 American prisoners of war who died in captivity aboard 16 British prison ships during the American Revolution.

HELPING THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS EXPLORE HISTORY

Trust's grant program enabled field trips from 34 states last school year

MORE THAN 10,000 STUDENTS were able to visit historical sites near and far through the American Battlefield Trust's History Field Trip Grant Program during the 2025–26 school year, joining the nearly 75,000 young learners able to experience the power of place with the support of these competitively awarded microgrants since the program's inception in 2014

With a total of 157 trips taken by schools in 34 states, 50 of these included stops at sites related to the Revolutionary War, marking a significant interest in this area in the lead-up to the nation's historic 250th anniversary. Boston was a frequent destination, with nearly 1,000 students from Texas, California, France and elsewhere visiting. School groups toured the Boston Freedom Trail, bringing classroom learning about the American Revolution into real-life experiences at sites such as the Paul Revere House, the USS *Constitution* and the Boston Massacre site.

A group of 60 students from Genesee Community Charter School's Flour City Campus in Rochester, New York, also visited sites in Boston. "Learning about the battles of the American Revolution, through maps, letters and paintings, helps students realize that real people from all walks of life were willing to pick up arms in defense of their ideals. That people fought and fell on the very ground we walk in places like Bunker Hill, the Lexington Green, Ft. Stanwix, and the cobblestone streets of Boston.



Beeman Memorial Elementary School in Boston, Mass.

We study these places out of wonder and respect of what was sacrificed," said teacher Christopher Dolgos. "Students bring that profound sense of place back with them and tell these stories to parents, siblings and other students in our school and use this information in presentations, where they celebrate their learning."

Additionally, 1,851 students across 32 trips visited Gettysburg National Military Park, underlining the importance of heritage tourism as demonstrated in the Trust's recent economic impact study. School groups from farther away, such as a group from Winnebago, Nebraska, coupled their Gettysburg trip with stops in Washington, D.C. Nearly 60 students from Schoharie, New York, visited Gettysburg before exploring Fords Theatre, the White House, the Lincoln Memorial and the National Museum of American History, an itinerary which brings to life the story of President Lincoln.

The power of place magnifies the learning potential for students who benefit from this program. A group of 30 students from Cambria Heights High School in Patton, Pennsylvania, also visited Gettysburg National Military Park this spring through the program. "I had a student who attended a similar trip I did two years ago stop me this summer and tell me how that trip was the highlight of his high school career," said teacher Michele Schirf. "We have so many amazing kids at our little school who just need to see the world a little and get out and learn by seeing, touching and hearing — they learn so much more when they are immersed in the lesson."

The Trust's History Field Trip Grant Program allows K-12 educators to apply for funding to offset the cost of day trips to battlefields, museums and other historic sites related to the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, in alignment with the Trust's mission. Grants range from $250 to $3,000, to be put toward transportation costs, admission fees and reasonable fees for presenters and guides. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis but must be received one month before a trip. Full details and application materials are available at ***www.battlefields.org/fieldtrips*** ★



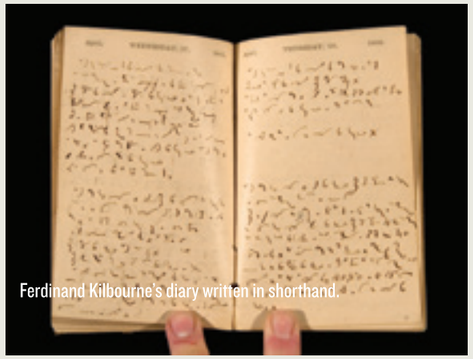
Arkport Central School at Fort Ticonderoga, N.Y.

"THIS WAR IS TURNING"

Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum continues a legacy of service from the Civil War

WHEN SECRETARY of the Interior Doug Burgum travelled to Gettysburg National Military Park for Memorial Day, it was about more than paying tribute to all of the brave soldiers who sacrificed on behalf of their nation. Laying a wreath at the monument of the 42nd Pennsylvania was an act of personal remembrance and honor.

Ferdinand Kilbourne, Burgum's great-grandfather, was a private in the famous "Bucktails" regiment and fought at Gettysburg, among other legendary engagements. Thanks to the survival of two wartime diaries, Kilbourne's service is uniquely well documented — with one critical catch: They are recorded entirely in Pittman shorthand.



Ferdinand Kilbourne's diary written in shorthand.

Born in 1836 in New Hampshire and raised in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, Kilbourne enlisted as a bugler in Company I. The Bucktails were famed as marksmen, woodsmen and hunters who pinned deer tails to their caps as proof of deadly precision.



Classic Bucktail uniform

Kilbourne's path through the war was harrowing. In the summer of 1862, he was wounded at Harrisonburg, Va., and captured at Cross Keys, spending time as a prisoner of war. While the wartime diary covering the Battle of Gettysburg does not survive, his 1864 account of the Overland Campaign is powerful and poignant — and places him directly in areas that have been touched by the Trust's preservation work.

Of the intense fighting at the Wilderness on May 6, 1864, he wrote, in that curious shorthand: "Thick smoke again — could not see more than 10 yards. Shells burst overhead — trees shattered — men fell beside me," and "Fire broke out in the woods — cries of the wounded dreadful."

And of the aftermath, he noted the decision that meant the beginning of the end of the Civil War. "Rumor: we are to march south — not return. If true, this war is turning. Grant will not back away. We hope for rest, but the general says the campaign presses on."

Kilbourne and his regiment were part of the horrific assault on the Bloody Angle at Spotsylvania on May 12. "Charged enemy works near the salient — storm of musketry and shell. Fighting hand-to-hand over breastworks — mud slick with blood.... We held the position by dusk. No man who saw it will forget this day."

Kilbourne was among those haunted. "I keep thinking of May 12. I wake to bayonet screams," he wrote on the 16th. "None of us sleep much now. The woods still stink of blood" the next day.

By the time Kilbourne was moving from North Anna to Cold Harbor, he painted a bleak picture: "Burned what we couldn't carry.... We are shadows now. Thin and tired. But still we march."

At Cold Harbor, like Spotsylvania, the Bucktails were part of a massive and bloody attack — some 7,000 Union casualties in just an hour. "Charged at 4:30. Met with slaughter.... Men screamed for help, pinned by fire. Could do nothing. Sunset came. Bodies lay thick. We gained nothing. No more words. Just silence."

The aftermath of the attack was brutal (June 5: "We prayed for rain. Or mercy. Neither came."), but the Army of the Potomac pressed on. When they reached the outer defenses of Petersburg, the unit was disbanded, its three years of service concluded.



Sec. Borgum laying a wreath at the 42nd Pa. monument.

Ferdinand Kilbourne was mustered out of service and returned to Pennsylvania before moving to Kansas in the 1870s. He built a life as a furniture maker and, later, a farmer. His son, Burton, became a physician and served on the State Board of Health before moving to North Dakota. His youngest child and only daughter, Katherine, was an outstanding educator for whom a building is named on the campus of North Dakota State University. Her son, Douglas, served as the 33rd governor of North Dakota and is now the 55th Secretary of the Interior of the United States.★

AMERICAN VETERANS CENTER

Joining the Trust to uphold the Warrior Legacy across centuries

THE AMERICAN VETERANS CENTER (AVC) has been preserving the legacy of American veterans from the last 85 years for more than two decades. Ensuring the stories and experiences of those who served are remembered, its mission is to educate future generations about our shared modern history through oral history preservation, educational programs and civic events.

The AVC's major endeavors are: Guarding Their Legacy through education and preservation and Honoring Their Sacrifice by utilizing multimedia programs and events. Its signature annual events — the American Veterans Conference and American Valor: A Salute to Our Heroes Gala — bring together generations of veterans and leaders to share their stories and honor those who served in recent conflicts. The upcoming conference features naval aviators, some of whom flew as stunt pilots in *Top Gun: Maverick*; the women CIA agents behind the scenes in the search for Bin Laden; and Medal of Honor recipients. *American Valor*, the AVC's Emmy-winning television spectacular, salutes the legends and heroes of the last 75 years of American military history, becoming a Veterans Day television tradition.

Beyond these large-scale events, the AVC is dedicated to preserving military history as told by those who experienced it. Over its history, the AVC has recorded the stories of thousands of American veterans from World War II to the present day. All interviews are provided to the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project for use by future researchers. In addition to videos and documentary programs, the AVC has created a comprehensive World War II high school curriculum, with input from veterans.

"It is a privilege to preserve the legacy of America's servicemen and women, and an honor to share their experiences with such wide audiences, and with generations to come," said Tim Holbert, President of American Veterans Center. "There's something to learn from each and every story our veterans tell, and our mission is to ensure those lessons are not forgotten."

Over the past several years, the Trust has worked with the AVC on the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C. Now our nation's largest Memorial Day event, drawing more than 300,000 spectators and featuring a national television broadcast, the parade was inaugurated by the AVC in 2005 along Constitution Avenue. The first parade followed a period of more than 60 years in which the nation's capital was without a parade on Memorial Day. The parade now serves as a moving timeline of American military history, with the 250th anniversary of the country bringing even more attention to the full evolution of the United States armed forces.

Whereas the AVC focuses on recent military history, the Trust's mission is to preserve and interpret Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War battlefields. The National Memorial Day Parade offered an incredible opportunity to bring these passions together — the Trust works with reenactor and living history groups to demonstrate the evolution of the U.S. Army in the parade, from the American Revolution to the Civil War. This year, with the added excitement of the Semiquincentennial and involvement of Freedom 250 in the parade's planning and execution, groups commemorated Revolutionary soldiers, USCT marchers and mounted Civil War artillery.



Civil War reenactors in the Freedom 250 parade.

"The National Memorial Day Parade is an opportunity to bring together the best parts of our country," added Holbert. "Sharing the story of American service and sacrifice across our first 250 years is a powerful experience, and we are grateful to be the steward of it."

The American Veterans Center mirrors the mission of the Trust — preserving American history and those who created it — across centuries and conflicts, ensuring the stories and lessons of the past are guarded for future generations to learn from.

www.americanveteranscenter.org ★

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Please note: This list is current as of June 24, 2026 and reflects the Liberty Battalion (300+ gifts) and the Patriot Brigade (200-299 gifts).
For a full listing of Steadfast members, please visit *www.battlefields.org/give/steadfast*

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FORT MOULTRIE



Photo by ROB SHENK

FORT MOULTRIE, situated on Sullivan's Island near the entrance of Charleston Harbor, has a history that covers more than 220 years of seacoast defense, from the first decisive victory in the American Revolution, to protecting the coast from U-boats in World War II. The National Park Service has preserved and restored Fort Moultrie, as well as Fort Sumter in the same national historical park, to its numerous appearances throughout the fort's use.

The first fort, then called Fort Sullivan and made of palmetto logs and sand, was incomplete when the British Navy attacked on June 28, 1776. After the nine-hour battle, American Colonel William Moultrie and his Patriot forces were triumphant in defending Charleston Harbor from one of the largest navies in the world. Subsequently, the South Carolina General Assembly renamed Fort Moultrie in honor of the commander. In May 1780, the British finally captured Charlestown, including Fort Moultrie. Following the war, the fort was left neglected, with little of it remaining in 1791.

A second Fort Moultrie was constructed in 1793 as a safeguard from the ongoing war between France and Great Britain, but it also suffered from neglect and was destroyed by a hurricane in 1804. The third Fort Moultrie, constructed of brick, was completed in 1809.

Between 1809 and 1860 Fort Moultrie changed little, but outside its walls Fort Sumter was constructed in the harbor. In December of 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union, and the Federal garrison abandoned Fort Moultrie for the stronger Fort Sumter. Confederate troops shelled Fort Sumter into submission only months later, plunging the nation into civil war. When the Confederate army evacuated the city in February 1865, Fort Sumter was little more than a pile of rubble while Fort Moultrie lay hidden under the band of sand that protected its walls from Federal shells.

Once the war ended, the fort was repaired and modernized, eventually seeing construction of metal and concrete batteries as the threat of world conflict escalated. Throughout World Wars I and II, the fort continued to be outfitted with naval defense artillery, but the changing scope of long-range weapons led to its closure, and in 1960, the fort was decommissioned to become part of the National Park Service.

To celebrate 250 years since Fort Moultrie first defended the American coastline, South Carolina 250, South Carolina 250 Charleston and the park have installed a Palmetto Log Fort Exhibit to help tell the Revolutionary story. The palmetto tree, used to construct the original fort due to its abundance in the region, was added to the South Carolina state flag in 1861. It would also give the state its nickname — the Palmetto State. Now, with the palmetto log fort on proud display, Fort Moultrie tells the complete story of its dramatic history.★

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