

## *Preface*

More than forty years ago, Mark Mayo Boatner, III, then a forty-four-year-old lieutenant colonel in the United States Army, saw the need for an encyclopedia that focused on the military aspects of the American Revolution. He completed and published the fruits of his labor in 1966; it was an impressive achievement for one man, who distilled nearly two centuries of scholarship on the war into a single wide-ranging yet manageable volume of almost 1900 entries. The book immediately earned a respected place in the reference literature on the war, and came to be so well regarded that historians of the period referred to it simply as “Boatner.” Amid the many noteworthy books on the complex conflict that gave birth to the American nation, “Boatner” was the premier place to go for concise, accurate information on how the war was waged and won. Historians, of course, continued to investigate and write about the war, often with “Boatner” serving as an important reference and guide. Their efforts were spurred in part by the bicentennial events of 1975–1983, but they were also responding to evolving priorities and changing interests in the discipline of history. As more information on war making in colonial and revolutionary America was uncovered, and new questions were asked of familiar material, historians began to put together a more complete picture of what happened during the war, and understood more about why it happened, than had previously been the case. Because the literature on the American Revolution has burgeoned in the years since the original edition of “Boatner” was published, it is time to incorporate the information and new perspectives of that scholarship into an updated work that satisfies the needs and interests of the twenty-first-century reader.

The present volumes are a comprehensive revision of the original edition of Mark Boatner’s 1966 encyclopedia. All 1700 entries in the 2006 edition have been reviewed, and all but a small percentage have been comprehensively revised and augmented. Recent scholarship has been incorporated into the revised entries, as well as used to produce entirely new entries on subjects that had not been explored or contemplated forty years ago. These new subjects include “African Americans in the Revolution,” “Historiography,” “Iconography,” “Religion and the American Revolution,” “Continental Army, Social History” and “Violence,” among others. A new cluster of entries on mobilization in the colonies is also an original contribution to this edition. All entries are combined in a single alphabetical sequence, the plan Boatner employed in his original encyclopedia. This second edition is further enhanced by the addition of a thematic outline of entries, and a comprehensive updated bibliography. The purpose of the present volumes remains what it was in

1966: to provide a handy source for concise, accurate information on the military aspects of the American Revolution.

In addition to incorporating recent scholarship in revised and new entries, the present volumes differ from the original “Boatner” in another significant way. Where the 1966 encyclopedia was the product of the perspective and hard work of one person, these volumes are works of collective scholarship. Many historians have contributed their expertise to the present volumes, and their passion for and knowledge of their subjects is evident throughout, even as they write within the necessarily limited space of an encyclopedia entry. Every new entry ends with the name of its author, and every revised entry of substantial length ends with the name of the person who reviewed and revised it. (Shorter entries, typically definitions of military terms, mentions of physical locations, and alternate names for things and events known better by another name, as well as all cross references, do not carry an attribution, although all of them have been reviewed and revised where necessary.) The revisions undertaken to update the longer entries range widely in scope and substance. Many of these entries, including the biographical sketches on the most important leaders and all of the accounts of major battles and campaigns, have been rewritten in light of modern scholarship, and thus bear little resemblance to the original entry in the 1965 volume. All entries, of course, reflect the perspective of their authors or revisers; every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the factual information contained in each entry, but the interpretations and opinions are those of its author or reviser. Scholarship in history works that way: from the voices of many investigators, each with its own emphasis and point of view, come, eventually, a synthesis that allows us all to understand a bit more clearly what it was like to have lived and fought in a war that began more than 230 years ago.

It should be noted that the two volumes of the encyclopedia are part of a trilogy with the revised edition of Boatner’s *Landmarks of the American Revolution: A Guide to Locating and Knowing What Happened at the Sites of Independence*, originally published in 1973. The *Landmarks* book has been thoroughly updated in a process similar to that whereby the encyclopedia has been revised, and provides a comprehensive companion for the reader interested in the current state and accessibility of many of the sites mentioned in the encyclopedia.

As in all works of collective scholarship, the person whose name is on the masthead owes an incalculable debt to the many authors who have contributed their time and expertise to making this final product worthy of its pedigree and able to stand the test of time. Rather than single out a few, and thereby relegate the rest, I invite readers to thumb through the encyclopedia, to read with purpose or at leisure, and to note the name of the person whose words they have digested and from which they have learned a bit more about the conflict that defined the American nation. The names of all contributors are listed alphabetically in one group elsewhere in this front matter.

At the risk of seeming invidious, I would, however, wish to thank two individuals by name. Stephen Wasserstein is the editor at Thomson Gale in New York who contacted me about the possibility of updating Mark Boatner’s singular achievement. Stephen cheerfully put up with me, offered his counsel and assistance at every turn, and fully deserves the heartfelt thanks and appreciation I now offer him. These volumes owe their existence to him as much, or more, than anyone else.

The actual production of the volumes was in the capable hands of the Thomson Gale team at the company’s headquarters in Farmington Hills, Michigan. Stephen Cusack, project editor on the history team for the Macmillan and Scribner’s imprints, was the leader of the craftspeople who created the handsome volumes you now hold. In an age when cost-consciousness can be taken to extremes, he orchestrated a demonstration of how high quality can still be achieved on a tight budget.

Every author—and editor, too—owes a debt of gratitude to the family members who, in words that are as true as they are conventional, made it possible for me to undertake and

complete this project. In my case, those long-suffering—and endlessly supportive—individuals were my wife Joyce, our daughters Margaret and Caroline, and our canines Spenser, Emily and Daphne. It is also conventional, and accurate, for the editor to accept responsibility for whatever flaws might remain in the work. This I do so gladly, believing that it is more important to get scholarship that stimulates thinking into the hands of the reader, even if a few flaws remain.

## OVERVIEW OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

War remains the most complex task that any society can undertake. The decision to resort to politically sanctioned, purposeful armed violence generally arrives when a critical mass of a society's leaders wins the approval of enough of its politically active members so that war can be initiated and sustained with some prospect that the society will thereby earn a favorable outcome to whatever problem could not be resolved short of war. The decision that war is the only, or at least the best available, means to resolve a political problem is powerfully shaped by the character of the society. The makeup of that society, in turn, profoundly shapes how the war is imagined and waged. The course of the war—and no war ever resembles exactly what either side thought it would look like—exerts pressures and strains that can come to determine the structure and development of the societies involved. It therefore behooves us to investigate and understand how wars begin, are waged, and become part of the fabric and memory of our society. No war can be comprehended in isolation from the host of political, social, economic, geographic, and racial factors—to name but a few—that form the totality of a society. But it is possible to begin one's inquiry with the aspects of a conflict that involve the understanding and manipulation of armed violence, what might be called “military history.” As long as one remains mindful that war making is connected in a web with everything else in society, it is intellectually possible to focus on the armed struggle itself.

The term “American Revolution” encompasses far more than the military conflict between Great Britain and its continental North American colonies between 1775 and 1783. The full story of the American Revolution begins roughly in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the assumptions about the character and stability of the British Empire in North America, as we can see in retrospect, were more or less shared by British citizens living on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Over the next twenty-five years, circumstances, decisions, and events shredded those assumptions, to the point that open war broke out between the colonies and Britain in April 1775 and the colonies declared their political independence in July 1776. For eight years—the longest war in the history of the American nation until the Vietnam conflict—the men and women we know as “Patriots” created and used military and naval forces to defeat British attempts to re-establish the authority of the Crown over the colonies. The military aspects of that struggle, more accurately known as the War for American Independence, remain the focus of these volumes. The Revolution itself continued after the end of the war, as the victors continued their efforts to create new forms of governance that would be as widely accepted, and therefore as stable, as the ones they had once known under the British Empire. That process included the writing of a new federal constitution and the establishment of a working federal government, and culminated in the peaceful transition of power from one political party to another following the election of 1800.

Winning the War for American Independence was the indispensable prerequisite for the creation of an American nation. Had the British government managed to suppress the rebels in its North American colonies, the men we revere as the founding fathers would be known today as nothing more than the leaders of a failed insurrection, not the architects of a still-thriving experiment in republican government. Given the anger and antipathy eighteenth-century monarchies felt towards rebels, it is surely possible that some of the more prominent American rebels would have paid with their lives for challenging the established authority of the king-in-Parliament.

The outcome of the military conflict was, of course, not predestined. Each side faced a task of daunting, and in many ways unprecedented, complexity, but each side, too, had significant assets. The activists in the colonies, those who had concluded that British attempts to reform the empire amounted to unendurable intrusions on the rights and liberties of their societies, had to organize armed resistance to the most daunting array of military and naval power in their generation. The British government had to use its military and naval power judiciously in the trickiest of circumstances, using armed violence to restore political allegiance without completely alienating their subjects. At numerous points during the conflict, politicians and military commanders faced what we might call points of contingency, where the choices they made significantly shaped the options available thereafter.

Five crossroads stand out, battles that a traditional military historian might single out because the outcomes were unexpected, against the odds, and contributed significantly in shaping the conflict. The skirmishes outside Boston at Lexington and Concord on 19 April 1775 demonstrated to both the British and the Americans that the colonists, militarily unsophisticated by European standards, could and would fight effectively against well-trained British regular troops. Less than two months later, on 17 June, at the clash on the Charlestown peninsula that came to be called the battle of Bunker Hill, the British fumbled their best chance of demonstrating to the colonists the imbecility of their armed rebellion against the Crown. A year and a half later, at Trenton, New Jersey, on Christmas Day 1776, the rebellion that seemed to be in its last throes was plucked from the dustbin of history by America's greatest soldier, the aristocratic Virginia planter George Washington.

Having demonstrated that their rebellion would not crumble quickly, the Americans had to find a way to convert their resilience—their ability not to lose—into a way to win political independence. It appeared that the only solution lay overseas, in the hands of Britain's ancient enemy, France, and especially in its resurgent navy. The French king had already decided to turn covert French aid into open assistance, and thus to declare war on a Britain weakened by colonial rebellion, when the Americans captured a British army at Saratoga, in upstate New York, on 19 October 1777. Success in this subsidiary theater ratified the French decision to intervene, boosted American morale, and seemed to open the door to final victory. But it was four long years before the new partners could find the right opportunity to work together effectively. Forced by French intervention to find a new strategy to defeat the rebellion, the British tried to detach the Deep South from the rebel alliance. Meeting fierce local resistance, they turned their attention to Virginia in 1781. French naval assistance was the critical element in allowing the Americans to force the surrender of another British army at Yorktown on 21 October 1781. The war ended when Parliament accepted the fact that further efforts to recover the political allegiance of the colonies were a waste of time and money, especially since they were certain that Britain could readily maintain America in a continued state of economic dependency.

In the years since the original "Boatner" was published, historians have clarified this traditional military analysis and, more importantly, added to it a dimension not fully evident in 1966. Because we have come to recognize that "military history" includes so much more than just battles and leaders, our understanding of the war now begins with the mobilization of political support in the thirteen separate and distinct colonial societies of mainland British North America to resist British imperial intrusions and exactions, efforts the resisters demonized as British "tyranny." Once a sufficient number of resisters came to understand that their movement might one day have to field armed men capable of organizing a sustained and violent resistance, the colonial activists began to make preparations for that eventuality. They began to accumulate the physical means of resistance, including firearms and gunpowder, without adequate amounts of which no sustained or effective resistance would be possible.

More importantly, the leaders of the resistance had to sustain and expand popular support for their cause. They had to present an analysis of public events and proposals for a

course of action that would motivate a sufficiently large number of the politically aware adult white men in their societies to subscribe to a point of view that demanded action—violent if necessary—to reverse the erosion of their rights, liberties, and potential to capitalize on economic and social opportunities in the future. Some contemporaries—principally those who supported, or at least acquiesced in, the expansion of British authority—thought that men like Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry were nothing more than rabble-rousing demagogues who sought to lead the people away from their true allegiance, for reasons having more to do with personal profit and prestige than principled support for liberty. Some historians have agreed. Other historians have countered by suggesting that even men motivated by self-interest had to shape a message that would resonate with the widest possible audience, for without widespread support no resistance movement could hope to succeed, or, one day, field the number and quality of soldiers needed to oppose the well-trained army and well-manned ships that Britain could command. We now realize that the opponents of increased imperial control—the men and women often revered as “Patriots” and “founding fathers”—were not above using threats and intimidation to expand popular support and suppress pro-British dissenters. Our present understanding of how these societies mobilized for war combines an awareness of the mix of physical, social, economic, political, and emotional factors that motivate people, with an appreciation of the enormous complexity of the process of war making in an agricultural society, where the problems included the constant drain on society’s productive resources, the breathtaking expenses and financial expedients involved in raising and maintaining soldiers and sailors, and the debilitating uncertainty of not knowing how or when the conflict and the burden would end.

All of the complexity of this sort of war must be understood, moreover, in a premodern context. George Washington was a prominent member of the ruling Virginia oligarchy, a slave-holding plantation owner who believed he had a right to help direct the future of his society; he was not the precursor of the modern American general officer. Although he had more military (and combat) experience than any other American, he was not a professional soldier who had been trained to manipulate well-constructed armed forces along the lines suggested by the study of history and the principles of war. Nor was the Continental Army the direct ancestor of the modern United States Army (or the militia of the modern National Guard). Both forms of military organization were based, at least theoretically, on the model of a locally rooted, largely voluntary organization in which citizens undertook military service as part of their civic responsibilities, as it had been modified to suit local circumstances during the long series of imperial wars against French and Native American competitors since 1689. As the burden of service became increasingly difficult for men of some affluence to bear—meaning those who had a political stake in the outcome—societies willingly relegated more military service to younger, less affluent men, many of whom had fewer family ties to particular localities and could be induced to see the value of shouldering the burden of military service by the payment of financial incentives. The colonies had raised soldiers in this fashion during the Seven Years’ War that ended in 1763. In the same way, the rebels raised Continental forces that were able, ultimately, to meet the British on the field of battle on more or less equal terms. Together with much larger numbers of militiamen serving for brief periods, the rebels managed to field potent enough military organizations so that the British never managed to find a way to suppress the armed rebellion. By adapting and modifying their colonial military experience in a manner that remained more effective than efficient and in which the need to maintain popular support nearly always trumped the more strictly military demands of fighting the war, the American people won the chance to determine their own political destiny.

What is most remarkable about that process—what sets it apart from other examples of “people’s war” before and since, and makes it vital to study and understand—is that the leaders of the “people” managed to incorporate and sustain ideas of freedom, equality, and opportunity for an unprecedented number of adult white men in their societies; in the broadest sense, it does not make any practical difference if they did so because they felt

compelled to win popular support or because they believed fervently in the principles they espoused. That their idea of who was entitled to freedom, equality, and opportunity seems to us to be restricted and narrow ought not to earn them our disapprobation or lack of respect. It matters more that they imbedded in our language and our culture a set of ideals and principles, however imperfectly they implemented them, that have endured, and distinguish our society from much of the rest of the world. The essential account of how they got that chance, of how they won the war that enabled them to chart their own political and social future, is the story told in this encyclopedia.

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