

Preface

Books, television, and the Internet provide a wealth of images and information relating to the landmarks of the American Revolution, but there is still no substitute for being there. Whether one makes the pilgrimage to Concord's North Bridge on a glorious autumn day, walks the ramparts of Fort Ticonderoga, or soaks up the atmosphere of Philadelphia's Independence Hall, the sites that together constitute the birthplace of the United States offer a living connection to a great watershed in human history. This revised, expanded, and updated edition of Mark Boatner's *Landmarks of the American Revolution* is an invitation, in his words, to discover "America's outdoor archives, the new dimensions of history that lie in seeing, smelling, touching, and walking through famous places."

Even where these sites have been paved over, a bronze tablet or steel panel marking the spot—and the guidance of this book—can enable us to marvel at the contrast between the modern urban fabric and the bucolic landscape directly beneath the asphalt, where the Revolutionary War once raged. Reading a plaque at Park Avenue and 37th Street in Manhattan, once the center of a rural estate where Mary Murray served cakes and Madeira to the invading British generals in 1776, one imagines the roar of the subway underfoot to be the British naval bombardment at Kips Bay a few blocks to the east. Did the patriotic Mrs. Murray really interrupt the invasion and save thousands of American soldiers? *Landmarks*, in conjunction with the two companion volumes that make up the *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, sorts out military history from colorful lore, providing a definitive guide to locating and knowing what happened at the sites of independence.

When Boatner set out to write *Landmarks* in 1968, nothing so comprehensive had been attempted since 1848, when Benson Lossing embarked on an 8,000 mile journey through the original thirteen states and Canada gathering local history and lore from elderly eye-witnesses of the Revolution and producing more than 1,000 drawings of relevant scenery and buildings for his monumental *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*. With the benefit of Lossing's opus and in the same spirit, Boatner produced a book he described as part travel guide, part regional history, and part geographical dictionary. In writing *Landmarks*, Boatner also relied on the in-depth entries about people, places and events in his own *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, first published in 1966. Revised, expanded, and updated, the one-volume encyclopedia now constitutes the two companion volumes to this set.

Determined not to omit an important site "merely because it had been destroyed by real estate development or ignored by earlier writers of historic guides," Boatner compiled his long list of landmarks from general histories of the Revolution and then plotted them

onto modern maps. Relying on primary sources, the expertise of regional historians, and visits to the sites, Boatner pinpointed skirmish and battle sites, as well as taverns, bridges, graves, historic houses, churches, and monuments. He included well-established tourist attractions like the Saratoga and Yorktown battlefields, architectural treasures such as the Chew Mansion and Mount Vernon, and historic districts in Annapolis, Philadelphia, and Schenectady. However, he also examined an extraordinary variety of less traveled routes, including the trail of Benedict Arnold's expedition through Maine and Canada and the network of settlements in Tennessee where Patriots gathered to march into the Carolinas in support of the local militia, leading to the pivotal victory at Kings Mountain. He even tracked down sites that had ended up on private property or were unknown to local residents.

Urging readers not to confuse history with patriotism, Boatner examined Florida's role in the Revolution, neglected by most guidebooks because British and Loyalist leaders dominated events there. If we "shake our nationalistic vanities and concede that we should be interested in what happened in both camps during the Revolution," Boatner wrote, "there is more to be found . . . than you might have suspected." Similarly, Boatner includes the Simsbury Copper Mines in Connecticut, where the Americans kept prisoners of war and Loyalists in dismal underground cells, in retaliation for the horrific conditions on British prison ships in Brooklyn's Wallabout Bay, and in New York City's jails. With the same vigor he applied to tracking down the sites of American victories, Boatner located the scenes of disastrous American defeats, including the Brier Creek battlefield in Georgia, where "the amateur American generals" were overwhelmed by "the British professionals" and their classic maneuvers.

Published in 1971, *Landmarks* evaluated local efforts to preserve and mark historic sites and served as Boatner's pulpit for exhorting federal, state, and local authorities to prepare for the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence by improving their management of tourism information and destinations. At the same time, Boatner condemned an "epidemic of skyscraper building" in one part of the country and "a land development orgy of record proportions" in another. A soldier-scholar and ardent preservationist, Boatner was acutely concerned about overdevelopment and the disappearance of landmarks. A native of Virginia, Mark M. Boatner III is a descendant of prominent statesmen and soldiers of the Revolution. After graduating from West Point in 1943, he served as a combat infantryman in Italy and Korea before earning a masters degree in international affairs from George Washington University. His other books, *Military Customs and Traditions*, *Civil War Dictionary*, and *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, were all published before he retired from the Army in 1969.

A groundbreaking project, *Landmarks* catalogued and described places connected to the Revolution across an area that now encompasses twenty-seven states, Washington, D.C., and Canada. Picking up where Boatner left off, this expanded and updated version of *Landmarks* includes the work of various scholars and researchers enlisted by Stephen Wasserstein, Scribner senior editor, and by historian Harold Selesky, editor of the two companion volumes, the *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*.

An extensive chapter on the Caribbean by Andrew O'Shaughnessy, Saunders Director of the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies near Monticello, is a new and unusual feature of the present volume which identifies the wealth of surviving landmarks in this important theater of the American Revolution.

Writer and journalist Donald Lowe put his skills to work in the service of the entire volume, painstakingly bringing the chapters up to date by contacting local historical societies, museums, tourism directors, and town clerks to check on the current condition of each landmark and any change of ownership. Lowe also provides new contact information for government agencies and historic sites, including telephone numbers, websites, street addresses, and local directions.

Honoring Boatner's careful eye for the details of landscape, Lowe checked, for example, if a particular tree was still standing on a given site. In the case of Battlefield State Park in Princeton, New Jersey, Lowe discovered that after nearly 300 years, the solitary white oak, known since the Revolution as the Mercer Oak, had collapsed in 2001. It was to this tree, according to legend, that the mortally wounded General Hugh Mercer was brought after the battle. In Bucks County, Pennsylvania, tourists might simply pass by the Greene Inn on Durham Road, home of Edna's Antiques, with its yard full of old radiators and bathtubs, not knowing, as Lowe informs us, that this was General Nathanael Greene's headquarters before the attack on Trenton in December 1776.

This new edition of *Landmarks* provides a great deal of additional information about the role of African Americans and Native Americans in the Revolution as well as resources for exploring these topics further. Lowe points out, for example, that the members of the Old First Church near the Bennington Battle Monument in Vermont, were early opponents of slavery and supporters of racial equality. In 1780 they became the first white congregation in American history to have an African American minister, Revolutionary War veteran Reverend Lemuel Haynes.

Most of the numerous gaps in coverage of Native Americans and African Americans were filled by historian Michael Bellesilles, author of *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier*, who was enlisted to edit and update material throughout *Landmarks*, particularly the chapter on Vermont. One of his most striking additions is the Black Heritage Trail in Boston, which includes the home of George Middleton, the leader of an all-black militia company that received a flag from John Hancock for its outstanding service in the Revolutionary War. Also on this trail is the African Meeting House, the oldest surviving black church in America.

Along with a heightened awareness of American diversity among historians (and greater diversity in the ranks of the profession), much has changed in the field of historic preservation since *Landmarks* was first written in 1971, when the preservation movement had not fully picked up steam. The destruction of Pennsylvania Station in 1963 was a catalyst for New York City's formation of a Landmarks Preservation Commission, which became a model for others around the country. First Lady Ladybird Johnson's report, "With Heritage So Rich," warned that historic sites were vanishing under the onslaught of overdevelopment and led to the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. Without adequate funding, the law's impact was not immediate, however, and the criteria for inclusion in a National Register of Historic Places were developed gradually.

The movement gained momentum in the late sixties and early seventies. The National Environmental Protection Act of 1969 gave teeth to the 1966 law by creating fines for violators. An executive order signed by President Richard Nixon, followed in 1974 by the Moss-Bennett Act and in 1979 by the Archeological Resources Protection Act, unleashed an explosion of research and preservation activity. State Historic Preservation Offices were established and provided with matching funds by the federal government. Through grants to researchers, the National Park Service expanded its focus and mission to take stock of battlefields and their condition, as did the Department of Defense. Private sector archeologists also joined the effort to inventory the nation's military heritage sites.

At the same time, however, relic collectors, armed since the 1950s with increasingly sophisticated metal detectors, were combing through Revolutionary and Civil War battle sites, taking home bullets, swords, and buttons. More recently, these artifacts have entered the Internet marketplace through E-Bay. Only in the last few years have archeologists, who once shunned such collectors, begun enlisting them as partners, interviewing them about the precise locations where artifacts were discovered and using that knowledge to map entire battlefields.

In the late 1990s, the American Battlefields Protection Program, run by the National Park Service, launched a broad effort to make a national inventory of Civil War sites and a

report on their condition. By 2001—the 225th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence—Congress had mandated a similar effort for Revolutionary War sites through the ABPP, and grants were awarded to finance site visits. Without systematic physical inspection, and a central database, the government did not know if a particular site had become a state park or had been buried under a shopping mall. Along with the National Register of Historic Places, Boatner’s *Landmarks* guided the panel of park service officials and scholars that compiled the list of Revolutionary War sites.

In the twenty-first century, the discovery and analysis of Revolutionary War battlefields continue to reshape our perception of the nation’s history. Public-private partnerships to acquire and protect sites, along with advances in archeological techniques, play a major role. The latter include global positioning systems, which use satellites to locate artifacts and map battle sites; computerized, ground-penetrating radar, which finds graves and other disturbances in the soil; and the electronic surveyor’s transit, a laser-equipped device that makes short work of measuring a piece of ground.

At the Camden battlefield in South Carolina, for example, archeologists have combined these tools with old-fashioned shovel work, eyewitness accounts, and information from relic collectors to expand the borders of the 300-acre site and to revise the accepted location of the front lines 700 yards to the south. Such work may eventually earn National Park status for the Camden battlefield, and South Carolina is turning to archeologists in other initiatives, including the creation of a Francis Marion Trail, marking the campsites and battlefields associated with the indomitable “Swamp Fox.” New York has also been active in developing a Revolutionary War trail throughout the state, devoting significant resources to archeological work, for example, at Fort Montgomery on the Hudson River.

Beyond the condensed narrative developed for schoolchildren and for textbooks to encapsulate the complex eight-year war—Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill, Trenton, Saratoga, Yorktown—*Landmarks* offers a fuller picture of the American struggle for independence, fleshing out, geographically, the bare bones of the traditional story. Shunning any regional bias, Boatner arranged the chapters in alphabetical order, by state, following the same encyclopedic impulse that had led to his classic one-volume *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (1966), the basis for the two companion volumes in this set. The result is a guidebook proportioned by the quantity of historical markers on the ground in a given state, more accurately reflecting where the military action was concentrated during the course of the war.

New York State, for example, has the longest chapter, because almost one third of the fighting took place within its borders. Before the Revolutionary War, until the transfer to Massachusetts prompted by the Boston Tea Party, the headquarters of the British military had been in New York City, and after its recapture in the summer and fall of 1776, the city resumed that role for seven years—the rest of the war. Moreover, control of the Hudson River–Lake Champlain corridor, traversing the state from Canada to New York Harbor, was the focus of Britain’s grand strategy for dividing the colonies and ending the rebellion.

The revision of the section on New York City’s landmarks draws on three years of research for *The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution*, during which I spent several weeks exploring the five boroughs by subway, ferry, and on foot, locating the events of the Revolution and the markers commemorating them amid the modern cityscape. Among the local experts I relied on were Dr. Laurence Simpson of the Sons of the American Revolution in the State of New York; Nathan Hale scholar Richard Mooney; William Parry, Herb Yellin, and John Gallagher at the Old Stone House Historic Interpretive Center; Jonathan Kuhn of the Parks Department; and Savona Bailey McClain of the West Harlem Art Fund.

Like New York, New Jersey also receives more attention than usual in *Landmarks*. While Americans are generally familiar with Washington’s victories at Trenton and Princeton, the entire state, located between the rebel capital at Philadelphia and the main British base in

New York, was the scene of extensive military operations and clashes. Washington encamped in the Watchung Mountains at Morristown in order to keep an eye on the roads to Philadelphia and intercept the British.

Rhode Island, the smallest state, nonetheless receives a long chapter because of its active resistance to the crown in the run-up to the war and because it was occupied by the British, and headquarters to the French fleet, producing a rich fabric of Revolutionary sites and markers that have been well preserved. The state has more colonial-era houses than all of the other former colonies combined. In Rhode Island, the first regiment of African American troops to fight for the United States distinguished itself in battle, and this chapter, like the others in this revised edition of *Landmarks*, provides additional information about the service of these troops, the prevalence of slavery in colonial life, including in the North, and resources for learning more about black history in the state.

Unlike Rhode Island, South Carolina was the scene of intense fighting. Some 180 battles and skirmishes were triggered by British proclamations that forced Patriots and Loyalists actively to choose sides, producing an atmosphere of civil war. The British attempted to create a second hub for their operations by capturing Charleston, South Carolina in 1780. The ensuing war in the southern states resulted in the British defeat at Yorktown in 1781, commonly remembered as the end of the Revolutionary War.

However, the conflict lasted for two more years. On his way back to continue the American vigil around New York City, Washington warned Congress that complacency after the allied victory was the country's worst enemy. Indeed, ever since their defeat at Saratoga and the advent of the Franco-American alliance, the British had begun shifting their focus to include the Caribbean, and in a major naval battle there in 1782, Admiral de Grasse, the victor of Yorktown, was captured and his fleet badly damaged.

Andrew O'Shaughnessy's chapter on the Caribbean is a reminder that the American Revolution was a global war, a clash of superpowers (the British and the French) in a contest not only for North America but for the profitable sugar-producing islands of the Caribbean as well. The picturesque forts of St. Barts and San Juan also attest to the Dutch and Spanish presence in the area over the centuries and their supporting roles in the effort to undermine Britain's grip on the hemisphere. Additionally, American privateers prowled the Caribbean, preying on British shipping.

However, the ruined fortresses overlooking aquamarine harbors and the sun-drenched sugar plantations with their sprawling great houses and cramped slave huts reveal the moral shadows and contradictions of America's "Glorious Cause." While Americans protested their political enslavement to Parliament and a tyrannical King George III, they made the enslavement of Africans and African Americans the centerpiece of their economy, not only in the South, but in the northern states as well. The West Indies were an enormous slave market, because of the demand for labor to harvest sugarcane. During the colonial period, New York and New England earned bills of exchange, redeemable in England, by exporting food to the islands, freeing up land to cultivate the cash crop exclusively. Sugar and molasses were turned into rum in New England and exported to buy more slaves.

In adopting the Constitution in 1787, the United States would include protections for slaveholders' rights, a devil's bargain in the eyes of abolitionists, but a necessary compromise according to Federalists bent on keeping sectional differences from shattering the country. To its credit, Congress banned slavery in the Northwest territories, the modern Midwest, areas which George Rogers Clark conquered during the Revolution, clearing the way for American settlement of the region. *Landmarks* includes Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, illuminating another important theaters of the war and its impact on the future of the United States.

The campaigns in the Old Northwest also introduce the role of Native Americans in the Revolution, as they formed alliances with both sides and were drawn into the frontier fighting. This revision of *Landmarks* includes more detail about a massacre of Moravian

Indians by American forces in 1782 in eastern Ohio, “one of the most horrific scenes in American military history,” and the memorial to its victims. Also included throughout this edition is more information about tourism sites that preserve Native American culture and history through authentically reconstructed buildings, costumed interpretation, and craft demonstrations. The updated chapter on Connecticut notes that the Pequot tribe, decimated by white settlers in the seventeenth century, has made a comeback, ironically through its wildly successful gambling casinos, the bane of preservationists in various states trying to save historic landmarks.

While economic development threatens historic sites, recent scholarship has eroded the saintly image of America’s Founding Fathers. Some owned slaves and are known to have sired children out of wedlock, sometimes with those very slaves. Indeed the colonial economy, both North and South, was heavily dependent on African American slave labor and the profits of the slave trade. The launch of the greatest democratic experiment in human history in 1776 was also accompanied by the officially sanctioned slaughter or removal of Native American tribes.

On the other hand, while the American Revolution excluded Native Americans, blacks, poor whites, and women from its credo of human equality, it created a society in which meaningful protest and reform were possible. The United States remains a work-in-progress, still struggling with deep divisions of race and class. As we balance in our minds these two versions of America’s founding—the celebratory and the critical—the more we learn about the Revolutionary generation as real people rather than icons, and the more compelling it becomes to preserve and to visit the homes, statehouses, and battlefields where they lived, worked, and died for the “Glorious Cause” of self-government.

Barnet Schecter, New York City