

Woodbridge History - Essay Contest

"The harder the conflict, the greater the triumph" - George Washington. On December 2, 1776, through June 22, 1777, British Troops occupied Woodbridge. During that time, multiple scrimmages took place while historical buildings were being constructed. For example, the house of Dr. Moses Bloomfield was built in the 1750s, and the Cross Key Tavern was built in the 1740s. Following this, numerous well-known figures in our history have stepped foot in Woodbridge. In particular, Brigadier General Nathaniel Heard, Reverend Azel Roe, and Janet Gage, known as the "Molly Pitcher of Woodbridge." As you can see, multiple historical figures were able to make significant impacts on the history of Woodbridge Township. Oh, and I forgot to mention, my name is Carly, and today I'll be telling you my story about how I survived the British invasion as a mother of 2.

The terror started on December 2, 1776. It was my first day serving at the Trinity Episcopal Church. I didn't suppose anything would happen. At home, my two sons were preparing a meal for my arrival. If I remember, they were cooking a stew with a side of porridge. Hopefully, it will taste good. For my first day of work, I was wearing my white low-necked gown with a green petticoat. Thankfully, my outfit kept me warm from the cold temperatures. After walking along the side of the road, I finally reached the church. I noticed a gravel path leading to brick walls with a wooden door. Out of habit, I entered the church, and I started to begin my first shift. So far, my day went normal until I spilled coffee on my white gown and on the customer. Fortunately, the man accepted my apology, and I continued to serve him.

Currently, many women struggle to be hired and are expected to clean the house and educate our children. Since my two sons already had the proper education, I wasn't required to continue teaching them. By now, I'm pretty sure they can handle themselves at the ages of 17 and 19. At about 12:39 pm, I began my second shift and started to clean the outdoor stable. While cleaning the stable, I noticed the daily newspaper, the New-England Courant, sitting on top of the hay. Out of curiousness, I decided to read the section titled "General Washington continues for freedom." One sentence states, "British Troops headed towards the Cross Keys Tavern." In my opinion, we have years until we gain our freedom from the British.

All of a sudden, a musket was fired down the street. I jumped to my feet and ran around the stable to see what the noise was. I saw a large group of men knocking on people's doors. Red coats. Horrified, I ran back into the church. Suddenly, the men knocked on the door, threatening to shoot us. Everyone in the church remained quiet until the 1st shot fired through the door. Then, panic and screams filled the room instead of the smell of coffee and conversations. I ran to the back door and exited the church, leaving the building. Running down the sidewalk, I turned around and saw the British troops overtaking the church. It seems like they were using it as a temporary base.

Once I reached my house, I entered through the door seeing a man being served stew and porridge. A Red coat is in our home. The man threatened my sons to serve him a meal. Seeing my sons struggle to meet the British man's needs, I stood there and told the man to move. At first, I didn't realize he had a musket until he fired at the window. The window shattered into pieces becoming invisible in our rug. Even though I was scared, I wanted my freedom. I walked towards him and grabbed the musket from his hands. With all my strength, I threw the weapon out the door, telling him to leave. After an hour, the man finally got up and left my house. I guess we scared him off quickly. With my son's help, we were able to earn our home back.

A few hours passed with more gunshots and screaming. As a mother, I feel like I failed to protect my sons from fear. Even though they told me they weren't scared, I didn't believe them. Suddenly, more shots fired. I jumped to my feet, looking out the window with my sons beside me. It was George Washington's militia. Surrounding the town, they ambushed the British troops. Even though the soldiers were outnumbered, they fought as hard as they could. From the moment I saw George Washington, I knew this would lead to our freedom.

It was an hour. Our troops were being defeated. My mind was so busy that I didn't realize what was happening around me. Abruptly, my oldest son screamed, "For the world to have peace, you must have war." Begging my son not to go, he fled my home into the church. Screaming for him to come back, my other son fled my house, waving goodbye. So many thoughts were going through my head. They are going

to die, going to suffer. I need to save my sons in the church. I ran outside into the street, calling for their names trying to call them back. Before reaching the neighbor's house, I saw the church burst into flames. I stood there in disbelief about what just happened. My sons are dead. Seeing Washington's militia rejoice to killing the British troops didn't help me emotionally. The smell of fire filled the air. George Washington's forces fled the town. Silence filled the streets. I could only hear the crying of a mother who just lost her sons, me.

Today is September 15, 1777. We can call ourselves American Citizens. Now, George Washington is our president, who defeated the British. We did gain our freedom. The country was able to sign the Declaration of Independence. Only nine months later, we gained freedom. You may be thinking about what happened to my sons? Well, we had a funeral with an empty tomb since they were burned. No one even knew they gave up their lives for our country. My two sons will be known as unknown soldiers.

After George Washington's stay in the Cross Key Taverns, he reached Elizabethtown, where he had lunch at Boxwood Hall. From there, he continued his journey to New York for his presidential inauguration. During 1775, the Revolutionary War began and ended in 1783. Throughout those eight years, many soldiers were killed who put their life on the line. Those soldiers who haven't been identified are honored at the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" located at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. George Washington continued his presidency until 1797 and decided to retire at Mount Vernon.

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history>

https://www.revolutionarywarnewjersey.com/new_jersey_revolutionary_war_sites/towns/woodbridge_nj_revolutionary_war_sites.htm

<https://www.myrevolutionarywar.com/battles/1777-skirmish/>