

# **“THE GOWANUS GAZETTE”**

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The Battle of Brooklyn Chapter

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Sons of the American Revolution

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**LIBERTAS ET PATRIA**

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REVOLUTIONARY WAR TIMELINE 1765-1783  
NEW YORK CITY and NEIGHBORING COUNTIES

## EARLY PERIOD 1770-1776

The New York Sons of Liberty was founded in 1765 in reaction to the “Stamp Act” and “Quartering Act”, founding members include John Morin Scott, Hercules Mulligan, Marinus Willett, Isaac Sears. Alexander McDougall, John Lamb, William “Lord Stirling Alexander and others who would later play a prominent role in the Revolutionary War. Governing revolutionary political bodies are established, the Council of 60, later of 100, Delegates are elected to the newly formed Continental and Provincial Congresses. Other New York political and military leaders the would go on the play significant role in the Revolutionary War and early days of the founding of the United States include John Jay, Frances Lewis (DOI), Gov. William Livingston, Phillip Livingston (DOI), Gen. Richard Montgomery, Gov. and Gen. George Clinton, Robert “the Chancellor” Livingston and many came of age Alexander Hamilton and his college friends Robert Troupe and Nicholas Fish additionally, Aaron Burr, Morgan Lewis, and Henry Brockholst Livingston.

### Sons of Liberty Activity and Early Revolutionary War 1770-1775

- 19 Jan 1770, Isaac Sears, John Lamb, Robert Quakenbush and Alexander McDougall led a riot at Golden Hill (John and Gold Streets) over the British Army chopping down of Liberty Poles. British soldiers bayonet a number of the rioters, “drawing the first blood” three months before the “Boston Massacre, McDougall is jailed
- Oct 1772, Alexander Hamilton arrives in New York to attends King’s College, rents a room from Hercules Mulligan and is influenced toward revolutionary politics. Enlists in the “Hearts of Oak” Militia Co. with classmates Nicholas Fish, Robert Troupe and other King’s College students, this company is attached to Col. John Lasher’s New York Militia Regiment.
- April 18, 1775 British cargo ship “Nancy” is laden with tea captured off Sandy Hook and towed to New York harbor

- April 22, 1775 the “London” is caught smuggling a load of tea into New York harbor by the Sons of Liberty led by Hercules Mulligan. New York has its own “Tea Party”, dumping tea into the harbor. The “Nancy and “London” return to England
- 23 Apr 1775, Isaac Sears and Comfort Sands, led a raid and capture the Armory at City Hall(now Federal Hall)
- 20 Jul 1775, John Lamb leads a raid and captures the British supply depot at Turtle Bay (midtown east)
- 23 Aug 1775, Hercules Mulligan and Alexander Hamilton and the Hearts of Oak Militia raid on the “Battery” they capture twenty three cannon under heavy fire from the HMS Asia.
- November 1775 The Sons of Liberty led by Isaac Sears with a troop of Connecticut Light Horse raze and burn down the press operation of the New-York Gazetter a Loyalist newspaper published by James Rivington, Rivington flees to England but returns after the occupation, he is said later to have been a spy for the American side

#### 1776

- Late Winter through the Summer of 1776. Troops begin to arrive, Continentals from Boston after the siege ends in March, along with state and militia troops from regional neighboring states and counties and encamp throughout New York, Lower Westchester (Bronx), Queens and King’s Counties. Gen. Washington is headquartered in Lower Manhattan at 1 Broadway and other locations
- American troops are engaged in “fatigue work” building of forts, redoubts, artillery batteries and other fortifications, beginning early in 1776. Numerous forts and artillery batteries are built at key strategic points
- Key forts and artillery batteries, include the reoccupation of Fort George at the Battery, batteries on Governors Island built by the “Bunker Hill “Diggers”, Horn’s Hook(near Gracie Mansion) built by Hand’s 1<sup>st</sup> Pa./Continentals and Corlear’s Hook (FDR Dr. and Cherry St,) Montresor’s Island (Randall’s Island) and at high points like Bayard’s Hill. Brooklyn forts include Stirling (Brooklyn Heights) and Putnam (later Fort Greene) and guarding the northern approaches at Fort Washington and three forts at King’s Bridge and the Spuyten Duyvil built by the Dutchess County Militia.
- June and July, 1776 British and Hessian troops arrive from Canada, Ireland and Britain, encamp and train on Staten Island.
- There are numerous “fire boat” attacks on British Navy ships in the Hudson River, a fire boat was an expendable boat that was lit on fire and steered toward its target.
- “Chevaux-de-frize are sunk in the New York waterways, these were large crates, with long iron tipped spikes meant to damage the hulls of ships

- 28<sup>th</sup> of June, Sgt. Thomas Hickey a soldier in Washington's Commander-in-Chief Life Guard is executed on the Bowery for "treason and sedition for a plot and threats to kill Gen. Washington", This was an a large public event with as many as 20,000 attending.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of July, The Declaration of Independence is read at "the Commons" (City Hall Park). A patriot mob lead by Hercules Mulligan and the Sons of Liberty raze the gilded lead statue of King George at Bowling Green, it is broken down and carried off, some of it is melted down into musket balls
- July 9<sup>th</sup>, Many from the Staten Island Militia Regiments and Committee of Safety capitulate and swear an Oath of Allegiance to King George, these militia regiments become Loyalist Regiments
- Patriots from Staten Island cross over the Kill Van Kull and enlist in New Jersey Regiments or remain in New Jersey as political refugees
- 22 Aug 1776 British Army lands at Gravesend Bay near the town of New Utrecht from Staten Island
- Washington's troops are divided between Brooklyn, Upper and Lower Manhattan, Queens and King's Bridge unsure of the British intentions and because of the mobility of the British Navy, Washington must "cover all his bases".
- 22 to 27 Aug 1775. Scouts from Hand's 1<sup>st</sup> Pa. Continentals and King's Co. Militia skirmish with enemy troops at Flatbush. The 1<sup>st</sup> Continentals burn the farms of those supplying the British
- In the days leading up to and during the battle Long Island militia troops commanded by Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Woodhull herd cattle and other livestock away from British foragers.
- Woodhull is captured in a skirmish at Jamaica, Queens he refuses to acknowledge King George and is slashed numerous times with a saber, he dies a few days later at New Utrecht from infection.
- 27 Aug, Battle of Brooklyn aka Long Island. The British in a three prong attack and deliver a devastating lose to Washington's Army, Stirling's Brigade valiantly fights a delaying retreat allowing the Army to retreat to Brooklyn Heights and escape over the East River, and the army begins to move further north. This is considered the largest battle of American Revolution.
- Alexander Hamilton is promoted to Captain of artillery and commands a battery at Bayard 's Hill the highest point in Lower Manhattan at current Mott and Grand Sts. This has since been leveled with development.
- Prisoners of War are send to the prisons ships at Wallabout Bay, Many high ranking officers are taken as POWs, Generals Sullivan and Stirling Colonels Miles, Atlee, and others.

- 7 Sept., Inventor David Bushnell's "Turtle" submarine is piloted by Sgt. Ezra Lee in a failed attempt to sink the HMS Eagle in New York Harbor by planting explosive charges on its hull. This is the first time a submarine is used for military purposes. Bushnell attended Yale University with Nathan Hale and Benjamin Tallmadge.
- 15 Sept. Battle of Kip's Bay. Landing in the E. 34<sup>th</sup> St. area of Manhattan the British cross the East River in barges from Newtown, Queens with an overwhelming fusillade of firepower from British war ships, force the retreat of the mainly "green" troops, Glover's "Marbleheaders" stand fast, The troops retreat further north to Upper Manhattan, cutting off lower Manhattan, other British troops land in Lower Manhattan
- 8 to 18 Sept. 10 day Artillery Duel across the East River between the Americans at the Horn's Hook Battery and British at Newtown, Queens.
- 16 Sept. Battle of Harlem Heights. Washington and Greene, who hold the high ground of Morningside Heights defeat the British who overextend their line in pursuit of American troops, near current Columbia Univ. First victory since Boston. Lt. Col. Thomas Knowlton commander of Knowlton's Rangers is killed.
- 20 Sept., Great Fire of 1776, over 400 buildings are destroyed. Both sides blame each other but it was probably set by the Sons of Liberty. Most of the fire occurs in the area west of Broadway, stopping around current City Hall. Trinity Church is burned Rev. Charles Ingals the Loyalist rector of Trinity Church parsonage is looted. St. Paul's Chapel is spared
- 22 Sept. Capt. Nathan Hale, captured as a spy is executed at the Artillery Park near Dove's Tavern, near E. 66th St. and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. on the current Upper East Side.
- Oct 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Throg's Neck and Pell's Point. Gen. Howe attempts to box in Washington in Upper Manhattan, unable to land at Throg's Neck because Hand's 1<sup>st</sup> Pa. Continentals have destroyed the bridges to the mainland and position sharpshooter at the narrow causeway leading to the mainland Howe retreats and lands further north at Pell's Point (City Island), Glover's Marbleheaders and New York Militia fight a delaying retreat, allowing Washington enough time to move the Army towards White Plains.
- 15 Oct 1776, Mercer's Raid on Staten Island. Flying Camp troops under Brig. Gen. Hugh Mercer succeed in capturing 20 British and Hessian troops and convey them back to New Jersey after a skirmish at St. Andrew's Church in Richmond Town
- 28 Oct., Battle of Red Bank, Washington is unable to hold his ground Gen. Howe forces Washington to retreat toward Ft. Mifflin
- November, the Morris – Jumel Mansion in Upper Manhattan is used by Gen. Washington as his headquarters, after the defeat at Ft. Mifflin, it is used by Hessian and British officers

- Nov 16 Battle of Fort Washington. Washington divides his army, leaving just under 3000 troops commanded by Col. Robert Magaw to defend the fort in a last ditch attempt to hold New York. The bulk of the Army under Gen Washington crosses at Ft. Lee prior to the battle and heads south through New Jersey toward Philadelphia
- Over 2700 troops from Ft. Washington are taken as POWs and marched to the prison ships and sugar houses. New York is lost,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of these troops die as POWs

#### BRITISH OCCUPATION 1776-1783

- New York City aka York Island and the surrounding counties Kings (Brooklyn), Queens(including Nassau), Suffolk and Staten Island, Richmond are under British control. The Bronx was part of Westchester Co. is considered neutral or Patriot occupied, although the British occupy the three American built forts at King's Bridge after Fort Washington
- New York State in 1776 had twelve counties, seven that remained in Patriot hands Albany, Charlotte, Tryon, Dutchess, Orange, Ulster and Westchester. all had militia regiments that fought in the many battles in New York state. Everything west and north of Central Highlands was the Iroquois Nation.
- It is up for debate where the most battle were fought between New York, New Jersey or South Carolina.
- Patriots flee the New York occupied counties, patriotic men of military age enlist in New Jersey, Hudson Valley and Connecticut Regiments. Their abandoned homes and farmland are confiscated and marked with the King's Broad Arrow known as a "Crow's Foot" or a large red "R" for Rebel, are used to house troops or sold to Loyalist. Homes with leaded glass windows are broken out for British musket balls.
- Lasher's Militia Regiment, Lamb's Artillery and other New York militias units are adsorbed into McDougall's 1st New York Continentals and other Line and Militia Regiments. Those militiamen that stay behind like on Staten Island are pressed into British Loyalist service
- Five New York Continental Regiments are raised in 1775-1777 McDougall's 1<sup>st</sup> in New York City, Van Schaick's 2nd in Albany Co., Ritzema and Clinton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Orange, Ulster, and Dutchess Counties, west of the Hudson, Holmes's 4<sup>th</sup> Westchester Co., east of the Hudson, DuBois' 5<sup>th</sup>, Central Highland region and companies in Malcolm's (Pa. and NY) and Spencer's Additional (NY and NJ) Continental Regiments, later 1777-1780 additional Continental Levies are raised under Pawling, Dubois and Wessenfels.
- Many remaining, but not all swear an oath of allegiance to King George.
- At least 3 spy rings are operating in Lower Manhattan and occupied New York, Robert Townsend's Culper Ring, Hercules Mulligan and the Mersereau brothers of Staten Island

## Battles and Raids in the Occupied Counties, after November of 1776

- 22 May 1777, Meig's Raid on Sag Harbor, Connecticut troops under Col. Return Meigs cross the Long Island Sound and capture the Loyalist garrison at Sag Harbor, killing 6, taking 90 as POWs, commandeering supplies and sinking 12 boats.
- 22 Aug 1777, Sullivan's Raid on Staten Island. Gen. John Sullivan commanding Maryland and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Continentals and New Jersey Militia, cross over to Staten Island. Sullivan is disciplined for his rash actions and Washington angered for his wrong allocation of some of the best of troops in Continental Army who were needed elsewhere.
- 22 Aug 1777, Battle of Setauket, after the success of Meig's Raid, Continental troops under Brig. Gen. Samuel Holden Parsons attack a fortified Loyalist position at the Presbyterian church, the Continentals are turned away with only a few wounded. The Culper spy ring was active in this area.
- 7 Oct 1777, After the surrender of Burgoyne's Northern Army at the 2nd Battle of Saratoga, Bemis Heights the French enter the war
- Summer of 1778 the French Navy bringing the first troops under Admiral Comte d'Estaing departs France arriving at Newport, RI, after the Battle of Momouth on 6 June
- 31 Aug 1778, Stockbridge-Munsee Massacre, Bronx, Lower Westchester Co. (now Van Cortlandt Park) About 50 Native American scouts of the Stockbridge Militia commanded by Capt. Abraham Ninham are massacred by the Loyalist Queen's Rangers commanded by Lt. Col. John Graves Simcoe.
- Nov 1778, Marriner's Raid. 24 New Jersey privateer militiamen commanded by Captains William Marriner and John Schenk, cross New York Bay from Sandy Hook to New Utrecht and attempt to kidnap Loyalist Mayor David Matthews and succeed in kidnapping three British officers. Col. Rutgert and his brother Capt. Adrian Van Brunt, Kings Co., militia officers are implicated in the plot and jailed.
- 14 and 15 Jan 1780, Stirling's Raid on Staten Island. Gen. Stirling leads 2,500 Continentals in a raid to capture provisions as a diversion and morale booster for the troops suffering a hard winter at Morristown. Col. Marinus Willett and his NY troops torch the farm of Loyalist Isaac Decker in retaliation for Decker leading Maryland troops into an ambush during Sullivan's earlier raid, Basically a draw with some provision captured.
- 23 Nov 1780 Battle of Fort St. George, Suffolk Co. Troops under Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge. capture the British garrison at Fort St. George, near Coram and burn 300 tons of hay and 275 sheaves of oats confiscated from local farmer intended for the British Army.
- July to August 1781 French General Count de Rochambeau headquarters is at the Odell House in Greenburgh, Westchester County.

- 3 July 1781 Gen. Washington and Gen. Rochambeau discuss the possibility retaking Manhattan in a surprise attack but decided against it and march on to Yorktown. American Continentals and French troops under Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln skirmish with Hessian Jaegers at King's Bridge
- 11,500 die on the British prison ships at Wallabout Bay and an additional 5,000 to 6,000 in the three sugar houses, churches, hospitals and other facilities used to house POWs primarily in Lower New York throughout the duration of the war.
- May through August. 1783 The Birch Trials at Fraunces Tavern, eligibility is determined for about 3000 Black Loyalist(many formerly enslaved) to evacuate with the British Army, which inventively was going to happen

#### British Evacuation

- 25 Nov 1783 Evacuation Day, British commanding General Sir Guy Carleton is ordered to evacuate New York City of all British troops and Loyalist refugees.
- British nail the Union Jack to a greased the flagpole at Bowling Green. A young sailor John Van Arsdale donned climbing cleats and shimmed up the pole tore down the Union Jack and attached the Stars and Stripes.
- A Liberty Pole is erected at New Utrecht, which still stands today(replaced a few times over the years).This is the last thing the British see when depart New York
- General Washington and the Continental Army enter New York led by Gen. Henry Knox's Artillery from the encampment at the reclaimed Fort Washington.
- Thirteen Toast are drunk at Fraunces Tavern:

1. The United States of America
2. His Most Christian Majesty
3. The United Netherlands
4. The King of Sweden
5. Continental American Army
6. The Fleet and Armies of France, which have served in America
7. The memory of those Heroes who have fallen for our freedom
8. May our county be grateful to her Military children
9. May justice support what courage has gained
10. The Vindicators of the rights of mankind in every quarter of the globe
11. May America be an asylum to the persecuted of the earth
12. May a close union of the States guard the Temple they have erected to liberty
13. May the remembrance of this Day be a lesson to Princes

4 Dec 1783

General Washington's Farewell Dinner with Continental Army Officers  
Fraunces Tavern



"With a heart full of love and gratitude, I now take leave of you. I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable." He then took each of his officers by the hand for a personal word "- General George Washington

FINIS PART III and 2025

It has been a good year and 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration Year will prove to be better  
Adieu, for now, David Peters, Editor of the Gowanus Gazette