Volume 1
French & Indian War — War of 1812

A Military History of America
By the time of the French and Indian War (known in Europe as the Seven Years War), England and France had been involved in a series of ongoing armed conflicts, with scarcely a pause for breath, since 1666. Some touched directly on colonial interests in North America, others did not, but in the end the conflict would become global in scope, with battles fought on land and sea in Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America.

France had been exploiting the resources of the rich North American interior since Jacques Cartier first charted the St. Lawrence River in the 1530s–40s, exploring and establishing trading alliances with Native Americans south along the Mississippi River to New Orleans, north to Hudson Bay, and as far west as the Rocky Mountains. The English, in the meantime, had been establishing settled colonies along the eastern seaboard from the present-day Canadian Maritime Provinces to Georgia; Florida remained in the hands of Spain.

In the 1740s the British Crown made a massive land grant in the Ohio river valley to certain Virginia colonists, including Governor Robert Dinwiddie. The group formed the Ohio Company to exploit their new property. When the French began to establish a chain of forts along the Alleghenies that would effectively prevent English colonists from expanding their settlements, tension mounted.

In October 1753, Virginia Governor Dinwiddie sent a young, inexperienced British commissioned officer named George Washington to carry a letter to the French commander at Fort Presque Isle, warning the French to stay out of what was now considered to be Western Virginia. The French commander declined to be intimidated and Washington dutifully carried his formal letter back to Governor Dinwiddie. In his personal journal, however, Washington described a potential site for a British fort where the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers join to form the Ohio River:

*I spent some Time in viewing the Rivers, and the Land in the Fork; which I think extremely well situated for a Fort, as it has the absolute Command of both Rivers. The Land at the Point is 20 or 25 Feet above the common Surface of the Water; and a considerable Bottom of flat, well-timbered Land all around it, very convenient for Building.*

Acting on Washington's report, the British officials sent a small force to the area with orders to construct a fort. However, the French also found the site a desirable loca-
tion and, before the British fort was completed, they over-whelmed the smaller force, burned the existing structure, and built a sturdy fortification they named Fort Duquesne.

Governor Dinwiddie then attempted, but failed, to secure assistance from the other colonies to expel the French from the disputed area, so he ordered the 22-year-old Washington, now promoted to colonel, to lead a force of men in an attempt to force the French out. On May 28, 1754 Washington's forces surprised a group of French and Indians near Fort Duquesne and were able to defeat them. There was little time to do more than build a simple stockade to protect themselves from what proved to be a successful French counterattack on July 3. The French commander allowed the British colonial force to surrender, then burned the hastily constructed Fort Necessity to the ground. It was the first engagement in the French and Indian War, and would lead, in part, to the American Revolution.

The following year, General Edward Braddock led a large force of British regulars, accompanied by a small detachment of Virginia militia men, to take the French fort. Forced to cut their way through the dense forest as well as to build bridges and fill in boggy areas in order to get their huge baggage train through the wilderness, the army made only between two to four miles a day on a journey of some 125 miles. Finally, when they were within eight miles of Fort Duquesne, and stretched out along a narrow trail, a small force of French regulars and Indian allies (Ottawas, Miamis, Hurons, Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingoes) ambushed the British troops, who, between the advancing main force colliding with the retreating advance party and then both colliding with the cumbersome baggage train, were unable to maneuver through the thick woods and brush-filled ravines. It was a complete and disastrous rout. Sixty-two of the eighty-six British officers were killed or wounded as well as more than 700 soldiers — about two-thirds of the British force. Tragically, most of the casualties in the British ranks likely were inflicted accidentally by their own troops, as evidenced by the musket ball wounds suffered by many of the survivors (the French used a smaller caliber issue).

If there was a hero among the British forces it could be fairly said to be Colonel George Washington, who had been assigned as an aide to the British general. In spite of struggling from a sickbed to be present, having two horses shot from underneath him and having four bullets pass through his clothing, Washington helped the dying Braddock and his two wounded aides, Captains Robert Orme and Morris, from the field and then rode thirty miles to bring help from Colonel Dunbar's force, which was coming behind with the heavy baggage. Braddock died during the retreat and his body was buried in the road and wagons driven over it so that it would not be found. General Braddock's last words are reported to have been: "We shall know how to fight them next time."

The French and Indian War came to an end on February 10, 1763 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. France was forced to cede all of Canada in exchange for the return of Guadeloupe and Martinique. In addition, Spain was given French Louisiana in exchange for Florida, which was given to the British.
Braddock’s Field Issue: Statue of Col. George Washington (1930)  
2¢ • Scott 688
The issue marks the 175th anniversary of the Battle of Braddock’s Field battle, July 9, 1755; also known as Braddock’s Defeat or the Battle of Monongahela. Newly arrived British general Edward Braddock ignored the advice not only of the Virginia officers assigned to his staff, such as George Washington, but that of the members of his own senior command. So convinced was Braddock of his troops’ invincibility that he had them pause before covering the last leg of the journey and take the time change to full dress uniform, including white piping and brass buttons. Assuming that the French would likely have fled at their advance or else be preparing to surrender, the soldiers advanced cheerfully as the drummers played the Grenadier’s March. They were almost annihilated by a party of around 300 Indians and perhaps thirty French soldiers, before fleeing back across the Monongahela River to safety. Shot in the lung, Braddock died during the retreat

Washington Bicentennial: George Washington in the Uniform of a British Colonial Colonel (1940)  
1½¢ • Scott 706
The original oil painting by Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) is the only authenticated pre-Revolution portrait of George Washington. It was painted at Mount Vernon in 1772 and shows Washington in his uniform as a colonel of the Virginia Regiment, which he wore during the French and Indian War. A full color version of the portrait can be seen at http://marthawashington.us/archive/fullsize/gw-by-charles-willson-peale_637081de11.jpg

Fort Duquesne Bicentennial: Occupation of Fort Duquesne (1958)  
4¢ • Scott 1123
Following two failed efforts by the British to capture Fort Duquesne (one by George Washington in 1754 and the disastrous attempt by Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock in 1755), a large force under the command of Brig. Gen. John Forbes and including Washington’s 2,000-man contingent of Virginia militiamen headed out in late summer 1758, laboriously constructing a new road as they went instead of using the existing Braddock Road. While the ill Forbes vacillated about delaying an offensive until spring, Washington gathered information that the fort was now undemanned and poorly supplied, and ordered an advance. On November 23, as the British troops approached, the French realistically chose to withdraw under cover of night, setting fire to the fort and the munitions they couldn’t carry before they left. It was the Virginia Colonel of Militia who had the honor of personally raising the British flag over the ruined fort. Some of the British troops remained to begin construction on a new fort to be named Fort Pitt, the site of present-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
A Military History of America

French & Indian War (1756–1763)

Braddock’s Field Issue: Statue of Col. George Washington
2¢ • Scott 688

Washington Bicentennial: George Washington in the Uniform of a British Colonial Colonel
1½¢ • Scott 706

Fort Duquesne Bicentennial: Occupation of Fort Duquesne
4¢ • Scott 1123
Great Britain might have won the Seven Years War with France, but the royal treasury was nearly depleted. One means of restoring funds seemed simple: increase taxes on the Empire’s wide-flung colonies. The British colonists in North America, however, felt that they had earned the status of first-class British citizens and were outraged at being treated as simply a source of income for the crown.

The story is long and complex, and ultimately became a civil war of Loyalists against Patriots, with Moderates fighting a losing battle to find a middle ground where they might retain their rights as well as continuing to support the king. Briefly, however, there were some trigger points, beginning with the Proclamation of 1763 forbidding settlement beyond the Appalachian Mountains, which the outraged western settlers largely ignored. This was followed in 1764 with the Sugar Act, which raised the duties to be paid on sugar and molasses imported from the West Indies. It was the imposition of this duty that raised the protest of “no taxation without representation.” That same year Parliament passed the Currency Act, banning the colonial assemblies from issuing paper money, which was vital for doing business. In 1765 came the Quartering Act, ordering colonists to house and feed British soldiers at the military’s discretion, and the Stamp Act, taxing all paper goods from legal documents to playing cards and newspapers. New political activist groups calling themselves the “Sons of Liberty” were formed, particularly in Boston.

Delegates from nine colonies gathered at the Stamp Act Congress in New York that October. Under the leadership of Pennsylvanian John Dickinson, the congress drew up the Declaration of Rights and Grievances. The Declaration argued that as the colonies had no representation in Parliament, the tax was unconstitutional and against their rights as Englishmen. Benjamin Franklin, then in London representing the colonies, warned Parliament that continued taxation of this sort would lead to rebellion. Parliament repealed the tax, but in March 1766 it passed the Declaratory Act reserving the broad power to tax the colonies.

Two years later, in 1767, the Townsend Acts were passed, adding import duties on common products such as paper, paint, glass, and tea, and making the colonial officials responsible for collecting them independent of colonial jurisdiction. This led to more boycotts and continued protests. Following the civilian confrontation known as Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770, the Townsend Acts were repealed, except for the tax on tea. The Tea Act of 1773 gave the faltering British East India Company a monopoly on the tea trade in America. The response to this was the famous Boston Tea Party in November, where a raid by thinly disguised “Indians” was made on three East India ships docked in Boston Harbor. The ships were boarded and their crates of tea dumped into the harbor — the rest of the cargo was left strictly alone. This act of destruction led an angry Parliament to pass the repressive Intolerable Acts of 1774, which closed the port at Boston until the tea should be paid for.
and outlawed all town meetings. By May 1774 Massachusetts was under military rule.

The First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in September–October 1774 to contest the Intolerable Acts. Representatives from twelve of the thirteen colonies attended (Georgia did not send a delegate) and agreed to a boycott of British goods. They still thought of themselves as loyal British citizens trying to resolve a grievance with their mother country. They voted to meet again in May 1775; however, by that time it was too late.

In Boston, Lieutenant General Thomas Gage had replaced the despised Governor Thomas Hutchinson as the new royal governor on April 2, 1774. In February 1775 Parliament declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion, and in the spring of 1775, Gage ordered a series of raids to disarm the colonial militias. On the evening of April 18, British troops headed for Concord to seize the rebel munitions stored there. The following morning the British met a group of armed militia blocking their way in the village of Lexington. An unordered musket shot began the brief encounter, which left eight Americans dead. At Concord, however, after finding and burning some wooden cannon mounts and (probably) accidentally setting fire to the town meetinghouse, the British were confronted by a more substantial force of minutemen at the North Bridge and forced to retreat after an exchange of musket fire that left half of the British officers wounded. Harassed all the way back to Boston, the British troops suffered more than 200 casualties in dead and wounded. The shot fired that morning was the first in what would be nearly eight years of war between England and the American colonies.

By the time the Second Continental Congress met in May 1775, with all thirteen colonies in attendance, they were no longer hopeful of being heard and having their grievances addressed. The Congressional delegates, which now included Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, voted to establish a Continental Army. On June 15, George Washington was unanimously chosen as its commander in chief, with the rank of general — based in large part on the military experience and training in equipping and leading an army he had gained during his campaigns with the regular British Army against Fort Duquesne during the French and Indian War.

From the first major military encounter at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775 to the surrender of General Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 17, 1781 of the approximately 217,000 members of the Continental Army at least 4,435 (other estimates reach as high as 6,824) would lose their lives in battle, a conservative 13,000 men (one-third of whom were actually civilians) would die on British prison ships anchored offshore or in land-based British prison, while disease took the lives of an estimated ten soldiers for every battlefield casualty. It was steep price to pay from a total population calculated at 2,780,369.
The earliest stamp to show General George Washington (1732–1799) in American military uniform is one of the rarest and most valuable of the Washington portrait stamps. The portrait is taken from the large painting by John Trumbull titled George Washington Resigning His Commission (1824), which now hangs in the Capitol Rotunda.

George Washington (1932) 6¢ • Scott 711
An affordable alternative is the red orange reprint issued in 1932 as part of the Washington Bicentennial issue.

Army Issue: Washington, Nathanael Green & Mt. Vernon (1936) 1¢ • Scott 785
Nathanael Greene (1742–1796) was Washington's most trusted general during the Revolutionary War, and the only officer other than Washington to serve throughout the conflict with the rank of general. Desperate for supplies in the winter of December 1777 when the Continental Army was quartered at Valley Forge, Washington appointed Greene Quartermaster-General, and the efficient Greene came through.

Von Steuben Issue: General Von Steuben (1930) 2¢ • Scott 689
Friedrich von Steuben Baron (1730–1794) first presented a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin to the Continental Congress in February 1778 and was instructed to report to General Washington at Valley Forge. After inspecting the camp and the men, von Steuben set to work to write down a consistent set of drills and maneuvers that would be used by all units in the Continental Army. The “Blue Book” was used by the United States Army until 1814.

Pulaski Issue: General Casimir Pulaski (1931) 2¢ • Scott 690
Casimir Pulaski (1745–1779) joined the Continental Army in 1777 at the recommendation of Benjamin Franklin and proved to be a brilliant military tactician. The “Father of the American Cavalry” fell mortally wounded on October 9, 1779, during the Battle of Savannah.

Kosciusko Issue: General Tadeusz Kosciusko (1933) 5¢ • Scott 734
Thaddeus Kosciusko (1746–1817) joined Washington's army in 1776 as a Colonel of Engineers, the first of the foreign officers to receive a military commission from the Continental Congress. In 1778 he was appointed chief engineer at West Point, New York, where he created the fortification on the Hudson River that would become known as the “American Gibraltar” because of its unpenetrable battlements.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Military Leaders

- George Washington
  - 90¢ • Scott 39
- George Washington
  - 6¢ • Scott 711
- Army Issue: Washington, Nathanael Green & Mt. Vernon
  - 1¢ • Scott 785
- Von Steuben Issue:
  - General Von Steuben
  - 2¢ • Scott 689
- Pulaski Issue:
  - General Casimir
  - Pulaski 2¢ • Scott 690
- Kosciusko Issue:
  - General Tadeusz Kosciusko
  - 5¢ • Scott 734
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Military Leaders

Navy Issue: John Paul Jones and John Barry (1936)
1¢ • Scott 790

John Paul Jones
The Father of the American Navy, who once declared: “I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast for I intend to go in harm's way,” helped to establish the traditions of courage and professionalism that mark the modern day U.S. Navy.

John Barry
John Barry (1745–1803) not only shares the honor of being called the Father of the American Navy, but in the eyes of his contemporaries was more deserving of the title than his more famous naval colleague. His ship, the Alliance, was the only regularly commissioned Continental Navy ship still afloat at the end of the war. In 1794 Secretary of War Henry Knox wrote to Barry informing him that he had been appointed head of the newly created Federal Navy, a post in which Barry served until his death.

Lafayette Bicentenary (1957)
3¢ • Scott 1097
The engraving for the stamp design is based on an oil painting, Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, by French court artist Joseph Désiré Court in 1834, the year of Lafayette's death. It depicts the French and American hero in the uniform of a lieutenant general in the French army as he would have appeared in 1792.

American Bicentennial: 200th Anniversary of Arrival of Lafayette in America (1977)
13¢ • Scott 1716
Although he was only 19 years old when he arrived in South Carolina to fight for the American cause, Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roche-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834) was commissioned a Major General and assigned to Washington's staff. Fortunately, the two men quickly developed a warm relationship and throughout the war Lafayette would serve where he was needed, without complaint and with great success, including the triumph at Yorktown in 1781 when Lord Cornwallis finally surrendered to the combined American and French forces.

Bernardo de Galvez Issue (1980)
15¢ • Scott 1826
Bernardo de Gálvez (1746–1786) was a Spanish colonial administrator and Captain General of Louisiana during the American Revolutionary War. He corresponded with Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Henry Lee, and in 1777 personally sent $70,000 worth of medicine, uniform fabric, weapons, cartridges to Philadelphia. After Spain declared war on England in 1779, he captured all four British forts in the lower Mississippi, including Baton Rouge and Natchez; in 1780 he captured Mobile; and in 1781 Gálvez captured the British stronghold at Pensacola.

Great Americans Issue: General Henry Knox (1985)
8¢ • Scott 1851
Henry Knox (1750–1806) first saw action at the Battle of Bunker Hill as a member of the Boston Grenadier Corps. It was Knox's suggestion to add the cannon captured at Fort Ticonderoga to the Continental Army, and he was assigned the daunting task of transporting the captured cannons and mortars 300 miles to Boston in the dead of winter. Knox continued to organize the placement and transport of American artillery and munitions throughout the war, including the creation of a national arsenal. In 1789 he was appointed the country's first Secretary of War.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Military Leaders

- **Navy Issue: John Paul Jones & John Barry**
  - 1¢ • Scott 790

- **John Paul Jones Issue**
  - 15¢ • Scott 1789

- **Lafayette Issue: 175th Anniversary of Arrival of Lafayette in America**
  - 3¢ • Scott 1010

- **Lafayette Bicentenary**
  - 3¢ • Scott 1097

- **American Bicentennial: 200th Anniversary of Arrival of Lafayette in America**
  - 13¢ • Scott 1716

- **Bernardo de Galvez Issue**
  - 15¢ • Scott 1826

- **Great Americans Issue: General Henry Knox**
  - 8¢ • Scott 1851
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Soldiers & Other War Heroes

Nathan Hale (1925)  
½¢ • Scott 551  
Captain Nathan Hale (1755–1776) was born in Coventry, Connecticut and educated at Yale University. By 1776 the Continental Army was in desperate need of accurate information about British activities in New York City, and Washington asked for a volunteer to secure the needed intelligence. Hale volunteered to go behind enemy lines. The exact details of his activities in New York are unknown, but when he was captured and the notes and drawings he had made were discovered hidden in his clothes. He freely admitted that he was a Patriot soldier and was hanged as a spy the next morning on the orders of General William Howe. His body was left on display as a warning. One witness to his execution reported Hale's last words as "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." He was 21 years old.

Battle of Monmouth: Molly Pitcher Overprint (1928)  
2¢ • Scott 646  
Mary Ludwig (1754–1832) accompanied her first husband, John Hays, when he joined the American army, and acted as a nurse, cook, and washwoman. She became a heroine during the Battle of Monmouth on June 28, 1778 when she carried water for the men and to help cool the cannons, thus earning her nickname of "Molly Pitcher." When her husband collapsed from his wounds, she is reported to have taken over firing his cannon, holding her position throughout the remainder of the battle.

Liberty Issue: Patrick Henry (1955)  
$1 • Scott 1052  
Patrick Henry (1736–1799) was a fiery patriot whose passionate orations seemed to distill the revolutionary fervor sweeping the country into language everyone could understand. In 1775 he uttered the explosive words that blazed their way onto the pages of American history: "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

Contributors to the Cause:  
Sybil Ludington (1975)  
8¢ • Scott 1559  
Sybil Ludington (1761–1839) is one of the few heroines of the Revolutionary War who is remembered by name. Her father was the commander of the 7th Regiment, Dutchess County (NY) Militia. On April 25, 1777, word was received that British troops were burning buildings in Danbury, Connecticut, but Col. Ludington's men were scattered throughout the county, busy with spring planting. Sixteen-year-old Sybil rode throughout the night to sound the muster alert to the different farms. Sybil continued to serve the militia throughout the war as a messenger.

Salem Poor (1975)  
10¢ • Scott 1560  
Salem Poor (late 1740s–1802) was born a slave, but was able to purchase his freedom from his owner in 1769. In May 1775 he enlisted in the Continental Army mustering with the minutemen at Concord and to serve until 1780. For his actions at Bunker Hill, fourteen officers joined in signing a petition recognizing his bravery. Of the several thousand men who fought the British at Bunker Hill, he was the only one so honored.

Peter Francisco (1975)  
18¢ • Scott 1562  
As a 5-year-old Peter Francisco (ca.1760–1831) was found abandoned on a dock at City Point (now Hopewell), Virginia, dressed in the remains of rich clothing and speaking no English. He joined the Continental Army at age 16 and passed into legend for his bravery and feats of strength. One of the most dramatic stories is depicted on the stamp and shows Francisco at the Battle of Camden, South Carolina, where he single-handedly managed to save a 1,110-pound cannon from the British.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Soldiers & Other War Heroes

Nathan Hale
½¢ • Scott 551

Battle of Monmouth: Molly Pitcher
Overprint
2¢ • Scott 646

Liberty Issue: Patrick Henry
$1 • Scott 1052

 Contributors to the Cause:
Sybil Ludington
8¢ • Scott 1559

 Contributors to the Cause:
Salem Poor
10¢ • Scott 1560

 Contributors to the Cause:
Peter Francisco
18¢ • Scott 1562
Lexington & Concord (April 19, 1775):

On April 19, 1775, the British Military Governor of Massachusetts, General Thomas Gage, sent about 700 regular soldiers from Boston to Concord to destroy known rebel military stores. Although meant to be a surprise attack, the Committee of Safety learned about the march almost immediately, and chairman Dr. Joseph Warren sent out warning riders Paul Revere, William Dawes, and Dr. Samuel Prescott to alert the militia. When the British column arrived at Lexington as dawn was breaking, they found a small group of armed militia facing them on the village green. No one knows who fired the first shot, but it apparently was not from one of the men facing each other across the green. Nevertheless, the British opened fire on the militia, killing eight and wounding ten as the colonials fell back. It was the first official battle of the Revolutionary War.

The British troops then advanced on their main target, Concord, successfully entering the town before being confronted a large force of minutemen Concord's North Bridge. This time the encounter led to a rout of the British regulars. Both minutemen and militia from throughout the surrounding area joined in the pursuit of the retreating soldiers, who made it back to Boston only after suffering heavy casualties of nearly 20 percent. The Revolutionary War was now well begun.

Lexington-Concord Issue: Birth of Liberty (1925)
2¢ • Scott 618
Lexington-Concord Battle: Birth of Liberty (1975)
10¢ • Scott 1563

Both of these issues feature the oil painting Birth of Liberty, by Henry Sandham, which hangs in the Lexington Town Hall. This painting symbolizes the two battles that touched off the Revolutionary War.

Lexington-Concord Issue: The Minute Man (1925)
5¢ • Scott 619

The subject of the stamp design was taken from a photograph of The Minute Man statue by Daniel Chester, erected at Concord, Massachusetts in 1875. The name came from the requirement that one-third of the members of each Massachusetts militia regiment were "to be ready at a minute's warning with a fortnight's provision, and ammunition and arms."
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Lexington & Concord

Lexington-Concord Issue:
Washington at Cambridge
1¢ • Scott 617

Lexington-Concord Issue:
Birth of Liberty
2¢ • Scott 618

Lexington-Concord Issue:
The Minute Man
5¢ • Scott 619

Lexington-Concord Battle:
Birth of Liberty
10¢ • Scott 1563
Two independent plans to capture the British-held Fort Ticonderoga, strategically located in New York State on a hill overlooking Lake George and Lake Champlain, led to an unlikely joint command: Ethan Allen, the colonel of a Vermont militia group that was not a part of the Continental Army, and the duly commissioned Continental officer, Colonel Benedict Arnold. Allen had been sent by Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull to secure the lightly garrisoned fort against any attempt at a British invasion from Canada. The Massachusetts Committee of Safety had ordered Arnold to complete the same task. Both men claimed the right of command over their joint forces and only barely managed a compromise. Their surprise attack on the fort was made in the early morning when most of the garrison (including the sentry at the gate) were asleep. The British, who hadn't heard about the engagements in Massachusetts had no idea why they were being attacked. When one of the British officers, who had locked himself in a room, asked Allen under whose authority he was acting, Allen is famously supposed to have replied, "In the name of the great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!" However, the story is entirely apocryphal. Eyewitness accounts reported his response as "Come out, you old rat!" or even something a bit earthier. The victory gave the Americans control over a vital route from Canada. It also provided the Continental Army with six mortars, three howitzers, seventy-eight cannon, and related munitions that would later be transported to Boston in the dead of winter by the herculean efforts of Henry Knox. The colorful Ethan Allen emerged a folk hero, while the more reserved Benedict Arnold received little more than the satisfaction of managing to restrain the drunken Green Mountain Boys, who had broken into the fort's supply of rum, from accidently burning down the fort.

Issued for the bicentenary of the fort's capture, the stamp design includes a map of Fort Ticonderoga and a portrait of Ethan Allen (1738–1789) standing in front of the captured artillery.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Fort Ticonderoga (May 10, 1775)

Fort Ticonderoga Issue
3¢ • Scott 1071
In 1775 the British were well entrenched in Boston, but to truly command the area surrounding that hotbed of revolutionary fervor the British army needed to control two hills on the Charlestown peninsula that overlooked the city: Bunker Hill and Breeds Hill. The Massachusetts Committee of Public Safety learned of British plans and hurried to occupy the hills overlooking city and harbor. Some 1,400 Massachusetts and Connecticut militia under the command of Colonel William Prescott moved in overnight to build fortifications on Breed's Hill, which although lower than Bunker Hill was closer to the city. They were joined about approximately 1,000 additional militia. British commander Sir William Howe was ordered to take the hill. Repulsed with great losses in their first two attempts, the British soldiers ultimately broke the American line. The militia were nearly out of ammunition and supplies, and the final encounter came down to using muskets as clubs as the colonials retreated towards Cambridge. The exhausted British troops followed as far as Bunker Hill where they dug in. Although the British took the field they did so at great cost: out of a force of about 3,000 they had suffered 1,034 casualties. The Americans lost 420 killed and wounded. The moral victory went to the rebel militia who had proved that they could face up to the vaunted British regular army in combat. British confidence was shaken; they now knew that there would be no easy automatic victory when faced with the rebel troops. The Americans, under the command of General George Washington, would retake the hills a few days later and in nine months the British would abandon Boston.

Historic Flag Series: Bunker Hill, 1775 (1968)  
6¢ • Scott 1351

No one knows which flag actually was carried by the American militia on Breed's Hill, but artist John Trumbull relied on eyewitness accounts when he chose to include the popular red flag with a pine tree emblem from New England (now known as the Continental Flag) in his famous painting. The flag, known today as the “Bunker Hill Flag” and depicted on the stamp, is actually the result of a nineteenth-century printing error. Although the flag was shown with the heraldic hatching that indicated a red field, the person who chose the color for the printing plate mistakenly used blue.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Bunker (Breed’s) Hill (June 16, 1775)

Liberty Issue: Bunker Hill Monument
2½¢ • Scott 1034

John Trumbull Issue:
Detail from The Battle of Bunker’s Hill
6¢ • Scott 1361

Bunker Hill Battle
10¢ • Scott 1564

Historic Flag Series: Bunker Hill,
1775 • 6¢ • Scott 1351
Battle of Brooklyn (August 27–29, 1776)

Sometimes called the Battle of Long Island or the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, this engagement was the first military action between the British and Rebel armies after the Declaration of Independence was issued on July 4. The new commander in chief, George Washington, had disposed his fractious military units in a fortifications at the southern end of Manhattan and on the Brooklyn Heights on Long Island, a total of about 10,000 men. Although he knew New York City was nearly indefensible, it was important that he try to prevent the British troops under General Howe (a total force of about 32,000 men including more than 8,000 Hessian mercenaries) from capturing her — along with the nascent American army. The first day of the engagement, the Americans awoke to find that, under cover of darkness and led by a local Loyalist, British troops had moved from their encampment on Staten Island to a commanding position on the Heights of Guan, where a small force of American troops were stationed. Due to the leadership of American commanders William Alexander of Pennsylvania and Mordecai Gist of Maryland, and the bravery of the men they led, a small band of between 260–270 Marylanders was able to hold off the British advance long enough for many of their fellow Americans to escape to the Brooklyn Heights. Of the men covering their retreat, 256 were killed and buried in a mass grave. Washington, watching the fighting from the army’s position on the Brooklyn Heights is reported to have exclaimed in anguish, “Good God, what brave fellows I must this day lose!” The American losses for the day were 312 killed, 1,407 wounded, and 1,186 captured, while the British forces suffered fewer than 400 killed, wounded, and missing. The British captured New York on September 15 and held the city until the end of the war, not withdrawing their troops until the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

Battle of Brooklyn: Washington Evacuating Army (1951)  
3¢ • Scott 1003

In an amazing feat of organization and determination, and with the assistance of the sailor-soldiers commanded by Col. John Glover of Marblehead, Massachusetts, Washington was able to evacuate his entire army across the choppy, fogged-in East River to safety. The evacuation was begun by night and in great stealth, but even with the heavily overloaded boats it was 7 a.m. on the morning of August 30 before the last of the army reached the far shore. All 9,000 men had been evacuated safely. The central design of the stamp shows Washington directing the evacuation from a point near the Fulton Ferry house. The engraving is an accurate depiction of both the house and the flat-bottomed ferries normally used to cross the East River at that spot, then know as the Brookland Ferry Crossing.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Battle of Brooklyn (August 27–29, 1776)

Battle of Brooklyn: Washington
Evacuating Army
3¢ • Scott 1003
White Plains (October 28, 1776)

Threatened by encirclement of the British forces under General William Howe, Washington decided to pull the Continental Army back from its position at the northern end of Manhattan to the village of White Plains. Under pressure from Congress, however, he was forced to leave 2,800 men with Colonel Robert Magaw to defend Fort Washington and another 3,500 with Major General Nathanael Greene to hold Fort Lee. This left Washington with about 8,200 men to face Howe's 14,000 British and Hessian troops. Although they managed modest entrenchments on Chatterton's Hill, the Continentals ultimately were dislodged by the British and retreated north to another hill about five miles away. After a few days of heavy rains, Howe advanced to find that the Continental army had slipped away, but decided not to follow them.

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Battle of White Plains Issue: Alexander Hamilton's Battery (1926)

2¢ • Scott 629

Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804) was a fervent and articulate supporter of the patriot cause, who joined the New York Artillery and quickly became a skilled and popular commander. At the Battle of White Plains, Hamilton's artillery battery covered the retreat of the Continental Army from Chatterton's Hill, holding back a large Hessian force. The unit still exists as the Alexander Hamilton Battery – Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery and is considered the oldest unit in the U.S. Regular Army. Continually praised for his courage and leadership, Hamilton eventually served as Washington's aide.

Alexander Hamilton Bicentennial (1957)

3¢ • Scott 1086

Following the war, the young lawyer helped to frame the U.S. Constitution and served as the new country's first Secretary of the Treasury. A believer in a strong national government, he was the major author of The Federalist (1787), a classic work on government that is still studied today. Although they often disagreed, Hamilton backed Thomas Jefferson for president against his opponent Aaron Burr, whom he described as "a man ... who ought not to be trusted with reins of government," and then opposed Burr's candidacy for governor of New York. Hamilton was challenged to a duel by Burr in 1804 and fatally shot.
A Military History of America
Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

White Plains (October 28, 1776)

Battle of White Plains
Issue: Alexander Hamilton's Battery
2¢ • Scott 629

Alexander Hamilton Bicentennial
3¢ • Scott 1086
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements
(chronological order)

Battle of Trenton (December 26, 1776)

Following the defeat at White Plains Washington moved his portion of the army, now a force of about 3,000 men, into New Jersey, slowly heading towards Philadelphia as he waited for Maj. Gen. Charles Lee to catch up to him, something it turned out Lee had no intention of doing. Washington and Gen. Nathanael Greene finally crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania on December 7, bringing all the available boats across the river with them. When the pursuing British Army under General Howe reached the Delaware there were no boats to be found and Howe decided to go into winter camp, posting his troops at Trenton, Burlington, Princeton, Perth Amboy, and New Brunswick.

The Hessian forces were stationed at the front, in Trenton and Burlington. Three regiments of Hessians (about 1,200 men) were quartered in Trenton under the command of Colonel Johann Rall. Rall had little regard for the fighting abilities of the Americans and didn't bother with fortifying the town, although he had been ordered to do so. When his officers suggested breastworks, he replied, "Let them come! We want no trenches! We'll use the bayonet!"

In a bid to raise the failing morale of his troops, Washington decided on a predawn attack on Trenton the day after Christmas and prepared an attack force of about 2,400 soldiers. To the Continentals' dismay, that night a storm blew in, first snow then freezing rain, followed by more snow and hail. Col. John Fitzgerald, Washington's aide, found the time to write a note in his diary as the troops prepared to embark on the icy river:

It is fearfully cold and raw and a snowstorm is setting in. The wind northeast and beats into the faces of the men. It will be a terrible night for those who have no shoes. Some of them have tied only rags about their feet: others are barefoot, but I have not heard a man complain.

The storm delayed their crossing by several hours and proved a brutal experience to the ill-clad American troops, two or perhaps three of whom fell out and froze to death along the march. However, the Hessian second-in-command had decided that the weather was too bitter to send out the regular pre-dawn patrol and the army approached undetected. The American attack was rapid and effective; the Hessian soldiers were completely unprepared. After a furious ninety-minute battle, the Hessians surrendered. Although many individuals escaped, 106 Hessians were killed or wounded and 868 captured. Only a few Americans were wounded, one of whom, Lt. James Monroe, would become the fifth president of the United States. Washington returned to Pennsylvania with his prisoners and a great store of arms and ammunition.

Prominent Americans Issue:
Thomas Paine (1968 untagged, 1973 tagged)
40¢ • Scott 1292

On Christmas Day Washington had his officers read aloud to the soldiers portions of an inspirational article that had appeared in the Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Magazine on December 23rd. “The Crisis” began: These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.” Author Thomas Paine (1737–1809) would go on to write thirteen “Crisis” articles between December 23, 1776 and April 19, 1783; they would eventually be collected and preserved as The American Crisis.

American Bicentennial:
Washington Crossing the Delaware
(1976)
24¢ • Scott 1688

One of the set of four bicentennial souvenir sheets, the sheet honoring the icy river crossing into New Jersey and the victory at Trenton is based on a copy of Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's massive (12x21-foot) oil painting Washington Crossing the Delaware (1851). Although it is a dramatic and inspiring portrayal of the event, the painting is more romantic than historically accurate — beginning with the fact that the crossing was made at night, not by day.
Battle of Trenton (December 26, 1776)
Battle of Princeton (January 3, 1777)

Infuriated by the debacle at Trenton, General Howe ordered Lord Cornwallis to take 6,000 regular troops and march against the American position. Cornwallis left about 1,200 men as a rear guard at Princeton and arrived at Trenton late in the day on January 2. Believing he held all the advantages, Cornwallis decided to wait until the next morning to attack and "bag the fox."

During the night, however, Washington left a few hundred men in place to keep the campfires burning and to make noises suggesting that the Americans were entrenching their position. In the meantime, the rebel army, about 4,500 strong, slipped away under cover of darkness, wrapping the wheels of the cannons in cloth to muffle the sound. Washington then turned his army north towards Princeton, burning the bridge over the swollen Stony Creek behind them.

When the British troops awoke to find their adversary had vanished, Cornwallis made a second mistake: he assumed that the Americans were retreating south and that he could pin them against the Delaware River.

In the meantime, an advance force of Americans had encountered the British regiments waiting at Princeton and were being pushed back when Washington arrived with the main body of the army. He rode directly for the British line, through intense fire, yelling for his men to follow. The British broke and Washington urged his men in pursuit, crying "It's a fine fox hunt, boys!" At the end of the engagement, the American casualties were limited to a few dozen; the British casualties were in excess of 100 killed and wounded, plus 280 captured. Knowing that his exhausted men could not go up against Cornwallis and his freshly provisioned troops, Washington withdrew to winter quarters in Morristown, New Jersey, while Cornwallis, stymied by the destroyed bridge at Stony Creek, retired to New Brunswick. The twin victories provided an enormous boost for American morale as the mostly amateur soldiers realized they could stand against the professional British army. They also provided sufficient encouragement for British enemies on the continent to begin sending supplies to the rebellious colonies.

American Bicentennial:
Washington at Princeton (1977)

The stamp issue celebrating Washington's victory over Cornwallis is based on the Charles Willson Peale painting George Washington at Princeton (1779). The stamp depicts Washington with his hand resting on a cannon barrel, captured battle flags at his feet; behind him can be seen Nassau Hall, Hessian prisoners, and a blue battle flag with a circle of thirteen stars. Although the composition is a product of artistic license, Peale was in fact a participant in the battle as the commander of a company of Philadelphia militia.
Battle of Princeton (January 3, 1777)
Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777)

As part of the greater Burgoyne Campaign to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies and take control of the fertile agricultural area of central New York, Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger was to lead a hand-picked army across the Mohawk Valley towards Albany, where his forces would join those of General Burgoyne. Along the way they were to seize the small, lightly garrisoned Fort Stanwix (present-day Rome, New York), originally built by the British in 1758 to protect portage along the Mohawk River, but later allowed to fall into ruins. When they reached the fort, however, it was to find it rebuilt and reinforced. The American commander, Col. Peter Gansvoort, refused to surrender, and without artillery to subdue the garrison, St. Leger decided to settle in for a siege.

Receiving word of the British advance, a relief force of about 800 Tryon County Militia plus sixty Oneida warriors under the command of Brig. Gen. Nicholas Herkimer set out from Fort Dayton. A mixed force of Iroquois allies and British regulars was dispatched to intercept the Americans, and the inexperienced and ill-disciplined militia were easily ambushed as they followed a narrow corduroy road through a deep, boggy ravine. Herkimer's horse was shot from under him and his leg shattered by a musket ball, but he had himself propped up under a tree to direct his men the best he could. A severe thunderstorm brought a pause to the fighting, and Herkimer took the opportunity to direct his men to fire in pairs: one man shooting as the other reloaded. When the heavy rain eased up in the early afternoon the British force withdrew and the shattered remains of Herkimer's force began a retreat to Fort Dayton. With American casualties totaling at least 500 out of the original force, it was the single bloodiest day of the war.

Gansvoort continued to resist the siege efforts and when St. Leger received word that a large relief force led by Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold (Arnold cleverly had the word spread that his advancing army was much larger than its true numbers), the disgruntled Iroquois demanded that they withdraw. Without St. Leger's support from the west, Burgoyne's Campaign was destined to fail.

The gravely injured Herkimer had to have his leg amputated; unfortunately, the inexperienced surgeon could not stop the bleeding. Herkimer faced his impending death with great calm, asking only for his pipe and a Bible to read. He died on August 16.

American Bicentennial: Battle of Oriskany (1977)

The stamp is based on the painting, Herkimer at the Battle of Oriskany (c.1901), by artist and magazine illustrator Frederick C. Yohn. The artist got one major detail wrong: it was Herkimer's right leg, not his left, that was hit by musket fire. Nicholas Herkimer (1728–1777) died without issue; his large and rather grand farm house in Little Falls, New York was restored in the 1960s and is now a state historical site.
Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777)
Bennington (August 16, 1777)

In the summer of 1777 British Maj. Gen. John Burgoyne moved down the Hudson River Valley from Canada in an attempt to split the American colonies and regain control of New York State. By August, however, his supply lines were stretched too thin and provisions were falling short. In the belief that it was protected by a garrison of only 400 militia, he ordered Lt. Col. Friedrich Braun to take a force of 800 men to seize supplies from Bennington, Vermont, about forty miles distant. However, the Bennington force had just been reinforced by 1,500 New Hampshire militiamen under French and Indian War veteran Gen. John Stark, who quickly attacked and overcame the British forces; Braun himself falling mortally wounded. (When Stark died in 1822 at age 92 he was the last surviving Revolutionary War general.) At this point, fresh British troops under Lt. Col. Heinrich von Breymann arrived and attacked the Americans. The timely arrival of Col. Seth Warner’s Vermont detachment of the Continental Army, the Green Mountain Rangers, helped to repulse von Breymann’s force, thus depriving Burgoyne’s army of vital supplies. More than 200 British soldiers and officers were dead and most of the survivors (some 700 men) were taken prisoner. The Americans lost about forty men killed and thirty wounded. In one day, Burgoyne had lost 1,000 fighting men out of his original force of approximately 8,000 and doomed his campaign.

Vermont Sesquicentennial: Green Mountain Boy (1927)
2¢ • Scott 643

The Green Mountain Boys originated as a group of Bennington, Vermont men — under the leadership of Ethan Allen, his brother Ira, his cousin Seth Warner, and Remember Baker — who banded together as an unauthorized militia, determined to protect their land rights against encroachment from the state of New York. These local militiamen formed the basis of the Vermont militia that was placed under the command of Col. Seth Warner as a part of the Continental Army in 1775.

Historic Flag Series: Bennington, 1777 (1968)
6¢ • Scott 1348

According to tradition, this was the flag that flew over the garrison at Bennington, Vermont when it was attacked by Burgoyne’s forces. Supposedly it was designed and sewn by Col. Stark’s wife Molly. Unfortunately for tradition, researchers have determined that both the cotton fabric and the thread used to sew it are from an item woven on an early nineteenth-century power loom. Some scholars believe the flag was created either in 1824 for the visit of General Lafayette or in 1826 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was donated to the Bennington Museum in 1926.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Battle of Bennington (August 16, 1777)

Vermont Sesquicentennial:
Green Mountain Boy
2¢ • Scott 643

Historic Flag Series:
Bennington, 1777
6¢ • Scott 1348
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements
(chronological order)

Second Battle of Saratoga (October 7, 1777)

After Gen. John Burgoyne failed to break the American lines at Freeman's Farm some ten miles south of Saratoga, New York on September 19, 1777 (sometimes called the First Battle of Saratoga), his forward momentum in his effort to reach Albany, New York and divide the colonies came to an abrupt halt. An advance force of Continentals commanded by Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold hit the British line one mile north of the Americans' entrenched position on Bemis Heights. When they ran low on supplies the Americans were forced to withdraw. The British, having suffered having casualties and receiving the promise of reinforcements from Sir Hillary Clinton who had detoured to take Philadelphia, decided to dig in and wait.

However, the promised reinforcements failed to arrive; their commander, Gen. Henry Clinton being unable to advance any nearer than the town of Clermont, some seventy miles away. Finally, on October 7, Burgoyne attempted to break free of the opposing American forces. It was a disastrous move. The Americans had been reinforced and easily dominated the field. The Battle of Bemis Heights (the Second Battle of Saratoga) culminated in an attack led by Benedict Arnold that broke the defending line and overran the British breastworks. Under cover of darkness, Burgoyne and his troops fell back to a new position in the hills outside Saratoga. By October 12 the Americans had the greatly outnumbered British forces surrounded and under siege. Realizing that the promised reinforcements would not come and with his men on near starvation rations, on October 17, 1777 Burgoyne was forced to surrender. His troops were paroled “upon the condition of not serving again in North America during the present contest.” It was a turning point in the war, giving both France and Spain the confidence to begin openly supporting the American Revolution.

Burgoyne Campaign Issue:
The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga (1927)
2¢ • Scott 644

The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga by John Trumbull. The scene shows the British commander Gen. John Burgoyne offering his sword in surrender to the American commander Gen. Horatio Gates, who graciously refuses to accept it. The painting now hangs in the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC. Around the stamp's frame are the names of the major battles of Burgoyne's campaign: Bennington, Oriskany, Fort Stanwix, and Saratoga

American Bicentennial Issue:
Surrender at Saratoga (1977)
25¢ • Scott 1728

Full-color detail of The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga by John Trumbull focusing on the central figures of Generals Burgoyne and Gates, and their attendants: Major General Phillips and Colonel Morgan of the Virginia Riflemen. Not to be seen anywhere in the painting is the real American hero of both major battles of the engagement, Benedict Arnold. Feeling that his military accomplishments had been slighted and that he personally had been betrayed by the politicians in Washington, Arnold had turned traitor in 1779; the former hero’s name had become synonymous with the word “turncoat.”

Definitive: The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga (1994)
$1 • Scott 2590

An expanded version of the engraving of The Surrender of General Burgoyne by John Trumbull was used as the focal point for the $1 definitive stamp issued in 1994.
Second Battle of Saratoga (October 7, 1777)

Burgoyne Campaign Issue:
The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga
2¢ • Scott 644

American Bicentennial Issue:
Surrender at Saratoga
25¢ • Scott 1728

Definitive: The Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga
$1 • Scott 2590
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

(chronological order)

Fort Sackville Surrender (February 25, 1779)

The lands that lay north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River were claimed by both Great Britain and the newly formed United States of America. George Rogers Clark was an explorer and a surveyor who first ventured into the western frontier in 1772, participated in Lord Dunmore's War in 1774, and then settled friends and family on land he located in Kentucky. In 1776 he was petitioned Virginia to have Kentucky recognized as a county of Virginia; recognition was duly granted and Governor Patrick Henry authorized 500 pounds of gunpowder for the new county's defense. Convinced that Indian depredations in the west were being instigated (and paid for) by British officers located in forts north of the Ohio River, Clark proposed a campaign against them. In January 1778 he received a commission from Governor Henry as a lieutenant-colonel with the authorization to enlist troops. With a force of about 175 men Clark marched first on the town of Kaskaskia, then Prairie du Rocher, Fort Gage, and Cahokia — taking all of them without gunfire once the local French populace was convinced by Clark to switch allegiance. This was followed by the surrender of Vicennes and the occupation of the ungarrisoned Fort Sackville in late July. However, in December Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton left Detroit with a large company of men (primarily Indians and Canadian militia), retook the fort, and then went into winter quarters after sending most of his 500-man force away. In February 1779, Clark returned with about 170 volunteers to retake the fort. He sent word through a friendly local to the inhabitants of Vicennes warning them to stay indoors.

GENTLEMEN—Being now within two miles of your village with my army, determined to take your fort this night, and not being willing to surprise you, I take this method to request such of you as are true citizens and willing to enjoy the liberty I bring you, to remain still in your houses; and that those, if any there be, that are friends to the king of England, will instantly repair to the fort and join his troops and fight like men....

Although the message was read aloud in the town square, no one went to warn the British. The Americans opened fire on the unsuspecting fort, quickly moving in so close that the fort's cannon were ineffective at striking anything other nearer than the town, and firing their muskets with such accuracy that they were able to shoot at the gunners directly through the portholes. By the second day, Hamilton was ready to ask for surrender terms, but the decision to accept Clark's demand for unconditional surrender wasn't made until an Indian raiding party sent by Hamilton to attack American settlers returned, unaware of the fighting that had gone on. Most of the Indians were killed outright by Clark's men, a few were pardoned, and the remaining five were tomahawked to death in view of the fort in retaliation for settler deaths and as a warning that the British were no longer able to offer protection to their Indian allies. At 10 a.m. on February 25th, Hamilton and his 79-man garrison surrendered and were sent as prisoners to Williamsburg, Virginia. American claims to the northwestern frontier were thus validated and were used as the basis of the cession of these lands to the United States during the Treaty of Paris. In 1787 it was formed into the renamed Northwest Territory, a vast area comprising modern-day Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

George Rogers Clark Issue: Surrender of Fort Sackville to Clark (1929)

2¢ • Scott 651

George Rogers Clark (1752–1818) continued to lead military actions on the western frontier until the war's end. He had assumed personal responsibility for many of the expenses associated with these campaigns during the Revolutionary War, and when neither Congress nor the state of Virginia would reimburse him, he became the victim of creditors, eventually losing all but the small piece of land he retired to in Clarksville, Indiana in 1803.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Fort Sackville Surrender (February 25, 1779)

George Rogers Clark Issue:
Surrender of Fort Sackville to Clark
2¢ • Scott 65
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements
(chronological order)

Sullivan Expedition (July–September 1779)

In the spring of 1779 Washington ordered General John Sullivan of New Hampshire to take 4,500 troops on a burn-and-destroy mission “against the hostile tribes of the Six Nations of Indians, with their associates and adherents.” Sullivan was to take his forces north from Easton, Pennsylvania, following the Susquehanna River into central and western New York and then to destroy all the Indian villages, crops, and food supplies he could find. It was a move intended to eliminate a key British ally, the Iroquois Confederation of central New York, The Confederation was Native American alliance comprised of the Seneca, Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, and Tuscarora tribes under the leadership of the Iroquois. Two of the tribes, the Oneida and the Tuscarora, were neutral or sympathetic to the American cause. The others were allies of the British and worked with Loyalist and regular forces in a campaign of terror against settlers living primarily on the New York and Pennsylvania frontiers.

The expedition was slow to get under way, not reaching its forward camp at Tioga, New York until the end of August, two months behind schedule. In the end the delay proved to work in the army's favor as the village crops were now ready for harvest and their destruction meant that their inhabitants would be forced to depend on the British Army for food and supplies, which was Washington's intent. By the end of September Sullivan was able to report to Congress that there was “not a single town left in the Country of the five nations.” There had been little fighting, as most of the Indians had fled the advancing Continental forces; nevertheless, the total destruction of at least forty villages followed by a severe winter effectively broke both the power of the Iroquois Confederation and its alliance with Great Britain. Although raids continued sporadically throughout the war, in the end the new nation would absorb most of the Iroquois lands.

1¢ • Scott 657

Major General John Sullivan (1740–1795) was a delegate to the First Continental Congress as well as an active military officer in the Revolutionary War. Following his scorched earth campaign against the Iroquois Confederacy in 1779 he resigned his commission for reasons of poor health. He was variously a member of Congress, attorney-general of New Hampshire, governor of that commonwealth, and finally a U.S. judge until his death.
A Military History of America
Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Battles & Engagements

Sullivan Expedition (July–September 1779)

Sullivan Expedition Issue:
Maj. Gen. John Sullivan
2¢ • Scott 657
Valley Forge (December 1777–June 1778)

The 12,000 men who marched into winter camp outside Philadelphia on December 19, 1777 were not yet an army. They were bands of men (white, black, and red) from different colonies and under a variety of leaders. When they marched away on June 19, 1778 it was as a well-disciplined and reinvigorated army who would face and defeat the British regulars at the Battle of Monmouth just days later.

Winter quarters were a brutal time for the men. Despite the fact that their first assignment was building more than 2,000 log huts to house small groups of men, within days of their arrival the Schuykill river had frozen over and the campground lay under six inches of new snow. Supplies, particularly food and clothing, were in chronically short supply. The men were hungry and cold much of the time. On December 23, Washington wrote: “We have this day no less than 2,873 men in camp unfit for duty because they are barefooted and otherwise naked.” Again in January Washington wrote to Congress, pleading for supplies for his men: “If the army does not get help soon, in all likelihood it will disband.” By spring, nearly 2,000 men had died — primarily of diseases such typhus, typhoid, dysentery, and pneumonia, which were exacerbated by the close quarters and inadequate food and shelter.

Relief was on its way, first in the form of former Prussian army officer Wilhelm von Steuben who arrived at Valley Forge on February 23, 1778 with a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin. With Washington's support he began the task of transforming the amateur militia men into a professional army, with daily training and drilling that lasted from dawn to dusk. Next, in March Washington appointed the efficient and no-nonsense Gen. Nathanael Greene head of the Commissary Department, and supplies finally began to arrive in the quantity and quality necessary to maintain the forces. Finally, there came the word that France had formally acknowledged the new nation, and the revitalized army celebrated May 6, 1778 as Alliance Day. The Continental Army was now a true military entity.

Valley Forge Issue:

Washington at Prayer (1928)

2¢ • Scott 645

The story of George Washington kneeling in prayer in the snow at Valley Forge first appeared in the 1816 edition of largely fanciful and often widely inaccurate Life of George Washington, with Curious Anecdotes by Rev. Mason L. Weems, part-time parson and full-time traveling book salesman. The stamp design is based on an 1889 engraving by John C. McRae (now in the Library of Congress) after an 1866 painting made by the well-known patriotic artist Henry Brueckner, The Prayer at Valley Forge.

American Bicentennial:

Washington Reviewing His Troops (1976)

31¢ • Scott 1689

The souvenir sheet with its pane of five stamps shows a detail from the 1883 painting by William T. Trego, originally titled The March to Valley Forge, December 16, 1777 and now more popularly known as Washington Reviews His Troops at Valley Forge. One of the last of the great “history painters,” Trego titled his iconic composition after a passage in Washington Irving’s Life of George Washington that begins: “Sad and dreary was the march to Valley Forge, uncheered by the recollection of any recent triumph....”

The stamp details show (left to right): (a) Two Officers; (b) Washington; (c) Officer, black horse; (d) Officer, white horse; (e) Three soldiers.

Christmas Issue: Washington at Valley Forge (1977)

13¢ • Scott 1729

The Christmas issue for 1977 used as its central design a detail from modern artist Arnold Friberg's popular painting The Prayer at Valley Forge (1976). The original shows Washington kneeling in the snow beside his white horse, a composition Friberg first attempted at age twelve. The original painting has been on display at the Mt. Vernon Estate, but will be moved to an as-yet unknown location following Labor Day, September 2012.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Wartime Events

Valley Forge (December 1777–June 1778)

Valley Forge Issue: Washington at Prayer
2¢ • Scott 645

Christmas Issue: Washington at Valley Forge
13¢ • Scott 1729

American Bicentennial: Washington Reviewing His Troops (1976) • 31¢ • Scott 1689
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Wartime Events

Battle of Yorktown (September 28–October 19, 1781)

Also known as the Siege of Yorktown, the last major battle of the American Revolution began in September 1781 when British Lt. General Lord Charles Cornwallis let his 9,000-man army be cornered at Yorktown, Virginia with their backs against the Chesapeake Bay. He was counting on a naval relief force from New York promised by Lt. Gen. Henry Clinton, but the British ships would never arrive, having been blocked in their efforts by ships of the French navy commanded by Admiral de Grasse. The final victory was the result of a combined effort by land and sea by joint American-French action. The roughly 20,000-man land forces were led by Gen. George Washington and Lt. Gen. Jean-Baptiste de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, while Admiral comte Francois-Joseph, de Grasse brought the French fleet up from the Caribbean to fend off the British fleet and prevent them from evacuating Cornwallis's troops. The Battle of Chesapeake in August insured that there would be no rescue by sea.

General marquis de Lafayette had received orders to hold Cornwallis in Yorktown until the joint army could arrive, and by the end of September Cornwallis was surrounded by land and sea. After more than two weeks of steady bombardment, on October 17 Cornwallis asked for surrender terms. The Articles of Capitulation were signed on October 19. Pleading illness Cornwallis refused either to meet with Washington or to attend the surrender ceremony, sending his second in command, Brig. Gen. Charles O’Hara, who offered Cornwallis's sword to French General Rochambeau. Rochambeau refused, indicating that the proper person was the American General Washington. Washington also declined to accept the sword, pointing to his second in command, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln. According to legend, the British fifers played “The World Turn’d Upside Down” as some 8,000 troops, several hundred artillery pieces, thousands of muskets, plus ships, wagons, and horses were surrendered to the French and American armies. The surrender of Cornwallis led to the British government deciding to open negotiations to end the war with their former colony.

Yorktown Issue: Surrender of Cornwallis (1931)
2¢ • Scott 703
The bicolor stamp design celebrating the 150th anniversary of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown features vignette portraits of the Count de Rochambeau, General Washington, and the Count de Grasse.

American Bicentennial: The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown (1976)
13¢ • Scott 1686
The souvenir sheet shows the center detail of The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis (1819–20) by John Trumbull. The central figure, mounted on a white horse, is Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, who is extending his hand to receive Cornwallis’s sword being surrendered by Brig. Gen. Charles O’Hara. The pane of five stamps depict (left to right): (a) Two British Officers; (b) Gen. Benjamin Lincoln; (c) George Washington (mounted on a brown horse); (d) John Trumbull, Col. Cobb, von Steuben, Lafayette, Thomas Nelson; and (e) Alexander Hamilton, John Laurens, Walter Stewart.

18¢ • Scott 1937
This map on stamp design shows the field positions of the various land and naval forces during the siege at Yorktown and demonstrates in simple graphics how neatly Cornwallis had been boxed in.

Peace of 1783 (1933)
3¢ • Scott 727
On April 18, 1783 George Washington issued a General Order to the Army that contained the long awaited Proclamation of Peace and the end to armed hostilities, although the final Treaty of Paris was not signed until September 30. The stamp design shows Washington’s headquarters at the Hasbrouck House in Newburgh, New York where he remained in residence from April 1, 1782 to August 19, 1783. It was while he was headquartered in Newburgh that he established the military award he called the Badge of Military Merit, now known as the “Order of the Purple Heart.”
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Wartime Events

American Bicentennial: The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown (1976) • 13¢ • Scott 1686

Yorktown Issue:
Surrender of Cornwallis
2¢ • Scott 703

American Bicentennial:
Map — Battle of Virginia Capes
18¢ • Scott 1938

American Bicentennial:
Map — Battle of Yorktown
18¢ • Scott 1937

Peace of 1783 (1933)
3¢ • Scott 727
Flags were hand-sewn by local seamstresses and usually were designed by those commissioned them. Fragile by nature, in 200+ years most have been lost or else disintegrated beyond repair. Still, as the war progressed, some designs took on a special resonance with the troops and the general populace. The following are those that have been memorialized on stamps.

**Historic Flag Series:**

**Philadelphia Light Horse,**

1775 (1968)

6¢ • Scott 1353

The flag was created for a mounted troop formed by a small group of Philadelphia businessmen and gentlemen on November 17, 1774. The elaborate, hand-painted design originally included a small Union Jack in the upper left, but the canton was later painted over in blue and silver stripes. It was presented to the troop by Captain Abraham Markoe in 1775. The Light Horse escorted George Washington when he left Philadelphia in June 1775 to take command of the Continental Army in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and served in various major campaigns and engagements throughout the war. Known today as The First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry, it is considered America's oldest continuously serving mounted unit. Replaced after the Revolutionary War by a Federal Eagle standard, the Philadelphia Light Horse standard continued to be carried on special ceremonial occasions such as the Troop's anniversary and the nation's centennial celebrations. The original Revolutionary War flag is housed in the Troop Museum in Philadelphia (see www.firsttroop.com), but is currently being stored off site until repairs to the Armory, which was damaged by fire, can be completed. Copies of the original Colors have been carried since the retirement of the original and are also in the Troop's collection.

**Washington's Cruisers (1968)**

6¢ • Scott 1347

This is the flag flown from a small squadron of ships outfitted by George Washington in the fall of 1775 at his own expense and before the Continental Navy was formed. Their goal was to keep British ships from resupplying troops in Boston. The design is a variation of the New England Pine Tree flag, common since the 1600s, and seems to have been the suggestion of Colonel Joseph Reed, George Washington's aide and military secretary at the time. The traditional image of the Washington Cruisers Flag with its branched pine tree is shown on the stamp issued in 1968. None of the original flags have survived and there are no contemporary descriptions that describe them in exact detail.

**First Navy Jack, 1775 (1968)**

6¢ • Scott 1354

According to the U.S. Navy's Naval History & Heritage Command, the "belief that ships of the Continental Navy flew a jack consisting of alternating red and white stripes, having the image of a rattlesnake stretched out across it, with the motto 'Don't Tread on Me' ... rests on no firm base of historical evidence." What is documented is that Commodore Esek Hopkins (1718–1802), the Commander in Chief of the Continental Navy, used as his personal standard a flag presented to the Continental Congress in 1775 by Col. Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina. The Gadsden Flag depicted a coiled rattlesnake, ready to strike, on a yellow field with the words “Don't Tread on Me.” Commodore Hopkins himself referred to the Navy jack used by the fleet in January 1776 as “the strip'd jack” and later mentions using a “striped flagg” as a signal. Nevertheless, the popular flag motif of a rattlesnake and “Don't Tread on Me” slogan has become enshrined among the stories of the American Revolution.
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Flags of the Revolutionary War

Historic Flag Series: Philadelphia Light Horse, 1775
6¢ • Scott 1353

Historic Flag Series: Washington's Cruisers
6¢ • Scott 1347

Historical Flag Series: First Navy Jack, 1775
6¢ • Scott 1354
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Flags of the Revolutionary War

**Historic Flag Series: Grand Union (1968)**

6¢ • Scott 1352

The Grand Union Flag has thirteen alternating red and white stripes and the British Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner (the canton). The design was intended to show that the united colonies still maintained an allegiance to Great Britain, while asserting their rights to be treated as equals. It was first hoisted on Prospect Hill near Washington's Cambridge headquarters on January 2, 1776.

**Betsy Ross Issue (1952)**

3¢ • Scott 1004

The story of Elizabeth (Betsy) Ross (1752–1836) and the first Stars and Stripes is based on family reminiscences and a very small amount of factual historical information. According to the family's story, George Washington (who attended the same church as Betsy and her late husband John), Robert Morris (another member of Christ Church), and George Ross (John's uncle), visited Mrs. Ross in her home above the family upholstery business in May 1776 and asked her if she could make a flag from a sketch they had. The rough sketch provided by the men included a six-pointed star, which Betsy corrected to a more easily cut five-point star (see “5-Pointed Star in One Snip” at www.ushistory.org/betsy/flagstar.html for instructions). Although no documents of this encounter exist, Betsy Ross is in the official records as having made ship's flags during the war. So, is the story true? What is known is that during this period of national strife and personal loss, she raised a family and supported them by her skills as a seamstress and a businesswoman. She knew George Washington personally and she is on record as having made military flags for the young republic. Perhaps the bottom line is that legends don't have to be literally true to be important. Sometimes they tell the story we need to hear.

**Historic Flag Series: First Stars and Stripes (1968)**

6¢ • Scott 1350

Also known as the Betsy Ross Flag, the thirteen stripes with thirteen stars in a circle on a blue field is a familiar icon in American history. First depicted in 1892 in a 9x12-foot painting by Charles H. Weisgerbert, who based his portrait of Betsy Ross on a photographs and life sittings of her daughters and other female relatives. She is shown displaying the finished flag with its thirteen stripes and circle of thirteen stars on a blue field to Washington, Morris and Ross. This image became part of the public consciousness in 1895 when millions of small reprints of the painting were sold for small sums to pay for the restoration of Betsy Ross's house. The iconic details were repeated in a 1908 painting by E. Percy Moran titled *The Birth of Old Glory*, which was widely reprinted in 1917.

**Historical Flag Series: Rhode Island (1968)**

6¢ • Scott 1349

Although tradition holds that Rhode Islanders fought with other minutemen outside Boston (1775), at the Battles of Trenton (1776) and Brandywine Creek (1777), the actual regiments were not formed until 1781. Certainly, by the Siege at Yorktown, Rhode Islanders were carrying the familiar Hope flag with its canton of thirteen stars and a ship's anchor below a banner that read: “HOPE.” The anchor and motto had been used as a symbol of Rhode Island since 1647 and both appear in today's state flag. Rhode Islanders also were distinguished by their raising of a largely African-American regiment. Known as the “Black Regiment,” the 1st Rhode Island was consolidated in January 1781 and its soldiers fought through the remainder of the war. Baron Closen, a German officer with the French Royal Deux-Ponts, described the 1st Rhode Islanders as “the most neatly dressed, the best under arms, and the most precise in its manoeuvres.”
A Military History of America

Revolutionary War (1775–1781) — Flags of the Revolutionary War

Historic Flag Series: Grand Union
6¢ • Scott 1352

Betsy Ross Issue
3¢ • Scott 1004

Historic Flag Series: First Stars and Stripes
6¢ • Scott 1350

Historical Flag Series:
Rhode Island
6¢ • Scott 1349
In the early 1800s the United States was trying to maintain an uneasy position between England and France, who were once again at war. American attempts to remain a neutral trading partner with both countries hit a stone wall in 1807 when Parliament passed the Orders in Council, which required neutral countries to obtain a British license before trading with France or French colonies. In addition, British warships had begun stopping American merchant vessels and seizing sailors in order to supplement the ranks of their own navy. Public indignation boiled over, however, when a British frigate actually opened fire on an American naval vessel. The country was outraged and demanded action. President Thomas Jefferson (served 1801–1809) felt that the United States was not prepared for war and that a shipping embargo restricting trade with the combatants would defuse the problem. Unfortunately, it proved ineffective: British ships continued to impress American sailors, and tensions began to rise on the northern and western frontiers of the United States as well. Jefferson’s successor, James Madison (served 1809–1817), also hoped to avoid open conflict. He repealed the Embargo Act and asked Congress instead to pass a Non-Intercourse Act that would specifically prohibit trade with both France and England. When this also proved an ineffective deterrent, Congress passed a bill in 1810 saying that if either France or Great Britain dropped their own trade restrictions with the United States, the U.S. would in turn impose non-intercourse restrictions with the other country. Napoleon indicated that he would agree to this proposal, and in November 1810 Madison stopped trade with Great Britain. However, by 1811 war hawks in Congress, led by Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, were pressing for direct action to stop British interference with American commerce and territorial ambitions. Although both the Senate and the House of Representatives were bitterly divided along regional lines as to the wisdom of a direct confrontation with England, ultimately Madison gave in and on June 18, 1812 the President signed a declaration of war against England.

In an incredible misjudgment of the situation, the decision was made to invade Canada by a pathetically small army of 7,000, which Congress confidently (and inaccurately) expected to be enlarged by state militia. The governor of the Michigan territory was charged with marching from Detroit into Canada; in the event, when faced with a small mixed force of Canadian soldiers and Indian allies led by the Shawnee war chief Tecumseh, he panicked and abandoned not only Canada but Detroit and the entire Michigan territory without any shots being fired.

Fortunately, there were naval successes to offset Hull’s abysmal performance. In September 1813, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry engaged British naval forces on Lake Erie, ultimately forcing them to surrender, and keeping the Northwest Territory in American hands. The
governor of the Indiana territory, William Henry Harrison, would later retake Detroit in the Battle of Thames.

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in April 1814, however, Great Britain was able to turn her full attention to her former colonies. A counter-offensive in August saw British troops in Washington, DC, dining on an abandoned executive meal for forty in the White House before setting the presidential residence on fire, as well as burning the Capitol and other public buildings in revenge for the American burning of York (present-day Toronto) in 1813.

Nevertheless, a small garrison of Americans stationed at Fort McHenry was able to hold the British advance at Baltimore. After withstanding a bombardment lasting twenty-five hours, the fort's defenders hoisted a large American flag, inspiring lawyer Francis Scott Key, who was on a ship in the harbor, to write a poem he titled “The Star Spangled Banner.” An attempt by the British fleet to invade New England via New York at Plattsburg also was foiled by American ships, leaving a door open to a settlement of the conflict, which was arrived at on Christmas Eve 1814 when both sides signed the Treaty of Ghent (ratified by Congress on February 17, 1815). Nothing had changed; the two sides merely agreed to stop fighting, exchange prisoners, and maintain the current Canada-U.S. borders.

It was at this point that a totally unnecessary battle took place on January 8, 1815, between 5,000 British troops and 4,000 Americans under Andrew Jackson who were dug in before the city of New Orleans to protect U.S. access to the Mississippi River. Both sides were unaware that a peace treaty had been concluded, but the defeat of the British at New Orleans left Americans feeling that they had indeed achieved a place in the world of nations and led many to celebrate it as a “second war of independence.”

Francis Scott Key's original manuscript copy of his “Star-Spangled Banner” poem. It is now on display at the Maryland Historical Society

Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans.
Battle of Lake Erie (September 10, 1813)

In February 1813 Master-Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry was assigned to Commodore Isaac Chauncey's command on Lake Ontario. Chauncey, however, decided that Perry would be of more use on Lake Erie where an American fleet was being built to confront the British squadron already in position on the lake. By July six ships had been completed and six more had arrived from Buffalo. The Battle of Lake Erie between the British and American squadrons took place September 10, 1813. At the beginning of the encounter Perry was aboard his flagship USS Lawrence, which took most of the enemy fleet's fire. Finally, with the ship severely damaged and more than 80 percent of her crew killed or wounded, Perry transferred to the USS Niagara, which had remained largely on the sidelines. He carried with him the Lawrence's battle flag, emblazoned with the words “Don't Give Up the Ship,” a shortened version of the dying Captain James Lawrence's last command before his ship, USS Chesapeake, was forced to strike her colors to the far superior British war ship, HMS Shannon, outside Boston Harbor in June 1813:

“Tell the men to fire faster and not give up the ship. Fight her till she sinks.”

Broadsides from the Niagara swept the already damaged British ships and in the confusion two of them, the HMS Queen Charlotte and the HMS Detroit, collided. British Commander Robert Heriot Barclay soon surrendered. Perry triumphantly reported to General William Henry Harrison: “We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two ships, two brigs, one schooner and a sloop.” He was the first commander ever to defeat an entire British squadron.

Commodore O.H. Perry (1895)

Oliver Hazard Perry (1785–1819) was born in Rhode Island, the son of a U.S. Navy captain, and entered the Navy himself as a 13-year-old midshipman. By age twenty, after assignments in the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa (fighting Barbary pirates), he was appointed acting lieutenant in command of the USS Nautilus. In June 1812 the United States and Perry was assigned to Commodore Isaac Chauncey’s command on Lake Ontario. Following the war, now promoted to captain of the USS John Adams, Perry was on a diplomatic mission to Venezuela when he contracted yellow fever and died at sea on his thirty-fourth birthday.

This definitive stamp is included for the sake of completeness and because it is the least expensive U.S. stamp (Scott used $100) available to collectors that features a portrait of the Hero of Lake Erie.
A Military History of America
War of 1812 — Battles & Military Leaders

Battle of Lake Erie (September 10, 1813)

Commodore O.H. Perry
$1 • Scott 276
Capture of the HMS Macedonia (October 25, 1812):
The British commander of the HMS Macedonia, John Carden, was confident that he could take the American frigate he identified as the USS Essex. All he had to do was stand back and let his 18-pound guns destroy the other ship, armed only with heavy short-range guns. The ship he challenged, however, was the USS United States, commanded by the daring Stephen Decatur. Not only was the United States armed with 24-pound guns, Decatur proved to be far the better tactician with a well-trained and disciplined crew. Finally, the shattered Macedonia was forced to strike her colors to the almost completely undamaged United States. The captured British ship was brought in to New London, Connecticut for refitting as an American vessel, and her flag presented to First Lady Dolly Madison at a Naval Ball being held to celebrate the victory of the commander of the USS Constitution, Isaac Hull, in capturing the the HMS Guerriere. The double triumph against the Royal Navy was the high point of the War of 1812, matched only by Andrew Jackson's resounding defeat of the British forces at the Battle of New Orleans.

Battle of Lake Champlain (September 11, 1814):
When the War of 1812 broke out Lt. Thomas Macdonough, who had been on leave, wrote to then Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, requesting a return to active duty and was eventually assigned to Burlington, Vermont with the rank of master-commodore where he was placed in command of the U.S. Naval Forces on Lake Champlain. The first thing that was obvious to Macdonough was that the existing ships were in pitiful shape, which meant he was faced with the necessity of rebuilding a fleet before he could engage the British.

When Great Britain launched a major offensive to gain control of Lake Champlain in 1814 as the precursor to a northern invasion from Canada, the first goal was to secure a gateway at Plattsburg, New York, protected by a small land force under Brig. Gen. Alexander Macomb and the Lake Champlain American fleet. Although the naval forces were evenly matched in numbers, the American land troops were outnumbered three to one by the advancing British army. Since his ships were armed mainly with short-range guns, Macdonough chose to anchor them in the Plattsburg Harbor and let the British come to him, which they did on September 11. What the British fleet commander, Captain George Downie (who would be killed fifteen minutes into the engagement) didn't know was that Macdonough's double-anchored ships were set up to be winched around in order to be able to deliver two broadsides. The result was devastating and by noon the badly damaged British fleet had surrendered. For the second time in less than two years an American naval commander had captured an entire British squadron. With the fleet having surrendered, the British land forces were ordered to retreat back into Canada. It was a major victory and a deciding factor in bringing the war to a close.

Navy Issue: Stephen Decatur & Thomas Macdonough (1937) • 2¢ • Scott 791

Stephen Decatur
Captain Stephen Decatur (1779–1820) started his naval career in 1798 as a midshipman on the USS United States, then commanded by Captain John Barry, and was promoted to lieutenant the following year. Cited for conspicuous gallantry for his actions during the War with Tripoli, 1803–1804, Decatur was promoted to captain in 1804. During the War of 1812, while in command of the USS United States, he was distinguished by his engagement and capture of the British frigate Macedonia on October 25, 1812. In 1816 he was appointed to the Board of Navy Commissioners, and at a banquet honoring his appointment he offered the following toast: “Our Country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong.”

Captain Thomas Macdonough
Thomas Macdonough Jr. (1783–1825) was the son of a physician and Revolutionary war hero Dr. Thomas McDonough. For reasons unknown, Thomas Jr. changed the spelling of his last name before entering the U.S. Navy as a midshipman in February 1800 at the age of sixteen. He was part of the daring crew that, under the command of Stephen Decatur, boarded and burned the captured USS Philadelphia in Tripoli harbor in 1803. Following a two-year leave of absence, he requested a return to duty at the start of War of 1812. Following his great victory on Lake Champlain Commodore Macdonough continued to serve in the Navy. He was in command of the USS Constitution, on patrol in the Mediterranean, in the fall of 1825 when he passed away from advanced tuberculosis at the age of forty-one.
A Military History of America

War of 1812 — Battles & Military Leaders

Navy Issue: Stephen Decatur & Thomas Macdonough
2¢ • Scott 791
Battle of New Orleans (January 18, 1815):

New Orleans was a prosperous, cosmopolitan city located 100 miles upriver from the mouth of the Mississippi. In early December 1814, a British flotilla of more than fifty ships carrying 10,000 veteran troops led by Sir Edward Pakenham, the brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington, was approaching the vulnerable prize with the aim of controlling the Mississippi River and its point of access to the Gulf of Mexico. The city’s defenses were commanded by the newly arrived Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson whose 4,000 troops were comprised of regular U.S. Army units, supplemented by New Orleans militia, former Haitian slaves fighting as free men of color, frontiersmen from Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Mississippi Territory, Indians, and even a small band of pirates led by the French privateer Jean Lafitte.

On December 23, warned that a British vanguard was making its way along an unguarded waterway, Jackson ordered a nighttime attack. Although neither side could claim victory in the encounter, it bought Jackson time to withdraw his troops to the Chalmette Plantation located on a narrow strip of solid land between the approaching British and the city of New Orleans. Here Jackson dug in, building a 3/5-mile-long defensive embankment, protected on one end by the Mississippi River and on the other by a dense cypress swamp.

On December 28, Lieutenant General Pakenham attacked but was repulsed with the aid of the American ship, the Louisiana, which fired on the British troops from the river. On January 1, 1815, Pakenham ordered a sustained artillery barrage, which also was unsuccessful in dislodging the Americans.

The arrival of fresh troops encouraged Pakenham to try a massive push against the center of Jackson’s line, aided by two flanking attacks. The intention was to approach under cover of the early morning fog, but the attack was delayed and the British troops were forced to cross a quarter mile of open ground before they could close with the waiting American troops. It was close to a massacre: 251 killed (including the command’s two senior generals and Pakenham himself, who was struck by an artillery shell), 1,259 wounded, and 484 missing or captured. The American losses in comparison were minuscule: eleven killed and twenty-three wounded. The entire battle took only an hour. An eyewitness to the battle described the action:

> It was so dark that little could be seen, until just about the time the battle ceased. The morning had dawned to be sure, but the smoke was so thick that every thing seemed to be covered up in it. Our men did not seem to apprehend any danger, but would load and fire as fast as they could, talking, swearing, and joking all the time. All ranks and sections were soon broken up. After the first shot, everyone loaded and banged away on his own hook. . . . When the smoke had cleared away and we could obtain a fair view of the field, it looked, at the first glance, like a sea of blood. It was not blood itself which gave it this appearance but the red coats in which the British soldiers were dressed. Straight out before our position, for about the width of space which we supposed had been occupied by the British column, the field was entirely covered with prostrate bodies. In some places they were laying in piles of several, one on the top of the other.

The astounding one-sided victory over a numerically superior, professional army made Andrew Jackson a national hero and helped propel him into the presidency in 1829.
A Military History of America

War of 1812 — Battles & Military Leaders

Battle of New Orleans:
General Jackson
5¢ • Scott 1261
U.S. Frigate Constitution (1947)

3¢ • Scott 951

Ordered built by President George Washington as part of the Naval Armament Act of March 27, 1794 that called for six new Navy frigates, the 44-gun USS Constitution was built in Boston and launched October 21, 1797. At the beginning of the War of 1812 the Constitution was one of twenty-two commissioned U.S. warships facing the more than eighty British warships stationed off the eastern coast of North America. Although “Old Ironsides” never had to fire another round in combat after her February 1815 victories over the HMS Cyane and HMS Levant, she continued to amass successes at sea. Her final record: thirty-three wins and no losses to an enemy. The Constitution continued to serve the U.S. Navy until she was finally taken out of service in 1855, after which time she served as a training ship until 1897 when she was returned permanently to the Charlestown (MA) Navy Yard. The stamp design features a Naval architect's drawing of the Frigate Constitution and was issued on the 150th anniversary of her launching.

The War of 1812: USS Constitution (2012)

Forever • Scott number not yet assigned

In eighty-four years of patrolling the world's oceans, “Old Ironsides” was never defeated, never had an enemy set foot on her deck. From her launch in 1797 to her final international voyage in 1931–1934, the grand old ship was a source of pride to American civilians and military alike. Her greatest feats occurred during the War of 1812, during which she defeated or captured the British ships Guerriere, Java, Pictou, Lord Nelson, Susannah, Cyane, and Levant. On August 19, 2012, on the 200th anniversary of her fight with the HMS Guerriere, the Constitution set sail under her own power for only the second time since 1881.

Frigate USS Constitution (1985)

6¢ • Scott U609

Constructed of 2,000 trees shipped in from Maine to Georgia, and incorporating copper bolts and spikes provided by Paul Revere, the frigate was on her way to becoming a national icon from the day her keel was laid on November 1, 1794. “Old Ironsides” received her nickname following her August 19, 1812 encounter with the 49-gun frigate HMS Guerriere. When the enemy's shot failed to pierce the 25-inch thick, triple-layered oak hull of the American vessel, one of the sailors is said to have yelled out, “Huzzah, her sides are made of iron! See where the shot fell out!” The cheering sailors took up the name, and “Old Ironsides” she has been ever after.

Frigate USS Constitution (1988)

8.4¢ (nonprofit) • Scott U612

The USS Constitution is the world's oldest commissioned warship. Permanently berthed in Charlestown, Massachusetts, she is a national monument, open to visitors year-round. When the Boston Daily Advertiser reported in 1830 that the Secretary of the Navy had recommended the old ship be scrapped, in a fit of inspiration, 21-year-old Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. wrote a poem he titled “Old Ironsides.” Holmes' poem was a call to action that resonated with the public heart and was reprinted across the nation, ultimately forcing the Secretary of the Navy to rethink his plan and ensuring that the venerable warship would be rebuilt and continue to serve her country.

[Note: Expanded descriptions and biographical text can be found at www.stamps.org/Free-Albums]
A Military History of America
America’s Ship of State

U.S. Frigate Constitution (1947)
3¢ • Scott 951

The War of 1812:
USS Constitution
Forever • Scott 4703

Frigate USS Constitution
6¢ • Scott U609

Frigate USS Constitution
8.4¢ (nonprofit) • Scott U612
A Military History of America
Learn More, Do More, Enjoy More with America’s Stamp Club

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