

250th Anniversary of the  
Revolutionary War:  
Maryland Militia's Role in  
Founding the United States of  
America



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## GREETINGS,

This pamphlet tells the story of the service members of the Maryland Militia who sacrificed their lives and livelihood for the vision of national freedom and personal liberties; the freedom and liberties we now enjoy. The Maryland National Guard, now just over 250 years young, remains dedicated to the vision that all citizens have the opportunity to live free and to exercise the liberties that so many of our fellow Guardsmen died to gain and preserve.

***Maryland 400!***

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# Road to War

## Background

In 1634, the Calvert family received an English charter to establish the Maryland colony as a sanctuary for persecuted Catholic families. They negotiated with local indigenous people to purchase land along the eastern shore in current St. Mary's County. Colonial militia officers quickly organized "armed bands" to protect the colony from external threats and assist in maintaining the peace among the English settlers. Despite the lack of a formalized, permanent militia, the armed bands engaged in periodic battles and episodes of putting down protests.

Maryland entered the mid-1700s, a well-established member of the British colonies with a burgeoning trade flowing from its ports and coastline. As settlement expanded west from the Chesapeake Bay, farmers cultivated the fertile soil of the colony to grow tobacco, corn, and grains. By the 1760s, large plantations and small tenant farms dotted the landscape. Maryland's population expanded from its original English settlers to include communities of Irish, Scots, and German settlers who used thousands of enslaved Africans to labor in its plantations and homes. In addition to the large agrarian footprint, developing cities of Annapolis and Baltimore provided the colony with a growing urban population. Baltimore, itself, became a hub for commerce and shipbuilding, and was widely known for its diverse population of immigrants and religious groups.

By the late 1700s, Baltimore boasted the third largest population in the colonies. A carriage road connected it to Philadelphia and its ships maintained regular contact with coastal cities throughout the northern and southern colonies. Considered a "middle colony," Maryland was a conduit between the southern and northern economies. By this time, Marylanders, as did the other colonists, grew discontent with the way the British parliament administered their colony. The heavy dependence on trade through the port of Baltimore meant British taxes and restrictions disproportionately affected Maryland's economy, much like that of Boston's. As the colonies moved closer and closer to outright conflict with Great Britain, many Marylanders became outspoken critics of English policies.

## Revolutionary Spirit

Most Marylanders considered themselves loyal British citizens but parliamentary actions such as the Stamp Act of 1765 during serious economic hardship helped drive moderates closer to the growing rebellion. Marylanders across the colony resisted the Stamp Act by boycotting British goods, establishing a black market, and threatening and attacking tax collectors and British officials.

In October 1765, Annapolis newspaperman Jonas Green printed an ominous protest to the Stamp Act in his Maryland Gazette, highlighting the fears of many that the effects of the act would prove fatal for the colony (The Fatal Stamp).

Some Maryland assemblymen addressed their grievances through the Governor and issued a formal petition against the acts.

As economic conditions worsened across the colonies, radicals within Maryland founded local branches of the famed “Sons of Liberty” and pushed for colonial representation through a Continental Congress. When British ships blockaded Boston harbor, many in the Maryland Assembly saw the need for an inter-colonial partnership. Fearing the growing “radical” influence, Maryland’s Royal Governor discontinued the session of the assembly in April. This act only fanned revolutionary fervor in the state.

Not all Marylanders, however, favored a complete break from Britain. In colonial newspapers and speeches, Loyalists argued the merits of maintaining ties with England. In some communities Anglican clergy urged their members to continue supporting the king and his government. Annapolis resident Daniel Dulany the Younger, a successful member of the upper house, wrote in the Maryland Gazette the need to continue the established government. This letter instigated a running debate with pro-revolutionary Charles Carroll. This written debate captivated Maryland readers and furthered arguments about the political direction of the state.



The Fatal Stamp  
Maryland Gazette 1765  
Courtesy Maryland State Archives

## Revolutionary Actions

As the nation moved closer toward outright conflict, clashes between Loyalists and Revolutionaries intensified and became destructive. This was shown in Annapolis harbor on October 14, 1774. The merchant ship *Peggy Stewart* arrived from England with a cargo hold full of English goods and passengers. Unknown to the captain, this load included more than 2,000 pounds of tea that influential Marylanders had boycotted.



The Burning of the *Peggy Stewart*  
Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives

On this day, when the ship's co-owner, Anthony Stewart paid the customs, he triggered Maryland's own version of the famed Boston Tea Party. Angry Marylanders gathered outside Stewart's home and demanded he destroy the tea and the ship.

Accompanied by members of the "lawless mob," Stewart rowed into the harbor to alight the *Peggy Stewart* and her contents, burning all to the harbor floor.

Following the dissolution of the Maryland Assembly in April 1774, revolutionary-minded Marylanders convened their own "Convention of Maryland" in Annapolis, governing the colony through elected representatives from across the 19 counties. Maryland also sent delegates to the first Continental Congress in September 1774 in Philadelphia, joining with fellow colonists to draft resolves against British actions in Boston.

To prepare for the anticipated military response, the Annapolis Convention called to strengthen the militia. Marylanders across the colony created militias, with Mordecai Gist forming the Baltimore Independent Cadets five days ahead of the Convention. On December 3, 1774, this 60-member militia company gathered to master military exercise and defend the city. The men outfitted themselves with weapons (including bayonets), uniforms, and equipment, and drilled on a regular basis. Gist's Cadets later provided the leadership for many of Maryland's future field units

## Soldier Profile: Mordecai Gist



Mordecai Gist

Courtesy, Maryland Center for  
History and Culture

Born and raised in Baltimore County, Mordecai Gist became a successful and wealthy merchant in Baltimore at a young age, selling textiles and other imported goods in a shop on Gay Street. Gist used the profits of his business to purchase land in western Maryland to farm, using enslaved labor and indentured servants. An early supporter of the revolution, Gist joined the crowd that burned the Peggy Stewart in the Annapolis harbor in October 1774.

In December 1774, Gist and other merchants of Baltimore used their personal earnings to organize and equip an independent company of militia named “The Baltimore Independent Cadets.” Gist’s cadets drilled and operated around the city for approximately a year, before the members left to join the Continental army’s forming 1st Maryland Regiment. Gist also joined the 1st Maryland Regiment, serving and leading them throughout the American Revolution in various leadership positions.

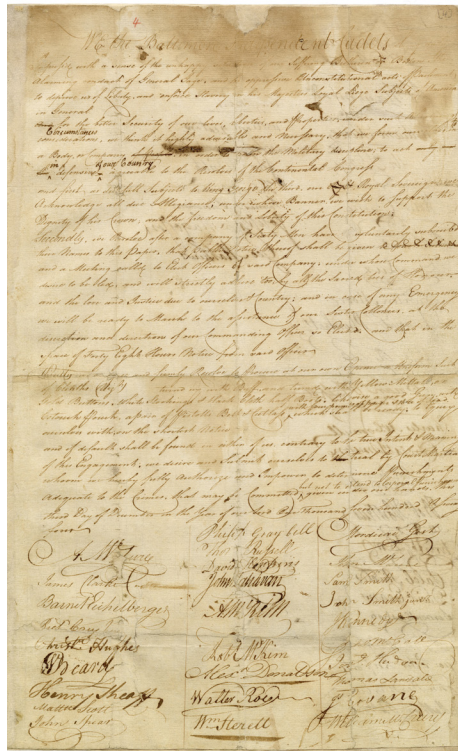
After the war, Gist founded Maryland’s chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati, a veterans’ organization for officers of the Continental Army. He later left Maryland, settling near Charleston, South Carolina, where he managed a plantation until his death in 1792.



# Artifact Profile: Articles of Incorporation for the Baltimore Independent Corps of Cadets

By signing the below charter on December 3, 1774, Mordecai Gist and 59 other Baltimoreans established one of Maryland's first Revolutionary War militias. The members trained themselves and purchased their own uniforms and equipment with the intent to join Maryland's official military organization.

Today, the descendant organization of the Independent Corps of Cadets still serves in the Maryland Army National Guard as the 1-175 Infantry, headquartered in Dundalk.



Courtesy of Maryland Center for History and Culture

# Joining the Fight

## Maryland Prepares for War

Following quickly upon the conflicts at Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress authorized the dispatch of a force of riflemen to Boston on June 14, 1775, to support what would become the Continental Army. Maryland delegates to Congress asked the committee of Frederick County to raise two companies of riflemen to join the new Continental army forming in Boston. Michael Cresap and Thomas Price were appointed Captains of the two companies. This congressional authorization to raise an army is recognized as the birthday of the United States Army.

## The 1st Maryland Battalion

In January 1776, the Maryland Convention authorized the formation of a battalion of troops consisting of nine regular companies and seven independent companies from across the state. The first regular battalion of Maryland troops was led by Maryland officers Col. George Stricker, Lt. Col. Francis Ware, First Maj. Thomas Price, and Second Maj. Mordecai Gist. Col. William Smallwood, a veteran of the French and Indian war, was elected to lead the battalion. Many members of the Independent Cadets were commissioned as officers or served as NCOs in this new battalion.

On July 6, 1776, just days after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Continental Congress published a Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms, declaring “being with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live slaves.” On that same day, the Maryland Convention, at the request of the Congress, ordered Smallwood to “immediately proceed with your battalion to the city of Philadelphia and put yourself under the continental officer commanding there”. Smallwood’s battalion departed Annapolis by barge, then quickly marched from Elkton to New York City in 24 days.



## Soldier Profile: William Smallwood



William Smallwood  
Maryland Center for History and Culture

Raised in Charles County, William Smallwood was born into a family of wealthy plantation owners and politicians. He was educated at the Eton School in England, and during the French and Indian War served a Lieutenant in the British Provincial Troops. Following in his father's footsteps, Smallwood became an elected member of the Maryland Assembly in 1761, where he was soon drawn into revolutionary politics. He was an early member of the Maryland Non-Importation Association and later served as part of the Committee of Correspondence.

In 1775, Smallwood signed Declaration of the Association of the Freemen of Maryland that called men to armed resistance to British oppression. In 1776, he

followed those words with deeds by taking command of the First Maryland Battalion.

During the Battle of Long Island, Smallwood was detained in Manhattan to preside over a court martial, so did not lead his battalion into battle. However, he rejoined his regiment in New York and led them until his promotion to General Officer in October 1776. He commanded led the Marylanders at the Battle of White Plains where he was wounded in action but returned to continue serving in the army for the remainder of the war. Smallwood returned to civilian life and managed his plantations in Maryland before re-entering politics to serve as Maryland's Governor and a member of the State Senate.

# The Battle of Long Island

By August 1776, Washington's 19,000 healthy regulars and militiamen faced a combined ground force of 27,000 British regulars and German auxiliaries threatening to encircle them in New York City. Additionally, the largest British fleet since the Armada to blockaded New York harbor. Facing elimination, Washington spread his 19,000 men behind fortifications throughout New York City, Brooklyn, and across Long Island. Although the veterans of Gist's Cadets possessed some military training, most were fresh volunteers for the cause. Additionally, the Marylanders had been hit by disease.

Of the 680 troops who departed Annapolis, only about 450 were reported fit for duty when the battalion arrived in New York City. In the early hours of August 27, Washington placed 9,000 troops in Brooklyn to defend it as long as possible. Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam and 6,000 troops defended the rear Brooklyn fortifications while Gen. William Alexander Stirling, and Maj. Gen. John Sullivan with a combined force of 3,000 Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania militiamen took the forward position on the south and east sides of Brooklyn at Gowanus Heights.

Maj. Mordecai Gist led the combined battalion of Maryland and Delaware militia to protect the extreme right flank and center, while Pennsylvania defended the left flank. On paper it looked solid. However, the British successfully encircled the Pennsylvanians and by 0800, the Americans ordered retreat to the rear fortifications. The only avenue of retreat led past a two-story house to the Gowanus Creek that they must cross to reach the rear fortifications. This house was filled with British infantry.

Washington ordered Gist's Maryland regiment of 400 soldiers to assault the stone house to direct the British fire away from the retreating army. Unhesitatingly, the Maryland militia charged the house once, twice, three times, four times, five times. As they faced fire from the front, Germans attacked from the rear. Twice the house briefly changed hands. When the Marylanders ran out of ammunition, they charged with bayonets. Gist continued the assault until he was assured that the rest of the army was safely across the Gowanus Creek.

Only then did the Marylanders retreat across the slimy marsh as British sharpshooters fired upon the retreating soldiers. No more than twelve from the original 400 Marylanders safely made it across the Gowanus Creek that day, among them Maj. Mordecai Gist. A total of 256 Marylanders gave their lives to save the American Army. As Washington watched the unfolding slaughter from the fortifications, he was heard to exclaim, “Good God, what brave fellows I must this day lose!”

But for the Marylanders’ sacrifices at Long Island, the fight for American Independence may have ended that summer on Long Island.



Battle of Long Island, by Alonzo Chappell (1858)

The American stand led by Lord Stirling at the Battle of Brooklyn, which included the men of the Maryland 400.

## Artifact Profile: Smallwood's Departure from Annapolis

This painting, housed in the Maryland Museum of Military History at the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore, features the moment on July 10, 1776, when Smallwood's Regiment departed Annapolis to join George Washington's forces in the defense of New York City. Alfred Wordsworth Thompson painted this highly stylized and inaccurate depiction of Smallwood's Regiment in 1876 and displayed it during the centennial exhibitions of the American Revolution.

Thompson was born in Baltimore in 1840. After drawing Civil War scenes for Harper's Weekly and the London Illustrated news, he studied art in Paris under Charles Gleyre and Emile Lambinet. Returning to Maryland after the Civil War, Thompson established a prominent studio in New York City and painted many scenes from the American Revolution. Other works of Thompson's can be found in the New York Historical Society, Philadelphia Union League, and the White House Art Collection.



Artifact Profile: Smallwood's Departure from Annapolis

# 10 Crucial Days

## American Setbacks

Despite the valiant effort of the Maryland Line at Long Island, the British victory forced Washington to withdraw his men from New York City and move north. Although a spirited victory over the British at Harlem Heights a few weeks later stayed their morale, the Continental army found itself outnumbered and in dire straits as the temperatures fell in the fall of 1776. Washington reorganized his force in the hilly terrain near White Plains, where he was again struck by the combined British and German force.

The Maryland Battalion showed their grit in this fight as well, charging down the hills to strike the British force as it advanced. A two-prong assault from the British ultimately broke the American flank, which forced the Marylanders to fight an orderly withdrawal. During the battle, their commander, Col. Smallwood, was twice wounded. Washington withdrew the remainder of his army into northern New Jersey, allowing the British to seize New York City. Despite the professional and aggressive actions of the Marylanders and their comrades, the American army suffered brutal losses in morale and personnel.

As winter set in, the Maryland battalion marched south with the army through New Jersey and into Pennsylvania. They made camp near the Delaware River on the opposite bank of a British and German force twice their strength.

The constant campaigning left the men of the Maryland battalion in tatters against the winter cold. In such a state, and with the enlistments of volunteers expiring every day, many members of Washington's staff as well as soldiers in the ranks worried that the revolution was petering out. Washington had to do something drastic to regain momentum and support.



In the early hours of January 2, 1777, the Americans waited for the British counterattack at a bridge on the Assunpink Creek that led to Trenton. This battle would decide the future of the cause: the Continentals had no avenue of retreat over the Delaware River. British forces launched an attack across the bridge three times, and each time was driven back. Although winning the battle, Washington realized the army's position was in danger of being surrounded so again gambled with an audacious plan. Late that night, the surviving Marylanders and their comrades quietly withdrew from their positions along the creek and marched north to Princeton, where in the early hours of January 3rd, they struck the British garrison there. The Maryland and Delaware units were attached to Gen. Hugh Mercer's brigade, in the forefront position. During the vicious battle, Mercer fell mortally wounded, causing a panic along the line. Leaderless, the men began to flee. Gen. Washington rode to the front of the line and called on the men to rally around him in a counterattack. The surprised British soldiers, who broke ranks and fled through the streets of Princeton. The British surrendered with about 200 soldiers captured.

In a span of ten days, Washington, with his stalwart Marylanders at his side, dramatically altered the course of the war and gave new confidence in Washington as a military leader. The American spirit was reinvigorated but at tremendous cost. The Maryland battalion, once 700 strong, had been worn down to around 100 survivors by January 1777. As the army wintered in Morristown, New Jersey, the Maryland battalion along with the rest of the Continental army needed to be recruited back to strength





## “These are the times that try men’s souls.”

As the Maryland Battalion camped in the brutally cold winter along the Delaware River, Thomas Paine published these famous words in his “American Crisis” pamphlet. For the men and the revolution to survive the winter, Washington needed to take drastic steps. The general ordered a surprise attack across the river in the dark between December 25 and 26, 1776. Washington bet that a victory at this critical time would reinvigorate the cause and convince many of his men to remain with him.

On New Year’s Eve 1776, Gen. Washington addressed his men in a plea to stay with the army. “My brave fellows, you have done all I asked you to do. . . but your country is at stake, your wives, your houses and all that you hold dear. . . . If you will consent to stay one month longer, you will render that service to the cause of liberty, and to your country.” More than half of the men agreed to stay, keeping the cause alive for another day.

In the twilight of Christmas Day, the Continentals were rowed across the bloated Delaware River in the freezing rain and snow from two departure points. Only the 2,600 men and artillery under Washington successfully regrouped on the New Jersey shore. Running behind time with only one third of his forces, Washington divided the men under Major Generals Nathaniel Greene, who would lead the main attack from the west, and John Sullivan who would approach from the south. Although the Germans were prepared for an attack, thanks to the weather the sentries did not see the American forces until only 200 yards away. Resistance was fierce, but quickly collapsed in the face of the overwhelming two-pronged assault. With over 900 prisoners taken at the cost of fewer than a dozen casualties, Washington withdrew to Pennsylvania, leaving their enemy stunned and their cause reinvigorated.

# Philadelphia Campaign

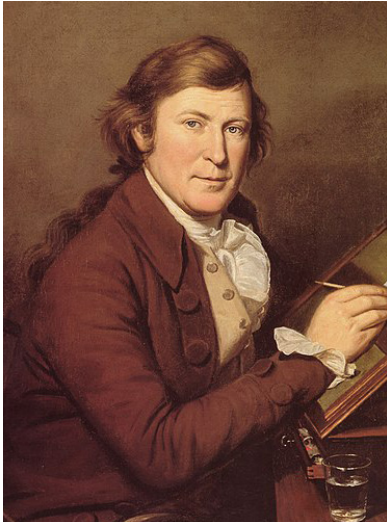
During the winter encampment of 1777 and into spring, Gist and Smallwood recruited the 1st Maryland back to regimental strength and reorganized its independent companies into the 2nd Maryland. Congress had called for each colony to send the number of regiments proportionate to its population, resulting in five additional Maryland regiments; the 3rd through the 7th. The seven Maryland regiments formed two full brigades in the newly reorganized Continental army.

In August 1777, British General Sir William Howe moved to capture the Continental Capitol of Philadelphia. His force of 12,000 men landed at Head of Elk in Maryland to march north. Maryland militia skirmished with the British around Elkton, delaying them for several hours while gathering intelligence on their disposition.

To protect Philadelphia, Washington established a defensive line of two sections on the eastern banks of the Brandywine Creek. The Marylanders under Maj. Gen. Sullivan were temporarily led by French Brig. Gen. de Borre and positioned on the right flank, guarding the northern fords. Sullivan recognized Howe's flanking action and, realizing that two fords upstream were unprotected, ordered de Borre to pivot the Marylanders to refuse the line. De Borre sent the men to various spots before positioning the Marylanders to engage an enemy already in musket-range. After a short, confused engagement, Maryland retreated before a reserve division supported them. Washington withdrew with a loss of about 500 casualties while Congress fled to York, Pennsylvania.

Washington devised a complicated plan to attack British troops encamped in Germantown, Pennsylvania, on October 4, 1777. The Marylander regulars under Gen. bore the brunt of the British advance, but they and Gen. Anthony Wayne's division of Pennsylvanians pushed the British through the town. However, changing orders in the dense fog led to confusion and friendly fire along the American lines. The British counterattacked, forcing the Americans from the field. While a tactical defeat, it demonstrated to European observers that the young American army could now match the British regulars in combat. The British wintered in Philadelphia while Washington's army withdrew for a second, brutal winter at Valley Forge.

## Soldier Profile: James Peale



James Peale Painting a Miniature by Charles Willson Peale.  
Amherst College

James Peale was born in Chestertown, Maryland, in 1749 to a family of humble background. Peale eventually assisted his brother Charles Willson Peale, an accomplished artist in Annapolis. James Peale also was drawn to the world of art and had become a skilled painter by the time of the Revolutionary War.

In 1775, Peale volunteered for service in Maryland and was commissioned an ensign in the 1st Maryland battalion. He fought at Long Island, Trenton, and Princeton in 1776 with the rest of the American army, Charles Peale, then a Captain in the Philadelphia militia, barely recognized his brother, James.

He “had lost all his cloaths (sic). He was in an old dirty blanket jacket, his beard long, and his face so full of sores, that he could not clean it, which disfigured him in such a manner that he was not known by his brother at first sight.”

Surviving the horror of the camp and the battles of Trenton and Princeton, Peale was promoted to Lieutenant and later to Captain in the Maryland Line. He resigned his commission in 1779 after three years’ service and returned home, eventually moving to Philadelphia.

Peale returned to his passion of painting in the post-war years and became a well-known artist. One of his most famous works depicted the battle of Princeton with Gen. George Washington leading the Continental army and Gen. Hugh Mercer’s death.

# In the Field with the Maryland Line

## Life of a Maryland Soldier

Life in the Maryland Line during the 1770s bears little resemblance to today's National Guard service. Volunteers for Maryland's units in the Continental Army enlisted for one-year terms of service, which lengthened to three years or the duration of the conflict after 1778. Once enlisted, most of the Continental soldiers' lives were spent in the field. The army campaigned in warmer months and built semi-permanent camps for winter quarters. When not in battle, much of the soldiers' day comprised of fatigue details, guard duty, and drilling. The latter was an important part of the Maryland Line's daily routine because they became known for their discipline and professionalism under fire.

Armies, then and now, move on their stomach, and the Maryland Line was no different. During the Revolutionary War, the standard ration for a soldier consisted of several components. A daily ration included a pound of beef, pork, or fish, paired with a pound of bread or flour, and peas, beans or another vegetable. Soldiers were also authorized a low alcohol spruce beer and molasses ration to add variety to their diet. When possible, their ration was augmented with milk, rice, cornmeal, or other items. Despite the authorizations, soldiers often were forced to "forage" the countryside for supplies. Members of the Maryland Line were often detailed to official foraging parties to purchase or impress goods from the local population near their encampments.

Soldiers carried a cartridge box holding 19—29 pre-rolled paper cartridges, tools for weapons maintenance, a bayonet, haversack for rations, canteen, and a knapsack with blanket and other personal items. Soldiers lived in the field with what they could carry, while the logistics wagons and quartermaster stores provided replacement issues as needed. As a whole, Maryland troops were among the better supplied in the Army, with other Mid-Atlantic states sometimes drawing from their stocks.

## Artifact Spotlight: Uniform of the Maryland Line

The uniform in the image below represents the basic field uniform of a member of the Maryland Line from 1779 through the end of the war. While soldiers entering the Continental Army in the early years of the war lacked standardized uniforms, regulations were quickly published to assist with uniformity in the ranks and provide specifications for colonies to produce or purchase uniforms for their soldiers.

On October 2, 1779, General Washington established a standardized guideline for uniforms in his army. The base coat color was blue with facings of different colors to represent the region in which a unit was raised. The blue wool coat with red facings indicated units from the mid-Atlantic colonies: Marylanders, Pennsylvanians, Virginians and Delawareans. All colonies soon equipped their regiments with coats of this pattern. New England troops wore blue with white facings, New York and New Jersey units wore blue with buff facings, while southern colonies were outfitted in blue with blue facings.

By the time they left winter encampment in 1778, most members of the Maryland Line wore the state-produced dark blue wool coat, faced in red. Members of rifle or light units also wore the popular “hunting shirt.”

Common Uniform of the  
Maryland Line  
Department of Defense Photograph



## Members of “The Old Line”

Popular legend states that Washington referred to the soldiers of the Maryland Regiments as his “Old Line,” highlighting their respected position as veterans. But who made up the Old Line itself?

The members of Maryland units in many ways reflected the diversity we see today in the Maryland National Guard. Officers such as Col. William Smallwood and Lt. Col. Francis Ware had previously served in the Maryland Convention, while others like Maj. Mordecai Gist and Capt. Thomas Price were veterans of earlier militia units. Laborers, farmers, merchants, and artists all added to the ranks of the Maryland Line. The unit also included volunteers from Maryland’s African American population, both free and enslaved persons. Immigrants also filled the ranks, such as the “German Regiment” recruited from recent German-speaking immigrants and boasting four companies of men from Maryland.

Women supported the war effort in multiple ways. They sewed uniforms and provided supplies through cottage industry workshops. Many women and girls ensured that the family farms and businesses continued running in the absence of husbands, fathers, and sons. In the field, “camp followers,” women and families attached to the Army while campaigning, provided critical logistical support to the soldiers. They cooked meals, mended and laundered uniforms, and provided a much-needed semblance of home life away from home. A 1779 roster of the Army at Middlebrook noted 172 women travelling with the two Maryland Brigades, an average of two women per company.



Camp Followers depicted in a period painting.

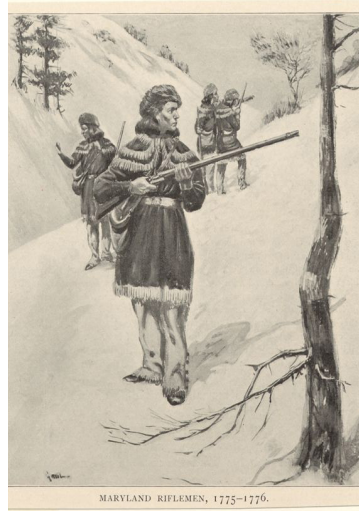
Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.



## “Additional Regiments”

### Service Beyond the Maryland Line

While two full brigades of Maryland troops in service with Washington more than provided Maryland's quota in the Continental Army, other units raised in Maryland served the Army in different ways. Thomas Cresap raised two companies of western Maryland Riflemen in 1775, among the first units to join the new Continental Army. In 1779, a combined group of Maryland and Virginia Riflemen joined Rawlings Independent Corps and served two years in the Western Department before being mustered out at Fort Pitt in 1781. Like the Riflemen, several other multi-colony units formed with Marylanders would join the fight for liberty throughout the conflict.



Maryland Riflemen  
New York Public Library Col-  
lection

In January 1777, Gen. Washington ordered Marylander Nathaniel Gist, noted frontiersman and brother to Mordecai Gist, to “raise four Companies of Rangers upon the Continental pay, Rank, and establishmt (sic).” Gist recruited men from the backwoods of Maryland and Virginia for his “Additional Regiment.” After absorbing Maryland soldiers from Grayson's Additional Regiment, Gist's Rangers fought in the Philadelphia Campaign and at Monmouth before transferring to the Southern Department where they were captured at Charleston in 1780.

Marylanders also raised three artillery units that served under Col. Charles Harrison of the 1st Continental Artillery Regiment. Maryland Artillerymen bombarded British positions during the siege of Yorktown in 1781. Marylanders served with the 3rd and 4th Light Dragoons, as well as with Pulaski's Legion. In addition to Marylanders in line units, Washington's staff also included Marylanders. His Aide de Camp, Lt. Col. Tench Tilghman hailed from Talbot County. Regardless of the arm in which they served, Marylanders played a critical role in the war effort.

## Soldier Profile: Private Abednego Jackson, 2nd Maryland

Abednego Jackson was one of many African American volunteers in the Maryland Line during the American Revolution. A common soldier, he began his military service first with compulsory duty in the St. Mary's County Militia in 1776. Jackson and some of his fellow militia members became concerned because of the increasingly frequent calls for local defense missions, as well as the "depredations of British Cruisers" in the county.

In April 1778, Jackson and 50 other "levies" (group of soldiers) from St. Mary's volunteered for service with the Continental Army and marched north to join during its operations in New Jersey. Initially volunteering for 9 months service, Jackson remained with the army for an additional 3 months. According to his pension documents, Jackson fought at the Battle of Monmouth and witnessed, "the roaring of cannon at that time, which remained in his ears for a long time afterward".



After his year of service with the 2nd Maryland Regiment, Jackson returned home and later took a job at Georgetown University where he worked for many years. The story of Private Jackson is captured in his post-war pension requests, where he lists in detail his experience with the army.

African American Soldier in the uniform of the Maryland Line  
National Park Service/T. Payton, 1997

# Southern Campaigns

## Moving South

British forces had conducted limited operations in the Southern colonies since 1778. However, by December 1780, its leaders dramatically shifted their operational strategy to focus on the Carolinas. They believed the southern colonies contained a “silent majority” of loyal residents, misled by a few vocal rebels. Gen. Howe, therefore, shifted most British maneuvers to the south where this perceived enclave of loyalists existed. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton led an expeditionary force from New York City down the coast to Charleston, South Carolina, and lay siege to the city in the spring of 1781. Washington responded by also redistributing forces south. He chose the Continentals from Maryland and Delaware to form two brigades under Smallwood and Gist to rebuild the southern army, which had just surrendered en masse to the British in Charleston. Over 2,000 Mid-Atlantic soldiers, led by Maj. Gen. Baron Johann de Kalb, sailed from Morristown to Petersburg, Virginia, then marched to Hillsborough, North Carolina to meet with Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates whom Congress appointed as the replacement commander of the southern forces.

## The Battle of Camden

The Marylanders fought their first southern battle at a British garrison in Camden on August 15, 1780. Maj. Gen. Gates conducted a forced night march through swamps and sandy ground with limited rest and no food to rendezvous with the local militia. British Lord Cornwallis had also conducted a night march, and the two armies unexpectedly met in the dark. The woods exploded with musket and cannon fire with the fresh British troops throwing the tired and confused Americans into general chaos. Within an hour, both sides ceased firing and regrouped to begin again in the morning.

Both armies then poised for frontal assault. Gates positioned the battle-hardened Marylanders and Delawareans on the American right flank with the green North Carolina and Virginia militia on their left. British regulars quickly broke the Virginia line, who fled and took the North Carolina militia with them. Maryland and Delaware, about 600 in total, were left alone to face more than 2,000 British and loyalist troops. Maj. Gen. DeKalb ordered fix bayonets and, to the astonishment of their enemy, engaged them in one of the fiercest hand-to-hand fighting of the war. This continued for about an hour, even after DeKalb was mortally wounded.

Only when the British surrounded them on three sides did the Marylanders and Delawareans concede the field and fled through the swamps, reminiscent of their retreat from Brooklyn, to meet up with Maj. Gen. Gates who had early in the battle deserted to Charlotte, North Carolina.

While Camden had been a tactical failure that cost the Maryland Line more than 50% in casualties, it again demonstrated that, under the worst conditions, the unit would stand its ground. On October 14, 1780, Congress issued a resolution thanking “Brigadiers Smallwood and Gist, and to the officers and soldiers in the Maryland and Delaware Lines... for their bravery and good conduct displayed in the action...near Camden.” Reinforcements arrived from Maryland during this time in the form of an “Extra Regiment” of Maryland levies. These volunteers joined the line in South Carolina and provided desperately need fresh troops.

Gen. Washington replaced Maj. Gen. Gates with Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene in December, and the Army reorganized in January of 1781. The survivors of the Old Line reformed into five regiments under Maj. Gen. William Smallwood, each with a Maryland colonel or lieutenant colonel commanding. After Camden, the Maryland and Delaware Lines, the backbone of the army, numbered only 949 men.

## Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse

Maj. Gen. Greene divided his force into two separate commands to better feed and shelter the soldiers as they regained fighting condition. Gen. Daniel Morgan commanded the western sector. Under Morgan, Marylander Col. John Eager Howard commanded the infantry of three Maryland companies, one Delaware company, and two Virginia companies. Soon after, Carolina militia were filled out the command.

British leader Cornwallis also divided his forces and sent Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton to crush Morgan’s men. During the spring of 1781, Morgan’s men conducted guerrilla raids in western South Carolina, quickly pursued by Tarleton’s forces. Morgan learned Tarleton’s location and determined to do battle in a wide open pasture called Cowpens, between two rivers. The Continentals dug in on a rise and Morgan arrayed his men in a defense in depth. The first skirmish line consisted of riflemen and a second line had Carolina militiamen. Behind these two lines stood the stalwart Maryland Line under Howard. Morgan knew that most of the short-term militia would likely break

in battle. Therefore, he told his first and second lines to fire only two volleys, aiming for the epaulettes—the officers. After that, they were to retreat to behind the veteran Marylanders.

Tarleton's famed legion approached Morgan's defense on January 17. As the British troops crashed into the American's first line, the rifleman picked off fifteen officers before withdrawing for the second line to fire. When the militia withdrew after firing, the British advanced rapidly in pursuit, exposing themselves to the third line. The Marylanders delivered a steady rate of accurate volleys into the British while the militiamen reformed with a cavalry reserve and advanced forward with fixed bayonets. This so surprised the British that they turned and ran—right into the mounted militia. Tarleton ordered his reserves to charge, but they had witnessed the destruction and refused. Tarleton retreated with the remnants of his forces, handing the Continental forces a decisive victory.

Two months later, at Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina, Maj. Gen. Greene employed the same defense in depth tactic, again grounding the green militia with the combat-hardened Maryland Line. The Battle of Guilford Courthouse was the largest, most hotly contested action of the Revolutionary War's Southern Campaign because the battle-hardened Marylanders held their ground. Although technically a British victory, the number of casualties (532 reported) influenced Cornwallis' decision to abandon South Carolina for Wilmington, North Carolina and, finally, to Yorktown, Virginia.



The Battle of Cowpens- Don Troiani  
National Guard Heritage Painting



## Soldier Profile: Gassaway Watkins

Gassaway Watkins was born and raised in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. When the Revolutionary war began, he enlisted with Smallwood's 1st Maryland Battalion and served as a sergeant during the stand of the Maryland 400 at Long Island.

When the Maryland Line expanded, Watkins was commissioned an ensign in the new 7th Maryland Regiment and fought in the Philadelphia Campaign and Monmouth. Watkins marched south with the Maryland Line and served in all actions of the southern campaigns, rising to the rank of captain with the 3rd and 5th Maryland Regiments.

After the war, Watkins returned home to Maryland but continued his service in the Maryland Militia as a colonel. In 1814, when the British threatened Maryland, Col. Watkins commanded the defenses of Annapolis and helped ensure the defeat of the British army for the second time on American soil.



Gassaway Watkins Grave



## Artifact Spotlight: Cowpens Medal

This Bronze Medal was coined for Baltimorean Lt. Col. John Eager Howard by the United States Congress in 1790. One of eleven such medals created to honor soldiers who excelled on the battlefield, Howard's medal was given for his steadfast performance commanding the Maryland Line at Cowpens.



Howard's Cowpens Medal  
Maryland Center for History and Culture

# Peace and Beyond

## Yorktown

While Charleston breathed a sign of relief with the absence of Cornwallis, Baltimoreans became uneasy with the proximity of the British just across the Chesapeake Bay. They needn't have worried, however, because Washington received word in August that the French fleet of 29 line-of-battle ships and 3,200 troops would be sailing into the Bay the first week in September to conduct joint operations with the Continentals until mid-October. Washington now had a window in which he could bring the war to a conclusion.

While most of the Maryland Line remained in the Carolinas, the 3rd and 4th Maryland Regiments under Mordecai Gist attached to Washington's main army that met with French ground forces in Maryland in early September. The French fleet had just gained a victory over the British at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and now controlled the Chesapeake. The combined French and Continental forces with Gist's Marylanders, including two newly raised regiments, boarded French ships and sailed to Williamsburg, Virginia, then marched to Yorktown.

The Maryland 3rd and 4th Regiments combined with Delaware soldiers to form the 1st Brigade under Brig. Gen. Gist in the Baron von Steuben's division. They settled down with the rest of the Continental and French forces to conduct siege operations while a French naval flotilla blocked the city – and any British relief forces – from the Chesapeake Bay. Gist recognized the war was in its final stages, writing, “I feel great happiness . . . when I reflect that the Surrender of Cornwallis and his Army must establish our Independence and pave the way to an honorable peace.”

The Americans began bombarding the fort on October 9th and conducted several daring assaults while continuing the punishing siege, showing Cornwallis that his situation was hopeless.

On October 17, 1781, as the 3rd and 4th Maryland watched from the entrenchments, a British lieutenant emerged from the post to negotiate a surrender with Gen. Washington. Two days later, as the American and French troops stood in formation, the British garrison marched out and laid down their arms. Sporadic fighting would continue until 1783 with the Treaty of Paris, and Marylanders would endure more campaigning before returning home. But, as they watched the British surrender at Yorktown, many knew the end was in sight.

# Legacy of the Old Line

The high costs of war in the American colonies and constant military setbacks and losses pushed the British public to demand an end to the war by 1782. The formal treaty of Paris was signed in September 1783, formally recognizing the United States' sovereignty and independence. The rabble of militia and volunteers, clothed in a mixture of uniforms and civilian clothes, armed with fowlers and hunting rifles alongside infantry muskets, had, by war's end, transformed into a professional fighting force.

From its foundation of regional equipment and local leadership, the Continental army transformed into the United States' first national institution. From Cresap's Rifle companies in 1775 to the Maryland Regiments in the trenches of Yorktown and the wilds of the Carolinas in 1781, the "Old Line" ensured U.S. independence at every turn. Washington and his staff trusted the Maryland Line as one of the Army's most professional formations. As other states' regiments ebbed and flowed throughout the war, Washington's army always included a component of Maryland soldiers. From the lowliest riflemen to his personal aide de camp, the Commander in Chief relied on the well-trained and disciplined Maryland soldier.

Today, the Maryland National Guard continues the traditions of the Maryland Line in both name and in practice. Just as revolutionary war leaders adapted tactics and resources to ensure victory, Maryland has also modernized and adapted to succeed on the contemporary battlefield anywhere in the world, on land, in the air, and through cyberspace. Our force today comprises of Marylanders from diverse backgrounds and genders. We continue to serve in both our communities and abroad whenever the nation calls us, carrying on the tradition of the members of the "Old Line" of the Revolution.

As the Maryland National Guard and the United States celebrate 250 years defending this free and independent nation, it is good to remember the role that ordinary citizens played to realize the dream of a sovereign nation and that we continue to proudly preserve liberty and freedom that our predecessors gained on the fields of Long Island, Princeton, and Cowpens.

## Soldier Profile: John Stricker

Born in 1759 in Frederick, Maryland Stricker was only 17 when his father, George Stricker, joined the continental cause as part of the German Battalion. Stricker himself enlisted and served as a cadet under his father's command. Later he was commissioned with the Continental Artillery, and served through the Philadelphia Campaign, and later at the Battle of Monmouth.

After the war Stricker moved to Baltimore and became a successful businessman. He continued his interest in the military by becoming an officer in the 5th Maryland Regiment, part of the state militia.

By 1814, Stricker had risen to command the 3rd Brigade of Maryland Militia as a Brigadier General. As the British landed at North Point in September of 1814, intent on attacking and burning Baltimore, it was General Stricker who skillfully led an advance on the British force, fighting the desperate Battle of North Point on September 12th. This action successfully delayed and attritted the British attackers, preventing them from capturing Baltimore, and boosting the American cause as it went to the negotiating table with Britian.



General John Stricker, 1814  
Maryland Center for History and Culture

## Artifact Profile: Baltimore Memorial to the Maryland Line

Just blocks from today's Fifth Regiment Armory, the Maryland Line Memorial was dedicated in 1901 by the Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution on Mount Royal Avenue. It serves as the city's visual reminder of the sacrifices and achievements of the Maryland Line in the American Revolution.



Maryland Line Monument, 1901  
Library of Congress

# Revolutionary War Battle Streamers of the Maryland National Guard

The United States Army authorizes the following Revolutionary War Streamers to the 175th Infantry Regiment:



Long Island	Cowpens
Trenton	Guildord Courthouse
Princeton	New York, 1776
Brandywine	New York, 1777
Germantown	South Carolina, 1780
Monmouth	Sourth Carolina, 1781
Yorktown	South Carolina, 1782



# Revolutionary War Heraldry of the Maryland National Guard

## Crest of the 175th Infantry Regiment

The red color of the annulet is symbolic of the red uniforms of the Baltimore Independent Cadets, the military forebears of the Regiment, which during the War of the Revolution were incorporated in Smallwood's Regiment of the Maryland Line.

Superimposed on the annulet is a belt of military design and origin containing the inscription "Decus Et Praesidium," the regimental motto which is translated "An Honour and a Guard." The belt is the heraldic symbol of knighthood and identifies the insignia as being of the military order, while the gray represents the skies over the beaches of Normandy during the unit's landing during World War II.

The numeral "5," the historic designation of the regiment, was assigned following the Revolutionary War by act of the General Assembly of Maryland in 1794. The insignia is the design of the Crossland Arms, Alicia Crossland having been the mother of George Calvert, first Baron of Baltimore and planner of the colony of Maryland.

The insignia symbolizes the historic record of the regiment from 1774 to 1931. The cross bottony forms the escutcheon, and the annulet represents the five most significant periods in the regiment's history until the time of adoption: 1774 – the organization of the Baltimore Independent Cadets; 1776 – the Revolutionary War; 1814 – War of 1812; 1918 – World War I; and 1944 – World War II.



## Coat of Arms of the 175th Regiment

The colors blue and white are for Infantry. White, the original color of Infantry facings has been superseded by blue. The combination of the old and new colors signifies the regiment has been Infantry since organization.



The five stripes have a dual significance. They represent the regiment's participation in five major wars, i.e., The Revolution, War of 1812, World War I, World War II, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Whiskey Rebellion 1794, Harpers Ferry 1859, War with Spain 1898, and The Mexican Border Incident 1916 are not referenced although in Federal Service because combat was not involved. They also indicate the former regimental designation, 5th Regiment, 1794-1941, and the popular sobriquet, "The Dandy Fifth of Maryland."

The torteau alludes to the red of the uniform of the Baltimore Independent Cadets, the initial uniformed militia company of the Colony of Maryland; this uniform was later adopted during the Revolutionary War by Smallwood's Regiment of the Maryland Line.

The swan is from the coat of arms of the Gist family and commemorates Mordecai Gist who on 3 December 1774 organized and commanded the Baltimore Independent Cadets, the parent unit of the regiment. The gold and black pattern in chief is from the reverse of the Great Seal of the proprietary Colony of Maryland, the family coat of arms of the Calverts, under whose authority the Mordecai Gist company was organized.

The bayonet is representative of its introduction to American arms at the Battle of Long Island 1776, by the Maryland Line and in the use of which it became famed throughout the War. It is also symbolic of the "Maryland 400" which by repeated charges and sustaining heavy losses delayed General Howe's army, which enabled General Washington to successfully withdraw his defeated army across the Hudson River.

## 58th Military Intelligence Brigade- Symbolism

The blue and white are Infantry colors, the original unit designation. The red and white quartered bottony cross is taken from the shield of the coat of arms of Lord Baltimore and appears on the state flag and state seal of Maryland. The blue and gray represents the service of Maryland's units in the 29th ("Blue and Gray") Infantry Division in World War I and World War II.



The bayonet represents the achievements of the Maryland Line during the War for Independence and the gallantry of the "Maryland 400" at the Battle of Long Island, August 1776, the first recorded use of the bayonet by American soldiers.

## 58th Military Intelligence Brigade Distinguished Unit Insignia

The unit's World War I service in France is represented by the lower fleur-de-lis; the upper one denotes World War II European service with the arrowhead recognizing participation in an assault landing at Normandy.

The red in the background refers to the Meritorious Unit Streamer awarded to the unit for European Theater Service in World War II and, together with the color green, signifies the award of the French Croix de Guerre with Palm for World War II service on the "Beaches of Normandy." The yellow and black diagonal bar is a reference to the Brigade's home state of Maryland.



The motto captures the spirit of the original Maryland. At the Battle of Long Island, Colonel William Smallwood's 400 Marylanders, fighting under Major Mordecai Gist, outnumbered 25 to 1, made six bayonet charges against British regulars to protect the retreat of Washington's defeated force. Washington's escape cost Maryland 256 soldiers. To quote Thomas Field, the Marylanders bought "an hour more precious than any other in the history of the nation."

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