

31 When It's Over, Shout Hooray

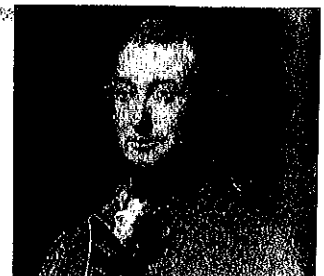


General Washington, in skirts, beats Britannia. His whip has 13 lashes, one for each colony.

The American Revolutionary War lasted almost nine years and was longer than any war in American history until the Vietnam War in the 20th century. It actually went on for two years after the battle of Yorktown, but mostly just in small skirmishes. The battle of Yorktown convinced most people—but not King George III—that Great Britain had lost.

a kind of victory for the Americans; the British had to beat the Rebel forces in order to win. So the English generals tried a new strategy: they shifted the war south.

By 1778, three years into the war, Sir William Howe had gotten tired of the war and of being criticized for the way he was running things, so he resigned. General Henry Clinton became the new commander in chief of the British forces. Clinton believed the South was full of Loyalists and that they would help the English soldiers. He named Lord Charles Cornwallis commander of his troops in the southern states. Then he loaded soldiers onto



Lord Cornwallis won battles in the South, but lost many men. "What is our plan?" he wrote. "Without one, we cannot succeed, and I assure you I am quite tired of marching about the country."

Now, back to the War of Independence.

The British had more fighting men, more guns, and more experience. But the Americans had a big advantage: they believed in their cause. In England the war was not popular, and the longer it lasted, the more unpopular it became. It went on and on and on—for more than eight years. Besides, the military leaders in England were trying to plan a war that was being fought thousands of miles away. That never works well.

After the American victory at Saratoga, the war in the North became stalemated. That means it was even. That was good for the Patriots. Holding on was

ships in New York harbor and sent them south. (Clinton kept a force in New York to hold on to that important city.)

Cornwallis was an able leader. First the British captured Savannah, Georgia. A British colonel wrote of ripping "one star and one stripe from the Rebel flag of America." He was talking about Georgia. It seemed to be in British hands. Next Cornwallis took Charleston, South Carolina. An American who was there described the British attack.

It appeared as if the stars were tumbling down...cannon balls whizzing and shells hissing continually amongst us; ammunition chests blowing up, great guns bursting and wounded men groaning.

The British won again at Camden, South Carolina. That was a big win. England thought it had won the South, but those who believed in the Patriot cause wouldn't let them have it. Americans formed guerilla bands and fought as the Indians did—with raiding parties. "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again," said Nathanael Greene (the same man who was quartermaster general at Valley Forge). It must have been frustrating for the English officers. They kept winning the big battles, but they seemed to be losing the war.

Then came the most important battle of all, the battle of Yorktown. Yorktown is a river port, near the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. That's where General Cornwallis brought his troops in August 1781. It seemed an ideal headquarters spot for an army that got its supplies and support from the sea. Cornwallis's boss, General Clinton, was at the British military headquarters in New York; Clinton promised to send men and supplies by sea. The British were sure they would soon control Virginia.

Washington and a French general, the Comte de Rochambeau (kont-duh-ROSH-um-bo), were in Rhode Island making plans. At first they thought they would march their armies to New York, although they knew that city would be hard to take. Then they got word that a French admiral, Admiral de Grasse, was sailing from Haiti in the West Indies to Chesapeake Bay with a fleet of 28 ships. Could he blockade the bay and keep supplies from Cornwallis? That was what they hoped would happen. Rochambeau and Washington decided it was the chance they had been waiting for. They knew they would have to march their troops south—almost 500 miles. They had only a few weeks to do it; the French fleet couldn't stay for long.



The siege of Yorktown really succeeded because the French navy drove off the British rescue fleet sent from New York. After that, Cornwallis and his redcoats were trapped.

The American war is over, but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. Nothing but the first act of the drama is closed.

—BENJAMIN RUSH

After the war, some 100,000 Loyalists moved from the United States to Canada.

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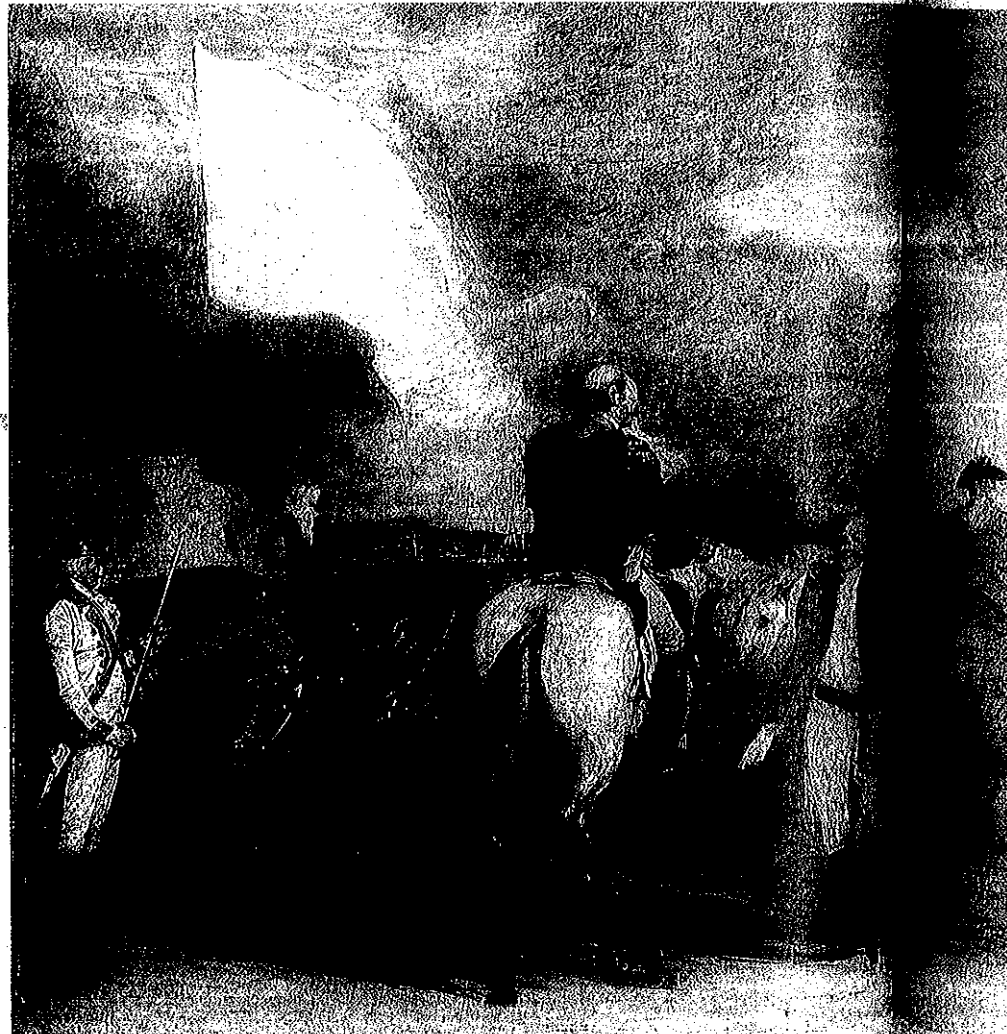
John Paul Jones

John Paul Jones was a Scottish-born merchant seaman who became America's first naval hero when, in 1779, the French gave him command of a small fleet and he set sail for England. In an exciting moonlit battle, his ship, the *Bonhomme Richard* (the French name for Ben Franklin's Poor Richard), fought the British warship *Serapis*. The British captain lashed the vessels together and asked Jones to surrender. He replied, "I have not yet begun to fight." And he had not. Before the night was over Jones accepted the surrender of his enemy.

They marched south together, and it must have been some sight. The French officers were elegant in white uniforms with gold braid. Their horses pulled wagons holding chests full of coins.

Most of the American officers wore bright blue uniforms with cream-colored trim (called buff). By this time many American privates (the ordinary soldiers) had uniforms, too, although they were often torn and ragged. But it didn't matter; the soldiers marched proudly with their general. They had become a disciplined army.

At Yorktown, three great military leaders greeted them: the dashing Frenchman, the Marquis de Lafayette; the cheerful German, Baron von Steuben; and a bold American, General Anthony Wayne (who was called "Mad Anthony" because he was so daring). They had great news for General Washington.



The French admiral, the Comte de Grasse, had arrived at Chesapeake Bay, fought the English fleet, and sent it sailing back to New York. And that wasn't all. De Grasse had brought extra troops who could fight on land. When George Washington heard all that news he took off his hat and handkerchief and waved them about. That was unusual behavior for the dignified general. "I have never seen a man moved by a greater or more sincere joy than was General Washington," wrote a French duke. When a French general stepped ashore, Washington gave the startled officer a big hug.

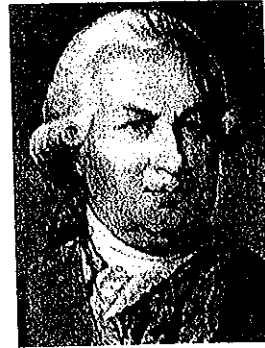
The French-American army moved into Yorktown. They dug deep trenches at night. In the morning the British redcoats found themselves trapped. A half-circle of entrenched soldiers faced them. The York River was behind them. The Americans began firing

their cannons. Then a brave young colonel named Alexander Hamilton led an attack. He captured a key British earth fortress.

The British didn't have a chance. They were outnumbered and outflanked. Cornwallis did everything he could. He even tried to save his army by sailing his soldiers across the York River to safety. But he had bad luck—a sudden storm swamped the boats.

The British adventure in America was coming to

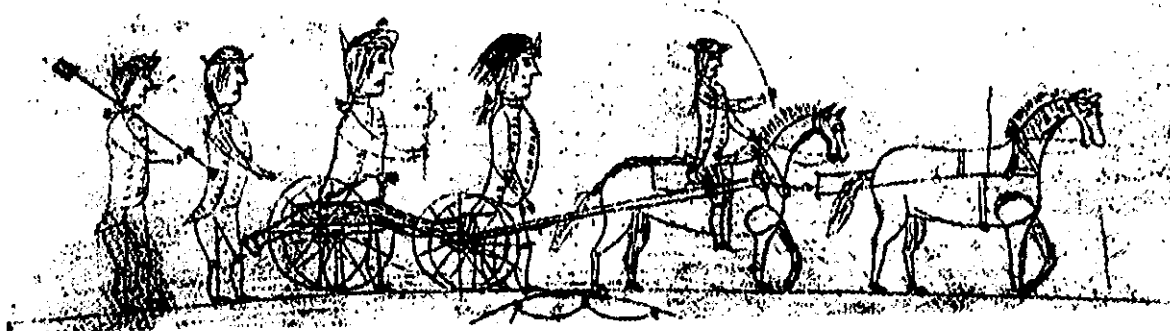
When the British surrendered at Yorktown, Lord Cornwallis could not bring himself to hand over his sword in person, so Brigadier General Charles O'Hara of the Guards did the deed. The War of Independence was over.



After beating off the British fleet, the French admiral De Grasse sent ships to fetch the American troops to Williamsburg.

The British surrender at Yorktown took place exactly four years to the day after Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.





In this drawing scratched on a powder horn, a band of Continental soldiers moves a siege cannon toward enemy lines. This type of cannon was used at Yorktown.

The war is officially over in September 1783 when a peace agreement—known as the Treaty of Paris (because it is signed in Paris, France)—is accepted by English and American delegates (including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay). The British recognize that their former colonies are “to be free, sovereign and independent states.” Britain cedes to the new nation all its land south of the Great Lakes and east of the Mississippi. Florida is returned to Spain. The Americans agree to “earnestly recommend” to the states that confiscated Loyalist property be returned to its former owners.

an end at Yorktown, just 25 miles from Jamestown, where it had all begun.

An English drummer boy climbed on top of a trench and beat his drums. An officer followed waving a white handkerchief. The great British army was surrendering. It was October 17, 1781.

Two days later, American soldiers stood proudly in a long line; facing them was a line of happy French soldiers. Between them marched the British and German armies; the defeated men were wearing clean uniforms and trying to keep their heads high, but many British soldiers cried when they laid down their arms. Army bands played an old English nursery tune, “The World Turned Upside Down.” Here are the words and music:



*If buttercups buzzed after the bee;
If boats were on land, churches on sea;
If ponies rode men and grass ate the cows;
And cats should be chased to holes by the mouse;
If the mammas sold their babies to the gypsies for half a crown;
Summer were spring and the t'other way round;
Then all the world would be upside down.*

And upside down it was. David had licked Goliath. The colonies would soon be states; the infant New World was growing up. A superpower had been defeated by an upstart colony.

A new nation was being formed: a nation that would try not to make the mistakes of its European parents. A nation that would be founded on ideas of freedom and equality. A nation ruled by laws, not kings. That nation soon had a great seal—which you can see on every dollar bill. On one side are two Latin words, *annuit coeptis*—“[God] has favored our venture.” On the other side are the Latin words *novus ordo seclorum*. They mean, “A new order of the ages [is created].”