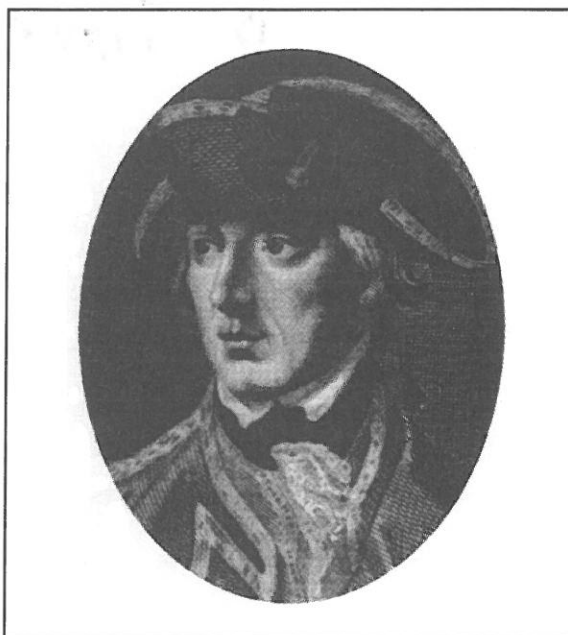


WASHINGTON STAGES A SURPRISE ATTACK ON TRENTON

As Washington rode to Boston to take command of his army, a messenger informed him that a battle had taken place, known today as the Battle of Bunker Hill. General Gage had sent General William Howe's British soldiers to take the hill held by the militia. Three attempts were made before the Americans withdrew, but one-third of Howe's men were dead or wounded. Howe had expected an easy win, but the results shocked him. He was more careful after that.



General William Howe

When the guns captured at Ft. Ticonderoga arrived, militia put them in place on the hills overlooking Boston harbor. Gage ordered the British navy to take the army to Nova Scotia. This gave Washington time to organize his army. In battle, he would depend on the men recruited by Congress, the Continentals. They would be his "professionals." Since each colony had its own militia, he would use them as well, but he always feared they could not stand the pressure of battle. His officers were chosen by Congress, many for political reasons. His main problem was not the English army, but getting supplies he needed. The French secretly sent the Americans guns and ammunition, but there were other shortages as well: food, clothing, shelter, and pay for the men. Many soldiers deserted; Thomas Paine called them "sunshine patriots." Washington guessed that when the British returned from Canada, their target would be New York City. He put some men on Long Island, the others on Manhattan.

Washington guessed right; General Howe landed on Long Island with 32,000 men, including 9,000 German professional soldiers. Since most of these were from Hesse, Americans called all the German soldiers Hessians. At Long Island, the Americans did not fight well, but a heavy rain came, and Washington was able to withdraw to Manhattan. There, he was defeated again. His men dropped their guns, and ran from the oncoming British soldiers. He tried to turn them around, and when he finally realized they were gone, he sat on his horse, practically begging the British to kill him on the spot. One of his officers came back, and led the horse away. Howe did not finish the job that night. While British soldiers slept, a heavy fog descended, and Washington's men escaped again.

The British spent the winter with their army scattered in New York and New Jersey. So far, they had won all the battles, but Washington was still loose and dangerous. Knowing that German troops were at Trenton and were surely not expecting an attack in a snowstorm on Christmas Eve, Washington's men crossed the Delaware River. The German colonel was warned of a possible attack, but the note was in English and he couldn't read English, so he just put it inside his coat. The battle was swift, and 1,400 Germans were either killed or captured. Later, the note was read to the dying colonel.

Name: _____

Class: _____

RESULTS: Trenton was one among many battles, but it gave confidence to an army that had been trounced time after time. Many soldiers who planned to leave, stayed. New men joined the army. For Washington, it was the beginning of a brighter day.

Activities:

1. Studying a map, look for the locations mentioned in this article. Try to get students to realize how hard it was to move an army 50 miles through a blizzard and across an icy river without enough clothes to keep them warm.
2. Discuss the "sunshine patriot." How does that apply to your school's competitive teams?

Essay:

1. Howe's nickname for Washington was the "Grey Fox." Remembering that in that time, foxes were hunted by the hounds, how would Howe feel about his image of Washington after this?
2. If you were a German soldier who had been "rented out" by your ruler, how hard would you fight in this war in North America?
3. As a signer of the Declaration of Independence, you have received word of the victory at Trenton. You write a letter to General Washington. What would you say?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

