
THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

On March 1, 1776, pursuant to a resolution of the Provincial Congress of the Colony of New York, the New York Provincial Artillery Company was organized. Thirteen days later, Alexander Hamilton, at only twenty-one years old, was commissioned a captain and appointed the first commander. In anticipation of the arrival of the British, Hamilton's company was stationed at what was then Fort George, at the very southern-most tip of Manhattan Island, a point ever since known as "The Battery". On July 12, 1776, the battery fired its first shots against two British ships, named "Phoenix" and "Rose" which were entering the harbor and sailing up the North River. It is believed to be the first artillery shots fired against the British after the Declaration of Independence. The American fire, which was returned, had no effect on the enemy vessels, but one of Hamilton's guns burst, killing one of the cannoneers.

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At the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776, the British under Lord Howe used his overwhelming navy to defeat the colonists, pushing them back to Manhattan. Hamilton's Battery was not seriously engaged until the end of the battle when it covered the successful withdrawal across the East River. The first streamer listed in our campaign participation credit is embroidered LONG ISLAND.

It was not until the Battle of White Plains on October 27, 1776 that the battery was completely engaged in a full-scale battle. On Chatterton's Hill, Hamilton and his two six-pounders helped fight off the first British attack on the hill. Later, the Colonists were forced to retreat as the British took the hill. While a tactical victory for the

British, it was a strategic and moral success for Washington, as his untrained, outnumbered Continentals proved they could stand up on even terms against the British regulars. As the British regrouped, Washington collected his forces and withdrew across the Hudson without interference. It was the magnificent performance of his battery in this battle that first attracted Washington's attention to Alexander Hamilton. The streamer, NEW YORK 1776, reflects our participation in this battle.

In a daring surprise move, Washington crossed the icy Delaware River on Christmas night 1776 to defeat the British forces near Trenton, capturing an entire regiment of Hessians. Although six thousand men were originally planned to take part in this, the first "amphibious" operation in our history, actually only one of the three American columns was able to accomplish the difficult crossing. What shocked the British most was the presence of American artillery on the east bank of the river. Hamilton's Battery played a major part in providing effective support, which assured the first real victory of the United States Army. The streamer embroidered TRENTON reminds soldiers of our unit of the night we crossed the Delaware with Washington, while the streamer NEW JERSEY 1776 represents the smaller skirmishes.

Reacting swiftly to the defeat, Lord Howe put his army in motion to drive Washington's gallant little force back across the river. Washington, although fighting against overwhelming numbers, drove the British back instead. As the British were retreating, Hamilton's Battery joined the action. At Princeton, a well-placed round of shot from one of Hamilton's pieces hit Nassau Hall, where some British soldiers had taken refuge. The shot, according to folklore, decapitated the portrait of King George II, which hung inside. The British soldiers inside surrendered soon after another cannonball smashed into the building. The PRINCETON streamer hangs proudly from our unit's colors.

Because of his outstanding conduct and the superior performance of his battery, Hamilton was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel shortly after the Battle of Princeton. He became Washington's Aide-de-camp. Simultaneously, the New York Provincial Congress authorized the company's transfer to the Continental Army into the Second Regiment of the Continental Artillery. General Washington appointed Captain John Doughty the new commander on March 17, 1777. For skirmishes fought during Doughty's first months as commander, the colors have a streamer embroidered NEW JERSEY 1777.

Having lost New York, Washington also failed in an effort to defend Philadelphia from the British. The British General William Howe put most of his army on ships and sailed down the coast and up the Chesapeake Bay. Though surprised by Howe's movement, Washington rapidly shifted his force and took up a position on Brandywine Creek, blocking the approach to Philadelphia. On September II, 1777, Howe executed a flanking movement and defeated Washington. Washington salvaged the situation by dispatching two brigades to fight a rear guard action, and

the Continental Army retired in good order. This unfortunate incident is remembered with the streamer inscribed BRANDYWINE.

Upon entering Philadelphia, Howe dispersed his forces, stationing 9,000 of his men at Germantown, to the north of the city. Washington sought to repeat the victory at Trenton with a surprise attack on Germantown. The plan was complicated, and clearly violated the principle of simplicity. Two columns of Continentals arrived at different times and fired on each other in an early morning fog. The militia did not arrive. The British were surprised, but had better discipline and cohesion and were able to send fresh troops into the fray. The Americans retreated fairly early in the morning, leaving the British in command of the battlefield. GERMANTOWN is inscribed on the streamer for this battle.

Our unit made up a small portion of the 6,000 Continentals who stayed with Washington at Valley Forge during the bitter winter of 1777-1778. As was the case with the rest of Washington's men, the soldiers of our unit had no shoes, no uniform trousers, and no blankets. Weeks passed when there was no meat and the men were reduced to boiling their shoes and eating them. The winter winds penetrated the tattered tents that were initially the only shelter. A Prussian officer, Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, arrived to help train Washington's men, including the soldiers of our unit. Von Steuben noted that American soldiers had to be told why they did things before they could do them well. After Valley Forge, Continentals would fight on equal terms with British Regulars in the open field.



In June 1778, a portion of the British Army was moving toward New York. On June 26, Washington decided to strike at the rear of the British column as it moved out of Monmouth Court House, New Jersey. Initially, the Americans began to retreat, but the leaders gained control of the situation. The battle, involving the bulk of both armies, lasted until nightfall on a hot, sultry day with both sides holding their own. The American artillery was especially effective in preventing the British from using a causeway. A short distance from where our guns were positioned, a woman named Mary Hays who had been carrying water for the cannoneers assumed her husband's position on one of the cannons belonging to the Pennsylvania State Regiment of Artillery when he fell wounded. The woman became famous as "Molly Pitcher". The streamer we earned for this battle is embroidered MONMOUTH. Our unit also campaigned in New Jersey in 1780, attested to by the streamer embroidered NEW JERSEY 1780.

Molly Pitcher

In the final battle of the war, Yorktown, Doughty and his men fired rounds into the redoubts that our first commander, Alexander Hamilton, now a colonel, charged into with a detachment of infantry. Yorktown was under siege from 6-19 October 1781. This led to bombardments of the British positions, and our unit participated in each of these. Doughty and his men distinguished themselves during the battle. Our unit was on hand to watch Lord Charles Cornwallis surrender, in large part ending the Revolution.

The treaty of peace was not signed until late 1783, at which time the British evacuated New York for the first time since 1776. Doughty's artillery company, the first American unit to reach the southern tip of Manhattan, was ordered to raise the American flag at Fort George. As the British left, Doughty's guns fired the last rounds of the Revolution in a thirteen-gun salute to the newly raised flag, from the same spot in which they fired their first rounds in 1776.

As after every subsequent war in our nation's history, the American Congress drastically reduced the Army immediately following the Revolution. In June of 1794, Henry Knox, senior officer in the Army, was ordered to discharge all but 55 men at West Point and 25 men at Fort Pitt to guard the military stores at each post. The artillerists at West Point, under the command of Brevet Major Doughty, had a tenuous link with the Continental Army, as some of them had served in Doughty's company. That company had descended from Alexander Hamilton's Provincial Company of Artillery in the Colony of New York.

