



St. George Tucker's Unsung Role in the Siege of Yorktown

Neglect of the principles of the constitution by the public functionary is a substitution of aristocracy, for a representative democracy: such a person no longer regards himself as the trustee, and agent of the people, but as a ruler whose authority is independent of the people, to whom he holds himself in no manner accountable; and he so degenerates into an usurper and a tyrant. — St. George Tucker, *View of the Constitution of the United States* (1803)



St. George Tucker

The American Revolution, a pivotal moment in world history, was marked by countless acts of bravery, sacrifice, and strategic genius. While the names of prominent figures such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson are etched into the annals of history, there are lesser-known heroes whose contributions deserve recognition. Among them is St. George Tucker, a man whose oft-overlooked participation in the Battle of Yorktown played a crucial role in securing American independence.

Born on July 10, 1752, in Bermuda, St. George Tucker came from a family with deep roots in the American Colonies. He received a classical education at the College of William and Mary, an institution that would later shape his revolutionary beliefs. Tucker's early years were marked by the simmering tensions between the American Colonies and British authorities, culminating in the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1775.

Driven by a fervent desire for liberty, Tucker joined the Continental Army in 1777. His decision to take up arms against the British was a reflection of the spirit of the times, as many young men from the Colonies rallied to the cause. However, Tucker's contribution to the war effort was unique and would be felt most profoundly during the Siege of Yorktown, which began this day, September 28, in 1781.

The Siege of Yorktown, often considered to be the decisive battle of the American Revolution, pitted the American and French forces under General George Washington against the British army led by General Charles Cornwallis. Tucker, at this time a captain in the Virginia Continental Line, played a pivotal role in the American artillery.

Tucker's expertise in artillery tactics was the result of his dedication to mastering the intricacies of warfare. He had studied the works of influential military theorists such as Baron von Steuben, and had trained diligently to become a skilled artillery officer. His knowledge and experience were about to be put to the test on a grand scale.

One of the critical moments of the Siege of Yorktown was the bombardment of the British fortifications. The American and French forces had encircled Cornwallis' troops, and a continuous barrage of cannon fire was essential to weaken the British defenses. Tucker's command of the artillery units was



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instrumental in orchestrating this barrage.

Under his leadership, the American artillery relentlessly bombarded the British positions, creating a devastating and demoralizing onslaught. The accuracy and intensity of Tucker's artillery fire helped breach the British fortifications and forced Cornwallis to consider surrender.

It was during these intense days of artillery duels that Tucker's courage and leadership shone brightly. He risked his life to ensure the cannons were accurately aimed and well-maintained. His composure under fire served as an inspiration to his men, who fought with unwavering determination.

On October 19, 1781, General Cornwallis surrendered to General Washington, effectively bringing the Battle of Yorktown and, in many ways, the American Revolution to an end. The surrender was a momentous event, and St. George Tucker's contributions on the battlefield played a significant role in achieving this decisive victory.

Tucker's service in the Revolutionary War did not end with the Battle of Yorktown, though. He continued to serve in the Virginia Continental Line until the war's conclusion, participating in various campaigns and battles. His dedication to the cause of American independence remained unwavering, and his experience on the battlefield only deepened his commitment to the principles of liberty and self-determination.

After the war, Tucker's contributions to the newly formed United States extended beyond the battlefield. He pursued a legal career and became a prominent jurist and legal scholar. His writings on law and government, including his influential work *Blackstone's Commentaries*, helped shape the legal and political foundations of the union of states and the Constitution that created it in 1789.

Tucker also played a role in the drafting of the United States Constitution. As a delegate to the Virginia Ratifying Convention in 1788, he supported the Constitution's adoption, believing it provided the necessary framework for a stable and just government.

In conclusion, St. George Tucker's oft-overlooked participation in the Battle of Yorktown was a testament to his unwavering commitment to the cause of American independence. As a skilled artillery officer, his leadership and expertise were instrumental in securing the victory that effectively ended the Revolutionary War.

Beyond his military service, Tucker's contributions to the legal and political development of the United States demonstrate the enduring legacy of those who fought for liberty during the American Revolution. It is essential that we remember and honor figures such as St. George Tucker, whose dedication and sacrifice helped shape the nation we know today.



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