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Henry Knox: Father of Artillery during the American Revolution

Henry Knox is an important historical figure who played a crucial role during the American Revolution. He is best known for his devoted military service under [General Washington](https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/john-hancock-snubs-george-washington/), his personal friend. Knox commanded the American artillery and later served as Secretary of War (Henry Knox). He lived a life with many struggles, but also achieved honor through his planning, logistics, engineering and leadership on the battlefield. His greatest strength was planning and executing how to accomplish victories by having the right supplies and forces in place for battle. George Washington saw this, which is why he kept him by his side during the American Revolution.

Knox had a rags-to-riches-to-rags life (Henry Knox). He also had many other struggles to

overcome. He was the seventh of ten children born to poor immigrant parents and lived a life of poverty with humble beginnings. He dropped out of school when his father died and was an apprentice to a bookseller before leaving to work for an artillery company. He had a passion for learning tactics from reading military books that led him to join the battle and use his engineering skills to be of service. Shortly after joining, he had another struggle when an explosion caused him to lose two fingers. It caused a disfigurement, and he wore a white cloth over it to hide it. He also had ten of his thirteen children die before they reached adulthood during his life. Later he accumulated prestige, honor and wealth, even building a mansion, but ended up dying broke and in debt (Rust). It was a life of struggles, but in history he is remembered for his accomplishments during the American Revolution as a good strategic planner and leader.

Knox was known as the Father of American Artillery. George Washington named the Chief

of Artillery after he came up with the plan to capture and bring artillery for the attack the British.

This became known as “The Knox Expedition”. The expedition successfully moved 60 tons of

cannons and other weapons to the camps of the Continental Army outside of Boston, covering

approximately 300 miles (Rust). He continued to lead with this title and directed the crossing of

the Delaware with Washington. He also was part of the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Knox

stated in a letter to his wife, Lucy, “The eyes of all America are upon us, the matters which we are

to act are of infinitely high import as we play our part posterity will bless or curse us” (Letter). He

understood that America was at an important turning point during this time and needed a victory.

These battles, which Knox contributed to by leading the artillery on, were critical to the

progression of the American Revolution and earned his spot in history an innovator for logistics

planning and action.

Knox continues to push forward and advance in the ranks. On December 27, 1776, Knox

was rewarded for his performance with a promotion to the rank of Brigadier General, and his

artillery corps was expanded to five regiments (Rust). During the last battle of the American

Revolution, Yorktown, Knox continued to command the American artillery batteries. For three

weeks, they bombarded the British and he was praised for his leadership on the battlefield.

Following Yorktown, Knox was promoted to Major General. Later he was appointed commander

of West Point, which was a training academy suggested by Knox that still exists today. The

American Revolution was at an end. After a brief return to private life in Boston, Knox accepted

the position of Secretary of War under the [Confederation Congress](https://www.americanhistorycentral.com/entries/congress-of-the-confederation/) on March 8, 1785 (Rust). He

did not have as many troops as he wanted and his suggestions to train troops to add additional help

later led to developing the U.S. Army and Navy. As an experienced warfare leader, he was

responsible for advising on policy and helped establish these two divisions. Knox's vision

for a professional military force laid the groundwork for the future United States Army (Drake).

His way of thinking that long ago helped contribute to the armed forces we still have today. This

is one of the many contributions by Knox from during the American Revolution.

Henry Knox left a legacy and impact on our nation. He showed how planning, developing a

strategy, engineering and having the right tools for war contribute to winning victories. He used

his knowledge to approach warfare using smart tactics. While he is not as well-known as some of

the others during this period, Fort Knox in Kentucky and Maine are both named in his honor.

Although he faced many hardships and struggles in life, he overcame them and left his mark on

history as a pioneer for modern warfare.

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