**Benedict Arnold**

Benedict Arnold is best remembered as a traitor; an American patriot who spied for the British during the American Revolution. But there is more to his story than this sad event.

Arnold was a fierce patriot during the Stamp Act crisis and the early years of the American Revolution. During the battles of Lexington and Concord, Arnold worked with Ethan Allen to capture Fort Ticonderoga and was named a colonel.

As a member of George Washington's Continental Army, he led a failed attack on Quebec, but was nonetheless named brigadier general in 1776.

His next big moment came at the Battle of Saratoga. Here, Benedict Arnold was instrumental in stopping the advance of the British and in obtaining the surrender of British General John Burgoyne.

During the Battle of Freeman's Farm, Arnold's leg was severely wounded when pinned beneath his horse. (Both Arnold and his leg survived, there is a monument to his leg at Saratoga National Historic Park.)

Over the next two years, Benedict Arnold remained a patriot, but was upset and embittered at what he felt was a lack of his recognition and contribution to the war. In 1778, following British evacuation of Philadelphia, George Washington appointed Arnold military commander of the city.

This is where the story gets interesting.

In Philadelphia, Benedict Arnold was introduced to and fell in love with Margaret (Peggy) Shippen, a young, well-to-do loyalist who was half his age. Ms. Shippen had previously been friendly with John André, a British spy who had been in Philadelphia during the occupation as the adjutant to the British commander in chief, Sir Henry Clinton. It is believed that Peggy introduced Arnold to André.

Meanwhile, Benedict Arnold's reputation while in Philadelphia was beginning to tarnish. He was accused of using public wagons for private profit and of being friendly to Loyalists. Faced with a Court-Martial for corruption, he resigned his post on March 19, 1779.

Following his resignation, Arnold began a correspondence with John André, now chief of British intelligence services. But Arnold had also maintained his close relationship with George Washington and still had access to important information. Over the next few months Benedict Arnold continued his talks with André and agreed to hand over key information to the British. Specifically, Arnold offered to hand over the most strategic fortress in America: West Point.

Arnold and André finally met in person, and Arnold handed over information to the British spy. But, unfortunately for both men, André was caught and Arnold's letter was found. Arnold's friend, George Washington, was heartbroken over the news, but was forced to deal with the treacherous act. While Benedict Arnold escaped to British-occupied New York, where he was protected from punishment.

John André was executed for spying.

Benedict Arnold was named brigadier general by the British government and sent on raids to Virginia. Following Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in 1781, Arnold and his family sailed to Britain with his family. He died in London in 1801.

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Benedict Arnold’s Leg

On the grounds of the Saratoga National Historic Park, there rests a monument to Benedict Arnold's leg. It sits on the spot where Arnold fell wounded during the Battle of Freeman's Farm. He had just led a brilliant charge against a British redoubt—the culmination of a day of extraordinary field generalship that led one of his soldiers to later write of Arnold that he was "the very genius of war."

The leg was severely wounded, bleeding copiously, and pinned beneath Arnold's own horse. It survived the battle and the war.

Arnold, of course, did, too. But in the process, he turned from one of the great heroes of the American Revolution into the epitome of traitorousness.

Some of the seeds of his treachery were planted during his recuperation from that wound at Saratoga. Arnold started to become embittered by what he saw as a lack of recognition for his military genius on the part Congress and the Continental Army. Just a year and a half after his gallantry at Saratoga, Arnold offered his services to the British. Specifically, he planned to hand over the keys to West Point, a crucial American fort on the Hudson which Arnold commanded.


The plot quickly unraveled. Arnold's contact with the British army, Major John Andre', was captured by American forces with letters implicating Arnold in his boot. Andre' was hanged. Arnold escaped to the British on a frigate called Vulture --- “one vulture receiving another,” Thomas Paine wrote in one of his *Crisis* papers.

Arnold went on to command British forces against American troops in his native Connecticut, but the war was soon over, and Arnold had made the grave mistake of jumping to the losing side. In the new republic, his name was reviled; in England, where he sailed after the Revolution, he received an ambivalent reception.

He died there in 1801.