

Revolutionary War Journal Project

You and a partner will create a Revolutionary War Journal. This means that you will put together a series of journal entries/written letters that will depict your daily life in the Continental Army. You can make up a name, age, home town, family, and other information about your soldier. Be creative!

Step 1:

Read and dissect the material provided to you, this includes:

1. Witnesses to Revolution
2. What Challenges did the Continental Army Face?
3. What Supplies did Continental Soldiers Receive?

These readings, along with your notes and everything we have discussed should give you a good idea of what it was like being a soldier in the Continental Army.

Step 2:

Now that you have read everything and have a good understanding of life in the Continental Army, you will write a series of journal entries.

What is required:

1. Minimum of 10 journal entries that are at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page
2. Journal entries should depict change over time (that means your soldier might start off excited about being in the army, healthy, with plenty of supplies and you should show how that will change)
3. Journals need to show location and where your army is marching (refer to book or internet if you need help with places your soldier may have been)
4. Journal entries all need a date and should be put in chronological order when turned in.
5. Your Journal should show the poor conditions of daily life in the Continental Army.

Honors: you will include a typed reflection of your thoughts on life in the Continental Army.

Things to help you write:

1. Name of general/other people your soldier may interact with
2. What is your soldier eating? How often?
3. Does your soldier have supplies? Shoes?
4. Are they warm when it's cold?
5. Are they happy to be in the army?
6. Has their outlook changed over time?
7. Was their family happy about them joining the Army?
8. How many of their friends died in the army?
9. Did they get injured or sick?
10. Do they still believe in the cause of the American Revolution?

This is a chance to be creative!! Think about what else you might include in a journal (art, poems, pressed flowers). **If your group goes above and beyond, it is a great opportunity for extra credit!**

What challenges did the Continental Army face?

It was a huge amount of work to supply Continental Army soldiers with what they needed. The army faced many problems with organization, money, and transportation. The Continental Army formed a special department, called the Quartermaster, to take care of getting needed items and delivering them to soldiers in the field. The Quartermaster asked each state and its people to help provide food, clothing, blankets and other items, but this did not result in having enough supplies to go around. Early in the war, the Quartermaster department wasn't very organized and had problems getting the state governments to cooperate.

There was not a lot of gold and silver in the American colonies. Paper money, or currency, became more and more worthless as the war went on. That meant that the Quartermaster could not easily purchase military supplies from Europe or food from local farmers. Equipment that usually came from Britain was no longer available to the colonies because of the war. Even when supplies did arrive, there was not a good system for transporting it to the soldiers. There were poor roads, the people in charge of delivering the supplies were not always honest, and ships had difficulties getting around British blockades. Army supplies, such as clothing and blankets, arrived late or not at all and food was often spoiled or damaged. Because of these difficulties, soldiers received much less than the promised rations and sometimes had to ask farmers for food or survive on what they could find or take for themselves.

Congress and the states were not able to raise the money needed to run the war effort. This created another hardship for soldiers. Pay rarely came on time, and when it did come, it was often in the form of increasingly worthless paper money made by the states or Congress.

At first, the Continental Army was poorly trained and did not have a standard way to drill, discipline or maneuver. This put them at a huge disadvantage when facing the well supplied, well trained British army. That all changed when in February 1778, Baron von Steuben, a Prussian military officer, offered to help General George Washington train and discipline the Continental Army. Because of von Steuben's work with the Continental Army, the soldiers greatly improved as a professional fighting force and they became more successful in battle.

Witnesses to Revolution

Jeremiah Greenman - A young soldier from Rhode Island

First-person account based closely on Jeremiah Greenman primary source documents

October 1775:

“Set out this morn very early. Left 5 sick men in the woods that was not able to march. Our provision being very short we killed a dog. I got a small piece of it...In a very miserable situation. This morn when we arose many of us so weak that we could hardly stand, we staggered about like drunken men. Very cold and snowing, marched down the river on the frozen ground bare-footed. In prison, 1776: Hear we live very discontented and quite out of hope of ever being reliv'd.”

Primary Source Document

November 1775:

In a very misrabel situation / nothing to eat but dogs / hear we killed a nother and cooked / I got Sum of that by good [luck] with the head of a Squirrll with a parsol of Candill wicks boyled up to gether wich made a very fine supe without salt /

...this morn marched down the river on the frozen ground bare footed and very Cold till at last I came to a french house ware I [blank] a pair of Seal Sil maugerson and had Sum fine Supe made out of cabage and bread / hear in this house I sleep by the fire.

Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman

Source:

Robert C. Bray and Paul E Bushnell, eds., *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775-1783: an Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman*. Northern Illinois University Press, 1978.

What supplies did Continental soldiers receive?



When they signed up to join the army, Continental soldiers were promised that their basic needs would be met. Each man was to receive food rations that included salted meat, hard bread and dried food. Soldiers were also supposed to receive clothing, a musket, ammunition, a haversack (carrying bag), canteen and blanket. Because of supply shortages, most soldiers only received these things as they became available.

Most battles of the American Revolution were fought spring through fall. This was called the campaign season. During this time, each six-man group (called a mess) shared a tent. Shortages of canvas led to not having enough tents. This caused crowding, often with eight men to a tent. Some soldiers had to find somewhere else to sleep. Living so close together was miserable for the soldiers because it was crowded, sickness and lice spread easily, and there was little quiet and no privacy. Officers lived in nicer tents and had more room. Because soldiers often marched ahead of the supply wagons, they sometimes had to build brush shelters out of tree branches until their tents arrived. Once winter began, soldiers often built log cabins large enough for twelve men. Living conditions in the cabins were often just as unpleasant as in the tents.

Selections from the Diary of Private Joseph Plumb Martin

Joseph Plumb Martin was born in western Massachusetts in 1760. His father was a pastor who often got in trouble for speaking his mind too freely. At the age of seven, Joseph was sent to live with his affluent grandfather. When the war started in 1775 Martin chafed to enlist but he was too young. Many of Martin's friends had enlisted and Martin was quite susceptible to their peer pressure.

In June of 1776, at the age of 15, Martin, though wary of a long enlistment, decided "to take a priming before I took upon me the whole coat of paint for a soldier." Thus, much to the chagrin of his grandparents, Martin enlisted in for six months as a private in the Connecticut state troops. After serving at the Battles of Brooklyn and White Plains on the side of the Patriots, the farm boy decided not to reenlist in December 1776. But a long winter at home proved too dull for the teenage veteran. He enlisted again in 1777, this time in Washington's Continental army, and served for the duration of the war, seeing action at a number of major battles.

At the age of 70, the venerated veteran then living in Maine published *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Danger and Suffering of a Revolutionary Soldier, Interspersed with Anecdotes of Incidents that Occurred Within His Own Observation*. The book, which did not sell particularly well, fell into obscurity until rediscovered in the 1960s when it was republished with the title *Private Yankee Doodle*.

The following excerpts detail Martin's activity at Fort Mifflin.

"I was soon relieved from this guard, and with those who were able, of our two regiments, sent to reinforce those in the fort [Mifflin], which was then besieged by the British. Here I endured hardships sufficient to kill half a dozen horses. Let the reader only consider for a moment and he will still be satisfied if not sickened. In the cold month of November, without provisions, without clothing, not a scrap of either shoes or stockings to my feet or legs, and in this condition to endure a siege in such a place as that was appalling in the highest degree.

In confirmation of what I have here said, I will give the reader a short description of the pen that I was confined in. Confined I was, for it was next to impossible to have got away from it, if I had been so disposed. Well, the island, as it is called, is nothing more than a mud flat in the Delaware, lying upon the west side of the channel. It is diked around the fort, with sluices so constructed that the fort can be laid under water at pleasure, (at least, it was so when I was there, and I presume it has not grown much higher since. On the eastern side, next the main river, was a zigzag wall built of hewn stone, built, as I was informed, before the Revolution at the king's cost. At the southeastern part of the fortification (for fort it could not with propriety be called) was a battery of several long eighteen-pounders and one thirty-two pounder."

"Our batteries were nothing more than old spars and timber laid up in parallel lines and filled between with mud and dirt. The British batteries in the course of the day would nearly level our works, and we were, like the beaver, obliged to repair our dams in the night. During the whole night, at intervals of a quarter or half an hour, the enemy would let off all their pieces, and although we had sentinels to watch them and at every flash of their guns to cry, "a shot," upon hearing which everyone endeavored to take care of himself, yet they would ever and anon, in spite of all our precaution, cut up some of us.

The engineer in the fort was a French officer by the name of Fleury, the same who struck the British flag at the storming of Stony Point. He was a very austere man and kept us constantly employed day and night; there was no chance of escaping from his vigilance.

Between the stone wall and the palisadoes was a kind of yard or pen, at the southern end of which was a narrow entrance not more than eight or ten feet wide, with a ditch about four feet wide in the middle, extending the whole length of the pen. Here, on the eastern side of the wall, was the only place in the fort than anyone could be in any degree of safety. Into this place we used to gather the splinters broken off the palisadoes by the enemy's shot and make a little fire, just enough to keep from suffering. We would watch an opportunity to escape from the vigilance of Colonel Fleury and run into this place for a minute or two's respite from fatigue and cold. When the engineer found that the workmen began to grow scarce, he would come to the entrance and call us out. He had always his cane in his hand, and woe betided him he could get a stroke at. At his approach I always jumped over the ditch and ran down on the other side, so that he could not reach me, but he often threatened me, but threatening was all, he could never get a stroke at me, and I cared but little for his threats.

It was utterly impossible to lie down to get any rest or sleep on account of the mud, if the enemy's shot would have suffered us to do so. Sometime some of the men, when overcome with fatigue and want of sleep, would slip away into the barracks to catch a nap of sleep, but it seldom happened that they all came out again alive. I was in this place a fortnight and can say in sincerity that I never lay down to sleep a minute in all that time.