



Benedict Arnold

In the early years of the Revolutionary War, Benedict Arnold was one of George Washington's most accomplished field generals.

His legacy today is quite different, with Arnold branded the most notorious traitor in American history, after a failed gambit to trade the vital American outpost at West Point for cash resulted in his defection to the British side.

Arnold's patriotism and battlefield exploits earned him little reward.

Though the British surrender at Saratoga was hailed throughout the colonies, other officers took credit for Arnold's tactical success and diminished his role.

As a further insult, Congress refused to promote Arnold in rank, elevating several junior officers above him.

As Arnold gradually became more disaffected, his wife, Margaret "Peggy" Shippen, was immersing herself in lavish spending, deeply indebting the general.

Adding to the swirl of troubles, Arnold faced a court-martial on charges of misconduct and financial impropriety.

Though he was largely exonerated, Washington criticized him, fanning a deep-seated resentment.

Bitter, indignant, and desperate for money, Arnold decided to turn away from his country, brokering a secret agreement to begin spying for the British.

On May 10, an emissary from Arnold reached John André, a British captain whom Peggy had come to know well in Philadelphia.

Arnold proposed to turn over West Point in exchange for money.

For the revolutionaries, holding West Point meant preventing the British from controlling the Hudson River and dividing the colonies in two.

He offered an additional lure, the potential capture of George Washington during a planned visit.

The British readily agreed.

Arnold began discreetly weakening the stronghold while secretly reporting to André on troop strength, planned movements, and defensive positions.

After returning from one of their secret meetings, André was captured and searched by local American militia, who discovered documents implicating Arnold.

Alerted that André had been captured, Arnold fled West Point and managed to reach the HMS Vulture, a British warship nearby.

Arnold was soon rewarded by the British with a commission as a brigadier general.

After clashing with redcoats for years, he would soon be leading them against his former comrades.

Arnold survived the war and moved with his wife Peggy to England, where he lived out the remainder of his life, mistrusted even by the British and consigned to relative obscurity. He died in London in 1801.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: www.sar.org

Presented by: The Hawaii Society Sons of the American Revolution

<https://hawaiisar.org/> For more:
<https://bit.ly/3Lkn6OH>