

Yorktown – Articles of Capitulation

After a series of reverses and the depletion of his forces' strength, in May 1781, the British commander in the southern colonies, General Lord Cornwallis, moved his army from Wilmington, NC, eastward to Petersburg, VA, on the Atlantic.

Cornwallis had about 7,500 men and was confronted in the region by only about 4,500 American troops under the marquis de Lafayette, General Anthony Wayne, and Frederick William, Freiherr (baron) von Steuben.

In order to maintain his seaborne lines of communication with the main British army of General Henry Clinton in New York City, Cornwallis then retreated through Virginia, first to Richmond, next to Williamsburg, and finally, near the end of July, to Yorktown and the adjacent promontory of Gloucester, which he proceeded to fortify.

General George Washington, ordered Lafayette to block Cornwallis's possible escape by land.

In the meantime Washington's 2,500 Continental troops in New York were joined by 4,000 French troops.

Cornwallis's army waited in vain for rescue or reinforcements from the British navy.



Throughout early October Washington's 14,000 American and French troops steadily overcame the British army's positions.

Surrounded, outgunned, and running low on food, Cornwallis surrendered his entire army on October 19, 1781.

The total number of British prisoners taken was about 8,000, along with about 240 guns. Casualties on both sides were relatively light.

The victory at Yorktown ended fighting in the Revolution and virtually assured success to the American cause. (Britannica)

The parties then entered into the Articles of Capitulation.

The 14 articles directed the surrender from the disposition of the troops, artillery, and arms, to even the surrender ceremony itself.

By the afternoon of October 19th, 1781, both commanders had signed the Articles of Capitulation, and the defeated British army was marching out from Yorktown to lay down their arms, ending the last major battle of the American Revolution.

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