



Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution

Patrick K. O'Donnell

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution

Patrick K. O'Donnell

Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution Patrick K. O'Donnell

In August 1776, little over a month after the Continental Congress had formally declared independence from Britain, the revolution was on the verge of a sudden and disastrous end. General George Washington found his troops outmanned and outmaneuvered at the Battle of Brooklyn, and it looked like there was no escape. But thanks to a series of desperate rear guard attacks by a single heroic regiment, famously known as the "Immortal 400," Washington was able to evacuate his men and the nascent Continental Army lived to fight another day.

Today, only a modest, rusted and scarred metal sign near a dilapidated auto garage marks the mass grave where the bodies of the "Maryland Heroes" lie—256 men "who fell in the Battle of Brooklyn." In *Washington's Immortals*, best-selling military historian Patrick K. O'Donnell brings to life the forgotten story of this remarkable band of brothers. Known as "gentlemen of honour, family, and fortune," they fought not just in Brooklyn, but in key battles including Trenton, Princeton, Camden, Cowpens, Guilford Courthouse, and Yorktown, where their heroism changed the course of the war.

Drawing on extensive original sources, from letters to diaries to pension applications, O'Donnell pieces together the stories of these brave men—their friendships, loves, defeats, and triumphs. He explores their arms and tactics, their struggles with hostile loyalists and shortages of clothing and food, their development into an elite unit, and their dogged opponents, including British General Lord Cornwallis. And through the prism of this one group, O'Donnell tells the larger story of the Revolutionary War. *Washington's Immortals* is gripping and inspiring boots-on-the-ground history, sure to appeal to a wide readership.

Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution Details

Date : Published March 1st 2016 by Atlantic Monthly Press

ISBN : 9780802124593

Author : Patrick K. O'Donnell

Format : Hardcover 463 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Military History, American Revolution, North American Hi..., American History, American Revolutionary War, War, Military Fiction

 [Download Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Eli ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an E ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution Patrick K. O'Donnell

From Reader Review Washington's Immortals: The Untold Story of an Elite Regiment Who Changed the Course of the Revolution for online ebook

Patti Pfister says

This is a very detailed account of Revolutionary War military campaigns in which the Maryland Immortals took part. It was meticulously researched and informative, almost text bookish. I found the book fascinating and am very glad I read it. I have a new appreciation for the men who gave everything so that we could live free.

Will Albers says

Interesting account of a specific core of the Colony's Revolutionary Army....the true America's Greatest Generation.

Paige says

I got through most of this, but I was bored and confused. I feel like I need a more general knowledge of the American Revolution to fully appreciate this book. I hope to come back to it someday.

Dr. Robert says

I have read scores of books on the American Revolution, but WASHINGTON'S IMMORTALS is one of a kind. Spanning the entire Revolutionary War, this original and breakthrough book is a band of brothers, boots on the ground, intimate look at the American Revolution, an elusive feat for other authors who have attempted to write about this topic in the past. In his inimitable style of crafting fact that reads like fiction, Patrick O'Donnell, in riveting and brilliant prose, brings to life the War's most dramatic and important battles. O'Donnell has meticulously researched material drawn from hundreds of previously unpublished sources, and he has captured hidden aspects of the Revolution. The author masterfully breathes life into the protagonists and even the forgotten players of the Revolution, such as Loyalists and traitors within the Maryland Regiment, and does so in an unbiased fashion. The Maryland Regiment, "men of honour, family, and fortune" are buried in a mass grave in Brooklyn, presumably under a street or automobile garage. This mystery must be uncovered, so that these courageous men can receive the proper recognition they so deserve.

This book will change your perception of the American Revolution. As I delved deeper into WASHINGTON'S IMMORTALS, I recognized the many lessons learned and the haunting parallels to America's modern conflicts. This masterpiece is a must-read.

D Bradley says

O'Donnell excels at presenting the big picture while at the same time personalizing the stories and experiences of the individuals who made that history possible. Most historians do one or the other well, but not both. O'Donnell does a great job telling what happened while making it personal with regards to how it happened to and how they experienced it. His talent makes the history real and brings it to life. One will be blown away by what these men endured, for so long, with victory never assured. The rare ability of O'Donnell to reach back through the centuries and connect the reader with these heroes in a meaningful way stems from O'Donnell's passion and diligent research. He knows that what he is telling you is important but he is never self important in his delivery. History is more than just facts. O'Donnell will take you as close as possible to walking in the shoes, or in many cases walking barefoot, with these often forgotten but immortal heroes. Res ipsa loquitur, with a helping hand from O'Donnell.

'Aussie Rick' says

Review Update March 2018:

Throughout this year I have been slowly re-reading a book that I first reviewed in 2016. I have taken my time and reading just a single chapter in between my other reading obligations as I wanted to re-assess my initial thoughts on this book. On this second reading I have come away with a deeper appreciation of the author's work in putting together an excellent combat narrative that is driven by the soldiers experiences during the American Revolution. The book is Patrick O'Donnell's "Washington's Immortals" and it is a five star effort. Anyone who enjoys a combat narrative in their military history will enjoy this book.

I have just finished reading Patrick O'Donnell's latest book; *Washington's Immortals*, which tells the story of an American unit that fought during the Revolutionary War and was known as the "Immortal 400". This unit, made up of stalwart patriots from Maryland, fought throughout the war in campaigns, battles and skirmishes from the north to the south.

This book is basically a combat narrative of these men and the battles they fought from New York in 1776 to the final days of the war at Yorktown. The author has used the men's diaries, letters and pension applications made after the war to help tell the story of this unit, its men and its actions whilst fighting for their new nation.

It is not an in-depth study of the American Revolution but a interesting and easy to read account of the many famous battles fought during this conflict by this band of men who came to be considered by many as an elite unit that helped hold together the infant American army during this terrible conflict.

Some of the first-hand accounts were tinged with humour, like this incident that took place during the British naval bombardment of the American positions at Manhattan:

"The Americans had a series of trenches and breastworks anchored on the high hill at Iclenburg, later known as Murray Hill. 'All of a sudden there came such a peal of thunder from the British shipping that I thought my head would go off with the sound', recalled Private Thomas Plumb Martin. 'I made a frog's leap for the ditch and lay as still as I possibly could, and began to consider which part of my carcass would go first'."

And this great exchange between two American soldiers during the British bombardment of Fort Mifflin:

"According to eyewitnesses, Smith remained staunch throughout the cannonades. At one point he saw an aide ducking and asked, 'What are you dodging for, sir? The King of Prussia had 30 aides de camp killed in one day!'

The aide replied, 'Yes sir, but Colonel Smith hasn't got so many to lose!' "

Other accounts highlighted the dedication of the American citizen soldier. This took place during the night march to attack Trenton:

"Many of our poor soldiers are quite barefoot and ill clad," wrote one of the officers on the scene. "Their route was easily traced, as there was a little snow on the ground, which was tinged here and there with blood from the feet of the men who wore broken shoes."

Or this during the 1780 march to the south:

"The majority within the Maryland and Delaware regiments traversed a breathtaking 4,656 miles - often barefoot - between the spring of 1780 and the spring of 1782. The state did not compensate them until 1783 - and then paid only if they were lucky enough to have survived and to have jumped through the right administrative and judicial hoops. Wages ceased for most men in August 1780. Officers advanced some of the men money, but after the war the men had to swear under oath and convince a Maryland judge that they were owed back pay."

Other accounts highlighted the terrible nature of war during this period:

" ... In this case, with the bone 'very much shattered', everyone knew the soldier's arm must be amputated if he were to have a faint chance of survival. With no doctor available, a blacksmith hacked off the limb 'with a shoemaker's knife and a carpenter's saw. He stopped the blood with the fungus of the oak, without taking up a blood vessel'."

There are a number of maps throughout the narrative to assist the reader in following the various battles discussed in the book. There is also a lovely colour plate section with some excellent pictures the reader can browse through while reading the book.

Overall this is an excellent combat narrative that I found a delight to read and I am sure that anyone who has an interest in America's early military history or a love for this period will also enjoy this book.

Lee says

Interesting tale of the Revolutionary War told thru the actions of Washington's Immortals the Maryland regiment that contained some of the best and most trustworthy soldiers in the Continental Army. It tells the tales of most of the major engagements of the Revolution thru the eyes of these soldiers. Excellent read.

John B. says

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. A couple of quotes from the book go a long way to summarizing why I would recommend this book to others. From the introduction to the Sources section at the end of the book:

In 2010 I had the pleasure of touring the Brooklyn battlefield with Colonel Willy Buhl, a seasoned military officer who helped plan the operation to clear Fallujah. Willy was the commanding officer of the Marines of 3/1, with whom I was embedded during that epic battle, and he later helped introduce me to many great stories that later became my books *We Were One: Shoulder to Shoulder with the Marines Who Took Fallujah* and *Give Me Tomorrow: The Korean War's Greatest Untold Story*. Running across the sign ["MARYLAND HEROES"] with one of the finest fighting Marine officers was just one of many full-circle and serendipitous moments I've had in career. Although many experts doubted there were enough sources to tell the untold story, his words convinced me to pursue the Marylanders' story: "If anyone could tell their story it's you, Pat."

An author's note next to a letter from Mordecai Gist sums this book up succinctly (fourth page of color insert pictures in my edition). "Much of the research for *Washington's Immortals* came from unpublished primary sources: pension files, letters, and diaries. In the words of the participants these unpublished sources capture a largely unknown, boots-on-the-ground, side of the Revolution."

I am largely unschooled in the history of the U.S. Revolutionary War. I have in mind two images of George Washington: 1) crossing the Delaware and 2) kneeling by his horse in prayer. These artistic impressions of George Washington do little to reveal the blood and sacrifice made by those who fought under the direction of General Washington. The author reminds the reader that this was America's First Civil War. Key battles and military actions of the war are presented from the perspective of the Maryland Regiment of citizen soldiers. By using the Maryland soldiers as the narrative thread, the author is able to touch on major battles that were fought from New York to South Carolina. This is not a complete history of the revolution. Saratoga and battles in other New England states are mentioned as an introduction to key military players that are tied in with battles fought by the Marylanders.

This is a boots-on-the-ground history. There is a lot of marching, worn out shoes, and bare feet. Soldiers were ill-equipped and in the beginning had no experience or training. One of the commanders made the statement to the effect that 'we fight, we lose, we rise to fight again'. Many battles were lost by the Americans. It was through persistence and grit that they continued to press forward in battle.

It is popular to view the revolution as a protest against high taxes levied by the crown. As the decision was made to revolt against the king and fight for independence, the colonies had little appetite for collecting taxes to pay for the military. In many colonies there was a contingent of Loyalists who were opposed breaking ties with England. Society was divided on the direction the country should take to secure its future.

For those men that spent more than 5 years fighting against the British, their motivation was liberty. After the war the soldiers scattered across the country, some returned home to Maryland, others sought their fortunes in the new frontier. Many were broken and scarred from the battles they had endured. Freedom is not free. The first-person accounts from soldiers who fought some of the bloodiest battles of the revolution leave one with a sense that it was not just George Washington that should be remembered, it is those citizen soldiers that helped lay the foundation of a mighty nation.

Jonathan says

Disclosure: I received a review copy of this book from NetGalley.

In his preface, Patrick K. O'Donnell writes that *Washington's Immortals* is an attempt to do a "Band of

Brothers treatment" on the Revolutionary War. This is an interesting claim, as *Band of Brothers* was primarily an oral history and we live essentially 200 years after the deaths of those involved in the Revolution. Practically, O'Donnell instead lays forth a plan to follow the actions of a group of men through the war. In this, O'Donnell succeeds. *Washington's Immortals* is an exciting, readable, and well-researched look at a group of individuals who aided in the forging of an independent country.

The book opens as a unit history: O'Donnell's subjects mostly begin their war years as members of the Baltimore Independent Company, Maryland's first militia company raised, in the final days of 1774, for the coming conflict. These men, focusing most heavily on the leading officers such as Mordecai Gist (distantly related to States Rights Gist, of Civil War fame), formed the core of Maryland's subsequent militia units and line regiments, and then the Light Infantry, which were among the more reliable formations in American armies.

As the narrative advances, the involved units multiply and on occasion it becomes confusing: where are we, who are we following, how did they get here? But these episodes are few and far between. O'Donnell is a skilled writer, and this is his tenth book. His other books are critically acclaimed, and he also served as both a combat historian and embedded journalist during the war in Iraq. He has generally focused on contemporary subjects, or special operations, and this is his furthest foray from his own experience. However, it is likely his own experience which enables him to make sense out of dissimilar accounts of frenetic activity.

One significant flaw I noticed does beg a very big question. About halfway through the book, O'Donnell identifies Joseph Plumb Martin as a "Maryland Private". In context, this slight error is attributable to Martin being assigned to the Light Infantry (as a corporal), which was commanded by Mordecai Gist. Martin, however, began his service with Connecticut troops, then later transferred to the Light Infantry, and finally (as a sergeant) to the Corps of Sappers and Miners. If O'Donnell, and his readers and editor, didn't catch this--and Joseph Plumb Martin's account is probably the best known Revolutionary War memoir--what else was missed?

Nevertheless, *Washington's Immortals* is a good book and worthy of a read for historians or buffs. It is an interesting spin on the unit history genre, and though it falls short of being a "Rev War Band of Brothers" it does meet the goal set out in the preface.

Sherwood Smith says

Received from NetGalley

Centered around the Marylander Immortals, which was a militia group raised to be a trained fighting force, this is really a capsule history of the key battles from 1776 to 1782. O'Donnell takes the time to develop the backgrounds and personalities of the key men, adding others as time progresses. At the core are Mordecai Gist, John Eager Howard, William Smallwood, and Jack Steward among others, whose exploits we follow until either death or their later lives.

O'Donnell seems to maintain that the course of history might have gone another way without these men. I don't know that he proves it; his superlative evocation of the brutalities and absurdities and tragedies of war work against him. So much was dependent on personality and the weather, mis-laid communications, mis-heard orders, great strategy with bad tactics (and the other way around), and all the coincidences that

multiply in the ferocious chaos that is battle. But he leaves no doubt that these men furnished the core of Washington's force, proving reliable, brave and cunning, while suffering a terrible cost.

Not overlooked was the constant, cruel, relentless effect on Patriots as the bankrupt nation failed to equip and supply its defenders. Furnished is a bleak accounting of the dreadful winter the Patriots spent starving and freezing in miserable, sickness-riddled camps while the British who'd taken Philadelphia whooped it up cheerfully--then were understandably reluctant to vacate.

Told in brisk, vivid, often dryly sardonic prose, O'Donnell's historical narrative displays impeccable scholarship, relying heavily on quotations from both sides in not only the usual military dispatches and later memoirs, but diaries and letters--occasionally quoting from letters from men who died before their delivery.

He sheds light in corners that many Revolutionary war chronicles finesse, like how much deserting to the other side went on--some opportunists switching sides back and forth several times, as needed. There was one officer so popular with his men that even when he deserted to the British then fell prisoner, or wounded, into American hands *twice*, his men received him right back again. Then there was the Loyalist who fought for a little, decided against war, returned home only to have his home burned to the ground by Tories, his disabled wife dragged out onto the lawn to watch. He became one of the grimmest and most determined Patriots after that. Personal passions and motivations, especially between people who speak the same language, and had lived in more or less amity not so long ago, made the conflict that much more bewildering at times, infuriating at others, fueled by feelings of anger and betrayal.

African-American soldiers are not overlooked, nor the sometimes confusing involvement of Native Americans (including battles against surviving Patriots, one of the tough officers who made it through the war dying on a hill in Kentucky, scalped) on both sides. Grim statistics about battle are never dry because O'Donnell shows the human cost.

I also appreciated his explication of evolving strategy and tactics--much of which, on the British side, was taken back and put in the field under Wellington in Portugal and Spain, to finally defeat Napoleon. If there is an area that O'Donnell skimps, it's the sea war, but then that really lies outside his stated intent. It's just that his clear picture of major troop movements made me wish he'd expanded the scope to include the maritime elements that influenced strategic decisions, especially by Cornwallis, who (as is pointed out) doesn't do well in memoirs afterward by certain British officers. But O'Donnell is on sure ground with the complexities of regimental statistics (and characteristics) on the British and Hessian side, and the constantly changing make-up of Washington's army.

Famous figures are all there--Washington, of course, seen through ordinary eyes, Benedict Arnold, the Howe brothers, and in the southern war, Francis Marion (the Swamp Fox) and Bloody Ban Tarleton.

To sum up: any reader desiring a boots-on-the-ground tour through the Revolutionary war should enjoy this.

David Mitchell says

Pat O'Donnell has contributed much to 20th century military history scholarship, having written extensively on mid-century conflicts and especially World War II. With *Washington's Immortals*, O'Donnell establishes himself as a pure military historian who can explore and present the personal and professional experiences of soldiers who have fought in any period.

Washington's Immortals offers meticulous and original research into an elite regiment that formed in

Maryland, under the leadership of Mordecai Gist in the early days of the Revolution, and fought its way through to American independence. Compiled largely from personal diaries, correspondence and pension applications of the men who fought -- on both sides of the conflict -- O'Donnell (as with all of his works) makes the experiences of the men about whom he writes both very personal and very immediate. He has created a virtual oral history from the voices of soldiers long since dead. Although gone, they are not forgotten and the reader really does hear their stories through their own voices.

Students of the American Revolution will largely know what happened during the conflict, but most will never have discovered the contribution that these Marylanders made to the cause of American independence, the sacrifice they made at the Battle of Brooklyn, the strategic advantages that their sacrifice gave to Washington in fighting the larger cause, or what typical combatants experienced while all of these things were happening. Readers of Washington's Immortals will discover all that and more.

This is a must-read work that belongs in the library of every student of American history or military history. Indeed, readers who seek a good story will appreciate O'Donnell's effort even if they have never read a history book.

Kevin says

I anxiously awaited the release of this book having watched it being teased for quite some time. I have now had the opportunity to read Washington's Immortals twice and I have to say that it is an amazing and intimate portrayal of a story that I thought I knew very well. A lover of this time period and the military engagements that took place; I had only tapped the surface of the Maryland Regiment until I read this book. I have an affinity for Mr. O'Donnell's writing style and delivery and could not have been more enthralled than to read this book and the manner in which this story was told. The brilliant research reveals a soldier's point of view I have never encountered in previous books and he brings the reader right alongside them during this pivotal point in history. As Mr. O'Donnell characteristically does in his books he puts the reader right onto the battlefield; alongside the soldiers as the fight is taking place. He has weaved together a story that shines a light on several key figures bringing them to life; again many who's story had never been told. The tension, detail, and investment I had as I turned each page rendered me unable to put the book down.

The Historian, Researcher, Military Enthusiast, or that person who wants to read a gripping novel will find this book well worth a read. I would highly recommend Washington's Immortals; you will not be disappointed! As well, I will echo the past few reviewers and note that this book would lend itself very well to a cinematic treatment.

Lori says

I am not a "war book" reader. When authors/teachers/historians begin sharing details about battle tactics, flanks and inverse V formations, my eyes tend to glaze over. However, this excellent account of one of Washington's elite regiments from the Revolutionary War kept me completely engaged. Just when I began to tune out because of what I consider to be excessive tactic details, the author drew me back in with diary quotes from soldiers who were there and inserted humanity onto the battlefield. I've never before heard the stories of the Battle of Trenton or Washington Crossing the Delaware with his troops in a way that kept me so invested in the story. I actually told my husband he would have to wait because I had to get through the battle of Trenton first.

This well-documented story brought new levels of respect for those brave men and women who literally pledged their "lives, fortunes and sacred honor" to help birth this nation of ours. I constantly shook my head in amazement at the first-hand accounts of soldiers so inspired by Washington's encouragement that they were willing to ignore the fact that they hadn't been paid in months, hadn't eaten well in just as long, were, many of them barefoot and scarcely clad during a bitterly cold winter and walked without complaint while their feet left a trail of blood to battle, in order to make sure we had the ability to govern ourselves. A very different time...full of heros and heroines well worthy of a read. More like 4 1/2 stars because...it is still a war book, but rounded up because it kept even me interested.

Kim says

After one or two books on the American Revolution one gets a sense of most of the great battles and movements of the war. Because of the presence of Washington through the course of the war, most histories tend to concentrate on battles in which he was involved even when, later in the war, most of the action was taking place in the southern states and far away from Washington's direct control.

Rather than being a broad-strokes history Washington's Immortals focuses on volunteers from the Maryland Colony who happened to be involved in many of the major battles through the entire revolution. This adds some extra detail to battles in the southern states fought under the likes of Nathaniel Greene and Robert E. Lee's father "Light Horse Harry" Lee. These were the battles that put pressure on Cornwallis helping to push the British toward surrender. The northern battles rocked the British but the southern battles finally knocked the legs from under them.

Not that the Maryland troops missed the northern battles. The book opens with the story of the Battle of Long Island under Washington's command, and the death of nearly 250 volunteers. The location of their mass grave in Brooklyn is still a matter of speculation. They were also present at Valley Forge and crossing the Delaware to conquer the Hessians at Trenton, New Jersey.

O'Donnell does an excellent job of culling information from diaries, memoirs, pensioner claims, and memories recorded by children of many of the men (and some women) in these battles. The most interesting histories will often give focus to a single event or individual to help the reader track the information as a narrative rather than a jumble of dates and events. O'Donnell mostly succeeds here, though with so many different soldier stories I found myself perking up when there were names I recognized, such as Washington, Hamilton, Greene, Ethan Allen, and others.

O'Donnell does an excellent job of covering the whole experience of war. Going beyond battles he deals with the political infighting among commanders, black volunteers, camp followers, diseases, surgery, and the infamous British prison ships where many captured Americans died and were tossed into the sea. He also covers some of the issues on the "Loyalist" side, those Americans who saw patriotism as supporting England and the king. Having ancestors on both sides it's nice to see them all treated fairly.

Many of the early battles in the book are familiar territory, but with the added interest of new diary reports and the concentration of some individual campaigns. On the whole, an excellent book for those interested in early American history. It's an immersive and humane book offering some unique perspectives.

Lou Fillari says

This appears to have been very hastily edited and hurriedly published as if somebody missed a deadline or two. Dates are incorrect and commas are missing and quotation marks are everywhere.

The story was fine and exciting, Maryland troops and their trials and tribulations across the colonies at the onset of the nation they call home,
