

MARCH IS IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Irish/Irish-American Revolutionary War Heroes

America won freedom by fighting 36 major land battles and hundreds more on the high seas. Many Irish fought in the Continental Army: Nine of Washington's generals and about 1500 officers were born in Ireland. Irishmen composed about 30% of the Continental Army. Sadly, references to these people are mostly omitted from American history.



ONE IRISH-AMERICAN HERO WAS

COLONEL

John Fitzgerald



1769

Born in Wexford, he immigrated among the first Catholics in Alexandria at a time when Catholicism was illegal. Nonetheless, he became a prominent business man in early Alexandria.

1770

A man of "culture, refinement and education", Fitzgerald was soon associated with Col. George Washington of Mount Vernon.



1770

Fitzgerald was elected Burgess and represented Alexandria in the legislature of Virginia.

1775

When Washington took command of the Continental Army, Fitzgerald was at his side as Aide-de-Camp. He was with Washington at all times, especially in action.



1776

Colonel Fitzgerald crossed the Delaware with Washington on Christmas Day as the Continental Army defeated the Hessians at Trenton.

1777

Col. Fitzgerald was with Washington at Valley Forge. He was "resolute in upholding the character and fame of the illustrious General". It was Fitzgerald who uncovered the conspiracy against Washington.



1778

Col. Fitzgerald was wounded at the Battle of Monmouth and medically retired. Washington described Fitzgerald as "a warm-hearted brave and honest Irishman".

1783

After the Revolutionary War ended, Fitzgerald maintained social and business relations with General Washington.



1785

Washington and Fitzgerald were active in establishing the Potomac Company to improve commercial navigation on the river. Washington was President, and Colonel Fitzgerald one of the four directors.

1787

Colonel Fitzgerald was elected Mayor of Alexandria.



1788

Fitzgerald hosted a dinner at his home for prominent citizens to raise funds to build a Catholic Church in Alexandria. Washington made the first contribution, and in 1795 the first official Roman Catholic parish in the Commonwealth of Virginia was founded.

1799

July 4, 1799 Washington and Fitzgerald celebrated Independence Day in Alexandria. It was one of the last public appearances Washington made.



Many Irish fought with Lafayette.

At the Siege of Savannah, 637 IRISH were killed.

At the Battle of Lexington, 174 IRISH were present.

At the Battle of Bunker Hill, 698 IRISH were present.

When the British Army evacuated Boston, Washington made ST. PATRICK the password for those on guard duty.

April 2, 1784, Lord MOUNTJOY told the English Parliament,

"America was lost by Irish emigrants. I am assured from the best authority, the major part of the American Army was composed of Irish and that the Irish language was as commonly spoken in the American ranks as English. I am also informed it was their valor that determined the contest."