

OCTOBER 1776

Military, Political & Civilian Events Across the Thirteen Colonies

A month when the fight for New York, the birth of new state governments, and hardship on the home front unfolded together.

THIRTEEN COLONIES • ONE REVOLUTION

SETTING THE SCENE

The War Enters Its Bleakest Autumn

Three months after the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Army was reeling. Defeat at the Battle of Long Island (Aug. 27) and the fall of New York City (Sept. 15) had pushed George Washington's forces off Manhattan and into the countryside north of the city. Congress had renamed the union the “United States” and new state constitutions were being drafted from New Hampshire to South Carolina. October 1776 would test whether this fragile new nation could survive on the battlefield while it was still inventing itself at the statehouse.

3

Fronts active at once: Hudson Highlands, the frontier, and Congress

9

New states now governing under their own constitutions

13

Colonies bound together by the Continental Congress

THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS THEATER

- Manhattan — occupied by Howe, Sept. 15
- Throgs Neck / Pell's Point — Oct. 12–18
- Mamaroneck — Oct. 22
- White Plains — Oct. 28
- North Castle — Washington withdraws

MILITARY — OCTOBER 11

The Battle of Valcour Island

On Lake Champlain, Brigadier General Benedict Arnold met a British fleet under Sir Guy Carleton in a desperate two-day engagement. Arnold had spent the summer building a scratch fleet of gunboats at Skenesborough to block a British invasion from Canada.

Nearly all of Arnold's small fleet was destroyed or run aground, and the survivors slipped away under cover of fog. **It was a tactical defeat — but it delayed Carleton's advance so long that he chose to withdraw to Canada for the winter rather than press on toward Fort Ticonderoga.**

“A squadron sacrificed to buy a winter.” — the delay bought time to fortify against the following year's invasion.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN, NEW YORK



15 American gunboats vs. a larger, better-armed Royal Navy squadron

This is a photo of the replica of the 1776 gunboat Philadelphia, which was part of Benedict Arnold's fleet on Lake Champlain.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/2980332862290428/posts/3265258987131146/

MILITARY — OCTOBER 12–22

Howe Tries to Outflank Washington

Unable to trap Washington on Manhattan, General Sir William Howe shifted his army by water into Westchester County, hoping to cut off the Continental Army's escape route. A string of sharp skirmishes followed as Washington's forces bought time to shift north.

OCT 12



Throgs Neck

Howe lands troops east of the Bronx River; a small American force under Col. Edward Hand delays them at a causeway, forcing a change of plan.

OCT 18



Battle of Pell's Point

John Glover's Massachusetts regiments fight a skillful delaying action along stone walls, slowing Howe's fresh landing at Pell's Point.

OCT 22



Battle of Mamaroneck

A night raid by Col. John Haslet's Delaware troops strikes a Loyalist “Queen's Rangers” outpost, part of the running contest for the roads north.

Throgs Neck

The Landing: British forces sailed up the East River and landed on the marshy Throgs Neck peninsula to flank the Continental Army. [1, 2, 3, 4]

The Obstacle: The British found that high tide turned the peninsula into an island, and Americans had removed the planks from the local bridge over Westchester Creek. [1]

American Resistance: A small group of about 25 to 30 Patriot soldiers under Colonel Edward Hand fired heavily on the British and stopped their advance. [1, 2, 3]

The Outcome: The British were stuck at the marsh for six days. General Howe then gave up on Throgs Neck and moved his troops north to Pell's Point. [1, 2]

Strategic Result: The delay gave General George Washington enough time to move the main American army safely to White Plains. [1]



https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/throgs-neck-new-york

MILITARY — OCTOBER 28

Battle of Pell's Point

The Landing: After failing to trap General George Washington's army at Throgs Neck, General Howe landed an amphibious force of 4,000 British and Hessian troops at Pell's Point (modern-day Rodman's Neck). [1, 2]

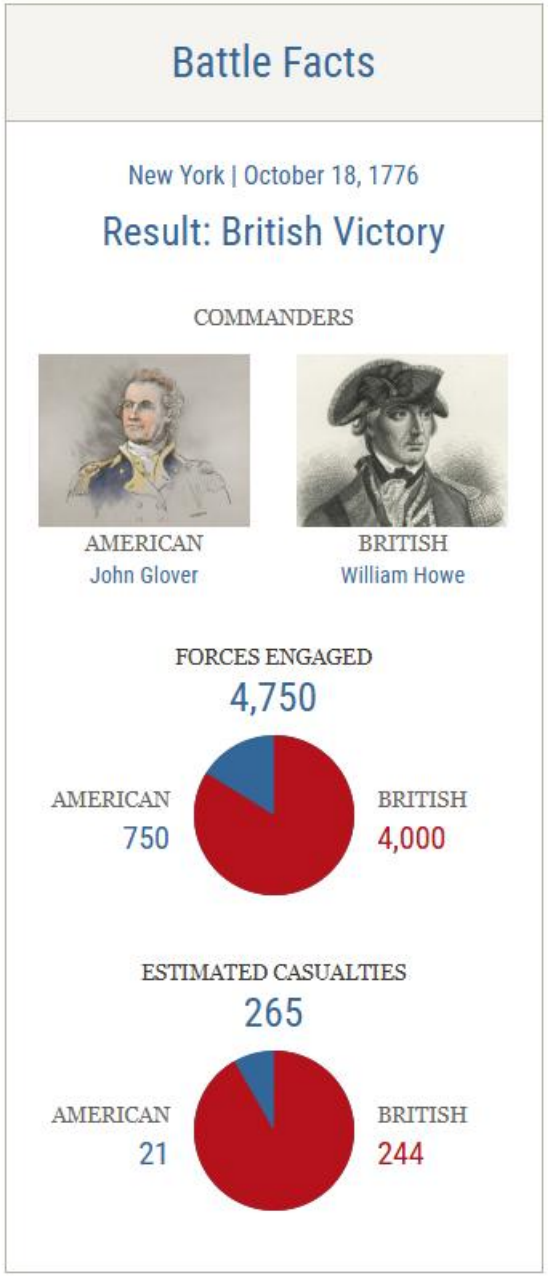
Staggered Defense: Outnumbered roughly five to one, Colonel Glover deployed his men behind stone walls and ridges in staggered, sequential positions. [1, 2]

Fighting Retreat: As the British advanced up Split Rock Road, the Patriots fired and then fell back from wall to wall, slowing the British advance for the entire day. [1, 2]

Strategic Significance

Saving the Army: The delaying tactics inflicted dozens of casualties and stalled Howe's advance, buying General George Washington critical time to safely evacuate the main Continental Army from Manhattan and relocate to White Plains. [1, 2]

Morale Booster: The disciplined defense proved that colonial militia could execute an orderly tactical retreat against a massive professional army. [1]



https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/pells-point

MILITARY — OCTOBER 28

Battle of Mamaroneck

Key Commanders
American Forces: Colonel John Haslet led about 750 Patriot troops, including the Delaware Continentals.

British Forces: Major Robert Rogers led about 400 Loyalist troops from the Queen's Rangers. [1, 2, 3]

What Happened
British General William Howe ordered Major Robert Rogers to seize Mamaroneck to protect the eastern flank of his army.

Colonel John Haslet led a surprise night assault on the British encampment at Heathcote Hill.

The American forces achieved complete surprise at first.

Major Rogers and his men quickly rallied, fought back, and drove off the American attackers. [1, 2]

Battle of Mamaroneck (Skirmish of Heathcote Hill)

Part of the American Revolutionary War



Historical Marker on Fenimore Road in Mamaroneck

Date	October 22, 1776
Location	Mamaroneck, Westchester County, New York
Result	British victory
Belligerents	
United States	Great Britain
Commanders and leaders	
John Haslet	Robert Rogers
Strength	
750 men	400 men
Casualties and losses	
3 killed 12 wounded[1]	30 killed or wounded 36 captured[2]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mamaroneck

MILITARY — OCTOBER 28

North Castle

Washington's Headquarters

The Elijah Miller House: General Washington used the Elijah Miller House in North White Plains as a command post and field office. [1, 2]

Safe Haven: The Miller family temporarily moved away, leaving their home for Washing his staff to coordinate troop movements. [1]

The Patriot Retreat

Strategic Fallback: American forces retreated to the safety of North Castle's hills on November 1, 1776. [1, 2]

Protected Positions: Troops built earthwork fortifications on high ground to watch enemy movements and block British access. [1, 2, 3]

The Final Shots

Miller Hill: Patriot troops under Colonel John Glover fired final defensive shots from Miller Hill on November 4, 1776. [1, 2]

Halting the British: These actions effectively stopped the British advance and turned the tide of the local campaign. [1, 2, 3]

Care for the Wounded

Field Hospitals: Local buildings, including the Old North Castle Church, treated wounded American soldiers after the heavy fighting. [1, 2]





https://www.northcastlehistoricalsociety.org/home/revolutionary-war/north-castle-revolutionary-war-sites

POLITICAL — OCTOBER 7, 10 & 20

New Governments Take Their Seats

Even as armies clashed near New York, the machinery of the new United States kept running. Colonies-turned-states seated their first legislatures and sworn officers under brand-new constitutions written earlier that year.



OCT 7

VIRGINIA

The 1st Virginia General Assembly convenes — the first legislature to meet under Virginia's new state constitution, replacing the colonial House of Burgesses.



OCT 10

CONNECTICUT

Jonathan Trumbull is sworn in as the 16th governor of the newly independent state, with Matthew Griswold as its first lieutenant governor.



OCT 20

DELAWARE

The 1st Delaware General Assembly convenes, seating the legislature created by the Delaware Constitution adopted just a month earlier.

POLITICAL — OCTOBER 31

The King Addresses Parliament

In London, King George III opened a new session of Parliament with his first speech since the American colonies had declared independence that summer. He acknowledged to Parliament that the war in America was not going as well as hoped — an implicit admission that crushing the rebellion would take far more time, money, and troops than the Crown had first assumed.

Word of the speech would not reach the colonies for weeks — news still crossed the Atlantic by sail.



https://hamilton.gilderlehrman.org/supporting-document/george-iii-addresses-parliament-rebellion-1775

A war that began as an act of discipline was, by October, an open question of resolve.

CIVILIAN & FRONTIER LIFE — THROUGHOUT OCTOBER

Beyond the Battle Lines



THE CHEROKEE CAMPAIGN

Since September, roughly 6,000 Patriot militia from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina had been burning Cherokee towns in retaliation for raids tied to the British alliance. On October 17, the Rutherford Light Horse expedition set out to press the campaign further into Cherokee territory — a brutal frontier war running in parallel with the fight against Britain.

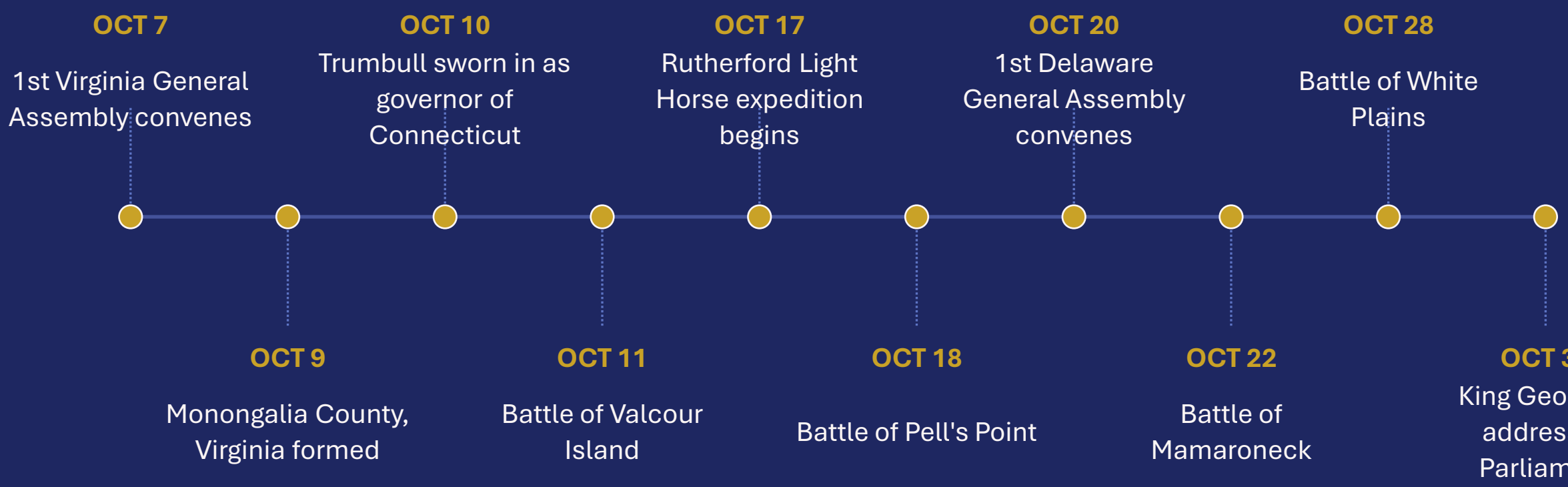


A CITY AND A CURRENCY UNDER STRAIN

New York City, occupied since mid-September, was still scarred from the Great Fire of September 20–21, which had destroyed roughly a quarter of its buildings. Thousands of residents — Patriot and Loyalist alike — had fled the city as armies marched through Westchester farmland, trampling crops and commandeering homes just as the harvest came in. Meanwhile, Continental currency issued by Congress was already losing value, foreshadowing the inflation that would plague the war effort for years.

THE MONTH AT A GLANCE

October 1776, Day by Day



October 1776 — the bigger picture

You can think of the month this way:

Area	What was happening
War	Britain was driving Washington's army out of New York
Military	Washington was desperately trying to preserve the Continental Army
Civilians	Communities were being divided between Patriots, Loyalists and neutrals; civilians faced displacement and property losses
Government	The new United States was trying to construct governments while fighting a war
Congress	Continental Congress was functioning as the national government, but had limited powers
States	Individual states were writing constitutions and establishing governments
Future government	Congress was beginning the difficult process that would eventually produce the Articles of Confederation
Morale	The American military situation looked increasingly bleak
British objective	Destroy Washington's army and force the Americans back under British rule

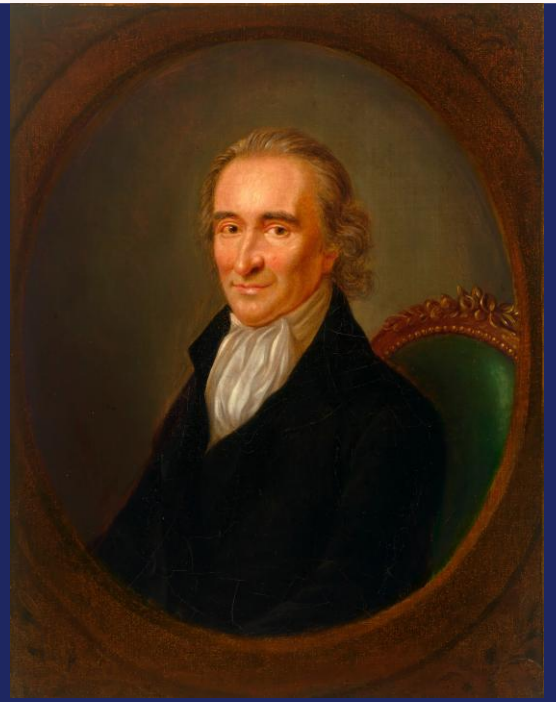
LOOKING AHEAD

A Retreat That Was Not Yet a Defeat

https://share.google/x92FzX4aaZXtHU2kO

October ended with Washington's army bruised but intact, and a new United States taking shape on paper even as it struggled to hold ground in the field. The setbacks were not over: Fort Washington would fall on November 16, and Fort Lee four days later, forcing a harrowing retreat across New Jersey.

But the same army that gave ground at White Plains would, within ten weeks, cross the Delaware and strike Trenton — a reminder that October's losses bought the time the Revolution needed to survive its first hard winter.



"These are the times that try men's souls."

Thomas Paine, The American Crisis — written in the field that autumn, published December 19, 1776

LOOKING AHEAD

New York Ancestors

Inhabitants Lists: The Inhabitants of New York, 1774-1776 collection covers over 13,000 names in New York City, Suffolk, and Queens, including militiamen, oath signers, and taxpayers. https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/49200 ($)

Loyalist Records: Brigadier-General Oliver De Lancey's battalions are documented in the 1776-1778 New York Loyalists Records detailing provincial troops on Long Island.

Military and Pension Files: Search the National Archives Revolutionary War Rolls or explore guidance via FamilySearch New York in the Revolutionary War.

New York State Archives: https://www.archives.nysed.gov/

New York State Military Patents: https://www.archives.nysed.gov/research/name-index-by-series/A0447/H

New York Public Library: Search using “Revolutionary War”: https://libguides.nypl.org/srch.php?group_id=19294&q=Revolutionary+War

Loyalist Claims: Review property loss and compensation files via the New York Public Library Loyalist Genealogy Guide.