

"Sheldon's Horse" 2nd Regiment, Continental Light Dragoons Connecticut's Revolutionary War Cavalry 1776 - 1783 "Washington's Eyes" "Watchdogs of the Highlands" The *first* Congressional cavalry regiment in the history of the **United States Army** as authorized by the **Continental Congress** and commissioned on Dec. 12, 1776 by Gen. George Washington.





The nation calls, her sons respond in thunder tones

Flags under which "Sheldon's" served.



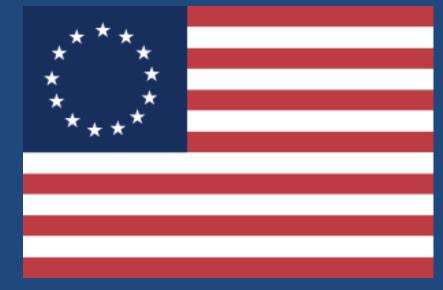
Connecticut State Flag



Regimental Device



Regimental Flag





"Tarleton-Bedford" Flag

"Betsy Ross" Flag

Things in which the 2^{nd} was 1^{st} ...

- *First* commissioned cavalry in US history.
- *First* "Pony Express".
- *First* cavalry charge on American soil at the Battle of the Flocky.
- *First* organized U.S. espionage system.
- Achieved victories on foot, horseback and at sea as whaleboat raiders capturing British vessels on Long Island Sound.

Notable names among the men of the 2nd Light Dragoons **Col. Elisha Sheldon** (1741-1805) – First Congressional Cavalry commander Put his reputation and his personal liberty at risk to supply his men. Survived the war and moved his family to what became Sheldon VT.



Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge (1754-1835) – Washington's Spy Master; Friend of Nathan Hale; Litchfield Town postmaster 1792; First Treasurer of the Society of the Cincinnati; Secretary of the Society of the Cincinnati; U.S. House of Representatives 1801-1817.

Capt. Thomas Youngs Seymour (1757-1811) – "Beau Sabreur of Saratoga" Aide to Generals Gates and Arnold; Escorted Burgoyne to Boston; Society of the Cincinnati; Lawyer & Connecticut legislator; Abolitionist; Founder and Commander of the Connecticut Governor's Horse Guard.

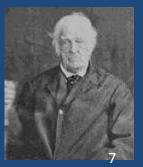




Sgt. Elijah Churchill (1755-1841) – Awarded Badge of Military Merit by General Washington in 1782. In the ancestral line of Winston Churchill.

Lemuel Cook (1759-1866) – The Last Man

Was 1 of 20 2LD assigned "On Command" to Washington. Present at Siege Of Yorktown. Last survivor of the 2LD and last surviving Revolutionary War veteran. One of seven Revolutionary War veterans to survive into age of photography and featured in "The Last Men of the Revolution (1864).





Creation of the American Dragoons

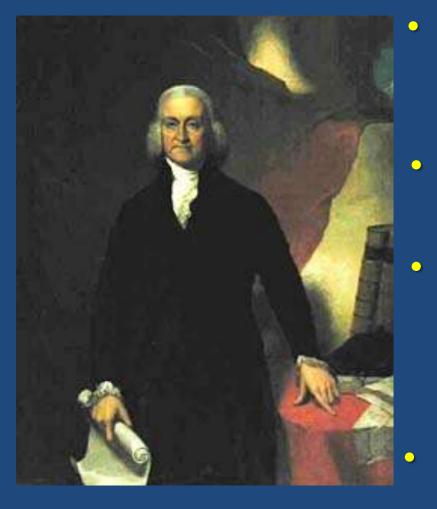


Governor Jonathan Trumbull

His Excellency M General George Washington

Colonel Elisha Sheldon No known image exists

Governor Jonathan Trumbull (1710–1785)



- **Royal Governor** of the Crown Colony of Connecticut. (1769 -1776)
- *State Governor* of Connecticut. (1776-1784)
- <u>Only Royal Governor</u> to side with the rebellion and only colonial governor to remain in office throughout the war.
 - *Had himself* served as a state dragoon officer in 1732.

As governor, Trumbull was able to read the quill-writing on the wall; and so he...

- Defied the Royal decree against manufacturing.
- Authorized a cannon foundry in Salisbury, CT.
- *Began* the manufacture of "Committee of Safety" muskets, pistols, bayonets and munitions.
- *Established* his War Office near the family home in Lebanon, CT.
- Divided Connecticut into 27 military districts, each with a company of infantry, a train of artillery and a troop of horse.

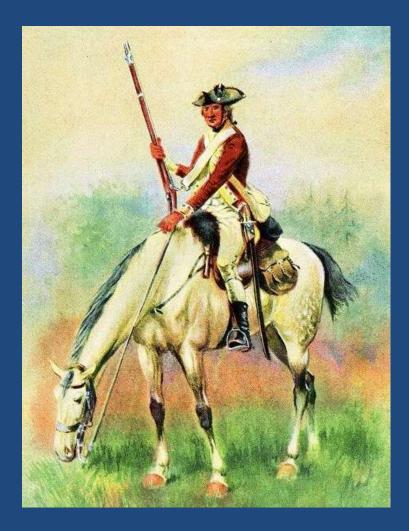




Gov. Trumbull's War Office Lebanon Green, Lebanon, CT



• Governor Trumbull included the 5th Connecticut Light Horse Militia commanded by Major Elisha Sheldon as part of the state militia contingent sent to **General Washington** in New York after the Battle of White Plains.



General George Washington (1732-1799)



- *At first* Washington didn't see the need for a mounted component to his army.
- *Changed his mind* after the Battle of White Plains.
 - *Requested* Congress to authorize a mounted corps.
 - Assigned Major Elisha Sheldon of the 5th Connecticut Light Horse Militia the task of creating a corps of cavalry on the "Continental establishment".
- A 1778 British attempt to kidnap Washington would fail because "The 2nd Dragoons are always with him." 13

Colonel Elisha Sheldon (1741 – 1805)



- Son of a Connecticut legislator.
- Boyhood friend of Ethan Allen.
- *Served* from 1768 as a captain in a state light horse militia regiment.
- *Commissioned* 12/12/1776 by
 Washington as Colonel-Commandant to raise a troop of Connecticut horse on the "Continental establishment".
- *Commanded* the 2LD throughout the war.

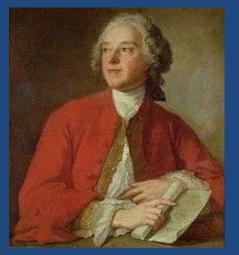


We didn't win this on our own!



The European ConnectionsVive la France!Pierre-Augustin CaronVive la France!What was I
thinking?

Pierre-Augustin Caron deBeaumarchais



Composer, inventor and author of the three "Figaro" plays, he would be a driving force behind *Hortalez et cie*, a joint Franco-Spanish venture to smuggle war materiél to the rebel colonists.



King Louis XVI

The French monarch's decision to aid the American rebels would eventually sow the seeds of his own destruction.



Dutch Treat!

Bernardo de Galvez y Madrid



Viscount of Galvezton, Count of Galvez and 61st Viceroy of New Spain. He aided the 13 Colonies by shipping supplies from Hortalez up the Mississippi and by taking military action against the British in the Floridas.



Dutch aid in the form of arms and munitions was smuggled to the Americans through the Dutch island of St. Eustatius.

At this point you might be wondering:

Q: Just what is a *Dragoon* anyway?

A: A Dragoon is a soldier trained to fight on foot as an infantryman and on horseback as a cavalryman. What made a dragoon a *Light* Dragoon was the stature of his mount. Q: Why are dragoons called dragoons?
A: There are two speculative answers both based upon the French word for dragon – *dragón:*

1. A man on a horse wielding a fire-spitting tube appeared to be a dragon-like creature.

2. The flint-holding jaws of some more ornate muskets were cast as dragon heads.

Q: How many men served in the 2nd Dragoons during the war?

A: Although the 2nd never served as a whole, it was the largest of the four Congressional, or Regular dragoon regiments with a maximum roster of approximately 416 men (troopers), NCOs, officers and supernumeraries, although never more than 250 "effectives" at any one time. However, the overall size of the regiment is what permitted it to perform the myriad duties it would undertake during the conflict. Over 700 men would serve in the regiment during the course of the war.

Q: Why is it that the <u>1st</u> commissioned cavalry is designated as the <u>2nd</u> Light Dragoons?

A: Politics, politics, politics; location, location, location,

Congress gave the honor of the designation of being the 1st Dragoons to a Regiment from Virginia.

However, Sheldon was with Washington in New York when the commissions came through and so the 2nd received its commission first.



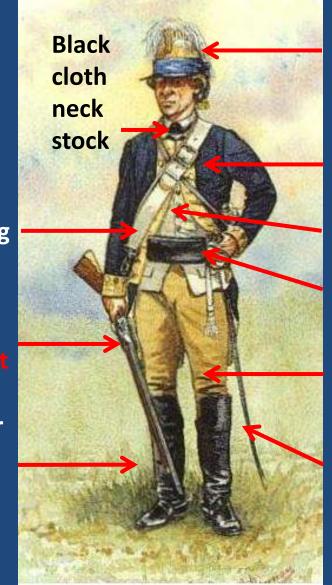
The clothes make the man...

Even before the 1777 American victory at Saratoga, the 2LD had begun to receive uniforms and equipage from France.

Carbine sling

Charleville carbine musket

Black leather knee-high riding boots and spurs



Brass helmet with horse hair crest & blue turban over bearskin (Or leather helmet) Short regimental jacket, blue with white facings and cuffs

worn over a cotton shirt

Cartridge box

Tan deerskin leather riding breeches with white cloth knee guards

Sword & bayonet in double carriage

Capt. Thomas Youngs Seymour models the brass dragoon helmet for your edification...



"Thomas Youngs Seymour" – Artist: John Trumbull ca. 1793

Brass helmets afford greater protection against sword blows.

Raised center crest acts as does a "crumple zone" on a modern motor vehicle.

Horse hair crest denotes cavalry and is a protective element – the horse hair is slick and hard to cut, thus shedding sword strikes off the back of the head. Helmet has an internal suspension system, precursor to modern military

and sports helmets.









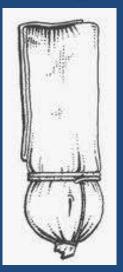
Cartridge box & cartridges

Sword (or sabre)





Because you can't bite the top off the



without opposable teeth!



<u>If they function</u> at all!

The firearms shown are smoothbore black powder weapons with flint and steel ignition.





The slide bar and ring and a carbine sling as the original "hands-free" device.



Musket Lock: Front view

Gap aligns with touch hole drilled through barrel

Musket Lock: Rear view

20

Boy, when things go wrong!

As if having a weapon that you can only load and fire, at best, one time every 15-20 seconds isn't bad enough...

- 18th Century firearms were an unreliable weapons system.
- Black powder susceptible to weather wet gun powder does not ignite.
- Wind can blow priming charge out of priming pan.
- Wind can blow sparks away from priming pan.
- Subject to "flash in the pan".
- Powder supplies may be adulterated.
- Flints may fail to spark.
- Unhardened frizzens may fail to spark.
- Firearms subject to delayed ignition or hang fire.
- Subject to misfire.
- Multiple loads may cause breech to blow out.

And then there are the swords!



18th Century steel was brittle. *Why?*

- As a result, the blades of 18th Century swords had blunted edges to discourage using the edge of the blade, which might cause the blade to snap. They were not cutting weapons.
- Neither were they stabbing weapons when used by cavalry, due to the inertia of motion.
- When used by cavalry, swords were intended to be used to inflict blunt force trauma injuries.
- Nevertheless, a dragoon without his sword is just one thing A dead man riding!

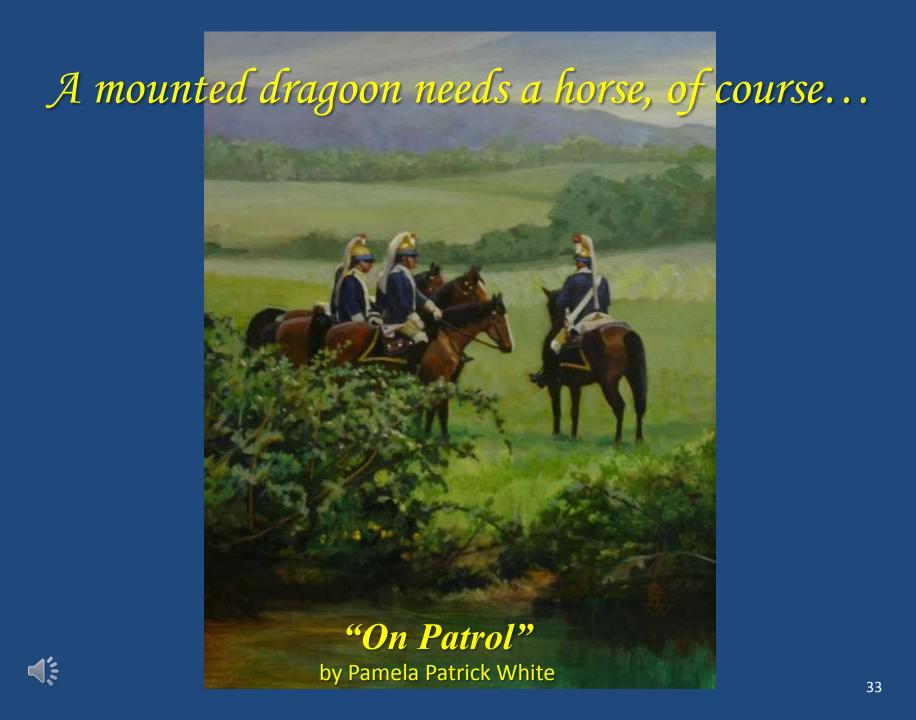
Once equipped the soldiers train to march and fight, first as dismounted troops...

In tight formations as a battalion company...



In open order as skirmishers...





The Mounted Dragoon... A boy and his horse

Portmanteau, Sword bedroll and **Cartridge** box saddle bags **Pistol** holsters Carbine (slung) Horse

Everything the trooper needs to do his job: training, patrolling and combat, is mounted to the front or to his side.

Those things unnecessary to those tasks are mounted behind the trooper.

And speaking of horses, did you know that a horse has a 6-foot blind spot directly to its front?

- <u>Yes, it's true!</u> Horses are prey animals their eyes are set to the side for greater peripheral vision, and don't reach a point of focus until 6 feet to their front.
- Humans are predators. Predator's eyes are set to the front, allowing for stereoscopic vision, depth perception and focus.
- A human on horseback creates a situation, highly unusual in nature, of a predator animal and a prey animal working in unison.

Horse and rider train...

With the hay head...



...and hand-to-hand sword training.



Mounted and dismounted elements train together



CALL TO <u>ACTION!</u>

~ or ~

All dressed up with someplace to go! Q: What type of functions did the 2nd Dragoons perform?

A: Recruiting and training; patrolling and intelligence gathering; messenger service; guarding supplies, commissaries and supply routes; flanking, screening and skirmishing; combat and ambuscades; espionage; guarding Washington and serving on his staff. Q: What battle service did the 2LD see? A: 12/26/1776: Battle of Trenton(NJ) 1/2/1777: 2nd Battle of Trenton (NJ) 1/3/1777: Battle of Princeton (NJ) 4/27/1777: Battle of Ridgefield (CT) 6/24/1777: Battle of Woodbridge (NJ) 6/28/1777: Battle of Short Hills (NJ) 8/13/1777: Battle of the Flockey (NY) 9/11/1777: Battle of Brandywine (PA) 9/19 – 10/17/1777: Battles of Saratoga (NY) 10/4/1777: Battle of Germantown (PA) 12/7 – 12/8/1777: Battle of Whitemarsh (PA) 12/--/1777: "Rawdon's action (PA) 12/--/1777: The Rising Sun Tavern action (PA) 40

1/21/1778: Valley Forge skirmish (PA) 6/28/1778: Battle of Monmouth (NJ) 10/7/1778: Clap's Tavern Road (now King Street) (NY) 7/2/1779: Burning of Bedford/Battle of Pound Ridge (NY) 7/11/1779: Battle of Norwalk (Tryon's Raid) (CT) 8/5/1779: Morrisania (NY) 8/29/1779: Battle of Newtown (NY) 9/5/1779: Raid on Lloyd's Neck (LI, NY) 11/23/1780: Raid on Fort St. George (LI, NY) 11/23/1780: Raid on Corum (LI, NY) 7/2/1781: Ft. Knyphausen (NY) 7/15/1781: Tarrytown (NY) 9/28 – 10/19/1781: The Siege of Yorktown (VA) 10/3/1781: Ft. Salongo (LI, NY) 12/7/1782: Norwalk Islands naval action (CT) 1/??/1783: Capture of the "Shuldham" in Norwalk (CT) 2/20/1783: Capture of the "Nancy" at Stratford Pt. (CT) 41

<u>1779 – It was a very big year!</u>

- It was the year the Connecticut coast went up in flames...
- It was the year the British went Dragoon hunting...
- It was the year the Americans went Indian hunting...



In response to Indian depredations in the Wyoming, Cherry & Mohawk Valleys, **Washington** dispatches Sullivan with a force sufficient to burn out the villages of the **Iroquois Confederation** in northern PA and southern NY. Sullivan's Expedition included 40+ Sheldon's Dragoons which merged into Spencer's Division.

William Tryon, Royal Governor of the Colonies of New York and North Carolina visited destruction on the Connecticut Coast during the summer of 1779 in retaliation for the cross-sound raiding rebels; East-and-West Haven on July 5th and Fairfield on July 6th, burning homes, shops and churches.



Gov. William Tryon

Meanwhile, on the rainy evening of July 9th Banastre "Bloody Ban" Tarleton led his Tarleton's Legion into the small town of Bedford, NY. His troops overwhelmed the 2LD, pushing them out of Bedford to the hamlet of Pound Ridge where 2LD and local militia offered stiff resistance. Nevertheless, Tarleton captured the 2LD HQ, baggage and flags before heading back to New York City. Only rain prevented them from burning the town.



This flag is one of four battle flags that Tarleton took when he returned to England. His great ++ grand nephew sold it at auction at Sotheby's NYC for *\$12.6 million dollars* on Flag Day, June 14, 2006.



arleton

Modern **2LD** Honor Guard at flag auction.



<u>He-e's ba-a-a-ck!</u>

On the 11th of July, 1779, Royal Governor William Tryon returns to turn his not-so-tender mercies on Norwalk. He lands Loyalist and Hessian forces who inflict severe damage.

Despite inflicting severe damage to property, the raid on Norwalk failed to have any significant impact on the ability of the Norwalk commissary to supply rebel forces in this area.

The Burning of Norwalk









Gen. George Washington – America's first spy master.



Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, 2LD – Headed "Culper " Spy Ring from 1778.



Abraham Woodhull – "Culper, Sr." operated on Long Island, while...



Robert Townsend

Robert Townsend – "Culper, Jr." operated in and around New York City.



Spies gathered information on LI & in NYC...



Information passed in code or by messages written in invisible ink...



Female agents such as Anna Strong then sent coded information, perhaps via hanging laundry for...



Capt. Caleb Brewster – spy, whaleboat-man & privateer.



Brewster would then transmit the intelligence back to...

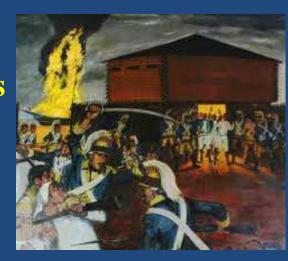


...**Tallmadge** who would organize...

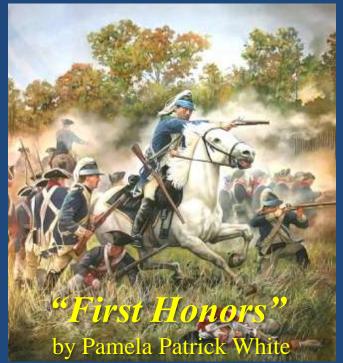


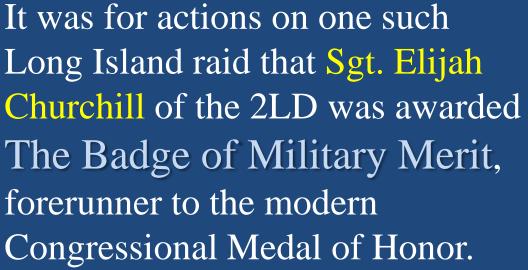
SERGEANT ELIJAH CHURCHILL LEADING THE ASSAULT ON THE BRITISH SUPPLY DEPOT AT FORT GEORGE, LONG ISLAND

...<mark>raids</mark> on LI to...



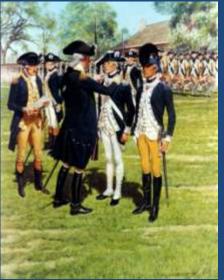
...destroy British supplies and fortifications.





The presentation was made by Gen. Washington on 7 August, 1782.

Three Badges are known to have been awarded, all to men from Connecticut.

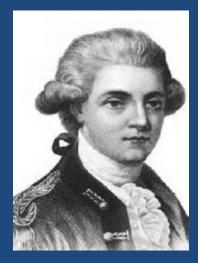


And where there are spies, there is...

TREASON! The Arnold – André Affair



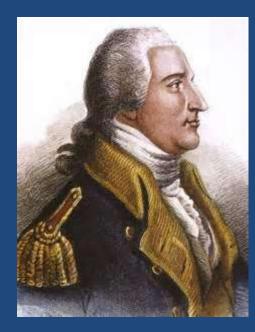
General Sir Henry Clinton – British commander in North America garrisoned in the City of Philadelphia and later in New York City.



Major John André – Aide to General Clinton, Clinton's party planner and close friend of Miss Peggy Shippen, later to be Mrs. Benedict Arnold.



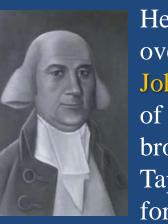
Miss Peggy Shippen – Daughter of a well-to-do Loyalist Philadelphia family. She would catch the eye of Benedict Arnold who would woo and wed her.



General Benedict Arnold – Perhaps the finest general in General Washington's army, but a flawed man whose vanity and spite would lead him to try and sell the plans of West Point to the British army.



Andre was captured near Tarrytown on his way back to NYC with the plans to West Point in his boot.



He was turned over to Col. John Jameson of the 2LD and brought to Tappan NY for trial.



Officer's of the 2LD comprised part of Andre's trial board. He was found guilty and executed.



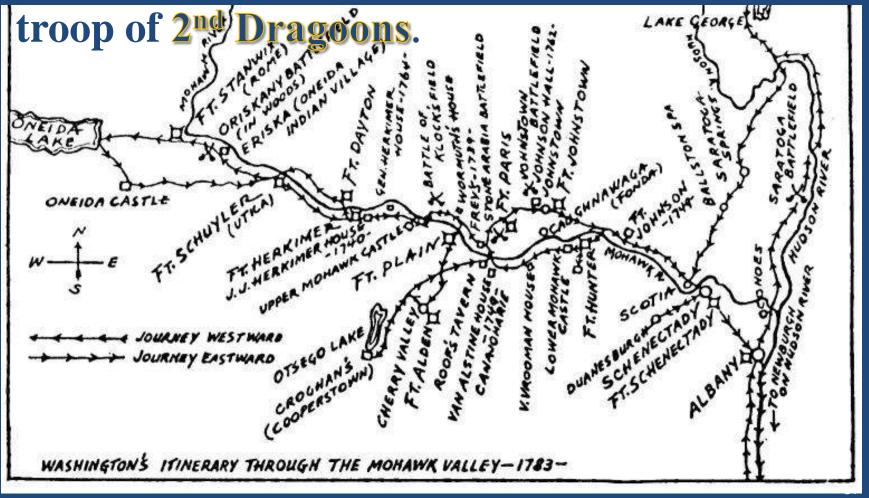
His place of incarceration is now a popular restaurant in Old Tappan, NY.

The World Turned Upside Down!



- The British defeat at Yorktown at the hands of the Franco-American Army stunned the world.
- Legend has it the British Field Music played "The World Turned Upside Down" as the English Army and its mercenary allies laid down their arms in October of 1781.
- Although some actions on the Western Frontier were still to be fought, hostilities east of the Alleghany's came to an end.

Although the regiment had been furloughed on June 9th, in July 1783 Washington toured the devastated Mohawk Valley accompanied by a



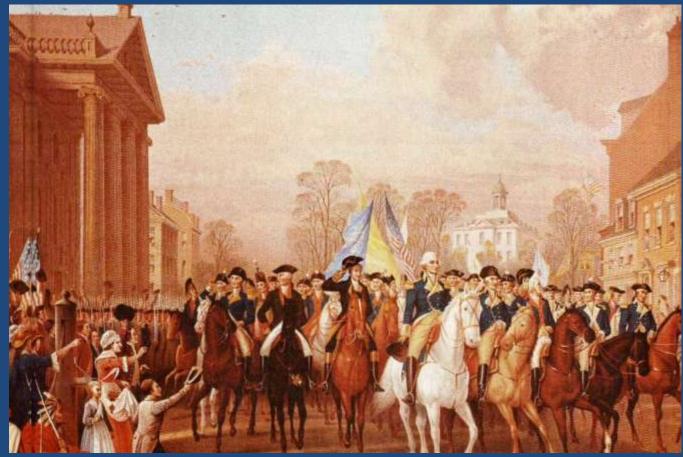
The regiment was decommissioned on November 20th, 1783.



On November 25th, 1783, Washington held a dinner ca. 1866 in New York City at Fraunce's Tavern to bid farewell to his officers, among them officers of the 2LD. Battle hardened veterans wept unashamedly.

"Washington's Farewell" Artist: Alonzo Chappell

Afterward, Washington led the parade following the British to the ships waiting to take them home.



"Evacuation Day" – Lithographers: E.P. & L. Restein ca. 1789

The **British** boarded their waiting vessels and sailed out of New York Harbor...



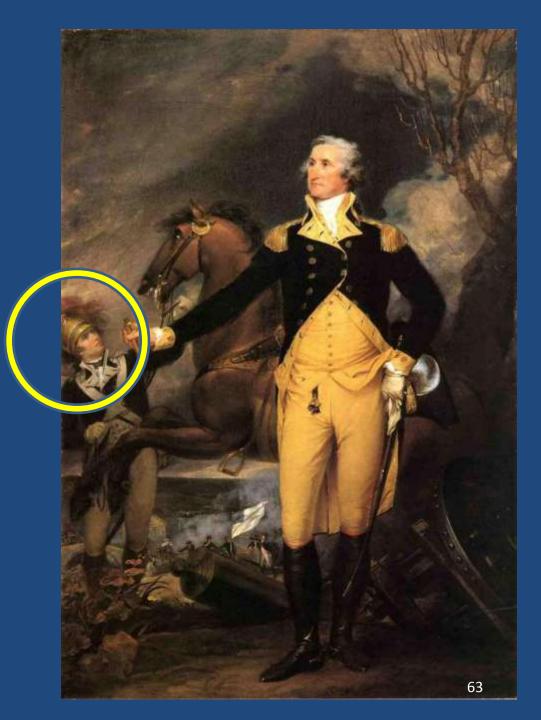
...and the next phase of the great American Experiment could now begin. • In the aftermath of the War, lands previously held by the Indigenous population or by the Crown came into American hands. The Western Reserve and the *Firelands* were opened for settlement and Western Expansion, the first steps of what would be called Manifest Destiny were taken.

• "Sheldon's" veterans participated in that westward migration and graves of 2LD veterans have been located as far west as Michigan and as far south as Alabama.

• While some returned to their farms, former trades or professions, others became legislators, judges or served in other prominent capacities. Proud of their dragoon service, many had their regimental information carved into their gravestones.



"Washington Before The Battle of Trenton" – Artist: John Trumbull ca. 1792



"Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga " – Artist: John Trumbull ca. 1821





"Washington at Yorktown" – Artist: Constantino Brumidi ca. 1781 An-eye-witness sketch of a private in the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons during the Yorktown Campaign, from the journal of Sub Lieutenant Jean-Baptiste de Verger of the Royal Deux-Ponts Regiment in Rochambeau's French army. This crude watercolor accurately portrays the 2nd's uniform – a short blue coatee with huff facings and shoulder straps, gilt buttons, slashed cuffs and vertical pockets. A black leather helmet is decorated with a blue and buff turban, and white horsehair crest.



"An eye-witness sketch of a private in the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons during the Yorktown Campaign, from the journal of Sub-Lieutenant Jean-Baptiste de Verges of the **Royal Deux-Ponts Regiment** in Rochambeau's French Army." Excerpted from "The United States Cavalry, An Illustrated History" by G. J. W. Urwin.

Sometimes life imitates art...



Saratoga Battlefield Saratoga NPS

Nielson farmhouse





- Keep your powder dry
- Flash in the pan
- Don't go off half-cocked
- Lock, stock and barrel
- Cross my heart and hope to die
- Flip your wig

These are all expressions that come from Revolutionary times, or earlier.

• However, no one ever said "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes," anywhere, except in Pastor Weems book of American fables.

Everything olde is new again!

"Sheldon's Horse" today...

- *Reestablished* in 1978 during the Bi-Centennial of the American Revolution.
- We are a §501 (c) 3 Not-for-profit volunteer organization.
- We are recognized by proclamation of the 106th United States Congress as the inheritors of the original 2nd Dragoons.
- *We are* officially recognized historical representatives of the States of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- *We are* members of: Centennial Legion of Historic Commands, The Brigade of the American Revolution, The Continental Line, The Living History Association, The Burning of the Valleys Military Association.

Membership in today's 2LD

Active membership, individual or family: If you are between the ages of 21 and 75, have a love of history and are willing to put in the time and expense, we are always looking for dedicated individuals to swell the ranks of both our mounted and dismounted squads. Young adults 18 or over may carry weapons only under the supervision of a participating male family member.

Heritage Membership: Did you have a Revolutionary War ancestor who served in the 2nd Dragoons between 1776 and 1783? If you do and have the requisite genealogical proof, you automatically qualify for a Heritage membership.



What does the 2LD do today?



We

We educate...







We *celebrate...*





Donors we *appreciate*...





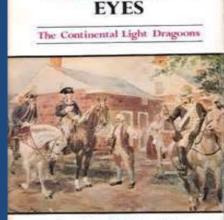
And we work exclusively with <u>rescued</u> horses.

<u>Plus...</u>









WASHINGTON'S

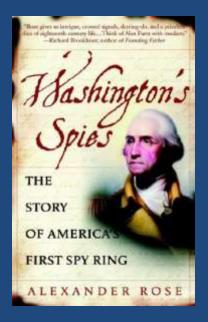
Burt Garfield Loescher



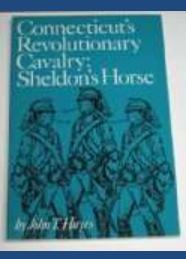
"Washington's Eyes – The Continental Light Dragoons" by Burt Garfield Loescher

"Soldiering On With the Third Troop, Second Continental Light Dragoons, 1782-1783" Edited and annotated by Salvatore Tarantino and John T. Hayes

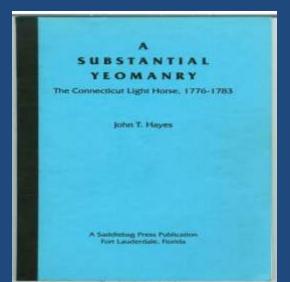
77

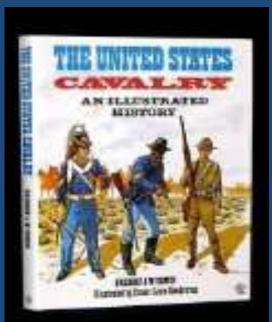


"Washington's Spies – The Story of America's First Spy Ring" by Alexander Rose



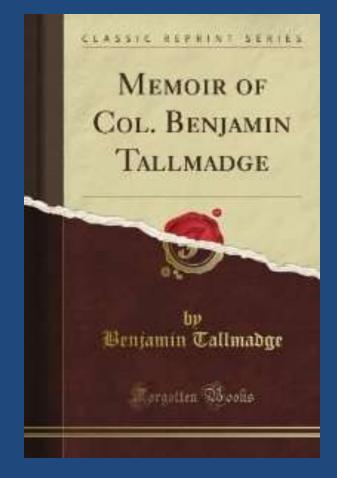
"Connecticut's Revolutionary Cavalry: Sheldon's Horse" by John T. Hayes





"A Substantial Yeomanry: The Connecticut Light Horse 1776-1783" by John T. Hayes

"The United States Cavalry An Illustrated History" by Gregory J.W. Urwin Illustrated by Ernst Lisle Reedstrom



"Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge" by Benjamin Tallmadge



MGM Studios -1955was based upon the Arnold/Andre Affair. Cornel Wilde portrays Major John Bolton of the Connecticut Light Horse. John Bolton was Tallmadge's code name within the "Culper" Spy ring.

For further information...



For general, schedule or booking information, *or to make a donation*, visit our website at www.dragoons.info or contact:

> Capt. Sal Tarantino 192 Prospect Hill Rd. Colchester, CT 06415-1620 (860) 537-1761 sh2ldhq@erols.com

Lt. Eric Chandler 101 Ledgebrook Drive Norwalk, CT 06854-1069 (203) 838-7764 echandler1073@yahoo.com



Created by Eric M. Chandler March, 2013 A Dunnwerkin Production