

American Spies Turn the Tide of War

When people think of spies, many immediately think of the Cold War and how they helped and hurt the strongest nations in the world. However, spies have been around much longer and played crucial roles in America's revolutionary fight for freedom. How the freedom fighters accomplished their tasks varied from spy to spy. Through their work, they played a crucial role in laying the foundation for the greatest country in the world - the United States of America.

Among the heroes of the revolutionary war was Nathan Hale, one of the era's most notable spies who heroically gave his life for his country. After graduating from Yale, he served in Knowlton's Rangers, which unfortunately fell apart very quickly. When troops bottled up, General George Washington looked for assistance and Hale gladly volunteered to help in any way he could. Hale proceeded to sneak behind enemy lines and reported critical information on British reinforcements and encampments. For a short while, he managed to stay hidden in plain sight posing as a schoolmaster. Unfortunately, Hale was soon captured by a British double agent, but only after providing crucial information to Washington. Upon his arrest, the British found incriminating evidence in the soles of his shoes. He was convicted and hung. Accounts of his final words vary but its meaning is not up for dispute: "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country."

Another freedom fighter, James Armistead was a slave permitted by his owner to fight for America. His first missions were transporting dispatches and intelligence reports behind enemy lines. It wasn't long before he committed to full-blown espionage. He was able to infiltrate British camps by posing as a runaway slave loyal to the British. Armistead was so convincing he was able to enlist as a British spy and was accepted almost immediately. Still loyal to the colonies, he fed the British false information while still giving America updates which ultimately helped win the war. Unfortunately, despite providing crucial information that helped the colonies defeat the British, he was forced to go back to being a slave after the war. Years later, Armistead managed to win his release papers and was at last a free man.

Revolutionary hero Enoch Crosby was drawn into being a spy by mere luck. He was on his way to an American army camp when he was confused for a British loyalist. The confusion allowed him an opportunity to attend a loyalist meeting. He didn't pass up the chance and reported the information to a colonial commanding officer. The colonial army quickly made Crosby a major part of its counter intelligence. Special precautions were taken to keep his identity hidden. America would continually arrest him for being a loyalist then allow him to escape to return to British territory. Because of Crosby's involvement in undercover risky business, he had a special pass that would allow him to be identified as American. He often used it to prevent being picked up by American sentries.

Even though the American Revolution isn't remembered for its spies, secret agents, and counterintelligence, the clandestine activities were crucial for helping the colonies win the war. Without these brave freedom fighters, America wouldn't be the country it is today.

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