

The War for Independence Ends

The Siege of Yorktown was the final major military action in the War for Independence. This [three-week long](#) battle is significant in American history because it finally secured American independence after [6 years](#) of active fighting.

A typically unknown aspect of the story of Yorktown is that a black man, [James Armistead](#), played a major role in securing the victory. He was a Virginia slave who wanted to help his country. Four months before Yorktown he began working with General Marquis de Lafayette as a spy. He had [successfully infiltrated](#) the camp of Lord Cornwallis where he collected intelligence on British movements and reported them to Lafayette.



Lafayette recognized Armistead's importance to the American victory and later successfully [petitioned](#) for Armistead's freedom. (Virginia required an act of the state legislature to free a slave for [meritorious service](#).)



During the siege, Cornwallis was heavily outnumbered ([about 17,000](#) American/French troops against his 8,000 British troops). [On October 16th](#), he attempted a last-ditch effort. Under the cover of darkness, the British

attempted to flee but a [storm arose](#), forcing them to remain. Running short of supplies and with reinforcements cut off, the British surrendered on [October 19, 1781](#). (WallBuilders' Collection includes an actual [unexploded mortar shell](#) from this siege.)

George Bancroft, the "Father of American History," recorded how the [Continental Congress responded](#) upon hearing the good news of the American victory:

When the letters of Washington announcing the capitulation [surrender] reached Congress, that body, with the people streaming in their train [following them], went in procession to the Dutch Lutheran church to return thanks to Almighty God.



So in October 1781, 242 years ago, the battle of Yorktown was won and Americans openly thanked God for His role in protecting the country. Now is a good time for us to likewise offer thanks for the blessings He has bestowed on our nation.
