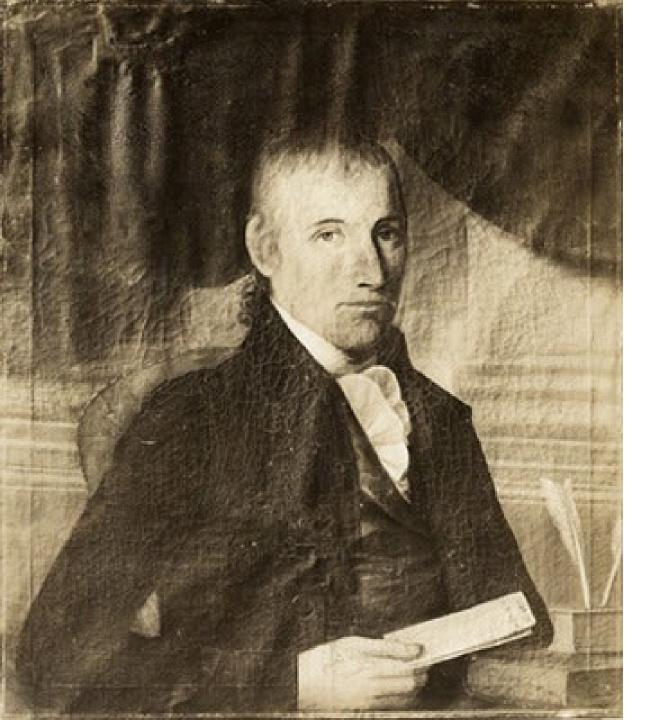
The Role of Espionage in the American Victory in the War for Independence

Jennifer Barnett Pittsburg State University Spring 2021



Contents

- Failures at New York : Nathan Hale
- Another Attempt at Espionage: Culper Spy Ring
- Historical Evaluation
- Summaries of Washington's Role as Spymaster



Nathan Hale

- Hale was a member of Knowlton's Rangers under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Knowlton.
- He volunteered for the mission of infiltrating General Sir William Howe's lines at Long Island, New York, to gain intelligence for General George Washington.
- Hale crossed into enemy territory undisguised, with no way to conceal his intelligence findings, used his identity, and was sick with influenza.
- Having been caught and tried for espionage and treason, Hale was sentenced to hanging and died 22 September 1776.



Culper Spy Network

After the horrible events at New York, Washington developed the Culper Spy Network. This group of spies reported on the operations of the British through a series of channels that connected General George Washington's front lines with the details of British ongoings and plans in the cities.

Historical evaluations

- General George Washington knew that the Continental Army was inferior to that of the British in terms of size, training, and resources; giving Britain the upper hand in the war.
- Washington's first attempts at espionage ended in failure, the death of Nathan Hale.
 - This led to a reevaluation of the role of espionage through the lessons of early attempts.
 - Timing was imperative.
 - Scouting became organized through parties.
 - Lessons, such as secrecy, covert operations, and safety of spies took precedence
 - The Culper Network formed out of the need for intelligence with the understanding of past failures as a model of what not to do.
- General George Washington became an effective spymaster, utilizing tactical, operational, and strategic deceptions.
- The Culper Spy Network was innovative in American espionage, and utilized Washington's skills of defensive and offensive counterintelligence, new inventions such as invisible ink and a system of codes and ciphers, as well as women's roles as scouts and spies.



Conclusion

- Learning from the mistakes of the first attempt at espionage and incorporating new and innovative procedures in the second attempt, Washington gained the advantage over the British Army.
- Along with the guerilla warfare used by the Americans against Britain in unknown territory, the use of espionage provided the smaller American army with the opportunity to avoid heavy head-to-head fighting, giving them a necessary advantage in the war.

Works cited

Books:

Ferling, John. Almost A Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence. New York: Oxford University Press. 2007.

Middlekauff, Robert. The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution 1763-1789. New York: Oxford University Press. 1982.

Phelps, M. William, Nathan Hale. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 135-144.

Ward, Harry M. George Washington's Enforcers: Policing the Continental Army. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. 2006

Washington, George, Jr., and W.B. Allen: George Washington: A Collection. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Incorporated. 1988.

Academic Journals:

Faunt, Raymond J. "George Washington's Application of Denial and Deception Operations Supported by a Multifaceted Mix of Defensive and Offensive Counterintelligence Measures." American Intelligence Journal Vol 35, No 2 (2018): 51-59.

Gates, Robert M. "Intelligence, Democracy, and Freedom." Presidential Studies Quarterly 22, no. 2 (1992): 231-37.

Gottschalk, Louis. "The Attitude of European Officers in the Revolutionary Armies toward General George Washington." Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984) Vol. 32, No 1 (March 1939): 20-50.

Pennypacker, Morton. "The Two Spies: Nathan Hale and Robert Townsend." The Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association Vol 12, No 2 (April 1931): 122-128.

Thompson, Edmund R. "GEORGE WASHINGTON: A MASTER AT DECEPTION." American Intelligence Journal 12, no. 1 (1991): 7-10

Thompson, Edmund R. "George Washington: Master Intelligence Officer." American Intelligence Journal Vol 19, No ½ (Spring 1999): 79-83.

Online Articles:

Baime, A.J. "How George Washington Used Spies to Win the American Revolution." Last modified 19 Feb 2020. https://www.history.com/news/george-washington-general-espionage-culper-spy-ring.

George Washington's Mount Vernon. "10 Facts about Washington and the Revolutionary War." Last modified 2021. https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-revolutionary-war/ten-facts-about-the-revolutionary-war/

Library of Congress. The American Revolution: A Timeline of George Washington's Military and Political Career During the American Revolution, 1774-1783. https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/articles-and-essays/timeline/the-american-revolution/

Rose, P.K. "The Founding Fathers of American Intelligence . The Founding Fathers of American Intelligence — Central Intelligence Agency (cia.gov)