Battle of Monmouth

# Introduction (5 mins)

We are here today to share the story of the Battle of Monmouth which happened on Sunday, June 28, 1778. We are representatives from Monmouth County Historical Association. We own five historic houses around the county and a museum located in Freehold. Let’s get started!

# What Led to the Battle of Monmouth

Bring up emotion by telling as a story. Colonists here getting taxed but the English people are not getting these additional taxes. Emotions running high, no taxation without representation, choosing sides, civil war within Monmouth County.

## Conflicts/Taxes

* Taxes:
  + Sugar Act - 1764
  + Quartering Act - 1765
  + Stamp Act - 1765
  + Townsend Act - 1767
* Boston Massacre - 1770
* Boston Tea Party - 1773
* Coercive/Intolerable Acts – closed Boston Harbor. March 1774
* First Continental Congress
  + led to the boycott of British goods (import and export) October 1774
  + the Olive Branch Petition – last ditch effort to reconcile peacefully and work out the problems
  + Before they could meet again, the Battle of Lexington and Concord started the American Revolution. April 1775
    - The colonists had a large stockpile of weapons and ammunition in Concord, just outside of Boston. British General Thomas Gage knew about it and decided to look for Samuel Adams in Lexington. The Minutemen learned about the British coming to Lexington and waited for them. 700 British to 70 Minutemen. Shot heard around the world. The Minutemen were able to keep the British from finding the arsenal, so they “won”.
* 2nd Continental Congress: 1776
  + Declaration of Independence – King George story. Statue erected 1770, pulled down 1776. Reproduction at the museum of the American Revolution.
  + Pass out musketballer at this point.
  + Loyalists versus Patriots versus Neutralists – really emphasize how volatile the environment was here in Monmouth County and that it was a civil war here.

## Just Before the Battle

**Timeframe:** late 1777 into early 1778

At this point in history, the Revolutionary War has been active for almost two years. In the tri-state area – New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania - there were two major circumstances going on:

* Washington was in a bit of a bind. He was made the Commander-in-chief but he wasn’t without his critics because of his lackluster battle results. His critics within Congress wanted to replace him with Charles Lee or Horatio Gates. Mention the acrimonious rivalry between Washington and Lee. He needed success in battle to solidify his position as the head of the Continental Army. He wanted to keep his job, so he set off from Valley Forge where the men trained over the winter of 1777.

**Scene:** BRIEF discussion of Washington at Valley Forge where the troops trained under von Steuben to become professional soldiers. (2 mins max)

**Dress the Soldiers**:

For Adult Program: select up to 2 participants or use the presenters

Alternate: the non-active presenter can put on the outfit and come back out so the active presenter can talk about the items on the “soldier”.

First, the coats and cocked hats are given to the participants. Next, the wooden fife is given to the participant wearing the red coat. It is explained that that person is the musician. [Insert why musician was important on field.] Next, the presenter selects one item from the table and asks the audience what they think the item is. Only 2-3 tries are given before the presenter moves on to the discussion about that item. This continues until each soldier has a fairly equal amount of items in their haversacks. The items that are used in this are:

* Blue/red coats
* Cocked hat
* Wooden fife
* Haversacks
* Cartridge case
* Musketballer and musket balls
* Canteens – one wooden, one tin
* Plates and bowl
* Utensils
* Cups – horn and tin
* Flint and steel holder
* Cards and dice
* Wallet
* Spectacles

**For Adult Program:** Discussion on the Brown Bess reproduction musket and steps to fire it.

Details: wood is walnut, it’s a reproduction based on an 18th century manufacturer “Grice”, the model , the barrel is sheet iron, the wood was walnut. The Brown Bess model was issued to the British army, while the continental soldiers were given French Charleville muskets. They were good weapons, but the Brown Bess was a better one. The Americans scrounge around for a Brown Bess if the opportunity presented itself. It’s fairly heavy to carry around – about 15 lbs. Here’s the steps on how to fire it:

1. Pull back on the flint cock halfway – “half-cocked”
2. Take a cartridge and tear the powder part open a little
3. Prime the flashpan by putting a little gun powder in it from the cartridge or a gun powder horn. Close the frizzen – the lid for the flashpan. (Point out the frizzen.) It’s made of steel.
4. Charge the cartridge by putting it down the barrel, or if you don’t have a cartridge, pour a bit of powder in the barrel, stuff a wad of paper in it, and then top with a musket ball.
5. Draw the ramrod and stuff the flat bit down the barrel to push the cartridge/musket ball down the barrel.
6. Return the ramrod back in position.
7. Pull back the flint lock fully, take aim, and pull the trigger to fire. When the flint lock is released, the flint hits the strike plate, causing a spark that ignites the powder in the pan, which in turn ignites the powder in the barrel and pushes out the musket ball.

* At the same time, the British decide to leave Philadelphia and concentrate their resources - all their provisions, munitions, personal baggage, etc. - in NYC. The French fleet was on its way from France and it wasn’t known when it was going to arrive. The British knew they couldn’t protect both locations, so it was decided to abandon Philadelphia and take all the provisions and head to NYC.
* Sum up where all the players are at this point – Von Stueben and Washington are at Valley Forge, the British army are moving out of Philadelphia and heading towards Sandy Hook/NY.

# March across NJ:

**Timeframe:** May into June 1778

The British need to get from Philadelphia to NYC. This can be done over land or sea. Going by sea means that the ships sail down the Delaware and into the Delaware Bay at the bottom of NJ, up to NY/Sandy Hook Bay. The British didn’t want all of the troops to go by sea because there could be a bottleneck at the base of NJ if the French fleet blocked them in the Delaware Bay. They didn’t have enough navy vessels to take everyone and all their provisions, equipment, etc., by sea, so a portion went by land, also.

The land group had between 1,000-1,500 wagons loaded up with provisions and the soldiers’ belongings, which stretched 6-7 miles long. Travel was slow – 5 to 7 miles a day. The roads in NJ were not in good shape and the British did not expect that. The summer was unbearably hot and the troops on both sides traveled carrying as little as possible, for example they were typically marching without their heavy wool uniform jackets.

**Continental side:**

When Washington finds out in mid-June that Cornwallis and Clinton were moving the British troops out of Philadelphia, he decided to do the same with the goal to shadow and harass the British on their way to Sandy Hook. Washington took his troops across at Coryell's Ferry – modern day Lambertville/Titusville area in NJ – and traveled in a northern route across NJ. The whole time, small NJ militia kept up the harassment against small groups of British. The Continentals never engaged in a larger battle with the British army because Washington’s orders were to engage the enemy at the officer’s discretion, but no major fights. Think dogs nipping at the heels, hurrying them along.

**British side:**

British Generals Cornwallis and Clinton began readying the troops and crossed the Delaware River to NJ at Cooper’s Ferry – modern day Camden. The British then proceeded on land in a southern route, but split into two groups to thwart/lessen the effect of Washington’s harassment efforts against the army. The “Jersey Desert” conditions didn’t help much either. The sand in the pinelands hindered the canon’s process along with the mosquitos. Clinton had 10,700 troops on their route. Knyphausen was the British officer in charge of protecting the wagon train and had just over 9,000 troops with him. At Bordentown, Knyphausen and Clinton take separate paths towards Monmouth Court House, with Knyphausen in front protecting the wagon train. Clinton’s group are constantly harassed by the local militia as they traveled across to Monmouth County.

Finally, in late June, both armies camp near Monmouth Court House - the Continental Army camped out by Cranbury, and the British Army had settled in Monmouth Court House – modern day Freehold – with Knyphausen and the wagon train just east of town, away from the battle field.

**Covenhoven House:** At the end of June (June 26), Clinton and several of his highest-ranking officers took over Elizabeth Covenhoven’s house on Monmouth Road to use as their headquarters while staying in Monmouth Court House. This house was one of the grandest houses in the area, built by a wealthy couple in 1752-3. It still stands today and you can visit it during the open house season starting in May. Elizabeth Covenhoven already knew that the British were making their way across NJ to NY and that they were expected to travel right through Monmouth Courthouse. She packed up most of her fine furnishings in three wagons and hid the wagons in the nearby woods and her china in the rose bushes. When Clinton arrived, he convinces Elizabeth Covenhoven to bring her belongings back and that he won’t take or destroy any of them, which she does. He lied – the belongings are taken by British soldiers, or destroyed, and all she is basically left with is the family Bible. During Clinton’s stay of three days and two nights, he made Elizabeth sleep on the floor of the milk room with her servants and slaves.

# The Battle of Monmouth (15 mins)

**Timeframe:** June 27, 1778, the day before the battle.

Washington held a Council of War to discuss the battle plans with his high-ranking officers. . Washington needed to test his newly trained troops and his plan included sending Charles Lee out with a group of 5,000 men to engage the British. Lee didn’t agree with this plan and voiced his unsolicited opinion. Note that this was not well received by Washington who then offered the engagement plan to the younger Lafayette. Not wanting Lafayette to receive the honor of commanding the group, Lee reluctantly agrees to execute the plan to humor Washington. Lee was a rival of Washington and their relationship was quite contemptuous. Lee felt that he deserved Washington’s position because he had greater military experience than Washington. An ornery and cantankerous man, he questioned Washington’s orders often and quite publically.

**Scene:** on the battlefield, still incredibly hot, typical NJ summer, in the 90s.

Longest battle of the war – close to the summer solstice.

Trying to communicate to the various units was difficult.

Early in the morning of June 28, 2017, Lee assumes command of roughly 5,000 men with Washington’s discretionary orders to attack if possible, but not if, in his judgment, circumstances are unfavorable.

At the same time, the British start marching towards Monmouth Court House, with the rear guard marching by 10am.

By 5am, Lee receives word that the British are on the move and the main Continental Army starts assembling. Between 8 and 9 am, Lee arrives at Hedgerow (this was a fence line overgrown with scrub brush in Applegate Orchard, east of the Parsonage and just west of Wemrock Road), but is warned not to bring his troops over the bridge because Clinton is nearby and may attack. Lee advances anyway and tries to surround the British rear guard. Clinton hears about the attack at the rear and responds with 3 and later 6 pound cannons. By 11:30, Lee begins a retreat with his men to Ker farm to reorganize the troops and find a more defendable position.

Meanwhile, Washington arrives about the same time after a late breakfast in Englishtown and meets up with Hamilton who warns him of what’s going on in front of them. Washington basically stays on Perrine Hill all day.

After a brief rest at Ker farm, Lee continues the retreat and meets up with Washington at the bridge in the boggy area known as the West Morass, who questions his decision to retreat. Uncharacteristically angry words from Washington to Lee, stumbling over his words, provided insufficient and vague answers. Lee was removed from commanding that group and ordered to command a newly organized rear guard. It guaranteed that Lee would stay out of the battle for the rest of the day.

Small skirmishes all day long in various locations. No major battle between the main armies.

Around 1:30pm, the Great Cannonade begins! The British are firing at the Continentals with 6 and 12 pounders, plus howitzers. Continentals respond with over a dozen guns. This volley lasts until almost 4pm.

**Cannonball:** When discussing the artillery portion of the Battle of Monmouth, the cannon ball is passed around the audience to feel how heavy it is.

Washington, seeing two British battalions are threatening to outflank Perrine’s Hill, repositions Lafayette and his troops. At 3:45 until 4pm, Greene is in position on Combs Hill (where the Visitor Center now stands), and opens fire on Clinton. Clinton withdraws his artillery and shifts his soldiers to begin withdrawing from the field.

**Sidebar:**

**Molly Pitcher/Campfollower Discussion:** Both sides had “support staff” – a group of women who supported the soldiers by doing their laundry, cooking, baking, etc. Some of these women would help out on the battlefield by bringing water to the soldiers and cannons. You may have heard of a woman from the Battle of Monmouth – she is known by the name Molly Pitcher, but it wasn’t her real name. Select a student to be Molly Pitcher and give them the cap, apron, and pail. We believe her to be Mary Hayes from Carlisle, PA. Because the heat was so intense on the day of the battle, soldiers were dropping from heat exhaustion.

**Continuing the discussion:**

Finally, the heat starts to effect both armies. Washington’s forces continue their harassment while the British troops are withdrawing. In the early evening, the fighting stops and Sterling is ordered to wait until the morning to resume fighting. The Continental Army camps overnight to restart the fight in the morning.

**The next day:**

**Continental side:**

Washington’s men woke up the next day to restart the fighting and realized that the British were nowhere to be found. They left by 11pm on the 28th to continue their way to Sandy Hook Bay. Along the way, they camped at the Highlands, which was owned by the Hartshorne family, who were Loyalists. British Col. Monkton’s body was found on the battlefield along with his sword, which we now have in our collection.

**British side:**

June 28-29: Knyphausen starts up the wagon train and begins traveling towards Highlands and Sandy Hook Bay. Monmouth and Middlesex militia attack, but are pushed away. They make it to Nut Swamp – 3 miles outside of Middletown by sunset, with stragglers coming in by dawn the next day.

# The Impact (10-15 mins)

So what happened? Who won? Each side obtained their goals:

* Washington kept his job in part because of this successful campaign. The same British soldiers had been at Brandywine the previous year. That was a glorious victory for the British, but here at Monmouth, the Continental forces held their own and felt that they won the battle. The newly trained soldiers passed their crucial test against the strongest army in the world.
* The British went on to NYC with their provisions on the wagon train intact.
* Charles Lee’s court-martial: (Read letters to introduce the topic if possible)
  + He made a mountain out of a mole hill. His honor was at stake and had been hearing all the negative news in camp regarding his role in retreating. He insisted on the court-martial to clear his name. In a series of letters between himself and General Washington, he continued to insult and irritate the general in order to clear his name. Washington’s typical brief responses annoyed Lee who eventually asked that a court martial be ordered. He was looking for a showdown with Washington and received no further word from him except to inform Lee of a court martial.
  + The court martial proceedings began on July 4, 1778, with the following formal charges:
* First: For disobedience of orders, in not attacking the enemy on the 28th of June, agreeable to repeated instructions.
* Secondly: For misbehavior before the enemy on the same day, by making an unnecessary, disorderly, and shameful retreat.
* Thirdly: For disrespect to the Commander-in-Chief, in two letters dated the 1st of July and the 28th of June.
  + Eventually, through 39 witnesses and testimony, on August 12, Lee was found guilty on all three charges, but “shameful” was removed from the second charge. During the trial, Lee was articulate but also egotistical and refused believe he did anything wrong, even though the retreat was “...in direct opposition to [his] then wish…” It became apparent that the whole reason for the court martial came down to an acrimonious division between Lee and Washington.
  + The decision and recommended suspension from the army for a year was sent to Congress, who agreed with the court’s decision in December of 1778. Lee tried to exonerate himself and only resulted in alienating Congress and several supporters. This included a duel with the son of the president of Congress in which he was seriously wounded. When his suspension was almost over, Congress, tired of his antics and insults, finally cashed Lee out from the Continental army.

# Additional Local Stories

The Revolutionary War didn’t end with the Battle of Monmouth. The turmoil in Monmouth County continued and heightened over the next few years after the battle. Here are some of the other local stories that we’d like to share with you.

## Allen House Massacre

*Thirty pounds cash plese to pay for the Rum you bough for me and I shall take it as favor if you can send me one more.*

Josiah Halstead, tavernkeeper of the Blue Ball Tavern

I need to find the source of the above quote from the archives. Found it! See the addendum below.

The tavernkeeper of Allen House, Josiah Halstead, at the time of the Revolutionary War, had vague political leanings. It is not clear whether he was an outright Loyalist or just an opportunist who played both sides. He went into the war a prosperous tavernkeeper and ended up much poorer by the end of the war.

In the summer of 1779 on the Monmouth County coast, one of the locals, Joseph Price, was “on command” for the loyalist New Jersey Volunteers. He had permission to carry out raids and forage behind Continental lines. A small group of Continental soldiers was stationed at the Blue Ball Tavern to observe the local Tories. The tavern owner at the time, William Lippincott was a Whig, and the tavern was the site of several public meetings to discuss the boycott of British products.

When word of this Continental group reached Joseph Price, he headed to the tavern with four soldiers. They rushed the house and seized the weapons of the Continental soldiers. In the ensuing melee, three of the twelve Continental soldiers were bayonetted to death and the other nine were captured.

An interesting note: Joseph Price was Josiah Halstead’s son-in-law and was married to Josiah’s second daughter. Hence, he knew the tavern’s layout very well.

## Holmes-Hendrickson House

*Loyalists: atrocious monsters of wickedness”*

*Patriot* Lt. Garrett Hendrickson

On the snowy evening of February 8th, 1782, a raiding party of 40 British refugees, led by Lieutenant Stevenson, came ashore at Sandy Hook and proceeded westward, attacking farms along the way and carrying off prisoners, horses, and supplies. Stevenson’s raiders arrived at the Hendrickson farm and captured Garret, his brother Hendrick, and several others. Garret’s son Hendrick and his friend William Thomson managed to hide themselves in the attic and escaped to the house of Captain John Schenck, who quickly assembled a rescue party. After a wild chase along snowy trails and a good deal of musket fire, the prisoners were rescued and the plunder recovered. The only fatality was William Thomson, Hendrick’s young friend. The only other loss was Mrs. Hendrick’s silk gown that was used by a raider to wrap a prize ham.

## Marlpit Hall

*Dear Patriots,*

*The charges against me are intirely [sic] unjust. I am as innocent as an unborn child.”*

*Loyalist* Edward Taylor, Esq.

Two stories:

* Edward Taylor (1712-1783), local businessman, farm owner, and mill owner, was a staunch loyalist. During the Revolutionary War, Taylor made no secret of his feelings towards those who wished to break with England and on at least four occasions, he was declared “dangerous” by the New Jersey Council of Safety. His son, George, worked with the local Loyalist militia and led raids in Shrewsbury, Middletown, and Freehold.

Edward was accused of being a spy by providing his son with information about their neighbors and on July 2, 1777, he was placed under house arrest at Marlpit Hall. At this time, most Loyalist residents lost their property and possessions due to their political leanings. Edward formally disinherited his son George to prevent the government from seizing the property and leaving them destitute.

Edward did not live to see the end of the war, dying a few months before the surrender at Yorktown in 1781.

* Joseph Murray, an Irish immigrant and Middletown Patriot as well as a member of the Monmouth County militia, was ordered to commandeer horses for the Patriot cause. He is believed to have stolen a horse from Marlpit Hall, the home of Middletown Loyalist Edward Taylor. Supposedly, Murray tipped his hat to Taylor as he rode away on his horse. He was arrested for the crime, but a sympathetic court let him go. Several months later, as Murray was working on his farm, he was shot in the back and then bayonetted by three men. It is believed that these three men worked for Edward Taylor, and that they shot Joseph Murray in retaliation for stealing the horse.

# Addendum - Josiah Halstead Rum Note 1762

*(Address on back of scrap of paper) To Mr Joseph Holmes in New York*

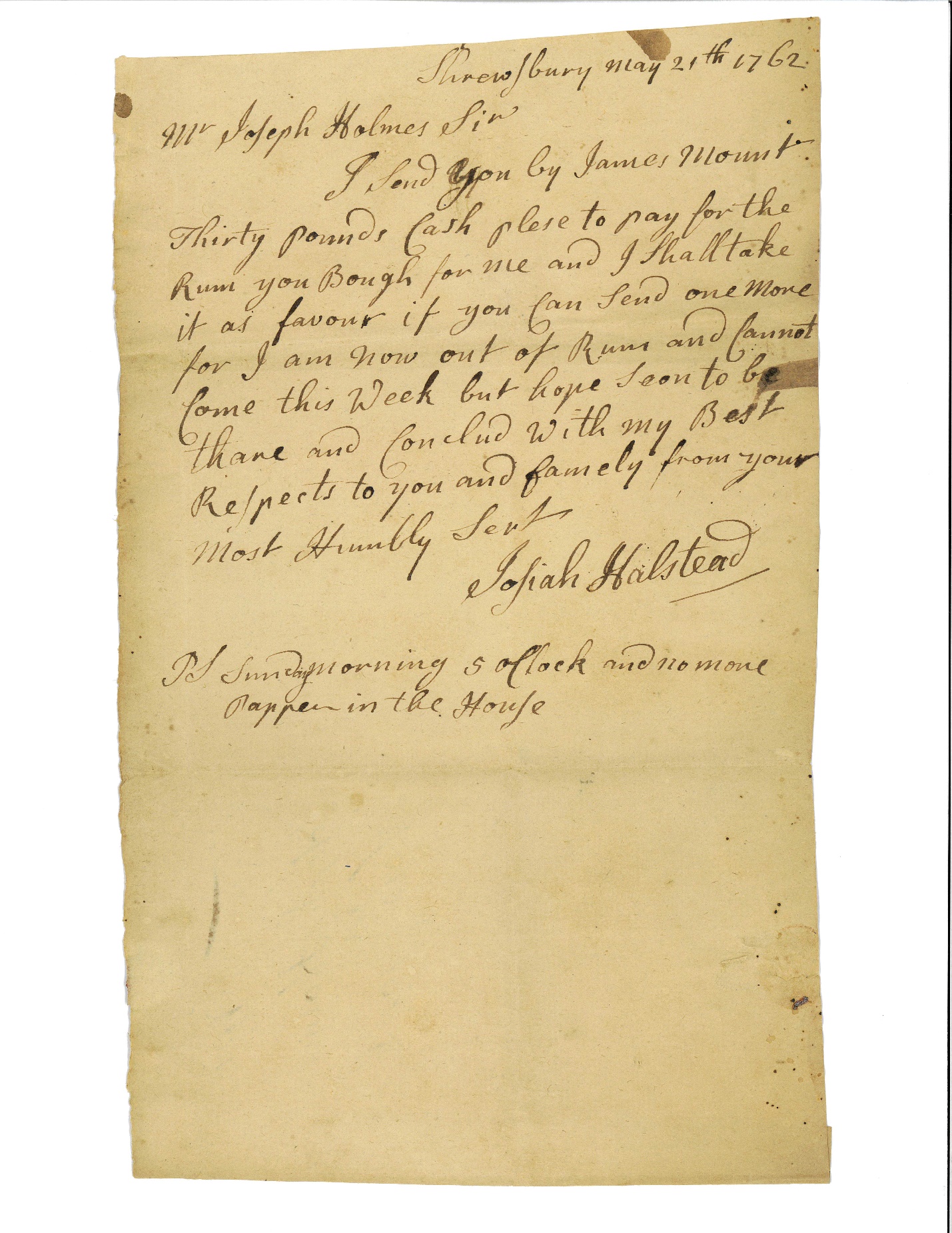
*Shrewsbury May 24th 1762*

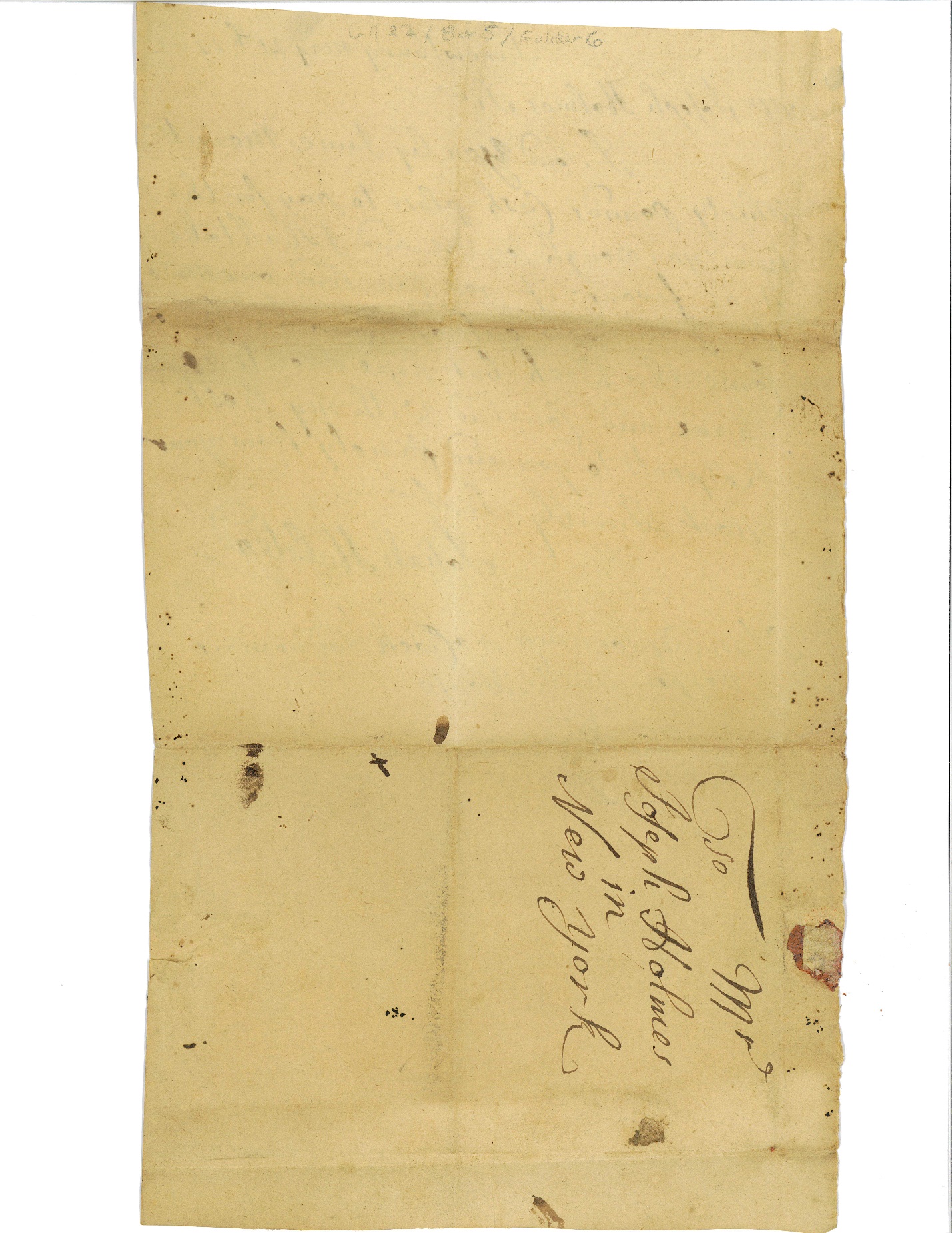
*Mr Joseph Holmes Sir*

*I send you by James Mount   
Thirty pounds cash plese [sic] to pay for the Rum you bough[t] for me and I shall take   
it as [a] favor if you can send me one more  
for I am now out of Rum and Cannot   
Come this Week but soon hope to be   
there and Conclud[e] with by Best   
Respects to you and Famely [sic] from you[r] Most Humble Sert*

*Josiah Halstead*

*PS Sunday morning[g] 5oClock and no more   
Papper [sic] in the House*

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# Addendum - Lee and Washington Letters

*Camp, English Town, July 1st*[actually June 29]*1778*

*Sir,*

*From the knowledge I have of your Excy’s character-I must conclude that the misinformation of some very stupid, or misrepresentation of some very wicked person, coud have occasioned your making use of so very singular expressions as you did on my coming to the ground where you had taken post- They implyed that I was guilty either of disobedience of orders, of want of conduct, or want of courage. Your Excellency will therefore infinitely oblige me by which of these three articles you ground your charge-that I may prepare for my justification which I have the happiness to be confident I can do the army, to the Congress, to America, and to the world in general. Your excellency must give me leave to observe that neither yourself, nor those about your person, could from your situation be in the least judges of the merits or demerits of our maneuvers-And to speak with a becoming pride, I can assert, that to these maneuvers the success of the day was entirely owing-I can boldly say, that had we remained on the first ground, or had we advanced, or had the retreat been conducted in a manner different from what it was, this whole army, and the interests of America, would have risked being sacrificed. I ever had (and hope ever shall have the greatest respect and veneration for General Washington) I think him endowed with many great and good qualities, but in this instance I must pronounce that he has been guilty of an act of cruel injustice towards a man who certainly has some pretensions to the regard of every servant of this country- and, I think Sir, I have the right to demand some reparation for the injury committed- and unless I can obtain it, I must in justice to myself, when this campaign is closed, which I believe will close this war retire from a service at the head of which is placed a man capable to offering such injuries. But at the same time in justice to you I must repeat that I from my soul believe, that it was not a motion of your own breast, but instigated by some of those dirty earwigs who will for ever insinuate themselves near persons in high office- for I really am convinced that when General Washington acts from himself no man in his army will have reason to complain of injustice or indecorum. I am, Sir, and hope I ever shall have reason to continue your most sincerely devoted humble servt*

*Charles Lee*[[2]](https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/03/lees-defeat-in-court/" \l "_edn2" \o ")

*Head Qr. English Town June 30th 1778*

*Sir,*

*I received your letter, (dated, thro’ mistake, the 1st of July) expressed, as I conceive, in terms highly improper. I am not conscious of having made use of any very singular expressions at the time of my meeting you, as you intimidate. What I recollect to have said was dictated by duty and warranted by the occasion. As soon as circumstances will permit, you shall have an opportunity either of justifying yourself to the army, to Congress, to America, and to the world in general; or of convincing them that you were guilty of a breach of orders and of misbehaviour before the enemy, on the 28th inst. in not attacking them as you had been directed and in making an unnecessary, disorderly, and shameful retreat. I am Sir, your most obt. servt,*

*Go Washington*[[3]](https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/03/lees-defeat-in-court/" \l "_edn3" \o ")

*Camp June the 28th [actually the 30th] 1778*

*Sir,*

*I beg your Excellency’s pardon for the inaccuracy in misdating my letter- you cannot afford me greater pleasure than in giving me the opportunity of shewing to America the sufficiency of her respective servants-I trust that the temporary power of office and the tinsel dignity attending it will not be able by all the mists they raise can offuscate the bright rays of truth, in the mean time your Excellency can have no objection to my retiring from the army-I am Sir your most obt. hble srvt.*

*Charles Lee*[[4]](https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/03/lees-defeat-in-court/" \l "_edn4" \o ")

*Sir*

*Since I had the honor of addressing my letter by Col. Fitzgerald [Washington’s aide] to your Excellency I have reflected on both your situation and mine, and beg leave to observe, that it will be for our mutual convenience, that a court of inquiry should immediately ordered- but I could wish it might be a court martial- for if the affair is drawn into length it may be difficult to collect the necessary evidences, and perhaps might bring on a paper war betwixt the adherents to both parties which may occasion some disagreeable feuds on the Continent- for all are not my friends nor all your admirers- I must intreat therefore from your love of justice that you will immediately exhibit your charge- and that on the first halt, I may be brought to tryal- and am Sir your most obt. hble servt.*

*Charles Lee*[[5]](https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/03/lees-defeat-in-court/#_edn5)