





The Bell Ringer

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Mark your calendar: Winter Park Elks Club,
SATURDAY, January 14, 11:00 a.m. – 8:00
p.m.

From the President,

Dear CFLSAR Compatriots and Friends,

As we gather in spirit to celebrate the season, I'm reminded of the courage and conviction that shaped our nation. On December 20, 1776, the Continental Congress sought refuge in Baltimore, weathering uncertainty with resolve. Just over two months later, on February 27, 1777, they returned to Philadelphia — emboldened by Washington's victories and the promise of a new year.

In that same spirit, may this holiday season bring you peace, purpose, and the joy of shared history. Let us carry forward the legacy of liberty with warmth in our hearts and strength in our service.

Let's work together as a chapter in the SAR and make this coming semiquincentennial year one that we can be proud of, our families can be proud of, and most of all, our patriot ancestors before us can be proud of.

Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed Christmas and a hopeful New Year.

With patriotic pride,

Central Florida Chapter SAR
49th Chapter President (2025 – 2027)

2025 – 2027 Officers

President/Historian – Robin Preston

rlpreston0306@gmail.com – (832)655-4173

2nd Vice President – Don LaJoie

grazingbuffalo94@gmail.com - (912) 580-9433

Treasurer – William “Billy” Morgan

wsmorganv@outlook.com - (407) 427-9692

Corresponding Secretary – Gary Smith

trekker01@gmail.com - (214) 437-3577

Member-at-Large/Chaplain - Randal Allen

aerospace321@outlook.com - (407) 909-9649

Member-at-Large – Burt Fairchild

burtfairchild@gmail.com - (407) 415-5655

Immediate Past President – Scott Cook

mousephone2@gmail.com - (407) 579-1612

Sergeant-at-Arms – Michael Meyer

meyermi1775@gmail.com - (407) 452-2666

Patriot Medal Winner/Color Guard Commander

– Phil Markoe

markoevikingsfan@aol.com - (407) 350-8143

---OPEN POSITIONS---

1st Vice President, Recording Secretary,
Genealogist, Registrar, Webmaster

If you are interested in any of the above vacant positions, please get in touch with one of the officers and let him know.

Volunteer today and make your Patriot proud.



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Committee News, CFLSAR Committees

The following are chapter committees. Some need Chairmen, all of them need members.

AMERICA 250 COMMITTEE – Robin Preston Chairman

We are seeking volunteers with 250 America points to present the America 250 minutes over the next year. Presenting the short A250-minute earns you 10 points, and attending the meeting adds an extra 3 points, totaling 13.

FLAG COMMITTEE – Chairman Randal Allen

The Flag Committee is the custodian of the Chapter flags, except those flags assigned to the Chapter Color Guard.

The Flag Committee shall present SAR Flag Certificates to homeowners and business owners who have noteworthy American Flag displays.

The Flag Committee shall present SAR Flag Certificates to homeowners and business owners who properly dispose of flags.

NEW MEMBER COMMITTEE – Chairman Milton Mersinger

Committee News, continued

JROTC/ROTC COMMITTEE – Chairman Phil Markoe

Purpose - Provide patriotic outreach to the Senior and Junior ROTC programs that exist in Florida schools.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE – Chairman TBD

This is the committee that arranges the meeting and program, and, as required, special meetings. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact Robin Preston.

VETERANS COMMITTEE – Chairman Phil Markoe

YOUTH EDUCATION OUTREACH COMMITTEE – Phil Markoe, Chairman

He will try to run as many SAR youth programs as possible each season.

These programs include, but are not limited to, the Eagle Scout Program, Joseph S Rumbaugh Oration Contest, George S & Stella M Knight Essay Contest, Sgt Moses Adams Memorial Middle School Brochure, Youth Video, Elementary School Poster, Car Activity Award, and Good Citizenship Awards.

Mission Statement: The Sons of the American Revolution honors our Revolutionary War patriot ancestors by promoting patriotism, serving our communities, and educating and inspiring future generations about the founding principles of our country.

Cash Award Amounts

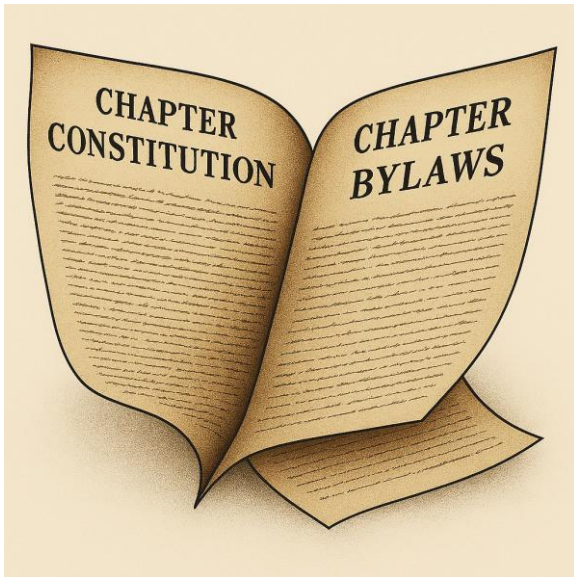
Place	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
History Teacher	300	200	100
Poster Contest	100	75	50
Brochure	150	100	50
Video	150	100	50
Essay	250	125	75
Oration	400	250	125

BECOME AN ACTIVE PART OF THE CHAPTER and JOIN A COMMITTEE TODAY. YOUR CHAPTER NEEDS YOU. *Make your Patriot Proud.*



Your Chapter NEEDS YOU

In addition to the Standing committees listed on the previous page, we need members for two temporary committees.



In one effort, the EXCOM is considering merging the chapter's constitution and bylaws into a single document. We are looking for one or more compatriots to assist in the review of the proposed changes before they are voted on by the EXCOM and then by the chapter.

If you are interested in assisting in this effort, don't hesitate to get in touch with Randal Allen.

aerospace321@outlook.com

In another effort, the EXCOM has decided to establish a committee to design a medal and to set criteria for earning it by contributing to the chapter endowment fund.

If you are interested in assisting with this effort, don't hesitate to contact the committee chairman, Donald LaJoie.

grazingbuffalo94@gmail.com





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It has been over a year. Finally,
the **LONG** Wait is Over.

That's Right

American Revolution Trivia Night Has Arrived

Let's see how much of a know-it-
all you really are!

Americanism Report



Every year, we, as a chapter, are required to submit a report to the State and National Societies detailing our activities. We are graded in the following categories.

- Media Publicity,
- Speakers Bureau,
- CAR-DAR Support,
- Youth Programs,
- Public Service Programs,
- Historic Sites,
- Grave Markings,
- Color Guards,
- Medals and Awards,
- National Society Service,
- Membership,
- Meeting attendance.

2024 Points were 6,060

2025 Points are **7825**

America 250

Compatriots

(16.3% of Chapter Membership have medaled)

- Bronze – 13
- Silver – 5
- Gold – 6



Non-Compatriots

- Bronze – 1
- Silver – 2
- Gold – 3

How do I get Points?

Attending the following events will earn you 3 points. If in colonials, you get an extra five points.

- Chapter Meetings
- Honor Flights
- Chapter Book Club Meetings
- Most SAR activities

Mentoring Program

"I've joined—now what?" Exactly. What *do* you do?

The Mentors for the Central Florida Chapter are:

If you're interested in becoming a mentor to a new Compatriot, please reach out to Milton Mersinger. Your experience could be the key to helping someone else find their place in SAR.

The current mentors for new members are:

Randal Allen

Milton Mersinger

William Morgan

Robin Preston

Harry Rinker

Gary Smith



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Saturday January 10 Chapter Meeting

Where: Winter Park Elks Club

4755 Howell Branch Road
Winter Park

Meal Cost: \$25 per person (payable at the door)

Topic: American Revolution Trivia – Pick your table wisely.

Dress Code: Business Casual (not shorts, not t-shirts, not nasty old blue jeans)

If you plan to attend, RSVP to Phil Markoe
– by voice or text **407.350.8143** or by email
at **markoevikingsfan@aol.com**

CFLSAR Dues are PAST DUE

If you have not paid your dues by December 31, you are officially past due.

Make a single check payable to **Central Florida Chapter SAR, or CFLSAR**, and mail it to:

William Morgan
c/o The History Center
65 E Central Blvd – 5th Floor
Orlando, FL 32801

If you have already renewed your membership, we appreciate your continued support.

CFLSAR Chapter Dues	\$20.00
FLSSAR State Dues	\$20.00
NSSAR National Dues	<u>\$50.00</u>
TOTAL DUES	\$90.00



CFLSAR Book Club

The book for January is *“Henry Knox’s Noble Train”* by Hazelgrove.

For questions, please contact Randal Allen.

The book for February is *“The Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge”* by Hatch (available on Kindle). Also, *“The March to Independence – The Revolutionary War in the Southern Colonies”* by Cecere, pp. 117 – 143.

Zoom call details will be emailed out before the meeting.

Social Media

Facebook Page – www.facebook.com/cflsar

The CFLSAR Facebook page has something new every day. Take a look at our page for yourself and encourage your family and friends to do the same.

The first post from this current version of the FB page was on 15 NOV 2023.

Total Posts since inception - **1101**

Views since inception – **38,871**

Views in 2025 – **29,953**(as of December 24)

Average views per day – **83.9**

Average views per post – **35.3**

Most views in one day: **581** on 4DEC2025

Number of Followers - **88**





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Service to our Vets

If you have done something in the service of a veteran or veterans, no matter how small you believe your contribution may have been, please let us know. Small contributions add up to big points by the end of the year. We were the second-ranked chapter in the state in total points. Please email Phil Markoe or Robin Preston and inform them of your actions.

Actions that Count

- 1) Member of a VA Hospital Council, Voluntary Service, or Center of Development or Civic Engagement
- 2) Each hour served in VA Hospital Volunteer Service
- 3) Visiting a Veteran in a Hospital, Nursing Home, or private home, or taking one or more Veterans on an outing where the hours aren't recorded in 2.
- 4) Personal care items donated to veterans through an organization whose primary clients are veterans.
- 5) Cash donations to an organization whose primary clients are veterans.
- 6) Each publication whose primary clients are veterans.
- 7) Participation in the SAR Wounded Warriors Program.
- 8) Activities supporting VETS (Honor Flight)

9a) Decorating Veterans' (Wreaths Across America) graves and attending funerals.

9b) Participation in a Veterans Funeral.

10) Donating New or Used men's or women's clothing to an organization whose primary clients are veterans.

11) Furniture Donation – New or used, but working items to an organization whose primary clients are veterans.

2024 Points over 22,000

2025 Points to date are 39,758

Attention Vets

If you are a veteran and have not received a Service Medal, please notify Robin Preston so that we can obtain the medal you have earned through your service to America.



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Uncle Sam wants you to..



I know many of you have done things to support our veterans or promote patriotism. If you have, you should report it. Chapters compete against one another, and your contribution might be the contribution that puts us over the top.



Websites You Might Like



The National America 250 Website

www.freedom250.org



The Florida America 250 Website

america250fl.com



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The Orlando Naturalization Ceremony

December 4



After a two-month delay, due to the government shutdown, the Orlando Naturalization Ceremony once again took place at the Orlando Federal Courthouse. The new citizens were greeted as they exited the courthouse. This time, we were joined by Lady Liberty, who is often in attendance at the Orlando area Honor Flights. From L to R: Kathy Haynes, Andrew Sechler, Kim Cullars, Robin Preston, and Phil Markoe.



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The Lakeland Chapter of the DAR Celebrating 100 Years

December 6



The Lakeland DAR chapter requested a five-person color guard to present the colors at the beginning of their celebration, from L to R: Randal Allen, Phil Markoe, Harry Rinker, Michael Meyer, and Robin Preston.



L-to-R Kathy Markoe, DAR Florida State Regent, Kim Zeman, Maria Preston, and Robin Preston.

This is a model of a 5'2" statue that the Lakeland Chapter commissioned of Mary Katherine Goddard, a publisher of one of the first copies of the Declaration of Independence. It was the first copy to list all the signers' names and to have her name printed on the document. The statue will be placed in Veterans Memorial Park upon completion.





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Central Florida Chapter Meeting

December 10, 2025

Kathy Markoe pins the Past President pin onto Phil Markoe's President ribbon while Robin Preston, Randal Allen, and Harry Rinker look on.



Central Florida Chapter Meeting

December 10, 2025



Guest, Dwight Smith, is presented with a Flag Certificate by the chairman of the Flag Committee, Randal Allen. "In Recognition of Exemplary Patriotism In the display of The Flag of the United States of America."



Member Rob Patton received a Flag Certificate for the proper retirement of the flag.



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Central Florida Chapter Meeting

December 10, 2025



Harry Rinker gave a talk on how George Washington spent his Christmases.



Rob Patton receives a Flag Certificate from Flag Committee chairman Randal Allen for ensuring proper retirement of a flag.



Milton Mersinger is awarded an America 250 Silver Certificate. Not shown is Andrew Sechler, who also earned the America 250 certificate.

Randal Allen spoke about upcoming Compatriot Grave Markings.





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Wreaths Across America

December 13, 2025



Harry Rinker, Michael Meyer, and Phil Markoe worked at the festival on Saturday, November 22, taking photos with festival goers and participants while also selling wreaths.



On Sunday, November 23, Harry, Michael, and Phil were joined by Randal Allen.

The total number of wreaths sold using the chapter QR code, to date, is **36**.



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Wreaths Across America

December 13, 2025



This year, our chapter members' participation in Wreaths Across America was outstanding. We had representation at at least six cemeteries. There are likely some people in the chapter who participated that we don't know about. Still, those that we are aware of include: Randal Allen, Art Bullock, Kim Cullars, Donald LaJoie, Rich Lester, Phil Markoe, William Morgan, Rob Patton, Harry Rinker, and Andrew Sechler. Many of the compatriots were joined by wives or other family members, and they also have our thanks.





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HAPPY BIRTHDAY COMPATRIOTS

It's time to party. These Compatriots are celebrating a birthday during the next month.

December 25 – Charles Wilklow

December 26 – Timothy Roniger

December 27 – Howard Marshall & Daniel Coughlin Jr.

December 29 – Daniel Garris

January 3 – John Pittendreigh & Bradley Bridgford

January 4 – Bret Oetting

January 5 – Dean Craft

January 7 – Don Wise

January 8 – Oliver Lester

January 10 – Gabriel Bridgford

January 24 – Jack Fox

January 25 – Stephen Bradbury

January 27 – Michael Bridgford

January 30 – Kevin Short

January 31 – John Grist



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The CFLSAR chapter is looking to begin marking the graves of SAR members who have passed. Six of the graves to be marked are in Greenwood Cemetery. We plan to conduct those markings before the end of January. Before the end of 2026, we will mark at least 15 graves. If you would like to either participate in the grave markings or sponsor one or more graves, please get in touch with Randal Allen (aerospace321@outlook.com).



Rest in Peace, Compatriots

The cost to sponsor a grave is \$60. If you sponsor and/or participate in the marking of 15 graves, you become eligible for the SAR Compatriot Grave Marking medal.



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Christmas during the American Revolution

Christmas at Valley Forge, 1777:

Soldiers endured brutal conditions with little food, clothing, or shelter.

Despite the hardship, some officers exchanged greetings—Major John Clark Jr. wrote to George Washington: “I wish your Excellency a merry Christmas & all the Compliments of the Season”.

Religious observances varied, and some soldiers may have marked the day with prayer or quiet reflection.



No Santa, No Stockings:

Santa Claus, Christmas trees, and gift-giving were not yet part of American tradition.

Celebrations focused on church services, communal meals, and modest decorations like greenery and candles.

New England (Puritan Influence):

Christmas was often *discouraged* or outright banned. Puritans viewed it as a pagan or Catholic holiday with no biblical basis.

Businesses and schools remained open, and celebrations were minimal or nonexistent.

Middle Colonies (Diverse Traditions):

More religious and ethnic diversity meant varied observances.

German and Dutch settlers brought customs like feasting, singing, and even early versions of Christmas trees, especially among Hessian soldiers fighting for the British

Southern Colonies:

Christmas was more widely celebrated with feasts, music, and religious services.

Plantation owners might host large gatherings, and enslaved people were sometimes given brief reprieves from labor.



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Things to do

10 JAN 2026

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

CFLSAR Chapter Meeting
4755 Howell Branch Rd
Winter Park

TRIVIA Night

17, 18 JAN 2026

**Central Florida Scottish
Highland Games**

Central Winds Park
Winter Springs

28 JAN 2026

4 p.m.

**Brewing a Revolution:
The Role of Coffeehouses
in Colonial Protest**

ZOOM Webinar
fau.edu/history/lavoy

31 JAN 2026

10:00 a.m.

Liberty Tree Dedication
Fort Lauderdale Chapter

City of Tamarac
Veteran's Park

13, 14 FEB 2026

CAR State Conference

Gainesville
University Hilton

14 FEB 2026

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

CFLSAR Chapter Meeting
4755 Howell Branch Rd
Winter Park

28 FEB 2026

3 p.m.

Liberty Tree Dedication
St. Augustine Chapter
Palatka, Putnam County, FL

5 MAR 2026

American Revolution Musical

OMNI Hotel
Championsgate, FL

5, 6, 7, MAR 2026

FSDAR State Conference

OMNI Hotel
Championsgate, FL

11 MAR 2026

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

CFLSAR Chapter Meeting
4755 Howell Branch Rd
Winter Park

14 MAR 2026

10:00 a.m.

**1st Amphibious Assault
Memorial Dedication**

Pompano Beach, FL

19 MAR 2026

**Inheriting the Revolution:
The Modern Legacy of 1776**

Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, FL



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Things to do

21 MAR 2026

10:00 a.m.

**Last Naval Battle
Commemoration**

Veterans Memorial Center
Merritt Island, FL

28 MAR 2026

10:00 a.m.

**Battle of Thomas Creek
Commemoration**

Jacksonville, FL

4 APR 2026

Liberty Tree Dedication
Jacksonville Chapter

Jacksonville, FL

11 APR 2026

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

CFLSAR Chapter Meeting
4755 Howell Branch Rd
Winter Park

15 APR 2026

9:00 p.m.

The Villages Honor Flight
Mission 70
Allegiant Air
Sanford, FL

17 APR 2026

Time TBD

Liberty Tree Dedication
Clearwater Chapter

Clearwater, FL

2 MAY 2026

American Revolution Musical

Orange County History Center
Orlando, FL

2 MAY 2026

Flag Raising by Color Guard

Orange County History Center
Orlando, FL

2 MAY 2026

Naturalization Ceremony

Orange County History Center
Orlando, FL

8 MAY 2026

**Battle of Pensacola
Commemoration**

Pensacola, FL

8 MAY 2026

7:00 p.m.

**America 250 Ball
Desoto Chapter DAR**

Tampa Yacht and Country
Club - Tampa, FL

13 MAY 2026

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

CFLSAR Chapter Meeting
4755 Howell Branch Rd
Winter Park

Awards Night



Things to do

15, 16, MAY 2026

FLSSAR Spring Board of Management Meeting

Embassy Suites
Kissimmee, FL

27 MAY 2026

9:00 p.m.

The Villages Honor Flight
Mission 71
Allegiant Air
Sanford, FL

6 JUN 2026

American Revolution Musical

Orlando Garden Club
Orlando, FL

20 JUN 2026

10:00 a.m.

Battle of Alligator Creek Bridge Commemoration

Callahan, FL

27 JUN 2026

10:00 a.m.

Liberty Tree Dedication
Central Florida Chapter

Longwood, FL

10 - 13, SEP 2026

FSDAR Fall Forum

OMNI Hotel
Championsgate, FL

30 SEP 2026

9:00 p.m.

The Villages Honor Flight
Mission 72
Allegiant Air
Sanford, FL

28 OCT 2026

9:00 p.m.

The Villages Honor Flight
Mission 73
Allegiant Air
Sanford, FL

FALL 2026

9:00 p.m.

John Clark Historical Marker Dedication

Panama City, FL



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It Happened 250 Years Ago

1776 — General Howe warned London that Boston had only three weeks of fuel left. Firewood had become scarce, and the British were using up to 336 tons of coal per week. In desperation, horse dung was even being burned for heat.

1776 – Quebec Campaign

In January, Congress offered the first bounty of the war to those who would join the army bound for Canada. Those soldiers were given \$6.66 (\$235 today).

Throughout the first few months of 1776, there were some minor artillery actions taken against Quebec, but nothing of significance. Major General David Wooster replaced Brigadier General Benedict Arnold in early April. At the end of April, Wooster was replaced by Major General John Thomas. Upon taking command, Thomas quickly concluded that the siege could not be sustained. In May, the retreat began and continued until they reached Fort Ticonderoga.

Governor General Guy Carleton requested that the Canadians who helped the Americans be identified. The final tally was over 700. Carleton showed leniency to some while being stricter with others. Those who faced harsher treatment were made to repair parts of the city and fortifications that had been damaged or destroyed during the siege.

In the month following the Americans' departure, forty British ships and 9,000 British troops arrived at Quebec City.

JAN 1, 1776 — Between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., four British ships off the coast opened fire on the town of Norfolk, Virginia. Over 100 guns were firing into the city. After several hours of cannonading, landing parties were sent ashore—some to obtain provisions, others to set fire to buildings. The British succeeded in setting most of the waterfront ablaze.

The Patriot militiamen were able to resist the landing parties but had little success against the flames, which were fueled by advantageous winds. The burning continued for three days. By the time order was restored, much of the town had been destroyed.

The British shelling destroyed only 19 properties, while the Patriots destroyed 852 buildings. By February 6, the remaining 416 structures in the town were also destroyed. It took over a year for the Patriot involvement in the fires to come to light.

JAN 4, 1776 – Quebec Campaign

On New Year's Day, the British recovered the body of American Major General Richard Montgomery, who had been killed the previous night during the Battle of Quebec.

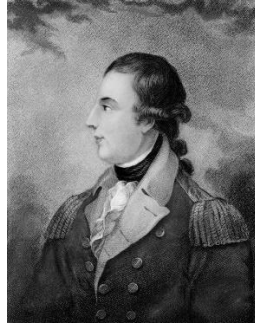


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It Happened 250 Years Ago

Three days later, he was honored with a military funeral by the British. Forty-two years later, in 1818, the general's body was reburied in New York.



JAN 5, 1776 – Although they were not officially States yet, the Congress of New Hampshire ratified the first constitution for what would become the state of New Hampshire.

JAN 9, 1776 – *Common Sense* was a small book that advocated for independence from England. When it was released, the author of the 47-page pamphlet was anonymous. It was later revealed to be written by Thomas Paine (born 1737). At the time of its release, it sold 150,000 copies at 2 shillings each (\$1.45 today). While that might not seem like much by today's standards, consider that there were about 2.5 million people in the colonies in 1776. If we equate 150,000 to the population of the United States in 2020, the book would have sold almost twenty million copies.

Paine never made a penny off his book. He signed over all proceeds to the Continental Congress.

JAN 18, 1776 – After a two-month absence, Colonel Henry Knox rode into Cambridge with great news about the artillery being moved from Fort Ticonderoga.

JAN 20, 1776 – British Lt General Henry Clinton left Boston, ultimately heading to New York City.

JAN 23, 1776 – The *HMS Blue Mountain Valley* was captured about 40 miles off the coast of Sandy Hook, New Jersey. The Patriot force that captured the ship was out of Elizabethtown.



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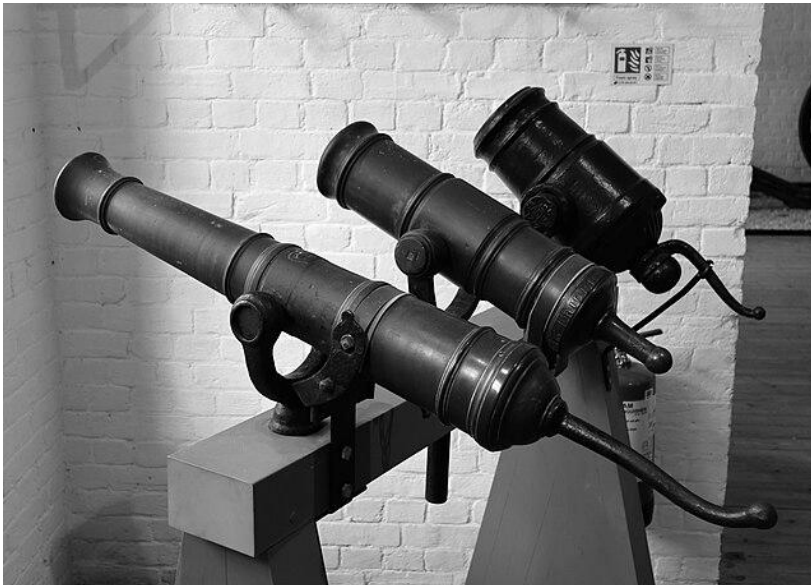
It Happened 250 Years Ago

JAN 24, 1776 – Siege of Boston

Sixty tons of heavy artillery from Fort Ticonderoga, which was captured in May, arrived in Cambridge. It took forty-seven days to move the artillery three hundred miles from the fort, as opposed to the fifteen days Knox initially figured it would take.

JAN 27, 1776 – Admiral Richard Howe replaced Samuel Graves as the commander of the British fleet in the Americas. If the last name sounds familiar, it's because Richard Howe was the older brother of William Howe, the commander of British army forces in the Americas.

Trivia Question: *What is the difference between a **cannon**, a **mortar**, and a **howitzer**?* All three are types of artillery. A **cannon** fires projectiles with a near horizontal trajectory, some reaching over a mile. A **howitzer** has a more extended range than a cannon and can be fired at various angles, capable of hitting targets over two thousand yards away. **Mortars** have the steepest trajectories, making them ideal for shooting over walls, trees, and other obstacles. Mortars can launch iron balls loaded with powder and a fuse up to 1,300 yards.



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