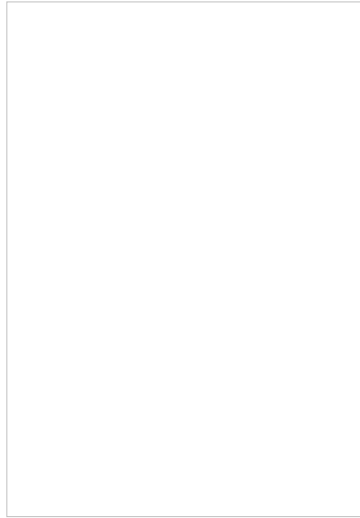


The Continental Army.



ARMY LINEAGE SERIES

THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

by
Robert K. Wright, Jr.

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Foreword

This volume completes the Center of Military History's trilogy of special studies on the War of American Independence (the Revolution). As part of the Army's contribution to the Bicentennial, the center undertook three separate but related projects to produce significant monographs on previously unexplored aspects of the Revolutionary War. Dr. Mary C. Gillette's *The Army Medical Department, 1775-1818* was published in 1981 as was Dr. Erna Risch's *Supplying Washington's Army*. Each has increased the information available on the war by detailing the support furnished to the fighting man. *The Continental Army* now directs us to the basic military organization used during the war and to the forming of the Army's traditions and first tactical doctrine. This book traces the birth of the Army and its gradual transformation into a competent group of professionals and emphasizes for the first time the major influences of eighteenth century military theorists on that transformation. It should join the other two volumes as a basic reference on the military history of the Revolution.

The Continental Army is the first volume of the Army Lineage Series published under a revised format. Hereafter, lineage volumes will include lengthy, footnoted narratives, along with lineages and bibliographies. In a sense, a study of the Continental Army, the forerunner of today's Regular Army, is a fitting choice for beginning a new series. Later volumes will detail the development of specific branches of the army from those early days to the present. The U.S. Army Center of Military History regards this series as essential to its mission of helping today's Army prepare for tomorrow by better understanding its past. In addition, the narratives herein make accurate information available to those in the Army as well as the general public. Furthermore, the lineages should help to foster unit *esprit-de-corps*. We hope that this volume with its new format will prove as popular as earlier volumes in the series.

Washington, D.C.
May 1982

JAMES L. COLLINS, JR.
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Military History

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The Author

Robert K. Wright, Jr., received a B.A. degree in history from the College of the Holy Cross in 1968 and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in early American history from the College of William and Mary in 1971 and 1980, respectively. He served with the Army on active duty from 1968 to 1970, first as a radio-teletype operator in Germany and then in the 18th Military History Detachment. During the latter assignment, he recorded the combat operations of the 25th Infantry Division in the former Republic of Vietnam for 1969 and 1970. Before returning to graduate school, Dr. Wright attained the rank of sergeant. He joined the Organizational History Branch, U.S. Army Center of Military History in 1974. In 1982 he was commissioned as a captain in the Virginia Army National Guard. Dr. Wright is also the author of many articles related to the War of American Independence and to unit history.

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Preface

Past historical accounts of the War of American Independence have largely ignored two areas which I find fundamental to evaluating campaigns and generalship. The basic concepts of military organization within units and in the larger realm of command and staff determine an army's capabilities. These concepts, for example, can insure that an army will be unable to cope with irregular opponents in difficult terrain. An army's doctrine—a theory on employing force which is taught to the army and is based on carefully worked out principles—in turn reveals how well that army's leaders understand their own organization and the situation in which they intend to fight. This monograph treats the organization and doctrine used in the Continental Army during the War of American Independence.

This book is not, however, a comprehensive account of the Revolution. Militia and regular state troops gave invaluable service during the war, but other historians have already dealt with these forces' contribution. This volume does not address logistical and medical support within the Continental Army because

other volumes of the U.S. Army Center of Military History have covered those subjects in detail. Also, this volume does not discuss actual operations. Instead, *The Continental Army* provides a background for other historians to better evaluate campaigns through understanding how the Continentals and their adversaries organized and deployed their troops.

The present volume grew out of a proposal in January 1975 to produce a shorter, special volume in the Army Lineage Series for the Bicentennial. We then assumed that the Continental Army's organizational history was simple, that we could produce a short narrative relatively quickly, and that the book would serve primarily as a reference tool by including lineage (outline histories) of the approximately 200 regiments and smaller units which made up that Army. However, actual research soon revealed an untold story. The Continental Army actually underwent a complex evolution which greatly affected the military, political, and social history of the Revolution. Our discovery of Revolutionary leaders' decision to adopt many then contemporary European, and especially French, military theorists' concepts justified transforming a short narrative into the present footnoted monograph. Yet we have retained the original plan to include all 177 unit lineages and have added extensive bibliographies. I hope that the military and academic communities will accept this volume as a serious, scholarly treatment of a very important subject. I also expect it to be useful as a reference for professional and amateur historians and for genealogists interested in a specific unit's services. Nevertheless, practical considerations mandated including only selective bibliographies and publishing the lineages without footnotes. Those interested in more extensive bibliographies or in sources for a particular lineage entry may write to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, ATTN: DAMH-HSO, Washington, D.C. 20314 for additional information. *[NOTE: Bibliographic information is now available in expanded form on this Internet site instead of by writing.]*

Many contributed to the success of this project. Cols. Walter McMahon, William F. Strobridge, and Robert N. Waggoner, successive Chiefs, Historical Services Divi-

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sion, lent their support. As Chief, Organizational History Branch, and later as supervisory historian of that division, Mr. Stanley R. Connor read the manuscript and shared his expertise. Ms. Janice E. McKenney, the current branch chief, contributed many valuable suggestions which improved both the narrative and the lineages. Past and present coworkers in the branch asked critical questions, endured frequent monologues, and reminded me to step down from my soapbox.

Dr. Robert Coakley served as this book's midwife during his tenure as deputy chief historian. He patiently read each draft and provided countless suggestions, corrections, and words of encouragement. Mr. Detmar Finke loaned me numerous rare volumes, saving long hours of research time. Mr. Howell C. Brewer prepared

the superb maps and charts, and Mr. Arthur S. Hardyman, Chief, Cartographic Branch, reviewed them and suggested placing the state maps within the lineage section.

The polish of the finished product is due in no small measure to the skill of several editors: Mr. John W. Elsberg, Mrs. Sara Heynen, and Mrs. Ann Conley. They patiently worked with me to turn my rough prose into a readable book. Typing support came from Mrs. Reda Robinson, the division secretary, and from the members of the center's Word Processing Unit, especially Mrs. Elizabeth Miles and Mrs. Joycelyn Bobo.

I cannot list all of the archivists and librarians who extended courtesies to me during my research. Several, however, merit special thanks: Carol Anderson and Joseph Mosley of the center's library, John Slonaker and Phyllis Cassler of the Military History Institute, Penny Crumpler of the Corps of Engineers Library, Ronald Gephart of the Library of Congress, Stewart Butler and Charles Shaughnessy of the National Archives, John Kilbourne of the Anderson House Museum of the Society of the Cincinnati, and Thomas Dunning of the New-York Historical Society. Professors Richard Kohn, Russell Weigley, and Charles Royster read parts of the manuscript and deserve commendation for their insights. Mr. Nicholas D. Ward and Col. Joseph B. Mitchell of the American Revolution Round Table of the District of Columbia allowed me to read chapters before their group and to benefit from that organization's critical skills.

Every historian is the product of his teachers. I want to acknowledge the contributions of some of the more influential men who helped to mold my career: Professors Edward F. Wall and James F. Powers of the College of the Holy Cross; Richard M. Brown, now of the University of Oregon; John Selby, Ludwell H. Johnson, and Thomas F. Sheppard of the College of William and Mary; and an extra thanks to Dr. Bruce T. McCully, formerly of the latter institution.

One group actually contributed more to this book than any other: my family. My parents and brother sacrificed innumerable vacations to my eccentricities and allowed me to walk over many of the battlefields and encampment areas of the Revolution. Insights gained then gave me an edge in dealing later with documentary sources. My sons Robbie and Michael endured abandonment many evenings and weekends to let me put in the hours necessary to meet deadlines and to compensate for unavoidable interruptions during normal duty hours. Marcia, my wife, put me through graduate school, brewed the oceans of coffee to keep me going, and gave me remedial spelling lessons.

In spite of the best efforts of so many, some errors may have gone undetected. I am fully responsible for them.

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Illustrations courtesy of the following sources: p. 135 from the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association; pp. 138 and 162 from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; p. 101 from the Permanent Collection, the Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.; p. 63 from the American Philosophical Society; pp. 43 and 88 from the Art Commission of the City of New York; p. 97 and between pp. 187 and 194 from the Anderson House Museum of the Society of the Cincinnati (photographs by Sgt. Jim Moore, 50th Military History Detachment); the frontispiece and between pp. 187 and 194 from the Delaware Art Museum, Howard Pyle Collection; pp. 9, 12, 23, 24, 27, 28, 37, 52, 54, 61, 74, 76, 79, 80, 103, 111, 115, 116, 117, 123, 129, 130, 133, 140, 148, 155, 164, 166, 168, 169, 171, 173, and between pp. 187 and 194 from the Independence National Historical Park Collection; and p. 86 and between pp. 187 and 194 are copyright the Yale University Art Gallery. The documents on pp. 31, 33, 34, 77, 96, 124, 144, 172, 174, and 185 are from Record Group 93, National Archives. Illustrations on pp. 30, 64, and between pp. 187 and 194 are from the Army Art Collection. The line art on pp. 328, 334, and 344 is by William S. Ballou, Typography and Design Division, U.S. Government Printing Office.

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