

Chapter 06 – securing independence essay



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Chapter 6: Securing Independence, Defining Nationhood, 1776-88

The Prospects of War The Revolution gave white northerners and southerners their first real chance to learn what they had in common, and they soon developed mutual admiration. In July 1776, the thirteen colonies had declared independence out of desperation and joined together in a loosely knit confederation of states. Only as a result of collective hardships experienced during eight years of terrible fighting did the inhabitants cease to see themselves only as military allies and begin to accept one another as fellow citizens.

Americans remained divided over some basic political questions relating to the distribution of power and authority.

1. Loyalists and Other British Sympathizers

Most colonists were still loyal to Britain, called "Tories" by their Whig foes, these loyalists opposed the rebellion actively and refused to support the Confederation unless threatened with fines or imprisonment. Although loyalists usually opposed Parliament's claim to tax the colonies, many found themselves fighting for a cause with which they did not entirely agree, and as a result, many of them switched sides during the war.

Loyalists denounced separation as an illegal act, certain that it will ignite an unnecessary war, and above all, felt that if they failed to defend their king, they would sacrifice their personal honor. The worst atrocities committed during the war were inflicted by Americans upon each other as both sides, the Wigs and the Tories, saw its cause as so scared that any opposition was an unforgivable act of betrayal. Loyalist strength in any area was influenced by the standpoint of the leading elite family in that area.

When leading families acted indecisively, their communities remained divided when the fighting began, like in NY and NJ. Many Canadians hoped for an American victory, however, Britain's military hold on the region remained strong throughout the war. A few German, Dutch, and French religious congregations were largely pro-British, but the majority of German colonists had already embraced republicanism by 1776 and supported the Americans. African-Americans fought for both sides, but the majority of southern black slaves were largely pro-British as compared to the northern slaves who were ore pro-American. The Six Nations Iroquois and the Creek Confederation, like most other Native Americans, were deeply divided in their support, like although most did support the British, both sides saw the dangers of Anglo-American expansion. Native Americans in upper New England took a pro-American side as they took an anti-British stand because of earlier ties with the French. 2. The Opposing Sides Britain's two major advantages, it's 11 million population and world's largest navy, greatly outnumbered the 2. 5 million colonists, a third of which were either slaves or loyalists.

Britain also hired 30, 000 German mercenaries known as Hessians and later enlisted 21, 000 loyalists. The new nation, however, still managed to mobilize about 220, 000 troops, compared to the 1620, 000 who served in the British army, although most Americans served short terms and would have been hard pressed without the help of France and Spain later in the war. Britain's ability to crush the rebellion was largely undercut due to a reduction in the navy's budget in 1762 along with 42, 000 men who deserted and the 20, 000 who were lost to disease or wounds.

American privateers helped damage the Britain's supply lines overseas as they capture over 2,000 British vessels and 16,000 crewmen causing a deficit in British supply as their navy to never effectively blockade American ports. The British people were also under strain from record taxes along with the national debt that had doubled since the war. Americans, on the other hand, faced the problem of an unprofessional army against the strictly trained British troops. Although they perform well in hit-and-run battles, the Americans could not get enough European support without a clear victory.

The Continental Army thus had to fight in the standard European fashion where battles were played out in large open spaces involving quick maneuvers. The inexperienced American soldiers only had to fight a defensive war to wear out the British taxpayers as compared to the well-trained British troops with a strong tradition of discipline and bravery under fire. 3. George Washington Powerfully built, athletic, and hardened by a rugged outdoor life, Washington was one of the war's few generals whose presence on the battlefield could inspire troops to heroism. Washington's military experience started when he led a Virginian regiment to battle in the Ohio Valley where he learned of the dangers of over confidence and about how American soldiers performed best when lead by example and treated with respect. Washington was the logical choice to head the Continental Army as he also sat in the Continental Congress and fought against early Parliament taxation. War and Peace, 1776-83 1. Shifting Fortunes in the North, 1776-78 Henry Knox's successful transport of artillery to Boston prompted the British to evacuate Boston in March 1776 and move towards

New York, where they hoped to seize and base their formations to conquer New England.

Defending New York was Washington's 18,000 poorly trained troops. Thomas Paine accurately described "the times that try men's souls" as British General William Howe's troops had already killed or captured a quarter of Washington's troops by the end of the year. Fearing the collapse of both his army and country, Washington takes the offensive as he led his troops to attack a Hessian garrison at Trenton on Christmas night 1776 and captures 918 Germans while losing only 4 troops.

American victories at Trenton and later Princeton helped boost the country's moral when defeat seemed inevitable. British withdrawal from New Jersey helped bring some Tories to the Continental cause as the British looted indiscriminately. The enlistment of Marquis de Lafayette into Washington's staff also indicated that the French were willing to support the Americans. However, Louis XVI wanted proof that Americans could win a major battle. Americans quickly supplied the French with the proof as they won a clear victory in the Battle of Saratoga in October 17, 1777.

The Battle of Saratoga proved to be a turning point in the war as the Americans won the help of the French in June 1778 along with Spain who joined as France's ally in 1779 and the Dutch Republic in the last days of 1780. The Continental Army faced further hardships, however, at Valley Forge where they were ravaged by hunger and a bleak winter. Friedrich von Steuben arrived at Valley Forge and almost single-handedly turned the army into a formidable fighting force against the British.

The Continentals were able to display their skills in a battle against General Henry Clinton, who after a 6 hour battle ordered his troops to withdraw.

However, Clinton successfully takes New York after the Battle of Monmouth.

2. The War in the West, 1776-82 A different kind of war developed west of the Appalachians where fighting consisted of small-scale skirmishes. Despite its smaller scale, the war in the West was fierce and the stakes could not have been higher. War in the West erupted in 1776 when Cherokees began to attack whites from North Carolina and other southern colonies who had settled on their land.

Intense fighting lasted longer in the Northwest where Ohio Indians and white settlers fought for two years in Kentucky with neither side gaining a clear advantage but most Ohio Indians resisted the Americans until the end.

Meanwhile, pro-British Iroquois devastated the Pennsylvania and New York frontiers in 1778 until American General John Sullivan retaliated by invading Iroquois country along with several other Indian tribes who had broke with the Iroquois. Although the western campaigns did not determine the outcome of the war itself, fighting continued until 1782 and will have a significant impact on the future shape of the United States. . American

Victory in the south, 1778-81 In 1778, the entry of France and Spain turned the conflict into an international war with Britain locked in a struggle that extend from India to Gibraltar to the West Indies and the American mainland. Nevertheless, British officials remained optimistic and acquired the flexibility to move its forces back and forth between the West Indies and the mainland as necessity dictated with the securing of the ports in the South.

When Clinton arrived at Charles Town, South Carolina on May 12, 1780, Southern loyalism had suffered several serious blows since the war began. British intervention in runaway slaves angered the plantation owners, both Whigs and Tories, causing them to celebrate with the return of the Continentals in 1782. Earlier resistance by Horatio Gates, who took command of the American forces after the capture of Charles Town, resulted in a failure as a single British volley quickly defeated the poorly trained militiamen while Gates was escaping.

The Confederate responded by sending General Nathanael Greene to confront Cornwallis. Even though he lost three major battles, Greene's campaign was considered successful as he gave the Whig militia the protection they needed to hunt down loyalists and stretch the British supply lines until they sapped. When Cornwallis went against Clinton's plans to retreat to Charles Town but instead made base in Yorktown, he was forced to surrender to the American and French forces as a French fleet blockaded the Virginia coast. 4. Peace at Last, 1781-83

Peace negotiations started with the fall of Yorktown and the American negotiations in Paris were led by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay. Affected largely by military realities, the treaty forced Britain to recognize American independence and evacuate all troops from the new nation's soils. The Confederation was given all lands east of the Mississippi and important fishing rights off the Grand Banks of Canada. However, in a separate treaty with Spain, Britain returned East and West Florida to Spain, while in the treaty with the Confederation, it named the thirty-first parallel as Florida's northern border.

Disputes on the northern border of Florida between Spain and the US remained until 1795. The treaty also planted future seeds of conflict as Americans later refused to compensate loyalists for their property losses and erected barriers against British creditors' attempts to collect prewar debts. In response, the British refused to withdraw troops from forts and return Americans' slaves. The treaty also left out the Native Americans, most of whom supported the British, in effect, leaving them on their own without any provision for their status or treatment.

Also the Peace of Paris ratified American independence, it came at a large price with the lives of at least 5% of all free males between the ages of sixteen and forty-five. The war also drove one out of six loyalists to move into exile and caused 20% of New York's population to flee. The Revolution and Social Change The war left the United States in a dark spot as they must settle two important issues as to what kind of society America was to become and what sort of government the new nation would possess.

Social tensions exposed during the imperial crises of 1765-1775 were subsequently magnified along with the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the dislocations caused by the war itself. 1. Egalitarianism Among White Males By 1776, the anti-British movement that had persuaded many elites to maintain the appearance, if not the substance, of equality. The war only helped efforts to erode the class differences between the gentry who held offices and the ordinary folk serving as privates.

General Putnam, like some of the best officers at the time, realized this fact immediately and worked with his troops as a team without discrimination. This behavior between officers and soldiers will translate, after the war, to form the social and political behavior of every man. The gentry's sense of social rank also diminished as elites met men who rose through ability rather than through advantages of wealth or family. Like for example, Captain James Purvis who joined the Continentals as an illiterate private who trained himself, after being promoted, to learn to read and write to perform his captain duties.

However, not all those who considered themselves republicans welcomed the apparent trend towards democracy but instead continued to insist that each social class had its own particular virtues. Voters began to view members of the "natural aristocracy"—those who had demonstrated fitness for government service by personal accomplishments—as the ideal candidates for political office. Although many whites became more egalitarian, the Revolution left the overall distribution of wealth in the nation unchanged as the departure of the loyalists left the new nation's class structure unaltered. . A Revolution for Black Americans The wartime situation of African-Americans contradicted the ideals of equality and justice for which Americans were fighting and lived under restrictions with grudging toleration if they were free. Although the United States was a "white man's country" in 1776, the war opened some opportunities for African-Americans. African-Americans served both sides during the war even though the Continental Army had forbid the enlistment by blacks in 1775, the black-listing started to collapse in 1777.

Until the mid-18th century, slavery was not a question for Europeans and white Americans just as they saw how disease and sin was part of the natural order. However, the debate about the validity of slavery grew swelled in the decade before the Revolution as resistance leaders increasingly compared the colonies' relationship with Britain to that between slaves and a master. The Declaration of Independence's broad assertion of natural rights and human equality spurred a more general attack on the institution of slavery. Northern states like Vermont and Massachusetts were lead by the Quakers' xample, who aimed mainly to abolish slaveholding within their own ranks, to abolish slavery within their own states. Rather than immediately abolishing slavery, the Revolution generation took steps that would weaken the institution and in this way bring about its eventual demise. Even in the South, where slavery was most entrenched, slavery troubled some whites. Although none of the Southern states abolished slavery, all states except South Carolina and Georgia ended slave imports and all but North Carolina passed laws making it easier for masters to free their slaves.

These " free persons of color" faced the future as destitute, second class citizens, as most have already passed their prime and were discriminated against as they sought jobs causing the majority of them to remain poor. Even though they were disadvantaged, some freed blacks were able to gain recognition from whites such as Benjamin Banneker of Maryland, a self-taught mathematician and astronomer, along with Phillis Wheatley, a prominent African-American poet.

Most states granted some civil rights to free blacks during and dafter the Revolution and several states even allowed them to vote if they met the

property requirements. The Revolution neither ended slavery nor brought equality to free blacks, but it did begin a process by which slavery eventually could be extinguished. 3. White Women in Wartime The assumption that women were naturally dependent continued to dominate discussions of the female role although it partially relaxed gender barriers and proved significant for some white American women.

White women's support of colonial resistance before the Revolution widened their range of support activities during the war. Some female "camp followers" served military units on both sides by cooking, laundering, and nursing the wounded, while a few female patriots disguised themselves as male and even served in combat. Traditional roles took on new meaning in the absence of male household heads as the experience boosted women's confidence in their abilities to think and act on matters traditionally reserved for men. . Native Americans and the Revolution For Native Americans, the consequences of the Revolution were even less certain as they fear the influx of American posed a threat to the Native's way of life as they introduce diseases to the already weakened Native population. In face of these uncertainties, Native Americans continued to incorporate the most useful aspects of European culture into their own and this interweaving of the new with the traditional characterized Indian communities in the east.

Native Americans, then, did not remain stubbornly rooted in traditional ways but continued to insist of retaining control of their communities and their way of life. However, these resolutions appeared doubtful with the end of the war. Forging New Governments, 1776-87 1. From Colonies to States The

state governments that Americans constructed during the war magnified the prewar struggle between more-radical democratic elements and the elites.

Eleven of the thirteen states maintained bicameral legislatures, consisted of two houses that mirrored after Parliament's House of Commons and House of Lords, symbolizing the assumption that government should be separate for the representation of the common people and the upper class. Despite participation by people from all classes in the struggle against Britain, few questioned the long standing practice of setting property requirements for voters and elected officials, and this association between property and citizenship was so deeply ingrained that even radicals opposed allowing all males to vote and hold office.

Although Americans today take political parties for granted, the idea of parties as necessary instruments for identifying and mobilizing public opinion was alien to the ties with "factions"—selfish groups that advanced their own interest at the expense of liberty or public good. Another colonial practice that persisted into the 1770s and 1780s was the equal division of legislative seats among all counties or towns. State constitutions were, above all, written documents whose adoption usually required popular ratification and could be changed only if voters chose to amend them.

Elite-dominated but popularly elected assemblies had led the fight against royal governors and their appointees who had repeatedly enforced laws and policies deemed dangerous to liberty. Accordingly, the earliest state constitutions severely limited executive power and turned governors into figure heads who simply chaired executive councils that made militia

appointments and supervised financial business. As the new state constitutions weakened the executive branch and vested more power in the legislatures, they also made the legislatures more responsive to the will of the people. Revolutionary leaders described themselves as republicans rather than democrats, which at the time, was considered mob rule. In the first flush of revolutionary enthusiasm, elites had to content themselves with state governments dominated by popularly elected legislatures. However, the rising middle class and the upper class gradually asserted centralization of power. Some republican elites believed that social divisions could jeopardize liberty and attempted to prevent such an outcome through legislation, like the ending of primogeniture and entails.

These years also brought an end to most state-established churches throughout the country, except in New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts. The American Revolution, wrote Thomas Paine in 1782, was intended to ring in a "new era and give a new turn to human affairs" as it was this new way of thinking that made American politics revolutionary. 2. Formalizing a Confederation, 1776-81 As did their revolt against Britain and their early state constitutions, America's first national government reflected widespread fears of centralized authority and its potential for corruption.

The Articles of Confederation explicitly reserved to each state "its sovereignty, freedom and independence" and established a form of government in which Americans were citizens of their own states first and of the U. S. second. Under the Articles, the national government consisted of a single-chamber Congress, elected by the state legislatures, in which each state could enact no tax of its own without every state's approval. By 1781,

all thirteen state legislatures had ratified the Articles, and the Confederation was in place. 3.

Finance, Trade, and the Economy, 1781-86 To finance the War of Independence, which cost far more than could be immediately collected through taxation, the government borrowed funds from abroad and printed its own paper money, called Continentals, which lost 98% of its value from 1776-81. In 1781, seeking to overcome the national government's financial weakness, Congress appointed Robert Morris as the nation's superintendent of finance who proposed that states authorized the collection of a national import duty of 5%, which later failed when Rhode Island rejected it.

Meanwhile, seeing themselves as sovereign, most states had assumed some responsibility for the war debt and begun compensating veterans and creditors within their borders. Feeling that the U. S. needed sources of revenue independent of the states in order to establish its credit-worthiness, enabling it to attract capital, and to establish a strong national government. Alexander Hamilton engineered a dangerous gamble known as the Newburgh Conspiracy to threaten a coup d'état unless the treasury obtained the taxation authority needed. However, Washington discovered and ended the plot.

When peace came in 1783, Congress sent another tax measure to the states which was once again defeated. From this point on, states steadily decreased their contributions to Congress. The Confederation also failed in prying trade concessions from Britain. The decline in trade with Britain contributed substantially to an economic depression that gripped parts of the

nation beginning in 1784. British restrictions against trading with the West Indies fell especially hard on New England. The mid-Atlantic states, on the other hand, were less dependent on British-controlled markets for their exports.

Southern planters faced frustration at the failure of their principal crops, tobacco and rice, to return to prewar export levels. 4. The Confederation and the West, 1785-87 After winning the war against Britain, one of the most formidable challenges confronting the Confederation was the postwar settlement and administration of the western lands. After the states surrendered claims to more than 160 million acres north of the Ohio River, forming the Northwest Territory, Congress established uniform procedures for surveying this land in the Ordinance of 1785, which established a township six miles square as the basic unit of settlement.

Subsequently, in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Congress defined the steps for the creation and admission of new states. It forbade slavery while the region remained a territory although citizens could legalize the institution after statehood. The Northwest Ordinance outlined three stages for admitting states into the Union which included the appointment of a territorial governor and judges, voter's approval of a temporary constitution and election of a legislature that would pass the territory's laws, and finally the ratification of a state constitution by which Congress would have to approve.

The Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance had a lasting effect on later American history besides laying out procedures for settling and

establishing governments in the Northwest. They also served as models for organizing territories farther west. The Northwest Territory seemed to offer enough rich land to guarantee future citizens landownership for centuries. The realization of these republican's dream was by no means inevitable as most "available" territory from the Appalachians to the Mississippi River belonged to those peoples whom the Declaration of Independence had condemned as savages.

Under threats of continued warfare, some northwestern Indian leaders initially gave in. Native Americans' resistance to Confederation encroachments also stemmed from their confidence that the British—still a presence in the West—would provide the arms and ammunition they needed to defy the United States. The Mohawk Joseph Brant emerged as the initial inspiration behind Indian resistance in the Northwest. Seizing on disunity within Indian ranks, Kentuckians and others organized militia raids into the Northwest Territory.

The Confederation confronted similar challenges in the Southeast, where Spain and its Indian allies took steps to prevent American settlers from occupying their lands. Spain also sought to prevent American infiltration by denying western settlers permission to ship their crops down the Mississippi to New Orleans. Toward a New Constitution, 1786-88 1. Shay's Rebellion, 1786-87 The Jay-Gardoqui Treaty revealed deep-seated tensions that lay just beneath the surface appearance of American national unity. In contrast, the mid-Atlantic and southern states were emerging from the depression, thanks to rising tobacco and food exports to Europe.

Despite the nation's prosperity outside New England, a growing minority of nationalists were dissatisfied with the Confederation. In 1786, a movement reminiscent of pre-Revolutionary backcountry dissents, farmers and former war officer Daniel Shays led two thousand angry men in an attempt to shut down the courts in three western counties in hope of preventing foreclosures on farm mortgages. The Shaysites had limited objectives, were dispersed with relatively little bloodshed, and never seriously threatened anarchy.

Instead of igniting a popular uprising, as Washington feared, Shays' Rebellion sparked aggressive nationalists into pushing for a wholesale reform of the Republic's legal and institutional structure. 2. The Philadelphia Convention, 1787 In May 1787 fifty-five delegates from every state but Rhode Island began gathering at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, later known as the Independence Hall. The convention immediately closed its sessions to the press and the public, kept no official journal, and even appointed chaperones to accompany the aged and talkative Franklin to dinner parties lest he disclosed details of what was happening.

The delegates shared a "continental" or "nationalist" perspective, instilled through their extended involvement with the national government. The convention faced two basic issues. The first was whether to tinker with the Articles of Confederation, as the state legislatures had formally instructed the delegates to do, or to replace the Articles all together with a new constitution that gave more power to the national government. The second fundamental question was how to balance the conflicting interests of large and small states.

Madison's Virginia Plan, introduced in late May, boldly called for the establishment of a strong central government rather than a federation of states. The Virginia plan was designed "to abolish the State Govern[men]ts altogether." Madison's scheme aroused immediate opposition, however, especially his call for state representation according to population. On June 15, William Paterson of New Jersey offered a counterproposal, the so-called New Jersey Plan, which recommended a single-chamber congress, just as under the Articles.

The two plans exposed the convention's great stumbling block: the question of representation. As the convention had arrived "at a full stop" the delegates assigned a member from each state to a "grand committee" dedicated to compromise. The panel adopted a proposal offered earlier by the Connecticut delegation: an equal vote for each state in the upper house and proportional voting in the lower house. Despite their differences over representation, Paterson's and Madison's proposals alike would have strengthened the national government at the states' expense.

As finally approved on September 17, 1787, the Constitution of the United States was an extraordinary document, and not merely because it reconciled the conflicting interests of the large and small states. To allay the concerns of more moderate delegates, the Constitution's framers devised two means to restraining the power of the new central government. First, by establishing three distinct branches—executive, legislative, and judicial—within the national government; and second, they designed a system of checks and balances to prevent any one branch from dominating the other two.

To further ensure the independence of each branch, the Constitution provided that the members of one branch would not choose those of another, except for judges, whose independence was protected by lifetime appointment. In addition to checks and balances, the founders devised a system of shared power and dual lawmaking by the national and state governments—"federalism"—in order to place limits on central authority. A key assumption behind federalism was that the national government would limit its activities to foreign affairs, national defense, regulating interstate commerce, and coining money.

The dilemma confronting the Philadelphia convention centered not on whether slavery should be allowed in the new Republic but only on the much narrower question of whether slaves could be counted as persons when it came to determining a state's representation at the national level.

Representing states that had begun ending slavery, northern delegates hesitated to give southern states a political advantage by allowing to count people who had no civil or political rights.

After Georgia and South Carolina threatened to secede if their demands were not met, northerners agreed to allow three-fifths of all slaves to be counted for congressional presentation. The Constitution also reinforced slavery as it forbade citizens of any state, even those which had abolished slavery, to prevent the return of escaped slaves to another state. Although leaving much authority to the states, the Constitution established a national government clearly superior to the states in several spheres, and it utterly abandoned the nation of a federation of virtually independent states.

In the end, the Philadelphia convention provided for the Constitution's ratification by special state conventions composed of delegates elected by the voters. Under the Constitution the framers expected the nation's "natural aristocracy" to continue exercising political leadership. 3. The Struggle over Ratification, 1787-88 The Constitution's supporters began to campaign for ratification without significant national support.

Its opponents, commonly known as "Antifederalists," maintained that the Constitution would ultimately doom the states. The Antifederalists' arguments reflected a deep-seated Anglo-American suspicion of concentrated power, expressed from the time of the Stamp Act crisis through the War of Independence and during the framing of the first state constitutions and the Articles of Confederation. Although the Antifederalists advanced some formidable arguments, they confronted a number of disadvantages in publicizing their cause.

The Federalists' advantages in funds and political organizing proved decisive. Federalist delegates prevailed in eight conventions between December 1787 and May 1788, in all cases except one by margins of at least two-thirds. However, unless Virginia and New York—two of the largest states—ratified, the new government would be fatally weakened. The Constitution became the law of the land on June 21, 1788, when the ninth state, New Hampshire, ratified by the close vote of 57 to 47.

The struggle was even closer and more hotly contested in New York where Antifederalists had solid control of the state convention and would probably have voted down the Constitution, but then news arrived of New

Hampshire's and Virginia's ratification. So the Antifederalists went down in defeat, and they did not survive as a political movement, instead left an important legacy. Antifederalists' objections in New York also stimulated a response in the form of one of the great classics of political thought, *The Federalists*, a series of eighty-five newspaper essays penned by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay.

Although the Federalist papers probably had little or no influence on voting in the New York State convention, its importance lay in the articulating arguments for the Constitution that addressed Americans' wide-ranging concerns about the powers and limits of the new federal government. According to the authors, the Constitution was meant to defend the minority's rights against majority tyranny and to prevent a stubborn minority from blocking well-considered measures that the majority believed necessary for the national interest.

As the Antifederalists predicted, the Constitution afforded enormous scope for special interests to influence the government. A Place in Time: Boonesborough, Kentucky Westerners were more concerned with securing land and surviving than the outcome of the Revolution, except to the extent that it might affect their own prospects. In the case of Boonesborough, Kentucky, townspeople remained largely divided over the cause of the Revolution and mainly followed the Whigs and Tories Party of their families. The Shawnees were likewise divided while some even moved west to seek neutrality.

However, Blackfish, a renowned war leader from Chillicothe, led two war parties against Boonesborough and in February 1778 captures Boone and twenty-six other Boonesborough men. Boone was later adopted by Blackfish, who renamed him Sheltoewe ("Big Turtle"), but escaped in June. When Blackfish along with four hundred Shawnees plus a British unit from Detroit emerged from the woods to request that Boone return with his father, Boone decided to fight along side with the townspeople in the face of defeat.

After a peaceful meeting inside the village, the forces of both side quickly drew into fire, and for seventeen days, the Shawness tried to burn the fort and tunnel toward it while the people inside tried to defend. Finally, after a torrential downpour collapsed the nearly completed tunnel, the demoralized Shawnees withdrew. Although the siege of Boonesborough, like the rest of the Revolutionary War in the West, had no immediate military significance, it reflected the divided and uncertain loyalties of both Native Americans and whites in the region.