

## Revolutionary War Discussion with Andy Drysdale

When we arrived for the Revolutionary War Discussion day, we were ushered into the unheated lower level of the Shippen Manor museum. Thankfully, it wasn't too cold outside, so we weren't that cold inside. Andy started by telling us that this was going to be more of a discussion group than a lecture, so we were just going to ask him questions and he would answer to the best of his ability.

Through the questions that were asked, we learned some pretty interesting things. First was an old favorite of mine, how periods of history are written about in different time periods. When the revolutionary war had just ended, the school textbooks painted it as a cut-and-dried affair, the nasty British on one side and the brave Americans on the other. However, as time went by and it became less of a hot topic, a more objective history was put forth.

Another fun story was of a politician in our area many years after the war, who decided to get a veteran from the Revolutionary War to help him get the vote. He got the guy up on the stage and proceeded to talk about the American way and the "glorious war". Then he asked the man, an old farmer by that time, to say a few words, and it turned out that he had been a Hessian who had fought against the Americans during the war, before settling down and becoming a farmer when he was discharged. Oops! That probably didn't help the politician get any votes.

A long-standing myth, Andy explained, was that the Americans won because they hid behind bushes and shot at the British while the British pranced around like simpletons in open fields wearing bright red coats. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Americans only began to win skirmishes after they were taught linear warfare (a type of fighting where soldiers would get in a long line, trading round after round with the enemy; and occasionally make a bayonet charge) by Baron von Steuben at Valley Forge.

Lastly, we discussed the documents that came out of the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights and of course, our Constitution. Thomas Jefferson, who penned the Declaration of Independence, gained many of his ideas on the rights of man from the writer John Locke, who wrote about the purpose of government and the rights of citizens, many of which made it into the Declaration and the Bill of Rights'. We discussed the differences between rights and privileges, and were asked the question: would you ever give up your rights? Then we finished, but not before we were set some topics to think about for next time. It was a very interesting and thought-provoking discussion.