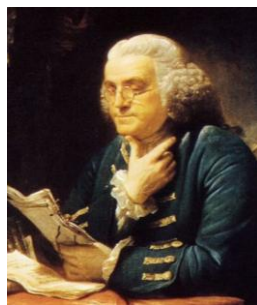


6:30 Tuesday, June 4th the Black Rock Branch Library

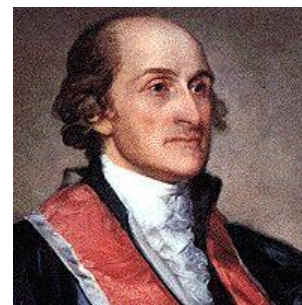
Ciphers, Stains and Silver Bullets: Espionage in the American Revolution



Without **George Washington's** skillful management of American intelligence activities, the course of the Revolutionary War could have been quite different. Washington utilized secret agents behind enemy lines, launched scores of agents on intelligence missions and interrogated travelers for information. He was adept at deception and a skilled propagandist. He recognized the need for developing multiple sources so reports could be cross checked. He said: *"There is nothing more necessary than good intelligence to frustrate a designing enemy."*



Benjamin Franklin's efforts in covert action were wide-ranging and usually successful. Long before the war started, he was recognized as a scientist of distinction, a seasoned diplomat and a talented public servant. He used all these skills as an agent of influence, propagandist and manager of covert French aid to America and director of American paramilitary activities against the British. It was through his untiring efforts that France came into the war on the side of America and played a major role in the British defeat at Yorktown.



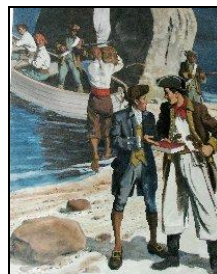
John Jay is considered the Founding Father of American counter-intelligence. He developed the first patriot organization for "Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies," a secret service that had the power to arrest, convict, parole, jail or deport. A company of militia was placed under its command. The Committee heard over 500 cases involving disloyalty and subversion. Jay helped establish the right of the President to conduct intelligence activities in secrecy.



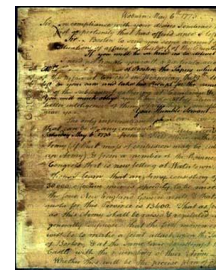
In 1776, **Col. Thomas Knowlton** of Ashford, CT. was put in command of an elite hand picked corps under the direct command of Washington. This unit was called "Knowlton's Rangers." On September 16, Knowlton's Rangers encountered the British Black Watch at Harlem Heights and Knowlton was mortally wounded. Knowlton's Rangers were the first intelligence unit in the American Army. Nathan Hale was a member of this unit when he volunteered to enter British held New York to obtain information for Washington.



Benjamin Tallmadge, was a Yale graduate and later the headmaster of a school in Wethersfield, CT. Tallmadge recruited old friends from Long Island and New York City, forming the "Culper Spy Ring." These agents gathered countless amounts of information for Washington, which greatly aided in winning the war. He was one of the founders of the first organized espionage operations in America. Tallmadge devised a cipher substituting numbers for over 700 commonly used words, and names of persons and places. Washington, for example was 711, Tallmadge was 721, New York was 727.



Caleb Brewster commanded a fleet of whale boats from Black Rock Harbor, and was an important informant for George Washington on British military movements on Long Island. Known as the most bold and daring of the Culper Spy gang, Brewster picked up spy letters from Long Island and passed them along to Tallmadge who delivered the letters to General Washington. Brewster was known as spy code 725. Only Washington, Tallmadge and a few of the others had a copy of the spy code "dictionary." He fought in the 'Battle of Setauket', and helped capture Fort St. George at Mastic. (Photo courtesy of Bev Tyler).



Invisible Ink. In 1776, Sir James Jay, John Jay's brother, formulated a pair of chemicals that would allow agents to correspond without fear of detection. Known as a "Sympathetic Stain" a message could be written between the lines of a normal letter and would disappear, to be read later when the "counterpart" would be brushed over it. It was then rendered visible again. Various techniques were used to hide a message from the enemy. A British spy used a hollow silver bullet to carry a message from New York to General Burgoyne on the Hudson River but he was seen swallowing it. When the message was retrieved he was hung.

