

1782-1783

# Newburgh Conspiracy

by Sean Vitti

# Issues

- War over but morale of troops low
- Reasons:
  - Withholding of pay for Continental Army.
  - Bankrupt Congress.
  - Articles of Confederation.



Treaty of Paris ends the American Revolution

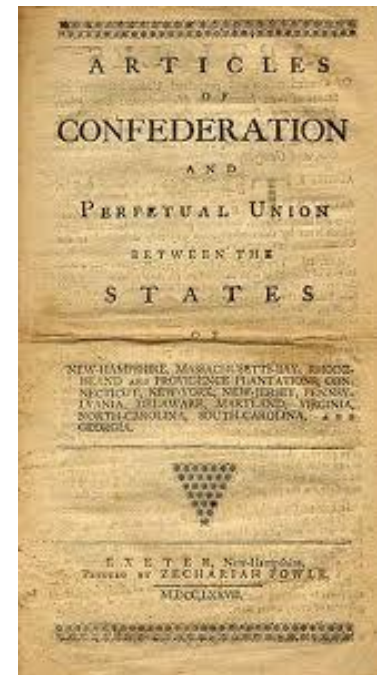
# Pay Withholding & Bankruptcy

- Summer of 1782, Congress is \$6 million in debt, with only \$125,000 raised to pay.
- Many members of the military were owed back pay, as much as 6 years worth



# Articles of Confederation & Payments

- Articles of Confederation granted powers to maintain a wartime army
  - However not the power to levy the required taxes to pay for this expenditure.
- States objected to Congressional plans to raise taxes to pay the military debt.



# The Conspiracy

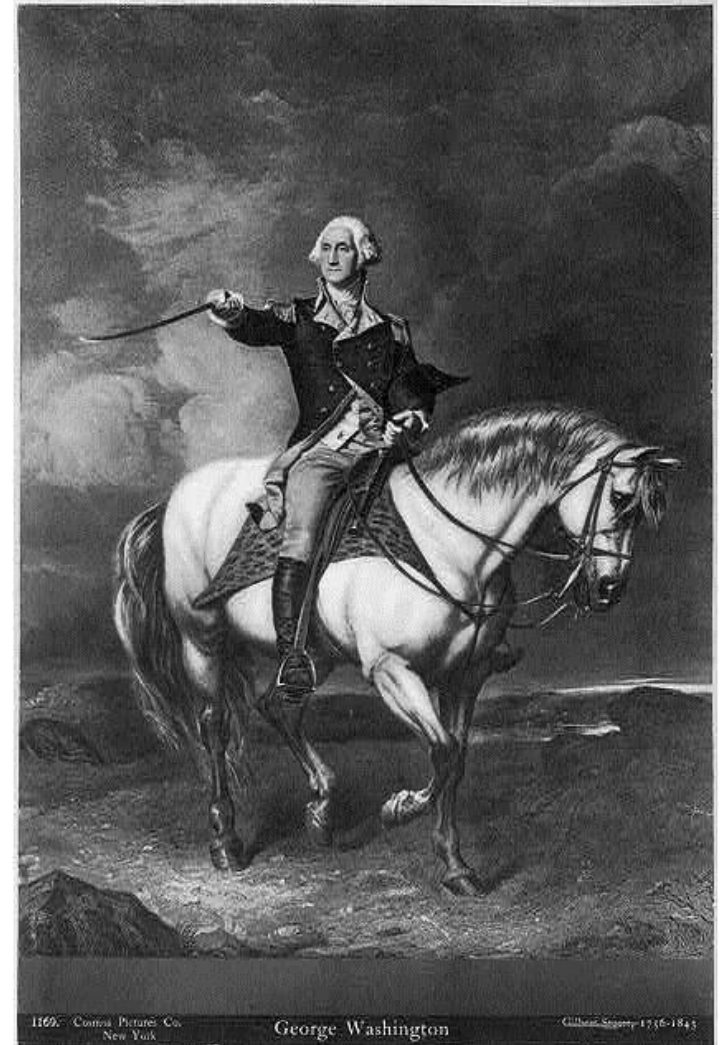
- In response to the withholding of pay tied to the financial and bureaucratic issues the officers drew together under the leadership of Henry Knox
  - Pay the Army
  - Pension for service
  - Option of commuting pension for lump sum
- Sent a delegation to Congress with a list of demands
  - The possibility of a *coup d'ete* seemed possible
    - Possibility of establishing a military dictatorship for the United States.



Henry Knox

# George Washington

- Made aware of the grievances of the officers on March 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Called for a meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup> with the officer corps.



# The Newburgh Address

- Appeared at the scheduled March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Reads letter, The Newburgh Address, to the assembled officer corp.



Washington's Farwell at Newburgh

# Excerpt from The Newburgh Address

- "Gentlemen: By an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together; how inconsistent with the rules of propriety! How unmilitary! And how subversive of all order and discipline..."



Lead <sup>700</sup> Quarters at Newburgh 15<sup>th</sup>  
March 1783

Gentlemen

By an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together - how inconsistent with the rules of propriety - how tumultuous - and how subversive of all order and discipline. - Let the good sense of the Army decide! -

In the moment of this summons, another anonymous proclamation was sent into circulation; addressed more to the feelings & passions, than to the reason & judgment of the Army. - The author of the piece, is entitled to much credit for the goodness of his sense - and would wish he had as much credit for the rectitude of his thoughts; for, as men receive different Opinions, and are induced by the reflecting faculties of the Mind, to use different means, to attain the same End; the author of the address, should have had more humanity; than to mark for suspicious, the man who had recommended moderation & longer forbearance - or, in other words, who should not think as he thinks, and act as he advises. - But he had another plan in view, in which Candor & liberality of sentiment, regard to Justice, & Love of Country, have no part. And he was right, to insinuate the darkest suspicions, to effect the blackest designs. -

That the

# Resolution

- Washington's presence and message to the officer corp. singlehandedly change the views of most of the officers present.
- Most affirm their trust in the newly formed Congress and its promise to compensate the members of the military

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