

Lesson Three: For Eleventh Grade

"The General most earnestly requires": *The Artemas Ward orderly book (3-8 July 1775)*

Background:

This is one of over 150 digitized documents from the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society which have been brought together around fifteen topical areas and nine broad themes on a special website called *The Coming of the American Revolution* (www.masshist.org/revolution). This website, constructed especially for high school students and teachers, aims to provide the primary source documents, contextual essays, guiding questions and tools of document analysis to enable users to conduct their own research. This document can demonstrate well how to look for clues and piece together evidence in an historical investigation: note how much historical research is like good detective work.

Early battles of the Revolution are fought mainly by New England troops. If the colonies are to fight as a united body, then they must have a leader that all will agree on, and George Washington is the Congress' choice for commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. He arrives in Boston in July 1775, and works tirelessly to expel the British from Boston in the winter and spring of 1776.

In Philadelphia, many delegates are concerned by the role New England has played in the conflict so far, believing the New Englanders to be rabble-rousers and trouble-makers. If there is to be an Army of the United Colonies, it must be agreed upon and supported by all the colonies, not only those in the North. Artemas Ward has commanded the assembled troops in Cambridge for several months, but finally Congress picks a Virginian to increase the sense of colonial unity as "Chief of all the Forces Rais'd." That Virginian is George Washington.

When Washington arrives in Cambridge, he finds a motley and disorganized collection of men and armaments. Many of the New England troops are suspicious of him as an outsider, but he soon lets them know that "The General most earnestly requires" (http://www.masshist.org/revolution/doc-viewer.php?old=1&mode=nav&item_id=759) order and obedience. From his very first day in charge he begins issuing new sets of general orders, which are dutifully copied down and distributed by his orderlies to his officers. Artemas Ward, now officially a Major General, keeps careful

notes of all the new General's rules and requirements in his Orderly Book.

Framing Questions:

What does it tell you about the state of the soldiers' camp that Washington has to give some of these orders?

Do you think the soldiers from different colonies got along? What evidence from the orderly book supports your opinion?

What regiment does Washington seem to favor? What kinds of duties does he give them?

Why would Washington forbid the firing of "small arms and Cannon?" What information might he have gathered from his earlier orders that would prompt this order?

How does Washington seek to unify his troops and give them a new identity? What language does he use?

Further Investigation:

What is the British Army in Boston doing during this same time? Is it possible to find out what kinds of orders the officers give and record? Are they issuing any proclamations or public statements?

What are people's reactions to Washington's early commands? Look at the letters and diaries of John and Abigail Adams: do the Adamses record their impressions of Washington? What about Washington's officers: do any of them leave letters or journals that might tell us how they reacted?