

# *Liberty* DON TROIANI'S PAINTINGS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

## *Audio Tour* )))

### *The Times That Try Men's Souls*

205 )))

*T*he American Revolution nearly failed in 1776. In the months after the United States of America declared its independence from Great Britain, the British Army and Navy nearly crushed the so-called rebellion. The new Continental Army led by General George Washington lost control of New York City after a series of battles. The army dwindled in both size and spirit, and it appeared as if the Revolution had come to a quick end. But George Washington secured daring victories at three battles in New Jersey – two in Trenton and another in Princeton – at the very end of 1776 and in the first days of 1777. They kept the Revolution alive. As one Loyalist put it, that campaign made the American Revolutionaries “liberty mad again.”

The events of 1776 and 1777 – and the paintings here – include people you may have heard of, like the spy Nathan Hale and a young Alexander Hamilton boldly leading his cannon crews into battle at Trenton. But other figures may be less familiar. The Hessian soldiers who opposed Hamilton at Trenton, for example, were German troops who fought alongside the British. Troiani’s paintings show us what they looked like in battle. Can you imagine what the war was like for them?

Margaret Corbin, to take another example, was a woman known as a “camp follower,” someone who travelled with the army and performed essential duties like laundry and nursing. She was 25 when she witnessed the death of her husband – a Revolutionary soldier – at the Battle of Fort Mifflin on November 16, 1776. As Hessian soldiers attacked, Corbin took her husband’s position at a cannon and continued to fight. As shown in Don Troiani’s painting of Corbin at the battle, she fell wounded when three grapeshot hit her, injuring her arm, jaw, and chest. Margaret Corbin survived the war, and Congress awarded her a soldier’s half-pay for life. She is buried on the grounds of the US Military Academy at West Point.