

Samuel Flaggerty

# The Journal of Private Thomas Winfrey

## Introduction

My name is Thomas Winston Winfrey. I was born on January 18th, 1756 in Bedford, Pennsylvania to William and Margaret Winfrey. I was raised in a strict upbringing, growing up with my older brother, Andrew, and my younger sister, Mary. The war started when I was nineteen and I joined the military. In the summer of 1775, I would meet my wife, Beatrice while I was on temporary leave. She was a gentle lady with a heart of pure gold and her eyes were like those of the seas. We got married on July 23rd, 1775 and on March 3rd, 1776, our beautiful daughter, Deborah, was born. Deborah takes after her mother and is the light of my world. This is the recounting of my service in the military during the Siege of Yorktown.

September 28th, 1781

This was quite the long and exhausting day. General Washington led our troops out of Williamsburg, Virginia as we, along with the Africans and the Frenchmen who became our allies due to our mutual contempt against the British, marched onward to Yorktown, where Cornwallis was. The March was long and grueling, hours passing by miserably. Cornwallis, that little rascal, he would retreat like a frightened coward, always going from place to place. He's the reason we're even here in the first place. If there's one thing my father taught me about cowards, it's that they were as good as dead.

My father was a bit of a callous man who would show no mercy at any signs of debauchery and tomfoolery. Any sign of disobedience, and you would be beaten. Anyhow, as we finally arrived with the Frenchmen, there was a rather tense atmosphere in the air. We surrounded the British fortifications and I met a rather pleasant fellow by the name of Lieutenant James Sumner, who oversaw our activities.

September 31st, 1781

We have been here for multiple days, and yet the British still won't surrender. I am ready to go home and head back to my Little Debbie and my dear wife, Beatrice. How Debbie would drop her dolls and rush out of her room! Her beautiful ocean blue eyes would beam with excitement as I came home. Oh, how my wife would give me a warm smile and a kiss on the cheek as the smell of wine and cooked pork would fill my nostrils! I miss them dearly and I can't wait for all of this to end.

October 2nd, 1781

Out of many, there was one who I considered my good friend, a Frenchman named Louis Tremblay. His hair was as dark as the starry night and his eyes were like a shining emerald. Quite an enthusiastic young lad, I must say. He told me he was from Bordeaux. His mother died during childbirth and he spent his entire life in poverty, fighting every single day for his survival. Twas a sad tale he mentioned to me, yet he always had a bright smile on his face.

October 6th, 1781

On this night, we picked up our shovels and started excavating our first line near the river of York with our group of men. Tremblay was chattering on about creating houses from match sticks, much to our annoyance. It got to the point where even Lieutenant Sumner got onto him for his talkative behavior. We would be sweating our pantalones off and here Tremblay was, eagerly digging as if it were a pastime of his.

I also met a quiet yet friendly man named Donald Harrison. He was a scrawny lad that was as dark as coal and had eyes of leather. I struck up a conversation with him and he was rather curious. Based on intuition and what I was told by him, he was a slave that joined the war to earn his freedom. He was forcibly taken from his own country at the age of fourteen as a servant and was loaded from Africa to West Virginia, having had multiple scars on his back and his chest from the amount of whips he received since then. I must say, I do find it rather ironic how we are supposedly a just society based on freedom when its foundation is built off the slaves.

Anyhow, it had been raining heavily for days, softening the soil and making it easier to excavate. We would tell each other jokes and Banbury tales to pass the time as we worked on the line, making up absurd stories as we progressed. I found Tremblay's comparison of Cornwallis to a doe particularly hilarious. Sumner would get onto us on the occasion, yet even he was amused at times. By the time we finished the siege line, it was dark and we were all exhausted, so we all headed into our tents for the evening as the rain poured onwards, the pitter-pattering setting us into a slumber.

October 9th, 1781

After multiple days of adequate preparation, all of our matters were taken care of, wherefore all we needed to do was wait for the right time to strike. Near three pm, the French side of the trench started firing at British fortifications. We waited two hours before General Washington opened fire, signalling us to do the same. Here all of us were, French, African, and American, working together in order to fight off our common enemy. But then, the rifles shot, the swords clashed, the bombs exploded, and the cannons would boom. The sky was set ablaze with chaos and destruction as the cries of many were forcibly silenced.

October 10th, 1781

This previous night was truly horrific. So many men were wounded in horrific ways that an ordinary man could only begin to imagine. I struggle to find a well night's rest with what I took part in as my mind fills with dread. The once lush green grasses were tainted with the red of the injured and dead. Thus, the extent of it all is better left unsaid. I headed to my comrades, tending to their wounds as I internally would repent for my sin. The worst part is that we would have to do it all again.

October 11th, 1781

Tremblay has been acting quite strange the past couple of days. I have never seen him so dull and quiet before. What was once a bright, cheerful young man was now a hollow, detached husk of a man that was as lifeless as a cadaver. Though I can't say I really blame him, given everything that has happened. General Washington commanded us to continue our excavation, so we began working on the second parallel. Even then, I could still hear the firing and the sickly screams. I looked over my shoulder multiple times as I kept seeing shadows in the corner of my eyes. Needless to say, I was discharged for the time being when I became startled and almost shot at Lieutenant Sumner.

October 14th, 1781

On this night, we marched towards the redoubts under the orders of General Campbell and Colonel Hamilton. There was a hint of apprehension and anticipation in the air as we made our way towards the redoubt near the river while the Frenchmen made their way towards the redoubt closer to land. I did not know it, but this would be the last I ever saw of Tremblay. Our men fought off the British, the Scots, and the Germans with our bayonets as a clash ensued between us. I've watched the light leave the eyes of many men as they dropped to the ground, with many of them having died due to my own actions. Multiple of our men died while others were imprisoned. The rest, like me, were fortunate enough to escape. However, I did not get through this unscathed, having sustained multiple injuries in the chest and back. I began to feel lightheaded as I made my way through our siege line as my vision began to fade to nothing but darkness.

October 18th, 1781

I have been unconscious for over three days. I woke up in the infirmary, finding myself covered in bandages. I turned my head upwards to find Harrison's face looking down upon me. I inquired of him about the whereabouts of Tremblay. It was then that I would discover that Tremblay was fatally wounded during the French's attack on the respective redoubt. I felt a strange sensation, as if I were pierced through the heart by a blade. He was but a little brother to me! and yet, I'll never see those emerald eyes again.

*October 19th, 1781*

*During the afternoon, Cornwallis had finally surrendered. It was all over. After many lives were extinguished, we could finally rest. Cornwallis was supposed to take part in the surrender ceremony, but he was supposedly ill, so General O'Hara took his place. General Washington took O'Hara's sword and thus, the surrender was official. We have won this battle, but at what cost? Hundreds of men were killed in the name of freedom and I will never forget what I saw. However, things are looking quite bright in the near future as I look forward to seeing my wife and daughter again. This is the dawn of a new day for our nation!*