

Topic Page: [Greene, Nathanael \(1742 - 1786\)](#)

Summary Article: **Greene, Nathanael**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1742–86, American Revolutionary general, b. Potowomut (now Warwick), R.I. An iron founder, he became active in colonial politics and served (1770–72, 1775) in the Rhode Island assembly. At the beginning of the American Revolution he commanded a detachment of militia at the siege of Boston and was in charge of the city after the British evacuation (1776). Greene helped plan the defense of New York (1776), but illness kept him from the battle of Long Island. He was with Washington (1776–77) at Trenton, Brandywine, Germantown, and Valley Forge. In Feb., 1778, he became quartermaster general while still holding his field command; he reorganized the department, found supplies for the army, and rendered fine service in this capacity. His notable ability at organization also appeared in his fieldwork. He fought (1778) at Monmouth and in the Rhode Island campaign and was president (1780) of the court-martial board that sentenced Major John André. After Gates was defeated at Camden (1780), Greene became the commander in the Carolina campaign. He reorganized the Southern army, and he and his lieutenants (notably Daniel Morgan and Henry Lee), with aid of partisan bands under Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens, turned the tide in Carolina. Greene's forces were defeated at Guilford Courthouse, Hobkirks Hill, and Eutaw Springs, but each time the British victory was reversed, and he pushed south to surround Charleston until the British evacuated it (1782). The campaign is generally considered an example of excellent strategy, and Greene's generalship is much admired. To get supplies for the Continental Army, Greene often had been forced to endorse personal notes. After the war the dishonesty of a contractor forced him to sell his estates to honor those pledges. The people of Georgia, however, gave him a plantation.

See biographies by his grandson, G. W. Greene (3 vol., 1867-71), and T. G. Thayer (1960); Johnson, W. , *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene* (1822, repr. 1973).

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