

MAJOR BENJAMIN TALLMADGE (Deceased)



Benjamin Tallmadge was born on 25 February 1754 at Brookhaven, New York, and was the second surviving son of Rev. Benjamin and Susannah (Smith) Tallmadge. His father served as his tutor until he enrolled in Yale College in 1769. He graduated in 1773 and was featured as one of the graduation speakers at his commencement. In the fall of 1773, he accepted a position as the Superintendent (Principal) of a high school in Wethersfield, Connecticut, and held this position until 1776 when he left it to enter military service.

Benjamin Tallmadge's military service began when he was appointed a Lieutenant and Adjutant in Chester's Connecticut State Regiment on 20 June

1776. He displayed superior military ability and skill and was promoted to Captain on 14 December 1777 and finally to Brevet Lieutenant Colonel on 30 September 1783, near the end of the American Revolution. His combat service included the Battle of Germantown (October 1777) and the Battle of Monmouth (June 1778). He was also present at many other smaller engagements. Tallmadge was credited with the capture and destruction of Fort George on Long Island on 22 November 1780. This was his most notable accomplishment in combat, and he received written praise for his actions from both GEN George Washington and the Continental Congress. During the period of 1778-1783, Tallmadge served with distinction as GEN Washington's Intelligence officer and was responsible for many sensitive missions against the British forces.

At Yale College, Tallmadge's closest personal friend was Nathan Hale who failed in his first intelligence mission into the British-held section of New York City and was hanged on 22 September 1776. As a result, Tallmadge, sensing the sensitive nature of his intelligence duties, carefully organized a net in the Long Island area to gather intelligence on British operations. His key agent was Abraham Woodhull who operated under the cover name Samuel Culper and sent numerous messages to Tallmadge, who used the name John Bolton. Tallmadge exhibited his abilities as an intelligence professional by inventing and using a code that the British never broke and also by using sympathetic inks to keep information out of the hands of the enemy should his messages be intercepted.

In 1780, Tallmadge was placed in charge of MAJ John Andre, the captured British spy, whom he grew to respect as a professional intelligence officer. Tallmadge was present when MAJ Andre was hanged. Because of the very critical nature of Tallmadge's work during the Revolution, much of the information that he and his agents gathered and processed has been lost, although a number of letters have survived the two centuries. Indicating his professionalism as an intelligence officer, Tallmadge insisted that he enter New York City with an American flag at the conclusion of the Revolution to provide safe passage to his agents before the British could take any action against his sources.

At the close of the American Revolution, Tallmadge left military service to engage in a variety of commercial ventures in and around Litchfield, Connecticut. When George Washington was called out of retirement in 1798 to head a provisional Army to counteract the French threat to the nation, he suggested to Army officials that Benjamin Tallmadge should be recalled to command the horse cavalry. This was an obvious tribute to Tallmadge's abilities as a skilled soldier.

In 1800, Tallmadge was elected to the US House of Representatives as a Federalist and was reelected to this seat seven consecutive times before retiring from the House in 1817. As a member of Congress, Tallmadge served on a number of committees and also served as the Chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs at one point in his distinguished career.

Tallmadge died in Litchfield, Connecticut, on 7 March 1835 at the age of 71. He was inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 1988 and Tallmadge Hall at Fort Huachuca is named in his honor.



**Benjamin Tallmadge portrait by
artist Ezra Ames, circa 1800
(original is at Litchfield Historical
Society)**