

Escape of the Century

Few people have appreciation for rain, wind, or fog. Yet on the night of August 29th, 1776, these three phenomena saved nearly nine thousand men. This historical incident, known by few, took place on the northern tip of Brooklyn, Long Island. I would have liked to watch this miracle, as I take pleasure in watching people and happenings almost as fondly as I love the rain.

The first person to note would have been George Washington himself. He and the rest of the Continental Army were in a rather despairing situation, surrounded by nearly 20,000 British troops. The first major battle of the Revolutionary War had taken place two days before on the 27th, known as the Battle of Long Island. For whatever reason, the British General stopped the attack before full completion of their victory, so the Continentals were waiting for the final attack.

Lingering through the next day the British continued to delay, and hour after hour circulated by. Observing Washington's thinking cap would have been fun, as his ideas proved to be quite astute. The plan he formed consisted of moving all of his army a mile across the East River to the opposite shore at the foot of Manhattan Island, where the main body of American forces remained. A strong wind had now blown in, which prevented the British fleets from entering the East River, and enabled Washington to begin carrying out his plan. A lot of strategy went into all of this in order for them to escape safely and quickly. Wagon wheels were muffled, they had campfires to deceive the British that they were still there, men were forbidden to talk and few even knew that they were escaping—just told that they were being replaced.

August nights were short, so when it got dark these plans were carried out as speedily as they could manage. John Glover and his Marbleheaders were called upon to man all the flat-bottomed boats and sloops they could find. These men were full-fledged fishermen and seamen from the Massachusetts Bay area. Quick to carry out orders, and skillful in nautical management, the Marbleheaders were well equipped for the job. Growing up near boats and being partial to them myself, it would have been fun to observe how they handled the boats and glean from their abilities.

Throughout the night, the rowers faced the unfamiliar waters and transported unit after unit to the opposite shore. As dawn approached, a tense atmosphere arose upon the ones not yet conveyed. At one point, a rearguard unit mistakenly received orders to move, and there was a gap in the lines that, thankfully, the British failed to see. The advancing morning revealed a cloudless sky and no evidence could deny that it would be a beautiful, clear day. This fear soon

was withdrawn though, as a mist fog appeared and encircled them, enabling them to complete their task. The miracle of this fog is really extraordinary. It has been recorded that it was so thick, the soldiers couldn't see their hand in front of their face. Appearing just as dawn advanced, it retreated just as suddenly into the sky as the last boat rowed away out of range of British gunfire. It would have been interesting to have seen the British soldier's faces in that moment. Surprise was probably washed all over them.

. The wind and rain had prevented the British fleets from entering the East River, and the fog kept them from detecting the Continental Army's escape. It has been said that the weather was on George Washington's side, but the Creator of the weather was also on Washington's side. If I could have gone back in time, I would have liked to witness this miracle in history because it would have been amazing to see the hand of God save thousands of men. I silently salute George Washington and the Continental Army for standing for our country. I can only imagine the smiles of Washington and his men as they maneuvered the final boat towards the opposite shore.