

The Maryland 400**April 24, 2026****Word Count: 1765 words**

There are many events, battles, conversations, and encounters that took place throughout the Revolutionary War in America that had the potential to completely change the outcome of our great country's future and its relationship with Great Britain. One such event took place one August morning in New York, involving men from the First Maryland Regiment. Sadly, this event is not frequently discussed in Maryland public school classrooms or in university lecture halls, perhaps because it is deemed insignificant because of what actually happened, rather than realized for the intrinsic value of what *could have* happened.

Perhaps you've never heard of the Maryland 400, a detachment of the First Maryland Regiment, whose members answered the call at the Battle of Brooklyn (also known as the Battle of Long Island), the first military engagement after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Taking place on August 27, 1776, this was also the largest battle of the Revolutionary War, and it was a pivotal point in the war, because, had it resulted in a different outcome, the war would have been lost for the new Americans less than 2 months after it had begun.

Just days before the battle, Thomas Stone, Charles County, Maryland's signer of the Declaration of Independence, sent word to Annapolis that additional troops were needed in New York. While the Maryland forces, consisting mainly of farmers mustered to head up to New York, General William Smallwood and his First Maryland Regiment were already well on their way.

On the morning of August 27th, near the Old Stone House in Brooklyn, New York, the British Army's troops were advancing toward the main American camp, which housed General George Washington and his army. Hessians advanced from one side toward the Maryland Regiment, now led by General William Alexander (Lord Stirling), and British forces approached from another direction. During the battle, the 400 Maryland soldiers fought off 2,000 British troops. They were severely outnumbered and outgunned. But over and over, they fell, regrouped, and continued to attack, buying time for the Continental Army, and "holding the line" to prevent advance by the enemy. Eventually, the Maryland 400 were defeated, and General William Alexander (Lord Stirling) surrendered. Of the 400, 259 were killed, wounded, or missing, and where those who were killed and buried is uncertain to this day, though it is speculated that they were buried in a mass grave near present-day Prospect Park, New York. In that park, a monument was erected to the Maryland 400 with this inscription: "In honor of Maryland's 400 who on this battlefield August 27, 1776 saved the American Army."

The Maryland 400

April 24, 2026

Word Count: 1765 words

Ultimately, this battle helped to stave off the British army's attack, allowing General George Washington and his army to escape across the East River under the cover of night and live to fight another day, for years, in fact, as it turned out.

While in terms of wins, this battle was, at the time, a victory for Great Britain, it was also a strategic loss, as the battle kept British forces occupied long enough to prevent capture of General Washington and his army, which would have been a heavy loss for the Americans, and could have lost America the war.

The actual site of the battle involves an historic building that still stands today. The Old Stone House of Brooklyn is comprised of 85% of materials from the original house and stands in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York City, New York. It is located at Washington Park on Third Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, and serves as a museum as part of the Historic House Trust .

Each year, in New York, on August 27th, New Yorkers remember the Maryland 400 who saved the American Army, literally putting themselves between the American army and British forces. As homage to the Maryland 400, the Old Stone House proudly flies the Maryland State Flag in quiet reverence of the Maryland soldiers who held the line as long as they could, in order to save the Continental Army, and thus, our new nation.

So, what lessons should we learn from this important event from our past? Well, one lesson is that, in the grand scheme of things (in this case, the entire American Revolutionary War), there are multiple small components that play an important part in the whole picture. Each of these battles, such as the Battle of Brooklyn, was important to the overall cause. In the case of the Battle of Brooklyn, it might even seem like a loss for our team, but it was one of those strategic losses. In this case, we literally lost the battle (at the time), but eventually went on to win the war.

Had the Maryland 400, who were highly trained and outfitted soldiers, not been able to hold the British back for as long as they did, General George Washington and the Continental Army may have been captured and we would have lost the Revolutionary War when it had scarcely begun, less than two months earlier. Another important lesson we should learn from this event is that when it really comes down to it, there are more of our countrymen who believe in our country strongly enough to do what is needed and will lay their lives down for the rest of us if it means that we can be free. Yet another lesson is that sometimes something might appear one way, but might truly be something else. This is twofold in this case: the Battle of Brooklyn

The Maryland 400**April 24, 2026****Word Count: 1765 words**

appeared, in itself, a loss, but truly was a Hail Mary that the Maryland 400 threw to allow the Continental Army to escape across the East River under the cover of darkness and prevent the British forces from capturing our troops. Additionally, the Maryland 400 regiment, comprised of largely unskilled laborers and tenant farmers, turned out to be the most tenacious soldiers we could have asked for in the moment. They had everything on the line: their families, their fortunes, their freedom, their lives. These men, who did not have a lifetime of military and tactical training, did what needed to be done to hold that line to ensure safe passage for our troops. It is this action of “holding the line” that indeed, gave Maryland its motto: The Old Line State.

So, the next question we must ask ourselves is: do events from so long ago, such as the Battle of Brooklyn, matter in our lives today? The answer is a resounding “YES!” These events and their stories are part of the fabric of our nation’s founding and history. They are part of our own being, and serve as a reminder to fight with everything we’ve got to hold on to our freedoms and defend our land. These men made the ultimate sacrifice without hesitating--without turning tail and running, knowing what was at stake, and cognizant of the fact that they were the only ones who could save our country at that pivotal moment. And if those men were willing to give all of that up for all of us, who they couldn’t even fathom at the time, then we should also recognize the importance of that sacrifice, especially in the face of today’s daily battles, which, in the grand scheme of things, are miniscule, compared to what our founding fathers and the Maryland 400 contended with. These men loved their country, and by extension, all of us, so much that they answered the call. They did what had to be done, and what no one else could do. They understood the gravity of the situation, and despite being mere farmers and unskilled laborers, when it came to freedom, something burned inside of them that they could not ignore, and that could not be tamped out as long as they could still fight. We must not forget the “WHY” that our forefathers fought for, because if we forget why our freedoms are important, and why we needed to be our own country, then we’ve lost our entire identity and we’ve lost respect for our founding fathers and the generations who’ve worked so hard to preserve our freedoms and our land for us.

For me, personally, this battle means much more, because, in researching the family names of the Maryland 400, I know there were ancestors and cousins of my family who gave their lives for our country. My mother’s family goes back more than 9 generations in Charles County, and seeing family names such as Chunn, Nash, Thompson, Bowie, Hamilton, Scott, and Jenkins on the Maryland 400 regiment roster fills me with an immense pride in my ancestors who were blazing a path for their own families for generations to come.

The Maryland 400**April 24, 2026****Word Count: 1765 words**

As a proud Marylander, I am filled with so much pride and love for the Maryland 400, and at the same time, disheartened that our schools didn't teach us about this group of men from our home state and their important role in the Revolutionary War. These soldiers were from my home state, and represented us well among our fellow countrymen at the start of our country, nearly 250 years ago. I'm not sure if they could even contemplate that our country would still exist 250 years later, but I sure hope they knew that those who came after them would be able to enjoy and hold on to the freedoms they gave their lives for.

The Maryland 400 gave the ultimate sacrifice, because they knew not only the value of freedom, but also the cost it would take to achieve it. We must not lose sight of how important our freedoms are, when every day life casts shadows on things like battles and wars that we know nothing of. We must not trivialize the big things of the past, thinking them insignificant when weighed against the daily things of the present. These events are important because if we do not learn from these events, and keep telling the history, we will forget, and the very fabric of our country will be lost. We can learn from these events—to inspire us, to teach us, and to remind us of the incredible gift that the brave men and women of the American Revolution have entrusted to us to care for and pass along to the next generation.

This August 27th, I hope you will pause for a moment to remember the Maryland 400 and the incredible sacrifice they made 250 years ago to ensure that America remained the land of the free, because they made it the home of the brave.

Works Cited:

- “Road to Liberty: Battle of Brooklyn.” The White House, 20 Nov. 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/road-to-liberty-battle-of-brooklyn/> Accessed 25 Apr. 2026
- “The Maryland 400.” *National Park Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-maryland-400.htm>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2026

The Maryland 400

April 24, 2026

Word Count: 1765 words

- “Maryland 400 Monument, Brooklyn, NY.” Maryland State Archives, no date, https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000034/000000/000008/restricted/mva_html.pdf Accessed 24 Apr. 2026.
- O'Donnell, Patrick K. Washington's Immortals: the Untold Story of an Elite Regiment who Changed the Course of the Revolution. First Edition. Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, NY. 2016.
- Reno, Linda Davis. The Maryland 400 in the Battle of Long Island, 1776. McFarland & Co., Jefferson, NC. 2008.