

The Battle of Germantown

Lane Reese

PA History

Period 7

Mr. Grybos

Shamokin Area High School

12/09/19

The battle of Germantown was a battle that took place on October 4, 1777, during the American Revolutionary War. The American Continental Army was defeated by the British forces at this battle. This battle showed us that the American army was not going to give up and that they were on their way to become a strong army.

At Germantown, British General William Howe camped a large contingent of his troops.¹ George Washington had planned a surprise attack on the British at Germantown due to their vulnerability. Despite a complex and well thought out battle plan, the American Continental Army failed to pull it out and win the battle. Many Americans started questioning Washington's leadership because of his failed plan.² Even though this was a significant loss, the Americans stayed determined and it led them on a road to become a real army.

Germantown was poorly defended due to four roads leading into it, since it held a large amount of British troops, it would be a good target. Washington's plan was to send separate forces down each road to hit the British all at once from four different sides.³ The army, now divided into four columns, marched for Germantown on October 3rd, during the night, planning to attack on the morning of October 4th. One of the columns had trouble finding their way to the battlefield and never got there, another column fired at the British, but never charged. The column that was planned to attack the center of the British camp, led by General John Sullivan, was the first to engage the British in combat, they caught the British by surprised and succeeded in driving the British army back.⁴ The last column, led by General Nathanael Greene, started to

¹ History.com Editors, "Battle of Germantown," HISTORY, last modified November 9, 2009, <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/battle-of-germantown>.

² Editors, "Battle of Germantown."

³ Editors, "Battle of Germantown."

⁴ Editors, "Battle of Germantown."

turn the tide of the battle when they entered it, they arrived late due to their longer path. The field was covered in thick fog and gun smoke, and the two columns encountered and fired at each other, not realizing they were on the same side.⁵ It was too late when they realized that they were firing towards each other, as the British had started a counterassault, the remaining Americans had to flee the battle.

Many European countries were shocked by the Americans continued determination. After such a devastating battle, it would have been expected for them to give up. However, the army was on its way to become properly trained, as they have shown more professionalism and discipline since the start of the war.⁶ Shortly after the Battle of Germantown, the continental army rested at Valley Forge, where Von Steuben helped further the army's skills.⁷

The Battle of Germantown showed a sign that the Americans were becoming an actual army. They had a complex battle plan for the Battle of Germantown, which would've worked, if some things such as the fog or road lengths were different, among other aspects. Von Steuben entered the picture, which greatly helped the Americans become a fighting force. A force that would lead to a strong country.

⁵ "Battle of Germantown Facts & Summary," American Battlefield Trust, last modified September 18, 2019, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/germantown>.

⁶ Editors, "Battle of Germantown."

⁷ Editors, "Battle of Germantown."

Bibliography

Editors, History.com. "Battle of Germantown." HISTORY. Last modified November 9, 2009.

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/battle-of-germantown>.

Battle of Germantown Facts & Summary. (2019, September 18). Retrieved from

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/germantown>