Washington and the Moon

By Isabella Henderson

George Washington's rise from the eldest son of a middling Virginian family of diminished means to a living symbol of liberty and the American experiment is among the most dramatic in history. Amid moments of ascent, uncertainty, reinvention, and surrender, he remained quietly steadfast in what he valued most: his honor. Though not all of the events in Washington's life corresponded with seemly lunar conditions, the ones that did demonstrated a thread—subtle but unmistakable—linking celestial rhythm to early consequence. What emerges is a striking narrative shaped not only by revolution but by the quiet, cosmic rhythm that seemed to echo the transformation of a man and the dawn of the American republic.

Commission as Major (Waxing Crescent)

On December 13, 1752, under the promising glow of a Waxing Crescent moon, Washington reportedly received his first commission as Major. Washington's entry into the colonial militia was shadowed by the death of his older half-brother, Lawrence Washington, an adjutant general of the Virginia militia who had succumbed to tuberculosis. For a twenty-one-year-old young Virginian born into modest circumstances, a military commission was highly coveted, representing a preliminary step in the climb toward high society, which Washington, a dedicated follower of the Rules of Civility, was determined to penetrate from an early age. Unbeknownst to Washington, the commission also marked the beginning of a storied military career etched into the annals of history—one that would bear many far-reaching consequences. But before he would help conceive the most radical nation on earth, Washington's military service helped ignite the first major global conflict: the Seven Years' War, also known in the American context as the French and Indian War.

Battle of Jumonville Glen (Waxing Crescent)

On October 31, 1753, under a Waxing Crescent moon, Washington departed Williamsburg on his first military orders from Governor Robert Dinwiddie. His mission was to journey toward the newly contested Ohio River Valley, an enclave that lay beyond the Allegheny Mountains claimed by both French and British settlers. The presence of a Waxing Crescent moon, symbolizing the planting of the seeds of destiny, could not be more suitable for the occasion. Washington's foray into the Ohio River Valley set in motion an unstoppable chain of events, propelling the young major onto the world stage and into international notoriety. As part of his mission, Washington was tasked with delivering a demand that the French withdraw from the western territory claimed by British Virginians. If Dinwiddie's message to the French was declined, Washington was instructed to respond with force, but purely on the defensive. Upon arriving at Fort Le Boeuf, Washington delivered the ultimatum, which the French commander, Jacques Le Gardeur de Saint-Pierre, promptly declined. Washington returned to Williamsburg

with the French response in hand, along with surveys detailing their fort-building activity on the

western plains. Dinwiddie interpreted this as sufficient grounds for French aggression and, with credence from the Governor's Council, ordered Washington to prepare a response. Still, he instructed Washington to proceed with diplomacy and tact in reencountering the French.

On May 28, 1754, in coincidence with another Waxing Crescent, the Battle of Jumonville Glen erupted, yielding worldwide ramifications unprecedented in scale. Just days prior, Washington had returned to the Western frontier, briefly encamping at Great Meadows before receiving reports of nearby French forces. Now joined by 159 British soldiers and a contingent of warriors led by Tanacharison, a prominent Seneca chief, Washington set off to isolate a small French encampment before it could call for reinforcements. By early dawn, Washington and the troops reached the camp, catching most of the French soldiers still asleep and unprepared. Abandoning earlier directives to maintain diplomacy, Washington and his men quickly besieged the French, whose weapons were rendered useless after being left in the prior night's rain. The French were overwhelmed, and fourteen were killed in the skirmish. Among the dead was commanding leader Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville, who had been on a diplomatic mission—not unlike Washington's—to deliver France's demand that the British Virginians withdraw from King Louis XV's claim to the Ohio River Valley. The surviving French soldiers were taken prisoner. To magnify blows, Tanacharison and his men descended upon the fallen and scalped them. Though Washington intervened to prevent further harm to the captives, the damage had already been done.

The incident at Jumonville promptly threw British-French relations, already fraught in the aftermath of the War of the Austrian Succession, into deeper chaos. The French promptly painted the British as ruthless aggressors who had ambushed a defenseless ambassadorial party. Had Washington simply approached the camp with diplomatic intentions, they argued, he and his men could have avoided bloodshed altogether. In London, Dinwiddie scrambled to explain Washington's blunder to British officials, relegating the blame to the "Half-King & their Indians," to whom the British, he claimed, served as mere auxiliaries: "My Orders to the Commander of our Forces [were] to be on the Defensive." Yet on July 3, 1754, under a Waxing Gibbous moon, Dinwiddie's narrative collapsed. At the Battle of Fort Necessity, Washington, overwhelmed by a French retaliatory attack, unwittingly signed a poorly translated surrender document that asserted that the British had assaulted a diplomatic delegation without provocation. Within just a few years, Prussia, Austria, Russia, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal would be dragged into the conflict, which would drag on until 1763. More importantly, the first stirrings of the American Revolution had commenced.

First Resignation (Waning Crescent)

On July 17, 1754—commensurate with the Waning Crescent's themes of rest and surrender—Washington returned to Virginia, where he spent the following year as a private citizen tending to his farm in the wake of his humiliating defeat at Fort Necessity. That October, he briefly but indignantly resigned his commission. His withdrawal from the military was prompted by newly instituted British regulations barring colonials from advancing beyond the

rank of captain. The ruling not only dashed Washington's hopes of distinction but subjected him to the authority of men who had once served under him. It marked the first strain in Washington's loyalty to the British crown, which would continue to splinter with each successive slight in the years leading to American independence. In a letter to Colonel William Fitzhugh, a senior Virginia military officer, Washington expressed indignation at the suggestion that he would accept a commission stripped of both rank and proper pay, writing, "You must entertain a very contemptible opinion of my weakness, and believe me to be more empty than the Commission itself." Before signing off the letter, he reflected on his nascent legacy and acknowledged the "Thanks of [his] Country, for the Services [he had] rendered it," but affirmed it was "the call of Honour, and the advice of Friends" that urged him to lay his arms down. He would not return to military life until March 1755.

Battle of Monangahela (New Moon)

On the New Moon of July 9, 1755, Washington returned to military service in full force, serving as a volunteer aide to General Edward Braddock in the Battle of the Monongahela. In keeping with the New Moon's themes of beginnings and pivotal shifts, Washington's performance at Monogahela marked the shedding of his reputation as an inexperienced, blundering soldier and the emergence of a nobler image: that of a composed and capable commander. Still embittered by the British Army's refusal to promote colonial officers beyond a certain rank, Washington chose to volunteer on his own terms, viewing it as a more dignified alternative to accepting reduced pay. He was further enticed by the opportunity to serve closely alongside Braddock during the campaign to capture Fort Duquesne from the French—a prospect he hoped would materialize into an appointment to a higher rank. The journey toward the Fort proved arduous. Beginning in early June from Fort Cumberland in present-day Maryland, Braddock's forces struggled to haul the army's cumbersome armaments across the rugged, steep region, all while warding off dysentery and intense exhaustion. By late June, Washington himself had fallen ill with a severe case of dysentery, relegated to a rear wagon until he recovered well enough to rejoin Braddock at the front on July 8.

As the army crossed the Monongahela River, roughly ten miles away from Fort Duquesne, they were violently ambushed by the French and their Indian allies. Braddock's rigid, European-style tactics translated badly on North American soil, particularly against Indigenous guerrilla warfare, and the British soldiers flailed around futilely as the General continued to order his men into platoons against Washington's protests. Still recovering from illness and propped up by pillows atop his saddle, Washington continued to take orders directly from Braddock, galloping across the battlefield for more than twelve hours to retrieve cannons and deliver directives. Nearly two-thirds of the British forces were killed and wounded in the assault, including Braddock himself, who finally suffered a fatal shot to the lung after having four horses shot underneath him. He succumbed to his wounds three days later. With Braddock's aides and second-in-command also having fallen, Washington swiftly assumed leadership, organizing a rear guard that allowed the surviving soldiers to retreat. All the while, bullets seemed to fly past

the twenty-three-year-old officer. Washington later recounted having two horses shot underneath him and four bullets pierce his coat and hat, but he escaped unharmed.

The impact of Monongahela on Washington's career was immediate and profound. Though the battle marked a resounding defeat for the British, Washington's unyielding resolve and deft leadership earned him widespread acclaim throughout the colonies, helping to restore a reputation once marred by the Jumonville affair. On August 14, 1755, he was appointed colonel of the Virginia regiment under a Waxing Crescent moon. Admirers were particularly stunned by his near-mythic skill to escape death, especially when so many of his fellow soldiers, most notably Braddock, had fallen. This aura of invincibility would become central to Washington's legend, following him into the American Revolution and his eventual ascent to the presidency. As the colonial Presbyterian minister, Samuel Davies, clairvoyantly remarked, "I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved [him] in so signal a manner for some important service to his country." Washington's survival, in contrast to the British losses at Monongahela, also mirrored a subtle shift in colonial attitudes toward British rule. In the years that followed, Britain's reputation for military supremacy began to wane, and many colonists started to imagine the possibility of standing up to the global power. Indeed, the New Moon had unfurled the beginnings of a new destiny for Washington and the colonies.

Second Resignation (Waning Crescent)

On December 27, 1758, coinciding with another Waning Crescent, Washington formally resigned his commission, turning his attention to the new foundations of his life: his recent marriage to Martha Custis, his burgeoning estate at Mount Vernon, and his election to the House of Burgesses. Once again, his decision to leave military service was spurred by mounting frustration with the Crown, which he believed continually undermined his authority due to his colonial status. Just months earlier, Washington had voiced his grievances in a letter to Governor Robert Dinwiddie, warning that the denial of royal commissions to Virginians would only agitate anti-British sentiment. In a moment of early political foresight, he wrote: "We can't conceive that being Americans should deprive us of the benefits of British Subjects."

In August 1758, Washington's disillusionment came to a head when he was selected to command the 1st Virginia Regiment in the third and final campaign to capture Fort Duquesne. He reported to Brigadier General John Forbes, a royal officer who made no secret of his disdain for colonial soldiers, whom he dismissed as a "bad collection of broken innkeepers, horse jockeys, and Indian traders." Though Forbes held Washington in higher esteem than other members of the colonial army, tensions between the two men soon surfaced, especially as Washington continued to impose his knowledge of backwoods warfare against Forbes's traditional approach to combat. In early November, a tragic friendly fire incident occurred when Washington's brigade mistakenly engaged allied troops, resulting in the deaths of fourteen Virginians—a harrowing episode that marked the most violent action of the campaign. Two weeks later, Washington learned that the French had abandoned Fort Duquesne, burning the territory to ashes before British forces could arrive. Washington surrendered his rank a month

later, thanking his officers "with uncommon sincerity and true affection for the honor you have done me, for if I have acquired any reputation, it is from you I derive it." With that, Washington's career in the British army came to a close, and he would spend the next fifteen years tending to Mount Vernon.

Siege of Boston (Waxing Crescent)

Under the Waxing Crescent of July 3, 1775, Washington arrived in Boston to answer the call to arms once more: this time, against the very empire in which he had first honed his military skills. In the fifteen years since the French and Indian War, Washington's disillusionment with the British Crown had hardened into lasting animosity, fueled by declining profits from his tobacco crops and mounting colonial taxation. Two weeks before his arrival, the Second Continental Congress had appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army—a natural choice given his military experience and unwavering sense of duty. His first assignment was to drive the British from Boston, a critical stronghold both strategically and symbolically. As a vital port and the heart of revolutionary fervor, Boston's liberation was paramount for the colonial cause.

Washington was well aware of the challenge that lay before him. He had never commanded an army of this size, nor operated beyond the familiar terrain of the American frontier. Yet he accepted the assignment with humility and resolve, reminding the delegates that "his abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important trust," while vowing to "enter upon the momentous duty and exert every power I possess in their service and for the support of the glorious Cause."

Battle of Dorchester Heights (Full Moon)

Although eager to launch an immediate attack on Boston, Washington reluctantly heeded the guidance of his advisors to postpone direct action until winter. In the meantime, he oversaw the execution of a series of supporting missions, most notably the retrieval of 59 cannons from Fort Ticonderoga by Henry Knox. At last, by the light of the Full Moon of March 4, 1776, the hour for action arrived. Following Washington's orders, American forces launched diversionary attacks from Lechmere Point and Cobble Hill to draw British attention from the true objective. Meanwhile, a special detachment moved swiftly onto Dorchester Heights, laboring through the night to build an elaborate fortification wall manned with the newly acquired artillery.

With the Full Moon symbolizing the culmination of long-laid plans, the celestial timing could not have been more fitting—both marking the execution of nearly eight months of preparation and providing the light needed for the men to work through the night. To some, it was a divine signal that Providence favored the American cause. "A finer [night] for working could not have been taken out of the whole 365," wrote Reverend William Gordon. "It was hazy below [the Heights] so that our people could not be seen, though it was a bright moonlight night above on the hills."

The Battle of Dorchester Heights spelled the end of British domination in Boston. By morning, the fortifications were fully constructed, much to the astonishment of the British. Upon seeing the American defenses, General Howe purportedly cried, “My God, these fellows have done more work in one night than I could make my army do in three months.” The British scrambled to organize a swift counterattack, but a sudden snowstorm foiled their plans to scale the Heights, a disruption that seemed to confirm for Howe that their departure was overdue. Two weeks later, on March 17, 1776, 11,000 British soldiers evacuated the city by boat, accompanied by hundreds of Loyalists. With the end of the Siege of Boston, the first chapter of the Revolutionary War closed in favor of the Patriot cause.

Battle of Harlem Heights (Waxing Crescent)

Washington’s next triumph under favorable lunar conditions came at the Battle of Harlem Heights, fought under the Waxing Crescent of September 16, 1776. The engagement followed a demoralizing string of losses for the Americans after their arrival in New York in pursuit of the British, who had returned to the city following their evacuation from Boston. These defeats included the Battle of Long Island, where a coordinated assault by General Howe and his Hessian allies forced Washington to evacuate 9,000 troops from Brooklyn to Manhattan, as well as the disastrous encounter at Kips Bay. There, British troops advanced onto Manhattan’s eastern shore, sending the American militiamen guarding the East River into a panicked retreat and ceding control of lower Manhattan to British forces. The collapse at Kips Bay, occurring just the day before Harlem Heights, left Washington deeply anguished. Charging into the chaos as his men fled hysterically past him, he reportedly threw his hat to the ground in fury and shouted, “Are these the men with which I am to defend America?”

Victory the next day brought a much-needed reprieve for the Continental Army. On the morning of the engagement, Washington was alerted to reports of British movement and ordered Lieutenant Thomas Knowlton and Adjutant General Joseph Reed to investigate with a detachment of 150 troops. Knowlton soon encountered the British in the woods south of Harlem and, after a brief skirmish, retreated to camp with the Redcoats in tow. As the British advanced toward the Hollow Way—a narrow reentrant leading into the American position—they sounded the tune “Gone Away” on their bugles, a song traditionally played to signal a fox’s capture during a hunt. Reed interpreted the gesture as a deliberate provocation aimed at the Continentals, or perhaps at Washington himself, who, notably, counted fox hunting among his favorite pastimes at Mount Vernon.

Washington called in reinforcements led by Knowlton and Major Andrew Leitch to launch a counterattack, aiming to surround the British in the Hollow Way. The troops charged into the ravine while firing upon the Redcoats, who proceeded to run down into the valley beyond the woods. Fighting continued for several hours, as the Americans and the British continued to send in further reinforcements. Although Knowlton and Leitch were both mortally wounded and failed to complete the encirclement, the Americans maintained their position as British resistance began to falter.

The British were soon overwhelmed. With nearly 400 casualties, they had no choice but to abandon the field. Washington ordered his men to halt the pursuit, but the magnitude of the scene was not lost on the Americans. As Reed recalled later, “The pursuit of a flying enemy was so new a scene that it was with difficulty our men could be brought to retreat.” Like the Waxing Crescent under which it unfolded, the Battle of Harlem Heights represented the first signs of momentum after significant darkness.

The Crossing of the Delaware and the Battle of Trenton (Full Moon)

Under the Full Moon of December 25, 1776, General George Washington led approximately 2,400 Continental soldiers across the ice-choked Delaware River in one of the most audacious maneuvers of the American Revolution. In the days that followed, he would lead them to pivotal victories at Trenton and Princeton, restoring morale to a dispirited army and reigniting momentum for the American cause. The months between Harlem Heights and Trenton had been deeply taxing on Washington, whose army suffered critical defeats at the Battle of White Plains, the Battle of Fort Washington, and Fort Lee, compounded by dwindling supplies and the looming expiration of enlistments. With New York lost, Washington understood that “a lucky blow” to topple British strongholds in New Jersey would “most certainly rouse the spirits of the people, which are quite sunk by our misfortunes.”

The plan was to cross the Delaware from Pennsylvania under cover of darkness and advance onto Trenton, where a Hessian garrison had retired for the winter, intending to resume military operations in the spring. The eve of the scheduled crossing brought several setbacks, delaying Washington’s plan by more than three hours. Not long after Washington crossed the water in anticipation of the rest to follow, a nor’easter descended upon the men, bombarding them with strong winds, rain, snow, hail, and sleet, as they navigated a river already teeming with large chunks of ice and unsteady currents. Although three columns had been organized to launch a coordinated assault on Trenton, only one managed to advance; the other two were forced to turn back due to the worsening conditions.

Even so, Washington and the remaining men carried on, trudging nine miles on foot through ice and snow in freezing temperatures. By eight the next morning, they reached Trenton and launched a surprise attack on the Hessian outpost. Washington and General Nathanael Greene led the main body from the north, while General John Sullivan advanced from the south, catching the garrison in a two-pronged attack. Hessian Colonel Johann Rall, erroneously believing that retreat was not possible, commanded his men to fight the Continentals head-on—a fatal error. Within the hour, Rall was mortally wounded, sending his troops into disarray. Many surrendered, while others fled. The Patriots soon returned to Pennsylvania, where they revelled in their victory, and Washington, seizing the momentum, immediately began devising the campaign for Princeton.

The engagement was a monumental success for the Continental Army, coming at a time when colonial faith in the American cause had begun to falter. In contrast to the twenty-one fallen and 90 wounded Hessian soldiers, the Continental Army suffered four losses and six

non-fatal casualties. At the end of the engagement, nine hundred Hessians were captured alongside a sizeable amount of their armaments, including muskets and cannons. As news of the Americans' triumph at Trenton spread widely, Washington was hailed as a hero. On behalf of the Executive Continental Congress, Philadelphia delegate Robert Morris praised Washington as "a character which we admire and which we have long wished to appear in the world with that brilliancy that success always obtains and which members of Congress know you deserve." Although the Americans did not gain any ground at Trenton, the victory instilled enough morale to convince many of those whose enlistments were set to expire in the new year to renew them. The momentum borne from Trenton carried the Washington and the Continental Army to two more victories over the next week at Assunpink Creek and Princeton, the latter of which drove the British to abandon their stronghold on New Jersey. Under the glow of the Full Moon—a symbol of culmination and clarity—Washington's resolve at Trenton illuminated a path forward for the revolutionary cause, transforming dejection into promise.

Battle of Germantown (Waxing Crescent)

Although Washington's next battle under a Waxing Crescent did not end in victory, the Battle of Germantown arguably shifted the course of the war in favor of the Patriots. On October 4, in the wake of the British capture of Philadelphia, Washington sought to replicate the success of Trenton by launching a two-pronged surprise attack. Under his command, Generals John Sullivan and Nathanael Greene were tasked with ambushing General William Howe's as they quartered in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Upon arrival at the camp, the Americans under Sullivan's lead seemed to have reached the upper hand by repelling Howe's vanguard back into the camp for a mile, as Greene's troops captured a substantial contingent of enemy soldiers. However, Sullivan and Greene's forces soon collided and began to fire upon each other, mistaking fellow Continentals for enemy troops in the foggy conditions. At Cliveden, a nearby mansion where a group of British soldiers had taken shelter during Sullivan's advance, Washington elected to have his men repeatedly assault the structure rather than move onto the camp to reinforce Sullivan and Greene's forces, prompting heavy casualties. The resulting delays provided the British ample time to regroup and launch a counterattack against the Continentals, pushing them back into the entrance of the camp. In the aftermath, the Continental Army suffered 152 losses and 521 non-fatal casualties to the Redcoats' 70 losses and 451 non-fatal casualties.

Despite the defeat, the engagement at Germantown did much to further the Continental cause and draw international support for American independence. The elaborate nature of the American assault was a remarkable display, much to the anxiety of the British: it was unfathomable that "the enemy would have dared to approach after so recent a defeat as that at Brandywine," Howe reflected later. The events at Germantown caught the attention of the Comte de Vergennes, the French foreign minister who served under Louis XVI, who would ultimately cite the Americans' tenacity during the battle for his decision to ally France with the fledgling power. According to Vergennes, "that the battle had been fought unsuccessfully was of small

importance when weighed against the fact that it had been fought at all." The shifting tides of the Continental Army's abilities were especially not lost on Washington, who recognized that he and his men could now "confuse and rout even the flower of the British army with the greatest ease." In the dim lunar light of the Waxing Crescent, though Americans tested their strength, faltered, and fell back, the vision of eventual victory had begun to take shape.

Winter in Valley Forge (Waning Crescent)

On December 19, 1777, Washington and the Continental Army briefly retired to Valley Forge in Pennsylvania. Although Germantown provided a modest morale boost, Washington acknowledged that a serious overhaul was in order. The encampment began just after the Waning Gibbous moon, a lunar phase associated with refinement, ego release, and reflection after upheaval, and lasted through June 1778. The harsh winter that followed would mark one of the most defining chapters of the American Revolution, as the soldiers braved rampant hunger, exposure, and dwindling supplies while Washington reassessed the American strategy. Though no battle would be fought there, two thousand men succumbed to death owing to malnutrition and diseases such as pneumonia, scurvy, and typhus fever.

Washington's credibility was concurrently called into question. A small faction within the Continental Congress levied accusations of ineptitude and even despotism against the General, seeking to replace him with General Horatio Gates, who had carried his forces to victory at Saratoga. Settling into Valley Forge, Washington understood that this was not the time to despair but to lead. "The people of America look up to you as their father," Henry Knox affirmed. "Into your hands they entrust their all, fully confident of every exertion on your part for their security and happiness." Washington took charge of overseeing the construction of wooden huts to shelter the soldiers from the cold, temporarily settling into a shoddily built tent on the campgrounds to set an example. He continued appealing to Congress for the provision of supplies and successfully defended his command when a congressional delegation visited in early 1778.

In February, Washington and the men welcomed to the camp Baron Friedrich von Steuben, who began to transform the army into a more disciplined, cohesive force. Steuben was tasked with retraining the army and instilling essential skills such as bayonet use and coordinated march formations. After months of tireless drilling, the once-undisciplined troops emerged more prepared for combat than ever before, and Washington marveled at the men that stood before him: "The recent instance of uncomplaining patience during the scarcity of provisions in camp is a fresh proof that they possess in an eminent degree the spirit of soldiers and the magnanimity of patriots." Spirits rose further when news arrived in May that France had formally recognized American independence. And by June, Washington and the men marched out of Valley Forge not only hardened but transformed, reforged by fire, sacrifice, and quiet resolve under the waning moon.

The British Surrender at Yorktown (Waxing Crescent)

On October 19, 1781, the British formally surrendered to Washington and his army at Yorktown, bringing six years of major combat between the global superpower and its estranged child of empire to a close. It was only fitting that a Waxing Crescent moon—a phase associated with new beginnings, rising energy, and forward momentum—presided over the standstill moment that ushered in the negotiations for American independence. For Washington, whose service during the Revolutionary War had already made him a transatlantic figure of renown, Yorktown marked not just the end of armed struggle but the beginning of his transformation into a political founder and enduring public servant.

The Yorktown Campaign was devised nearly spontaneously after Washington's intentions to stage an assault on New York were intercepted by the British, who then proceeded to strengthen their position in the area, leaving their garrisons in Virginia vulnerable. The objective for Virginia was further propelled by news that Francois Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse had assembled a fleet of twenty-nine ships and 3,200 troops to land at the Chesapeake Bay—an endeavor that ultimately secured allied control of the Chesapeake and prevented the British from reinforcing their position at Yorktown—as well as intelligence that General Charles, the Earl of Cornwallis had stationed the remaining troops at the eastern tip of the Virginian peninsula, where they were surrounded by the Chesapeake. Washington immediately registered Cornwallis's fatal error and the perilous state that the British occupied; just years prior, Washington had rejected a plan by one of his aides to deploy troops to the same region, on account that "by being upon a narrow neck of land would be in danger of being cut off." As he and French Lieutenant General Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, began their advance toward Virginia with the hopes of surrounding the British, Washington continued to relay diversionary false reports of impending Continental action in New York.

On the 29th of September, Washington led a combined force of over 18,000 American and French troops into Yorktown, dwarfing Cornwallis's 9,000 troops. The siege began in earnest as the British opened fire on the encroaching allied forces. While the Continental Army lacked experience in European-style siege warfare, the French, under General Rochambeau, took the lead in constructing a series of parallel trenches that allowed the allies to advance under cover. These earthworks gradually pushed the allied line closer to the British defenses, shielding troops as they moved toward the crucial redoubts.

By October 9, allied artillery had been fully installed in the first parallel, allowing the Americans to unleash a relentless bombardment on British fortifications. As the bombardment continued and the British lines began to falter, Washington ordered an assault on Redoubts 9 and 10 on the night of October 14. American forces, led by Alexander Hamilton, and French troops under the Marquis de Lafayette, captured both forts in a coordinated night attack, bringing the allied line within striking distance of Cornwallis's inner defenses.

Deciding that the circumstances were "so precarious" that any attempt to order in reinforcements would "run great risk in endeavoring to save us," Cornwallis delivered his plea for a ceasefire to Washington on October 17. Addressing Cornwallis, Washington wrote, "An ardent desire to spare the further effusion of blood will readily incline me to such terms for the

surrender of your posts and garrisons of York and Gloucester as are admissible." Two days later, on October 19, the articles of capitulation were signed, effectively ending major combat in the American Revolution. While the war's end was not officially recognized until the 1783 signing of the Peace of Paris treaty, the victory at Yorktown heralded the dawn of a new chapter in the American cause—one that would soon culminate in full independence.

The American Cincinnatus and the Final Surrender (Waning Crescent)

King George III reportedly said that if Washington truly gave up command, "he will be the greatest man in the world." And under the Waning Crescent moon of December 23, 1783, he did. In a stunning display of surrender and republican ideals, Washington formally resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. With the close of hostilities facilitated by the 1783 Treaty of Paris, the dream of American independence was now realized. And although the opportunity to claim power or title lay in front of him, Washington elected to cede his influence over the military to the governing body that had appointed him. In the tradition of Cincinnatus, the venerable Roman commander whose devotion to civic virtue would see him abdicate the field to live humbly on his farm, Washington once again gave up his command to return to Mount Vernon as a private citizen.

The symbolism of the waning moon was remarkably well-suited for the occasion. Just as the New and Waxing Crescents had mirrored Washington's rise and the nascent flickers of American defiance, the Waning Moon ushered in release, closure, and the quiet unraveling of what once burned bright. His journey had been marked not only by strategy and sacrifice but by moments of irreversible transformation.

From the frozen banks of the Delaware to the battered redoubts at Yorktown, Washington had carried the cause on his shoulders. But it was his final act of surrender that solidified his legacy, not as a conqueror, but as a crusader of civic virtue. As the moon dimmed, so too did Washington's public role, leaving behind a legacy that would outlast even the brightest full moon.