



0. EXECUTION OF JOHN ANDRE - Story Preface

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Awaiting his execution, John Andre created this self-portrait (in 1780). Online via George Dudley Seymour Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University. PD

John Andre was not as fortunate as Benedict Arnold.

General Washington ordered a Board of Inquiry to investigate the facts. The generals on the Board concluded John Andre, Adjunct General to the British Army, was a spy because he had disguised his clothes behind enemy lines and traveled with a false name. The Americans didn't want Andre, though. They wanted Benedict Arnold.

The British command thought Washington would follow the unwritten rule of war: captured generals are not executed. They knew, however, what would happen if they returned Benedict Arnold. The British refused to deal.

The generals on the Board of Inquiry recommended that John Andre be executed. General Washington agreed.

Concerned about his chief of intelligence, General Clinton wrote to Washington expressing concern about Andre's situation. Washington responded, politely telling Clinton the decision would stand. Washington ordered Andre's execution. It would be "carried out this afternoon at five o'clock precisely."

John Andre was hanged. No one wanted that to happen. Both sides respected his gallantry.

The person whom Americans wanted to hang, Benedict Arnold, was busy at his new job. As a Brigadier General in the British Army, he issued a proclamation urging men in the Continental Army to join with him in the fight against America's independence.

Using the same intelligence and courage he had demonstrated before, Benedict Arnold fought against his former countrymen. At the end of the war, he and his family moved to England.

Even though his efforts had greatly helped His Majesty's cause, Benedict Arnold and his wife were shunned in Great Britain and in Canada where they lived for a brief time. He died in England, embittered and miserable during his last years.

He had experienced the meaning of the old adage:

Once a traitor, always a traitor.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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