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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

7th Annual

June 28, 2019



1794
The Whiskey Rebellion

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CCHS' Golf Classic is themed 1794 - the Whiskey Rebellion in honor of the 225th anniversary of that event. In October of 1794, President George Washington and thousands of militia men assembled in Carlisle to march west and quell the uprising over the whiskey tax.

Your support of the Golf Classic directly benefits activities at CCHS, including our Awards & Scholarships Fund (HistoryPOPS!).





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1794
The Whiskey Rebellion

Restaurant & Comfort Suites, Carlisle



The Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania and Carlisle

By Amelia Deering



The Pennsylvanians who led the Whiskey Rebellion were disproportionately affected by the 1791 excise tax on domestic liquor because the majority of western farmers were small-scale distillers, who also had the expensive disadvantage of having to transport their product over the Allegheny mountains in order to reach most urban centers.¹ Especially in terms of transport costs, whiskey was a much more efficient product than unprocessed rye, and was also used as currency in areas where hard cash was scarce. As such, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's plan to tax liquor as an unnecessary luxury undermined the basis of the rural economy.

¹ Jerry A. Clouse, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Southwestern Pennsylvania's Frontier People Test the American Constitution* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994): 11.



Citizens all over the newly-formed United States were negatively affected by the tax, but the farmers of Washington, Westmoreland, Fayette, and Allegheny counties of Pennsylvania as well as Ohio and Monongalia counties in Virginia were historically known for their distrust of central government and therefore primed for rebellion. John Penn remarked in 1760 that southwest Pennsylvanians were a “lawless, ungovernable crew,” very different from the educated cosmopolitans of Philadelphia.² The western counties had only been securely settled after the Revolutionary War, in many cases by the very men who now suffered under the excise law.³ As such, the farmers took it as a personal responsibility to stand up for their interests, especially in the face of what they saw as the tyranny of the federal government in Philadelphia. The 1791 Excise Act felt very similar to the hated British Stamp Act, and this group of men—who had almost all fought for independence—would not stand for a rebirth of tyranny in America.⁴

Anti-Federalist Americans such as the whiskey rebels believed that their role in the new nation was to ensure the government heeded their suggestions and cared for their interests. The townships of West Pennsboro and Newton in Pennsylvania wrote that “All Civil authority originates with and is received from the people in a Republican government, that Every law made by the Representatives not agreeable to the Voice of those from whom they Derive their Authority is Tyanical [*sic*] and Unjust.”⁵ These resolutions are characteristic of those drafted by informal town and county assemblies—sometimes formalized as Democratic Societies—throughout western Pennsylvania, where farmers could air their grievances and debate the best path towards a repeal of the tax.⁶ Before resorting to violence, the rebels had appealed to their representatives in Philadelphia, but nothing changed. This intransigence was incompatible with the westerners’ understanding of how a democratic government ought to function.⁷

2 Ibid 13.

3 Lenore E. Flower, *Visit of President George Washington to Carlisle, 1794* (Carlisle: The Hamilton Library and Cumberland County Historical Society, 1932): 5.

4 Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965): 340.

5 Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1999): 212.

6 Clouse 18.

7 Saul Cornell, “Aristocracy Assailed: The Ideology of Backcountry Anti-Federalism,” *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1172



The resistance to the Excise Act began at the local level, but was mostly restricted to peaceful debate as the federal government did little to enforce the new tax. Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin openly refused to help the tax collectors, in essence condoning tax evasion in the southwestern counties.⁸ Meanwhile, farmers signed covenants vowing not to pay the tax and to punish anyone who did, and the few distillers who did comply were often met with vandalism and scorn.⁹



Spirited debate turned to violence in July 1794 after an amendment made it so that violators of the excise tax would be tried at state courts instead of in their own towns. Local Supervisor of Collection John Neville accompanied US Marshal David Lennox on July 15 to deliver the court summons of farmer and distiller William Miller of Allegheny County, who was to be tried in distant Philadelphia.¹⁰ The men were followed by a group of farmers led by militia leader David Phillips; the crowd “whooped and hallooed” but did not attack the officials.¹¹ The next day, approximately forty men came to Neville’s house demanding his resignation and all tax

8 Cornell Other 341.

9 Ibid 341.

10 Clouse 25.

11 Ibid 25.



records for the county.¹² Neville refused, but the group returned on the 17th having grown to six hundred men. Neville went into hiding while ten soldiers whom he had hired from nearby Fort Fayette protected his property. The rebels allowed the Neville family to be taken to safety and then opened fire. James McFarlane, Revolutionary War veteran and leader of the rebel group, was killed and five others injured. The epitaph on McFarlane's headstone reads "He served throughout the war with undaunted courage in the defense of American Independence against the lawless and despotic encroachments of Great Britain. He fell at last by the hands of an unprincipled villain in support of what he supposed to be the rights of his country."¹³ After McFarlane's death the militiamen began burning various buildings, eventually destroying most of Neville's estate.

On August 1, 1794, about two weeks after the incident at Neville's estate, a militia of between five and seven thousand men marched peacefully on Pittsburgh after a planned rally on Braddock's Field, just a few miles east of the city on the Monongahela River. It was this event which prompted Washington's cabinet to seriously consider organizing a national military response to the insurrection in Pennsylvania.¹⁴ Washington had been wary of such a show of force, as he felt it would reinforce Anti-Federalist fears of government overreach. Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Mifflin agreed, writing to the President on August 5, 1794 that he "feared that a military force brought into the region would also alienate the peaceable citizens of the region and cause more discontent there."¹⁵ The incident at Pittsburgh was the largest and most organized group of Whiskey rebels to date, however, and as Federalist judge John Wilkins remarked "The people engaged in the present opposition to government [were not] an inconsiderable mob. [Rather], they are a respectable and powerful combination...[of] some of the most respectable people in the country."¹⁶ This impressive and professional demonstration, as well as Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice James Wilson's decision to declare an official state of

12 Ibid 25.

13 Ibid 26.

14 Ibid 29.

15 Ibid 29.

16 Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 217.



rebellion on August 4th, pushed the administration to take military action in Western Pennsylvania.

In order to implement the federal decision to rally a militia, the state governments all had to agree. Seeing the potential for violence in the west, the Pennsylvania Assembly called the militia on September 19.¹⁷ New Jersey and Virginia would soon follow, and the three states together fielded a force of approximately 10,000 men. The rendezvous point of Carlisle, Pennsylvania was decided by Secretary Hamilton, as the town was just barely west of the Susquehanna river, generally used as the dividing line between eastern and western Pennsylvania. By the end of September the entire force had arrived in Carlisle and awaited their commander.

The town of Carlisle, lying as it did on the border between two cultural groups, was split on the validity of the Whiskey Rebellion. Anti-Federalists such as William Petrikin believed “that the western farmers were simply exercising their right to armed revolt against a government that had ceased to represent their interests.”¹⁸ He and his followers felt that government representatives did not adequately reflect their constituents, with congress people being mostly upper class and unfamiliar with agricultural issues. Carlisle’s elite were generally Federalists, and welcomed the arrival of President Washington and the militia. While the Anti-Federalists felt that the new democratic government was not sufficiently representative, Federalists believed that “the existence of representative institutions meant that extralegal action was no longer acceptable.”¹⁹ They agreed with many in the administration who felt that such a rebellion amounted to treason and ought to be crushed.

President Washington himself arrived in Carlisle on October 4, 1794 to great fanfare. Secretary Hamilton had written a friend of the administration Ephraim Blaine on September 19 to procure lodging, and the President’s entourage was housed in the late Robert Magaw’s house which Blaine was renting.²⁰ Accompanying the president were Secretary of War Henry Knox, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, District Court Judge Richard Pe-

17 Clouse 36.

18 Wayne L. Trotta, *The Cumberland County Historical Encyclopedia*, “William Petrikin: Anti-Federalist Scourge” (Carlisle, PA: Cumberland County Historical Society): 10.

19 Cornell Other 209.

20 Willis Kocher, *The Cumberland County Historical Encyclopedia*, “Ephraim Blaine” (Carlisle, PA: Cumberland County Historical Society): 12.



ters, and the President's personal secretary Mr. Dandridge.²¹ The president's arrival parade was covered in all the area newspapers: the *Philadelphia Gazette* described how "our beloved Washington appeared, on horseback in a traveling dress."²² Another paper recounted how "every man as [Washington] passed along poured forth his wishes for the preservation of this most valuable of their fellow citizens."²³ Most reports agree that Washington reviewed the troops on the field which is now the site of Denny Hall, a Dickinson College academic building.²⁴



On October 6th, the people of Carlisle addressed their president. Their speech uniformly condemned the rebels, proclaiming that "The present insurrection and opposition to the Government is exceeded by none, either for its causeless origin or for the extreme malignity and wickedness with which it has been executed."²⁵ Anti-Federalists including William Petrikin had wanted to use Washington's stay as an opportunity to air their grievances against the federal government, but the majority of Carlilians were so in awe upon meeting the revolutionary hero in person that no major shows of dissent took place.

21 Flower 10.

22 Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser, Oct. 9, 1794, in Flower 13.

23 Flower 14.

24 Flower 15.

25 In Clouse 16.



The only loss of life in the Whiskey Rebellion after the federal militia got involved took place in Carlisle: “The first death came when federal troops shot a boy who had helped to raise a liberty pole. The second occurred when a drunken tavern scuffle ended with a soldier running a local man through with his bayonet.”²⁶ President Washington later apologized for these incidents and asked that an investigation be done so that such needless loss of life could be prevented in the future.

President Washington led the militia out of Carlisle on October 11, and their journey west was relatively uneventful. Some Anti-Federalists erected liberty poles along the militia’s path, but once the force reached the heart of the rebellion, most opposition fell immediately. Constitutional order was restored, and the excise tax remained in place until President Thomas Jefferson repealed it in 1802.



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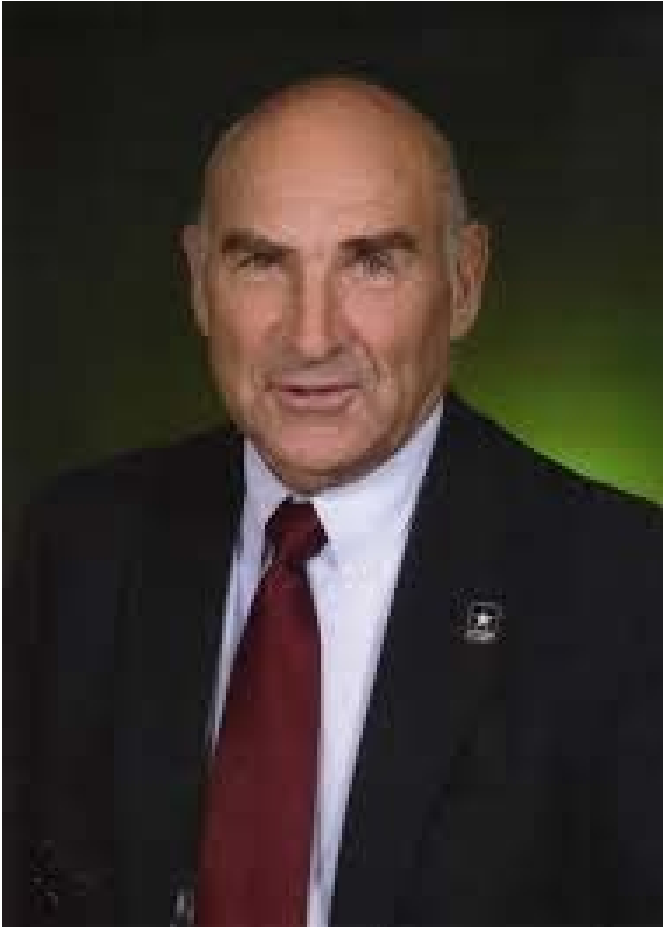


Executive Director Jason Illari presents 2018 POPS Award to Historian Cory Young.

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August 26, 1937 – January 4, 2019



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419 Village Drive, Suite 1

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717 960-5345

david.k.metz@morganstanley.com

[advisor.morganstanley.com/
bartoli-seig-metz](http://advisor.morganstanley.com/bartoli-seig-metz)

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Auction Items

Items will be sold during dinner

1. Carlisle Country Club (\$240 value)

Foursome with carts

2. Italian Night(s) out (\$200 value)

Miseno Risto Pub (\$100) and Marcello's Ristorante (\$100)

3. Get Ready For a Night Out (\$170 value)

Foundation Skincare by Michelle, LLC Essential Paradise Spa Facial (\$70), and Allenberry Resort (\$100)

4. Golf and Dinner (\$175 value)

Rich Valley Mini Golf, Range Balls, Twilight Greens Fees (\$75), Marcello's Ristorante (\$100)

5. Drive-In Date Night (\$170 value)

Brick (\$50), Miseno Risto Pub (\$50) and Quik Quality Car Wash (\$52) Drive in Movie Tickets (\$20)

6. Out on the Town (\$220 value)

Cassell's Grille (\$20), Marcello's Ristorante (\$100), Miseno Risto Pub (\$100)

7. A Night to Remember (\$1800 value)

1794 Whiskey Rebellion Chef's Table A Guided Dining Experience for 12 (\$1800 value)



Special Whiskey Basket 50/50

1794
The Whiskey Rebellion

Special Thanks to Comfort Suites and 1794 The Whiskey Rebellion for providing today's Whiskey Basket. Be sure to purchase your whiskey 50/50 tickets at registration.

Must be present to win all chance prizes.



The Rules

-The Tee Markers are small plaques with the CCHS Golf Classic logo framed with either white, black, or red for respective tees.

All Ladies will hit from the Red Tees

All Men 65 and older will hit from the Gold Tees

Men 64 and younger will hit from the White Tees

-Hole #7 is the \$10,000 Hole-In-One hole. The prize is \$5,000 for the golfer and \$5,000 for CCHS. To be eligible for prizes, all players will hit from the same Tees on the Par 3s which are color coded Red, Black, & White.

Note: There are \$50 gift certificate prizes for each par 3 “closest to the pin”. To be eligible ball must be on the green, not on the fringe.

There are \$50 gift certificate prizes for long drive holes: #4 for gold, #10 for red, #18 for white.

-Hole #13 is Old Hickory. All players must use a hickory shafted club which will be provided at the tee. Do not use a regular club from your bag on this tee. The names of the players whose ball remains on the green will be recorded and placed in a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate. All players hit from the same tee.

-This is a scramble. The best ball of the 4 team players will be selected on each shot from the tee into the hole. **Each player must use at least three tee shots.** First ball in the hole ends play.



-The ball may be moved one (1) club length, no closer to the hole except when on the green, in a sand trap, or behind a hazard (e.g. tree).

-The total number of strokes, using the best ball on each shot, will be recorded on the score card for each hole. At the end of the round, the 18 hole score will be totaled, signed, and turned in at the designated scorer's table near the large score sheets. In the case of a tie, scores of the highest handicapped hole(s) will be compared until winner is determined.

-To maintain pace of play, please adhere to limit of one mulligan per player per round (purchase for \$10 at registration). The maximum score on any hole is a double bogey. If your foursome players miss their bogey putts, pick up, enter a double bogey score, and proceed to the next hole.

-All prizes will be a gift certificate redeemable in Eagles Crossing pro shop except 1st place in the first flight, which will be \$400 cash.

Thank you to Eagles Crossing for
hosting this tournament



History POPS!

Proceeds from the event fund our awards and scholarships program which provides history scholarships to deserving county students and projects.

This year's winners are:

Steven Campbell
Indiana University of PA
Master's thesis: Mt. Tabor AME Zion
Church Research Project

Hope Station
Black History Festival
Jim Washington Award

Carlisle Theatre
80th Birthday Documentary Project

Mt. Holly Springs History Collaborative
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