

Christian Coon – German American Soldier

By: William Dodd Brown

Christian Coon was a soldier in the American Revolution. While his brothers in arms served in the militia or signed up with a state regiment, Christian enlisted in the German Battalion — an extra Continental regiment created by the Continental Congress.

Christian was German through and through. Grandfather Philip Göhn and his father had arrived in America September 19, 1738, on the ship *Thistle*. But Christian was also an American. He was born on August 21, 1753, in York County, Pennsylvania, the son of Johann Gohn and Anna Rosina Crantzdorf. He was baptized at Christ Lutheran Church in York County.

Prior to the Revolution, American propagandists learned that the British government was not only bringing British soldiers to fight but had hired German troops, as well. Radicals were outraged. The British were sending mercenaries to fight the colonists, German mercenaries. It wasn't long before this anger spilled over and generated controversy at home. The colonies had a large number of Germans, and many were recent immigrants. When war broke out, would these Germans support independence? Could they be relied on to fight fellow Germans from Hesse-Kassel, Brunswick and Ansbach-Bayreuth?

America's honest, decent Germans actively pushed back against the prejudice of their English brethren. In Miller's *Staatsboten Zeitung* appeared many requests for the Germans to stand up for independence "for they all knew how bitter the servitude was in Germany." With war on the horizon, German military associations were formed in Philadelphia. They drilled and held meetings in the Lutheran school house.

In the first of many requests in years yet to come, the government was asked to step in to resolve the conflict between these two groups. In 1776, the Continental Congress passed several resolutions as follows:

Resolves of the Continental Congress of 25 May 1776

"Resolved that one Battalion of Germans be raised for the Service of the United Colonies"

Resolves of the Continental Congress 27 June 1776

“Resolved that four companies of Germans be raised in Pennsylvania and four companies in Maryland to compose said regiment”

On July 17, a ninth company was recruited from Pennsylvanians at the urging of George Washington as a way to employ veteran John David Woelper. One week later, on July 24, Christian Coon enlisted in Captain Woelper’s company for a period of three years.

The first engagement that Christian was in was the Battle of Trenton. He crossed the Delaware River with General Washington and was one of the first soldiers to follow the general across a snowy field to start the battle. During the last part of the engagement, men of the German Battalion yelled in German to the Hessians to lay down their weapons and surrender. With Hessian commander Rall mortally wounded and many of their higher officers wounded, the Hessians admitted defeat and surrendered. Trenton has been called the battle that saved America.

Next, according to Christian’s pension application, he was at the Battle of Princeton “when a number of English were taken prisoners.”

He was “stationed with the Army at Valley Forge under General Washington.” The online Valley Forge Muster Roll lists him as a soldier in the German Regiment, 1st Virginia Brigade, 5th Division, Capt. John D. Woelppers Company.

In his last engagement, Christian “was at some Court house in the Jerseys where a number of the enemy were killed.” It was the Battle of Monmouth Court House, fought on June 28, 1778.

In July of 1779, Christian “had served out his three years.” Leaving the army, he returned home a proud veteran. Not only had he helped defeat the British. He had fought against prejudice at home and won.

On March 18, 1818, Congress passed a pension act that recognized the services of the soldiers who had fought in a war that secured our country’s independence. The act also provided payments to those men in need of assistance.

This was welcome news to Christian. By occupation he had been a blacksmith, but by 1819, he was in his mid-sixties. As he put it, he was “now too old and nearly blind to work.” He had no property, and he and his wife were living with a son in Washington County, Maryland. In 1822, he applied for and received a military pension.

Like many other families in the 1820s, the Coons headed west. Christian eventually found himself in Fairfield County, Ohio. He passed away there in 1825 and is buried in Tarkiln Cemetery.

Sources:

Christian Coon or Koon, S34,712, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files, National Archives Microfilm Publication M804, Roll 645. Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, DC. (on HeritageQuest).

Muster Roll of Capt. John David Woelpper's Company, October 1777. Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives Microfilm Publication M246, Roll 131. Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, DC. (on FamilySearch). Record shows Christian Coon's date of enlistment.

Stein, Charles Francis, *The German Battalion of the American Revolution* (Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland, 1975), 26.

Dr. R. M. Bolenius' article "Germans in Pennsylvania" appeared in the *Papers Read before the Lancaster County Historical Society* (1906), 343.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34289608/christian-coon>

<https://valleyforgemusterroll.org/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Battalion

10,605. R
 Maryland
 Christian Coon

Washington Co in the State of Maryland
 was a Private in the Regiment commanded by
 Colonel Welton of the Maryland
 for the term of 1776 (War)

scribed on the Roll of Maryland
 at the rate of 8 Dollars per month, to commence on
 the 19 of May 1819

ificate of Pension issued the 17 of May 1822
 sent to Thomas Kennedy Esq
 Agent town M.C.

years to 4th of March 1822	268.38
anl. all'ce ending Sept 1822	48.00
	<hr/>
33 ²¹ 17/2	\$316.38
8	
<hr/>	
264	
4.38	

{ Revolutionary claim,
 Act 18th March, 1816. }

May 1. 1820

Christian Coon Payment Card