

# General Daniel Morgan - Sharpshooter

In 1753 Winchester, Virginia, was a wild village of sixty homes, with one tavern and one Anglican church. A newcomer named Daniel Morgan, age 18, arrived that year to claim some inexpensive farm land, to operate a sawmill and drive a wagon. Daniel was of Welsh descent, the son of a New Jersey farm laborer whom he did not want to identify as his father because of their constant arguments and ongoing estrangement.



In 1754, 250 years ago, Virginia Governor Dinwiddie faced the beginning of the French and Indian War. Military supplies had to be transported as part of Gen. Braddock's attack against Ft. Duquesne. Daniel was hired to haul supplies between Winchester, Fort Cumberland and the District of West Augusta (today's southwestern Pennsylvania). Daniel saw young George Washington in his first military action. After Braddock's defeat, wagons were needed to transport the wounded to safety. Daniel joined the Virginia Rangers in 1756, and in an Indian ambush, a musket ball was shot through his mouth. After Gen. Forbes's victory at Ft. Duquesne in 1758, Daniel returned to hauling produce and hardware in and out of Winchester. He fell in love with Abigail Curry, and they had two daughters, Nancy and Betsy.

In 1775 Congress voted to raise ten companies of frontier sharpshooters. Daniel was made captain of one Virginia company. He served with Benedict Arnold in New York and New Jersey battles. The great American victory over Gen. Burgoyne at Saratoga, in 1777, opened the way for the French to enter as allies in the American Revolution.

When Washington quartered his troops at Valley Forge, Daniel patrolled and blocked loyalist farmers from selling food to the British troops. Critics of Washington wanted him to be replaced as commander. Daniel voiced his view that "party matters" had no place in a republic. Col. John Neville supported Daniel's views, but Daniel resigned because he did not get the acclaim he expected for his views and military role.

Daniel returned to his family when the British army moved into Georgia and Charleston. But Washington called Daniel back into duty, and he agreed, provided he got the rank of Brigadier General. Congress finally did agree to that promotion, plus a valued gold medal. He served there with Lafayette and Mad Anthony Wayne. He also added two slaves, Nat and Toby, to his family. Daniel suffered from severe sciatica, which he described as "a glimmering glimpse of eternity." Cornwallis surrendered to the Americans at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, and Daniel was called to arrange housing at Winchester for the British prisoners. Then Daniel resigned his commission. He was 46. He served 6½ years in the Revolutionary War.

Back at Winchester, Daniel had Hussein prisoners of war build his home, which he named "Saratoga." Daniel's daughter Nancy married the son of Gen. John Neville, Presley, in 1782 when he served in the Pennsylvania Legislature. She bore fifteen children. Nancy's sister Betsy Morgan married James Heard, who unfortunately was a drunkard. She bore four children.

Washington agreed in 1791 to place an excise tax on distilled spirits. This hit hard the settlers west of the Allegheny mountains. Those opposed to Washington and the tax, as anti-federalists, protested and refused to pay. In 1794 Washington named his friend Gen. John Neville to be the Inspector of Revenue for western Pennsylvania. When Neville began to enforce the tax, open violence broke out against him in July, 1794. This has been called the Whiskey Rebellion. Washington and Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, called

out 13,000 militiamen to stop this treason against the United States. In order to maintain peace and discipline at Pittsburgh (and perhaps to protect his daughter, Nancy, wife of Presley Neville), Daniel Morgan returned to active duty. He effectively commanded into 1795 some 1,200 militiamen (one of whom was Meriwether Lewis, who in 1803 would begin the Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" expedition to the Pacific ocean).

Daniel was a activist, but not an intellectual. He had pride as a Federalist in the new Constitution and in what he called "my country." He found a new focus in religion, claiming that it was the basis of a stable country. His last public service was as a Congressman from Virginia. When Washington died in 1799, it motivated Daniel to write his will. He favored his wife and Nancy Neville, but shorted Betsy and her alcoholic husband. Daniel died on July 6, 1802, first buried in a Winchester churchyard, then moved during the Civil War to Spartanburg, South Carolina, for fear Yankee troops would steal his body.

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*Reference: "Daniel Morgan" by Don Higginbotham, University of North Carolina Press, 1961*

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