

## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS ...

# BROTHERS IN REVOLUTIONARY SERVICE

**John Bradley  
(c. 1754 – 1821) /  
Richard Bradley  
(c. 1758 – 1827) /  
Thomas Bradley  
(c. 1762 – 1829)**

**— *Bradley Rymph***

**VISIT TO VALLEY FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA:**

**September 11, 2019 (with José Baquiran)**

*Original text © 1996 by Bradley B. Rymph.  
Revised text and photos © 2010, 2014, 2019  
by Bradley B. Rymph.*

Almost all the immigrant ancestors of Albert James Rymph and Edna Mae Heath came from Europe to America in the century and a half preceding the Revolutionary War. As a result, it should not be surprising that multiple ancestors fought in that war against England. Among these soldiers were **Thomas Bradley** and his two older brothers, John and Richard.

Genealogical records given to Wilma Heath suggested that these brothers' father, Richard Bradley, likely was born in Ireland and that he probably sailed to America as a boy or young adult (possibly with a brother named John), settling in Duplin County, North Carolina. However, family trees posted online by Bradley family genealogists disagree, with one suggestion being that he was born in 1730 in North Carolina and another suggestion being that he was born June 25, 1734, in Kendall, Yorkshire, England. Wherever Richard Bradley was born, in 1760 he was one of the original grantees of property in Duplin County.

There is also disagreement regarding the name of the elder Richard's wife, with most genealogists saying her first name was Sarah but others saying Elizabeth. Clearly, Richard Bradley did have a wife named Sarah as they were cosigners of land deeds in 1763 and 1764. One option might be that Sarah

died sometime after 1764 and Richard remarried to an Elizabeth. Another, though probably not likely, option might be that there were two Richard Bradleys in Duplin County — one, the father of John and Richard, Jr.; the other, the father of Thomas.

In any case, three Bradleys residing in Duplin County, North Carolina — John (c. 1754–1821), Richard (1758–1827), and Thomas (1762–1829), my great-great-great-grandfather — served separately in the Revolutionary forces on behalf of independence from Great Britain. Several Bradley family genealogists agree that these three men were likely brothers — all sons of the immigrant Richard.

It is difficult to conclusively link some Revolutionary-era military records for soldiers with relatively common personal and family names to specific individuals, frequently causing uncertainty and confusion. That said, military records for North Carolina do

all show that a John, a Richard, and a Thomas Bradley from Duplin County each served in varying capacities on behalf of American independence.

Not surprisingly, John and Richard — being around 22 and 18 years old, respectively, when independence from Britain was declared — served in much more significant capacities than did their younger brother Thomas, who would have been only 13 at the war's opening.

## THOMAS BRADLEY

Despite his young age, at some point Thomas Bradley did sign up and serve in the North Carolina militia out of the Wilmington District. In the North Carolina State Archives is a Revolutionary War Pay Voucher for Thomas Bradley dated December 22, 1781, one day after he would have turned age 19. A transcription of the voucher reads:



Thomas Bradley's  
Revolutionary War Pay  
Voucher, dated  
December 22, 1781

*Marriage bond for Thomas  
Bradley and Elizabeth Taylor,  
dated September 28, 1782*

State of N. Carolina }  
Duplin County }  
Know all men by these presents that we —  
John Bradley and William Taylor both of the  
County of Duplin aforesaid are held and jointly  
bound unto His Excellency the Governor of the said  
State in the full and true sum of Five Hundred  
Pounds Law money to be paid to the said Governor  
or his successors on, after the which day or it  
will and lawfully to be raised we bind ourselves  
our heirs, Executors and Administrators —  
Jointly and severally firmly by these present  
Seal with our Seals and Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> —  
(Day of September anno Domini 1803)

The condition of the above Obligation is such that Thomas  
Thomas Bradley of the County of Duplin aforesaid hath made  
application for and obtained License of Marriage between him  
and Elizabeth Taylor of the said County (single woman) and  
hath obtained the same Now if it shall not happen at  
any time hereafter that there is any such Law or Lawful  
impediment to obstruct the said Marriage then the above  
obligation shall be void and of no Effect otherwise to Stand  
and remain in full force and Virtue.

Signed Sealed & Delivered,  
In the presence of — }  
Mr. Dickson Clk.

John Bradley  
William Taylor

No. 473 State of North Carolina 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Dec 1781

As Auditors for the District of  
Wilmington

This is to certify that Thos Bradley is  
allowed the sum of Twelve pounds  
ten shillings Sxxxxx for his services  
(in) the Militia x Xturned in Pay Roll  
No 400

Davis Holmes Cox

£12-10-0

(Signed by) W Dickson and Tho  
Routledge

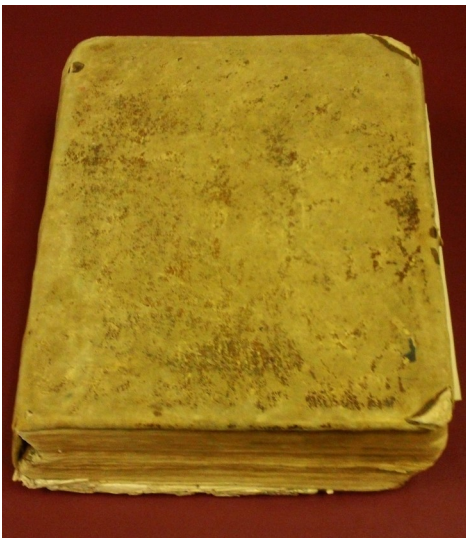
underage (Thomas, still 19; Elizabeth, only 16). As a result, the marriage bond required approving signatures of adult family members, provided by a John Bradley (possibly the groom's brother) and William Taylor (likely Elizabeth's father).\*

Less than six months after Thomas and Elizabeth's wedding, their first son, Henry (my great-great-great-grandfather) was born June 6, 1763.

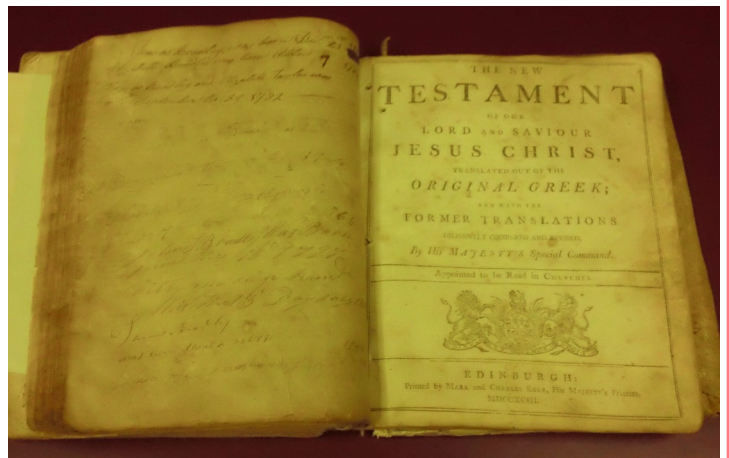
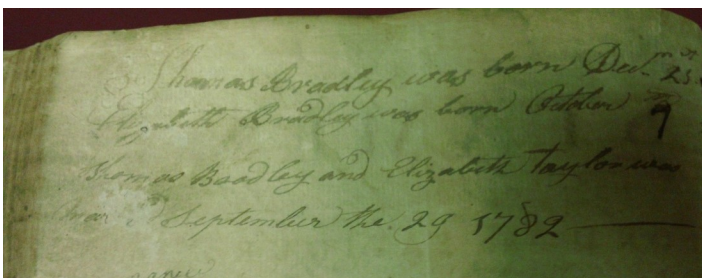
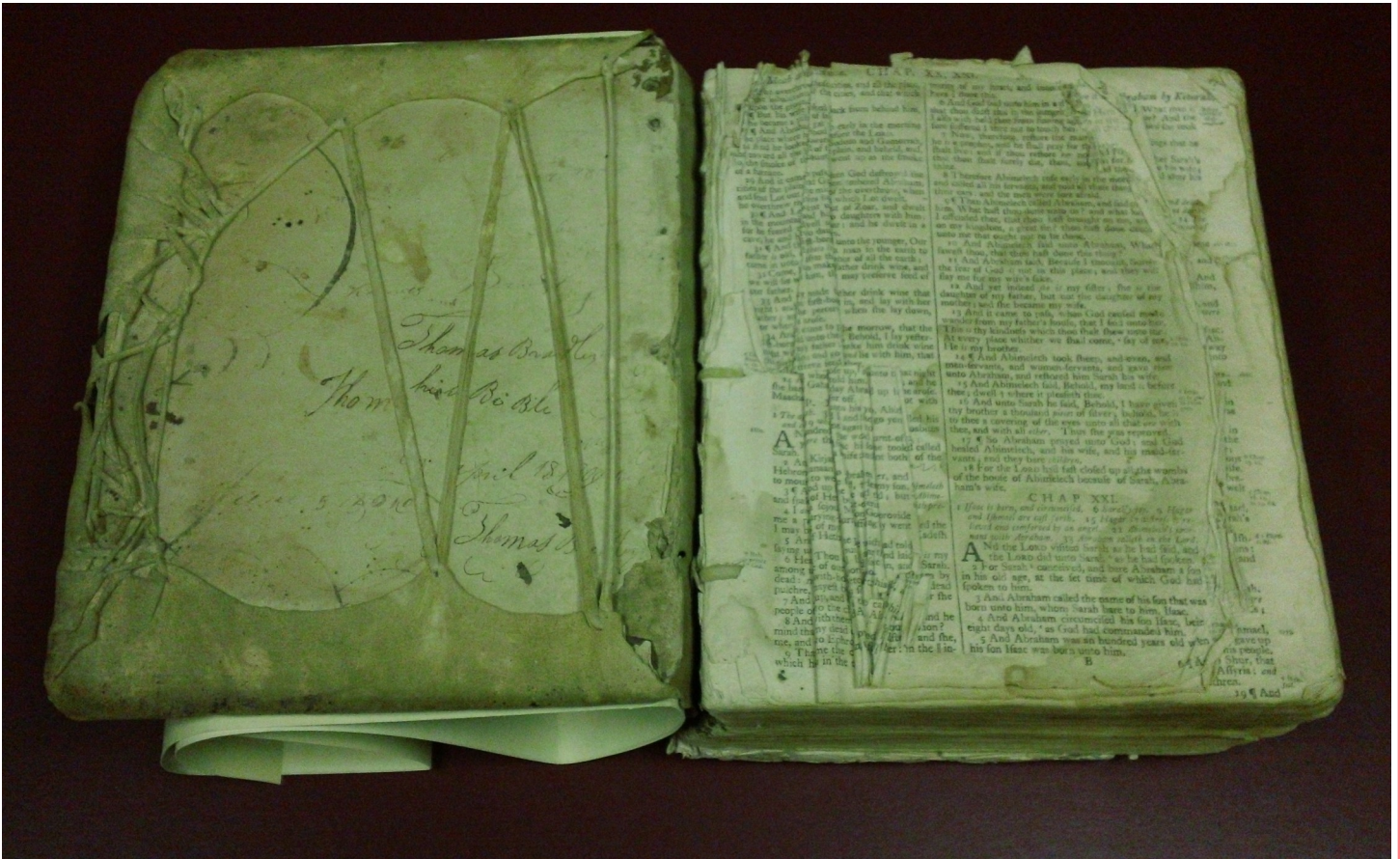
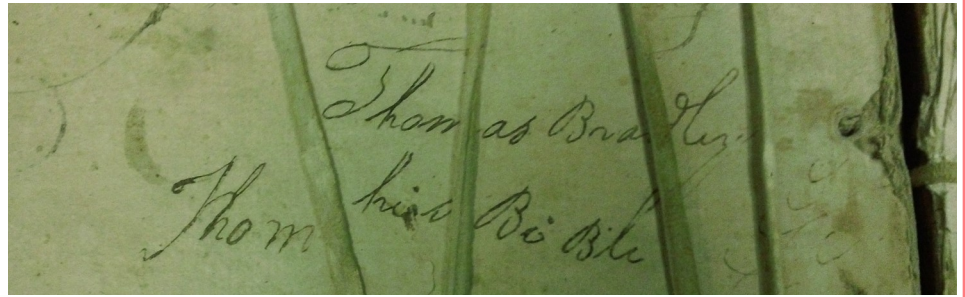
\* It is interesting that ascent for Thomas Bradley was given by John Bradley and not by Richard Bradley, Sr., the groom's presumed father. Genealogical records for Richard Sr. do not provide a death date, and the last-known land record that clearly relates to him is from 1764. Could it be that Richard Bradley, Sr., had died by Thomas's wedding and that Thomas's oldest brother had become his legal guardian?

On September 29, 1782, Thomas married Elizabeth Taylor in Duplin County. Both groom and bride were





Thomas Bradley family Bible, printed in 1793 and in the collection of the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in Springdale, Arkansas. Top right and center: Inside front cover with signature of Thomas Bradley and inscription "His Bible."



Bottom left and right: Page opposite start of New Testament, with birth and marriage dates for Thomas and Elizabeth (Taylor) Bradley.





*George Washington's Valley Forge headquarters.*

Thomas's name is listed as a grantee of two pieces of property in Duplin County in 1785, and he is listed in that county's censuses in 1786 and 1790. Land records indicate that he sold at least one of his Duplin County properties in 1796. Unlike his brothers John and Richard, Thomas's name does not appear in the Duplin County federal census records for 1800, so he may have left North Carolina by then. The 1810 federal census records for Tennessee were lost or destroyed. By the 1820 census, John, Richard, and Thomas had all moved with their families to Sumner County, Tennessee.

## **RICHARD BRADLEY**

Among the Bradley brothers, the most detailed Revolutionary War records exist for Richard. A search for his service records on [fold3.com](https://www.fold3.com) reveals many documents filed under

his name in the records of the National Archives.\*

On August 9, 1777, Richard Bradley enlisted in the North Carolina army to fight on behalf of the new nation. He was a member of the 1st North Carolina Regiment, Third Division, which had been formed in the fall of 1776 at Salisbury and Wilmington, North Carolina. In the years that followed, he was part of some of the most important experiences of the Revolutionary War.

The war had not been going well for the Americans in 1777. As winter approached, General George Washington, the head of the Continental (American) Army, needed a place where

---

\* Brother John's records are not as apparent. At least one additional John Bradley from North Carolina served in the Revolutionary forces. However, that John moved to Georgia, not Tennessee, after the war. I am attempting to determine which records may belong to my great-great-great-great-uncle John Bradley.

# REVOLUTIONARY WAR PENSION RECORDS OF RICHARD BRADLEY

## Pension Application of Richard Bradley / April 3, 1822

District of West Tennessee Nashville

This may certify that Richard Bradley a citizen of the State of Tennessee, residing in the County of Sumner, came before me on the 3rd day of April 1822 and made the following declaration upon oath, with the view of obtaining a pension for his services as a Continental soldier in the War of the Revolution, and after being duly sworn, upon the holy evangelist of Almighty God declared, that he enlisted as a Continental soldier on the 9th day of August 1777 in the North Carolina Continental line under the command of Captain Henry Dawson in the 7th Regiment in the latter end of the same year he with several others were marched to the northward and joined the Army when they were in winter Quarters at the Valley Forge, and was there turned into the 1st North Carolina Regiment under the command of Captain James Reed, the Regiment was commanded by Colonel Thomas Clark, that they marched from the Valley Forge in pursuit of the British until the battle of Monmouth in which he was, some time after they took up winter Quarters at Paramus Court house, they marched from thence to West Point on Hudson River, from thence they were ordered to South Carolina for the relief of Charleston — and that he was in that siege and that there they were all captured on the 12th of May 1780 and that he remained a prisoner with the British two years and three months and made his escape from them and joined General Greene at Ashley Hall about twenty miles above Charles Town and there he got his discharge in the Fall of the year 1782, that his discharge was sent to the Secretary of State's office of North Carolina, to obtain his land grant and he does not know where it is now, unless it may be in that office. This deponent further maketh oath that he hath no property of any value, to make schedule love, he is confident that all he owns in this world besides his wearing apparel is not worth \$10, he further maketh oath that he has not conveyed sold or otherwise disposed of any of his property to anyone with a design of thereby obtaining a pension and that he is totally dependent on others for his livelihood and support, that he is almost totally blind, not being able to discern more than day from night and prays his country & Government to give him some aid.

Sworn to before me the date above  
S/ John McNairy, District Judge

S/ Rich'd Bradley, X his mark

## Claim Filed in Sumner County, Tennessee by Richard and Catherine Bradley's Son, Abraham Bradley, on Behalf of Himself and the Other Heirs of Catherine Bradley / February 7, 1853

"... declarant further states that his father as is fully proved in his mother's application for a pension after his return from the regular service enlisted as a volunteer in the service of the United States and served a 3 months tour after his intermarriage with their Mother which took place on or about the 24th of July 1783 and the Service as a volunteer took place commencing within a month after that Period. This Declarant recollects often hearing his father relate the circumstances of this 3 month tour as a volunteer. He was stationed at Wilmington a part of the time, marched through several counties in North Carolina and during his 3 months service was engaged in a skirmish or battle with the Tories and took some prisoners, shot one of them and then some of the Company preached his funeral in derision [?] taking his text "The dust shall return to dust" His father was present and witnessed this singular circumstance in warfare and showing the ferocity of times during the Revolution."



## ALSO AT VALLEY FORGE

*Richard Bradley was not the only Rymph/Heath family member who served with George Washington at Valley Forge. Also among Washington's troops was:*

- ♦ Nathaniel Gerrard (1752 – 3/23/1832) — Nathaniel Gerrard, the great-great-great-great-great-grandfather of Bradley Rymph, was the son of the Rev. John Gerrard and his wife Mehitable (Haugen) Gerrard. An ancestral chart is shown for him in the profile of John Gerrard in the “Servants of God”

his soldiers could stay through the cold weather. He chose Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, a high plain 18 miles northwest of Philadelphia. The winter turned out to be brutally cold. Strong

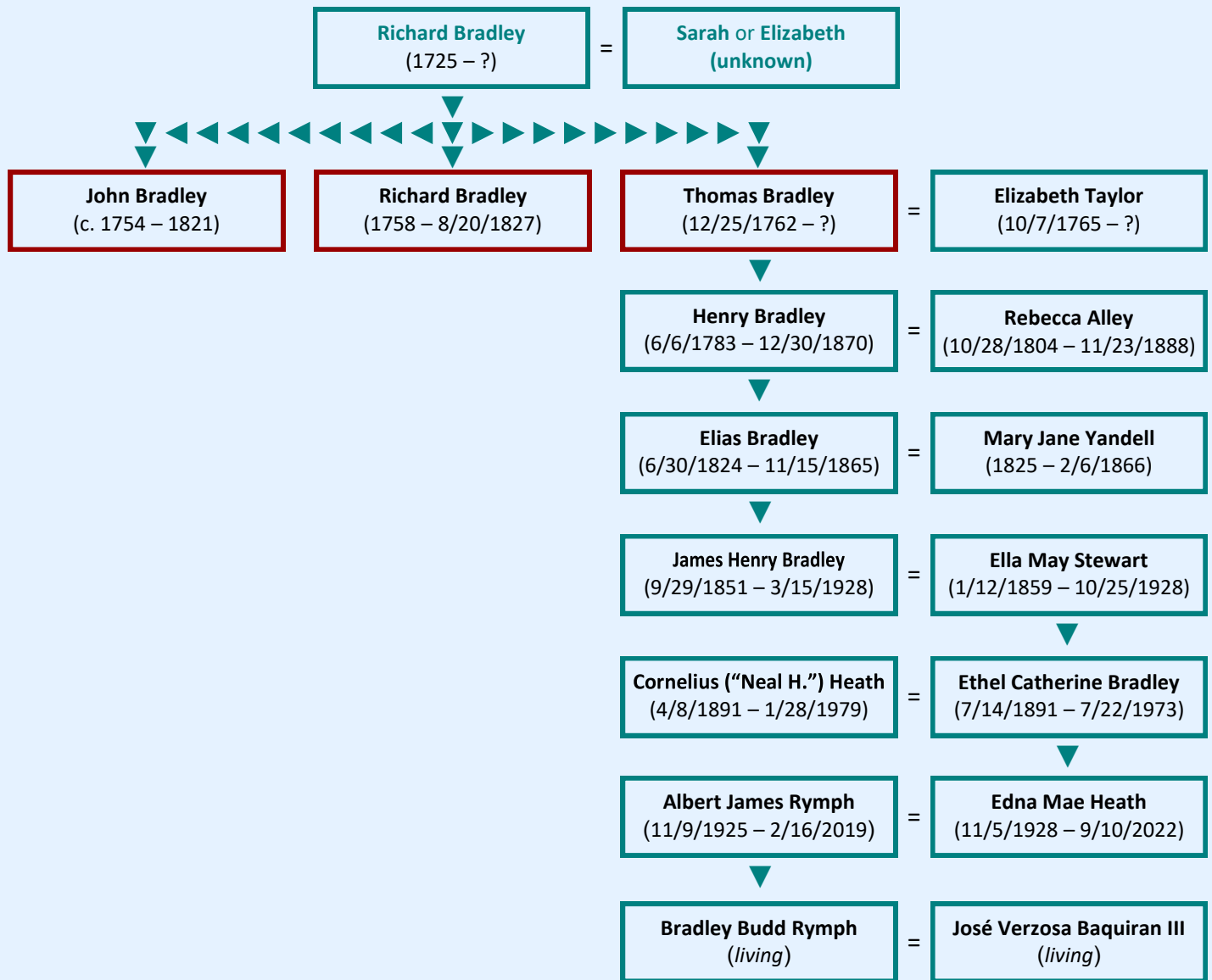
winds swept across the area, the soldiers' log cabins provided little warmth, and there were almost no food or blankets. The soldiers froze and starved through the winter. Ever since then, Valley Forge has been remembered as a symbol for terrible suffering and great courage. Richard Bradley was among the American soldiers stationed at Valley Forge that miserable winter. Despite the cold, Washington and his associates (including the Prussian captain, “General” Friedrich Von Steuben) used the winter for readying the troops for new battles in 1778. In June 1778, Washington led his troops, including Richard Bradley, in an attack on British soldiers who were occupying



*Map depicting the Plan of Battle for the Siege of Charleston.*

## HOW WE'RE RELATED

*Thomas Bradley was my great-great-great-great-grandfather through my mother, Edna Mae (Heath) Rymph. John Bradley and Richard Bradley, Jr., were my great-great-great-great-grand-uncles.*



Monmouth, New Jersey. This battle was a tie between the British and the Americans, but it proved that the soldiers had learned a lot about fighting at Valley Forge.

The North Carolina regiment entered Valley Forge with 1,412 men assigned

and 905 fit for duty. The regiment left Valley Forge in 1778 with 658 assigned and 310 fit for duty.

Richard Bradley was the paymaster for the 1st North Carolina, Third Division, troops.

The major battles in the war began to



shift to the southern states. One of the most important battles was the Siege of Charleston, South Carolina, in the spring of 1780. The British took Richard Bradley as a prisoner during that battle, and he stayed their prisoner until he escaped over two years later. By that time, the Americans had won the war, and the head of the British forces, General Lord Charles Cornwallis, had surrendered to George Washington.

## TO LEARN MORE

Carter, Aldren R. *At the Forge of Liberty*. "The American Revolution" series. New York: Franklin Watts, 1988. A history of the experience at Valley Forge written for adolescent readers. *Roster of Soldiers from North Carolina*

*in the American Revolution*.

Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1988.

"Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters." Transcribed by Will Graves. ([southerncampaign.org/pen/896.pdf#search="richard bradley"](https://southerncampaign.org/pen/896.pdf#search=richard%20bradley))

Stein, R. Conrad. *The Story of Valley Forge*. "Cornerstones of Freedom" series. Chicago: Children's Press, 1985. A history of the winter at Valley Forge written for younger children.

Trussell, John B. B., Jr. *Epic on the Schuylkill: The Valley Forge Encampment*. Harrisburg: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1999.