



## It Happened Near Me:

### The American Revolution at Home

**County:** Loudoun

**Date:** 1776-77

**Background:** Nicholas Cresswell came to America on vacation. He had just graduated from college in England and crossed the Atlantic Ocean to visit the colonies. Shortly after observing buffalo on the frontier of Virginia, he learned that war had broken out between America and Britain. He came to Leesburg and it took a long time to get a ride home. He kept a secret diary though (referring to Americans as “slebers”—rebels backwards!), right in Leesburg, observing the Revolution before him. As an Englishman, he was not a fan of the Revolutionaries.

“Fri. Jan. 19th, 1776. A pamphlet called “Commonsense” makes a great noise. One of the vilest things that ever was published to the world. Full of false representations, lies . . . and treason, whose principles are to subvert all Kingly Governments and erect an Independence Republic . . . The sentiments are adopted by a great number of people who are indebted to Great Britain.”

“Thursday, October 10th, 1776. . . . The 6th Regliment] of Virginians are camped here on their way Northward. A set of dirty, ragged people, badly clothed, badly disciplined and badly armed.”

“Monday, October 28th, 1776. General Muster of the County Militia in town, about 600 men appeared underarmed, with Tobacco sticks in general. Much rioting and confusion. Recruiting Officers for the Sleber army offer 12 Pounds bounty and 200 acres of land when the war is over, but get very few men.”

“Wednesday, December 4th, 1776. A mob of about 40 horsemen went through the town to-day on their way to Alexandria to search for Salt. If they find any they will take it by force. All of them armed with swords or large clubs. This article is exceedingly scarce, if none comes in the people will revolt.”

“Monday, Jan. 6th, 1777. News that Washington has taken 760 Hessian prisoners at Trenton. The minds of the people are much altered. A few days ago they had given up the cause for lost [but] are all liberty mad again. Their Recruiting parties could not get a man; now men are coming in by companies. “

“Wednesday, January 8th, 1777. This is a most unhappy country. Every necessary of life is at an extravagant price, some of them indeed is not to be had for money. Poor people are almost naked . . . ”

“Thursday, March 27th, 1777 . . . The Happy fruits of Independence: the populace are grown so insolent, if you do not tacitly submit to every insult or imposition they think proper, they immediately call you a Tory and think that if you have that stigma upon your character they have a right, nay, even take it to be a meritorious act to knock your brains out . . . ”

## Making Sense of Evidence from the Past.

1. Nicholas Cresswell has to live a false life, not telling anyone he wants to go home, and noticing that even by not saying the right things, can get one in trouble. What is happening here during the Revolution on the home front? Quote two examples.

One-

Two-

2. How is the economy being affected by the Revolutionary War? Give two examples.

One-

Two-

3. According to Cresswell's loyalist-Tory thinking, most Americans who support the Revolution and Thomas Paine's Common Sense do so because . . .? [See Jan. 19, 1776]

4. What physical shape is the American army in (consider weapons, uniforms, etc.)?

Provide two examples from Nick's diary.

One-

Two-

Nicholas Cresswell, about 1774

