

GERMAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

BARON JOHANN DE KALB

Johann deKalb was one of the central figures in the American Revolution. Baron de Kalb, born in 1721 in Huettendorf, served in a German regiment of the French army at the age of twenty-two. At that time there was no Germany. De Kalb came from one tiny state, which hired out troops to other states. Baron de Kalb shared in the brilliant victories of Marshall Saxe and served throughout the Austrian War of Succession.

De Kalb studied diligently the subjects of: languages, mathematics and troop organization. In 1747 he had advanced to captain of his regiment. In 1754 he submitted elaborate plans for a naval attack on England, but they were not accepted. He then served with distinction in the Seven Years War and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1764 he married the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer and retired, with a fortune, to a comfortable estate outside of Paris.

De Kalb's passion for adventure proved to be overpowering. In 1767 he was requested by the French to engage in a secret mission to America to report on conditions in the British colonies. Arriving in Philadelphia in 1768, Baron de Kalb traveled for four months collecting data for his reports. Upon his return, de Kalb received invitations from several armies in Europe for high ranking military positions. However, de Kalb had been in America in 1776. He was determined to fight for the American Revolution. He set sail for America in 1777 after having been contracted by an agent of the Americans in France.

A controversy had arisen: the Americans had contacted two famous men. One was Baron de Kalb and the other was Lafayette. Congress gave the latter the royal welcome and made him a major general while the American Congress refused the German Baron acceptance.

After threatening a civil suit and planning to return to Europe, Congress finally gave de Kalb a major-generalship. He then joined the American forces and commanded several New England regiments, took part in numerous battles and spent the dreadful winter at Valley Forge with Washington.

On April 3, 1780 he came to the relief of Charleston, South Carolina, which was besieged by the British. Shortages of troops and supplies retarded de Kalb's steady advance. De Kalb, in command of the right wing, attacked the enemy three times. With sword in hand, he led his troops forth to the attack. After being wounded eleven times he finally fell. His last words to his troops were addressed to his adjutant. "Thanks for their valor, and bid them an affectionate farewell." Three days after the battle he perished from battle wounds. His courageous example became a symbol of patriotism in the American Revolution.

Baron de Kalb's achievements presented by
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