



Virginia C.A.R. Patriots of the Round Table *Peter Francisco*

The Virginia Giant! The Hercules of the Revolution!

Peter Francisco was a Portuguese-born American Patriot and soldier who fought for the 10th Virginia Regiment in several important battles during the Revolutionary War. George Washington reportedly stated that without him, the Patriots would have lost two major battles and perhaps the war, calling him a “One Man Army.”



Francisco was born in July 1760 to a prominent Portuguese family, but after a series of events was found alone at about age five on the docks at present-day Hopewell, Virginia. He told the locals there his name was "Pedro Francisco", but they misunderstood and called him Peter. He was taken in by Judge Anthony Winston of Buckingham County, Virginia, an uncle of Patrick Henry. When he was old enough to work, Francisco became a blacksmith, a choice no doubt influenced by his size and strength -- he grew to be **six feet and eight inches tall and weighed approximately 260 pounds!**

At the age of 16, Francisco joined the 10th Virginia Regiment in 1776. He soon became famous for his size and strength and his actions inspired many soldiers to keep up the fight against the British. He fought with distinction in numerous military actions throughout the Revolutionary War, beginning with the Battles of Brandywine and Germantown. Francisco was hospitalized at Valley Forge for two weeks following these skirmishes. On June 28, 1778, he fought at Monmouth Court House, New Jersey, where he suffered a serious musket ball injury in his right thigh. At Stony Point, New York, Francisco helped lead the charge into the British fortifications and helped to capture their flag. During the Battle of Camden, Francisco noticed the Americans were leaving behind one of their valuable cannons, mired in mud. Legend says he picked up the approximately 1,100-pound cannon and carried it on his shoulder to keep it from falling into the hands of the enemy. Also, George Washington supposedly had a special six-foot sword made specifically for Francisco which he then used at the Battle of Guilford Court House to kill eleven British soldiers.

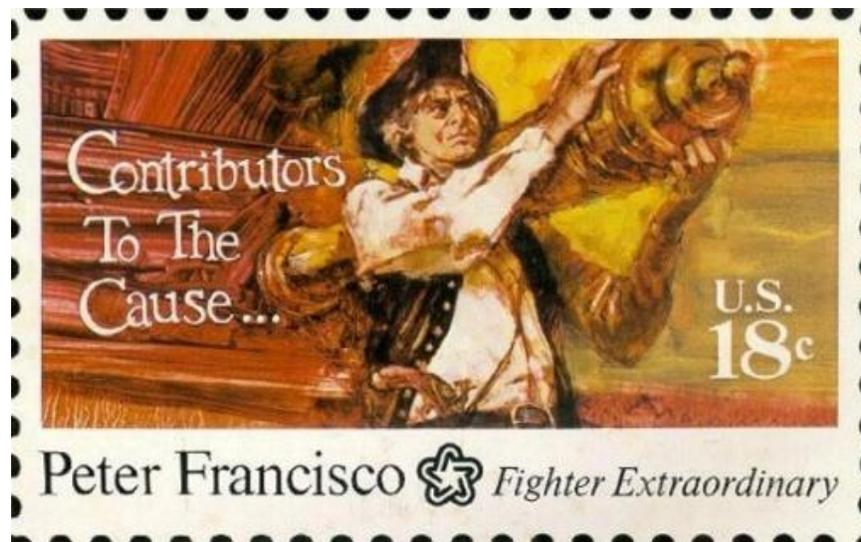
Of all the legends surrounding Peter Francisco, however, none is more famous than the event that became known as “Francisco’s Fight.” In July 1781, Francisco volunteered to spy on British officer Tarleton and his horsemen known as “Tarleton’s Raiders” who were operating in Virginia. Legend has it that Francisco killed or mortally wounded three of the eleven raiders sent to capture him and was later able to escape from a group of nine British soldiers waiting outside a tavern to arrest him. They told Francisco to give over his silver shoe buckles, and he told Tarleton's men to take the buckles themselves. When they began to seize his shoe buckles, Francisco took a soldier's saber and struck him on the head. Another enemy soldier aimed a musket at Francisco, but the musket misfired. Francisco grabbed it from the soldier's hands, knocked him off his mount, and escaped with the horse. After this heroic effort, Francisco was ordered by his commanding officer to join the army in 1781 at Yorktown, where he was a witness to Cornwallis’ surrender ending the Revolutionary War.

After the war, Francisco pursued a basic education. He went to school along with young children who were fascinated by his stories of the war. Legends of Francisco's deeds and his super-human strength continued during his lifetime. He was eventually appointed the Sergeant-at-Arms for the Virginia Senate and served in that position until his death from appendicitis in 1831. He was buried with full military honors in Shockoe Hill Cemetery in Richmond. The Virginia state legislature adjourned for the day, and many legislators attended his funeral.

Legacy:

Peter Francisco Day is officially recognized on March 15 (anniversary of the Battle of Guilford Court House) in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Maryland.

A statue of Peter as a young boy stands in his birthplace of Porto Judeu Terceira, dedicated in 2015 on the 250th anniversary of his arrival in America.



In 1975, Francisco was commemorated on a stamp by the U.S. Postal Service in its "Contributors to the Cause" Bicentennial series. The image shows his saving the cannon at the Battle of Camden.

A monument commemorating the life of Peter Francisco is located on the grounds of the municipal building in Hopewell, VA (left and center, below). The City of Hopewell is believed to be the location where young Peter was found abandoned on the docks as a child. Hopewell has also named a street in his honor, “Peter Francisco Drive.”



The grave of Peter Francisco in Shockoe Hill Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia (above right), is the site of annual commemorations of the service of the Virginia Giant.

The Peter Francisco Society is comprised of descendants and anyone else interested in Peter Francisco and his legacy. For more information on this society, visit www.peterfrancisco.org.

Discussion Questions for Local Societies

How old was Peter Francisco when he arrived in America?

How did he get here?

What famous speech did Francisco hear when he accompanied Judge Winston to the Second Virginia Convention in 1775 at St. John's Church, Richmond?

At what age did he join the Virginia Militia?

Discussion Questions for Local Societies
(continued)

In what battles of the Revolution did Francisco fight according to his own petition for a pension?

https://books.google.com/books?id=WtURAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA217&dq=Peter+Francisco+1820+petition+to+Virginia+Assembly&hl=en&ei=0rixTNSxBYyMnQe60pyUBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Peter%20Francisco%201820%20petition%20to%20Virginia%20Assembly&f=false

Where does the original portrait depicted at the beginning of this fact sheet hang?

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Virginia_State_Capitol_complex_-_portrait_of_Peter_Francisco.jpg

What are the responsibilities of the sergeant-at-arms of the Virginia Senate?

<https://apps.senate.virginia.gov/Senator/SCOrg.php>

Resources

For some additional information, you can visit

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/peter-francisco>.

For a great 30-minute video about Peter Francisco, narrated by one of his descendants:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jRyxgip5ew>