

## **Benedict Arnold and Amos Weeks**

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On December 30, 1780, British ships with a force of over 1,600 soldiers arrived off Cape Henry under the command of newly appointed British Brigadier General Benedict Arnold. Their mission was threefold: attack the Continental Army magazines and supply depots, establish a post at Portsmouth on the Elizabeth River, and distribute proclamations addressed to the inhabitants of Princess Anne and Norfolk Counties.

In early 1781, Patriot forces led by Princess Anne County militia Captain Amos Weeks were actively suppressing Loyalists in the region. With orders to support and protect Loyalists in Norfolk and Princess Anne County, Benedict Arnold sent soldiers to capture Weeks and disrupt Patriot militia activity in the county. The attempt to capture Weeks involved maneuvers at Elbow Road, Great Bridge, Salem Road, North Landing Road, West Neck Swamp and West Neck Creek. In a skirmish at James's Plantation on February 15, 1781, near present-day Nimmo Methodist Church, Weeks narrowly avoided capture.

The failure to capture Amos Weeks and his militia led Benedict Arnold to call an assembly on February 21 at Kemp's Landing in Princess Anne County. This assembly was reminiscent of the event hosted by Lord Dunmore in 1775 following the Skirmish at Kemp's Landing. At the gathering, Arnold attempted to persuade the inhabitants to take a new oath of allegiance to the Crown. By promising protection to the Loyalists of Princess Anne County, Arnold hoped to recruit its residents to be part of his "American Legion" to secure the area. At the same time, Arnold hoped to use the assembly to entice Amos Weeks and his militia to attack.

Arnold soon came to realize that obtaining the loyalty of Princess Anne County residents was going to be difficult. Issuing what amounted to a death warrant against Amos Weeks did not sit well with those who saw Weeks as a better guarantor of safety and protection than that offered by Arnold and the British. If it was not the British presence that Princess Anne County residents disliked, it was perhaps the very presence of Benedict Arnold himself. Viewed by most as a traitor, Arnold was likely the most despised individual in the United States.