



## Cannons for the Cause

*Martin R. Ganzglass*

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Sixteen year old Willem Stoner and his father, together with other New York teamsters, are hired by Colonel Henry Knox to haul almost sixty cannons, some weighing more than a ton, on wagons and sleds 300 miles from Ft. Ticonderoga, New York to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the brutally cold winter of 1775-1776. The artillery is desperately needed by General Washington and the Continental Army, preparing to attack the British in Boston. At the beginning of the arduous trek, Will is befriended by Ensign Nathaniel Holmes of the Marblehead Mariners. Their friendship deepens as the "Noble Train of Artillery," struggles through snow drifts and storms, across the partially frozen Hudson River and over the Berkshire Mountains during a blizzard and on into Cambridge. Using ropes, chains and freshly cut trees as levers, Will and his companions hungry and poorly clothed against the harsh winter, battle to maneuver the massive cannons up steep inclines and to slow the wagons and sleds from running away on the precipitous icy downward slopes and crushing the drivers and their teams of horses and oxen. After the treacherous descent from the Berkshires, the caravan slogs through axle deep mud as the frozen roads thaw at the end of their fifty-day journey. Arriving in Cambridge, Will stays in the barracks with the Mariners who are serving as General Washington's Headquarters troops. He makes friends with Private Adam Cooper one of several African American soldiers, free men who enlisted in Colonel Glover's regiment along with other fishermen from Marblehead and Salem. When a race riot breaks out between the Mariners and some backwoods riflemen, Will finds himself in the midst of the melee, fighting alongside the Mariners. In the early morning hours of the sixth anniversary of the Boston Massacre, Washington's troops occupy Dorchester Heights, overlooking Boston and its harbor. Will, now assigned to Colonel Knox's artillery regiment, hauls a cannon up to the Heights and tensely awaits the assault by the battle tested and disciplined Redcoats and the feared Death's Head Cavalry. Later, on an exposed promontory overlooking the Boston Neck, he is caught in a fierce British artillery bombardment. When the British leave Boston, Will searches for his older brother, Johan who is apprenticed to a Boston merchant. After inquiring in the more respectable areas of the city, he wanders among the grog shops and taverns along the wharves. There, he makes a surprising discovery and is almost tarred and feathered as a Tory sympathizer. Will is rescued at the last minute by his friends in the Mariners and Knox's artillery. Through Will's experiences, this novel explores the divided loyalties that tore families apart and the motives of ordinary people taking up arms against King George. Unlike many historical novels that take substantial liberties with established facts, "Cannons for the Cause," is carefully researched. The End Notes include background information about the events described, different interpretations by prominent historians, and quotes from the historical figures' own correspondence. Original sources used are diaries, newspapers, gazettes and broadsheets. The historical figures emerge from under the cloak of hero worship and the fog of historical mythology as real people, not too unlike modern Americans in their doubts, concerns and aspirations. The fictional characters, based on solid research of those who actually lived through the tumultuous years of 1775-1776, add to the novel's historical authenticity.

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