

US History/American Revolution

The Beginning of the War (1775 - 1778)

Lexington and Concord

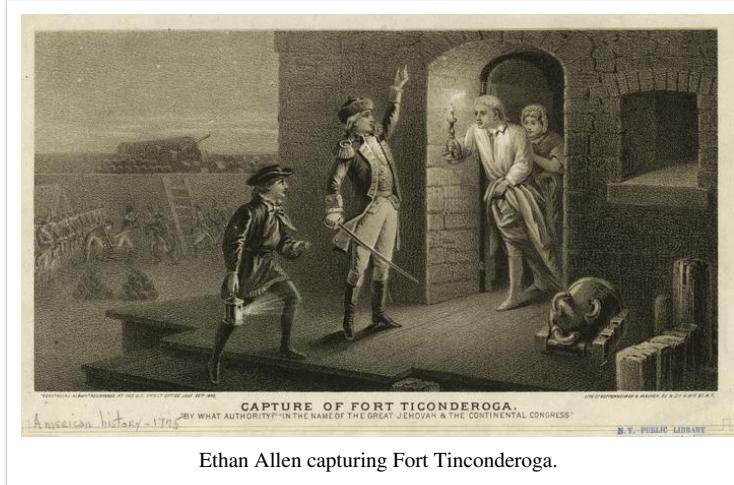
The British government commanded General Thomas Gage to enforce the Intolerable Acts and shut down the Massachusetts legislature. Gage also decided to confiscate a stockpile of colonial arms located in Concord. On April 19, 1775, Gage's troops marched to Concord and on the way, at the town of Lexington, Americans, who were warned in advance by Paul Revere and others of the British movements, made a token attempt to stop the troops. No one knows exactly which side fired the first shot, known as **The Shot Heard 'Round the World**, but it sparked a battle on Lexington Green between the British and the Minutemen. Faced against an overwhelmingly superior number of British regular troops in an open field, the Minutemen were quickly routed. Nevertheless, alarms were sounded throughout the countryside and the colonial militias poured in and were able to launch sporadic guerrilla attacks on the British while they marched on to Concord. The colonials managed to amass a sizeable number of troops at Concord and they engaged the British in force there and they were able to repulse them. The British were forced to depart without destroying the armory. They were compelled to retreat to Boston while all the way under a constant and withering fire from all sides. Only a reinforcing column with artillery support, on the outskirts of Boston, prevented the British withdrawal from becoming a total rout. The following day the British woke up to find Boston surrounded by 20,000 armed colonists.



The skirmish at Lexington.

At the time of the American revolution Catholics formed approximately 1.6% of the total population of the original 13 colonies. Catholics, specifically Irish Catholics, were forbidden from settling in some of the colonies (i.e. before 1688 Catholics had not arrived in New England). Throughout the American revolution American Catholic priests were still controlled by the Catholic Bishop of the London diocese, but during the war the Bishop, James Talbot, refused any communication with any American ecclesiastical subjects, this was due to his lack of sympathy with American rebel Catholics. This act enabled the Vatican to create the American diocese under the control of American Bishops. The American alliance with the French also had a great effect of American Catholics, when the French fleet arrived at Newport, Rhode Island the colony repealed its act of 1664 which refused citizenship to Catholics. When the 1st amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1791 (Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...) which put an end of all official anti-catholic laws from the statute books of all the new American states.

Ethan Allen and Fort Ticonderoga



The American hero Ethan Allen commanded a group called the Green Mountain boys. These so called "Green Mountain boys" lived and hunted in present day Vermont. They were a small group that fought side by side to keep New Yorkers off their land. When Ethan was charged to take the fort for the cannons, Benedict Arnold, another American general, was charged to help. Benedict Arnold later sided with the British, and his name became synonymous with traitor.

May 10, 1775 American forces led by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold capture Fort Ticonderoga in New York. The fort contained a much needed supply of military equipment, including cannons which were then hauled to Boston by ox teams. The Second Continental Congress sent a petition for peace - the Olive Branch Petition. But Parliament reacted by passing the Prohibitory Act, which banned trade with the colonies.

The Battle of Bunker Hill

In Massachusetts, Boston and little else was controlled by British troops. The colonists besieged the city; General Gage countered on June 17 by attacking the colonists on Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill. Although the British suffered tremendous casualties compared to the colonial losses, the British were eventually able to dislodge the American forces from their entrenched positions. The colonists were forced to retreat because many colonial soldiers ran out of ammunition. Soon after the area surrounding Boston fell to the British. However, because of the losses suffered by the British, they were unable to break the siege of the city. And were therefore forced to stay in the city, and the siege continued. Despite the early defeat for the colonists, the battle proved that they had the potential to counter British forces, which were, at that time, considered to be the best in the world. The British were eventually forced to leave the city in exchange for not burning it to the ground.



The Battle of Bunker Hill.

Battle For Boston

The siege on Boston started on the night after the Battle of Lexington and Concord as American forces followed the British back to Boston, and occupied the neck of land extending to the peninsula the city stood on.

At first, General Artemas Ward, as the head of the Massachusetts militia, had the oversight of the siege. He set up his headquarters at Cambridge, Massachusetts and positioned his forces at Charlestown Neck, Roxbury, and Dorchester Heights. Initially, the 6,000 to 8,000 rebels faced some 4,000 British regulars under General Thomas Gage and had them bottled up in the city.

In traditional terms, the British were not *besieged* since the Royal Navy controlled the harbor, and supplies did come in by ship. Nevertheless, the town and the army were on short rations. Salt pork was the order of the day, and prices

escalated rapidly. Another factor was that the American forces generally had information about what was happening in the city, while General Gage had no effective intelligence of rebel activities.

On May 25, 1775, Gage received about 4,500 reinforcements and three new Generals, Major General William Howe, and Brigadiers John Burgoyne and Henry Clinton by ship in the Boston Harbor. Gage began plans to break out of the city.

On July 3, 1775, George Washington arrived to take charge of the new Continental Army. Forces and supplies came in from as far away as Maryland. Trenches were built at the Dorchester Neck, and extended toward Boston. Washington reoccupied Bunker Hill and Breeds Hill without opposition. However, these activities had little effect on the British occupation.

Then, in the winter of 1775– 1776, Henry Knox and his engineers, under order from George Washington, used sledges to retrieve 60 tons of heavy artillery that had been captured at Fort Ticonderoga. Knox, who had come up with the idea to use sledges, believed that he would have the artillery there in 18 days. It took 6 weeks. Bringing them across the frozen Connecticut River, they arrived back at Cambridge on January 24, 1776. Weeks later, in an amazing feat of deception and mobility, Washington moved artillery and several thousand men overnight to take Dorchester Heights overlooking Boston. Now the British fleet ceased to be an asset, being anchored in a shallow harbor with limited maneuverability, and under the American guns on Dorchester Heights—which General John Thomas had fortified.

When General Howe saw the cannons, he knew he could not hold the city. He asked that George Washington let him evacuate the city in peace, and in return, they would not burn the city to the ground. Washington agreed, he had no choice. He had the artillery guns, but did not have the gunpowder. The whole plan had been a masterful bluff. The siege ended when the British set sail for Halifax, Nova Scotia on March 17, 1776. The militia went home, and in April Washington took most of the Continental Army forces to fortify New York City.



Henry Knox helped bring the Continental Army the artillery used to defeat the British.

Army Bands

In 1777, George Washington issued an order that every officer must provide military music for his troops. The first military bands were comprised of drums and fifes. A fife is a small flute. The bands were used to announce the beginning and end of the day, direct troops in battle, and also uplift spirits. The bands were important in battle because it was a way to communicate over the loud musketry fire.

Popular Songs:

"Yankee Doodle" The origin of this tune is unknown but believed to have been created during the Seven Years War. "Yankee Doodle" was a popular patriotic anthem during the Revolutionary War.

"Chester" "Chester" was written by William Billings in 1770. The song appeared in the *New England Psalm Singer*. The tune was popular patriotic song during the American revolution.

Canada

In September of 1775, the Colonists, led by General Richard Montgomery, invaded Canada. At first the invasion proved successful, with Montgomery capturing Fort St. Jean and the city of Montreal. On December 30 he made the decision to launch an attack onto the British held city of Quebec. It proved disastrous, and Montgomery was killed in battle. This was the last major action in Canada, although Benedict Arnold and a number of other generals did attack the coasts of Canada, or launch raids across the border.

The Declaration of Independence and Common Sense

In 1776, the Englishman Thomas Paine wrote the pamphlet *Common Sense*, which encouraged American independence based on an anti-Monarchy argument. Thomas Paine argued from both a biblical perspective and republican virtues that monarchies were never good for people of any free state. As military hostilities built up, the Second Continental Congress appointed George Washington as General of the Continental Army. Washington gave up his salary for the position all through the war (being among the richest men in the colonies, this was a choice he could afford). In June, 1776, thoughts in the Second Continental Congress turned to independence and the Committee of Five was appointed to draft a declaration of independence. Thomas Jefferson, one of the five, became the principal author of the document, along with John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Finally, on July 4, Congress declared the independence of the colonies. The Declaration of Independence listed the "crimes" of the King and set forth other justifications for independence.



Raising the first flag at Independence Hall. Copy of a painting by Clyde O. Deland.

The Turning Point of the War

Despite the numerous defeats they faced in the early years of the war, the colonists were able to turn the tide around with several major victories.

New York and New Jersey

In July, 1776, General William Howe and thirty-thousand British troops arrived at Staten Island in New York. The large army attacked and defeated General George Washington's American forces in the Battle of Long Island. After nearly having his entire army captured, Washington led a skilled withdrawal out of New York. Eventually the Continental Army was forced to set up camp in Pennsylvania.

Howe could have ended the war by pursuing Washington's forces. But Howe was very cautious and took almost no risks. He feared losing too many men so far from home. Britain hired German mercenaries (Hessians) to guard the British fort at Trenton. Howe took advantage of these replacements and decided to wait until spring to attack the Continental Army again.

Washington also took advantage of the situation, though from a different perspective. He figured that the Hessians would be weakest on Christmas night, after heavy feasting and drinking. On the night of December 25, 1776, Washington led his troops 9 miles, and across the Delaware River to ambush the Hessians. Crossing the river was difficult. A hail and sleet storm had broken out early in the crossing, winds were strong and the river was full of ice floes. The crossing took 3 hours longer than expected, but Washington decided to continue the attack anyway. As Washington predicted, the mercenaries were completely caught off guard and had little time to respond. Within just a few hours, on the morning of December 26, the Continental Army had won the Battle of Trenton. The Americans had just 4 wounded and 0 killed against 25 Hessians Killed, 90 wounded and 920 captured. The victory increased the troops' morale and eventually led to re-enlistments. Some historians even speculate Trenton saved the revolution.

On January 2, the British came to re-take Trenton, and did so with heavy casualties. Washington once again led a clever withdrawal, and advanced on Princeton. At the Battle of Princeton, the Continental Army attacked the rear-guard of the British Army, and forced them to retreat from New Jersey.

The Battle of Saratoga



Burgoyne surrendering the Continental Army.

In the summer of 1777, British General John Burgoyne and General Howe decided to attack the colonial Army from two sides and thus defeat it. As Howe marched north, winning the Battles of Brandywine and Germantown, eventually capturing Philadelphia. But Burgoyne's Army was not as fortunate. Delayed by natural traps set up by the Continental Army, Burgoyne's troops slowly marched from Canada to Albany. By September of the year, the troops reached Saratoga. A relatively enormous American Army attacked the troops, and in October, General Burgoyne surrendered his entire Army to the Americans. General Howe, despite his victories in Pennsylvania, resigned

his post.

The Battle of Saratoga proved to be the major turning point in the war. Its greatest significance was the introduction of French aid to the colonists, as France was now convinced that America had a chance to overthrow Britain. In addition, the battle was the last time that the British would continue to advance north. By the summer of 1778, following the Battle of Monmouth (New Jersey), all fighting would take place in the South.

Defeat of the Iroquois

The Iroquois Confederacy in its zenith had been the equal of the European Powers. But since the French and Indian war it had been in decline. The Tribes of the Confederacy disagreed on who to support in the Revolution. The Oneida and Tuscaroras supported the Americans, while the Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, and the Seneca supported the British. The Confederacy managed to stay together until 1777, when following the Battle of Saratoga, the 4 Tribes supporting the British began to attack American settlements across New York and Pennsylvania.

A back and forth battle followed. The Iroquois would attack American Forts and Towns, then the Americans would burn Iroquois villages. In 1779 George Washington sent General Sullivan to destroy the Iroquois Nation. After defeating the Iroquois at the Battle of Newtown, Sullivan's army then carried out a scorched earth campaign, methodically destroying at least forty Iroquois villages. The devastation created great hardships for the thousands of Iroquois refugees outside Fort Niagara that winter, and many starved or froze to death. The survivors fled to British regions in Canada and the Niagara Falls and Buffalo areas. Thus ended the 700-year history of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Conclusion of the War (1778 - 1781)

After the loss at Saratoga, France, a traditional rival of the British, offered their aid in the Revolution. The United States allied itself with France in 1778. Spain and the Dutch Republic also joined the American side, both lending money to the United States and going to war with Britain.

On the Seas

War broke out on the seas as well. Americans granted commissions to "privateers" to attack and destroy all British ships, whether they were military or not. One of the most famous privateers, John Paul Jones, scored several victories at sea for the Americans, even attacking the shores of Britain itself.

The War Heads South

Britain turned its attention from the North, to the South, where more loyalists lived. They were at first very successful, defeating the Americans at Waxhaws, Charleston, and Camden. Lord Cornwallis, commander of the British forces in the south, was faced with the challenge of chasing down the Americans. Nathanael Greene had split his army into two, leaving one under the control of Daniel Morgan. Morgan drew Banastre Tarleton, who was commanding one half of the British Army, to Cowpens where they were decisively defeated the British. The other half of the British Army, still under control of Cornwallis, defeated the Americans at the Battle of Guilford Court House. However, it was a bloody victory for Cornwallis and he was forced to withdraw to Yorktown Virginia to regroup.

After hearing that the British were in Yorktown, and there was a French Fleet arriving, Washington took the Continental Army, along with French Troops, to Yorktown and surrounded the British. By mid September the town was under siege. Cornwallis was assured by British Commander-in-Chief, Henry Clinton, who was in New York, that he would be relieved shortly. However, the British relief force was defeated by the French fleet. The British continued to hold off for a few more days, but the allied army moved in closer and closer to Yorktown, and their cannons destroyed many of the British defences. On October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered his entire army, over 7,000 men.

Scattered fighting continued, but back in Britain, the British were crushed by this defeat. Parliament voted to cease all offensive operations in "the colonies." Washington took his army to Newburgh New York, where he stopped a mutiny in the Army.

At the conclusion of the war in 1783 large numbers of loyalists and their families relocated to the home country of England and in large part to Canada as well as to other British Colonies. They submitted claims for lost property and lands in America. Many of the claims were not accepted by the English government for lack of evidence of the losses or significantly reduced. The property and lands were acquired by the American communities and then resold to the highest bidders.

Due to the climatic effects of a 1782 eruption of an Icelandic volcano, the loyalists also experienced one of the coldest Canadian winters on record which contributed to poor crops in 1783-1784. Starvation, disease and hardship were rampant and many resolved to return to the United States despite the threats of retribution rather than subsist on their meager produce.



Benjamin Lincoln accepting the British surrender at Yorktown, with Washington in the background.

Treaty of Paris (1783)

The British lost almost all hope of crushing the rebellion after Yorktown. They decided to negotiate peace with The United States, France, and also Spain. The Treaty of Paris was signed on September 3rd, 1783, and it provided the colonists with several things:

1. The United States was recognized as an independent nation;
2. Its boundaries stretched from the Canadian border (to the north) to the Mississippi River (to the west) and to the northern border of Florida (to the South);
3. Britain was forced to return Florida to Spain, but still could hold Canada;
4. Congress would advise the states to restore property lost or stolen from the Loyalists. (Nevertheless, many Loyalists fled during the Revolution itself.)

Education

The literacy rate in Europe from the 17th century to the 18th century grew significantly. The literacy rate back in the 18th century had double since the 17th century. The rate of literacy had grown more popular in certain areas where there were the religious schools. The literacy rate in England in 1640s was around 30 percent for males and rose to 60 percent in mid-18th century. In France, the rate of literacy in 1686-90 was around 29 percent for men and 14 percent for women and it increased to 48 percent for men and 27 percent for women. The literacy for the general public had grown for both men and women during the 18th century. During the 18th century there were more and more girls being sent to school to get educated. Most of the girls that were going to the schools came from the middle class society. When girls went to school they had restrictions. Women were excluded from learning about science and politics. One of the main issues about female education was due to the weakness of a faulty education. (1) (2) The first colleges were Harvard in 1636 the college of William and Mary in 1693, St. Johns college in 1696, Yale in 1701, the college of New Jersey which is known as Princeton in 1746, King's college known as Columbia in 1754, the college of Philadelphia in 1755, and the queen's college known as Rutgers. All of these colleges were meant for men and only white men. Some of the college experimented by admitting Native American students in 18th century. During this time, boys would enter college when they were the ages of 14 or 15. In the 18th century science, politics and modern history were the main courses to study in the college curriculum. During the 18th century American college graduates become Protestant clergymen. Also during that time they had Vocational education. (1)

1. www.wikipedia.org\ Education_in _the_Age_of_enlightenment 2. A Peole and A Nation Eight Edition

Article Sources and Contributors

US History/American Revolution *Source:* <http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?oldid=2069408> *Contributors:* Adrignola, Aleksev, Ampersand5000, Az1568, Bwilliamson, Ccny930, Etohex, JW1805, Jguk, Jklemak, Jomegat, Karl Wick, Lord Emsworth, Neoptolemus, Rakrom, Rchurch, Recent Runes, Red4tribe, Spongebob88, Sundance Raphael, Tannersf, TrackMonkey, Tweetybird1990, Wesley Gray, Whiteknight, Xania, 68 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

Image:Battle_of_Lexington.jpeg *Source:* http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Battle_of_Lexington.jpeg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Flying Jazz, Magicpiano, Tangopaso, Vonvon, 8 anonymous edits

Image:Fort_Ticonderoga_1775.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Fort_Ticonderoga_1775.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Heppenheimer & Maurer

Image:Bunker_hill.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Bunker_hill.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* John Frost

Image:Henry_Knox.PNG *Source:* http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Henry_Knox.PNG *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Alensha, Andreagrossmann, CORNELIUSSEON, G.dallorto, Marcok, Sailko, Sparkit

Image:Flag_at_Independence_Hall.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Flag_at_Independence_Hall.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Original uploader was Karl Wick at en.wikibooks

Image:Surrender_of_General_Burgoyne.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Surrender_of_General_Burgoyne.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Davepape, Dspark76, Huntj, Jappalang, Magicpiano, Mbdortmund, Michael Devore, Neutrality, PericlesofAthens, Rcbutcher, UpstateNYer, 9 anonymous edits

Image:Yorktown80.JPG *Source:* <http://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=File:Yorktown80.JPG> *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* -Strogoff-, Alensha, Goldfritha, Infrogmation, Itsmine, JamieS93, Man yvi, Mbdortmund, Nonenmac, Royalbroil, Shakko, The Red Hat of Pat Ferrick, Zolo

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>