

1

Early Battles

FIND OUT

- What actions did the Second Continental Congress take in 1776?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of each side in the Revolution?
- How did colonists force the British to leave Boston?

VOCABULARY blockade

As darkness fell, the redcoats limped into Boston from Lexington and Concord. All along the route, rebels had fired on them. The events of April 19, 1775, left the British stunned. How had a handful of rebels forced 700 redcoats to retreat? That night, British soldiers grew even more uneasy as they watched rebels set up campfires all around Boston.

In the weeks and months ahead, the campfires remained. They were a clear sign that the quarrel between Britain and its colonies had blazed into war. Many colo-

nists clung to hopes for a peaceful solution to the crisis. The rebels outside Boston, however, were ready to fight.

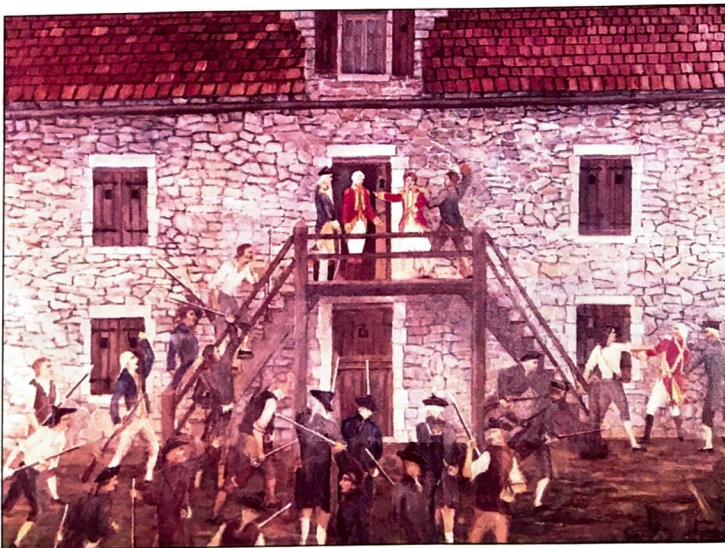
The Green Mountain Boys

In 1775, the colonies did not have a united army—or even a united government. In each colony, rebels took daring action. Ethan Allen, a Vermont blacksmith known for his strength and fierce temper, flew into a rage when he learned of events in Massachusetts. “I read with horror,” he later wrote, of the “bloody attempt at Lexington to enslave America.”

Allen led a band of Vermonters, known as the **Green Mountain Boys**, in a surprise attack on Fort Ticonderoga. The fort was located at the southern tip of Lake Champlain. (See the map on page 163.) Allen knew that it had many cannons, which the colonists badly needed.

In early May, the Green Mountain Boys slipped through the morning mists at Fort Ticonderoga. They quickly overpowered the guard on duty and entered the fort. Allen rushed to the room where the British commander slept. “Come out, you old rat!” he shouted.

The commander demanded to know on whose authority Allen acted. “In the name



Ethan Allen Captures Ticonderoga

*In May 1775, Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys made a bold attack on Fort Ticonderoga. Here, Allen demands that the British commander surrender. **Geography** Why was Fort Ticonderoga important?*

of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!" Allen replied. The commander had no choice but to surrender the fort with its cannons and valuable supply of gunpowder. Allen's success gave the Americans control of a key route into Canada.

Last Efforts for Peace

While the Green Mountain Boys celebrated their victory, delegates from the colonies met at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Although fighting had begun, most delegates did not want to break with Britain. A few, however, including Sam and John Adams, secretly wanted the colonies to declare independence.

After much debate, the Continental Congress voted to patch up the quarrel with Britain. Delegates sent King George III the **Olive Branch Petition**. In it, they declared their loyalty and asked the king to repeal the Intolerable Acts.

At the same time, the Congress took a bold step. It set up the **Continental Army**. John Adams proposed George Washington of Virginia as commander:

“I [have] in my mind for that important command . . . a gentleman whose skill and experience as an officer, whose independent fortune, great talents, and excellent universal character would command the [approval] of all America.”

Washington heard Adams's words. Embarrassed by the praise, he quietly slipped out of the room. In a vote, all delegates approved Washington as commander.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Without wasting any time, Washington left Philadelphia to take charge of the forces around Boston. He faced an uphill struggle. Colonial forces were untrained. They had few cannons, little gunpowder, and no navy.

The British, on the other hand, had highly trained, experienced troops. Britain's navy was the most powerful in the world. Its ships could move soldiers quickly up and down the Atlantic coast.

Still, Britain faced serious problems. Its armies were 3,000 miles (4,800 km) from home. News and supplies took months to travel from Britain to North America. Also, British soldiers risked attacks by colonists once they marched out of the cities into the countryside.

The Americans had certain advantages. They were fighting to defend their homes, farms, lands, and shops. Reuben Stebbins of Williamstown, Massachusetts, was typical of many farmers. When he heard that the British were nearby, he rode off to battle. “We'll see who's goin' t' own this farm!” he cried.

Although few Americans had military training, many owned rifles and were good shots. Also, the colonists had a brilliant leader in George Washington. He demanded—and received—respect from his troops.

Taking a Stand at Bunker Hill

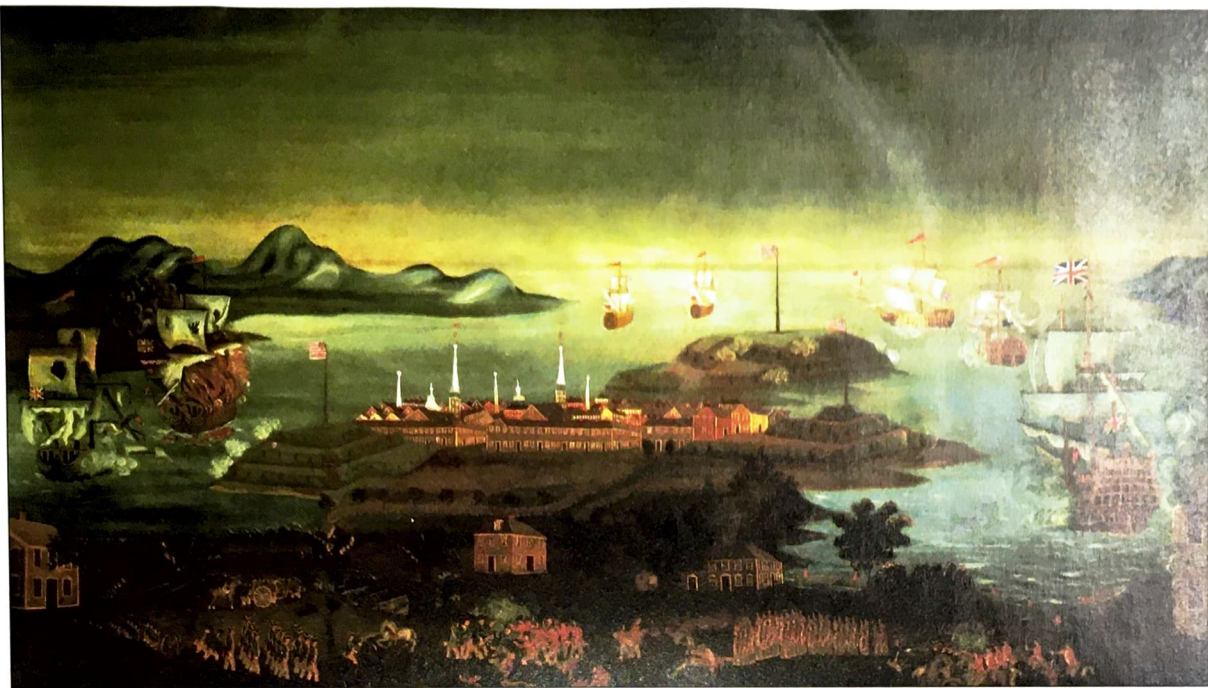
While Washington was riding toward Boston, rebels tightened their circle around the city. The Americans wanted to keep the British from marching out of the city.

At sunset on June 16, 1775, Colonel William Prescott led 1,200 minutemen to take up a position on Bunker Hill in Charlestown, across the river from Boston.



History and You

Patriots used many different flags during the Revolution. Besides the familiar stars and stripes, flags featured a variety of symbols, including a pine cone and an eagle. What symbols would you use to represent the United States today?



Battle of Bunker Hill American forces fought fiercely but could not prevent the British from taking Bunker Hill. This painting by Winthrop Chandler gives a bird's-eye view of this first major battle of the Revolution. **Geography** Why did the Americans take up a position on a hill?

From there, they could fire on British ships in Boston harbor.

“Dig, men, dig.” Prescott soon saw that nearby Breed’s Hill was a better position. He had his men dig trenches there. “Dig, men, dig,” he urged. Prescott knew that the trenches must be ready before dawn. Otherwise, the British could force him off the hill.

At sunrise, the British general, William Howe, spotted the Americans. He ferried about 2,400 redcoats across the harbor to Charlestown. The British then had to cross rough fields and climb Breed’s Hill. Each soldier carried a heavy pack that weighed about 125 pounds. It was hot, exhausting work, and the soldiers moved slowly.

From their trenches, the Americans watched the British approach. Because the colonists had very little gunpowder, their commanders warned, “Don’t shoot until you see the whites of their eyes!”

The deadly attack. As the enemy advanced, “We gave them such a hot fire that they were obliged to retire nearly 150 yards before they could rally,” recalled Colonel Prescott. Twice, the British advanced up the hill. Twice, they had to retreat under deadly fire.

On the third try, the British pushed over the top. By then, the colonists had run out of gunpowder. The British took both Bunker Hill and Breed’s Hill. They paid a high price for their victory, however. “The day ended in glory,” noted a British officer, “but the loss was uncommon in officers for the number engaged.” More than 1,000 redcoats lay dead or wounded. American losses numbered 400.

The **Battle of Bunker Hill** was the first major battle of the Revolution. It proved that the Americans could fight bravely. It also showed that the British would not be easy to defeat.

Redcoats Leave Boston

Washington finally reached Boston in midsummer. There, he found about 16,000 troops camped in huts and tents at the edge of the city. Their weapons ranged from rifles to swords made by local blacksmiths.

General Washington quickly began to turn raw recruits into a trained army. His job was especially difficult because soldiers from different colonies mistrusted one another. "Connecticut wants no Massachusetts men in her corps," he wrote. And "Massachusetts thinks there is no necessity for a Rhode Islander to be introduced into her [ranks]." Slowly, Washington won the loyalty of his troops. They, in turn, learned to take orders and work together.

By January 1776, the Continental Army had a firm grip around Boston. From Ticonderoga, soldiers had dragged cannons on sleds across the mountains. Washington had the cannons placed on Dorchester Heights, overlooking Boston and its harbor. General Howe realized that he could not overpower the Americans. In March 1776, he and his troops sailed from Boston to Halifax, Canada.

Although the British left New England, they had not given up. King George III ordered a blockade of all colonial ports. A **blockade** is the shutting off of a port to keep people or supplies from moving in or out. The king also hired Hessian troops from Germany to help fight the colonists.

March on Canada

Some Americans wanted to attack the British in Canada. They hoped to win support from French Canadians, who were not happy under British rule.

In the fall of 1775, two American armies moved north into Canada. (See the map at right.) Richard Montgomery led one army from Fort Ticonderoga to Montreal. He seized that city in November 1775. He then moved toward the city of Quebec.

MAP STUDY

The first clashes of the Revolution took place in the northern colonies and in Canada.

1. In which direction did Benedict Arnold march to reach Quebec?
2. About how far did Montgomery have to travel from Fort Ticonderoga to Quebec?
3. **Analyzing Information** Based on the map, which American commander would have had a harder time reaching Quebec? Explain.



Benedict Arnold led the second army north through Maine. He was supposed to join forces with Montgomery in Quebec.

Arnold and his troops had a terrible journey through the Maine woods in winter. Rainstorms followed by freezing nights coated their clothes with ice. Supplies ran so low that soldiers survived only by eating boiled bark and shoe leather. Finally, Arnold reached Quebec. He was disappointed, however. French Canadians did not support the Americans.

In a blinding snowstorm on December 31, 1775, the Americans attacked Quebec. Montgomery was killed, and Arnold was wounded. The Americans failed to take the city. They stayed outside Quebec until May 1776, when the British landed new forces in Canada. At last, weakened by disease and hunger, the Americans withdrew, leaving Canada to the British.

SECTION 1 REVIEW

- 1. Locate:** (a) Fort Ticonderoga, (b) Boston, (c) Montreal, (d) Quebec.
- 2. Identify:** (a) Ethan Allen, (b) Green Mountain Boys, (c) Olive Branch Petition, (d) Continental Army, (e) Battle of Bunker Hill, (f) Benedict Arnold.
- 3. Define:** blockade.
- 4.** Describe three actions taken by the Second Continental Congress.
- 5.** What did the Battle of Bunker Hill reveal about each side?
- 6. CRITICAL THINKING Comparing** Compare the strengths and weaknesses of the British and Americans at the start of the war.

ACTIVITY Writing to Learn

Imagine that you have George Washington's job at the beginning of the American Revolution. Write several diary entries describing the task you face as commander of the Continental Army.

2

Independence Declared

FIND OUT

- How did *Common Sense* influence the colonists?
- What are the main ideas of the Declaration of Independence?
- How did Americans respond to the Declaration of Independence?

VOCABULARY traitor

George III was furious when he heard about the Olive Branch Petition. The colonies, he raged, are in a “desperate [plot] to establish an independent empire!” He vowed to bring the rebels to justice.

Colonists learned of the king's response in November 1775. At first, most still hoped to patch up the quarrel with Britain. As the months passed, however, attitudes changed. More and more colonists spoke openly of breaking away from Britain.

Common Sense

In January 1776, a pamphlet appeared on the streets of Philadelphia. “I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense,” said its author, Thomas Paine. The pamphlet, *Common Sense*, created a great stir. Paine's “plain arguments” boldly urged the colonies to declare their independence.

Paine had only recently arrived from England. Still, he shared the colonists' desire for liberty. In *Common Sense*, he showed how colonists had nothing to gain from staying under British rule. He pointed out that there were many disadvantages in their current situation: