

Timeline of Events: American Revolution

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April 14, 1775 - Massachusetts Governor Gage is secretly ordered by the British to enforce the Coercive Acts and put down "open rebellion" among colonists by using all necessary force.

April 18, 1775 - General Gage orders 700 British soldiers to Concord to destroy the colonists' weapons depot. That night, Paul Revere and William Dawes are sent from Boston to warn colonists. Revere reaches Lexington about midnight and warns Sam Adams and John Hancock who are hiding out there. At dawn on April 19 about 70 armed Massachusetts minutemen stand face to face on Lexington Green with the British advance guard. An unordered 'shot heard around the world' begins the American Revolution. A volley of British muskets followed by a charge with bayonets leaves eight Americans dead and ten wounded. The British regroup and head for the depot in Concord, destroying the colonists' weapons and supplies. At the North Bridge in Concord, a British platoon is attacked by minutemen. British forces then begin a long retreat from Lexington back to Boston. Along the way they are harassed and shot at by farmers and rebels, suffering over 250 casualties in the process. News of the events at Lexington and Concord spreads like wildfire throughout the Colonies.

April 23, 1775 - Colonial volunteers from all over New England assemble and head for Boston, then establish camps around the city and begin a year long siege of British-held Boston.

May 10, 1775 - American forces led by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold capture Fort Ticonderoga in New York. The fort contains a much needed supply of military equipment, including cannons that are then hauled to Boston over land by ox teams.

May 10, 1775 - The Second Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia, with John Hancock elected as its president. On May 15, the Congress places the colonies in a state of defense. On June 15, the Congress votes to appoint George Washington general and commander-in-chief of the new Continental Army.

June 17, 1775 - The first major fight between British and American troops occurs at Boston in the Battle of Bunker Hill. American troops are dug in along the high ground of Breed's Hill (the actual location) and are attacked by a frontal assault of over 2000 British soldiers who storm up the hill. The Americans are ordered not to fire until they can see "the whites of their eyes." As the British get within 15 paces, the Americans let loose a deadly volley of musket fire and halt the British advance. The British then regroup and attack 30 minutes later with the same result. A third attack, however, succeeds as the Americans run out of ammunition and are left only with bayonets and stones to defend themselves. The British succeed in taking the hill, but at a loss of half their force. The Americans lose about 400, including important colonial leader, General Joseph Warren.

July 3, 1775 - At Cambridge, Massachusetts, George Washington takes command of the Continental Army which now has about 17,000 men.

July 5, 1775 - The Continental Congress adopts the Olive Branch Petition, which expresses hope for a reconciliation with Britain. In August, King George III refuses even to look at the petition and instead issues a proclamation declaring the Americans to be in a state of open rebellion.

December 23, 1775 - King George III issues a royal proclamation closing the American colonies to all commerce and trade. Also in December, Congress gets word that France may offer support against Britain.

January 9, 1776 - Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" is published in Philadelphia. The 50 page pamphlet is highly critical of King George III, attacks the idea of a monarchy, and gives strong arguments for American independence. It becomes an instant best-seller in America.

March 4-17, 1776 - American forces capture Dorchester Heights which overlooks Boston harbor. Captured British artillery from Fort Ticonderoga is placed on the heights and the British are forced to evacuate Boston. George Washington rushes to New York to set up defenses, anticipating the British plan to invade New York City.

May 2, 1776 - The American revolutionaries get the much needed foreign support they had been hoping for. King Louis XVI of France commits one million dollars in arms and munitions. Spain also promises support.

June 28, 1776 - In South Carolina, American forces at Fort Moultrie successfully defend Charleston against a British naval attack and inflict heavy damage on the fleet.

June-July, 1776 - A massive British war fleet arrives in New York Harbor, including 30 battleships with 1200 cannon, 30,000 soldiers, 10,000 sailors, and 300 supply ships. The fleet is under the command of General William Howe and his brother Admiral Lord Richard Howe.

June-July, 1776 - On June 7, Richard Henry Lee, a Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress, presents a formal resolution calling for America to declare its independence from Britain. On June 11, Congress appoints a committee to draft a declaration of independence. Committee members are Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Livingston and Roger Sherman. Jefferson is chosen by the committee to prepare the first draft of the declaration, which he completes in one day. On June 28, Jefferson's Declaration of Independence is presented to the Congress, with changes made by Adams and Franklin. On July 2, Congress votes in support of Lee's resolution for independence and on July 4, the Congress formally adopts Jefferson's Declaration, with copies to be sent to all of the colonies.

August 27-29, 1776 - Gen. Howe leads 15,000 soldiers against Washington's army in the Battle of Long Island. Washington, outnumbered two to one, suffers a severe defeat as his army is outflanked and scatters. The Americans retreat to Brooklyn Heights. Facing possible capture by the British or even total surrender, Americans retreat across the East River under cover of night and escape to Manhattan. The Continental Army evacuates New York City and retreat up through Manhattan Island to Harlem Heights. Washington now changes tactics, trying to avoid large battles with the British.

September 16, 1776 - After evacuating New York City, Washington's army pushes back a British attack during the Battle of Harlem Heights in upper Manhattan. Several days later, fire engulfs New York City and destroys over 300 buildings.

September 22, 1776 - After he is caught spying on British troops on Long Island, Nathan Hale is executed without a trial. His last words are, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

September 26, 1776 - Congress appoints Jefferson, Franklin and Silas Deane to negotiate treaties with European governments. Franklin and Deane then travel to France seeking financial and military aid.

October 11, 1776 - A big defeat for the inexperienced American Navy on Lake Champlain. In the 7 hour Battle of Valcour Bay most of the American fleet of 83 gunships is crippled. The remaining ships are destroyed in a second engagement two days later.

October 28, 1776 - After evacuating his main forces from Manhattan, Washington's army suffers heavy casualties in the Battle of White Plains from Gen. Howe's forces. Washington retreats westward.

November, 1776 - More victories for the British as Fort Washington on Manhattan and its precious stores of over 100 cannon, thousands of muskets, and ammunition is captured by Gen. Howe. The Americans lose Fort Mifflin in New Jersey to Gen. Cornwallis. Washington's army suffers 3000 casualties in the two defeats. Gen. Washington totally abandons the New York area and moves his forces further westward toward the Delaware River with Cornwallis pursuing him.

December 11, 1776 - Washington takes his troops across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. The next day the Continental Congress flees Philadelphia for Lancaster and then York. Among Washington's troops is Thomas Paine (author of Common Sense) who writes: "...These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country: but he that stands it NOW deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered. Yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

December 25-26, 1776 - On Christmas, George Washington takes 2400 of his men, recrosses the Delaware River, and conducts a surprise raid on 1500 Hessian troops (German mercenaries) at Trenton, New Jersey. The Hessians are taken completely by surprise and nearly 1000 are taken prisoner. The victory provides a much needed boost to the morale of all American patriots.

January 3, 1777 - A second victory for Washington as his troops defeat the British at Princeton and drive them back toward New Brunswick. Washington then establishes winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey. During the harsh winter, Washington's army shrinks to about 1000 men as enlistments expire and deserters flee the hardships. By spring, with the arrival of recruits, Washington will have 9000 men.

March 12, 1777 - The Continental Congress returns to Philadelphia from Lancaster and York after Washington's successes against the British in New Jersey.

June 14, 1777 - The flag of the United States consisting of 13 stars and 13 white and red stripes is mandated by Congress.

June 17, 1777 - A British force of 7700 men under Gen. John Burgoyne invades from Canada, sailing down Lake Champlain toward Albany. Their plan is to link up with Gen. Howe who will come from New York City, thus cutting off New England from the rest of the colonies.

July 6, 1777 - Gen. Burgoyne's troops stun the Americans with the capture of Fort Mifflin on Lake Champlain. Its military supplies are greatly needed by Washington's forces. The loss of the fort is a tremendous blow to American morale.

July 23, 1777 - British Gen. Howe, with 15,000 men, sets sail from New York for the Chesapeake Bay to capture Philadelphia, instead of sailing north to meet up with Gen. Burgoyne.

July 27, 1777 - Marquis de Lafayette, a 19 year old French noble, arrives in Philadelphia and volunteers to serve without pay. Congress appoints him as a major general in the Continental Army. Lafayette will become one of Gen. Washington's most trusted aides.

August 1, 1777 - Gen. Burgoyne reaches the Hudson after a grueling month spent crossing 23 miles of wilderness separating the southern tip of Lake Champlain from the northern tip of the Hudson River.

September 9-11, 1777 - In the Battle of Brandywine Creek, Gen. Washington and the main American Army of 10,500 men are driven back toward Philadelphia by Gen. Howe's British troops. Both sides suffer heavy losses. Congress is again forced to flee Philadelphia.

September 26, 1777 - British forces under Gen. Howe occupy Philadelphia.

October 7, 1777 - The Battle of Saratoga results in the first major American victory of the Revolutionary War as Gen. Horatio Gates and Gen. Benedict Arnold defeat Gen. Burgoyne, inflicting 600 British casualties. American losses are only 150.

October 17, 1777 - Gen. Burgoyne and his entire army of 5700 men surrender to the Americans led by Gen. Gates. The British are then marched to Boston, placed on ships and sent back to England after swearing not serve again in the war against America. News of the American victory at Saratoga soon travels to Europe and boosts support of the American cause.

November 15, 1777 - Congress adopts the Articles of Confederation as the government of the new United States of America.

December 17, 1777 - Washington sets up winter quarters at Valley Forge in Pennsylvania.

February 6, 1778 - American and French representatives sign two treaties in Paris. France officially recognizes the United States and will soon become the major supplier of military supplies to Washington's army. After British vessels fire on French ships, the two nations declare war.

February 23, 1778 - Baron von Steuben of Prussia arrives at Valley Forge to join the Continental Army. He begins much needed training and drilling of Washington's troops, who are suffering from poor morale resulting from cold, hunger, disease, low supplies and desertions over the long and harsh winter.

May 8, 1778 - British General Henry Clinton replaces Gen. Howe as commander of all British forces in the American colonies.

May 30, 1778 - A campaign of terror against American frontier settlements, instigated by the British, begins as 300 Iroquois Indians burn Cobleskill, New York.

June 18, 1778 - Fearing a blockade by French ships, British Gen. Clinton withdraws his troops from Philadelphia and marches across New Jersey toward New York City. Americans then re-occupy Philadelphia.

June 27/28, 1778 - The Battle of Monmouth occurs in New Jersey as Washington's troops and Gen. Clinton's troops fight to a standoff. American Gen. Charles Lee orders a retreat, allowing Gen. Clinton to continue on toward New York.

July 2, 1778 - Congress returns once again to Philadelphia.

September 14, 1778 - Ben Franklin is appointed as the American representative in France.

December 29, 1778 - The British begin a major southern campaign with the capture of Savannah, Georgia, followed a month later with the capture of Augusta.

August 29, 1779 - American forces defeat the combined Indian and Loyalist forces at Elmira, New York. Following the victory, American troops head northwest and destroy nearly 40 Cayuga and Seneca Indian villages in retaliation for the campaign of terror against American settlers.

Sept. 3 - Oct. 28 - Americans suffer a major defeat while attacking the British at Savannah, Georgia. Americans suffer 800 casualties. British losses are only 140.

September 23, 1779 - Off the coast of England, John Paul Jones fights a desperate battle with a British frigate. When the British demand his surrender, Jones responds, "I have not yet begun to fight!" Jones then captures the frigate before his own ship sinks.

October 17, 1779 - Washington sets up winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey, where his troops will suffer another harsh winter without desperately needed supplies, resulting in low morale, desertions and attempts at mutiny.

December 26, 1779 - British Gen. Clinton sets sail from New York with 8000 men and heads for Charleston, South Carolina, arriving there on Feb. 1.

May 12, 1780 - The worst American defeat of the Revolutionary War occurs as the British capture Charleston and its 5400-man garrison (the entire southern American Army), along with four ships and a military arsenal. British losses are only 225.

May 25, 1780 - After a severe winter, Gen. Washington faces a serious threat of mutiny at his winter camp in Morristown, New Jersey. Two regiments conduct an armed march through the camp and demand immediate payment of salary (overdue by 5 months) and full rations. Troops from Pennsylvania put down the rebellion. Two leaders of the protest are then hanged.

July 11, 1780 - 6000 French soldiers under Count de Rochambeau arrive at Newport, Rhode Island. They will remain there for nearly a year, blockaded by the British fleet.

August 3, 1780 - Benedict Arnold is appointed commander of West Point. Unknown to the Americans, he has been secretly collaborating with British Gen. Clinton since May of 1779 by supplying information on Gen. Washington's tactics.

August 16, 1780 - A big defeat for the Americans in South Carolina as forces under Gen. Horatio Gates are defeated by troops of Gen. Charles Cornwallis, resulting in 900 Americans killed and 1000 captured.

August 18, 1780 - An American defeat at Fishing Creek, South Carolina, opens a route for Gen Cornwallis to invade North Carolina.

September 23, 1780 - A British major in civilian clothing is captured near Tarrytown, New York. He is found to be carrying plans indicating Benedict Arnold intends to turn traitor and surrender West Point. Two

days later, Arnold hears of the spy's capture and flees West Point. He is later named a brigadier general in the British Army and will fight the Americans.

October 7, 1780 - Gen. Cornwallis abandons his invasion of North Carolina after Americans capture his reinforcements, a Loyalist force of 1000 men.

October 14, 1780 - Gen. Nathanael Greene, Washington's most able and trusted General, is named as the new commander of the Southern Army, replacing Gen. Gates. Greene begins a strategy of rallying popular support and wearing down the British by leading Gen. Cornwallis on a six month chase through the back woods of South Carolina into North Carolina into Virginia then back into North Carolina.

January 20, 1781 - Mutiny among American troops at Pompton, New Jersey. The rebellion is put down seven days later by a 600-man force sent by Gen. Washington. Two of the leaders are hanged.

March 15, 1781 - Forces under Gen. Cornwallis suffer heavy losses in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina. As a result, Cornwallis abandons plans to conquer the Carolinas and begins a campaign to conquer Virginia with an army of 7500 men.

May 21, 1781 - Gen. Washington and French Gen. Rochambeau meet in Connecticut for a war council. Gen. Rochambeau reluctantly agrees to Washington's plan for a joint French naval and American ground attack on New York.

July 20, 1781 - Slaves in Williamsburg, Virginia, rebel and burn several buildings.

August 1, 1781 - After several months of chasing Gen. Greene's army without much success, Gen. Cornwallis and his 10,000 tired soldiers arrive to seek rest at the small port of Yorktown, Virginia, on the Chesapeake Bay where he establishes a base to communicate by sea with Gen. Clinton's forces in New York.

August 14, 1781 - Gen. Washington abruptly changes plans and abandons the attack on New York in favor of Yorktown after receiving a letter from French Admiral Count de Grasse saying that his entire 29-ship French fleet with 3000 soldiers is now heading for the Chesapeake Bay near Cornwallis. Gen. Washington coordinates with Gen. Rochambeau to rush their best troops south to Virginia to attack the British position in Yorktown.

August 30, 1781 - Count de Grasse's French fleet arrives off Yorktown, Virginia. De Grasse then lands troops near Yorktown, linking with Lafayette's American troops to cut Cornwallis off from any retreat by land.

September 5-8, 1781 - Off Yorktown, a major naval battle between the French fleet of de Grasse and the outnumbered British fleet of Adm. Thomas Graves results in a victory for de Grasse. The British fleet retreats to New York for reinforcements, leaving the French fleet in control of the Chesapeake. The French fleet establishes a blockade, cutting Cornwallis off from any retreat by sea.

September 14-24, 1781 - De Grasse sends his ships up the Chesapeake Bay to transport the armies of Washington and Rochambeau to Yorktown.

September 28, 1781 - Gen. Washington, with a combined Allied army of 17,000 men, begins the siege of Yorktown. French cannons bombard Gen. Cornwallis and his 9000 men day and night while the Allied lines slowly advance and encircle them. British supplies run dangerously low.

October 17, 1781 - As Yorktown is about to be taken, the British send out a flag of truce.

October 19, 1781 - As their band plays the tune, "The world turned upside down," the British army marches out in formation and surrenders at Yorktown. Hopes for a British victory in the war against America are dashed. In Parliament, there will soon be calls to bring this long and costly war to an end.

October 24, 1781 - 7000 British reinforcements under Gen. Clinton arrive at Chesapeake Bay but turn back on hearing of the surrender at Yorktown.

January 1, 1782 - Loyalists begin leaving America, heading north to Canada and other areas still under British control.

March 20, 1782 - British Prime Minister, Lord North, resigns and is succeeded two days later by Lord Rockingham who seeks immediate negotiations with the Americans.

April 12, 1782 - Peace talks begin in Paris between Ben Franklin and Richard Oswald of Britain.

August 19, 1782 - Loyalist and Indian forces attack and defeat American settlers near Lexington, Kentucky.

August 27, 1782 - The last fighting of the Revolutionary War between Americans and British occurs with a skirmish in South Carolina along the Combahee River.

November 10, 1782 - The final battle of the Revolutionary War occurs as Americans retaliate against Loyalist and Indian forces by attacking a Shawnee Indian village in the Ohio territory.

November 30, 1782 - A preliminary peace treaty is signed in Paris. Terms include recognition of American independence and the boundaries of the United States, along with British withdrawal from America.

January 20, 1783 - England signs a preliminary peace treaty with France and Spain.

February 4, 1783 - England officially declares an end to hostilities in America.

March 10, 1783 - An anonymous letter circulates among Washington's senior officers camped at Newburgh, New York. The letter urges the officers to defy the authority of Congress for its failure to honor past promises to the Continental Army. The next day, Gen. Washington forbids the unauthorized meeting and instead suggests a regular meeting to be held on March 15.

March 15, 1783 - General Washington gathers his officers and talks them out of a rebellion against the authority of Congress.

April 11, 1783 - Congress officially declares an end to the Revolutionary War.

April 26, 1783 - 7000 Loyalists set sail from New York for Canada, bringing a total of 100,000 Loyalists who have now fled America.

June 13, 1783 - The main part of the Continental Army disbands.

September 3, 1783 - The Treaty of Paris is signed by the United States and Great Britain. Congress will ratify the treaty on January 14, 1784.

October 7, 1783 - In Virginia, the House of Burgesses grants freedom to slaves who served in the Continental Army.

November 2, 1783 - George Washington delivers his farewell address to his army. The next day, remaining troops are discharged.

November 25, 1783 - Washington enters Manhattan as the last British troops leave.

November 26, 1783 - Congress meets in Annapolis, Maryland.

December 23, 1783 - Following a triumphant journey from New York to Annapolis, George Washington, victorious commander in chief of the American Revolutionary Army, appears before Congress and voluntarily resigns his commission. He will later be elected as the first President of the United States.