

Key Events of the American Revolution

What had started as a fight for their rights as citizens of Great Britain had ended as a fight for independence. What **key events** led to the American Revolution and the future of our nation?

The **Boston Massacre** took place in Boston, Massachusetts in the spring of 1770. By this time over 9,000 British soldiers had been sent to the colonies. The king said the soldiers had been sent to protect the western territories won in the French and Indian War. The colonists, however, believed they had been sent to keep them under control. On March 5, 1770, in the city of Boston, a crowd of colonists gathered near a squad of British soldiers. The colonists called the soldiers names and threw snowballs and rocks. Suddenly muskets fired and five colonists were killed. This event is known as the *Boston Massacre* because people who could not defend themselves were killed.

The **Boston Tea Party** occurred in Boston Harbor in December of 1773. Earlier that year the British Parliament passed the Tea Act. This law allowed a British company to sell tea to the colonies at a very low price. Knowing this would hurt colonial merchants, the colonies decided to boycott British tea. In Boston, the royal governor demanded that the colonists unload and purchase the tea that had just arrived in three British ships. Angry colonists led by **Samuel Adams** and **Paul Revere** boarded the ships late one night and dumped 45 tons of tea into the harbor to protest tea taxes.

In September of 1774 representatives from every colony except Georgia met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to discuss the conflict with Great Britain and the growing talk of independence. This important meeting was known as the **First Continental Congress**. During this meeting the delegates agreed to end all trade with Great Britain. They also informed the king that the colonies were not going to obey any British laws that took away their rights as citizens. The king did not respond and the colonies began to talk of war.

Key Events of the American Revolution (cont'd)

In the spring of 1775, the royal governor of Massachusetts heard that colonists not loyal to the king were storing weapons at Concord. One thousand British soldiers were sent to find the weapons in Concord and arrest the leaders of these patriots in the neighboring town of Lexington. A patriot by the name of **Paul Revere** rode out of Boston to warn the people of Lexington and Concord. When the British arrived in Lexington they found the colonial militia, or army waiting for them. Eight colonial minutemen were killed. The British army continued on to Concord but found that the weapons had been moved. On their return to Boston, 73 British soldiers were killed by minutemen hiding in the woods along the road. Ninety-three minutemen also lost their lives in this **first armed conflict** of the Revolutionary War known as the **Battles at Lexington and Concord**.

The news of the Battles at Lexington and Concord spread quickly throughout the colonies. In response to the news, the Second Continental Congress met again in Philadelphia in May of 1775. The delegates agreed to form an army. They chose **George Washington** to be Commander of the new Continental Army. The first major battle of the Revolutionary War was the **Battle of Bunker Hill** fought near Boston in June of 1775.

After nearly a year of fighting, the Second Continental Congress decided to act on the idea of gaining independence from Great Britain. A committee was formed to draft a **Declaration of Independence**. Final approval of the Declaration of Independence came on July 4, 1776. The colonies had officially **declared independence** from Great Britain.

In the fall of 1777, a British army of approximately 6,000 marched south from Canada in an attempt to divide the colonies in two. At the **Battle of Saratoga** in New York, the Continental Army defeated the British. This patriot victory was the **turning point in the war** because it showed foreign powers that the colonies were capable of winning the war. As a result, the government of France and Spain began supplying the colonies with guns, food, money, and soldiers. This foreign support allowed the Continental Army to continue its fight for independence.

The end of the Revolutionary War came at **Yorktown**, Virginia in 1781 with a colonial victory over the British army commanded by **General Lord Cornwallis**. With the help of the French Army and Navy, the Continental Army defeated the British and Lord Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown.

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Nearly two years after the Battle of Yorktown, the Americans and British signed the **Treaty of Paris**. A treaty is an agreement between countries. As a result of the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain agreed to remove its troops from American soil and accept that the United States of America was an independent nation.

Even though the nation of Great Britain was a world power with great wealth, the thirteen American colonies were successful in defeating it. **There were several advantages that helped the Americans win their war for independence.**

One of these advantages came in the form of **additional support from France and Spain**. Wanting to see Great Britain fall from its position of power, these two nations supplied the guns, ships, soldiers and money that allowed the Continental Army to continue the fight.

Another advantage was that some colonists were **defending their own land**. With hard work and the sweat of their brow, they had built their own towns, farms and businesses. These colonists would not give them up easily. They also held **strong beliefs** concerning the rights of people and the limited powers of government. They were not willing to return to life under the rule of an unconcerned king and his Parliament.

Lastly, the colonists had **strong leadership**. Men like Patrick Henry, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Thomas Paine, and the Marquis de Lafayette supplied the leadership and direction necessary to defeat a world power and establish a new nation.