




Road to Independence



- **By 1775 Great Britain had clearly lost control of her colonies in North America**
 - Those in America still loyal to the crown (known as loyalists or Tories) were unorganized and intimidated into submission
 - Provincial congresses and assemblies began to assume authority
 - Colonial militias began gathering arms and gunpowder
- **The goal for most colonists in 1775 was not independence, but a return to salutary neglect**



- **The British army was confident**
 - Major John Pitcairn wrote from Boston, “I am satisfied that one active campaign, a smart action, and burning two or three of their towns, will set everything to rights.”
 - He’d soon get his chance.



Lexington and Concord

- General Thomas Gage, military governor of Massachusetts, received orders to stop the rebellion
- British tried to arrest rebel leaders and seize the militia supply depot at Concord, twenty miles west of Boston.
 - On the night of April 18th, 1775 he gathered 700 redcoats and began marching for Concord





- Locals learned of the plan, and sent riders ahead to spread the alarm
 - Paul Revere
 - “The Regulars are coming”
 - Why not “The British are coming”?
 - The town of Lexington was between Concord & Boston; when the alarm came the minutemen who lived in the town started to mobilize



- As the British troops reached Lexington, they saw about 70 colonial minutemen under Captain John Parker formed up on the Lexington green
 - Probably meant as a silent protest



- **Parker supposedly said "Stand your ground; don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here."**



- Major Pitcairn rode ahead of his men to threaten the Americans
 - **“Disperse you damned rebels!
You dogs, run!”**
- The minutemen started to leave when someone fired a shot
 - **Most likely an accidental discharge from an officer’s pistol**
 - **The British fired & charged with bayonets, killing 8 Americans**
 - **Jonathon Harrington crawled to his door before dying in front of his family**

- The American Revolution had begun





- The British reach Concord, but the colonists had already moved the munitions
 - And more militia were arriving
 - At Concord's North Bridge the militia inflicted 14 casualties on a British platoon
 - **Events of the day were later immortalized by Ralph Waldo Emerson**
 - *Here once the embattled farmers stood, and fired the shot heard 'round the world.*



- **As the British marched back to Boston, local colonists sniped from stone walls, trees, houses, etc.**
 - Samuel Whittemore (80) was in his fields when he spotted an approaching British force sent to assist the retreat. Whittemore loaded his musket and ambushed the British from behind a nearby stone wall, killing one soldier. He then drew his dueling pistols and killed a grenadier and mortally wounded a second. He managed to fire three shots before a British detachment reached his position. Whittemore then attacked with a sword. He was shot in the face, bayoneted thirteen times, and left for dead in a pool of blood. He was found alive, trying to load his musket to fight again. He was taken to Dr. Cotton Tufts of Medford, who perceived no hope for his survival. However, Whittemore lived another 18 years until dying of natural causes at the age of 98.
- **By sunset the British army in Boston was surrounded by thousands of angry militiamen**

Battle of Bunker Hill

- In June 1775 the British attacked a fortified colonial position outside Boston
- After three charges they eventually succeed in taking the position
 - The militia ran out of ammunition & were reduced to throwing stones
- Although the British won, they took heavy losses
 - British casualties were over 1,000 (including Major Pitcairn, who died). The colonists only lost about 400.



- Effects
 - High British casualties made them more cautious in the future (this would help save Washington the next year)
 - Convinces many colonists that citizen militias can defeat the British army
 - Moral boost for Americans (despite defeat)



- **When colonists brought in cannons that overlooked Boston, the redcoats (and loyalists) had to evacuate**
 - **Now the British were faced with retaking an entire continent**



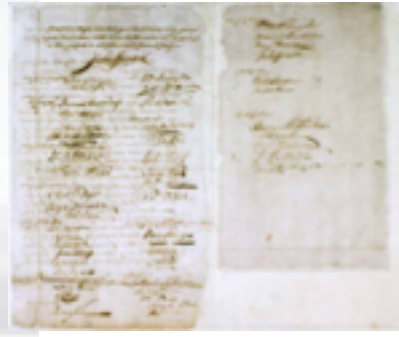
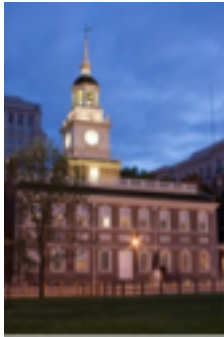
Second Continental Congress

- May 1775; Philadelphia
 - Recommends all men enlist in a militia
 - Divides population: either with us or against us
 - George Washington named commander of a Continental Army
 - Had experience during French & Indian War
 - Virginian – tied together north & south
 - Gentry – tied together upper & lower class
 - Also looked like a leader - very tall and distinguished



Other Congressional Actions


- Olive Branch Petition
 - John Dickenson
 - Professed loyalty to King George III & begged him to restrain from further hostilities
 - Which colony was *least* enthusiastic about this?

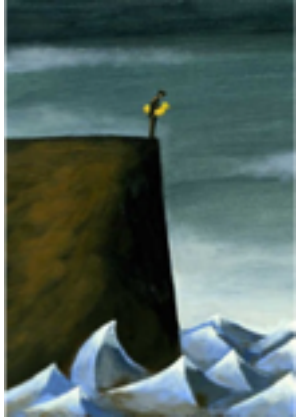


- King George III refused to read it, and declared the colonists “open and avowed enemies”
- Colonists shocked when King George III recruited Hessians to fight in America
 - German mercenary soldiers
 - Like hiring someone to kill your child




- Congress still held back from declaring independence
 - Many hoped for reconciliation

 The picture can't be displayed.



Common Sense

- T. Paine 
 - A recent immigrant from England
- Presented several reasons why complete independence was natural and justified
 - Attacked allegiance to the monarchy, not just Parliament






- *Common Sense* convinced many to support independence
 - **Hundreds of thousands of copies were circulated in the colonies**
 - **By the summer of 1776, provincial governments were authorizing their delegates to vote for independence**



Declaration of Independence

- Richard Henry Lee of VA presented a resolution for independence on June 7, 1776
- The written rationale for separation
- The Congressional committee that created it including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson
 - Thomas Jefferson drafted final document



- Inspired by John Locke's contract theory.
 - A government's powers come from the consent of the people
 - "All men are created equal..." and have the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

- Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776
 - Benjamin Franklin commented, "we must now hang together, or we shall most assuredly hang separately"





- One veteran, Levi Preston, later said "We had always governed ourselves, and we always meant to."

