

* Don't Know Much About History

44

Don't Know Much About History

ets from the small peninsula. A string of victories between 1758 and 1760 gave the English control over the American colonies and, with the fall of Montreal in 1760, all of Canada.

In 1763 the Treaty of Paris brought peace and, with it, a complete British triumph. The British now owned all of Canada, America east of the Mississippi Valley, Florida, and a number of Caribbean islands. Colonial Americans, not so heavily bled in a major armed conflict, took pride and rejoiced at the victory they had helped win for their new king, George III, who had taken the throne in 1760.

What do sugar and stamps have to do with revolutions?

In the short space of thirteen years, how did the colonies go from being loyal subjects of King George III, flush in their victory over the French, to becoming rebels capable of overthrowing the most powerful nation on earth?

Obviously, no single factor changes the course of history. And different historians point to different reasons for the Revolution. The established traditionalist view is that the American Revolution was fought for liberties that Americans believed they already possessed as British citizens. The more radical political and economic viewpoint holds that the Revolution was simply a transfer of power from a distant British elite to a home-grown American power class that wanted to consolidate its hold over the wealth of the continent.

History is a boat big enough to carry both views comfortably, and a mingling of these perspectives brings an approximation of truth. It is safe to say that British bungling, economic realities, a profound philosophical revolution called the Enlightenment, and historical inevitability all played roles in the birth of the American nation.

As for the British bungling: In the immediate aftermath of the Seven Years War, England had an enormous wartime debt to pay. In London, it was naturally assumed that the colonies should chip in for some of the costs of the defense of America as well as the yearly cost of administering the colonies. To do this, Parliament enacted what it thought an entirely reasonable tax, the

Say You Want a Revolution

45

so-called Sugar Act of 1764, which placed tariffs on sugar, coffee, wines, and other products imported into America in substantial quantities. A postwar colonial depression—economic doldrums typically following the free spending that accompanies wartime—sharpened the act's pain for American merchants and consumers. Almost immediately, negative reaction to the tax set in, an economic dissent that was summed up in a new political slogan, "No taxation without representation." James Otis, one of the most vocal and radical leaders in Massachusetts, wrote that everyone should be "free from all taxes but what he consents to in person or by his representative."

In real terms, the representation issue was a smokescreen—a useful phrase, but not what the new breed of colonial leaders wanted. They had the wisdom to see that getting a handful of seats in Parliament for the colonies would be politically meaningless. Growing numbers of American politicians saw a wedge being driven between colony and Mother England, and they had their eyes on a larger prize.

Resistance to the sugar tax, in the form of drafted protests from colonial legislatures and halfhearted boycotts, failed to materialize. Until, that is, Parliament tightened the screws with a second tax. The Stamp Act of 1765 set stiff tariffs on virtually every kind of printed matter from newspapers and legal documents to playing cards. One member of Parliament, protesting the new tax plan, used the phrase "Sons of Liberty" to describe the colonists, and it was quickly adopted by men in every colony. While the Sugar Act reflected Parliament's power to tax trade, the Stamp Act was different. It was a direct tax, and the protests from America grew louder, stronger, and more violent. Riots broke out, the most violent of which were in Boston, where the house of Governor Thomas Hutchinson was destroyed by an angry mob. In New York, the home of the officer in charge of the stamps was also ransacked. A boycott of the stamps, widely joined throughout the colonies, was followed by a general boycott of English goods. Hit hard by the economic warfare, London's merchants screamed and the law was repealed in 1766.

But it was a case of closing the barn door after the horses had scattered. In America, forces were gathering that most London

politicos, ignorant of American ways, were too smug or superior to acknowledge.

What was the Boston Massacre?

Having been kicked once by the colonial mule, Parliament failed to grasp the message of the Stamp Act boycott, and in 1767 thought up a new set of incendiary taxes called the Townshend Acts, once again placing itself directly behind the mule's hind legs. Once again, an American boycott cut imports from England in half. The British answer to the Americans' protest was a typical superpower response—they sent in troops.

Soon there were 4,000 British redcoats in Boston, a city of 16,000 and a hotbed of colonial protest. These troops, however, did not just idly stand guard over the populace. In a town already hard-pressed for jobs, the British soldiers competed for work with the laborers of Boston's waterfront. Early in March 1770, a group of ropemakers fought with a detachment of soldiers who were taking their jobs, and all around Boston, angry encounters between soldiers and citizens became more frequent. Tensions mounted until March 5, when a mob, many of them hard-drinking waterfront workers, confronted a detachment of nine British soldiers. The scene turned ugly as snow and ice, mixed with stones, began to fly in the direction of the soldiers. Confronted by a taunting mob calling for their blood, the soldiers grew understandably nervous. It only took the word "Fire," most likely yelled by one of the crowd, to ignite the situation. The soldiers shot, and five bodies fell. The first to die was a fifty-year-old former slave, either a black or Indian mulatto sailor named Crispus Attucks.

It did not take long for the propagandists, Samuel Adams chief among them, to seize the moment. Within days the incident had become the "Boston Massacre," and the dead were martyred. An engraving of the shootings made by Henry Pelham, a half-brother of the painter John Copley, was "borrowed" by silversmith Paul Revere, whose own engraving of the incident got to the printer's first and soon became a patriotic icon. As many as ten

thousand marched at the funeral procession (out of Boston's population of 16,000).

In the wake of the killings, British troops were withdrawn from the city. With the Townshend Acts repealed (coincidentally on the day of the Massacre), a period of relative calm followed the massacre and the trial of the soldiers—defended by John Adams, who wanted to ensure fairness—most were acquitted and two were branded and discharged—but it was an uneasy truce at best.

What was the Boston Tea Party about?

In the thick of the 1988 presidential election campaign, candidate George Bush made Boston Harbor an issue that badly hurt his opponent, Michael Dukakis. Bush made political hay out of the fact that the harbor was an ecological disaster zone, and placed the blame squarely in the lap of Dukakis, the Massachusetts governor. Once before, the mess in that harbor played a role in history, and back then the results were quite extraordinary. If George Bush thought Boston Harbor was a mess in 1988, he should have seen it in 1773.

The post-Massacre peace and the end of the non-importation boycott brought renewed prosperity to the colonies and with it a respite from the bickering with London. Fearing this calm would soften resistance, Samuel Adams and his allies tried to fan the embers over such local issues as moving the Massachusetts assembly out of Boston and who should pay the governor's salary. These were important legal questions, but not the sort of outrages that inspire violent overthrow of the government. Things heated up considerably when a party of patriots in Rhode Island boarded and burned the *Gaspee*, a grounded Royal Navy boat intensely disliked for its anti-smuggling patrols.

While the *Gaspee* arsonists avoided arrest, the British Crown threatened to bring the guilty to England for trial, rebuffing the English tradition of right to trial by a community jury. It was the bit of tinder that Samuel Adams needed to stoke the flames a little higher. In Virginia the House of Burgesses appointed Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and Richard Henry Lee as a Com-

mittee of Correspondence, and by 1774, twelve of the colonies had such committees to maintain a flow of information between like-minded colonists.

But a burning—or boiling—issue was still lacking until Samuel Adams found one in tea. In 1773, Parliament had granted a legal monopoly on tea shipment to America to the nearly bankrupt East India Company. The injury was made worse by the insult of funneling the tea business through selected loyalist merchants, including the sons of Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts. The East India Company could now undercut American merchants, even those using smugglers, on the sale of tea. Tea first, thought the colonists, what will be next?

In November 1773, three tea-laden cargo ships reached Boston. Led by Samuel Adams and a powerful ally, John Hancock, one of the richest men in America and one of those most threatened by the possibility of London-granted trade monopolies, the patriots vowed that the tea would not be landed. Governor Hutchinson, whose sons stood to profit by its landing, put his back up. After two months of haggling, the Boston patriots made up their minds to turn Boston Harbor into a teapot.

On the night of December 16, 1773, about 150 men from all layers of Boston's economy, masters and apprentices side by side, blackened their faces with burnt cork, dressed as Mohawk Indians, and boarded the three ships. Once aboard, they requested and received the keys to the ships' holds, as their target was the tea alone and not the ships or any other cargo aboard. Watched by a large crowd, as well as the Royal Navy, the men worked for nearly three hours, hatcheting open the cases of tea and dumping it into the harbor. So much was dumped that the tea soon piled up in the waters and spilled back onto the decks, where it was shoveled back into the water.

The Boston Tea Party, as it was quickly annointed, was soon followed by similar tea parties in other colonies and served to harden lines, both in America and England. Patriots became more daring; Loyalist Tories became more loyal; Parliament stiffened its back.

The Sons of Liberty had slapped London's face with a kid glove. The King responded with an iron fist. "The die is now

cast," King George told his Prime Minister, Lord North. "The colonies must either submit or triumph."

What was the First Continental Congress? Who chose its members, who were they, and what did they do?

From the moment the tea was dumped, the road to revolution was a short one. In a post-Tea Party fervor, Parliament passed a series of bills, called the Coercive Acts, the first of which was the Port Bill, aimed at closing down Boston until the dumped tea was paid for. It was followed by the Administration of Justice Act, the Massachusetts Regulating Act (which virtually nullified the colony's charter), and the Quebec Act, establishing a centralized system of government in Canada and extending the borders of Canada south to the Ohio River. Parliament backed up these acts by sending General Thomas Gage to Boston as the new governor, along with 4,000 troops. In addition, it reinforced provisions of the Quartering Act, which gave the army the right to demand food and shelter from colonists.

In response to these "Intolerable Acts," as the colonists called them, the colonial assemblies agreed to an intercolonial meeting, and each assembly selected a group of delegates. Gathering in Philadelphia from September 5 to October 26, 1774, the First Continental Congress was made up of fifty-six delegates from every colony but Georgia. They represented the full spectrum of thought in the colonies, from moderates and conservatives like New York's John Jay or Pennsylvania's Joseph Galloway, who were searching for a compromise that would maintain ties with England, to fiery rebels like Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry of Virginia (Thomas Jefferson was not selected to make the trip). As they gathered, John Adams privately worried, "We have not men fit for the times. We are deficient in genius, in education, in travel, in fortune—in everything."

But his opinion would soon change as the debate began, and Adams became aware that he was indeed in remarkable company. The first Congress moved cautiously, but ultimately adopted a resolution that opposed the Coercive Acts, created an Association to boycott British goods, and passed ten resolutions enumerating

the rights of the colonists and their assemblies. Before adjourning, they provided for a second session to meet if their grievances had not been corrected by the British. While they had not yet declared for independence, the First Congress had taken a more or less unalterable step in that direction. In a very real sense, the Revolution had begun. It needed only for the shooting to start.

What was "the shot heard 'round the world"?

Now governor of Massachusetts, General Gage wanted to cut off the rebellion before it got started. His first move was to try to capture hidden stores of patriot guns and powder and arrest John Hancock and Sam Adams, the patriot ringleaders in British eyes. The Sons of Liberty had been expecting this move, and across Massachusetts the patriot farmers and townspeople had begun to drill with muskets, ready to pick up their guns on a minute's notice, giving them their name "Minutemen."

In an increasingly deserted Boston, Paul Revere, silversmith and maker of false teeth, waited and watched the British movements. To sound an early warning to Concord, Revere set up a system of signals with a sexton at Christ Church in Boston. One lantern in the belfry meant Gage's troops were coming by land; two lanterns meant they were crossing the Charles River in boats. Late on the night of April 18, 1775, as expected, it was two lanterns. Revere and another rider, Billy Dawes, started off to Lexington to warn Hancock and Adams and alert the Lexington Minutemen that the British regulars were coming. Continuing on to Concord, Revere and Dawes were joined by Samuel Prescott, a young patriot doctor. A few minutes later a British patrol stopped the three men. Revere and Dawes were arrested and briefly jailed, while Prescott was able to escape and warn Concord of the British advance.

Meanwhile, in Lexington, the group of seventy-seven Minutemen gathered on the green to confront the British army. The British tried to simply march past the ragtag band when an unordered shot rang out. Chaos ensued, and the British soldiers broke ranks and returned fire. When the volleying stopped, eight Minutemen lay dead.

Warned by Prescott, the Concord militia was ready. Farmers from the nearby countryside responded to the churchbells and streamed toward Concord. The resistance became more organized, and the Concord Minutemen attacked a troop of British holding a bridge leading into Concord, and later took up positions behind barns, houses, stone walls, and trees, pouring fire down on the British ranks. Unused to such unfair tactics as men firing from hiding, the British remained in their standard formations until they reached Lexington again and were met by reinforcements.

By the day's end, the British tallied seventy-three dead and 174 wounded.

The Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia on May 10, 1775, had come to the crisis point. The bloodshed at Lexington meant war. With swift action, the patriots could bottle up the whole of the British army in Boston. To John Adams, all that needed to be done was to solidify the ranks of Congress by winning the delegates of the South. The solution came in naming a Southerner as commander of the new Continental army. On June 15, 1775, George Washington, a delegate from Virginia who had hinted at his ambitions by wearing his old military uniform to the Philadelphia meetings, received that appointment.

Militaries in the American Revolution

1775

April 19, 1775 - One hundred British soldiers march from Concord, Massachusetts to Lexington. They are met on the Lexington green by a force of colonial Minutemen. An unordered shot - the shot heard 'round the world - leads to the killing of eight Americans. During a pitched battle at Concord and on the way back to Boston, the British are harassed constantly by colonial snipers and suffer heavy losses.

May 10, 1775 - Under Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold, a colonial militia captures Fort Mifflin in the Delaware River, New York. The British are forced to retreat to Fort Mifflin, New York. The British garrison at Crown Point on Lake Champlain is seized.

August 16 At Camden, South Carolina, American forces under General Gates are overwhelmingly defeated by General Charles Cornwallis; Gates is relieved of command.

September 23 Carrying the plans for Benedict Arnold's surrender of West Point, British Major John Andre is captured and later hanged as a spy. Arnold flees to a British ship and is made a brigadier general in the British army.

October 7 A frontier militia force captures a Loyalist force of 1,100 at Kings Mountain, North Carolina, forcing General Cornwallis to abandon plans for an invasion of North Carolina.

October 14 General Nathanael Greene replaces General Gates as commander of the southern army. Greene begins a guerrilla war of harassment against the British.

January 17 The Battle of Cowpens (South Carolina). American forces under General Daniel Morgan win a decisive victory.

March 15 Despite a victory at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse (North Carolina), Cornwallis suffers heavy losses, abandons plans to control the Carolinas, and retreats to await reinforcements.

June 10 American forces under Lafayette are reinforced by General Anthony Wayne in Virginia to combat Cornwallis.

August 14 Washington receives news that French Admiral de Grasse is sailing a fleet carrying 10,000 men to Chesapeake Bay. Washington secretly abandons plans to attack Clinton in New York and moves south instead.

August 31 French troops, under de Grasse, land at Yorktown, Virginia, and join American forces under Lafayette, blocking off retreat by Cornwallis.

September 5-8 In a naval battle off Yorktown, the French fleet is victorious and additional French troops arrive from Newport, Rhode Island.

September 14-24 American troops under Washington are transported to Williamsburg, Virginia, by de Grasse's ships.

September 28 A combined force of 9,000 Americans and 7,000 French begin the siege of Yorktown.

October 19 Cornwallis, with 8,000 troops, surrenders at York-

town, effectively ending British hopes of victory in America. Aware of Cornwallis's predicament, Clinton fails to send British reinforcements in time. They sail back to New York.

January 1 Loyalists in America, fearing confiscations and reprisals, begin to leave for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

February 27 The House of Commons votes against waging further war in America; the English Crown is empowered to seek peace negotiations. In March, Lord North resigns as Prime Minister and is replaced by Lord Rockingham, who seeks immediate negotiations with America.

April 19 The Netherlands recognizes the independence of the United States.

August 27 A skirmish in South Carolina is the last wartime engagement on the Eastern Seaboard.

November 30 A preliminary peace treaty is signed in Paris.

January 20 Preliminary peace treaties are signed between England and France and England and Spain.

February 4 Great Britain officially declares an end to hostilities in America.

April 11 Congress declares a formal end to the Revolutionary War.

June 13 The main part of the Continental Army disbands.

September 3 The Treaty of Paris is signed, formally ending the war. The treaty is ratified by Congress in January 1784.

The Patriots

John Adams (1735-1826) Born in Braintree (Quincy), Massachusetts, a Harvard-educated lawyer, he was the cousin of Samuel Adams. A thorough but cautious patriot, Adams safely crossed a political highwire in defending the British soldiers accused in the Boston Massacre. A prominent member of the Continental Con-

gresses, Adams was among those named to draft the Declaration of Independence, which he later signed. As America's wartime envoy to France and Holland, he was instrumental in obtaining the foreign aid of both of those countries, and then joined in negotiating the Peace of Paris ending the war.

After the war he served as first U.S. minister to Great Britain and then returned home to serve as Washington's Vice-President for two terms. Adams succeeded Washington as the second President in 1796, but was defeated by Thomas Jefferson in 1800. Both Adams and Jefferson died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Samuel Adams (1722–1803) After squandering an inheritance, ruining his father's brewery business, and failing as a tax collector, this most fiery of Adamses found his calling as a rabble-rouser. Always a step ahead of arrest or debtor's prison, he was one of the most radical of the patriots, far better at brewing dissent than beer. Samuel Adams was the chief political architect behind the machinations that led to the Boston Tea Party, as well as tutor to his younger cousin, John Adams. A signer of the Declaration, he all but faded from the national picture after the war was over, holding a variety of state offices and leaving his more illustrious cousin to take a leading role.

Dr. Benjamin Church (1734–1778?) Although not as notorious as Benedict Arnold, Church earned the unpleasant distinction of being the first American caught spying for the British. A physician from Boston, Church had established powerful credentials as a patriot zealot, being the first on hand to treat the wounded after the Boston Massacre. But in 1775, coded documents he was transmitting to the British were intercepted and he was tried as a spy. Found guilty, he was spared the hanging that George Washington requested.

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) Of all the figures in the Revolutionary pantheon, perhaps only Washington has inspired more myths than Franklin. Printer. Writer. Philosopher. Scientist. Politician. Diplomat. All of the labels fit, but none defines the man

who was, during his life, one of the most famous men in the world.

Born in Boston, he was the fifteenth of a candlemaker's seven apprentices. His brief formal schooling ended when he was apprenticed to his older half-brother James, printer of the *New England Courant* and a member of the young radicals of Boston. Failing to get along with James, Ben moved to Philadelphia and found work as a printer, quickly gaining the confidence of the most powerful men in that cosmopolitan city. A trip to London followed in 1724, although financial support promised to Franklin by Pennsylvania's governor fell through and he was forced to find work as a printer.

Returning to Philadelphia in 1726, he began a rise that was professionally and financially astonishing. By 1748 he was able to retire, having started a newspaper; begun a tradesmen's club called the Junto; founded the first American subscription library; become clerk to the Pennsylvania legislature; established the first fire company; become postmaster of Philadelphia; established the American Philosophical Society; and launched *Poor Richard's Almanac*, the collection of wit, wisdom, and financial advice he produced for twenty-five years.

Franklin turned his attention to science and politics. He performed his electrical experiments—most famously the silken kite experiment, which proved that lightning and electricity were the same force of nature—and he invented the lightning rod. He added to his list of inventions with bifocal eyeglasses and the efficient Franklin stove. A key mover in the Pennsylvania legislature, he was sent to England as the colony's agent in 1764, emerging as the leading spokesman against the Stamp Act. (His illegitimate son William became colonial governor of New Jersey, but remained a Loyalist, a fracture of his relationship with his father that was never repaired.)

With war looming, Franklin returned to America a month before the battles at Lexington and Concord. During the war, he sat in the Second Continental Congress, was a member of the committee that formed the Declaration, and soon afterward was sent to Paris to negotiate an alliance with the French, staying in Europe to make the terms of peace.

Nathan Hale (1755–1776) A Connecticut schoolteacher, Hale joined Washington's army but saw no action. When Washington called for volunteers to gather information on British troops, Hale stepped forward. Recognized and reported by a Tory relative, he was arrested by the British in civilian clothing with maps showing troop positions. After confessing, Hale was hanged. While his dignity and bravery were widely admired and he became an early martyr to the rebel cause, his famous last words of regret are most likely an invention that has become part of the Revolution's mythology. The words have never been documented.

John Hancock (1736–1793) The richest man in New England before the war, Hancock was a merchant who had inherited his wealth from an uncle who had acquired it through smuggling. As an ally of the Adamses, Hancock's purse assured him a prominent place among the patriots, and he bankrolled the rebel cause. Hancock attended the Continental Congresses and served as President of the Congress. Despite a total lack of military experience, Hancock hoped to command the Continental Army and was annoyed when Washington was named. He was the first and most visible signer of the Declaration, but his wartime service was undistinguished, and after the war he was elected governor of Massachusetts.

Patrick Henry (1736–1799) Far from being a member of the Virginia aristocracy, Henry was the son of a frontier farmer whose first attempts to earn a living met with failure. Through influential friends, he was licensed to practice law and made a name for himself, eventually winning a seat in the House of Burgesses. An early radical and an ambitious self-promoter, Henry represented frontier interests against the landed establishment and was known throughout the colonies for his fiery orations. He went to both Continental Congresses, and following the first, he returned to Virginia to make the March 20, 1755, speech for which he is most famous.

He was elected first governor of Virginia, and sent George Rogers Clark to expel the British. After the war he opposed the

Constitution, but later reversed himself. His poor health kept him from taking a position offered in Washington's administration.

American Voices

Patrick Henry to the House of Burgesses:

Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? . . . I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) Born into a well-off farming family in Virginia's Albemarle County, the Declaration's author distinguished himself early as a scholar, and gained admission to the Virginia bar in 1767. Although no great admirer of Patrick Henry's bombastic style, Jefferson was drawn to the patriot circle around Henry after his election to the House of Burgesses, having provided voters with the requisite quantities of rum punch. His literary prowess, demonstrated in political pamphlets, prompted John Adams to put Jefferson forward as the man to write the Declaration, a task he accepted with reluctance.

Most of his war years were spent in Virginia as a legislator and later as governor. After his wife's death, in 1783, he joined the Continental Congress and served as ambassador to France, where he could observe firsthand the French Revolution that he had helped inspire. Returning to America in 1789, Jefferson became Washington's Secretary of State and began to oppose what he saw as a too-powerful central government under the new Constitution, bringing him into a direct confrontation with his old colleague John Adams and, more dramatically, with the chief Federalist, Alexander Hamilton.

Running second to Adams in 1796, he became Vice-President, chafing at the largely ceremonial role. In 1800, Jefferson and fellow Democratic Republican Aaron Burr tied in the electoral vote and Jefferson took the Presidency in a House vote. After two terms, he returned to his Monticello home to complete his final endeavor, the University of Virginia, his architectural masterpiece. As he lay dying, Jefferson would ask what the date

was, holding out, like John Adams, until July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration.

Richard Henry Lee (1732–1794) A member of Virginia's most prominent family and the House of Burgesses, Lee was a valuable ally of Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams. Sent to the Continental Congress in 1776, he proposed the resolution on independence and was one of the signers of the Declaration.

James Otis (1725–1783) A descent into madness kept this Boston lawyer, a writer and speaker on a par with the greats of the era, from earning a greater place in Revolutionary history. Samuel Adams's first ally, Otis became one of the most fiery of the Boston radicals, his pamphlets declaring the rights of the colonists and introducing the phrase "no taxation without representation." Although he attended the 1765 Stamp Act Congress, by 1771 his behavior was increasingly erratic. Walking the streets of Boston, he fired pistols and broke windows until his family bound him and carted him off to a country farm. In and out of asylums, he died when his farmhouse was struck by lightning.

Thomas Paine (1737–1809) One of the Revolution's pure idealists, the English-born Paine lived up to his name in the eyes of those he attacked. Unsuccessful in London, where his radical notions got him into trouble, he came to America with the aid of Benjamin Franklin. At Franklin's urging, he wrote *Common Sense* and helped push the colonies toward independence.

With the Continental Army in retreat, he later wrote a series of pamphlets at Washington's request that became *The Crisis*. In 1781 he went to France and helped secure a large gold shipment for the rebel cause. After the war he returned to England and wrote *The Rights of Man*, which earned him a conviction on charges of treason. He took refuge in France, where his anti-monarchist ideas were welcomed as France went through the throes of its great Revolution. But as that Revolution began to eat its own, Paine was imprisoned and wrote *The Age of Reason* while awaiting the guillotine. Spared execution, he returned to Amer-

ica. The eternal gadfly, Paine alienated the new American powers-that-be with his *Letter to Washington*, and died a poor outcast.

American Voices

From *The Crisis* by Thomas Paine:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will shrink from the service of his country. . . . Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered.

Paul Revere (1735–1818) "Listen my children and you shall hear . . ."

It is perhaps the best-known bit of doggerel in American literature. But like most epic poems, Longfellow's tribute to the Boston silversmith fudges the facts. Boston-born, Revere was the son of a Huguenot, the French Protestants who had been driven from France. In America, he changed his name from Apollos Rivoire. A silversmith like his father, Paul Revere also went into the false-teeth business. A veteran of the French and Indian War, he was in the Samuel Adams circle of rebels, serving as a messenger. He took an active part in all the events leading up to the war, and his famous engraving of the Massacre, which had been lifted from the work of another artist, became an icon in every patriot home.

But it was the ride to Lexington that brought him immortality of sorts. In fact, he made two rides. The first was to warn the patriots to hide their ammunition in Concord, and the second was the famous "midnight ride." After receiving the signal from the South Church, Revere and two other riders set off. Although he was able to reach Lexington and warn John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and the Minutemen of the British approach, Revere was soon captured.

His wartime record was also slightly tarnished. Despite his services as a trusted courier, he had not received a commission from Congress and served out the war in a militia unit. In one of his few actions, Revere was ordered to lead troops against the British at Penobscot. Instead he marched his men back to Boston when American ships failed to engage the British. Relieved of

command and accused of cowardice, Revere's honor was smudged until a court acquittal in 1782.

Joseph Warren (1741–1775) A Boston physician, Warren became one of Sam Adams's most devoted protégés. An active participant in the major prewar event in Boston, Warren became an instant hero when he charged into enemy fire at Lexington to treat the wounded. His fame was short-lived as he became one of the first patriot martyrs. Commissioned a general despite a lack of experience, he joined the ranks on Breed's Hill and was killed in the fighting there.

Mercy Otis Warren (1728–1814) Sister of the patriot leader James Otis, Mercy Warren surmounted the considerable odds placed before women in eighteenth-century America to become a writer of considerable influence. A dramatist, she was unable to see her plays performed because Puritan Boston did not permit theatrical works. An outspoken critic of the Constitution, she wrote widely to defeat its ratification. In 1805 she published the first history of the Revolution, the three-volume *Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*. While rich in anecdotal material and period detail, the book was colored by Warren's fierce anti-Federalist bias, and was written in the full fervor of postwar patriotic sentiment.

The Soldiers

Ethan Allen (1738–1789) A flamboyant veteran of the French and Indian War and a giant of a man, Allen raised a private army in Vermont called the Green Mountain Boys during an ongoing border dispute with Vermont's sister colony, New York. After Lexington, Allen and his men, joined by Benedict Arnold, captured the undermanned Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York from the British. Captured during an assault on Montreal in 1775, Allen was thrown in irons and returned to England to stand trial. He was held prisoner for two years. Later he attempted to negotiate a separate peace treaty with the British. He took no further part in the war. He died of apoplexy.

Benedict Arnold (1741–1801) Perhaps the greatest villain in American history, Arnold might have been a great hero. An audacious, even reckless field commander, he fought with distinction in the early days of the Revolution. Raising his own militia force, Arnold joined Ethan Allen in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga and later attempted a brave but ill-fated assault on Quebec. Bitter at being passed over for promotion, he then played an important role in the crucial victory at Saratoga, where he was wounded. Belatedly promoted, Arnold was made commander of the Philadelphia garrison, where he was accused of improprieties and a shadow fell over his career. At about this time, Arnold began to supply the British with military information, culminating in the plan to surrender the strategic fort at West Point. When Arnold's contact, British Major John André, was captured with the plans in his boots, Arnold fled to a British ship. (André was hanged as a spy, partly in retaliation for the execution of Nathan Hale.) Given rank in the British army, Arnold conducted vicious raids on American forces in New England and Virginia. After the war, he and his family were granted a royal pension and given a tract of land in Canada.

George Rogers Clark (1752–1818) A surveyor and frontiersman, Clark led the successful military operations against the British and their Indian allies on the western frontier in what would later become Kentucky.

Horatio Gates (c. 1728–1806) A British-born soldier, he was badly wounded in his first action during the French and Indian War. Gates took up the patriot cause and led the American forces that won the key battle at Saratoga in 1777. But later that year he took part in an abortive attempt to wrest control of the army from George Washington. In 1780 he was given command of the army in the South, but was badly defeated at Camden, South Carolina, and lost his command. After the war, Gates was reinstated as the army's second-ranking officer.

Nathanael Greene (1724–1786) A Rhode Island Quaker with no military experience, Greene became a self-taught student of mili-

tary history and emerged as one of the war's most successful tacticians, rising to the rank of general. At the war's outset, he commanded Rhode Island's three regiments but was picked by Washington for rapid advancement. With Washington at the defeats in Long Island and Manhattan as well as the victory at Trenton, his greatest contribution came as commander in the South. Utilizing a guerrilla strategy, he harassed Cornwallis from the Carolinas, forcing him back toward Virginia and the Yorktown showdown.

Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804) Born in the West Indies, Hamilton was proof that low birth need not be an impediment in early America. The illegitimate son of a shopkeeper mother whose father deserted them, Hamilton caught the attention of wealthy benefactors who sent him to King's College (now Columbia University) in New York. He became an ardent patriot and, at age nineteen, was leading a company of New York artillery.

At Trenton he caught Washington's eye and became a favorite, rising to the position of Washington's aide and private secretary, and later commanding in the field. A convenient marriage to the daughter of Philip Schuyler, a powerful New Yorker, gave him entrée to society and additional clout.

His career was even more significant after the war, when he established a law practice in New York and became a key figure in the Constitutional convention of 1787. Hamilton was one of the chief essayists behind *The Federalist Papers* arguing for the Constitution's ratification (see Chapter 3). He became Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, and was a crucial figure in the first two administrations, establishing the nation's economic policies. But he became involved in political and amorous intrigues that crippled his career.

He returned to private practice, remaining a central figure in the Federalist Party, and his views were the source of the feud that led to his fatal duel with Aaron Burr.

John Paul Jones (1747–1792) Essentially an adventurer who followed the action, America's first naval hero was born John Paul in Scotland and began his career on a slave ship. He came to

America under a dark cloud following the death of one of his crewmen, and added Jones to his name. When the Congress commissioned a small navy, Jones volunteered and was given the *Providence*, with which he raided English ships. With the *Ranger*, he sailed to France and continued his raids off the English coast. The French later gave him a refitted ship called the *Bonhomme Richard*, and with it he engaged the larger, British ship *Serapis* in a battle he won at the loss of *Bonhomme Richard*. A hero to the French, Jones was later sent there as an emissary, and received a congressional medal in 1787. He finished his sea career with the Russian navy of the Empress Catherine before his death in Paris. (In 1905, his supposed remains were returned to the U.S. and reburied at Annapolis, Maryland.)

American Voices

John Paul Jones during the battle against *Serapis*:

I have not yet begun to fight.

Henry Knox (1750–1806) A Boston bookseller and a witness to the Boston massacre, Knox rose to become the general in charge of Washington's artillery and one of the commander-in-chief's most trusted aides. His nickname, "Ox," came from both his substantial girth—he stood six feet three inches and weighed some 280 pounds—and for the exploit in which, during the dead of winter in 1776, he transported the British cannons captured at Fort Ticonderoga by oxcart back to Boston. In Washington's first engagement as commander, these guns were placed on Dorchester Heights, forcing General Howe's army to evacuate the city without a shot being fired.

At Yorktown, Knox commanded the artillery bombardment of General Cornwallis's forces and after the war, he served in Congress. Following Washington's election, Knox became the first War Secretary.

Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834) One of the Revolution's idealists, this young Frenchman came to America at age nineteen,

wealthy enough to pay for his own ship to make the journey. Like other young European aristocrats for whom war was a matter of personal honor and social standing, Lafayette came in search of glory and adventure. In exchange for a major general's rank, he offered to serve without pay, and quickly earned Washington's affection. They developed an almost father-son relationship. Given a minor command, Lafayette proved to be an able and loyal commander.

During a trip back to France, he was instrumental in securing the French military assistance that was the key to the American victory at Yorktown. At the surrender, Lafayette's personal band proudly piped "Yankee Doodle Dandy," once a song mockingly sung by the British to taunt the Americans. After the war, Lafayette returned to France with enough American soil in which to be buried.

Charles Lee (1731–1782) A British-born soldier who rose to general in the patriot army, Lee had fought in the French and Indian War with Braddock, and had seen combat in Europe as well. A professional soldier, he was far more experienced than most of the American commanders, including Washington, whom he grew to disdain. Commissioned a major general, he justified the rank with his defense of Charleston early in the war. He was later captured and held by the British for fifteen months. Allegedly, he offered his captors a plan for defeating the Americans. At the Battle of Monmouth, Lee ordered a confused and nearly costly retreat, for which he was court-martialed and broken of command. He returned to Virginia, where he died in a tavern before the peace treaty was signed.

Francis Marion (1732?–1795) Best known as the "Swamp Fox," Marion led a successful guerrilla war against British and vicious Tory troops under General Cornwallis in the Carolinas. It was the efforts of Marion and other guerrillas, including Charles Sumter, in the southern colonies that frustrated the British strategy to control the South.

Daniel Morgan (1735–1789) A veteran of Braddock's French and Indian disaster, Morgan had driven supply trains, earning his

nickname "Old Wagoner." Another of Washington's most valuable commanders, he led a troop of buckskinned frontier riflemen who played a crucial role in the victory at Saratoga. Elevated to general, he commanded half the southern army and led the key victory at Cowpens and was also instrumental in the bloody Battle of Guilford Court, where General Cornwallis's losses were so heavy that the British commander had to abandon his plans to hold the Carolinas and retreat to Virginia.

"Molly Pitcher" (1754–1832) During the exhausting summer heat of the Battle of Monmouth (1778), Mary McCauley Hays, the wife of Private John Hays, fetched water for her husband and his gun crew, earning her the sobriquet "Molly Pitcher." When her husband was wounded in the battle, she knew his job well enough to help the gun crew continue firing. An apocryphal story they perhaps didn't tell you in grade school was that a cannonball passed through "Molly's" legs and tore away her petticoats. "Molly" is said to have told the men that it was a good thing it hadn't been higher, or it would have carried away something else! After the war, Mary Hays became a scrubwoman and the Pennsylvania Assembly later granted her a yearly pension of \$40.

Israel Putnam (1718–1790) A colonel in the Connecticut militia, "Old Put" left his plow, in the great tradition of civilian soldiers, and headed for Boston when the shooting started at Lexington. One of those in command on Breed's Hill, he achieved immortality of sorts with his order, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes," a well-known piece of military advice of the day.

When the rebel troops started to break ranks after inflicting heavy losses on the British, Putnam unsuccessfully tried to keep his troops in place. But his failure to reinforce an American position was one reason the patriot army left off the battle when a victory might have been won, and Putnam was nearly court-martialed. Instead, Congress made him a general out of regional political considerations. Though never a great strategist or commander, he remained a loyal aide to Washington throughout the war.

Comte de Rochambeau (1725–1807) Commander of the 7,000 French troops sent to aid the rebels, Rochambeau had far more experience than Washington. Coordinating his movements with the French war fleet under Admiral de Grasse, Rochambeau deserves much of the credit for forcing the showdown at Yorktown at a time when Washington seemed to prefer an assault on New York.

Deborah Sampson (1760–1827) Assuming the name “Robert Shurtleff,” this former indentured servant enlisted in the Continental Army in 1782 and became the only woman to serve formally in the Revolution. Fighting with the Fourth Massachusetts, she managed to maintain her disguise, although her fellow soldiers nicknamed her “Molly” because of her hairless face. A fever finally uncovered her true identity, and Sampson was discharged in 1783. She married the next year and received a small military pension. In 1802 she began a lecture tour, one of the first American women to do so, recounting her experiences as a soldier, a performance capped by her donning a soldier’s uniform. Congress granted her heirs a full military pension in 1838.

George Washington (1732–1799) As for the “cherry tree” story, it was one of many fabrications created by Washington’s “biographer,” Parson Weems, who also fashioned the “fact” that he was rector of a nonexistent parish at Mount Vernon. The coin tossed across the Rappahannock—not the Potomac—was another of Weems’s inventions. The legends began there, leaving “the father of our country” enshrouded in more layers of myth than any other figure in American history.

Washington was born into a modestly prosperous Virginia family. His father’s death reduced his fortune, but with the help of relatives he did well, eventually inheriting the family estate at Mount Vernon. He spent about eight years in school, but never went to college. He set out to study law, but gave it up for his preference for the outdoors. Becoming a surveyor, he eventually bought some of the land he had been mapping. His early military career was mostly remarkable for the fact that he survived it. Yet

when the French and Indian War was over, Washington was something of a military hero.

His wealth came from his marriage to the young widow, Martha Dandridge Custis, and by the time of the Revolution he was supposedly one of the richest men in America, although his holdings were in land and slaves rather than cash. As expected of men of his station, he ran for the House of Burgesses and was sent to the two Continental Congresses. After volunteering to serve without pay, he was unanimously chosen commander of the Continental Army when it became apparent that for political reasons a southerner had to fill the job.

There are conflicting views about his military leadership. Traditionalists say that he held together a ragged, ill-equipped army by sheer force of will, chose his commanders well, and had to spend too much time dickering with Congress for enough money to arm his men. This view also holds that he was a master of the strategic retreat, and tricked the British into believing his point of attack would be New York when it was actually Yorktown.

The revisionist view holds that Washington was an unduly harsh leader who maintained brutal discipline in the ranks, nearly lost the war several times, to be saved only by greater incompetence on the part of the British, was better at politicking than commanding, and had to be dragged against his will by the French to attack Yorktown. Several historians argue that Charles Lee or Horatio Gates would have been more daring commanders who might have ended the war sooner. It is an intriguing speculation that will remain unanswered, although Lee’s actions in battle and assistance to the British while a captive do little to arouse confidence in his abilities.

The fact remains that Washington, dealt a weak hand, surmounted the odds of poorly outfitted troops, political intrigues, numerous betrayals, and a vastly better equipped opposition to sweep up the jackpot. If nothing else, he was a consummate survivor, and that may have been what America required at the time. That he was loved by his soldiers seems unlikely; there were frequent mutinies for the suppression of which Washington kept

a well-fed and trained group of militia. He did inspire fierce loyalty among his officer corps, perhaps the true strength of a commander. For the American people, he was the first larger-than-life national hero, something a new nation arguably needs to survive.

After his emotional farewell at Fraunces Tavern in New York, he retired to Mount Vernon, until he was called back to serve as President at a time when probably no other man in America could have united the country behind the new government. The presidency was tailored with him in mind, and he led the nation through eight critical years during which the machinery of government was literally invented. He returned to the gentleman's life at Mount Vernon, where he caught a chill on a cold December day. Left alone, he might have survived. Instead his physicians bled him, standard medical procedure in the day, and the treatment probably doomed him.

What was Common Sense?

When the Continental Congress met for the second time, in May 1775, it was a very different group. The first Congress had been cautious and even conciliatory with conservative and moderate voices holding sway. But the pendulum was swinging to the radical position, and there were new faces among the delegates, Benjamin Franklin—once cautious, now rebellious—and Thomas Jefferson among them.

Events were also moving swiftly. The battles at Lexington and Concord, the easy victory at Fort Mifflin, the devastating casualties inflicted on the British army by the rebels at Breed's Hill, and the evacuation of British troops from Boston in March 1776 had all given hope to the Whig (patriot) cause. But the final break—*independence*—still seemed too extreme to some. It's important to remember that the vast majority of Americans at the time were first and second generation. Their family ties and their sense of culture and national identity were essentially English. Many Americans had friends and family in England. And the commercial ties between the two were obviously also powerful.

The forces pushing toward independence needed momen-

tum, and they got it in several ways. The first factor was another round of heavy-handed British miscalculations. First the King issued a proclamation cutting off the colonies from trade. Then, unable to conscript sufficient troops, the British command decided to supplement its regulars with mercenaries, soldiers from the German principalities sold into King George's service by their princes. Most came from Hesse-Cassel, so the name "Hessian" became generic for all of these hired soldiers.

The Hessians accounted for as much as a third of the English forces fighting in the colonies. Their reputation as fierce fighters was linked to a frightening image—reinforced, no doubt, by the British command—as plundering rapists. (Ironically, many of them stayed on in America. Benjamin Franklin gave George Washington printed promises of free land to lure mercenaries away from English ranks.) When word of the coming of 12,000 Hessian troops reached America, it was a shock, and further narrowed chances for reconciliation. In response, a convention in Virginia instructed its delegates to Congress to declare the United Colonies free and independent.

The second factor was a literary one. In January 1776, an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Common Sense* came off the presses of a patriot printer. Its author, Thomas Paine, had simply, eloquently, and admittedly with some melodramatic prose, stated the reasons for independence. He reduced the hereditary succession of kings to an absurdity, slashed down all arguments for reconciliation with England, argued the economic benefits of independence, and even presented a cost analysis for creating an American navy.

With the assistance of Ben Franklin, Thomas Paine came to America from London and found work with a Philadelphia bookseller. In the colonies for only a few months, Paine wrote, at Franklin's suggestion, a brief history of the upheaval against England. It is impossible to understate the impact and importance of *Common Sense*. Paine's polemic was read by everyone in Congress, including General Washington, who commented on its effects on his men. Equally important, it was read by people everywhere. The pamphlet quickly sold 150,000 copies, going through numerous printings until it had reached half a million. (Approximating