

BATTLE OF FORT TICONDEROGA

In April 1775, when hostilities broke out between colonial militiamen and British soldiers at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga, captured during the French and Indian War, numbered barely 50 men.

Fort Ticonderoga was located directly across Lake Champlain from Vermont, where the Green Mountain Boys—a militia organized in 1770 to defend the property rights of local landowners—joined the revolutionary effort without hesitation. On the morning of May 10, 1775, fewer than a hundred of these militiamen, under the joint command of their leader, Ethan Allen, and Benedict Arnold of Massachusetts, crossed Lake Champlain at dawn, surprising and capturing the still-sleeping British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga.

As the first rebel victory of the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Fort Ticonderoga served as a morale booster and provided key artillery for the Continental Army in that first year of war. Cannons captured at Fort Ticonderoga would be used during the successful Siege of Boston the following spring. Because of its location, the fort would also serve as a staging ground for Continental troops before their planned invasion of British-held territory in Canada.



Benedict Arnold

THE SIEGE OF BOSTON

Following the battles of Lexington and Concord, colonial militiamen surrounded Boston in an effort to contain the British troops there. However, because the British maintained control of Boston Harbor, they were able to receive additional soldiers and supplies.

On June 16, 1775, having learned that the British were planning to send troops from Boston to occupy the hills surrounding the town, colonial militiamen under Colonel William Prescott (1726-95) built fortifications on top of Breed's Hill, overlooking Boston and located on the Charlestown Peninsula. (The men originally had been ordered to construct their fortifications atop Bunker Hill but instead chose the smaller Breed's Hill, closer to Boston.) The next day, British troops under Major General William Howe (1729-1814) and Brigadier General Robert Pigot (1720-96) attacked the Americans at Breed's Hill. The British went on to win the so-called Battle of Bunker Hill, and Breed's Hill and the Charlestown Peninsula fell firmly under their control. Despite their loss, the inexperienced and outnumbered colonial forces inflicted significant casualties against the enemy, and the battle provided the Patriots with an important confidence boost.

After the Battle of Bunker Hill, the Siege of Boston turned into a stalemate for a number of months.

SIEGE OF BOSTON AND FORTIFICATION OF DORCHESTER HEIGHTS

In early July 1775, General George Washington (1732-99) arrived in the Boston area to take command of the newly established Continental Army. Washington's goal was to drive the British from Boston, and in order to do this, his army required weapons. That winter, Colonel Henry Knox (1750-1806) oversaw an expedition to transport more than 60 tons of captured military supplies from New York's Fort Ticonderoga back to Boston. In May 1775, the British-held Ticonderoga and nearby Fort Crown Point had been seized by colonial forces under Benedict Arnold (1741-1801) and Ethan Allen (1738-89). After a challenging journey across snowy terrain, the armaments, including more than 50 cannon, reached the Boston area in late January 1776.

Some of the cannon were placed in fortifications around Boston, and beginning on March 2 used to bombard the British for two days straight. On the night of March 4, several thousand of Washington's men and more of the Ticonderoga cannon were moved into position at Dorchester Heights, overlooking Boston and its harbor. British General William Howe (1729-1814) realized his troops could not defend the town against the Continental army's elevated position at Dorchester Heights, and soon decided to leave. On March 17, the eight-year British occupation of Boston ended when British troops evacuated the town and sailed to the safety of Nova Scotia, a British colony in Canada.

BATTLE OF QUEBEC

In September 1775, with the authorization of the Second Continental Congress, two expeditions of American troops began an advance toward the province of Quebec. General Richard Montgomery and his forces proceeded up Lake Champlain and successfully captured Montreal on November 13 before heading to Quebec City. Colonel Benedict Arnold led his men through the wilderness of present-day Maine, approaching the city directly. In mid-November, Arnold arrived on the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec City. He requested the city's surrender but was rebuffed. Deciding he lacked sufficient resources to fight, Arnold was forced to wait for Montgomery to join him with his troops and supplies.

In early December 1775, Montgomery, Arnold and their men met on the outskirts of Quebec and demanded the surrender of the city. General Guy Carleton (1724-1808), the governor of the province of Quebec, rejected their demand.

BATTLE OF QUEBEC: DECEMBER 31, 1775

Facing the year-end expiration of their troops' enlistment, the American forces advanced on Quebec under the cover of snowfall in the early morning hours of December 31. The British defenders were ready, however, and when Montgomery's forces approached the fortified city, the British opened fire with a barrage of artillery and musket fire. Montgomery was killed in the first assault, and after several more attempts at penetrating Quebec's defenses, his men were forced to retreat.

Meanwhile, Arnold's division suffered a similar fate during their attack on the northern wall of the city. A two-gun battery opened fire on the advancing Americans, killing a number of troops and wounding Arnold in the leg. Patriot Daniel Morgan (1736-1802) assumed command and made progress against the defenders, but halted at the second wall of fortifications to wait for reinforcements. By the time the rest of Arnold's army finally arrived, the British had reorganized, forcing the Patriots to call off their attack. Of the approximately 1,200 Americans who participated in the battle, more than 400 were captured, wounded or killed. British casualties were minor.

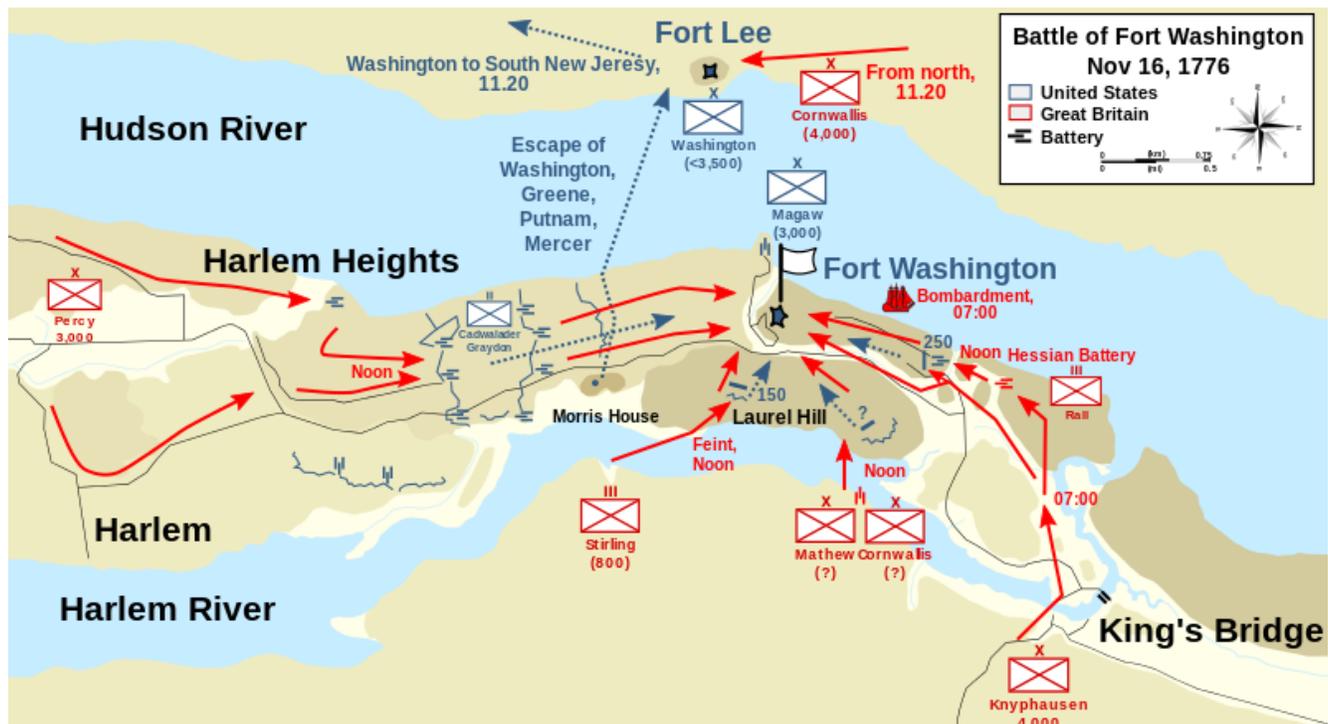
After the defeat at Quebec, the battered and ailing Patriots remained outside the city with the help of additional supplies and reinforcements, carrying out an ineffectual siege. However, with the arrival of a British fleet at Quebec in May 1776, the Americans retreated from the area. The Battle of Quebec was the first major defeat of the Revolutionary War for the Americans.

BATTLE OF FORT WASHINGTON

After defeating the Continental Army under General George Washington at the Battle of White Plains on October 28, the British Army forces under the command of Lieutenant General William Howe planned to capture Fort Washington, the last American stronghold on Manhattan. General Washington issued an order to General Nathanael Greene to abandon the fort and remove its garrison – then numbered at 1,200 men but later to grow to 3,000– to New Jersey. However, Colonel Robert Magaw, commanding the fort, declined to abandon it as he believed it could be defended from the British. Howe's forces attacked the fort before General Washington reached it to assess the situation.

Howe launched his attack on November 16, 1776. He led an assault from three sides: the north, east and south. Tides in the Harlem River prevented some troops from landing and delayed the attack. When the British moved against the defenses, the southern and western American defenses fell quickly. Patriot forces on the north side offered stiff resistance to the Hessian attack, but they too were eventually overwhelmed. With the fort surrounded by land and sea, Colonel Magaw chose to surrender. A total of 59 Americans were killed and 2,837 were taken as prisoners of war.

After this defeat, most of Washington's army was chased across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania, and the British united their control of New York and eastern New Jersey.



BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE

On the afternoon of September 11, 1777, General Sir William Howe and General Charles Cornwallis launch a full-scale British attack on General George Washington and the Patriot outpost at Brandywine Creek near Chadds Ford, in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, on the road linking Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Howe and Cornwallis split their 18,000 British troops into two separate divisions, with Howe leading an attack from the front and Cornwallis circling around and attacking from the right flank. The morning had provided the British troops with cover from a dense fog, so Washington was unaware the British had split into two divisions and was caught off guard by the oncoming British attack.

Although the Americans were able to slow the advancing British, they were soon faced with the possibility of being surrounded. Surprised and outnumbered by the 18,000 British troops to his 11,000 Continentals, Washington ordered his men to abandon their posts and retreat. Defeated, the Continental Army marched north and camped at Germantown, Pennsylvania. The British abandoned their pursuit of the Continentals and instead began the British occupation of Philadelphia. Congress, which had been meeting in Philadelphia, fled first to Lancaster, then to York, Pennsylvania, and the British took control of the city without Patriot opposition.

The one-day battle at Brandywine cost the Americans more than 1,100 men killed or captured while the British lost approximately 600 men killed or injured. To make matters worse, the Patriots were also forced to abandon most of their cannon to the British victors after their artillery horses fell in battle.



VALLEY FORGE

The winter of 1777-1778 was the low point of America's struggle for independence. The troubles began the previous August when the British fleet unloaded a force of Redcoats at the top of the Chesapeake Bay with the objective of capturing the American capital at Philadelphia. The Americans were overpowered by the British at the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, leaving Philadelphia undefended. Members of the Continental Congress fled the city: first to Lancaster and then to York where they reestablished the capital. The British entered Philadelphia on September 26.

THE BRITISH ATTACK PHILADELPHIA

The Continental Army suffered another defeat at the Battle of Germantown just north of Philadelphia on Oct. 4. General Washington led his weary and demoralized army to Valley Forge a few miles away where they would camp for the winter and prepare for battle with the return of warm weather.

Conditions in the camp were horrendous. Forced to live in damp, crowded quarters, Washington's army of approximately 12,000 suffered from a lack of adequate clothing and food. Diseases such as typhoid, dysentery, typhus and pneumonia ran rampant. An estimated 2,000 died. Morale plummeted.

General Washington was in despair as he watched his army disintegrate. However, as time progressed, a transformation occurred. Under Washington's inspired leadership, conditions improved: more food, equipment and new recruits reached the camp lifting spirits. Most importantly, the training efforts of Baron von Steuben increased discipline and reinvigorated pride among the troops. A former member of the General Staff of the Prussian Army, Steuben arrived in camp in February bearing a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin whom he had met in Paris

Washington immediately assigned the seasoned soldier the task of training his army. Drilling started immediately. From dawn to dusk individual soldiers, companies, regiments and battalions were incessantly schooled in the art of war. What had been a ragtag and undisciplined collection of individuals became a cohesive fighting force.

Out of this terrible winter emerged a new Army, confident and ready to do battle. On June 19, 1778 the British abandoned Philadelphia and marched back to New York City. Washington led his Continental Army in pursuit. The subsequent battle at Monmouth, New Jersey ended in a draw. The War for Independence would last another five years, but a major victory of the spirit had been won during the winter at Valley Forge.

SIEGE OF SAVANNAH

On December 29, 1778, British Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell and his force of between 2500 and 3600 troops, which included the 71st Highland regiment, New York Loyalists, and Hessian mercenaries, launch a surprise attack on American forces defending Savannah, Georgia.

American Major General Robert Howe and his measly force of between 650 and 900 men were severely outnumbered. Campbell also outflanked the Continental forces by locating a path through the swamp to the right of the American position. Howe ordered the city to be evacuated and the army to withdraw from combat. During the process, the Georgia Brigade took heavy losses when it was cut off from Howe's other forces. The Patriots lost 83 men and another 483 were captured, while the British lost only 3 men and another 10 were wounded.

French and American forces held Savannah under siege from September 23 to October 18, 1779, but failed to reclaim the city.

The French troops included 500 free Haitians of African descent, calling themselves the *Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint-Dominique*. Soldiers of African descent fighting for the Patriots was an anomaly during the southern campaign—most American slaves attempted to flee and join British forces, as they had no desire to defend their Patriot masters' right to enslave them. Many of the *Volontaires* themselves later went on to rebel against French control of Haiti. In fact, the *Volontaires'* twelve year old drummer, Henri Christoph, commanded Haiti's revolutionary army and later became king of Haiti.

Savannah remained in British control until the Redcoats left of their own accord on July 11, 1782.

BATTLE OF KETTLE CREEK

A Patriot militia force of 340 led by Colonel Andrew Pickens of South Carolina with Colonel John Dooly and Lieutenant Colonel Elijah Clarke of Georgia defeats a larger force of 700 Loyalist militia commanded by Colonel James Boyd on February 14, 1779 at Kettle Creek, Georgia.

The Patriots attempted a two-pronged attack. Pickens' line engaged the Loyalists, while Dooly and Clarke's men attempted to cross the creek and surrounding swamp. Dooly and Clarke's troops were soon bogged down in the difficult crossing and though Boyd had sent 150 of his men out to forage for food that morning, the Loyalists still had the upper hand.

The tide turned when the Loyalists saw their commander, Boyd, collapse from a musket wound. Panicked, they disintegrated into a disorderly retreat towards the creek as Pickens' Patriots fired down upon their camp from above. Shortly thereafter, the two South Carolina commanders, Dooly and Clarke, emerged with their men from the swamp and surrounded the shocked Loyalists, who were attempting to retreat across the creek.

By the end of the action, the Loyalists suffered 70 killed and another 70 captured, compared to 9 killed and 23 wounded for the Patriots. Colonel Boyd, who was wounded during the engagement, died shortly afterward. The victory was the only significant Patriot victory in Georgia and delayed the consolidation of British control in the largely Loyalist colony.

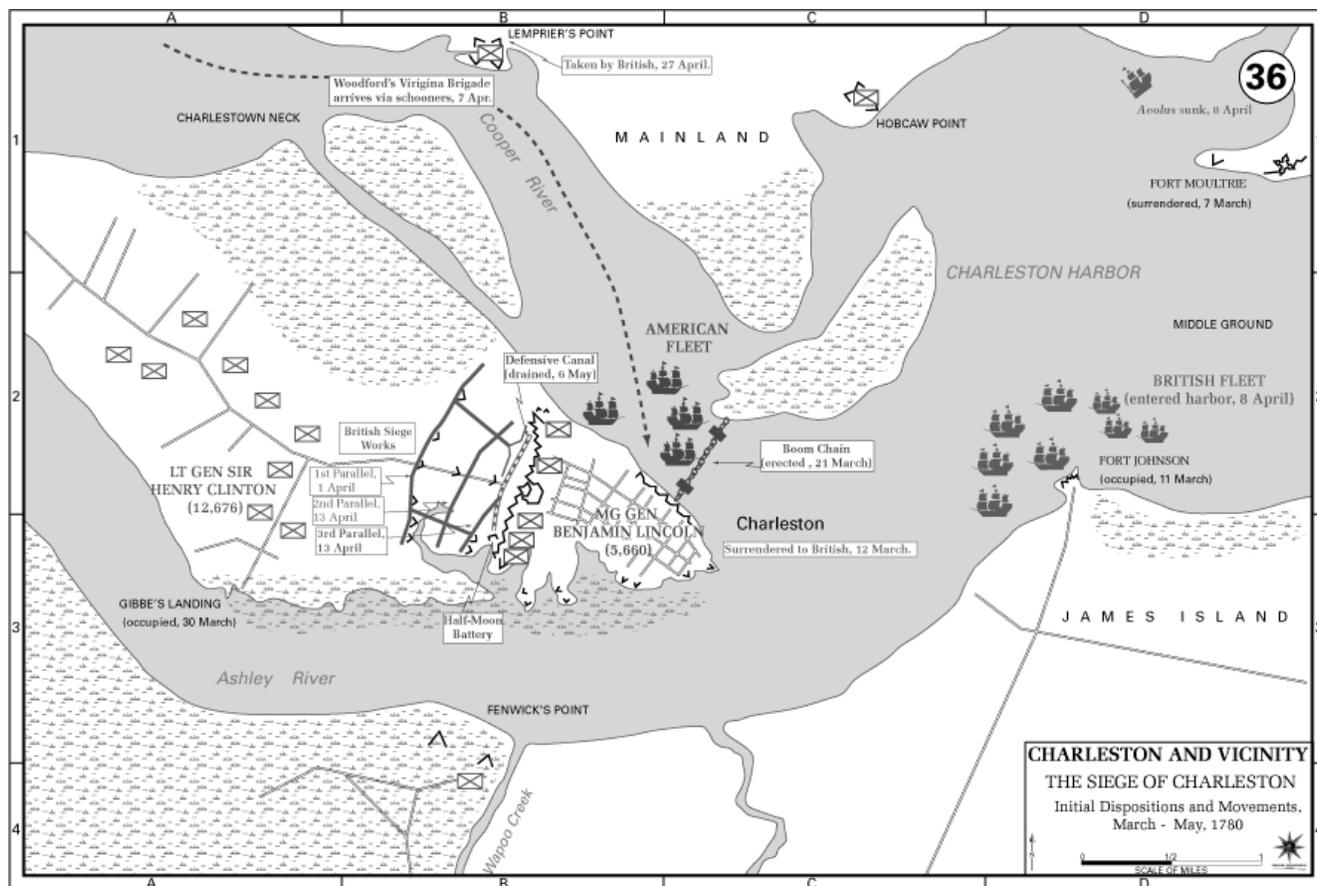
In 1780, Colonel John Dooly was murdered at his log cabin home on his Georgia plantation by South Carolina Loyalists. Dooly County, Georgia, was named in his honor, and the spring near his former cabin in Lincoln County, Georgia, within the grounds of the Elijah Clarke State Park—named for his former Patriot partner—bears a historic marker in the martyred patriot's memory.

SIEGE OF CHARLESTON

After a siege that began on April 2, 1780, Americans suffer their worst defeat of the revolution on May 12, 1780, with the unconditional surrender of Major General Benjamin Lincoln to British Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton and his army of 10,000 at Charleston, South Carolina.

With the victory, the British captured more than 3,000 Patriots and a great quantity of munitions and equipment, losing only 250 killed and wounded in the process. Confident of British control in the South, Lieutenant General Clinton sailed north to New York after the victory, having learned of an impending French expedition to the British-occupied northern state. He left General Charles Cornwallis in command of 8,300 British forces in the South.

South Carolina was a deeply divided state, and the British presence let loose the full violence of a civil war upon the population. First, the British used Loyalists to pacify the Patriot population; the Patriots returned the violence in kind. The guerrilla warfare strategies employed by Patriots Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter and Nathanael Greene throughout the Carolina campaign of 1780-81 eventually chased the far more numerous British force into Virginia, where they eventually surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, 1781.



BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN

Kings Mountain is a unique battle for several reasons. It was one of the few major battles of the war fought entirely between Americans: no British troops served here. In the South, many people were divided. When the war started, some fought for independence, others for loyalty to England. During the American Revolution, Patriots under Colonel William Campbell defeated Loyalists under Major Patrick Ferguson at the Battle of King's Mountain in South Carolina on October 7, 1780.

Major Ferguson's Loyalist force, made up mostly of American Loyalists from South Carolina and elsewhere, was the western wing of General Lord Cornwallis' North Carolina invasion force. One thousand American frontiersmen under Colonel Campbell of Virginia gathered in the backcountry to resist Ferguson's advance. Pursued by the Patriots, Ferguson positioned his Loyalist force in defense of a rocky, treeless ridge named King's Mountain. The Patriots charged the hillside multiple times, demonstrating lethal marksmanship against the surrounded Loyalists.

Kings Mountain is also unique in that large numbers of riflemen fought here. Rifles were not used much by the armies. A rifle was a hunting weapon, used by families on the frontier. The American militia that fought here mainly used rifles; the Loyalist troops had mostly muskets. The difference between a rifle and a musket is speed versus accuracy. A rifle is slow to load, but very accurate. Riflemen can hit a target at 200 or 300 yards. Yet the rifle can only be fired once a minute. A musket, with a smooth bore, is easy to load but inaccurate. Muskets have an accurate range of about 100 yards, but can be fired up to three times a minute.

Unwilling to surrender to a "band of banditti," Ferguson led a suicidal charge down the mountain and was cut down in a hail of bullets. After his death, some of his men tried to surrender, but they were slaughtered in cold blood by the frontiersmen, who were bitter over British excesses in the Carolinas. The Tories suffered 157 killed, 163 wounded, and 698 captured. Colonel Campbell's force suffered just 28 killed and 60 wounded.



BATTLE OF COWPENS

After the British scored victories in South Carolina at Charleston (May 1780) and Camden (August 1780), Major General Nathanael Greene (1742-86), commander of the Continental army's Southern campaign, decided to divide Patriot troops in the Carolinas in order to force the larger British contingent under General Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805) to fight them on multiple fronts—and because smaller groups of men were easier for the struggling Patriots to feed. Brigadier General Daniel Morgan took 300 Continental riflemen and some 700 militiamen with the intention of attacking the British backcountry fort, Ninety-Six.

In response, Cornwallis dispatched Banastre Tarleton with 1,100 Redcoats and Loyalists to catch Morgan, whom he feared might start a broad-based backcountry Patriot uprising. Morgan, nicknamed Old Waggoner because he served as a wagon driver during the French and Indian War (1754-63), prepared for the encounter with Tarleton by backing his men up to a river at Cowpens, a pastureland in present-day Spartanburg County and north of Ninety-Six.

As Tarleton's men attacked, Morgan instructed the militia to skirmish with them but to leave the front line after firing two rounds. The British mistook the repositioning of the Americans as a retreat and ran into an unexpected volley of concentrated rifle fire coupled with a cavalry charge and followed by the return of the militia. Tarleton escaped, but Morgan's troops decimated his army.

American rifles, scorned by Britain's professional soldiers, proved devastatingly effective in this engagement. More than 800 British troops were killed, wounded or captured. The Americans suffered less than 100 casualties in the first Patriot victory to demonstrate that they could outfight a similar British force without any other factors, such as surprise or geography, to assist them. The victory provided an important morale boost, and later that year, in November, the Americans would defeat the British at Yorktown, Virginia, the last major Revolutionary War battle.