

December 10, 2025

## AMERICAN REVOLUTION TIMELINE

(excerpted from Wikipedia)

1215

**Magna Carta.** Rebellious barons forced John I of England to sign the charter which defined and limited the power of monarch and established that the monarch was not above the law.

1603-1625

**James VI of Scotland succeeds** to the throne of England as James I, asserting the idea of absolutism and the divine right of kings.

1606

**Virginia Company established** as a corporation to colonize the east coast of North America.

1619

**House of Burgesses** established, the first representative legislature in the Americas, meeting in Jamestown, Virginia, (July 19) The (Thirteen Colonies) were part of the emerging English empire and all had elected assemblies with a broad suffrage for free, white, male colonists.

**First enslaved Africans** arrive in Virginia.

1620

**Mayflower Compact** (Nov. 21, 1620) founding document of the Plymouth Colony of Pilgrims.

1630

John Winthrop leads Puritan settlers to Massachusetts Bay. "**Great Migration**" of Puritans begins, with some 21,000 English men and women migrating by 1642. They come in family groups for religious reasons.

1642-1651

**English Civil War** breaks out, bloody conflict between Royalists supporting Charles I of England and Roundheads supporting Parliament.

1643

**New England Confederation** of colonies established during the English Civil War; primary purpose was to unite the Puritan colonies in support of the Congregational church, and for mutual defense against the Native Americans and the Dutch colony of New Netherland; first cooperative effort of English colonies.

1647–60

**First Families of Virginia** arrive. Major migration of royalists fleeing the Commonwealth of England.

1649

**Trial of Charles I** for treason by an ad hoc High Court, found guilty, and publicly executed by beheading. Charles claimed the court had no jurisdiction to try him, asserting he ruled by divine right. The trial and execution of Charles I remain pivotal events that challenged the traditional ideas of monarchy.

1650

**Board of Trade** established

1651, 1652

**Navigation Acts**

1660

**Restoration of the Stuart monarchy**, Charles II returns from exile.

1675-1678

**King Philip's War** was an armed conflict in 1675–1678 in New England.

1676-77

**Bacon's Rebellion**, an armed rebellion by Virginia settlers against Governor William Berkeley for his failure to drive Native Americans from the colony's frontiers

1679

**Habeas Corpus Act** 1679 was passed by Parliament.

1683

**The Lords of Trade issue quo warranto writs** for the charters of several North American colonies, including Massachusetts (June 3).

1684

**Revocation of the Massachusetts Charter** by Charles II (June 18).

1686

**Disestablishment of the New England Confederation.**

The **Dominion of New England** established in America (May 14), centralizing the administration of formerly separate crown colonies in New England and the Middle colonies during the reign of James II of England.

1688

**Glorious Revolution** or the Revolution of 1688, the ouster of Catholic James II of England as monarch by Protestant royals William III, James II's nephew, and Mary II, James II's daughter, becoming joint monarchs, but with power held by Parliament.

1689

**English Bill of Rights**, the Act of Parliament, enumerating basic civil rights.

**1689 Boston revolt**, Leaders of the former Massachusetts Bay Colony reclaim control of the government.

**Leisler's Rebellion** in New York, breaking territory away from the Dominion of New England, ending in 1691.

Protestant Revolution (Maryland), also known as **Coode's rebellion**, overthrew the Catholic proprietary government.

**John Locke** anonymously publishes **Two Treatises of Government**. The Second Treatise outlines Locke's ideas for a more civilized society based on natural rights and contract theory. The book is a key foundational and influential text in the theory of liberalism.

1691

**Royal charter formally establishing the Province of Massachusetts Bay** (Oct 7). Major change in voter eligibility requirements from religious qualifications to land ownership, greatly enlarging the number of men eligible to vote. The charter guarantees freedom of worship for all Protestants, but not Catholics. Major change from election of senior government officials to crown appointment, including governor, lieutenant governor, and judges. The legislative assembly continued to be elected and was responsible for choosing members of the Governor's Council. The governor had veto power over laws passed by the assembly and appointments to the council. These rules differed in important ways from the royal charters enjoyed by the other New England colonies. The most important were that the assembly now possessed the power of appropriation, and that the council was locally chosen and not appointed by either the governor or the Crown, significantly weakening the governor's power.

1700

English settlers in North America reach 200,000; French settlement in New France is no more than 12,000. The rest of North America is claimed by a waning Spanish Empire.

1702

**Queen Anne's War**/War of the Spanish Succession prompts German migration to American colonies.

1733

**Molasses Act** passed by Parliament, affecting the colonial molasses trade.

1739

**Stono Rebellion**, South Carolina slave insurrection, largest in the colonial era.

1744-48

**King George's War** in North America formed part of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748). It was the third of the four French and Indian Wars, taking place primarily in the British provinces of New York, Massachusetts Bay, the rest of New England, and Nova Scotia.

1747

**Ohio Company** of Virginia formed, a land speculation company.

1748

Lord Halifax appointed head of the British Board of Trade, the only royal office dealing solely with the American colonies; attempts to end previous de facto policy of **salutary neglect** of colonial affairs, allowing much local autonomy and loose oversight of royal officials. Implementation of a new, unitary and restrictive approach to royal control largely a failure, but renewed in 1763, after the Seven Years' War.

1749

Parliament passes the **Currency Bill**; includes a clause declaring that "any colonial legislative enactments contrary to [government] instructions null and void"; pushback from colonial agents and government reserved this for "future consideration."

1754-1763

**French and Indian War** (1754–1763), a nine-year conflict, the North American portion of the Seven Years' War, a global conflict fought between European powers, that began on the fringes of the British and French empires in North America.

Colonial militias play a role; Virginia planter, Col. George Washington makes a name for himself as a military leader.

1754

**Albany Congress**, the first time in the 18th century that American colonial representatives meet to discuss some manner of formal union; attempts to gain Iroquois support (June 18 – July 11).

1757

Prime Minister **William Pitt** commits to all-out effort in the Seven Years' War, incurring massive debt for the royal treasury.

1759–60

**British Army defeats French Army** in New France.

1763

**The Treaty of Paris** (February 10) ends the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), called in North America the French and Indian War (1754–1763). France cedes most of its territories in North America to Great Britain, but Louisiana west of the Mississippi River is ceded to Spain.

**George Grenville** becomes Prime Minister (April 16) – a hardliner, who implemented policies to make the colonies contribute to paying off the massive debt from the Seven Years' War and assert Parliament's authority over the colonies.

**Pontiac's War** is launched by a Native American confederation in the Great Lakes region under the overall command of the eponymous Ottawa chief. Previously allied with France, they were dissatisfied by the policies of the British under Amherst (April 25, 1763 – July 25, 1766).

**Royal Proclamation of 1763** establishes royal control in territories newly ceded by France, land to which some English colonies claim. To prevent further violence between White settlers and Native Americans, the Proclamation sets a western boundary on the American colonies (October 7). American colonies view this as a limitation on their previous rights to continue expansion westward that encroached on Native American territory.

**Navigation Acts re-enforced** by George Grenville as a part of his attempt to reassert unified economic control over the British Empire following the Seven Years' War.

1764

**Sugar Act** (April 5), intended to raise revenues, and the **Currency Act** (September 1), prohibiting the colonies from issuing paper money, are passed by Parliament. These

Acts, coming during the economic slump that followed the French and Indian War, required that colonists contribute to paying off the war debt and led to colonial protests.

1765

**Stamp Act** enacted by Parliament (March 22) to impose control and help defray the cost of keeping troops in America to control the colonists, imposing a tax on many types of printed materials used in the colonies. Seen as a violation of rights, the Act sparks violent demonstrations in several Colonies. In May, Virginia's Patrick Henry sponsors the Virginia Resolves claiming that, under British law, Virginians could be taxed only by an assembly to which they had elected representatives.

**Quartering Act** (March 24), act of Parliament requiring the Colonies to provide housing, food, and other provisions to British troops. The act is resisted or circumvented in most of the colonies.

**Virginia Resolves** (May 29) passed by the House of Burgesses, mainly authored by Patrick Henry, defends colonial rights against Parliament's action; widely disseminated in the colonies.

**Sons of Liberty** created in Boston, name taken from a speech by Isaac Barré, MP; with Samuel Adams prominent member.

**Stamp Act Congress**, gathering of delegates from 9 colonies which adopts (October 19) a Declaration of Rights and Grievances and petitions Parliament and the king to repeal the Act.

1766

**Stamp Act repealed** by Parliament; **Declaratory Act** simultaneously issued asserting Parliament's "full power and authority to make laws and statutes ... to bind the colonies and people of America ... in all cases whatsoever"; designed to overrule actions by the legislative assemblies of each colony, which had traditionally held authority (March 18)

1767

**Townshend Acts** – renewed Parliament assertion of its right to tax the American colonies after the repeal of the Stamp Act, placing duties on many items imported into America, including tea (June 29). The American colonists, who were denied any representation in Parliament, strongly condemned the Acts as an egregious abuse of power.

- **The Revenue Act 1767** (29 June 1767) placed taxes on glass, lead, "painters' colors" (paint), paper, and tea. It also gave the supreme court of each colony the power to issue **writs of assistance**, general warrants that could be issued to customs officers and used to search private property for smuggled goods.

- **The Commissioners of Customs Act 1767** created a new Customs Board for the North American colonies, to be headquartered in Boston with five customs commissioners to enforce shipping regulations and increase tax revenue for the Crown. Previously, customs enforcement was handled by the Customs Board in London. Due to the distance, enforcement was poor, taxes were avoided and smuggling was rampant. (29 June 1767).
- **The Vice Admiralty Court Act 1768** passed on 8 March 1768.

**Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania** by John Dickinson are twelve letters widely read and reprinted throughout the Thirteen Colonies, and were important in uniting the colonists against the Townshend Acts.

1768

**Massachusetts Circular Letter** (February) by Samuel Adams asserts the Townshend Acts are unconstitutional. British Secretary of State for the Colonies orders colonial governors to stop their own assemblies from endorsing the letter; he also orders the governor of Massachusetts to dissolve the General Court if the colonial assembly does not revoke the letter. By month's end, the assemblies of New Hampshire, Connecticut and New Jersey have endorsed the letter

**Royal governor of Massachusetts dissolves the assembly** (July) after the legislature defies his order to revoke Samuel Adams's circular letter. In August, in Boston and New York, **merchants agree to boycott most British goods until the Townshend Acts are repealed**. In September, at a town meeting in Boston, residents are urged to arm themselves. Later in September, more British warships sail into Boston Harbor; **two regiments of British regular infantry land in Boston** and set up permanent military occupation.

1770

**Lord North becomes Prime Minister** of Great Britain (January 28), serving until 1782, essentially the entire span of the war

**Boston Massacre** (March 5), a small number of British soldiers, harassed by an unruly crowd of 300–400 and pelted with snowballs and oyster shells, fired upon the civilians, killing 5. The soldiers were arrested and tried. Patriot John Adams defended them in court.

1772

**Samuel Adams** organizes the **Committees of Correspondence**

**Gaspee Affair** (June 9)

1773

**Sheffield Declaration of individual rights** passed in the town of Sheffield, Massachusetts. The first resolution reads that "Mankind in a state of nature are equal, free, and independent of each other, and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property". (Jan. 12)

**Tea Act** passed by Parliament, requiring the colonies to buy tea solely from the East India Company rather than a variety of sources now deemed illegal (May 10)

**Association of the Sons of Liberty** in New York published by local Sons of Liberty (December 15)

Colonists in all major ports refuse to allow tea to be landed

**Boston Tea Party** (December 16)

1774

British Parliament passes a series of bills, called in the colonies the **Intolerable Acts**, to punish Boston for the Boston Tea Party including:

- **Boston Port Act** (March 31) – closing the port
- **Administration of Justice Act** (May 20)
- **Massachusetts Government Act** (May 20)
- **A second Quartering Act** (June 2)
- **Quebec Act** (June 22) set the terms for the governance of territory won from France in the French and Indian War; continuation of French civil law and governmental, and toleration of Catholicism; the territorial boundaries extended through the Ohio Valley, which the colonies of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut colonies claimed by their charters and expected to profit from by land sales to white settlers, ignoring the claims of Native Americans.

Anglo-Irish MP **Edmund Burke** delivers the speech On American Taxation in Parliament, calling for a repeal of the Townshend acts, warning that the draconian and punitive policies against the Americans were wrong and would be counterproductive. He had the speech printed and it was widely distributed.

**First Continental Congress**, (September 5 – October 26); 12 colonies send delegates; major actions:

- **Joseph Galloway's Plan of Union** debated September 1774, calling for the creation of a Grand Council for the American colonies, with each having representation and hold and exercise power within the British Empire; rejected by the Continental Congress.

- **Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress**, also known as Declaration of Rights (October 14)
- **Continental Association** created (October 20, effective December 1), the agreement exhibited the collective will of the colonies to act together for their common interests, initially an economic boycott against British goods. The agreement is published in a London newspaper. The British government begins to realize the extent of the colonies' collective resistance.
- **Petition to the King** (October 26) **to repeal the Intolerable Acts**; addressed to George III, but since 1688 the monarch could not act independently of Parliament, which had passed the acts

**Suffolk Resolves**, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. The declaration rejected the Massachusetts Government Act and resulted in a boycott of imported goods from Britain unless the Intolerable Acts were repealed. The Resolves were recognized by British statesman Edmund Burke as a major development in colonial animosity and he urged British conciliation with the American colonies, to little effect. (September 9)

"A Summary View of the Rights of British America," written anonymously by **Thomas Jefferson**, published in London, asserting that kings were servants, not proprietors of people (November).

1775

**Edmund Burke** delivers a major speech to Parliament "**On Conciliation with America**", appealing for peace as preferable to civil war and reminding the House of Commons of America's growing population, its industry and its wealth. He warned against the notion that the Americans would back down in the face of force since most Americans were of British descent. (March 22, published in May)

**Paul Revere's** Midnight Ride (April 18)

**Battles of Lexington and Concord**, (April 19) skirmishes between British regular troops and Massachusetts citizen militias, outbreak of armed conflict of the American Revolutionary War.

**Siege of Boston** (19 April 1775 – 17 March 1776), American blockade of British forces in the port of Boston, garnering other colonies' support, ending with British withdrawal.

**Fort Ticonderoga captured** in upstate New York.

**Second Continental Congress** begins meeting as scheduled (May 10) it functioned as the de facto federation government at the outset of the Revolutionary War by raising militias, directing strategy, appointing diplomats, and writing petitions such as the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms and the **Olive**

**Branch Petition.** All 13 colonies were represented when the Congress unanimously adopted the following year later the **Declaration of Independence**.

**Continental Army created** by Congress with George Washington of Virginia as commanding general (June 14).

**Battle of Bunker Hill,** Boston (June 17), pyrrhic British victory with large casualties.

**Washington arrives in Cambridge,** Massachusetts to take command of the Continental Army (July 2).

**Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms** issued (July 6), written by Jefferson and Dickinson, revised and adopted by Congress, explains why the Thirteen Colonies had taken up arms in what had become the American Revolutionary War.

**Olive Branch Petition** adopted by the Second Continental Congress and sent to King George III (July 8), last ditch American effort for peace.

**King George III issues the Proclamation of Rebellion** (August 23), de facto royal response to the Olive Branch Petition, dashing the hopes of loyalists and moderates; it declared anyone aiding the open rebellion to be traitors.

**Dunmore's Proclamation** issued by Virginia royal governor Lord Dunmore, offering freedom to enslaved men held by rebel masters if they fight for the British (November 7).

1776

Publication of **Common Sense** by **Thomas Paine** (January 10). It becomes a runaway bestseller, selling 500,000 copies, convincing many colonists that independence was the only course.

**British evacuate Boston** (March 17), major victory for the Americans over the British, with the withdrawal of their forces after the year-long Siege of Boston. This is the first example of the British forces being able to take a major American city, but being forced to abandon it.

**Declaration of Independence** – Second Continental Congress enacts (July 2) a resolution declaring independence from the British Empire (July 2).

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**Largest assembly of British naval fleet in history** commences off the coasts of Staten Island, Brooklyn and New Jersey (July 3).

**Proclamation of the Declaration of Independence** by the Second Continental Congress (July 4).

**Statue of George III** pulled down, New York City.

**Sons of Liberty topple the statue of King George III** in Bowling Green; the lead in the statue was melted down and made into bullets (July 9)

**Battle of Long Island**, a.k.a. Battle of Brooklyn (August 27) – British victory; British occupation of New York for the duration of the war; Washington's largely intact forces escape capture, a repeated strategy in the war

**Battle of Trenton** (December 26) Washington's surprise attack on Hessian mercenaries and victory, capturing the garrison. Howe's army is forced to retreat from all British posts in New Jersey. The crossing of the Delaware River the night before the attack is an iconic image.

**Thomas Paine** publishes **The American Crisis**, inspiring Americans to continue in their struggle. (1776–1777).

1777

Delegates in **Vermont**, which was not one of the Thirteen Colonies, **establish a republic and adopt a constitution**, the first in what is now the territory of the United States to **prohibit slavery** (July 8).

**Battle of Saratoga** (September 19 and October 7); surrender of the British army under General Burgoyne. Major American victory, demonstrating to France that the Americans could win in battle. **The French now formally allied with the Americans in 1778**, after providing covert aid since 1776.

**Articles of Confederation**, formal legal framework for governance of the U.S. until 1787, adopted by the Second Continental Congress (November 15).

Continental Army in third winter quarters at **Valley Forge** (December 19, 1777 – June 19, 1778)

1778

American treaties of alliance with France with **Treaty of Amity and Commerce** and **Treaty of Alliance** (February 6). The full weight of the France, Britain's longstanding rival, provides crucial support (money, army and naval forces, war materiel) to the Americans.

**France declares war on Great Britain**, starting the Anglo-French War (1778–1783) and formally allying with the United States (March 17) The war is transformed from an insurgency within the British Empire and one of its component parts into a global conflict between Britain and France, which seeks to undermine British dominance. Britain must rethink its war strategy since its lucrative Caribbean

colonies of Jamaica and Barbados and others and India are now vulnerable to the French and Britain itself could be invaded.

**British troops evacuate from Philadelphia**, redeploy to New York City (June 18).

**Capture of Savannah**, Georgia, British victory, launching their **southern strategy** (December 29).

1779

**Spain declares war on Great Britain** in alliance with France but not in alliance with the U.S. to recover Gibraltar and Minorca; gives material and logistical support to the American Revolution (June 21)

1780

**New York cedes to Congress its western claims**, including territory west of Lake Ontario (February 1).

**Siege of Charleston** (March 29 – May 12). Successful British siege of the major southern colonial port.

**Treason of Gen. Benedict Arnold** exposed; Major John André captured and executed as spy. (September 23) Arnold becomes a British general and recruits Loyalists.

**Battle of Kings Mountain**, South Carolina, American militia victory against Loyalist militias in the southern campaign, following a string of American defeats, greatly raising their morale. (October 7)

1781

**Battle of the Chesapeake**, huge French naval victory over the British navy; France can now prevent the relief of Cornwallis in Yorktown and he is forced to surrender his army to the joint American-French army (September 5).

**The British surrender at Yorktown**, effective end of the land war in North America. (Oct. 19) Joint French-American armies of Washington and Rochambeau and the French navy trap Cornwallis and force the surrender of his entire army. War continues on other fronts until the Peace Treaty of 1783.

1782

**House of Commons votes to suspend the war in America** (27 February 1782); Lord North resigns

**Rockingham becomes Prime Minister**, pursues peace (March 27-July 1)

**Preliminary terms for peace between Britain and Americans:** British recognition of U.S. independence; British pledge withdrawal of troops; U.S. ceded land in the Great Lakes and Ohio; U.S. granted fishing rights off of Newfoundland (30 November 1782)

George **Washington**, citing a clause in the preliminary treaty, **insisted on the return of any present or former slaves**. As part of documenting and evacuation of former slaves to British North America, the Book of Negroes was compiled in New York City.

**Enslaved Africans in America who escaped to the British** during the American Revolutionary War **became the first settlement of Black Nova Scotians** and Black Canadians.