

The Revolution in March

Year 1775

March 6th a panic erupts at a town hall meeting in Boston when a British soldier yells “Fie” and it’s mistaken for “fire” by the citizens. In that time however the use of the word “Fire” had a different meaning.

March 17 the Cherokee are pushed into selling the land between the Cumberland river and the Kentucky river to the Transylvania company. Daniel Boone was then contracted to lead settlers to this new Colony along the Wilderness Road. It set in motion the Indian raids in both Kentucky and Tennessee for the remainder of the Revolution.



March 20th, the second Virginia convention begins. Delegates heard Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech as well as require ever county of the colony to form volunteer infantry and cavalry units. Attending the event was George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, and Thomas Jefferson.

March 30th, King George issues the New England Restraining Act. It bars the New England colonies from trading with anyone other than the British Empire and prohibits fishing in

the North Atlantic. This act would eventually be extended to the other colonies until the battle of Lexington rendered such acts redundant.

Year 1776

The South



March 1st. Congress recalls General Charles Lee from the Canadian department to take command of the continental forces in the southern states.

He took command of an estimated 20,000 men in three colonies, prepared to fight British General Clinton where ever he choose to land.

As Lee traveled south to Charleston, a British fleet sailed into Savannah. They were to acquire rice to feed the British forces besieged in Boston. But instead of meeting Royal Governor Wright, they were met by Georgia Patriots who had previously arrested the governor. The resulting fight saw the sinking of some Rice boats and a British transport before the Fleet withdrew with what supplies they had been able to seize from the Patriots.

This included governor Wright who had been informed on March 20th by General Clinton that no British troops were available to retake the colony.

Finally, on **March 26th**, the Provincial Congress in Charleston approves a new Constitution and elects as its president John Rutledge.



Boston

March 2nd 1776, Cannons brought by General Knox from Fort Ticonderoga begin bombarding Boston. Three days later the British decide to evacuate the city, which begins on March 17th. Washington himself enters the city the following day. Most of the American forces can't enter however due to the risk of Small Pox within the city.

On March 25th Congress issued Washington a gold medal for his success at Boston.

France

March 3rd, Silas Deane embarks for France on a secret Mission. He is to meet the Foreign Minister, Charles De Vergennes, to brief him on the Americans plans and need for military supplies. Later that month Charles directs his ambassador to London to falsely state that France was not in contact with the Continental Congress or General Washington.



Foreign Minister Charles Gravier De Vergennes

The High Seas

On **March 3rd**, eight American ships launched the first-ever amphibious landing by American forces. The target was Fort Nassau where a large supply of gunpowder was stored. The powder had been shipped out of Virginia by Governor Dunsmore to keep it out of rebel hands. The patriots had in turn tracked it down to the Bahamas. In the end only the 100 cannons at the harbor were seized as the all-important powder was shipped away in the night to St. Augustine Florida.



On **March 16th** British Admiral Shuldham reported that American vessels were loading supplies at three Spanish ports in violation of the Trade Act. And what were they loading, Gunpowder.

New York

On hearing that the British were withdrawing from Boston, Congress over reacts and believes General Howe was immediately planning an attack on New York harbor. On **March 14th** Congress orders 8,000 Continentals to New York for its defense. The following day they send orders to Connecticut, New York and New Jersey to have their militias in readiness. Washington only agrees to the concern on **March 27th** when he sends a brigade from Boston to New York. Two days later Washington then appoints Major General Israel Putnam commander of the troops in New York.



Putnam (seen here) served in the French and Indian War with Rogers Rangers. He was said to be a gregarious tavern-keeper, an industrious farmer and an aggressive soldier.

In fact General Howe was not heading for New York. He sailed to Canada to organize his troops and then insure British control of Quebec. For months American forces had been besieging Quebec City and Montreal. The British reinforcements included Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne who routed the American forces.

Year 1777

New Jersey,

Following the battles of Trenton and Princeton British General Howe withdrew his forces to Northern New Jersey. By the end of winter 1777 close to 14,000 British and Hessian troops were quartered between Amboy and New Brunswick. From these locations the British sent out small units to acquire supplies (forage). In turn American units would intercept them in a series of small- but violent- skirmishes.

General William Maxwell of New Jersey was one of the American commanders during these fights. His personal knowledge of the land allowed him to set up several traps for the professional British and Hessian commanders. More British and Hessian troops were lost in New Jersey during this conflict than in the previous New York campaign.

One of Maxwell's traps however nearly got away from him. On March 8th, he spotted a large foraging party leaving Amboy. At nearly 3,000 men strong and with two cannons, it hardly seemed a foraging party and when it then took up

position on Punk Hill near Bonham town it seemed more like a redeployment of forces.

Maxwell wanted to know more about this position. He sent a small unit against the British right to draw their attention. At the same time he sent a larger unit around the left towards Bonham town to scout the enemy lines (if any). But the larger unit quickly encountered a strong force from Punk Hill. Reinforcements were called by both sides and Maxwell was quickly mobilizing his main force.

Before Maxwell could launch an assault on the hill however the British began withdrawing towards Bonham town. The Americans gave chase and soon it had the makings of a rout. It was then Maxwell realized his men were running head-long into an area of no cover: plain open ground. He thus ordered the pursuit halted.

Later Maxwell learned British General Howe had been in Bonham town that day. Was the British troop movement to Punk Hill a trick by Howe to lure Maxwell's forces into his own trap? We may never know for sure.

Congress

March 12, Congress convenes in Philadelphia after returning from Maryland. The next day they issue orders for their agents in Europe to look for qualified foreign military experts. One such agent was Benjamin Franklin.

Peekskill New York

While Washington's forces kept the British from moving south to Philadelphia, other American units in forts along the Upper Hudson River kept the British from moving on Albany. At Peekskill General McDougall guarded magazines and storehouses loaded with supplies with some 250 men at Fort Independence. Further up river were Forts Clinton and Montgomery that guarded a chain and boom across the river. The problem was Peekskill was down river and an easy target.

On March 23rd, nine to ten British ships arrived at Peekskill and deployed some 500 marines. Before reinforcements could arrive from Fort Montgomery the British raiders sacked the community, burning the storehouses and powder

mills. They then re-embarked and sailed back down river with few casualties: and 400 hogsheads of rum.

Nova Scotia

In late March three ships of the Massachusetts Navy were off the coast of Nova Scotia when they encountered the HMS Milford. The Americans intended to attack, but severe fog caused the Americans to lose each other. When the fog cleared USS Cabot found itself alone and being pursued by the larger British frigate.



After a chase of several days, *on March 28th* the Captain of the Cabot decided to beach his ship near Yarmouth. Though officially a British victory the crew escaped, hiding within the local community until they could get passage back to New Hampshire.

Year 1778

The US Army



On March 2nd General Washington selected General Nathanael Greene as his new Quartermaster General. Though Greene did not want the position he proved an excellent choice. He officially took the position on *March 23rd*.

The Battle of Barbados

On *March 7th*, while escorting American merchant ships in the West Indies the 36 gun Frigate USS Randolph encountered the 64 gun British ship-of-the-line HMS Yarmouth.. For some 20 minutes the two fought, with the HMS Yarmouth taking the most damage. But then a

spark occurred in the main magazine of the *Randolph*. In an instant she was gone: 301 dead out of a crew of 305. It was the worst loss of life for the US Navy until the sinking of the *USS Arizona* in 1941.

Europe

March 13th, the French government formally informs the British government that they recognize the United States of America. This prompts the British to declare war with France on *March 17th*. Following this, on *March 20th* Louis the XVI formally received the American delegation led by Benjamin Franklin.

New Jersey

On *March 18th* the Queens rangers, led by John Graves Simcoe and other British units (some 1,200 men) engaged 300 Patriot militia at Quinton's Bridge over Alloway Creek, New Jersey. The British were attempting to bring to battle General Anthony Wayne who had been gathering supplies for Washington's troops at Valley Forge.



The British succeeded in luring 200 of the defenders to cross the bridge into an ambush. 30 to 40 militia were killed before patriot reinforcements arrive with two field guns to stop the British at the bridge.

With Quinton bridge still blocked, this left only the nearby Hancock bridge. The British commander, Col Charles Mawhood now sent Simcoe to seize that location. This they accomplished, killing all 30 defenders while they slept in the house of Tory Judge William Hancock. The judge was also killed.

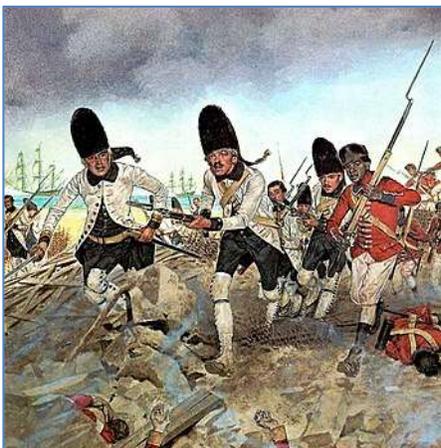
In the end the actions were meaningless. General Wayne was already headed back to Valley Forge with his supplies.

Year 1779

On **March 3rd**, some 1,300 American militias from North Carolina and Georgia were encamped at the confluence of Brier Creek and the Savannah River. They had been sent to Georgia to assist in the retaking of Savannah from the British. That afternoon, 900 experienced British troops and rangers attacked them with little warning.

Various issues hampered the American defense including the fact many of the men were carrying rifles, not muskets. Thus they had no bayonets, which insured that when the British launched their bayonet charge, the militiamen fled in panic. It was a major defeat in the effort to retake Georgia.

Year 1780



On **March 2nd**, 1,300 Spanish forces under the command of General Bernardo de Gálvez began surrounding Fort Charlotte at the entrance to Mobile Bay. After a two-week siege the British garrison finally surrendered, leaving Pensacola as the only remaining British fort on the Gulf of Mexico.

On **March 29th** British forces crossed the Ashley River and began marching on Charleston South Carolina. The city would hold out for a month and a half, surrendering on **May 12th**. In all 5,466 patriots were captured, the largest surrender of American troops until the Civil War. While the militia-men were released on parole, the continentals were kept in prison ships in the harbor.

The Fall of Charleston however would spawn the legends of the Swamp Fox (Francis Marion). Marion was injured before the City was surrounded and sent home to recuperate.



Year 1781

North Carolina

On **March 6th** some 700 militiamen under the command of General Greene clashed with 1,200 loyalist troops under Banastre Tarleton. Called the Battle of Wetzell's mill, it was really a battle to gain control of the ford at the Reedy Ford Creek.

The British pushed the Americans from the ford, but the battle was valueless to the British. General Greene has already sent word for those American troops to re-join his main force at Guilford Courthouse. Tarleton in turn returned to Cornwallis who then marched on General Greene's position. The two armies then clashed on **March 15th**.

Though Cornwallis may have expected to be victorious his victory was Pyrrhic. While he did force Greene to withdraw he in turn lost nearly 25% of his troops. With Greene trailing him, Cornwallis marched his troops to Hillsborough. From there he then moved to Wilmington where the British Navy could reinforce him. In the process he effectively abandoned the Carolina back country to the Americans.



On *March 16th*, British and French ships-of-the-line engaged in battle off Cape Henry Virginia. Washington had asked the French to send ships to support the Marquis de Lafayette who was in Virginia fighting Benedict Arnold. But the British Navy became aware of this and sent its own ships to the Chesapeake Bay. Both fleets suffered damage, but the British forced the French to withdraw. The British fleet then delivered reinforcements to Arnold forcing Lafayette onto the defensive.



Year 1782

On *March 22nd*, Kentucky militia engaged Wyandot warriors at the battle of Little Mountain near Boones borough. After a fierce fight the Militia withdrew after suffering 50% casualties.