

October in the American Revolution

1775

Boston

The situation around Boston continues. On October 1st General Gage issues his last order as Governor of Massachusetts, ordering two detachments at St. Augustine Florida to Boston. This leaves only half a regiment in all of East Florida. A week later on October 8th Washington reports that the new US Army around Boston is 20,372 men strong. General Howe, now in command at Boston also knows this and on October 9th asks Lord Dartmouth for permission to evacuate Boston for Rhode Island. While awaiting his decision, on Oct 28 Howe issues a proclamation to the American residents of Boston forbidding any person from leaving the city on pain of death. He also orders citizens to organize into military companies in order to aid in the "defense" of their city.

High Seas

On October 2nd the British supply ship Prince George is taken by force as it enters the Portsmouth harbor by mistake. It was carrying a shipment of flour from Bristol England for the troops in Boston. Three days later Congress appoints a committee to prepare a plan to fit out two armed vessels to intercept British transports like the Prince George. Then on October 7th Bristol Rhode island is bombarded and burned for refusing to provision a British ship: the townspeople surrender 40 sheep to stop the attack.

As conflict at sea increases on Oct 13th Congress authorizes the creation of the US Navy. Five days later British ships bombard and set fire to Falmouth, Maine, destroying the majority of the town. On Oct 24th and the 25th Patriot forces defend Hampton Virginia from attack by British ships. On Oct 29th Four armed American vessels sail from Cambridge as part of a fleet created to cruise the coast in search of enemy transports carrying arms and provisions.

Canada

On October 11th John Hancock writes to General Philip Schuyler expressing Congress's hope that his endeavors in Canada result in convincing the Canadians to join in the union with the Colonies. Congress eventually hopes Canada will form a Provincial Convention, and send delegates to the Continental Congress. Eight days later the British surrender their fort at Chambly, Canada.

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New York

On October 1st Americans occupy the three strong points in New York: Harlem Heights, King's Bridge and Mt. Washington. General Howe, in turn, has built a defense line across Manhattan from Bloomingdale to Hell Gate. At the same time, on Oct 5th, the brothers Howe go to Long island to determine a location in Westchester County to land troops behind Washington's defenses. On Oct 11th Congress urges Washington to obstruct the Hudson River and hold the British at Fort Washington on New York and Fort Lee in New Jersey. The following day Howe lands troops at Frog Point where Maryland militia is stationed. Though defeated by the patriots, Howe moves three miles North to Pell's Point where the landing is successful on Oct 18th.

Now flanked Washington withdraws to White Plains. There on Oct 28th Washington's 3,500 troops were engaged by over 7,000 British and Hessian troops. By October 31st Washington is in full retreat into New Jersey.



FRANKLIN'S RECEPTION AT THE COURT OF FRANCE. 1776.

France

Oct 1st,
1776

Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris received information that the French were going to

purchase arms and ammunition in Holland and send them to the West Indies for the Americans. On Oct 22nd Arthur Lee and Benjamin Franklin are then elected commissioners to France. On Oct 24th the Secret Committee of Congress retains the Ship "Reprisal" to carry Franklin to France. Two days later Benjamin Franklin, accompanied by his grandsons Temple Franklin (17) and Benjamin Franklin Bache (7), departed from Philadelphia for France.

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Salt for the wounds

The British embargo of Salt supplies from India begin to bite. On Oct 2nd the Council of Safety of Lebanon Ct ordered ships to sail at state expense, to buy salt wherever it was available. Three days later Congress, following up on the committee's report on the Army in New York, ordered the continental agents to turn over all salt in their hands to the commissary general. On Oct 23rd, the Maryland Convention reported that inhabitants of Caroline County had marched into Dorchester County and in a "violent manner" taken and carried away salt from the local inhabitants.

Lake Champlain



On Oct 11th the British fleet under General Carleton surprised the American fleet lying near Valcour Island. Two days later the British fleet again caught up with the American fleet moving south to Crown Point. General Waterbury was captured and Benedict Arnold escaped with only 3 of his 15 boats. With this defeat Ticonderoga was now threatened and on Oct 16th General Phillip Schuyler wrote to Berkshire County, Massachusetts to send militia

immediately for anticipation of an attack on Fort Ticonderoga. Then on Oct 20th Rev. William McKay gave a sermon at Fort Ticonderoga in which he begged them not to be weak and afraid, but to "do yourselves honor by using the weapons of your warfare with that heroism, firmness, and magnanimity which the cause requires."

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Saratoga

As General Burgoyne digs in North of Saratoga NY, on Oct 3rd General Clinton sends troops up the Hudson River towards Albany. On October 6th his forces take Fort Clinton and Fort Montgomery. But these actions were too little and too late to help Burgoyne who was rapidly running out of supplies. On October 7th he moved against the American left flank on the Bemis heights only to be repulsed. Then the



unauthorized appearance of General Arnold drove forward the American counter attack, taking two redoubts before nightfall. Burgoyne was forced to retreat North and by Oct 8th was in the same fortifications he was in back on September 16th.

By Sept 13th Burgoyne was surrounded. Unable to break out, and informed Clinton would not reach him, Burgoyne asks Gates for a cease-fire. Three days later, in an attempt to pull Patriot troops off Burgoyne, General Clinton's troops burn the town of Esopus, New York. Again its too-late and on Sept 17th Burgoyne surrenders to Gates.

Philadelphia

After leaving a 3,000 man garrison at Philadelphia, General Howe occupies German Town.

Washington believes he now has a chance and on October 4th launched a complex attack on the British.

Washington hoped for a repeat of Trenton. Unfortunately a heavy fog descended on the area, masking British movements and causing two American units to engage each other. Washington lost close to 1,000 men (killed, wounded, and captured) but even after this defeat he still

outnumbered Howe who withdrew back to Philadelphia and then sent word to General Clinton for reinforcements.



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Said reinforcements were not forthcoming as the defenses at Fort Mifflin and Fort Mercer still blocked the British fleet from the Delaware River approach to Philadelphia. A Hessian force failed to take Fort Mercer on October 22nd forcing the British to lay siege to Fort Mifflin.

1778

Native Conflict

In reprisal for the destruction of German Flats in September, a group of Continental soldiers and frontiersmen marches against the Iroquois town of Unadilla, located 50 miles west of German Flats. The Iroquois have previously fled and the patriots easily destroy the village. Later in the month, on October 24th British and native forces under Major Carleton began a raiding operation along the shore of Lake Champlain. Several communities in New York and Vermont were attacked.

New Jersey

October 4-5, A combined force of British regulars and Loyalists attempt to eradicate “this nest of privateers” at Egg Harbor. The battle is successful but the British could not follow up their victory by the arrival of Count Pulaski and his Legion. Ten days later a deserter led a British force to where some 50 of Pulaski’s troops were camped. Most die in the surprise attack, though the British are then forced back to their boats by Pulaski’s cavalry.

1780

Kings Mountain



On October 7th 1,400 frontiersmen led by Colonel William Campbell finally catch up with the 1,100 Loyalist under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson as they camped at Kings Mountain. Ferguson had been trying to link up with General Cornwallis who was in Charlotte N. Carolina. The Patriots are armed with Long Rifles, which kill the Tories at distance. Ferguson himself is shot from his horse as he attempted to lead a charge against the Patriots. This defeat was serious for the British, forcing Cornwallis to

withdraw back into S. Carolina.

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October 15, 1780

Native Attacks

On October 15th a combined force of 1,000 British regulars, Hessians, Loyalists, and Indians led by Sir John Johnson and Chief Joseph Brant attempt an unsuccessful attack upon Middleburg New York. The fort (Middle) is manned by Major Melanchthon Woolsey and 200 Continental soldiers that, unknown to the British, are low on ammunition. The British however are there to destroy supplies and thus ignore the fort for the homes and farms around it. They then move off in the direction of the Schoharie Valley destroying everything in their path.

In four days they are threatening Fort Keyser at Stone Arabia. Colonel John Brown commands 130 militia at the fort. On receiving word that General Robert Van Rensselaer's forces will arrive in time, Brown sallies forth from the fort. It's a fatal mistake as Brown and one-third of his men die before Van Rensselaer's force can arrive.



Though victorious at Fort Keyser, Sir John Johnson is now being pursued by General Robert Van Rensselaer's militia. On Oct 19th Van Rensselaer's caught Johnson at Klock's farm marking the start of a 26 hour running battle. The battle ends with both sides exhausted: the Americans withdraw to Klock's farmhouse while Johnson crosses the Mohawk River (abandoning his cannon) and escapes north.

Swamp Fox

On October 25th Tory Militia under the command of Samuel Tynes is approaching Tearcoat Swamp. Tynes has procured arms for his recruits and was now looking for a remote place where he could train them in arms. Hearing of this, Francis Marion decides to raid the camp in the hope of capturing Tynes and undermining Loyalist support. His attack that night was a success, resulting in the capture of arms, supplies, and horses. More importantly several of the Loyalists are said to have reconsidered their views and, for the first time, joined the patriot cause.

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1781

Yorktown

October 3, 1781

On October 3rd, British foragers, commanded by Thomas Dundas, are North of Yorktown at Gloucester when they encounter French cavalry commanded by General de Choisy. In a short clash 3 Frenchmen are killed and 16 wounded. British losses are unknown but they retreat, leaving the French in command of the field of battle. This fight marks the point where Cornwallis is truly surrounded.



After Mid-night on October 6th Washington himself strikes the first pick axe blow, beginning the first siege trench. Two days later the cannons were emplaced with the bombardment beginning on October 9th with Washington firing the first cannon at 5:00 PM. The shelling continued until the 12th, after which the guns were moved to a new trench line closer to redoubts No. 9 and 10. On the 14th the shelling of the redoubts began, to be followed by a night assault by both American and French troops. These were taken and on the 15th allied cannons began shelling the town of Yorktown. In a desperate attempt to break out Cornwallis

tried to evacuate his troops across the York River only to have a squall hit swamping the boats. Thus on the 17th a drummer and a flag of truce was spotted on the British ramparts. Cornwallis proposes terms of surrender in which he will surrender all his war material. He also states that his men will no longer engage in war against the United States or France. Two days later over 7,000 British soldiers march off into captivity to the tune "The World Turned Upside Down." The British are unable to marshal another army in America and this virtually ensures American independence.

October 20-30, 1781

On Oct 20, the last combined British, Loyalist, and Indian raid is launched in the Mohawk Valley. Led by Major John Ross, it collapses immediately due to a lack of Indian interest, muddy roads, and the possibility of encountering Patriot militia commanded by Colonel Marinus Willett. On the 30th Colonel Willett's Patriots actually catch up with the retreating Major Ross at West Canada Creek. At a point that is fairly deep and wide, shooting breaks out and a number of men on each side are hit. Loyalist leader Walter Butler is mortally wounded and later scalped by an Oneida Indian. Patriots pursue the Loyalists for 20 miles before giving up the chase.

October in the American Revolution

1783

October 20, 1783

Congress votes to build a second “federal town” on the banks of the Potomac River, with plans to alternate sessions between there and Philadelphia.

October 23, 1783

Virginia emancipates slaves who fought for independence during the Revolutionary War.