

# Bunker Hill 250<sup>th</sup> Civilian Guide



“The 250th Anniversary Reenactment of The Battle of Bunker Hills aims to accurately portray the events and faithfully represent the people involved in the conflict of June 17, 1775. Our mission is to celebrate and commemorate the actions and sacrifices of the men and women of all sides of the Battle of Bunker Hill through careful research, public demonstrations, civic engagement and educational outreach. Through these means, we endeavor to increase understanding of the Battle of Bunker Hill, and to bring to life the stories and voices of those long gone or purposefully excluded: when you see us, think of them.”

Hello Civilians,

Welcome to the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Bunker Hill! So much time, research and hard work have gone into this event and we're sure that, through your help, it will be a resounding success. With over 1000 reenactors coming and tens of thousands of the public expected throughout the weekend it is going to be an exciting and busy time.

With this reenactment of the Battle of Bunker Hill we are not only focused on the military engagements and building of the redoubt. There is also a focus on civilian activities and the stories behind them. There is an important story to be told of the hundreds of residents/evacuees from Boston and the surrounding areas, both Whig and Tory. There is a need to understand why this battle happened to begin with, and how the buildup of hostilities affected the lives of everyday people around Boston. With this reenactment we have an opportunity to present many civilian roles that often get overlooked and that represent the variety of peoples who lived, worked and fought in and around the city of Boston.

Our hope is that every reenactor that is attending will have the tools to engage with the public and be able to set the stage for the activities that will be happening during the event. Which is why this guide was created. Not only will it give you information on the events happening each day and where they will happen but how to discuss the history behind what is happening and being able to share that with the public. There are also important details and contact information in case you have any more questions or ideas to share. So please feel free to reach out anytime!

Sincerely,

The Bunker Hill Civilian Committee

Stacy Booth, Michele Gabrielson, Sarah Vedrani

### **Important Details**

- Date: June 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2025 (Friday-Sunday)
- Place: Stage Fort Park, Gloucester, MA [Google Map Link](#)
- Time: Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>: 12:00 pm (Set Up) to Sunday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>: 3:00 pm (Break Down)
- Bunker Hill Committee: <https://www.battleofbunkerhill250.com/contact-7>
- Clothing Guidelines
  - Men (British): <https://www.battleofbunkerhill250.com/british-troops>
  - Men (Provincial): <https://www.battleofbunkerhill250.com/provincial-troops-1>
  - Women: <https://www.battleofbunkerhill250.com/civilian-interpreters-1>
- Bunker Hill Civilian Committee
  - Stacy Booth: [saboath82@gmail.com](mailto:saboath82@gmail.com)
  - Michele Gabrielson: [michele.gabrielson@gmail.com](mailto:michele.gabrielson@gmail.com)
  - Sarah Vedrani: [redcoat\\_riz@comcast.net](mailto:redcoat_riz@comcast.net)
  - [Facebook Civilian Planning Page](#)

## **Battle of Bunker Event Schedule\***

### **Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>**

**12:00 pm - 5:00 pm:**

QM Staff: Lay Camp Lines

Work Parties: Build Redoubt, Set Up Lines for Public Viewing Areas

### **Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 am- 1:00 pm:**

QM Staff: Lay Camp Lines

Work Parties: Build Redoubt, Set up Lines for Public Viewing Areas

**12:00 pm – 10:00 pm:**

Reenactors: Set Up in Camps

Civilian Presenters: Set Up Displays in Civilian Programs Area (Optional)

### **Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup>**

**7:00 am:** Reveille (9/10- “Camps”)

**7:00 am- 9:00 am:** Civilian Presenters: Set Up Displays in Marketplace

**8:30 am:** Fort Cannon Fires (4- “Stage Fort”)

**8:30 am- 11:30 am:** Royal Navel Bombardment (Storey/5- “Half Moon Beach”)

**8:30 am – 11:30 am:** Fortifying Redoubt (2- “Redoubt”)

**9:00 am- 11:30 am:** Royal Navel Bombardment

(Ardelle, Isabella/5- “Half Moon Beach”)

**10:00 am- 4:00 pm:** Civilian Programs (6- “Marketplace”)

**10:00 am- 11:00 am:** Landing of the Regulars (5- “Half Moon Beach”)

**10:30am- 10:45 am:** Asa Pollard Funeral (2- “Redoubt”)

**11:00 am:** Frye’s Regiment Arrives (2- “Redoubt”)

**12:00 pm- 1:00 pm:** Nooning (9/10- “Camps”)

**12:30 pm:** Stark’s Arrival/Fortify Beach (near 12- “Settler’s Rock”)

**1:00 pm- 2:00 pm:** Flank (1<sup>st</sup>) Attack (near 12- “Settler’s Rock”)

**4:00 pm-4:30 pm:** Second Attack (near 2- “Redoubt”)

**4:30 pm- 5:00 pm:** Third Attack (near 2- “Redoubt”)

**5:00 pm:** Camps Close to the Public

## **Sunday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**7:00 am:** Reveille (“Camps”)

**8:30 am- 11:30 am:** Royal Navy Bombardment

(Storey, Ardelle, Isabella/5- “Half Moon Beach”)

**8:30 am- 11:30 am:** Fortifying Redoubt (2- “Redoubt”)

**10:00 am- 2:00 pm:** Civilian Programs (6- “Marketplace”)

**10:00 am-11:00 am:** Landing of the Regulars (5- “Half Moon Beach”)

**10:30 am- 11:00 am:** Asa Pollard Funeral (2- “Redoubt”)

**11:00 am:** Frye’s Regiment Arrives (2- “Redoubt”)

**11:30 am- 12:30pm:** Noonning (9/10- “Camps”)

**12:00 pm:** Stark’s Arrival/Fortify Beach (near 12- “Settler’s Rock”)

**12:30 pm-1:30 pm:** Flank (1<sup>st</sup>) Attack (near 2- “Redoubt”)

**2:00 pm- 2:30 pm:** Second Attack (near 2- “Redoubt”)

**2:30 pm- 3:00 pm:** Third Attack (near 2- “Redoubt”)

**3:00 pm:** Camps Close to the Public.

Reenactors: Break Down Camp/Marketplace

## **Meet and Greets Schedule\***

**At the HQ/Gazebo (1)**

### **Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup>**

**10:00 AM – General Clinton**

**10:30 AM – Abigail Adams**

**11:00 AM – Martha Washington**

**11:30 AM – Joseph Warren**

**12:00 PM – General Howe**

**12:30 PM - Elizabeth Murray**

### **Sunday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**10:00 AM – General Clinton**

**10:30 AM - General Howe**

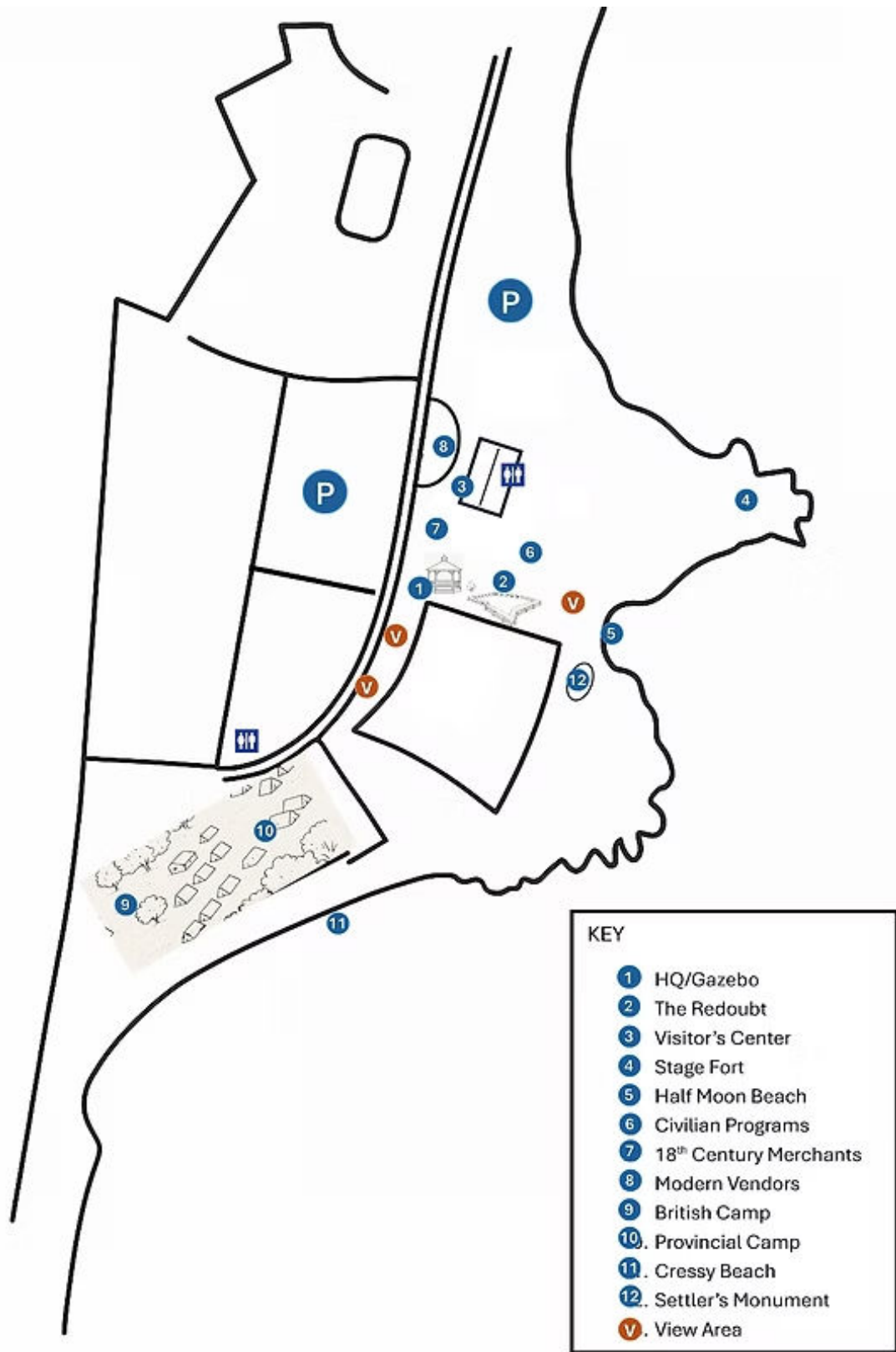
**11:00 AM – Joseph Warren**

**11:30 AM – Don Hagist**

**12:00 PM- General Gage**

**\*Subject to change. Check on the website for any updates.**

# Map





## **Map Area Descriptions**

- 1) **HQ/Gazebo**: Historic figures will interact with the public and historians will explain the battle's history.
- 2) **The Redoubt**: Provincial forces will build defenses to repel British soldiers attempting to take Charlestown.  
**Topics of Discussion**: Battle Timeline, Demographics of Charlestown, Key Events, Aftermath of the Battle
- 3) **Visitor's Center**: The Park's central location, where we'll have information, modern vendors (8), food, bathrooms, etc.
- 4) **Stage Fort**: Artillery battery and surgeons' area, as well as stunning views of Gloucester  
**Topics of Discussion**: Battle Timeline, The Siege of Boston, Key Events
- 5) **Half Moon Beach**: Landing zone for British forces for the day's first action.  
**Topics of Discussion**: Battle Timeline, Gage's Preparations, Key Events
- 6) **Civilian Programs/Marketplace**: Historic tradespeople and civilians will explain life in Boston is under siege.  
**Topics of Discussion**: Demographics of Charlestown, Civilian Evacuation of Boston, Primary Source Reflections (Siege of Boston, Battle of Bunker Hill, The Aftermath)
- 7) **18th Century Merchants**: Sutlers selling period-correct materials and ready-made items to reenactors and visitors
- 9) **British Camp**: Tents and cooking area where Crown forces will be encamped for the weekend.  
**Topics of Discussion**: Gage's Preparations, The Siege of Boston, Battle Timeline, Key Events
- 10) **Provincial Camp**: Tents and cooking area where Colonial forces will be encamped for the weekend.  
**Topics of Discussion**: The Formation of the Provincial Army, Camp Cambridge and Camp Roxbury, Battle Timeline
- 11) **Cressy Beach**: Gathering point for British forces ahead of the final assaults  
**Topics of Discussion**: Battle Timeline, Siege of Boston, Gage's Preparations, Primary Source Reflections (Battle of Bunker Hill)
- 12) **Settler's Monument**: Highly visible landmark in the park; at its base, Stark's men will fend off a British attack.  
**Topics of Discussion**: Battle Timeline, Primary Source Reflections (Battle of Bunker Hill)
- V) **Viewing Areas**: Ideal spots for spectators to take in the action during the battles.

# **Before the Battle of Bunker Hill**

## **The Demographics of Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1774**

In 1774, Charlestown, Massachusetts was a small but important town with about 2,000 to 2,500 residents and roughly 400 buildings, including homes, shops, and public structures. Located just across the Charles River from Boston, it was largely inhabited by English-descended colonists—mostly farmers, tradesmen, laborers, and merchants. The population was predominantly white and Protestant, with Puritan traditions still shaping religious and civic life. A large meeting house served as a center for worship and community gatherings. A small number of enslaved African people also lived in the town. Charlestown's economy was active, supported by trades such as shipbuilding, blacksmithing, carpentry, tanning, and coopering. Locally produced goods like barrels, timber, leather, and iron tools were traded regionally. The town's ferry and shipyards were vital to its commerce. However, the 1774 closure of Boston Harbor under the Boston Port Act severely disrupted trade, causing economic hardship and fueling unrest ahead of the American Revolution.

## **The Provincial Congress and Committee of Safety**

After Governor Thomas Gage dissolved the Massachusetts General Court in 1774, Provincial leaders formed the Massachusetts Provincial Congress to act as a de facto government. This body coordinated the colony's response to Parliamentary Acts and took responsibility for organizing military resistance. Within the Congress, the Committee of Safety was established to act swiftly in emergencies. This committee oversaw the collection of arms, ammunition, and provisions, and supervised the training and deployment of militias. Leaders like John Hancock and Dr Joseph Warren played central roles, turning these organizations into the foundation of provincial governance and military planning.

## **The Formation of the Provincial Army**

In the aftermath of the battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress quickly organized the scattered militias surrounding Boston into a more unified force known as the Provincial Army. This army included town militias from Massachusetts as well as Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. Recruitment efforts relied heavily on local town committees and community networks, which called upon able-bodied men (age 16 to 60) to enlist. Motivation to enlist came from patriotism, a sense of duty, community pressure, and/or the promise of pay and provisions. Many had prior militia experience, having trained in local companies under the colonial militia system. Some also had fought in the French and Indian War. The Provincial Congress and its Committee of Safety appointed officers, managed enlistments, supplied the troops, and oversaw the construction of camps and fortifications. By June 1775, this citizen army would become the foundation of the Continental Army.

## **The Siege of Boston**

Following the battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, Provincial militia forces rapidly mobilized and surrounded Boston, initiating the Siege of Boston. The siege was a spontaneous but coordinated effort by thousands of New England militiamen who converged on the city, determined to contain the British troops under General Thomas Gage. Within days, the colonial forces had effectively cut off the land routes in and out of Boston, forcing the British to rely on naval supply lines through Boston Harbor. The Royal Navy maintained a strong presence in the harbor, allowing the British to receive provisions and reinforcements by sea, while also projecting power and deterring rebel movements along the coastline. Despite the British naval advantage, the American forces entrenched themselves in fortified positions in the surrounding towns of Cambridge, Roxbury, and Dorchester, steadily building defensive lines.

## **The Evacuation of Civilians from Boston, May 1775**

As the Siege of Boston took hold, conditions inside the city quickly worsened. Although British Regulars maintained control within the city limits, they were encircled by colonial militias, severing vital overland supply routes. Food shortages became increasingly severe, and the looming threat of violence or a full-scale assault caused widespread anxiety among the civilian population. In May 1775, under a tenuous truce, General Thomas Gage permitted limited evacuations from the city as long as those evacuating handed over any firearms and weapons. However, some Loyalists within Boston opposed these evacuations, arguing that a continued presence of Provincial sympathizers might discourage their Army from attacking. Eventually, Gage reversed his decision and halted the evacuations altogether. Many residents had already fled, but not everyone could afford to leave. In response, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress offered financial assistance to those in need, enabling more families to escape. Surrounding towns welcomed many of the displaced, offering shelter and support. Still, some remained behind to guard their homes and belongings, aware that once they left, their property would likely be looted or destroyed.

## **Camp Cambridge and Camp Roxbury**

Outside of Boston, colonial forces established two major encampments: Camp Cambridge to the northwest and Camp Roxbury to the south. Camp Cambridge served as the headquarters of General Artemas Ward and became the central hub for drilling and organizing the Provincial Army. Camp Roxbury, under General John Thomas, was strategically positioned to guard the Boston Neck and played a key role in maintaining the siege lines. Both camps functioned as vital staging grounds for fortifications and supply efforts, reflecting the growing military structure of the colonial forces.

Life in the camps, however, was far from easy. Soldiers endured cramped conditions in tents or makeshift huts, often with limited access to clean water and poor sanitation, leading to frequent outbreaks of illness. To improve hygiene and order, latrines were dug, strict rules governed activity around water sources, and waste was confined to designated areas. Efforts to enforce



discipline and uphold moral standards were also introduced. Women were officially barred from the camps, and attendance at multiple church services each week was mandatory. Rooted in a strong Puritan tradition, many soldiers found comfort in the routine and spiritual guidance these services provided. Although these measures did not eliminate disorder as General Ward had hoped, they laid the foundation for a more disciplined force. This is a standard that was reinforced and expanded upon when General George Washington took command in July 1775.

### **Gage's Preparations in May 1775**

In May 1775, as the Provincial Army militias tightened their grip around Boston, British General Thomas Gage focused on reinforcing the city's defenses. Aware of the growing threat, he urgently requested additional troops and supplies from Britain. His call was answered on May 25, when Generals William Howe, Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne arrived with roughly 4,500 reinforcements. Their arrival was met with celebration and a surge of hope among both British troops and Loyalist civilians, who viewed the new commanders as a symbol of renewed strength and strategic leadership. In response, Gage moved swiftly to bolster Boston's fortifications, expand patrols, and improve his intelligence operations to better anticipate colonial movements. At the same time, he allowed the limited evacuation of some civilians—partly to ease the strain on food and resources, and partly to maintain stability and morale within the increasingly pressured city.

### **Key Events That Happened in May 1775**

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold led a daring and successful assault on Fort Ticonderoga in New York. The surprise capture of the fort not only secured strategic waterway access to Canada but also provided the Provincial Army with much-needed artillery, which would later play a key role in the siege of Boston.

Around the same time, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, General Israel Putnam led a bold march around the Charlestown Peninsula. This show of force and maneuvering near the British stronghold demonstrated the growing confidence and resolve of the Provincial Army, boosting colonial morale and further unsettling British troops within Boston.

On May 27 and 28, colonial militia engaged British marines in a skirmish on Noddle's Island and Hog Island in Boston Harbor. The Provincials managed to seize livestock and supplies from the islands, dealing a logistical blow to the British. During the fighting, the British schooner *Diana* ran aground while attempting to support the marines and was ultimately pillaged and burned by colonial forces—an early symbolic and tactical victory for the Provincials.

Despite these setbacks, British General Thomas Gage and his recently arrived reinforcements—Generals William Howe, Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne—began drafting a plan to break the siege by seizing the strategic high ground in Dorchester and Charlestown. Though the exact target remained uncertain, intelligence leaks suggested that the British would launch an assault on Sunday, June 18, 1775. Fearing that such an offensive could shatter the cause and erase their hard-won gains, General Artemas Ward decided to act preemptively. He sent 1000 men to secure Charlestown a day before the intended battle, June 17, 1775.

## **Primary Source Reflections on the Siege of Boston**

Diary of Mary Draper, Dedham (May 1775)

*"We take in travelers and refugees from Boston nearly every day. One family of seven arrived with only what they could carry. We shared our bread and gave them blankets. The children do not laugh as children should—they have seen too much."*

Journal Entry of Nathaniel Greenough, Boston merchant (May 15, 1775)

*"Business has come to a halt. No one dares speak freely, and we barter more than we buy. I saw soldiers take flour from the baker's for the garrison. A mother cried when her child fainted from hunger. I long for peace, but fear it shall not come soon."*

Recollection of Patience Lovell Wright, artist (Written 1778)

*"I left Boston in late May, my brushes and paints wrapped in linen. It felt like abandoning one's own skin. We heard tales of arrests and looting. Charlestown offered no refuge—only the stench of war and rumors of an attack."*

Testimony of John Winslow, Loyalist (Recounted 1783)

*"We Loyalists were not welcome in the countryside. I tried to stay neutral, but neutrality is not a refuge when both sides see treason in silence. We lived quietly near Watertown until threats made us retreat back to Boston."*

Abigail Adams to John Adams (June 16, 1775)

*"The horrors of a civil war are beginning. I have been told that our army is well supplied with provisions, but we can purchase nothing but at an exorbitant price... The town of Boston is entirely blocked up by land, and but very poorly supplied by water."*

John Andrews, Letter to William Barrell (May 15, 1775)

*"This town is now in a most melancholy situation. The inhabitants are daily suffering by the troops—our liberties gone, and everything dear to us at the mercy of an enraged soldiery."*

William Cheever's Diary (May 20, 1775)

*"Many inhabitants are flying from Boston, which looks dismal indeed. Women and children crying in the streets, and carts loaded with household goods. Those who remain do so out of necessity, not choice."*

# **Timeline of the Battle of Bunker Hill**

## **June 16, 1775 (Evening till Midnight)**

### **Planning and the March to the Charlestown Peninsula**

- General Artemas Ward orders a preemptive move to seize the high ground (Bunker Hill) on the Charlestown Peninsula to block British advances.
- Colonel William Prescott, supported by Brig General Israel Putnam, leads ~1,000 men from Massachusetts and Connecticut Regiments to entrench themselves on Breed's Hill.
- It is unclear why they chose not to build on the designated Bunker Hill. However, after holding a meeting upon their arrival, they decided to construct the fortification on the smaller hill, which was within range of naval fire.

## **June 17, 1775 (Midnight till Dawn)**

### **Building the Redoubt**

- Under cover of darkness, Provincial troops dig a redoubt on Breed's Hill and begin connecting trenches and breastworks.
- Colonel Richard Gridley, Chief Engineer, leads the men by selecting the right areas and designing the fortifications.
- Working with limited tools they build quickly but efficiently completing most of the redoubt before dawn.

## **Morning: The Day of Battle Begins**

### **Royal Navy Bombardment Begins**

- At dawn, British ships under Vice Admiral Samuel Graves open fire on Charlestown and the Neck after seeing the redoubt on Breeds Hill. Despite the naval fire, Provincial troops continue strengthening their defenses.

### **Gage and British Generals Meet**

- General Thomas Gage confers with Generals William Howe, Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne. They finalize plans for a coordinated land assault against the colonial fortifications.
- Howe is chosen to lead the main attack on Breed's Hill, with support from artillery and the Royal Navy.
- Gage also orders that Camp Roxbury, under the control of General John Thomas, is to be shelled to distract and pin down reinforcements.

### **Fortifying the Redoubt Continues**

- Colonel William Prescott's men reinforce the redoubt with earthworks and trenching.
- Captain Thomas Knowlton and others extend defensive lines with a rail fence and stone walls toward the Mystic River.

### **Asa Pollard's Funeral**

- Private Asa Pollard is decapitated by a British cannonball while working on the Redoubt becoming the first fatality of the day. His sudden death spreads fear among the men but also strengthens their determination to stand firm.
- To steady his troops, Colonel Prescott walks the top of the redoubt walls, exposed to enemy fire, calmly giving orders and offering words of encouragement.

### **Frye's Regiment Arrives**

- Soldiers from Colonel Joseph Frye's regiment manage to cross the fire-swept Neck to reinforce Breed's Hill. But the trickle of reinforcements is slowed by naval fire and poor coordination. And there are more troops leaving due to fear, hunger and thirst making it that much harder to maintain their position.

### **Late Morning to Early Afternoon**

#### **Stark's Arrival and Fortification Efforts**

- Colonel John Stark and Colonel James Reed arrive with New Hampshire troops.
- Stark orders the extension of the rail fence and positions troops behind makeshift defenses. His arrival secures the Provincial left and boosts morale. It also keeps the British forces from coming in behind the redoubt and causing a quick and demoralizing defeat for the Provincial Army.

#### **Landing of the Regulars**

- Around noon, General William Howe and General Robert Pigot land 2,200 troops at Moulton's Point.
- Observed by Generals Clinton and Burgoyne from Copps Hill, the British begin preparations for a full-scale assault.

#### **Burning of Charlestown**

- To clear sharpshooters and terrorize the defenders, British troops and Naval vessels bombard and set Charlestown village ablaze.
- The town burns quickly, producing thick smoke that covers the battlefield. Despite the destruction, Provincial troops remain focused and hold their lines.

### **Early Afternoon – First Attack**

- Howe leads a coordinated advance along the beach and hillside toward the rail fence and redoubt.
- General Robert Pigot pushes uphill toward the redoubt from the center in a feint.
- As British troops climb the slope in tight formation, Provincial defenders, under orders from Prescott, Stark, and Knowlton, wait until they are within 30 yards.
- When the signal is given, the hill explodes with musket fire—British lines are cut down in rows.
- Officers are struck down mid-command and entire companies are thrown into confusion. The assault breaks and retreats in disorder to the base of Moulton hill.

### **Mid-Afternoon – Second Attack**

- Determined not to fail, Howe reforms the lines and attacks again.
- This time, the British adjust formation to avoid tight ranks but are still met with disciplined fire. Pigot's troops are repulsed at the redoubt, while Howe's forces are devastated near the rail fence.
- British soldiers, wounded or dead, now cover the hillside. Many officers, elite grenadiers and light infantry, are lost. Howe later describes it as "*a dear-bought victory*."

### **Late Afternoon – Third Attack**

- Howe, now reinforced by Clinton's arrival and fresh troops, leads the final assault.
- Provincials, running critically low on powder and shot, fire only a few rounds before switching to bayonets, clubs, and rocks.
- The British, learning from earlier failures, push in tighter and with more coordination.
- The redoubt is breached, and Major General Joseph Warren is killed in the melee, shot in the head at close range.
- The Provincials, exhausted of munitions and outnumbered, are forced to abandon the redoubt.
- Their retreat is chaotic. Many flee or fight their way out, while others are captured or killed. Putnam desperately tries to rally troops at Bunker Hill, but there are not enough reinforcements or ammunition to hold. The Provincial forces fall back across the Charlestown Neck.

### **Evening – June 17, 1775**

#### **British Digging In**

- Weary and bloodied, the British do not pursue the Provincials beyond the Neck of Charlestown. They begin entrenching on Bunker Hill, preparing for further action.

#### **Provincials Fortify New Positions**

- Provincial forces regroup across the Charlestown Neck and dig in on Prospect Hill and Winter Hill.
- Generals Ward, Putnam, and Thomas oversee the construction of new defensive lines, which will form the new front of the siege.

Though technically a British victory, the cost was deemed to be too high to be a true victory.

## **Primary Source Accounts of the Battle of Bunker Hill**

Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams (June 18, 1775)

*"The noise of the cannon last Saturday at Charlestown was so terrible that we feared for our lives. I took the children and fled to the woods. From the hill above our home, we saw the smoke rising, thick and black, from the town. I cannot express the horror we felt watching the flames consume so many homes. The sound of muskets and the cries carried across the water; it was a dreadful day."*

Diary of Peter Edes, apprentice printer (June 17, 1775)

*"This day will long be remembered. The town was in great confusion early this morning as the firing began. I could see the flashes from the heights and hear the thunder of the guns. Many families fled Boston in fear, their faces pale and their possessions few. My father and I remained to print the news, but we were deeply troubled for the poor souls caught in Charlestown."*

Testimony of Rebecca Gill, resident of Charlestown (Recounted in 1784)

*"I was but a young girl then, yet I recall the terror well. We awoke to the sound of drums and men shouting. My mother hastened us from the house as the British marched through. The ground shook from the cannons, and our neighbor's roof caught fire. We ran towards the marshes and hid among the reeds. When we returned days later, there was nothing but ashes where our home once stood."*

Letter from Samuel Prescott to his brother (June 20, 1775)

*"You ask if I saw the battle—indeed I did, though from a distance. I was with others on the Medford road. We could see the heights crowded with men and the red coats advancing. A man beside me fell weeping as the smoke rose from Charlestown. The town is laid low, and many innocent lives have been turned out. There is much anger among the people."*

Newspaper account from The Massachusetts Spy (June 21, 1775)

*"Eyewitnesses tell of terrible destruction in Charlestown. Civilians, unable to save their homes, fled in all directions. Women with infants in arms, elderly folk supported by the young, all made their way from the town as it burned. The flames, kindled by the King's troops, devoured over 400 buildings. It was said the sky turned red as blood and the air reeked of smoke and powder."*

Journal of Thomas Wainwright, dockworker (June 17, 1775)

*"The ships in the harbor fired shot after shot at the hill. From the wharf I watched the spectacle—awful and grand. But then came the horror, as refugees from Charlestown arrived by boat. They were covered in soot and crying for loved ones lost. I gave what bread I had to a woman and her boy. We are not soldiers, yet the war has already scarred us."*

Statement from Hannah Mears, nurse at a Boston refuge (June 19, 1775)

*"We cared for so many injured—burns, wounds from flying debris, terror-stricken children. One girl would not speak, only stare into the hearth as if seeing the fire anew. We did our best with herbs and cloth, but so many needed aid. Each night, we heard the distant thunder of war and prayed for it to end."*

Entry from the Diary of Eliza Witherspoon, schoolteacher (June 17, 1775)

*"My pupils were dismissed early when the sound of cannon echoed through the lanes. I gathered them in the meeting house and led them in prayer. One child asked if God was angry with us. I had no answer. That night, I sat by the window watching the orange glow across the river and wept for the ruin of learning and peace."*



# **Events that Happened After Bunker Hill**

## **The Aftermath of Battle**

The aftermath of the Battle of Bunker Hill revealed the staggering cost of the British victory. British forces suffered 1,054 casualties, including 226 killed and 828 wounded—nearly half of the troops engaged in the battle. A particularly high number of British officers were killed or wounded, severely impacting command structures. Many of the wounded later died due to a lack of hospital space and inadequate medical supplies in the besieged city of Boston. The heavy British casualties left a lasting impact on General Howe, contributing significantly to his later reluctance to launch direct assaults on fortified American positions, as seen in his more cautious approach during the Battle of Brooklyn.

The Provincial forces endured around 450 casualties, with 115 killed, 305 wounded, and 30 missing. Their most significant loss was Dr. Joseph Warren; a respected leader recently appointed Major General by the Massachusetts Provincial Congress. Despite his promotion, Warren chose not to command, instead joining the ranks to fight alongside the men. Though the Provincials ultimately lost control of the Charlestown Peninsula, they took satisfaction in their strong defense and the heavy toll inflicted on the British regulars. The battle proved that untrained colonial forces could stand their ground against the powerful British Army, marking a pivotal moment in the early stages of the American Revolution.

## **The Formation of the Continental Army**

Just days before the Battle of Bunker Hill, on June 14, 1775, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress voted to establish the Continental Army to unify the colonial military effort under a single command. The following day, June 15, George Washington, a veteran of the French and Indian War and a respected Virginian delegate, was unanimously appointed Commander-in-Chief. He accepted the post humbly, refusing a salary, and began his journey north. While en route, he received word of the bloody confrontation at Bunker Hill, which underscored the urgency and seriousness of the conflict.

Washington arrived in Massachusetts on July 2, 1775, and took formal command of the army at Cambridge on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. He found a collection of poorly equipped and disorganized militias, with inconsistent discipline, short-term enlistments, and limited supplies. He immediately began the challenging task of imposing structure, instituting drills, improving discipline, and organizing supply lines. He also prioritized creating defensive works and reinforcing the siege of Boston, determined to maintain pressure on British forces trapped in the city. Washington's leadership quickly began to transform the Provincial forces into a more unified and professional army, laying the foundation for a sustained resistance in the American Revolutionary War.

## **The Siege of Boston After the Battle**

General George Washington focused on organizing and training his inexperienced troops, tightening siege lines, and finding a way to oust the British without a costly assault. A breakthrough came through a daring plan by Colonel Henry Knox, who led a mid-winter expedition to transport over 50 heavy cannons from Fort Ticonderoga, a grueling 300-mile journey through icy terrain.

March 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 1776, Washington's forces secretly fortified Dorchester Heights, a key position overlooking Boston and its harbor. Overnight the artillery was installed, catching the British off guard. The new threat made their position in Boston untenable. British General William Howe planned a counterattack but was stopped by a severe snowstorm. Unwilling to risk another Bunker Hill, Howe chose to evacuate. On March 17, 1776, British troops and over 1,000 Loyalists sailed for Halifax, ending the 11-month Siege of Boston and securing the Continental Army's first major victory.

The Battle of Bunker Hill marked a dramatic turning point. While it did not end the siege of Boston immediately, it ignited full-scale conflict. In the months that followed momentum grew for full independence, culminating a year later in the Declaration of Independence.

## **Primary Sources on the Aftermath of Bunker Hill**

### Letter from Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton, Boston (July 5, 1775)

*"We keep to ourselves and speak in whispers. The King's soldiers patrol the streets, but it is hunger, not gunpowder, that saps our strength. I wrote a poem yesterday to pass the time, but the ink is thin and the paper brittle—like us."*

### Account of Ezra Whittemore, Cambridge farmer (July 10, 1775)

*"I planted less this year, for fear the troops would trample it or take it. Yet we give what we can to the camp. My wife and daughters sew for the soldiers. War is not just in battles—it's in every sacrificed hour of peace."*

### Excerpt from the Memoirs of Jonathan Loring, merchant (Written 1802)

*"I recall with sorrow the chaos that overtook our lives that June. Trade ceased, families scattered, and those of us loyal to the Patriot cause feared retribution. I sheltered a neighbor whose home was destroyed. The British soldiers, though victorious in the field, sowed only bitterness in their wake. The people's suffering turned hesitation into resolve."*

### Recollection of Margaret Atkins, Loyalist widow (Statement recorded 1789)

*"I did not cheer for the rebels. My husband served the Crown and had died the year before. When Charlestown burned, I hid in the cellar of a friend's house, fearing for my life. The mob outside blamed us for everything. We lost our home, and I left for Halifax not long after. War brings no justice, only grief."*

# Suggested Resources

## Books

- Atkinson, Rick “The British Are Coming” 2019
- Borneman, Walter R. “American Spring” 2014
- Gross, Robert A “The Minutemen and Their World”  
(Revised and Expanded 2022)
- Lockhart, Paul “The Whites of Their Eyes” 2011
- Philbrick, Nathaniel “Bunker Hill ‘A City, A Siege, A Revolution’” 2013

## Articles

- “‘An Uninterrupted Peal of Thunder’ - The Battle of Bunker Hill”  
Cain, Alexander  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r2PwxDAhNOVBxB0jGJHRHS8buDuHTRVpKpX7Rj7ebck/edit?tab=t.0>
- “The Siege of Boston and the Civilians Trapped Behind Enemy Lines”  
Cain, Alexander  
[https://www.historicalnerdery.com/\\_files/ugd/9ff80a\\_75250c8398334b9fa10ed1e601472a10.pdf](https://www.historicalnerdery.com/_files/ugd/9ff80a_75250c8398334b9fa10ed1e601472a10.pdf)
- “First Hand Accounts” Cain, Alexander [The Battle of Bunker Hill - Historical Resources - Google Docs](#)

## Webpages

- **Meet the Leaders:** Information on important names to know within the military command structure. <https://www.battleofbunkerhill250.com/meet-the-leaders>