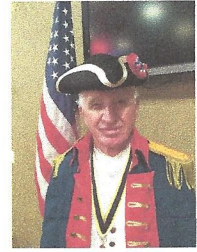




# The American Revolution

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## Battle of Bunker Hill: Article 1 of 3

Navy Commander Hopkins and his American flotilla returned to Delaware from their successful raid on the Bahamas. Meanwhile, clouds of eminent war were gathering over Boston. Since Lexington and Concord, the pace of martial events was quickened by British Royal Governor General Gage requesting reinforcements, Parliament rejecting American peace offers, and British opinion hardening into subduing the American Rebels by military force.

Parliament answered Gage's reinforcement request by transporting 6,000 fresh British soldiers by May, 1775. All 6,000 men were fed and quartered by citizens of Boston. In May, 1775, HMS *Cerberus* arrived in Boston Harbor, discharging British Generals, William Howe, John Burgoyne, and Sir Henry Clinton. Governor General Gage and his trio of guests immediately began planning the British breakout from Boston.

This plan was finalized by 12 June 1775, and called for an attack on Dorchester Neck, fortifying of Dorchester Heights, and finally pressing the attack on the Americans at Roxbury. When all was accomplished, the attack would continue by frontal assault on colonial forces at Cambridge. The attack was set for 18 June 1775.

While the British were planning their attack, colonial intelligence informed the Massachusetts Provincial Congress of the planned British assault on Dorchester and Charlestown. On 15 June 1775, the Massachusetts Committee for Correspondence ordered reinforcement of all colonial defensive positions. Colonial General Ward instructed General Israel Putnam to prepare defenses on Charlestown Peninsula and specifically instructed him to occupy the most prominent elevation, Bunker's Hill.

On the night of 16 June 1775, colonial Colonel William Prescott invaded the peninsula with a force of 1,200 men, where he erected defensive bunkers with artillery positions situated for fire on Boston. The colonials held the heights. In addition to erecting a defensive redoubt on Bunker's Hill, work was begun on positions located at nearby Breed's Hill. While it was lower in elevation, it was closer to Boston and within artillery range.

The colonial activity on Breed's and Bunker's Hills did not escape the attention of the British. General Sir Henry Clinton observed the colonial activity, alerted Generals Howe and Burgoyne, suggesting that the British should attack at dawn. His sound advice was ignored. Predawn light enabled sentries on board the HMS *Lively* to spot the colonial activity, and that ship began firing. On board the HMS *Somerset*, Admiral Graves was awakened and ordered all firing to cease. At sunrise, Gage became aware of the situation and countermanded Admiral Grave's order to cease firing. He ordered all 128 harbor guns and Copp's Hill guns into action.

As a result of the British artillery fire, several things became evident to both sides.

The British learned that artillery attacks from their ships were ineffective, and ship board guns could not be properly elevated for rounds to reach Bunker's Hill. Colonial Colonel Prescott became painfully aware that his redoubt on Bunker's Hill had both right and left flanks exposed to British attack. He ordered trenches dug and shooting platforms erected down hill along the colonial right flank. He also realized the colonists were lacking in manpower to secure his left flank, so it remained exposed.

General Sir Henry Clinton urged an immediate attack, which should fall on Charlestown Neck and turn the colonial right flank, thus cutting off their retreat. Again his sound advice was outvoted. Generals Burgoyne and Howe agreed that the British attack should be concentrated on the undefended colonial left flank along the Mystic River shoreline.