



# The American Revolution

A Historical Series Sponsored by William Hightower Chapter#35  
Sons of the American Revolution

[www.nbsar.net](http://www.nbsar.net)

Author, Dr. Patrick D. Hollis

Battles of Lexington and Concord, 1775

Article 1 of 6

Previously in our series, we reviewed how the American colonies responded to the British Parliament's *Intolerable Acts* with a Boston Tea Party, and the formation of a clandestine shadow government known as the Committees of Correspondence. The First Continental Congress was called, and it petitioned King George III and Parliament for redress of colonial grievances. Under the direction of Massachusetts' Committee of Correspondence, known as the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, the colonists had organized militias, clandestinely marshaled arms, ammunitions, and established a colonial governmental control of the countryside outside Boston and Boston Harbor.

Boston remained under the control of its Royal Governor, General Thomas Gage, who was also the Commander-in-Chief of about 3,000 British Regulars garrisoned and quartered in Boston. The populace had become divided into two strong groups: the pro-Patriot, Whig's and the pro-Loyalists, Tory's. Governor Gage was well aware of the clandestine activities made by the Whig's, and he had devised a plan to avoid conflict between the two groups by having the army remove any and all supplies stockpiled by the Whig militias. A series of small, secret and rapid strikes were to be conducted by troops against Whig militias. This struggle for supplies led to a series of bloodless coups

known as the *Powder Alarms*. Gage considered himself as a friend of liberty, and attempted to separate his duties as Governor from his duties as Commander of an occupying army. This schizophrenic circumstance led Sir Edmund Burke to comment in Parliament that, “An Englishman is the unfittest person on Earth to argue another Englishman into slavery.” In February, 1775, both houses of this same Parliament declared Boston, Massachusetts, to be in a state of rebellion.

On the morning of 14 April 1775, Governor General Gage received instructions from the Secretary of State, William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth, to disarm those in rebellion, specifically those known to have hidden weapons at Concord. In particular, they were to imprison the rebellion’s leaders, and the names of Samuel Adams and John Hancock were of special interest. Gage acted promptly, because he had received previous information from a spy within the Provincial Congress, relating that the New England colonies were cooperating in the effort to raise a New England army of 18,000 soldiers. On the morning of 18 April 1775, Governor General Gage ordered a mounted patrol of 20 British soldiers under the command of Major Mitchell of the 5th Regiment of Foot into the surrounding countryside for the expressed purpose of arresting colonial messengers. Likewise that afternoon, Gage ordered Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith to proceed with utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord, where he was to seize and destroy military stores, but was cautioned to avoid any plunder of inhabitants or injury of their property. Gage used his own discretion and did not issue orders for the arrest of any rebel leaders.

Paul Revere, Joseph Warren and all militia messengers departed Boston by

April 8th, after having received notifications concerning Lord Dartmouth's secret instructions to Governor General Gage, well before the general himself received them. Adams and Hancock had fled to safety and the military supplies of Concord had been removed to safer locations. Our next article will explore the explosive events following on 19 April 1775, when the British Army ventures forth to invade Concord.