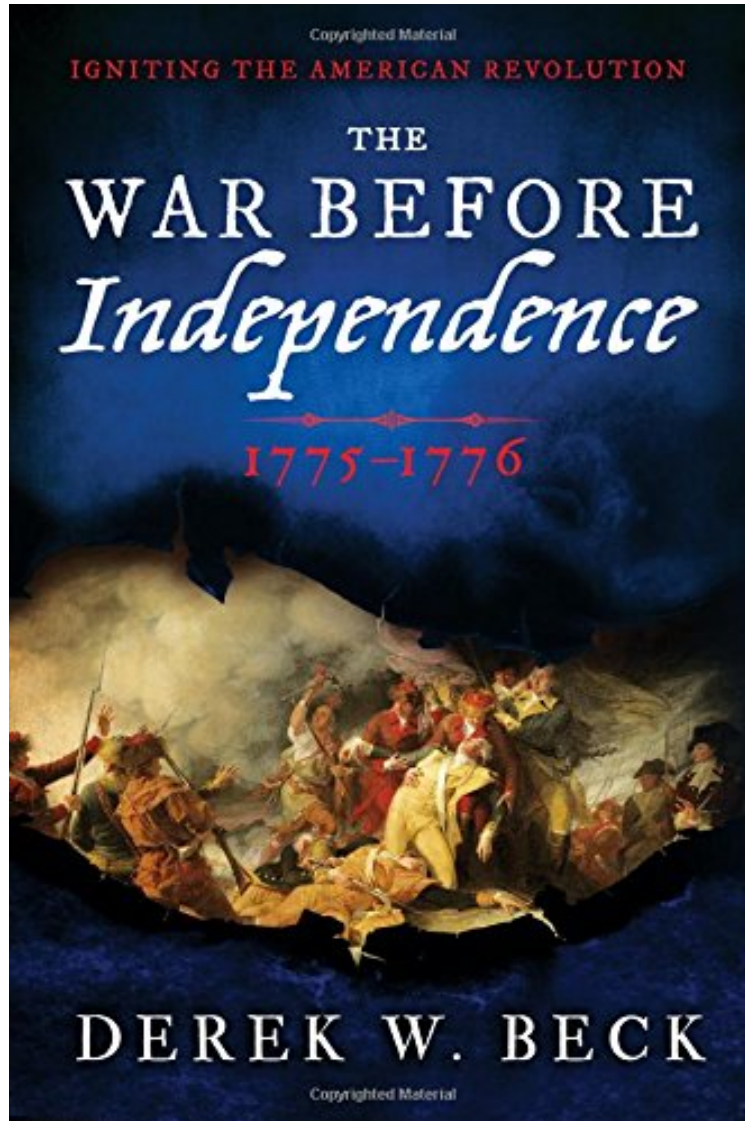


(Download ebook) The War Before Independence: 1775-1776

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Derek W. Beck

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Ralph McKenna This is Derek Beck's second book on my favorite subject. I enjoyed the first one, so I read this one as well. I hope he continues with this topic. His books capture the atmosphere and uncertainty that the colonists felt, and its very easy to read and follow. I recommend this title. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. and personal-beautifully told. The problem is that is where the ...By Norman Bernstein Esq. Outstanding account of the battle of Bunker Hill, military, political, and personal- beautifully told. The problem is that is where the book should have ended. The second half of the book is endless detail about the dreary slogging failure of the effort to invade Canada. Buy and read the first half of the book.

The United States was creeping ever closer to independence. The shot heard round the world still echoed in the ears of Parliament as impassioned revolutionaries took up arms for and against King and country. In this captivating blend of careful research and rich narrative, Derek W. Beck continues his exploration into the period preceding the Declaration of Independence, just days into the new Revolutionary War. *The War Before Independence* transports readers into the violent years of 1775 and 1776, with the infamous Battle of Bunker Hill a turning point in the Revolution and the snowy, wind-swept march to the frozen ground at the Battle of Quebec, ending with the exciting conclusion of the Boston Campaign. Meticulous research and new material drawn from letters, diaries, and investigative research throws open the doors not only to familiar figures and faces, but also little-known triumphs and tribulations of America's greatest military leaders, including George Washington. Wonderfully detailed and stunningly layered, *The War Before Independence* brings America's early upheaval to a ferocious boil on both sides of the battlefield, and vividly captures the spirit of a fight that continues to inspire brave hearts today.

"Though Beck only covers a short period, his excellent research brings to life the men who fought, providing readers with real, tangible heroes, not just hazy historic figures. Revolutionary War fans will rejoice in this well-written work and hope that the author has more on the way." - Kirkus STARRED "Beck writes exceptionally vividly, and as such, even readers slow to respond to battleground to-and-fro will be fully engaged." - Booklist "Beck establishes himself as a premier historian of the American Revolution...this excellent read takes its place next to Nathaniel Philbrick's *Bunker Hill*, Paul Lockhart's *The Whites of Their Eyes*, and Mark Anderson's *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony*...highly recommended for those seeking a comprehensive telling of the immediate events prior to the Declaration of Independence and those who want a satisfying read." - STARRED Library Journal "With just over 320 pages of text focused on less than a single year, then, one can imagine the level of granularity Beck sometimes achieves, especially as regards military events. Although political events are not entirely ignored, they are secondary to the actions of the military men of all ranks. Readers who enjoy immensely detailed combat narratives will therefore especially enjoy this work." - Journal of the American Revolution "Wonderfully detailed and layered, *The War Before Independence* brings America's early upheaval to a ferocious boil on both sides of the battlefield and vividly captures the spirit of a fight that continues to inspire brave hearts today. Historian Beck provides a sweeping and provocative view of pivotal years in U.S. history, painting the events with accuracy and objectivity." - SirReadaLot.org "Beck follows 2015's *Igniting the American Revolution: 1773-1775* with another rich and accessible popular history of the early Revolutionary period." - Publishers Weekly "Provocative and emotionally riveting revelations about the birth of the American Revolution." - Zebra "I recommend *The War Before Independence*. Mr. Beck's history is impeccable, his documentation thorough, and he tells an entertaining, vivid tale. I loved it." - Historical Novel Society About the Author Award-winning author Derek W. Beck has always had a passion for military history, which inspired him to start his career in the U.S. Air Force. He has served as an officer on Active Duty in science roles and in space operations. In 2005, he earned a Master of Science degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he also fell in love with Boston's revolutionary past. To more fully pursue writing, he later transitioned to the Air Force Reserves, though he still remains quite active, presently holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Derek's first book, *Igniting the American Revolution: 1773-1775*, was published in October 2015 by Sourcebooks. When not working on future history books, Derek is a frequent contributor to the online *Journal of the American Revolution*. You can follow or connect with him through his website at www.derekbeck.com. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. CHAPTER 1 Mounting Tensions The great schism that had formed between Britons and Americans tore holes in friendships and families. One lady of Philadelphia wrote to a British officer in Boston, "I assure you that though we consider you as a public enemy, we regard you as a private friend; and while we detest the cause you are fighting for, we wish well to your own personal interest and safety." Benjamin Franklin felt this schism more directly. When he first arrived in London, he was the most noted and celebrated American, but when he left there in mid-March of 1775, he did so as a dejected outcast. This great schism was more than just a political or professional upheaval for Franklin: it also divided his own family. When he arrived in Philadelphia in early May, he cast his lot firmly with the Whigs, joining the Second Continental Congress as a Pennsylvania delegate. But Franklin's forty-four-year-old son, William Franklin, who as a young man had stood by his father during his famous lightning-storm kite experiment, was now the royal governor of New Jersey and a staunch Loyalist. The political turmoil that would tear apart the colonies from their mother country would likewise tear apart this son from his father. This schism was never more apparent than

in and around Boston. After the Destruction of the Tea in December 1773, Britain overreacted by closing the Port of Boston and placing large numbers of troops in the town. Tensions grew as quickly as the British garrison, and on April 19, 1775, when the British attempted to disarm the American war stores in nearby Concord, those tensions erupted into open violence, thus igniting the American Revolution. American militia forces swarmed from the countryside and chased the British back to Boston, where both sides now dug in for war-literally. While the Americans concentrated their entrenching efforts in and around nearby Cambridge to protect their new headquarters, the British fortified Boston Neck and all the hills in the peninsular town. Besides entrenching, the Americans devoted their attention to the organization of their militia forces. On May 19, 1775, Maj. Gen. Artemas Ward, the highest-ranking man in the Massachusetts Militia, was bestowed the honor of first commander in chief of the Massachusetts Army and so promoted to full general. Ward received a small ceremony to mark the occasion. As John Adams described it, "Dr. [Joseph] Warren...made a harangue in the form of a charge, in the presence of the assembly, to every officer, upon the delivery of his commission; and he never failed to make the officer, as well as all the assembly, shudder upon those occasions. A few days later, John Thomas, commander of the Massachusetts forces based in Roxbury (immediately across from the British via Boston Neck), was promoted to the number two position, receiving the rank of lieutenant general in the new Massachusetts Army. The Massachusetts Army was just a portion of the grander New England Army of Observation, an eclectic collection of men representing the spectrum of New England society—from out-of-work longshoremens, weatherworn farmers, and decrepit millers to youthful blacksmith apprentices, refined gentlemen lawyers, and zealous doctors. Young and old, green recruit and hardened veteran of the French and Indian War, opportunist and patriot, adventurer and reluctant soldier: together they represented every lifestyle. Almost none wore uniforms. Instead, most wore diverse homespun clothes, a product not of the late recession resulting from the closing of Boston's port, but of the spirited Yankee refusal to accept finished goods from England. Most were Protestant Christians of one denomination or another. Unremarkably, most were also white men, descendants of European settlers, though not all. A small number were black men who joined the Army, some perhaps as freemen, most as slaves enlisted in the stead of their masters. Members of the "domesticated" Mahican (or Mohican) Indian tribe of western Massachusetts, living then-modern lives and locally known as Stockbridge Indians, also joined the camp, as did a few others from various tribes. The men were not the only thing conspicuously eclectic about the American Army. Rev. William Emerson, whose Old Manse stood overlooking the fight at Concord's North Bridge, wrote, "It is diverting to walk among the camps. They are as different in their form, as the owners are in their dress; and every tent is a portraiture of the temper and taste of the persons, who encamp in it. Some are made of boards, and some of sailcloth. Some partly of one and partly of the other. Again others are made of stone and turf, brick or brush. Some are thrown up in a hurry, others curiously wrought with doors and windows, done with wreaths and withes [twigs] in the manner of a basket. Some are your proper tents and marquees, looking like the regular camp of the enemy. In these are the Rhode Islanders, who are furnished with tent-equipage and every thing in the most exact English style. However, I think this great variety rather a beauty than a blemish in the army." The then-small Harvard College also dedicated its few buildings to the American Army, which used them for the commissary, mess, and as officer barracks. Every day the Americans eyed their rivals across the Charles River, and sometimes the ill-disciplined Yankees fired a few potshots to harass the British in Boston. These shots had no physical effect on the British—the range was too great—but they did serve as psychological warfare against the Americans' besieged enemy. In fact, the Americans would be quite ingenious at times with psychological warfare. Lt. John Barker of the British was particularly galled when he heard the rebels had erected the British Union flag in Cambridge. As Barker explained in his diary, "they call themselves the King's Troops and us the Parliaments. Pretty Burlesque!" In Boston, Lt. Gen. Thomas Gage was well aware of much of the inner workings of the colonial leadership in Cambridge, thanks to his stifled but still functional spy network. By the end of April, Gage had received critical intelligence warning that some Yankees were discussing an attack on Boston, particularly from Dorchester Heights, which stood on a peninsula just south of Boston. Yet he had received intelligence just days earlier explicitly stating that there were no such talks of an American attack. In other words, something had changed. No doubt it was the arrival of Benedict Arnold with his scheme to collect cannon with which to bombard the town. By mid-May, Gage received further intelligence that the Americans were urging Boston's inhabitants to leave town within days if they could or suffer the consequences from an intended bombardment. There was no truth to this, but Gage had to take all such warnings seriously, so he redoubled the troop guards throughout the town. Still more intelligence described a rebel scheme to fortify the heights of the two nearby peninsulas—to the north at Charlestown (namely Bunker Hill) and to the south at Dorchester. As if to punctuate the accuracy of Gage's intelligence, on May 13, in broad daylight, American Brig. Gen. Israel Putnam defiantly marched at the head of some two thousand or more men across Charlestown Neck and into what had become an unspoken but understood neutral ground between the two armies. Putnam led his procession over Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill and paraded there with much pomp and circumstance, their drums and fifes blaring marching songs, all in full view of the armed British sentries in Boston, the watchful heavy cannon of the Admiral's Battery on Copp's Hill, and the many ready cannon of HMS Somerset on the Charles. As the Americans marched on display, another three hundred appeared in the Cambridge Marshes across from Boston Common, parading in much the same way. At length, Putnam and his men

marched to Charlestown itself and up to the very shores of the Charles, directly across from the Somerset, "and after giving the War-hoop opposite the Somerset returned as they came." As Lieutenant Barker wrote in his diary, "It was expected the Body of Charles Town wou'd have fired on the Somerset, at least it was wished for, as she had everything ready for Action, and must have destroyed great numbers of them, besides putting the Town in Ashes." Doubtless, some among the Americans equally wished for battle, but it was not to be. According to Amos Farnsworth, one of the Americans there on the march, they had paraded only "to Shoe themselves to the Regulars". Old Put, as his friends called him, was not foolish for leading such a march. Rather, it built confidence among the mostly green Yankee Army. But just as important, it kept the men active. Putnam's experience had taught him that raw and undisciplined troops must be employed in some way, or they would become vicious and unmanageable. "It is better to dig a ditch every morning and fill it up at evening than to have the men idle" was a maxim he had adopted. So while Putnam kept his men busy building two redoubts he called Forts Number 1 and Number 2, both near Phipps Farm at Lechmere Point in Cambridge, the march was a much-welcomed break from the routine of entrenching. In this way, Putnam also helped boost morale, and the men who served with him grew to wholly trust his leadership. "He does not wear a large wig, nor screw his countenance into a form that belies the sentiments of his generous soul; he is no adept either at politics or religious canting and cozening: he is no shake-hand body: he therefore is totally unfit for everything but fighting." Finally, the Americans were just as fearful the British might take Charlestown Heights as the British were of the Americans. So while Putnam's march taunted the British, it also allowed the Yankees to reconnoiter and familiarize themselves with that ground, should a battle for that peninsula soon come. For this same reason, General Ward sent a warning to Lt. Gen. John Thomas in Roxbury that, should the British sally from the town and endeavor to secure Dorchester Heights, the other implicit neutral ground to the south, Thomas should be ready at a moment's notice to repulse such an enterprise. Thomas assured his commander in chief, "the Information is Simular to what I have Recvd almost Every Day this 10 Days Past. I have had For Sum Time Near Two hundred men Posted Near the Neck Two Hundred more as a Picket that Repair there Every Night Partt of Two Rgement more not more Then a mile halfe Distant from the Place am Determind to Take all Posible Care to Prevent their Taking Posesion". From the British perspective, Putnam's march combined with the latest intelligence strongly supported the likelihood of a rebel plot. Hence, Gage's new adjutant general, Lt. Col. James Abercrombie, lately arrived ahead of his 22nd Regiment that was itself bound for New York, decided to take a longboat up the Charles River to reconnoiter the American lines. According to Lieutenant Barker, Abercrombie's men were "fired upon by several of the Rebels from the Banks; several balls went thro' the boat but nobody was hurt; they made the best of their way back, and I don't hear that he has been as fond of reconnoitring since." Barker later noted of the rebels, "Some of the idle Fools frequently fire small Arms at the [HMS] Glasgow, and at our Camp; us they never reach, but they sometimes stick a Ball in the Ship, who never returns it tho' she has it in her power to drive 'em to the D-1 [Devil]." Meanwhile, all throughout May, British troops began to leave their winter barracks and again set up their white tents on and around Boston Common. While this was to be an orderly affair, in mid-May a fire swept through the barracks of the 65th Regiment, destroying much of their arms, gear, and clothing and forcing them to encamp on the Common sooner than expected. There were many advantages to moving the men into summer quarters, such as a healthy respite from being cooped up with so many soldiers in close quarters and the savings that came from relinquishing rented barracks. In addition, the Common was closer to Boston Neck and the Charles River, so the troops there were in a better position to guard against rebel incursions. The month of May also brought new troops to Boston. First, four more companies of the 65th had redeployed from Halifax and arrived on May 6. Then on May 14, the first two transports arrived of what would be the First Embarkation of fresh troops in 1775, bringing with them a portion of almost seven hundred fresh marines and officers. Within the next few days, four more transports arrived with the remaining marines. Once they had all arrived, Marine Maj. John Pitcairn divided the marines evenly into two battalions of ten companies each, mimicking the army regiments. The veteran marines and some of the new ones were now officially named the 1st Battalion and placed under Pitcairn (who also retained overall command of the Marines), while the bulk of the new arrivals formed the 2nd Battalion under Maj. John Tupper. The remainder of the First Embarkation would arrive within weeks, supplying another three full army regiments plus cavalry, an addition of nearly 1,500 fresh men and officers. Lt. Richard Williams was one of those who arrived with the First Embarkation. After assessing the toll taken on the town by the siege, he wrote in his journal that Boston was a fair town, but "as to publick buildings I can't say they shine much, the town house [Old State House] Fanuel Hall are the only two worth notice, are of bricks. some churches have very neat elegant steeples of wood. no such thing as a play house, they were too puritanical a set to admit of such lewd Diversions, tho' ther's perhaps no town of its size cou'd turn out more whores than this cou'd. they have left us an ample sample of them. I walked thro' the town was much affected at the sight of it, in a manner abandoned, almost every other shop, shut up...the trade of Boston must have been very extensive of great consequence, the great number of store houses warfs, which are contiguous to them shows it plainly if there were not other proofs, I can't help looking on it as a ruined Town, I think I see the grass growing in every street." With the troops besieged on a small peninsula, their only diversion was the dreaded and ubiquitous New England rum. Once again, drunkenness became a problem among the British ranks, eroding troop discipline. Gage soon learned that the women camp followers-the many

soldiers' wives and the ample prostitutes in town-were among the leading suppliers. Consequently, he issued stern orders that his officers should strictly investigate all incidents of drunkenness, and that any woman who did not observe the prohibition to sell rum and liquor to the soldiers was "to be immediately seized and put on board Ship."The other great burden Gage faced was that of provisions for his army. So far, the army had plenty of salt-cured meats and dry goods-there was no crisis yet. But Gage's army was in need of fresh vegetables and fruit, of which they had none, and without which the town would eventually succumb to scurvy. Still, while the supply of fresh goods from the countryside had been cut off at the start of the siege, some continued to trickle in through Boston Neck thanks to a handful of industrious Yankees eager for cash.Gage also needed fresh meat for his army, not a necessity for survival, but crucial to maintain troop morale. The disappearance of a pair of oxen at the North End gave proof of the growing desperation for fresh meat and provisions. The one critical provision the army desperately lacked was hay, necessary for the horses and few livestock remaining in town. So Gage devised a plan to secure a supply from nearby Grape Island in the harbor. It was meant to be a routine foraging mission, but once again, Gage underestimated the Americans.