

BATTLE DIGEST™

Lessons for Today's Leaders

Volume 2 ★ Issue 10

Early American Wars:

Lexington-Concord

DATE:

April 19, 1775

LOCATION:

Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts

OPPOSING FORCES

British Army: 700 light infantry and grenadiers, commanded by Lt. Col. Francis Smith. Smith reported to Lt. Gen. Sir Thomas Gage, the overall commander with a garrison of 3,000 soldiers in Boston. Gage's second in command was Brig. Gen. Lord Hugh Percy, who would command the relief effort.

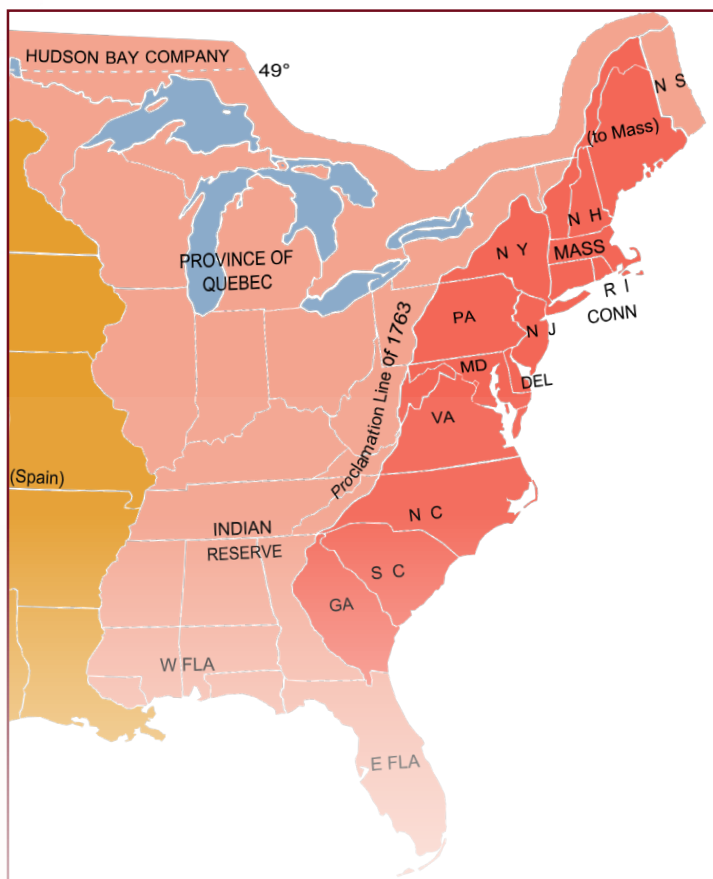
Colonial Militia: 77 militiamen at Lexington, led by Capt. John Parker; 400 militiamen at Concord, led by Col. James Barrett. In total, between 3,000–4,000 militiamen from 40 towns would appear throughout the day.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Tension between Britain and her North American colonies had been building for years. After numerous protests and acts of defiance, things took a serious turn after the December 1773 Boston Tea Party, when an irate King George III and Parliament took more drastic action to teach their rebellious citizens in Massachusetts a lesson. After shutting down Boston's port, dissolving elected government, and placing the colony under military occupation, the dry tinder of Colonial resentment was ready to ignite. The spark came on the morning of 19 April 1775, as a British force moved west to destroy military supplies secretly stored in Concord. When the column came upon a small company of militia waiting on Lexington Green, the fateful "shot heard round the world" rang out. The American Revolution had begun.

STRATEGY & MANEUVER

Actions by the British: After the French and Indian War (1754–1763), Britain began exerting more control over her Colonial possessions in North America. (Map 1) This included increased taxes and levies to help pay off war debt and defray the costs of maintaining its overseas military presence. Beginning with the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, Colonial citizens spent years expressing their frustrations through protests, boycotts, and petitions. As early as 1768, British regiments arrived in Boston to quell this "metropolis of sedition," only to see things continue to deteriorate, reaching a head after the Boston Tea Party when King George



Map 1: The American Colonies in 1775.



Lt. Col. Francis Smith

Massachusetts was declared "in rebellion" and placed under the military control of Lt. Gen. Sir Thomas Gage and his garrison in Boston. The port was closed, local government was abolished, and residents were forced to accept the quartering of British soldiers in their homes.

By early 1775, Gage faced a precarious situation. Towns and villages were reinvigorating their militias and stockpiling weapons and ammunition. Amid calls from London for harsher action, Gage worked to find and destroy these military stores. When he learned, in late March, of a large cache in Concord,