

## *Transcript: Part Three, Episode Two- The Siege of Boston*

I'm Matthew and I'm Mike. Welcome back to Keep Liberty Alive. In the previous episode, we left the British and American armies in a stalemate at Boston. Other than firing a few shots at each other over the wintertime, not much happened. Someone needed to come up with an idea to end the stalemate. And that someone was Henry Knox. This is Part Three, Episode Two: The Siege of Boston.

Colonel Henry Knox approached George Washington with an idea. That idea was to go to Fort Ticonderoga in New York, which the Americans had captured from the British, but had then abandoned. There they would retrieve the artillery and bring them down to Boston. Washington liked the idea, put Knox in charge, and on November 16th sent him on his way.

By the end of November, winter was setting in, the snow was falling and the conditions in Boston for the British were poor, to say the least. There was a shortage of food, a shortage of wood for burning, and they were cutting down trees and old wooden buildings for heat. The British were depending on resupplies from British ships, but American privateers were capturing the British ships as they were coming in. This created a desperate situation in Boston. The Redcoats were hungry, cold and suffering from scurvy and smallpox.

The Americans were not that better off. They had enough food, but they were also suffering from outbreaks of smallpox and there was a shortage of gunpowder.

Near the end of January, Colonel Henry Knox and his team returned to the Boston area with the guns from Fort Ticonderoga. Plans began in earnest to end the siege. Knox's journey to move those cannons from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston is quite the story in itself. If you'd like to read more about that, and about the entire war itself, then we highly recommend David McCullough's book 1776. It is very well written and researched and reads like a novel.

The key would be to fortify Dorchester Heights and force the hand of the British. However, the ground was frozen so it would be impossible to dig trenches on the Heights. So, the Americans built defenses off site ahead of time, and on the night of March 5th, they moved many of the cannons and the reinforcements to Dorchester Heights overnight. In the morning, when the British saw this, they knew that it was over. British General William Howe reportedly stated, "My God, these fellows have done more work in one night than I could make my army do in three months." The British tried to hit the troops on Dorchester with cannon, but their guns couldn't reach that high. They planned to assault the Americans on Dorchester Heights and Washington was very much hoping they would do so, but a storm arose, and the British decided to cease that effort. That storm probably saved the lives of many British troops. On March 10th, General Howe ordered all loyalists to give up any goods that would help Americans in preparation to evacuate Boston, which the British did, eventually sailing away in the middle of March. The Siege of Boston was over.

After the British left Boston, Washington entered and found the city in not too bad of shape. The Americans had taken Boston from the British and would hold it throughout the war. This was the second large victory for the Americans in a war that would be long, and also have many defeats.

Washington decided that New York City would be the next battleground, so they packed up most of the troops and began the long trek south.

Washington and his army left Boston on April 4, arriving in New York City on April 13, where he set about fortifying the surrounding area before the British attack that was sure to come. Washington had it authorized and hoped to have close to 30,000 troops, but he actually had 19,000.

Meanwhile, the British Navy had been gathering at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and near the end of June, Washington learned that they were on the way. On June 29th, 45 British ships were anchored in New York Bay. The British would continue to amass forces over the next few weeks in preparation for what would become the Battle of Long Island.

While the Siege of Boston was going on and preparations for the Battle of Long Island were happening, murmurs of independence from England were becoming more and more commonplace. In January 1776, a 47-page booklet titled *Common Sense* was anonymously published in the colonies. This booklet was written by Thomas Paine and clearly stated the case for independence. Over the first half of 1776, that call for independence would gain much traction, to the point that some in the Continental Congress took up that cause very seriously. Many of the colonies who now considered themselves free and independent states, were very much trying to persuade the Continental Congress to separate from England. This was not easily accomplished. Support for independence in the Congress was far from unanimous and many needed to be persuaded.

While this debate was raging, Congress appointed a committee of five to draft a declaration. This committee consisted of John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, Robert Livingston of New York, and Roger Sherman of Connecticut. The committee thought that Adams should draft it, but Adams thought Jefferson, who was known for his eloquence, should draft the declaration, which he did.

The committee of five presented Jefferson's draft to Congress on June 28, and Congress then did some editing of the Declaration. Jefferson had asserted that King George III had forced slavery on the colonies, but in order to appease some of the southern states, which were heavily involved in the slave trade, that assertion was removed much to Jefferson's disappointment. The Final draft was completed on July 1, and after much wrangling, Congress voted in favor of independence on July 2. The Declaration of Independence was finalized on July 4, and published for all to see. Independence from England had officially been declared.