



Igniting the American Revolution: 1773-1775

Derek W. Beck

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"For those who like their history rich in vivid details, Derek Beck has served up a delicious brew in this book....This may soon become everyone's favorite." —Thomas Fleming, author of *Liberty! The American Revolution*

A sweeping, provocative new look at the pivotal years leading up to the American Revolution

The Revolutionary War did not begin with the Declaration of Independence, but several years earlier in 1773. In this gripping history, Derek W. Beck reveals the full story of the war before American independence—from both sides.

Spanning the years 1773-1775 and drawing on new material from meticulous research and previously unpublished documents, letters, and diaries, *Igniting the American Revolution* sweeps readers from the rumblings that led to the Boston Tea Party to the halls of Parliament—where Ben Franklin was almost run out of England for pleading on behalf of the colonies—to that fateful Expedition to Concord which resulted in the shot heard round the world. With exquisite detail and keen insight, Beck brings revolutionary America to life in all its enthusiastic and fiery patriotic fervor, painting a nuanced portrait of the perspectives, ambitions, people, and events on both the British and the American sides that eventually would lead to the convention in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

Captivating, provocative and inspiring, *Igniting the American Revolution* is the definitive history of these landmark years in our nation's history, whose events irrevocably altered the future not only of the United States and England, but the whole world.

"Integrating compelling personalities with grand strategies, political maneuverings on both sides of the Atlantic, and vividly related incidents, *Igniting the American Revolution* pulls the reader into a world rending the British Empire asunder." —Samuel A. Forman, author of the biography *Dr. Joseph Warren*

Igniting the American Revolution: 1773-1775 Details

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From Reader Review Igniting the American Revolution: 1773-1775 for online ebook

Swimminghitsuji says

This book was a great read! I am recommending this book to everyone. US history is not my usual genre of choice but Derek Beck does a wonderful job of telling the story starting from the Boston Tea Party thru Ticonderoga. He fills in the gaps between the common highlights that are taught in school with nuance and details drawn from original sources such as letters and diaries. It is written in a way that is both engaging, informative, and easy to follow. Sometimes I forgot I was reading non-fiction.

I learned a lot by reading this book. I now have a deeper understanding of what went into the American Revolution. My previous knowledge was limited to "no taxation without representation", the intolerable Acts, and a few scimmages. There was so much more! For instance, the Powder Alarms were particularly new to me. The book does a great job giving insight and details into the who, what and why the colonies were heading to revolution. I never knew much about Joseph Warren. He played such an important role in the shaping of our country. Why he glossed over in our history books is beyond me. I whole hardily recommend this book to everyone.

Andrew Whitaker says

Very detailed and, more importantly, unbiased account of the events of the Boston Tea Party to the April 19th battle that started the American Revolutionary War

Steven Peterson says

A view of the pre-Revolution events that led to the Revolution. . . . This book covers the period from 1773-1775. These years began to provide the momentum for Revolution.

This book does a very fine job of providing detailed discussion of key events. We have all heard of the Boston Tea Party. The volume provides a great deal of information about this. We learned of the decision making process and the role of Boston's leaders. The background of the Party is nicely told.

The march of the British forces to Lexington and then Concord, the ultimate target, to take colonial armaments. Much detail; one gets a very good perspective on the background for English General Gage's decision to move ahead. We learn of the role of the colonials' responses to the mission of the infantry as they marched toward Concord. Then the bloody retreat of the British troops, as they moved toward the safety of Boston.

Aftermath? A siege of Boston by colonial militia and the resulting logistical problems. Side stories include the roles of the Green Mountain Boys and Benedict Arnold in taking Fort Ticonderoga and the potential of its artillery and powder.

In the end, a well constructed work. . . .

Richard says

An impressive amount of research was conducted by the author to ensure that his highly enjoyable descriptions of the seminal events leading to the start of the American Revolution are based on a solid foundation of facts. There are no doubt many histories of every aspect of the Revolution, but Derek W. Beck has proven that there is always room for a book which offers fresh perspectives on the occurrences that all Americans should know about.

The time span of the book is roughly late 1773 to the Spring of 1775. From the end of the French and Indian Wars, in 1763, until ten years later, something momentous happened in the British North American Colonies which completely changed how their citizens felt about their place in the world. In 1763, it would have been common for the average American colonist to feel grateful for the presence of the King's forces, and for many to have felt proud of participating, as colonial militia, side-by-side with Royal soldiers in the struggle to keep the French out of the colonies.

By 1773, much heated dissent against British governance, especially in the application of taxation, was inciting open hostility, especially in Massachusetts. By the end of that year, the Mother Country's authority would be defiantly challenged by the public destruction of a fortune in tea, followed by the British government's imposition of acts to place Boston under a military government while strangling its economic life blood.

Beck's great accomplishment is the way that he maintains the pace of the telling of the story of the disintegration of good will between the parent country and its colonists. He shows how the eventual clash of arms which started the war happened at the end of a progression of crises, many of which may not be familiar to the casual history reader. Everyone knows that the shooting started at Lexington and Concord, but in reality, other occurrences could have caused the war to start earlier. In particular, several flashpoints occurred which would have had dire consequences if cool heads did not prevail in tamping down wild rumors surrounding what have become known as the Cambridge Powder Alarm, Portsmouth Alarm and the Salem Alarm.

The alarms emanating from the April 19, 1775 British Army expedition to Concord, however, led to the igniting of the revolt of the Colonies. The description of the "Battle of the Nineteenth of April" takes up the most number of pages as well as representing the emotional center of the book. It is also here that a really good book becomes a hard-to-put down book, as Beck gives an almost moment by moment account of the actions of those on both sides of the conflict during April 18th and 19th. We all know what historical happening occurred in American history, but Beck continuously adds insights to flesh-in how things transpired during those fateful hours.

Beck is a military man (he's a major in the Air Force Reserves) and he shows his deep knowledge of the American militia and British units that clashed on the 19th. He adds valuable insight into how these forces deployed and performed on that first day of the Revolt. His running account of the British withdrawal and continued armed harassment from Concord, on the way back to Boston, makes it possible to understand the increasingly stressful sense of danger and resulting ferocity shown by combatants on both sides as they continuously clashed along this route.

The book also contains biographical information on some of the most influential actors operating around Boston at that time, including the British-appointed military governor of Boston, Lt. General Thomas Gage, and the future American general making his mark during the capture of British installations at Fort

Ticonderoga and Crown Point, Benedict Arnold. An interesting fact brought out by Beck is that Arnold was America's first Revolutionary naval hero, for his actions on Lake Champlain. But the most noteworthy personalities may have been the two doctors involved in the conflict, Dr. Joseph Warren and Dr. Benjamin Church. They both served on the Revolutionary Massachusetts Provincial Congress, but the former was a great hero of the Revolution while the latter was a spy for General Gage.

This is a relatively fast read, in that the actual text only spans 272 of the book's 467 numbered pages. There are 25 pages alone of Bibliography, but the greatest post-text length of pages is used on footnotes (almost 90 pages) and the 14 Appendices. I don't usually bother with post-text footnotes unless something in the book prompts me to want to look deeper into something of interest in the story, but hey , if this is the type of detail you are interested in, go for it. I'm not knocking the author for his thoroughness; some of the Appendices were of use in adding to the book's message, like the numbers and unit types of the forces deployed by the British, and especially the Expedition to Concord Timeline (Appendix 7).

Beck, however, likes to dive deep into arcana, like detailed listings of the Royal Naval vessels in and around Boston, with tons of information about their dimensions and armament, when they weren't really central to the story. The casual reader can also, in my opinion, be excused for not delving deeply into the provided Appendix on British Cannon Statistics, including trigonometric calculations of their effectiveness.

All of this well-documented data does, however, bring this volume to a level of historical credibility equal to any scholarly book on the Revolution. I'm sure this book will remain as a source of research for a long time to come. Although I'm quibbling here, I can't avoid showing some disappointment in the lack of commensurate attention to detail in the text. More careful proofing would have eliminated the errors on page 147 ("As they approached with a mile or so of Lexington Green, ..."); page 183 ("They road turned again eastward ..."); and page 236 ("He reached reaching the city on May 28, ...").

Bob Lamberti says

excellent work, especially in presenting both sides of the conflict in what appears to be a realistic manner. as often happens in a conflict there are well-intentioned players on both sides who get caught up in something that slowly transitions from a series of avoidable events to an unavoidable conflict. It shows what influence a small but active minority actually had on these momentous events. this book is rich in the details that most lovers of history crave.

Alexys says

I read this for a book report that I had due and I learned so much from this book Beck did an amazing job writing this

John Vanek says

Very very detailed account of crucial events that are usually only summarized. However, Beck is sometimes aggravatingly repetitive, repeating the same thing sometimes almost verbatim as many as three or four times. It's still a very good book for people interested in just how Massachusetts became a war zone, but it needed a more diligent editor to streamline the flow of ideas just a bit more.

Sam says

In the way of disclosure I first crossed paths with Mr. Beck several years ago as we were both researching fine points of the Siege of Boston among the Thomas Gage papers at the Clements library in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Through that and subsequent interactions I became aware of his meticulous attention to scholarly detail.

Joseph Warren, my biographical subject, is one of many characters that Beck deftly incorporates into his account of the British North American colonies on the brink of rebellion. Along the way he brings insights into his subjects' characters, while jumping freely and smoothly between authentic detail and the arc of major events. His telling of the origin of the American Revolution emphasizes key personalities amongst colonial Americans as well as British leaders. In his characterization of Warren, Derek Beck has performed original scholarship in reconstructing this lesser-known American founder's personal life as well as forensics utilizing post-mortem pictures of Warren's remains. Comparable original insights come fast and furious, such as a gripping account of the opening battles at Lexington and Concord.

'Igniting the Revolution' is a refreshing and, I believe, one of the best ever written accounts of a critical portion of the formation of the United States as a nation. Beck's novelistic, almost cinematic presentation makes this a particularly delightful read. In addition to gaining readers, I hope that future popular media renderings of the era - such as the recent History Channel Sons of Liberty, will base their presentations on Mr. Beck's work as opposed to presenting fanciful fiction as historical fact. The real story, as related by Derek Beck, is far more compelling.

In a project of this size and scope, one is bound to find aspects with which to disagree. One thing that comically stuck out for me was the characterization of British lieutenant colonel and later general Francis Smith, who led the British soldiers confronting American militiamen on the iconic Lexington Green at the outset of the Revolutionary War. Smith's chief sin would appear to have been obesity. Never mind that Benjamin Franklin could also be presented in such a bariatric manner. In Smith's case the physical characterization is especially unsympathetic. It seems to be shorthand for him being slow of mind and dimwitted. Picky, picky! For me this was the exception among hundreds of pages and many expertly presented and entertaining vignettes.

This book is particularly strong in characterizing the breakdown of civil government and subsequent outbreak of hostilities. The work is strongest for pivotal events in the Northeast circa 1773-1775 and to a lesser extent other geographies.

General readers will be delighted in the main flow of the narrative. Specialists and scholars will be impressed by extensive footnotes and appendices. These amply demonstrate the broad base of primary source material on which Derek Beck builds his engaging book. They also present alternate viewpoints and interpretations for those aspects equivocal in primary sources. General readers may want to skip over the appendices, losing nothing of the broad sweep and excitement of the narrative.

I hope 'Igniting the Revolution' finds its place among the classic renderings of the American Revolution, both for its readability and base of accurate and often new scholarship. I believe readers will look forward to further contributions from this new voice chronicling American history in a most engaging manner.

- Samuel A. Forman, author of the new young adult novel *Twenty-One Heroes* and the American founders biography *Dr. Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty* .

Dave Hoff says

An old subject, but a new book on the Revolution. Full of detail, that is enjoyable and instructional learning. One of my favorite quotes, "no one ever remembers the name of Paul Revere's horse", I can now say I do. And Revere did not shout, "the British are coming" he thought himself British-American. It was "the Redcoats are coming". Our side were called "rascally patriots". And Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen almost came to blows over who entered Ft. Ticonderoga's side door first. Book ends with the Patriots taking the forts of Lake Champlain and the 2 British wars ships.

Sam says

This is one of the books that really made me love history. It's very well researched and extremely detailed, so it becomes a very vivid story and reads almost like a novel. It succeeds in capturing the feeling of a time while still discussing the important events. It also doesn't shy away from complexity in looking at the events/outcomes/reasons surrounding the American Revolution. It kicked off a bigger interest in the general period for me.

Also, I bought this book in the midst of a five hour shopping trip with people who care a lot more about fashion than I do, which was incredibly boring, during which I was forced to listen to country music, and this book was my refuge during that period, for which I am grateful. Thx for letting me ignore my cousins, dude.

Jeri says

Slow reading, but well-written and not dry. Some parts are extremely amusing. Mr Beck is able to cut through the hyperbole and give us "just the facts." The beginning of the Revolutionary War is very clearly spelled out.

Tamesin says

Derek Beck's first book, *Igniting the American Revolution: 1773-1775*, is sure to ignite new appreciation for the Revolutionary period. In this age of "popularized" versions of American history, which too often sacrifice accuracy for glitz, Beck has attained that magical balance of truth in reporting and engaging storytelling. He retells familiar stories (the Boston Tea Party, the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and Ticonderoga) by drawing on a vast well of original letters and diaries, which allows the characters to tell much of the story themselves and injects colorful realism at all points of the tale. Lesser-known events such as the early Powder Alarms and back-room dealings are also presented in an equally engaging way. Kudos also goes to Beck for not picking a particular hero or villain – American or British – and instead emphasizing the "grey areas" of human responses to world-shattering events. From committee meetings to the battlefield, the years leading up to the Revolution are presented more as a fascinating game of chess than as a battle between good and evil. It's a refreshing approach, and proves that truth is just as, if not more, riveting than fiction. Aside from the very readable main body of the book, Beck also presents numerous appendices and extensive notes, a treasure trove for researchers and anyone who wishes to delve more deeply into the details

of military maneuverings. The years 1773-1775 were only just the beginning of America's revolutionary history, and this reader hopes that Derek Beck will continue to see us through with future titles.

Darcia Helle says

Having grown up in Massachusetts, where we were taught the glorified version of the American Revolution, I was pleasantly surprised by the unbiased, detailed account Derek Beck gives us with this book. While the topic is complex, the ease and structure of the writing simplifies things. This isn't a light read, but it also isn't one requiring a dictionary, map, and Master's degree to sort through.

The author has clearly done extensive research. We start when the Revolution, then barely a resistance, began simmering, with events leading us to the Boston Tea Party. This isn't a dry read, loaded with nothing but facts. Instead, we meet the key players of the time on a personal level, with their stories told through snippets of journals and letters. These bits are woven into the timeline, bringing history to life on the pages.

I was surprised by how the Revolution came about almost by accident. Neither side truly understood the other, and this was complicated by distance and their inability to immediately communicate. Through the honest telling of this part of our history, the author offers compelling insight into the political and very human aspects of war.

My quibbles are minor. For one, this 480 page book is only 272 pages of actual text. The rest of the book, nearly half, is the appendix, notes, etc. Consequently, some interesting and pertinent information is buried where most readers will never venture. I read a lot of nonfiction, but I'm one of those guilty of being bored by endless pages of notes at the end. I prefer the content to flow within the timeline of the book.

My other minor complaint is that the ending felt abrupt. In fairness to the author, he does finish at the right spot for his purposes. We're left at the time when the militia join forces, taking things from a disorganized rebellion to a more organized war. I would have liked some sort of summation, in closing, of the war to come. Perhaps that will be a sequel to this book.

Overall, this is straightforward, enlightening read perfect for anyone interested in the truth of how and why American became independent.

I was provided with an ebook copy by the publisher, via NetGalley, in exchange for my honest review.

Ionia says

Impressive!

If you read a lot of historical non-fiction, then you will understand what I mean when I say that often times, one book is just a slightly reworded repeat of another. That is not the case with this book.

Meticulous research, an unbiased standpoint from the author and good organisation, make this book one that you don't want to miss. I was particularly interested in the descriptions of the Boston Tea Party events that many other books seem to just gloss over. This was explained in detail in this book and in such a way that it seemed interesting and relevant today.

I love it when a historical non-fiction can bring events from the past to life and make you feel as though you were there to witness them, and Derek Beck does so with style.

If you are interested in the American Revolution, this is a book you will definitely want to add to your collection.

This review is based on a complimentary copy from the publisher, provided through Netgalley. All opinions are my own.

Casey Wheeler says

I received a prepublication copy of this book (October 6, 2015) through NetGalley with the understanding that I would publish a review on my blog, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google + pages along with NetGalley, Amazon and Goodreads.

I requested this book because I have an interest in the history of the United States. It is the first book by the author that I have read.

The title is a little misleading in that a very significant portion of the book takes place in 1775. That said, it is an interesting read and well documented. It holds your attention resulting in making it a quick read.

It covers the events leading up to the Battles of Lexington and Concord and then continues on covering the events surrounding the British occupation of Boston. This includes Paul Revere's ride helping to separate fact from fiction along with the events surrounding Lexington and Concord.

I recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in American History, especially the events leading up to the Revolutionary War.
