

THE REVOLUTIONARY IRISH

When the American Revolution erupted in June, 1775, the Irish and Scots-Irish living in New England quickly joined the colonial side to fight for American independence. After all, they knew sometime about revolution, and about meeting the British in battle. Here are a few of their names.

Major General **John Sullivan** was the son of indentured servants from Co. Limerick who emigrated to Berwick, Maine. Sullivan committed the first act of armed rebellion against the British on December 14, 1774, when he raided Fort William and Mary in Portsmouth, NH, seizing gun powder and guns. Those weapons were later used at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Sullivan's brothers, Daniel, James and Ebenezer also fought against the British.

At the Battles of Lexington and Concord on June 19, 1775, the Irish were involved on both sides of the skirmish, since some of the British troops had been conscripted from Ireland! One former British soldier who defected to the American side was **Hugh Cargill** of Ballyshannon, Donegal. He was in Concord that day and helped to save the town records from being captured by the British.

In Maine, **Jeremiah O'Brien** and his brothers fought at the Battle of Machias on June 12, 1775, the first naval battle of the American Revolution. It occurred when the British ship HMS Margareta sailed into Machias Bay and tried to remove a Liberty Tree the townsfolk had erected. After intense combat, O'Brien captured the Margareta and took its munitions as bounty. The Battle became known as the "Lexington of the Sea."

Major General **John Stark** and Major **Andrew McClary** were among the heroes at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17,

1775 in Charlestown, fighting for the 1st New Hampshire Regiment, composed of men from the state's Scots-Irish. Historian Michael O'Brien notes that 176 Irish-born men and hundreds of Scots-Irish Americans fought at Bunker Hill. McClary was the last American to fall at the end of the battle and died of his wounds.

Henry Knox was a Boston bookseller whose Scots-Irish Presbyterian family had immigrated from Ulster province. Knox masterminded the plan to drag 58 cannons and artillery from Fort Ticonderoga to George Washington's headquarters in Cambridge from December 1775 to January 25, 1776. Two months later, on March 17, 1776, the colonial forces, commanded by **George Washington**, aimed those canons atop Dorchester Heights at the British fleet in Boston Harbor, forcing the British to end the Siege of Boston.

On December 7, 1775, the U.S. Continental Congress commissioned its first warship, the USS Lexington, named in honor of the battle. Commodore **John Barry** of County Wexford, who received his official naval commission in March 1776, was given command of the ship.

BITA is compiling a **Revolutionary Irish Trail** of memorials, plaques, gravesites, historic homes and museums pertaining to Irish and Scots-Irish contributions to the American Revolution. Here are some of the landmarks you'll find in New England.

irishboston.org/2025/rev250-irishtrail/



DORCHESTER HEIGHTS

REVOLUTIONARY IRISH NEW ENGLAND LANDMARKS®

Commodore John Barry Plaque

Boston Common
Boston, MA

Jeremiah O'Brien Plaque

Massachusetts State House
Boston, MA

Bunker Hill Monument

Monument Square
Charlestown, MA

Bunker Hill Memorial Tablets

Winthrop Park
Charlestown, MA

Hugh Cargill Gravesite

Old Hill Burying Ground
Monument Square
Concord, MA

Henry Knox Trail

29 Markers from
Alford to South Boston, MA

Henry Knox Museum

Thomaston, ME

Fort O'Brien State Historic Site

Machiasport, ME

Fort McClary State Historic Site

Kittery Point, ME

John Sullivan Monument

Durham, NH

Andrew McClary Plaque

Epsom, NH

Fort Stark State Historical Park

New Castle, NH

Colonel John Stark Statue

State Capitol Building
Concord, NH

Colonel John Stark Statue

Bennington Memorial
Bennington, VT



COLONEL JOHN STARK, NH STATE HOUSE