

John Kendrick

American Revolutionary War Patriot

Sea Captain John Kendrick fought in the French and Indian War in 1762, reportedly threw tea overboard in the Boston Tea Party in 1773, and commanded several continental ships during the Revolutionary War.

Following the Revolutionary War, Kendrick was among the first citizens of the new nation to sail into the Pacific. He visited Hawai'i a number of times and is credited for initiating the sandalwood trade (Hawai'i's first commercial export). Kendrick died at Honolulu Harbor, December 12, 1794.

Kendrick was born in 1740 on a small hilly farm in East Harwich, Cape Cod, the third of seven children of Solomon Kendrick and Elizabeth Atkins.

Kendrick's grandfather, Edward Kendrick, had arrived in Harwich around 1700 and married Elizabeth Snow, the granddaughter of Nicholas Snow, a holder of extensive lands and one of the 'old-comers' from Plymouth who first settled the Cape.

Kendrick's father, Solomon, born sometime during the winter of 1705, was master of a whaling vessel who was famous in local lore. John Kendrick followed his father and went to sea by the time he was fourteen. By his late-teens, he was crewing on local sailing vessels.

Let's look back ...

The Colonies

By the 1770s, Great Britain had established thirteen colonies in North America. The American colonists thought of themselves as citizens of Great Britain and subjects of the King.

They were tied to Britain through trade and by the way they were governed. Each colony had its own government, but the British king controlled those governments.

By 1763 the word "American" was commonly used on both sides of the Atlantic to designate the people of the 13 colonies. (Britannica)

French and Indian War

The Colonists were British until the Declaration of Independence and subsequent Revolutionary War. Over time, however, they believed that Great Britain did not treat the colonists as equal citizens. (US Citizenship and Immigration Services)

The French & Indian War (1754-1763) started as a struggle for control of the land west of the Allegheny Mountains in the Ohio River Valley. As the conflict spread, European powers began to fight in their Colonies throughout the world. It became a war fought on four continents (Seven Years War).

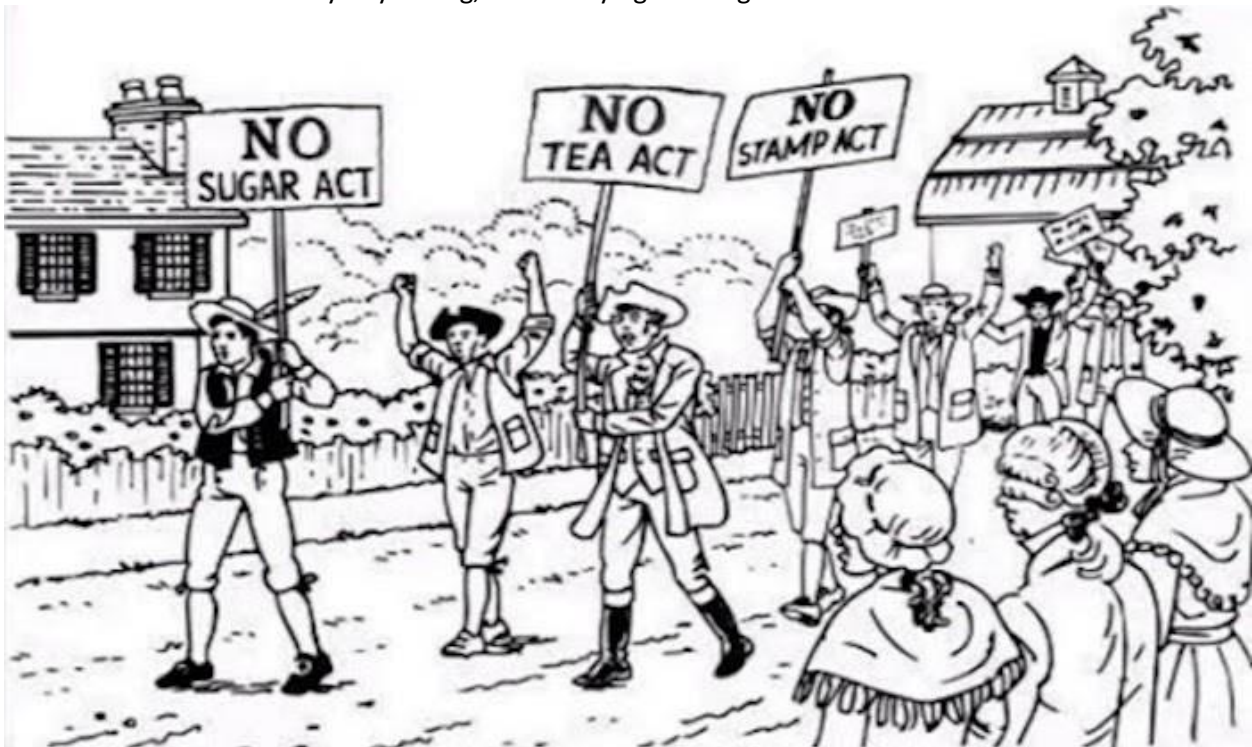
In North America, the war was a clash of British, French and American Indians. The Colonists considered themselves British and fought on the British side. John Kendrick joined Captain Jabez Snow's company during the French and Indian War in 1762. Like most Cape Codders of the time, he served for only eight months and did not re-enlist.

The war ended with the removal of French power from North America. However, the stage was set for the American Revolution. (NPS)

No Taxation Without Representation

In a lot of respects, actions after the French and Indian War changed everything in the Colonies. While the British won the war, it had been enormously expensive and left Great Britain with a heavy debt.

The British government's attempts to impose taxes on colonists to help cover these expenses resulted in increasing colonial resentment of British attempts to expand imperial authority in the colonies. The colonists started to resist by boycotting, or not buying British goods.



“As strife increased on the waterfront, [Kendrick] may have been involved in the widespread boycott of British goods and the burning of Boston's customs house, or riots over seizure and impressment of American sailors for British ships.”

“Family tradition holds that on the rainy night of December 16, 1773, John Kendrick was part of the legendary [Boston Tea Party] band that boarded two East India Company ships at Griffin's Wharf in Boston and dumped 342 chests of tea into the harbor. Thumbing his nose at the British shortly after, he is said to have been master of the brig Undutied Tea.” (Ridley)

In retaliation, the British Parliament passed the series of punitive measures known in the colonies as the Intolerable Acts, including the Boston Port Bill, which shut off the city's sea trade pending payment for the destroyed tea. The British government's efforts to single out Massachusetts for punishment served only to unite the colonies and impel the drift toward war. (Britannica)

The Colonists were British, but they did not have any member of Parliament representing them; and they resented that the taxes were imposed only on them and not all British subjects.

Revolutionary War

The French and Indian War and the British government's attempts to impose taxes on the Colonists to help cover these expenses resulted in increasing colonial resentment.

The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) was sparked after American colonists chafed over issues like taxation without representation, embodied by laws like The Stamp Act and The Townshend Acts. Mounting tensions came to a head during the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, when the "shot heard round the world" was fired.

It was not without warning; the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770 and the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 1773 showed the colonists' increasing dissatisfaction with British rule in the colonies.

The Declaration of Independence, issued on July 4, 1776, enumerated the reasons they felt compelled to break from the rule of King George III and parliament to start a new nation. In September of that year, the Continental Congress declared the "United Colonies" of America to be the "United States of America."

Kendrick fought in the American Revolutionary War and at its outbreak, he may have smuggled powder and arms from the Caribbean with the sloop Fanny, whose owners were under contract with a secret committee of the Continental Congress and later captured a couple British ships, which helped to precipitate the entry of France into the war. (Ridley) Kendrick also commanded the Count D'Estaing and Marianne.

Benjamin Franklin, in a February 28, 1778 letter to the American Commissioners to the Committee for Foreign Affairs, noted,

"Our States have now a solid Support for their Liberty and Independence in their Alliance with France, which will be certainly followed by that of Spain and the whole house of Bourbon, and probably by Holland and the other Powers of Europe who are interested in the Freedom of Commerce and in keeping down the Power of Britain. ..."

"Americans are every where in France treated with Respect and every Appearance of Affection. We think it would be well to advise our People in all Parts of America to imitate this Conduct with Regard to the French who may happen to be among us. Every means should be used to remove ancient Prejudices, and cultivate a Friendship that must be so useful to both Nations."

"[W]e can with Pleasure now acquaint you, that we have obtained full Satisfaction for the Owners of the Prizes confiscated here ..., which Prizes after Confiscation were for Reasons of State restored to the English [through Capt. Kendrick] ... This is fresh Proof of the good Will and Generosity of this Court, and their Determination to cultivate the Friendship of America." (Benjamin Franklin to The American Commissioners to the Committee for Foreign Affairs, February 28, 1778)

Establishing Trade Following the Revolutionary War

“Shortly before the British surrendered at Yorktown in 1781, Kendrick came ashore. In his sporadic visits home he had managed to father six children, and now he buckled down to making his way in the new nation.”

“After the victorious Revolution and the euphoria of the Peace Treaty of 1783, an economic depression had settled over villages and farms. Port cities and their harbors were left reeling from the war. Inflation was rampant.”

“There was no common currency, state governments were weak, and representatives to the Congress of the Confederation bickered over fundamental issues, threatening to secede.”

“Heavy debts owed to Britain for damages in the war were due, and the prospects for international trade and revenue were bleak. In a punching move, the king had closed all British ports from Canada and the British Isles to the Caribbean to the remaining American ships.”

Without trade, without customs revenue, without taxes, it would be impossible to support a new central government and succeed in securing independence.

Shipping was the soul of early commerce; the Pacific voyages of James Cook in 1778 revealed the high prices sea otter furs from the Northwest Coast would bring in China.

The new nation needed money and a vital surge in trade. In 1787, a group of Boston merchants decided to send two ships on a desperate mission around Cape Horn and into the Pacific Ocean, to establish new trade with China, settle an outpost on territory claimed by the Spanish and find the legendary Northwest Passage.

The men chosen to lead the expedition were John Kendrick - a master navigator and a charismatic captain of privateers during the Revolution - and Robert Gray. (Morning of Fire)



In September 1787, captains John Kendrick and Robert Gray, along with fifty other men - sailors and tradesmen alike - set sail from Boston, soon to be the first citizens of the new nation to sail into the Pacific and lay eyes on the lush and resource-rich Northwest Coast of North America.

Kendrick, on board the *Columbia Rediviva* (meaning *Columbia Triumphant*, but she was usually called, simply, *Columbia*), and Gray, on the *Lady Washington*, carried cargoes of trade goods, chiefly items of copper and iron, special medals for the Indians.

The maritime fur trade focused on acquiring furs of sea otters, seals and other animals from the Pacific Northwest Coast and Alaska. The furs were to be mostly sold in China in exchange for tea, silks, porcelain and other Chinese goods to be sold in the US.

The two captains eventually would switch ships, and Kendrick would remain on the Northwest Coast, while Gray eventually (January 1790) went to China to trade the Northwest furs and eventually made it to Japan, arriving on May 6, 1791, probably becoming the first official Americans to meet the Japanese.

The fur traders and merchant ships crossing the Pacific needed to replenish food supplies and water. The traders soon realized they could economically barter for provisions in Hawai'i; a triangular trade network emerged linking the Pacific Northwest coast, China and the Hawaiian Islands to the United States (especially New England).

Within ten years after Captain Cook's 1778 contact with Hawai'i, the islands became a favorite port of call in the trade with China.

Hawai'i's Sandalwood ('Iliahi) Trade

The origin of the Hawaiian sandalwood trade has been traced to Captain John Kendrick of the Lady Washington, on the basis of information furnished by Vancouver. The latter found on Kauai in March, 1792, three men who said they had been left there by Kendrick in October, 1791, to collect sandalwood and pearls; they stated that Kendrick intended to engage in this branch of trade. (Kuykendall)

Vancouver wrote, "One of them, a young man about seventeen years of age, whose name was Rowbottom, came on board in a large double canoe; who said he was of Derbyshire, that he had sailed from England about five years since in an Indiaman to China, which ship he had quitted in order to engage with some of the vessels in the fur trade between North-West America and China; and that he had, ever since, been thus employed in the American service."

"He informed me, that himself, John Williams a Welchman, and James Coleman an Irishman, had been left at Onchow, in order that they might return to this island for the purpose of collecting sandal-wood, and pearls, for their master John Kendrick, an American, commanding the brig Lady Washington, in whose service they full remained at the wages of eight dollars per month."

"The Lady Washington had quitted these islands the preceding October, bound to New England, with a cargo of furs to dispose of in her way thither at China; she was immediately to return from Boston, and having spent the next winter in North-West America, was, in the autumn of the ensuing year, to call for these men at Attowai (Kauai), and take in a cargo of sandal-wood for the Indian market, with such pearls as they might have collected." (Vancouver, March 10, 1792)



Sandalwood became a source of wealth in the islands, trade in Hawaiian sandalwood began as early as the 1790s; by 1805 it had become an important export item. Sandalwood trade was a turning point in Hawai'i, especially related to its economic structure. It moved Hawai'i from a self-sufficient economy to a commercial economy. This started a series of other economic and export activities across the islands.

Unfortunately, the harvesting of the trees was not sustainably managed (they cut whatever they could, they didn't replant) and over-harvesting of 'iliahi took place. By 1830, the trade in sandalwood had completely collapsed.

Once reported as growing on landscape scales, today, there are only remnant patches of 'iliahi. Hawaiian forests were exhausted and sandalwood from India and other areas in the Pacific drove down the price in China and made the Hawaiian trade unprofitable.

Death of Captain John Kendrick

On December 3, 1794, Kendrick returned to Fair Haven (Honolulu Harbor) Hawai'i aboard the Lady Washington; a war was waging between Kalanikupule and his half-brother Ka'eo (Ka'eo.)

Also in Honolulu were British Captain William Brown (the first credited with entering Honolulu Harbor) in general command of the Jackall and the Prince Lee Boo, Captain Gordon.

At the death of Kahekili in 1793, Ka'eo became ruling chief of Maui, Molokai and Lānai. Kalanikupule was ruler of O'ahu. Homesick for his friends, Ka'eo set out to return to Kauai by way of Waialua and then to Waimea. He learned of a conspiracy to kill him. (Kamakau)

"In the emergency confronting him, Kalanikupule sought and obtained assistance from Captain Brown. Brown furnished guns and ammunition, and, as Kaeo continued to advance, the mate of the Jackall, George Lamport, and eight sailors from the English ships volunteered to fight for the Oahu king."

"In the final battle, between Kalauao and Aiea, the Englishmen were stationed in boats along the shore inside the eastern arm of what is now called Pearl Harbor. Kalanikupule gained a decisive victory and Kaeo was killed." (Kuykendall)

To celebrate the victory, Kendrick's brig fired a thirteen-gun salute in celebration of the British ship of Captain Brown.

(The tradition of rendering a salute by cannon originated in the 14th century as firearms and cannons came into use. Since these early devices contained only one projectile, discharging them rendered them harmless.)

(Initially, the tradition began as a custom among ships, whose captains had volleys fired upon entering a friendly port to release its arsenal, which demonstrated their peaceful intentions (by placing their weapons in a position that rendered them ineffective.))

Following Kendrick's salute, "Brown order'd three guns to be unshotted for that purpose & about ten the next morning [December 12, 1794], the ship Jack hall began to salute, but on coming to the 3'd gun, it was discover'd not to be prim'd."

"So ye Apron of ye 4th gun was take on, which was fir'd, & being shoted with a round & Grape Shote, it pierced the side of ye Lady Washington & kill'd Captain [K]endrick as he sat at his table, & kill'd & wound'd many upon deck". (Log of the Union)

“Kendrick was buried at the place where Captain Derby was interred in 1802 and Isaac Davis in 1810.”
“[T]he chiefs designated a place for the burial of a foreigner in 1794 [so] it is likely that other foreigners who died in Honolulu would be interred in the same locations.” (Restarick)

There was “a lot set apart for the interment of foreigners, situated at what is now near the corner of Piikoi and King Streets. When this burying ground was abandoned the tombstone at the head of the Derby grave was removed to the Kawaiahao churchyard.” (Schmitt)

The actual location of Kendrick’s grave is unknown.

Kendrick Commemoration

On December 12, 2022, the Hawai’i State Organization of the Daughters of the American Revolution installed a commemorative plaque in honor of Captain John Kendrick. It was placed at a spot that would have been about the shoreline when Kendrick was killed.



In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young