

Israel Putnam, Continental Army general who was stationed on Governors Island during the Revolution.



Chapter 3

The echoes of "the shot heard 'round the world" from Concord on that famous April day of 1775 were not slow in reaching New York. There, the strenuous hostility of the more ardent Colonial sympathizers made life distinctly uncomfortable for those who preferred to remain loyal subjects of King George. Immediately Governors Island became, as it has become in every war in our country's history, a focal point of martial interest.

The small garrison remaining on the island was utterly unable to cope with the constant anti-British demonstrations throughout the city. Agitators against royal rule boldly attacked the Redcoats in the streets and taverns, provoking desertions, which made the situation even more acute. Finally, to ease the tensions, families of soldiers were camped on Governors Island. The troops, thus dispossessed, were quartered on the board H.M.S. *Asia* anchored in the harbor. But even this measure failed to produce any beneficial

results. It was then decided to remove the English soldiers entirely, until such time as they could return in force sufficient to occupy and administer New York in a manner befitting one of Great Britain's most important colonial possessions.

Therefore on June 7, 1775, the Redcoats withdrew from Governors Island and the adjacent city, never again to return as proprietors. For the next few months, the island knew no military activity, but it did continue to live up to its name and prove worthy of the responsibilities it implied. When the Continental Congress began to consider arresting the resident crown officers, New York's Royal Governor William Tryon wisely chose the better part of valor and discreetly removed himself to Governors Island. There, under the protective guns of the *Asia*, he managed the city's affairs as best he could on behalf of those citizens who would still listen to him.

Shortly after the start of the new year, the Continental Army, lately created at Cambridge under General George Washington, had proved more active than the British invasion headquarters