

## The Story of the Battle of Lexington and Concord

In Massachusetts, colonists were already preparing to resist. Newspapers called on citizens to prevent what they called "The Massacre of American Liberty." Volunteers known as minutemen trained regularly. Minutemen got their name because they kept their muskets at hand and were prepared to fight in a minute's notice. In towns near Boston, minutemen collected weapons and gunpowder. At the same time, more British troops were arriving in Boston. They too were preparing.



Early in 1775, General Thomas Gage, the British Commander, received a tip from a Loyalist that the Minutemen had a large storage of arms in Concord, a village about 18 miles from Boston. So, Gage planned a surprise march to Concord to seize the weapons.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, about 700 British troops quietly left Boston under cover of darkness. However, the Sons of Liberty were watching. As soon as the British set out, Americans hung two lamps in the Old North Church. The signal meant the British were on the move by water.

Colonists who were waiting across the Charles River saw the signal. Messengers mounted their horses and galloped through the night toward Concord. One midnight rider was Paul Revere. "The Redcoats are coming! The Redcoats are coming!" shouted Revere as he passed through each sleepy village along the way.

At daybreak on April 19<sup>th</sup>, the Redcoats reached Lexington, a village about 5 miles from Concord. On the village green, some 70 minutemen were waiting, commanded by Captain John Parker. The British ordered the Minutemen to go home.

Outnumbered, the colonists began to leave. When suddenly, a shot rang out through the chilly morning air. No one knows who fired that shot, but in the brief struggle that followed, eight colonists were killed.

---

The British pushed on to Concord. Finding no arms in the village, they turned back to Boston. On a bridge outside Concord, they met 300 minutemen. Again, fighting broke out. This time, the British were forced to retreat. As the redcoats withdrew, the minutemen shadowed them all the way back to Boston firing on them along the way. Colonial sharpshooters took deadly aim at them from the woods and fields. Local women even fired on the British from their windows. By the time they reached Boston, the British had lost 73 men and another 200 were wounded or missing.

News of the Battles at Lexington and Concord spread swiftly. To many colonists, the fighting ended all hope of a peaceful settlement. Only war would decide the future of the 13 Colonies.