

Paul Revere Rides!

by
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This month we celebrate the midnight ride of Paul Revere, Lexington and Concord, the ‘shot heard round the world, and the beginning of the American Revolution...for it was on April 19, 1775, that it all started.

“One if by land, two if by sea...” [*Remember when you had to memorize Longfellow’s “Paul Revere’s Ride” in school?*] What did that mean? Well, the British were getting ready to march on Lexington and Concord, find and destroy weapons caches, and arrest pesky Sons of Liberty trouble makers such as Sam Adams and John Hancock. But, the good guys [*that’s us*] didn’t know if the bad guys [*that’s the British*] were going to cross Boston Harbor by marching around it [*by land*] or sailing across it [*by sea*]. So, a signal was set up: a lantern would be waved “One if by land, two if by sea...” ...get it?

And, **how** was that lantern lighted? Probably by a tinderbox, the forerunner of the matchbox. Thus, we’re actually glimpsing here an exciting prelude to our own hobby. [*Note the smooth tie-in between topic and hobby; that’s why they made me editor!*]

Well, back to Paul; here’s the real story of what happened on April 19, 1775...

The primary goal of the British regulars was to apprehend the leaders of the opposition, Sam Adams and John Hancock. Their secondary goal was to disarm the populace along the way. Thus, they set forth.

Roused from their beds upon receipt of the signal, Paul Revere and William Dawes set out for every country



town within 20 miles of Boston to give the warning.

Revere confronted two British regulars manning a road block as he headed north across Charlestown Neck. As he turned around, the regulars gave chase, and he eluded them. He then continued on to Lexington, to the home of Jonas Clarke, where Sam Adams and John Hancock were staying. There, he fulfilled his primary mission when he notified Adams and Hancock that "The Regulars are coming out!" (he never exclaimed, "The British are coming". This would have made no sense at the time since they considered themselves British).

Revere and Dawes then headed for Concord and came across Doctor Samuel Prescott, who then joined them. They decided to raise the alarm at every house along the way.

Just outside of the town of Lincoln, they were confronted by four Regulars at another road block. They tried unsuccessfully to run their horses through them. Prescott, who was familiar with the terrain, jumped a stone wall and escaped. Revere and Dawes tried to escape and shortly into the chase they were confronted by six more regulars on horseback. Revere was surrounded and taken prisoner. Dawes got away as they were taking Revere into custody.

The British officers began to interrogate Revere, whereupon Revere astonished his captors by telling them more than they even knew about their own mission. He also told them that he had been warning the countryside of the British plan and that their lives were at risk if they remained in the vicinity of Lexington because there would soon be 500 men there ready to fight. Revere, of course, was bluffing.

The Regulars had Revere remount his horse, and they headed toward Lexington Green, when suddenly, they heard a gunshot! Revere told the British officer that the shot was a signal "to alarm the country!". Now the British troops were getting very nervous.

A few minutes later, they were all startled to hear the heavy crash of an entire volley of musketry from the direction of Lexington's meeting house, and then the Lexington town bell began clanging rapidly! Jonathan Loring, a Lexington resident captured earlier, turned to his captors and shouted "The bell's a ringing! The town's alarmed, and you're all dead men!"¹

The British officers then talked urgently among themselves and decided to release their captives so as to make a hasty retreat!

[The heavy crash of an entire volley of musketry was the result of a group of men discharging their guns prior to entering the tavern - many of the taverns at that time prohibited their patrons from entering with loaded weapons and the only way to unload a musket was to discharge it. And...The town bell was actually ringing to alert the Lexington Company of Militia to assemble on the town common because the British regulars were on the march. It was a general alarm, not an alarm of an imminent threat].