



Paul Revere's Ride - the Real Story

April 15, 1775 - Saturday

Morning: The British Regiments in Boston were taken off all duties till further orders. The reasons given for this step were new exercises. Paul Revere and his self-appointed patrol of patriots noticed the removal of these troops from their normal duties and reported the fact to Dr. Joseph Warren, who in turn relayed the intelligence to the Committee of Safety. Preparations for an expedition into the country to seize the military stores at Concord, some 18 miles distant, were at once suspected.

Afternoon: The Provincial Congress, meeting at Concord as the legislative body representative of patriots in the Province of Massachusetts Bay and in defiance of the military governor in Boston, adjourned. John Hancock and Samuel Adams, who had attended, went to Lexington to stay with the Reverend Jonas Clarke, who resided in the Hancock-Clarke House.

April 16, 1775 - Sunday

Paul Revere observed *"about 12 o'clock at night, the Boats belonging to the Transports were all launched, & carried under the sterns of the men of War."* They had previously been hauled up for repairs. This move was further interpreted as preparatory to an expedition, especially one that would carry troops by water across the Back Bay to the Cambridge shore.

Morning: Paul Revere rode to Lexington to warn John Hancock and Samuel Adams about the British preparations in Boston.

Evening: Returning to Boston through Charlestown, Revere *"agreed with a Colonel Conant, and some other Gentlemen, that if the British went out by water, we would shew two lanthorns in the North Church Steeple; and if by land, one as a signal; for we were apprehensive it would be difficult to cross the Charles River, or to git over Boston neck."* This arrangement was made, not to inform Revere, but to notify Colonel Conant and the other gentlemen so they could send word to Lexington and elsewhere if Revere should run into difficulty or be halted by the British in attempting to cross the Charles River or ride out via Boston Neck and Roxbury.

April 17, 1775 - Monday

Morning: The Committees of Safety and Supplies in session at Concord received word of the British preparations in Boston, probably from John Hancock to whom Paul Revere had delivered the message in Lexington the day before; whereupon the Committees voted to transport some of the cannon at Concord to places of greater safety in adjacent towns. The Committee also voted to adjourn and meet again the next day at Mr. Wetherby's house in Menotomy (Arlington) also known as the Black Horse Tavern.

April 18, 1775 - Tuesday

Morning: As voted on the previous day, *"four six - pounders"* (cannons) were hauled away from Concord and started on the way to Groton, about 18 miles northwest of Concord.

Afternoon: General Gage sent out mounted officers from Boston to patrol the road between Cambridge and Concord.

9:00 p.m. - The Lexington Minute Men sent out scouts on horseback to watch the movements of the British patrol.

10:00 p.m. - The three scouts were seized at pistol point by the British patrol and led into a pasture, where they were held for four hours.

Back in Boston, the grenadiers and light infantry *"were not apprised of the design, till just as it was time to march, they were waked by the sergeants putting their hands on them and whispering to them."* Dr. Joseph Warren had the news almost before the British had left their barracks. He sent for Paul Revere and William Dawes, Jr. Dawes was dispatched over the route, longer by four miles, to Lexington via Boston Neck, Roxbury, Brookline, Cambridge and Menotomy (Arlington).

10:30 p.m. - Revere bid Captain John Pulling, Jr. have two lanterns hung in the steeple of the Old North Church. He hurried to the north part of the town, where he kept a boat and was rowed by two friends across the Charles River. The British detachment of about 700 men assembled at the foot of Boston Common under the general command of Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith and with Major John Pitcairn of the Marines in charge of the light infantry. Embarkation in boats on the Back Bay began.

11:00 p.m. - Revere arrived on the Charlestown side and was met by Colonel Conant and others who had seen the light of the signal lanterns in the steeple of the Old North Church. Richard Devens of the Committee of Safety, upon being informed that the troops were actually in the boats, procured a horse (*"Brown Beauty"*) for Revere from Deacon Larkin and sent him off to give the intelligence at Menotomy and Lexington.

11:30 p.m. - Beyond Charlestown Neck, Revere was confronted by two British horsemen waiting under a tree at a crossroads. Turning his horse abruptly, Revere galloped back toward the Neck and took the road for Medford, alarming almost every house on the way.

April 19, 1775 - Wednesday

Midnight or Soon After - Revere arrived at the Hancock-Clarke House in Lexington. Sergeant Munroe of the Lexington Minute Men refused to let Revere pass, stating that the family did not wish to be disturbed by any noise. Whereupon Revere cried out, "Noise! You'll have noise enough before long. The Regulars are coming out!"

12:30 a.m. - William Dawes, Jr., arriving at the Hancock-Clarke House from his longer ride, set out for Concord with Revere. On his ride, Dawes had managed to elude British sentries by pretending to be drunk. He staggered his way past the redcoats.

The bell in the belfry that stood on Lexington Green rang out the alarm and the Lexington Minute Men, about 130 in number, under Captain John Parker, began to assemble.

Dr. Samuel Prescott, who had been visiting his fiancée, Miss Lydia Mulliken, in Lexington, started on his journey home to Concord. He overtook Revere and Dawes, who were soon satisfied that he was "a high Son of Liberty."

1:00 a.m. - Dawes and Prescott were riding about 200 yards behind Revere when the latter was surprised by two British officers in the road near the opening into the pasture where three Lexington scouts had been taken prisoner three hours earlier. Dawes turned his horse quickly and sped down the road back toward Lexington. He made good his escape, but was thrown from his horse and had to limp back to Lexington.

Prescott jumped his horse over a stone wall, escaped down a farm path and successfully carried the alarm to Concord. Revere made for a wood at the foot of the pasture, but just as he reached it, six of the British officers who were holding the three captured Lexington scouts, grabbed his bridle, put pistols to his chest and forced him to dismount; thus ended the famous ride of Paul Revere.

Following his capture, Revere was interrogated by the British, who became seriously disturbed when he told them that people for a distance of 50 miles into the country were being notified about their intended march.

Major Mitchell of the 5th British Regiment gave orders for the prisoners to mount and the party to ride back toward Lexington.

2:30 a.m. - Revere and the three Lexington scouts were let loose near the village of Lexington and the British patrol rode off in haste. Revere made his way to the Hancock-Clarke House to help with the flight of John Hancock and Samuel Adams.

4:30 a.m. - Paul Revere and a clerk went to Buckman Tavern in Lexington to remove a trunk of papers that belonged to John Hancock. Before they left, daylight was breaking and they were able to see the column of the British light infantry marching up the road to Lexington Green.

5:00 a.m. - 6:30 a.m. - British Major John Pitcairn shouts to the 77 Lexington Minute Men who have gathered on Lexington Green, "*Lay down your arms, you damned rebels and disperse!*"

Before the Minute Men are able to file away, a single shot rang out (to this day, no one knows for sure who fired this first shot). Shots were exchanged on both sides, eight Minute Men were killed, and ten more wounded. *The first American blood had been fatally shed!*

For modern Americans, Paul Revere is a heroic patriot, immortalized in the poem *Paul Revere's Ride*, written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1861. It does not sound correct to call Paul Revere a traitor, but he was. To call him a spy sounds just as ridiculous. But Revere was a spy, and express rider and official courier who carried treasonous secrets and documents from town to town in New England.

Paul Revere was by trade a "mechanic," a skilled silversmith-artist, who was also an excellent rider. A member of the Boston chapter of the radical Sons of Liberty, he was involved in all of the local protests, boycotts, and resistance to British tyranny. His engraving of the Boston Massacre (see below), which often appears in textbooks, is a classic piece of propaganda. The engraving did much to whip up support for the Patriot Cause and opposition to the Redcoat army in Boston. Paul Revere was, from his artistry and patriotic activities, already a celebrated figure before April 18, 1775. On that fateful night the skilled horseman rode from Boston to Lexington and Concord to warn John Hancock, Sam Adams, and other American minutemen along the way of the approaching Redcoats. The Longfellow poem tells an exciting and heroic story; however, the story is inaccurate and incomplete. As a result, most Americans over the past two centuries do not know that two other patriot riders, William "Billy" Dawes and Dr. Samuel Prescott, also rode out that night and performed the same feat as Revere.

When Longfellow wrote his historically inaccurate but stirring poem, the country was engaged in the Civil War. The North was looking for heroes to bolster its fight against the Confederacy. Longfellow picked Revere from that April 18 - 19, 1775, night over Dawes and Prescott probably because Revere was already well known as a patriot leader and as a silversmith. In addition, Longfellow happened to be dating Revere's granddaughter at the time.

