



Revolutionary Times



Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

One if by Land, Two if by Sea

“In the Fall of 1774 & Winter of 1775 [we had formed] a Committee for the purpose of watching the Movements of the British Soldiers, and gaining every intelligence of the movements of the Tories.”

“We held our meetings at the Green-Dragon Tavern. .. We were so carefull that our meetings should be kept Secret”. (Paul Revere)

On the evening of April 18, 1775, Dr. Joseph Warren summoned Paul Revere and gave him the task of riding to Lexington, MA, with the news that British soldiers stationed in Boston were about to march into the countryside northwest of the town.

“From these movements, we expected some-thing serious was [to] be trans-acted. On Tuesday evening, the 18th, it was observed, that a number of Soldiers were marching towards the bottom of the Common.” (Revere)

According to Warren, these troops planned to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock, two leaders of the Sons of Liberty, who were staying at a house in Lexington. In fact, the British troops had no orders to arrest anyone - but they were very much on a major mission out of Boston.

“I was sent for by Doctr. Joseph Warren, of said Boston, on the evening of the 18th of April, about to oClock”. (Revere)

Revere contacted an unidentified friend and instructed him to hold two lit lanterns in the tower of Christ Church (now called the Old North Church) as a signal to fellow Sons of Liberty across the Charles River in case Revere was unable to leave town.



The two lanterns were a pre-determined signal stating that the British troops planned to row “by sea” across the Charles River to Cambridge, rather than march “by land” out Boston Neck.

“[I]t was supposed, that they were going to Lexington, by the way of Cambridge River, to take them, or go to Concord, to destroy the Colony Stores.” (Revere)

Revere set off on horseback. He then alarmed almost all the houses

from Medford through Menotomy (today’s Arlington).

Because of the epic poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Paul Revere is often credited as the sole rider who alerted the colonies that the Regulars (Red Coats) were coming.

Yet, despite this tale, there were many riders who went out the night of April 18 and in the years following, warning the colonists of the approach and movement of the British forces.

Five have been named; four men and one woman made late night rides, alerting the early Americans of what dangers lay ahead. They were Paul Revere, Samuel Prescott, Israel Bissell, William Dawes and Sybil Ludington.

Contrary to popular belief, Paul Revere never shouted the phrase “the British are coming.” The Colonists considered themselves British, so it would not have made sense to use that phrase.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: www.sar.org

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