



The Minuteman statue on
Lexington Green

The Day the United States Stood up for Independence ~Patriot's Day~

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Special thanks to Kate Baty

The third Monday of April is a special holiday in Massachusetts. Not all of the states in the US celebrate this holiday. But all American people know what this day is. The name of this holiday is Patriot's Day. Why is this day the day for patriots (a person who loves their country and who is ready to defend it against an enemy). Let's explore the history of Boston and experience it!

Everything starts here in Boston.

At midnight, Paul Revere was riding on horseback. He brought the news that British soldiers were coming to Lexington to attack the Minutemen. It was April 18th in 1775. This is the day the people who lived in British colonial America started on the path to becoming independent.

After Columbus discovered the new continent, North America was colonized by Spain, France and Great Britain. But in 1755 the French-Indian War broke out. Britain needed to get resources of the Mid West which was occupied by France. In 1763 the war was over and Britain was victorious but in debt. The government of Britain decided to solve this problem by increasing customs revenue. They put heavy taxes on one item after another. It started with sugar, printing and finally black tea. The people who lived in the colonies reacted against this outrage on December 16th 1773, by dressing up as "Indians" and attacking the trading ships. They threw 60 tons of tea chests into the Boston Harbor. The group planning this "Boston tea party" was called the Sons of Liberty, and one of their leaders was Samuel Adams. After this "party" the situation became tense. The British parliament sent troops to punish to Boston. They banned public meetings of the colonists and closed the port. Boston's economy was under crisis when their trade links were cut. In September 1774, the first Continental Congress was held. This was a meeting of the representatives of the 13 states of the British colonies. There was growing agreement to rise up against Britain. They formed the militia, called Minutemen, who could be ready at a minute's notice and congregate from each village all over New England. Finally Massachusetts was in a state of rebellion, London declared war in February 1775.

The day came to the patriots. British troops were assembled on Boston Common. They got the order to attack an illegal stock of arms in Concord, and to arrest two leaders of rebellion. One was a politician, Samuel Adams, whose articles and speeches promoted independence and the other was a merchant, John Hancock, whose fortune supported their fund. It was April 18, 1775. Paul Revere heard the news and galloped to Lexington to deliver it to Adams, Hancock and the Minutemen. The details are explained in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem, "Paul Revere's Ride". When the British troops reached Lexington on 5:00 am of April 19th, the Minutemen were already on Lexington Green. The number of British soldiers was 700, and the number of Minutemen was only 77. The Revolutionary War broke out here. The Minutemen lost 8 friends but British also lost many soldiers. The way from Boston was not easy in that age. Most of the land was muddy and most of the troops were very tired. The British had won, but most of them lost the will to fight. They returned to Boston for reinforcements, leaving only 100 troops there. The battle moved to Concord. And the North Bridge was the next battle field. The number of Minutemen expanded to 400. Against them the British force was around 100 men. And "the shot heard" 'round the world" on the North Bridge, here is the exact place that American civilians first took control away from the British.

All American citizens know that this moment was the first step to building the United States. The American Revolution had begun here. One year and three months later, in 1776, on July 4th, the Declaration of Independence was announced. But it took more than five years to really finish this revolution.

Let's experience the day of Patriots in Lexington

Can you imagine what happened there on that day? It was more than 200 years ago. What were they wearing? How did they arm themselves? There is the way you can "see" what happened in Lexington on that day. Every year the citizens of Lexington reproduce the battle just as it was. It opens with the scene when Paul Revere comes into Lexington. And everything goes on. The first shots are fired at 6:00 am on Patriot's Day. It will be better to go to Lexington Green around 5:00 am. Please bring there your own steps, icebox or ladder to see everything. Because a huge number of people who are from all over Massachusetts and the US, will come to see this historic event. And there are no reservation sheets. First come, first served. There are not so many parking lots around there. If you have friends who will also go Lexington, please join them and go to there by one car.

After the battle is over, you can get the chance to talk with the persons who act as Minutemen, their families and the British soldiers. All of them play a specific person who existed at that age. You can ask anything you wish. They will talk to you about their own story. Don't miss the special pancake breakfast which is served by some churches. If you can stay there for the afternoon, you would see the big parade on Massachusetts Avenue. Please bring your extra jacket and a pot of hot coffee. We don't know the reason, but traditionally Patriot's Day is always very cold.

Paul Revere's Ride

Written by Henry W. Longfellow

This is the famous poem that all American school children are familiar with. The poem is very long, and we have printed just a few verses here.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear,
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.
He said to his friend, "If the British march
By land or sea from the town tonight,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm."...

...Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,
Now gazed on the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped his saddle girth;
But mostly he watched with Old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and somber and still.
And lo! As he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, till full on his sight
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!...

...It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket-ball.
You know the rest. In the books you have read
How the British Regulars fired and fled –
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farmyard wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.
So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm –
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo for evermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.



British troops on North Bridge in Concord



The Minutemen marching towards Concord

What we can see on that day in Boston

229 years ago, the story began at the Boston Common. In remembrance of this honorable day, the whole Boston area has a lot of events.

Monday April 19, from 9:00 am at Boston City Hall Plaza you can see the flag raising ceremony and a parade of people in traditional colonial costumes. And on Hanover Street in the North End, the re-enactment of Paul Revere's Ride will be held.

On this day the world famous Boston Marathon is also held in the Boston area. Runners start from the Hopkinton Common just at noon. They run through Ashland, Framingham, Natick, Wellesley, Newton, Brookline and finally come to the finish line at Copley Square on Boylston Street. The first runner usually reaches the finish around 2:00 pm. This marathon is also a memorial event for Patriot's Day. All of the entries run 23 miles in honor of Paul Revere's Ride.

For the other events concerning this special day, please check the website of the City of Boston calendar:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/calendar/calendar.asp>