

Lexington and Concord – ‘The Shot Heard Round the World’

In 1775 there were 7,000 British redcoats in America, with around 4,000 in Massachusetts itself.

The royally appointed governor, Thomas Gage, had been granted broadly expanded powers.

Rebellion was in the air.

Acting on intelligence that the militia were stockpiling weapons, Gage ordered British Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Smith to march to Concord and seize the arms.

The rebel intelligence network suggested that the British aim in Lexington was to capture Samuel Adams and John Hancock, two of the prominent Patriot leaders.

But the size of the British army force was large enough to suggest they had bigger goals in mind.

The British soldiers and rebel militiamen raced to Lexington during the night; they confronted each other at Lexington Green - a village common area - just as the sun was rising on April 19.

Captain John Parker, a veteran of the French and Indian War, led a contingent of 80 Lexington militiamen, known as minute men because they had to be ready to fight at a minute's notice.

Most of the militiamen were farmers or tradesmen.

Non-uniformed, they were armed with a variety of firearms including muskets and fowling pieces.



On April 19, 1775, initial skirmishes between British regulars and American Patriots marked the beginning of the American Revolutionary War.

It is unclear who fired the first shot. A skirmish ensued, during which eight militiamen were killed and only one British soldier wounded.

After order was restored, the British soldiers began the march to Concord. Total losses were American 95, British 273.

The Battles of Lexington and Concord roused New Englanders to join forces and begin the Siege of Boston, resulting in its evacuation by the British the following March.

Lexington and Concord led many Americans to support the ‘revolution’.

They showed that American citizen soldiers could stand up to redcoats; something previously doubted by many on both sides.

It was the turning point in the future of the continent and an everlasting change in what would become the United States.

It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who coined the phrase ‘Shot Heard Round the World’ and used it in his 1837 poem, ‘Concord Hymn,’ that he wrote for the dedication of a battle monument at the site of the North Bridge.

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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