

Remembering the Battles of Lexington and Concord



By Paul Engel

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- Most Americans learned about the Battles of Lexington and Concord from a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. But is that history or propaganda?
- Did you realize that our war for independence was initiated in response to gun control?
- Will the American people learn the lessons of these battles before we have another shot heard around the world.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,

[Paul Revere's Ride](#) by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Most of us who grew up here in America learned about the battles of Lexington and Concord from this Longfellow poem. Who does not remember, "One if by land, and two if by sea"? Or Paul Revere's cries of "The British are coming! The British are coming!"?

Most of the stories we have heard are not true. Whether it was poetic license or outright propaganda has been lost to history. However, the story behind those battles was not only well worth the telling, but of great importance to anyone today who still claims the title of American.

Poems, songs, and stories are all ways to remember history.

While some of these memory tools are more historically accurate than others, they all have a way of getting into your mind. The story of the battles of Lexington and Concord are not only far greater than the poem suggests, but are crucial to remember if we are to remain free. Since this week will be the 249th anniversary of these famous battles, I think it proper to spend some time remembering.

Before the Battle

The Battles of Lexington and Concord did not happen out of nowhere. Starting around 1764, the British Parliament enacted numerous taxes upon the colonists, ostensibly to recoup the cost of the French and Indian war. The Sugar Act, Stamp Act, and Townshend Acts (a series of taxes on goods imported into the colonies), were understandably not received well by the colonists. The cry of "no taxation without representation" led to the Boston Tea Party. Shortly thereafter, the British Parliament declares Massachusetts to be in open rebellion.

Starting in 1774, the British Parliament began enacting what became known as The Intolerable Acts. Since Boston seemed the epicenter of much of the resistance, King George III shutdown Boston harbor until restitution had been made for the Boston Tea Party. Then King George abolished the colonies charter of 1691, replacing the elected local council with an appointed one, increasing the military powers of the newly appointed royal governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Gage, and forbidding town meetings without approval. Next King George allowed British officials charged with capital offenses to go to England or another colony for trial. The last of these Intolerable Acts allowed the housing of British troops in the dwellings of colonists without their consent. This led to even more open hostility from the colonists.

Acting upon orders from Lord Dartmouth to confiscate the colonists' weapons, Thomas Gage ordered troops to seize their powder house in Concord. On April 18, 1775, Joseph Warren, a

physician and member of the Sons of Liberty, learned about the orders and dispatched Paul Revere and William Dawes to alert the residents. On their way to Concord, the troops would pass through Lexington.

The Battles of Lexington and Concord

As word spread through the colony, 77 members of the Massachusetts Militia, commanded by Captain John Parker, gathered on Lexington Green. Around dawn these men saw 700 British troops marching toward them. The British Major called for the militiamen to lay down their arms. The orders from Captain Parker to the militia were:

“Stand your ground; don’t fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have war, let it begin here.”

[Lexington – Britannica](#)

We do not know who fired first, but several volleys were fired. When the smoke cleared, eight militiamen were dead, 9 were wounded, along with one Redcoat. The British troops continued to Concord, even though their searches proved futile, as most of the arms had already been relocated for safe keeping. By this time approximately 2,000 militiamen had arrived in the area. After a brief engagement at Concord’s North Bridge, things settled down. After four hours, the British troops began their march back to Boston, some 18 miles away. The militiamen were ready, harassing the British column all the way back to Boston.

Why Should We Remember This Battle?

Most Americans tend to remember the Battle of Lexington, along with its sister battle for Concord. There is much we can learn from this first true battle of the Revolutionary War, even though it was a loss.

What I believe most important is why the British were marching

on Concord in the first place. The colonists' own government had ordered the confiscation of their arms. The British government was not concerned with their treatment of their fellow citizens in the colonies, they were concerned those colonists might seriously stand up against them. Sure, small acts of defiance had happened, but what if those colonists actually tried to defend themselves against the violations of their rights as British citizens? This could not be tolerated. Patrick Henry would later expound during the Virginia Ratification Debate:

“Are we at last brought to such a humiliating and debasing degradation, that we cannot be trusted with arms for our own defense?”

Patrick Henry – [3 Elliot Debates 168-169](#)

Similarly today, we see governments at all levels infringing on our right to keep and bear arms. Look at the arguments they use.

- “Hell, yes, we’re going to take your AR-15, your AK-47.” – [Beto O’Rourke](#)
- “I don’t believe people should be able to own guns.” – [Barak Obama](#)
- “If I could have gotten...an outright ban – ‘ and Mrs. America turn in your guns’ – I would have!” – [Senator Diane Feinstein](#)
- “We’re bending the law as far as we can to ban an entirely new class of guns.” – [Rahm Emanuel](#)
- “If the personal freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution inhibit the government’s ability to govern the people, we should look to limit those guarantees.” – [President Bill Clinton](#)
- “Banning guns addresses a fundamental right of all Americans to feel safe.” – [Senator Dianne Feinstein](#)

We hear claims that citizens should not be allowed to own

weapons of war, yet this battle is a perfect example of why we need them. As the Second Amendment states:

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

U.S. Constitution, Second Amendment

First, whether that government be foreign or domestic, the people need arms to keep themselves free. The militia who defended their rights in Lexington and Concord were not part of a national militia, just a group of local men standing up against the tyrannies of their own government. This's why the Constitution protects the right of every individual to keep and bear arms. If we forget that the war for independence started because of gun control, then we may be doomed to repeat such a war.

Second, for all the talk of the power of the federal government, the Battles of Lexington and Concord shows that an outnumbered force can defend themselves against a superior one. The 77 militiamen at Lexington slowed the British march, not only giving those in Concord time to hide their arms, but giving neighboring militias time to assemble. What could a small group of Americans today do to slow the advance of tyranny? Look at what is happening at the border in Texas. Not only has a small group in the state militia stood up to the infringements of the federal government, but they have given time for other states to rally to their cause.

Lastly, we see that there are things worth fighting for, even in the face of incredible odds. Seventy-Seven brave men stood before 700. When asked to stand their ground, they did. I do not believe they did so for flag and country, because they were fighting against those things. I believe they were standing up for rights and family. The Declaration of Independence had not even been proposed yet, but these men

were standing to protect the rights of their neighbors to possess the tools for their defense. I believe they understood that should this most basic and fundamental human right of self-defense against man, beast, or government, be abolished in Concord, Lexington could not be far behind. What would become of their families without such tools of defense? How would their children and grandchildren live in a land where they could not defend themselves against the violation of their rights by their own government?

Conclusion

If the Battles of Lexington and Concord are so important, why do we not celebrate them? With all of the non-sensical special holidays that Congress has created, you would think they'd take just a little bit of time to remember the beginning of the War for Independence. It seems, just as the 18th century British government wasn't all that interested in protecting their citizens' rights, our 21st century government doesn't like reminding the American people that they can stand against them.

There's another battle that few Americans seem to know about. A battle where Americans stood up against corrupt government with force of arms in order to protect their rights and those of their neighbors. I wrote about it in my article [The Battle of Athens, TN](#). Perhaps we should remember this day as well.

What would happen if a handful of Americans were to stand up for their rights and those of their neighbors? If just a handful of patriots not only read the Constitution, but learned how to use it to defend their rights? Would men and women recognize the tyranny of attempting to disarm the American people, and the power they had to oppose these unconstitutional acts? Perhaps, if we had a few Americans with the bravery of those in the Massachusetts Militia, the wisdom of the veterans in Athens, TN, and the conviction to do what is right, no matter the cost, we would not need another shot

heard around the world. Perhaps all we need is a state willing to stand up and tell the federal government not to buy us the time to secure both our weapons and our future.

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