The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere

Paul Revere stood beside his horse and stared through the night blackness towards the Old North Church in Boston. He was nervously waiting for the signal that the British army was crossing the river to march on Concord. Revere’s horse was rested and ready for one of the most famous rides in history.

Revere was a Patriot. He was resentful towards the British and believed that armed conflict was inevitable. All through the winter of 1775, Patriots had been organizing into groups of Minutemen prepared to use weapons on the British army if provoked. Minutemen in all communities around Boston were kept in constant touch by means of riders like Revere, who carried letters from one Committee of Correspondence to another.

Spies had informed Revere that tonight was the night. Two lanterns in the spire of the church meant that 1000 British troops were coming across the river. At eleven o’clock there was a flicker of light in the spire. Then two lanterns appeared.

Revere shoved his foot in the stirrup and was off on the road to Lexington and Concord. As he thundered through the village he cried, *“The British are coming! To Arms!”* And all along the route, sleepy Minutemen began to assemble in small groups. (They had dressed quickly and some were even barefoot.)

Revere carried on at breakneck speed. His horse, covered with lather, kicked up small showers of gravel as it galloped along the gravel road. He passed through Lexington, warning the leaders John Hancock and Sam Adams.

On the way to Concord, Revere was stopped by a British patrol. He was not arrested because there was no evidence that he was doing anything illegal.

Meanwhile, back at Lexington, 70 Minutemen lined up to face the British. They were not taken very seriously by the much more numerous redcoats who asked them to disperse. In the confusion, someone misinterpreted the order not to fire. All that was heard was the word FIRE! No one knows who fired first. When the smoke cleared, five Minutemen were dead and ten wounded. Only one British soldier was wounded. The victory was clearly British.

Then the redcoats proceeded on to Concord, where they seized a small collection of military supplies. At Concord the firing broke out again. This time the situation looked serious, so the British officer in charge ordered a withdrawal.

By that time, however, many more Minutemen had arrived at various points along the route. One hundred, 200, eventually as many as 3000 Minutemen lined both sides of the road that the British had to use for their withdrawal to Boston. Seventy-three British soldiers were killed and 200 were wounded before they reached the safety of Boston.

1. Define Patriot and Minutemen.
2. Why did firing break out between the redcoats and the Minutemen at Lexington? Who won the fight at Lexington?
3. What did the British do at Concord?
4. What happened to the British as they returned to Boston?