

April 19th 1775
By Kevin Rung

On this date two hundred and forty two years ago, in the early morning hours, a post rider - a member of an anarchist group known as the Committee of Correspondence, set off from Boston riding on what today is "Battle Road" or Massachusetts Route 2. He was a Boston "mechanic" a silver smith and engraver of French Huguenot decent, Paul Revere. British soldiers garrisoned in Boston having had too much ale at one of Boston's many taverns, were overheard talking about a company of regulars being sent to the Town of Concord to arrest two troublemakers: Samuel Adams and John Hancock and to search for a cache of "powder and ball" allegedly stored there. This information was relayed through the Committee of Correspondence to Revere who was dispatched to warn Adams and Hancock and spread the word along the route of the movement of the British troops. En route, Revere was joined by two other riders, John Dawes and Samuel Prescott. Just outside of the Town of Lexington the riders were stopped by a British patrol. Prescott and Dawes were able to escape before being detained as they knew the area; however, Revere was briefly held and then released because the soldiers had no reason to hold him. After alerting a Patriot sympathizer, one John Parker in Lexington, that British Regulars were en route from Boston, Revere spurred on toward Concord and roused Adams and Hancock who thus were able to escape capture.

Back in Lexington, Parker roused the town militia out of their very early morning slumber and directed them to muster on the village green space in the center of town. After milling around, half asleep for awhile, the company all slumped off to the local tavern to wait and see what might happen next. As the morning wore on....word finally arrived from a person stationed outside of Lexington on, now - Route 2 - that British soldiers were marching toward Town. Parker directed the militia to again assemble out on the green. It is enlightening to stop for a moment, and consider the dynamic of the situation: a bunch of untrained local farmers and townsmen, armed with whatever they possessed: a blunderbuss, what the French called: *Les fusées des chasse* (hunting muskets) the odd Brown Bess British musket and a couple of *Charleville* French muskets, acquired from who knows where, prepared to stand against a company of soldiers of the British Army; at that time in the eighteenth century, the most professional, formidable troops in the world. It would be like you and your neighbors, facing a United States Marine battle hardened rifle company.

When the Regulars arrived and saw the townsmen milling around on the green with arms, the commander ordered them to: "...disperse you damned rebels" and formed up his soldiers into firing formation - one row on their knee in a line, with a second row behind. He ordered, "Make ready..." causing both lines to bring their muskets to their cheeks in order to fire.

History records that Parker shouted to the militia: "...Run.....run for your lives!" History also records that a shot was fired. It has never been determined which group was responsible for that musket shot - the *Shot Heard Round the World* but it was the event which began the rebellion of the English Colonies in North America and ultimately, their break with the British Crown and subsequent formation of a Constitutional Republic: The United States of America. An interesting historical side note is that French King Louis XV decided to support the Americans in their rebellion, in order to pay back Britain for the French defeat in the Seven Years War. The decision wasn't taken lightly, it followed the severe mauling that the Americans inflicted on the British and their Hessian mercenaries at Saratoga a couple years later when the rebellion had turned to war between Britain and Her American Colonies. It looked to Louis like the Americans just might be a good bet; however, his support bankrupted the French Government, and the resultant food shortages and tax excesses caused the subsequent

revolt of the French peasants and the overthrow of the French Monarchy – The French Revolution.