

Paul Revere's Letter to Jeremy Belknap, ca. 1798 (abridged)

On Tuesday evening, the 18th, it was observed, that a number of Soldiers were marching towards the bottom of the Common. About 10 o'Clock, Dr. Warren Sent in great haste for me, and beged that I would imediately Set off for Lexington, where Messrs. Hancock & Adams were, and acquaint them of the Movement, and that it was thought they were the objets. When I got to Dr. Warren's house, I found he had sent an express by land to Lexington—a Mr. Wm. Daws. The Sunday before, by desire of Dr. Warren, I had been to Lexington, to Mess. Hancock and Adams, who were at the Rev. Mr. Clark's. I returned at Night thro Charlestown; there I agreed with a Col. Conant, & some other Gentlemen, ~~in Charleston~~, that if the British went out by Water, we would shew two Lanthorns in the North Church Steeple; & if by Land, one, as a Signal; for we were aprehensive it would be dificult to Cross the Charles River, or git over Boston neck. I left Dr. Warrens, called upon a friend, and desired him to make the Signals. I then went Home, took my Boots and Surtout, and went to the North part of the Town, where I had kept a Boat; two friends rowed me across Charles River, a little to the eastward where the Somerset Man of War lay. It was then young flood, the Ship was winding, & the moon was Rising. They landed me on Charlestown side. When I got into Town, I met Col. Conant, & several others; they said they had seen our signals. I told them what was Acting, & went to git me a Horse . . . I set off upon a very good Horse; it was then about 11 o'Clock, & very pleasant. . . . I saw two men on Horse back, under a Tree. When I got near them, I discovered they were British officer. One tryed to git a head of Me, & the other to take me. I turned my Horse very quick, & Galloped towards Charlestown neck, and then pushed for the Medford Road. The one who chased me, endeavoring to Cut me off, got into a Clay pond, near where the new Tavern is now built. I got clear of him, and went thro Medford, over the Bridge, & up to Menotomy. In Medford, I awaked the Captain of the Minute men; & after that, I alarmed almost every House, till I got to Lexington. I found ~~Mrs.~~ Messrs. Hancock & Adams at the Rev. Mr. Clark's; I told them my errand, and inquired for Mr. Daws; they said he had not been there; I related the story of the two officers, & supposed that He must have been stopped, as he ought to have been there before me. After I had been there about half an Hour, Mr. Daws came; ~~after~~ we refreshid our selves, ~~we~~ and set off for Concord, to secure the Stores, &c. there. We were overtaken by a young Docter Prescott, whom we found to be a high Son of Liberty. I told them of the ten officers that Mr. Devens mett, and that it was probable we might be stoped before we got to Concord; for I supposed that after Night, they divided them selves, and that two of them had fixed themselves in such passages as were most likely to stop any intelegence going to Concord. I likewise mentioned, that we had better allarm all the Inhabitents till we got to Concord; the young Doctor much approved of it, and said, he would stop with either of us, for the people between that & Concord knew him, & would give the more credit to what we said. We had got

nearly half way. Mr Daws & the Doctor stoped to allarm the people of a House: I was about one hundred Rod a head, when I saw two men, in nearly the same situation as those officer were, near Charlestown. I called for the Doctor & Daws to come up; —~~were two & we would have them~~ in an Instant I was surrounded by four; —they had placed themselves in a Straight Road, that inclined each way; they had taken down a pair of Barrs on the North side of the Road, & two of them were under a tree in the pasture. The Docter being foremost, he came up; and we tryed to git past them; but they being armed with pistols & swords, they forced us in to the pasture; —the Docter jumped his Horse over a low Stone wall, and got to Concord. I observed a Wood at a Small distance, & made for that. When I got there, out Started Six officers, on Horse back, and orderd me to dismount; —one of them, who appeared to have the command, examined me, where I came from, & what my Name Was? I told him. He asked me if I was an express? I answered in the afirmative. He demanded what time I left Boston? I told him; and aded, that their troops had catched aground in passing the River, and that There would be five hundred Americans there in a short time, for I had alarmed the Country all the way up. He imediately rode towards those who stoppd us, when all five of them came down upon a full gallop; one of them, whom I afterwards found to be Major Mitchel, of the 5th Regiment, Clapped his pistol to my head, called me by name, & told me he was going to ask me some questions, & if I did not give him true answers, he would blow my brains out. He then asked me similar questions to those above. He then orderd me to mount my Horse, after searching me for arms. He then orderd them to advance, & to lead me in front. When we got to the Road, they turned down towards Lexington. When we had got about one Mile, the Major Rode up to the officer that was leading me, & told him to give me to the Sergeant. As soon as he took me, the Major orderd him, if I attempted to run, or any body insulted them, to blow my brains out.