

Warren: The Life and Legacy of Dr. Joseph Warren

1741-1775



by John Singleton Copley- est. 1765

Preface

Prior to the 2015 premier of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical*, painfully few Americans could have identified the man whose likeness appears on our ten-dollar bill. Alexander Hamilton is not alone. There are large numbers of people from across the human timeline that have changed history in a substantial manner without the benefit of lasting notoriety or acclimation.

Such is the case with Dr. Joseph Warren. Today fourteen states have a **Warren County** named for Dr. Warren. Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Michigan all have a city or town named **Warren** in his honor. Virginia and Missouri remembered Dr. Warren through towns named **Warrenton**. And across the nation there are thirty **Warren Townships** also named in his recognition. But talk with the people who live within these diverse communities today. You will quickly observe that the vast majority know little, if anything concerning Dr. Joseph Warren.

In his book, *Founding Martyr: The Life and Death of Dr. Joseph Warren, the American Revolution's Lost Hero* (copyright 2018), Christian Di Spigna reminds readers that most Americans think of 1776 and the July 4th signing of the Declaration of Independence as the commencement of the independent America experiment. By this time Dr. Joseph Warren had been dead for thirteen months. "The complexities behind the resistance movement that led to the American Revolution," writes Di Spigna, "run deeper than previously realized given that Warren had been largely forgotten. He was killed fighting in the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775, his body mutilated by British troops. His martyrdom and multiple reburials in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have helped obscure his legacy and his many contributions to the cause of American independence." As a consequence of these realities, Warren's legacy lies hidden in the lengthy shadows of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and now, Alexander Hamilton.

From 1760-1775, Massachusetts was the heart of colonial political agitation, social unrest and economic turmoil. It was here that a small cluster of traitors to the British Crown arose in spite of the fact that they had no military support and minimal financial resources. These were the ones Di Spigna refers to as the "Founding Grandfathers" of America. These were the ones who designed and fabricated the principled, liberty-based foundation upon which America's Founding Fathers successfully built.

John Adams is the primary figure who substantially participated in both the Grandfather and Father subclusters. It was from the perspective of hindsight that Adams, through his letter to Hezekiah Niles, seemed to sense that Americans were already looking beyond the rebellion's table setters. "But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American War? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced."

The pre-war revolution was fought in the press, from the pulpits, inside the taverns and meeting houses, within the streets and ports of America's eastern coastline. Of all the

Massachusetts revolutionaries, Dr. Joseph Warren was the most diverse and omnipresent. His role as a physician gave him unique respect along all points of the political spectrum, but in particular his presence lent legitimacy to the early Whig movement. His clandestine maneuverings countered the British intelligence in place throughout Boston. It was his espionage system that sent riders into the countryside to alert John Adams, John Hancock and neighboring militias of British movements toward Lexington and Concord. One month before Bunker Hill, Warren warned Samuel Adams, "We must now prepare for everything as we are certain that nothing but success in our warlike enterprises can possibly save us from destruction."

Sadly, Warren did not have the good fortune to survive into the post-war, victorious phase of American history. He did not live long enough to be an American. He died a traitor to King George III in relentless pursuit of liberty. It was two weeks after the death of Warren at Bunker Hill that General George Washington came to Boston to assume military command. Their paths never physically crossed.

Warren's influential zenith hit during the spring of 1775. From the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 through his death at Bunker Hill, Warren was at the center, both up front and behind the scenes, in every major revolutionary conflict. That claim can be made only about Warren and Samuel Adams. Daniel Webster reminds us that theirs "was a thinking community that achieved our revolution before a battle had been fought."

What follows, for those who have interest, is a more detailed telling of the times and life of Dr. Joseph Warren.

Body

Childhood:

Roxbury, Massachusetts was settled just south of the Boston Neck in 1630. It was a community of orchards, farms and timber, and the childhood home of Dr. Joseph Warren. His parents owned a farm where they grew primarily Warren apples. His father, also Joseph Warren, married Mary Stevens in 1740. Their first son, Joseph was born June 11, 1741.

Warren's childhood was highlighted by labor. Farm chores, firewood procurement, hunting and fishing were all on an 18th century farm boy's routine agenda. He often went with his father to take their fruits to the market in neighboring Boston. It was here that his people skills were planted and refined at an early age. He met and observed all levels of the social, political and economic world alive within the town of Boston during that time.

Warren's childhood occurred during a period of general economic struggle where true money was in short supply. Farmers were frequently in debt to elite merchants. Yet Joseph Warren insisted that his four sons would be educated and exposed to political thought, literature and religion. This all unfolded as the *First Great Awakening* exploded within the colonies. Fire and brimstone sermons and print materials were readily available and definitely contributed to Joseph Warren, the father's Calvinistic faith. A central tenant of Joseph's theology was a strong hatred of oppression, a priority he clearly passed on to his sons. In Roxbury, the *Greyhound* was the local tavern which served as a community hub for important socio-political discourse and learning. It was places like this where opinions were shaped, logic was weighed and ultimately sides were taken.

In 1751, at age ten, Joseph was sent to the local *Roxbury Latin School* where he experienced a high level of education in the humanities and religion. Warren was not a reluctant student. He embraced these opportunities with enthusiasm. He assisted the schoolmaster with chores and repairs around the school. Just as he had found in his visits to the Greyhound, Joseph learned that his teachers too owned the diverse political leanings of the radical Whigs and the loyalist Tories.

Harvard College:

Mid-18th century Massachusetts featured a distinctly stratified society. Certainly those who aspired to be respectful gentlemen scholars would need a formal college education. By the time Joseph Warren was of age to enroll at *Harvard College*, the institution was already more than a century old. Here was one of the few places where

those of modest rootage had the potential to rise from the middle through hard work and focus. Warren's parents were determined to make that available to him.

On July 18, 1755 Warren set out for Cambridge, a five mile trip by horse from Roxbury, for admissions testing at Harvard College. He arrived dressed for success at age fourteen with his cotton and silk garments, powdered wig, leather shoes and knee breeches. He sailed through the testing and was admitted into the freshman class with a socioeconomic rank of 31 of 45 students. Harvard, as did most of Puritanical New England culture, placed a premium on wealth and prestige. As a reflection of that focus they ranked and privileged each class accordingly.

On the morning of October 25, 1755, Warren was home in Roxbury, on holiday from Harvard, when his father fell from a ladder during his apple harvest, broke his neck and died within minutes. He was 59 years old. The loss created much more than emotional hardship for the family. The practical realities were perhaps more punitive. Funeral expenses were burdensome, and his father's labor was lost from the farm. But his mother insisted that she would find the way to keep young Joseph at Harvard, and she did.

One of Warren's professors at Harvard was astronomer John Winthrop, a lifelong friend of Benjamin Franklin. His was a strong influence on Warren, helping him to see through scientific eyes that often ran counter to the Puritanical account of nature he learned as a child. Through things like the significant earthquake that afflicted New England in 1755, and the fulfillment of Edward Halley's forecast of a comet, Winthrop was able to make a significant impression on Joseph Warren. It helped Warren to look past the folly of the superstitions, fears, and stories of witchcraft that abounded during his youth.

Typically Harvard's rigid social hierarchy managed to keep students in their social place, but Warren found his standing on the rise as he became connected with more and more of the school's top tier students. It was here at Harvard that his oratory skills were first honed. The students also petitioned for and received permission to form a Harvard militia unit. Warren and fellow students met to drill, march and engage in use of firearms. These rudimentary drills certainly provided some level of comfort when later Warren gave himself to military combat as a young adult. In the end he was "highly distinguished as a scholar", as he returned to Roxbury in the summer of 1759.

Exploring paths:

For Warren, his return to the farm in Roxbury was welcome, yet far removed from the stimulus and challenge of Harvard. In the spring of 1760 he accepted a position as master of Roxbury Latin School. He often spent time away from Roxbury in Boston which afforded him the opportunity to connect with some of his classmates. It was here and then that he was first drawn to Freemasonry. It was a fraternity that promoted integrity, honor and compassion. For Warren it held the promise of further exposure to people of power and influence in and around Boston. Indeed, with Paul Revere, Thomas Crafts, Dr. Samuel

Danforth Jr., John Hancock and Joseph Warren the seeds were planted here that grew to America's Founding Grandfather core.

A number of factors contributed to Joseph Warren's interest in medicine. He was influenced by the injury and premature death of his father, his mother's father, Dr. Samuel Stevens, and his old Harvard professor, John Winthrop. Medical schools had yet to come to the colonies, and Warren looked to Harvard where he entered a two year term of study toward a Master of Arts degree in medicine. On successful completion he obtained an apprenticeship with an established physician. Boston's Dr. James Lloyd, a wealthy, well-connected, highly accomplished, European-trained medical pioneer, accepted Joseph Warren into his practice. Immediately Warren was immersed in Lloyd's society and world beyond medicine.

Something's Broken:

Warren's apprenticeship unfolded at a time during which events were beginning to transpire creating friction between Boston and the British Crown in London. In the early post-French & Indian War years, Boston found itself with a strained economy and an abundance of war widows and poor children. Fold in the outbreak of small pox, a devastating fire, and new political unrest, and Boston was in genuine trouble.

The Boston Town Meeting was the vehicle through which the citizenry could participate in and shape their community. The colonial governors were appointed by the Crown and they had control of the military. The General Court, a bicameral legislative body was responsible for setting laws, assessing taxes, determining punishments and fines and appointing officers. The governor had veto power over the General Court.

In October of 1760, Britain's King George II died. The coronation of his twenty-two year old grandson, King George III followed soon afterward. Britain's war debt following recent wars throughout Europe and the American colonies left the new King looking for ways to generate revenue. Within the American colonies the Crown began to restrict westward migration, put new taxes in place, and began to reign in the powers of the local legislatures. It took no time for opposition movements to spring up in response. Within the colonies there were Loyalist Tories who stood in support of the crown who were countered by a growing opposition amongst the Sons of Liberty, and radical Whigs.

The Crown had established *writs of assistance* within the colonies that allowed for arbitrary searches of homes or businesses in search of smuggled goods that cut into the Crown's collection of prescribed taxes. The writs stood as a clear thorn in colonial life, an offense that some suggest served to catalyze yearnings for independence. Warren saw both sides of this argument through his academic connections as well as within his profession. Dr. Lloyd was an ardent Loyalist, while Warren found his heart connecting with the drum beat of the radical Whigs. Yet his commitment to furthering his medical craft gave Warren the maturity to maintain his friendship and closeness with Dr. Lloyd.

His apprenticeship was complete the spring of 1763, and Warren opened a practice of his own within Boston. Warren's active role and with inoculations and care of infected patients throughout a smallpox outbreak in 1764 pushed him quickly into a position of leadership within the medical community. It was at this time, through the inoculation of John Adams, that Warren crafted an influential friendship that stood the remainder of his life.

Somehow, during the burdensome months of the smallpox infestation, Joseph Warren found time and occasion to connect with Miss Elizabeth "Betsy" Hooton. Eighteen years of age, Betsy was both beautiful and financially gifted. Her father, Richard, a successful merchant and Masonic member, had died just months before Betsy and Joseph were married. The Rev. Samuel Cooper officiated at the wedding. Cooper's beliefs and priorities set an example that further cemented Warren's radical Whig inclinations. The Reverend insisted that all were born equal and free and that none had the right to encroach on the liberty of another.

Yet a parade of encroachments were thrown at the already struggling colonial economies by the British government. Aimed at ending colonial smuggling of sugar and molasses from the Dutch and French West Indies, Parliament passed the *Sugar Act* in April of 1764. It was during the protests that followed when claims of "taxation without representation" surfaced with regularity. The standing British forces remaining in the colonies once had offered a sense of safety and comfort to the colonies. Those same forces quickly came to feel like a police presence in place to enforce unwelcome British policies.

On the heels of the Sugar Act came the *Currency Act*, which prohibited paper money within the colonies, and the *Quartering Act*, which imposed the cost of feeding and housing British soldiers on the colonies. Protests of the Crown's new invasive mandates became much more broadly based throughout the colonies. Especially throughout the Boston area, many had fought in the French & Indian War. If those veterans returned alive, they found nothing but mounting economic hardship and Imperial judgment. James Otis, Jr. wrote that the Sugar Act "set people a thinking, in six months, more than they had done in their whole lives before." When, in November of 1764, Warren's maternal grandmother, Mary Stevens died, he went out of his way to avoid the purchase of any British goods for her burial. His hopes were that "this laudable example will be universally followed." He was among the first to call for boycotts in resistance of the Crown.

Within his growing medical practice he continued to attend to the needs of all levels of Boston's society. He welcomed the Tory upper crust, the artisans and mechanics of the middle class, and the lowest of prisoners and slaves. The radical Whig core, Samuel & John Adams, James Otis Jr., John Hancock, Paul Revere and William Dawes, were all found among the doctor's patient load. His had quickly become one of Boston's largest medical practices.

The winter of 1765 brought brutal cold to New England further cementing the economic downturn throughout Boston. It directly impacted Warren's professional well-being with more and more patients looking to compensate him with goods and services.

Warren took loans from John Hancock to assist his struggling family. And still, in the face of these colonial hardships, the British Parliament passed the *Stamp Act* in March of 1765. It was another effort to raise money toward their war debt and the cost of keeping troops in the colonies. The new act taxed all printed materials; playing cards, legal documents, almanacs, mortgages, land deeds, attorney licenses, newspapers and diplomas. It was a direct tax once again imposed without representation. In Boston, the Stamp Act served to unite all social classes in protest.

In response, the Massachusetts Assembly sent a circular letter to all other colonial assemblies in June of 1765. It provided an invitation to attend an October congress in New York “to unite in Petition to his Majesty and the Parliament, for relief under the supportable Grievance of the Stamp Act.” In the end twenty-seven representatives from nine colonies met, composing a respectful, yet certain statement that both declared their loyalty to the king, while insisting that loyal British subjects cannot be taxed without their consent. In further protest, a group of tradesmen formed a secret pod of political radicals, self-dubbed the “Loyal Nine”. They were all friends, patients and Masonic brothers of Joseph Warren. The group conducted a violent campaign of intimidation and confrontational tactics in direct response to the Stamp Act. They vandalized homes and businesses of those who had been put in place within Boston to enforce the provisions of the act.

The Growing of a Radical Leader:

On October 7, 1765, one month before the Stamp Act was to take effect, an article written by Warren was published in the *Boston Gazette*, a radical leaning newspaper, under the pseudonym “B.W.”. Within the writing Warren enumerated the dangers behind the Stamp Act, and spelled out those who stood to benefit from enforcement of the act. With the colonies mired in economic hardship, Warren asked, “will it be possible under the circumstances, to endure this tax”, which threatens “to drain the province of the little cash left among us?” Dr. Warren closed his outreach with a prescription. “Awake my countrymen, and by a regular and legal opposition defeat the designs of those who enslave us and our posterity.... Ages remote, mortals yet unborn, will bless your generous efforts, and revere the memory of the saviours of their country.”

The Earl of Rockingham was appointed prime minister by King George III, in March of 1766. Under his influence the king and Parliament both saw fit to repeal the Stamp Act. In America, according to John Adams, the response was “a smooth and peaceful calm.” The Whigs saw the repeal as affirmation that their mob behavior, boycotts and protests had yielded direct results.

Ultimately Warren, Samuel Adams and a handful of others targeted the concept of separation from the Crown long before most colonials were open to it. For them liberty came to be seen as a right to self-government. In a letter to former Harvard classmate

Edmund Dana, Warren went so far as to raise the specter of revolution. “When the rage of the people is raised by oppression to such a height”, it could “break out in rebellion.”

Counter to the Puritanical teachings he had embraced as a child, Warren’s collective young adult experience brought him to a point at which he was open to the brand of logic he found within Enlightenment philosophy. The notion of a top-down system of absolute monarchical rule was cast aside. In contrast, recognition of the natural rights to life, liberty and property had been championed by John Locke and John-Jacques Rousseau. In his heart Warren instilled a vision larger than the present day conflict with Britain, the concept that sovereignty originates from the bottom and takes bloom in the actions and voices of virtuous and accountable persons. As the calendar turns to 1767, Joseph Warren, at just the age of 26, Warren has been practicing medicine for several years. He has one of Boston’s fastest growing practices. And his working class farm roots blended with his attained gentleman scholar achievements continue to feed a unique appeal and trust amongst a broad cross-section of native Bostonians.

In hindsight, history shows us that the most influential of America’s founding grandfather group were Samuel Adams and Joseph Warren. Samuel Adams was nearly a full generation older than Warren. On the surface it would be easy to envision that Adams, a wily Whig veteran, would have played a mentor’s role to the young physician. But in fact, Warren connected with Adams as one piece of a collective effort to bail him out from significant financial debt following Adams failed effort as tax collector for the town of Boston. In truth, Samuel Adams needed Warren’s financial resources as well as his political and social influence. He needed Warren’s insights into the Tory mind-set. And initially, the British respected Warren more than Adams because of Warren’s professional success.

It was September of 1767 when a new round of duties were slated out of Britain, the *Townshend Acts*. Paper, paint, glass, silk, and tea imported from Britain would all be subjected to new punitive duties to cover the cost of administration of the colonies. In large numbers the people of Boston quickly rallied against the proposed taxes. Samuel Adams composed a circular letter sent out to the other colonies in an effort to unite other legislatures in a boycott of British goods. In response British secretary of state, Lord Hillsborough advised Massachusetts Governor Bernard that the Massachusetts Common Court was to be dissolved unless Adam’s letter was rescinded. In response to rising tensions, General Thomas Gage, the commander in chief of British forces in North America was also warned that additional troops might be needed in Boston. The Massachusetts legislature voted 92-17 not to rescind Adam’s letter. Warren penned pieces for the *Boston Gazette* openly attacking Governor Bernard, and in response the governor dissolved the General Court. With their official colonial legislative voices silenced the Whigs pushed for the establishment of a renegade provincial convention to provide a vehicle for the coordination of plans. The group met in September of 1768 with no unanimous course of action set. On October 1, 1768, General Gage and his British troops arrived in Boston bringing an abrupt end to the convention. To the radical faction the town felt as if it were

under siege. In response to their presence Warren went so far as to burn his incriminating personal papers. In addition, Warren looked to find a silver lining to the arrival of the redcoats. Shrewdly he extended word to any Masons within the British ranks that they were welcome at local Masonic meetings.

Warren Raises British Eyes:

Under the elevated levels of tension within Boston, Governor Bernard was recalled to England, and one of Warren's patients, Tory leader Thomas Hutchinson was installed. On October 4, 1769 a meeting was held at Boston's Faneuil Hall. A committee was chosen to "vindicate the character of the town, from the false and injurious representations contained in the letters" of Governor Bernard, General Gage and others. The group unanimously agreed that all local merchants still importing goods from Britain, a list that contained the names of Thomas Hutchinson's two sons, would be identified in town records for all to know just who "opposed their country." It proved to be a turning point in the relationship between Warren and Governor Hutchinson. Hutchinson and other Tories began to look toward Warren with a cautious eye. Meanwhile, his Whig brethren embraced him all the harder.

From day-to-day both sides of the conflict managed to co-exist, but by February of 1770 some local merchants had set aside the boycott and started dealing in and selling goods imported from Britain. In response, the radicals published their names, posted protest signs and took again to vandalizing their shops. Ebenezer Richardson, a Boston Customs Service employee engaged in an argument with a cluster of protesting school-aged boys. The boys followed him home, taunted him with relentless verbal assaults and began lobbing rocks through his windows. In defense, Richardson opened fire with his musket. Ten-year old Christopher Seider was killed. Dr. Warren was called upon to conduct young Christopher's autopsy. The public groundswell of protest grew with each passing of violent escalation. The funeral procession for the boy was, according to Tory Governor Hutchinson, "the largest perhaps ever known in America."

In the days and weeks following Seider's death there were multiple new tense confrontations between soldiers and citizens. Something was destined to break. On the cold, blustery night of March 5th, Private Hugh White struck a young barber's apprentice who had been taunting the soldiers. An angry mob quickly formed in front of the custom's house on King St. A squad of soldiers was called to assist the custom's house guards. Corporal Wemms aligned his soldiers in a defensive semi-circle with the front wall of the custom's house at their backs. Shouts became insults. Insults became abusive. The abuse became physical with the tossing of rocks, ice chunks and oyster shells. The outnumbered and panicked soldiers responded with gunfire. Three were killed instantly and two more died soon after. Several others were injured. Once again Dr. Warren was called out to treat the injured and autopsy the dead. At an emergency town meeting called the

next day, Warren and others pushed for the formation of a citizen's squad of militiamen to patrol the streets and attempt to guard against further bloodshed. In the press accountings, the event was quickly identified as the "*Boston Massacre*". On March 8th, a funeral procession of nearly 12,000 marched to accompany the massacréd to their graves. The British understood that their presence could provoke a full-scale riot of the populous and Colonel Dalrymple began sending troops off shore onto Castle William island. All sense of trust was fractured between the two sides and British soldiers no longer accepted Warren's invitations to Masonic events. Politics it seems, trumped fraternity. Joseph Warren was one of three selected to prepare a narrative of the events leading to the violent night of March 5th. Their report traces the roots of the event directly to the Stamp Act. More and more, the British came to see that Warren was instrumental among the rebelling Whig leadership.

In October, around the time of the trial of the soldiers involved in the March massacre, the British rescinded parts of the Townshend Acts. For many, a sense of calm, a softening of emotions came upon the streets of Boston. The troops were gone, the Stamp Act rescinded, the Townshend Acts muted. Dr. Joseph Warren however, continued to see and treat Christopher Monks, an injury victim of the Boston Massacre. Ultimately Mr. Monks died in 1780 of complications secondary to his wounds, the massacre's sixth and final victim. While many within the colony had settled into a post-Townshend Act calm, Warren, through the wounds of Christopher Monks remained vividly fixed on the brokenness of the colony's collective subservience to Britain. As energy levels waned among Boston's radical Whig movement, Warren formed the Boston Committee of Correspondence, a move to establish an intercolonial communication system. With time similar committees popped up across Massachusetts and throughout the other colonies.

In 1772, on the second anniversary of the Boston Massacre, Warren was invited by Whig leadership to deliver the annual oration commemorating the tragic events. And so it was that Warren climbed into the podium at the Old South Meeting House with hopes of rekindling a fire in the face of false peace. Warren enumerated, one after another, the infringements the colonies had endured under the parade of Parliament acts; "for taxing America, and the standing army sent in a time of peace for the enforcement of obedience to acts which upon fair examination appeared to be unjust and unconstitutional." One can imagine his voice rising in emotion as he insisted that "the true fatal fifth of March 1770, can never be forgotten – the horrors of that dreadful night are but too deeply impressed on our hearts – our streets were stained with the blood of our brethren." Indeed he, more than any other, had been "tormented with the sight of the mangled bodies of the dead." Warren pleaded with his fellow countrymen to "use every method in the power to secure your rights", and "with united zeal and fortitude oppose the torrent of oppression." Warren had emerged from behind the scenes with a very visible effort that ignited renewed passion from political somnambulism. Overnight his notoriety rocketed further in opposite directions among his Whig and Tory followers.

Personal Triumph and Tragedy:

While Boston continued to struggle economically during the early 1770s, Warren's personal status was solid. He had inherited money, property and goods. His medical practice was a banner success. He had reached a point where he was now taking in apprentices to lighten his workload. Warren's role and influence within Freemasonry also expanded during this time. He received a commission appointing him Grand Master of Masons for the Continent of America. Running counter to the Puritanical restraints of his youth, Warren's lifestyle now reflected his assorted successes. He purchased an opulent west-Boston estate and hired people to expand and repair the property. It was an ongoing project that lasted too long for Warren and his family to ever enjoy physical habitation of that home. Dr. Warren and his wife, Elizabeth sat for the painting of formal portraits. And Warren's personal carriage was painted in an eye-grabbing vermilion, the most expensive of paints that was common among European elites. During this time Warren also purchased a slave, a young boy. Yes, Joseph Warren was one of the cluster of early American visionaries whose hearts embraced impassioned calls to liberty, while their heads contentedly justified the ownership of a human being.

For Warren, his marriage was more than a simple partnership. His love and affection for Betsy was genuine. He lavished her with fashionable jewelry that reflected his feelings. But in the spring of 1773, he was reminded that we mustn't take such fixtures for granted. The youngest of the family's four children had just turned one when Betsy was afflicted with the onset of significant illness. Her inheritance was quickly designated to Warren's brother, Ebenezer. The couple was planning financially for what seemed the certain reality that their children would be spending time with the extended Warren family in Roxbury. One can imagine the degree of dotage that Dr. Warren, the physician provided for his new patient prior to her ultimate death at age 26 on April 27, 1773.

Within that same week Warren's Masonic friend Paul Revere also lost his wife. The two, while from entirely different social planes, found themselves drawn together. In addition to their shared Whig belief systems, Revere too had lost his father early in life. Both men had endured the sting of losing a child. In time Revere became one of Warren's most trusted allies and friends. Such was the sincerity of their closeness that Revere named a son Joseph Warren Revere.

A "Party" in the Making:

It was May of 1773 when Parliament passed the *Tea Act*. The act provided the East-India Company with a monopoly on exported dutied tea to the American colonies. If embraced the colonies would be deprived of free trade options regarding tea. Upon receiving news of the Parliament's action, Boston's North End Caucus, led by Joseph Warren, met promptly and resolved their "lives and fortunes" that "tea shipped by the east-

India Company shall not be landed.” Knowing that three British ships, the *Eleanor*, the *Dartmouth*, and the *Beaver*, had arrived in Boston harbor carrying, among other things, East-India Company tea, the Whigs created a rotating watch to make certain the tea was not landed. Meanwhile, men of the North End Caucus confronted the five men commissioned to sell the newly arriving East-India tea. Despite their best efforts, all five agents refused to set aside their commissions. In response, the men of the caucus conceived and enacted a very direct plan, a plan guaranteed to change the equation.

Dressed as Mohawk Indians, a coordinated group of patriots, equipped with clubs and swords found themselves on Griffin’s Wharf where they boarded the trio of tea carrying ships. In all more than 340 chests of tea valued at 9000 pounds were irreverently dumped into Boston Harbor. Joseph Warren’s role in the plan is unknown. It is unlikely that he participated in the actual raid. In hindsight John Adams insisted the action was “so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important consequences, and so lasting, that I can’t but consider it an Epocha in History.”

Response from Britain to news of the destruction of the tea was immediate and punitive. Prime minister, Lord North pressed through a rapid-fire series of *Coercive Acts* in an effort to punish and hopefully break the colonial mischief. The *Boston Port Act* came in March of 1774. It called for a closure of the port of Boston until payment in full for the destroyed tea was made. The *Massachusetts Government Act*, the *Administration of Justice Act*, and the *Quartering Act* were introduced in the weeks that followed. With each act more-and-more political control of Boston was transferred across the Atlantic to London. In addition, British General Thomas Gage replaced Thomas Hutchinson as governor of Massachusetts in May of 1774, ushering in a true chapter of military rule throughout the colony.

With his elevated respect amongst the Whigs, Warren was appointed to head a committee charged with drafting a *Solemn League and Covenant* which pledged a termination of all commercial exchange with Britain. Those signing onto the covenant pledged anew to never “buy, purchase or consume” anything off the ship from Britain into any colonial port. Success would be dependent on cooperation beyond Boston, throughout all Massachusetts and all of the remaining colonies. Support for the covenant at the June Boston town meeting was not unanimous, but in the end a majority did vote to support the committee and the proposal they had drafted.

Somehow, in the midst of this frantic 1774 turmoil, Joseph Warren connected on an intimate level with Mercy Scollay. He had known Mercy for years through his acquaintance with her father, John Scollay. Philosophically Warren was drawn to the Scollay family through their shared theology as voiced clearest through the Reverend Samuel Cooper. Educated and of social privilege, Mercy was more than familiar with politics in Boston and throughout the colonies. With her family’s strong Whig leanings she found herself easily drawn to the available Dr. Warren. Mercy’s blend of both political and emotional support provided Warren with a substantial boost.

“Act then like men”:

When Governor Gage blocked the regular Boston town meetings, Warren called together a renegade colonial convention for Massachusetts. It was within that meeting that Warren insisted it was time to convene a *Continental Congress* to work toward unity of American colonies against Britain. “I am for dying rather than betray the rights of America,” wrote Warren. He was warning his countrymen that “the event of this struggle insures happiness and freedom or miserable slavery to this continent... Act then like men. Appoint a general Congress from the several colonies.”

In the face of the Boston Port Act, other colonies found ways to get supplies and provisions to the people of Boston. In a letter of June 1774 George Washington stated that “the cause of Boston...is now and ever will be considered as the cause of America... and that we shall not suffer ourselves to be sacrificed by piecemeal.” Within that same month Warren himself wrote to Samuel Adams who was in attendance at the General Court, reminding him “the mistress we court is LIBERTY; and it is better to die than not to obtain her...”

When in September the senior Whig leaders set out for Philadelphia and the convening of the Continental Congress, the town of Boston was occupied by British forces. Their governor was a British general. The Massachusetts charter had been largely eviscerated. The provincial stores of gunpowder had been confiscated, and the Boston Neck access to the city was guarded by British artillery. Remaining within Boston was Joseph Warren, the thirty-three year old physician who had called for the Continental Congress, who now was entrusted on the front lines, the leader in effect, of the Whigs.

A September renegade convention of delegates from counties across Massachusetts was held in Warren’s home Suffolk County. Warren was chosen as chair for the convention. A committee was appointed, led by Warren, to review a post-Coercive Acts document upon which Warren had been working. It defined a path by which their collective resistance to Britain would become a genuine rebellion. In finished form the document came to be called the *Suffolk Resolves*. On September 9th the document was read aloud at the convention to celebration and unanimous favor.

One could argue that the Suffolk Resolves were Joseph Warren’s single most-impactful written work to be shared with the timeline of world history. Here was the document that kicked down the door with an endorsement of genuine insurrection against the Crown. The writings call upon the colonies to deny the acts of Parliament and to be prepared to defend themselves as a consequence. It was Warren’s friend, Paul Revere who was entrusted to carry a copy of the Suffolk Resolves to Philadelphia and the meeting of the Continental Congress.

That first meeting of the Continental Congress was awkward to say the least. From New Hampshire to South Carolina a collection of men with different priorities, diverse

faiths, and assorted prejudices had come together for the first time. Each arrived with his guard up and an inherent sense of mistrust of the motives of others. But each also arrived understanding that they shared a common threat. Upon Paul Revere's arrival, the Suffolk Resolves were read aloud to applause. In the end, the diverse delegates approved and adopted Warren's work without dissent. John Adams recorded in his diary, "This was one of the happiest days of my life....This day convinced me that America will support the Massachusetts or perish with her."

A *Massachusetts Provincial Congress* was called to meet in response to the blockage of the meeting of the General Court by Governor Gage. With Joseph Warren selected to represent Boston, the group met on October 11 in Concord. The congress appointed a *Committee of Safety*, a group charged with the coordination of military readiness. Warren and eight others were elected to fill the committee.

No Turning Back:

On both sides of the Atlantic, people had arrived at a point where each accepted that violence was inevitable. The colonials realized that the Crown would never concede to their demands for liberty, while the Crown saw with equal clarity that the colonials were not about to respect and comply with Parliament's edicts.

In spite of personal risk Joseph Warren refused to accept seclusion. He wrote to Samuel Adams that he was "constantly busied in helping forward the political machines in all parts of this province." And indeed, Warren was a part of every influential political body within his colony. Most of these bodies, in the eyes of the Crown were illegal in nature, placing Joseph Warren closer and closer to the center of their crosshairs.

As the calendar turned to 1775, factional tensions were at a fever pitch. In March the annual oration commemorating the Boston Massacre was planned for the 6th. In the face of direct threats of assassination, Warren volunteered to deliver the speech. On the morning of the 6th Warren equipped himself with twin pistols and set off to see the patients he had scheduled within his practice. As the day wore on, people by the thousands, Bostonians and British soldiers both, congregated around the Old South Meeting House. At the appointed hour Warren arrived in a single-horse Chaise. Present that day was a complete and diverse cross-section of Boston's factions. Reports stated that "The aisles of the meeting-house, the steps to the pulpit, even the pulpit itself, were occupied by the British." Yet into the heat of that setting marched Joseph Warren, prepared yet again to allow his voice to provide vent from his heart. He took his hearers back five years to the night on which King Street was "bespattered" with the "brains" of innocent Bostonians. And yet nothing, he warned, had changed. "Our streets are again filled with armed men... Our harbor is crowded with ships of war....Our Liberty must be preserved; it is far dearer than life... We cannot suffer even BRITONS to ravish it from us." In the direct presence of his affronted enemy he proclaimed, "It is the hand of Britain that

inflicts the wound. The arms of George our rightful king have been employed to shed that blood.” He sermonized that day for more than forty-five minutes. In closing Warren challenged the colonials, both those present, and those not, to embrace “the wise measures recommended by the honourable, the continental congress.” Yet, “If these pacific measures are ineffectual, and it appears that the only way to safety is, thro’ fields of blood,” he dared picture, “I know you will not turn your faces from your foes; but will undauntedly press forward, until tyranny is trodden under your foot... and you have fixed.... LIBERTY... on the American throne. Our Country is in danger,” he warned, “but not to be despaired of. Our enemies are numerous and powerful – but we have many friends, determined TO BE FREE, and Heaven and Earth will aid the RESOLUTION.” And then, a final charge issued to the sympathetic ears within his hearing. “On you depend the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important question, on which rest the happiness and liberty of millions yet unborn. Act worthy of yourselves.” In hindsight, years later one native of Boston reflected with amazement. “It has always been a wonder to me, that the war did not commence on that day.”

Warren understood that his actions and his words put him and potentially his family at grave risk. Behind the scenes he began making plans to send Mercy and his children to live outside of Boston with his trusted colleague Dr. Elijah Dix in Worcester. It was April 19th when he hugged his children and promised his love to Mercy as they loaded onto a carriage. Never again was he to see any of them in our earthly realm.

With Mercy standing guard over his children and his apprentices able to cover the majority of his medical duties, Warren turned his nearly undivided attention to the conflict with Britain. As head of the Committee of Safety he was responsible for organizing and equipping the provincial militia. In addition a growing spy network spread out across the island with Warren’s medical office acting as the nerve center. It was Warren’s intermixing of Freemasonry, the Sons of Liberty, the North End Caucus, the Boston Committee of Correspondence, the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, the burgeoning ranks of his medical practice, and his faith community that placed him in a singular position to see and understand the big picture of what was unfolding with regard to the colonial grievances with the Crown. No one understood the political realities and the options available to the patriots on any given day with the degree of clarity seen by Dr. Joseph Warren.

The Redcoats Are Coming:

In April of 1775 the spy network picked up intelligence suggesting that Governor Gage intended to send troops to Concord to seize or destroy cannon and artillery stored there. On the night of April 18th, Warren summoned Paul Revere to his home and sent him by ferry across the Charles River toward Lexington, where he was to find John Adams and John Hancock in transit toward Philadelphia and the *Second Continental Congress*. In

addition he sent William Dawes by another path, leaving from Boston Neck. His instructions to both men were to warn Adams and Hancock of the British plans and to alert the local militia units to the impending arrival of British troops.

Warren spent the night at home tending to personal matters. He destroyed sensitive correspondence and focused time on the medical records of his patients. The next morning Warren learned that the British had killed nine militiamen at dawn as they arrived at and passed through Lexington. He packed his essential supplies, and set out from home, never again to cross that threshold. Via the Charlestown Ferry Warren caught up with the Committee of Safety membership at the *Black Horse Tavern* in Menotomy. From there he followed General William Heath into a series of active skirmishes with the king's soldiers returning from frustration at Concord and struggling to find their way back to the safety of Boston.

In the days following the fighting at Lexington and Concord Warren took time to write to the surrounding towns within Massachusetts, imploring each to assist in the formation of a patriot army. On April 23rd the Second Massachusetts Provisional Congress unanimously agreed "an army of 30,000 men be immediately raised and established." On May 2nd Joseph Warren was elected President of the *Second Massachusetts Provincial Congress*. He was still chairman of the Committee of Safety. His influence and impact among the Whig patriot movement was at its absolute apex.

In the sixty days between the battles of Lexington and Concord, and the Battle of Bunker Hill there were four separate lesser skirmishes that took place in and around Boston. Joseph Warren is the only person known to have been present and participatory in all four. In addition, talking with six different native Indian nations, Warren was in search of military alliances. He also thoughtfully considered his network of physician colleagues in an effort to create a list of potential surgeons for the building army. He spent time in search of arms, ammunition and food. He explored options for a colonial navy.

In recognition of Warren's ceaseless efforts and despite his lack of genuine military experience the Massachusetts Provisional Congress, on the afternoon of June 14 appointed him the rank of major general. The very next day, in Philadelphia, George Washington was appointed commanding general of the newly amalgamated Continental Army. Sadly, Dr. Warren did not live long enough to receive this news.

A Path to Bred's Hill:

General Gage was concerned. He and his troops were isolated on the island that was 18th century Boston. Provisions were low for his men and his horses. On a daily basis more-and-more spirited provincial soldiers were recruited and arriving to bolster the forces that surrounded his army. Gage knew that with the passage of time it would get nothing but harder to break the siege that entrapped his army.

Warren's intelligence network picked up news that Gage intended to split his forces, get off the island and move both north toward Bunker Hill, and south to Dorchester Heights. His target date was June 18th. The colonial forces were not capable of strengthening both positions against the anticipated movement and chose to focus on the reinforcement of Breeds Hill, a somewhat shorter hill that stood between the river and Bunker Hill. From here they had better vantage points to observe what was unfolding in front of them coming out of Boston.

General Gage awoke to the colonial's surprise developments on the morning of the 17th. Undeterred, he opened an artillery bombardment of the newly fabricated Breeds Hill entrenchments. In the afternoon he sent 2000 troops across the river and amassed them in three fronts beneath the colonials perched above. Colonial snipers fired on the arriving British from elevated positions inside Charlestown's buildings. Gage responded by unleashing his artillery on Charlestown which, in effect, set the town ablaze. Colonel John Stark and his New Hampshire forces successfully held off, from the eastern flank, the first British attempt at an assault up Breeds Hill.

Meanwhile, Joseph Warren learned the British had landed in Charlestown. He was at the *Hastings House* in Cambridge, the meeting place for the Committee of Safety. Between his lack of sleep and a propensity for intense headaches, he found himself afflicted and had excused himself to recline. But Warren quickly prepared himself and set out to unite with the provincial forces. Despite the multitude of friends and colleagues who reminded him of his irreplaceably plural leadership roles within their ensuing rebellion, Warren was resolute. He would not linger in the background. He knew he had no business strategically leading troops into battle from a safe and distant vantage point. No one knew the Charlestown topography better than Joseph Warren.

He arrived at the scene attired in his Dr. Warren finery. From his wig to his "white satin waistcoat laced with silver, and white breeches, with silver loops" Warren looked more fit for a wedding than a war. But he was armed with pistols, musket, sword, bible, and a vital sense of purpose. Upon encountering Dr. Warren, both General Israel Putnam and Colonel William Prescott respectfully offered the newly appointed major general command of the field of battle. Warren declined and fell in with Prescott's men in the newly dug trenches.

Soldiers who survived the fighting on Breed's Hill wrote in hindsight about the lift provided by Dr. Warren's presence within their trenches. With time the redcoats collected themselves and began anew an advance up the incline. Limited in supply of ammunition, the patriot troops had been instructed to hold their fire until the enemy was well within reliable range of their muskets. The details of faces fell into view by the time the next thunderous salvo of musket fire rang out across the landscape. "Our first fire was shockingly fatal", reflected one of the patriot fighters in Warren's redoubt. "The enemy were thrown into confusion and retreated a short distance. Their lines were broken, and it was some minutes before they had conveyed their dead and wounded into their rear."

British troops paused once again to collect their breath, spirit and coordination. Patriot forces experienced an ambivalent mix of euphoria and concern. They were repelling King George III's finest but they also were dangerously low on ammunition. For a third time British forces bravely came out of hiding and began their ascent. Once in range the patriot muskets once again roared to life. But quickly the intensity of their fire waned and one soldier after another found the bottom of his empty cartridge box. The cacophony of their fire arms was replaced by the ominous rise of British war cries. Bayonets were fixed and swords were drawn as the redcoats spilled across the rebel lines. A period of intense hand-to-hand combat ensued. Joseph Warren was among those quickly wounded. But on he and the others fought. Using their empty muskets as clubs, and retrieving the swords of those fallen, Warren led a new push against the advancing bayonets.

But the provincial troops were simply overwhelmed by sheer redcoat numbers, and exhausted by human limitations. Soldiers began, as they were able, to fall off in retreat. Gradually the cries of the wounded and dying dominated the hill as the heat of the battle wound down to a close. The patriot masses rushed for the Charlestown Neck, their lone land route into the safety of Cambridge beyond. Dr. Warren lingered behind covering the retreat of his men when a lone shot caught him beneath his left eye, an instantly fatal occurrence that tore through his skull and out the back side.

In a letter to John Adams, a colonial soldier shared what he had witnessed that day. Dr. Warren's "whole soul seemed to be fill'd with the greatness of the cause he was engaged in, and while his Friends were dropping away all around him, gave his orders with a surprising calmness, till having seen the enemy in the breast work he unwillingly left the front and then fell amid heaps of slaughter'd enemies."

The battle had been somewhat of a moral victory for the colonial forces. They had taken all that the king's forces had thrown their way and countered it with incredible destruction. If not for exhausting their ammunition supply, they had clearly won the day. But in truth, their fledgling rebellion had been dealt substantial blows. Their survivors had been scattered, the British still held Boston, and Dr. Warren was dead.

The British took possession of Warren's body as a prize upon which they could work out their collective wrath. They stripped him of his clothing, collected his bible, sword and a clutch of incriminating letters. His lifeless corpse was bayoneted repeatedly and ultimately tossed irreverently into the trenches with other fallen soldiers where they were buried. Lt. Walter Laurie, who was in charge of the Crown's burial detail reported, "Doctor Warren, president of the Provincial Congress ... and next to [Samuel] Adams in abilities, I found among the slain, and stuffed the scoundrel with another rebel, into one hole, and there he and his seditious principles may remain."

Immediate Reflections:

Late on the night of June 24th, an express rider hurried through the streets of Philadelphia and roused the snoozing Continental Congressional delegates. All rose to hear the shocking news of Bunker Hill and of the death of Dr. Joseph Warren. Despite the fact that Warren had not physically been in attendance at either Congress, he had been there among those delegates by way of the Suffolk Resolves they had unanimously adopted the previous year.

Much as George Washington ultimately rose in American stature to god-like status, Dr. Warren too, on a local level initially saw that same reverence. A local paper wrote of the "Godlike Warren, thy country's guardian angel." For months Warren had joined with Samuel Adams in pushing for a formal separation from Britain. Surely the battle in which he gave his life made certain that objective had been realized. Protest had become genuine rebellion, and rebellion had become war.

In March of 1776 the British set sail from Boston. On April 4th Joseph Warren's brothers, John and Ebenezer, crossed once again to Charlestown and Breeds Hill in search of their brother's remains. Following guidance they had received from those who had been there the day of the battle they found his naked and decomposing corpse. He was positively identified by the presence of a gold-wired dental prosthesis that had been made for Warren by his close friend and metallurgist, Paul Revere. Now in reverent hands, his remains lay in state within the Massachusetts State House until his funeral on April 8th. Hundreds of mourners and a detachment of Continental soldiers accompanied Warren's earthly remains on the solemn march to King's Chapel. "Col. Phiney's regiment march first with drums and fifes in mourning," reported the *Virginia Gazette*, "then the Free Masons, the remains, the relations, friends and town's people". Warren was laid to rest, unmarked in Boston's Old Granary Burial Ground.

Engaged but not yet married to Joseph Warren, Mercy Scollay was devastated on multiple levels by his loss. Their love had been genuine as was her love for Warren's four children. But Warren's mother and brothers had legal control of the children and all ultimately were withdrawn from Mercy's care and returned to the Warren family farm in Roxbury. With the passage of time Mercy was permitted to visit Warren's children in Roxbury and she became quite close with the children's grandmother, Mary. Benedict Arnold had become fast friends with Joseph Warren during the days surrounding the battles at Lexington and Concord. Standing tall for his fallen friend, Arnold sent money on a regular basis to Mercy for the care and education of Warren's children. In all he provided nearly 3000 pounds toward their wellbeing. When Arnold's treason was uncovered later in the war, the Warren family was caught in a state of utter disbelief. In time all four of Warren's children were adopted legally by his brother John. John, who had followed his older brother into a career in medicine, was a loyal custodian of his

brother's legacy the remainder of his life. In 1825 Joseph Warren's remains were exhumed and reburied alongside John at St. Paul's Church in Boston.

Thirty years later Warren's remains were on the move for a third time. His nephew, Dr. John Collins Warren had followed his uncle and his father into medicine. He had developed for himself an international reputation for medical innovation and surgical success. It was he who saw fit to have his uncle's remains reinterred at an impressive family plot in Roxbury's Forest Hills Cemetery. They remain there today.

Ongoing Exercises and Invitations:

Through examining the legacy of Dr. Joseph Warren and America's other Founding Grandfathers, we see clearly that the concepts of liberty and justice are the very bedrock upon which the American experiment was built. We'll remember that Dr. Warren wrote to Samuel Adams, "**the mistress we court is LIBERTY; and it is better to die than not to obtain her...**" And in that sense, his death is just. He died courting LIBERTY! What seems rather unjust however, is that Joseph Warren's legacy of sacrificial leadership goes largely unrecognized in the America of today. Warren was just twenty-four years old when his writing was published in the *Boston Gazette*. It was in response to the Stamp Act that Warren's thoughts appeared under the pseudonym "B.W.". He attempted to light a fire of action among the citizenry in promising that "**Ages remote, mortals yet unborn, will bless your generous efforts, and revere the memory of the saviours of their country.**" Joseph Warren then, was writing about us today. We are the Americans of those remote ages, the mortals now very much alive. So, how do we bless their generous efforts? How do we revere the memory of those who defined and saved the dream of America before it yet existed? How can we best dust off our unclaimed invitation to stewardship of the legacy of Dr. Joseph Warren?