

## The Revolution Begins

**KEY QUESTION** Why did the fighting begin at Lexington?

Since 1770, Sam Adams had been building a network of informants to keep watch over British activities. The British had their spies too. It was from these spies that General Gage learned that the Massachusetts militia was storing arms and ammunition in Concord, about 20 miles northwest of Boston. He also heard that Sam Adams and John Hancock were nearby in Lexington. On the night of April 18, 1775, Gage ordered his troops to arrest Adams and Hancock in Lexington and to destroy the supplies in Concord.

**The Midnight Ride** The Sons of Liberty had prepared for this moment. **Paul Revere**, a Boston silversmith, and a second messenger, William Dawes, were sent to spread the news about British troop movements. Revere would cross the harbor from Boston to Charlestown. From there he would ride to Lexington and Concord. Dawes would take the land route.

Revere had arranged a system of signals to alert colonists across the harbor in Charlestown. One lantern burning in the Old North Church steeple signaled that the British troops were taking the land route out of Boston; two lamps meant that the troops were leaving Boston by water.

### CONNECTING History

#### NEW ENGLANDERS OPPOSE THE KING

New Englanders had a long history of fierce opposition to royal authority. During the English Civil War of the 1640s, many New England Puritans returned to England to fight the king. They rejoiced when a republic was set up in England following the king's execution.

Over a century later, in the 1760s and 1770s, descendants of the Puritans were still angered by the same issues that had upset their ancestors:

- the levying of taxes without the people's consent
- the extent of the king's power
- the creation of a standing army that might threaten their freedom

Puritans execute King Charles I in London in 1649.

**CRITICAL THINKING** **Make Generalizations** Why was New England a hotbed of political protest?

