

Patriots Day

Patriots' Day is an annual event, formalized as several state holidays, commemorating the battles of Lexington, Concord, and Menotomy, some of the first battles of the American Revolutionary War. The holiday occurs on the third Monday of April each year, with celebrations including battle reenactments and the Boston Marathon.

History



In 1894, the Lexington Historical Society petitioned the Massachusetts State Legislature to proclaim April 19 as "Lexington Day". Concord countered with "Concord Day". Governor Frederic T. Greenhalge opted for a compromise: Patriots' Day. However, the biggest battle fought on this day was in the town of Menotomy, now Arlington, Massachusetts. Menotomy was on the Concord Road between Lexington and Concord and Boston. While the fighting was going on in Lexington and Concord, 5,100 militia men arrived in Menotomy from Middlesex and Essex Counties. These men took up positions along the road the British troops would take on their retreat to Boston. They placed themselves in and around houses, stone walls, fields, and barns. The bloodiest fighting of the first day of the American Revolution took place inside a single house, the Jason Russell House, in Menotomy. Eleven militia men died in this house fighting British troops trained in bayonet fighting.



Patriots' Day was first proclaimed in Massachusetts in 1894 by Gov. Greenhalge, replacing Fast Day as a public holiday. The idea was introduced to the Governor by the statesman from Lowell, Isaac Henry Paige. It was established on April 19, commemorating the date of the Battles of Lexington and Concord and the larger Battle of Menotomy in 1775, and consolidating the longstanding municipal observances of Lexington Day and Concord Day. It also marked the first bloodshed of the American Civil War in the Baltimore riot of 1861, during which four members of the Massachusetts militia were slain and 36 injured. In Menotomy, now Arlington, 25 militia men died, and 40 British soldiers were killed. The dual commemoration, Greenhalge explained, celebrated "the anniversary of the birth of liberty and union". It is likely that the battles that took place in Menotomy are not as well-known as the smaller battles in Lexington and Concord because the town has had several names since that day in 1775. In 1938, with the generation that had fought in the Civil War largely off the voter rolls, the Massachusetts legislature passed a bill establishing the holiday "in commemoration of the opening events of the War of the Revolution".

Maine followed Massachusetts in 1907 and replaced its Fast Day with Patriot's Day. On June 10, 2017, Governor Dannel Malloy signed a bill establishing Patriots' Day as a statewide unpaid holiday in Connecticut. On April 16, 2018, Connecticut became the 4th state to recognize the holiday.

Description



The holiday was originally celebrated on April 19, the actual anniversary of the battles (fought in 1775). Since 1969, it has been observed on the third Monday in April in Massachusetts and in Maine (which until the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was part of Massachusetts). The Monday holiday creates a three-day long weekend. It is also the first day of a vacation week for public schools in both states and a school holiday for many local colleges and universities, both public and private. Observances and re-enactments of the battles occur annually at Lexington Green in Lexington, MA (around 6:00 am) and the Old North Bridge in Concord, MA (around 9:00 am) and in Arlington, MA on the Sunday before Patriot's Day. Tours are available of the Jason Russell House in Arlington, Massachusetts on Sunday, and Monday. On Monday morning, mounted re-enactors with state police escorts retrace the Midnight Rides of Paul Revere and William Dawes, calling out warnings the whole way.

The most significant celebration of Patriots' Day is the Boston Marathon, which has been run every Patriots' Day since April 19, 1897 (except in 2020 and 2021) to mark the then-recently established holiday, with the race linking the Athenian and American struggles for liberty.