

Alex Payne

Bolder is Better

Few things ever test a man's courage, strength, and loyalty like the thought of a dreadful death suddenly sucking life from their tender bodies. Those who are able to stay strong in such a mind set are the greatest of mankind and looked upon for strength. One example of this rare asset is found at the Battle of Bunker Hill, the first bloody battle of the Revolutionary War, on June 17, 1775. True patriots were seen in this horrific battle and heroes were made amongst the hail storm of musket balls and smoke.

In the late hours of June 16, 1775, a group of about 2400 colonist troops under the command of Israel Putnam, William Prescott, John Stark, and Joseph Warren advanced to Bred's hill overlooking Boston and began to fortify it. The colonial troops work quickly through the night, digging trenches and making a wall to secure their position against the unaware British troops. In the early hours of June 17, the British awoke to an undesirable sight. General Gage ordered his British ships to begin bombarding the built up Bred's hill and sent William Howe and 2000 men to the opposite side to push up the hill side and recapture the lost land. As the colonist troops saw this, some deserted the cause while others dug more diligently to withstand the incoming British troops. Each commander had their troops in position and waited anxiously, as the British troops started up the hill. The experienced commanders were aware that there was a shortage of gunpowder and musket balls, and said, "Men, you are all marksmen - don't one of you fire until you see the white of their eyes."

The colonists gained courage. When the British were within 50 yards they began to engage. The British lines were torn apart as leaders and comrades fell to their knees spilling their blood on the ground, forcing a retreat. General Howe organized another assault and sent the

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second wave. Again they were repelled and retreated. Reenforcements arrived for General Howe and the third wave was ordered to attack the rebels. By this time the colonists had little ammunition left to gun down the remaining British troops and hold their position. Soon British troops flooded over the wall and began to impale colonist troops, forced to fight with the stocks of their muskets, with bayonets. The brave colonists tried to hold their ground but were soon forced to retreat, not as cowards but to salvage as many as possible in a already lost battle. Many colonists gave their lives, including Joseph Warren, to hold Breeds Hill. Many others fought until they were literally pushed down the hill.

Though the colonists lost the battle, they were given heart. Their casualties halved those of the British. Others saw and heard of the great men who fought and knew they could do the same. In the words of Peter Brown, "God in Mercy to us fought our battle, and tho' we were but few in number, and suffer'd to be defeated by our enemy, yet we were presrev[ed] in a most wonderful manner."

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