

# In Defiance of King George, A Red Cap Signals A Call To Patriots



**Annually, on a Saturday in early April, the Bedford Minuteman Company and Minuteman Companies from the area converge on Willson Park in Bedford to commemorate the spirit and courage of the patriots who sparked the American Revolution.**

This ceremony features a march, displays of musketry, and music of the period performed by the men and women of the many Minuteman Companies in attendance. But the main event – which draws not only spectators, but also the soldiers of His Majesty’s 10th Regiment of Foot, intent on stopping the defiant rabble-rousing – is the raising of a tall wooden pole, which is climbed by a Bedford Minuteman and affixed with a red knitted cap.

The “Pole Capping” reenacts the practice in Colonial America of dissatisfaction with varied rulings and conduct of the English government. This defiance to the British Crown showed the spirit of liberty exemplified by Bedfordians and other colonials in the early phases of the War for Independence.

The Liberty Pole was started with a tree, not a pole, in 1765 by a group of American Colonials in Boston. The Sons of Liberty as they became known to be called, would meet at the base of a large elm tree at the juncture of Washington and Essex streets in Boston. From the trunk of the tree was fastened a pole which rose far above the topmost branch, and a red flag floated from it as an understood signal to call together the fearless members of the organization.

This tree was referred to as the “Liberty Tree” and the ground below, “Liberty Hall.” The intentions of the group remained to carry on the voice of the Sons of Liberty to rise and fight against the country’s oppressors. The Sons of Liberty were forced to meet in secret with the Liberty Tree retaining its status until the winter of 1775-76, when it fell before the hatchets of an angered British soldiery. Liberty poles also were erected in New York and fell to the same fate of being cut down by British troops.

The Town of Bedford displayed equally the spirit and courage of their compatriots with, among other acts of courage, the erection of their own Liberty Poles. It is in commemoration of those men, and their American feeling for Liberty, that the Bedford Minuteman Company conducts its annual Liberty Pole Capping and Raising ceremonies.