

## Short but Sweet: The Life of America's Lost Hero

What defines a hero? A hero is someone that others look up to, are inspired by, and strive to be like. Throughout history, the men and women who have come to be hailed as heroes have all shared a certain set of unique qualities. They are loyal, brave, compassionate, unwavering, and willing to sacrifice themselves for others without hesitation. Such a man was Joseph Warren. Although his life was tragically cut short at the young age of 34 years in a final act of bravery at the Battle of Bunker Hill, his legacy consists of much more than just his final moments. Warren's patriotic nature, combined with his idea of just taxation along with his diligent work behind the scenes and later at the front line, led him to become one of the most significant figures of the American Revolution.

Joseph Warren was born on June 11, 1741, in Roxbury, MA. The oldest of four brothers, he followed the path of his maternal grandfather and studied medicine at Harvard College. Sons of wealthier families were sent to Europe to study medicine, but Warren did not have this privilege and instead became apprenticed for two years in the colonies to a London-trained physician practicing in Boston named Dr. James Lloyd.<sup>1</sup> After Warren completed his apprenticeship, he soon opened his practice in Boston where he treated patients of all classes, from the wife of John Adams to unnamed slaves.<sup>2</sup> He saw it as his civic duty to treat anyone who needed his help. For example, he remained in Boston during the 1763 smallpox epidemic, inoculating hundreds of "petrified but ultimately grateful individuals," who all survived under the care of Dr. Warren.<sup>3</sup> It was through Warren's medical practice that he met many radical colonial leaders and future heroes of the Revolution, opening the door to his political future.

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<sup>1</sup> James L. Nelson, *With Fire and Sword: The Battle of Bunker Hill and the Beginning of the American Revolution* (Macmillan, 2011), 38.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry Cary, *Joseph Warren; Physician, Politician, Patriot*, 1961, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Di Spigna, *Founding Martyr: The Life and Death of Dr. Joseph Warren, the American Revolution's Lost Hero*, digital (Crown, 2018), 74.

Warren's kind and nationalistic nature put the lives of his country's people above all else, a belief that would soon lead to his untimely demise.

Warren's first contribution to the radical cause came in the form of writing. In 1765, he wrote an impassioned editorial on the Stamp Act under the pseudonym "B.W." in the *Boston Gazette*. He wrote that the stamps were a "grievous and unconstitutional Tax," and invoked the argument put forth by Whig leaders "that no man shall be taxed but with his own consent."<sup>4</sup>

Warren's writings were a major force in spreading the idea of "no taxation without representation," an idea that proved to be essential in the colonists' fight for independence.

Writing also as "Paskalos" (1766-1767), "Philo Physic" (1767), and "A True Patriot" (1768),

Warren evolved into a thundering dissenter against British policies. For instance, in response to the Townshend Duties and royal governor Francis Bernard, he wrote as "A True Patriot": "Surely you must suppose we have lost all Feeling, or you would not dare thus tauntingly to display the Trophies of your Slanders, . . . But it is certain that Men totally abandoned to Wickedness, can never merit our Regard, be their Stations ever so high. . . If such Men are by God appointed, The Devil may be the Lord's anointed."<sup>5</sup> After reading the editorial, the governor was furious and sued for libel, but the grand jury refused to find a bill and dismissed the claim.<sup>6</sup>

After his writings in the *Boston Gazette*, Warren's political involvement grew rapidly. He rose to power in the Masonic lodges, being appointed first as the "Grand Master of Masons of Boston, New England, and within one hundred miles of the same" in 1769, and then as the "Grand Master of Masons for the Continent of America" in 1772, establishing Warren as the

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Warren, "To the Inhabitants of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay.," *The Boston Gazette*, October 7, 1765.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Warren, "The Devil May Be the Lord's Anointed," *The Boston Gazette*, February 29, 1768, suppl 2.

<sup>6</sup> "The American Revolution - (Joseph Warren)," n.d., <http://theamericanrevolution.org/people/detail.aspx?people=21>.

most senior Mason in all of the colonies.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he became chairman of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety after the Boston Massacre of 1770 and delivered the famous 1772 oratory on the Boston Massacre, where he encouraged colonists to “oppose the torrent of oppression” and “use every method in your power to secure your rights.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, Warren drafted the 1774 Suffolk Resolves, a radical declaration written in protest against the recently passed Intolerable Acts, urging colonists to openly disobey the unfair British laws and rebel against the British government.<sup>9</sup> In 1775, after Warren learned that the British army was going to capture the radical leaders Samuel Adams and John Hancock in Lexington, he promptly dispatched Paul Revere and William Dawes to warn the two leaders of the upcoming attack, in what would be known as “The Midnight Ride.”<sup>10</sup> As a result of his pivotal role in the successful escape of the rebels, Warren was elected as the president of the Provincial Congress, thus becoming the effective leader of the revolution in Massachusetts. Most of the other rebel leaders were years or even decades older than Warren, but that did not stop him from achieving great success while still under 30 years of age.

Restless at home after news of skirmishes in Lexington and Concord, Warren left his patients in the hands of his assistant and went to the front line, both as a soldier and a doctor treating injured rebels.<sup>11</sup> He was admired for his “cool, collected bravery” in battle.<sup>12</sup> Warren

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Frothingham, *Life and Times of Joseph Warren* (Applewood Books, 2009), 115, 289.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Warren, “Boston Massacre Oration,” *Delivered at Boston, 5 March, 1772 by Dr. Joseph Warren* (United States of America, March 5, 1772), [https://ahp.gatech.edu/boston\\_mass\\_orat\\_1772.html](https://ahp.gatech.edu/boston_mass_orat_1772.html).

<sup>9</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Suffolk Resolves | American Revolution, Continental Congress, Declaration of Independence,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Suffolk-Resolves>.

<sup>10</sup> “Paul Revere - The Midnight Ride,” Paul Revere House, July 11, 2023, <https://www.paulreverehouse.org/the-real-story/>.

<sup>11</sup> National Park Service, “Dr Joseph Warren (U.S. National Park Service),” n.d., <https://www.nps.gov/people/dr-joseph-warren.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Frothingham, *Life and Times of Joseph Warren*, 462.

fought fearlessly in battle; as Di Spigna describes, “[a] musket-ball came so close to him as to take off a lock of his hair which curled close to his head.”<sup>13</sup> For his valiant efforts, he was appointed as a major general of the Massachusetts forces.<sup>14</sup> In what would be his last act, Warren fought in the Battle of Breed’s Hill (commonly known as the Battle of Bunker Hill). Even though he was a major general, he chose to fight as a private, asking to be positioned where “the battle would be fiercest.”<sup>15</sup> Despite other officers and soldiers abandoning the battle along with an official retreat ordered by Colonel Prescott, Warren “chose to stand and fight instead of running away from the hill.”<sup>16</sup> He was instantly recognized by a British officer, who shot him in the face with a pistol, the ball “entering below the left eye and exiting through the back of his head.”<sup>17</sup> A martyr for the revolutionary cause, he was forever immortalized through both John Trumbull’s painting “The Death of General Warren” and the first Bunker Hill Monument.<sup>18</sup> Warren’s abrupt death marked the end of a life, short yet impactful. Even the British respected him: British General Thomas Gage estimated the death of Warren was “worth the death of 500 men.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite living a short life, Warren lived a fuller life than most. His patriotic instincts identified the British as a parasite preying on the life and liberty of America. Just as with his patients, he was unrelenting in his desire to find a cure. Even if he would perish as a result,

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<sup>13</sup> Di Spigna, *Founding Martyr: The Life and Death of Dr. Joseph Warren, the American Revolution’s Lost Hero*, 170.

<sup>14</sup> George C. Wildrick, “Dr. Joseph Warren: Leader in Medicine, Politics, and Revolution,” *Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 27–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08998280.2009.11928466>.

<sup>15</sup> Ryan Holland et al., “Joseph Warren: A Discussion of His Life and Analysis of His Death,” *Neurosurgical Focus* 39, no. 1 (July 1, 2015): E13, <https://doi.org/10.3171/2015.3.focus1564>.

<sup>16</sup> Holland et al., “Joseph Warren: A Discussion of His Life and Analysis of His Death.”

<sup>17</sup> Nathaniel Philbrick, *Bunker Hill: A City, a Siege, a Revolution* (Random House, 2013), 188–230.

<sup>18</sup> National Park Service, “Dr Joseph Warren (U.S. National Park Service).”

<sup>19</sup> Leslie Landrigan and Leslie Landrigan, “Joseph Warren, the Patriot Who Might Have Made Us Forget George Washington,” *New England Historical Society* (blog), May 25, 2023, <https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/joseph-warren-patriot-made-forget-george-washington/>.

Warren fearlessly volunteered to stand with his countrymen. Perhaps Peter Oliver, former chief justice of the Massachusetts Court, put it best: “If Warren had lived, Washington would have remained an obscurity.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hektoen International, “Joseph Warren: The Forgotten Founder - Hektoen International,” *Hektoen International - An Online Medical Humanities Journal* (blog), December 8, 2022, <https://hekint.org/2019/02/27/the-forgotten-founder/>.

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## Biography

Louis Huang is currently a sophomore at Herbert Henry Dow High School. Louis has a weighted GPA of 4.70 on a 5.0 scale. Louis participates in the DECA High School Competitive Event Series in the event of Personal Financial Literacy. In his freshman year, Louis was a Michigan DECA State Champion in his event, and was a top 10 exam finalist at the annual DECA International Career Development Conference.

Louis has also found success in STEM-related activities as well. He is a United States National Chemistry Olympiad National Exam Finalist. Also, he took 7th place at the Flint Regional Science & Engineering Fair for his research on solar-powered hydrogen fuel cells for renewable energy generation. He is also the national winner of the 2023 American Chemical Society Chemists Celebrate Earth Week Illustrated Poem Contest. His work has been featured on the American Chemical Society website.

In addition to academic pursuits, Louis also participates in Dow's band program. He plays clarinet in Symphonic Band and Symphony Orchestra, the top ensembles at Dow, starting his freshman year. He is a 2-time MSBOA All State Honor Band member, and has participated in MSBOA Solo and Ensemble competition every year, qualifying for the state competition, both as a soloist and as part of various woodwind and saxophone ensembles, which have been nominated for the MSBOA Outstanding Ensemble Competition.

Louis enjoys tennis and has been a member of his school JV tennis team, playing singles. Outside of school, he likes to volunteer and perform at nursing homes and hospitals.