

Horses Played their Part in Independence Day

From George Washington to Paul Revere, horses helped carry our nation to freedom.

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America's Fourth of July holiday is all about patriotism and fireworks. But horses played a vital role in America's independence and they shouldn't be left out of the celebration. Three horses that were prominent in history were the two horses ridden by General George Washington, and the horse that Paul Revere galloped through the streets of Boston proclaiming the arrival of British troops.

Although artistic images typically portray George Washington astride his silvery white horse Blueskin, he actually favored his other horse, Old Nelson, because the chestnut was much more reliable in the heat of battle. Old Nelson was a living example of being "bombproof" while Blueskin was more fractious. Unfortunately, the archetypal image of the good guy riding to victory aboard a white horse has pushed the plain-coated Old Nelson into the background. Fortunately, both horses survived the Revolutionary War and lived out a peaceful retirement at Washington's Mount Vernon estate.

Paul Revere didn't actually own the horse he rode on his famous ride. He worked as a courier, and began his journey in a rowboat that carried him across the Charles River. It would've been difficult to bring along his horse. Instead, he borrowed a horse from a local merchant who sympathized with the patriots. Later, historical documents would suggest that the horse's name was Brown Beauty, although Revere only referred to his mount as "a very good horse." That very good horse, however, was never returned to his owner. Revere and his two fellow couriers were captured and held for a short time by the British, and an officer confiscated the horse Revere was riding.

George Washington and Paul Revere were two heroes of the American Revolutionary War. But they couldn't have made it into our history books without a horse.