

Personal Recollections Of The

Completion and Dedication of Bunker Hill Monument

By Elisha D. Eldridge Boston Boot and Shoe Recorder Press 1907

*Summarized by The Patriot Pastor Garrett Lear 6/22/2020 AD*

Seventeenth of June 1843, when the completion of the monument was celebrated with unusual demonstrations of patriotic enthusiasm.

For more than eighteen years this noble shaft had been rising in tier upon tier of massive blocks of granite, cut in Quincy dragged there by 30 yoke of oxen, 221 feet toward the sky. The cornerstone was laid 1825. Daniel Webster was speaker for the event. In his speech he said funding would take sterner virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The last object to the sight of him who leaves his native shore, and the first to gladden him who revisits it, may be something which will remind him of the liberty and glory of his country.

He commended those present survivors for freeing their country from a foreign yoke. He praised "Heaven for bounteously prolonging your lives that you might behold this joyous occasion."

It was no easy matter to raise money in those days. \$150,000. Was raised by a variety of means including a huge fair in Faneuil Hall. Mr. Judah Truro, a Jew ad son of a Rabbi from Newport R.I. donated \$10,000. Toward the project.

I read in childhood about the then not very distant battle of Bunker Hill and the great contest for liberty and a republican form of self-government in place of colonial subordination in another land.

The long looked for day arrived; it was ushered in by ringing of bells, firing of guns, and salves of artillery. The weather was charming, perfect, an endless sky and everybody was abroad and astir.

About 10 o'clock A.M. the great procession started in Boston, with a large body of soldiers, for the military if the state were out in force. I remember especially the Boston Light Infantry known as "Tigers" with a banner bearing this inscription "Death or an honorable life".

Then appeared the carriages with the distinguished guests. In the first carriage was President of the United States Mr. John Tyler. The President sat in the back seat immediately above and behind him was "Deacon" Foster known as "Deacon Snowball". He was an unadulterated African with an immense amount of white hair who cared for every visiting President of the United States who came to Boston.

On the front seat was Daniel Webster beside him was the president of the Bunker Hill Monument Association. In the next carriage was ex-President John Quincy Adams.

It took more than two hours for the procession to get to the monument grounds where a grandstand had been raised to accommodate the distinguished company.

Mr. Webster was introduced to the vast audience. He was at his best. He could not but impress the most indifferent person that he was no ordinary man.

In commencing he referred to the early history of our country, and described the little band of Pilgrims in the mayflower, one hundred one in number who crossed a storm-tossed ocean that the gospel of peace might be planted in the new world, here to assist in founding a New commonwealth which should become a beacon of light for nations of

the earth. Strong in religious faith, "They journeyed in its light and labored in its hope." He said our country had sent forth moral and intellectual light throughout the world.

Present were 40 survivors, heroes of the great Revolutionary struggle. All were not far from 90 years of age, they were tottering and feeble; he spoke tenderly of these soldiers who were engaged in the battle. There had been two thousand and now comparatively few remained. They came from Boston, Concord, Lexington, Acton, Cambridge, Malden; in fact, all towns within 30 miles.

Webster described the Revolution as a seven-year struggle of the farmers with the might of the British empire. No public man during the past century did more to infuse in the minds of the masses the element of patriotism and love of country than Daniel Webster. His magnetic influence and his power of logic were marvelous. He remarked when someone said impossible... is there anything impossible at Bunker Hill.

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A toast was made by Daniel Webster after grace was said by Rev> dr. George Ellis... The principles of the Revolutionary striggle—a love of liberty protected and regulated by law and a dread of anarchy not less strong than hatred of oppression.

Elisha Eldridge attended Bunker Hill Day celebrations commemorations for sixty-three consecutive years.