



In April, two nations remember defining moments in the struggle for liberty and independence. On April 19, 1775, the opening shots of the Battles of Lexington and Concord was the beginning of the American Revolution. On Easter Monday April 24, 1916 the Easter Rising began a bold rebellion against British rule in Ireland. These two dates separated by 140 years and an ocean had similarities. Those participating on those dates shared a desire for liberty. The events on those dates started movements that reshaped the political future of its people and inspired generations.

When British troops marched from Boston to Concord and Lexington, militia companies from towns across Massachusetts gathered in defense of their communities. Among the men who answered the alarm were many men of Irish birth and Irish ancestry, reflecting the already significant Irish presence in colonial New England. What began as local resistance at Concord and Lexington soon became a full revolutionary movement. On July 4, 1776, fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. Of those fifty-six men, nine were of Irish heritage.

From the Battles of Concord and Lexington to the signing of the Declaration to the Siege of Yorktown, men and women of Irish heritage played vital roles in sustaining the cause of liberty. George Washington shared his gratitude: “When our friendless standards were first unfurled, who were the strangers who first mustered around our staff, and reeled in the fight, who more brilliantly sustained it than Erin’s generous sons.” Washington’s adopted son George Washington Parke Custis recognized the contribution “in the War of Independence, Ireland furnished 100 men for every single man furnished by any other nation, let America bear eternal gratitude to Irishmen” An Irishman from Cork Stephen Moylan even gave us our name United States of America.

Irish immigrants and their descendants played a significant role in the American Revolution, and the success of the United States provided inspiration to Irish nationalists, demonstrating that independence from the British Empire was possible.

On Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, Irish republicans seized key locations in Dublin and proclaimed an independent Irish Republic. Leaders such as Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, and Thomas Clarke believed that even if the uprising failed militarily, it would awaken the Irish spirit and inspire the nation toward independence. Connolly and Clarke had lived in the United States for short time. In the Proclamation that was read on Easter Monday it states: “seizes that moment supported by her exiled children in

America” The Irish spirit was awakened and still is as Irish Americans are inspired to assist Ireland to become a United Nation- A Nation Once Again.

Both events began with relatively small numbers. Early American patriots were local militia defending their communities, until unified as the Continental Army. The Easter Rising was small in number with about 1,600 made up of the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army. The rebellion lasted only six days before British forces suppressed it.

American colonists framed their cause in the language of liberty and natural rights, immortalized in the Declaration of Independence in 1776, which declared governments derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

In Ireland, the leaders of the Easter Rising were executed and became martyrs. Their sacrifice stirred public opinion and transformed a controversial rebellion into a national movement, ultimately leading to the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921) and the establishment of the Irish Free State.

At their core, both the American Revolution and the Easter Rising reflected the principle of self-determination: that a people should govern themselves. American revolutionaries sought independence from British imperial authority, while Irish patriots sought to restore Ireland as a sovereign nation.

As we approach this important milestone, we reflect on the deep ties between Ireland and America. Today, let us remember that the pursuit of liberty is shared across nations and generations, with Irish Americans honoring both their American citizenship and Irish heritage. Let us continue to preserve our American values and assist in making Ireland a Nation Once Again.