Let It Begin Here

The Revolutionary War began in 1775 with the “shot heard round the world.” The paintings here show the soldiers who fought in the first battles of the war and transport us to a cool April morning in Lexington and Concord and a bright June afternoon on a hill overlooking Boston Harbor. These are scenes where you can feel the tension. What were these soldiers thinking in the moments before battle?

To better imagine these moments, Don Troiani often visits the battlefields he paints, usually around the anniversary of the events themselves. In preparation for his 2009 painting of the battle at Concord Bridge, for example, he visited Minute Man National Historical Park in Massachusetts and toured the battlefield. He stood in the same place as the Minute Men shown in the painting to experience their viewpoint and imagine the terrain as it was in April 1775. He used historical maps to plot out the locations of old roads and houses. Instead of showing the thick woods that surround the Concord River today, for instance, he painted few trees. In April 1775, most of the nearby land was cleared for farming and the few trees left standing did not have their summer leaves yet. These sorts of details help us better imagine what the Revolutionary War looked and felt like as it was happening.