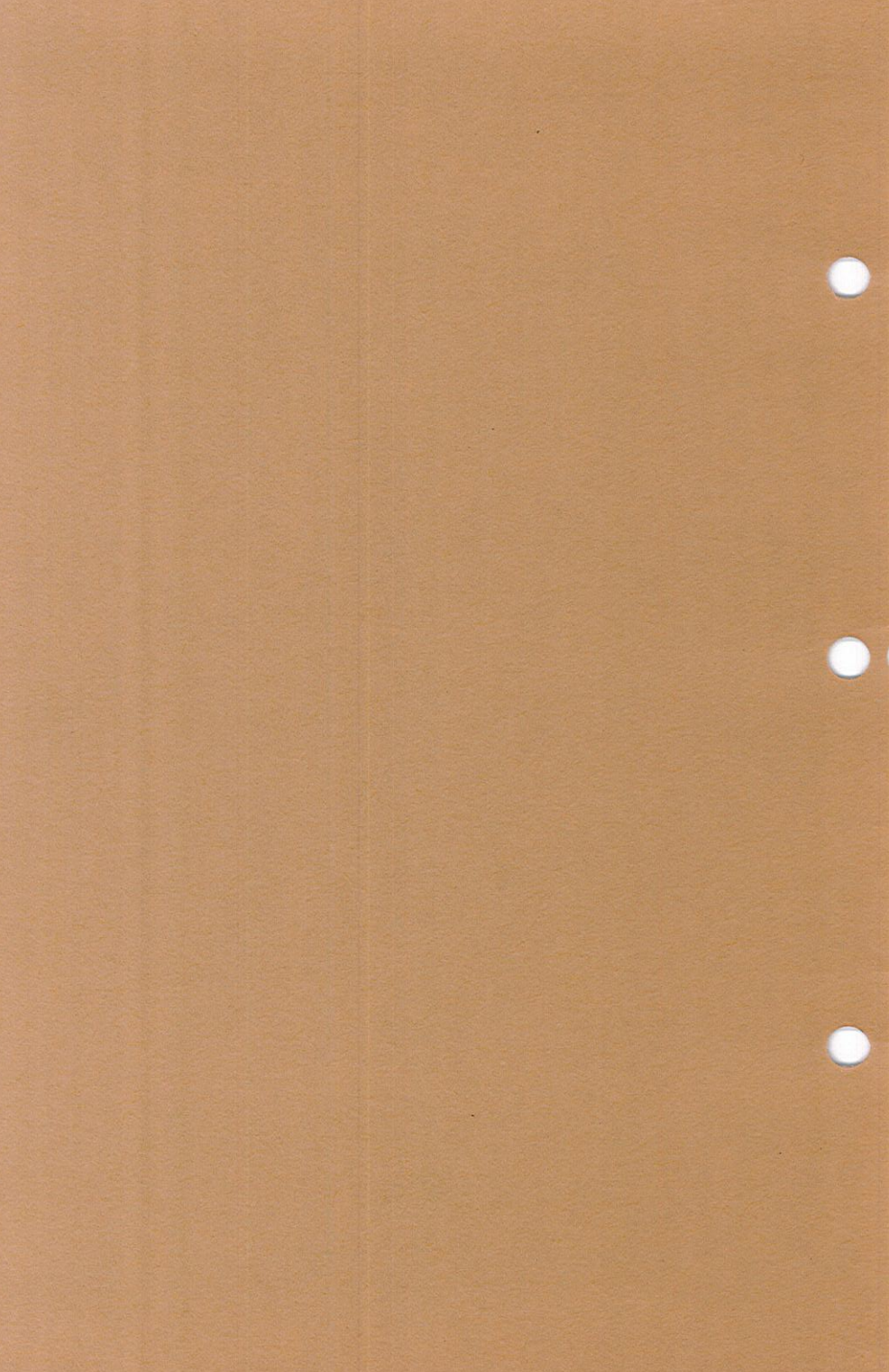


# THE LEXINGTON - CONCORD BATTLE ROAD

*Hour-by-hour account of events  
preceding and on the  
History-making day  
April 19, 1775*



CONCORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Boston National Sites Commission, Mark Bortman, Chairman, has petitioned Congress to establish a national historic park along the Lexington-Concord battle road as a lasting memorial to the Minute Man.

We are indebted to the Commission for the material in this booklet taken from their complete and interesting Interim Report to the Congress of the United States.

We are also indebted to the *Boston Globe* for permission to use their edited story and the *Boston Herald* for the picture of Meriam's Corner on page 17.

Cover picture of the Old North Bridge, Concord, Massachusetts, courtesy of Keith Martin, photographer for the Boston National Sites Commission.



# The Concord Hymn

*Sung at the Dedication of the Battle Monument*

JULY 4, 1837

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
    Their flag to April's breeze unfurled;  
Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
    And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;  
    Alike the conqueror silent sleeps,  
And Time the ruined bridge has swept  
    Down the dark stream that seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,  
    We place with joy a votive stone,  
That memory may their deeds redeem,  
    When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

O Thou who made those heroes dare  
    To die, and leave their children free, —  
Bid Time and Nature gently spare  
    The shaft we raise to them and Thee.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



## Letter to Globe Included In Historical Park Report

A letter from an out-of-state couple, published in the *Sunday Globe* of July 15, 1956, points up the significance attached to the establishment of a National Historical Park along the Lexington-Concord Battle Road of April 19, 1775.

The letter writers, a man and his wife, who described themselves as "sad and disturbed," asked such questions as:

"Is that tiny area all the space in Lexington and Concord you have to spare to commemorate the epic events that occurred there?

"Has all the world forgotten?

"Don't the residents of your section realize how vital to the world are the events that occurred there?"

The couple went on to state that "the Cradle of Democracy (including Boston and Bunker Hill) should be a beautiful place, magnificent and shining for everyone to come and visit . . . the whole district should be a national park district."

## Historical Significance of the 19th of April, 1775

*Historical Significance of the 19th of April, 1775:* The direct purpose of the military expedition to Lexington, as presumed by the patriots who watched every move made by the British in Boston, was to arrest John Hancock and Samuel Adams, who had taken refuge there as guests of the Reverend Jonas Clarke following the adjournment of the Provincial Congress at Concord. These patriot leaders had been foremost in fomenting sedition against those acts of oppression and misrule that for more than a decade had characterized the restrictive Colonial policy of the King's ministers and Parliament. If captured, they doubtless would have been sent to England and tried for treason. From Lexington, the royal troops were to advance on Concord and seize the military stores gathered there by order of the Provincial Congress and the Committees of Safety and Supplies.

The outcome, as every schoolchild knows, was a clash of arms, the shedding of blood, and *the opening of the War of the American Revolution*. When Samuel Adams heard the distant rattle of British musketry on Lexington Green, he is alleged to have exclaimed, "What a glorious morning for America is this!" And, indeed, it was, for the volley which brought forth those ecstatic and oft-quoted words from the "Father of the Revolution" foretold *the coming of Independence and the birth of a new Nation*.

# Chronology of Incidents Relating to the 19th of April, 1775 The Opening Day of the War of the American Revolution

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The Revolutionary War of deeds, which began in earnest on the 19th of April, 1775, was preceded by a long and no less significant war of words, with Boston as the principal center of agitation and objective of royal coercion. Fully living up to her reputation as the "Metropolis of Sedition," Boston was where the first British regiments were sent in 1768 to enforce, what seemed to the inhabitants, the harsh and tyrannical measures of a new British colonial imperialism and to quell the rebellious rumblings of a people possessed not only of an ardent passion for freedom but a jealous knowledge of self-government.

The presence of the royal troops provoked the famous Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770. They were removed from the town temporarily, but were back again in greater numbers after the port was closed by act of Parliament following further defiant demonstrations by mobs and the populace in general. Of these demonstrations, the Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773, was an illustrious example.

Tension between patriots and the soldiery had mounted to the breaking point and more reinforcements were on the way to aid in the increasingly difficult task of maintaining the King's rule when General Thomas Gage, the military governor of the province, decided to take more positive measures to curb the bold enterprise of the patriot leaders. The most important of these measures for which preparations began to be made in March, 1775, was a plan to send an expeditionary force to ~~Concord~~ Concord to destroy powder and other military supplies.



## MARCH 20, 1775 — MONDAY

### *Morning*

General Gage, Military Governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, contemplating future operations into the country, sent Captain Brown of the 52nd Regiment, Ensign De Berniere of the 10th Regiment, and a private on a secret scouting trip from Boston to Roxbury, Brookline, Weston, Sudbury and Concord. The three were well armed and so strikingly disguised in "brown cloathes and reddish handkerchiefs" that they were readily recognized as spying British soldiers. They, nevertheless, obtained useful information

bearing on the topographical features of the landscape and, with the help of a friend of the royal government, learned about the location of military stores being collected at Concord by the Committees of Safety and Supplies set up by the Provincial Congress. Plans for a night march began to be laid as soon as Brown and De Berniere returned from their mission.

(Daniel Bliss, a Tory, who lived near the mill pond in the center of Concord, assisted Brown and De Berniere. He left town with them never to return again.)

## APRIL 15, 1775 — SATURDAY

### *Morning*

The grenadiers and light infantry, comprising the flank companies of the British regiments in Boston, were "taken off all duties 'till further orders." The reasons given for this step were "Exercise and new evolutions." Paul Revere and his self-appointed patrol of patriots noticed the removal of these troops from their normal duties and reported the fact to Dr. Joseph Warren, who in turn relayed the intelligence to the Committee of Safety. Preparations for an expedition into the country to seize the military stores at Concord some 18 miles distant, were at once suspected.

### *Afternoon*

The Provincial Congress, meeting at Concord as the legislative body representative of patriots in the Province of Massachusetts Bay and in defiance of the military governor in Boston, adjourned. John Hancock and Samuel Adams, who had attended, went to Lexington to stay with the Reverend Jonas Clarke, who resided in the dwelling that is preserved by the Lexington Historical Society and known today as the Hancock-Clarke House.

(The site of the meetinghouse

where the Provincial Congress met late in 1774 and early again in 1775 to lay plans for rebellion is marked by a fitting tablet in front

of the present First Parish Church, Unitarian, on the south side of Lexington Road near the central square of Concord.)

## APRIL 16, 1775 — SUNDAY

### *Midnight or Soon After*

Paul Revere observed "about 12 o'clock at Night, the Boats belonging to the Transports were all launched, & carried under the sterns of the men of War." They had previously been hauled up for repairs. This move was further interpreted as preparatory to an expedition, especially one that would carry troops by water across the Back Bay to the Cambridge shore.

### *Morning*

Paul Revere rode to Lexington to warn John Hancock and Samuel Adams about the British preparations in Boston.

### *Evening*

Returning to Boston through Charlestown, Revere "agreed with

a Col. Conant, and some other Gentlemen, that if the British went out by water, we would shew two lanthorns in the North Church Steeple; and if by land, one as a signal; for we were apprehensive it would be difficult to cross the Charles River, or to git over Boston neck." This arrangement was made, not to inform Revere, but to notify Col. Conant and the "other Gentlemen" so they could send word to Lexington and elsewhere if Revere should run into difficulty or be halted by the British in attempting to cross the Charles River or ride out via Boston Neck and Roxbury.

(The *Old North Church* or *Christ Church in Boston* still survives.)

## APRIL 17, 1775 — MONDAY

### *Morning*

The Committees of Safety and Supplies in session at Concord received word of the British preparations in Boston, probably from John Hancock to whom Paul Re-

vere had delivered the message in Lexington the day before. Whereupon the Committees voted to transport some of the cannon at Concord to places of greater safety

in adjacent towns. The Committee also voted to adjourn and meet again the next day at "Mr. Werherby's, at Menotomy," (Arlington) also known as the Black Horse Tavern.

(The Black Horse Tavern no longer exists, but its site on the north side of Massachusetts avenue between Tufts and Foster streets in the present Arlington has been marked by a stone tablet.)

## APRIL 18, 1775 — TUESDAY

### *Morning*

As voted on the previous day, "four six-pounders" were hauled away from Concord and started on the way to Groton, about 18 miles northwest of Concord.

### *Afternoon*

General Gage sent out mounted officers from Boston to patrol the road between Cambridge and Concord. A British patrol of ten or more horsemen dined at the Black Horse Tavern before riding farther out into the country.

Jasper, a Boston gunsmith, heard about the intended march of the troops from a British sergeant.

John Ballard, a stableman, overheard a remark in the Province House that there would be "hell to pay tomorrow." The Province House was the residence of the military governor, Gen. Gage.

This undoubtedly stemmed from a report that Gen. Gage had sent out mounted officers from Boston to patrol the road between Cambridge and Concord.

The cannon sent from Concord

arrived at Groton. The Groton Minute Men, curious about the arrival of the "six-pounders" assembled promptly and nine of them started for Concord, arriving the next morning long before the British troops entered the town and joining the ranks of the Militia who came from points nearer in answer to the alarm.

### *6:30 P.M.*

Solomon Brown, a young man of Lexington who had been to market in Boston, arrived home with the news that he had overtaken and passed the patrol of British officers. He reported his observations to Sgt. William Munroe, proprietor of the Munroe Tavern.

Shortly after, an express rider arrived with a message for John Hancock from the Committee of Safety. The British patrol had been seen at Menotomy (Arlington).

### *7:00 P.M.*

William Munroe, sergeant of the Lexington Minute Men, collected



eight men in his company and posted a guard at the Hancock-Clarke House.

### **8:00 P.M.**

The British horsemen rode through Lexington without attempting to molest Hancock and Samuel Adams. The patrol continued on the old Bay Road to Lincoln.

As soon as the British patrol was through Lexington, about 40 Minute Men gathered at the Buckman Tavern on Lexington Green.

### **8:30 P.M.**

The British patrol passed the farmhouse of Sgt. Samuel Hartwell of the Lincoln Minute Men. After riding a mile or two farther on the Concord Road, the patrol wheeled about and rode back toward Lexington. (The Hartwell House remains today).

### **9:00 P.M.**

The Lexington Minute Men sent out scouts on horseback to watch the movements of the British patrol. Elijah Sanderson, later a famous Salem cabinetmaker, Jonathan Loring and Solon Brown, who had first spotted the horsemen, volunteered.

### **10:00 P.M.**

The three scouts from Lexington were seized at pistol point by the British patrol in Lincoln and led

into a pasture, where they were held for four hours.

\* \* \*

The grenadiers and light infantry in Boston "were not apprised of the design, till just as it was time to march, they were waked by the sergeants putting their hands on them and whispering to them."

But Dr. Joseph Warren had the news almost before the British had left their barracks. He sent for Paul Revere and William Dawes, Jr. Dawes was dispatched over the route, longer by four miles, to Lexington via Boston Neck, Roxbury, Brookline, Cambridge and Menotomy (Arlington).

### **10:30 P.M.**

Revere bid Capt. John Pulling, Jr. have two lanterns hung in the steeple of the Old North Church. He hurried to the north part of the town, where he kept a boat and was rowed by two friends across the Charles River "a little to the eastward where the Somerset man-of-war lay."

(Joshua Bentley and Thomas Richardson were the two friends who rowed Revere across the river. Their oars were muffled by a petticoat, "yet warm from the body of a fair daughter of Liberty." Revere's boat was kept near the Charlestown Ferry, at the foot of Prince Street).

The British detachment of about 700 men assembled at the foot of Boston Common under the general

command of Lt. Col. Francis Smith of the 10th Regiment and with Maj. John Pitcairn of the Marines in charge of the light infantry. Embarkation in boats on the Back Bay began.

(The place where the troops entered the boats was probably near the present corner of Boylston and Charles streets, where the shore line of the Back Bay then extended back from the Charles River.)

The British became well aware of the fact that the secret of the expedition had not been kept successfully. Earl Percy, crossing Boston Common, heard a man say to another, "The British troops have marched, but they will miss their aim." "What aim?" inquired Percy. "Why," the man replied, "the cannon at Concord."

### **11:00 P.M.**

Revere arrived on the Charlestown side and was met by Col. Conant and others who had seen the light of the signal lanterns in the steeple of the Old North Church. Richard Devens of the Committee of Safety, upon being informed that the troops "were actually in the boats," procured a horse for Revere from Deacon

Larkin and sent him off "to give the intelligence at Menotomy and Lexington."

(Revere landed at a wharf off Water st., just north of the present Charlestown Bridge and near City square. From there, he rode out the present Main st. and headed for Cambridge.)

### **11:30 P.M.**

Beyond Charlestown Neck, the present Sullivan square, Revere was confronted by two British horsemen waiting under a tree at a crossroads. Turning his horse abruptly, Revere galloped back toward the Neck and took the road for Medford, where he awakened Capt. Hall of the Minute Men before proceeding to Menotomy, alarming almost every house on the way.

(The British horsemen who had barred Revere's path were on Cambridge st. at the present Charlestown-Somerville line. After wheeling his horse, Revere rode over the present Broadway in Somerville to Winter Hill, where he bore to the right on Main st. into the center of Medford. His route from there to Menotomy, the present Arlington, carried him over High st.)

## **APRIL 19, 1775 — WEDNESDAY**

### ***Midnight or Soon After***

Revere arrived at the Hancock-Clarke House in Lexington. Sgt.

Munroe of the Lexington Minute Men refused to let Revere pass,

stating that the family did not wish to be disturbed by any noise. Whereupon Revere cried out, "Noise! You'll have noise enough before long. The Regulars are coming out!"

### **12:30 A.M.**

William Dawes, Jr., arriving at the Hancock-Clarke House from his longer ride over Boston Neck via Roxbury and Cambridge, set out for Concord with Revere. On his ride, Dawes had managed to elude the British sentries on Boston Neck.

The bell in the belfry that stood on Lexington Green near the meetinghouse rang out the alarm and the Lexington Minute Men, about 130 in number, under Capt. John Parker, began to assemble.

Dr. Samuel Prescott, who had spent the evening with his sweetheart, Miss Mulliken, in Lexington, started on his journey of six miles home to Concord. He overtook Revere and Dawes, who were soon satisfied that he was "a high Son of Liberty."

Dawes and Prescott rode into the dooryard of a house near the Lexington-Lincoln line and, on knocking at the door, found Nathaniel Baker, a Lincoln Minute Man, still courting a Concord lass, Elizabeth Taylor, who was visiting there. Baker, who lived in South Lincoln, spread the alarm on his way home. With his father, brothers and brother-in-law, he was at Concord Bridge in the morning

with the Lincoln Minute Men. He married Elizabeth Taylor in 1776.

### **1:00 A.M.**

Dawes and Prescott were riding about 200 yards behind Revere when the latter was surprised by two British officers in the road near the opening into the pasture where the three Lexington scouts had been taken prisoner three hours earlier. Dawes turned his horse quickly and sped down the road back toward Lexington. He made good his escape.

Prescott jumped his horse over a stone wall, escaped down a farm path by the swamp and carried the alarm to Concord. Revere made for a wood at the foot of the pasture, but just as he reached it, six of the British officers who were holding the three captured Lexington men, grabbed his bridle, put pistols to his breast and forced him to dismount. Thus ended the famous ride of Paul Revere. (The site of Revere's capture is marked with a tablet.)

### **1:30 A.M.**

Capt. Parker dismissed his men on Lexington Green with orders to respond again at the beating of the drum. Those who did not live near enough to go home repaired to the Buckman Tavern.

Dr. Prescott came out of a thicket behind the house of Sgt. Samuel Hartwell of the Lincoln Minute Men. He awakened the family and requested that the news



be speeded to Capt. William Smith of the Lincoln Minute Men, who lived a short distance back on the road to Lexington.

Sukey, a slave girl, in terror of the British, refused to leave the house, so Mary Hartwell, the sergeant's wife, placing her 5-month-old infant in Sukey's arms, rushed down the road to Capt. Smith's house. The latter mounted his horse and hastened to Lincoln Center, two miles to the south, where the two Lincoln companies eventually assembled and started off for Concord. They were the first companies to reach Concord from any of the neighboring towns.

\* \* \*

Following his capture, Revere was interrogated by the British, who became seriously disturbed when he told them that people for a distance of 50 miles into the country were being notified about their intended march. Maj. Mitchell of the 5th British Regiment gave orders for the prisoners to mount and the party to ride back toward Lexington.

## **2:00 A.M.**

As the British officers and their prisoners rode down the road to Lexington, the hoof beats of their horses awakened Josiah Nelson, a Lincoln Minute Man, who had been appointed to keep watch and carry the alarm to Bedford if the British marched.

Leaving his bed hurriedly, Nelson ran out into the road and

called out, "Have you heard anything about when the Regulars are coming out?" One of the officers, reaching for his sword, replied in anger, "We will let you know when they are coming!" and struck Nelson on the crown of his head, cutting a long gash. Thus was drawn the first blood on the opening morning of the Revolution!

Nelson was taken prisoner, but was soon released and returned to his home to have his wife bind up his wound and dispatch him on horseback to Bedford, where he spread the alarm.

\* \* \*

Upon the arrival of Dr. Prescott, Concord was alarmed by the ringing of the Town House bell. With gun in hand, Rev. William Emerson, grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson (who had built the Old Manse in 1769) was the first to answer the alarm. Three companies of Minute Men and an alarm company soon followed and gathered at Wright's Tavern in the town square. The task of removing and concealing the military stores that had not been sent away the day before began. (Concord's first Town House, erected in 1721 and used both for town meetings and County courts, stood until 1794. The Old Manse is preserved by the Mass. Trustees of Reservations. Both Wright's Tavern and the Reuben Brown house survive.)

\* \* \*

The British grenadiers and light infantry, who began to embark in boats on the Back Bay from Boston

Common about 10:30 the evening before, crossed to Lechmere Point in East Cambridge. As the boats were heavily loaded and could not be run in close, the troops had to wade ashore. They then waited "in a dirty road" as much as three hours "for provisions to be brought up from the boats and divided." Each soldier then received a day's rations and 36 rounds of ammunition. This delay was serious as it gave the country people more time.

The troops were finally ready to advance about 2 a.m. They proceeded through the west end of Charlestown, now Somerville, and took a road skirting the northern part of Cambridge to Menotomy.

### **2:30 A.M.**

Revere and the three Lexington scouts were let loose near the village of Lexington and the British patrol rode off in haste toward Menotomy. Revere made his way across a "burying ground and some pastures" to the Hancock-Clarke House to help with the flight of John Hancock and Samuel Adams.

These important patriots were taken first in a chaise to the house of Capt. James Reed in a part of Woburn that is now Burlington, about two miles away, and then a little farther to the home of Madame Jones, a clergyman's widow. At the latter, they were joined later in the morning by Hancock's betrothed, Dorothy Quincy, and his aunt, Mrs. Thomas Hancock, who had also been guests of Rev. Jonas Clarke.

The ladies brought with them a "fine salmon" that Hancock and Adams had forgotten in their hasty departure before sunrise.

The party was about to sit down and make a meal of it when a Lexington farmer rushed in with a false rumor that the British were coming. They continued their flight and finally sat down to a repast of "cold salt pork and potatoes served on a wooden tray" at Amos Wyman's in Billerica, a distance of more than four miles from the Lexington parsonage they had left earlier in the day.

### **3:00 A.M.**

The British expedition arrived in Menotomy, where the three members of the Committee of Safety from Marblehead — Col. Jeremiah Lee, Col. Azor Orne and Elbridge Gerry, later signer of the Declaration of Independence and Vice President of the United States — were spending the night at the Black Horse Tavern following a session of the Committee. As the troops marched by, Gerry and his associates "arose from their beds to gaze on the unwonted spectacle" and, upon the approach of an officer and file of soldiers to search the house, fled out the back door in their nightclothes and hid in a field of corn stubble.

### **4:00 A.M.**

Gen. Gage, pondering the failure to keep the expedition a secret, ordered Lord Percy to start out from Boston via Roxbury at this

hour with a relief force of 1000 men. Blunders in relaying the order to Percy delayed his start by five hours.

Col. James Barrett of the Concord Militia, after answering the first alarm, returned to his farmhouse, two miles west of the center of town, where some of the military supplies were still stored and much work remained to be done at daybreak to place them beyond the reach of the British.

Musket balls, flints and cartridges were put into barrels in the attic and covered with feathers, and kegs of powder were hauled into the woods behind the house and hidden. A plow and yoke of oxen were gotten out and the barrels of light cannon and muskets were covered by laying them down in furrows turned up in an adjoining field. It has been asserted that the plowman was still at work when the British came in sight around 8:30 a.m.

#### 4:30 A.M.

Thaddeus Bowman, the last of four scouts sent down the road from Lexington toward Menotomy (Arlington), to find out how near the British were, returned with the news they were less than half a mile away. The three other scouts had been taken by a small guard of British flankers sent out ahead of Pitcairn's companies of light infantry.

The drum was beat and the Minute Men reassembled on Lex-

ington Green. Finally, 77 men of Capt. Parker's company were lined up in a double row on the triangle formed by the Green to await the arrival of the British.

In the words of a later historian, deeply infused with a sense of the significance of this move, *"They stood there, not merely as soldiers, but as citizens, nay, almost as statesmen, having the destiny of the country in their hands."*

\* \* \*

Paul Revere and a clerk went to the Buckman Tavern to remove a trunk of papers that belonged to John Hancock. Before they left, daylight was breaking and they were able to see the column of the British light infantry marching up the road to Lexington Green.

#### 5:00 A.M.

Maj. Pitcairn saw the Minute Men drawn up to oppose him and formed his men into line of battle.

Capt. Parker then gave his famous order to his company: *"Stand your ground! Don't fire unless fired upon! But if they mean to have a war, let it begin here!"*

Whereupon Pitcairn rode to the front of his ranks and shouted to the men in Parker's lines, "Lay down your arms, you damned rebels and disperse!"

Realizing at last how badly he was outnumbered and how futile his situation was, Parker ordered his men to file away, but not before a single shot rang out and a



volley from a British platoon. Another volley followed and, with bayonets leveled, the Redcoats charged. Eight men were killed and 10 more, wounded, were able to get away with their fleeing comrades. *The first American blood had been fatally shed!*

Jonathan Harrington, Jr., mortally wounded, was able to drag himself to the door of his house, opposite the northwest corner of the Green, where he died at his wife's feet.

Even more heroic in death was the brave Jonas Parker, cousin of the captain, who had fired once and yet stood his ground though wounded by a bullet and sinking to his knees. He was trying to reload, with bullets, wadding and flints in his hat tossed at his feet, when finally cut down by a bayonet thrust.

The main body of the British soon came upon the Green. A cheer rose in token of the victory and "the musick struck up" as the troops started down the road for Concord. Any illusion as to the secrecy of their mission was now completely gone.

(The bodies of the eight Minute Men who gave their lives were placed in a tomb, in 1835, behind the Monument that was erected on Lexington Green in 1799. The Jonathan Harrington House still stands and is suitably marked.)

\* \* \*

The two companies of Lincoln Militia, which had assembled as a

result of the alarm spread by Nathaniel Baker and Capt. William Smith, arrived at Concord. The Acton Minute Men, either accompanied or soon followed by the nine men from Groton, came from the opposite direction. The Bedford Militia also got there in time to face the British.

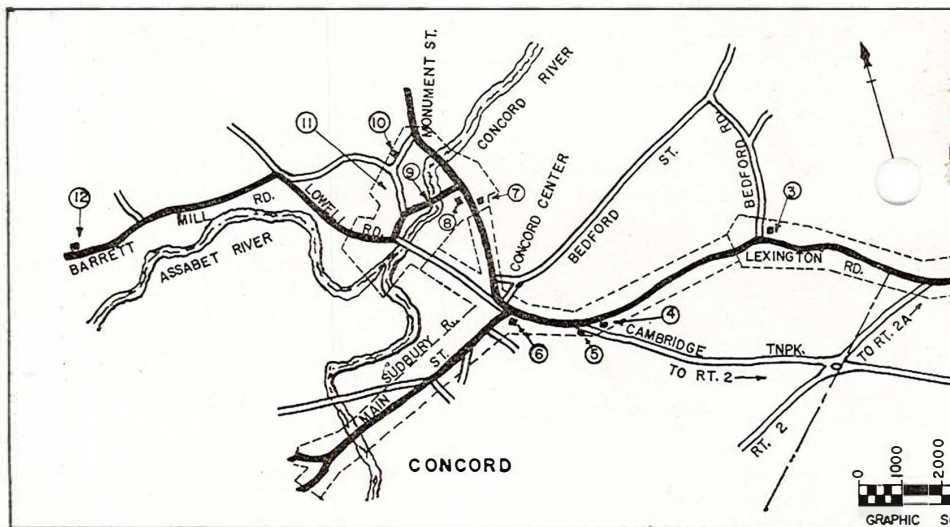
A rumor of fatalities at Lexington, brought by the men from Lincoln, was supported by Reuben Brown of Concord, who had viewed the engagement at Lexington Green and galloped home to report.

### 6:30 A.M.

An array of about 150 men from the companies gathered at Concord marched down the road toward Lexington. After a mile or mile and a half, they saw the British coming. As the Minute Men readily observed the Regulars had a force three or more times their number, they prudently turned around and marched back into town ahead of the Redcoats and to the "grand musick" of fife and drum.

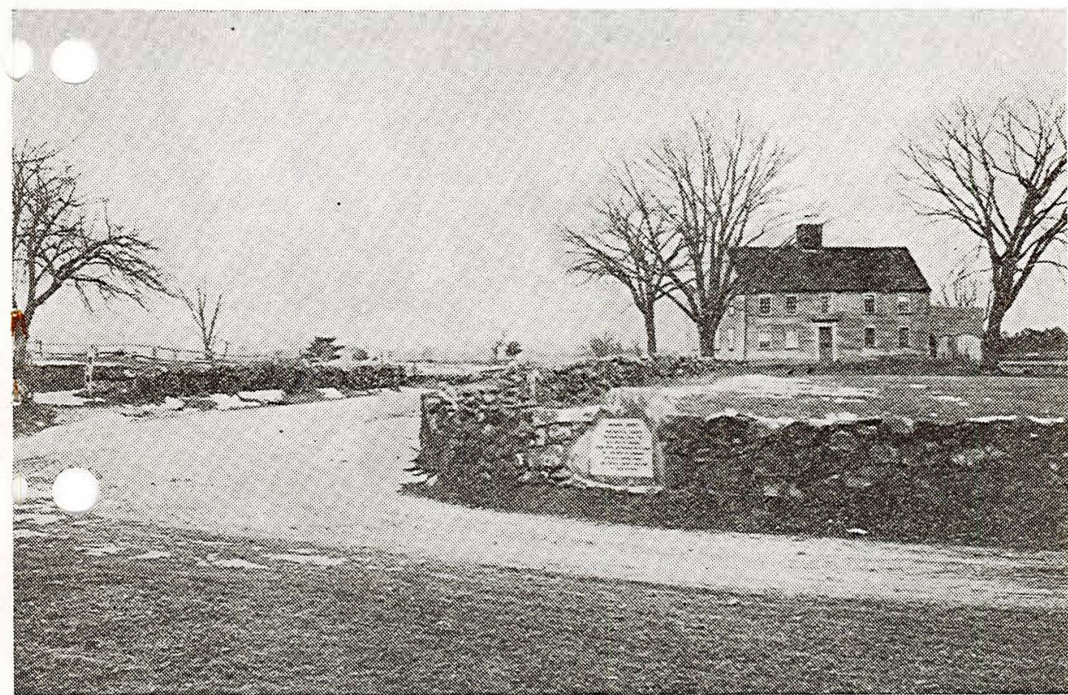
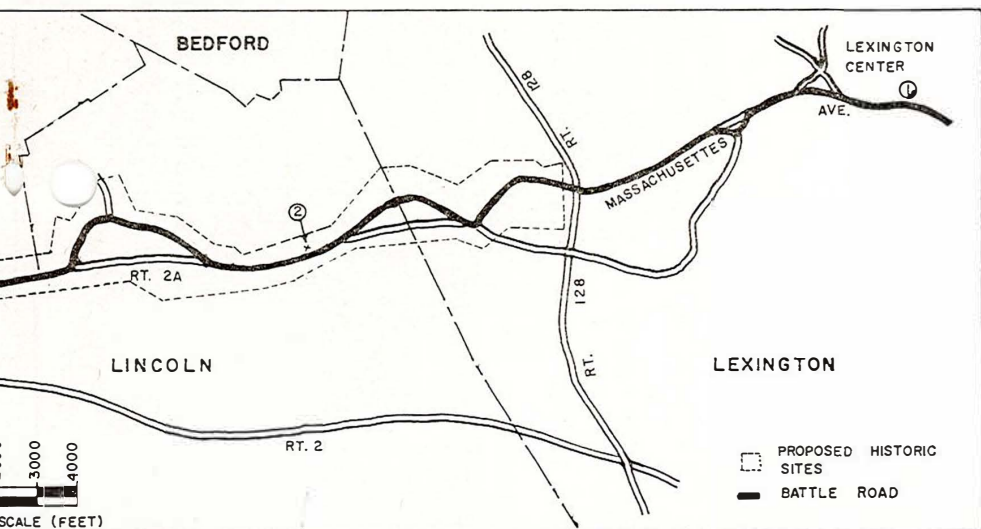
### 7:00 A.M.

The British approached the center of Concord. Observing that some of the Minute Men had taken up a position on a ridge to the right overlooking the road and the town, Lt. Col. Smith, the British commander ordered the light infantry out as flankers to clear the ridge, while the grenadiers kept to the road.

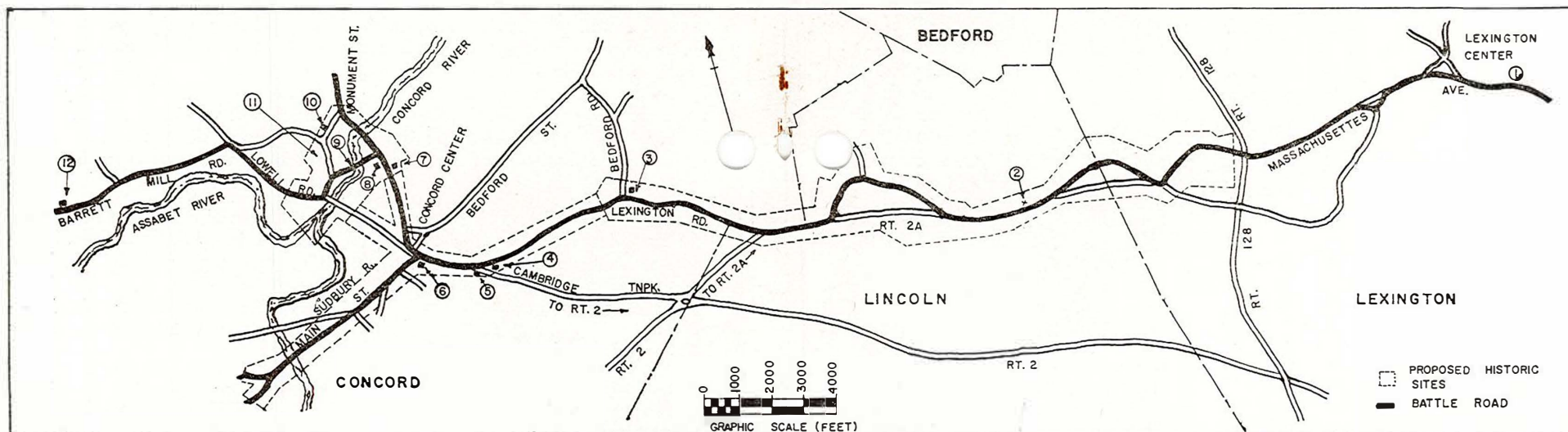


1. BATTLE GREEN (LEXINGTON)
2. PAUL REVERE CAPTURED
3. MERIAM'S CORNER
4. ANTIQUARIAN HOUSE
5. EMERSON'S HOUSE
6. WRIGHT'S TAVERN
7. BULLET HOLE HOUSE
8. OLD MANSE
9. CONCORD BRIDGE — MINUTE MAN
10. BUTTRICK HOUSE
11. MUSTER FIELD
12. COL. BARRETT'S HOUSE

MERIAM'S CORNER in Concord, shown as it appeared in 1885, is where the continuous running fight marking the British retreat began.

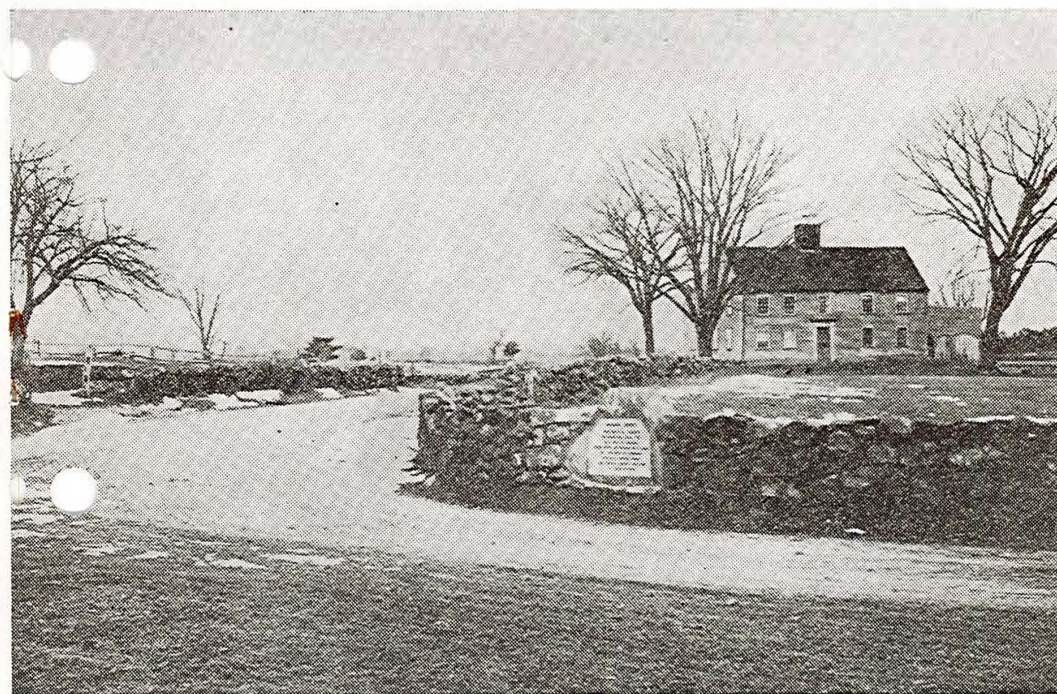






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MERIAM'S CORNER in Concord, shown as it appeared in 1885, is where the continuous running fight marking the British retreat began.





As the light infantry "ascended the height in one line," the Minute Men retired "without firing" onto a second ridge, now known as Ripley Hill, half a mile north of the center and nearly opposite the North Bridge that crossed the Concord River. A liberty pole with "a flag flying" stood near the west end of the first ridge. After cutting down the pole, the light infantry came off the ridge and halted in the center of the town.

Col. Smith and Maj. Pitcairn climbed to a cemetery near the site of the liberty pole and through telescopes stared at the surrounding countryside from among the grave-stones. As Smith later reported to Gen. Gage, he very likely saw at this time "vast numbers assembling in many parts."

### **7:30 A.M.**

Descending from the burying ground, Smith ordered six companies of light infantry, and then a seventh, to proceed to the North Bridge. There they divided into two parties. Three companies under Capt. Walter Laurie of the 43d Regiment remained to guard the bridge, while four in command of Capt. Lawrence Parsons of the 10th Regiment marched on to Col. Barrett's farm to look for the military stores concealed there. At the same time, Smith dispatched Capt. Munday Pole with a company of light infantry a mile in the opposite direction to hold the South Bridge and destroy any military stores that might be found.

Col. James Barrett, in general command of the Militia at Concord, was now back from the work of putting out of sight the supplies of ammunition and weapons at his farm. He ordered all the men on the second ridge or Ripley Hill, east of the Concord River, to cross the bridge on a muster field on the brow of Punkatasset Hill. There the Americans were to await reinforcements and see what the British would attempt to do.

### **8:00 A.M.**

The withdrawal of the Minute Men to Punkatasset Hill was completed just before the seven British companies under Capts. Laurie and Parsons got to the North Bridge. When Barrett saw the companies of Parsons cross the bridge and take a road to the left over a causeway that led to his farm, two miles further on, he galloped home ahead of them to give warning and last orders.

Meanwhile, two of Laurie's companies, the 10th Lincolnshires and the King's Own 4th Royal North Lancashires, were sent across the bridge to the first rise of ground beyond. The 43d Oxfordshires, assigned to watch the bridge itself, remained on the east bank.

Troops from this company in turn surrounded the well in front of the Elisha Jones House (Bullet Hole House), not far from the bridge and drank its cool water. Little did they realize that stores of 55 barrels of beef and 1700 pounds of salt fish were concealed

there in a cellar and shed.

While these activities were going on at the North Bridge and beyond, officers in the British force strolled about the center of the town, directing the grenadiers in their task of seeking out hidden stores and refreshing themselves in the public houses. At Wright's Tavern, Maj. Pitcairn, in a bad humor from bodily encountering an aged citizen of the town, is supposed to have stated as he "called for a glass of brandy and stirred it with his bloody finger" that "He hoped he should stir the yankee blood so before night."

The search of the grenadiers did not prove very successful. About 500 pounds of musket balls were thrown into the mill pond, but many of them were dredged up afterwards. The grenadiers also set fire to the Town House and Reuben Brown's harness shop, but were prevailed upon by the inhabitants to put out the flames.

(The mill pond, which formerly occupied a sizeable area in the center of town, was subsequently filled and now comprises a good part of the business section.)

### **9:00 A.M.**

Earl Percy finally got his delayed orders to go out from Boston with the 1st Brigade as a relief party. Gen. Gage had issued this order at 4 a.m., but two mistakes in relaying it cost a very late start for the force consisting of 1000 men and two light fieldpieces.

The Minute Men and Militia on Punkatasset Hill, now made up of a force of over 400, began to move down to a lower elevation nearer the North Bridge. From there, they saw the smoke rising from fires in the town. They did not know the exact cause, but had reason to suspect the worst. Col. Barrett consulted with his officers and Joseph Hosmer, the Concord Adjutant, raised the question: "Will you let them burn the town down?" The decision was made "to march into the middle of town for its defence or die in the attempt."

Barrett gave the order to march, but not to fire until fired upon. Lt. Col. John Robinson of Westford and Maj. John Buttrick of Concord led the procession, followed by Capt. Isaac Davis' Acton company of Minute Men, the three Concord companies, the Militia of Acton, Bedford and Lincoln, and a column of volunteers. A pair of fifers and drummers struck up the tune of "The White Cockade" and the "embattled farmers" were on their way to engage some of the finest troops in the King's army.

As soon as the Americans were in motion on Punkatasset Hill, Capt. Laurie's two outer companies retreated before them and soon joined the third company at the bridge. Laurie was able to perceive that the oncoming force outnumbered his and despatched a messenger to Col. Smith for reinforcements from the town. Smith ordered out two or three companies of grenadiers, "but putting himself

at their head" and "being a very fat heavy man" so slowed up the advance to the bridge as to make it impossible to arrive in time to be of any help.

### 9:30 A.M.

Capt. Laurie moved most of his men to the east end of the North Bridge, leaving only a few to pull up the planks. Maj. Buttrick, coming on at the head of the American column, ordered the men at work to desist and accelerated the pace of the militia. The men removing the planks stopped and hastily formed for action in the road at the end of the bridge.

Laurie had little time to arrange his men effectively, for, as one of his lieutenants later wrote, "the Rebels got so near him his people were obliged to form the best way They could . . . the three companies got one behind the other so that only the front one could fire."

(Captain Laurie's men without doubt attempted to form in a tactical design known as "street firing". They lined up in columns of fours. After the men in the first two or three ranks had fired from kneeling and standing positions, they broke to the right and left, and filed to the rear to reload, while their position in front was taken by ranks moving up in succession. Thus it was a theory that a narrow way or bridge could be kept under a steady fire.)

It was clearly Laurie's intention

to check the American advance at the North Bridge and his leading ranks of light infantry burst forth with the first shots—three of them which fell harmlessly into the river. The first full British volley followed at a range of 75 yards or less. "Their balls whisled well," and Isaac Davis, the Acton captain, was killed as he was raising his gun, and Abner Hosmer, one of his men, fell to the ground with a bullet through his head.

In obedience to Barrett's order, the Americans had not fired first. Maj. Buttrick now leaped into the air and fervently shouted, "Fire, fellow soldiers, for God's sake, fire!" The words rang down the ranks and a volley was fired by all who "could fire and not kill our own men." A few more shots came from the British, but their morale was broken by the number and force of the round balls that came smashing among them and they began to scatter.

As the advancing column of inspired Minute Men stepped onto the bridge, the Redcoats turned and fled, leaving two men on the ground. At the end of the episode at the bridge, three privates were to become fatalities, while four of the eight British officers present were wounded, besides a sergeant and four men.

Concord Fight—"physically so little, spiritually so significant"—was over in two or three minutes, but, as a noted student of that one day in history has further remarked, "the way lay open for all that America since has done."



(The two British soldiers who were left on the ground are buried beside a stone wall at the left of the approach to the bridge. A slate tablet bears a suitable inscription of verses from James Russell Lowell.)

Though the British were able to carry away one of their dead, their flight from the bridge was so complete that their wounded had to hobble away as best they could. As they passed the Elisha Jones House, Jones pointed his musket out of a second story window, but his wife knocked it from his hands before he could fire. Determined, however, to witness the spectacle before his eyes, Jones went downstairs and stood in the doorway of his shed. A retreating Redcoat, no doubt welcoming the chance to shoot an insolent Rebel, took hasty aim as he hurried by and fired. The shot pierced the wall of the shed about a yard from Jones' head. The hole thus made is preserved today under glass and gives to the place the popular name of the Bullet Hole House.

The Redcoats fleeing the North Bridge met Col. Smith coming to their aid with his grenadiers about a quarter of a mile away. They were pursued by the Americans for only a short distance.

With his forces still divided, Smith was nervous and undecided what to do. According to Rev. William Emerson, who was watching from the Old Manse nearby: "For half an hour, the enemy, by their marches and counter-marches,

discovered great fickleness and inconstancy of mind; sometimes advancing, sometimes returning to their former posts" before definitely withdrawing into the village.

While the British were engaged in these evolutions, about half the American force of 400 recrossed the bridge to the west bank. There, the bodies of Davis and Hosmer, the Acton Minute Men, were taken to the home of Maj. Buttrick, a handsome clapboarded dwelling that still stands on the slope of Punkatasset Hill but no longer in view of the picturesque river setting. A monument with a suitably inscribed tablet commemorates Maj. John Buttrick beside the road nearly opposite the house.

When Captain Munday Pole and his company of light infantry, who had seized the South Bridge at 8:00 a.m., heard the guns at the North Bridge, they at once started back to the center of town to rejoin the main body. They removed the planks from the bridge to protect their retreat. Some of Pole's troops were on Lee's Hill, an elevation about 100 feet high across the South Bridge, when the reports of musketry at the other end of the town echoed in the sky.

(Lee's Hill, now called Nashawtuc Hill, was the home of Joseph Lee, a Tory and the town's physician.)

During their stay of an hour and a half at the South Bridge, Captain Pole's company entered and searched at least three houses and got food for which they were careful to pay the womenfolk. They



came upon three 24-pound iron cannon, which they knocked from their trunnions, and destroyed a small quantity of flour. Some gun carriages were also found and set on fire, together with a number of barrels containing wooden trenchers and spoons. The smoke that rose from the burning of these supplies may have been seen by the Minute Men gathering on Punkatasset Hill and prompted their attack at the North Bridge, perhaps, as much as the fires started by the grenadiers in the town.

While the action at the North Bridge was taking place, the four companies of light infantry under Capt. Parsons, returning from Col. Barrett's farm, had got to a cross-roads still more than a mile away. Charles Handley, a lad of 13 then living at a tavern kept by the Widow Brown, claimed later that he "heard guns at the bridge, but the British did not appear to hear them."

### **10:00 A.M.**

The main body of the British began to reassemble in the center of Concord as Smith got back from the North Bridge and Pole's company came in from the South Bridge. The men, who had been on the move since the night before, were exhausted and needed rest. The wounded required attention and provision had to be made to carry them back to Boston. Chaises and horses were confiscated from stables, and bedding

from nearby houses.

### **11:00 A.M.**

The companies of Capt. Parsons returning from the Barrett farm, recrossed the North Bridge without interference from the Americans and rejoined the main body of troops in the square. They brought back the first story of atrocity in the Revolution.

They had observed the bodies of two of their slain comrades lying beside the road near the east end of the bridge. One of them had been killed instantly, but the other, though wounded in the brief engagement, had not immediately expired.

About a half hour later, a boy, hatchet in hand, had crossed the bridge to join the force of Americans. As he went by, the wounded soldier was sitting up and trying to raise himself to his knees. Whereupon the boy, doubtless under the spell of the exciting action that had just taken place and possibly fearing the soldier meant to do him harm, decided to finish the unfortunate victim by sinking the sharp blade of his weapon into his skull.

The returning troops of Capt. Parsons, seeing the corpse thus mangled and bloody, originated accounts of exaggerated barbarism and cruelty. It soon became popular in England to believe that the Rebels, in Indian fashion, scalped and cut off the ears of their adversaries.

## *Noon or Soon After*

The British expeditionary force, at last rested and organized as well as possible for the return to Boston, pulled out of Concord, with flankers ordered up along the ridge on the north of the road to Meriam's Corner.

### *12:30 P.M.*

As soon as the Americans who had been present at the fight at the North Bridge received warning that the British were heading back toward Lexington, they crossed the Great Meadows that lay in the north of the village and arrived at Meriam's Corner about as soon as the retreating Redcoats. In the vicinity of Meriam's Corner, the numbers of the Militia were increased to as many as 1100 as more men from neighboring towns appeared.

From the north came the Billerica, Chelmsford, Reading and Woburn companies. From the south, those of Framingham and Sudbury. Three companies from Westford, and at least one from Stow, had been too late at the North Bridge, but were now on hand to take up the pursuit.

At Meriam's Corner, the old Bedford road runs in from the north to join the highway to Lexington. As the Reading companies were coming down this road and were nearly abreast the old Meriam House, they saw the British flankers, about 100 in number, rejoin the main column in the highway.

Taking care not to be out-flanked, the Reading men then advanced to the cover of the buildings and stone walls at the homestead and waited while the British slowly made their way over a little bridge that spanned Mill Brook, a few hundred feet farther along the highway.

Up to this moment, the remainder of the day might have passed without further incident. The few minutes of action at Lexington Green and Concord Bridge might even have been written off as part of a chronicle without any fulfillment or far-reaching end. Such however, was not destined to be the case as the last of the grenadiers, reaching the east side of the narrow bridge, suddenly turned and fired a volley in the direction of the Reading companies gathered around the Meriam House.

From this volley, there was to be no point of return. A war had opened that was not to end until Yorktown. During the course of the next few hours, a continuous battle was to rage around the retreating Redcoats on a battlefield only several hundred feet wide but 16 miles long, all the way from Meriam's Corner to Charlestown.

The volley fired by the exasperated grenadiers ushered in the real results of the eventful day. The Militia companies swarming in at the corner from both sides of the road replied with more deadly effect.

A Concord Minute Man was, perhaps, a bit over-zealous in reporting that "a grait many Lay

dead and the Road was bloody." Yet at least two British privates were killed in the road beyond the stream, while several more were wounded.

From Meriam's Corner on, the warfare of the day became more and more of a guerrilla nature. It, indeed, was open season for shooting at the British. Any directing force and discipline beyond the company unit were lacking and even there they were slight as the Minutemen chose to fight as individuals either exposed in pursuit or behind shelter.

By these tactics the British force could not be destroyed, but it could at least be expelled from the countryside, and the casualties of the Americans kept to a minimum.

In contrast, the British commander tried to maintain his force in a solid formation on the highway, except when he sent out detachments of light infantry in flanking movements.

These flanking parties were effective and more than once caught the local yeomen by surprise as they fired from roadside walls, boulders and trees. Of the total of 49 Americans killed during the day's fighting, it is probable that more than twice as many met their fate at the hands of the flankers as from the soldiers marching or retiring along the highway.

### **1:00 P.M.**

As the British approached the top of Brooks or Hardy's Hill, half

a mile east of the bridge at Meriam's Corner, they were attacked by the Sudbury company of Capt. Nathaniel Cudworth, which took cover by the roadside. A constant fire was kept up by the Minute Men as the Redcoats sped down the slope past the Brooks Tavern and over the line into Lincoln.

Crossing Tanners Brook, the British marched rapidly on. Across the bridge, the old road turns sharply to the left. On the left hand side was a tall growth of trees and on the right one somewhat smaller. Many Minute Men, including the Bedford company of Capt. Jonathan Willson, raced to reach the advantageous position afforded by these woods.

### **1:30 P.M.**

When the Regulars reached this wooded portion of the highway, now cut off from the main route and known as Old Bedford and Virginia road, the Americans under cover of the forest growth laid down a devastating fire that killed eight men outright and wounded many more. Fittingly, this curving section of the road was soon to be named "The Bloody Angle."

The losses, to be sure, were not all one-sided. In the heat of the action on the road, the Minute Men forgot all about the British flankers. Capt. Willson and two others were shot or fatally jabbed from the rear, and a fourth injured and disabled for life.

Half a mile farther on were three old houses, only a few hun-



dred feet apart. The first was a tavern kept by Ephraim Hartwell and also the home of Sgt. John Hartwell of the Lincoln Minute Men; the second, the Sgt. Samuel Hartwell House; and the third, the Capt. William Smith House.

As the broken ranks of the British staggered on, a grenadier was shot and fell before a pair of bars on the side of the road midway between the two Hartwell houses.

A little farther on, another grenadier was mortally wounded near the Capt. Smith House and left by the roadside to die. Members of the family carried him into the house, where his wound was dressed and he lingered on for three or four days.

The shattering fire faced by the British at Bloody Angle had turned their retreat into a rout.

Just east of the pasture on the north side of the highway where Revere had been captured lay two fields enclosed by stone walls. They were part of the homestead of Josiah Nelson, who, after taking a sword-slash on his head from a British officer at an early hour, had spread the alarm to Bedford.

A venturesome Lincoln Minute Man, William Thorning, had sunk into one of the holes in the first field and had the Redcoats in the road under incessant fire when their bullets began to bounce upon the ground around him. He narrowly missed being hit, but finally made good his escape by flattening

himself in another trench and waiting for the party to pass on.

Thorning, minutes later ran into the second field or pasture nearer the Nelson House and took up a position behind a huge boulder, about 50 feet from the road, where the main body of the British were still hurrying along. He resumed his fire with fatal effect. Two soldiers fell and were buried on a knoll in an orchard across the road.

The rock over which Thorning leveled his musket at the fleeing Redcoats goes today by the appropriate name of "The Minute Man Boulder."

As soon as the news was received that Gen. Percy's wagon train of supplies would be along without a sufficient escort, the "old men of Menotomy" (Arlington) assembled at the Cooper Tavern in the center of the village to make plans for seizing it. They were all old men, exempts from the alarm list, for the young men in the Militia had already been called out.

David Lamson, a half-Indian, who had served in the old war against the French, was chosen leader and, accompanied by Rev. Phillips Payson of Chelsea, the little band of about 12 men took their position behind a bank wall of earth and stone nearly opposite the meetinghouse of the First Parish.

When the wagon train came abreast of Lamson and his aged companions, Lamson called on the



sergeant in charge to surrender. His request was not heeded and the drivers whipped up their horses to get away. The old men, who had taken aim, then fired, killing several of the horses and two of the soldiers, while some of the others were wounded.

The drivers and guards who were not wounded or killed leaped in panic from the wagons and ran to the shore of Spy Pond, a half-mile to the southward, where they threw their guns into the water. Continuing their flight, they came upon an old woman, named Mother Batherick, who was digging dandelions. Begging for protection, they insisted on surrendering to her.

She took them to the home of Capt. Ephraim Frost, where she delivered them as prisoners, saying, "If you ever live to get back, you tell King George that an old woman took six of his grenadiers prisoners."

When the story reached England, the opposition papers picked it up and pointedly asked the question, "If one old Yankee woman can take six grenadiers, how many soldiers will it require to conquer America?"

Those wagons abandoned at Menotomy provided the Americans with the first provisions and stores to be taken as the result of a forcible attack in the Revolution.

## 2:00 P.M.

The British, now back in Lex-

ington, were once again to encounter Capt. Parker's little band of Minute Men under less favorable circumstances. Just over the line from Lincoln, the land rises sharply at a bend in the old road. There many of Parker's men who had not already gone on into Lincoln gathered and waited for vengeance.

As the sorely pressed Regulars came into sight and finally drew opposite their advantageous position, the Lexington men poured down a resounding volley. The British returned their fire in desperation, but without effect.

A quarter of a mile farther along the road the famished British troops came to the Bull Tavern. Making a swift entry and departure, they ransacked the bar for liquor and devoured what food they could find.

In the Bluff-Fiske Hill area, just beyond the Bull Tavern, some of the most colorful and furious but least known and publicized action in the course of the British retreat took place.

As the broken ranks of the main body of troops got around the bluff and started up the west side of Fiske Hill, Col. Smith decided to make a desperate effort to rally his men. A rear guard was thrown up on the bluff, while the troops were halted in the road beyond and steps taken to restore some semblance of order.

That this attempt failed is made clear in accounts left by two young British subalterns. Lt. John Barker observed that the number of the

enemy was "increasing from all parts, while ours was reducing from deaths, wounds and fatigue, and we were totally surrounded with such an incessant fire as it's impossible to conceive, our ammunition was likewise near expended."

Ensign De Berniere reported an even more humiliating situation: "When we arrived within a mile of Lexington, our ammunition began to fail, and the light companies were so fatigued with flanking that they were scarce able to act, and a great number of wounded scarce able to get forward, made a great confusion; Col. Smith had received a wound through his leg, a number of officers were also wounded, so that we began to run rather than retreat in order . . . we attempted to stop the men and form them two deep, but to no purpose, the confusion increased rather than lessened."

In such a condition, the British were to go on the remaining mile from Fiske Hill to the village of Lexington.

Maj. Pitcairn as well as the wounded Smith was a conspicuous target for the Minute Men and Militia, whom Lt. Barker found "so concealed there was hardly any seeing them."

With his superior in command, the Major tried valiantly to bring the men into line, but any hope of successfully reorganizing the British column had to be abandoned. The distraught men, to the consternation of their officers, broke and ran down the east side

of the hill and, in greater disarray than before, hastened on toward Lexington.

## 2:30 P.M.

The Americans kept a harrassing fire on the flying foe as he sped over Concord Hill and on past Lexington Green. No stop was now made to disperse any Rebels! No Minute Men were now lined up to oppose the retreat. It was too easy to add to the enemy's discomfiture on the flanks and at his rear. The situation had radically changed since the initial clash of arms at sunrise.

As the British ran on in confusion, more of their number were killed and wounded. Three more soldiers were abandoned near the Lexington Green and carried into the Buckman Tavern, where one of them died three days later.

The beaten British force was now threatened with complete dissolution before the relief party under Earl Percy could come to its aid. One last effort to restore discipline, however, was made and succeeded in bringing the discomfited troops together until they could reach the protection of their reinforcements.

De Berniere described how it was done. "At last, after we got through Lexington, the officers got to the front and presented their bayonets, and told the men that if they advanced they should die. Upon this they began to form under a very heavy fire."

### 3:00 P.M.

Gen. Percy opened his ranks a half-mile east of Lexington Green to admit Smith's men, "so much exhausted with fatigue, that they were obliged to lie down for rest on the ground, their tongues hanging out of their mouths, like those of dogs after a chase." The rescue party was the King's Own 4th Regiment.

Col. Smith's men rested for a half-hour or more inside the line thrown out by the rescue party.

Meanwhile, Percy, with the two fieldpieces he had brought along, opened the first cannonade of the Revolution.

No Americans were killed or wounded, but the meetinghouse on Lexington Green was struck and damaged. Percy's men, moreover, took pains to destroy any structure that might be used as cover by scattered groups of the Rebels for sniping at the British flanks. Three houses and three outlying buildings were both looted and burned.

While this destruction was taking place, the wounded were conveyed into the Munroe Tavern, where their wounds were dressed. John Raymond, a cripple, mixed drinks for the thirsty Redcoats at the bar. When he tried to escape by the rear door, he was shot and killed.

Despite the precautions taken by Percy, marksmen among the Militia crept up in small numbers to woods and meadows on both

sides of the road and, from behind trees and the second line of walls at more than point-blank distance, resumed a fire that had been momentarily interrupted by the British artillery. About this time, three companies of Militia from Newton also entered the fight. The Minute Men had to give up the chase as soon as their ammunition gave out. Their numbers, however, were continually replenished along the way.

### 3:30 P.M.

The retreat of the British in the direction of East Lexington and Menotomy was resumed. Flankers prevented the Americans from using any close cover and at the same time they entered and pillaged houses by the roadside without restraint from their officers.

\* \* \*

William Heath, one of five generals appointed by the Provincial Congress to take charge of the Militia, arrived at Lexington and soon was joined by Dr. Joseph Warren. Both had attended a meeting of the Committee of Safety at Menotomy that morning after receiving news of the baptism of blood at Lexington Green.

### 4:30 P.M.

The British troops trudged slowly on under the burden of goods they had stolen along the way. After advancing about two and a half miles and soon after leaving the Lexington line, they had to climb Pierce's Hill near the west

end of Menotomy, now Arlington Heights, and half a mile farther on came down again to lower ground known as the "Foot of the Rocks." There once again they were exposed to a fierce fire as Militia from towns to the eastward and nearer the coast began to enter the fray.

Beginning at the "Foot of the Rocks," the fire power of the Americans was greatly increased as over 1700 men in no less than 35 companies began to swell the force of Militia that had the Regulars under attack. Companies from Watertown, Medford, Malden, Dedham, Needham, Lynn, Beverly, Danvers, Roxbury, Brookline and Menotomy itself now thronged the roadsides.

The British were severely harassed in some of the bloodiest fighting of the day as they retreated over the long stretch of more than a mile and a half of Massachusetts avenue from the "Rocks" to the center of the present Arlington.

Besides firing in the street or from cover, the Militia and unattached individuals engaged the Redcoats in hand-to-hand fighting. In this manner, Dr. Eliphalet Downer, who had arrived with the Brookline and Roxbury companies, faced up to a British soldier and killed him in a celebrated duel. The bellicose physician, quickly discovering he was no match for the Regular in the fine points of bayonet play, deftly reversed his musket. Using the butt as a club, he then stunned his adversary with

a swift blow before finishing him with eight inches of cold steel.

Gen. Percy, riding his white horse, offered a conspicuous target. He escaped death or injury, but a button was shot from his uniform. The increasing number of Minute Men brought such pressure on his rear and flanks that Percy finally halted his column not far from the "Rocks" and turned his two field-pieces upon them. The cannon shot hit no one, but temporarily, at least, scattered his pursuers. The destructive aspect of real war was now fully present as cannon balls blasted the road, smashed into stone walls and trees, and tore jagged holes through houses.

### **5:00 P.M.**

Jason Russell, 58 and lame, was one citizen of Menotomy who believed that "An Englishman's house is his castle." So after taking his wife and children to a place of greater safety, he had returned to his dwelling and prepared for any forays the British might make.

A group of Minute Men who ran into a British flanking party got to Russell's doorway just as Earl Percy's column, coming up the road, saw them and fired, forcing them to take a shelter in the house.

The unfortunate Russell, with his disabled foot, was the last to reach the door, and was struck by two bullets. As he lay in the doorway, the Redcoats stabbed him with no less than eleven bayonet thrusts.



In the house the Minute Men who had no bayonets were at a great disadvantage, and the Redcoats readily slew all they could reach. Some men from Beverly, and others, eight in number, fled into the cellar, and pointing their muskets up the stairway, threatened instant death to any soldiers who should follow. One venturesome Redcoat took a chance and was shot on the stairs. Another was killed in the fight on the floor above.

After the British had gone, the dead in and about the house were gathered in a single room. When Mrs. Russell came home she found her husband and eleven Minute Men lying side by side on the floor in a common pool of blood.

**They were the largest number of combatants, either American or British, to give up their lives in any one place and at any one time during the course of the day's conflict.**

(The Jason Russell House, commendably saved by the Arlington Historical Society in 1823, stands today not far from its original location near the corner of Jason street and Massachusetts avenue.)

### **5:30 P.M.**

The section of the highway leading to the Cooper Tavern from the Jason Russell House was, indeed, the scene of some of the most frenzied and desperate action during the running fight over an almost continuous battlefield. No less than 20 Americans and as

many or more British were finally slain in this stretch, which deservedly has been called "*the bloodiest half mile of all the Battle Road.*"

The buildings along the village street of Menotomy had harbored so many Minute Men and made the route of the British retreat so hot and tantalizing that it was inevitable the harried troops would sooner or later in their reckless fury make victims of some of the innocent as well as the guilty. This very thing occurred at the Cooper Tavern.

Jason Winship, 45, and Jabez Wyman, 39, had already tarried too long over their mugs of ale and the landlord, Benjamin Cooper, and his wife, Rachel, were mixing flip at the bar when the Redcoats began shooting at the doors and windows and crowded into the tap-room. The drinking companions never had a chance.

The landlord and his spouse, who escaped for their lives into the cellar, made the incident appear even more merciless and shocking than it probably was. In a later deposition for the Provincial Congress they described Winship and his brother-in-law as "two aged gentlemen . . . most barbarously and inhumanely murdered . . . being stabbed through in many places, their heads mauled, skulls broke, and their brains beat out on the floor and walls of the house."

\* \* \*

The battle had reached the height of its ferocity at Menotomy.

More were killed there on both sides than in any other town. At least 40 of the British succumbed, more than half of their fatalities of 73 for the day, while 25 out of the 49 Americans who lost their lives fell in the town that was later to be called West Cambridge and finally Arlington. Homes were put to the torch as at Lexington, but the Regulars were more closely pursued by a greater number of Minute Men and others, who deprived them of sufficient time to destroy the village by a wholesale conflagration. Many fires were started, but soon extinguished by the militia and townsmen.

### **6:00 P.M.**

Only an hour remained before complete darkness and the British force still had several miles to go before it could reach the comfort and protection of the warships in the Charles and reinforcements at Boston. The troops, therefore, rapidly and without incident beyond the Cooper Tavern and in a little more than a mile and a quarter arrived at the Menotomy River, the present Alewife Brook, where they crossed into the north end of Cambridge.

A mile beyond the Menotomy River, a small but resolute band of Americans waited for the British under the dubious shelter provided by a pile of empty casks in the yard of Jacob Watson, a blacksmith. Once again the flankers caught their victims by surprise as they got in their rear unobserved

and charged with bayonets. Maj. Isaac Gardner, of the Brookline Militia and the highest ranking officer to be slain on either side during the day, fell in the encounter, and two volunteers of Cambridge, John Hicks and Moses Richardson, both 50.

### **6:30 P.M.**

When Gen. Percy led his troops out of Boston in the morning, it is claimed by one source that he intended to camp that night on Cambridge Common and, with reinforcements to be sent out later by Gen. Gage, lay waste the buildings of Harvard College and others in the town as an example of the swift and terrible punishment King George was ready to mete out to subjects who were rebellious and took up arms to defy his authority.

Any thought of stopping in Cambridge now, however, was far from Percy's mind. In the course of the afternoon's fighting, he had seen what an aroused and hostile countryside could do to an invader. As a result, he was determined to get back to the main army in Boston as soon as possible by taking the shortest and safest route through Charlestown.

He had regarded the Americans before as "cowards" and "timid creatures," but was now in a position where he had to reverse his opinion. In a report the next day he wrote, "many of them concealed themselves in houses & advanced within 10 yds. to fire at me and other officers, tho' they

were morally certain of being put to death themselves in an instant . . . nor will the insurrection here turn out so despicable as it is perhaps imagined at home. For my part, I never believed, I confess, that they wd have attacked the king's troops, or have had the perseverance I found in them yesterday."

Percy's column wheeled to the left onto Beech street, from Massachusetts avenue, a quarter of a mile beyond the spot where three Americans had been killed in the fight at the empty casks, and came into the modern Somerville at the corner of Beech and Elm streets.

The militia were too inexperienced and too few in number to oppose Percy with anything like a frontal attack, but they exposed him to a hot fire from a grove not too far away and killed several of his men. As he had already done more than once on the retreat, Percy was compelled to unlimber his two field pieces and with cannon shot frighten and drive off his adversaries.

This sharp encounter took place at the corner of Elm street and Willow avenue in Somerville.

Almost a mile farther on, the Redcoats, now moving swiftly in the last moments of daylight, came to a small pond at the foot of the present Laurel street and Somerville avenue. Overheated by their exertions and frantic with thirst, many of the soldiers threw themselves into the water to refresh

their perspiring bodies and parched throats.

The pond, like almost all features of what was unspoiled countryside or a small village comprising the west end of Charlestown in 1775, disappeared many years ago. Under the impact of urban growth, this part of Charlestown was set off as Somerville in 1842.

### *All's Well . . .*

The last few musket shots flashed in the darkness as Gen. Percy's exhausted troops filed over Charlestown Neck and reached the protection of Bunker Hill. There they flung themselves to the ground and waited, some of them for hours, until arrangements could be completed and boats provided to carry them across the river to Boston. Thus ended the opening day of battle in the American Revolution.

The British losses were 73 killed, 174 wounded, 26 missing, a total of 273 casualties; while the Americans had 49 fatalities, 41 wounded and five missing, a total casualty list of 95.





