

Coordinates: 42°26′58.7″N 71°13′51.0″W﻿ / ﻿﻿ / ﻿

# Battles of Lexington and Concord

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The **Battles of Lexington and Concord** were the first military engagements of the American Revolutionary War.<sup>[9][10]</sup> They were fought on April 19, 1775, in Middlesex County, Province of Massachusetts Bay, within the towns of Lexington, Concord, Lincoln, Menotomy (present-day Arlington), and Cambridge, near Boston. The battles marked the outbreak of open armed conflict between the Kingdom of Great Britain and its thirteen colonies in the mainland of British North America.

About 700 British Army regulars, under Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith, were given secret orders to capture and destroy military supplies that were reportedly stored by the Massachusetts militia at Concord. Through effective intelligence gathering, Patriot colonials had received word weeks before the expedition that their supplies might be at risk and had moved most of them to other locations. They also received details about British plans on the night before the battle and were able to rapidly notify the area militias of the enemy movement.

The first shots were fired just as the sun was rising at Lexington. The militia were outnumbered and fell back, and the regulars proceeded on to Concord, where they searched for the supplies. At the North Bridge in Concord, approximately 500 militiamen fought and defeated three companies of the King's troops. The outnumbered regulars fell back from the minutemen after a pitched battle in open territory.

More militiamen arrived soon thereafter and inflicted heavy damage on the regulars as they marched back towards Boston. Upon returning to Lexington, Smith's expedition was rescued by reinforcements under Brigadier General Hugh Percy. The combined force, now of about 1,700 men, marched back to Boston under heavy fire in a tactical withdrawal and eventually reached the safety of Charlestown. The accumulated militias blockaded the narrow land accesses to Charlestown and Boston, starting the Siege of Boston.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his "Concord Hymn", described the first shot fired by the Patriots at the North Bridge as the "shot heard 'round the world."<sup>[11]</sup>

## Battles of Lexington and Concord

Part of the American Revolutionary War



Romanticized 19th century depiction of Battle of Lexington

<b>Date</b>	April 19, 1775
<b>Location</b>	Middlesex County, Massachusetts Lexington: <span><span><span><span><span>42°26′58.7″N</span> <span>71°13′51.0″W</span></span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span><span><span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span></span></span></span> Concord: <span><span><span><span><span>42°28′08.54″N</span> <span>71°21′02.08″W</span></span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span><span><span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span></span></span></span>
<b>Result</b>	Colonial victory; start of the American Revolutionary War

### Belligerents

Province of Massachusetts Bay	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> Great Britain
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### Commanders and leaders

John Parker	Francis Smith
James Barrett	John Pitcairn
John Buttrick	Hugh Percy
William Heath	
Joseph Warren	
Isaac Davis †	

### Strength

<b>Lexington:</b> 77 <sup>[1][2]</sup>	<b>Departing Boston</b> 700 <sup>[4]</sup>
<b>Concord:</b> 400 <sup>[3]</sup>	<b>Lexington:</b> 400 <sup>[5]</sup>
<b>End of Battle:</b> 3,800 <sup>[1]</sup>	<b>Concord:</b> 100 <sup>[6]</sup>
	<b>End of Battle:</b> 1,500 <sup>[7]</sup>

### Casualties and losses

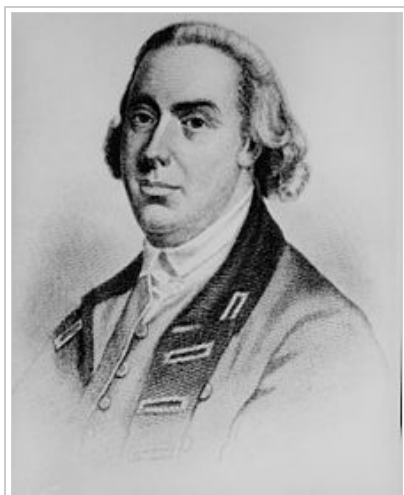
49 killed, 39 wounded, 5 missing <sup>[8]</sup>	73 killed, 174 wounded, 53 missing <sup>[8]</sup>
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## Background



Thomas Gage

*Further information: Minutemen and Boston campaign*

The British Army's infantry, nicknamed "redcoats" and sometimes "devils" by the colonists, had occupied Boston since 1768 and had been augmented by naval forces and marines to enforce the Intolerable Acts, which had been passed by the British Parliament to punish the Province of Massachusetts Bay for the Boston Tea Party and other acts of protest. General Thomas Gage, the military governor of Massachusetts and commander-in-chief of the roughly 3,000 British military forces garrisoned in Boston, had no control over Massachusetts outside of Boston, where implementation of the Acts had increased tensions between the Patriot Whig majority and the pro-British Tory minority. Gage's plan was to avoid conflict by removing military supplies from the Whig militias using small, secret and rapid strikes. This struggle for supplies led to one British success and then to several rebel successes in a series of nearly bloodless conflicts known as the Powder Alarms. Gage considered himself to be a friend of liberty and attempted to separate his duties as Governor of the colony and as General of an occupying force. Edmund Burke described Gage's conflicted relationship with Massachusetts by saying in Parliament, "An Englishman is the unfittest person on Earth to argue another Englishman into slavery."<sup>[12]</sup>

The colonists had been forming militias of various sorts since the 17th century, at first primarily for defense against local native attacks. These forces were also mustered to action in the French and Indian War in the 1750s and 1760s. They were generally local militias, nominally under the jurisdiction of the provincial government.<sup>[13]</sup> When the political situation began to deteriorate, in particular when Gage effectively dissolved the provincial government under the terms of the Massachusetts Government Act, these existing connections were employed by the colonists under the Massachusetts Provincial Congress for the purpose of resistance to the military threat from Britain.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Government preparations

On April 14, 1775, Gage received instructions from Secretary of State William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth, to disarm the rebels, who were known to have hidden weapons in Concord, among other locations, and to imprison the rebellion's leaders, especially Samuel Adams and John Hancock. Dartmouth gave Gage considerable discretion in his commands.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

On the morning of April 18, Gage ordered a mounted patrol of about 20 men under the command of Major Mitchell of the 5th Regiment of Foot into the surrounding country to intercept messengers who might be out on horseback.<sup>[17]</sup> This patrol behaved differently from patrols sent out from Boston in the past, staying out after dark and asking travelers about the location of Adams and Hancock. This had the unintended effect of alarming many residents and increasing their preparedness. The Lexington militia in particular began to muster early that evening, hours before receiving any word from Boston. A well known

story alleges that after nightfall one farmer, Josiah Nelson, mistook the British patrol for the colonists and asked them, "Have you heard anything about when the regulars are coming out?", upon which he was slashed on his scalp with a sword. However, the story of this incident was not published until over a century later, which suggests that it may be little more than a family myth.<sup>[18]</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith received orders from Gage on the afternoon of April 18 with instructions that he was not to read them until his troops were underway. He was to proceed from Boston "with utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord, where you will seize and destroy... all Military stores... But you will take care that the soldiers do not plunder the inhabitants or hurt private property." Gage used his discretion and did not issue written orders for the arrest of rebel leaders, as he feared doing so might spark an uprising.<sup>[19]</sup>

## American preparations



Francis Smith, commander of the military expedition, in a 1763 portrait



Margaret Kemble Gage may have given military intelligence to the rebels

The rebellion's ringleaders—with the exception of Paul Revere and Joseph Warren—had all left Boston by April 8. They had received word of Dartmouth's secret instructions to General Gage from sources in London well before they reached Gage himself.<sup>[20]</sup> Adams and Hancock had fled Boston to the home of one of Hancock's relatives in Lexington where they thought they would be safe from the immediate threat of arrest.<sup>[21]</sup>

The Massachusetts militias had indeed been gathering a stock of weapons, powder, and supplies at Concord, as well as an even greater amount much further west in Worcester, but word reached the rebel leaders that British officers had been observed examining the roads to Concord.<sup>[22]</sup> On April 8, Paul Revere rode to Concord to warn the inhabitants that the British appeared to be planning an expedition. The townspeople decided to remove the stores and distribute them among other towns nearby.<sup>[23]</sup>

The colonists were also aware of the upcoming mission on April 19, despite it having been hidden from all the British rank and file and even from all the officers on the mission. There is reasonable speculation, although not proven, that the confidential source of this intelligence was Margaret Gage, General Gage's New Jersey-born wife, who had sympathies with the Colonial cause and a friendly relationship with Warren.<sup>[24]</sup>

Between 9 and 10 pm on the night of April 18, 1775, Joseph Warren told William Dawes and Paul Revere that the King's troops were about to embark in boats from Boston bound for Cambridge and the road to Lexington and Concord. Warren's intelligence suggested that the most likely objectives of the regulars' movements later that night would be the capture of Adams and Hancock. They did not worry about the possibility of regulars marching to Concord, since the supplies at Concord were safe, but they did think their leaders in Lexington were unaware of the potential danger that night. Revere and Dawes were sent out to warn them and to alert colonial militias in nearby towns.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Militia forces

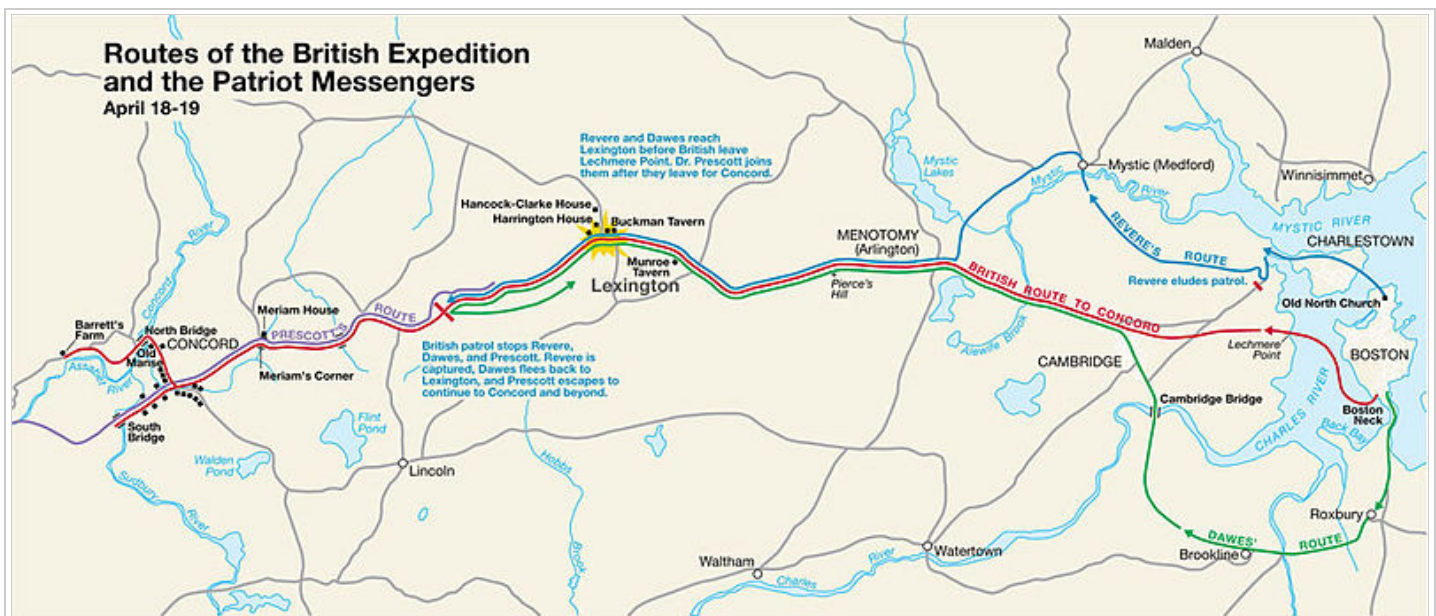
*Further information: Old North Church*

Dawes covered the southern land route by horseback across Boston Neck and over the Great Bridge to Lexington.<sup>[26]</sup> Revere first gave instructions to send a signal to Charlestown and then he traveled the northern water route. He crossed the Charles River by rowboat, slipping past the British warship HMS *Somerset* at anchor. Crossings were banned at that hour, but Revere safely landed in Charlestown and rode to Lexington, avoiding a British patrol and later warning almost every house along the route. The Charlestown colonists dispatched additional riders to the north.<sup>[27]</sup>

After they arrived in Lexington, Revere, Dawes, Hancock, and Adams discussed the situation with the militia assembling there. They believed that the forces leaving the city were too large for the sole task of arresting two men and that Concord was the main target. The Lexington men dispatched riders to the surrounding towns, and Revere and Dawes continued along the road

to Concord accompanied by Samuel Prescott. In Lincoln, they ran into the British patrol led by Major Mitchell. Revere was captured, Dawes was thrown from his horse, and only Prescott escaped to reach Concord.<sup>[28]</sup> Additional riders were sent out from Concord.

The ride of Revere, Dawes, and Prescott triggered a flexible system of "alarm and muster" that had been carefully developed months before, in reaction to the colonists' impotent response to the Powder Alarm. This system was an improved version of an old network of widespread notification and fast deployment of local militia forces in times of emergency. The colonists had periodically used this system all the way back to the early years of Indian wars in the colony, before it fell into disuse in the French and Indian War. In addition to other express riders delivering messages, bells, drums, alarm guns, bonfires and a trumpet were used for rapid communication from town to town, notifying the rebels in dozens of eastern Massachusetts villages that they should muster their militias because the regulars in numbers greater than 500 were leaving Boston, with possible hostile intentions. This system was so effective that people in towns 25 miles (40 km) from Boston were aware of the army's movements while they were still unloading boats in Cambridge.<sup>[29]</sup> These early warnings played a crucial role in assembling a sufficient number of colonial militia to inflict heavy damage on the British regulars later in the day. Adams and Hancock were eventually moved to safety, first to what is now Burlington and later to Billerica.<sup>[30]</sup>



A National Park Service map showing the routes of the initial Patriot messengers and of the British expedition

## British advance

Around dusk, General Gage called a meeting of his senior officers at the Province House. He informed them that orders from Lord Dartmouth had arrived, ordering him to take action against the colonials. He also told them that the senior colonel of his regiments, Lieutenant Colonel Smith, would command, with Major John Pitcairn as his executive officer. The meeting adjourned around 8:30 pm, after which Lord Percy mingled with town folk on Boston Common. According to one account, the discussion among people there turned to the unusual movement of the British soldiers in the town. When Percy questioned one man further, the man replied, "Well, the regulars will miss their aim". "What aim?" asked Percy. "Why, the cannon at Concord" was the reply.<sup>[24]</sup> Upon hearing this, Percy quickly returned to Province House and relayed this information to General Gage. Stunned, Gage issued orders to prevent messengers from getting out of Boston, but these were too late to prevent Dawes and Revere from leaving.<sup>[31]</sup>

The British regulars, around 700 infantry, were drawn from 11 of Gage's 13 occupying infantry regiments. For this expedition, Major John Pitcairn commanded ten elite light infantry companies, and Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Bernard commanded 11 grenadier companies, under the overall command of Lieutenant Colonel Smith.<sup>[32]</sup>

Of the troops assigned to the expedition, 350 were from grenadier companies drawn from the 4th (King's Own), 5th, 10th, 18th (Royal Irish), 23rd, 38th, 43rd, 47th, 52nd and 59th Regiments of Foot, and the 1st Battalion of His Majesty's Marine Forces. Protecting the grenadier companies were about 320 light infantry from the 4th, 5th, 10th, 23rd, 38th, 43rd, 47th, 52nd and 59th



1775 map of the battles and of the Siege of Boston

Regiments, and the 1st Battalion of the Marines. Each company had its own lieutenant, but the majority of the captains commanding them were volunteers attached to them at the last minute, drawn from all of the regiments stationed in Boston. This lack of bond between commander and company would turn out to be problematic.<sup>[33]</sup>

The British began to awaken their troops at 9 pm on the night of April 18 and assembled them on the water's edge on the western end of Boston Common by 10 pm. The British march to and from Concord was a disorganized experience from start to finish. Colonel Smith was late in arriving, and there was no organized boat-loading operation, resulting in confusion at the staging area. The boats used were naval barges that were packed so tightly that there was no room to sit down. When they disembarked at Phipps Farm in Cambridge, it was into waist-deep water at midnight. After a lengthy halt to unload their gear, the regulars began their

17 miles (27 km) march to Concord at about 2 am.<sup>[32]</sup> During the wait they were provided with extra ammunition, cold salt pork, and hard sea biscuits. They did not carry knapsacks, since they would not be encamped. They carried their haversacks (food bags), canteens, muskets, and accoutrements, and marched off in wet, muddy shoes and soggy uniforms. As they marched through Menotomy, sounds of the colonial alarms throughout the countryside caused the few officers who were aware of their mission to realize they had lost the element of surprise.<sup>[34]</sup> One of the regulars recorded in his journal,

“We got all over the bay and landed on the opposite shore betwixt twelve and one OClock and was on our March by one, which was at first through some swamps and slips of the Sea till we got into the Road leading to Lexington soon after which the Country people begun to fire their alarm guns light their Beacons, to raise the Country. ... To the best of my recollection about 4 oClock in the morning being the 19th of April the 5 front Compys. was ordered to Load which we did.”<sup>[35]</sup>

At about 3 am, Colonel Smith sent Major Pitcairn ahead with six companies of light infantry under orders to quick march to Concord. At about 4 am Smith made the wise but belated decision to send a messenger back to Boston asking for reinforcements.<sup>[36]</sup>

## The Battles

### Lexington

Though often styled a battle, in reality the engagement at Lexington was a minor brush or skirmish.<sup>[37]</sup> As the regulars' advance guard under Pitcairn entered Lexington at sunrise on April 19, 1775, about 80 Lexington militiamen emerged from Buckman Tavern and stood in ranks on the village common watching them, and between 40 and 100 spectators watched from along the side of the road.<sup>[1][2][38]</sup> Their leader was Captain John Parker, a veteran of the French and Indian War, who was suffering from tuberculosis and was at times difficult to hear. Of the militiamen who lined up, nine had the surname Harrington, seven Munroe (including the company's orderly sergeant, William Munroe), four Parker, three Tidd, three Locke, and three Reed; fully one quarter of them were related to Captain Parker in some way.<sup>[39]</sup> This group of militiamen was part of Lexington's "training band", a way of organizing local militias dating back to the Puritans, and not what was styled a *minuteman company*.<sup>[40]</sup>

After having waited most of the night with no sign of any British troops (and wondering if Paul Revere's warning was true), at about 4:15 a.m., Parker got his confirmation.<sup>[41]</sup> Thaddeus Bowman, the last scout that Parker had sent out, rode up at a gallop and told him that they were not only coming, but coming in force and they were close.<sup>[42]</sup> Captain Parker was clearly aware that he was outmatched in the confrontation and was not prepared to sacrifice his men for no purpose. He knew that most of the colonists' powder and military supplies at Concord had already been hidden. No war had been declared. (The Declaration of Independence would not even be written for another year). He also knew the British Army had gone on such expeditions

before in Massachusetts, found nothing, and marched back to Boston.<sup>[43]</sup>

Parker had every reason to expect that to occur again. The Regulars would march to Concord, find nothing, and return to Boston, tired but empty-handed. He positioned his company carefully. He placed them in parade-ground formation, on Lexington Green. They were in plain sight (not hiding behind walls), but not blocking the road to Concord. They made a show of political and military determination, but no effort to prevent the march of the Regulars.<sup>[44]</sup> Many years later, one of the participants recalled Parker's words as being what is now engraved in stone at the site of the battle: "Stand your ground; don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here."<sup>[45]</sup> According to Parker's sworn deposition taken after the battle:

"I ... ordered our Militia to meet on the Common in said Lexington to consult what to do, and concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with said Regular Troops (if they should approach) unless they should insult or molest us; and, upon their sudden Approach, I immediately ordered our Militia to disperse, and not to fire:—Immediately said Troops made their appearance and rushed furiously, fired upon, and killed eight of our Party without receiving any Provocation therefor from us."<sup>[46]</sup><sup>[47]</sup>

— John Parker

Rather than turn left towards Concord, Marine Lieutenant Jesse Adair, who was at the head of the advance guard, decided on his own to protect the flank of the troops by first turning right and then leading the companies down the common itself in a confused effort to surround and disarm the militia. These men ran towards the Lexington militia loudly crying "Huzzah!" to rouse themselves and to confuse the militia, as they formed a battle line on the common.<sup>[48]</sup> Major Pitcairn arrived from the rear of the advance force and led his three companies to the left and halted them. The remaining companies under Colonel Smith lay further down the road toward Boston.<sup>[49]</sup>

### First shot

A British officer (probably Pitcairn, but accounts are uncertain, as it may also have been Lieutenant William Sutherland) then rode forward, waving his sword, and called out for the assembled throng to disperse, and may also have ordered them to "lay down your arms, you damned rebels!"<sup>[50]</sup> Captain Parker told his men instead to disperse and go home, but, because of the confusion, the yelling all around, and due to the raspiness of Parker's tubercular voice, some did not hear him, some left very slowly, and none laid down their arms. Both Parker and Pitcairn ordered their men to hold fire, but a shot was fired from an unknown source.<sup>[50]</sup>

"[A]t 5 o'clock we arrived [in Lexington], and saw a number of people, I believe between 200 and 300, formed in a common in the middle of town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack through without intending to attack them; but on our coming near them they fired on us two shots, upon which our men without any orders, rushed upon them, fired and put them to flight; several of them were killed, we could not tell how many, because they were behind walls and into the woods. We had a man of the 10th light Infantry wounded, nobody else was hurt. We then formed on the Common, but with some difficulty, the men were so wild they could hear no orders; we waited a considerable time there, and at length proceeded our way to Concord."<sup>[51]</sup>

— Lieutenant John Barker, 4th Regiment of Foot



The first of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775. Doolittle visited the battle sites and interviewed soldiers and witnesses. Contains controversial elements, possibly inaccuracies. Fire from the militia may have occurred but is not depicted.

According to one member of Parker's militia none of the Americans had discharged their muskets as they faced the oncoming

British troops. The British did suffer one casualty, a slight wound, the particulars of which were corroborated by a deposition made by Corporal John Munroe. Munroe stated that:

"After the first fire of the regulars, I thought, and so stated to Ebenezer Munroe ...who stood next to me on the left, that they had fired nothing but powder; but on the second firing, Munroe stated they had fired something more than powder, for he had received a wound in his arm; and now, said he, to use his own words, **'I'll give them the guts of my gun.'** We then both took aim at the main body of British troops the smoke preventing our seeing anything but the heads of some of their horses and discharged our pieces."<sup>[52]</sup>

Some witnesses among the regulars reported the first shot was fired by a colonial onlooker from behind a hedge or around the corner of a tavern. Some observers reported a mounted British officer firing first. Both sides generally agreed that the initial shot did not come from the men on the ground immediately facing each other.<sup>[53]</sup> Speculation arose later in Lexington that a man named Solomon Brown fired the first shot from inside the tavern or from behind a wall, but this has been discredited.<sup>[54]</sup> Some witnesses (on each side) claimed that someone on the other side fired first; however, many more witnesses claimed to not know. Yet another theory is that the first shot was one fired by the British, that killed Asahel Porter, their prisoner who was running away (he had been told to walk away and he would be let go, though he panicked and began to run). Historian David Hackett Fischer has proposed that there may actually have been multiple near-simultaneous shots.<sup>[55]</sup> Historian Mark Urban claims the British surged forward with bayonets ready in an undisciplined way, provoking a few scattered shots from the militia. In response the British troops, without orders, fired a devastating volley. This lack of discipline among the British troops had a key role in the escalation of violence.<sup>[56]</sup>

Witnesses at the scene described several intermittent shots fired from both sides before the lines of regulars began to fire volleys without receiving orders to do so. A few of the militiamen believed at first that the regulars were only firing powder with no ball, but when they realized the truth, few if any of the militia managed to load and return fire. The rest wisely ran for their lives.<sup>[57]</sup>

"We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, [and 32 other men ...] do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth in the morning, being informed that... a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord. ... About five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade, and soon found that a large body of troops were marching towards us, some of our company were coming to the parade, and others had reached it, at which time, the company began to disperse, whilst our backs were turned on the troops, we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded, not a gun was fired by any person in our company on the regulars to our knowledge before they fired on us, and continued firing until we had all made our escape."<sup>[46]</sup>

The regulars then charged forward with bayonets. Captain Parker's cousin Jonas was run through. Eight Massachusetts men were killed and ten were wounded; only one British soldier of the 10th Foot wounded. The eight colonists killed were John Brown, Samuel Hadley, Caleb Harrington, Jonathon Harrington, Robert Munroe, Isaac Muzzey, Asahel Porter, and Jonas Parker. Jonathon Harrington, fatally wounded by a British musket ball, managed to crawl back to his home, and died on his own doorstep. One wounded man, Prince Estabrook, was a black slave who was serving in the militia.<sup>[58]</sup>

The companies under Pitcairn's command got beyond their officers' control in part because they were unaware of the actual purpose of the day's mission. They fired in different directions and prepared to enter private homes. Colonel Smith, who was just arriving with the remainder of the regulars, heard the musket fire and rode forward from the grenadier column to see the action. He quickly found a drummer and ordered him to beat assembly. The grenadiers arrived shortly thereafter, and once order was restored the light infantry were permitted to fire a victory volley, after which the column was reformed and marched on toward Concord.<sup>[59]</sup>

## Concord



The second of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775, depicting the British entering Concord

The militiamen of Concord and Lincoln, in response to the raised alarm, had mustered in Concord. They received reports of firing at Lexington, and were not sure whether to wait until they could be reinforced by troops from towns nearby, or to stay and defend the town, or to move east and greet the British Army from superior terrain. A column of militia marched down the road toward Lexington to meet the British, traveling about 1.5 miles (2 km) until they met the approaching column of regulars. As the regulars numbered about 700 and the militia at this time only numbered about 250, the militia column turned around and marched back into Concord, preceding the regulars by a distance of about 500 yards (457 m).<sup>[60]</sup> The militia retreated to a ridge overlooking the town and the command discussed what to do next. Caution prevailed, and Colonel James Barrett surrendered the town of Concord and led the men across the North Bridge to a hill about a mile north of town, where they could continue to watch the troop movements of the British and

the activities in the center of town. This step proved fortuitous, as the ranks of the militia continued to grow as minuteman companies arriving from the western towns joined them there.<sup>[61]</sup>

### The search for militia supplies

When the troops arrived in the village of Concord, Smith divided them to carry out Gage's orders. The 10th Regiment's company of grenadiers secured South Bridge under Captain Mundy Pole, while seven companies of light infantry under Captain Parsons, numbering about 100, secured the North Bridge near Barrett's force. Captain Parsons took four companies from the 5th, 23rd, 38th and 52nd Regiments up the road 2 miles (3.2 km) beyond the North Bridge to search Barrett's Farm, where intelligence indicated supplies would be found.<sup>[62]</sup> Two companies from the 4th and 10th were stationed to guard their return route, and one company from the 43rd remained guarding the bridge itself. These companies, which were under the relatively inexperienced command of Captain Walter Laurie, were aware that they were significantly outnumbered by the 400-plus militia men that were only a few hundred yards away. The concerned Captain Laurie sent a messenger to Smith requesting reinforcements.<sup>[63]</sup>

Using detailed information provided by Loyalist spies, the grenadier companies searched the small town for military supplies. When they arrived at Ephraim Jones's tavern, by the jail on the South Bridge road, they found the door barred shut, and Jones refused them entry. According to reports provided by local Loyalists, Pitcairn knew cannon had been buried on the property. Jones was ordered at gunpoint to show where the guns were buried. These turned out to be three massive pieces, firing 24-pound shot, that were much too heavy to use defensively, but very effective against fortifications, with sufficient range to bombard the city of Boston from other parts of nearby mainland.<sup>[64]</sup> The grenadiers smashed the trunnions of these three guns so they could not be mounted. They also burned some gun carriages found in the village meetinghouse, and when the fire spread to the meetinghouse itself, local resident Martha Moulton persuaded the soldiers to help in a bucket brigade to save the building.<sup>[65]</sup> Nearly a hundred barrels of flour and salted food were thrown into the millpond, as were 550 pounds of musket balls. Of the damage done, only that done to the cannon was significant. All of the shot and much of the food was recovered after the British left. During the search, the regulars were generally scrupulous in their treatment of the locals, including paying for food and drink consumed. This excessive politeness was used to advantage by the locals, who were able to misdirect searches from several smaller caches of militia supplies.<sup>[66]</sup>

Barrett's Farm had been an arsenal weeks before but few weapons remained now, and these were, according to family legend, quickly buried in furrows to look like a crop had been planted. The troops sent there did not find any supplies of consequence.<sup>[67]</sup>

### The North Bridge

Colonel Barrett's troops, upon seeing smoke rising from the village square, and seeing only a few companies directly below them, decided to march back toward the town from their vantage point on Punkatasset Hill to a lower, closer flat hilltop about 300 yards (274 m) from the North Bridge. As the militia advanced, the two British companies from the 4th and 10th that held the position near the road retreated to the bridge and yielded the hill to Barrett's men.<sup>[68]</sup>

Five full companies of Minutemen and five more of militia from Acton, Concord, Bedford and Lincoln occupied this hill as more groups of men streamed in, totaling at least 400 against Captain Laurie's light infantry companies, a force totaling 90–95



men. Barrett ordered the Massachusetts men to form one long line two deep on the highway leading down to the bridge, and then he called for another consultation. While overlooking North Bridge from the top of the hill, Barrett, Lt. Col. John Robinson of Westford and the other Captains discussed possible courses of action. Captain Isaac Davis of Acton, whose troops had arrived late, declared his willingness to defend a town not their own by saying, "I'm not afraid to go, and I haven't a man that's afraid to go."<sup>[69]</sup>

Barrett told the men to load their weapons but not to fire unless fired upon, and then ordered them to advance. Laurie ordered the British companies guarding the bridge to retreat across it. One officer then tried to pull up the loose planks of the bridge to impede the colonial advance, but Major Buttrick began to yell at the regulars to stop harming the bridge. The Minutemen and militia advanced in column formation on the light infantry, keeping to the road, since it was surrounded by the spring floodwaters of the Concord River.<sup>[70]</sup>

Captain Laurie then made a poor tactical decision. Since his summons for help had not produced any results, he ordered his men to form positions for "street firing" behind the bridge in a column running perpendicular to the river. This formation was appropriate for sending a large volume of fire into a narrow alley between the buildings of a city, but not for an open path behind a bridge. Confusion reigned as regulars retreating over the bridge tried to form up in the street-firing position of the other troops. Lieutenant Sutherland, who was in the rear of the formation, saw Laurie's mistake and ordered flankers to be sent out. But as he was from a company different from the men under his command, only three soldiers obeyed him. The remainder tried as best they could in the confusion to follow the orders of the superior officer.<sup>[71]</sup>

A shot rang out, and this time there is certainty from depositions taken from men on both sides afterwards that it came from the Army's ranks. It was likely a warning shot fired by a panicked, exhausted British soldier from the 43rd, according to Laurie's letter to his commander after the fight. Two other regulars then fired immediately after that, shots splashing in the river, and then the narrow group up front, possibly thinking the order to fire had been given, fired a ragged volley before Laurie could stop them.<sup>[72]</sup>

Two of the Acton Minutemen, Private Abner Hosmer and Captain Isaac Davis, who were at the head of the line marching to the bridge, were hit and killed instantly. Four more men were wounded, but the militia only halted when Major Buttrick yelled "Fire, for God's sake, fellow soldiers, fire!"<sup>[72][73]</sup> At this point the lines were separated by the Concord River and the bridge, and were only 50 yards (46 m) apart. The few front rows of colonists, bound by the road, and blocked from forming a line of fire, managed to fire over each other's heads and shoulders at the regulars massed across the bridge. Four of the eight British officers and sergeants, who were leading from the front of their troops, were wounded by the volley of musket fire. At least three privates (Thomas Smith, Patrick Gray and James Hall, all from the 4th) were killed or mortally wounded, and nine were wounded.<sup>[74]</sup>

The regulars found themselves trapped in a situation where they were both outnumbered and outmaneuvered. Lacking effective leadership and terrified at the superior numbers of the enemy, with their spirit broken, and likely not having experienced combat before, they abandoned their wounded, and fled to the safety of the approaching grenadier companies coming from the town center, isolating Captain Parsons and the companies searching for arms at Barrett's Farm.<sup>[73]</sup>

### After the fight

The colonists were stunned by their success. No one had actually believed either side would shoot to kill the other. Some advanced; many more retreated; and some went home to see to the safety of their homes and families. Colonel Barrett eventually began to recover control. He moved some of the militia back to the hilltop 300 yards (274 m) away and sent Major Buttrick with others across the bridge to a defensive position on a hill behind a stone wall.<sup>[74]</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Smith heard the exchange of fire from his position in the town moments after he received the request for reinforcements from Laurie. He quickly assembled two companies of grenadiers to lead toward the North Bridge himself. As



The reconstructed North Bridge in Minute Man National Historical Park, Concord



The third of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775, depicting the engagement at the North Bridge



Statue memorializing the battle at the North Bridge, inscribed with verse from Emerson's "Concord Hymn"

these troops marched, they met the shattered remnants of the three light infantry companies running towards them. Smith was concerned about the four companies that had been at Barrett's, since their route to town was now unprotected. When he saw the Minutemen in the distance behind their wall, he halted his two companies and moved forward with only his officers to take a closer look. One of the Minutemen behind that wall observed, "If we had fired, I believe we could have killed almost every officer there was in the front, but we had no orders to fire and there wasn't a gun fired."<sup>[75]</sup> During a tense standoff lasting about 10 minutes, a mentally ill local man named Elias Brown wandered through both sides selling hard cider.<sup>[75]</sup>

At this point, the detachment of regulars sent to Barrett's farm marched back from their fruitless search of that area. They passed through the now mostly-deserted battlefield, and saw dead and wounded comrades lying on the bridge. There was one who looked to them as if he had been scalped, which angered and shocked the British soldiers. They crossed the bridge and returned to the town by 11:30 am, under the watchful eyes of the colonists, who continued to maintain defensive positions. The regulars continued to search for and destroy colonial military supplies in the town, ate lunch, reassembled for marching, and left Concord after noon. This delay in departure gave colonial militiamen from outlying towns additional time to reach the road back to Boston.<sup>[76]</sup>

## Return march

*An interactive mural describing this stage of the battle may be found at the National Park Service site (<http://www.nps.gov/mima/photosmultimedia/index.htm>) for the Minute Man National Historical Park.*

## Concord to Lexington

Lieutenant Colonel Smith, concerned about the safety of his men, sent flankers to follow a ridge and protect his forces from the roughly 1,000 colonials now in the field as they marched east out of Concord. This ridge ended near Meriam's Corner, a crossroads and a small bridge about a mile (2 km) outside the village of Concord. To cross the narrow bridge, the army column had to stop, dress its line, and close its rank to a mere three soldiers abreast. Colonial militia companies arriving from the north and east had converged at this point, and presented a clear numerical advantage over the regulars. As the last of the army column marched over the bridge, colonial militiamen from the Reading militia fired, the regulars turned and fired a volley, and the colonists returned fire. Two regulars were killed and perhaps six wounded, with no colonial casualties. Smith sent out his flanking troops again after crossing the small bridge.<sup>[77]</sup>

Nearly 500 militiamen from Chelmsford had assembled in the woods on Brooks Hill about 1 mile (1.6 km) past Meriam's Corner. Smith's leading forces charged up the hill to drive them off, but the colonists did not withdraw, inflicting significant casualties on the attackers. The bulk of Smith's force proceeded along the road until it reached Brooks Tavern, where they engaged a single militia company from Framingham, killing and wounding several of them. Smith withdrew his men from Brooks Hill and moved across another small bridge into Lincoln.<sup>[77]</sup>

The regulars soon reached a point in the road where there was a rise and a curve through a wooded area. At this point, now known as the "Bloody Angle", 200 men, mostly from the towns of Bedford and Lincoln, had positioned themselves behind trees and walls in a rocky, tree-filled pasture for an ambush. Additional militia joined in from the other side of the road, catching the British in a crossfire in the wooded swamp, while the Concord militia closed from behind to attack. Thirty soldiers and four colonial militia were killed.<sup>[78]</sup> The soldiers escaped by breaking into a trot, a pace that the colonials could not maintain through the woods and swampy terrain. Colonial forces on the road itself behind the British were too densely packed and disorganized to mount an attack.<sup>[78]</sup>

Militia forces included western towns by this time,<sup>[79]</sup> and had risen to about 2,000, and Smith sent out flankers again. When



A National Park Service map showing the retreat from Concord and Percy's rescue



This statue known as *The Lexington Minuteman* is commonly believed to depict Captain John Parker. It is by Henry Hudson Kitson and stands at the town green of Lexington, Massachusetts.

three companies of militia ambushed the head of his main force near either Ephraim Hartwell's or (more likely) Joseph Mason's Farm, the flankers closed in and trapped the militia from behind. Flankers also trapped the Bedford militia after a successful ambush near the Lincoln–Lexington border, but British casualties were mounting from these engagements and from persistent long-range fire, and the exhausted British were running out of ammunition.<sup>[78][79]</sup>

On the Lexington side of the border, Captain Parker, according to only one uncorroborated source (Ebenezer Munroe's memoir of 1824), waited on a hill with the reassembled Lexington Training Band, some of them bandaged up from the encounter in Lexington earlier in the day. These men, according to this account written only many years later, did not begin the ambush until Colonel Smith himself came into view. Smith was wounded in the thigh sometime on the way back to Lexington, and the entire British column was halted in this ambush now known as "Parker's Revenge". Major Pitcairn sent light infantry companies up the hill to clear out any militia sniping at them.<sup>[80]</sup>

The light infantry cleared two additional hills—"The Bluff" and "Fiske Hill"—and took casualties from ambushes. Pitcairn fell from his horse, which was injured by colonists firing from Fiske Hill. Now both principal leaders of the expedition were injured or unhorsed, and their men were tired and thirsty. A few surrendered; most now broke formation and ran forward in a mob. Their organized, planned withdrawal had turned into a rout. "Concord Hill" remained before Lexington Center, and a few uninjured officers turned and supposedly threatened their own men with their swords if they would not reform in good order.<sup>[80]</sup>

Only one British officer remained uninjured in the leading three companies. He was considering surrendering his men when he heard cheering further ahead. A full brigade, about 1,000 men with artillery under the command of Earl Percy, had arrived to rescue them. It was about 2:30 pm.<sup>[81]</sup>

During this part of the march, the colonists fought where possible in large ordered formations (using short-range, smoothbore muskets) at least eight times. This is contrary to the widely held myth of scattered individuals firing with longer-range rifles from behind walls and fences. Although scattered fire had also occurred on this march, these long-range tactics proved useful later in the war. Nobody at Lexington or Concord—indeed, anywhere along the Battle Road or later at Bunker Hill—had a rifle, according to the historical records.<sup>[82]</sup>

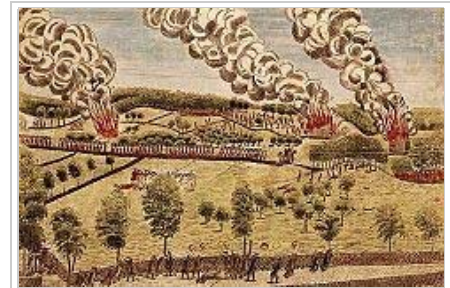
### Percy's rescue

General Gage had left orders for reinforcements to assemble in Boston at 4 am, but in his obsession for secrecy, he had sent only one copy of the orders to the adjutant of the 1st Brigade, whose servant left the envelope on a table. At about 5 am, Smith's request for reinforcements was finally received, and orders were sent for 1st Brigade consisting of the line companies of infantry (the 4th, 23rd, and 47th) and a battalion of British Marines to assemble. Unfortunately, once again only one copy of the orders were sent to each commander, and the order for the Marines was delivered to the desk of Major Pitcairn, who was on the Lexington Common at the time. After these delays, Percy's brigade, about 1,000 strong, left Boston at about 8:45 am. His troops marched out toward Lexington. Along the way they marched to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" to taunt the inhabitants of the area.<sup>[9][83]</sup> By the Battle of Bunker Hill less than two months later, the song had become a popular anthem for the colonial forces.<sup>[84]</sup>

Percy took the land route across Boston Neck and over the Great Bridge, which some enterprising colonists had stripped of its planking to delay their way.<sup>[85]</sup> His men then came upon an absent-minded tutor at Harvard College and asked him which road would take them to Lexington. The Harvard man, apparently oblivious to the reality of what was happening around him, showed him the proper road without thinking. (He was later compelled to leave the country for inadvertently supporting the enemy.)<sup>[86]</sup> Percy's troops arrived in Lexington at about 2:00 pm. They could hear gunfire in the distance as they set up their cannon and lines of regulars on high ground with commanding views of the town. Colonel Smith's men approached like a fleeing mob with the full complement of colonial militia in close formation pursuing them. Percy ordered his artillery to open fire at extreme range, dispersing the colonial militiamen. Smith's men collapsed with exhaustion once they reached the safety of Percy's lines.<sup>[87]</sup>

Against the advice of his Master of Ordnance, Percy had left Boston without spare ammunition for his men or for the two

artillery pieces they brought with them, thinking the extra wagons would slow him down. Each man in Percy's brigade had only 36 rounds, and each artillery piece was supplied with only a few rounds carried in side-boxes.<sup>[88][89]</sup> After Percy had left the city, Gage directed two ammunition wagons guarded by one officer and thirteen men to follow. This convoy was intercepted by a small party of older, former militiamen, still on the "alarm list" who could not join their militia companies because they were well over 60. These men rose up in ambush and demanded the surrender of the wagons, but the regulars ignored them and drove their horses on. The old men opened fire, shot the lead horses, killed two sergeants, and wounded the officer.<sup>[88]</sup> The survivors ran, and six of them threw their weapons into a pond before they surrendered.<sup>[89]</sup>



The fourth of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775, showing Percy's rescue in Lexington.

## Lexington to Menotomy



Percy's return to Charlestown (detail from 1775 map of the battle)

Percy assumed control of the combined forces of about 1,700 men and let them rest, eat, drink, and have their wounds tended at field headquarters (Munroe Tavern) before resuming the march. They set out from Lexington at about 3:30 pm, in a formation that emphasized defense along the sides and rear of the column.<sup>[90]</sup> Wounded regulars rode on the cannon and were forced to hop off when they were fired at by gatherings of militia. Percy's men were often surrounded, but they had the tactical advantage of interior lines. Percy could shift his units more easily to where they were needed, while the colonial militia were required to move around the outside of his formation. Percy placed Smith's men in the middle of the column, while the 23rd Regiment's line companies made up the column's rear guard. Because of information provided by Smith

and Pitcairn about how the Americans were attacking, Percy ordered the rear guard to be rotated every mile or so, to allow some of his troops to rest briefly. Flanking companies were sent to both sides of the road, and a powerful force of Marines acted as the vanguard to clear the road ahead.<sup>[90]</sup>

During the respite at Lexington, Brigadier General William Heath arrived and took command of the militia. Earlier in the day, he had traveled first to Watertown to discuss tactics with Joseph Warren, who had left Boston that morning, and other members of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. Heath and Warren reacted to Percy's artillery and flankers by ordering the militias to avoid close formations that would attract cannon fire. Instead, they surrounded Percy's marching square with a moving ring of skirmishers at a distance to inflict maximum casualties at minimum risk to individual militiamen.<sup>[91]</sup>

A few mounted militiamen on the road would dismount, fire muskets at the approaching regulars, then remount and gallop ahead to repeat the tactic. Unmounted militia would often fire from long range, in the hope of hitting somebody in the main column of soldiers on the road and surviving, since both British and colonials used muskets with an effective combat range of about 50 yards (46 m). Infantry units would apply pressure to the sides of the British column. When it moved out of range, those units would move around and forward to re-engage the column further down the road. Heath sent messengers out to intercept arriving militia units, directing them to appropriate places along the road to engage the regulars. Some towns sent supply wagons to assist in feeding and rearming the militia. Heath and Warren did lead skirmishers in small actions into battle themselves, but it was the presence of effective leadership that probably had the greatest impact on the success of these tactics.<sup>[91]</sup> Percy wrote of the colonial tactics, "The rebels attacked us in a very scattered, irregular manner, but with perseverance and resolution, nor did they ever dare to form into any regular body. Indeed, they knew too well what was proper, to do so. Whoever looks upon them as an irregular mob, will find himself very much mistaken."<sup>[92]</sup>

The fighting grew more intense as Percy's forces crossed from Lexington into Menotomy. Fresh militia poured gunfire into the British ranks from a distance, and individual homeowners began to fight from their own property. Some homes were also used as sniper positions, turning the situation into a soldier's nightmare: house-to-house fighting. Jason Russell pleaded for his friends to fight alongside him to defend his house by saying, "An Englishman's home is his castle."<sup>[93]</sup> He stayed and was killed in his doorway. His friends, depending on which account is to be believed, either hid in the cellar, or died in the house from bullets and bayonets after shooting at the soldiers who followed them in. The Jason Russell House still stands and contains bullet holes from this fight. A militia unit that attempted an ambush from Russell's orchard was caught by flankers, and eleven men were killed, some allegedly after they had surrendered.<sup>[93]</sup>



The Jason Russell House in Arlington

Percy lost control of his men, and British soldiers began to commit atrocities to repay for the supposed scalping at the North Bridge and for their own casualties at the hands of a distant, often unseen enemy. Based on the word of Pitcairn and other wounded officers from Smith's command, Percy had learned that the Minutemen were using stone walls, trees and buildings in these more thickly settled towns closer to Boston to hide behind and shoot at the column. He ordered the flank companies to clear the colonial militiamen out of such places.<sup>[94]</sup>

Many of the junior officers in the flank parties had difficulty stopping their exhausted, enraged men from killing everyone they found inside these buildings. For example, two innocent drunks who refused to hide in the basement of a tavern in Menotomy were killed only because they were suspected of being involved with the day's events.<sup>[95]</sup>

Although many of the accounts of ransacking and burnings were exaggerated later by the colonists for propaganda value (and to get financial compensation from the colonial government), it is certainly true that taverns along the road were ransacked and the liquor stolen by the troops, who in some cases became drunk themselves. One church's communion silver was stolen but was later recovered after it was sold in Boston.<sup>[94]</sup> Aged Menotomy resident Samuel Whittemore killed three regulars before he was attacked by a British contingent and left for dead. (He recovered from his wounds and later died in 1793 at age 98.)<sup>[96]</sup> All told, far more blood was shed in Menotomy and Cambridge than elsewhere that day. The colonists lost 25 men killed and nine wounded there, and the British lost 40 killed and 80 wounded, with the 47th Foot and the Marines suffering the highest casualties. Each was about half the day's fatalities.<sup>[97]</sup>

### Menotomy to Charlestown

The British troops crossed the Menotomy River (today known as Alewife Brook) into Cambridge, and the fight grew more intense. Fresh militia arrived in close array instead of in a scattered formation, and Percy used his two artillery pieces and flankers at a crossroads called Watson's Corner to inflict heavy damage on them.<sup>[94]</sup>

Earlier in the day, Heath had ordered the Great Bridge to be dismantled. Percy's brigade was about to approach the broken-down bridge and a riverbank filled with militia when Percy directed his troops down a narrow track (now Beech Street, near present-day Porter Square) and onto the road to Charlestown. The militia (now numbering about 4,000) were unprepared for this movement, and the circle of fire was broken. An American force moved to occupy Prospect Hill (in modern-day Somerville), which dominated the road, but Percy moved his cannon to the front and dispersed them with his last rounds of ammunition.<sup>[94]</sup>

A large militia force arrived from Salem and Marblehead. They might have cut off Percy's route to Charlestown, but these men halted on nearby Winter Hill and allowed the British to escape. Some accused the commander of this force, Colonel Timothy Pickering, of permitting the troops to pass because he still hoped to avoid war by preventing a total defeat of the regulars. Pickering later claimed that he had stopped on Heath's orders, but Heath denied this.<sup>[94]</sup> It was nearly dark when Pitcairn's Marines defended a final attack on Percy's rear as they entered Charlestown. The regulars took up strong positions on the hills of Charlestown. Some of them had been without sleep for two days and had marched 40 miles (64 km) in 21 hours, eight hours of which had been spent under fire. But now they held high ground protected by heavy guns from the HMS *Somerset*. Gage quickly sent over line companies of two fresh regiments—the 10th and 64th—to occupy the high ground in Charlestown and build fortifications. Although they were begun, the fortifications were never completed and would later be a starting point for the militia works built two months later in June before the Battle of Bunker Hill. General Heath studied the position of the British Army and decided to withdraw the militia to Cambridge.<sup>[98]</sup>

### Aftermath

In the morning, Boston was surrounded by a huge militia army, numbering over 15,000, which had marched from throughout New England.<sup>[99]</sup> Unlike the Powder Alarm, the rumors of spilled blood were true, and the Revolutionary War had begun. The militia army continued to grow as surrounding colonies sent men and supplies. The Second Continental Congress adopted these men into the beginnings of the Continental Army. Even now, after open warfare had started, Gage still refused to impose martial law in Boston. He persuaded the town's selectmen to surrender all private weapons in return for promising that any inhabitant could leave town.<sup>[100]</sup>

The battle was not a major one in terms of tactics or casualties. However, in terms of supporting the British political strategy behind the Intolerable Acts and the military strategy behind the Powder Alarms, the battle was a significant failure because the expedition contributed to the fighting it was intended to prevent, and because few weapons were actually seized.<sup>[92]</sup>

The battle was followed by a war for British political opinion. Within four days of the battle, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress had collected scores of sworn testimonies from militiamen and from British prisoners. When word leaked out a week after the battle that Gage was sending his official description of events to London, the Provincial Congress sent over 100 of these detailed depositions on a faster ship. They were presented to a sympathetic official and printed by the London newspapers two weeks before Gage's report arrived.<sup>[99]</sup> Gage's official report was too vague on particulars to influence anyone's opinion. George Germain, no friend of the colonists, wrote, "the Bostonians are in the right to make the King's troops the aggressors and claim a victory."<sup>[101]</sup> Politicians in London tended to blame Gage for the conflict instead of their own policies and instructions. The British troops in Boston variously blamed General Gage and Colonel Smith for the failures at Lexington and Concord.<sup>[102]</sup>

The day after the battle, John Adams left his home in Braintree to ride along the battlefields. He became convinced that "the Die was cast, the Rubicon crossed."<sup>[103]</sup> Thomas Paine in Philadelphia had previously thought of the argument between the colonies and the Home Country as "a kind of law-suit", but after news of the battle reached him, he "rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England forever."<sup>[104]</sup> George Washington received the news at Mount Vernon and wrote to a friend, "the once-happy and peaceful plains of America are either to be drenched in blood or inhabited by slaves. Sad alternative! But can a virtuous man hesitate in his choice?"<sup>[104]</sup> A group of hunters on the frontier named their campsite Lexington when they heard news of the battle in June. It eventually became the city of Lexington, Kentucky.<sup>[105]</sup>

## Legacy

It was important to the early American government that an image of British fault and American innocence be maintained for this first battle of the war. The history of Patriot preparations, intelligence, warning signals, and uncertainty about the first shot was rarely discussed in the public sphere for decades. The story of the wounded British soldier at the North Bridge, *hors de combat*, struck down on the head by a Minuteman using a hatchet, the purported "scalping", was strongly suppressed. Depositions mentioning some of these activities were not published and were returned to the participants (this notably happened to Paul Revere<sup>[106]</sup>). Paintings portrayed the Lexington fight as an unjustified slaughter.<sup>[106]</sup>

The issue of which side was to blame grew during the early nineteenth century. For example, older participants' testimony in later life about Lexington and Concord differed greatly from their depositions taken under oath in 1775. All now said the British fired first at Lexington, whereas fifty or so years before, they weren't sure. All now said they fired back, but in 1775, they said few were able to. The "Battle" took on an almost mythical quality in the American consciousness. Legend became more important than truth. A complete shift occurred, and the Patriots were portrayed as actively fighting for their cause, rather than as suffering innocents. Paintings of the Lexington skirmish began to portray the militia standing and fighting back in defiance.<sup>[107]</sup>

Ralph Waldo Emerson immortalized the events at the North Bridge in his 1837 "Concord Hymn". The "Concord Hymn" became important because it commemorated the beginning of the American Revolution, and that for much of the 19th century it was a means by which Americans learned about the Revolution, helping to forge the identity of the nation.<sup>[108]</sup>

After 1860, several generations of schoolchildren memorized Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride". Historically it is inaccurate (for example, Paul Revere never made it to Concord), but it captures the idea that an individual can change the course of history.<sup>[109]</sup>

In the 20th century, popular and historical opinion varied about the events of the historic day, often reflecting the political mood of the time. Isolationist anti-war



Gravemarkers along Battle Road in Lexington are maintained with Britain's 1775 version of the Union Flag.

By the rude bridge that arched the flood

sentiments before the World Wars bred skepticism about the nature of Paul Revere's contribution (if any) to the efforts to rouse the militia. Anglophilia in the United States after the turn of the twentieth century led to more balanced approaches to the history of the battle. During World War I, a film about Paul Revere's ride was seized under the Espionage Act of 1917 for promoting discord between the United States and Britain.<sup>[110]</sup>

Their flag to April's breeze unfurled  
Here once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world.

- First verse of Emerson's "Concord Hymn"

During the Cold War, Revere was used not only as a patriotic symbol, but also as a capitalist one. In 1961, novelist Howard Fast published *April Morning*, an account of the battle from a fictional 15-year-old's perspective, and reading of the book has been frequently assigned in American secondary schools. A film version was produced for television in 1987, starring Chad Lowe and Tommy Lee Jones. In the 1990s, parallels were drawn between American tactics in the Vietnam War and those of the British Army at Lexington and Concord.<sup>[111]</sup>

The site of the battle in Lexington is now known as the Lexington Battle Green, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a National Historic Landmark. Several memorials commemorating the battle have been established there.

The lands surrounding the North Bridge in Concord, as well as approximately 5 miles (8.0 km) of the road along with surrounding lands and period buildings between Merriam's Corner and western Lexington are part of Minuteman National Historical Park. There are walking trails with interpretive displays along routes that the colonists might have used that skirted the road, and the Park Service often has personnel (usually dressed in period dress) offering descriptions of the area and explanations of the events of the day.<sup>[112]</sup> A bronze bas relief of Major Buttrick, designed by Daniel Chester French and executed by Edmond Thomas Quinn in 1915, is in the park, along with French's *Minute Man* statue.<sup>[113]</sup>

Four current units of the Massachusetts National Guard units (181st Infantry,<sup>[114]</sup> 182nd Infantry,<sup>[115]</sup> 101st Engineer Battalion,<sup>[116]</sup> and 125th Quartermaster Company<sup>[117]</sup>) are derived from American units that participated in the Battles of Lexington and Concord. There are only thirty current units of the U.S. Army with colonial roots.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## Commemorations



1970 Franklin Mint medallion commemorating Lexington and Concord 1775

Patriots' Day is celebrated annually in honor of the battle in Massachusetts, Maine, and by the Wisconsin public schools, on the third Monday in April.<sup>[118][119][120]</sup> Re-enactments of Paul Revere's ride are staged, as are the battle on the Lexington Green, and ceremonies and firings are held at the North Bridge.

### Centennial commemoration

On April 19, 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant and members of his cabinet joined 50,000 people to mark the 100th anniversary of the battles. The sculpture by Daniel Chester French, *The Minute Man*, located at the North Bridge, was unveiled on that day. A formal ball took place in the evening at the Agricultural Hall in Concord.<sup>[121]</sup>

### Sesquicentennial commemoration

In April 1925 the United States Post Office issued three stamps commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Battles at Lexington and Concord. The Lexington—Concord commemoratives were the first of many commemoratives issued to honor the 150th anniversaries of events that surrounded America's War of Independence. The three stamps were first placed on sale in Washington, D.C. and in five Massachusetts cities and towns that played major roles in the Lexington and Concord story: Lexington, Concord, Boston, Cambridge, and Concord Junction (as West Concord was then known).<sup>[122]</sup> This is not to say that other locations were not involved in the battles.



Daniel Chester French's *Minute Man*



Washington at Cambridge  
issue of 1925

Shot heard round the World  
Birth of Liberty  
issue of 1925

The Minute Man  
by Daniel Chester French  
issue of 1925

## Bicentennial commemoration

The Town of Concord invited 700 prominent U.S. citizens and leaders from the worlds of government, the military, the diplomatic corps, the arts, sciences, and humanities to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the battles. On April 19, 1975, as a crowd estimated at 110,000 gathered to view a parade and celebrate the Bicentennial in Concord, President Gerald Ford delivered a major speech near the North Bridge, which was televised to the nation.<sup>[123]</sup>

Freedom was nourished in American soil because the principles of the Declaration of Independence flourished in our land. These principles, when enunciated 200 years ago, were a dream, not a reality. Today, they are real. Equality has matured in America. Our inalienable rights have become even more sacred. There is no government in our land without consent of the governed. Many other lands have freely accepted the principles of liberty and freedom in the Declaration of Independence and fashioned their own independent republics. It is these principles, freely taken and freely shared, that have revolutionized the world. The volley fired here at Concord two centuries ago, 'the shot heard round the world', still echoes today on this anniversary.<sup>[124]</sup>

— President Gerald R. Ford

## Notes

- <sup>a b c</sup> Coburn, p. xii
- <sup>a b</sup> The exact number of militia on the field for the conflict is a matter of debate. Fischer (notes on p. 400) cites contemporaneous counts and those of other historians of between 50 and 70 militia, and states (p. 183) that Sylvanus Wood, in an account taken 50 years later, recalled only counting 38 militia. Coburn (p. 60) identifies 77 individuals by name that mustered for the encounter.
- <sup>a</sup> Chidsey, p. 29 estimates the colonial force at 500 by the time the confrontation occurs. Coburn, pp. 80–81 counts about 300 specifically, plus several uncounted companies.
- <sup>a</sup> Chidsey, p. 6. This is the total size of Smith's force.
- <sup>a</sup> Coburn, p. 64. This force is six light infantry companies under Pitcairn.
- <sup>a</sup> Coburn, p. 77 and other sources indicate "three companies". Chidsey, p. 28 gives a company size "nominally of 28".
- <sup>a</sup> Coburn, p. 114 gives the size of Percy's force at 1,000. This count reflects that estimate plus the departing strength, less casualties.
- <sup>a b</sup> Chidsey, p. 47 recites all casualty figures except MIA. Coburn, pp. 156–159 recites by town and name the American losses, and by company the British losses, including MIA (from Gage's report). Chidsey, Coburn, and Fischer disagree on some American counts: Chidsey and Fischer count 39 wounded, Coburn 42. Fischer, pp. 320–321 also records 50 American KIA vs Chidsey and Coburn's 49.
- <sup>a b</sup> French, pp. 2, 272-273
- <sup>a</sup> A controversial interpretation holds that the Battle of Point Pleasant, six months earlier, was the initial military engagement of the Revolutionary War. Despite a 1908 United States Senate resolution designating it as such, few, if any, historians subscribe to this interpretation.[1] ([http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal\\_vvwh/vvwh56-5.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal_vvwh/vvwh56-5.html))
- <sup>a</sup> Emerson's Concord Hymn
- <sup>a</sup> Fischer, p. 30
- <sup>a</sup> Brooks, pp. 30–31
- <sup>a</sup> Fischer, p. 51
- <sup>a</sup> Fischer, pp. 75–76
- <sup>a</sup> Brooks, pp. 37–38



17. ^ Fischer, p. 89
18. ^ Hafner discusses this incident in detail.
19. ^ Fischer, p. 85
20. ^ Tourtellot, pp. 71–72 (colonists have intelligence in late March) & p. 87 (Gage receives instructions April 16)
21. ^ Tourtellot, p. 70
22. ^ Fischer, pp. 80–85
23. ^ Fischer, p. 87
24. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, p. 96
25. ^ Brooks, pp.41–42
26. ^ Fischer, p. 97
27. ^ Brooks, pp. 42–44
28. ^ Brooks, p. 50
29. ^ Fischer, pp. 138–145
30. ^ Frothingham, p. 60
31. ^ Frothingham, p. 58
32. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Tourtellot, pp. 105–107
33. ^ Fischer, pp. 70, 121
34. ^ Tourtellot, pp. 109–115
35. ^ Jeremy Lister's Journal
36. ^ Fischer, pp. 127–128
37. ^ *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (1994) p. 122
38. ^ Fischer, p. 400
39. ^ Fischer, p. 158
40. ^ Fischer, p. 153
41. ^ Fischer, David Hackett, *Paul Revere's Ride*, p. 151, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1994.
42. ^ Tourtellot, Arthur Bernon, *William Diamond's Drum: The Beginning of the War of the American Revolution*, pp. 116-126, Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1959.
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44. ^ Galvin, Gen. John R., US Army, *The Minutemen - The First Fight: Myths and Realities of the American Revolution*, 2nd edition, pp. 120-124, Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1989.
45. ^ Coburn, p. 63
46. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Isaiah Thomas deposition
47. ^ Tourtellot, p. 123
48. ^ Brooks pp. 52–53
49. ^ Fischer, pp. 189–190
50. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, pp.190–191
51. ^ John Barker's Diary, p. 32
52. ^ Chronology06 (<http://www.motherbedford.com/Chronology06.htm>). Motherbedford.com. Retrieved on 2013-08-16.
53. ^ Fischer, p. 193
54. ^ Fischer, p. 402
55. ^ Fischer discusses the shot on pp. 193–194, with detailed footnotes on pp. 399–403, in which he discusses some of the testimony in detail.
56. ^ Urban, pp. 19–20
57. ^ Fischer, pp. 194–195
58. ^ Brooks, pp. 55–56
59. ^ Fischer, pp. 198–200
60. ^ Tourtellot, p. 152
61. ^ Tourtellot, p. 154
62. ^ Frothingham, p. 67
63. ^ Fischer, p. 215
64. ^ Fischer p.207
65. ^ Martha Moulton deposition
66. ^ Tourtellot, pp. 155–158
67. ^ French, p. 197
68. ^ Fischer, p. 208
69. ^ Fischer, p. 209
70. ^ Fischer, pp. 209–212
71. ^ Fischer, p. 212
72. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Brooks, p. 67
73. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Tourtellot, pp. 165–166
74. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, p. 214
75. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, p. 216
76. ^ Tourtellot, pp. 166–168
77. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Brooks, p. 71
78. ^ <sup>a b c</sup> Fischer, pp. 226–227
79. ^ <sup>a b</sup> "Source: Google Books url= *Genealogical and Personal Memoirs, relating to the families of the state of Massachusetts, by William Richard Cutter, and Wm Frederick Adams, Vol 4, 1910, George T Hoar, Harvard College Library*" ([http://books.google.com/books?pg=PA2393&lpg=PA2393&dq=Captain%20Baxter%20Hall&sig=bmMBLV8-s8cDtQBc3Vm-GRYpsOE&ei=Aq9US7SyGMmztgf9\\_q2tDA&ct=result&id=FM8UAAAAYAAJ&ots=P\\_Tlbp4dLU&output=text](http://books.google.com/books?pg=PA2393&lpg=PA2393&dq=Captain%20Baxter%20Hall&sig=bmMBLV8-s8cDtQBc3Vm-GRYpsOE&ei=Aq9US7SyGMmztgf9_q2tDA&ct=result&id=FM8UAAAAYAAJ&ots=P_Tlbp4dLU&output=text)).
80. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Brooks, pp. 72–73
81. ^ Fischer, p. 232
82. ^ Fischer, p. 161
83. ^ Brooks, p. 79
84. ^ Frothingham, p. 178
85. ^ Tourtellot, pp. 184–185
86. ^ Tourtellot, p. 185
87. ^ Fischer, pp. 241–242
88. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Brooks, pp. 81–82
89. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, pp. 243–244
90. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, pp. 245–246
91. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, pp. 250–251
92. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Tourtellot, p. 203
93. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, p. 256
94. ^ <sup>a b c d e</sup> Fischer, p. 258
95. ^ Tourtellot, p. 197
96. ^ Fischer, p. 257
97. ^ Hurd, p. 181
98. ^ Fischer, p. 261
99. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Brooks, p. 96
100. ^ Fischer, p. 265
101. ^ Fischer, pp. 275–276
102. ^ Fischer, p. 263
103. ^ Fischer, p. 279
104. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, p. 280
105. ^ Fischer, p. 271
106. ^ <sup>a b</sup> Fischer, pp. 327-328
107. ^ Fischer, p. 329
108. ^ Napierkowski
109. ^ Fischer, pp. 331–333
110. ^ Fischer, pp. 336–338
111. ^ Fischer, pp. 340–342
112. ^ Minuteman National Historical Park Things To Do
113. ^ "John Buttrick Memorial" (<http://sirir-artinventories.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=1W80430D191F9.6618&profile=ariall&source=~!sirtinventories&>

- view=subscriptionssummary&uri=full=3100001~1340743~10&ri=5&aspect=Browse&menu=search&ipp=20&sp=20&staffonly=&term=Quinn,+Edmond+Thomas,+1868-1929,+sculptor.&index=AUTHOR&uindex=&aspect=Browse&menu=search&ri=5). Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved 2010-08-12.
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  116. ^ Department of the Army, Lineage and Honors, 101st Engineer Battalion
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## External links

- National Park Service site for Minute Man National Historical Park (<http://www.nps.gov/mima/>)
- Why We Remember Lexington and Concord and the 19th of April (<http://rjohara.net/gen/wars/ minuteman>)
- Rescued cannon returns to Concord (<http://www.nps.gov/mima/My%20Webs/myweb/The%20Hancock%20Returns.htm>)
- Battles of Lexington and Concord (<http://www.generalatomic.com/AmericanHistory/lexington.html>)
- Articles about the Concord Fight in Concord Magazine (<http://www.concordma.com/concordfight/toc.html>)
- Animated History of the Battles of Lexington and Concord (<http://www.revolutionarywaranimated.com/index.php/lexington-and-concord>)
- Concord Massachusetts (<http://www.revolutionaryday.com/usroute20/concord/default.htm>)
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- Statements of American combatants at Lexington and Concord (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20636/20636-8.txt>) contained in supplement "Official Papers Concerning the Skirmishes at Lexington and Concord" to *The Military Journals of Private Soldiers, 1758-1775*, by Abraham Tomlinson for the Poughkeepsie, NY museum, 1855.
- Teach this article at the Wikischool ([http://www.wikischool.us/instructor\\_pages/vol\\_1\\_files/Page315.htm](http://www.wikischool.us/instructor_pages/vol_1_files/Page315.htm))

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