

## British Documents about April 19, 1775

*British Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith received his orders from General Thomas Gage on the afternoon of April 18, 1775, with instructions not to open them until his troops were underway. When opened the instructions read:*

### Orders from General Thomas Gage to Lieut. Colonel Smith, 10th Regiment 'Foot

Boston, April 18, 1775

Lieut. Colonel Smith, 10th Regiment 'Foot,

Sir,

Having received intelligence, that a quantity of Ammunition, Provisions, Artillery, Tents and small Arms, have been collected at Concord, for the Avowed Purpose of raising and supporting a Rebellion against His Majesty, you will March with a Corps of Grenadiers and Light Infantry, put under your Command, with the utmost expedition and Secrecy to Concord, where you will seize and distroy all Artillery, Ammunition, Provisions, Tents, Small Arms, and all Military Stores whatever. But you will take care that the Soldiers do not plunder the Inhabitants, or hurt private property.

You have a Draught of Concord, on which is marked the Houses, Barns, &c, which contain the above military Stores. You will order a Trunion to be knocked off each Gun, but if its found impracticable on any, they must be spiked, and the Carriages destroyed. The Powder and flower must be shook out of the Barrels into the River, the Tents burnt, Pork or Beef destroyed in the best way you can devise. And the Men may put Balls of lead in their pockets, throwing them by degrees into Ponds, Ditches &c., but no Quantity together, so that they may be recovered afterwards. If you meet any Brass Artillery, you will order their muzzles to be beat in so as to render them useless.

You will observe by the Draught that it will be necessary to secure the two Bridges as soon as possible, you will therefore Order a party of the best Marchers, to go on with expedition for the purpose.

A small party of Horseback is ordered out to stop all advice of your March getting to Concord before you, and a small number of Artillery go out in Chaises to wait for you on the road, with Sledge Hammers, Spikes, &c.

You will open your business and return with the Troops, as soon as possible, with I must leave to your own Judgment and Discretion.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant  
Thos. Gage.

*Major Pitcairn's report to General Gage:*

Boston Camp,  
26 th April, 1775  
To: General Thomas Gage

Sir,

As you are anxious to know the particulars that happened near and at Lexington in the 19 th Inst agreeable to your desire, I will in as concise a manner as possible state the facts, for my time at present is so much employed, as to prevent a more particular narrative of the occurrences of that day.

Six companies of Light Infantry were detached by Lt Colo Smith to take possession of two bridges on the other side of Concord, near three in the Morning, when we were advanced within about two miles of Lexington, intelligence was received that about 500 men in arms were assembled, determined to oppose the Kings troops, and retard them in their march. On this intelligence, I mounted my horse, and galloped up to the six Light Companies. When I arrived at the head of the advance Company, two officers came and informed me, that a man of the rebels advanced from

those that were assembled, had presented his musket and attempted to shoot them, but the piece flashed in the pan. On this I gave directions to the troops to move forward, but on no account to fire, or even attempt it without orders; when I arrived at the end of the Village, I observed drawn up upon a Green near 200 rebels; when I came within about 100 yards of them, they began to file off towards some stone walls on our right flank. The Light Infantry, observing this, ran after them. I instantly called to the soldiers not to fire, but surround and disarm them, and after several repetitions of those positive orders to the men, not to fire, etc. some of the rebels who had jumped over the wall fired four or five shots at the soldiers, which wounded a man of the Tenth and my horse was wounded in two places, from some quarter or other, and at the same time several shots were fired from a meeting house on our left. Upon this, without any order or regularity, the Light Infantry began a scattered fire, and continued in that situation for some little time, contrary to the repeated orders both of me and the officers that were present. It will be needless to mention what happened after, as I suppose Colo Smith hath given a particular account of it..

I am, Sir, Your Most Obedt  
Humble Servant  
John Pitcairn

*From Lieutenant Colonel Smith's report to General Gage, April 22, 1775:*

In the obedience to your Excellency's commands, I marched on the evening of the 18th inst. with the corps of grenadiers and light infantry for Concord, to execute your Excellency's orders with respect to destroying all ammunition, artillery, tents, &c, collected there.

I think it proper to observe, that when I had got some miles on the march from Boston, I detached six light infantry companies to march with all expedition to seize the two bridges on different roads beyond Concord. On these companies' arrival at Lexington, I understand, from the report of Major Pitcairn, who was with them, and from many officers, that they found on a green close to the road a body of the country people drawn up in military order, with arms and accoutrement, and, as appeared after, loaded.

*Lord Percy, who commanded the relief column, reported to General Gage April 20th.*

In obedience to your Excellency's orders I marched yesterday morning at 9 o'clock with the 1st brigade and 2 field pieces, in order to cover the retreat of the grenadiers and light infantry in their return from their expedition to Concord. As all the houses were shut up, and there was not the appearance of a single inhabitant, I could get no intelligence concerning them till I had passed Menotomy, when I was informed that the rebels had attacked his Majesty's troops who were retiring, overpowered by numbers, greatly exhausted and fatigued, and having expended almost all their ammunition - and at about 2 o'clock I met them retiring rough the town of Lexington - I immediately ordered the 2 field pieces to fire at the rebels, and drew up the brigade on a height.

The shot from the cannon had the desired effect, and stopped the rebels for a little time, who immediately dispersed, and endeavoured to surround us being ery numerous. As it began now to grow pretty late and we had 15 miles to retire, and only 36 rounds, I ordered the grenadiers and light infantry to move of first; and covered them with my brigade sending out very strong flanking parties wch wre absolutely very necessary, as there was not a stone wall, or house, though before in appearance evacuated, from whence the rebels did not fire upon us. As soon as they saw us begin to retire, they pressed very much upon our rear guard, which for that reason, I relieved every now and then.

In this manner we retired for 15 miles under incessant fire all round us, till we arrived at Charlestown, between 7 and 8 in the evening and having expended almost all our ammunition. We had the misfortune of losing a good many men in the retreat, though nothing like the number which from many circumstances I have reason to believe were killed of the rebels. His Majesty's troops during he whole of the affair behaved with their usual intrepidity and spirit nor were they a little exsperated at the cruelty and barbarity of the rebels, who scalped and cut off the ears of some of the wounded men who fell into their hands.

*General Thomas Gage Reports on the Battles of Lexington and Concord in a Letter to the Earl of Dartmouth April 22, 1775*

**My Lord**

. . . I am to acquaint your Lordship that having received Intelligence of a large Quantity of Military Stores being collected at Concord, for the avowed Purpose of Supplying a Body of Troops to act in opposition to His Majesty's Government, I got the Grenadiers and Light Infantry out of Town under the Command of Lieutenant Colonel Smith of the 10th Regiment and Major Pitcairne of the Marines with as much Secrecy as possible, on the 18th at Night and with Orders to destroy the said Military Stores, and Supported them the next Morning by Eight Companys of the 4th the same Number of the 23d, 47th and Marines, under the Command of Lord Percy. It appears from the Firing of Alarm Guns and Ringing of Bells that the March of Lieutenant Colonel Smith was discovered, and he was opposed by a Body of Men within Six Miles of Concord; Some few of whom first began to fire upon his advanced Companys which brought on a Fire from the Troops that dispersed the Body opposed to them; and they proceeded to Concord where they destroyed all the Military Stores they could find, on the Return of the Troops they were attacked from all Quarters where any Cover was to be found, from whence it was practicable to annoy them, and they were so fatigued with their March that it was with Difficuly they could keep out their Flanking Partys to remove the Enemy to a Distance, so that they were at length a good deal pressed. Lord Percy then Arrived opportunely to their Assisstance with his Brigade and two Pieces of Cannon, and Notwithstanding a continual Skirmish for the Space of Fifteen Miles, receiving Fire from every Hill, Fence, House, Barn, etc. His Lordship kept the Enemy off, and brought the troops to Charles-Town, from whence they were ferryed over to Boston. Too much Praise cannot be given Lord Percy for his remarkable Activity and Conduct during the whole Day, Lieutenant Colonel Smith and Major Pitcairn did every thing Men could do, as did all the Offlcers in general, and the Men behaved with their usual Intrepidity. I send your Lordship Lord Percy's and Lieutenant Colonel Smiths Letters to me on this Affair to which I beg Leave to referr your Lordship for a more Circumstantial Account of it. I have likewise the honour to transmit your Lordship a Return of the killed, wounded and Missing. The Loss sustained by those who attacked is said to be great.

The whole Country was assembled in Arms with Surprizing Expedition, and Several Thousand are now Assembled about this Town threatening an Attack, and getting up Artillery. And we are very busy in making Preparations to oppose them....

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