



“In the Afternoon We Went to Training”: War Time Preparations in Plymouth County (1774-1775)

# Introduction



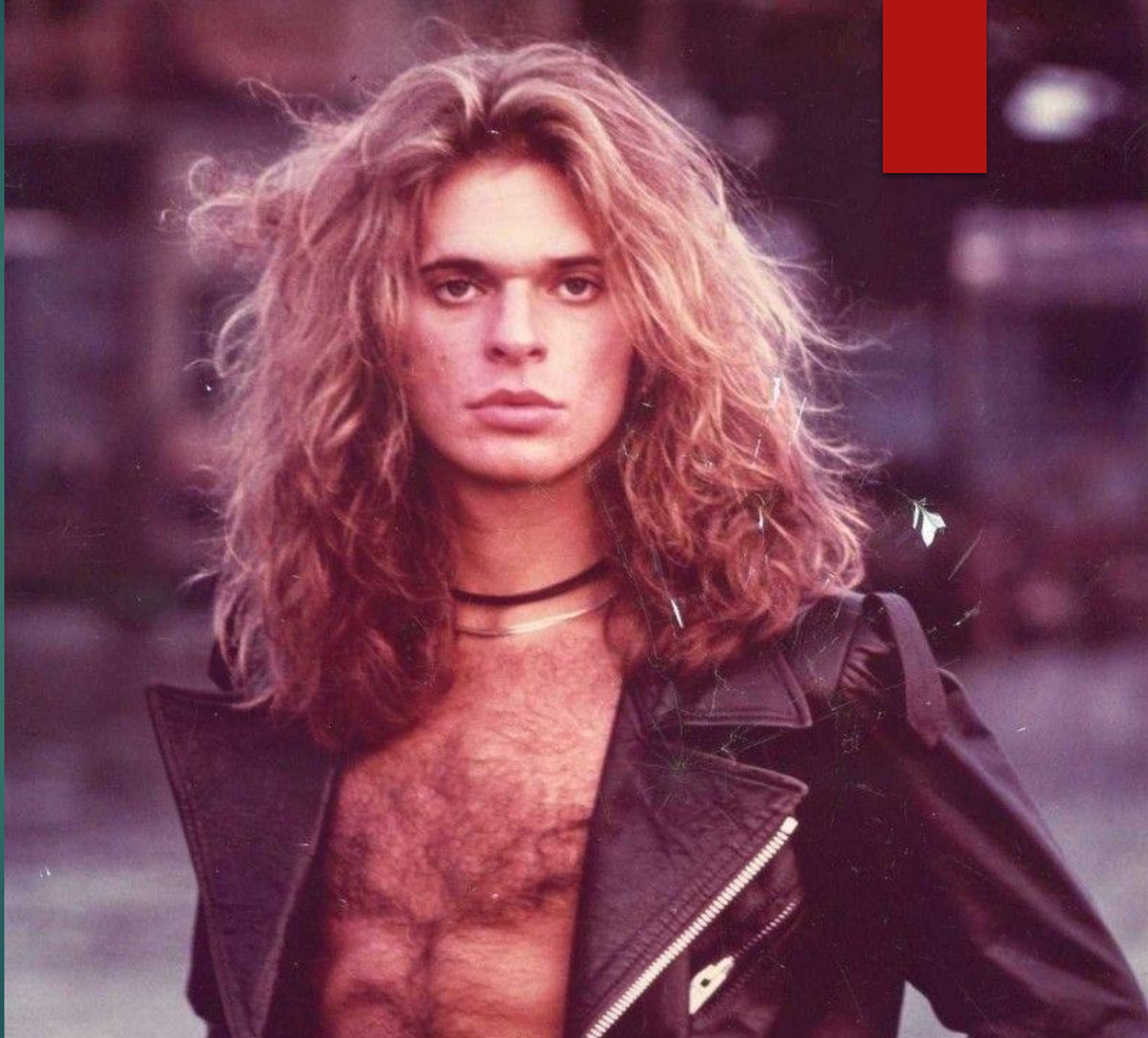
# What We'll Cover Today

- ❖ On the Brink of War: A Snapshot of Massachusetts Bay Colony on the eve of the American Revolution
- ❖ An Introduction to the Massachusetts Militia System
- ❖ Massachusetts Prepares for War
- ❖ Local Efforts to Support the Wartime Buildup
- ❖ Military Drilling and Exercise in Plymouth County
- ❖ The Marshfield Affair
- ❖ The Siege of Boston
- ❖ Questions??

# Inspirational Quote



“When I die,  
sprinkle my  
ashes over the  
80’s.”  
- *David Lee  
Roth*



The State of the  
British Empire in  
1763



# England and Her Colonies in 1763

- ❖ The origins of the American Revolution can be traced back to the close of the French and Indian War (1754-1763). Following its conquest of Canada, England began to recognize the harsh realities of its victory.
- ❖ In the months following the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain was forced not just to administer its newly acquired territories, but also to defend them.
- ❖ This necessitated maintaining a ten-thousand-man army to protect North America from future French operations and Native American attacks, such as Pontiac's Rebellion, which ignited after the conclusion of the war.
- ❖ By January 5, 1763, Britain's funded debt was a staggering £122,603,336 with an annual interest of £4,409,797. A year later, the debt was almost £7,000,000 larger and by January of 1767, it had increased yet another £7,000,000.

# England and Her Colonies in 1763

- ❖ To curb this financial burden, the English government implemented a series of economic programs aimed at having those it considered to have benefited most by the successful conclusion of the war, the American colonies, share in the burden.
- ❖ After reviewing the state of Britain's finances, Chancellor of Exchequer, George Grenville, concluded that the American colonies had benefited greatly from the protection of the Crown while contributing very little in taxes.
- ❖ At the same time, Grenville pointed out, an active smuggling trade coupled with massive colonial customs mismanagement, particularly in the New England region, had led to an annual £6,000 deficit in custom duties collected in American ports.
- ❖ Accordingly, he suggested that a direct tax be levied on the American colonies in order to generate additional revenue.





## The Stamp and Sugar Acts

# The Stamp and Sugar Acts

- ❖ The first two revenue raising measures that Great Britain imposed on her American colonies were the Sugar Act of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765.
- ❖ The Sugar Act established tariffs on colonial trading and also attempted to curb the American practice of smuggling sugar and molasses from the West Indies by placing a three pence per gallon tax on foreign molasses.
- ❖ The act established a list of “enumerated goods” that could be shipped only to England, including lumber, and set forth procedures for the accounting, loading and unloading of cargo in port.
- ❖ Violations of the act were prosecuted in a vice admiralty court, where defendants would be denied the right to a jury trial and where the presumption was of guilt rather than innocence.

# The Stamp and Sugar Acts

- ❖ The second revenue raising measure was the Stamp Act, which levied an unprecedented direct tax on almost every piece of public paper in the colonies.
- ❖ Newspapers, almanacs, deeds, wills, custom documents, even playing cards were among the many papers subjected to the tax.
- ❖ The Stamp Act went so far as to impose a tax upon *tax receipts*.
- ❖ The Sugar and Stamp acts brought on an explosion of riots, boycotts and protests throughout the colonies, particularly in Massachusetts.
- ❖ Violence broke out in Newport, Providence, Boston, Portsmouth (NH) and Plymouth.

*The true Sons of Liberty*

And Supporters of the Non-Importation  
Agreement,

**A**RE determined to resent any the least  
Insult or Menace offer'd to any one or  
more of the several Committees ap-  
pointed by the Body at Faneuil-Hall, and  
chastise any one or more of them as they  
deserve; and will also support the Printers  
in any Thing the Committees shall desire  
them to print.

**AS** a Warning to any one that shall  
affront as aforesaid, upon sure Infor-  
mation given, one of these Advertisements  
will be posted up at the Door  
or Dwelling-House of the Offender.

# The Townshend Acts

# The Townshend Acts

- ❖ By 1767 England's debt was still out of control. The government was faced with a projected annual cost of almost £400,000 just to maintain her army in America alone.
- ❖ Charles Townshend, the impetuous Chancellor of the Exchequer, of whom it was said, "his mouth often outran his mind", suddenly announced that he knew how to tax the American colonies.
- ❖ The Townshend Acts, as they became known, provided for an American import tax on paper, painter's lead, glass and tea. The acts also tightened custom policies and revived the vice-admiralty courts.
- ❖ Although a minority within the House of Commons opposed such a measure, the majority rationalized it would "raise colonial revenue, punish the colonists for their ill-behavior after the repeal of the Stamp Act, and exercise the rights to which Parliament laid claim in the Declaratory Act."

# The Townshend Acts

- ❖ Once again, Massachusetts stood at the forefront of opposition.
- ❖ On October 28, 1767, the citizens of Boston resolved, at a town meeting, to oppose the acts by refusing to import English goods and to encourage American manufacture instead. However, by 1768, Boston was once again resorting to violence to indicate its opposition to British policy.
- ❖ The victims of the mob begged Governor Bernard to apply for military protection so the Townshend Acts could be enforced. The governor struggled with the decision, but ultimately applied to the king for troops.
- ❖ In 1768, Governor Bernard was ordered to dissolve the Massachusetts legislature, and two full regiments of British regulars were dispatched to Boston to protect the custom officials and enforce the Townshend Acts.

# The Townshend Acts – Boycott





# The Boston Massacre



# The Paul Revere Engraving



|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Unhappy Boston! see thy Sons deplore,<br/>         Thy hallow'd Walks besmear'd with guiltless Gore:<br/>         While faithless P—n and his savage Bands,<br/>         With murderous Rancour stretch their bloody Hands;<br/>         Like fierce Barbarians ginning o'er their Prey,<br/>         Approve the Carnage and enjoy the Day.</p> | <p>If scalding drops from Rage from Anguish spring,<br/>         If speechless Sorrows lab'ring for a Tongue,<br/>         Or if a weeping World can ought appease<br/>         The plaintive Ghosts of Victims such as these:<br/>         The Patriot's copious Tears for each are shed,<br/>         A glorious Tribute which embalms the Dead.</p> | <p>But know, Extraneous summons to that awful Goal,<br/>         Where Justice strips the Mind rev' of his Soul,<br/>         Should venal C—ts the scandal of the Land,<br/>         Snatch the relentless Villain from her Hand,<br/>         Keen Execrations on this Plate inscrib'd,<br/>         Shall reach a JUDGE who never can be brib'd.</p> |
|---|--|---|

*The unhappy Sufferers were Messrs SAM<sup>l</sup> GRAY, SAM<sup>l</sup> MAVERICK, JAM<sup>s</sup> CALDWELL, CRISPUS ATTUCKS & PAT<sup>r</sup> CARROLL  
 Killed. Six wounded; two of them (CHRIST<sup>o</sup> MONK & JOHN CLARK) Mortally*

# The Boston Tea Party



# The Boston Tea Party

- ❖ In 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act to refinance the shaky economic base of the British East India Company. Established in 1709, the East India Company derived over ninety-percent of its profits from the sale of tea.
- ❖ However, by 1772, due to severe mismanagement, the company was in desperate need of a bailout. The company directors looked to Parliament for relief. Parliament's response was the Tea Act, through which the East India Company was given exclusive rights to ship tea to America without paying import duties and to sell it through their agents to American retailers.
- ❖ American merchants who had for years purchased tea from non-British sources (Dutch tea was a particular favorite of New Englanders) faced the prospect of financial ruin.
- ❖ Massachusetts immediately opposed the act and began to organize resistance. On November 29, 1773, the tea ship *Dartmouth* arrived at Griffin's Wharf in Boston. Three days later, the *Beaver* and the *Eleanor* arrived at the same wharf. Bostonians demanded that Governor Hutchinson order the three ships back to England.
- ❖ On December 16, 1773, the owner of the *Dartmouth* apparently agreed and went to Hutchinson to beg him to let the ships return to England. Hutchinson refused, and at approximately six o'clock that evening, some 150 men and boys disguised as "Indians" marched to the three ships, boarded them and dumped 340 chests of tea into Boston Harbor.

# The Intolerable Acts

- ❖ In response to the Tea Party, the English Parliament adopted several harsh and restrictive measures aimed at punishing Massachusetts.
- ❖ On March 31, 1774, King George the Third signed the Boston Port Bill, intended to severely reprimand rebellious Boston. The port was closed to all seagoing traffic until damages for the destroyed tea were paid in full.
- ❖ The Massachusetts Provincial Charter of 1691, which residents viewed as a sacred guarantee of their liberties, was revoked.
- ❖ Additional regiments of regulars were dispatched to Boston and Major General Thomas Gage replaced Thomas Hutchinson as governor.
- ❖ Gage moved the seat of government from Boston to Salem and the customs office from Boston to Plymouth.
- ❖ The Governor's Council was replaced with a non-elective Mandamus Council, town meetings were prohibited without the consent of the governor and jury trials were abolished.

# The Gauntlet Has Been Thrown Down

- ❖ The common belief emerged that an immoral British government, having exhausted opportunities for plunder and profit in England and Ireland, was now seeking a dispute with the American colonies as an excuse to enslave and deprive them of their wealth and liberties.
- ❖ Parliament had hoped to accomplish this goal quietly, but the furor aroused in the colonies by England's economic policies had given the government a temporary setback. Now, these mysterious men, who controlled Parliament and the king's ministers, were undertaking to openly incite a war, declare American rebels and enslave them.
- ❖ On October 5, 1774, representatives of the Massachusetts General Court met in Salem. General Thomas Gage, acting governor and overall commander of all British forces in North America attempted shut down the meeting but failed. In response, the representatives voted to make the Massachusetts Provincial Congress the governing body of the colony, in order "to promote the true interests of his Majesty, in the peace, welfare and prosperity of the Province."
- ❖ Any hope of avoiding a civil war now seemed dashed.



# The Coming Conflict

# Massachusetts Prepares for War

*In Provincial Congress,*

*Cambridge, October 26, 1774.*

*Whereas in Consequence of the present unhappy Disputes between Great-Britain and the Colonies, a formidable Body of Troops with warlike Preparations of every Sort are already arrived at, and others destined for the Metropolis of this Province, and the expressed Design of their being sent is to execute Acts of the British Parliament, utterly subversive of the Constitution of the Province. And whereas his Excellency General Gage has attempted by his Troops to disperse the Inhabitants of Salem, whist assembled to consult Measures for preserving their Freedom; and to subjugate the Province to arbitrary Government;—And proceeding to fill more unjustifiable and alarming Lengths has Fortified against the Country the Capital of the Province, and thus greatly endangered the Lives, Liberties and Properties of its oppressed Citizens;—invaded private Property by unlawfully seizing and retaining large Quantities of Ammunition in the Arsenal at Boston and sundry Pieces of Ordnance and Warlike Stores of all Sort, provided at the Public Expense for the Use of the Province, and by all possible Means endeavoured to place the Province entirely in a defenceless State—at the same Time having neglected and altogether disregarded Assurances from this Congress, of the pacific Dispositions of the Inhabitants of the Province, and Intreaties that he would cease from Measures which tended to prevent a Restoration of Harmony between Great-Britain and the Colonies:*

# Massachusetts Prepares for War

- ❖ When war with England appeared inevitable, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress looked to the colony's militia to serve as its military arm.
- ❖ Quickly, it resolved to remove the loyalist officers who commanded it.
- ❖ As a result, militias were ordered to “meet forthwith and elect officers to command their respective companies; and that the officers so chosen assemble as soon as may be . . . and proceed to elect field officers.”
- ❖ Congress also recognized the need to revitalize and further strengthen the colony's militia system as quickly as possible. On October 26, 1774, the delegates set into motion the formation of minute companies within Massachusetts.



# Massachusetts Minute Man Resolution

“[The] field officers, so elected, forthwith [shall] endeavor to enlist one quarter, at the least, of the number of the respective companies, and form them into companies of fifty privates . . . who shall equip and hold themselves in readiness, on the shortest notice from the said Committee of Safety, to march to the place of rendezvous . . . said companies into battalions, to consist of nine companies each.”

*Massachusetts Provincial Congress, October 26, 1774*

# Massachusetts Prepares for War

- ❖ Emphasis on proper military skill and logistical supply was strongly emphasized by the delegates. On the same day as the creation of minute companies, the Provincial Congress resolved "That, as the security of the lives, liberties and properties of the inhabitants of this province, depends under Providence, on their knowledge and skill in the art of military, and in their being properly and effectually armed and equipped."
- ❖ The Congress also voted to create a Committee of Safety, charged with the responsibility "to alarm, muster, and cause to be assembled with the utmost expedition, and completely armed, accoutered . . . so many of the militia of this Province, as they shall judge necessary for the ends aforesaid."
- ❖ To support the logistical needs of the Committee of Safety, a sister committee was created to gather "such provisions as shall be necessary for [the militia's] reception and support."

# Continued Preparations

- ❖ As tensions continued to mount during the fall of 1774, the Provincial Congress began to pass Resolutions that, if followed, would better prepare the militia for a potential conflict with England.
- ❖ These resolves did not alter existing militia acts. Rather, they were recommendations that worked within the existing militia framework.



# The Massachusetts Provincial Congress

“The improvement of the militia in general in the art military has been therefore thought necessary, and **strongly recommended** by this Congress. We now think that particular care should be taken by the towns and districts in this colony, that each of the minute men, not already provided therewith, **should be immediately equipped with an effective firearm, bayonet, pouch, knapsack, thirty rounds of cartridges and balls.**”

*Massachusetts Provincial Congress, “To the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Towns and Districts of Massachusetts-Bay,” Cambridge, December 10, 1774*

# The 1774-1775 Militia and Minute Company Resolutions of Massachusetts Towns



# 3 Types of Town Militia and Minute Company Resolutions

- ❖ Vague, often last minute, resolutions passed by towns after January 1775 that likely relied upon existing militia laws.
- ❖ Highly detailed resolutions that often expanded upon or added to the recommendations of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress as to what a militiaman or minuteman should carry.
- ❖ Resolutions and contractual clauses drafted and issued by “independent” minute companies or exclusive societies from several Massachusetts towns.

# Vaguely Worded Resolutions

- ❖ The Town of Amesbury voted that its minutemen would be responsible for their own arms and equipment. “Voted that said Minnit men shall upon their own cost be well equiped with arms and aminition according to law fit for a march.” *Resolution of the Town of Amesbury, March 20, 1775.*
- ❖ Boxford merely issued a resolution that its minutemen “arm, equip, and hold themselves in readiness to march in any emergency in defence of the Province.” *Resolution of the Town of Boxford, January 5, 1775.*

# Detailed Resolutions that Followed the Provincial Congress Orders

"Each soldier to provide himself with a good firearm, a steel or iron ramrod and a spring for same, a worm, a priming wire and brush, a bayonet fitted to his gun, a scabbard and belt thereof, a cutting sword fifteen rounds . . . at least, a hundred buckshot, six flints, one pound of powder, forty leaden balls fitted to the gun, a knapsack and blanket, [and] a canteen or wooden bottle to hold one quart [of water]."

*Journal of Arthur Harris of the Bridgewater Coy of Militia, c. 1775*



# Independent Company Resolutions

“We whose names are hereunto subscribed, do voluntarily Inlist ourselves, as minute men, to be ready for military operation, upon the shortest notice. And we hereby Promise & engage, that we will immediately, each of us, provide for & equip himself, with an effective arm, Bayonet, Pouch, Knapsack, & Thirty rounds of Cartridges ready made. And that we may obtain the skill of compleat Soldiers, We promise to Convene for exercise in the Art of Military, at least twice every week.”

*Minuteman Covenant for the Town of Ipswich, January 14, 1775*



Where Did the Arms and Equipment Come From?

# Uniformity

- ❖ Many towns passed resolutions agreeing to provide some or all of the accouterments of its minute and militia companies.
- ❖ Local men were hired by their respective towns to make certain pieces of equipment for the militia and minute companies. For example, a saddler may have made cartridge boxes for his town's minute company while a blacksmith scoured old bayonets.
- ❖ As a result, there was some semblance of uniformity amongst American minute companies on the eve of Lexington and Concord.

# Examples of Town Resolutions

- ❖ The Town of Duxbury voted that the community would “provide proper firearms and all other warlike instruments, and amimition suitable for to defend ye town and country as need may require.” The town later voted to acquire “thirty fire-arms with bayonets for the use of the town.” *Resolution of the Town of Duxbury, January 5<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 1775.*
- ❖ Kingston issued a resolution that it provide “firearms and accoutrements to equip thirty-three soldiers completely.” *Resolution of the Town of Kingston, January, 1775.*

# Examples of Town Resolutions

- ❖ “Voted as followes that the sum of fifty two pounds four shillings be and is hereby granted to provide for those person who have inlisted as minute men each on a bayonet belt catrige box steal ramer, gun stock and knap sack.” *Resolution of the Town of Lincoln, March 20, 1775.*
- ❖ “Voted, that the prayer of the petition be so far granted that the Town of Brimfield provide for 50 minute men a Cartridge Box, Knapsack, and thirty rounds of cartridge and ball a sett for each private in said Company to be provided immediately.” *Resolution of the Town of Brimfield, January 18, 1775.*

# Examples of Town Resolutions

“Voted that 40 guns, 250 lbs. powder, 750 lbs. lead, and 600 flints be provided. The [town] shall provide provisions and all other necessaries for the poor upon any special emergency. That 50 men be enlisted to be ready at a minute's warning, and pd 3 s. A week for exercising two half days a week, and 6 dolls. bounty if called out of town. The officers to have the same as Rehoboth pays their officers.”

*Declarations and Resolves of the Town of Swansea, April 23, 1775*



The Men Who  
Made the  
Equipment

# Cartridge Boxes and Belting - Scituate

- ❖ “[January] 14 [1775] I made me a Cartridge-box, I Covered it with a Coltskin it will Carry 19 Rounds.” *Israel Litchfield Journal, January 14, 1775.*
- ❖ “I bought me a Back Sword or Cutlefs [cutlass] it Coft me ten Shillings Lawfull money Cap' Stockbridge bought a hide and an half of Moose skin for Catoos box Straps it Cofl him 16.10.0 old tenor.” *Israel Litchfield Journal, February 27, 1775.*
- ❖ “In the forenoon I made my Sword Belt and Bayonet belt. In the afternoon We went to training We met at Lieutenant Cushings.” *Israel Litchfield Journal, March 13, 1775.*



# Belting and Bayonet Scabbards

“Voted, To Phineas Carlton, for 22 Bayonets fitted with Scabbards and Belts, 8l. 5s. 0d. Voted, To Phineas Carlton, for Scowering the old Bayonets, and fitting with Belts, 4l. 4s. 0d. For 2 Scabbards and Belts, 0l. 3s. 0d. Wm. Greenough, for fitting one Bayonet and one belt, 0l. 2s. 8d.”

*Resolution of the Town of Bradford, September 21, 1775.*

# Cartridge Boxes, Bayonets, Guns, Blankets and Knapsacks

“To Ariel Collins, for 43 cartouch-boxes, £1. Is. 6d. ; to Thomas Bates, for a gun and bayonet, £2. 10s. ; to Luke Bliss, for a gun and bayonet, £2. 8s. ; to Capt. Thomas Stebbins, for the use of a gun, 6s.; to Timothy Bliss, for a large homespun blanket, 15s.; to John Burt, for a blanket, 9s.; to Oliver Burt, for a gun delivered Sylvanus Hale, £2 . . . . to George Cotton, Jr., for a blanket and knapsack delivered Benoni Barrister, 13s. 6d.”

*Resolution of the Town of Springfield, November 14, 1775.*

# Ammunition - Rochester

Nathan Nye, Jr. , was directed to “make up the Town Stock of powder to 400 weight with Lead and Flints.”

*-Resolution of the Town of Rochester, October, 1774.*



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# Artillery and Related Ammunition - Hingham

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| To Jacob Leavitt for making carriage for cannon, timber, &c.  | 9-0-2   |
| To Capt. Isaiah Cushing Company for exercising as per the Clerk's Role made up                      | 4-16-4  |
| To Jacob Leavitt for shop candles, &c., for company   | 1-1-7   |
| To John Fearing for timber for the cannon   | 0-9-0   |
| To Capt. Jones Company for Exercising as pr Roll  | 2-8-4   |
| To Capt. James Lincolns Company for Exercising and Allowance for house Liquor, Candles              | 7-6-4   |
| To Capt. Jotham Loring for his Company Exercising Evenings and the allowance for house candles, &c. | 8-0-11½ |
| To Adam Stowell for 4 lb. Ball Led 47 18 lbs Cannon shot @ 20                                       | 0-4-7   |
| To Joshua Leavitt for 38 lb. Cannon Ball @ 2  | 6-4     |
| To Jer <sup>h</sup> Lincoln for part Capt. Jones Company Exercising house room candles, &c.         | 2-0-4   |
| To Enoch Whiton for part his Company Exercising house room Candles, &c.                             | 4-11-0  |
| To Theop. Wilder for part of Capt. Whiton Company Exercising house room Candles, &c.                | 2-9-8   |



## Drilling and Exercise

# Did Minute and Militia Companies Drill?

- ❖ Yes! Rochester ordered “Every minute man (so-called ) in Rochester to the number of One Hundred that shall attend Three Half Days in each week as shall be appointed by their Captain & Twice in a month in one Body to Learn the use of the Fire-Licks from this day to the first Day of April next & be Ready to March when Needed & Equip Himself with a Good Firearm & other accouterments as Recommended by the Provential Congress shall be Entitled to one Shilling ye Week.” *Resolution of the Town of Rochester, October, 1774.*
- ❖ “In the forenoon I worked Some in the Shop and at the tan houfe in the afternoon We went to training We met at Landlord Fofthers there were above Sixty that bore arms the Officers Draw'd us up in three Ranks.” *Journal of Israel Litchfield, November 14, 1774.*

# Did Minute and Militia Companies Drill?

- ❖ “We went to training we met at Mr James Jenkinss again there was allmoft the whole Company of minute men that met this Day But the weather was So inclement that We Could not Exercise much Except marching and whealing there is but Little Snow.” *Journal of Israel Litchfield, January 1, 1775.*
- ❖ According to local tradition, in 1775, local teacher Peleg Wadsworth was hired by the selectmen of Kingston and Duxbury to train their towns’ minute companies in the 1764 Crown Manual Drill and in the proper use and care of firelocks.

# Financial Compensation

Most minute and militia  
companies were PAID to  
drill in preparation for  
war!!

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| To Jacob Leavitt for making carriage for cannon, timber, &c.  | 9-0-2   |
| To Capt. Isaiah Cushing Company for exercising as per the Clerk's Role made up                      | 4-16-4  |
| To Jacob Leavitt for shop candles, &c., for company   | 1-1-7   |
| To John Fearing for timber for the cannon   | 0-9-0   |
| To Capt. Jones Company for Exercising as pr Roll  | 2-8-4   |
| To Capt. James Lincolns Company for Exercising and Allowance for house Liquor, Candles              | 7-6-4   |
| To Capt. Jotham Loring for his Company Exercising Evenings and the allowance for house candles, &c. | 8-0-11½ |
| To Adam Stowell for 4 lb. Ball Led 47 18 lbs Cannon shot @ 20                                       | 0-4-7   |
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## Joint Company and Battalion Level Drills

# Joint Drills

- ❖ Evidence suggests that minute and militia companies across the colony were holding joint company and regimental level drills.
- ❖ On April 13, 1775, minute companies from Haverhill, Bradford and Andover met in Andover to drill.
- ❖ According to documentation, Captain Sawyer and forty-six of his Haverhill minute men travelled west to Andover to hold a joint drill with Captain Thomas Poor and his men. Sawyer's subsequent report states the purpose of the event "[was to meet] at Andover for Exsise."
- ❖ Joint company and regimental drills were also being held across Middlesex, Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth Counties.

# Joint Drills – Bristol County

“On Monday ye 21st day of November 17744, the East Division of ye 3d Regiment in ye County of Bristol met at Tauton and Drawed up in a Battalion in Captain Toms. Cobbs Shed Lot, so called by ye Adjutant Major Abijah Hodges in manner hereafter described viz. Ye Field officers came in on ye right wing, viz., G. G. (The Colonel) next to ye Battalion and G. W. (the Lieut. Col.) on the right, N. Leond (the first Major) on the Left and Z. Keith (the second Major) on ye Right aud so marched round said Battalion until we come to ye center. Three of ad Field officers with their Hats under ye arms and G. G. (the colonel) his hat on and paid his Compliments to each Captain.”

*Brigadier General George Godfrey Papers and Memorandum Book*

“April the 19<sup>th</sup> ... I got up this morning at three o'clock to go up to moors forge to a general Review of our Regiment of minute men We went upon ... aboute Eleven oClock there was 9 or 10 Companeyes of us tho' before we went upon the lines a minister (I think they Calld him m. hitchcock) Went to prayer with us firstly tho' there was Sang a psalm ... The major Excerfifed us a little while then the Battallion [illegible] for half an hour to go to Dinner then we were Calld to amis again by the Beat of Drums ... we were Excerfifed aboute 2 or 3 hours then the Battallion Was Dismiffd but Just as the Battallion was Difmiffd there Came word from a post that the Regulars were marchd out of Boflon and were a fighting with our people in Concord.”

*Journal of Israel Litchfield, April 19, 1775.*





# The Marshfield Affair

# The Conflict Begins

- ❖ On the eve of the American Revolution, Marshfield had a high percentage of loyalists living in the town and as a result, “leaned” towards the Crown in the ongoing political dispute.
- ❖ In January 1775, the residents of the town rejected the endorsement of a “patriot” resolution. When neighboring towns discovered what had taken place, “the faction there threatened to come down in a body and make them recant”.
- ❖ In response, “the Marshfield Associators sent an express to General Gage, to acquaint him with their situation and determination, and to beg his support.

*“We the Subscribers Inhabitants of Scituate and Marshfield, being loyall Subjects of his Majesty King George the Third, desireous of Supporting his Crown, & dignity and the Laws of Great Brittain, But being insulted, our persons and property’s threatned by many ill disposed people, who declare their intention of Assembling in great numbers to Attack & destroy us and many others among us who are determind as far as in us lies to Support the Laws of the Realm, and repel by force every unlawfull Attempt to destroy his Majestys good Government over us, Desire we may be Assisted with One Hundred of his Majestys troops to repair to Marshfield as Soon as conveniently may (or such number as may be thought proper) by whose Assistance we will to the Utmost of our power repel and resist any violent or rebellious attempt that may be made against us, or any other of his Majesty’s loyall & peaceable Subjects whom we can protect there are about two Hundred & forty in Marshfield & Scituate who are loyally disposed & who we have good reason to believe will stand forth in Support of his Majestys Government”*

# Dispatching of Troops

- ❖ In response, General Thomas Gage dispatched 100 British soldiers from various regiments under the command of Captain Nisbet Balfour of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot (King's Own).
- ❖ The soldiers brought with them “three hundred stand of Arms for the use of the gentlemen of Marshfield” against the rebels and mobs threatening them with violence.
- ❖ According to a New York newspaper account, “Two hundred of the principal inhabitants of this loyal Town, insulted and intimidated by the licentious spirit that unhappily has been prevalent amongst the lower ranks, of people in the Massachusetts Government, ... were happily relieved by the appearance of Captain Balfour's party, consisting of one hundred Soldiers, who were joyfully received by the Loyalists.”



# Plymouth County's Response

- ❖ The placement of troops in Marshfield horrified the surrounding communities and confirmed their beliefs that the English government was attempting to provoke a war with Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- ❖ On February 27, 1775, the towns of Kingston, Scituate, Duxbury, Pembroke, Plymouth and Hanover sent a joint petition to General Gage pleading the troops be withdrawn.
- ❖ The towns argued they “cannot but lament, that, while we are endeavoring to preserve peace and maintain the authority of the laws, at a period when the bonds of government are relaxed, by violent infractions on the charter of the province, our enemies are practising every insidious stratagem to seduce the people into acts of violence and outrage.”
- ❖ In a February, 1775 letter to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, the six towns downplayed any threats of mob violence against the residents of Marshfield.

# April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1775

- ❖ By April, 1775, the British soldiers were still stationed in Marshfield.
- ❖ On April 19, 1775, a full regiment of minute men had assembled near Situate to drill for the day.
- ❖ Towards the end of the day, Israel Litchfield recalled, “Just as the Battallion was Dismiss’d there Came word from a post that the Regulars were marchd out of Boston and were a fighting with our people.”
- ❖ Multiple Plymouth County minute and militia companies quickly mobilized. By the morning of April 20<sup>th</sup>, two full regiments of Plymouth County men were advancing on Marshfield.



# Plymouth County Goes to War

- ❖ According to a nine-year-old *child* eyewitness, Isaac Thomas, Marshfield militiamen who opposed the presence of His Majesty's troops in their town fired alarm guns and quickly assembled.
- ❖ “He also, on the morning succeeding the battle of Lexington, witnessed Capt. William Thomas and his young kinsman as they ascended to the summit of the hill, and saw him discharge the three alarm guns while his attendant beat the drum, which was the concerted signal to acquaint the surrounding inhabitants of the commencement of hostilities.”
- ❖ According to Revolutionary War veteran Dr. James Thatcher, Plymouth's minute and companies “immediately on hearing of the bloodshed at Lexington ... marched to Marshfield ... There were at the same time about sixty fishing vessels with their crews on board at anchor in Plymouth harbor. The fishermen voluntarily left their vessels, and speedily marched to Marshfield with their arms, resolutely determined to attack the company of British troops.”

# Plymouth County Goes to War

- ❖ By early afternoon, over 500 militia and minute men had assembled in Duxbury. The British troops and their loyalist allies were outnumbered almost six to one. Present among the Plymouth troops was enslaved person Luther Jotham of Bridgewater.
- ❖ In command of the troops were Colonel Theophilus Cotton and Major Ebenezer Sprout. A council of war was held at the home of Colonel Briggs Alden on April 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> to determine what course of action should be taken regarding the troops stationed in Marshfield.
- ❖ As the officer's debate continued, more troops from Rochester, Hanson, Kingston and Pembroke arrived, augmenting the Massachusetts forces to over 1000 men. Also closing on the town were militia and minute companies from Barnstable County.
- ❖ Frustrated with the council of war's inaction, at least two militia companies, one from Kingston and one from Duxbury, advanced to within one mile the Captain Balfour's position in Marshfield.

# His Majesty's Troops Escape

- ❖ At approximately 3 o'clock, in the afternoon, a pair of Royal Navy sloops appeared off the coast of Marshfield and anchored off "Brant Rock".
- ❖ Captain Balfour and most of his troops quickly withdrew from Marshfield, boarded boats and rowed across Green Harbor to the ships. Several sentries were left behind to watch the movements of the Massachusetts troops. Eventually they too withdrew and joined their companions on the sloops.
- ❖ In their haste, Balfour and his men left behind an extensive number of supplies and equipment, including most of the 300 stands of arms destined for the Marshfield loyalists.
- ❖ It is believed that several Marshfield loyalists, including Nathaniel Ray Thomas, fled with His Majesty's Troops to the safety of Boston.

Muster Roll of a Company of Minute Men that Marched on the West Parish in Pembroke<sup>1</sup> to Scituate and Marshfield, on the Alarm of 19th of April, 1775.

CONTRIBUTED BY R. G. CARTER, U. S. ARMY.

Eleazer Hamblin mentioned below was the grandfather of Hannibal Hamblin, Vice President, U. S. Army. Eleazer Hamblin was son of the above, and brother of Cyrus Hamblin, Hon. Hannibal Hamblin.

Length of service 19 April to 29 April, 11 days.

*Captain.*

James Hatch<sup>2</sup>.

*Lieutenants.*

Consider Cole, 1st Lieutenant,<sup>3</sup>

Eleazer Hamblin, 2nd Lieutenant.<sup>4</sup>

*Sergeant.*<sup>5</sup>

Nathan Howland,  
Thomas Fuller,  
Nathan<sup>1</sup> Thomas,  
Elihu Phillips.

*Corporals.*<sup>6</sup>

Dan<sup>1</sup> Crooker,  
Sam<sup>1</sup> Howland,  
Ephraim<sup>rm</sup> Briggs,  
Lyons Tsar.

*Musicians.*

Isaac Wade, drummer.

*Privates.*<sup>7</sup>

Increase Robinson,  
Isaac Beals,

Seth Perry,  
Wm. Cox, Jr.,

Isaac Moore,  
Chris<sup>r</sup> Phillips,  
Isaac Bonney,  
Elijah Cushing, 3rd,  
Eleaz<sup>r</sup> Bisby,  
Leonard Hill,  
Thos. Lincoln,  
Ephr<sup>m</sup> Lindsay,  
Wm. Bonney,  
Benj. Guillian,  
Africa Hamblin,  
Daniel Garnet, Jr.,  
Rich<sup>d</sup> Baker, Jr.,  
Sam<sup>1</sup> Harden,  
Abijah Levett,  
Sam<sup>1</sup> Gorham,  
Tilden Crooker,

Isaac Phillips,  
John Stutson,  
Reuben Clark,  
Dan<sup>1</sup> Child,  
David Beals,  
Benj. Munroe,  
Lot Phillips,  
Abr<sup>s</sup> Josselyn, Jr.,  
Wm. Gould,  
Seth Cox,  
Alex<sup>r</sup> Soaper,  
Wm. Hayford,  
Heze<sup>b</sup> Pearce,  
Jon<sup>s</sup> Bonny,  
Gershom Ramsdall,  
Chas. Jewett.

MIDDLESEX, s.s., DEC. 19, 1775.

James Hatch made solemn oath that the Muster Roll by him subscribed is according to the best of his knowledge just and true in all its parts.

Before me, Moses Gill } Jus. Peace  
  } Thro. ye Province

In Council, March 14, 1776. Read & allowed & ordered that a warrant be drawn on the Treas<sup>r</sup> for £53-16s-11 1-2d in full of this roll,

PEREZ MORTON,  
D. Sec'y

Examined & allowed after a deduction of 2s per man for 52 men & 1-4 for one, amounting in the whole to £5-5s-4d for Billetting. There remaining now due £53-16s-11 1-2 d.

Jonas Dix, Pr. Order.

Examined and compared with the original.

JOSIAH JOHNSON } Committee.  
JONAS DIX }

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Transcription of a Muster Roll of Pembroke (Hanson?) Minute Men Who Marched on Marshfield.

|                                 |                |                |                        |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| John Anthony                    | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Howard Robert                   | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Howard Daniel                   | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Howard Oliver                   | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Howard [unclear]                | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Hauger Moses                    | Naughton       | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Jotham Luther                   | Widowwater     | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Keith Simon                     | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Littlefield Edmon               | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Noys John                       | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Pachard Lemuel                  | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Pachard Jonathan                | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Perkins Jonathan                | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | April 26               |
| Pachard Eph <sup>m</sup>        | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | April 19 <sup>th</sup> |
| Pachard Mark                    | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Pachard Oliver                  | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Pratt Thaddeus                  | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Setinaill Stephen               | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Perkins Jonathan J <sup>r</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| Purley Joshua                   | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |
| [unclear]                       | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup> | D <sup>o</sup>         |

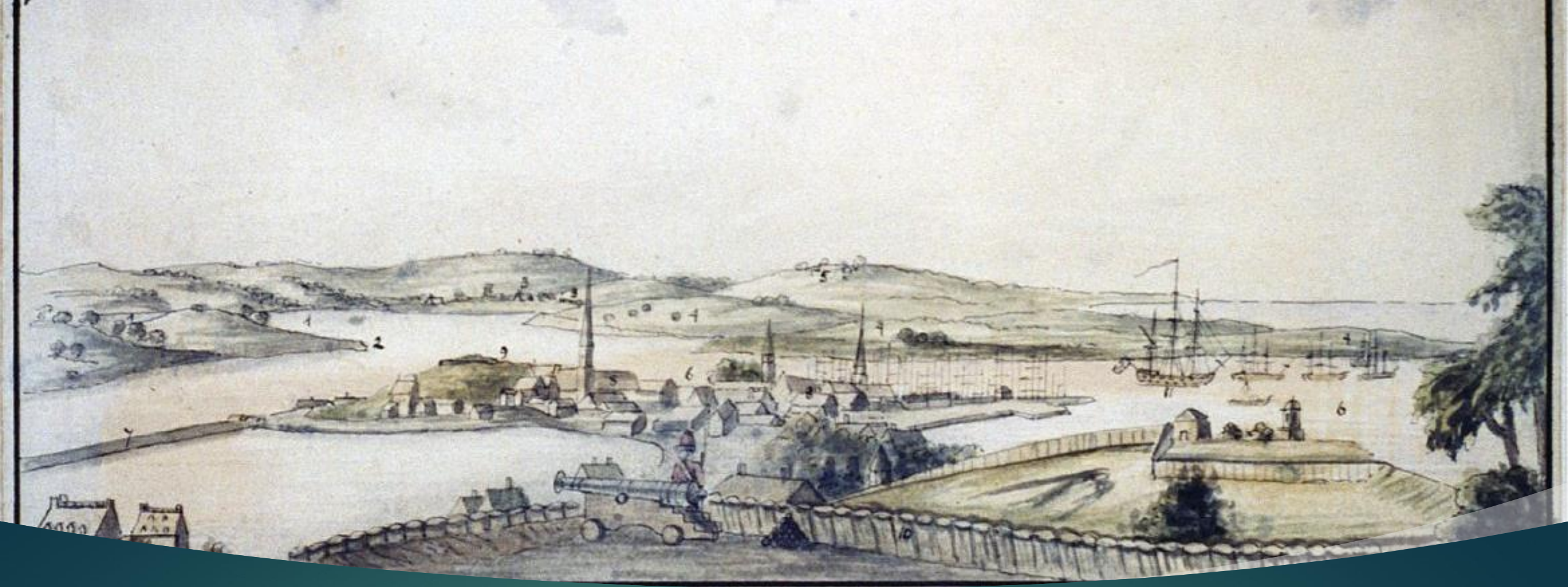
Section of a  
Muster Roll Dated  
April 19, 1775 for  
Bridgewater  
Minute Man  
Company on their  
March to  
Marshfield

# The Aftermath

- ❖ In the aftermath of the Marshfield Affair, the men of Plymouth County remained in the area for the next several days to protect the coastline from a perceived the Royal Navy attack.
- ❖ On April 23, 1775, Israel Litchfield noted during a church service “I never Saw Such a Sight in the meeting upon a Sabbath Day I suppose that there was near 150 men under arms.”
- ❖ Approximately two weeks after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, many Plymouth County militiamen had already arrived outside of Boston to support the siege.



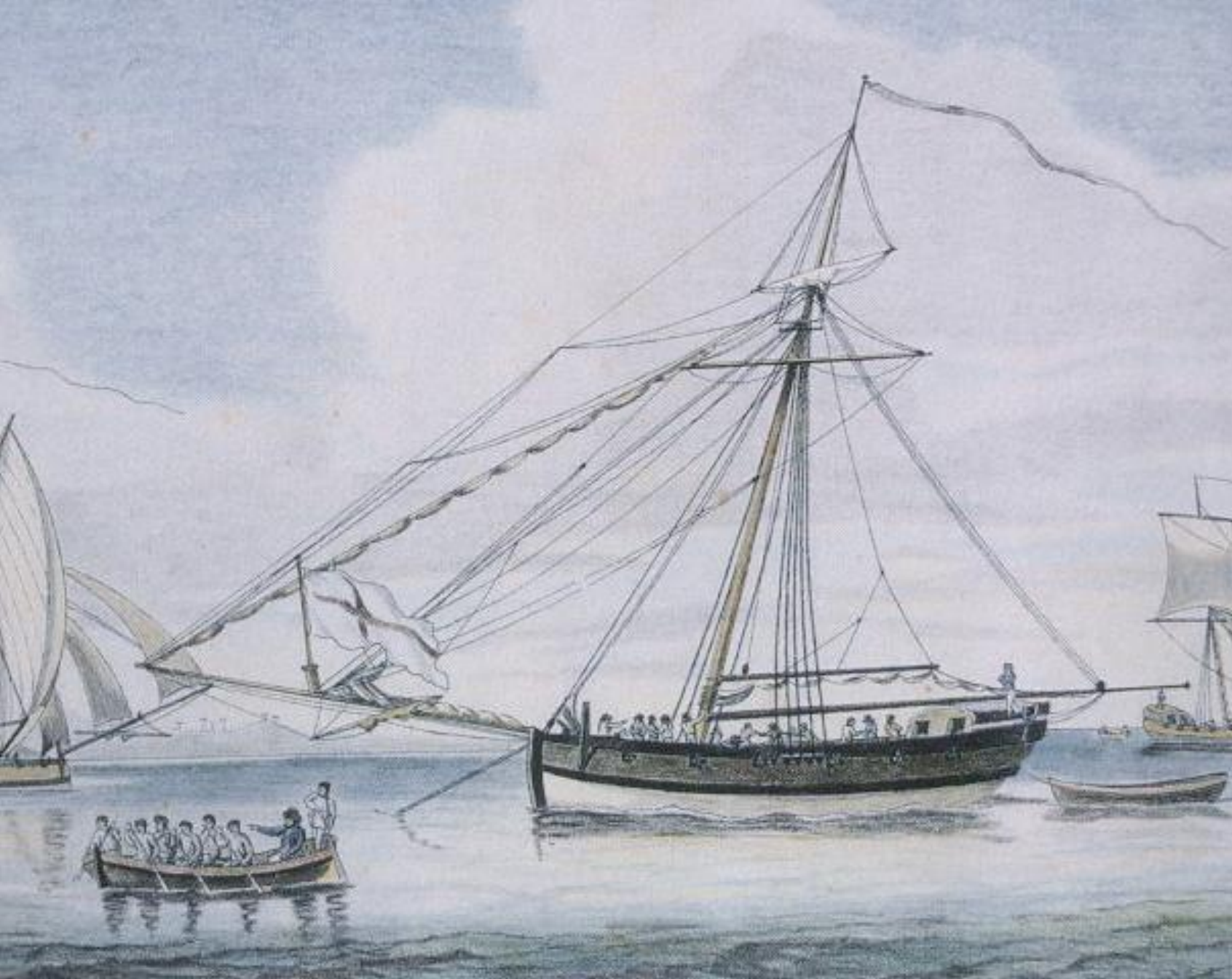




# The Siege of Boston



Questions?



Contact me

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