

*“We Could Easily Trace the March of
Troops from the Smoke Which Arose
Over Them”*

*The Experience of the Men and Women at the
Battles of Lexington and Concord*

What We'll Discuss Today

- The Minute Men and Militia of April 19th
- The Civilian Evacuation of April 19, 1775
- The Fear of a Slave Uprising
- Loyalists Who Served with the British Expedition to Concord
- The Aftermath of the Fighting

“This is a super-important quote”



- From some expert

The Plan of Operation



Background To Lexington and Concord

- In an attempt to break the Massachusetts colonists of their resistance to crown policy, Parliament and the King authorized General Thomas Gage to undertake any military measures necessary to help bring the colony under control.
- Gage quickly responded to this authorization by requesting naval warships be sent to the New Hampshire coast, Cape Ann and to the Massachusetts South and North Shores.
- He also dispatched soldiers and loyalists to Middlesex, Essex and Worcester Counties with instructions to map the roads and topography, sample the political moods of the countryside and discover what they could about suspected provincial supply depots

- In late winter and early spring of 1775, Gage received a series of dispatches from London ordering him to not only arrest the leaders of Massachusetts's opposition party, but to launch a major strike against the apparently growing provincial stockpiles of weapons and munitions.
- As he contemplated these orders, Gage considered a variety of military options, including a long-range strike against the large store of weapons located in the shire town of Worcester, forty miles west of Boston.
- Realizing that this was much too risky a venture, the general decided instead to seize the military supplies reportedly stored at Concord, a march half the distance of that to Worcester.

General Thomas Gage's plan called for approximately seven hundred men composed of the elite grenadiers and light infantry from several regiments and a company of marines, to march from Boston to Concord under cover of darkness on April 18, 1775.



This “strike force,” under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith of the 10th Regiment of Foot, was ordered “[to proceed] with the utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord where you will seize and destroy all the 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.”

General Gage to Lieutenant Colonel Smith, April, 18, 1775

Lexington-Concord

19 April 1775

The march to Concord and back

- Smith's Column ————
 - Percy's Column ————
 - Combined Column ————
 - Colonials ————
- Arriving like swarms of bees all through the day

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*The Militia and
Minute
Companies of
1774-1775*



Prelude to War: 1774

- When war with England appeared inevitable, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress looked to the colony's militia to serve as its military arm. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress recognized it had to “consider what is necessary to be done for the defence and safety of the province.” (October 22, 1774).
- The Massachusetts Provincial Congress first ordered the militias 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.” (October 26, 1774).
- On October 26, 1774, the delegates also set into motion the formation of minute companies within Massachusetts.

Order to Create Minute Companies

[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

Order to Prepare for War

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, it is therefore recommended, that they immediately provide themselves therewith; that they use their utmost diligence to perfect themselves in military skill; and that, if any of the inhabitants are not provided with arms and ammunition according to law, and that if any town or district within the province is not provided with the full town stock of arms and ammunition . . . that the selectmen of such town or district take effectual care, without delay, to provide the same.

By December 1774, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress was recommending that colonial towns ensure their minute and militia companies are properly armed and equipped in the event of war with England.

“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.

- By January, 1775, there are four types of military units in Massachusetts that are actively preparing for war with England:
 - Minute Man Companies: Were recruited from town militia companies and generally composed of young men between the ages of 17 and 25.
 - Militia Companies: A town's military unit that existed to protect the community from external threats. On the eve of Lexington and Concord the average age range of militia men who were not serving in minute companies was 30 to 55.
 - Alarm List: A town's military reserve. This body of soldiers was composed of the elderly and infirm. An alarm list would only be mobilized in times of dire emergencies.
 - "Independent Companies": Military units composed of the elite, wealthy or influential. These units were rare but did exist in Massachusetts on the eve of the American Revolution.

Pay and Reimbursement

- To ensure and maintain enlistments, many towns established a salary and reimbursement of expenses for those who joined the ranks of minuteman companies.
- The Town of Amesbury ordered “each man shall have one shilling for exercising four hours in an fortnight and that the commanding officer of said Minnit men shall exhibit an account of them that shall exercise to the Selectmen for to receive their pay for exercising.”
- The residents of Bradford voted “To give each man a dollar for billeting, when they are called to march, and seven dollars per month while in actual service.”

- Andover resolved that its minutemen would receive “eight pence for each half day they shall be exercised in the art of military . . . and from 30th day of March to the 30th Day of September . . . one shilling for each half day they shall be exercised . . . and in the case each soldier shall be called to active service, thirty six shillings per month.”
- Methuen simply established a pay scale of eight pence per day dedicated to drilling.

Drilling

- Following the recommendations of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Andover ordered “[Soldiers] on the said first said day of December meet together and chuse such person only for leading or instructing as shall appear to them to be most skillful in Military Discipline and that they be well equipped with good guns, and other necessary warlike armour in order for their performing of all military maneuvers.”
- Amesbury resolved that its minute men would engage in “exercising four hours in an fortnight.” Two weeks later, the town modified its order and instructed its minute men to “[exercise] four hours in a week.”
- Methuen simply ordered its minute company be “drawn out or exposed to train.”



Weapons, Equipment and Uniforms

Despite popular modern misconceptions, Massachusetts minutemen were not poorly armed and equipped. Instead it appears most towns, including those units in the Merrimack Valley and York County regions of Massachusetts, took appropriate steps to ensure its minute companies were well supplied for war.

- Many towns also 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, one resident may have made cartridge boxes for his town's minute company while another made bayonet carriages.
- As a result, there was some semblance of uniformity amongst American minute companies on the eve of Lexington and Concord in regard to accouterments carried.

Lexington

- **Jonathan Harrington Sr.** - father of company fifer Jonathan Harrington, was charged with making cartridge boxes and belting for the militia.
- **Phillip Russell**- was also making cartridge boxes and bayonets for members of the militia.
- **Nathan Simonds** - was providing blankets to those Lexington militiamen who could not afford them.
- **John Parker** - Was possibly making powder horns for the Lexington Company

*The Civilian
Evacuation of
Lexington and
Concord*

April 19, 1775



Historical Background: April 18, 1775

- Hours before the engagements at Lexington and Concord, at approximately six o'clock in the evening of April 18, 1775, Lexington resident Solomon Brown observed nine British officers riding slowly along a country road before him.
- The night was not very cold yet Brown noted that each of the officers was wearing a heavy wool blue overcoat under which he could see the shape of their pistols.
- Taken aback, Brown passed the officers and galloped towards Lexington. He rode directly to Munroe's Tavern where he informed William Munroe of what he had observed.

Source: Deposition of William Munroe, March 7, 1825

- By eight o'clock in the evening, Lexington received two messages from Elbridge Gerry, a member of the Massachusetts Provincial Committee of Safety and Supplies.
- According to Jonas Clarke “We received two messages, the first verbal, the other, by express . . . informing that eight or nine officers of the king's troops were seen just before night passing the road towards Lexington in a musing, contemplative posture; and it was suspected they were out upon some evil design.”

*Source: Reverend Jonas Clarke, “The Fate of Blood-thirsty Oppressors...”,
Preached at Lexington, April 19, 1776.*

- At eleven o'clock in the evening, alarm rider Paul Revere arrived in Lexington warning of a military expedition advancing from Boston.
- Approximately an hour later, a second alarm rider, William Dawes, arrived and confirmed Revere's report.
- As a result, Lexington militia Captain John Parker ordered his company to assemble.



- When Lexington's alarm bell began to toll between Midnight and 1 AM, many residents realized that a hostile military force was marching directly towards them.
- With the possibility of the town being subjected to plunder and destruction, a panic set in. Many who lived along the Boston Road prepared to evacuate.
- Prior to fleeing their homes, some women helped their husbands, fathers and sons prepare for war.

Anna Munroe, wife of Sergeant Munroe, started to bake bread for her husband. Later she confessed “I mixed my bread last night with tears coming, for I feared I should have no husband when the next mixing came.”

Source: Carrie E. Bacheller, Munroe Tavern: The Custodian's Story.



*Before the Battle: The First Wave of
Evacuation*

- As the Lexington militia assembled on the common at approximately 1 AM many of the town's civilian population who lived along the Bay Road fled from their homes.
- The Reverend William Gordon of Roxbury noted “the inhabitants had quitted their houses in the general area upon the road ... and thinking themselves well off in escaping with their lives.”

Source: Rev. Mr. William Gordon, An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great Britain and America

- Lydia Mulliken and her daughters, who lived along the Boston road, heard the alarm and fled to distant safety.
- Mary Sanderson gathered her children and “by the light of a lantern [made their way] to a refuge, the home of her father in New Scotland.”

- Abigail Harrington, took her toddlers “down a lane back of the house across a meadow to the old place on Smock farm.”
- Anna Munroe fled from the family tavern with her three young children and hid on a hill behind the establishment.

Source: Obituary of Rebecca Harrington Munroe, (Boston), Daily Advertiser, April 11, 1834



- The flight was particularly difficult for new mothers.
- Four Lexington women, Sarah Marrett, Amity Pierce, Sarah Reed and Betty White, had recently given birth and were still likely bedridden on April 19th.
- Three others, Dorcus Parker, Elizabeth Estabrook and Lydia Harrington, were all over eight months pregnant.



Meanwhile, in Lincoln and Concord, news of the British expeditionary force advancing into the countryside spread. After the Lincoln minute companies departed for Concord, Mary Hartwell recounted “I did up the chores of the barn and cared for the children as well as I could in my anxiety . . . I feared that I should never see your grandfather again.”

Source: Samuel Hartwell account of Mary Hartwell’s tale, in “Stories of the Fight,” Boston Daily Globe, April 15, 1894, p. 25.



According to the petition of Martha Moulton of Concord, “on the 19th day of April 1775, in the fore noon the town of Concord, wherein I dwel was beset with an army of regulars, who in a hostile manner enter’d the town ... all our near neighbors ... were drawn off ... from the thickest part of the town, where I live and had taken with them their families & what of their best effects they could carry ... some to a neighboring wood and others to remote houses for security.”

Source: Petition of Martha Moulton of Concord, February 4, 1776, Massachusetts Archives Volume 180, p. 306

*The British Retreat to Boston: The Second
Wave of Evacuation*

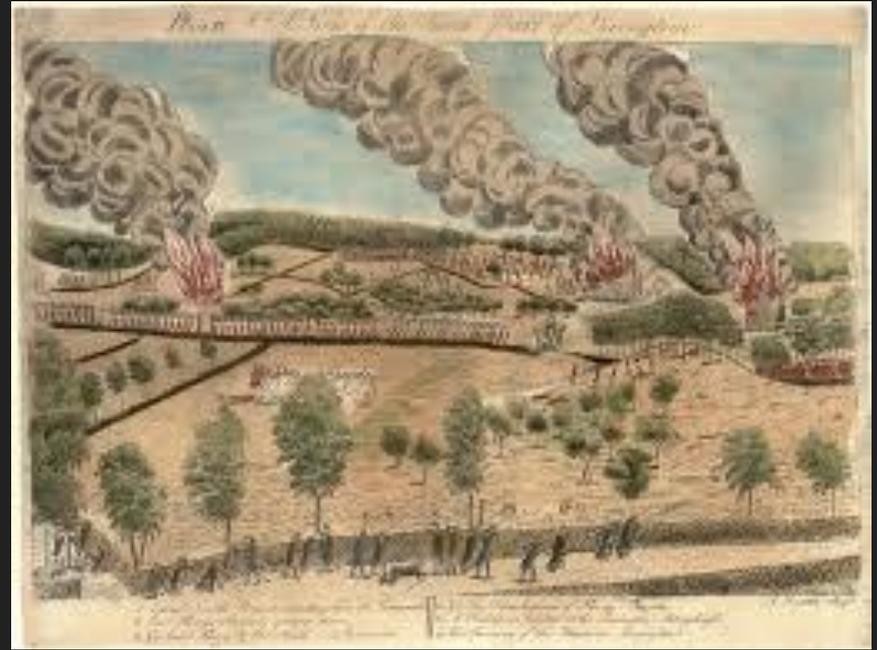
Later in the morning, many residents along the Boston Road realized that the British regulars would be marching back through their respective towns again.



- One evacuee recalled that the roads were clogged with “women and children weeping.”
- Some escaped to woods and fields, while others traveled to nearby towns. Some sought refuge in homes far from the British path of retreat.
- “When news of the advance of the British arrived April 18, 1775, many women and children took refuge [in Josiah Smith’s home in Weston] until the struggle of the 19th of April had passed.”
- By the time the retreating regulars returned to Lexington, “the women and children had been so scattered and dispersed, that most of them were out of the way.”

Sources: Smith, “Kite End,” p. 114.; Deposition of Elijah Sanderson, December 11, 1824

- Unfortunately, some families waited until the last moment to escape and came in direct contact with the British army.
- Anna Munroe, daughter of William and Anna, was five years old when the Battles of Lexington and Concord took place. After returning to Munroe Tavern following the first evacuation, the family was forced to flee again.



According to her 19th Century account, Anna “could remember seeing the men in redcoats coming toward the house and how frightened her mother was when they ran from the house. That was all she could remember, but her mother told her of her very unhappy afternoon. She held Anna by the hand, brother William by her side and baby Sally in her arms . . . She could hear the cannon firing over her head on the hill. She could smell the smoke of the three buildings which the British burned between here and the center of Lexington. And she did not know what was happening to her husband, who was fighting, or what was happening within her house. . . Anna’s mother used to talk to her of what happened on April 19th and she remembered that her mother used to take her on her lap and say: ‘This is my little girl that I was so afraid the Red coats would get.’”

Source: Bacheller, Munroe Tavern, p. 6-7

- Not all Middlesex men saw combat on April 19, 1775.
- A few men who remained with evacuees were ministers who tended to their flock.
- Others suffered from physical injuries and thus, could not field with their companies.
- At least four Lexington men missed the fighting and participated in the civilian evacuation because they were caring for their wives, mothers or daughters.



Teenager Joseph Estabrook and his father “assisted in carrying his mother with a young infant (Solomon) in her arms, in an armchair, about a mile back from the scene of danger.”

Source: “Genealogy of the Estabrook Family”.





*“Are You Going to Kill
Us, Ishmael?”*

*The Fear of a Slave
Uprising*

- In Menotomy, where the women and children had gathered in houses safely removed from the firing, a rumor began to circulate that the town's slaves were about to launch a revolt of their own and "finish what the British had begun by murdering the defenseless women and children."
- When Ishmael, an enslaved man belonging to the Cutter family of Menotomy, approached the house of George Prentiss, one of the many terrified women gathered inside asked, "Are you going to kill us, Ishmael? No, Ishmael replied; he wasn't there to kill them; he was there to see whether his owner's wife, Mrs. Cutter, was safe."

- According to an early 19th Century account, A similar fear overtook the women of Framingham.
- After the town's minute and militia companies mobilized for Concord, a rumor started to spread that the enslaved people of the town had risen up in revolt and “were coming to massacre them all!”
- Women and children fled to the home of the Framingham Minute Company captain. Under the leadership of the Captain's wife, they armed themselves with “axes and pitchforks and clubs” and waited for the coming massacre that never came.

- Many enslaved people risked their own lives by remain relatively close to their master's properties to safeguard homes from the British column.
- In West Cambridge, retreating regulars broke into Cutter's Tavern. The soldiers carried off what they could, left the taps of the molasses and spirit casks open, destroyed furniture, drove a bayonet through the best mirror, and set the house on fire.
- A family slave, however, had watched from a safe distance what had happened, and, as soon as the soldiers left the property, crossed the fire and extinguished the flames.

Who Were the Loyalists of April 19th?



- Many colonists who ultimately became “Tories” were not distinguishable from their neighbors who embraced independence.
- Many loyalists were respected members of their towns; often well-educated Harvard graduates who worked as merchants, doctors, lawyers, distillers or ministers.



However, most colonists from New England who remained faithful to the crown hailed from the middle and lower classes of the American colonies. These loyalists enjoyed neither wealth nor privilege.

The Forgotten Volunteers

- One group that has been noticeably absent from period accounts of the Battles of Lexington and Concord were the Loyalist guides who assisted the military expedition to Concord.
- Little has been written about the role Loyalists played in Gage's military operation prior to 2016. Many early historians initially suggested that only two to three loyalists accompanied Smith's regulars to Concord. This is incorrect.
- Likewise, the role of armed and mounted loyalists present when Lord Hugh Earl Percy's relief force marched to Lexington the afternoon of April 19, 1775 has been completely overlooked.

The Presence of Loyalist Guides

According to the Reverend William Gordon, “several” loyalists were present with the army. “On the first of the night, when it was very dark, the detachment, consisting of all the grenadiers and light infantry, the flower of the army to the amount of 800 or better, officers included, the companies having been fitted up, and several of the inimical torified natives, repaired to the boats, and got into them just as the moon rose, crossed the water, landed on Cambridge side, took through a private way to avoid discovery, and therefore had to go through some places up to their thighs in water.

An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great Britain and America, in the province of Massachusetts Bay, by the Rev. Mr. William Gordon, of Roxbury, in a letter to a gentleman in England. May 17, 1775

Why Recruit Loyalist Guides?

- In the days leading up to the March to Concord, General Thomas Gage actively recruited Loyalist men to assist in the military operation.
- Why recruit Loyalist civilians?
 - They were familiar with the countryside, especially the route from Boston to the Concord area.
 - They were familiar with the location of hidden military stores in Concord.
 - Some had previous military experience and as a result, could help identify hostile forces and potential ambush sites.
 - If necessary, they could serve as a communication line between Boston and the battle front.

Location During the Mission

- It appears the guides were interspersed throughout the column.
- Lieutenant William Sutherland of the 38th Regiment of Foot references on two separate occasions a “guide” attached to the front of the column.
- “When I heard Lieut. Adair of the Marines who was a little before me in front call out, here are two fellows galloping express to Alarm the Country, on which I immediately ran up to them, seized one of them and our guide the other, dismounted them and by Major Pitcairn's direction gave them in charge to the men.”

Assignments

- Loyalist guides assisted British officers in identifying enemy combatants. Lieutenant William Sutherland describes how a Loyalist guide identified a captured American prisoner as being a person of importance.
- “I mett coming out of a cross road another fellow galloping, however, hearing him some time before I placed myself so that I got hold of the bridle of his horse and dismounted him, our guide seemed to think that he was a very material fellow and said something as if he had been a Member of the Provincial Congress.”

- In addition to leading the column to Concord, the guides also had the responsibility of assisting search parties in locating military stores.
- “The troops renewed their march to Concord, where, when they arrived, they divided into parties, and went directly to several places where the province stores were deposited. Each party was supposed to have a Tory pilot.”

The Loyalist Guides of Percy's Relief Column



Contingency Plans

- General Gage had also made contingency plans in the event the expedition to Concord was in danger or in jeopardy of failure.
- In the event of an emergency, Lord Hugh Earl Percy and regimental units from his brigade were to march to the expedition's aid.
- At six o'clock on the morning of April 19th, an unknown rider, possibly a Loyalist guide from Lieutenant Colonel Smith's column, arrived in Boston requesting assistance. After some delay, over one thousand soldiers marched out of Boston towards Lexington.

Why Did Gage Keep the Loyalist Guides Out of His Official Report?

- It is likely General Gage had excluded his Loyalist Guides from his official reports in an effort to shield them from retribution. Why?
- The presence of Loyalists with the British column on April 19, 1775 eventually garnered the attention of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress.
- On June 16, 1775 Congress proposed to pardon all enemies who surrendered, except General Gage, Admiral Graves “and all the natives of America, not belonging to the navy or army, who went out with the regular troops on the nineteenth of April last, and were countenancing, aiding, and assisting them in the robberies and murders then committed.”

A Snapshot of the Brutality of the Day



“The news reached us about nine o’clock A.M. The east company in Needham met at my house as part of the Military stores were deposited with me, they there supplied themselves, and by ten o’clock all marched for the place of action with as much spirit and resolution as the most zealous friends of the cause could have wished for. We could easily trace the march of troops from the smoke which arose over them, and could hear from my house the report of the cannon and the Platoons fired by the British.”

Source: Excerpt from Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel West, Pastor (1764 – 1788), First Parish, Needham Massachusetts

The Aftermath



According to the Reverend Gordon, “you would have been shocked at the destruction which has been made by the Regulars, as they are miscalled, had you been present with me to have beheld it. Many houses were plundered of everything valuable that could be taken away, and what could not be carried off was destroyed.”

*Source: Rev. Mr. William Gordon, An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities... , May
17, 1775*

In Lexington

- In addition to suffering the highest casualty rate of the American forces on that day, Lexington also had extensive property damage. Several homes were burned or destroyed and while others were looted.
- Andover minuteman Thomas Boynton noted “after we came into Concord road we saw houses burning and others plundered and dead bodies of the enemy lying by the way, others taken prisoners.”
- Another Andover soldier, James Stevens, recalled “we went in to Lecentown . . . we went a long through Lecintown & we saw . . . three or fore houses was Burnt & som hoses & hogs was cild thay plaindered in every hous thay could git in to thay stove in windows & broke in tops of desks.”

In Menotomy

On April 20, 1775, Hannah Winthrop and her husband started the journey back from Andover to their home in Cambridge. As they passed through Menotomy (Arlington), she recalled “But what added greatly to the horror of the scene was our passing through the bloody field at Menotomy, which was strewn with the mangled bodies. We met one affectionate father with a cart looking for his murdered son and picking up his neighbors who had fallen in battle, in order for their burial.”

Source: Letter from Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, circa May 1775

In Cambridge

- The fighting in Cambridge was just as brutal as Menotomy and East Lexington.
- A “Mrs. Butterfield”, who lived on the north side of the Boston Road, returned to her own house to find her best bed covered with blood and occupied by this British officer. A wounded Provincial from Framingham was lying in a nearby second bed. The American recovered, but the officer lingered along a fortnight and then died.
- A “Mrs. Adams” was “obliged to step over the dead body of a British soldier, in order to enter her back door. And in the front room lay another soldier mortally wounded, the white sanded floor beneath him red with the blood which had flowed from his wounds.”

Questions??



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