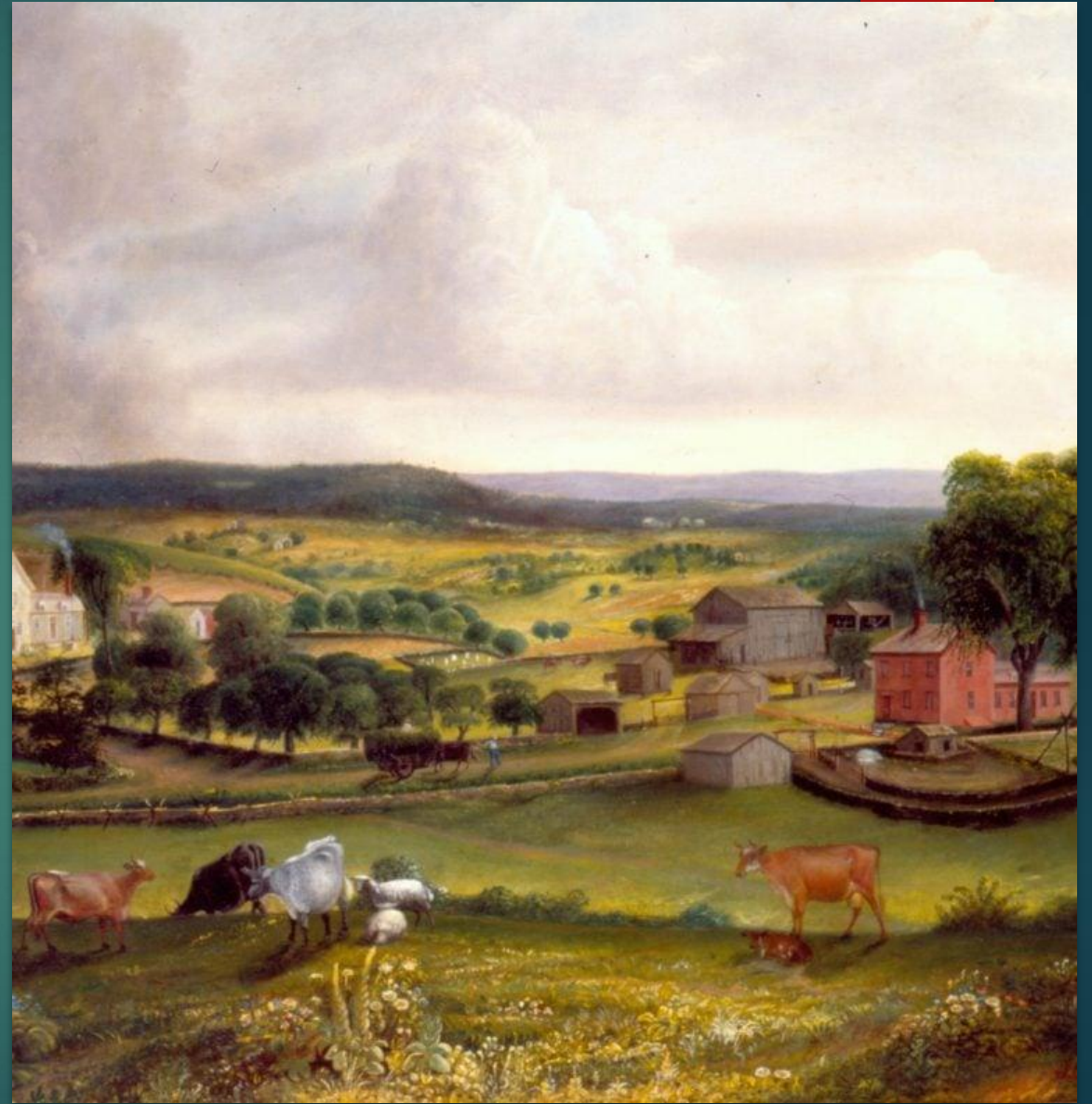


“Committed to a Common Bonfire”-
The Lexington Peoples of April 18, 1775



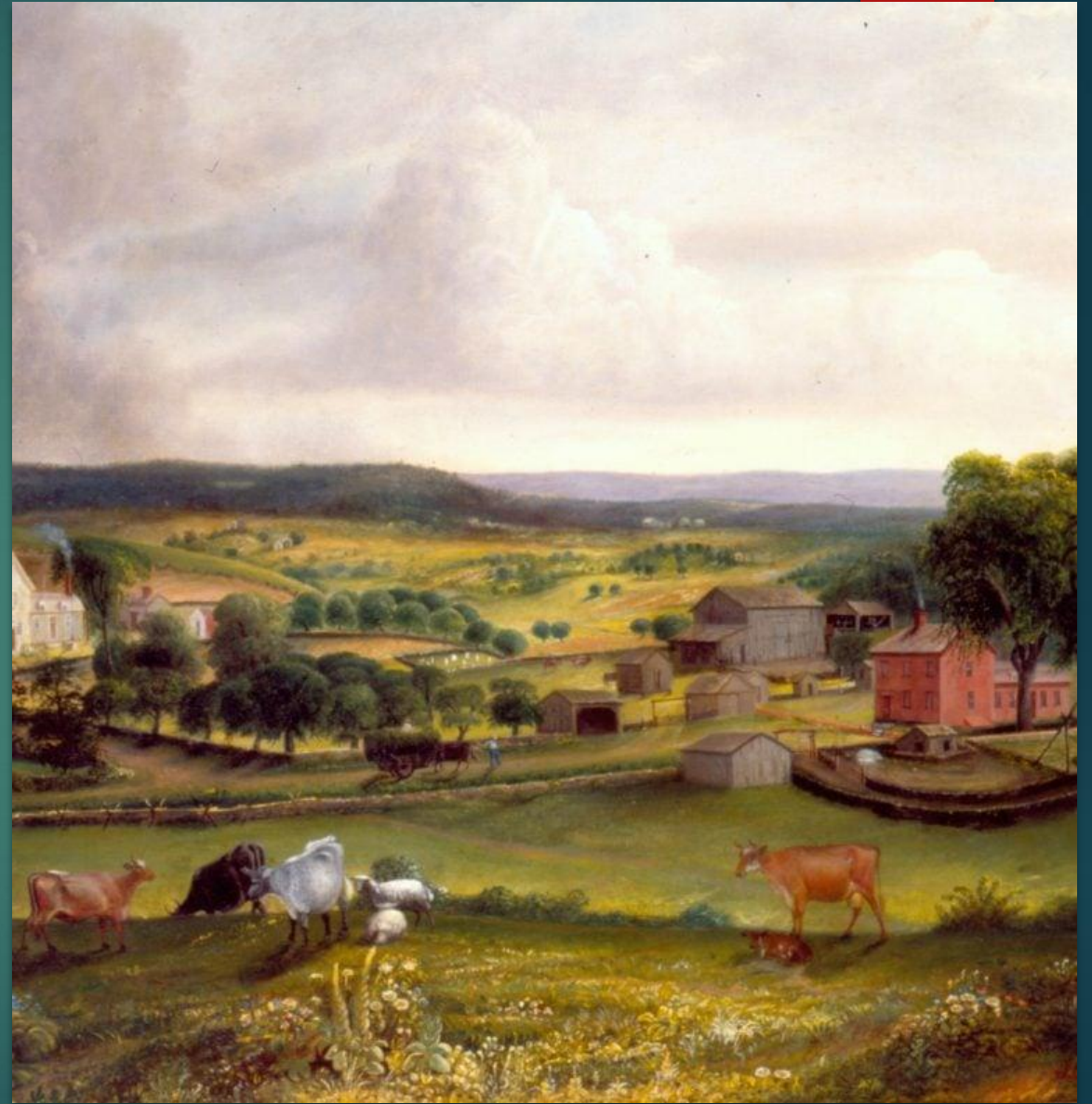
Introduction

- In the early hours of April 19, 1775, militiamen from Captain John Parker's Company assembled on the village common to await the arrival of the British expedition from Boston to Concord.
- When the two forces met, the encounter was brief but bloody. Yet the long-term effects of this skirmish were monumental. By the time the King's troops had resumed their march towards Concord, the machinery of the American Revolution had been set in motion.



Introduction

- For over two hundred and forty-five years, the Lexington militia has been held to the highest standard by American society.
- Unfortunately, despite the significant stature the Lexington “Minute Men” have obtained in historical lore, little has been written about the social history of Lexington: The daily routines, the societal structure of their village, or the vital role of women, children and enslaved peoples played within societal frameworks.
- In addition, myth, legend and fantasy clouds much of what we do know about the average Lexington resident.



What We'll Discuss Today

- The World of Lexington: An Introduction
- The Daily Lives of the Peoples of Lexington
- The Hierarchy of Lexington Society in 1775
 - Men in 1775 Lexington
 - Women in 1775 Lexington
 - The Youth of Lexington 1775
 - Enslaved Peoples and Black Freedmen and Freedwomen
- April 18, 1775
- Questions?



Inspirational Quote



When I die, sprinkle my ashes over
the 80's.

— *David Lee Roth* —

AZ QUOTES

A historical photograph of a 1775 Lexington interior. The room features two wooden tables, each with a bowl of fruit and a plate. Several wooden chairs are visible, including a large wooden chair on the left and a smaller one on the right. In the background, there is a large wooden cabinet or counter with various items on top. The walls are made of stone or plaster, and a red vertical bar is visible on the right side of the image.

The World of Lexington in 1775: An Introduction

An Introduction to 18th Century Lexington

- The Village of Lexington was known until 1713 as Cambridge Farms and was located northwest of Boston, nestled among the surrounding towns and districts of Menotomy (now Arlington), Bedford, Lincoln, Waltham and Woburn.
- Sprawled out over nineteen square miles, Lexington consisted of approximately 10,000 acres of fertile fields, gentle hills, woodlands, and peat bogs, crossed by gently meandering streams that eventually found their way to either the Charles or Mystic Rivers.
- In 1711, at the suggestion of Samuel Stone, great-grandfather of Captain John Parker, the residents of Lexington purchased from Massachusetts Bay Colony an acre and a half of land where the Concord, Bedford and Boston Roads met. From this resolution, a village common was created that instantly became the physical, political, religious and military center of town.

An Introduction to 18th Century Lexington

- The Common was roughly triangular in layout. It was bounded on the south by the road to Concord running southeast to southwest, on the east by the road to Bedford, and on the north by a narrow dirt track joining the Bedford and Concord Roads.
- Buckman's Tavern, its stables and adjacent outbuildings stood directly across Bedford Road from the easternmost point of the common. Built in 1710, the structures functioned to accommodate drovers bringing herds to market in Boston, as well as Lexington residents attending Sunday services or town meetings.
- Across the Bedford Road from the tavern, in the angle formed by the Bedford and Concord Roads, stood the town's meetinghouse. A great barn-like structure with two tiers of galleries and a main floor made up of high walled pews, it served as a town hall, church, an assembly place and an arsenal.
- Approximately four hundred feet behind the meetinghouse was a schoolhouse, and on the south side of the common, stood the belfry.

An Introduction to 18th Century Lexington

- There were several residential clusters throughout Lexington, including farms and properties along the Woburn, Bedford and Lincoln borders. The primary “clusters” centered along the Bay Road between the Lexington Common and the Cambridge District of Menotomy.
- In addition to a cluster of homes around the common, there were two small clusters of homes east of the center of Lexington on the road to Boston.
- **Vine Brook**: On the north side of the road and along the west bank of Vine Brook, were Amos Muzzy’s home and barn. Further east, between Vine Brook and the road to Woburn, Benjamin Estabrook’s house and mill stood on the north side of the road, while Jonathan Smith and Benjamin Merriam’s homes were on the south side. Matthew Mead and Joshua Loring’s homes were a bit further east on the south side of Boston Road.
- **Munroe Tavern/East Lexington**: Continuing in an easterly direction, the second cluster of homes on the Boston Road were well south and centered near Sergeant William Munroe’s Tavern. Residents included Joshua Bond, Nathaniel Mulliken’s widow Lydia, Samuel Sanderson, John Mason and John Raymond.

An Introduction to 18th Century Lexington

- From the 1640's onward, Lexington's population grew by one hundred people per decade. This population "boom" had a direct impact upon the natural and social environment of the town.
- As new residents moved in, more woods were cleared, fields cultivated, and rich peat swamps harvested.
- This process continued for over a century until the French Wars of the 1750's, when immigration virtually stopped.
- By April 18, 1775, Lexington was inhabited by over one hundred families that included seven hundred and fifty people, seven slaves and four hundred cows.
- Available land was becoming scarce and economic opportunities were dwindling. Many Lexington residents were saddled with overwhelming debt.
- In 1759, fifteen percent of Lexington men saw a forced sale of all or part of their real estate to settle debts at the time of their death. By 1779, the percentage had risen to almost twenty-nine percent. By the end of the American Revolution, a staggering forty percent of Lexington estates faced forced sales (foreclosure).



The Daily Lives of the Peoples of Lexington

The Daily Lives of the Peoples of Lexington

- Many, but not all, of the townsmen subscribed to “mixed husbandry” farming, which encouraged farmers to produce a variety of items necessary for survival.
- Such items included vegetables and fruit, meat and wood for fuel and shelter. Lexington farmers needed approximately sixty acres of land to generate such supplies for the long term.
- According to research conducted by historian Mary Babson Fuhrer, approximately two to four acres of land was typically allocated to an orchard and home.
- The average Lexington family burned about an acre of wood per year. As a result, an additional twenty to thirty acres of land was be set aside as a “wood lot”.
- Another six acres were designated as “tillage”, which was designed to generate grains for bread and flax for linen. However, to remain productive, tillage needed to be fertilized with cow manure.

The Daily Lives of the Peoples of Lexington

- Of course, cows needed to be fed. At least fifteen acres of land was usually set aside as grazing fields while another fifteen acres was designated for hay to feed cows and other livestock during the winter. Naturally, cows and other livestock also served as a valuable source of meat, dairy and hides.
- On the eve of the American Revolution, farmers in Lexington had roughly allocated ten percent of their lands as tillage, twenty-five percent as pastures and hay fields and forty percent as wood lot.
- More specifically, according to a 1771 tax valuation of Lexington land, 15.1 acres of land was set aside for tillage, 12.5 acres of land for pastures, 14.7 acres of land for hay fields, 21.5 “unimproved acres” or woodlots, and 32.3 acres of “improved acres”.

Lexington Livestock

- The average farm in Lexington in 1771 was barely supporting the average family at just subsistence level, except for cattle.
- Lexington farmers were relatively well off in cows, which was probably their “market” product. They could drive excess cattle to market or send butter or cheese to Boston.
- That said, the number of cows was four times the minimum for survival, but just the minimum needed to manure tillage.
- This does not mean that dairy goods were a staple product; having an extra cow or two merely allowed some Lexington farms to produce a slight annual excess in dairy to market.

Lexington Livestock

- The average Lexington farm in 1775 typically had:
 - One or two horses
 - One or two oxen to use as a team for plowing
 - Five or six cows
 - Three goats or sheep
 - Two to three pigs.
 - It would also have had poultry, which was not included in Lexington tax valuations.

Average Livestock Holdings in Lexington in 1771

Livestock	Basic Subsistence	1771 Lexington	1771 Concord
Horses	1	1.1	1.2
Oxen	1 to 2	1.4	2.9
Cows	1	5.1	4.3
Goats/Sheep	6 to 10	3.0	3.1
Swine	1 to 2	2.2	2.1

The Seasonal Work of Lexington

- Life on colonial Lexington farms was very much guided by the changing of the seasons.
- In the winter months men felled, hauled and chopped firewood. Farmers had to feed precious hay to any animal they hoped to “winter over”. That said, November, December, and January were also time of slaughtering; the cold helped preserve the fresh meat until women had a chance to salt it or turn it into sausages.
- In April, farmers began their season by turning gardens and plowing their tillage land. They were faced with the onerous task of gathering the winter’s manure and ashes and carting them to the tillage field to be spread and plowed into the soil as fertilizer.
- In May and June, while farmers plowed, sowed, and weeded, Lexington women turned to the work of the dairy. Women continued cheese making until the heat of July impeded their work.

The Seasonal Work of Lexington

- All available men turned their hands to the hay and grain harvest in July and August. Women did extra loads of laundry and cooked extra meals for hired harvest help.
- In autumn, men worked to bring in the harvest of fruits, vegetables, root crops, and squashes, while women preserved them by canning or making barrels of applesauce, apple vinegar, and apple molasses for sweetening.
- Cider mills ran non-stop turning as men produced barrels of that most essential colonial beverage.



Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
December - March	April - June	July - August	September - November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turning gardens & plowing their tillage land - Gathering the winter's wood, manure, and ashes - Ice harvesting - Slaughtering hog(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plowed, fertilized, sowed, and weeded fields - Milking cows - Cheese making - Soap making - Farm/house maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hay and grain harvest - Laundry and household cleaning - Cooking extra meals for hired harvest help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harvest of fruits, vegetables, root crops, and squashes - Canning the harvest for winter food - Making apple cider, vinegar, apple molasses, and apple sauces

The Seasonal Work of Lexington: Highlights

The Hierarchy of Lexington Society in 1775



*John Collins
Photography*



The Men of 1775 Lexington

A Male Dominated Society

- Although society in 18th century Lexington was fluid, it was not as mobile as modern society.
- By 18th century standards, failure to remain within expected norms of New England societal structure would not only result in disorder, chaos and anarchy, but would also anger God.
- Men dominated the top three tiers of Lexington society:
 - Religious leadership
 - Town leadership (selectmen and militia officers)
 - The yeomen and skilled tradesmen

The Spiritual and Political Leader: The Minister

- The clergy stood at the pinnacle of 18th century Lexington society.
- As ministers, the Reverend John Hancock and his successor, Jonas Clarke, were the most important individuals in Lexington society they were the spiritual and moral leaders, the political commentators and, when the town was without a schoolteacher, the educators as well. The minister held an often-unchallenged position within Lexington society.
- In times of need, citizens naturally turned to the minister for assistance. Frequently he involved himself in settling the daily squabbles that arose between residents. Reverend Hancock often settled land disputes by driving a stake into the ground and telling the involved parties that the stake was the borderline and there would be no further quarrel about it.
- The minister even influenced the education of the town's children, taking a leading role in preparing Lexington boys for Harvard.

The Town Leaders: Selectmen and Militia Officers

- Below the ministers stood the selectmen and other town leaders. These were the substantial yeomen and tradesmen who usually had greater wealth and held more property than the average Lexington farmer.
- These leaders were viewed as role models for the doctrine that success could only be attained through hard work. Their positions also entitled them to other benefits, the right to represent Lexington in the House of Representatives in Boston and Massachusetts Provincial Congress.
- Individuals rarely exercised local political leadership until they had reached middle life and achieved economic independence. It was assumed that only those who had established a place in society, whose accumulation of property ensured that their interests were dependent on no man, could be relied upon to wisely lead the community.

The Town Leaders: Selectmen and Militia Officers

- Between 1769 and 1779:
 - Twenty-seven of Lexington's selectmen were between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine.
 - Another seventeen were between the ages of forty and forty-nine.
 - No one under the age of thirty served as a selectman.
- Dependent sons, laborers, poor farmers and servants had no right to accept leadership positions.

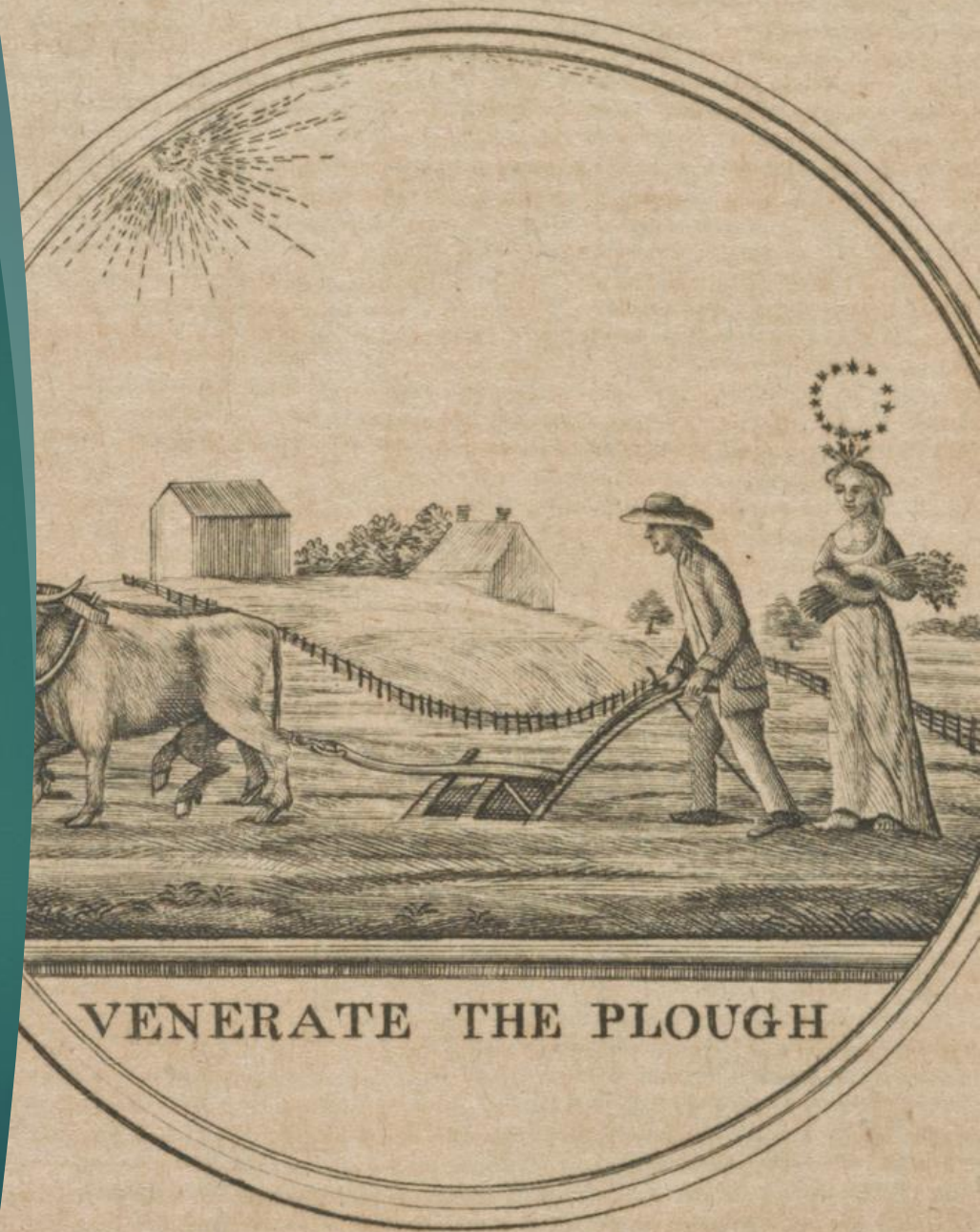


Lexington's Yeomen and Tradesmen

- Below the town politicians in the social order was the general male population, or yeoman. Hard working and dedicated to their beliefs, these men were concerned primarily with raising their families and cultivating their farmlands.
- A review of Lexington's tax valuations of property in 1774 reveals the wealthiest resident of Lexington, William Reed, Esq., was assessed 16 shillings, one pence. The town's poorest resident, Ephraim Winship, was assessed a mere ten pence. Most male property owners in Lexington fell somewhere in the middle and thus, were considered "yeoman" or tradesmen.
- A yeoman could vote in town elections and participate in town meetings if he had resided in Lexington for one year, was at least twenty-one years old and possessed an estate that would rent for £3:6:8 a year according to the valuation of the local assessor.

Lexington's Yeomen and Tradesmen

- As in many other towns, the average Lexington farmer made up the rank and file of the militia.
- He could read, possessed high moral standards and was often easily influenced by the Whig propaganda emanating from Boston.
- His daily duties began at dawn and continued, almost without interruption, until after sunset.



Beyond the Farms: Artisans of Lexington

- In 1774, Lexington boasted, among other trades:
 - Two blacksmiths
 - Four wheelwrights
 - Three clock makers
 - For example, John Parker and Jonas Parker (cousins) were woodworkers who found some success in the production of farm tools and protective wood boxes for watches.



The Daily Concerns of the Average Farmer?

- As discussed earlier, many Lexington farmers were saddled with debt.
- The soil of Middlesex County was failing. Limited studies of mid to late 18th century farms in Middlesex County were suggest soil fertility may have been in decline.
- Massachusetts Bay Colony was in the middle of an economic depression. The Boston Port Bill and other economic and political initiatives by His Majesty's government certainly did not help. The coming revolution and the inflation associated with it would only exacerbate a growing problem.
- Lexington farms were running out of land. The ability to expand or even pass on farms to sons was becoming more and more difficult.

The Poor and Landless Males

- By 1774, nearly one third of Lexington men were landless. Many were young men, transients or non-inheriting sons who remained in town.
- More troubling was the number of poor who were dependent upon the town for support.
 - In 1764, there were twelve individuals who were dependent upon the town.
 - In 1767 the town struggled to support twenty-one dependent poor, including men with wives and children.
 - By 1775, the number rose to twenty-four.
 - To curb the rise in government dependency, the town resolved to prosecute any resident who allowed nonresident poor to reside in their homes without first seeking permission of the selectmen.
 - If the newcomer appeared likely to become a charge of the town, the selectmen would then warn him or her out of town. These individuals were not compelled to leave, but the town had established that it would not be responsible for their care.



The Women of 1775 Lexington

The World of Lexington Women: An Introduction

- According to extensive research conducted by historian Janice Potter McKinnon, prior to the American Revolution most women were bound by the legal and moral codes of their respective communities.
- Although 18th century women had some say in the selection of a spouse, parents still played a significant role in the decision and their consent was required.
- Colonial era women were expected to obey their husbands, rear the children, cook and prepare meals, make and launder clothes and undertake minor household repairs.
- A married woman was seen as subordinate to her husband. Basic to the marriage contract was the notion that the man had the power to make the important decisions for the family unit, as he also had the responsibility to ensure its well- being by providing the essentials - food, clothing, and housing.
- Under the eyes of the law, a married woman was “civilly dead” and thus could not vote, make contracts, serve as a juror, nor execute a will on her own. A male counterpart was often required to assist or be on standby.

The World of Lexington Women: An Introduction

- Ninety-five percent of all New England women, including Lexington women, from the Revolutionary Era were married.
- In addition to being wife and mother, a married Lexington woman was also the mistress of her own household.
- As such, she was responsible for a more extended “family.” Anyone who lived within the household – and this could include grandparents, unmarried siblings, extended family, hired help, boarders, apprentices, resident poor, and slaves – were subject to the husband’s government but under the wife’s care.
- Period accounts suggest New England women thought of these others, whose presence might be temporary or long term, as part of their family, and referred to them in many period letters and memoirs as “my family.”

The Extended Family and “Helpers”

- To support an extended family, many Lexington women relied upon live-in “helps.”
- According to historian Mary Fuhrer, these were usually young female neighbors, who played a central role in meeting the labor needs of many Lexington women.
- For example, in the late 1760s, Lexington’s Mary Clarke, wife of the Reverend Jonas Clarke, had eight children, but her oldest daughter was not yet ten. Short on help, the Clarks arranged for a series of live-in local girls, who joined the family for a year at a time.
- The Reverend Clarke recorded their comings and goings of three such girls - Betty Pollard, Betty Perry, and Susanna Merriam – and how they were compensated in textile goods in exchange for their service.
- Responsibilities of these “helpers” included worked in kitchens, watching children, assisting in textile production, and nursing mothers through childbirth or illness.

A Community of Interconnectedness

- Lexington women also depended upon their neighboring women for support, assistance and exchanges.
- Women were accustomed to trading “on account” with each other, just as men traded their artisan craft and labor.
 - Many Lexington women were accustomed to borrowing a churn or other dairying equipment, textile tools, pots or tubs for preserving food and producing soaps and candles.
 - They also had to trade skills, as few women were trained in all the specialized steps of household production.
- Women traded most frequently with their closest neighbors, as a matter of convenience. Historian Mary Fuhrer suggests trades were not barter; women rarely swapped one-for-one items. Rather, they kept account with each of their neighbors, recording the value of what they had swapped.
- Periodically they “reckoned,” totaling all they owed a particular neighbor and balancing it against all that neighbor owed them, noting what was due to whom.



The Life of Lexington Women

Life Influenced By Community Dynamics

- The lives of Lexington women were influenced and shaped by the economy and physical world of the community.
- Adolescent and teen years were assigned to the learning the skills and gathering the tools of housekeeping. Young girls would learn from an early age the skills of childcare and nursing, concocting home remedies, turning the raw materials of the farm into the food and clothing of her future household.
- As a women approached marriage, she would begin to gather the essential items of her “marriage portion,” including household linens, cookware, textile tools, and furnishings that she would need for her role as the housekeeper.
- John and Lydia Parker had a daughter whose 1770s marriage portion was recorded by the family. The document is currently contained in the Lexington Historical Society’s collection.

An Example of the Marriage Portion

- The following items were part of the Parker daughter's "marriage portion" that she brought to her marriage:
 - Feathers for a mattress
 - Bed ticks
 - Bedsteads
 - Bed cords
 - Coverlets, quilts, and underbeds sufficient to equip two beds
 - Shirts
 - Twenty-four yards of diaper cloth
 - High quality furniture, including chairs
 - A kettle frying pan, trammel, iron work
 - Bible and Psalm Book
 - "Sundries" from two local stores

Childbirth and Raising a Family

- Lexington society saw the most important female role began after marriage with the rearing of children. It was central to their life and identity.
- Most women in late colonial Lexington married in their early- to mid-twenties. They generally bore children every eighteen months to two years from then until the end of fertility in their mid forties.
- In other words, 1775 Lexington women could expect to have approximately six to ten children and to be continuously either pregnant or lactating from marriage until middle age.
- For example:
 - Lucy Clarke: Thirteen children between 1758 and 1780
 - Anna Harrington: Eleven children between 1760 and 1780
 - Lydia Mulliken: Seven children between 1753 and her husband's death in 1765
 - Anna Munroe, Five children between 1768 and her death in 1780

Later in Life: The Fate of Widows

- If a woman became a widow, her fate was often tied to the economic success or unsuccess of her spouse.
- According to Massachusetts colonial probate laws, a third of her husband's estate was reserved for her life-time use, and some husbands – by will - left even more assurance of their widow's well-being.
- This was all well and good if the deceased husband was well off, as was the fate of Dorothy Tidd. However, many Lexington women did not fare as well.
 - Rebecca Munro was forced to send her children away to be cared by others after being left financially destitute following the death of her husband Edmund at Monmouth.
 - Abigail Harrington, who lived at the head of the common, scrambled to make ends meet by teaching school, renting a room in her house for school classes and taking in the town's poor as boarders.
 - Lucy Parker was left utterly destitute following the death of her husband Jonas. She was forced to rely on the support of the town. Her children were sent away to be cared for by others and she remained on the town poor rolls until her death.

Female Property Rights in Probate

- While all property technically belonged to the husband, household movables such as textiles, furniture, the tools of domestic production, silverware and dishes were generally passed from generation to generation through the female line and were considered properly part of women's domestic sphere.
- For example, Hannah Stone, bequeathed almost the whole of her estate "to my beloved daughter Tabitha Merriam." Hannah Stearns willed to her daughter-in-law Patty her porridge pot and flat irons. Abigail Bridge left her riding hood to one daughter-in-law and a dark calico gown to another.
- Thus, a woman's household goods was a woman's closest representation of legitimate possessions and gave her a sense of ownership.





The Daily Routines of Lexington Women

Daily Work Through the Seasons

- **Spring:** The season started with the twice-daily milking ritual and the making of butter and cheese that would continue through the summer and autumn. The season also meant spring cleaning, whitewashing and sweeping out winter's debris. Sheared sheep meant wool to pick, clean, card, and spin. May's garden planting was followed by wedding, tending, picking, and putting up produce.
- **Summer:** The hay and grain harvests in July and August meant extra hands to feed and board, and much extra laundry. By September, Lexington's women were turning apples to sauce and cider, drying fruit, making preserves.
- **Fall:** In October and November, they were busy putting up vegetables and fruits. The winter slaughter meant that meat would need to be salted in tubs or turned to sausages, lard rendered and turned to candles and soap.
- **Winter:** Winter months were usually heavily occupied with spinning, knitting, sewing, and repairing textiles.

We are positively informed that the patriotic inhabitants of **Lexington**, at a late meeting, unanimously resolved against the use of Bohea Tea of all sorts, Dutch or English importation ; and to manifest the sincerity of their resolution, they bro't together every ounce contained in the town, and committed it to one common bonfire.

We are also informed, Charlestown is in

Lexington Women and Economic Independence

Lexington Women and Economic and Political Independence

- Economic Independence
 - **Deputy Husbands.** Women in the eighteenth century also acted independently as deputy husbands, a term coined by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.
 - As a deputy husband, the wife could take over her husband's job or business in his absence. This usually occurred in family businesses such as stores, taverns, mills, and the like.
 - Women were familiar with the business and kept it running smoothly while their husbands were incapacitated or away. The role of deputy husband allowed married women to purchase supplies, pay bills, bank, and perform all other aspects of running their businesses.
 - During times of war, women ran their husband's businesses, farms, families, and managed the servants, while their husbands served in the military. Such was the case during the American Revolution and women, whether Tory or Whig, did whatever was necessary to keep the home front running.


Lexington Women and Economic and Political Independence

- Economic Independence
 - **Feme Sole:** A *feme sole*, typically a widow but in some very limited circumstances an unmarried woman, could sign contracts, own a business, control her own wages, buy and/or sell property, and distribute personal property and chattel in her will.
 - A *feme sole* could also sue or be sued in her own name in a court of law.
 - Such positions enabled women to work within the accepted sphere of gendered society (and/or sometimes in conjunction with family members, husbands, or business partners) and earn incomes that placed them in the middling ranks.
 - One example of a Lexington *Feme sole* was Joseph Loring's daughters. Mr. Loring had skills as a tailor, and he taught his daughters the trade. Before their marriages they worked independently as tailoresses, including offering a service for the cutting and fitting of garments.
 - Lydia, the eldest *feme sole*, also offered her services as a private school mistress.



Participation in Political Protests

**YOU KIDS
GET OFF MY
LAWN!**



18th Century
Lexington
Youth

Youth and Lexington Society: An Introduction

- Massachusetts colonial society was not a democracy and the father, or head of the family, was the master of all those under his roof.
- Children were expected to be obedient and deferential to their elders *and* their economic and political betters.
- If a child was to be disciplined, it was not to stifle youthful behavior or crush an independent spirit. Instead, parental discipline was rooted in a loving desire to secure the child's eternal happiness through salvation.
- A common myth, based on misinterpretations of early family portraits, was that children in colonial New England were considered merely “little adults,” and that they experienced no significant life-course transition from childhood to adulthood.
- The youth of 18th century Lexington experienced changes similar to the youth of today: a distinct hormonally-initiated phase of heightened emotions, tendencies towards risk-taking, and more impulsive behaviors.

The Progression of Lexington Youth

- **Infancy:** Birth through age seven.
- **Childhood Proper:** Age seven through fourteen. During this stage, youth were introduced to education and physical labor.
- **Youth:** Ages fourteen through twenty-one. At fourteen, both boys and girls marked a rite of passage into the era of “youth.”
 - It was at this point that boys chose their life’s work and began training either by laboring with their father on the farm or beginning an apprenticeship.
 - Girls at his stage mastered the skills of housekeeping and worked to assemble the household textiles and goods that they would need to “go to housekeeping.”
 - Girls could marry at age sixteen and boys could serve in the militia.
- **Entry Into Adulthood:** Upon reaching age twenty-one, both boys and girls were considered legally adults, though dependence on their father might extend until marrying or receiving their inheritance.

Youthful Chores and Responsibilities

- During the infancy stage, most children were subjected to instruction related to the submission of authority (patriarchal, political, social and religious) and learning self-control.
- Children up to roughly age ten (based on account books and diaries) mostly assisted around the farm. Work at this young age was not generally gender segregated.
 - Children might be tending younger siblings, feeding poultry or swine, herding sheep, scaring the birds away after sowing seeds, weeding the garden, plucking pests from vegetables.
 - At harvest time they might carry food or beverage to workers in the field, help bind cut grain into sheaves, and assist in threshing or husking.
 - During the autumn they might be called upon to assist in cider making, boiling apples for “sauce” and putting up vegetables.
 - In the winter, they could be recruited to muck out stalls, carry wood, or gather kindling.
 - In the spring, they could assist in the task of spreading dung on the tillage fields.
 - And year round they could be called upon to fetch water, bring in wood for the fire, sweep and assist around the house.

Youthful Chores and Responsibilities

- Around approximately age eleven, gender-segregated work began, with boys following their fathers and girls their mothers in the work on the land or in the house.
 - Girls learned the skills of housekeeping: turning the raw materials of the land into the goods the family needed to thrive. They turned their hands to carding and spinning fibers, sewing, mending, and embroidery; cooking and preserving; doing laundry; nursing and producing home medicines; gardening and making candles and soap.
 - Boys' farming responsibilities grew with their physical strength. One Massachusetts' boy's journal recorded his progress:
 - Age 11: Spreading flax and clearing stalks
 - Age 12: Learning to hoe
 - Age 13: Carting and spreading dung
 - Age 14: Digging stones
 - Age 17: Sawing wood
 - Age 18: Managing a team of oxen

Education and Instruction

- In the 17th Century, Massachusetts had passed a series of educational laws early that required towns with 50 families to provide a reading and writing school. Larger towns with 100 families also had to provide a “grammar school” where older students (almost always boys) were instructed in Latin and Greek grammar, as well as other advanced subjects that they would need for admission to Harvard.
- Lexington built its first schoolhouse on the common in 1715, described in 19th century accounts as “humble frame building with a huge stone chimney and fireplace at one end.”
- At first, girls and younger boys attended “female” or “dame” schools on the outskirts of town to learn reading and writing. In 1747, Lexington girls were also allowed to attend the grammar school.
- In 1761, the town rebuilt the schoolhouse. Over the next several years residents debated whether the grammar school should also be held there or circulated around the outer districts.
- Eventually the town decided to host the grammar school on the common and the reading and writing schools for younger students in the outer districts.



Social Life and Activities of Lexington Youth

Social Life and Activities of Lexington Youth

- Lexington youth certainly engaged in age related activities with members of their own and opposite sex.
- Some of their activities were harmless fun and games, while others were a bit more mischievous or outright immoral (and perhaps illegal).
- According to the Lexington Historical Society, the Reverend Jonas Clarke, was an often out of control youth, who, as a teenager, was fined for gambling and “for making tumultuous and indecent Noises.”
- In 1757, Lexington residents were particularly upset with a group of teenage boys and girls who were quite rowdy during church on Sunday and resolved that “strict and special care be taken to prevent all disorders among the children and youth in and about the Meeting House, as well as to prevent their doing damage upon the grass and fruits of those who live nigh the Meeting House.”

Intermingling with the Opposite Sex

- Tavern dances or “frolics” were quite popular activity for Lexington teens and young adults.
- Frequenting Buckman, Munroe and other Lexington taverns to consume alcohol and socialize with members of the opposite sex was another popular activity.
- Yet another enterprise, popular with Lexington youth but discouraged by Lexington adults, was “night walking”. This activity typically involved male and female teens wandering around Lexington after sunset, often to secluded areas, to engage in “sinful behavior”.
- These rebellious activities were not common to only Lexington and many Massachusetts adults would complain teens spend “Days and Nights in Singing and Dancing, and other youthful sins.” Ministers condemned such “patterns of youthful behavior: night-walking, frolicking, company-keeping, carousing, merry-meeting, dancing, and singing”

“Sinful Pleasure” – Pre-marital Activities

- Historians Laurel Ulrich and Lois Stabler uncovered a growing mid-18th century culture in New England of young males “sleeping over” females' homes during courtship, even during courtships that did not end in marriage.
- Both scholars assert that this was not merely courtship, but a form socializing that progressed and developed in a world where boys and girls were always in each other's kitchen, fields, haystacks – and eventually bedchambers.
- Of course, this activity horrified the Reverend Jonas Clarke, who would later chastise the younger members of his flock in a sermon. The minister warned Lexington youth they could be “tempted and allured away from God and their Deity to Sinful Pleasure and vicious Courses to their Shame and Sorrow, and finally to their Destruction .” He urged them to refrain from such immoral behavior and “choose other courses.”
- As well see, his warnings fell on many youthful but deaf ears.

Premarital Pregnancy Comparison, Lexington, Mass., 1700–20
vs. 1755–75

1700–20

	Number	Percent
Yes	6	17.6
No	28	82.4
Total	34	100.0

1755–75

	Number	Percent
Yes	23	31.1
No	51	68.9
Total	74	100.0

SOURCE: *Vital Records of Lexington, Mass., through 1898* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co. for New England Historic and Genealogic Society, 1898).

NOTE: Couples married in Lexington between 1700 and 1720, or between 1755 and 1775, in which at least one of the pair was from Lexington and for whom the date of birth of firstborn is known. Premarital pregnancy is indicated when the date of birth was less than 9 months after the date of marriage.

Premarital Pregnancy: Findings by Historian Mary Fuhrer

Pregnancy Out of Wedlock

- In the 18th Century the birth of illegitimate children were treated as criminal in nature and punished by the imposition of a fine. On the eve of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the promiscuous behavior of several young women from Lexington played out in the Middlesex County Court.
- “Sarah Mead of Lexington in the County of Middlesex, spinster, being presented for the crime of fornication on file comes into the court and pleads guilty and says she was delivered of a bastard female child born of her body in Lexington aforesaid on the 13th day of January last, which child is still living, and she charges Thomas Nunning of Bedford in the same County, husbandman, with being the father of said child... Sept. 8, 1772.”
- “Lydia Simends of Lexington in the County of Middlesex, spinster, comes into court and confesses she has been guilty of the crime of fornication at said Woburn... whereof she there afterward had a bastard male child born of her body on the 15th day of September last which child is still living. The court having considered her offense ordered that the said Lydia five shillings to be disposed of as the law directs and that she pay fees and costs, standing committed til performed. March 8, 1774.”

Pregnancy Out of Wedlock

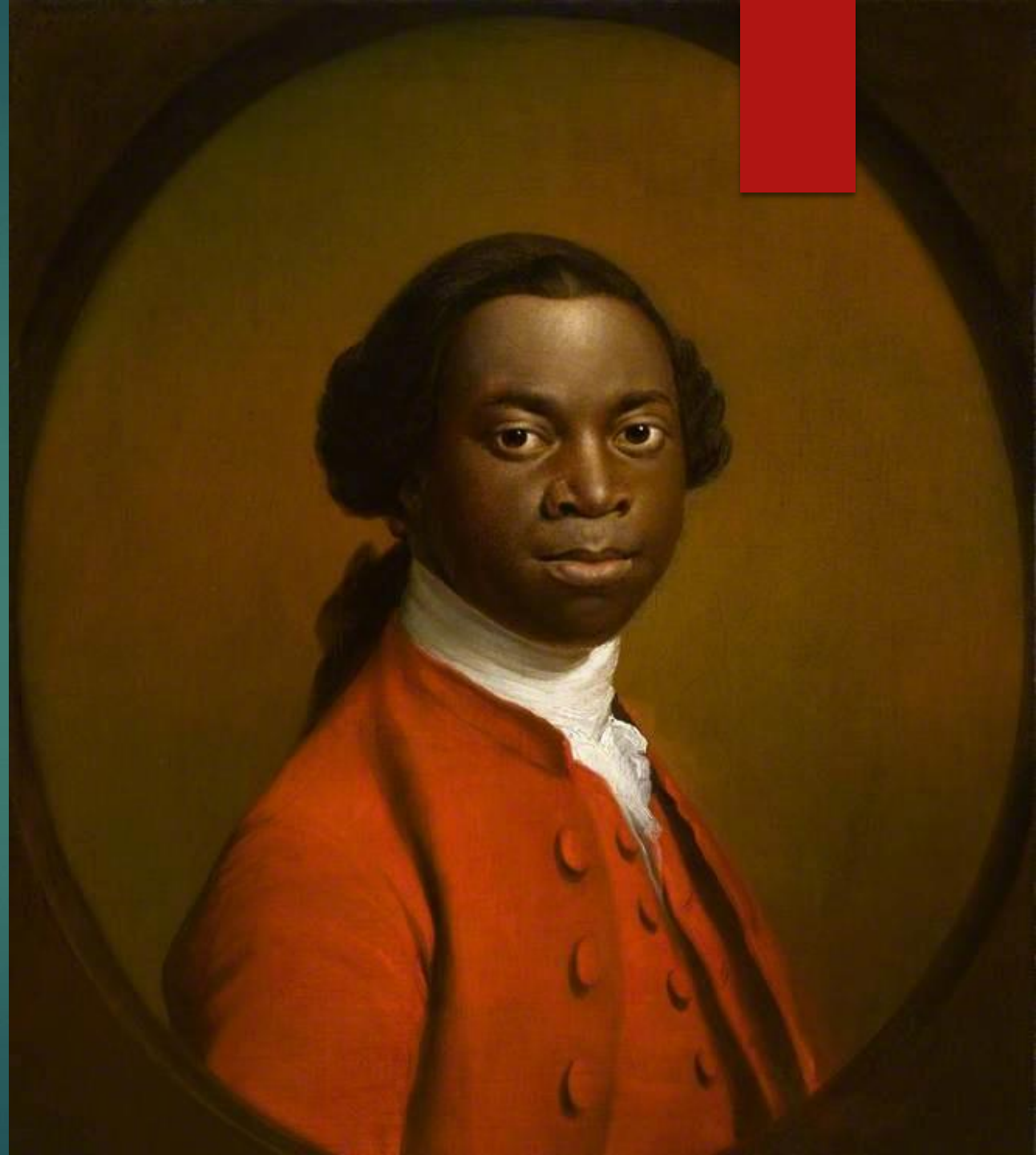
- Four girls from two Lexington Munro families appeared before the Court on five occasions.
- Rachel Munro, daughter of Marrett Munro, was fined for “fornication and says she was delivered of a bastard child at Lexington on the first day of December last (which child still living) and she charges Thomas Godding of Lexington, cordwainer, with being the father of said child.... Date March 12, 1765.”
- Four years later she was back before the Court again. “Rachel Munro, spinster, presented for the crime of fornication, resulted in birth of bastard girl on Nov. 30, 1769. Pleads guilty and charges Benjamin Bodge of Charlestown as father. Case dated April 2, 1770.”
- Rachel's younger sister Bethia also appeared before the Court in 1775. “Bethia Munro of Lexington in the County of Middlesex, single woman, comes into the court and confesses she has been guilty of the crime of fornication in said Lexington whereof she there afterwards had a bastard male child born of her body on the 24th day of February 1775.”

Pregnancy Out of Wedlock



- Two of Thomas Munro's daughters were also hauled before the Court. “Sarah Munro [of Lexington], spinster, presented for the crime of fornication, resulted in birth of bastard girl on Dec. 20, 1767. Pleads guilty and charges Wm. Swaney of Charlestown.”
- “Abigail Munro, crime of fornication resulted in the birth of bastard girl on Oct. 27, 1769. Pleads guilty and charges Jonathan Peirce of Lexington. Case dated Nov. 27, 1770.”

The Enslaved Peoples,
Freedmen and
Freedwomen of
Lexington



The Enslaved Peoples of Lexington: An Overview

- Contrary to popular myths, slavery did exist in Massachusetts, and there were slaves living in Lexington at the outbreak of the Revolution.
- In towns such as Lexington, the slave population rarely exceeded one to two percent. For example, there were on average no more than 20 slaves in Lexington at any one time during most of the 18th century.
- Research conducted by Mary Fuhrer identifies many of the town's prominent members who owned slaves: The Bowmans, Reeds, Stones, Estabrooks, Bridges, and Muzzys all owned enslaved peoples.
 - 18th Lexington slave owners purchased their slaves one of two ways – travelling to Boston, Salem or Newburyport to purchase imported slaves from the West Indies or “domestic” slaves. The latter usually involved the breaking up of an enslaved family.
 - Enslaved peoples in Lexington were often exchanged as gifts or bequeathed as part of a deceased's estate.

The Enslaved Peoples of Lexington: An Overview

- In some households, male slaves worked side by side with their masters as coopers, blacksmiths, shoemakers and wheelwrights. In other homes they ran errands, functioned as valets and performed heavy work for their masters. In Boston, slaves worked closely with sailors and merchants.
- The few female slaves in Lexington were required to carry out the various household tasks their mistresses demanded, most notably laundry. Female slaves were also set to scrubbing floors and walls, soap-making, garden work, and even fieldwork.
- Massachusetts slaves were not without rights. Unlike slaves in the southern colonies, New England slaves could hold personal property, serve in the militia (as was the case with five of Lexington's slaves: Prince Estabrook, Pompey Blackman, Samuel Crafts, Cato Tuder and Jupiter Tree) and testify in court against both whites and other blacks.
- On rare occasions they were permitted to petition the colony for legal assistance. In 1774, several African-Americans addressed the Massachusetts General Court and demanded that they too have the right to enjoy the benefits of liberty.

The Enslaved Peoples of Lexington: An Overview

- A slave could also sue for freedom, as was the case with a female mulatto slave named Margaret. On November 20, 1770, Margaret appeared in a court in Cambridge represented by a local Boston lawyer named Jonathan Sewall. John Adams, who was currently in the midst of the Boston Massacre trial, represented her masters, the Muzzey family of Lexington. At the end of the hearing, which lasted most of the day, the court freed Margaret.
- However, slavery was a degrading and inhumane institution. A slave could not move in search of opportunity or even travel outside of Lexington without the master's assent. If he or she were discovered, a slave would be prosecuted as a fugitive.
- A slave could marry only with the master's blessing and interracial marriage was illegal.
- Finally, a slave was always subject to both actual and potential cruelty against which there was no defense. If a slave struck a white man, he would be summarily and severely punished.

Enslaved Peoples: Marriage, Families and Growing Old

- The low concentration of Black enslaved peoples in Lexington made it difficult for slaves to find spouses and create families.
- With over 100 documented slaves in 18th century Lexington, there were only three documented slave marriages (and two marriages of former slaves).
- Compared to white marriages, which commonly produced eight or ten children, the number of children born to a slave family was considerably lower.
 - Slave women's heavy labor led to low fertility.
 - Married slaves were discouraged or outright prohibited from living with each other.
 - Massachusetts slaves were often discouraged by their masters from having children.
- It was not uncommon for a slave that had been acquired as a child, brought up in his or her master's family, and spent the whole of his or her productive years working for them, to be "freed" upon reaching old age to release the master from any financial obligation of support.

Enslaved Peoples: Marriage, Families and Growing Old

- For example, Venus Munroe, had been purchased and brought to the Reed family as an infant.
- She refused the freedom offered to her in her old age.
- Her master, Captain James Reed, had tried to set her free and force the town to support her as a pauper, but she refused to comply, arguing she should not be forced to leave the only home she had every known.



A Belief of Inferiority

- Over the 18th century, the number of freedmen and freedwomen in Lexington dropped significantly.
- As a result, the continuing racial disparities between white and Black Lexington residents continued to grow and already existing racist views of enslaved peoples only became exacerbated.
- Many, if not most, white Lexington residents viewed enslaved peoples as inferior to them.
- Between 1740 and 1770, the Massachusetts colonial legislature passed a series of laws that moved to restrict and control enslaved peoples, including an effort to create additional financial burdens if a slave wished to purchase their freedom. The residents of Lexington quickly enforced these laws.
- Curiously, on the spiritual front, neither the Reverends John Hancock or Jonas Clarke preached or wrote about the evils of slavery or advocated for the souls of the enslaved.



Fears of Slave Uprisings and Resistance

- White Lexington residents were continuously fearful that the enslaved peoples of Lexington and Massachusetts Bay may one day revolt.
- A member of the Harrington family would later write that as enslaved militia men such as Prince Estabrook and Jupiter Tree were fighting side by side with whites to protect the town and its people, a rumor spread in Lexington that “the slaves were about to rise and murder the defenseless women and their children.”



Lexington Freedmen and Freedwomen: The Case of the Burdoos

Freedmen and Freedwomen: Eli Burdoo

- On the eve of Lexington and Concord, there were Black freedmen and freedwomen in Lexington. The most notable were the Burdoo families.
- Eli Burdoo was born in Lexington on July 15, 1755. He was the only child of Moses and Phebe (Banister) Burdoo.
- Eli's father was also a freeman. According to a 1750 property tax valuation, his wealth fell exactly in the middle of Lexington residents for assessed wealth.
- Sadly, Eli's mother died in 1756. His father was killed in 1759 in Canada while fighting the French.
- It is unknown who stepped forward to care for the orphaned child, but someone from Lexington did as he is not listed on the town's "poor list". Eventually, Eli Burdoo was taken in by his uncle and fellow freeman Philip Burdoo Jr.
- On April 18, 1775, Eli Burdoo was 19 years old and a private in Captain John Parker's Lexington Company.

Freedmen and Freedwomen: Silas Burdoo

- Silas Burdoo, Eli's cousin, is a bit of a conundrum when it comes to his relationship with Lexington.
- Silas was born on February 14, 1748. He was the son of Phillip Burdoo Jr., a freeman and laborer...and the same man who took in Eli.
- Silas' grandfather was either a freeman or may have purchased his freedom. Regardless, by the 1740s, he had amassed enough wealth and property that Lexington's tax rolls valued his property above that of his immediate neighbors.
- Silas' father was also economically successful and often participated in fur trapping expeditions with Lexington's Edmund Munro.
- Unfortunately, Silas Burdoo was not as fortunate. According to existing records, by the early 1770s Silas was possibly landless, worked as a hired hand and would often move back and forth between Lexington and Cambridge.
- After the war he moved first to Ringe, New Hampshire and then Reading, Vermont. He was considered a well-respected businessman by his community.



Lexington:
April 18, 1775

Lexington: April 18, 1775

- A bloody skirmish will break out in Lexington in less than twenty-four hours.
- On April 18, 1775, many white adult men and women of Lexington were not only preoccupied with the threat of war, but also the specter of overwhelming debt, lack of land opportunities for their children, the inability to support the elderly and poor and the possible collapse of their agricultural economy.
- Lexington youth may be preoccupied with members of the opposite sex. Many teens are also worried about pregnancy, the lack of economic opportunity and the genuine possibility that they or someone they love could be called to war and killed in action.
- The enslaved peoples of Lexington see little to no economic, legal or political opportunities for themselves. They may scoff or bristle at the hypocrisy of their fellow white residents who argue that British policy and military actions threaten English liberties and are tantamount to slavery.

Lexington: April 18, 1775

- Shortly after dawn, 19-year-old Solomon Brown will leave Lexington and drive a cart to Boston to sell dairy products at market.
- Throughout the morning, the men and women of Lexington will go about their daily business and tend to the tasks of the day.
- At some point towards midday, they may break for a light lunch before returning to their respective chores.
- In the late afternoon, Lieutenant William Tidd will assemble his platoon, composed of teenage and adult males, to drill in preparation for war with England.
- Between 4 and 6 PM, Solomon Brown will start his return to Lexington. En route, he will encounter six-to-nine-armed British officers riding on horseback. Taken aback, he will ride directly to Munroe Tavern to alert Lexington militia sergeant William Munroe.
- Within the hour, Lexington will begin to mobilize for war.



Questions?

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Required Readings: Source Materials Utilized for This Presentation

1. Mary Babson Fuhrer, *Analysis of Lexington Tax Assessments and Valuations*
2. Mary Babson Fuhrer, *Research for the Re-Interpretation of the Buckman Tavern, Lexington, Massachusetts: Conceptions of Liberty*
3. Mary Babson Fuhrer, *The Revolutionary Worlds of Lexington and Concord Compared*
4. Mary Babson Fuhrer, *Reckoning with the Parkers*
5. Robert Gross, *The Minute Men and Their World*
6. Alyssa Kariofyllis, *The Role of Women of Concord, Lexington and Lincoln*

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