

## Timeline of the Battle of Lexington

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### *Prelude to War*

1. On September 26, 1774, Lexington voted to form committees whose responsibilities were “to bring two pieces of cannon from Watertown and mount them, to provide a pair of drums for the use of the military company in town . . . [and] to have the militia and alarm list meet for a view of their arms.”<sup>1</sup>
2. On November 3, 1774, the town assembled to plan “military discipline and to put themselves in a position of defense against their Enemies.”<sup>2</sup>
3. On November 10, 1774, the town further resolved “Voted. That two half barrells of powdere be addede to the Town stocke. Also Voted that a sufficiency of ball for sd powdere be provided. Votede. That there be a suitable quantity of Flints provided for the Towne if there be found a defidency. . . That the Towne provide a pair of Drums for the use of the Military Company in Towne.”<sup>3</sup>
4. On November 28, 1774, Lexington took significant steps towards acquiring an artillery piece from Watertown. “Voted . . . that the Selectmen receive the two pieces of cannon with their beds of the Towne of Watertowne and give receipts for the same on behalf of the Towne . . . that a committee of three persons be chosen to get the saide pieces well mounted & as cheap as they can. . . Voted . . . £40 for the purpose of mounting the cannon ammunition.”<sup>4</sup>
5. On December 12, 1774, elements of the Lexington militia assembled to inspect arms and equipment. However, due to snow, the inspection was rescheduled to December 28, 1774. “The training bande & alarm liste men [will] appear at the Meeting house . . . for viewing arms & ammunition.”<sup>5</sup> That same day, Lexington residents voted “Upon request of a number of the Inhabitants to see if the Town will call for those bayonets that were providede for part of the training soldiers at the Province cost, and that the remaindere of the soldiers may be providede with bayonets at the expense of the Towne, to be returnable when called for. And that those persons that have purchased bayonets at their own cost may be paid for them, by the Towne, at the price the others cost the Towne.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, September 26, 1774.

<sup>2</sup> Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, November 3, 1774.

<sup>3</sup> Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, November 10, 1774.

<sup>4</sup> Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, November 28, 1774.

<sup>5</sup> Declaration and Resolves, Town of Lexington, December 12, 1774.

<sup>6</sup> Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, December 12, 1774.

6. On December 27, 1774, Lexington “Votede . . . That seven persons be appointed as a committee of inspections to see that the plans of the Continental and Provincial Congresses are faithfully carried into executione. . . . [seven people listed, including John Parker]”<sup>7</sup>
7. On December 28, 1774, Lexington residents resolved “to provide bayonets at the town’s cost for one third of the training soldiers.”<sup>8</sup>
8. According to the Reverend Jonas Clarke, the Lexington militia were “training” and “showing arms” as early as September 15, 1774. Other dates Clarke records the militia drilling are October 5, 1774 and March 13, 1775.<sup>9</sup> Town records also confirm the company was drilling on December 12 and December 28, 1774.
9. Likewise, Lieutenant William Tidd asserted the company met often and drilled regularly. “I, William Tidd, of Lexington, in the county of Middlesex, do testify and declare, that I was a Lieutenant in the company of Lexington militia, commanded by Capt. John Parker, in the year 1775; that, previous to the 19<sup>th</sup> of April of that year, it was expected the British would soon commence hostilities upon the then Provincials; that said company frequently met for exercise, the better to be prepared for defense; that, on the evening previous to the 19<sup>th</sup> a number of the militia met at my house for the above purpose.”<sup>10</sup>
10. It is possible Jonathan Harrington Sr., father of company fifer Jonathan Harrington, was making and providing cartridge boxes and belting to Captain John Parker’s Company. “Account of things I lost on the nineteenth of April, 1775, by the British troops...Two large moose skins...Three cartridge boxes ; three bridles and straps, all new...The above is a true copy from the original that was taken in and sworn to by Major Fuller and others, with some additional things. JONATHAN HARRINGTON.”<sup>11</sup>
11. It is also possible Captain John Parker was making powder horns for the men of his company. “An Inventory of the Real and Personal Estate of Capt. John Parker Late of Lexington taken June 1776, Middlesex County Probate Court . . . One gun ...powder ball & flints...three Powder horns...A knapsack”<sup>12</sup>
12. A review of Jonas Parker’s estate reveals that prior to the Battle of Lexington he was making cutting the stocks of civilian guns down so the weapons could accept bayonets.

*The Events Leading up to The Battle of Lexington*

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<sup>7</sup> Declaration and Resolves, Town of Lexington, December 27, 1774.

<sup>8</sup> Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, December 28, 1774.

<sup>9</sup> Journal of the Reverend Jonas Clarke, September 15, 1774, October 5, 1774 and March 13, 1775.

<sup>10</sup> Deposition of William Tidd, December 29, 1824. Emphasis added by author.

<sup>11</sup> Massachusetts Provincial Congress, “Accounts of Damages”, April 25, 1775.

<sup>12</sup> Inventory of Captain John Parker’s Estate, June, 1776.

13. At approximately six o'clock on April 18, 1775, Solomon Brown observed nine British officers riding slowly along the country road before him. The evening 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 onto Lexington. He rode directly to Munroe's Tavern where he informed Sergeant Munroe of what he had observed.<sup>13</sup>
14. Between approximately six o'clock and eight o'clock, Sergeant Munroe dispatched a detail to guard the provincial leaders John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Both of these men had taken up temporary residence in the home of Reverend Jonas Clarke, located a short distance up the Bedford Road from Buckman Tavern. According to Munroe, "these men were placed . . . around the house of Mr. Clarke for the night and I remained with them."<sup>14</sup>
15. During the evening of April 18, 1775, elements of the Lexington militia were drilling at William Tidd's house.<sup>15</sup>
16. At approximately eight o'clock, the town received two messages from Elbridge Gerry, a member of the Provincial Committee of Safety and Supplies. According to Jonas Clarke "We received two messages, the first verbal, the other, by express, in writing from the Committee of Safety, who were then sitting in the westerly part of Cambridge, directed to the Honorable John Hancock, Esq., who, with the Honorable Samuel Adams, Esq., was then providentially with us, 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. Both these gentlemen had been frequently, and even publicly, threatened by the enemies of this people, both in England and America, with the vengeance of the British administration. And as Mr. Hancock, in particular, had been more than once personally insulted by some officers of the troops in Boston, it was not without some just grounds supposed that under coverage of the darkness, sudden arrest, if no assassination might be attempted by these instruments of tyranny."<sup>16</sup>
17. An hour later, a party of British officers was observed riding through Lexington. At the same time, approximately thirty members of the training band had assembled outside Buckman's Tavern. Among those present were Solomon Brown, Jonathan Loring and Elijah Sanderson. An older member of the alarm list, hoping to locate the nine officers and ascertain their objective, approached the three. The young men agreed to set out on their horses. Sanderson and Loring were charged with the task of observing the officer's movements, while Brown would ride ahead to Concord to alert the town.

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<sup>13</sup> Deposition of William Munroe, March 7, 1825.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Deposition of William Tidd, December 29, 1824. Emphasis added by author.

<sup>16</sup> "A Brief Narrative of the Principle Transactions of That Day" by Jonas Clarke, A.M., Pastor of the Church in Lexington, Massachusetts State, April 19, 1776.

18. Between nine thirty and ten o'clock, Brown, Loring and Sanderson were captured in Lincoln by the British officers observed earlier in the evening. "We were, about ten of the clock, suddenly surprized by nine persons, whom we took to be Regular Officers, who rode up to us, mounted and armed, each having a pistol in his hand, and after putting pistols to our breast, and seizing the Bridles of our horses, they swore, that if we stirred another step, we should be all dead men, upon which we surrendered ourselves."<sup>17</sup>
19. At Midnight in the evening, alarm rider Paul Revere rode into Lexington. He galloped past Munroe's Tavern, across the bridge at Vine Brook and on to Buckman's Tavern. After a brief conversation with the men there, he rode the few hundred yards up the Bedford Road to the Clarke parsonage. As he dismounted, Revere encountered Sergeant Munroe and his armed guard. Munroe, not recognizing the rider, called for Revere to identify himself and ordered him not to make so much noise as people inside the house were trying to sleep. The agitated Revere shouted "Noise! You'll have enough noise before long! The regulars are coming out!" Storming past the sergeant, he began banging on the front door of the parsonage. Hancock immediately lifted the sash of his bedroom window to see what was happening. Recognizing Revere, he exclaimed, "Come in Revere! We're not afraid of you!"
20. At approximately one o'clock on the morning of April 19, 1775, alarm rider William Dawes arrived in Lexington. Following his arrival, militia officers, as well as Hancock and Clarke concluded that a military expedition from Boston was advancing towards Concord. "[Between] the hours of twelve and one on the morning of the 19th of April, we received intelligence, by express, from the intelligence service, the Honorable Joseph Warren, Esq. at Boston, that a large body of the king's troops, supposed to be a brigade of about twelve or fifteen hundred, were embarked in boats from Boston and gone over to land on Lake Marispoint, so-called, in Cambridge."<sup>18</sup>
21. At one o'clock in the morning, Revere, Dawes, Adams, Hancock and Clarke left the Clarke parsonage and walked down Bedford Road to Buckman's Tavern to speak with the officers of the militia.<sup>19</sup> According to Clarke, the conversation centered on the purpose of the British mission.
22. At the conclusion of this meeting, Lexington's militia is alarmed. As Clarke recalled, "upon this timely intelligence, the militia of this town were alarmed, and ordered to meet on the usual place of parade."<sup>20</sup> As they gathered, Captain Parker addressed his men so as to "consult what might be done for our own and the people's safety; and also, to be ready for whatever service Providence might call us out to upon this alarming occasion, in case--just in case--overt acts of violence or open hostilities should be committed by this mercenary band of armed and blood-thirsty oppressors."<sup>21</sup> After some discussion, it

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<sup>17</sup> Depositions of Elijah Sanderson, Solomon Brown and Jonathan Loring, April 25, 1775.

<sup>18</sup> Clarke, "A Brief Narrative . . ."

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

was decided to confirm the accuracy of Revere's message by sending scouts eastward to locate and observe the movements of the British regulars. "Two persons were sent, express, to Cambridge, if possible to gain intelligence of the motions of the troops and what route they took. The militia met, according to order, and waited the return of the messengers that they might order their measures as occasion should require."<sup>22</sup>

23. Between one and two o'clock, Captain John Parker requests Nathan Munroe and Benjamin Tidd to ride to Bedford and Concord to alarm the militia companies in those respective towns.<sup>23</sup>
24. At about one thirty in the morning, Lexington's alarm bell began to toll. A panic sets in and most residents recognize that a military force is marching towards Lexington. Anna Munroe, wife of Sergeant William Munroe, starts 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."<sup>24</sup>
25. By two o'clock in the morning, Lexington women had begun to gather their valuables and evacuate their families to the safety of nearby woods and fields or to homes away from the route of the British advance. Captain John Parker's wife, Lydia, "took all the valuables and hid them in a hollow trunk of a tree standing some distance from the house."<sup>25</sup> Widow Lydia Mulliken and her daughters, who lived along the Boston road, heard the alarm and hurriedly buried the family's silver and other valuables in a wall near the clock shop, then fled to distant safety.<sup>26</sup> Mary Sanderson gathered her children and "taking such articles as they could hurriedly collect and carry in their arms, by the light of a lantern [made their way] to a refuge, the home of her father in New Scotland."<sup>27</sup> The Loring daughters scurried to hide the communion silver in a brush heap back of the house before fleeing.<sup>28</sup> Abigail Harrington, took the younger children "down a lane back of the house across a meadow to the old place on Smock farm." Anna Munroe fled Munroe Tavern with her three children and hid on a hill behind the establishment.<sup>29</sup>
26. At approximately two o'clock Sanderson and his compatriots are released by their British captives. "They detained us until Two O'clock the next morning, in which time they searched and greatly abused us; having first enquired about the magazine at Concord, whether any guards were posted there, and whether the bridges were up."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Deposition of Nathan Munroe, December 22, 1824.

<sup>24</sup> Carrie E. Bacheller, *Munroe Tavern: The Custodian's Story*, Lexington Historical Society, date unknown. "Dictated by Miss Carrie Bacheller, custodian of the Munroe Tavern since 1913," p. 6-7.

<sup>25</sup> A. Bradford Smith, "Kite End," *LHS Proceedings* Vol. 2, p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth W. Harrington, "A Few Words for our Grandmothers of 1775," *LHS Proceedings* Vol. 1 p. 52. Canavan reports that Mulliken and her daughters went to Robert Munroe's house, p. 353.

<sup>27</sup> "George O. Smith, "Reminiscences of a Participant in the Occurances of April 19, 1775," *LHS Proceedings*, Vol. 1, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Canavan, p. 126.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, Loring and Sanderson Deposition.

27. One of the Lexington scouts returned between three and four o'clock in the morning and reported that there was "no appearance of the troops on the roads to Cambridge and Charlestown and that the movements of the army were but a feint to alarm the people."<sup>31</sup> Believing Revere was mistaken, Parker dismissed his men "but with orders to be within call of the drum, waiting the return of the other messenger who was expected in about an hour, or sooner, if any discovery should be made of the motions of the troops."<sup>32</sup>
28. Before five o'clock in the morning, John Hancock and Sam Adams leave Lexington for Woburn. Revere and Lowell begin to remove Hancock's papers from the Buckman Tavern.
29. At approximately five o'clock in the morning, Thaddeus Bowman, the second scout sent out earlier in the morning returns. He alerts Captain Parker that the Regulars were less than a half hour away. In turn, John Parker orders the Lexington Company to assemble. "We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, [and 32 other men], All of lawful age, and inhabitants of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex...do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth in the morning, being informed that...a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord...we were alarmed and having met at the place of our company's parade, were dismissed by our Captain, John Parker, for the present, with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of the drum. We further testify and declare that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade."<sup>33</sup>
30. Following the company assembly, Parker again discusses what action the company should take. According to the Reverend Clarke, there is debate over whether the company should dismiss and reform at another location away from the advancing column. "Upon this intelligence, as also upon information of the conduct of the officers as above-mentioned, the militia of ths town were alarmed, and ordered to meet on the usual place of parade; not with any design of commencing hostilities upon the king's troops but to consult what might be done for our own and the people's safety; And also to be ready for whatever service providence might call us out to, upon this alarming occasion in case overt acts of violence or open hostilities be committed by this mercenary hand of armed and blood thirsty oppressors."<sup>34</sup> Clarke also notes John Parker "thought best to call the company together, not with any design of opposing so superior a force, much less of commencing hostilities, but only with a view to determine what to do, when and where to meet, and to dismiss and disperse."<sup>35</sup> This second statement further supports the proposition that the Lexington militia was properly armed and equipped for

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<sup>31</sup> Clarke, "A Brief Narrative . . ."

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *A Narrative of the Excursion and Ravages of the King's Troops*. Worcester, Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1775.

<sup>34</sup> Clarke, "A Brief Narrative . . ."

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

a military campaign, had discussed dispersing before the British column arrived in Lexington, gathering at a second rallying point and then marching towards Concord.

31. Approximately a half hour before sunrise, between five and five thirty, the British Column arrived at the Lexington Common. Thomas Rice Willard watched the events unfold from a window in Daniel Harrington's house, located at the back of the Lexington common. Four days later, he testified "On the Nineteenth instant, in the morning, about a half hour before sunrise, I looked out at the window of said house, and saw (as I suppose) about four hundred regulars in one Body."<sup>36</sup> John Robbins noted the training band "being drawn up (sometime before sun Rise) on the Green or Common . . . there suddenly appear'd a Number of the Kings Troops."<sup>37</sup> William Draper, a resident of Colrain, Massachusetts who happened to be in Lexington on April 19th declared "about a half hour before sunrise, the King's Regular Troops appeared at the meeting house of Lexington."<sup>38</sup> Finally, Thomas Fessenden asserted that as he stood in a pasture, he watched the regulars enter the common and rush the training band "at about half an hour before sunrise."<sup>39</sup>
32. According to a report by Lieutenant Colonel Smith "I marched on the evening of the 18th inst. with the corps of grenadiers and light infantry for Concord, to execute your Excellency's orders with respect to destroying all ammunition, artillery, tents, &c, collected there. I think it proper to observe, that when I had got some miles on the march from Boston, I detached six light infantry companies to march with all expedition to seize the two bridges on different roads beyond Concord. On these companies' arrival at Lexington, I understand, from the report of Major Pitcairn, who was with them, and from many officers, that they found on a green close to the road a body of the country people drawn up in military order, with arms and accoutrement, and, as appeared after, loaded."<sup>40</sup>
33. Between five and five thirty in the morning the Battle of Lexington occurs.

### *The Aftermath*

34. As the regulars left the onslaught behind them and continued their march towards Concord, over two hundred men from Woburn's militia and minuteman companies arrive in Lexington. Disturbed at what they saw, the men halted and assisted the Lexington

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<sup>36</sup> Deposition of Thomas Rice Willard, April 23, 1775.

<sup>37</sup> Deposition of John Robbins, April 24, 1775.

<sup>38</sup> Deposition of William Draper, April 25, 1775.

<sup>39</sup> Deposition of Thomas Fessenden, April 23, 1775.

<sup>40</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Smith's to General Gage, April 22, 1775. The 18th Century military term "accouterments" included, but was not limited to, items such as cartridge boxes, edged weapons, musket tools, belting, knapsacks, canteens and ammunition. See R.R. Gale's "A Soldier Like Way: The Material Culture of the British Infantry 1751 - 1768, (2007).

militiamen in treating the wounded and carrying the dead into the meetinghouse. Afterwards, the Woburn men reassembled and resumed their march toward Concord.<sup>41</sup>

35. Two British soldiers who lagged behind the British column were captured. “After our company had all dispersed, and the British had done firing, they gave three cheers. After they had marched off for Concord we took two prisoners, who were considerably in the rear of the main body. I carried their arms into Buckman's tavern, and they were taken by some of our men, who had none of their own.”<sup>42</sup>
36. At some point the morning of April 19th, elements of Captain Parker’s Company reassembled and marched towards the Lincoln line to intercept the retreating British column. “Parker’s Revenge” occurs at some point after noon. “About the middle of the forenoon, Capt. Parker, having collected part of his company, marched them towards Concord, I being with them. We met the regulars in the bounds of Lincoln, about noon, retreating towards Boston. We fired on them, and continued so to do until they met their reinforcement in Lexington.”<sup>43</sup>
37. In the late morning or early afternoon residents of Lexington who remained behind bury their dead in a makeshift grave. “Father sent Jonas down to Grandfather Cook's to see who was killed and what their condition was and, in the afternoon, Father, Mother with me and the baby went to the Meeting House. There was the eight men that was killed, seven of them my Father's parishioners, one from Woburn, all in Boxes made of four large boards nailed up and, after Pa had prayed, they were put into two horse carts and took into the grave yard where some of the neighbors had made a large trench, as near the woods as possible and there we followed the bodies of those first slain, Father, Mother, I and the baby, there I stood and there I saw them let down into the ground, it was a little rainy but we waited to see them covered up with clods and then for fear the British should find them, my Father thought some of the men had best cut some pine or oak bows and spread them on their place of burial so that it looked like a heap of brush.”<sup>44</sup>
38. The women and children of Lexington evacuate once again. “During the day, the women and children had been so scattered and dispersed, that most of them were out of the way when the reinforcements arrived.”<sup>45</sup>
39. Approximately mid to late afternoon, Andover minute man James Stevens passes through Lexington. In his journal he describes in some detail the extent of damage Lexington suffered that day. “April ye 19 1775 this morning about seven aclok we had alarum that

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<sup>41</sup> According to Major Loammi Baldwin of Woburn, “We mustered as fast as possible. The Town turned out extraordinary, and proceeded toward Lexington . . . I rode along a little before the main body, and when I was nigh Jacob Reed's I heard a great firing; proceeded on, soon heard that the Regulars had fired upon Lexington people and killed a large number of them. We proceeded on as fast as possible and came to Lexington and saw about eight or ten dead and numbers wounded.”

<sup>42</sup> Deposition of Ebenezer Munroe, April 2, 1825.

<sup>43</sup> Deposition of Nathan Munroe, December 22, 1824.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Clarke to Lucy Allen, April 20, 1835. Elizabeth was twelve years old at the Battle of Lexington.

<sup>45</sup> Deposition of Elijah Sanderson, December, 1824.



the Reegerlers was gon to Conkord we getherd to the meting hous & then started for Concord we went throu Tukesbary & in to Bilrica we stopt to Polords & eat some bisket & Ches on the comon. we started & wen into Bedford & we herd that the reegerlers was gon back to Boston we went through Bedford, we went in to Lecentown. We went to the metinghous & there we come to the distraction of the Reegerlers thay cild eight of our men & shot a Canon Ball through the metin hous. we went a long through Lecintown & we saw severel reegerlers ded on the rod & som of our men & three or fore houses was Burnt & som hoses & hogs was cild thay plainered in every hous thay could git in to thay stove in windows & broke in tops of desks.”<sup>46</sup>

40. Late in the afternoon, British prisoners are turned over to the Lexington militia. “I, James Reed, of Burlington, in the county of Middlesex and commonwealth of Massachusetts, do testify and declare, that, soon after the British troops had fired upon the militia at Lexington, on the morning of the 19th of April, 1775, and had taken up their march towards Concord, I arrived at the common, near the meeting-house, where I found several of the militia dead, and others wounded. I also saw a British soldier march up the road, near said meeting-house, and Joshua Reed of Woburn met him, and demanded him to surrender. He then took his arms and equipments from him, and I took charge of him, and took him to my house, then in Woburn Precinct. I also testify, that E. Welsh brought to my house, soon after I returned home with my prisoner, two more of said British troops; and two more were immediately brought, and I suppose, by John Munroe and Thomas R. Willard of Lexington ; and I am confident, that one more was brought, but by whom, I don't now recollect. All the above prisoners were taken at Lexington immediately after the main body had left the common, and were conveyed to my house early in the morning ; and I took charge of them. In the afternoon five or six more of said British troops, that were taken prisoners in the afternoon, when on the retreat from Concord, were brought to my house and put under my care. Towards evening, it was thought best to remove them from my house. I, with the assistance of some others, marched them to one Johnson's in Woburn Precinct, and there kept a guard over them during the night. The next morning, we marched them to Billerica ; but the people were so alarmed, and not willing to have them left there, we then took them to Chelmsford, and there the people were much frightened ; but the Committee of Safety consented to have them left, provided, that we would leave a guard. Accordingly, some of our men agreed to stay.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Journal of James Stevens, April 19, 1775.

<sup>47</sup> Deposition of James Reed, January 19, 1825.