

MAJOR JOHN BUTTRICK HOUSE

MINUTE MAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Concord, Massachusetts

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT PART I HISTORICAL DATA SECTION

by

John F. Luzader

DIVISION OF HISTORY

Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

September 9, 1968

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HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT - PART I

FOR THE

MAJOR JOHN BUTTRICK HOUSE

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA SECTION

Administrative Data

- a. Major John Buttrick House - Number 42, Approved Structure
Classification BBB.
- b. This structure will be utilized as quarters probably for the
park Superintendent.
- c. The use proposed above is justified by the Master Plan which
proposes the structure to be utilized as quarters.
- d. The building will be operated through funds provided from annual
buildings and utilities maintenance appropriations.
- e. No cooperative agreements exist with any organizations for
refurnishing or operating the structure.
- f. It is proposed that the exterior of this building be restored
to its 1775 appearance with whatever later period additions or
changes are recommended following architectural investigation.
The interior should be remodeled for quarters saving old
materials wherever possible.
- g. No architectural investigation has been accomplished on this
structure. It is estimated that an exterior restoration to
the 1775 period plus remodeling of the interior for quarters
would total approximately \$100,000.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief survey of the pertinent historical information that relates to the Major John Buttrick House in sufficient detail to assess its historical importance and to assist in establishing a policy concerning its preservation and interpretation.

Major John Buttrick of Concord

Of all the Buttricks who lived in Concord the most prominent in local and national history was John, son of Jonathan and Elizabeth Wooley Buttrick and great-grandson of William Buttrick, who arrived in Concord in 1635. Born in either 1730 or 1731 in the old Samuel (later Ephraim) Buttrick house south of the Groton Road, he grew to manhood in the century-old township of Concord. The frontier had passed, and Middlesex County was a prosperous region, dotted with villages and farms, with a generally literate, plain-living population that had a reputation for being independent in ecclesiastical and political matters. Town records reflect the concerns of the community with a wide range of subjects, including pay of ministers and teachers, roads, bridges, care of the poor, and fire protection. It was a virile and wholesome environment where men exercised and valued the ancient rights of free-born Englishmen.

John Buttrick's family enjoyed a secure and respected position in the social and economic life of the town. His father and grandfather had held responsible offices and were substantial landowners and farmers. Jonathan, the father, was still a "yeoman" when his son was born, but by the time the latter was grown he was a "Gentleman," paying the highest taxes in the North Quarter of Concord.¹

1. Concord Tax Lists, 1731; 1741. Originals in the Concord Free Library. For a general discussion of the Buttrick family, see Ruth R. Wheeler, Minute Man National Historical Park History of Area B, 62 - 84; For a more detailed treatment, see Mary Harris, The Buttrick Family and Land, 1 - 25.

Like his father and grandfather, John took an active part in the township's affairs, participating in town meeting and holding minor offices, including such positions as fence viewer, surveyor, tythingman, and constable. He frequently performed work on the highways, North Bridge, and the meeting house. In 1760 the town paid him £ 1 16d 10f 2 for work done at the town house (town hall), making the stocks, and for grain and wood furnished Margret Brebrook, a town ward. On other occasions, he repaired the school house and built "part of a stone wall around the east burying place. ii2

The mid-1770's found John a vigorous and active man, a recognized leader among his neighbors. The years of the American Revolution were ones of fulfillment for him. By April of 1775 he had risen from lieutenant to major and second in command, under Colonel James Barrett, of Concord's four militia companies.

An article by Frederick Hudson in the May 1876 issue of Harper's New Monthly Magazine gave an account of some of Major Buttrick's activities during the early hours of April 19, 1775:

No one was asleep at three o'clock. All were astir, and wide awake to the approaching danger. The village bell and the alarmguns aroused Major John Buttrick, who lived half a mile, as the bee flies across the river. He prepared for the

2. See Appendix, Summary of John Buttrick's Public Career.

emergency at once, called his son John, a lad of sixteen years and a fifer in Captain Brown's company of minute-men. "John, the bells are ringing; jump up and load your pistols, take your fife; we'll start immediately for the village." 3

The two Johns hurried to Center Concord and joined the other militia-men as they assembled to meet the approaching expedition. The commander, Colonel Barrett, was busy seeing to the security of the military stores that were the object of the British column, and the command devolved upon Major Buttrick. He ordered a reconnaissance down the Lexington Road, withdrew before the advancing regulars, and after twice pausing briefly on the ridge near the Liberty Pole and on "a rising Eminence," led his men across the North Bridge and up the hill to a field on Buttrick's farm. From this position, they watched the British movements.

While they watched, the grenadiers searched the village and parties of light infantry crossed the South and North Bridges. It was over the latter that the larger element marched, because it lay on the route to the Barrett farm, where many of the stores they sought were collected. From their vantage point on the hill above the bridge, the militia waited and gathered strength while the light infantry divided into three parties. Three companies marched on toward Barrett's, one remained at the western end of the bridge, and two halted along the road about a mile west of the bridge.

3. Frederick Hudson, "The Concord Fight," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, May 1876, 786.

The militia looked down at the three companies and across the river toward the village, where smoke was rising from bonfires made of the gun carriages that had been found. Believing that the British had set fire to the town, the leaders conferred, and in response to Lieutenant Joseph Hosmer's question, "Will you let them burn the town down?", agreed to march back to the village. Colonel Barrett told the men to load their muskets, with strict orders not to fire the first shots, then to shoot as rapidly as possible.⁴

Captain William Smith of the Lincoln Company volunteered to lead his men and clear the bridge.⁵ However, for some reason, the honor of leading the attack went to Captain Isaac Davis's Acton Company. Colonel Barrett remained where he belonged, mounted at the rear of the column; and Major Buttrick led the "first American army under a unified commander ever to take the field" against the light infantrymen at the bridge.⁶

The three British companies reunited at the bridge, crossed to the eastern end, and began removing the planks, in total disregard to the four companies that had marched to Barrett's. They prepared

4. Lemuel Shattuck, A History of the Town of Concord, 111; Henry True, Journals and Letters, 33.

5. Allen French, The Day of Concord and Lexington, 187.

6. Ibid., 189; Arthur Bernon Tourtellot, Lexington and Concord: The Beginning of the War of the American Revolution, 163.

to receive the American advance by forming for street firing, a formation with which the soldiers were unfamiliar.⁷ As they had at Lexington, the light infantry put on a display that reflected adversely upon the British soldier's traditionally high standard of discipline.

When the militia column neared the bridge, Major Buttrick shouted to the regulars to stop tearing up the planks. They stopped, not in compliance with his order, but out of concern with the proximity of his four-hundred-man force.

As yet, no shot had been fired, no huzza shouted, only the shrill tones of the colonial fifers' "The White Cockade" attended the march.⁸ Then, probably from a British gun, the first shots fell into the river to the right of the militia as they approached the bridge. Then followed a volley from the regulars, and Isaac Davis and Abner Hosmer fell dead in their tracks.⁹ Leaping into the air, John Buttrick shouted out his order, "Fire, fellow soldiers, for God's sake fire!"¹⁰ Because the road to the bridge lay on a grade,

7. French, ~. cit., 194-5; Tourtellot, ~. cit., 164.

8. French, ~. cit., 189.

9. Ibid., 191.

10. Ibid.; Tourtellot, op. cit., 165; Shattuck, ~. cit., 112.

most of the colonials were able to fire immediately, an advantage not enjoyed by the British. Two of the latter were killed and several wounded. After a scattered and ineffective return fire, the light infantry turned and ran toward Concord.¹¹

John Buttrick's house had witnessed one of the events that form the watersheds of history, and its owner had been an important party to it.

John Buttrick's House

Major John Buttrick's house was more than half a century old when its owner went out to join his neighbors in fighting General Gage's soldiers on the "Day of Concord and Lexington." Sometime between 1710 and 1717, John's father, Jonathan, had built it for his parents, Samuel and Elizabeth, on or near the site of the home of William, the immigrant.¹² There they spent their last years and died, and the house passed to their bachelor son, Samuel, Jr., then to Jonathan, from whom John received it. It is a rectangular, two-story building, with an ell on its northwest side. On at least three occasions, "renovations" have been accomplished.¹³

11. French, ~. cit., 191.

12. Harris, ~. cit., 7 - 10.

13. Harris, ~. cit., 7 - 10; Wheeler, ~. cit., 71, 73; John Shepard Keyes, Houses in Concord 1885, 71 - ~

APPENDIX

Map. No. 1. North Quarter of Concord, 1660

Map. No.2. North Quarter of Concord, 1775

John Buttrick's public career and services.

To Barrett's or Spencer's 11.31

North River

Boaleway

The Twenty Score

Beaz Brown

William Battinck

John Flint

John & Dorothy Heald

Concord or Great River

Great Meadow

Map No. 1

North Quarter of Concord
1660

William Hurst

Thos. Bateman

Thos. Brown

4 acre meadow

North Bridge

Great Field

Town Meadow

Jas. Blood Jr
Jas. Blood

John Smedley

John Jones

Humphrey Barrett

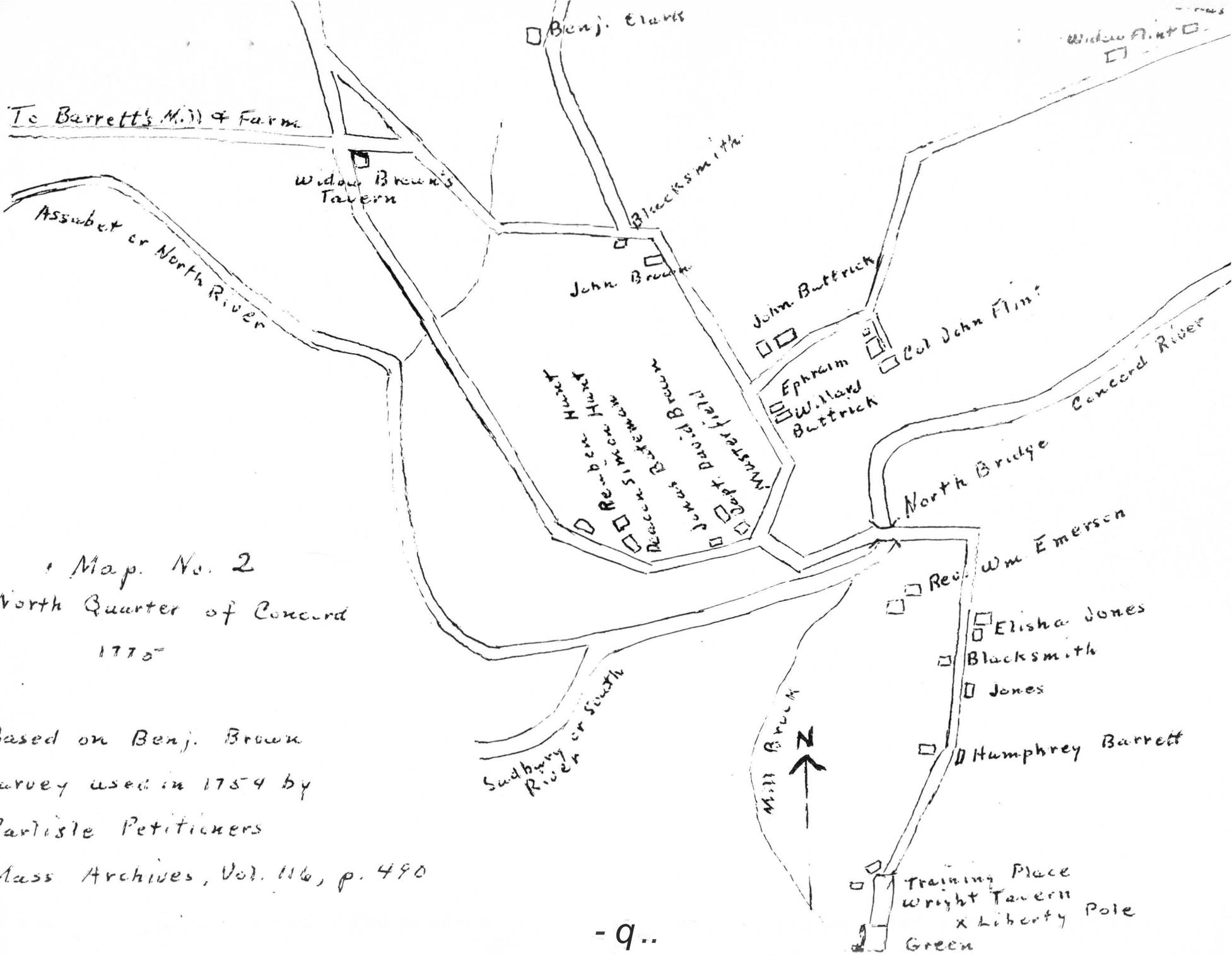
South River

Mill Brook

Training Field
Baria? Hill
Meeting House

Timothy Wheeler

Based on Benj. Brown
Survey of 1754.



To Barrett's Mill & Farm

Widow Brown's Tavern

Benj. Clark

Widow Flint

Assabet or North River

Blacksmith

John Brown

John Buttrick

Col John Flint

Wright's Mill
 Ephraim Willard Buttrick
 Ephraim Willard Buttrick
 Col John Flint
 North Bridge
 Rev. Wm Emerson
 Elisha Jones
 Blacksmith
 Jones
 Humphrey Barrett

North Bridge

Concord River

Map No. 2
 North Quarter of Concord
 1775

Based on Benj. Brown
 Survey used in 1754 by
 Carlisle Petitioners
 Mass Archives, Vol. 116, p. 490



SUMMARY OF JOHN BUTTRICK'S
PUBLIC SERVICES DERIVED FROM CONCORD TOWN RECORDS

John Buttrick

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Concord Town</u> <u>Records</u>
1753	paid s1 for work on highways	Vol.. IV, 80
1754	paid sld6 for work at Bulkey's Swamp	Vol.. V, 54
1755	paid d8 for work on highways	Vol.. IV, 99
1759	chosen fence viewer	" 162
1760	paid ~sl6dlOf2 for work done at the town house, making the stocks, & for grain and wood he gave Margret Brebrook	" 174
1760	paid s14d7f1 for work at North Bridge and for timber	" 186
1761	paid s4 for repairing the Town Schoolhouse	" 188
1761	chosen field driver	" 192
1762	chosen field driver	" 208
1763	chosen field driver	" 222
1763	paid ~3s9d10 for making part of stone wall around the east burying place	" 224
1764	paid s5d5f3 for work on highways and bridge	" 231
1764	chosen field driver	" 235
1765	paid bbd9f3 for 73R of walls in the north part	" 244
1765	paid ~sl0d2 for "work Done by them at the Highways & Bridges under Mr. John Buttrick Surveyor of Highways"	" 246
1765	chosen fence viewer and field driver	" 254
1766	paid s13 for what was owed Joshua Benjamin	" 260
1766	paid sld9 for work at highways	" 274
1767	chosen tythingman	" 284
1768	chosen constable	" 297
1768	discharging duties as constable	" 302
1769	to see if he will serve as constable instead of Melven	" 309
1769	above accepted	" 310
1769	discharging duties as constable	" 311
1770	paid b4sllldOf3 for service as constable and for work done at the alms house	" 312
1770	paid ~s9d8 for what was due to others	" 320
1770	paid ~3s14dllf1 for service as constable	" 324
1771	paid ~sl6d9f1 for work at North Bridge Causey & meeting House	" 327
1772	paid s5d9 for highway work	" 346
1772	paid s7d8 for work at Great Bridge and loss of ax at same time and 1/2 day at the highways	" 349
J.772	petitioned for a stable near meeting house with others	" 357
1773	chosen field driver	" 373
1774	paid s6~7 for work at highways more than crossing his rate (Lt.)	" 385
1774	chosen fence viewer (Lt.)	" 394

John Buttrick, contd

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cone ord Town</u> <u>Records</u>	
1775	paid ils10 for service as Capt. of the Minute Company	Vol.	429
1776	appointed to a committee to inform House of Representatives why they weren't a proper body to frame a new constitution (Col)	"	452
1776	appointed to a committee with four Deacons to see if (?) could be relieved (Col.)	"	446
1777	chosen to COLnmittee of Safety (Col.)	"	461
1777	appointed to Committee to see how the town would fill its complement of men for the continental army (Col.)	"	462
1777	on committee about funds for Rev. Emerson's widow	Vol., V,	69
1777	chosen l-man corom. to collect evidence against enemies of the states	"	71
1777	on a committee to help supply the pulpit	"	74
1778	paid sl9d3 for bread and meat provided the Joneses and Durands during small pox	"	76
1778	on Committee of Safety	"	83
1778	on committee to raise 19 men for army	Vol., V,	89
1778	on committee to see to salaries	"	94
1778	request to see how town will raise 19 men	"	99
1778	on committee to decide method of raising 1/3 of militia	"	101
1778	on committee to make arrangements for the ordination of Ezra Ripley	"	102
1779	chosen selectman-assessor, comm. of Correspondence & Inspection	"	112
1779	on committee to see if town would have a new constitution	"	117
1779	receipt from Ezra Ripley to John Buttrick as selectman	"	119
1779	put on comm. to lnake sure everyone complied with set price	"	120
1779	on conllnto oppose setting off of Blood's Farm at General Court	"	126
1780	paid for services as selectman and for grain and meat delivered to the poor tl63sl5	"	131
1780	chosen selectman & comm. of Correspondence, Inspection & Safety	"	135
1780	put on comm. about setting off separate district	"	137
1780	walked the boundaries and renewed the marks	"	144
1780	on committee to see about recruitment	"	159
1781	chosen selectman, Committee of Correspondence	"	165
1781	on committee to settle Treasurer's reports	"	167
1781	paid tl027 for services as assessor and for meat to poor	"	168
1781	paid for bussels of corn	"	421
1782	paid ils6d8 in order to payoff someone else	"	185
1782	paid t38sl2dl for services as assessor & articles to poor, and soldiers wives, for Ephraim Buttrick for boarding Jn ^o Prescott, and for a pair of oxen for public use	"	190
1782	chosen selectman, Comm. of Correspondence	"	193
1782	Selectman as a comm. to deal with Carlisle	"	194

John Buttrick, contd

		<u>Concord Town</u>	
<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Records</u>	
17d2	on comm, on highway encroachments	Vol..	201
1783	paid sl for 3 days highway work & 1 bu\$sel of corn	"	215
1783	chosen selectman.	"	219
1783	perambulated Bedford line, settled with town treasurer	"	226
1783	paid for services.	"	238
17[.4	paid for services.	"	242
1784	chosen selectman	"	245
178L~	on comm. to find real value of money paid to Ezra Ripley	"	246
1784	paid for services and something else	"	263
1785	"and it was voted that the Thanks of the Town should be returned to Colo Joh~ Buttrick & M George Minot for their past Good Services for the Town as Selectmen for the six past years" also appointed fish officer	"	265
1786	chosen surveyor of highways & fence viewer	"	297
1786	on committee about the roads	"	307
1786	paid for services and 2 yarn coverlids for Jn ^o Prescott	"	324
1783	on list paid for South Bridge work	"	363
1788	paid for work at Great North Bridge	"	392
n89	on committee to see whether to hire a tax collector	"	405
1789	recommended against hiring tax collector instead of constable	"	412
1790	chosen tythingman and fish officer	"	441
1'780	paid William Parkman for his services with Col. Buttrick in the Continental Service	"	141

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The house of b~jor John Buttrick as reconstructed by I~s. Stedman Buttrick, Sr. (1938 photograph courtesy of Mrs. Caleb Wheeler)



Building Number 42 - Major John Buttrick House