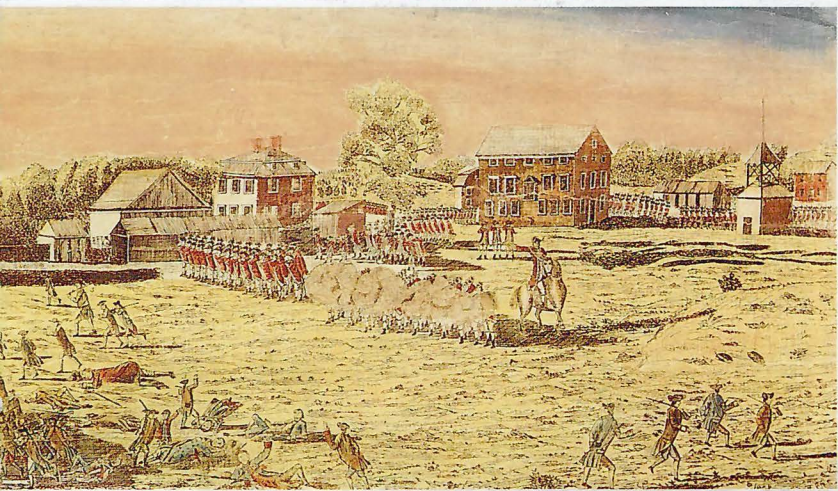


Minute Man

Minute Man
National Historical Park
Massachusetts

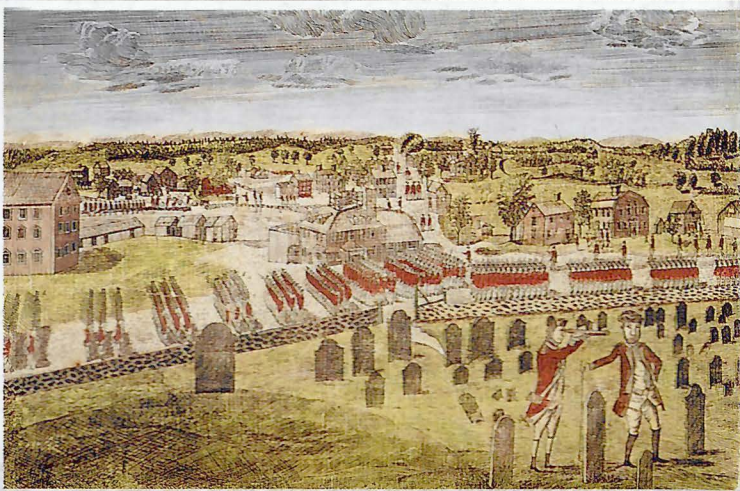
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Two weeks after Lexington and Concord, militiaman and artist Ralph Earl sketched the events of April 19 from eyewitness

accounts. Amos Doolittle's engravings of the drawings are the most reliable depiction of the fighting. On Lexington

Common British soldiers fired at fleeing American militiamen in the first hostile action of the American Revolution.



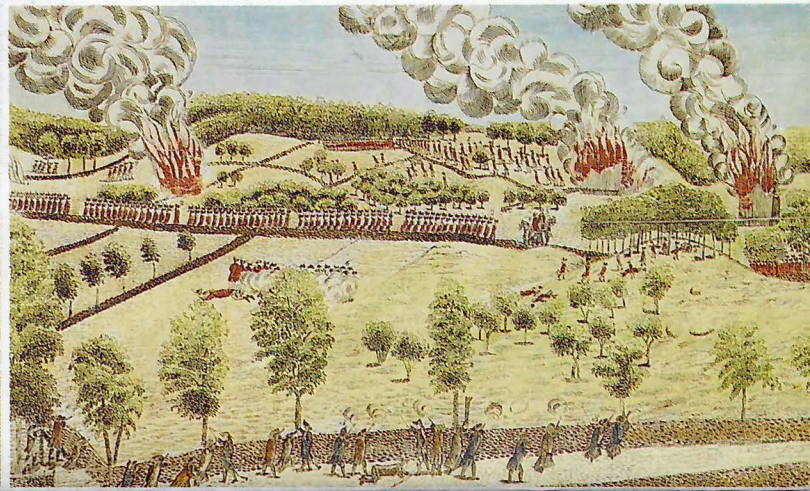
Colonel Smith and Major Pitcairn watched as British troops searched Concord door-to-door for provincial arms stores,

which they burned or threw into the town pond.



The first real engagement of the day took place at North Bridge outside Concord, where the British withdrew across the

bridge and were driven back into Concord by rebel militia.

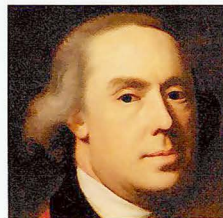


Colonel Smith's troops (far right), retreating under American fire (foreground), were met and saved by General Percy's

reinforcements, who fired three Lexington homes and scattered Americans with cannon fire.

Connecticut Historical Society

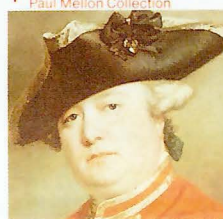
In Service of the King



1 Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection



2 Lexington Historical Society



3 National Army Museum, London



4 Lexington Historical Society

Thomas Gage (1), Commander in Chief of the British Army in America and Governor General of Massachusetts, knew conflict was inevitable. "The first stroke will decide a good deal," he told London. Maj. John Pitcairn (2), a respected officer, was appalled at the uncontrolled firing by British soldiers. Lt. Col. Francis Smith (3) headed the expedition. Though experienced, he was slow and deliberate—a disadvantage in a surprise operation. Lord Percy (4), general of the rescue brigade, countered American tactics with artillery and saved the British column from annihilation.

The American Resistance



1 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



3 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Paul Revere (1), a propagandist and courier for the Committee of Correspondence, rode to warn provincial leaders that the British were marching. Dr. Joseph Warren (2) was an orator and fighter who encouraged militia with the words: "They have begun it—we will end it." Patriot firebrand Samuel Adams (3) hoped the fighting in Massachusetts would spur other colonies to take up arms.

"A People Armed and Numerous"



To British soldiers trained in formal European warfare, the militia's tactics were cowardly and undisciplined, but British General Percy recognized that their "irregular" attacks were carried out with "perseverance and resolution." The militia's preference for individual firing from behind cover nullified the British tactic of close-range volleys at opposing ranks followed by a bayonet charge.



The smoothbore musket was a reliable but inaccurate rate of fire weapon that a trained soldier could fire four times a minute.

The Public Reaction



The Provincial Congress's official narrative of the day's events exaggerated British atrocities and American helplessness. The account was sped by couriers to newspapers along the coast which further embellished the story. The Salem Gazette broadside, complete with coffins, was typical. As a propaganda tool, the report was highly successful. Colony after colony, enraged by the "dismal carnage," called up militia and prepared to fight. In England, the Whig opposition also profited, lampooning the King's army in widely circulated cartoons.

The discontent smoldering in the American colonies under British rule flared into open hostilities on April 19, 1775. On a stretch of country road outside Boston, a prolonged skirmish between 3,500 colonial militiamen and 1,700 of His Majesty's redcoats opened the American Revolution. The initial fighting in the war was a local action between Britain and her recalcitrant colony of Massachusetts. The government had clamped down in reaction to the colony's resistance to the Mother Country's economic policies. For a year a British army, under Gen. Thomas Gage, had occupied Boston. Pressed by the ministry in London to quell rebellion by arresting the rabble-rousers Samuel Adams and John Hancock, Gage chose instead to take what he thought was the less inflammatory step of confiscating the patriots' arms supply in Concord. But incompetence and miscalculation doomed what he meant to be a limited, routine operation. Gage depended on secrecy to seize the arms before the people of Concord could resist, but Boston knew of the operation before his troops left, and the arms at Concord were soon hidden. Couriers Paul Revere and William Dawes notified Adams and Hancock in Lexington that the British were on their way. Mixups delayed the British departure for hours, giving the colonists more time to prepare. Finally, the local militia and minute men were not the contemptible, undisciplined mob Gage took them to be. They had trained for months and had well-rehearsed plans for immediate reaction to a British incursion.

Gage gave command of the British troops to Lt. Col. Francis Smith, a ponderous, tactically unimaginative officer who slowed an already delayed operation. By the time Smith's advance troops under Maj. John Pitcairn arrived in Lexington it was dawn and Capt. John Parker had his militia lined up on Lexington Common. Because he had only 77 men, Parker had no thought of impeding the 700 British soldiers. He wanted to make a display of patriot resolve. But as the militiamen slowly obeyed Pitcairn's order to disperse, a shot was fired—it is not clear from which side—and the green British soldiers, ignoring orders to stop, began firing at will at the fleeing Americans. When Pitcairn and Smith regained control, eight Americans lay dead. As the British troops continued down the road to Concord, news of the shooting spread to neighboring communities, and militiamen flocked to the British line of march between Boston and Concord.

At Concord, British soldiers began searching house-to-house for arms. Smith sent seven companies across the North Bridge to seize the supplies hidden at Col. James Barrett's farm. The militiamen who had fallen back to Punkatasset Hill advanced on the three companies left to guard the bridge. As the militia approached, they saw the smoke of burning military supplies rising from town. Fearing that their homes were being put to the torch, they set out to save them. After the British withdrew across the bridge the colonials continued to advance until the British

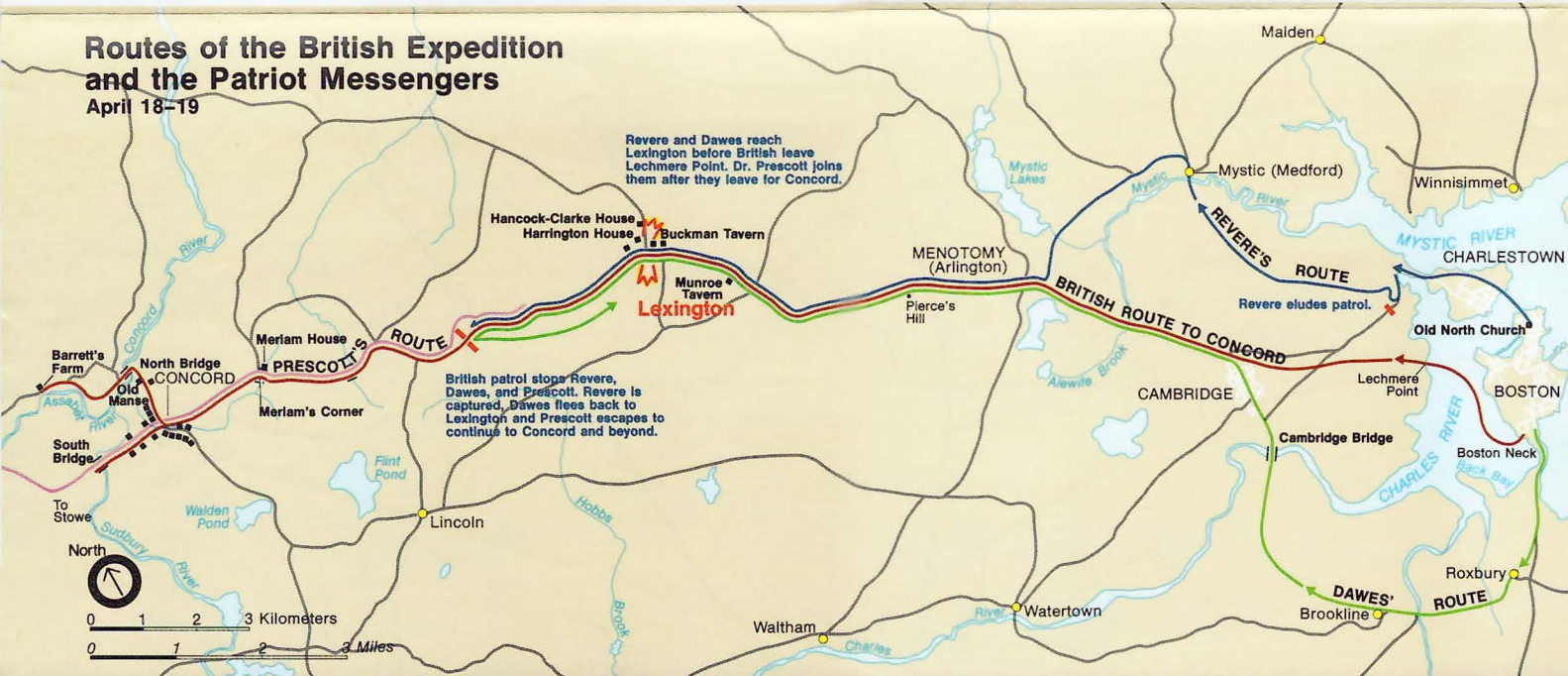
fired a volley. Major Buttrick of Concord then gave the order, "Fire, fellow soldiers, for God's sake, fire!", and for the first time Americans fired a volley into the ranks of British soldiers. The British, outnumbered four to one and with half of their officers wounded, retreated to the center of town. The troops returning from Barrett's farm were allowed to march by unharrassed. After pausing about two hours to regroup and feed his troops, Smith began the march to Boston. Flankers moved along the mile-long ridge on the left that separated the column from the colonials. At Meriam's Corner, where the ridge ended, the flankers had to be drawn in to cross the narrow bridge, and the militia, reinforced by companies from towns to the north, gathered near the road, taking cover where they could. Here began the running skirmish which continued to Boston. The British encountered heavy, unrelenting fire from the hundreds of militiamen behind building, wall, and tree, but the range was too great for the muskets to do much damage, and the British escaped with relatively few injuries.

Having attacked a British column, the Americans had committed themselves. From this point on, the British ranks had to run a gauntlet of colonial fire. Already there seemed to be a musket behind every tree, and fresh militiamen were pouring in from towns like Reading, Salem, and Lexington. Luckily for the British, the Americans were far enough from the road most of the day that few of the thousands of bullets fired found their

mark. When the flanking parties could operate, most of the militiamen were driven out of range. But British soldiers fell steadily at every hill or curve where the Americans had position. After the column had passed one spot, the militiamen would cut across country and be ready for them farther up the road. Exhausted and near panic, the British troops staggered into Lexington at about 2:30, where they were met at last by 1,000 reinforcements under Lord Percy. Under cover of artillery, the British rested briefly before starting the final retreat to Boston. Percy knew that his troops were in danger of annihilation unless they kept moving. The worst fighting occurred on the road into Menotomy (now Arlington), where over 5,000 men were involved and both sides lost more men than in any other fighting along the road. After escaping Menotomy, Percy had to use cannon several times to scatter the Americans concentrated at his rear. That was probably the edge that allowed him to make it across Charlestown Neck after nightfall to the safety of Bunker Hill, where he was protected by the guns of HMS Somerset in Boston Harbor. But he had lost 73 dead and 174 wounded, with 26 missing. The American losses were 49 dead, 40 wounded, and 5 missing. Soon after, Boston was under siege and Gage was reduced from governor to a general of forces occupying one city. The performance of the militia that day convinced Percy that this rebellion ran deeper than he or the ministry had suspected. The Americans were indeed prepared to fight for their rights.

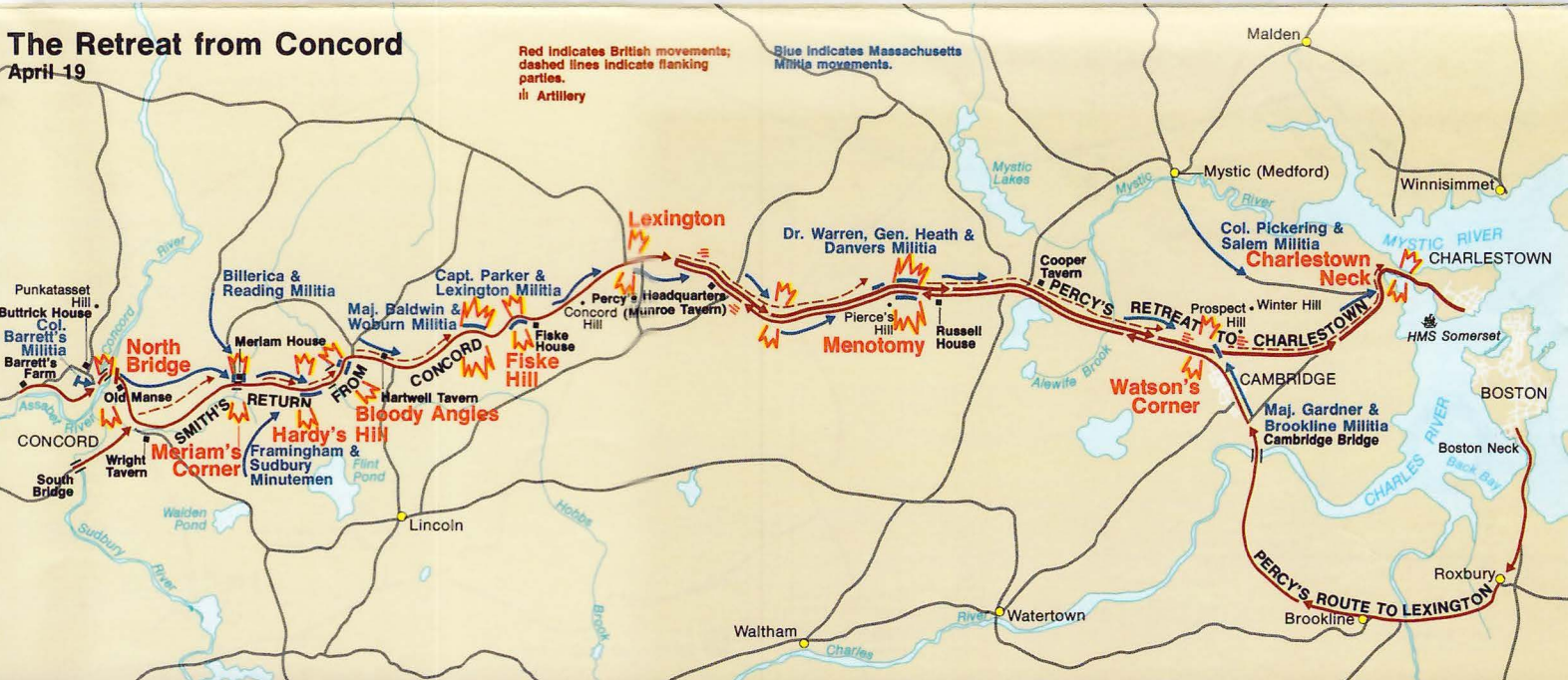
Routes of the British Expedition and the Patriot Messengers

April 18-19



The Retreat from Concord

April 19



Minute Man

Minute Man
National Historical Park
Massachusetts

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Battle Road has undergone many changes in the over 200 years since the fight, but this section near Hartwell



Tavern (viewed east along Virginia Road) retains much of its former appearance.

Nearly a million visitors a year cross the North Bridge. This commemorative bridge, built in 1956, is the fourth on the

site since 1875. The historic bridge was removed in 1793 and the road re-routed a quarter-mile downstream.



Hartwell Tavern (a 1775 building with later additions) was a typical country inn of the period. The British marched proudly

by on their way to Concord, but returned under heavy fire.



The Meriam House, at Meriam's Corner, is one of the oldest houses in Concord. The shots exchanged here between

the British and the provincial militia began the fighting that continued for 16 miles.



The foundation at Fiske Hill (at Lexington end of the park) is one of several foundations and stone fences throughout

the park. They mark houses and farms that dated back to the early 18th century and before.

Where the Revolution Began

It was a curious field of battle for the opening of the Revolution: 20 miles of winding, hilly road connecting a port city and several country towns. But word of the fighting on Lexington Common, at Concord Bridge, and on the road to Boston raced throughout the American colonies to unite men and women behind the patriot cause. What had begun as a struggle between British authorities, determined to enforce the will of Parliament, and the people of Massachusetts, just as determined to retain their rights as Eng-

lish citizens, soon escalated into a war for independence which lasted more than eight years. Much of that country road is now an urban highway, but the Battle Road still follows generally the same route, passing the sites of the bitterest fighting and the buildings that stood nearby, helping recall the dramatic events of April 19, 1775.

Many visitors begin their tour with the film and map program at the Battle Road Visitor Center.

Following the Battle Road



The North Bridge Area
The North Bridge, where the "shot heard round the world" was fired, was the site of the first effective forcible resistance to British rule in America. Visitors can cross the North Bridge and see the Minute Man statue. The North Bridge Visitor Center overlooks the site.

The Wayside
Samuel Whitney, muster master for the Concord militia, lived in the Wayside during the Revolution. The house later was the home of literary figures and reformers, in-

cluding the Hawthornes, Alcotts, and Lothrop.

Meriam's Corner
The Meriam House and barn gave cover to the militia, allowing them to get close to the British column as it crossed the narrow bridge there. The shots exchanged between the colonists and the British rear guard opened the running battle on the road to Boston.

Hardy's Hill
Militia from Sudbury and towns to the south joined the fighting at Hardy's Hill, where the British

were subjected to fire from both flanks.

Bloody Angles
The Battle Road made two sharp turns after Hardy's Hill, providing ambush points for the Woburn militia and others. The British, exposed to a murderous crossfire, lost eight dead—thus the name "The Bloody Angle." Here they realized how desperate was their situation.

Hartwell Tavern
In 1754 Ephraim Hartwell opened a part of his home as a tavern, where travel-

ers were provided bed and board. It was also a popular gathering place for local people.

Capt. William Smith House
This restored 18th-century house, typical of its period, was the home of the Captain of the Lincoln minute men.

Paul Revere Capture Site
Paul Revere, Dr. Samuel Prescott, and William Dawes were confronted by a British patrol as they rode to warn Concord of the approaching British column. Revere was cap-

tured and Dawes was forced back to Lexington, but Prescott escaped to carry word of the British march to Concord.

The Bluff
A small rocky hill along the Battle Road presented a significant obstacle to the British while it was held by the colonials. The column appeared trapped until Major Pitcairn sent a detachment to occupy the high ground while the column moved past and reformed.

Fiske House Site
The area around the



house of Ebenezer Fiske was the scene of intense, close-quarter fighting, as British flankers tried to flush out the concealed ambushers. The historical park ends here, but the fighting continued on through Lexington, Menotomy (present-day Arlington), and Cambridge until the British reached Bunker Hill.

The Minute Man statue was sculpted by Daniel Chester French to memorialize the citizen-soldier of 1775. It was unveiled for the Centennial of the North Bridge fight.

About the Park

Visitor centers are located near the North Bridge in Concord and on State route 2A in Lexington.

Please respect the rights of private families living within the park boundary.

For Your Safety
The Battle Road, not a park-owned road, carries heavy traffic in many areas. It may not be safe to slow down and sight-see.

Administration
Minute Man National Historical Park is adminis-

tered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 160, Concord, MA 01742, is in immediate charge of the park.

