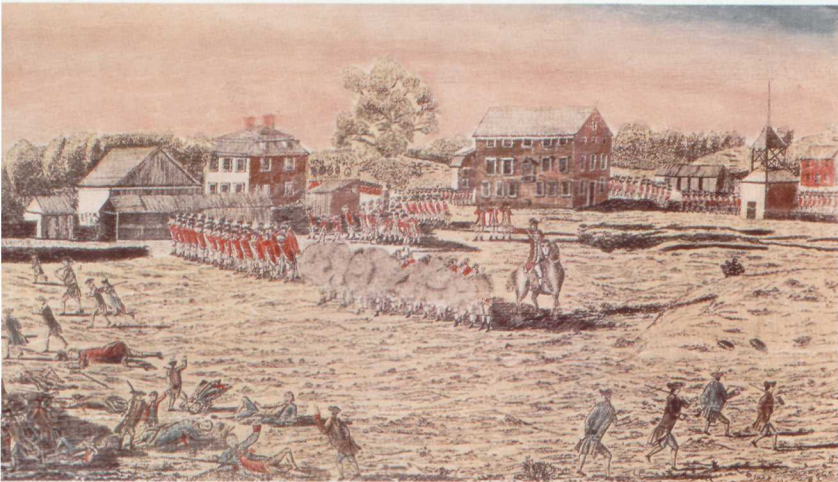


Minute Man

Minute Man
National Historical Park
Massachusetts

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Two weeks after Lexington and Concord, Connecticut militia man Amos Doolittle visited the area and interviewed eyewitnesses.

His engravings are the most reliable depiction of the day's events. Here on Lexington Common British soldiers are shown firing

at American militia men in the first hostile action of the American Revolution.



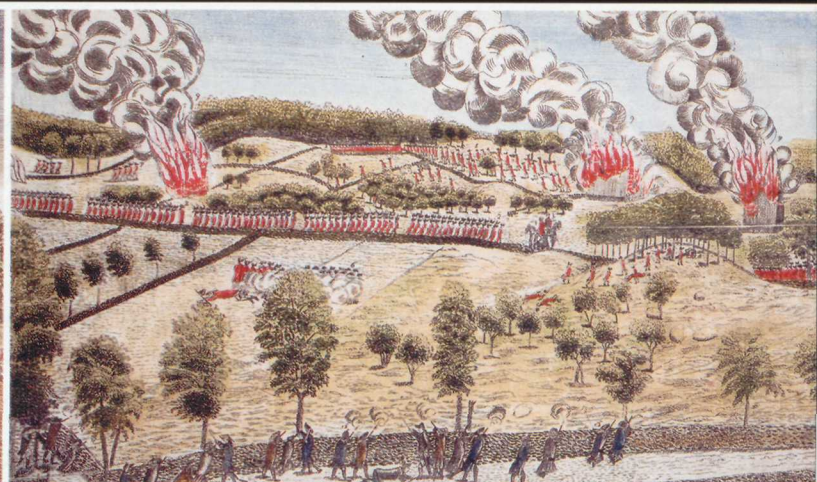
Colonel Smith and Major Pitcairn searched Concord door-to-door for stores of provincial arms, which

they burned or threw into the town pond.



The first real engagement of the day took place at North Bridge outside Concord. Rebel militia forced the British across the

bridge and drove them back into the town.



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

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

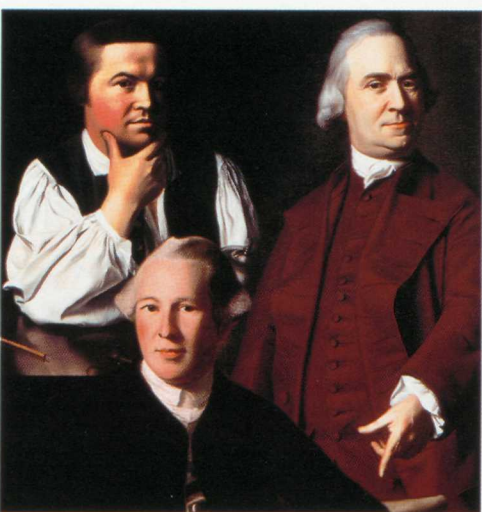
In Service of the King



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART, PAUL MELLON COLLECTION, LEXINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM, LONDON, LEXINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Clockwise from top left: Lt. Gen. Thomas Gage, Commander in Chief of the British Army in America and Governor General of Massachusetts, knew conflict was inevitable. "The first stroke will decide a great deal," he told London. Maj. John Pitcairn, a respected officer, was appalled at the uncontrolled firing by British soldiers. Lt. Col. Francis Smith headed the expedition. Though experienced, he was slow and deliberate—a disadvantage in a surprise operation. Lord Hugh Percy, commanding the relief column, countered American tactics with artillery and saved the British column from annihilation.

American Resistance



ALL: MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

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

"A People Armed and Numerous"



FROM "CHALLENGE AT NORTH BRIDGE" BY LOUIS GLANDMAN

NPS/LOUIS GLANDMAN

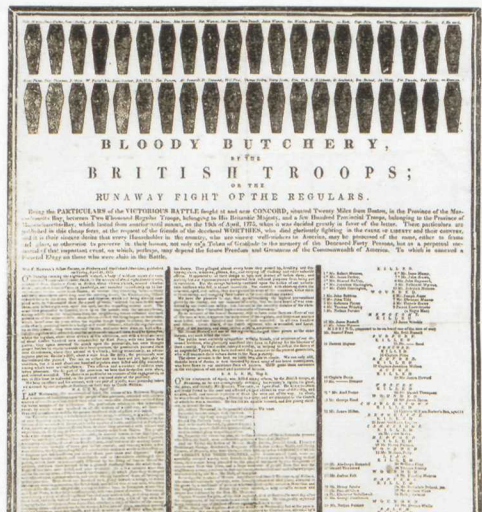


The smoothbore British "Brown Bess," the most common musket of the

Revolution, was a reliable but inaccurate weapon that a trained

soldier could fire four times a minute.

Public Reaction



AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

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 that 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.

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 militia men 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 the 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 militia men 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 militia men 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 militia men 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 that killed two minute men. Maj. John 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. Two British soldiers were killed. 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 unharassed. 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 that continued to Boston. The British encountered heavy, unrelenting fire from the hundreds of militia men 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.

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 militia men were pouring in from towns like Reading, Salem, and Lexington. When the flanking parties could oper-

ate, most of the militia men 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 militia men 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 and 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 more than 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 the 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.

British Expedition and Patriot Messengers

April 18-19, 1775

Red indicates British route to Concord.

Patriot Messengers:
Dark blue indicates Paul Revere's route.
Green indicates William Dawes's route.
Purple indicates Samuel Prescott's route.



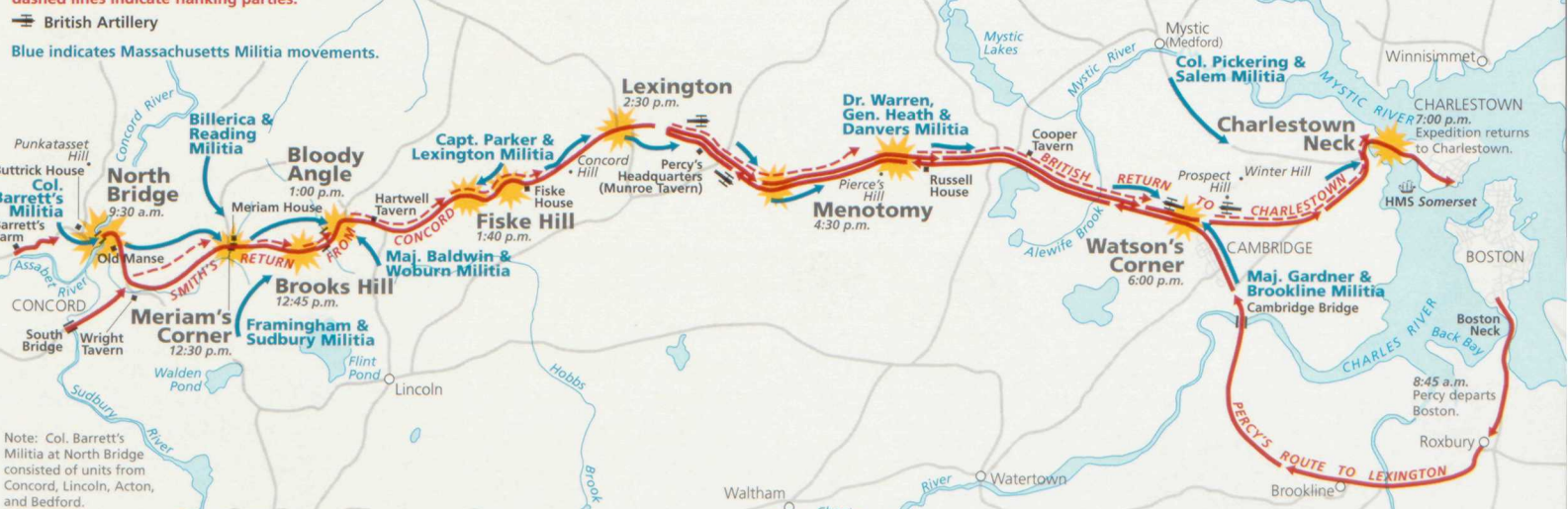
British Return from Concord

April 19, 1775

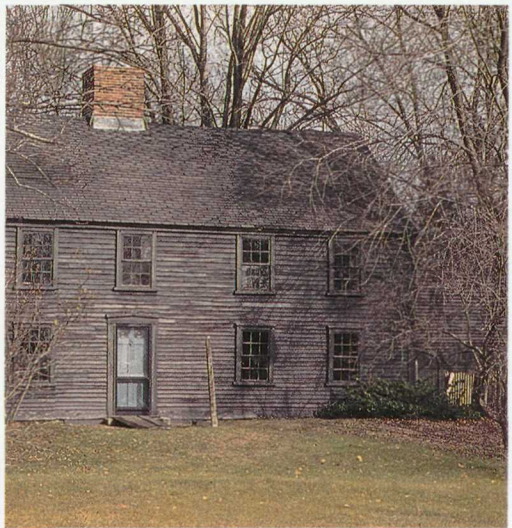
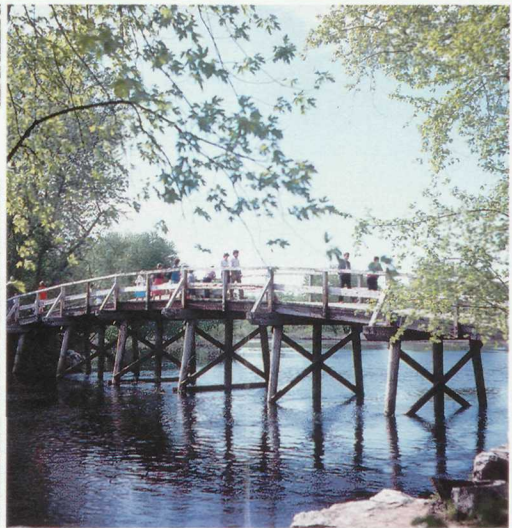
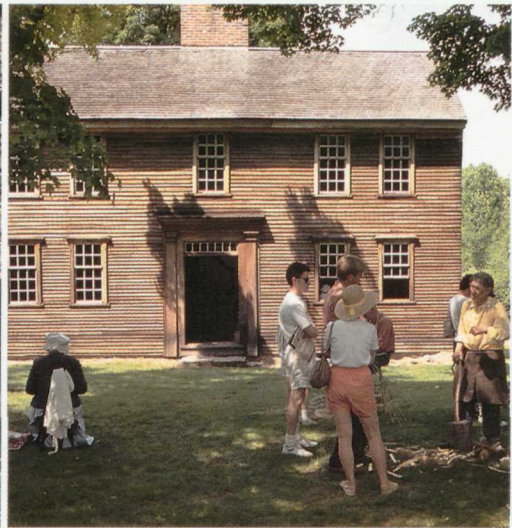
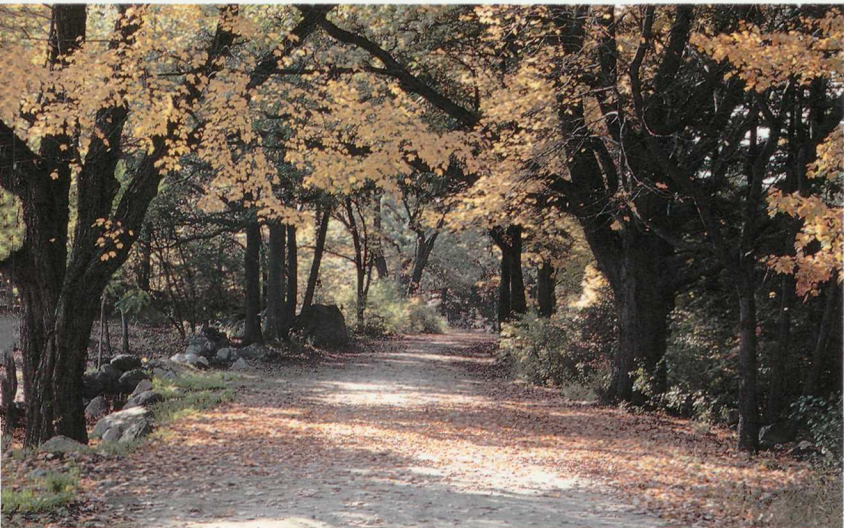
Red indicates British movements;
dashed lines indicate flanking parties.

British Artillery

Blue indicates Massachusetts Militia movements.



Visiting Minute Man



The Battle Road has undergone many changes in the more than two centuries since the fight. This section near the Minute Man

Visitor Center has been restored to a dirt and clay surface that represents the original surface of the entire road.

Hartwell Tavern—a 1733 building with later additions—was the typical country inn of the period. British soldiers marched

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

Ralph Waldo Emerson coined the phrase “the shot heard ‘round the world” to describe the significance of the brief battle that took place at

the North Bridge. Visitors should take time to walk across the bridge to see Daniel Chester French’s Minute Man statue.

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

colonial militia and British troops began the fighting along the Battle Road that continued for 16 miles.

Once the home of Samuel Whitney, muster master for the Concord Minute Men, The Wayside gained fame in the 19th century through three lit-

erary families. Louisa May Alcott’s childhood here inspired her scenes in *Little Women*. Nathaniel Hawthorne named it The Wayside; it was the only

home he ever owned. Margaret Sidney, author of *Five Little Peppers*, preserved this “Home of Authors.”

Where the Revolution Began

It was an unusual field of battle for the opening of the American Revolution: 20 miles of winding, hilly road connecting a port city and several country towns. But word of the fighting on Lexington Common, at the North 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, determined to retain their

rights as English citizens, soon grew into a war for independence that lasted more than eight years. Today, much of that country road is an urban highway, but the Battle Road still follows generally the same route, passing the sites of the bitterest fighting and the buildings nearby, helping to recall the dramatic events of April 19, 1775.

Begin your visit at the Minute Man Visitor Center near the eastern entrance of the park. “The Road To Revolution,” a multimedia theater program, provides an excellent introduction to the park story, depicting Paul Revere’s Ride and the battles at Lexington Green, North Bridge, and along Battle Road.

Battle Road Trail Connecting many of the park’s historic sites, this pathway follows remnants of the historic road and also crosses farming fields, wetlands, and forests. You can explore

this five-mile route on foot, bicycle, or by wheelchair. Take time to discover the trail and enjoy the rich historical and natural resources that the park offers. Battle Road Trail was not designed for high-speed use. Bicyclists: watch out for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and children in strollers. Walk bicycles on wetland boardwalks.

If you wish to experience the entire trail, begin at Meriam’s Corner and follow the course of the Battle Road from west to east. You may also visit portions of the trail

from any of the following parking areas:

Minute Man Visitor Center The Nelson house sites along Battle Road echo family stories. At *Parker’s Revenge*, the Lexington Militia attacked the British column in retaliation for the deaths incurred at dawn. If you walk east from the visitor center, you can follow Battle Road to *Fiske Hill* and loop back via a walking trail through historic pasture land.

Paul Revere Capture Site A monument marks the approximate site where

the famous “midnight ride” of Paul Revere came to an end.

Hartwell Tavern If your time is limited, be sure to stop here. The home of Ephraim and Elizabeth Hartwell and their children was a prosperous farm and tavern. Travelers to and from Boston stopped and shared the latest news of the day. Living history demonstrations bring this site to life. From *Hartwell Tavern* walk on the restored Battle Road through one of the most evocative historic landscapes in the park.

Brooks Beyond the historic Brooks houses a boardwalk leads through the Elm Brook wetland. The trail then follows the route of the colonists uphill along stone walls to the Bloody Angle, where they set up an ambush and caught the British column in a cross-fire.

Meriam’s Corner Walk a short distance west from the parking area to *Meriam’s Corner*, where spontaneous gunfire between colonists and British soldiers initiated the six-hour fight known as “Battle

Road.” Walk east to view *Historic Farming Fields*; follow farm lanes traversed by the colonists on the day of the battle. In the 19th century, author Henry David Thoreau was born near here and wrote about this landscape.

The Wayside and North Bridge Traveling west from Meriam’s Corner, stop at *The Wayside*, where 19th-century authors kept the spirit of the Revolution alive by helping to create a uniquely American literature.



The Minute Man statue was sculpted by Daniel Chester French to honor the citizen-soldier of 1775.

Continue on to the North Bridge, site of “the shot heard ‘round the world.” Next to the bridge is the Minute Man statue. Here along the Concord River is an ideal place to reflect upon what you have learned and experienced.

Minute Man National Historical Park is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America’s communities.

About Your Visit

For Your Safety Sections of the Battle Road coincide with Mass. 2A. Because of heavy traffic, use caution.

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

Historic and natural features within the park are protected by federal law. Do not excavate, remove, disturb, deface, or destroy any structure, exhibit, artifact, animal, or plant life. The park has instituted a “Park Watch” program to protect the park and to

provide a safer environment for our visitors. You can help by reporting any criminal activity or safety hazard to park rangers: 508-254-7491.

In an emergency call 911.

For More Information Minute Man National Historical Park 174 Liberty Street Concord, MA 01742-1705 978-369-6993 www.nps.gov/mima

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