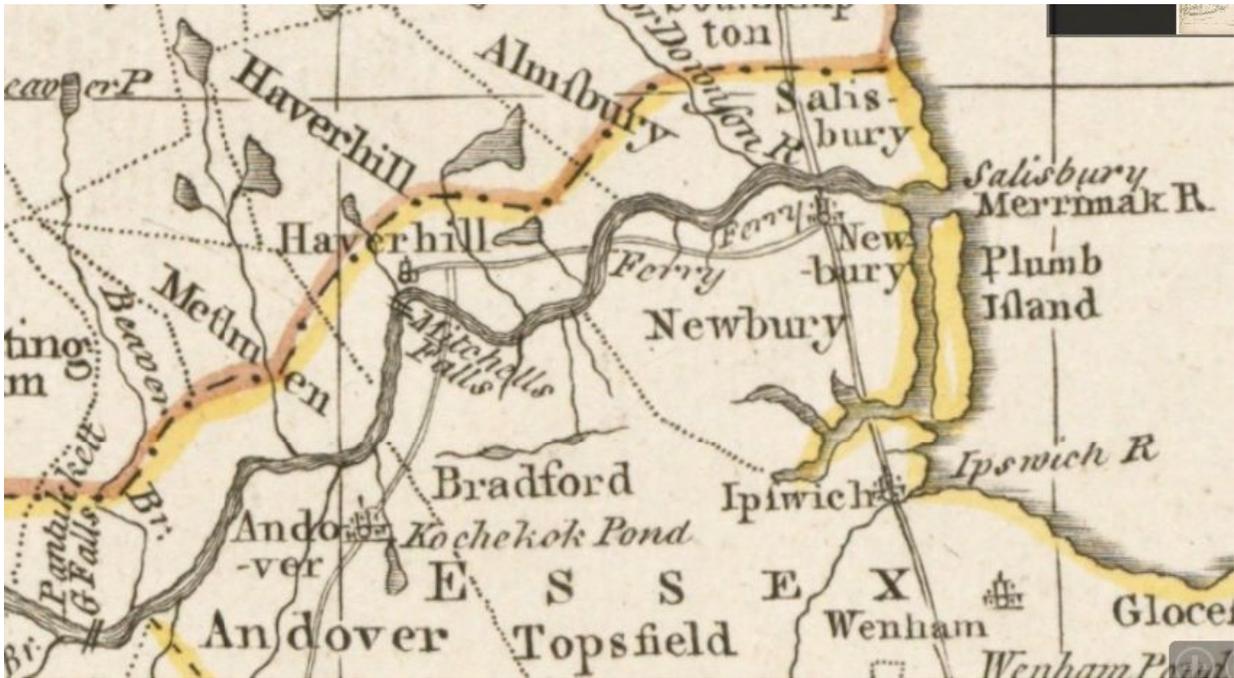


HEADS OF FAMILIES AND MEN OF SUBSTANCE: THE RISE OF THE MINUTE MEN IN
THE MERRIMACK VALLEY REGION OF ESSEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

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When war with England appeared inevitable, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress looked to the colony's militia to serve as its military arm. The origins of the Massachusetts militia can be traced back to the reign of Edward I, when Parliament enacted legislation decreeing that every freeman between the age of fifteen and sixty was to be available to preserve the peace within his own county or shire.¹ In the towns where the freemen were located, they were organized into military units known, by the virtue of their periodic training, as "trained bands". However, when Parliament, under the rule of Charles II, revised

¹ Edward M. Harris, *Andover in the American Revolution*, (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1976), 37.

membership requirements, established payment protocols and appointed officers, trained bands became known as militias. By the 17th century, militias had become one of the cornerstones of English society. Thus, when Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies were founded, the establishment of the militia followed naturally. In both colonies, every man over sixteen automatically became a member. Musters were frequent and mandatory, and punishments were doled out for being absent or not properly equipped. The governor maintained the sole authority to activate the militia in the time of crisis. Each time a new town sprung up, a militia company was formed. As the town expanded, additional companies often were created. When counties were formed, the various town militias within the borders of each county were organized into regiments. The governor held the sole authority to activate the militia in the time of crisis. However, with the elimination of the French threat as a result of the French and Indian War, the need for a militia decreased significantly. After 1763, companies and regiments of Massachusetts militia rarely assembled to drill and as a result, were of little military value. By the eve of the Boston Tea Party, a militia muster was not viewed as a military gathering, but rather as a sort of town holiday offering an opportunity for families and friends to get together.

The Massachusetts Provincial Congress recognized it had to “consider what is necessary to be done for the defence and safety of the province.”² Quickly, it resolved to wrest control of the militia away from the group of loyalist officers who commanded it. To achieve this, the Provincial Congress first ordered the militias to “meet forthwith and elect officers to command their respective companies; and that the officers so chosen assemble as soon as may be . . . and proceed to elect field officers.”³ Congress also recognized the need to revitalize and further

² Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Saturday, October 22, 1774.

³ Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Wednesday, October 26, 1774.

strengthen the colony's militia system as quickly as possible. On October 26, 1774, the delegates set into motion the formation of minute companies within Massachusetts. As part of its resolution, it declared

[The] field officers, so elected, forthwith [shall] endeavor to enlist one quarter, at the least, of the number of the respective companies, and form them into companies of fifty privates . . . who shall equip and hold themselves in readiness, on the shortest notice from the said Committee of Safety, to march to the place of rendezvous . . . said companies into battalions, to consist of nine companies each.⁴

Emphasis on proper military skill and supply was strongly emphasized by the delegates.

On the same day as the creation of minute companies, the Provincial Congress resolved

That, as the security of the lives, liberties and properties of the inhabitants of this province, depends under Providence, on their knowledge and skill in the art of military, and in their being properly and effectually armed and equipped, it is therefore recommended, that they immediately provide themselves therewith; that they use their utmost diligence to perfect themselves in military skill; and that, if any of the inhabitants are not provided with arms and ammunition according to law, and that if any town or district within the province is not provided with the full town stock of arms and ammunition . . . that the selectmen of such town or district take effectual care, without delay, to provide the same.⁵

Finally, the Congress voted to create a Committee of Safety, charged with the responsibility to “carefully and diligently . . . inspect and observe all and every such person or persons as shall at any time attempt or enterprise the destruction, invasion, detriment or annoyance of this Province . . . [The Committee] shall have the power . . . to alarm, muster, and cause to be assembled with the utmost expedition, and completely armed, accoutered . . . march to the place of rendezvous, such and so many of the militia of this Province, as they shall judge necessary for the ends aforesaid.”⁶

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

To support the logistical needs of the Committee of Safety, a sister committee was created to gather “such provisions as shall be necessary for [the militia’s] reception and support, until they shall be discharged by order of the Committee of Safety.”⁷

Three days later, on October 29, 1775, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress addressed what appropriate military exercise the various militia and minute companies should adopt. It is possible that the delegates considered the “Norfolk Exercise”. Developed in England in 1757, the Norfolk Exercise, or “A Plan of Discipline, Composed for the Use of the Militia of the County of Norfolk”, had been adopted by many New England militia companies by 1768 and was declared the official drill of the colony in the early 1770’s. However, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress ordered that “it be recommended to the inhabitants of this Province that in order to their perfecting themselves in the Military Art, they proceed in the method ordered by his Majesty in the year 1764, it being, in the opinion of this Congress, best calculated for appearance and defence.”⁸ Known as the 1764 Crown Manual of Arms, this was the drill used by the British troops stationed in Boston in 1775.

Methuen and Haverhill appear to be the first two towns in Northern Essex County to take steps towards preparation for war. Approximately twenty days *before* the resolutions of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, a Methuen Company of Militia declared

Whereas milartrary Exercise hath been much nelicked we the Subcrbers being the first comptrey in methuen Do Covenant and Engage To from our Bevels in to a Bodey in order to Lam the manual Exercise. To be Subegat To Such officers as the Comptrey shall chuse by Voat in all constutenel marshes according to our Chattaers . . . [list of sixty eight men] . . . the ferst Compyney in Methuen meat att Mr. Eben Carlton's in order To Chuse officers, and thay chose Lieut. Benj'm Hall Moder ator, they Chose Mr. James Jones for thar Capt. Mr. Ichobied Perkins furst Leut. Mr. James Wilson Sonent Leut. Mr.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Saturday, October 29, 1774.

Sam Messer Ens. Mr. Nath Messer Jr. Clark for said Compyney.⁹

In Haverhill, the town took the extraordinary step of establishing an artillery company.

Haverhill Sept, 5th. 1774. We the Subscribers, sensible of the importance of a well regulated Military Discipline, do hereby covenant and engage, to form ourselves into an Artillery Company at Haverhill according to the following Articles, — First, That there shall be four officers (viz) a Capt, Lieut, Ensign and Sergeant, who is to act as Clerk, To be chosen by a majority of the Company when met together, 2d. That we will meet together (on the first and third Mondays of September, October and November following, and on the first and third Mondays of the six Summer months annually till the Company shall agree - to dissolve the same) for the exercise of Arms and Evolutions, And that the role shall be called two hours before Sunset, and the Company shall be dismissed at Sunset N. B. If it be fowl weather the Day appointed, the Company shall meet the next fair Day — 3dly. Any one neglecting Due attendance shall be subject to a fine of eight pence, for the use of the Company; unless on a reasonable Pica; excused by the Company, 4thly. That no new member be admitted without the vote of the Company, That each member shall be Equiped with Arms, Accoutriments and Dress, according to Vote of Company, 6thly. That each member shall be supply'd with one Pound of Powder and Twenty Balls ; to be reviewed twice a year ; upon the Days of a chusing Officers, to commence the first Monday in October, from that time, the first Monday in May and August annually.¹⁰

Following the instructions of the Provincial Congress, the various militia units from Andover, Methuen, Bradford, Haverhill, Amesbury and Salisbury replaced loyalist Richard Saltonstall as regimental commander of the 4thth Essex Regiment of Militia. Andover's Samuel Johnson was elected in his place. Recognizing how woefully ill prepared the various units under his command were, Johnson drafted and issued a circular letter to his men.

To the officers and soldiers of the Regiment under my command, with my sincere regards to your person, and as a well-wisher to your Interest and Welfare and that also of the whole community, I present to you the following address.

Considering ourselves under Indispensable obligations to defend our Lives and Liberties against a Potent, Avaricious, Tyrannical Enemy who are incessantly contriving and Thirstily pursuing our utter Ruin, it becomes us to be diligent in the use of all outward means for Defense, without which we cannot expect Divine Protection; and I would

⁹ Resolution of the 1st Company of Militia, Methuen, October 6, 1774.

¹⁰ Resolution of Captain James Brickett's Company, Haverhill, September 5, 1774.

recommend to soldiers, as they would preserve their Lives and Liberties and everything dear to them, that they attend to such orders of their officers as they shall receive, and in particular not to fail of their Giving their attendance, whenever notified to muster, which Duty I fear, according to what information I have had from some companies in the sd regiment, has been too much neglected.

Officers giving way to indulgence for some reasons rather than to take such measures as the time points out, fills me with fear that Military Authority will soon be brought into contempt, and who would not shudder at the thought of the consequence. I therefore enjoin it upon the officers of my regiment that they see their orders punctually obeyed, although they should be obliged to take such measures as the law directs. In order hereunto, Military preparations are the only measures wherewith we may expect to meet our enemy with safety and success.

I earnestly call upon all officers in my Regiment to exert themselves in their several places to cultivate a marcial spirit and Disposition and to maintain their sincerity and activity therein by frequent mustering according as the Legislative Assembly has required.¹¹

After issuing this command, the various towns began to debate the merits of establishing minute companies. However Colonel Johnson took the additional step of personally visiting several of the units under his command to expedite the decision making process. On February 2, 1775, he spoke to the four companies of militia from the North and South Parishes of Andover. According to the *Essex Gazette*,

Last Tuesday at 2 o'clock p. M. the town foot-companies of the 4th regiment of Militia in the County of Essex, Inhabitants of the North Parish in Andover, being mustered (after attending prayers for the direction of the God of armies), Col. Samuel Johnson, lately chosen first officer of said regiment, addressed himself to the companie and with great zeal recommended to them the necessity of enlisting themselves into the service of the province and in a short time fifty able-bodied effective men, being one quarter part of said companies — more than a third part of whom are heads of families and men of substance and Probity, willingly offered themselves: they were then escorted to an Inn, where they made choice of Capt. Thomas Poor, junr, for their captain, Ensign Benjamin Farnum first lieutenant, and Samuel Johnson junr. for second lieutenant. They then subscribed a covenant obliging them to conform to the Resolves of the former or any future Congress or General Assembly of the Province that hath or may have Relation to their Duty, and by said Covenant subjected themselves to martial discipline for the term of one year from the time of their enlisting. And this day the two companies in the South

¹¹ Circular Letter of Colonel Samuel Johnson, Undated, Andover Historical Society; Report of the Committee Appointed by the Town of Andover, November 14, 1774.

Parish in this town were mustered at two o'clock afternoon, when after attending prayers for direction, Col. Johnson enlisted forty-five able-bodied men as aforesaid and of the like condition and probity, being one quarter part of said companies last mentioned, who immediately proceeded to make choice of Capt. Benjamin Ames for their captain, Lieut. David Chandler first lieutenant and Isaac Abbot for second lieutenant, and subscribed the covenant aforesaid. All being performed with great unanimity, seriousness and decorum, and the soldiers seeming rather to be animated than disheartened by the late disagreeable news contained in the king's speech.¹²

On February 14, 1775, Johnson visited Methuen. Following his speech, fifty men enlisted as minute men under the command of Captain John Davis. Haverhill likewise established a minute company under the command of James Sawyer. On February 22, 1775, Johnson visited Boxford. The colonel "addressed himself with great zeal to the two foot-companies of the Fourth Regiment, recommending to them the necessity of enlisting themselves into the service of the Province, and in a short space of time fifty-three able-bodied and effective men willingly offered themselves to serve their Province in defence of their liberties."¹³ Amesbury, one of the few towns not visited by Johnson, was slow to respond in the formation of a minute company. On March 20, 1775, the town finally "voted to raise fifty able bodied men including officers for minnit men and to enlist them for one year."¹⁴

Most towns had little or no problem finding men who were willing to fill the ranks of minuteman companies. However, to ensure enlistments, many towns established a salary and reimbursement of expenses for those who joined the ranks of minuteman companies. The Town of Amesbury ordered "each man shall have one shilling for exercising four hours in an fortnight and that the commanding officer of said Minnit men shall exhibit an account of them that shall

¹² *Essex Gazette*, February 2, 1775.

¹³ *Essex Gazette*, February 22, 1775.

¹⁴ Resolution of the Town of Amesbury, March 20, 1775. Once the various towns in the Merrimack Valley established its minute companies and officers, they were organized into a "minute man regiment" separate from the 4th Essex. The regiment was commanded by James Frye of Andover.

exercise to the Selectmen for to receive their pay for exercising.”¹⁵ Two weeks later, the town amended its resolution to include “that each minit man shall have two dollars bounty paid them at their first marching of provided they are called for by the Congress or a General officer they may appoint.”¹⁶ Haverhill established that its minute men “be allowed for each half day, eight pence till ye middle of March next, and one shilling for each half day afterwards, until they are called out to actual service from home, or disbanded. That when they are called to leave home on actual service they shall Receive ye same wages & subsistence as Soldiers received the last war. That if they are called upon & do actually march from home in defence of the Province, they shall be intituled to receive three dollars each as a Bounty, either from the Town or Province. Further that the three chief officers recieve for each half Day two Shillings Each till ye middle of March next, & after that time three shillings each half Day till called upon to march from home, or are disbanded.”¹⁷ Andover resolved that its minutemen would receive “eight pence for each half day they shall be exercised in the art of military . . . and from 30th day of March to the 30th Day of September . . . one shilling for each half day they shall be exercised . . . and in the case each soldier shall be called to active service, thirty six shillings per month.”¹⁸ The residents of Bradford voted “To give each man a dollar for billeting, when they are called to march, and seven dollars per month while in actual service.”¹⁹ Methuen simply established a pay scale of eight pence per day dedicated to drilling.²⁰

Despite popular modern misconceptions, Massachusetts minutemen were not poorly

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Resolution of the Town of Amesbury, April 7, 1775.

¹⁷ Resolution of the Town of Haverhill, January 30, 1775.

¹⁸ Report of the Committee Appointed by the Town of Andover, November 14, 1774.

¹⁹ Resolution of the Town of Bradford, January 20, 1775.

²⁰ Resolution of the Town of Methuen, January 1775.

armed and equipped. Instead it appears most towns, including the Merrimack Valley region of Essex County, took appropriate steps to ensure its minute companies were well supplied for war. In Bradford, the residents voted to ensure its minutemen were uniformly armed with bayonets and cartridge boxes. “Voted, That the Selectmen provide bayonets and cartouch boxes for the Minute-Men on the town cost, to be returned to the town after they are dismissed from the service.”²¹ Later that year, three Bradford men were reimbursed for fitting bayonets to guns and making cartridge boxes, scabbards and belting for the town’s minute company. “Voted, To Phineas Carlton, for 22 Bayonets fitted with Scabbards and Belts, 8l. 5s. 0d. Voted, To Phineas Carlton, for Scowering the old Bayonets, and fitting with Belts, 4l. 4s. 0d. For 2 Scabbards and Belts, 0l. 3s. 0d. Wm. Greenough, for fitting one Bayonet and one belt, 0l. 2s. 8d . . . To Phineas Cole for Leathering 50 Cartridge boxes, 6l. 13s. 4d.”²²

Andover placed a heavy emphasis in arming its two minute companies with bayonets. “Voted, that the enlisted soldiers be furnished with bayonets at the expense of the town. Voted, that a committee be chosen to collect the bayonets now in the hands of individuals in this Town and provide such a number of new ones as will be sufficient to supply the minute men. Voted, that the Committee chosen at the last meeting to procure bayonets collect as many as they can of those belonging to the Province by next Wednesday, two o'clock, P. M., that they procure one hundred more to be made as soon as possible and supply those firelocks that are effective which belong to the minute men with good bayonets as soon as may be.”²³ Likewise, Methuen resolved to provide bayonets “which should be brought to Capt. John Davis and after the service

²¹ Resolution of the Town of Bradford, January 20, 1775.

²² Resolution of the Town of Bradford, September 21, 1775.

²³ Resolution of the Town of Andover, February, 1775.

was over said Davis is to return said bayonets unto the Selectmen of said town.”²⁴ The town also voted to provide guns for all minute men unable to supply their own, blankets and cartridges.²⁵ Amesbury voted that its minute men would be responsible for their own arms and equipment. “Voted that said Minnit men shall upon their own cost be well equipped with arms and aminition according to law fit for a march.”²⁶ Boxford merely issued a vague resolution that its minutemen be “arm, equip, and hold themselves in readiness to march in any emergency in defence of the Province.”²⁷

Captain James Brickett’s Company from Haverhill appears to have taken the greatest measures to ensure its men were properly equipped and dressed for war. As discussed earlier, Brickett’s Company was originally formed as an artillery unit. When its members were unable to procure an artillery piece, it reorganized itself as an “independent corps”.²⁸ On the eve of the American Revolution, Brickett’s Company was essentially operating as a minute company. On March 21, 1775, the company voted “that we Dress in a Uniform consisting of a Blue Coat, turned up with Buff, and yellow plain Buttons, the Coat cut half way the thigh; and the Pockets a Slope. Voted, Also, that we have Buff, or Nankeen Waistcoat & Breeches, and White Stockings with half Boots or Gaiters. Also that the Hats be cocked alike. And that each one have a bright gun, Bayonet, & Steel Ramrod. Voted that the Company be equipd in this Uniform by the first Monday in May.”²⁹ The unit also agreed that “each member shall be supply'd with one Pound of Powder and Twenty Balls; to be reviewed twice a year; upon the

²⁴ Resolution of the Town of Methuen, January 1775.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Resolution of the Town of Amesbury, March 20, 1775.

²⁷ Resolution of the Town of Boxford, January 5, 1775.

²⁸ Minutes of Captain James Brickett’s Company, November 12, 1774. 19th Century sources refer to this unit as a “light infantry” company.

²⁹ Minutes of Captain James Brickett’s Company, March 21, 1775.

Days of a chusing.”³⁰

A strong emphasis was placed on drilling and training for war by all the towns in the Merrimack Valley. Following the recommendations of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Andover ordered “[Soldiers] on the said first said day of December meet together and chuse such person only for leading or instructing as shall appear to them to be most skillful in Military Discipline and that they be well equipped with good guns, and other necessary warlike armour in order for their performing of all military maneuvers.”³¹ Amesbury resolved that its minute men would engage in “exercising four hours in an fortnight.”³² Two weeks later, the town modified its order and instructed its minute men to “[exercise] four hours in a week.”³³ The residents of Boxford voted on March 14, 1775 “that the minute-men shall train one half day in a week, for four weeks after this week is ended.”³⁴ Methuen simply ordered its minute company be “drawn out or exposed to train.”³⁵

Haverhill initially voted that its minute men “be duly disciplined in Squads three half days in a Week, three hours in each half day.”³⁶ On March 14, 1775, the town also voted to raise thirty dollars “to procure a military instructor to instruct the Militia in the Art Military.”³⁷ One week later, it was voted that the minute-men should train one whole day per week, instead of three half days as previously voted. Furthermore, the minutemen were to be trained by a “Mr

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Resolves of the Town of Andover, November 27, 1774.

³² Resolution of the Town of Amesbury, March 20, 1775.

³³ Resolution of the Town of Amesbury, April 7, 1775.

³⁴ Resolution of the Town of Boxford, March 14, 1775.

³⁵ Resolution of the Town of Methuen, January, 1775.

³⁶ Resolution of the Town of Haverhill, January 30, 1775.

³⁷ Resolution of the Town of Haverhill, March 14, 1775.

George Marsden, whom we have hired.”³⁸

In a document prepared by Sergeant Michael Whittier, the names of the minute men belonging to Captain Sawyer’s Haverhill Minute Company and the number of days each soldier attended military drills for the months of March and April is described:

A Role of the Miuit Men in Capt James Sawyer's Company & the Number of days Each man Trained according to the Voat of the Town of Haverhill in March and Apirel 1775.

	Days		Days
James Sawyer Capt	5	Samuel gips Mitchel	-
Timothy Johnson Lieut	5	Joshua Emory	6
Nathaniel Eaton Lieut	5	Jerimiah Stickney	5
Mitchel Whiticher Sargt	6	Joseph Webster	5
Moses Heselton Sargt	5	Isaiah Eaton	5
Wm Rolf Sargt	5	Ebenezer Grifen	4
Charles Davis Sargt	5	Samuel Emerson	5
Enook Eaton Coprel	4	John Silver	-
Chas Sarjant Coprel	3	Seth Wymon	4
John Bery Coprel	6	Daniel Lord	5
Ruben Sargent	3	Nathan Peabody	5
Asa Currer	5	James Whiticker	4
Thomus Tiytor	5	Samuel Sanders	3
Daniel Colby	3	Henerey Springer	1
John Dow	6	Ebenezer Webster	-
John Eaton	4	Johnathan Dusten	4
Joseph Emorson	5	Daniel Grifen	3
Simon Picck	4	Moses Emorson Juner	4
Lewis George	5	John gipson	3
'Wm Davis	2	Nathan Ayre	4

³⁸ Resolution of the Town of Haverhill, March 21, 1775. A secondary source suggests Mr. Marsden was a British deserter who ultimately rose through the ranks to serve as an adjutant with Colonel Scamman’s Regiment during the American Revolution.

Mossce Emorson	5	James Townsand	4
Job gage	4	Stophen Runcls	4
Peter Emorson	3	John Tylor	3
Samuel George	-	James Wilson	-
John Cheney	1	Daniel Remock	3
Nathaniel Cahaney	-	Stephen Jackson	3
Samuel Ealy	2	Joshua Moors	1
Wm Sawyer	4	Philip Bagley	4
James Smiley	5	Humpree Nicola	4
Joel Harrimcn	5	Dudley Dusten	3
James Snow	5	Johnthan Lowger	4
Mark Emorson	-	John Sanders	4

Atteset,
 Mitchel Wittier Serjant

On April 13, 1775, Captain Sawyer and forty six of his men travelled west to Andover to hold a joint drill with Captain Thomas Poor and his men. According to Sawyer's subsequent report, the purpose of the event "[was to meet] at Andover for Exsise"³⁹

Meanwhile, the "Independent Corps" commanded by Captain Brickett passed their own resolutions regarding preparations for war. "That we will meet together (on the first and third Mondays of September, October and November following, and on the first and third Mondays of the six Summer months annually till the Company shall agree - to dissolve the same) for the exercise of Arms and Evolutions, And that the role shall be called two hours before Sunset, and the Company shall be dismissed at Sunset N. B. If it be fowl weather tho Day appointed, the Company shall meet the next fair Day."⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, the men voted to adopt "the

³⁹ Return of Captain James Sawyer's Company, April 13, 1775.

⁴⁰ Resolution of Captain James Brickett;s Company, September 5, 1774.

exercise as ordered by His Majesty in the year 1764.”⁴¹ Two months later, Brickett’s “independent corps” voted “that we hire Mr George Marsdin for 4 days at 12s a day, & that he be paid out of the fines.”⁴²

In the early morning of April 19, 1775, news of a British operation towards Concord arrived in the Merrimack Valley. According to Lieutenant Benjamin Farnum of Andover “April 19, 1775. This day, the Mittel men of Colonel Frye's regiment were Alarmed with the Nuse of the Troops marching from Boston to Concord, at which Nuse they marched very quick from Andover, and marched within about 5 miles of Concord, then meeting with the Nuse of their retreat for Boston again with which Nuse we turned our corse in order to catch them. We retreated that Day to Notme [Menotomy] but we could not come up with them. The nit coming on, we stopped; the next day we marched to Cambridge.”⁴³ Andover minute man Thomas Boynton expressed frustration as his unit shifted course multiple times in an attempt to ambush the regulars. “Andover, April 19, 1775. This morning, being Wednesday, about the sun's rising the town was alarmed with the news that the Regulars was on their march to Concord. Upon which the town mustered and about 10 o'clock marched onward for Concord. In Tewksbury news came that the Regulars had fired on our men in Lexington, and had killed 8. In Bilricke news came that the enemy were killing and slaying our men in Concord. Bedford we had the news that the enemy had killed 2 of our men and had retreated back; we shifted our course and persued after them as fast as possible, but all in vain ; the enemy had the start 3 or 4 miles. It is said that their number was about 1500 men. They were persued as far as Charlestown that night;

⁴¹ Resolution of Captain James Brickett’s Company, November 21, 1774.

⁴² Resolution of Captain James Brickett’s Company, February, 1775.

⁴³ Journal of Lieutenant Benjamin Farnum, April 19, 1775.

the next day they passed Charles River. The loss they sustained as we hear were 500; our men about 40. To return, after we came into Concord road we saw houses burning and others plundered and dead bodies of the enemy lying by the way, others taken prisoners. About eight at night our regiment came to a halt in no time. The next morning we came into Cambridge and there abode.”⁴⁴ Another Andover minute man, James Stevens, described in some detail the extent of damage Lexington suffered that day. “April ye 19 1775 this morning about seven a clock we had alarm that 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 plaindered in every hous they could git in to thay stove in windows & broke in tops of desks we met the men a coming back very fast we went through Notemy & got into Cambridg we stopt about eight a cloke for thay say that the reegerlers was got to Chalstown on to Bunkers hil & intrenstion we stopt about two miles back from the college.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Journal of Thomas Boynton, April 19, 1775.

⁴⁵ Journal of James Stevens, April 19, 1775.

Essex Co To John Currier Capt of a militerry foot
Company in Amesbury this Day I have received intil
gence that the ministeriel troops under the Comon
and of General Gage did Last evening march out
of Boston and marched to Lexington & there Killed
a Number of our American Soldiers & thence
proceed to Concord Killing and Destroying our men
and interest. These are therefore to order you forth
with to Notify and muster as many of your under
officers and Soldiers as you can possible to meet imon
ediately to some suitable place and then to march of
forthwith to Concord or Espe where as in your Discret
ion you shall think best to the reliefe of our Forts
and Country: and also to order those who are now
absent & out of the way to Follow after and join you
as soon as they shall be apprized of the Alarm
and when you have marched your men to some part
of our army you are to Appoint some officer to head
them in case you return home your Self: till some
Further Order may be taken: in this Traile Not
Given under my Hand and Seal at Amesbury this
Nineteenth Day of April in the Twelfth year
of the Reign of George the third Anno Domini: 1775

Isaac merrill
Coll

In Amesbury, the minute company received orders to mobilize as quickly as possible.

“Essex Co To John Currier Capt of a militerry foot Company in Amesbury this Day I have received intilgence that the ministeriel troops under the Command of General Gage did Last evening march out of Boston and marched to Lexington & there Killed a Number of our American Soldiers & thence proceed to Concord Killing and Destroying our men and interest: These are therefore to order you forthwith to Notify and muster as many of your under officers

and Soldiers as you can possible to meet immediatly to Some Suitable place: and then to march of forthwith to Concord or Else where as in your Descretion you Shall think best to the reliefe of our Friend[s] and Country: and also to order those who are now absent & out of the way to Follow after and ioin you as Soon as they shall be apprized of the Alaram and when you have marched your men to Some part of our army you are to appoint some officer to head them in case you return home your Self: till Some Further order may be taken: in this Faile Not Given under my Hand and Seal at Amesbury this Ninteenth Day of April in the Fifteenth year of the Reign of George the third Anno Domini: 1775. Isaac Merrill.”⁴⁶

It appears many of the Merrimack Valley minute companies under the command of Colonel Frye remained outside of Boston for approximately one week. Afterwards, the men slowly began to trickle back home to the Merrimack Valley and their homes. Little did they know in a little over a month, many would return to fight at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

⁴⁶ Isaac Merrill to John Currier, Essex County, Massachusetts, April 19, 1775.