

We Stood Our Ground

*18th Century Lexington on the Eve of the American
Revolution*

What We'll Discuss Today

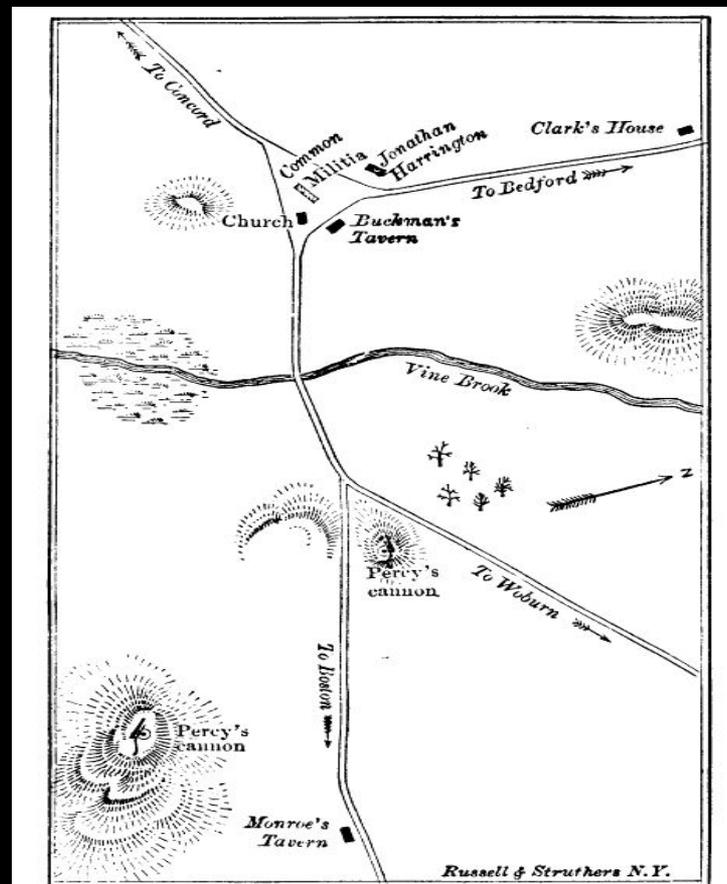
- The Physical Layout of Lexington
- The Social Setting of Lexington
- Religious Influence
- Political Evolution of the Town (1765-1774)
- Military Buildup
- Overview of the Events of April 19th
- The Civilian Evacuation of April 19, 1775

“This is a super-important quote”



- From some expert I've never heard of ...

THE VILLAGE OF LEXINGTON



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE BRITISH ATTACK AT LEXINGTON.







THE HOUSE WAS BUILT
IN 1840 BY
JAMES H. HAYES



ECONOMIC PROFILE OF LEXINGTON



- Although society in 18th century Lexington was fluid, it was not as mobile as modern society.
- Residents of Lexington, like most New Englanders, believed that the upper orders of society were to rule, while the lower were expected to obey.
- Lower class citizens were viewed with contempt and disdain if they attempted to assert influence or power beyond that expected of their station, and were quickly reminded of their proper place in society.
- Leaders had to be men of distinction, respected by all. By 18th century standards, failure to adhere to this societal structure would not only result in disorder, chaos and anarchy, but would also anger God

Economic Profile of Lexington

- Lexington had approximately 400-600 cows on the eve of the American Revolution
- In 1771, there were 185 males identified as being over the age of 16. In 1775, it was 208. The total population of the town in 1770 was approximately 800 residents.
- The overwhelming majority of families were involved in dairy farming
- Other occupations identified included: Blacksmith, Wheelwright , Carpenter, and Clock Maker

Winter

December - March

- Turning gardens & plowing their tillage land
- Gathering the winter's wood, manure, and ashes
- Ice harvesting
- Slaughtering hog(s)

Spring

April - June

- Plowed, fertilized, sowed, and weeded fields
- Milking cows
- Cheese making
- Soap making
- Farm/house maintenance

Summer

July - August

- Hay and grain harvest
- Laundry and household cleaning
- Cooking extra meals for hired harvest help

Fall

September - November

- Harvest of fruits, vegetables, root crops, and squashes
- Canning the harvest for winter food
- Making apple cider, vinegar, apple molasses, and apple sauces

Lexington in Debt

- On the eve of the American Revolution, many Lexington residents were saddled with overwhelming debt.
- In 1759, fifteen percent of Lexington men saw a forced sale of all or part of their real estate to settle at the time of their death.
- By 1779, the percentage had risen to almost twenty-nine percent.
- By the end of the American Revolution, a staggering forty percent of Lexington estates faced forced sales

- By 1774, nearly one third of Lexington men were landless
- In 1764, there were twelve individuals who were dependent upon the town for financial support.
- By 1775, the number doubled to twenty-four.

Teen Pregnancy

- In the 1740's, nineteen percent of all first births were prenuptial conceptions.
- From the 1740's onward, births less than nine months after marriage steadily increased.
- By 1774, forty-one percent of all first born children were conceived out of wedlock.

*The Reverend
Jonas Clarke*



“I am sorry to say that no body of men in this Province are so extremely injurious to the peace and tranquility of it as the clergy. They preach sedition openly from their pulpits. (Nay, some of them have gone so far as absolutely to refuse the sacrament to the communicants till they have signed a paper of the most seditious kind, which they have denominated the Solemn League and Covenant). So much with respect to the inhabitants.”

Letter from Lord Hugh Earle Percy to the Duke of Northumberland, July 27, 1774.

*Sample Sermons of Rev. Clarke on the Eve
of the American Revolution*

“The Importance of Military Skill”

“Measures for Defense”

“A Marshall Spirit in a Time of Peace”

“The Fate of Blood”

Rev. Clarke on....

- **The Stamp Act Crisis:** “[It is] a door to numberless evils, which only time can discover” *Instructions from Jonas Clarke to William Reed Esq., the Present Representative of Lexington, October 21, 1765*
- **The Quartering Act:** “an infringement of their natural, constitutional and chartered rights.” *Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, September 21, 1768*

Rev. Clarke on...

- Supporters of the Tea Tax: “should be looked upon as an enemy of the town . . . and shall . . . be treated with neglect and contempt.” *Report of the Committee of Correspondence adopted by the Town of Lexington, December 1773*
- The Intolerable Acts: “We shall be ready to sacrifice our estates and everything dear in life, yea and life itself, in support of the common cause.” *Report of the Committee of Correspondence adopted by the Town of Lexington, December 1773.*

The Stamp Act Crisis

“ [We] earnestly recommend to [William Reed] the most calm, decent and dispassionate measures for our open, explicit and resolute assertion and vindication of our charter rights and liberties . . . We take it for granted, therefore, that you will carefully avoid all unaccustomed and unconstitutional grants, which will not only add to the present burden, but make such precedents as will be attended with consequences which may prove greatly to the disadvantage of the public”

Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, October 21, 1765



Influence on Lexington Politics

*Americans throwing the Cargoes of the Tea Ships into the River,
at Boston*

Lexington on the Stamp Act

“What of all most alarms Us is an Act Commonly Called the Stamp Act, the full Execution of which we Apprehend would divest us of our Most inestimable Charter Rights and Privileges, Rob us of our Character as Free and Natural Subjects, and of almost Everything we ought as a People hold Dear.”

“We humbly conceive this Act to be directly repugnant to those Rights and Privileges granted to us in our Charter, which we always hold sacred, as confirmed to us by the Royal word and Seal, and as frequently recognized by our Sovereign and the Parliament of Great Britain, wherein it is expressly granted to us and to our children--- That We shall have and enjoy all Liberties and Immunities of Free and Natural Subjects, within any of His Majesty’s Dominions”

“By this Act we are most deeply affected as hereby we are debarred of being tried by juries in case of any breach or supposed breach of it, - a right which, until now, we have held in common with our brethren in England . . . This we apprehend will open a door to numberless evils which time only can discover.”

Lexington's Response to the Townshend Duties...

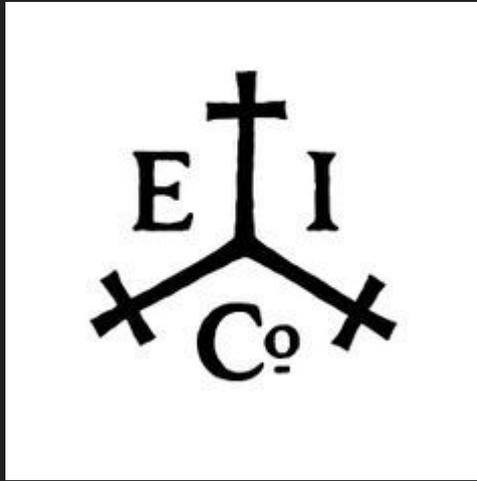
“[That] the freeholders & other Inhabitants of the Town of Lexington will, *at the utmost peril of their Lives and Fortunes, take all Legal and Constitutional measures to Defend* and maintain ye person, Family, Crown and Dignity of our Said Sovereign Lord, George ye Third, and all and Singular the Rights, Liberties, privileges and Immunities Granted in said Royal Charter as well as those which are Declared to be Belonging to us as British subjects, by Birthright as all others therein Specially mentioned.”

Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, September 21, 1768

December 31, 1772

“It is the natural right and . . . Duty of every man . . .
To consult their own safety, and *to take measures for
the preservation of their own liberty and property,
without which life can be scarcely be deemed worth
possessing.*”

Lexington and Tea



Lexington on the Tea Tax

“[It] appears that the Enemies of the Rights & Liberties of Americans, greatly disappointed in the Success of the Revenue Act, are seeking to Avail themselves of New, & if possible, Yet more detestable Measures to distress, Enslave & destroy us. Once admit this subtle, wicked Ministerial Plan to take place, once permit this Tea . . . to be landed, received and vended . . . the Badge of our slavery is fixed, the Foundation of ruin is surely laid.”

Report of the Committee of Correspondence adopted by the Town of Lexington, December 1773.

Mob Rule

“That if any Head of a Family in this Town, or any Person, shall from this time forward; & until the Duty taken off, purchase any Tea, Use or consume any Tea in their Famelies [sic], such person shall be looked upon as an Enemy to this town & to this Country, and shall by this Town be treated with Neglect & Contempt”

Enslavement?

“[Our] Charter Rights & Liberties are in danger, are infringed and upon a most careful, Serious & mature Consideration of them . . . We are clearly of opinion that . . . the Plan of Oppression is begun, & so far carried on that, if our Enemies are still Successful, and no Means can be found to put a Stop to their Career, . . . we have just Reason to fear That the Eyes of the Head of Government being blinded, the Sources of Justice poisoned and Hands of administration bribed with interest, the system of slavery will soon be compleat.”

Declarations and Resolves, Town of Lexington, January 5, 1773.

*The Military
Buildup of
1774-1775*



*Officers of the Captain John Parker's
Company of Militia*

Captain John Parker

Lieutenant William Tidd

Ensigns Robert Munroe

Ensign Joseph Simmonds

Clerk: Daniel Harrington

NCOs

Sergeant William Munroe

Sergeant Francis Brown

Sergeant Ebenezer White

Corporal Joel Viles

Corporal Samuel Sanderson

Corporal John Munroe

Corporal Ebenezer Parker

*Enslaved People Serving in the
Lexington Militia in 1775*

Prince Estabrook

Pompey Blackman

Samuel Crafts

Jupiter Tree

Cato Tuder

Lexington was Preparing for War

- A full month before the Massachusetts Provincial Congress first ordered the residents of the colony to reorganize its militia system and create minute companies, Lexington was already in full wartime preparation.
- According to the Reverend Clarke, the Lexington militia were “training” and “showing arms” as early as September 15, 1774.
- On September 26, 1774, Lexington voted to provide a pair of drums for the use of the military company in town.
- Finally, on November 3, 1774, the town gathered to plan “military discipline and to put themselves in a position of defense against their Enemies.”

The Massachusetts Provincial Congress

- On December 10, 1774, the Provincial Congress declared “The improvement of the militia in general in the art military has been therefore thought necessary, and strongly recommended by this Congress. We now think that particular care should be taken by the towns and districts in this colony, **that each of the minute men, not already provided therewith, should be immediately equipped with an effective firearm, bayonet, pouch, knapsack, thirty rounds of cartridges and balls . . .** [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”
- Most towns passed additional resolutions that expanded upon this order to include canteens, powder horns and blankets.

- In December, 1774, Lexington resolved to *strictly follow* the military recommendations of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress.
- That same month a committee composed of Lexington men, including John Parker, was created and oversaw the execution of the orders of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress to properly equip the militia.
- Local Lexington men were making and supplying arms and equipment to Captain Parker's Company.

- One of the individuals assigned to the committee was Captain John Parker, commander of the Lexington militia.
- Over the next several months it appears that this committee, under the leadership of Parker, took steps to ensure the company was properly armed and equipped.
- As a result, several men in Lexington personally contributed to Lexington's effort to properly arm and equip the town's militia for war.

Who Helped Arm and Equip the Lexington Militia?

- **Jonathan Harrington Sr.** - father of company fifer Jonathan Harrington, was charged with making cartridge boxes and belting for the militia.
- **Phillip Russell**- was also making cartridge boxes and bayonets for members of the militia.
- **Jonas Parker** - was cutting back gunstocks so fowlers could accept socket bayonets.
- **Nathan Simonds** - was providing blankets to those Lexington militiamen who could not afford them.
- **Jeremiah Harrington** - was making tow cloth knapsacks for members of the militia.
- **John Parker** - Was possibly making powder horns for the Lexington Company.

Bullets and Powder

- **Joshua Reed and an “Ensign Harrington”** were even scrambling to acquire gunpowder and lead for bullets for the militia.
- “Granted an ordere to pay Ensign Harrington £2.12.10 in full . . . for 104 lbs. of bullets & . . . for going to Walthame for powdere & to Bostone for leads.”
- “Grantede an ordere to pay Mr. Joshua Reed . . . in full for his bringing up leade from Boston and running the bullets.”

Was Captain Parker and the Committee Successful?

Items Required by the
Massachusetts Provincial
Congress in the Event of War
with England

Firearm
Bayonet
Cartridge Box
Knapsack
Ammunition
Blanket
Canteen

Items Acquired by Lexington in
Preparation for War

Firearm
Bayonet
Cartridge Box
Powder Horn
Knapsack
Ammunition
Blanket
Canteen
Two Iron Field Pieces

Yeah...but did they *really* carry all that stuff on April 19, 1775?



- The official correspondence from Lt. Colonel Francis Smith.
 - In his report to General Thomas Gage regarding the events of April 19th, Smith specifically states the Lexington militia was drawn up in military order and well armed and equipped.
 - “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.”

- **The Petition of Lt. John Tidd**

- John Tidd submitted a petition to the Massachusetts Legislature in early 1776 claiming that after he was wounded at the Battle of Lexington, British soldiers robbed him of his arms and equipment.
- “Petition of John Tidd of Lexington setting forth that on the 19th of April he received a wound in the head (by a Cutlass) from the enemy, which brought him (senseless) to the ground at wch time they took from him his gun, cartridge box, powder horn &c.”

- **“The Petition of Benjamin Wellington and others of Lexington”**
 - Three Lexington militiamen and one widow submitted a joint petition to the Massachusetts legislature in 1776. In the petition they too asserted that British troops stole their arms and equipment immediately after the Battle of Lexington.
 - “Petition of Benja Wellington, & others of Lexington, setting forth that they sustained the aforementioned losses by the Kings troops on the 19th of April 1775 viz: Benja Wellington, a gun, bayonet, &c. ... Jno Muzzy, a gun, powder horn, &c. Taken from his son ... Lucy Parker, a musquet, &c. Taken from her husband ... Marrit Munro, a gun & hat taken from him.”

The Plan of Operation



Background To Lexington and Concord

- In an attempt to break the Massachusetts colonists of their resistance to crown policy, Parliament and the King authorized General Thomas Gage to undertake any military measures necessary to help bring the colony under control.
- Gage quickly responded to this authorization by requesting naval warships be sent to the New Hampshire coast, Cape Ann and to the Massachusetts South and North Shores.
- He also dispatched soldiers and loyalists to Middlesex, Essex and Worcester Counties with instructions to map the roads and topography, sample the political moods of the countryside and discover what they could about suspected provincial supply depots

- In late winter and early spring of 1775, Gage received a series of dispatches from London ordering him to not only arrest the leaders of Massachusetts's opposition party, but to launch a major strike against the apparently growing provincial stockpiles of weapons and munitions.
- As he contemplated these orders, Gage considered a variety of military options, including a long-range strike against the large store of weapons located in the shire town of Worcester, forty miles west of Boston.
- Realizing that this was much too risky a venture, the general decided instead to seize the military supplies reportedly stored at Concord, a march half the distance of that to Worcester.

General Thomas Gage's plan called for approximately seven hundred men composed of the elite grenadiers and light infantry from several regiments and a company of marines, to march from Boston to Concord under cover of darkness on April 18, 1775.



This “strike force,” under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith of the 10th Regiment of Foot, was ordered “[to proceed] with the utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord where you will seize and destroy all the artillery, ammunition, provisions, tents, small arms and all military stores whatever. But you will take care that the soldiers do not plunder the inhabitants, or hurt private property.”

General Gage to Lieutenant Colonel Smith, April, 18, 1775

*The Civilian
Evacuation of
Lexington and
Concord*

April 19, 1775



- As the Lexington militia assembled on the common at approximately 1 AM many of the town's civilian population who lived along the Bay Road fled from their homes.
- The Reverend William Gordon of Roxbury noted “the inhabitants had quitted their houses in the general area upon the road ... and thinking themselves well off in escaping with their lives.”

Source: Rev. Mr. William Gordon, An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great Britain and America

Later in the morning, many residents along the Boston Road realized that the British regulars would be marching back through their respective towns again.



- One evacuee recalled that the roads were clogged with “women and children weeping.”
- Some escaped to woods and fields, while others traveled to nearby towns. Some sought refuge in homes far from the British path of retreat.
- “When news of the advance of the British arrived April 18, 1775, many women and children took refuge [in Josiah Smith’s home in Weston] until the struggle of the 19th of April had passed.”
- By the time the retreating regulars returned to Lexington, “the women and children had been so scattered and dispersed, that most of them were out of the way.”

Sources: Smith, “Kite End,” p. 114.; Deposition of Elijah Sanderson, December 11, 1824

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Questions??



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