

Battle of Lexington and Concord

A Brief History:

On the 15 of April 1775, when General Thomas Gage, British Military Governor of Massachusetts, was ordered to destroy the rebel's military stores at Concord. To accomplish this he assembled the "Flanking units", including Light Infantry and Grenadiers, from his Boston Garrison. In charge he put Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith and Marine Major John Pitcairn. He also composed a relief column under the command of Lord Hugh Percy to leave 6 hours after the main column. In an attempt at secrecy he did not tell his officers his plan until the last minute. The problem with his security measures were that Boston had become a glass fishbowl. All rebel eyes were watching to see the British' next action, and when the garrison committed to an action, the Americans knew their every move.

At midnight on the 19th of April the British column, consisting of 650-900 troops left Boston, crossed the Charles River, followed closely by the alarm rider Paul Revere. As the British marched towards Concord, the entire countryside had been alerted to their presence, and rebel militia was deployed to meet them.

Until this time there was no armed resistance to the British that had resulted in loss of British life. Several Months earlier, Gage had attempted to destroy military arms at Salem and met with resistance but no shots were fired, and the British retreated without completing their objective. Lexington Militia Captain John Parker had heard of the events at Salem, and collected his men on Lexington Green to face the British column.

At dawn Smith's advanced parties under the command of Major Pitcairn, arrived at Lexington Green to see a group of armed Militia in formation across the Green. Pitcairn ordered the militia, led by John Parker, to be surrounded and disarmed. In response Parker ordered his men to disperse. Then a shot rang out. No one really knows who fired first, but the British, hearing the shot, fired upon the small group of militia, killing 8, and wounding 10 more. The militia then retreated into the woods to avoid the British fire.

So started the first battle in the American Revolutionary War.

The British column then advanced to Concord, and in spreading out to destroy some cannons believed to be at Provincial Colonel Barrett's farm encountered a group of armed militia at Concord North Bridge. This time when shots rang out the Americans were more prepared, and fired back in "The Shot Heard Round The World.", and so began the American Revolution. The short battle at the bridge was a rout, and the British abandoned the bridge, retreating to Concord center. Knowing that he was in a dangerous situation, Smith decided to return to Boston as soon as possible. In his retreat the real battle began.

Militia and Minutemen from all surrounding towns had marched toward Concord, and when the retreating column ran into this army they were outflanked, outgunned and scared. The Americans did not fight as the British did. Instead of forming an offensive line the provincials used small squad and company tactics to flank the column and inflicted heavy damage. Because the American's never formed a firing line the inexperienced British had little to shoot at. This style of flanking and shooting from behind trees, walls etc. destroyed the British morale, and they broke ranks while retreating towards Lexington.

Had it not been for the relief brigade of Lord Percy the British retreat would have been a disaster. Waiting at Lexington, Percy used his two cannon to disperse the provincials and collected Smith's troops back into regiments. He then led the retreat back to Boston. Under Percy's command the retreating column maintained control, even under heavy fire, and the retreat to Boston was a success. The British suffered badly, nearly 20 percent casualties, but more importantly, this action led to the siege of Boston and the start of the Revolutionary War.

Days later the men of Massachusetts used the engagement as propaganda (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abspropa.html>) to turn the public opinion to their cause. At the time of the battle only one third of the population believed in breaking from Britain.

Overview Of Events Precipitating Battle



Minute Man Monument at Lexington Green

"By The Rude
Bridge That
Arched The
Flood,
Their Flag to
April's Breeze
Unfurled,
Here Once The
Embattled
Farmers Stood,
And Fired The
Shot Heard
Round The
World."

1. [French And Indian War \(http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/absfrench.html\)](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/absfrench.html)
2. [British Pass Coercive Acts \(http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abscoer.html\)](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abscoer.html)
3. [Boston Tea Party \(http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/absbostea.html\)](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/absbostea.html)
4. [Boston Massacre \(http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/absbosmass.html\)](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/absbosmass.html)
5. [British Infantry move on Salem Mass. \(http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abssalem.html\)](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abssalem.html)
6. [Provincial Congress meets in Concord \(http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abspro.html\)](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/abspro.html)

Key Events Prior to Start of Action

Events Leading to Deployment of British Troops:

DATE	AMERICAN ACTIONS	BRITISH ACTIONS
14 APRIL 1775	Mass. Provincial Congress continues to illegally meet in Concord Mass with John Hancock and Sam Adams.	General Gage receives orders to take decisive action against colonials. It was recommended he arrest Mass. Provincial Congress. Gage decides to seize the military supplies at Concord.
15 APRIL 1775	Mass. Provincial Congress adjourns.	Eight Regiments of Grenadiers and Light Infantry are relieved from normal duties to learn "New Drill Formations." Naval vessels were loaded with longboats for troop transport.
16 APRIL 1775	Dr. Joseph Warren sends Paul Revere to Concord to warn Hancock and Adams of unusual British activities. Paul Revere arranges the signal of "One If By Land, Two if By Sea" with Charlestown residents to signal the route British were taking.	Gage keeps his objective secret from commanding officers in an attempt at security.
18 APRIL 1775	At ten that evening observing British maneuvers Dr. Joseph Warren sends for William Dawes and Paul Revere to take the message to Concord.	Smith is put in charge of "Flanking Units" and is given his orders to leave at midnight by sea to destroy military stores at Concord. Percy is put in charge of relief units to be deployed at 0600.

Definition of Subject Matter

1. When the Battle Occurred:
19 April 1775

2. Where the Battle Occurred:

Lexington and Concord, MA. A Running Battle from Concord to Boston.

Map of The Battle (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/batmap.html>)

3. Who was Involved:

(a) Key American Leaders

Major Loami Baldwin (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#baldwin>)

Commander of the Woburn militia at bloody curve.

Colonel James Barrett (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#barrett>) Commander of provincials at the old North Bridge

Major John Buttrick (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#buttrick>) Militia commander led provincial s in Attack on old North Bridge

Captian Isaac Davis (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#davis>) Militia captain comanding leading provincial minutemen on the attack on old North Bridge

General William Heath (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#heath>) First General to take command of American forces against the British. He attempted to lead the Milita and Minutemen into an effective fighting force.

Captain Parker (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#parker>) Led the Militia unit on Lexington Green and later on helped attack the retreating column.

Dr. Joseph Warren (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#warren>) Commanded

militia attack on retreating British column.

(b) Key British Leaders

General Gage (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#gage>) Commander in Chief and Governor of Massachusetts

Captain Laurie (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#Laurie>) Commanded the two companies at the Old North Bridge

Captain Parsons (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#parsons>) Led three companies to Barrett's Farm

Lord Percy (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#percy>) Led a relief column that rescued Smith

Major Pitcairn (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#pitcairn>) Marine Commander led troops into Lexington Green

Lt. Colonel Smith (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#smith>) Led the British forces into the field to destroy the Concord Stores.

Lieutenant Sutherland (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#sutherland>) British Lieutenant at Old North Bridge.

(c) Units Involved

American Militia (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#militia>)

American Minute Men (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#minmen>)

A partial list of American Units (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexcomp.html>) and their Commanders.

British Light Infantry (http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#light_inf)

British Grenadiers (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/glossary.html#grenadier>)

Staff Ride Qualifications

1. Echelons of Command: Americans -Company and under; British -Company
2. Terrain Quality: Fair (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexconfld.html#terrain>)
3. Types of Units Involved: Light Infantry, Grenadiers, Militia and Minutemen
4. Integrity of Historic Setting: Good. The Towns of Concord and Lexington have both been developed, but the National Historical Park of The Battle Road has not been developed since its establishment.
5. Availability of Sources: Very Good (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexconpre.html#hist>)
6. Availability of Logistic Support: Good (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexconpre.html#logi>)

Lexington Concord Staff Ride Pages

- Preliminary Study Phase Package (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexconpre.html>)
- Field Study Phase Package (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexconfld.html>)
- Integration Phase Package (<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/Depts/MilSci/Resources/lexconint.html>)

Maintained by webmaster@wpi.edu
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Department of Military Science - Worcester Polytechnic Institute

100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609-2280 | Phone: +1-508-831-5268 | Fax: +1-508-831-5809 |
armyrotc@wpi.edu (<mailto:armyrotc@wpi.edu>)