

HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE EVIDENCE RELATING TO THE EVENTS OF THE 19TH APRIL, 1775.

FIFTY years after the events of the 19th of April, 1775, occurred, some statements relating to the history of those events became the subject of controversy. The following questions embrace the most material points in discussion.

1. Did the Lexington company disperse as directed by the British officers? and were they *first* fired upon *while dispersing*?

2. Was the *first forcible resistance* to the British armed soldiers made by the provincials at Lexington in the morning; and did they *then* return the fire of the enemy?

Some Individuals are satisfied with a history which describes the whole of the events of that day under the local name of Lexington Battle, whether reference be had to the affair at Lexington in the morning, or to the fight at Concord, or to that in the afternoon, continued during the whole course of the retreat from Concord to Charlestown; and they will consider it of little importance how these questions are answered. But those who regard truth as important in historical matters, even in minute particulars, will look at the subject in a different light. Without any intentions of reviving the controversy, or of stating at length the reasons for the opinions I entertain, or of casting a comparative shade over the honor acquired by the brave "sons of liberty" in either town for the part they acted, I deem it due to historical truth to make the following detail of facts, that the subject may be fairly understood; and that those who entertain or promulgate opinions relating to these historical events, may have the means of doing it accurately.

The origin of this controversy will appear from the following statements. On the 2d of September, 1824, Lafayette passed through Lexington and Concord; and in an address to him in Concord, the Hon. Samuel Hoar said, "You now behold the *spot on which the first forcible resistance* was made" to British oppression. The same idea had often been given before by Morse, Worcester and others, who had in their Gazetteers, described the geography of the town. In the following October the Bunker Hill Monument Association published an address to the public, soliciting subscriptions in aid of its objects, in which it is said, "At Concord the first [British] blood was shed between the British and armed Americans." — "It is also intended to erect a suitable monument at Concord, where the first conflict was had, bearing proper inscriptions to commemorate the glorious spirit of independence which manifested itself there." This produced two illiberal newspaper articles in "The Boston Patriot," and a reply from the Hon. William Sullivan, chairman of the committee. During the approaching winter the citizens of Concord made arrangements to celebrate by public performances the fiftieth anniversary of the 19th of April, 1775. The Hon. Edward Everett was engaged as the orator, and Lexington and the neighboring towns were invited to unite in the ceremony. The Bunker Hill Monument Association appropriated \$500, — which was somewhat less than the amount of the subscriptions to that Association in Concord, — towards the erection of a monument in that town, and sent to the committee of arrangements a plan of the monument, and proposed that the cornerstone should be laid on the day of the celebration.¹

In the mean time the inhabitants of Lexington had taken measures to collect and publish a statement, intended, as we are informed in the preface to the publication, to counteract the influence of the two statements above mentioned; and also the testimony given under oath in 1775; and the narrative of the Rev. Mr. Clark published in 1776. The result of these measures was, "The History of the Battle of Lexington," written by Elias Phinney, Esq., a member of the committee chosen by the town for that purpose. This pamphlet was placed in the hands of the honorable and accomplished orator, and he states in a note to the historical Oration, pronounced at the celebration, that his "aim has been not to pronounce on questions in controversy," - "reference being had to the testimony contained" in Mr. Phinney's pamphlet.

1. This money has been vested on interest by the town for this object. The directors of the Bunker Hill Monument Association have also more recently pledged themselves to pay the additional sum of \$1000; and when received, the whole will be appropriated to building a monument, probably on the very spot where the first British blood was shed, — where the first British life was taken, in the cause of American liberty, and where are the graves of the slain.



These two publications (the Oration and History) appeared in print about the same time; and, so far as relates to the particular facts in question, stand equally on controversial ground. In 1827, "the Rev. Ezra Ripley, D.D., and other citizens of Concord, published a "History of the Fight at Concord," intended to invalidate some of the statements contained in the two pamphlets just mentioned. All three of these publications, though they contain much valuable historical matter, must be considered in regard to the points at issue, controversial.

About the time these publications were made, several highly controversial articles appeared in the newspapers; but they cannot be regarded by candid minds in the serious light of historical truth. A new lithographic edition of Doolittle's Historical Engraving, first published in 1775, also appeared. In the original no one is represented as firing at the British soldiers at Lexington, but several as dispersing and some as slain. As this would be rather an awkward representation of a *battle*, the editors, as is sometimes the practice of historians, thought fit to improve the original to suit their views of what the engagement should have been. From this picture wood cuts have been prepared, which appear in some school-books to perpetuate error.

The original evidence, which was for the first time obtained and printed in the above pamphlets, was taken *ex parte*, and designed, so far as relates to the question at issue, to establish some particular facts in controversy, and cannot therefore be considered strictly impartial. If there was an influence which produced defective evidence in 1775, as has been stated, it is not more reasonable to suppose that some other influence, operating fifty years afterwards, when the facts could not be so distinctly remembered, and the points then in controversy were a subject of frequent conversation, might produce evidence so stated and expressed as to give erroneous impressions? Whatever weight might be attached to either of these publications, no accurate historian will be satisfied with their statements merely, or pronounce on questions in controversy, without a reference to the whole original evidence. In this case, as well as in many others, where historians copy the errors of other writers, it will be found to differ materially from the modern version. And what are the original sources of the evidence? What is its purport? And how was it understood?

Some account of those events was published in the "Essex Gazette" of April 21st and 25th, and May 5th, 1775, which, including an introduction, a list of the killed and wounded, and a "Funeral elegy to the immortal memory of those worthies which were slain in the Battle of Concord, April 19, 1775," soon after appeared in a hand-bill 20 inches long and 15 wide, entitled "Bloody Butchery by the British Troops, or the Runaway Fight of the Regulars"; — "being the Particulars of the Victorious Battle fought at and near Concord." Just above the title were pictured 40 coffins over which were printed the names of the slain.

On the 22d of April a committee of the Provincial Congress, consisting of Col. Elbridge Gerry of Marblehead, Hon. Thomas Cushing of Cohasset, Col. James Barrett of Concord, Capt. Josiah Stone of Dracut, Dr. John Taylor of Lunenburgh, Mr. Samuel Freeman of Falmouth, Abraham Watson, Esq. of Cambridge, and Jonas Dix, Esq. of Waltham, were chosen to take the depositions relating to the conduct of the British on the 19th [of April, 1775]; another was appointed to draw up a narrative, and another to make an additional copy of the depositions. After it was collected, the evidence was transmitted to the Continental Congress, and to England;² *part* of it was published in the "Pennsylvania Ledger," and copied into other American and English newspapers. The whole was published by Isaiah Thomas, by an order of the Provincial Congress passed May 28th, in a pamphlet of 22 pages, 8vo., entitled, "A Narrative of the Incursions and Ravages of the King's Troops under command of General Gage on the Nineteenth of April, 1775, together with the Depositions taken by order of Congress to support the truth of it." The pamphlet was ordered to be sent to every town in the province, though I have seen but one copy, which is owned by William Lincoln, Esq., of Worcester. These depositions were all taken the next week after the battle; and it is a fact worthy of notice,

2. Capt. John Derby of Salem was despatched with these papers to England, where he arrived the 29th of May [1775]. He was the bearer of the "Essex Gazette," containing the first published account of these events, which was printed and circulated in London on the day of his arrival, and gave the first notice of the affair in England. It produced great commotion. General Gage's official account, although despatched four days before Capt. Derby sailed, did not arrive until the 10th of June, eleven days after Capt. Derby's arrival, subjecting the ministry to no small embarrassment and chagrin. The depositions taken out by Capt. Derby were the originals first taken, and contain the real signatures of the deponents. They were intended for the British government, but for some causes not known were never communicated. They have been returned to this country, and are now in the Library of Harvard College. See Washington's Writings, Vol. III. p. 35. The depositions and the letters sent by Capt. Derby may be found in the printed Journals of Congress for 1775.



that those relating to Concord were dated the 23d [of April, 1775], and those relating to Lexington the 25th of April.

“A Narrative of the Concord Fight, with 104 Depositions to support the truth of it,” was written by the Rev. Mr. Gordon of Roxbury, and published in George’s Almanac for 1776, “by particular desire and for the use of the gentlemen officers and soldiers of the American Army.” Lowe’s Almanac for that year contains another account by the same gentleman, describing “what he saw, or collected from unquestionable authority on the spot,” relating to the same events.

The Rev. Jonas Clark published his Narrative, referred to in our General History, in connexion with his Anniversary Sermon in 1776. He informs us that he was an eye-witness, and that it is “a plain and faithful narrative of facts, as they appeared unto us in this place.”

A “circumstantial account,” of this affair was transmitted by Gov. Gage to Gov. Trumbull,³ and an official account was sent to England, which was not published by the ministry till June 10th, and which drew forth some severe but well deserved criticisms in the “Remembrancer” and other English papers. Gordon says it “had little truth in it;” and all who had even an imperfect knowledge of the facts will say the same. This statement of the material facts is contradicted by the original depositions, by Mr. Clark’s Narrative, and by all the recent publications above noticed. It was so drawn up as *especially* to answer a particular purpose, and as a lame apology of Gage to England for murdering innocent citizens. It was probably compiled from letters of Smith and Percy, or from a narrative of the occurrences written by Ensign D. Bernicre, which was left in Boston, when the British evacuated it, and published in 1779, says the title, “for the information and amusement of the curious.”⁴ This remark in some measure shows the estimation in which its statements were then held. It was not believed by most of the English historians of those time, who have been considered accurate and impartial; though some, who appear willing to adopt the errors of others from prejudice or without careful investigation, have believed and sent it forth as truth.

These were all the material printed original sources of evidence.⁵ Most other writers anterior to 1825 have described the events without being eye-witnesses, — without thorough examination, or have been mere copyists from some one of these authorities with comments to suit their own peculiar views.

And what is the purport of this evidence?

In these depositions, Capt. Parker, commander of the Lexington company, testifies under oath, that on the approach of the British troops he “immediately ordered the militia to disperse, and not to fire; immediately said troops made their appearance.” John Robbins, that when commanded by the British troops to disperse, they did disperse before any firing took place. 34 others, that “the company began to disperse, and, when their backs were turned upon the troops, they were fired upon.” Timothy Smith, that “the troops marched up to the company then dispersing” before the firing. Thomas Fessendon, that “as soon as ever the officer cried, ‘Disperse, you rebels,’ the said company dispersed as fast as they could; and, while they were dispersing, the regulars kept firing at them.” Edward T. Gould, a British officer, that “on our approach they dispersed, and, soon after, firing began.” The Rev. Mr. Clark fully confirms these depositions. The British account says, “when the troops came within one hundred yards of them they began to file off towards some stone walls.”

How was this testimony understood? Isaiah Thomas, in the *Massachusetts Spy* of May 3d, 1775, published an account of this affair, “collected from those whose veracity is unquestioned,” in which he says, “it is to be noticed they fired upon our people as they were dispersing agreeably to their command, and *that they did not even return the fire.*” — “Thus did the troops of the British king fire first at two several times [at Lexington and Concord] upon his loyal American subjects, and put a period to ten lives *before a gun was fired upon them.* Our people THEN returned the fire and obliged them to retreat.” The London “Remembrancer” (Vol. I, p. 56) says, “The positive oaths and veracity of witnesses render it unquestionable that the King’s troops began the fire, and that too upon a very small body of provincials *who were dispersing.*” Gordon, in the Narrative to which I have referred, says, “Upon seeing the regulars they dispersed.” — “The Lexington company upon seeing these troops, and being of

3.2 [Massachusetts Historical Collections](#), ii, p. 224.

4.2 [Massachusetts Historical Collections](#), iv, p. 215.

5. The letter of Paul Revere relates to other occurrences of the day not in controversy. 1 [Hist. Coll.](#), Vol. v. p. 106.



themselves so unequal a match for them, were deliberating for a few moments what they should do, when several dispersing of their own heads, the Captain soon ordered the rest to disperse for their own safety.” This was before the firing of the British. “They killed 3 or 4 on the common, the rest on the other side of the walls, and while dispersing.” This is confirmed by the British account. The Rev. Mr. Pemberton says, “They were fired upon *while dispersing*,”⁶ and repeats the same idea in his manuscript history.

It has been said that this evidence was “*ex parte* and made for particular purposes,” — to decided the question “whether the Americans fired first, and not whether they fired at all.” It has also been said, that those “who gave in their evidence would not disclose any “facts which might in all probability expose themselves or their friends to the British halter.” These objections, to be of force, must, as seems to me, apply equally to all the testimony, to that which relates to Concord as well as to Lexington; and even to the Narrative of Mr. Clark. The Concord deponents testified before “Gen. Gage and other apologists of British outrage,” (in the language of Mr. Phinney’s preface,) “had asserted that the people of Lexington commenced the attack on the king’s troops; and they testified two days before the Lexington deponents gave in their testimony to the same committee. If the Lexington company returned the fire, why, it has been asked, should they not have testified to it after the Concord deponents had done it? Why should one fear the halter more than the other? And why should it be more criminal in one to tell the whole truth than in the other? And it is especially difficult to perceive how Mr. Clark should be influenced by such or any other improper motives. His Narrative was drawn up after being a year on the spot, and after daily conversations on the subject. It is not easy to perceive how any motive could have influenced him to make an imperfect statement, or “color it for a particular purpose.” He could not have suppressed the truth, because he feared “the halter”; nor was it necessary at that time to rouse the indignation of the Americans towards the British by erroneous statements, nor to refute their assertions, nor to show that they had committed “the most deliberate murder” at Lexington. Bunker Hill battle had been fought, Washington for some time had had the command of the army; and, among other great events, the enemy had removed from our neighborhood, and evacuated Boston. Why should his Narrative not be believed and received as he says it is, — as “a plain and faithful Narrative of facts as they appeared to us in this place” [Lexington]? And with far more authority than any foreign historian?

None of the original authorities to which I have referred, states that the fire was returned, though it is inferred from what is testified that some guns were fired. But these could not have been fired till after Capt. Parker had “ordered the militia to disperse and not to fire.” — “Very few of our people,” says Mr. Clark, “fired at all; and even they did not fire till, after being fired upon by the troops, they were wounded themselves, or saw others killed, or wounded by them, and looked upon it next to impossible to escape.” But does not the expression *returning the fire*, as usually understood, convey some other meaning than that implied by Mr. Clark? Would two or three guns from behind the walls or from neighboring houses or even on the common, on each one’s own responsibility, after orders had been given by the commanding officers, “to disperse and not to fire,” be considered, in military affairs, or in the ordinary use of language, as returning the fire, and making a regular, forcible resistance? Whether any British blood was shed or not at Lexington in the morning, so far as regards the sources of evidence to which we have adverted, rests entirely on the assertion in the British account, that a single man was wounded in the leg. Whether this be true is problematical, since this account is not now relied on by any one as authority. It is not pretended by anyone, that a single individual of the enemy was killed at Lexington in the morning.

Notwithstanding the distinguished part Concord acted on that occasion, her citizens never took the trouble to have the particulars published to the world. This is partly to be ascribed to the premature death of that devoted patriot, the Rev. William Emerson. He and several others left matter in manuscript which has aided me in this work. Lexington, on the other hand, celebrated the day by military parades and religious services on eight successive anniversaries; and the sermons preached on the occasion were printed. The legislature also granted on the 28th of February, 1797, on the petition of Joseph Simonds, then a representative from Lexington, \$200 to erect a monument in that town. Mr. Thomas Park of Harvard built the monument. After some progress had been made in its erection it was found that a further sum

6. 1 Massachusetts Historical Collections, ii, p. 48.



would be necessary to complete it, and the Selectmen petitioned for more aid. \$200 more were granted on the 13th of January, 1798.⁷ It was proper that such a monument should be placed there; and the inscription it bears is happily designed for its object. This monument, however, and the celebrations above noticed, combined with various other circumstances, have tended to take off the public mind from an examination of the whole history of the events on the 19th of April, 1775, and to mark this spot for other purposes than the monument was intended - the spot where *the first American blood was shed*; where *the first American life was taken*.

The inhabitants of Lexington deserve great credit for the stand they took in the morning, and the part they acted during the day. That her militia were slain with arms in their hands is an important fact, and highly honorable to their patriotism and valor. As to resistance there, it is not contended by anyone that any was made or attempted, which could have impeded the progress of the troops. Mr. Clark speaks of the place, as "the field, not of battle, but of murder and bloodshed." This was undoubtedly true. It would have been rash and inconsiderate for 70 militia men to have placed themselves in the attitude of opposition to 800 chosen troops; and much more so to have engaged in a battle. It would have been folly and not bravery. It was much more honorable to disperse. It was not so at Concord. There the circumstances were different, and the numbers of both opposing parties more nearly equal. All testimony concurs in saying that *there* was cool, deliberate and effectual opposition, by order of the commanding officer. There was the first forcible resistance — there the enemy were *first compelled to retreat; and there the first British life was taken*.

I annex all the depositions taken by authority of the Provincial Congress, and published officially in the pamphlet of which we have given the title on page 336 ["A Narrative of the Incursions and Ravages of the King's Troops under command of General Gage on the Nineteenth of April, 1775, together with the Depositions taken by order of Congress to support the truth of it."]. The signatures of the deponents and the certificates of the Justices of the Peace and Notaries Public, only, are omitted.

"We, SOLOMON BROWN, JONATHAN LORING, and ELIJAH SANDERSON, all of lawful age and of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex, and Colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, do testify and declare, That on the evening of the eighteenth of April [1775] instant, being on the road between Lexington and Concord, and all of us mounted on horses, we were, about ten of the clock, suddenly surprised by nine persons whom we took to be regular officers, who rode up to us, mounted and armed, each holding a pistol in his hand, and after putting pistols to our breasts, and seizing the bridles of our horses, they swore that if we stirred another step we should be all dead men, upon which we surrendered ourselves, they detained us until two o'clock the next morning, in which time they searched and greatly abused us, having first enquired about the magazine at Concord, whether any guards were posted there and whether the bridges were up, and said four or five regiments of regulars would be in possession of the stores soon, they then brought us back to Lexington, cut the horses bridles and girths, turned them loose, and then left us.

"Lexington, April 25th, 1775.

page 342

"I, ELIJAH SANDERSON above-named, do further testify and declare that I was in Lexington Common the morning of the nineteenth of April [1775] aforesaid, having been dismissed by the officers above-mentioned, and saw a large body of regular troops advancing towards Lexington Company, many of whom were then dispersing, I heard one of the regulars, whom I took to be an officer, say, 'Damn them we will have them,' and immediately the regulars shouted aloud, run, and fired on the Lexington Company, which did not fire a gun before the regulars discharged on them, eight of the Lexington Company were killed, while they were dispersing and at considerable distance from each other, and many wounded, and, although a spectator, I narrowly escaped with my life.

7. Resolves of the General Court.



“Lexington, April 25th, 1775.”

“I, THOMAS RICE WILLARD, of lawful age, do testify and declare, that being in the house of Daniel Harrington, of Lexington, on the nineteenth instant, in the morning, about half an hour before sun-rise, looked out the window of said house and saw (as I suppose) about four hundred of the regulars in one body coming up the road and marched toward the north part of the Common back of the meeting-house, of said Lexington, and as soon as said regulars were against the East-End of the meeting-house, the commanding officer said something, what I know not, but upon that the regulars ran till they came within about eight or nine rods of about an hundred of the militia of Lexington who were collected on said common, at which time the militia of Lexington dispersed, then the officers made an huzza, and the private soldiers succeeded them, directly after this, an officer rode before the regulars, to the other side of the body, and hollowed after the Militia of said Lexington and said, ‘Lay down your arms, damn you, why don’t you lay down your arms,’ and that there was not a gun fired till the militia of Lexington were dispersed, and further saith not.

“April 23d, 1775.”

“Lexington, 25th of April, 1775.

“SIMON WINSHIP of Lexington, in the county of Middlesex, and province of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, being of lawful age testifieth and saith, that on the nineteenth of April instant, about four o’clock in the morning, as he was passing the public road in said Lexington, peaceably and unarmed, about two miles and an half distant from the meeting-house in said Lexington, he was met by a body of the King’s regular troops, and being stopped by some officers of said troops was commanded to dismount, upon asking why he must dismount, he was obliged by force to quit his horse, and ordered to march in the midst of the body, and being examined whether he had been warning the minute-men he answered no, but had been out and was then returning to his father’s. Said Winship further testifies, that he marched with said troops until he became about half a quarter of a mile of said meeting-house, where an officer commanded the troops to halt, and then to prime and load; this being done, the said troops marched on till they came within a few rods of Capt. Parker, and company, who were partly collected on the place of parade, when said Winship observed an officer at the head of said troops, flourishing his sword and with a loud voice giving the word ‘Fire,’ which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from said regular troops, and said Winship is positive, and in the most solemn manner declares, that there was no discharge of arms on either side, till the word fire was given by said officer as above.”

“Lexington, April 25th, 1775.

“I, JOHN PARKER, of lawful age, and commander of the militia in Lexington, do testify and declare, that, on the 19th instant, in the morning about one of the clock, being informed that there were a number of the regular officers riding up and down the road, stopping and insulting people as they passed the road, and also was informed that a number of the regular troops were on their march from Boston, in order to take the province stores at Concord, ordered our militia to meet on the common in said Lexington, to consult what to do, and concluded not to be discovered nor meddle or make with said regular troops (if they should approach) unless they should insult or molest us, and upon their sudden approach, I immediately ordered our militia to disperse and not to fire. Immediately said troops made their appearance and rushing furiously, fired upon and killed eight of our party, without receiving any provocation therefor from us.”

“Lexington, April 24th, 1775.

“I, JOHN ROBBINS, being of lawful age, do testify and say, that on the 19th instant, the company under the command of Captain John Parker, being drawn up sometime before sunrise, on the green or common, and I being in the front rank,



there suddenly appeared a number of the King's troops, about a thousand, as I thought, at the distance of about sixty or seventy yards from us, hussaing, and on quick pace towards us, with three officers in their front on horseback, and on full gallop towards us, the foremost of which cried, 'Throw down your arms, ye villains, ye rebels,' upon which said company dispersing, the foremost of the three officers ordered their men, saying, 'Fire, by God, fire,' at which moment, we received a very heavy and close fire from them, at which instant, being wounded, I fell, and several of our men were shot dead by me. Capt. Parker's men, I believe, had not fired a gun, and further the deponent saith not."

"We, BENJAMIN TIDD, of Lexington, and JOSEPH ABBOT, of Lincoln, in the county of Middlesex, and colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, of lawful age, do testify and declare, that on the morning of the nineteenth of April instant, about five o'clock, being on Lexington common and mounted on horses, we saw a body of Regular Troops marching up to the Lexington company which was then dispersing; soon after, the regulars fired, first a few guns, which we took to be pistols, from some of the regulars who were mounted on horses, and then the said regulars fired a volley or two before any guns were fired by the Lexington company. Our horses immediately started and we rode off and further say not.

"Lexington, April 25th, 1775."

"We, NATHANIEL MULLIKEN, PHILIP RUSSELL, MOSES HARRINGTON, JUN., THOMAS HARRINGTON, DANIEL HARRINGTON, WILLIAM GRISMER, WILLIAM TIDD, ISAAC HASTINGS, JONAS STONE, Jun., JAMES WYMAN, THADDEUS HARRINGTON, JOHN CHANDLER, JOSHUA REED, Jun., JOSEPH SIMONDS, PHINEAS SMITH, JOHN CHANDLER, Jun., REUBEN LOCK, JOEL VILES, NATHAN REED, SAMUEL TIDD, BENJAMIN LOCK, THOMAS WINSHIP, SIMEON SNOW, JOHN SMITH, MOSES HARRINGTON, 3d., JOSHUA REED, EBENEZER PARKER, JOHN HARRINGTON, ENOCH WILLINGTON, JOHN HOSMER, ISAAC GREEN, PHINEAS STEARNS, ISAAC DURANT, and THOMAS HEADLY, Jun., all of lawful age, and inhabitants of Lexington, in the county of Middlesex, and Colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, do testify and declare, that on the 19th of April instant, about one or two o'clock in the morning, being informed that several officers of the regulars had, the evening before, been riding up and down the road, and had detained and insulted the inhabitants passing the same, and also understanding that a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord, with intent (as it was supposed) to take the stores belonging to the colony in that town, we were alarmed and having met at the place of our company's parade, were dismissed by our Captain, John Parker, for the present, with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of a drum, we further testify and declare, that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade, and soon found that a large body of troops were marching towards us, some of our company were coming up to the parade and others had reached it, at which time the company began to disperse, whilst our backs were turned on the troops, we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded, not a gun was fired by any person in our company on the regulars, to our knowledge, before they fired on us, and they continued firing until we had all made our escape.

"Lexington, April 25th, 1775."

"We, NATHANIEL PARKHURST, JONAS PARKER, JOHN MUNROE, Jun., JOHN WINSHIP, SOLOMON PIERCE, JOHN MUZZY, ABNER MEADS, JOHN BRIDGE, Jun., EBENEZER BOWMAN, WILLIAM MUNROE, 3d, MICAH HAGAR, SAMUEL SANDERSON, SAMUEL HASTINGS, and JAMES BROWN, of Lexington in the county of Middlesex and colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, and all of lawful age, do testify and say, that on the morning of the nineteenth of April, instant, about one or two o'clock, being informed that a number of regular officers had been riding up and down the road the evening and night preceding, and that



some of the inhabitants as they were passing had been insulted by the officers and stopped by them, and being also informed that the regular troops were on the march from Boston, in order (as it was said) to take the colony stores then deposited in Concord, we met on the parade [grounds] of our company in this town; after the company had collected, we were ordered by Capt. John Parker (who commanded us) to disperse for the present, and to be ready to attend the beat of the drum, and accordingly the company went into houses near the place of parade. We further testify and say, that about five o'clock in the morning, we attended the beat of our drum, and were formed on the parade; we were faced toward the regulars then marching up to us, and some of our company were coming to the parade with their backs towards the troops, and others on the parade began to disperse, when the regulars fired on the company, before a gun was fired by any of our company on them; they killed eight of our company and wounded several, and continued their fire until we had all made our escape."

"Lexington, 25th April, 1775."

"I, TIMOTHY SMITH of Lexington, in the county of Middlesex and colony of Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, being of lawful age, do testify and declare, that on the morning of the nineteenth of April instant, being at Lexington common, as a spectator, I saw a large body of regular troops, marching up towards the Lexington company, then dispersing, and likewise saw the regular troops fire on the Lexington company, before the latter fired a gun. I immediately ran, and a volley was discharged at me, which put me in imminent danger of losing my life: I soon returned to the Common, and saw eight of the Lexington men who were killed, and lay bleeding at a considerable distance from each other, and several were wounded; and further saith not.

"Lexington, April 25th, 1775."

"We, LEVI MEAD and LEVI HARRINGTON, both of Lexington, in the county of Middlesex, and colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, and of lawful age, do testify and declare, that on the morning of the nineteenth of April, being on Lexington Common, as spectators, we saw a large body of regular troops marching up towards the Lexington company, and some of the regulars on horses, whom we took to be officers, fired a pistol or two on the Lexington company, which was then dispersing. These were the first guns that were fired, and they were immediately followed by several volleys from the regulars, by which eight men belonging to said company were killed, and several wounded.

"Lexington, April 25th, 1775."

"Lexington, April 25th, 1775."

"I, WILLIAM DRAPER, of lawful age, and an inhabitant of Colrain, in the county of Hampshire, and colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England, do testify and declare, that being on the parade of said Lexington, April 19th, instant, about half an hour before sunrise, the King's regular troops appeared at the meeting-house of Lexington; Captain [John] Parker's company, who were drawn up back of said meetinghouse on the parade [grounds], turned from said troops, making their escape by dispersing, in the mean time the regular troops made an huzza, and ran towards Captain Parker's company who were dispersing, and, immediately after the huzza was made, the commanding officer of said troops (as I took him), gave the command to the troops, 'Fire, fire, damn you, fire,' and immediately they fired, before any of Captain Parker's company fired, I then being within three or four rods of said regular troops, and further saith not.

"Lexington, April 23d, 1775."

"I, THOMAS FESSENDEN, of lawful age, testify and declare, that being in a pasture near the meeting-house, at said Lexington, on Wednesday last, at about half an hour before sunrise, I saw a number of regular troops pass speedily by said meeting-house, on their way towards a company of militia of said Lexington, who were assembled to the number of about an hundred in a company, at the distance



of eighteen or twenty rods from the meeting-house, and, after they had passed by said meeting-house, I saw three officers on horseback advance to the front of said regulars, when one of them, being within six rods of said militia, cried out, 'Disperse you rebels, immediately,' on which he brandished his sword over his head three times; meanwhile the second officer, who was about two rods behind him, fired a pistol, pointed at said militia, and the regulars kept huzzaing till he had finished brandishing his sword, and when he had thus finished, he pointed it down towards the militia and immediately on which, the said regulars fired a volley at said militia, and then I ran off as fast as I could, while they continued firing till I got out of their reach. I further testify that as soon as ever the officer cried, 'Disperse, you rebels,' the said company of militia dispersed every way as fast as they could, and while they were dispersing, the regulars kept firing at them incessantly, and further saith not."

"Lincoln, April 23d, 1775.

"I, JOHN BATEMAN, belonging to the fifty-second regiment, commanded by Colonel Jones, on Wednesday morning, on the nineteenth of April instant, was in the party marching to Concord, being at Lexington in the county of Middlesex, being nigh the meeting-house in said Lexington, there was a small party of men gathered together in that place, when our said troops marched by, and I testify and declare, that I heard the word of command given to the troops to fire, and some of said troops did fire, and I saw one of said small party lie dead on the ground nigh said meeting-house, and I testify, that I never heard any of the inhabitants so much as fire one gun on said troops."

"Lexington, April 23d, 1775.

"We, JOHN HOAR, JOHN WHITEHEAD, ABRAHAM GARFIELD, BENJAMIN MUNROE, ISAAC PARKS, WILLIAM HOSMER, JOHN ADAMS, and GREGORY STONE, all of Lincoln, in the county of Middlesex, Massachusetts-Bay, all of legal age, do testify and say, that on Wednesday last, we were assembled at Concord, in the morning of said day, in consequence of information received, that a brigade of regular troops were on their march to the said town of Concord, who had killed six men at the town of Lexington; about an hour afterwards we saw them approaching, to the number, as we apprehended, of about twelve hundred, on which we retreated to a hill about eighty rods back, and the said troops then took possession of the hill where we were first posted; presently after this, we saw the troops moving towards the North Bridge about one mile from the said Concord Meeting-house, we then immediately went before them and passed the bridge, just before a party of them, to the number of about two hundred arrived: They there left about one half of their two hundred at the bridge and proceeded with the rest towards Colonel Barret's, about two miles from the said bridge; we then, seeing several fires in the town, thought the houses in Concord were in danger, and marched towards the said bridge, and the troops who were stationed there, observing our approach, marched back over the bridge, and then took up some of the plank; we then hastened our march towards the bridge, and when we had got near the bridge, they fired on our men, first, three guns one after the other, and then a considerable number more, and then, and not before, (having orders from our commanding officers not to fire till we were fired upon), we fired upon the regulars, and they retreated; on their retreat through this town and Lexington, to Charlestown, they ravaged and destroyed private property and burned three houses, one barn, and one shop."

"Lexington, April 23d, 1775.

"We, NATHAN BARRET, Captain; JONATHAN FARRER, JOSEPH BUTLER, and FRANCIS WHEELER, Lieutenants; JOHN BARRET, Ensign; JOHN BROWN, SILAS WALKER, EPHRAIM MELVIN, NATHAN BUTTERICK, STEPHEN HOSMER, Jun., SAMUEL BARRETT, THOMAS JONES, JOSEPH CHANDLER, PETER WHEELER, NATHAN PIERCE, and EDWARD RICHARDSON, all of Concord, in the county of



Middlesex, in the province of the Massachusetts-Bay, of lawful age, testify and declare, that on Wednesday, the 19th instant, about an hour after sunrise, we assembled on a hill near the meeting-house in Concord, aforesaid, in consequence of an information that a number of regular troops had killed six of our countrymen at Lexington and were on their march to said Concord, and about an hour after we saw them approaching, to the number, as we imagine, of about twelve hundred, on which we retreated to a hill about eighty rods back, and the aforesaid troops then took possession of the hill where we were first posted. Presently after this, we saw them moving towards the North Bridge, about one mile from said meeting-house; we then immediately went before them, and passed the bridge just before a party of them, to the number of about two hundred, arrived; they there left about one half of those two hundred at the bridge, and proceeded with the rest towards Colonel Barrett's, about two miles from the said bridge; we then, seeing several fires in the town, thought our houses were in danger, and immediately marched back towards said bridge and the troops who were stationed there, observing our approach, marched back over the bridge, and then took up some of the planks; we then hastened our steps towards the bridge, and when we had got near the bridge, they fired on our men, first, three guns, one after the other, and then a considerable number more, upon which, and not before, (having orders from our commanding officers not to fire until we were fired upon,) we fired upon the regulars, and they retreated. At Concord, and on their retreat through Lexington, they plundered many houses, burnt three at Lexington, together with a shop and a barn, and committed damage, more or less, to almost every house from Concord to Charlestown."

"Lexington, April 23d, 1775.

"We, JOSEPH BUTLER and EPHRAIM MELVIN, do testify and declare, that when the regular troops fired upon our people at the North Bridge, in Concord, as related in the foregoing depositions, they shot one, and, we believe, two of our people, before we fired a single gun at them."

"Concord, April 23d, 1775.

"I, TIMOTHY MINOT, Jun., of Concord, on the nineteenth day of this instant April, after that I had heard of the regular troops firing upon the Lexington men, and fearing that hostilities might be committed at Concord, thought it my incumbent duty to secure my family: After I had secured my family, some time after that, returning towards my own dwelling, and finding that the bridge on the northern part of said Concord, was guarded by regular troops, being a spectator of what happened at said bridge, declare that the regular troops stationed on the bridge, after they saw the men that were collected on the westerly side of said bridge, marched towards said bridge, then the troops returned towards the easterly side of said bridge, and formed themselves, as I thought, for a regular fight, after that, they fired one gun, then two or three more, before the men that were stationed on the westerly part of said bridge fired upon them."

"Lexington, April 23d, 1775.

"I, JAMES BARRETT, of Concord, Colonel of a regiment of militia in the county of Middlesex, do testify and say, that on Wednesday morning last, about day-break, I was informed of the approach of a number of the regular troops to the town of Concord, where were some magazines belonging to this province, when there were assembled some of the militia of this and the neighboring towns, when I ordered them to march to the North Bridge, so called, which they had passed and were taking up; I ordered said militia to march to said bridge and pass the same, but not to fire on the King's troops unless they were first fired upon; we advanced near said bridge, when the said troops fired upon our militia, and killed two men dead on the spot, and wounded several others, which was the first firing of guns in the town of Concord; my detachment then returned the fire, which killed and



wounded several of the King's troops."

"Lexington, April 23d, 1775.

"We, BRADBURY ROBINSON, SAMUEL SPRING, THADDEUS BANCROFT, all of Concord, and JAMES ADAMS, of Lincoln, all in the County of Middlesex, all of lawful age, do testify and say, that on Wednesday morning last, near ten of the clock, we saw near one hundred of regular troops, being in the town of Concord, at the North Bridge in said town (so called), and, having passed the same, they were taking up said bridge, when about three hundred of our militia were advancing toward said bridge, in order to pass said bridge, when, without saying anything to us, they discharged a number of guns on us, which killed two men dead on the spot, and wounded several other, when we returned the fire on them, which killed two of them, and wounded several, which was the beginning of hostilities in the town of Concord."

"Concord, April 23d, 1775.

"I, JAMES MARR, of lawful age, testify and say, that in the evening of the 18th instant, I received orders from George Hutchinson, Adjutant of the 4th Regiment of the regular troops stations in Boston, to prepare and march, to which order I attended, and marching to Concord, where I was ordered by an officer, with about one hundred men, to guard a certain bridge there; while attending that service, a number of people came along, in order as I supposed, to cross said bridge, at which time a number of regular troops first fired upon them."

"I, EDWARD THORNTON GOULD, of his Majesty's own regiment of foot, being of lawful age, do testify and declare, that on the evening of the 18th instant, under the order of General Gage, I embarked with the light infantry and grenadiers of the line, commanded by Colonel Smith, and landed on the marshes of Cambridge, from whence we proceeded to Lexington; on our arrival at that place, we saw a body of provincial troops armed, to the number of about sixty or seventy men; on our approach they dispersed, and soon after firing began, but which party fired first I cannot exactly say, as our troops rushed on, shouting, hazzaing, previous to the firing, which was continued by our troops so long as any of the provincials were to be seen. From thence we marched to Concord; on a hill near the entrance of the town, we saw another body of provincials assembled, the light infantry companies were ordered up the hill to disperse them; on our approach they retreated towards Concord, the grenadiers continued the road under the hill towards the town, six companies of light infantry were ordered down to take possession of the bridge which the provincials retreated over; the company I commanded was one of the three companies of the above detachment, went forward about two miles; in the mean time the provincial troops returned, to the number of about three or four hundred; we drew upon the Concord side of the bridge, the provincials came down upon us, upon which we engaged, and gave the first fire: this was the first engagement after the one at Lexington; a continued firing from both parties lasted through the whole day: I myself was wounded at the attack of the bridge, and am now treated with the greatest humanity, and taken all possible care of, by the provincials at Medford.

"Medford, April 20th, 1775."

"A paper having been printed in Boston, representing that one of the British troops at the bridge at Concord, was scalped and the ears cut off from the head, supposed to be done in order to dishonor the Massachusetts people, and to make them appear to be savage and barbarous, the following deposition was taken, that the truth may be known.

"WE, the subscribers, of lawful age, testify and say, that we buried the dead bodies of the King's troops that were killed at the North Bridge in Concord, on the nineteenth day of April, 1775, where the action first began, and that neither of those persons were scalped, nor their ears cut off, as has been represented.



DR. LEMUEL SHATTUCK'S

1835 HISTORY OF CONCORD

“ZECHARIAH BROWN,
“THOMAS DAVIS, Jun.
“*Concord, May 11th, 1775.*”

“*Cambridge, May 19th, 1775.*

“HANNAH ADAMS, wife of Deacon Joseph Adams, of the second precinct in Cambridge, testifieth and saith, that on the nineteenth day of April last past, upon the return of the King's troops from Concord, divers of them entered our house, by bursting open the doors, and three of the soldiers broke into the room in which I then was, laid on my bed, being scarcely able to walk from my bed to the fire, not having been to my chamber door from my being delivered in child-birth to that time. One of said soldiers immediately opened my curtains with his bayonet fixed, pointing the same to my breast. I immediately cried out 'For the Lord's sake do not kill me;' he replied, 'Damn you;' one that stood near said, 'We will not hurt the woman, if she will go out of the house, but we will surely burn it.' I immediately arose, threw a blanket over me, went out, and crawled into a corn-house near the door, with my infant in my arms, where I remained until they were gone; they immediately set the house on fire, in which I had left five children and no other person, but the fire was happily extinguished, when the home was in the utmost danger of being utterly consumed.

“*Cambridge, Second Precinct, 17th May, 1775.*”

“We, BENJAMIN COOPER and RACHEL COOPER, both of Cambridge aforesaid, of lawful age, testify and say, that in the afternoon of the 19th day of April, last, the King's regular troops, under the command of General Gage, upon their return from blood and slaughter, which they had made at Lexington and Concord, fired more than an hundred bullets into the house where we dwell, through doors, windows, &c.; then a number of them entered the house where we and two aged gentlemen were, all unarmed; we escaped for our lives into the cellar, the two aged gentlemen were immediately most barbarously and inhumanly murdered by them, being stabbed through in many places, their heads mauled, skulls broke, and their brains out on the floor, and the walls of the house” and further saith not.”*

TO CONTINUE READING:

APPENDIX. — No. II. Notices of Military Services performed by the People of Concord in the Revolution.

[Back to the Special Collections homepage](#)

<http://concordlibrary.org/scollect/scoll.html>

[Home](#)

<http://concordlibrary.org/index.html>

* In March, 1834, while these sheets were passing through the press, the Rev. Dr. Ripley, with his characteristic patriotism and liberality, presented to the town of Concord, a lot of land of convenient size with a passage-way to it, where the Battle at the North Bridge took place, and where the first British soldier was killed and buried, on condition that the town erect a suitable monument there to commemorate those events, within three years from the 4th of July next. The town accepted this generous donation, and chose Daniel Shattuck, Ephraim Merriam and Joseph Davis, a committee to accomplish the wishes of the donor.