

The American Revolution Lexington and Concord 1775

Lexington and Concord 1775
MOSSAR 250th Anniversary Series

By Dr. Brad Frazier

“The die is cast, the colonies must either submit or triumph” – King George III



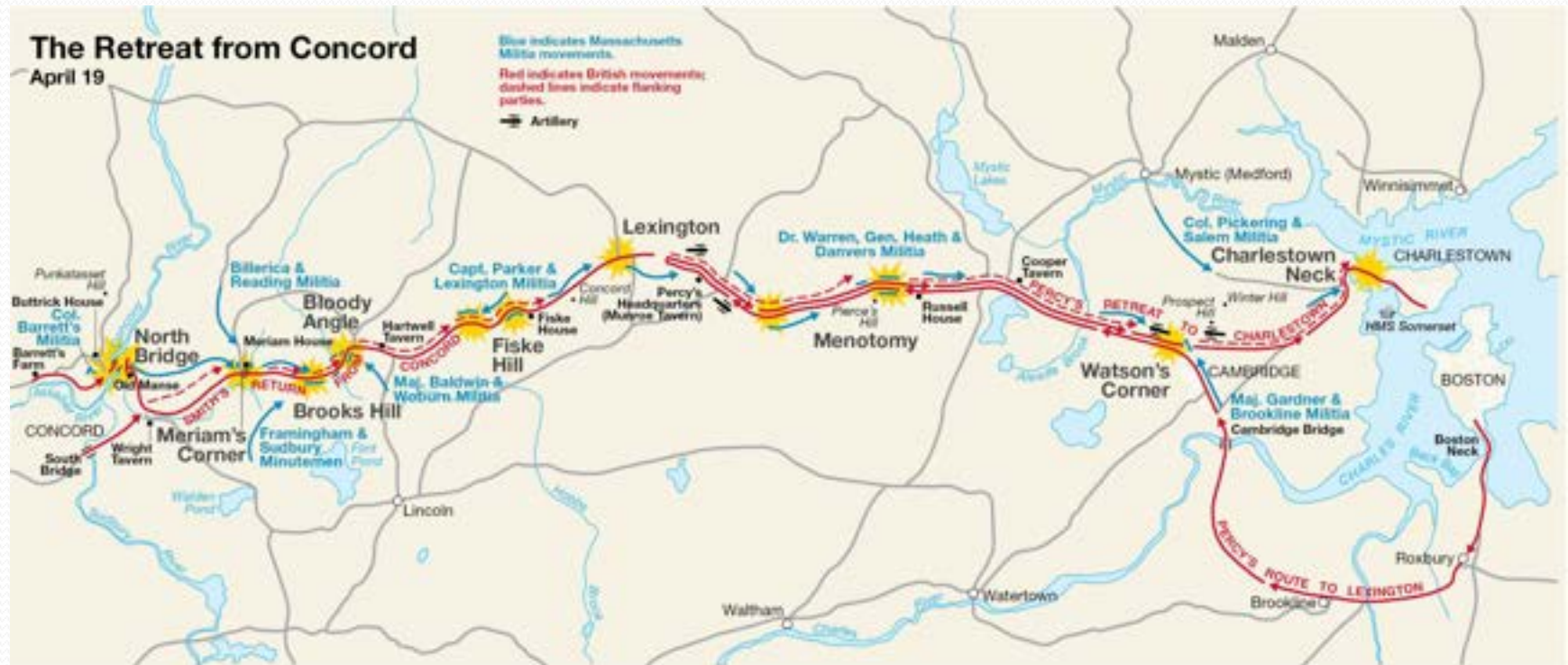
Lexington and Concord – April 1775

- General Gage was originally instructed by the Secretary for the American Colonies – Lord Dartmouth to “use every method to quiet the minds of the people by mild and gentle persuasion to induce submission”.
- General Gage attempted to bribe Sam Adams with a generous Royal pension but Adams refused.
- Gage messages the King, “Things are worse here than even at the time of the Stamp Act.” Keep in mind that it takes at least a month to get a message across the Atlantic. And often three months to get a response to a request.
- British spies in civilian dress are being sent to the local communities to map out the countryside and determine which points to attack if needed.
- Plans to seize arms at Portsmouth, NH, Salem, MA and Concord MA.

Lexington and Concord

- News arrives from London to “take strong action”.
- Spies in Boston keep the patriots informed of all British troop movement plans, No surprise is possible.
- Night of April 18th, 1775 Gage orders a column of 700 troops under Lt. Colonel Francis Smith and Marine Major John Pitcairn to Concord to seize arms and capture 52 year old Sam Adams and 28 year old John Hancock believed to be there. Colonel Smith is grossly overweight and considered slow moving by his peers.
- William Dawes and Paul Revere ride off to warn the countryside as well as Adams and Hancock.
- Revere is captured by a British patrol but released in the confusion as the patrol starts to hear the alarm guns firing in the Lexington area.
- The local militia posts eight men at the Clark house to protect Adams and Hancock.

Concord and Lexington Route



Lexington and Concord

- Revere arrives at Lexington and warns Adams and Hancock to leave.
- Uncomfortable with Colonel Smith's ability to handle the situation, General Gage sends a relief column under Lord Hugh Percy, his highly effective 5th Regimental commander. This move would turn out to be the only truly effective British decision of the day.
- Around 1 AM on April 19th, Militia Captain John Parker and 70 men had gathered at Buckman's Tavern at Lexington to oppose the British advance into the countryside. They had been told that the British were going to burn the town.
- Major Pitcairn, leading the advance British patrol arrives at Lexington common to line up facing the Patriot militia.
- Both commanders had ordered their troops not to fire first.

Lexington and Concord

- Pitcairn orders the militia under Parker to - “disperse or you are all dead men”
- Someone off to the side on the militia side lets off a shot either by intent or accident. After the war the survivors indicate that it came from the Tavern.
- The British respond with a volley without orders to fire.
- Eight militia are killed and ten wounded including Parker’s cousin Jonas. Parker himself dies of tuberculosis and is buried with his men at the Old Burying Ground in Lexington. No militia man even gets off a shot.
- Pitcairn temporarily loses control of his troops who run around tearing up the town and by the time he gets them back in order, Colonel Smith arrives and berates him for bringing on a fight.
- The whole column reforms and heads on to Concord.

Lexington Common and the Revolution Begins



Lexington Common



Concord – April 19, 1775

- Militia from twenty miles in all directions are now converging on the Concord and Lexington area.
- Many on the way are also in the Crown's militia but not today. Imagine if the Missouri National Guard in Rolla fired on US Army troops from Ft. Wood. That was the situation that day in 1775.
- Corporal Amos Barrett of the Concord militia said, “the beel rong at 3 o'clock for the alarum. We marched towards the British, we had grand musick.”
- Many were headed to the North Bridge outside of Concord that crossed the Concord River. Bridges were not common at this time.
- Lt. Barker of the British Light Infantry said, “we approached within 2 miles of the town and thought the Yankees would occupy a ridge but they withdrew through the town.”

Concord

- British troops search Concord for arms and ammunition but find little as it had already been moved. Colonel Smith orders seven companies of Light infantry to the North Bridge outside of town.
- The Patriot militia pull back to a rise just on the far side of the bridge



Concord

- The militia ranks are steadily growing and this alarms British Captain Laurie and his small advance detachment of thirty at the bridge.
- The militia force soon grows to over 400 and Captain Laurie sends back the two miles to Concord for help.
- Around 9:30 AM Major John Buttrick leading a large group of Patriot militia eyes the British on the other side of the Bridge.
- British troops begin dismantling the bridge, seeing this Buttrick advanced and the British fired. Buttrick's militia immediately returned fire and corporal Barrett said, "the balls whistled well."
- Three Regulars were killed, four officers and four privates were wounded.
- **British troops had now been killed in open rebellion.**
- The militia now began a steady fire on the British patrol which retreated towards Concord.

Concord

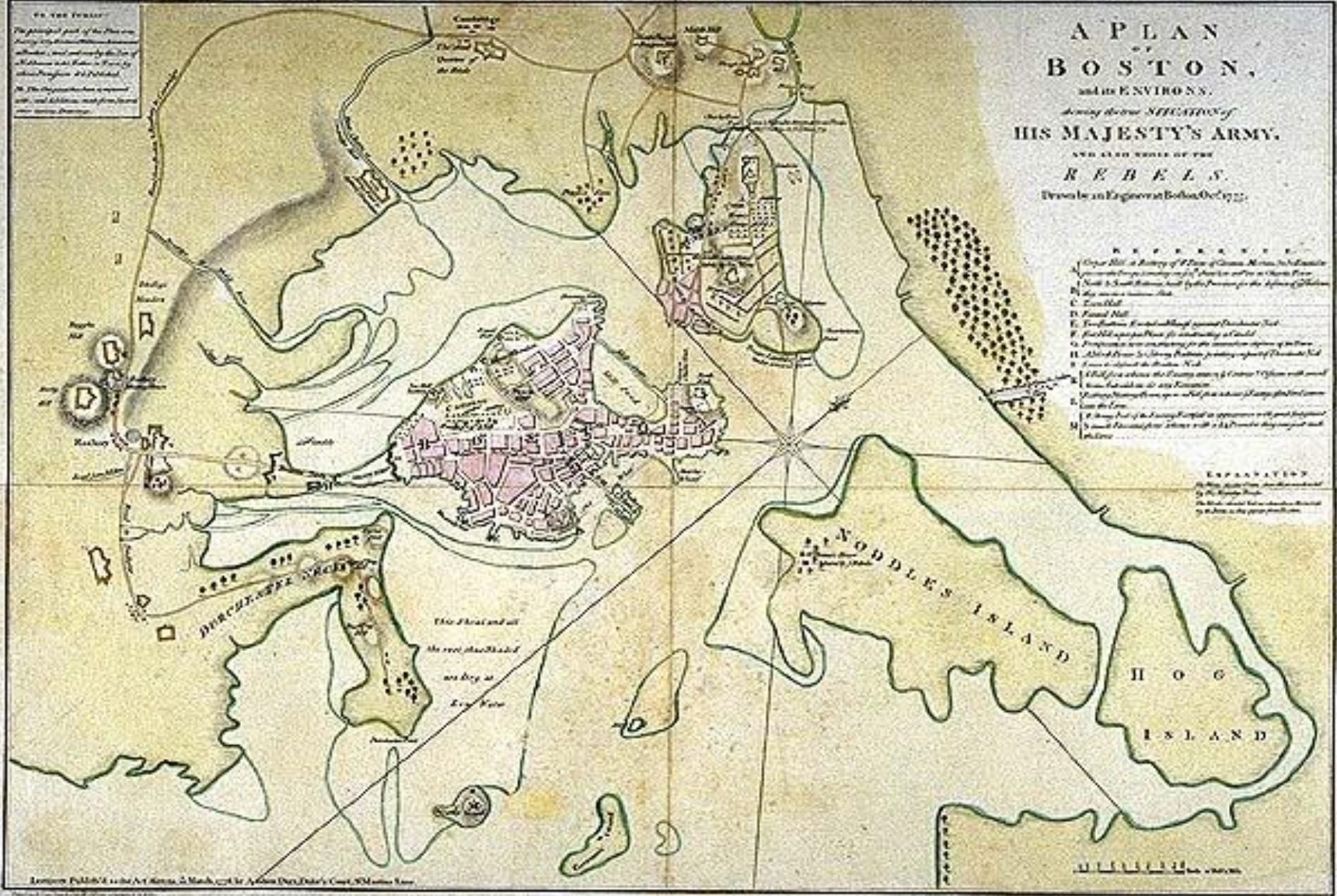
- The fleeing patrol runs into the reinforcements and Colonel Smith who had taken far too long to get moving according to Lt Barker.
- Smith immediately heads back to Concord and then inexplicably delays leaving while militia from the surrounding countryside pours towards him. As American Parson Emerson put it, the Colonel showed a “great feekelness and inconstincy of mind.”
- The British then finally left Concord in good order for about a mile and then their nightmare began.
- “We were fired on from all sides,” said Lt. Barker
- Colonel Smith had already received a leg wound as his force was steadily reduced on their retreat to link up with Lord Percy’s relief column.

Concord Retreat

- Lt Mackenzie of the Welsh Fusiliers attached to Percy's column said it was around 2PM when they heard firing ahead at Lexington.
- The two groups joined up and then began the retreat back to Boston. "Even the weamin had firelocks" according to Mackenzie.
- The British combined column moved into Lexington where they were attacked by a force of at least 1800 militia in a running street fight. Most of the British casualties of the day occurred in and around Lexington.
- Near sunset at 6:30 PM, Percy and Smith's mauled force reached Charleston Neck outside of Boston and their men collapsed on Bunker Hill.
- The American militia General William Heath wisely did not pursue with his disorganized force.

TO THE READER
 The principal part of this Plan was
 drawn by the late Major-General
 Mifflin, and was published by
 the late Major-General Mifflin.
 It has since been revised
 and additional parts have
 been added.

A PLAN
OF
BOSTON,
 and its ENVIRONS,
 showing the *SITUATION* of
HIS MAJESTY'S ARMY,
 AND THE *MOVES* OF THE
REBELS.
 Drawn by an Engineer at Boston Oct. 1775.



- EXPLANATION**
- A. Citadel or Battery of 20 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - B. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - C. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - D. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - E. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - F. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - G. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - H. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - I. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - J. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - K. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - L. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.
 - M. Fort Mifflin, a Battery of 10 Guns, situated on the Point.

EXPLANATION
 The Plan shows the Situation of
 the City, and the Position of
 the Army, and the Moves of
 the Rebels.

Aftermath

- The militia forces encamped around Boston showed no signs of leaving and the British forces were bottled up for the time being.
- 1800 British troops had left that morning for Lexington and Concord. The end of the day saw them with 73 dead and 200 wounded or missing. The Americans had lost 49 dead and 46 wounded or missing.

Lord Hugh Percy

Lord Percy summed up the action in his letter the following day to the British Army Adjutant General.

“Whoever looks upon them as an irregular mob will find himself much mistaken. They have men amongst them who know very much what they are about, having been employed as Rangers against the Indians and Canadians. For my part, I never believed, I confess that they would have attacked the King’s troops or have had the perseverance I found in them yesterday.”



Aftermath

- When the news arrived in London it became clear that a full blown colonial rebellion had begun and that a large military force would be needed to put it down.
- The British government immediately began making plans to do just that.