

FREEDOM

STORIES

*Battles of Lexington and Concord**April 19, 1775*

A Savage and Murderous Affair

Historic Spotlight

On April 19, 1775, ordinary men in Lexington and Concord took a stand that would ignite a revolution and reshape liberty forever. Farmers and shopkeepers stood, with resolve on the Lexington Green. In the days leading up to the skirmish, British General Thomas Gage had received orders to quietly march troops from Boston to Concord, Massachusetts, where colonial militia were storing gunpowder, weapons, and supplies. They intended to disarm the Colonists and arrest key patriot leaders, including Samuel Adams and John Hancock, along the way.

The colonists were prepared, thanks in part to a network of riders including Paul Revere, so when British troops reached Lexington at dawn to confiscate weapons and supplies, they encountered that small group of militia gathered on the Lexington Green under Captain John Parker. Captain Parker, in the advanced stages of tuberculosis himself, gathered 77 militiamen to face 700 British troops. He spoke words that have embedded themselves into our cultural landscape:

“Stand your ground; don’t fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here!”

So they stood, the colonists’ conviction, against the empire’s discipline. A shot rang out, and British troops fired a volley, killing 8 of the 77 militiamen and wounding 11 others. What had become tension became savage bloodshed. The British troops, now full

of rage and little restraint, left a bloody path through Lexington and on the road to Concord, burning houses and turning innocent children and women into the cold. On their return march to Boston, Parker rallied what was left of the small militia, hid in the trees alongside the road, and made sure the British understood the determined resistance of the colonists. It remains one of America’s most epic battles.



But the story did not end at Lexington, it gathered force, as the alarm spread outward like fire through dry fields. Riders carried word across the countryside, among them Paul Revere.

By the time the British reached Concord they found a gathering resistance, and at the North Bridge the farmers became soldiers and the scattered became ordered; when the militia turned and fired in disciplined reply they did so not as rebels in chaos but as citizens in defense of inherited rights. In that moment the cause of liberty crossed a threshold from protest to open resistance.

Ralph Waldo Emerson would later give language to this moment in his Concord Hymn,

“Here once the embattled farmers stood, and fired the shot heard round the world.”

Though written years after, it captures the truth that something universal was born that day.

Plate IV. A view of the south part of Lexington
Amos Doolittle, 1775

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This was not just an American quarrel, but a universal declaration that power must answer to principle, a seeded conviction later given formal voice in the Declaration of Independence, present and in tangible form on that April morning.

As the British retreated under constant fire from an awakened countryside along the long road back to Boston, they faced a corridor of reckoning, for the empire discovered that it faced not just a mob but a people, persuaded and unified.

This is why Lexington and Concord matter, not simply as the opening of a war but as the unveiling of a truth. Liberty is rarely seized in a single moment but it is recognized, defended, and secured by those willing to stand.

What is striking about Lexington and Concord is not only that the colonists fought, but who they were when they fought and who influenced them. These minutemen were not professional soldiers in any modern sense but men drawn almost entirely from the fabric of ordinary New England life, farmers whose hands still carried the memory of the plow. The militia included blacksmiths, shopkeepers, fathers, church elders, men who gathered as often in meetinghouses as in marketplaces, and who understood themselves less as rebels than as stewards of a trust they had inherited. The pastors were the difference makers.

Freedom Stories

The minutemen earned their name by training to be ready at a moment's notice, but their readiness was also a moral one. They were shaped by covenant theology, and local self-government, where church gatherings and town meetings trained men to think and act with accountability before both God and neighbor. This social compact meant their actions were guided as much by conscience as by circumstance.

Much of this formation came from the pulpit. Pastors like Jonas Clarke of Lexington framed the conflict as a matter of moral responsibility. Clarke, who hosted Samuel Adams and John Hancock the night before the battle, had prepared his congregation to value life while also standing ready to defend their God-given rights.

All 18 Americans lying on the ground at Lexington were members of Jonas Clarke's congregation. Jonas had trained them for a moment such as this. The meetinghouse, the church and the training field had worked together, producing individuals who saw liberty not as license, but as a responsibility under God. Their stand was the visible result of years of spiritual and moral formation. The church was the difference maker and it can be again!

Please visit our Paper Trail of Liberty series [HERE](#) for Jonas Clarke's complete sermon.

detailed map of Concord and Lexington
Artist unknown, made before June 16, 1775

