

## Because Private Weapons Prohibition, That's Why

by Bill Buppert

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It's that time again.  
High Holy Day.

Today is the 244th anniversary of the “*shot heard 'round the world*” at Lexington and Concord. The British regulars who started the fracas were following an age-old government tradition of seizing powder, munitions and property for a pretentious King who had assumed such wide distribution of the tools of resistance should be available only to the government approved groups such as soldiers despite the danger on the frontier.

We celebrate that time of defiance against tyranny when for sixteen years (1775-1791), all thirteen colonial provinces and the thousands of rural polities that exited outside or alongside the framework enjoyed a freedom they had not previously had, and after 1791 would become enslaved once again under the totalitarian doomsday machine known as the Constitution.

The lobster-backs and British taxing regime would be replaced by a domestic variety of even more extreme virulence whose sole safety mechanism was a constant western diaspora trying to escape the clutches of the “Republic”.

The whitewashed history since then has lionized the inauguration of the divorce from the United Kingdom on this day and mistakenly links these events to all the “freedom” enjoyed under the Constitution. The Federalist coup in 1787 that reestablished an English-style yoke of central planning, national taxation and slight tinkering with indentured servitude to a kinder and gentler tax and regulatory apparatus did no more grant individual freedom than the Romans gave to conquered lands.

The Declaration of Independence, whether penned by Thomas Jefferson or Thomas Paine, is as elegant a jeremiad against tyranny as has been written. The relationship between the Declaration and the Constitution is the same as the one between the crucifix and the vampire. They stand as opposite documents embracing wholly different visions of freedom. One cannot be consonant with the other because their aspirations are antithetical to the other. As the brilliant Lysander Spooner would opine:

*“But whether the Constitution really be one thing, or another, this much is certain – that it has either authorized such a government as we have had, or has been powerless to prevent it. In either case, it is unfit to exist.”*

CPT Parker commanded the militia this day for an idea that was smothered and crushed by the Federalist coup in 1787 culminating in the creation of the ratification of the most clever slave document of the age.

When you look around on this day in this time in the minimum security (for now) Club Fed that is America, ask yourself what Parker would think. Everything you see (and don't see in the surveillance state that surrounds you) is a product of the glorious Constitutional Republic that Spooner described so splendidly.

As an Appleseed Instructor and Shoot Boss on extended sabbatical, part of the instruction in this extraordinary marksmanship program was a gripping retelling of the Three Strikes of the Match that led to the divorce proceedings with George III and started the First American Revolution.

While I don't share all the goals of the program hence the extended leave of absence, the telling of this ripping yarn has no match. I regret you can't hear this from a seasoned instructor but the reading can be compelling.

For those who wish further elucidation, I recommend Rothbard's '**Conceived in Liberty**' and Fischer's '**Paul Revere's Ride.**' The two books will lead to many more books to better understand the hoodwinking you have suffered through government schooling and the attendant media apparatchiks who reinforce the mewlings of the mind laundries. These books will lead to better understanding the modest but brilliant interregnum when the North American Confederation was free excepting the large number of indentured servants and chattel slaves. But the Constitution would remedy this by nationalizing the former and codifying the latter. The destruction of individual liberty would begin apace.

Please attend an Appleseed marksmanship weekend seminar if at all possible at your local range.

You can make sure Parker's sacrifice, he would die in September of that year, was not in vain.

The taxes and limitations on liberty, you ask?

1750 The Iron Act was designed to restrict the manufacturing activities in the colonies

1763 The end of the French and Indian War (Seven Years' War) left the British with a massive war debt. George Grenville became the British Prime Minister and to pay the war debt the British, under the leadership of Grenville ended their policy of Salutary Neglect in the colonies. The British started to enforce the Laws of the Navigations Acts and looked for ways of imposing new taxes in the colonies.

1763 Proclamation of 1763 was an attempt by the British crown to separate white settlements from Indian country

1764 Sugar Act – Law passed by the British Parliament setting a tax on sugar and molasses imported into the colonies impacting the manufacture of rum in New England. The Sugar Act was repealed in 1766 and replaced with the Revenue Act of 1766, which reduced the tax on molasses imports – also refer to Colonial, Continental and Revolutionary Currency

1764 Currency Act – Series of Laws passed by the British Government that regulated paper money issued by the colonies

1765 The Quartering Act: The first of a series of Laws requiring the provision of housing, food and drink to British troops stationed in towns designed to improve the living conditions of troops whilst decreasing the cost to the crown

1765 The Stamp Act of 1765 placed a stamp duty (tax) on legal papers, newspapers and pamphlets. Vehement opposition by the Colonies, led by patriots such as Patrick Henry, resulted in the repeal of the act in 1766.

1765 The Sons of Liberty. The Sons of Liberty was an organization (a secret society) formed by American Patriots who opposed British measures against the colonists, and agitated for resistance

1765 The Non-importation Agreements (1765–75). Associations were organized by Sons of Liberty and Whig merchants to boycott English goods in response to new taxes. American colonists were discouraged from purchasing of British imports.

1766 The Declaratory Act: Declaration by the British Parliament that accompanied repeal of the Stamp Act stating that Parliament's authority was the same in America as in Britain and asserted Parliament's authority to make laws binding on the American colonies

1767 Townshend Acts – Series of Laws passed by the British Parliament placing duties on items imported by the colonists including glass, lead, paints, paper and tea. The reaction from the colonists was so intense that Great Britain eventually repealed all the taxes except the one on tea. Acts included the Revenue Act of 1767, the Indemnity Act, the Commissioners of Customs Act, the Vice Admiralty Court Act and the New York Restraining Act.

1770 March 5, 1770: The Boston Massacre during which British troops killed 5 Boston civilians.

1773 Tea Act – Law passed by the British Parliament allowing the British East India Company to sell its low-cost tea directly to the colonies, undermining colonial tea merchants. The introduction of the Tea Act led to the Boston Tea Party

1774 December 16: The Boston Tea Party – Massachusetts patriots dressed as Mohawk Indians protested against the British Tea Act

1774 Intolerable (Coercive) Acts: The Intolerable Acts also known as Coercive Acts were a reprisal to the Boston Tea party rebellion. A package of five laws aimed at restoring authority in its colonie

March 31, 1774: The Boston Port Act

May 20, 1774: The Massachusetts Government Act

May 20, 1774: The Administration of Justice Act

June 2, 1774: The Quartering Act

June 22, 1774: The Quebec Act established on June 22, 1774

Reflect and remembering this day should force you to think on the state of your chains, whether you acknowledge them or not. –BB



### **The First Strike of the Match**

It's 19 April, 1775. In Massachusetts Colony, the times were hard. The Colonial government had been abolished, and a military governor, General Thomas Gage, controlled Boston under martial law. Boston was practically a ghost town. The Port Act had seen to that, as the port had been closed to all traffic for months.

The town slowly died without commerce, and many of those remaining in town relied on the kindness of outsiders to acquire food and necessities. Troops destroyed buildings and their contents for fire wood. Disease was rampant. The King was bent on breaking the radicals and bringing the colonies back in line, where they would pay dearly in taxes and subjugation to the motherland, and he was close to doing it.

The precedent had been set. In order to subjugate the colonies, England would have to disarm them. The colonies had a long standing custom for militia, and the militia was armed. The most expedient method of disarmament was to take their ammunition. Gunpowder was typically stored in a specially built powder house for safety and security and drawn for the militia when needed.

It was a simple matter to march in and take the colonists powder supply, and they had indeed done it before. In September of 1774, they had marched swiftly into Cambridge and carted off 250 half barrels of powder, hauling them back triumphantly to Boston.

This had so alarmed the colonist that within 24 hours there were nearly 30,000 men on the march to Boston, hearing rumors that the Brits intended to burn and shell the town. The incident ended without bloodshed, but General Gage, penned up in Boston with barely 3,000 troops had been so frightened that he asked the crown for an additional 20,000 men.

Paul Revere swore that this would never happen again, that they would not be taken by surprise, and instituted the Committee of Observation, an elaborate spy network throughout the colony. Then they began to smuggle arms and powder and hide them in various remote locations. They had even stolen four brass cannon right out from under Gage's nose, a theft not taken lightly by General Gage.

Then in December, Paul Revere had ridden more than 20 hours straight, through a blinding blizzard, to warn the colonist in Portsmouth, New Hampshire that a British patrol was on the way by ship to confiscate their powder and ball. The Redcoats were met by a band of militia who raised the drawbridge across the river and simply taunted them. After a short skirmish, the Brits marched back to their ships empty handed this time. But the failure stung the pride of the British, and they yearned for revenge.

Now the stage was set for another such raid. This time to Concord where they would have the added honor of capturing not only the provincial government, which had been meeting there, illegally, but also perhaps the traitorous Sam Adams and John Hancock, who were destined, they thought, to swing from the gallows in England. There was also rumored to be quite a stockpile of war materiel stored there.

The Colonist had been forming an army, but as yet, it was only an "Army of Observation", which was mostly sent out to shadow the British Regulars when they made forays into the countryside. This "Army" consisted of three groups: The main body was the Militia, mostly men from 16 to over 60 and able to fight. The second body was formed by taking 25% of the young men best suited from the militia to serve as "minute men", who would drop what they were doing and report with musket and ammunition on a minute notice. Those not falling into either category made up the Alarm List, and were tasked with spreading the alarm and supporting the militia.

General Gage knew he had to operate in total secrecy, for the colonist had an early warning system in place, with spies in Boston and alarm companies throughout the countryside. He told no one of his plans to raid Concord, save his trusted General Smith, and of course, his American born wife. This was to be his undoing. Preparations began early on 18 April as mounted officers and men began to fan out about the countryside to gather intelligence and later to pick up anyone suspected of trying to warn the colonists of the impending raid.

The townspeople at many places noticed something was afoot. First of all, the cavalry was dressed in uniform, so this wasn't just a Sunday ride in the country. Then there was the fact that high-ranking officers were present and they were not needed for a typical ride either. Also, the soldiers were armed, and this was typically forbidden. Sealing the deal was the fact that they remained in place or even rode away from Boston, even as darkness fell, when normally they would want to be in Boston well before dark to prevent their being attacked by radicals.

In Boston, about 2,200 the soldiers were roused from their bunks and began to assemble quietly in small parties on the green, down by the water, where long boats had been placed to row them across the Back Bay. By 2300, they were standing shoulder to shoulder in the shallow flatboats and heading into the night, not knowing what their mission was.

The Committee of Observation was very active all this time too. They noticed that a few days before, the British war ships anchored in the harbor had lowered their flat boats to the water and had tied them all together as if ready to be deployed.

This brought up an interesting problem for the Colonists. Would the army march out of Boston by the narrow strip of land known as Boston Neck, then north and west? Or would they simply row across the Back Bay and start their march five miles closer? They would need a way to get the word out as soon as the answer was known.

Dr. Joseph Warren, a prominent physician, was still in Boston, (Even though he risked arrest at any moment), and was a leader of the Committee of Observation. He tried hard to divine the intent of the British that day, but could not. At last, he played his trump card.

He went on a very dangerous mission to what he called "an unimpeachable source" for the information. Most historians believe he was referring to General Gage's wife, who was known to have American sympathies. Indeed, after the disaster on the 19<sup>th</sup>, she would be packed up and sent to England, never to see her native country again. The secret target would be Concord.

They decided to send a rider out the Boston Neck, another from Charlestown. Paul Revere, would row across from Boston to Charlestown and ride from there.

The signal for the riders was to be by lanterns in the steeple of the North Church. One lantern if the troops left Boston by land, the longer route, and two lanterns if they were to cross the Back Bay. At 2200, it was obvious it would be two lanterns, and shortly thereafter, the famous signal was given.

By this time, Paul Revere had made his way down to the north shore and was on his way across the harbor to Charlestown, under the very guns of the British Man O' War, "Somerset". Dressed in his long coat and riding gear, he had thought to leave his pistol at home, thinking it would not be prudent to be armed if he was captured.

As a full moon rose, they were concealed in the shadow of the skyline of Boston and made it undetected to the other side, where Revere was given a powerful and swift horse named Brown Beauty.

William Dawes had departed Boston about 30 minutes before Revere, but riding a slower horse and taking the longer route, arrived 30 minutes after Revere in Lexington, and as such is awarded the usual reward for second place finishers in history: obscurity.

While Revere was riding toward Concord, the British Regulars were up to their knees in the cold mud of the tidal flats and swamps of Lechmere's point, struggling in that mud which swallowed up their shoes. At one point they had to wade across an icy stream, in some places up to their waists, while holding cartridge boxes and muskets over their heads. The wool uniforms were wet, itchy, and no longer white.

They had assembled and waited for over an hour for the navy to deliver rations, but when they arrived, they were rotting and worm infested, and quickly discarded. All this combined to make the Regulars, normally in a surly mood, only that much more surly. After much delay, finally, around 0200, Major Pitcairn led his 300 troops, the advance guard for the rest of the army, 800 to 900 men strong, and the march to Concord began. Revere made good time, but quickly ran into a British mounted patrol and having the better mount, reversed course and quickly lost them. He made a circuitous route to the north to avoid the sentries placed to capture such riders and was making good time.

He arrived at the house of the Rev. Jonas Clarke, where Adams and Hancock slept, about midnight but the house was guarded by a detail placed there by the local tavern owner. Sgt. Munroe confronted Revere, telling him that he was making too much noise and he'd surely wake the sleeping parties inside. Revere replied "You'll have enough noise before long! The Regulars are coming out!"

Upstairs, the windows were thrown open and figures appeared trying to find out what was going on. Finally, Sam Adams recognized Revere and called him inside, where he gave them the warning that the Regulars were out and that they should be on their way. Shortly afterward, William Dawes arrived and he and Revere set off for Concord.

Soon after leaving Lexington, they encountered Dr. Samuel Prescott. He had been courting his girl, Lydia Mulliken, in Lexington and had in fact proposed marriage to her that very night. He was also a staunch Whig and radical in a family of doctors and radicals. He was happy to ride along and help spread the alarm, since he knew the people and the countryside very well.

They soon ran into another mounted patrol and in the encounter Dawes was unhorsed, but escaped, and Prescott escaped on horseback, while Revere was captured. The British officer held a pistol to Revere's head;

threatening death if he did not get the answers he wanted. (Revere's thought to leave his pistol behind likely saved his life for had he been armed, he would likely have been shot)

He told the British officer that 500 militia awaited them in Lexington, and to go there would surely mean death. The skeptical officer was swayed immediately when he heard the report of a volley of muskets going off in the town. (This was only the militia clearing their muskets before entering the tavern to wait for word of the arrival of the Brits)

Deciding he should warn his commanding officer, the officer relieved Revere of his horse and set out into the night. Revere began his walk to back to Lexington. When he arrived, he was startled to find that Sam Adams and John Hancock were still there. They hurried to escape, leaving in Hancock's gilded carriage. After Revere saw them safely on their way, he returned to the Jonas Clark house to rest, when some time later, a man named John Lowell arrived and told Revere that Adams had left a large trunk upstairs in Buckman's tavern.

Inside the trunk were papers of the proceedings of the Continental Congress, with names, dates, and places incriminating those men, all for the taking of the coming British. They had to get that trunk out and away from the British, who were nearly there. Both men struggled to lift the heavy trunk and made their way across the green at Lexington, even as the militia was assembling there to meet the Regulars.

Mean while, Dr. Prescott made good his escape and rode into Concord, sounding the alarm; the Regulars are out!

All along the way the Redcoats could hear the alarm bells ringing, muskets and alarm guns being fired far ahead. They knew there was no chance of surprise, but this did not bother them. Only a few months before, Major Pitcairn had boasted that with two companies of Grenadiers, he could march the length and breadth of the continent, completely subduing the colonies. General Gage had said that there was not a man among the colonies that was capable of taking command or directing the motions of an army. They said that the colonist were fit only to be beasts of burden, hauling the baggage of the army or clearing the woods and building fortifications.

Major Pitcairn led the column with 300 soldiers. He had heard the report of 500 militia at Lexington, and after hearing the volley of musketry, ordered his men to halt, load muskets, and fix bayonets. He expected a fight. In the town, the militia waited. John Parker, a thin sickly man of 46, struggling in the latter stages of tuberculosis, led them. He would not live six more months. But Captain Parker was a soldier, experienced in fighting from his days with the army in the French and Indian wars. He commanded what was called a "training band" in Lexington. Neither militia, nor minutemen, they had remained independent. They ranged in age from pre-teens to men in their 60's. Only the older men had any combat experience.

Parker had sent out two riders to find the Brits and return with word. One had come back and said there was nobody on the road, that it was all just a false alarm. This had caused them to stand down, discharge their muskets before entering the tavern, and that was the volley the Brits heard. But shortly thereafter, the second rider galloped up shouting that the Regulars were indeed on the road, and in fact were just a half mile outside of town, and coming at a fast pace!

Parker had his drummer; a boy named William Diamond sound the muster, and quickly had his men streaming back onto the green. It was about 0530, and the first rays of light were lighting up the countryside around them. They soon assembled in two lines, some 70 men, all locals, many related, brothers, cousins, uncles, fathers and sons.

They were formed up in the green, facing the fork of the road, in an aggressive military manner so that there was no doubt to the oncoming troops that they were standing their ground and that to pass, the Brits would have to deal with them directly. Parker told them to stand their ground, and not to fire unless the regulars fired first," But if they mean to have a war", he said, "Let it begin here!"

Behind them, Lowell and Revere labored with the large trunk, heading for the woods west of town.

Soon, the Redcoats came into view, bayonets gleaming in the dawn's light. It must have been a sight for those 70 or so men standing in the green while 300 of the Kings best troops bore down on them.

Major Pitcairn arrived at the head of the column, ordered them to divide and surround the militia on three sides, then rode up to the men and shouted "Disperse ye villains! Ye rebels!" "Lay down your arms and disperse, ye damned rebels!"

At this, Parker ordered his men to disperse, and they had begun to do just that, when a shot was fired. To this day, we don't know who fired that famous shot. Some say it was the accidental discharge of an officer's pistol. Others say it was a musket from behind a hedge or stonewall. The result was carnage. The soldiers opened fire on the dispersing militia, shooting some in the back. Others, the older men who had experience, stood their ground and fired back. Two were shot down and bayoneted there on the green. The soldiers began to run amok, entering houses and shooting.

Paul Revere heard the first shots and also the balls whistling over his head. He and Lowell continued on their mission as the fight raged behind them.

Finally, Col. Smith rushed to the green, called for his drummer to beat "Down Arms", and got his men back into formation and under control. On the green, eight Colonist lay mortally wounded, nine more wounded would survive. Of the eight pairs of fathers and sons on that green, five were separated by death that day.

Casualties on the British side consisted of one slightly wounded horse and one unlucky private Johnson, shot through the thigh. His luck would run out for good in a couple of months at a place called Bunker's Hill where he would be mortally wounded.

Col. Smith told the men of their mission, and for the first time they understood the enormity of the task ahead. They tried to persuade him to return to Boston. They had lost the element of surprise, and they knew they had to run the gauntlet of militia for another five miles to Concord, and then the 18 miles back to Boston.

They had not the ammunition for a sustained fight, and they knew from experience how many men the colonists could muster at a moments notice. Smith prevailed and allowed them a victory volley, three "huzzahs!" and they began their march to Concord.

Had nothing else happened, the regulars would have most likely marched into Concord, done their duty, and returned to Boston in triumph. There would have been inquiries, hearings, and they would have hanged a few traitors. And that would have been the end of the "revolution".

The first attempt to strike the match which lit the fuse of revolution had been made. There was a brilliant, momentary flash, a little smoke, and then the match extinguished.

But five miles away, in Concord, armed men were stirring and the match was being readied to strike again.

### **The Second Strike of the Match**



It's now 0645 in Lexington, and the sun is low, but bright. In Concord, Dr. Prescott has sounded the alarm, and more riders have gone out to spread the alarm from there. Prescott continued on to Acton, where he called on the local leader of the minutemen, Isaac Davis.

Davis was a 30-year-old farmer with a wife and two sick kids. They had a rash that was usually fatal back then and he and his wife were very distraught. But when he heard the alarm, he set out for Concord with his minutemen, telling his wife to "take good care of the children".

In the town, a man came rushing from Lexington with the news of the fight on the green there. The men of Concord wanted to know if the British soldiers were firing ball or just powder, as a warning. The messenger couldn't be sure, and this only added to the confusion at hand.

By now men from area militias were streaming in from all parts of the country to Concord, their forms silhouetted against the rising sun on the tops of the hills above the road to Concord. The British soldiers took note of this, one writing later that they moved along with a curious half walk, half run. And although the five mile march went without a hitch, nervousness prevailed among the green regulars.

In the town, the militia leaders took stock of the situation and debated what to do. The younger minute men wanted to intercept the Redcoats outside of town, and the older, experienced men of the militia wanted to stand their ground in Concord. The town elders wanted to wait for more men to arrive before committing.

On the British came, banners were flying and fifes and drums playing, soldiers marched in perfect cadence, making for quite an impressive display of military might. The younger minutemen marched out to intercept the yet unseen army, but just as quickly about faced when they saw them, just outside of the town. Witnesses said that it looked like a parade, with the militia just in front of the Regulars, marching back to town.

The militia continued through town and across the North Bridge until they concentrated on their muster field about a mile north town, a place called Punkatasset Hill. There they stood in formation, waiting, and for what they did not know. Other militia began to assemble with them, until their numbers grew to over 500.

In the town below, Col. Smith had his men separate to search for contraband. He divided his troops up, Grenadiers to search the town, one company to guard the South Bridge, seven more would go to the North Bridge where two would guard that bridge while the other five went to the Buttrick and Barret Farms in search of weapons.

In town, the troops began to break open houses and search for war materiel, but weren't having much luck. They had found a few hundred musket balls, some flour, a couple of gun carriage wheels, and some trenchers, (which were what we'd call a wooded plate) They also cut down the town's "Liberty Pole" and piled it with the contraband in the common and began to burn it.

Major Pitcairn had reason to suspect that the owner of the inn and town jailer had hidden a pair of cannon somewhere in the area and meant to find them. He kicked in the door of the inn and when the man refused to speak, placed a pistol to his head and demanded the whereabouts of the guns. The man then led them to the guns, two 24-pound guns that were too large to hide, and the soldiers knocked the trunions off the pieces, rendering them useless.

Col. Smith had, aside from the cannon, come up dry for all his efforts. Even out at the Barrett Farm the soldiers found nothing. This was because the day and night prior, the locals had plowed fields and placed the muskets

into the furrows, and covered them over. The unsuspecting Brits had marched past the freshly plowed fields never knowing what a valuable crop they held.

Up on Punkatasset Hill, the militia watched all this and waited. When they saw the smoke rising from the town, they thought the Brits had put it to the torch. At last one man asked, "Will we stand here while they burn our homes?" Col. Barrett at last decided to march to the bridge, and placed the Acton Minute Men in front because they were the best equipped, having both cartridge boxes and bayonets. When asked if his unit would lead the march, Isaac Davis replied "I have not a man who is afraid to go".



Down below, in front of the bridge, the British soldiers watched as the militia, outnumbering them four to one, began to move down the hill toward them with much military precision.

The green regulars were ordered back across the bridge, where they formed up again, using a formation meant for street fighting. This was not a much-practiced formation, and caused a lot of confusion among the men. The formation was very narrow and deep, intended for clearing mobs on narrow streets. They would have the front ranks fire, then peel off to the rear to reload while the next three ranks would fire. This continued, allowing a constant fire in a narrow area, but it was not suited for open warfare and made a very nice target.

Col. Buttrick told his men the same thing Captain Parker had only a couple of hours earlier in Lexington: They should not fire unless fired upon, but should stand their ground. They marched down the hill in line of battle, and when they got close some of the Redcoats began to fire without orders, then a ragged volley was fired. Isaac Davis went down immediately, a ball piercing his heart.

For once, the order of the Americans was better than that of the British and they held their formation gaining ground all the while until finally arriving only about 50 yards in front of the bridge.

Major Buttrick shouted, "Fire men! For Gods sake, fire as fast as you can!" and with the first volley, half the British officers went down. Shortly, the line broke in confusion and the Redcoats ran back down the road toward Concord, the wounded streaming slowly back as they could manage.

This left the Americans a bit stunned and wondering what to do next. Buttrick divided his men, placing half on the Concord side of the bridge, behind a stonewall, while the rest remained on the other side. Col. Smith was shocked to see his men running back into town pell-mell and upon advancing and seeing the large number of militia in strong positions, withdrew his men to town.

A young man named Ammi White who was mentally unfit for duty with the militia walked down to the wounded British soldiers, and taking his hatchet, split a soldier's skull, leaving him to die there, partly scalped with his brains exposed.

The raiding party came back from the Barrett Farm at the sound of the fight and was terrified at what they found. Between them and the rest of the army was a large band of militia controlling the only way home: The North Bridge. They rapidly ran across the bridge, and were allowed to pass unharmed by the militia, who were still operating under the long-standing requirement of having to be fired on first before returning fire.

Many of the Redcoats took notice of their dead and wounded comrades lying on the field, most especially, the man brained by Ammi White. They were angry at the atrocity and rumors ran as fast as they did, and soon the story went that 4 men had been butchered, eyes gouged out, noses and ears cut off. This was to change to tone of the fight and cause many atrocities that day and scandal as far away as England.

Still the various militias were streaming into the area by the thousands, many looking down at the British troops from the hills above the town.

In town, Col. Smith was reforming and resting his troops and forming them up for the long march ahead. Those officers who were wounded were placed in "borrowed" carriages, while the walking wounded were to go behind them. Then the army would proceed.

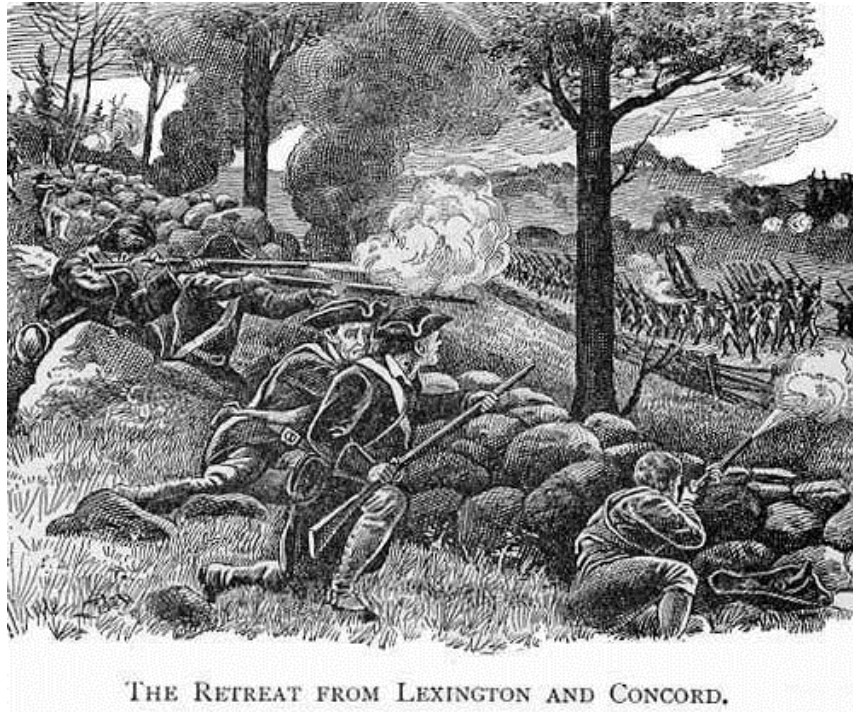
The entire operation in Concord had lasted barely four hours, and finally, around noon, the British began their return to Boston under the watchful eye of the Americans who were spoiling for revenge. At first, the militia simply shadowed them, watching and waiting for an opportunity. Many were swept up along the way by the flankers Col. Smith had placed in advance to keep the militia beyond musket range.

Again, the match to light the fuse of revolution had been struck. Again, there was a bright flash, a little smoke, and nothing as the match extinguished.

Had nothing else occurred that day, there would have been inquiries, hearing, hangings and promotions, and the revolution would likely have died then and there.

But about a mile outside of Concord, at a place called Meriam's Corner, American militia was pouring in, and the match was again readied to strike.

### **The Third Strike of the Match**



It is now shortly after mid day, and the British have begun retracing their steps out of Concord and back to Boston while the Americans watched from hilltops and behind stone walls along the way.

British soldiers were spoiling for revenge for their fellow soldiers allegedly butchered at the North Bridge. The Americans sought revenge for the “massacre” at the green in Lexington. Many had walked all night, and they didn’t do so just to observe. The stage was set for a fight, and a long one at that.

Hundreds of men lined the hilltops above the road back to Boston, muskets loaded, ready for a fight. Col. Smith and his men saw them there and knew they faced an 18-mile long gauntlet with sparse ammunition. He sent out flankers to keep the Americans back out of musket range from the main body. They had already cleared one hilltop and a few farm fields and things were going well for about a mile. But then they came to Meriam’s Corner.

Meriam’s corner:

About a mile east of Concord, the road turned slightly and crossed a stream by narrow bridge. The flankers were forced to come down from the hills and walk along the stream to the bridge, which allowed the Americans to get within musket range. By now they outnumbered the Redcoats by over 1000 men.

The British Rear guard took notice of all this, and when pressed closely and seeing a few Militiamen raising their rifles towards them, they turned to fire a volley and immediately the militia opened fire. Balls rained down on the Redcoats with fury.

The third attempted strike of the revolutionary match was made, and this time it blazed forth and burned brightly, lighting the fuse on a war of independence that would last eight long years and cost thousands of lives.

It was near 1300 now, and the running fight to Boston had begun.

From here on the British would be forced to fight their way out of one American ambush after another, often in deadly crossfire. In the smoke and confusion, Col. Smith had no way of knowing that the Americans had grown in number to the thousands. As the Brits marched along they continued to encounter fresh men with full cartridge boxes while they could find no rest or shelter or even water, and each round wasted was precious.

At Brook's hills and The Bloody Angle the Brits took more casualties but on they marched.

Parker's Revenge:

It's now about 1345. The men of Lexington had not retired after their fight, but had regrouped and marched toward Concord also. Now they stood behind a stone wall, some in the bloody bandages they had worn since daylight, waiting for the British and revenge for their fallen comrades. Captain Parker had his men wait until they were well within range then gave the order to fire.

They rose and gave a volley two times before the stunned British could effectively react, and the road was littered with dead and dying Redcoats. Before the flankers swept them from the field, Captain Parker and the men of Lexington had their revenge.

Col. Smith was shot through the thigh as he rode on his horse and Major Pitcairn was unhorsed but unharmed. (His luck would run out in a couple of months at a place called Bunker's Hill, shot in the head by a "negro militiaman" as he entered the fortifications there, just minutes before the battle was over)

The Brits were running low on ammunition and water. Some of the fiercest fighting occurred around wells, streams and even puddles of water. The road was filled with dead and wounded men and horses and the accouterments of war; knapsacks, cartridge boxes, muskets, hats, jackets, bayonets, and even the items looted from the homes of Concord.

It was beginning to look like the end for the British and the men discarded equipment and ran toward Boston. The officers could not maintain order, even at the point of their swords. They hadn't even made the five miles back to Lexington, and surrender seemed likely, and ironically, most likely on the green in Lexington where they had attacked less than ten hours earlier.

General Percy:

Then, as they stumbled into Lexington it was as if a miracle had happened. Before them was the relief column led by General Hugh Earl Percy arranged in line of battle and with two cannon trained on the advancing Rebels. Percy could not believe his eyes. A formerly proud British army stumbled bleeding and beaten through his ranks, exhausted and spent. Percy placed his cannon, one on each side of the road, on hills overlooking the approach to town. The Colonials had never faced big guns before and were halted immediately.

But Percy was still in a precarious position. He had left Boston about 0900 with his column and two guns with only the ammunition stored in the boxes on the carriage and no reserve. This meant he would have to keep up enough fire to keep the Rebels at bay, yet ration it for the long trek back to Boston. His men had carried the same 36 rounds of musket ammunition that Smith's troops had brought and so his men were short of ammunition also.

Percy took stock of his situation. He realized that he was not facing bumpkins in small numbers fighting from behind trees, but very large and well-regulated militia which was acting in concert and fighting in coordination with other units.

He burned three houses in Lexington to prevent their being used for sniping by riflemen of the militia. One of these houses being that of Lydia Mulliken, the new fiancé of Samuel Prescott.

What he didn't know was that there was a man arriving on the field about that time to command the colonist who hadn't spent a day in combat, but had devised a means of fighting a moving column of Regulars.

William Heath:

Brig. General William Heath was a self-described "corpulent, balding gentleman farmer" who had a passion for military tactics. He saw the coming conflict as inevitable for years before and had studied on his own at Henry Knox's book store in Boston and even engaged British Officers in conversations on tactics and had come up with a plan to fight under just such a situation as now presented itself.

He called it the "Circle of Fire" and it entailed a constant streaming of fresh men and supplies ahead of a moving column to keep them under constant unrelenting fire from all sides. It was a difficult tactic to pull off; keeping militia units coordinated and constantly in motion with ammunition, food, water, and supplies arriving at the right places at the right time, especially with inexperienced troops, but it would prove very successful this day.

Percy's cannon had held the Colonist off long enough to give Col. Smith's troops a much needed rest before they resumed the 13 mile trek back to Boston.

It is now 1515 and the first units of British soldiers move out for Boston, now reinforced and about 1600 strong under the capable General Percy and sporting two very dangerous cannon bringing up the rear. Flankers were put out to sweep the Rebels from the flanks and keep them out of musket range. Still, the Circle of Fire took its toll and all along the road the Regulars fell with regularity, (no pun intended).

By 1630 the Brits had reached Menotomy, (Present day Arlington), and the fighting became less open, and more house-to-house. The fighting reached a murderous pitch, with the Regulars seething to get at the rebels who would not stand and fight and also to revenge their fallen comrades who had been savagely butchered at the North Bridge. The militia wanted revenge for the killings at Lexington and Concord and the burning and looting of those towns.

When the Regulars received fire from a house, they rushed the house, killing all those within, sometimes even non-combatants. The fighting in Menotomy was terrible, as told by the numbers: 40 Redcoats dead, and over 80 wounded.

Heath's Circle of Fire ensured that fresh men with full cartridge boxes kept a constant fire on the Brits who had no chance of re-supply and were nearly out of ammunition.

Percy's intended route took him through the town of Cambridge, where there stood a bridge across the Charles River, their last obstacle before Boston Neck. Past that bridge was a very large contingent of militia with full cartridge boxes, freshly fed, watered, and spoiling for a fight.

It is now about 1730.

Advanced units of the Regulars found that the militia had pulled up the planks of the bridge, and neatly stacked them on the near side. They replaced the planks. The militia discovered this and pulled up the planks again, this time throwing them into the river.

Percy was now caught between the anvil of the bridge and fresh militia and the hammer of Heaths moving Circle of Fire. He had to do something fast.

Percy turned north just out of Cambridge and headed for Charlestown breaking through the Circle of Fire by sheer desperation. This caused a momentary shift in the balance of power there, as the Circle of Fire had to be adjusted for the unforeseen turn. In the confusion, Percy's column broke through and made for the Charlestown Neck, a narrow strip of land connecting that near island to the mainland.

The Americans had one last chance. To the north was militia under the command of Timothy Pickering, and if he moved out as ordered, they could stop the British escape and the entire retreating column would be captured.

Unfortunately, Pickering chose not to move out, against the protests of his own men, and the British escaped to Charlestown under the protection of the guns of the war ship "Somerset". General Gages battered troops at last collapsed in exhaustion on a knoll known as Bunker's Hill. General Percy noted the time as just past 1900. The raw numbers showed that Gage's 1800 men had suffered 73 killed, 174 wounded and 26 missing, nearly a ten percent rate. About 3500 militia were actually engaged and suffered 49 dead, 39 wounded, and 4 missing for a rate of less than 2%.

But what the statistics didn't show was that one of the world's best fighting units had been beaten and decimated by a bunch of determined New England farmers. It was this determination that would see them through the long years ahead of war and want.

General Percy, who had boasted that he could subdue the entire continent with 2 companies of Grenadiers, later wrote: "Whoever looks upon them as an irregular mob will find himself very much mistaken. They have men among them who know very well what they are about".



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