

Battles of Lexington and Concord



Figure 1: British troops fire at a line of minutemen during the battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775.

The American Revolution began on April 19, 1775, with the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Some time before, Gen. Thomas Gage, the military governor of Massachusetts, had received orders from England to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock, accused of stirring up rebellion in the colony. On the night of April 18 Gage sent a detachment of 800 troops to Lexington, where the “traitors” were staying. The troops were to arrest the two men, then push on to Concord to destroy military supplies stored there by the colonists. News of the expedition leaked out, and two minutemen (as the colonial militia were called), William Dawes and Paul Revere, rode through the country warning people that the British regulars were coming. Revere was captured as he rode and his ride was finished by Samuel Prescott.

When the troops reached Lexington they found about 50 minutemen on the common, an open square in the center of the town. John Pitcairn, the British commander, ordered the rebels to disperse. Both sides milled about in confusion, and shooting broke out. Eight Americans were killed and 10 were wounded. The others scattered, and the British went on toward Concord. Hancock and Adams, warned of their coming, had already fled.

The soldiers arrived at Concord at 7:00 am. During the night the colonists had hidden most of their stores and ammunition. What they had not been able to hide, the British set about destroying. Then they met the minutemen at the Old North Bridge over the Concord River and fired upon them. The Americans fired back, and the war had begun. In this skirmish the British numbered about 200; the Americans, 400. The Americans poured over the bridge. The British began a retreat

to Boston at about noon. Meanwhile, the farmers, from behind rocks, fences, and buildings, picked off the brightly clad soldiers along the road. At Lexington the fleeing redcoats met another detachment of 1,500 soldiers sent out by General Gage. Thus strengthened, the British returned to Boston, having suffered 274 killed and wounded and 25 missing. The American loss was 88 killed and wounded.

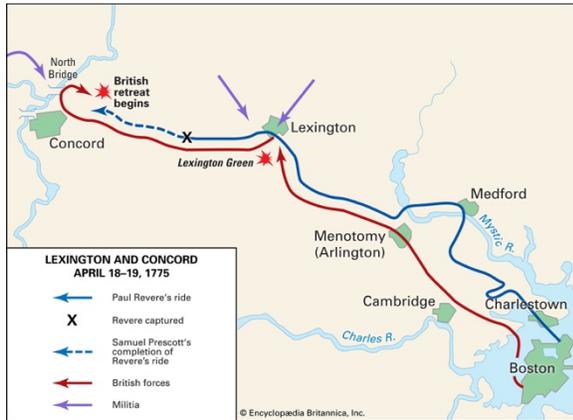


Figure 2: Some of the events that took place around Lexington and Concord on April 18 and 19 in 1775.

At Lexington, 12 miles (19 kilometers) northwest of Boston, visitors may still see Munroe Tavern, which the British used as their headquarters; Buckman Tavern, which was the rendezvous of the minutemen; and the Hancock-Clarke house, where Adams and Hancock lodged the night before the battle. The Minute Man National Historical Park, established in 1959, preserves these structures and such memorials as Daniel Chester French's statue of *The Minute Man* in Concord.

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