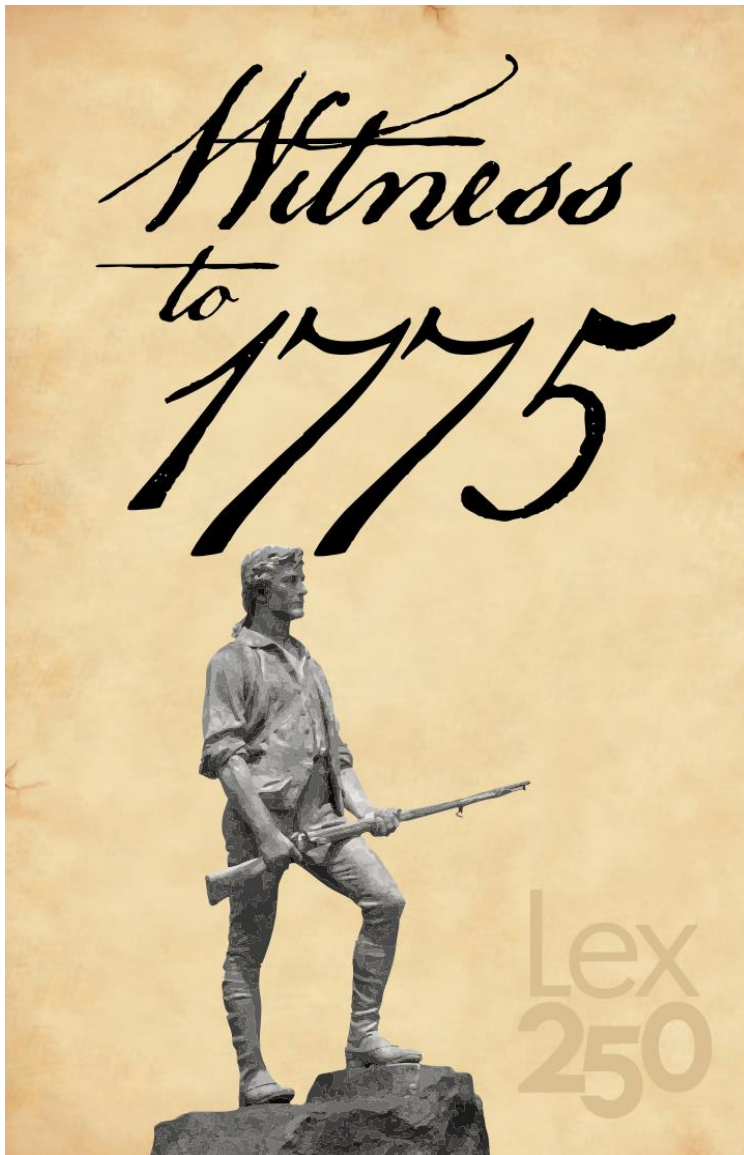


# Celebrating Lexington's *Witness to 1775 Houses*

## Abridged Table of Contents

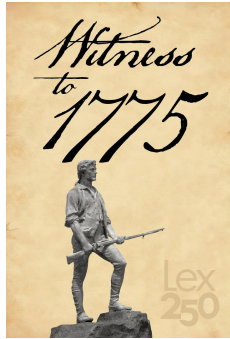


### Witness to 1775 Houses

Click on the address to view house history

- [1 Bedford Street](#)
- [282 Bedford Street](#)
- [26 Blossom Street](#)
- [9 Burlington Street](#)
- [70 East Street](#)
- [42 Forest Street](#)
- [9 Hancock Street](#)
- [36 Hancock Street](#)
- [63 Hancock Street](#)
- [1 Harrington Road](#)
- [50 Kendall Road](#)
- [271 Marrett Road](#)
- [419 Marrett Road](#)
- [837 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [898 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [1295 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [1303 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [1314 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [1332 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [1505 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [1906 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [2173 Massachusetts Avenue](#)
- [36 Woburn Street](#)
- [37-39 Woburn Street](#)

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



John Buckman Tavern

1 Bedford Street

Muzzey-Buckman Tavern – c.1710

*Home to a Revolutionary Soldier*



Lexington Historical Society

*With John Hancock and Samuel Adams meeting other Patriots in Lexington, strategic papers relevant to the independence cause were stored at the Buckman Tavern on April 18th. As the marching Redcoats could be heard advancing towards the Green in the wee hours of April 19<sup>th</sup>, the papers were quickly moved to a safer location.*





## House History

It is fitting to start our tour of the witness houses by visiting the so-called Headquarters of the Minute Men of 1775. Although **John Buckman's** tavern bore no such official designation, its position beside Lexington Common and the Meetinghouse made it a natural gathering place. At one time or another, Buckman played host to residents of all the houses to be covered in the following chapters.

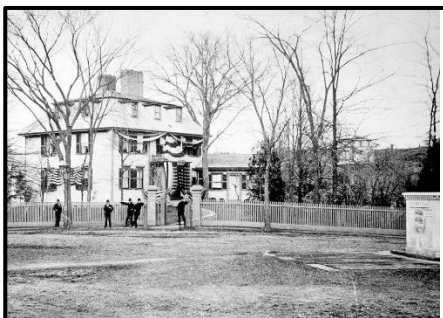
This welcoming facade was erected around 1710 by **John Muzzey** after he received the land in 1709 from his father, Benjamin, who then sold two acres to the precinct of Cambridge Farms in 1711 for use as a Common. The town was incorporated in 1713, started construction of the community's second Meetinghouse that year, and it was also in 1713 that John Muzzey received his publican's license.

The original structure was much smaller -- a saltbox only as wide as the "Tap Room" and front door. Muzzey expanded it through the years, building the west chambers, then a full second story with hipped roof, before selling the place in 1764 to his son-in-law, Samuel Stone. After Stone's death, his daughter Ruth married John Buckman, who had been living at what is now called Munroe Tavern and running a shop there. John and Ruth moved to the Centre and took over this public house by 1770.

And so we hear of the tavern in the words of the militiamen, like **Joseph Underwood**, who said the militia members gathered "early in the evening, at Buckman's tavern, near the meeting-house, for the purpose of consulting what measures should be adopted" in response to reports of British scouts passing along the road to Concord. "I went to the tavern," **Elijah Sanderson** later said of the wee hours of April 19, 1775. "The citizens were coming and going; some went down to find whether the British were coming; some came back, and said there was no truth in it. I went into the tavern, and, after a while, went to sleep in my chair by the fire. In a short time after the drumbeat, and I ran out to the common, where the militia were parading." Solomon Brown used the tavern for cover as he fired shots at the Regulars, and his fire was returned, as evidenced by scarred original clapboards.

A pair of cannons were also likely stored on the premises in one of Buckman's outbuildings. At a November 1774 town meeting, the inhabitants had voted to buy two drums for the militia and to accept two small cannon that had been offered by Watertown. There is no more word of the cannon in Lexington until sometime in 1775 when 13 Lexingtonians stayed at Buckman Tavern to guard them before they were hauled off to Cambridge. The Provincial Congress later reimbursed Buckman for boarding the men during the eight days they guarded the armaments -- perhaps the eight days that followed the battle, when citizens feared the Regulars would continue to seize local munitions.

Buckman, a member of the militia, marched to Roxbury with the company in March of 1776. He operated the tavern here until 1784, when he sold the place to his brother-in-law **Joseph Simonds**, a veteran of the Battle of Lexington. Simonds sold to **Rufus Meriam** a decade later, and Meriam kept the place open into the early 19th century but focused more on serving meals to genteel guests rather than providing rooms for drovers and teamsters, according to E. P. Bliss. Meriam opened Lexington's first post office in the ell as the town's inaugural postmaster. The Town of Lexington bought the property in 1913 and it has since been preserved by the Historical Society.

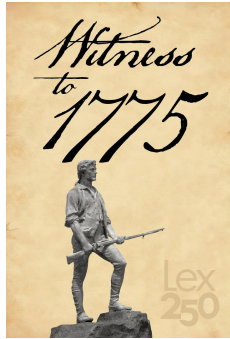


*Left: Buckman Tavern, April 19, 1875  
Source: Edwin B. Worthen,  
Cary Memorial Library*



*Right: Buckman Tavern Tap Room  
Source: Lexington History Museums*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Nathan Reed House

282 Bedford Street

William Reed House c.1719

*Home to a Minute Man*



*Nathan Reed was a fifth-generation settler in the Americas. His great-great grandparents William and Mabel left England with their young family and settled in Boston in 1635.*

*The Battle of Lexington saw action from three members of the Reed family – cousins Nathan and Joshua Sr. along with Joshua's son,*



# House History

The Reed family lived in something of a wilderness off the beaten path in North Lexington, occupying several houses that were connected to the rest of town by parallel lesser roads traveling east to Hancock Street. One branch of Reeds lived on today's Vaille Avenue, another was off Valley Road, and **William Reed's** family lived here on this site. It was not until the early 19th century that they were connected directly to the Centre when today's Bedford Street was cut northward from the old "Path to Goose Pasture" next to the **Abigail Harrington** house.

Historian Edwin B. Worthen noted that the rear ell was the oldest part of this house, constructed by **William**, an oral tradition also recorded by Nancy Seasholes in her history of the home. William may have built the initial house on this property around 1719, following the death of his father and at the same time that he married Sarah Poulter. William was an early selectman of the town, longtime representative to the General Court, and served in the French and Indian War. A month before his youngest son's marriage, William gave him the bulk of the homestead in a beautifully written deed.

He signed over four parcels, totaling around 89 acres, "in consideration of the love good will and affection I bear [sic] to my son **Nathan** ... and also in consideration of his labor and service in my employ since he was of age." Besides a 24-acre house lot, the conveyance included 20 acres to the north which included a second old house previously owned by the **Burdoo** family (no longer standing). That was on March 27, 1772. On April 30, Nathan married **Mary Page** of Bedford.

A few years later, at the time of the battle, Nathan was 31, Mary 28, and they had a 2-year-old son at home. Nathan responded to the call of the Belfry and made his way up town along North Hancock Street and Hancock Street. He also marched to Cambridge with the Lexington Militia in May of 1775, then again in June, and went on the Fourth Campaign to Ticonderoga that July. He was a selectman from 1785 to 1788 and deacon of the church for two decades.

Nathan built the impressive brick-ended Federal at the front of this property circa 1786 while he and Mary continued to expand their family in the post-war period. The farm was acquired in 1872 by the **George T. Smith** family, who named the place Orchard Hill Farm and operated a summertime boarding house for people looking to trade the cityscape for cool country air. By the 1920s, a kitchen in the ell was also producing taffy-like candies under the name of Smile-A-While Sweets.

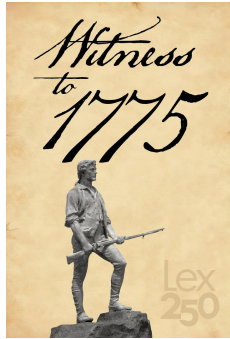
The property remained in the Smith family, later under the ownership of Carolyn Steele and Oliver and Sara Hooper, until the 1980s. It was acquired by what is now called the Edinburg Center in 1989 for a mental health treatment site.



*Lexington's Old Buriel Grounds includes Nathan's parents - Captain William who died in 1718 at age 55 and Abigail, who died in 1734 at age 68.*

*Source: Lexington Minute Men Company  
[Nathan Reed – The Lexington Minute Men](#)*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



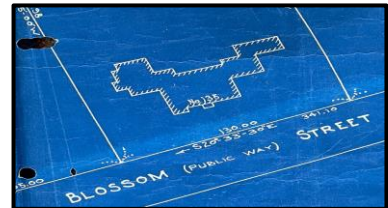
Josiah Smith House

26 Blossom Street

Joseph Underwood House c.1719-23

*Home to Minute Men*

*Home of Revolutionary Soldier*



*Clockwise from upper left: The oldest section of the Underwood House as seen in 2025; 1950 blueprint (Source: Owner's Collection); the home as seen in 1950 (Source: Owner's Collection); and the updated home in 2025, where the oldest section is on the far right.*



# House History

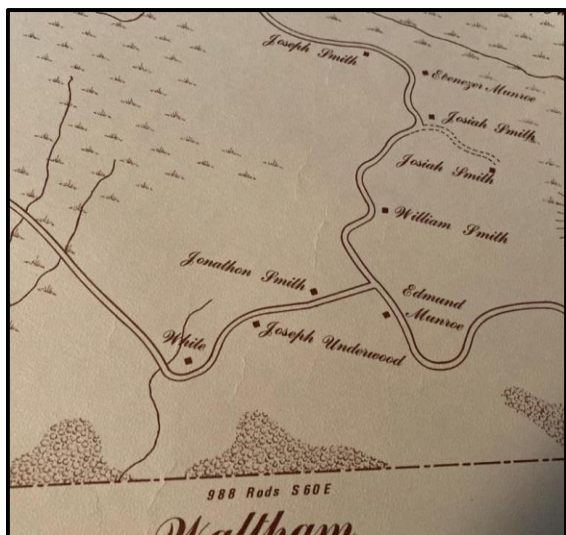
Perhaps the toll of the Belfry and the calls of midnight riders did not reach every corner of our town that morning. Noticeably absent from the ranks standing on the Common were members of the proliferate **Smith** family of Old Waltham Street. The old road ran down Allen Street, over Blossomcrest, onto today's Blossom Street before the link was severed by the construction of Route 2. One brother, **Hezekiah**, established his family on Allen Street while brother **Josiah** settled in this house on Blossom in 1760. According to his descendant, neighborhood historian A. Bradford Smith, Josiah arrived at the Common after the battle had ended and marched with Capt. Parker's Company toward Lincoln to attack the Regulars on their retreat back through town.

None of Josiah's sons were married yet by 1775 and likely all still lived here at home. Two of the four brothers, **Ebenezer and Josiah Jr.**, were members of the Lexington Militia. While there is no record of their activities on April 19, these men were active later in the war. Ebenezer marched to Cambridge in May, then served on the four-month campaign to Boston and Dorchester starting in December of 1776 and the five-month campaign "to guard the lines near Cambridge" starting in December 1777. Josiah Jr. was on the five-month campaign to Ticonderoga in 1775. **Abraham** marched to Cambridge in June of 1775, and Abraham and his younger brother **Isaac** both enlisted in the Continental Army in 1780.

The Smiths went on to serve their community after the war. Josiah Jr. served multiple terms as a selectman and assessor in the early 19th century, and Abraham was also a selectman in 1808. Josiah Jr. (1753-1826), Abraham or Abram (1755-1826), and Isaac (1764-1840) were each buried in Munroe Cemetery and are the only Revolutionary War veterans to be buried there. Josiah Jr.'s son, **Josiah III**, was famed as "Fifer Si," a military fife player who served in the War of 1812 and played for half a century in the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company's "June Day" change-of-command parades.

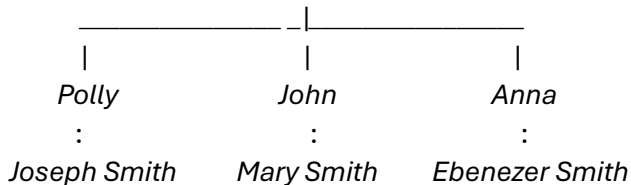
Abraham built the house now at 92 Blossomcrest St. His grandson, **Abram Bowman Smith**, married Galen and Lavinia Allen's daughter Annette and moved up to the Smith-Allen farm on Allen Street (see Joseph Smith house). Their direct descendants have continued to reside in Lexington, including the late **Dexter Allen Smith**, a World War II veteran -- one of the few colonial families to never leave town.

Josiah Smith Sr. bought this house and a 12-acre lot in 1760 from **Joseph Underwood Jr.**, whose father Joseph had bought the place in 1719. The house likely dates from around the time of Joseph Sr.'s marriage, sometime between 1719 and 1723, when eldest son Joseph Jr. was born there. The place passed down through the Smith family until 1884, when it was sold by descendant A. Bradford Smith. It was owned briefly by the Estabrooks, who sold it in 1895 to the Arthur F. Hutchinson family who farmed here until the mid-1900s.

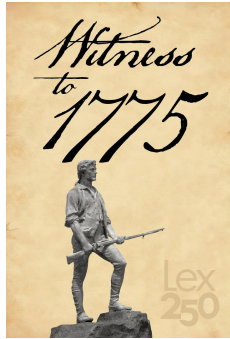


*This excerpt from the 1976 Bicentennial Map of Lexington illustrates the neighboring homes of the extended Underwood and Smith families. It was common in the 1700's for neighbors to marry neighbors.*

Joseph Underwood IV ----(second wife) Eunice Smith



# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Joseph Simonds House

9 Burlington Street

Joshua Simonds House c.1725

*Home to a Town Founder  
Home of a Minute Man*



*Today's Kinneen Park on  
Burlington Street is named after  
the Kineen Family on the former  
land of the Simonds ancestral  
family farm.*



# House History

Farmland in North Lexington once stretched out in great expanses, like the more than 100 acres occupied by Ensign **Joseph Simonds** at the time of the battle. Here Simonds lived, on the site his grandfather originally settled when he (also named Joseph) came to Lexington from Woburn in the 17th century. Early on, one part of the family had settled Grove Street by what is now Tidd Circle, while this branch of the Simonds family stayed at the site of the original house at the corner of the old Bedford and Burlington Roads.

Joseph stood on Lexington Common on April 19 as an ensign of the militia company, the same rank his grandfather had held at the time Lexington was incorporated. (**Grandfather Joseph** was on the first Board of Selectmen in 1713.) A month later, in May of 1775, Joseph was temporarily promoted to lieutenant under Capt. John Parker marching to Cambridge for five days' service. He was an ensign at Cambridge in June and returned to lieutenant in March of 1776 at Roxbury. Active in revolutionary affairs, he served on the Committee of Correspondence in 1776.

Joseph had married **Elizabeth Stone**, the second daughter of **Sam Stone** the tavernkeeper, in the 1760s. Elizabeth's sister, **Ruth**, moved into the tavern on Lexington Common with her husband **John Buckman** one or two years later. In 1784, after Ruth's death, Joseph and Elizabeth took over the tavern and operated it until 1794, when they may have returned to their farm.

After the war, in 1791, Joseph was one of three town leaders -- with **Rev. Jonas Clarke** and **Benjamin Brown** -- delegated to petition Congress for a memorial on Lexington's battlefield. They were not successful in persuading federal lawmakers, so Joseph, who had already served several terms as state representative under the new Constitution, petitioned the state Legislature. He secured funding and the Revolutionary Monument was erected on Schoolhouse Hill on the Common. Joseph died in 1813, and according to his grandson, he died at Buckman Tavern. He had long since sold the tavern to **Rufus Meriam**. But perhaps, after his wife's death seven years earlier, Joseph had moved into the comfort of the public house, closer to the Centre where meals could be prepared for him.

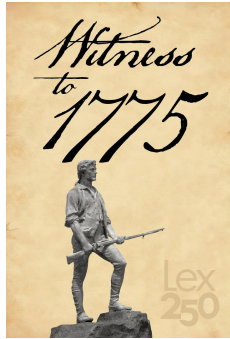
This house on Burlington Street stayed in the family for a couple more generations. It wound up in the hands of **Joseph Frederick Simonds**, a grandson of the Revolutionary veteran. "Old Fred," as the historian Canavan called him, sold the ancient homestead -- then 132 acres -- to Charles W. Johnson for \$7,600 in 1848. "Old Fred" moved to Hancock Street, eventually making his home in the Dr. Fiske house. "Potato" Johnson indeed raised potatoes here, in addition to a herd of cows. The Johnsons sold in 1889 to **Timothy Kinneen**, an Irish immigrant, whose cows were pastured on what is now the Diamond Middle School playing field, according to Thomas Sileo. The Kinneen family lived in the ancient Simonds house and the farm ran along Burlington Street, included the back portion of today's Willard's Woods conservation area and the Diamond Middle School, and ran south toward Chiesa Farm (now Adams Street). John and Anna Millican, who later founded Lexington Gardens, owned the place from 1923 to 1935, when they -- and other Lexington families -- lost their farms to the bank. The house remained a residence until 1985, when it was acquired by the Chabad Center.



*Cousin Ebenezer Simonds was also a member of the Lexington Militia Company. His mill and mill pond were located off Grove Street, shown here in 1935.*

*Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection, Cary Memorial Library*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



John Harrington House

70 East St.

Henry Harrington/Dr. Joseph Fiske Jr.  
House - c. 1745

## *Home to Minute Men*



*Aerial view of home with neighboring farmland c. mid1900s  
Source: Owner's Collection.*



*Smoke Chamber Door*

*Source: [FORM B - BUILDING](#)- [The Oldest Houses in Lexington](#) | Lexington, MA*



# House History

The four Harrington brothers who fought in the battle represented the largest family unit on the Common that morning, and they all grew up together in this home. By 1775, one of them, **John Harrington**, had taken over this farm and some of his younger, unmarried brothers may have continued to live here at their childhood home.

**Henry Harrington** and Sarah Laughton raised a total of eight sons and three daughters here on East Street, between the grapevines at Vine Brook and the Eight Mile Line at today's Adams Street. Some of them would have already been born by the time **Henry** built this new house, which was around 1745, according to the oral tradition passed down to the owners around 50 years later. That year, 1745, marked the birth of Henry and Sarah's son Jonathan, perhaps the battle's most famed casualty.

Standing shoulder to shoulder on the Common that morning were **John Harrington**, age 36; **Jonathan**, 30; **Thomas**, 27; and **Moses**, 21. (Also in the line was their sister Elizabeth's husband, Nathan Munroe.) Moses and Thomas went on to serve with the militia at Cambridge in May; John and Thomas served at Cambridge in June; and John and Thomas marched to Roxbury in March 1776 before the British evacuation, joined by their eldest brother Henry Jr. According to Hudson, John was later commissioned as a lieutenant in the militia.

The family scattered. Thomas left town a couple of years later and moved to upstate New York; Moses seems to have died by 1784, perhaps a casualty of disease or injury later in the war; John went to New Hampshire as the war came to a close; and Jonathan, of course, did not survive the day.

Henry's second wife, **Abigail**, kept school in this house in the 1760s, tutoring the children who would grow up to fight the Regulars. The farm included more than 87 acres by the time Henry sold it to his son, John, less than a year before the battle in June of 1774. Henry and Abigail, who was known as "Granny" Harrington, then moved down to the foot of what is today called Granny Hill. John, a cordwainer by trade, paid his father £400 for the substantial farm and wood lot.

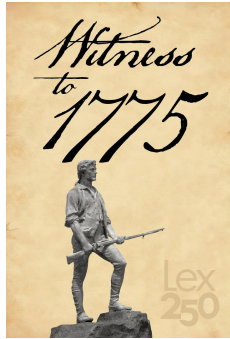
John moved to Deering, N.H. around 1783, according to Hudson, and **Dr. Joseph Fiske Jr.** of Hancock Street bought the farm in 1790. Fiske undertook extensive renovations between 1789 and 1794 before moving into the modernized house with his new bride Elizabeth in 1794, according to his descendants, who retained the bills for carpentry and masonry work performed over those years.

It was probably during the smallpox epidemic of 1792 that Fiske, who was still living in the family home on Hancock Street, opened this house as a hospital for smallpox patients along with an adjacent smokehouse. Smoke was thought to kill the disease. As a result, this place was commonly known by neighbors as the "Pest House" into the latter half of the 20th century.

While Joseph and Elizabeth later moved back to Hancock Street, Fiske descendants stayed on here until 1874, when they sold the home to Eben Stone.

*"At least two of the witness houses were used as hospital settings in the 1700s. Smallpox was treated in the Harrington/Fiske home (1792) and the wounds of the retreating British were tended to at Munroe Tavern (1775).*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Amos Muzzey House

42 Forest Street

Amos Muzzey House c.1734

*Home to a Revolutionary Soldier*



*Originally located on Massachusetts Avenue, the home was vandalized by the British on April 19<sup>th</sup> as they retreated to Boston following the Battle of Lexington and Concord. They left the house with three musket balls lodged in its walls and bloodied floors from tending to their injured. Amos Muzzey filed a claim with the Provincial Congress to recoup £18 for broken windows, a broken mirror (a piece of which is in the Lexington Historical Society Archives), and general damage.*



## House History

**Amos Muzzey** was not on the Common, nor was he home, when the war broke out. He was stuck behind the column of British Regulars in Menotomy after catching sight of the scouts from a nearby tavern. But Amos went on to fight at Ticonderoga in 1776 and served at Cambridge in 1778.

This house -- which stood at the north corner of Mass. Ave. and Grant Street and was probably built around 1734 by his father, also named Amos -- saw its own share of bloody action that day.

The plaque on its facade was dedicated in 1951 by the final Muzzey family to live in Lexington, including direct descendant **Clifford Muzzey**, who told of the chaos: "When the British troops returned from Concord they entered this house, breaking down the fence, destroying the buffet of valuable china and breaking a large mirror. They dressed their wounded in the parlor and **Amos Muzzey, Jr.** (who was eleven years old that day) told his grandsons years afterward that 'the floor had stripes of blood all over it, as if a pig had been stuck and dragged around the room.' Not content with this damage, the Regulars fired at the house, one bullet lodging in a chamber wall and two others in the lining of the brick wall, which were removed when the house was repaired in 1815."

Indeed, Amos filed a claim with the Provincial Congress to recoup £18 for broken windows, the broken mirror (a piece of which is in the Historical Society's collections), crockery ware, and general "damage to real estate."

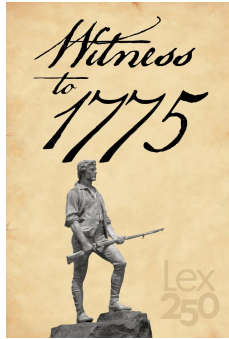
Amos' grandson, **Benjamin**, was a leading light of the effort to modernize Lexington in the 1830s and '40s, a time that culminated in the arrival of the initially unsuccessful railroad in 1846. After trading stocks in Boston, he came back to town, ran for office, and expanded the tavern and inn business his father had established. The new Lexington needed a grand new mansion, and this old colonial dwelling was moved to 52 Waltham St. to make way for Benjamin's manse in 1835.

The Muzzey family were Lexington's first family, and a direct line inhabited the same spot near the bank of Vine Brook for around 271 years. The first house at the Vine Brook territory was built around 1642 for a hired farmer, who was probably the first Benjamin Muzzey. The family bought a portion of that original 600-acre farm and stayed on the same house lot until they sold it in 1913 to the Edison Electric Illuminating Co. for construction of the present substation. The 1835 Muzzey house was then moved from that site up to Glen Road South, where Muzzey family continued living until the 1970s.

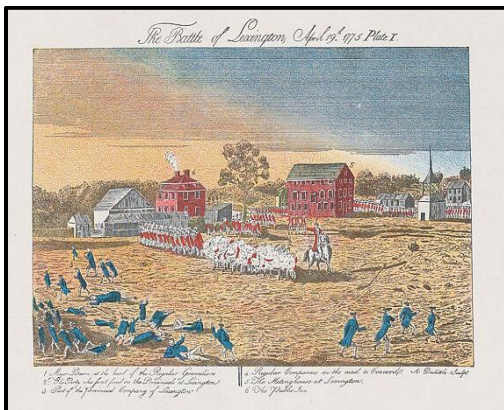
This Amos Muzzey house, later known as the Huffmaster place, was moved a second time in May of 1895 to make way for Bradley C. Whitcher's new residence on Waltham Street, which still stands. The house was moved to Forest Street by William Glenn and his wife Clara, who lived next door at No. 38. It was split into a two-family, and the rear ell was removed and set back down the driveway. Clara was the daughter of prominent local Civil War veteran George Dennett. It was in the old ell that Dennett and his Grand Army of the Republic comrades would pass the time by swapping old stories of the war that saved the Union.

*Getting its name from the letter "L," an ell is a perpendicular addition or wing to a home. They extended the home's living space and were sometimes attached to other out buildings. It was not uncommon to separate ells from their original colonial homes and move them to a new location as part of a new home. Several ells in Lexington have been attributed to the late 1700's.*

# Witness to 1775 Houses



Buckman Tavern Outbuildings  
9 Hancock Street  
Meriam Cottage/Garrity House -  
likely c. pre-1775



The Battle of Lexington April 19, 1775  
Amos Doolittle Engraving

In 1775, Amos Doolittle created a series of engravings of entitled "The Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775." They were based on eyewitness accounts and are the only known witness depictions of the battle. The Buckman Tavern at the time included a few outbuildings, including the Meriam Cottage. This Doolittle print includes some of these buildings.



# House History

Today's Garrity House is a far cry from its previous iteration that may have borne witness to the Battle of Lexington. A quaint cottage with a white picket fence, its 18th century origins were decidedly more rustic. The house as we know it was cobbled together in the 1830s by joining two outbuildings that had previously been part of the Buckman Tavern and Meriam farm, according to the reminiscences of Meriam descendant Abbie Stetson Griffing. Later, this house was a dormitory for young women attending classes at the Normal School across the street, the first teachers' college in the United States (now Framingham State University). Other residents rented the cottage from the Meriam-Stetson-Griffing family over the course of the 19th century until 1913, when the Town of Lexington acquired it along with the Buckman Tavern property.

Initially a residence and office for **John J. Garrity**, Lexington's first parks superintendent, this later became known to a generation of Lexingtonians as the headquarters of the Lexington Chapter of the American Red Cross. Long in disrepair, a first major push for town preservation funding was made in 1971 -- incidentally, the year of the first Lexington Reenactment of the Battle of Lexington. The house later returned to a private residence. The tavern property featured around a dozen outbuildings, including a cider mill, corn barn, cow barn, and the early 19th century chaise house that still stands behind this cottage and originally stood closer to Bedford Street.

Historian S. Lawrence Whipple was not able to determine where on the property these outbuildings came from, although the 1775 Earl-Doolittle print of the battle and a contemporaneous oil painting show one shed, perhaps the size of the front of this cottage, standing along the Bedford Road. Another shed of similar size is where today's Estabrook memorial stone is in front of the tavern. The estate extended up the side of Meriam Hill.

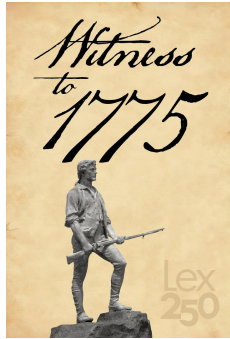
The cottage was fashioned by **Col. John Parkhurst Meriam**, a past captain of the Lexington Militia who commanded the company from 1815 to 1818 before rising through the ranks to the regimental level in Middlesex County. Meriam created the little house as a residence for a ward of his who had intellectual disabilities.



*Three Meriam properties can be seen east of the Common in this 1853 plan of Lexington, Massachusetts by Henry F. Walling.*

*Source: OCLC 56833719 (Boston Athenaeum, Harvard), 317759120 (Boston Public, Mass. Historical), and 1252272644 (Harvard)*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Reverend Jonas Clarke Parsonage  
36 Hancock Street  
Hancock-Clarke House -1737-1738

*Home to a Revolutionary Soldier*



*Hancock-Clarke House c. 1920's  
Source: Lexington History Museums*



## House History

It was in the upstairs study of this parsonage that **Rev. Jonas Clarke** etched out his lengthy sermons, in cramped handwriting, in the years that led up to the battle. After a walk down the road each Sabbath, he would belt out the word of God with a message that excited the patriotic passions of the town and prepared its people for the war that accidentally began on their doorstep.

More stately and ornate than the typical manse of a country parson, the main structure seen today was constructed by 1738 for **Rev. John and Elizabeth Hancock**, perhaps a gift from their son, wealthy Boston merchant **Thomas Hancock**. The materials were superb, and the craftsmen may have just finished working on Thomas' own mansion on Beacon Hill which was completed at the same time. An older house, dating to the turn of the 18th century, stood behind the present structure. It was connected to the new building by the rude kitchen ell with gambrel roof that still stands today.

**John Hancock III** was 7 years old when his father, **Rev. John Jr.**, minister at Braintree, died in 1744. Young John came out to Lexington to live on his grandparents' farm and spent some years of his childhood here. He was later president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, then president of the Continental Congress, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and first governor of Massachusetts under the new state Constitution of 1780.

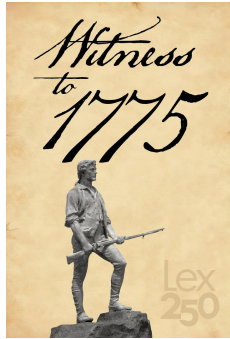
Old "Bishop" John died in 1752, and the town called Clarke, a recent Harvard graduate, to the ministry in 1755. Clarke boarded with the widow Hancock in the old parsonage and two years later married the widow's granddaughter, **Lucy Bowes** of Bedford. In all, the Clarks had 13 children, 12 of whom survived to adulthood. One of them, young **Jonas Jr.**, was 14 years old on the night of April 18, 1775. He might have listened to the murmur of conversation late into the evening as **John Hancock III** and **Samuel Adams** pondered their safety and mulled over affairs of state with Lexington's minister.

If Jonas Clarke Sr. provided the spiritual fervor for Lexington's soldiers, it was **Jonas Jr.**, still age 14, who provided the martial music. Little Jonas was the fifer for a detachment of the Lexington Militia that was sent out to Cambridge in May of 1775. He also gave two months' service in the Third Campaign at Cambridge in 1775. Jonas Jr. moved to Maine after the war and was appointed as collector of the Port of Kennebunk and a judge of the York County probate court.

Some of the spinster Clarke daughters lived on in the house until the last died in 1844. Joseph Eaton owned the home from the 1840s until the Centennial year, 1875, when he sold it to Henry Bigelow Brigham, a Lexington newcomer who had recently moved in next door at No. 40 with his wife Mary E. After Mr. Brigham's death in the 1880s, Mrs. Brigham announced her intention of demolishing the old parsonage, which she had allowed to become decrepit, to create a sprawling bowling lawn next to her mansion. A burgeoning historical preservation movement helped **Rev. Carleton A. Staples** -- a successor of Hancock's and Clarke's in the First Parish pulpit, to rally the townspeople to save it.

*Spending part of his childhood in Lexington, John Hancock was the cousin of Reverend Jonas Clarke's wife (Lucy Bowes). This provided him and fellow Patriot Samuel Adams the opportunity of staying at the family's ancestral Lexington home on April 18, 1775.*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Dr. Joseph Fiske House

63 Hancock Street

Dr. Robert Fiske House - 1732

*Home to a Minute Man*



*Spanning across three generations and for more than one hundred years, five Fiske men served as physicians in the Town of Lexington. Two tended to the wounded Patriots and British following the Battle of Lexington.*



## House History

Some people are called to serve others, and some rare families display this trait across multiple generations. Such is the case for three generations of the Fiske family who tended to the sick of Lexington as the town's only doctors for more than a century. By the time of April 19, there were two doctors in town -- **Joseph Fiske Sr.** and **Joseph Fiske Jr.** -- and both were living under this roof.

The father was 48 years old and provided the medical care to wounded British Regulars inside Buckman Tavern, one of whom did not survive and was interred in the Burying Ground. He was assisted by his son, who was 22 that day, and the duo surely also cared for the 10 Lexingtonians who were wounded in that first skirmish of the war.

A demanding day for these medical men, who would have treated injuries like those of **John Robbins**, who suffered a shattered jawbone and lacerated arm; **John Tidd**, whose head had been cut open by a British saber; and **Joseph Comee**, who was shot in the arm.

Joseph Fiske Jr. was a member of Capt. Parker's Company, and although his name has not been definitively linked to service in the battle, the claim was advanced by historian Rev. Artemas B. Muzzey, who knew him years later. Joseph Jr. went on to in the Continental Army throughout the war, rising to the rank of surgeon. He was granted membership in the prestigious Society of the Cincinnati in 1784, a year after it was founded, and was a founding member of the Massachusetts Medical Society. According to Hudson, he studied with Dr. John Warren, brother of **Dr. Joseph Warren**, the hero of Bunker Hill.

This house, possibly the second to stand on the site, was reputedly built in 1732 by **Dr. Robert Fiske**, the grandfather of the family, who was the first physician to ever practice in Lexington. Two of his other descendants, one named David and another named Robert, also practiced medicine in town.

Joseph Jr. moved after the war to the John Harrington house on East Street. He returned here to his childhood home in 1809, after the death of his father, Joseph Sr. The Fiske family stayed in the Hancock Street homestead until 1854, when they sold it to a member of the Simonds family who had just sold off the ancestral Simonds house on Burlington Street.

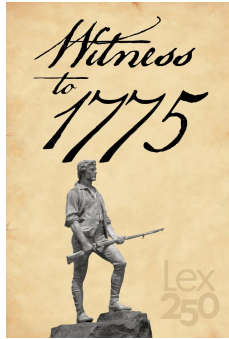


Left: Fiske House,  
Adams Street, 1885  
Source: Edwin B. Worthen  
Collection, Cary Memorial Library

Right: Bill from Dr. Joseph Fiske  
Province of Massachusetts for  
treating British soldiers  
Source: Lexington  
History Museums



# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Abigail Harrington/Jonathan Harrington House

1 Harrington Road

Jonathan Harrington House – c.1760

## *Home to a Minute Man*



*Nine Harrington family members fought on the Green that fateful day, aged 17-65. This included two first cousins, three third cousins, and four brothers. Caleb and Jonathan Jr. were killed and are buried at the Revolutionary War Memorial Oblisk on the Lexington Green.*

*The extensive Harrington family of Lexington all descended from **Robert Harrington**, who immigrated from England in 1642.*

*Two Historic House Plaques adorn the Harrington House. The right plaque tells the story of Jonathan Harrington's death. The left plaque identifies the home as that of John Augustus.*



*Harrington House circa 1896-1901*

*Source: Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company*



## House History

Perhaps no house in Lexington has been written of so often. Its notoriety comes from the tragedy that **Ruth Harrington** supposedly witnessed: her husband **Jonathan**'s death, on their own property, during the Battle of Lexington.

Jonathan's body was found near the barn, which stood near where Bedford Street is today, according to an account from his cousin Levi. The 30-year-old militiaman had been cut down by British musket fire after retreating from the Common and trying to escape to the rear of his property.

The story was amplified in the 19th century, resulting in exaggerated tales of Jonathan dragging himself to the front door and perishing at Ruth's feet. While those may be apocryphal, Ruth could very well have watched from the back door or a rear window as Jonathan fell. Their 8-year-old son, also named Jonathan, may have watched, too.

Local historians have puzzled over when the house was built and by whom. A house stood on the property as early as 1722. This building seems to have been extant by 1761, when the town rented rooms here to teach school while building the new schoolhouse on the Common. At that time, it was already the home of Widow **Abigail Harrington**, though it is not clear how she acquired the property.

Abigail was "a hard-working woman," according to antiquarian M. J. Canavan. She also hired out rooms in her house to the town as shelter for a homeless family, **Eggnatious Merion** and his wife and six children, in 1764. Abigail's husband, Richard, was also her first cousin and was the uncle of Jonathan, the patriot of 1775. Richard probably died in the early 1750s in what is now Hudson, N.H.

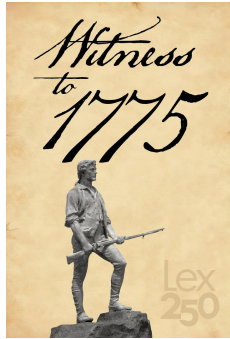
Nephew Jonathan and his new bride Ruth may have joined Abigail in the house around the time of their marriage on Feb. 13, 1766. Jonathan was raised on East Street, and Ruth was the daughter of **Dr. Robert Fiske Jr.**, whose brother, **Dr. Joseph Fiske Sr.**, lived on Hancock Street.

Abigail died in August of 1776 -- followed by young Jonathan Jr., who died in October just 11 days before his 10th birthday. The widow Ruth, now alone after two years of loss, remarried in February of 1777 and sold the house the same year to her brother, **Dr. David Fiske**.

Fiske practiced medicine out of this house for around 25 years, a tradition that would be revived in the early 1900s when **Dr. Bertha C. Downing**, Lexington's first female doctor, briefly resided here. Cobbler **John Augustus** lived here from around 1811 to 1828, and town records show reimbursements for times he mended shoes or provided clothes for the needy, including a boy who worked in his shop. After Augustus left Lexington for Boston, he worked to rehabilitate men and women as the so-called father of the probation system.

Faced with possible demolition, this house was saved -- and dramatically altered -- by **Leroy S. Brown** in 1910. It was later used as a parsonage by the First Parish Church. And for nearly 50 years, this was the home of Joann Gschwendtner, longtime chair of the Historic Districts Commission who prioritized the preservation of Lexington's quaint village streetscapes.

# Witness to 1775 Houses



Joseph Smith House

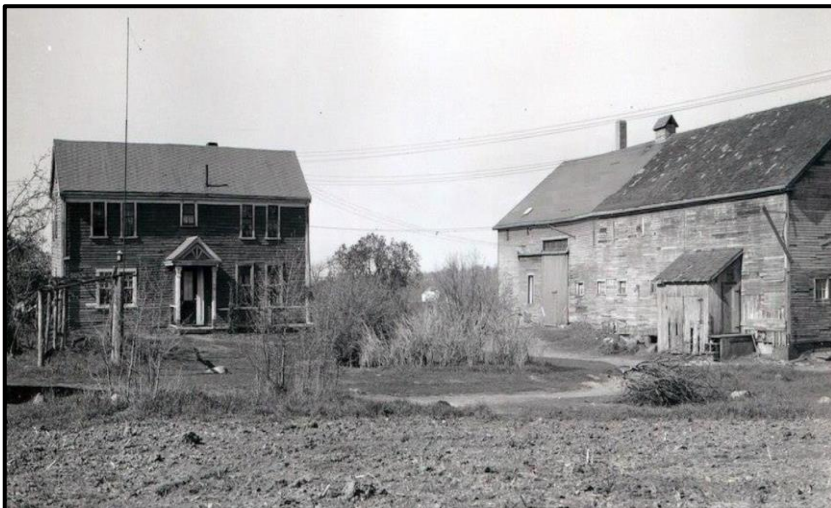
50 Kendall Road

Joseph Smith House – c.1765

*Home to a Revolutionary Soldier*



*Like some colonial homes, the Smith House was physically moved from its original location. As communities prospered and populations grew, open land in and around these antique homes became more sparse and thusly more valuable. The practice of relocating homes can help ensure the preservation of the historic structure and of local history.*



*Joseph Smith House*

*Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection,  
Cary Memorial Library*



*Paint layers on a door jamb.*

[FORM B - BUILDING- The Oldest Houses in Lexington | Lexington, MA](#)



## House History

Today tucked away on Kendall Road, this farmhouse originally stood in a cluster of Smith houses down at Kite End, also known in ancient times as Smith's End, along the old roads parallel to today's Waltham Street. The Joseph Smith house was originally at 29 Allen St. next to J. P. Carroll & Co.

**Joseph Smith** probably grew up in a home across from 29 Allen Street, where his father Hezekiah Smith's house reportedly stood. Joseph was just 17 when Hezekiah died, and he inherited and purchased the rights to his father's lands. Joseph probably built this house at the time he married Lucy Stone in 1765. He was 31 by the time he served with the Lexington Militia at Cambridge in June of 1775. He was appointed to the town Committee of Correspondence in 1778 and served the same year as a sergeant in the 16th Campaign to Providence.

After the war, Joseph jumped back into town affairs. He was the elected captain of the Lexington Militia from 1785 to 1786, simultaneously serving his first one-year term as a selectman. He was one of nine veterans of 1775 who later went on to command the town militia. Elected selectman again in 1789, 1791, and 1793, he also served three years as an assessor.

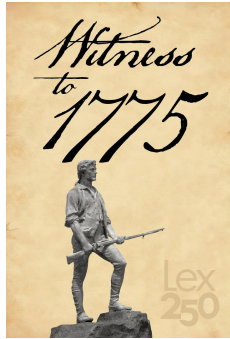
After Joseph died in 1805, his eldest surviving child, **Joseph Jr.**, acquired the farmstead. Joseph Jr. had followed in his father's footsteps as commander of the Lexington Militia from 1800 to 1805 -- one of several commanders from this period whose fathers had fought in the battle, such as John Parker Jr. Joseph Jr. died in 1813, on the 18th of April, and his ornate gravestone in the Burying Ground is a showcase of Masonic symbolism.

Joseph's youngest child, **Billings**, also performed a special military duty. April of 1835 -- the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Lexington -- featured the dramatic reinterment of the first fallen heroes of the Revolution. As the seven casualties of April 19 were reburied with elaborate ceremony beneath the obelisk on the Common, the town needed an honor guard to escort their remains. Military spirit had faded following the War of 1812 and many town militias had ceased drilling. **Billings Smith** was picked to command a special volunteer company that formed and trained exclusively to perform that one day's worth of service to honor their forebears -- the comrades-in-arms of Billings' father, Joseph.

Joseph Jr.'s widow sold the farm of around 70 acres to Marshall Wellington, who sold in 1837 to **Galen Allen**, namesake of Allen Street. A New Hampshire native, Allen moved to Lexington, married **Lavinia Munroe**, was elected selectman and became a leading citizen. Lavinia was the great-granddaughter of **Ensign Robert Munroe**, who had been killed in the battle while escaping over a stone wall near where the Minute Men Memorial stands today.

After a series of ownership transactions, Swedish immigrant Axel Swenson bought the house in 1906. He and his brother Henning formed the firm of Swenson Bros., operators of Greenfield Farm along Marrett Road and perhaps the most successful dairymen of the 20th century in Lexington. The Swenson family sold in 1988 to John P. Carroll, a Lexington native who sold the historical house for \$1 to Patricia and William DeBonte, who then moved it to its new site.

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Samuel Bridge House

271 Marrett Road

Matthew Bridge House - 1668

*Home to a Town Founder*

*Home of a Revolutionary Soldier*



*The Samuel Bridge House c. 1860 (left photo) and 1923 (right photo).*

[FORM B - BUILDING- The Oldest Houses in Lexington | Lexington, MA](#)



## House History

One of the original land grant recipients at Cambridge Farms, the Bridge family amassed around 600 acres of farmland by the early 1700s, when patriarch **Matthew Bridge** began dividing up his holdings among his four sons. One received a house that was later demolished on the Metropolitan State Hospital site; another was on Middleby Road and burned in the 19th century; a third farmstead still stands opposite Spring Street. Then there was the original homestead, where the old house -- believed to now be a portion of the main structure's ell -- was built by 1668.

Patriarch Matthew kept his own dwelling the longest, giving it to his youngest son, Samuel, probably around the time of Samuel's first marriage in 1731. Matthew likely continued to live there until his death seven years later. He was Lexington's original leading citizen -- a town founder, first member of the Board of Selectmen, town clerk, town treasurer, and soldier in the town militia company during the colonial wars. Son **Samuel** was likewise a patriot.

Selectman from 1758 to 1760, Samuel was already 69 years old by the time of the battle. While there is no record of him serving with the militia in those early days, he picked up the cause of liberty a couple years later and served in the Eighth Campaign to the Jerseys, the 11th Campaign to Bennington, and the 13th Campaign performing guard duty in Cambridge, according to muster rolls.

It's possible there was another Revolutionary soldier in this house, too. The town's warning-out notices in 1773 indicated that a **Matthew Bridge**, who was likely one of Samuel's sons, took in a man named **Matthew Farrington**. Farrington, who was around 25 years old and probably a hired farmhand here, later swore in his federal pension affidavit that he had served in the Lexington Militia at the Battle of Lexington. He went on to fight throughout the war -- in a Woburn company later in 1775, in the Lexington company in 1776, and in the Continental Army from 1777 to 1780.

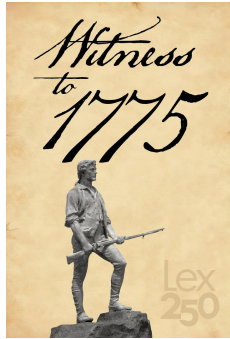
The Bridge family apparently held political favor with onetime Lexingtonian Gov. John Hancock, who appointed one of Samuel's seven surviving sons, Edmund, as sheriff of Hancock County in the District of Maine.

It was the youngest son's youngest son -- Samuel's son, **Jonas** -- who kept up the farm after his father died in 1791. One of them was responsible for building the front portion of today's house. Jonas' son, **Samuel**, married one of the **Wellingtons** from the Joseph Bridge house. After a series of ownership changes from 1853 to 1893, the house was associated with the Kendall family for some years. Developer Neil McIntosh developed what was left of the farm in 1917, and this house by the side of the road became known as "The Old House." First nationally showcased as author Della Lutes' test kitchen in Priscilla Magazine, The Old House became a sought-after Yankee restaurant operated by **Margaret Weimer Heywood**, an early Betty Crocker type who advertised baking flour with radio programs on the Yankee Network. She later scaled the business down into a tea room.

*First floor, SW parlor looking north.*  
*[FORM B - BUILDING- The Oldest Houses](#)*  
*[in Lexington | Lexington, MA](#)*

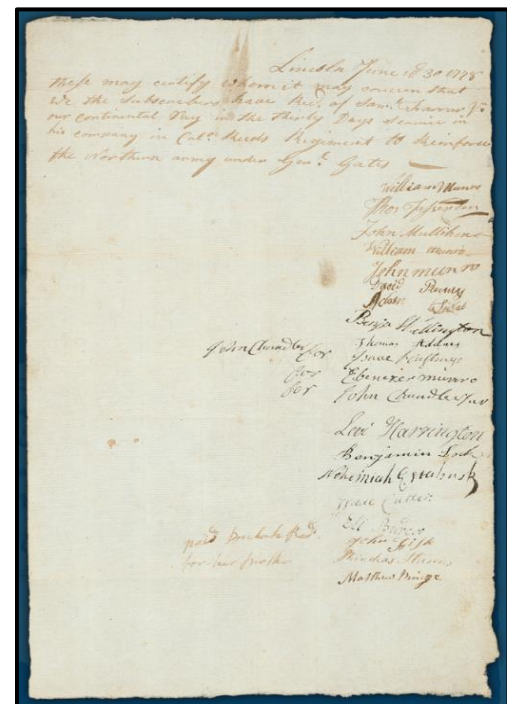


# Witness to 1775 Houses



Joseph Bridge/Eli Burdoo  
419 Marrett Road  
Joseph Bridge House - 1722

*Home to a Minute Man*



Receipt for the Lexington Militia Payroll in 1778 for Colonel Reed's Regiment in General Gates' Army. This receipt lists many Lexington names, including Eli Burdoo.  
Source: Lexington History Museums



## House History

Another of the houses that **Matthew Bridge Jr.** gave to his children, this one was a new construction built for son **Joseph Bridge Sr.** around the time of Joseph's marriage. And, like the original Bridge house, there seems to have been an additional member of the household living and working here in 1775 who contributed to the patriot cause.

**Eli Burdoo** came from Lexington's one prominent free Black family at the time, and here he likely lived under Joseph's roof. He had grown up on Bedford Street near Route 128 until his father, **Moses**, seems to have fallen on hard times. Moses sold his homestead to the Reeds, and in 1759 the town Overseers of the Poor had custody of young Eli, who was then around 4 years old. They arranged for him to be "bound out" to **Joseph Bridge Jr.** and his wife **Eliot** (Reed) Bridge as an indentured servant until close to his 21st birthday. Lexington did not yet have an alms-house and this is one way the town dealt with its housing-insecure population. (The contract was preserved by local collector Eric Carlson of Lexington Coin, who donated it to the Historical Society.)

Eli came to be working here on the Bridge farm alongside **Joseph Jr.'s son, Jonathan**, who was around three years younger. Under the terms of the contract, the Bridges had agreed to "teach or cause him the apprentice to be taught the art and mystery of good husbandry," along with reading the Bible and writing. Eli, around 20 in 1775, was a member of the Lexington Militia Company although there is no firsthand account of any of his actions on April 19. He did go on to serve in the Lexington Militia at Cambridge in May and June of 1775, joined by his contemporary **Jonathan Bridge**.

That September, **Joseph Bridge Jr.** -- half of the couple to whom Eli was indentured -- died, perhaps of the same tuberculosis that killed Capt. John Parker the same autumn. Then, on Jan. 1, 1776, Eli was done with his service. Under the terms laid out by the Overseers of the Poor years earlier, the Bridges were required to send him away with two suits of clothes.

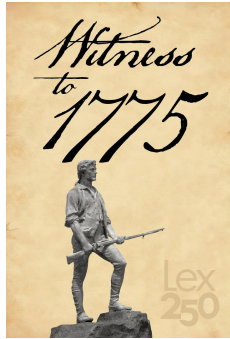
He was born free, and now he was truly free again. Eli joined the Middlesex County Militia in 1777 and served "to reinforce [the] Northern army," according to muster rolls. Records of him drop off after that and we know not what became of him after the war. Several of the Burdoos moved up north after the war to settle Windsor County, Vermont. A relative who was either a cousin or grand-nephew, Silas, lived there and served in the historic 54th Massachusetts Regiment during the Civil War.

Joseph Bridge Sr. died in 1778, leaving behind his grandson **Jonathan**, who seems to have encountered financial troubles and sold off the place. The original farm encompassed both sides of today's Marrett Road and ran down Waltham Street where there are still agricultural fields today. The **Wellingtons** acquired the farm in 1817, and by 1890 it was part of the Grassland Stock Farm owned by piano manufacturer Edward S. Payson, an early promoter of the Esperanto language. The more than 97 acres were developed by Neil McIntosh in 1922 and created today's Woodhaven neighborhood.

The house passed to the Daniel Curtin family, namesake of the Curtin's Corner intersection with Spring Street, who operated a garden shop here. It was Daniel's son, Dean Curtin, who developed much of the active business landscape in this neighborhood during the latter 20th century.

*There are two known persons of color who were members of the Lexington Militia Company – Eli Burdoo and Prince Estabrook.*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Thomas Fessenden Jr./William Diamond House  
837 Massachusetts Avenue

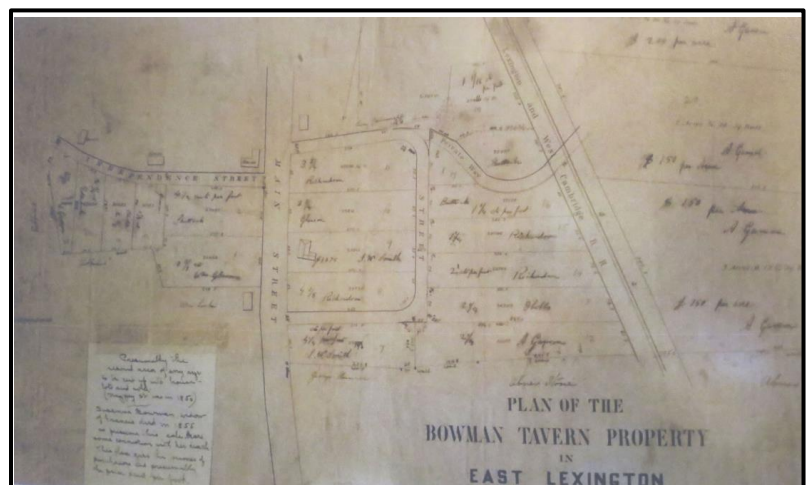
Thomas Fessenden Jr. House/Bowman Tavern  
- c. 1769

*Home to a Minute Man*

*Home to a Revolutionary Soldier*



*Map of the subdivision of the Fessenden/Bowman property, 1855. The tavern is located on the right side of Main Street, depicted with an L-plan with a hipped north end. Source: Owner's Collection*





# House History

**Thomas Fessenden** was in a pasture near the Common when the battle broke out. He stood and watched the imposing sight of more than 800 Regulars, in their bright red uniforms, marching up the main street of his town. He heard the officers ordering his Lexington neighbors to disperse, then saw the effects of the first volley of war. After that? "I ran off as fast as I could while they continued firing till I got out of their reach," he said in a deposition four days later.

Thomas, 41, was then a single father with two children at home -- Nelly, 5, and Thomas, 3. His wife **Elizabeth** (Apthorp) had died in 1773. Perhaps a sense of paternal responsibility kept him from risking his life that morning, for he was no less a patriot. Thomas was clerk of the Militia Company in March of 1776, signed the declaration of loyalty to the United American Colonies in May of 1776, and left Lexington as a lieutenant in 1777 on the campaign to capture **Gen. Burgoyne**. By then, he had remarried, to **Lucy (Lee)** of Concord with whom he would have five more children.

One member of this household did stand on the Common as the first shots rang out: **William Diamond**, 19, the company's drummer who was originally from Boston. Thomas had taken him "into my house to reside with me" in 1770, according to selectmen's records, probably to serve as an apprentice in Thomas' wheelwright shop. Young Diamond continued to serve throughout the Revolution including the first 8-month campaign, the second campaign of 12 months to New York, and service under **Gen. Washington** in the Continental Army. He returned to Lexington after the war, married **Rebecca (Simonds)**, and their first five children were born in town before the Diamonds moved on to Peterborough, N.H.

Thomas Fessenden had likely built this house around the time of his marriage to **Elizabeth Apthorp** in 1769. They assembled their family on a short timeline, as the intentions were published in February and their first child was born in July. After his death in 1804, the home eventually passed to **Francis Bowman Jr.**, who attached a large barn on the Centre side and made it into a public house. Bowman had been married the year before, and his first child was named **Elizabeth Apthorp Bowman** -- some sort of nod to Thomas' first wife who had died in 1773. The space was not well suited as a tavern and "the inconvenient arrangements and the lack of room in the house proved a hindrance to success," according to historian A. W. Bryant. Bowman also built a grocery store toward the lower end of Curve Street which burned within around 10 years, Bryant said. He gave up the tavern business after less than a decade, and E. P. Bliss relates a list of the tavernkeepers who followed in quick succession: **Brown, Spear, and Wyman, then Lemuel Lakin** from 1833 until 1840; then **Flint, Fields, and James W. Colburn**, who Bliss said was the final landlord in 1843. "In the busy season forty horses were put up" at this lively establishment, according to Bliss history of Lexington taverns. Flint the landlord may have been **Nathaniel Flint**, who bought the real estate in 1840, lived here until the mid-1850s, and subdivided the surrounding land into house lots. After the Flints moved out around the 1870s, it seems to have become a rental property and that might have been when it was divided into a double-house. Already in a decrepit state by the 1960s, the house was acquired in 1987 by **Vincent Cerbone**, who rescued and restored it

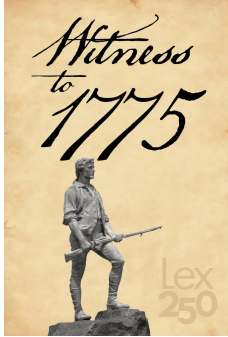


*Left: Fessenden House  
Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection,  
Cary Memorial Library*



*Right: William Diamond Drum  
Source: Lexington History Museums*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Fessenden House

898 Massachusetts Avenue

Possibly Thomas Fessenden Sr. - c. 1735



*Some Patriots served on the Green.*

*Some Patriots served at the retreat of the British back to Boston (Battle Road).*

*Some Patriots served in the battles thereafter that led to  
the eventual surrender of Cornwallis.*

*Some served in all of these conflicts.*



# House History

This is likely the oldest house standing in East Lexington today, but its history is perhaps the least certain. **Thomas Fessenden Sr.** may have built this house around the time of his 1735 marriage to **Hannah Prentice**, based on the architectural style and original doorway which existed prior to 21st century renovations. If so, this would be the "mansion house" Thomas Sr. left behind when he died in 1768, along with a barn, other outbuildings, and around 140 acres of land.

Who called this house home on April 19, 1775 remains unclear. **Thomas Fessenden Jr.** had by then built his new mansion house across the street. Perhaps his brother **Nathan**, who married around 1771, was starting his family here. Accounts of property damage wrought by the Regulars include losses by other Mass. Ave. residents whose residences have not been definitively located, such as **Elizabeth Samson**, from whom the Regulars stole clothing -- probably for bandages.

This was probably one of the three dwelling houses on Thomas Jr.'s estate at the time of his death in 1804. The house at 837 Mass. Ave. was set off to his second wife **Lucy** (Lee). And this parcel was part of a 29-acre share with buildings, located on both sides of the Cambridge Road, left to their youngest son, **John**. John sold it in 1822, two years after his mother's death, to **Francis Bowman Jr.**, proprietor of the tavern.

In 1829, Bowman sold a quarter-acre "house lot" to **Leonard Noyes**, who worked in the East Village fur-dressing industry and lived here until 1847, when he sold to **Daniel Benjamin**, a milk dealer. Noyes seems to have moved to the Centre and wound up by 1880 in the town Alms-house, noted on the Census as a criminal convict and "habitually intemperate." Daniel Benjamin seems to have moved to Somerville and sold this place to his mother, **Hannah (Estabrook) Benjamin**, who had previously lived with her mother at 19 Maple St.

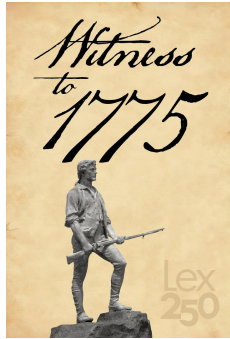
The house was acquired in 1874 by **Emma Leavitt**, who moved here with her husband, **Alonzo**. A heavy artillery veteran of the Civil War, Alonzo manufactured organ keys, sang in the Park Street Church choir in Boston, and was a member of the Handel and Haydn Society. The youngest Leavitt child, **Grace**, was born in 1875 and was the only child to survive. She worked as a clerk in the Corporations Department at the State House and sold this house by 1927. But according to Worthen, Grace was best remembered for the fact that she married the poet **Nixon Waterman** in 1940 -- when he was 80 and she was 65.



*Erected in 1799, the Commonwealth approved Joseph Simonds' petition to recognize the first men who lost their lives in the Battle of Lexington with what is now the oldest war monument in the United States. Inscribed with words from Reverend Jonas Clarke, seven of the eight Patriots were exhumed from Lexington's Old Burying Ground and laid to rest here.*

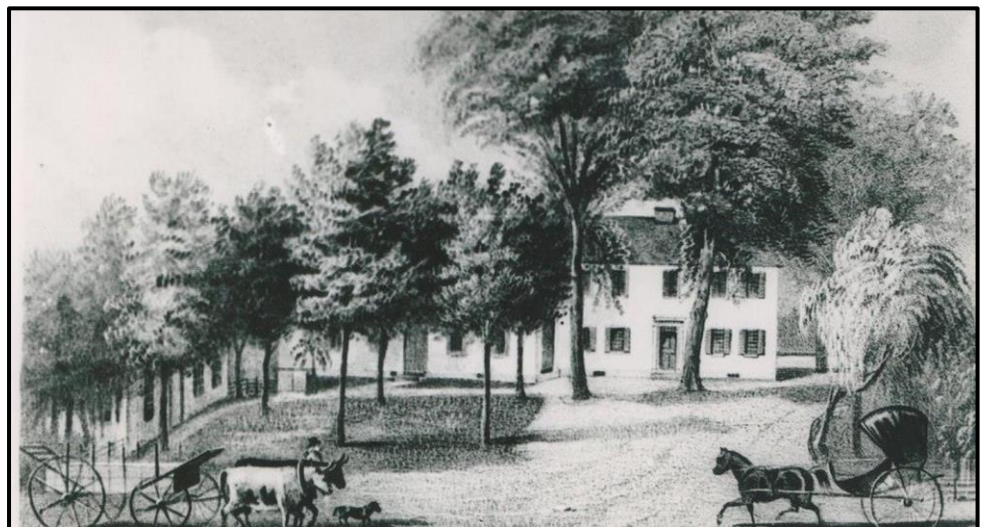
*The obelisk's location is on the line stretching across the Green where the Lexington Training Band held their ground on April 19, 1775.*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Nathaniel Farmer House  
1295 Massachusetts Avenue  
Robbins-Stone House – c. 1730

*Home of a Minute Man*



*Farmer House*

Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection,  
Cary Memorial Library



# House History

This house -- which originally stood at 669 Mass. Ave. until it was moved here in 1946 -- is primarily known for its later history as the home of **Stephen Robbins Jr.**, the man who sparked the industrial boom in the East Village. But for 25 years before and during the Revolution, this was the home of **Nathaniel Farmer**, one of the brave militiamen who was wounded on Lexington Common.

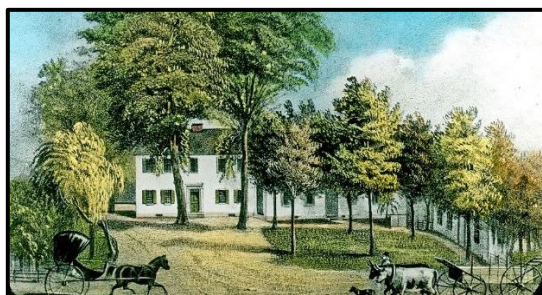
As Nathaniel made his way up the great road to the Centre on April 19, he left behind in this house his pregnant wife **Hannah (Fessenden)** and seven children between the ages of 3 and 17. Nathaniel had come to Lexington from Billerica around 1748. His first two wives, Ruth and Nabby, died in 1753 and 1754. Three months after Nabby's death, Nathaniel bought this house along with a barn and 2.5 acres. He married Hannah the following May.

The musket ball hit him in his right arm, a disastrous wound he described in a petition to the Provincial Congress later that year. It "fractured the bone to that degree that sundry pieces of the same have been taken out, by means of which your petitioner hath suffered much pain as well as loss of time, and charge to doctors ... and, in fine, is totally disabled from carrying on his business, by which he chiefly supported himself and family," Nathaniel wrote. He was a cordwainer, or shoemaker, and the use of his right arm was key. The Legislature granted him £13/15s. Nathaniel also had to seek recompense for what he called "the wanton ravages and depredations of the troops of his British majesty." The Regulars, on their retreat back down the road toward Cambridge, had damaged the windows of the Farmer house and Nathaniel's shoe shop, damaged and stolen furniture from three rooms of the house, and taken clothing and bedding, probably for bandages.

Nathaniel sold the house, barn, and shop -- except for "the large window in the front of my shop" -- in 1779 to **Samuel Bemis**, a watch and clock maker. Bemis, who lived elsewhere in the East Village at the time of the battle, had married in late 1775 **Elizabeth Robinson**, who seems to have lived in this house as a child. This saltbox was likely built by Elizabeth's father, **Jonathan Robinson (1707-1743)**, around the time of his marriage. Bemis sold the place to Elizabeth's cousin in 1783, and it was eventually purchased by **Stephen Robbins** in 1786. Originally from Charlestown, the Robbins family had lived for a couple generations on Lowell Street. Stephen's brother, **John**, who lived at the site of today's Mosque, was also wounded in the battle.

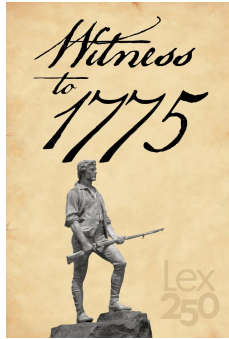
The Farmers were still in Lexington in 1782 when Hannah died. Nathaniel went off to Littleton, where he married twice more -- Hannah Stone in 1786 and Abigail Blodgett in 1795. He died in Littleton on the 18th of April, 1802.

Stephen Robbins Jr. developed extensive real estate holdings around the village and established a booming fur-dressing trade which was carried on by his son, **Eli**, who built a new house across Mass. Ave., constructed the Brick Store and the Stone Building, and brought transcendentalists and abolitionists to speak here. The old house was passed down to his granddaughter, **Ellen A. Stone**, the first woman to serve on the School Committee. After her death, a local builder planned to demolish the house until it was saved by Helen Potter, who moved it up Mass. Ave. for preservation.



*Color Drawing of the Robbins House, 1850  
Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection,  
Cary Memorial Library*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



John Mason House  
1303 Massachusetts Avenue  
John Mason House c. 1698

*Home to a Town Founder  
Home of a Minute Man*



THIS PROPERTY  
HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE  
NATIONAL REGISTER  
OF HISTORIC PLACES  
BY THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

*Lexington is host to twelve National Register of Historic Places buildings and three National Historic Landmarks properties. Only five are dated pre-1775 – Buckman Tavern, Hancock-Clarke House, the Mason House, Munroe Tavern, and the Lexington Green.*



# House History

One of many bygone industries of Lexington is that of leather-tanning. **Jonathan Smith** had his tannery near Vine Brook behind today's Baptist Church, and just down the Cambridge Road, John Mason operated a bark mill and tan pits near his house with his sons.

John was 73 at the time of the battle and not active in military affairs. He lived here with his wife **Lydia** (Loring), a childhood neighbor who had been raised near the entrance to today's Slocum Road. Two of their sons -- **Joseph**, 38, and **Daniel**, 23 -- were members of the Lexington Militia in 1775.

Joseph had served with the elite Rogers' Rangers in the French and Indian War, was married with two children, and was currently five years into his 20-year run as Lexington's town clerk. His beautiful penmanship can still be appreciated in those old records. He also served with distinction as one of Lexington's schoolmasters, though he appears not to have been the town's primary teacher in 1775. Joseph was a corporal in the militia when they marched to Cambridge in May and marched to Roxbury the following March. Daniel served from late 1776 to early 1777 as a guard in Boston, then served at Cambridge for several months and at Rhode Island in 1778. He "had little of the soldier in his bearing," **Rev. A. B. Muzzey** later recalled, and led a simple, impoverished life in his later years. Daniel was one of 10 survivors of Capt. Parker's Company present in 1835 to watch the men killed in the battle be re-interred on the Common amid great ceremony.

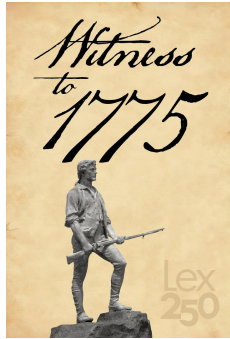
The British troops, on their retreat in the afternoon of April 19, ransacked John Mason's property along with many others along the road. He was granted £14/13s/4d by the Provincial Congress for damages including lost clothing and household furniture. The damage could have been worse; houses up the road were burnt to the ground, including the home of Lydia's brother, **Deacon Joseph Loring**.

John Mason's father, also **John**, came from the Waban area and built this house around 1698 ahead of his marriage in 1699, according to attorney-historian M. J. Canavan, who traced the often-unreliable early land deeds. John Jr. inherited the place in 1739, and by the time of the battle he had mortgaged it to his brother, **Thaddeus**, who later became the Middlesex County register of deeds. After John's death, Thaddeus sold the old house to the county's register of probate, "Professor" **James Winthrop**.

A former Harvard librarian, Winthrop was an "eccentric" who became increasingly "intemperate" with age, Canavan said. He planted mulberry trees on the Mason estate in an attempt to cultivate silkworms. A Cambridge resident, he would live in Lexington in the summers and rented the house to **Jonas Munroe**, who started his family here and later took over the tavern across the street. Jonas later bought this house, and it passed to his son **James S. Munroe**, who laid out paths for visitors in the extensive property behind the house. In colonial times, the area east of the Mason house down into today's Tower Park was called Mason's Hollow, where the road used to dip and the earth became boggy. In James Munroe's day, the lands back off Mass. Ave. were called God's Creation for the beauty he cultivated there. Later, those lands were used as the Breck-Robinson Nursery, and today the property is home to the Four Seasons plant nursery and garden center.

*At its roots, Lexington was a farming community whose focus included both livestock and commercial agriculture. Originally part of the town of Cambridge and first called the Vine Brook territory, some of its most fertile land is fed by Vine Brook. After many of the local farms had been closed and developed, Lexington found new renown as host to The Victory Garden, one of the nation's first do-it-yourself PBS television programs. This was filmed at Lexington Gardens near the Joshua Simonds House.*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Samuel Sanderson House  
1314 Massachusetts Avenue  
Samuel Sanderson House pre-1775

*Home to a Minute Man*



*Kitchen, detail of fireplace.*  
Source: FORM B – BUILDING - The Oldest Houses in Lexington | Lexington, MA



# House History

The sound of **Samuel Sanderson's** hammer striking nails into the boards would have shot out the open door of his cellar workshop and rang over the fields of the Munroe District, like echoes of the musket fire the town had heard at dawn. It was here in the cellar that Sam Sanderson made the coffins to give a proper burial to his 10 townsmen whose lives were taken on April 19. Samuel and his brother **Elijah**, who also lived here, were cabinetmakers -- a skilled trade making everything from furniture to coffins. Built into the side of the hill, the front wall of the Sanderson house's cellar was completely open to the road, and that is how the coffins were carried out and driven up to the Burying Ground.

The militiamen killed at dawn, along with an unarmed prisoner from Woburn, had been hastily buried in "boxes made of four large boards nailed up," **Rev. Clarke's daughter** later recalled. The mass grave was covered with tree boughs out of fear the Regulars would desecrate it during their retreat. The bodies were later exhumed and put into the finer coffins from Sanderson's shop. The town paid Samuel 16 shillings to cover four of the coffins, and it seems these were the four men whose families did not have sufficient funds -- **John Raymond** and **Jedediah Munroe**, whose families were in financial straits, and **Jonathan Harrington** and **Samuel Hadley**, who left young widows and little fortune.

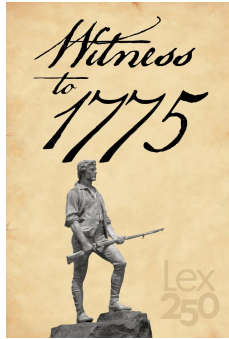
Elijah described how on the evening of April 18, they had seen an advance detail of British officers traveling up the road toward Concord. He walked up to Buckman Tavern and later rode out as a scout around 9 p.m. to look for the officers, who wound up detaining him until after 2 a.m. along with the other scouts and **Paul Revere**. Samuel fought in the battle with Elijah's musket, which he had taken while Elijah was in Lincoln. But Elijah witnessed the battle and helped tend to the casualties in the aftermath. "I assisted in carrying some of the dead into the meeting-house," he later said. Meantime, down the road, **Mary (Munroe) Sanderson** -- Samuel's wife -- returned from the safety of her father's house and found her own home in chaos. The property had been ransacked, their cow killed, and a wounded Regular was left behind. Mary asked Samuel why he did not "knock him on the head," according to a retold account of her story. She nursed the soldier although he reportedly insisted that the family taste his food before he would consume it. "The Satanish creatures stole and destroyed everything in the house, and didn't leave rags enough to dress the wounds of their own man," she said.

Elijah served with the militia at Cambridge the following month. After he returned to the shop, Samuel marched out and served at Cambridge in June. Elijah went on the campaign to Ticonderoga in July, both brothers served at Roxbury the next spring, and then Elijah enlisted in the Continental Army.

Samuel likely built the house in the early 1770s, and it was here by the time he married Mary in 1772. Earlier deeds do not indicate a house on this site. They did not stay long and left during the war for Lancaster. One of Samuel's sons born in this house, **Lewis**, became a carriagemaker in Concord, N.H. -- one of the founders of the company that made the famed Concord Coach. In the 1990s, owner Mary Petschek discovered in the wall an exemplary set of concealment shoes -- a superstition meant to ward off bad spirits.

*Originating in the 1400's, the superstitious practice of the concealing household personal items within a house's structure emigrated from Europe. It was believed that doing so provided a protective magic for both the home and its occupants. Worn shoes were a common object. During the restoration of both the Hancock-Clarke and Sanderson houses, concealment shoes were discovered under floorboards.*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



William Munroe Tavern  
1332 Massachusetts Avenue  
Comee/Munroe Tavern c. 1735

*Home to a Minute Man*



Lexington Historical Society

*Munroe Tavern served as a British field hospital when it was commandeered by the British troops on their retreat to Boston on the afternoon of April 19, 1775.*





# House History

Today's Munroe District was the section of Lexington hardest hit on the afternoon of April 19. As the Regulars retreated into Lexington, **Hugh Earl Percy** led a column of reinforcements out from Boston and stopped them here, just below the Centre. Percy seized **William Munroe's** tavern, established a field headquarters, and used the property as a hospital for wounded soldiers. A pair of field cannon were aimed northwest toward the village and a cannonball was fired through the Meetinghouse. Neighbors' houses were burnt to the ground, militiamen fired at the Regulars from the shelter of stone walls, and women and children fled to safety and perhaps spectated from the hillside.

William Munroe had taken over the operation of this old tavern around four years prior to the battle, when **John Buckman** moved up to the Centre. Besides the public house and lodging for drovers, who passed through Lexington with herds of anything from cows to turkeys bound for market, Munroe also operated a retail store. He put in a claim after April 19 for £90 in stolen and destroyed merchandise from his store, more than £83 in damaged and stolen furniture and clothes from his own family's rooms, and another £30 in damage to the house. Irreplaceable was the loss of human life. Munroe left **John Raymond**, a partially crippled neighbor, to watch over his property that day. Raymond had previously operated his own tavern across the road but failed to maintain a profit and spent a stint in debtors' prison. Canavan heard the story of his death directly from Munroe's grandson: the "humiliated and enraged" Regulars "went into the shop and were becoming crazy drunk from the liquor in the barrels ... The soldiers entered the barroom and demanded more drink. A gun went off, and you can see the bullet-hole in the ceiling. John was terrified and sought escape through this outer back door and was shot. He was an infirm, debilitated, inoffensive man." A plaque memorializes him.

As for Munroe the tavernkeeper, he had been tasked with guarding **Samuel Adams** and **John Hancock** at the parsonage the night before and ensuring their journey to safety before organizing the militia on the Common. He later joined the campaign to the capture of **Gen. Burgoyne** in 1777 and commanded the Lexington Company as captain from 1780 to 1784. As a colonel in the Massachusetts militia, he marched west in 1787 to put down Shays' Rebellion. In 1789, when **President George Washington** visited Lexington on his tour of the states, it was Munroe who entertained him upstairs in the tavern. He also led the first "sham fight," or reenactment, of the battle in 1822.

The east facade of the tavern, facing the driveway, was the original house sitting endwise to the road, later expanded by adding the wing that faces Mass. Ave. The oldest part was built by **David Comee**, whose family bought the place in 1699. Recent dendrochronology dated the oldest part of the structure to around 1735, though an earlier structure on the site was built circa 1695 by **John Poulter**. It was owned by the Buckman family from the 1740s up until Munroe took over. Under the Munroe family into the 19th century, hospitality could be had "at the sign of the punch bowl," and the old sign still hangs inside the tavern. At the bottom is painted the date 1775, perhaps added after William repaired the place in the aftermath of April 19. His son **Jonas**, also a military man, carried on the tavern until it was rendered obsolete by the advent of the railroad and the booming hotel era came to town.

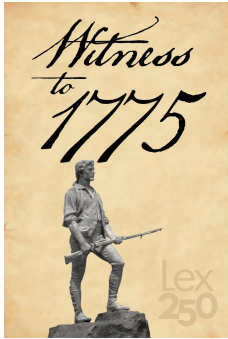


*Left: Reenactors at Munroe Tavern following the retreat of the British, April 19, 1775  
Source: Lexington History Museums*



*Right: Munroe Tavern, dressed for Patriots' Day, April 19, 1875  
Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection, Cary Memorial Library*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Matthew Mead/Levi Mead House  
1505 Massachusetts Avenue #3  
Matthew Mead House/Russell Hotel  
c. 1754

*Home to Revolutionary Soldiers*



*Following the Battle of Lexington, Battle Road is known as the retreat of the British from Concord's North Bridge back to Boston. Along the way, hundreds of Colonial Militia ambushed the Regulars as they made their way east.*

*According to local testaments, at age 15 Levi Mead was the youngest to aid in this battle as a powder-horn bearer.*



# House History

After losing seven of their number in the skirmish, the Lexington Militia marched out to the Lincoln line to strike the Regulars on their retreat. Young **Levi Mead**, 15, joined with the militia in the afternoon as a gunpowder-bearer, according to family tradition related in Putnam's Converse genealogy. He would have been the youngest boy to do any kind of service with the Lexington Militia that day. The second-youngest, Fifer **Jonathan Harrington** from the East Village, was a year older at 16.

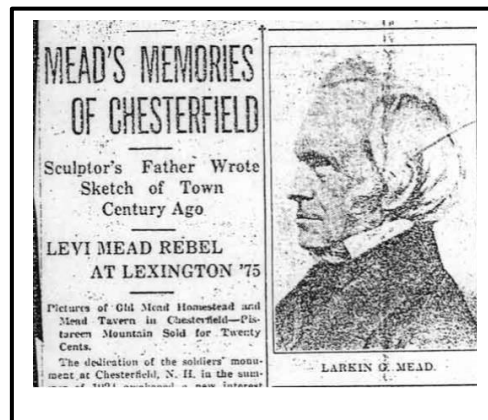
Levi lived here in the house his father, **Matthew Mead**, probably built around the time of his marriage in 1754 to **Martha Danforth**. The land had been bought of the **Estabrooks** before 1750. Living at the edge of the Centre village, Matthew was active in town affairs as a School Committee member, constable, and tythingman, and his farm stretched down to where the Munroe Center for the Arts driveway is today. There is no record of Matthew, 57, participating in military affairs on April 19, though Levi was a documented spectator at the morning battle. Matthew sustained a heavy £101 in reported damages to his property during the British retreat in the afternoon.

In May of 1776, Levi, then 16, was the youngest man to sign the so-called Test Oath which constituted the Lexington citizenry's own declaration of independence from British rule. He marched to Boston and Dorchester in late 1776 and early 1777 to guard the stores left behind by the evacuated British troops, then joined the Continental Army serving under Capt. Edmund Munro from 1777 to 1780 -- service under **General George Washington** in the Jerseys, a hard winter in Valley Forge, and a sweltering battle at Monmouth. His little brother Josiah performed guard duty at Cambridge in 1777.

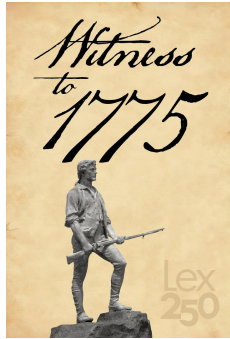
Levi started a family in the 1780s and built a new house around 1790 at 1445 Mass. Ave. The Lexington Militia elected him as their captain from 1796 to 1800; he was the final veteran of 1775 to serve as commander of the nit. After Matthew died in 1796, Levi and family left town for Chesterfield, N.H. Levi sold the houses and 40-acre farm in Lexington to **Shove Howland**, who divided the place into house lots and sold this old house in 1808 to **Abijah Harrington**. At the age of 14, Abijah had also witnessed the events of April 19, 1775. He became one of the few witnesses of 1775 to eventually be photographed, along with **Mary (Munroe) Sanderson** and Fifer **Jonathan Harrington**. He sold the place in 1822 to **Rev. Charles Briggs**, minister of the -- now the site of Muzzey Junior High -- and the lot where today's soccer field is located.

Former Boston hotelier Warren Russell bought the house during the Civil War and his son, **James Floyd Russell**, opened it as the Russell House Hotel in 1882. A large wing of rooms was added onto the east side and Russell filled the house with colonial antiques. The hotel was called "the Doorway to Lexington," Worthen said, because guests would return and often adopt Lexington as their new home. Sons Warren and Galen Allen Russell briefly took over the hotel, but the Great Depression soured business, Galen died young, and the hotel closed around the 1930s. The property was developed into condominiums in the 1970s with tasteful architecture and scale by builder **F. William Smith** and architect **Richard Wills** of Royal Barry Wills Associates.

*Levi Mead's son Larkin interviewed  
in the local Chesterfield newspaper in 1882, reprinted 1924.  
Source: [1822 Mead Article](#) | [Chesterfield History Site](#)*

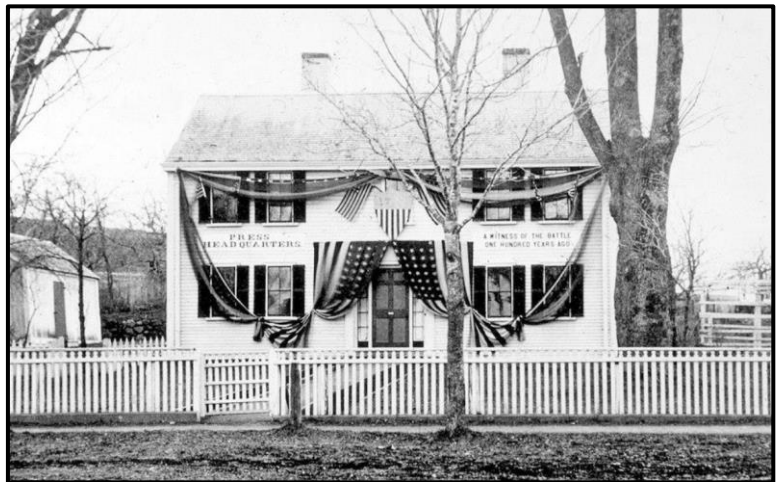


# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



John and Nathan Munroe House  
1906 Massachusetts Avenue  
John Munroe/Marrett Munroe House  
c.1735

*Home to a Minute Man*



*Marrett Munroe House,  
April 19, 1875.*

*Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection,  
Cary Memorial Library*



# House History

**Marrett Munroe** might have looked out these windows and seen his son, **Nathan**, parading on the Common and the sound of British drumbeats rumbled up the road from Cambridge.

Perhaps Nathan's wife **Elizabeth (Harrington)** was still in the house, too, with their young daughters **Dilly** and **Arethusa**, 5 and 2. Marrett was in his 60s and did not turn out that morning. But Nathan, who also made his home here, must have already been tired from extra service. His Uncle **John Parker** -- younger brother of Nathan's mother, **Deliverance** -- asked Nathan to ride to Bedford that night along with **Benjamin Tidd** to carry the alarm through Bedford, to Meriam's Corner in Concord, before turning back to Lexington. He later recalled what happened when he returned: "**Capt. Parker** gave orders to us to load our guns, but not to fire, unless we were fired upon first. About five o'clock in the morning, the British made their appearance at the east end of the meetinghouse, near where our men were, and immediately commenced firing on us. I got over the wall into Buckman's land, about six rods from the British, and then turned and fired at them."

While he was legging it toward Buckman's, a few Lexington men who had been fetching gunpowder from inside the Meetinghouse were now endangered by the British column. One of them, **Joseph Comee**, ran across the road and into Munroe's front door. Along the way, he was struck in the arm by a musket ball. Some Regulars turned their musket fire onto this house, which still has the interior scars. Comee was likely a hired hand and one wonders if he ran to the Munroe house because he lived here. He had been paid in 1774 as the town bellringer, a job usually reserved for someone living near the Common. Later in 1775, the injury to his left arm had rendered it "entirely useless for more than three months" with "great charge in surgery, nursing, and board," he wrote, as he prayed to the Provincial Congress for relief. The town chose **Nathan Munroe** to take over the job of bellringer in June, and Comee died the following year at the age of 23.

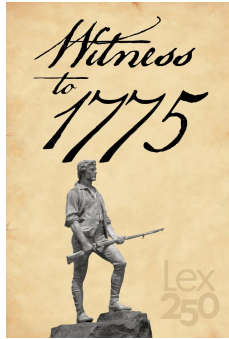
This house was built around 1735 by Marrett's father, **John Munroe**, according to Canavan. A couple years later, John divided up his estate between sons **Jonas and Marrett**. Jonas received the east portion over Belfry Hill and down Malt Lane -- today's Clarke Street -- to an ancient Munroe house and malt operation near today's Hancock School. John gave Marrett 40 acres on the west side of the farm including this new house. A third son, **William** the blacksmith, had already been given a small house at the site of today's Crafty Yankee. Marrett moved into this house with Deliverance (Parker), whom he had married when she was around 16. Next door was the town pound for stray livestock at the site of today's Hancock Church. Besides Nathan, they had another boy, Josiah, who fought in the French and Indian War, was an officer in the Revolution, and pioneered to the Northwest Territory as one of the first settlers of Marietta, Ohio in 1788.

Marrett and Nathan's house was the home in the 19th century of Leonard A. Saville, one of the town's leading citizens who operated a grocery store in the Centre and served as postmaster and longtime town clerk. The house was altered by **Leroy Brown** in the early 1900s after he had finished renovating One Harrington Rd.

*Second in numbers to the Harrington family, eight members of the Munroe family fought on the Lexington Common on April 19, 1775.*

*Killed in the battle included third generation father Marrett's younger cousins, Jedediah and Ensign Robert. Also fighting alongside fourth generation son Nathan were his cousins Ebenezer Jr. and Stephen (brothers), John, and Edmund and Sargent William (brothers).*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



John Parkhurst House  
2173 Massachusetts Avenue  
John Parkhurst House c. 1770

*Home to a Minute Man*



*The American Parkhurst family are descendants of the ancient legacies of Anglo-Saxon tribes of England, as recorded in the census of the Domesday Books of the tenth century.*





# House History



*Parkhurst House*

Source: [Nathaniel Parkhurst – The Lexington Minute Men](#)

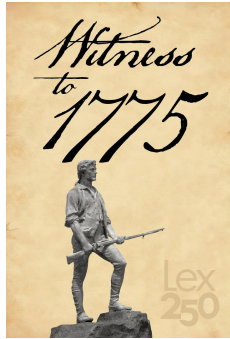
From boarding the schoolmaster to sheltering a wealthy family from Boston, **John Parkhurst's** house had ample room. A housewright originally from Chelmsford, Parkhurst first owned land in the upper Waltham Street area. He built this house on Concord Hill by 1773 when town meeting voted to mend the country road from "Mr. John Parkhurst's" to the west end of Fiske Hill. In 1774, his real estate was assessed at similar value to **John Buckman's**, and their houses were of similar size.

"His house was on the line of march of the British troops toward Concord," **Rev. A. B. Muzzey** later wrote, "a charming location, solid, simple, and firm, like its master." A School Committee member and surveyor of lumber, Parkhurst was paid in the early 1770s for boarding the master of the grammar school. He was a member of the Lexington Militia on April 19, and while there is no record of whether he served in the battle, the day's destruction gave this housewright plenty of work. In the months following the battle, the town paid him £1/1s for mending the pulpit window and for 19 windowpanes he set in the Meeting-house -- likely repair work from the musket balls of April 19, and the pulpit window may have been damaged by the British cannonball. Parkhurst marched to Cambridge in May of 1775, joined a dozen Lexington men on the campaign to White Plains, N.Y. in 1776, and was appointed to the Committee of Correspondence in 1777. He later served as a selectman.

But in olden days, this house was also known as the "Dennie Place," Rev. Staples said. For it was near immediately after the Battle of Lexington that the Scots-American merchant **Joseph Dennie Sr.** fled Boston with his family -- wife Mary and 6-year-old son Joseph Jr. -- for the safety of the countryside. Ironically, they moved to Parkhurst's house within sight of the battlefield where Mary Dennie's cousin, **Jonathan Harrington**, had died. The Dennies' temporary respite became permanent and they stayed here while **Joseph Jr.** attended Harvard up until Joseph Sr.'s death in 1811. Young **Joseph Dennie Jr.** was briefly a renowned wordsmith but he was not remembered fondly here. The family made few friends in town besides Parkhurst and **Dr. Joseph Fiske Sr.**, according to "Joseph Dennie And His Circle." They were politically opposite to the agrarian Democratic-Republicans of Lexington. Incensed by Lexington's opposition to the Jay Treaty in 1795, Joseph Jr. wrote disdainfully in a New Hampshire periodical of "the wretched and ignorant cottagers who surround that 'glorious' green where the first American blood was shed." Staples said in 1892 that Joseph Jr. became a "constant devotee at the shrine of Bacchus," squandered his bright literary future, and "failed to achieve anything worthy of his talents, died in obscurity, and was speedily forgotten."

After Parkhurst's death in 1812, the house was sold to his namesake, **John Parkhurst Meriam**, who ran a country store at the foot of Bedford Street and took over as Lexington's second postmaster in the little wing of Buckman Tavern. It was later owned by **George M. Rogers**, who probably built a large ell along with the expanded mansard roof around 1870. The place boasted 20 rooms before the ell was removed sometime after 1919. **James and Myra Hart** made their home here in 1966 and their family still owns the property. Jim Hart was captain of the Lexington Minute Men from 1986 to 1988, around 170 years after a previous occupant of this house, J. Parkhurst Meriam, held the same command.

# Witness to 1775 Houses



Solomon and James Brown House

36 Woburn Street

Benjamin Brown House – likely pre-1775

*Home to a Minute Man*



Source: [Solomon Brown](#) – [The Lexington Minute Men](#) and [James Brown](#) – [The Lexington Minute Men](#)

*John Brown & Ester Makepeace*

11 children, born 1655-1677

|

*Joseph Brown & Ruhamah Wellington*

9 children, born 1701-1723

|

*Benjamin Brown & Sarah Reed*

11 children born, 1744-1770

|

*Mariana Barnet & Solomon Brown & Eunice Barlow*

*James Brown & Betty Reed*

First marriage: 11 children

Second marriage: 6 children

9 children



# House History

The older of the two Brown homes that stood side-by-side on the Cambridge Road, this house became a sort of auxiliary dwelling on the homestead and may have been where some of **Deacon Benjamin Brown's** numerous sons were keeping their rooms by 1775. Among those sons living and working on the Brown farm were **Solomon**, 18, and **James**, 16.

Solomon had been in Boston the day before the battle when he saw the advance British officers scouting the road to Concord. He brought the alarming news to his neighbor, **Sgt. William Munroe**, and rode out that night with **Elijah Sanderson** and **Jonathan Loring** to track the officers on the road toward Lincoln. After their capture, they walked back in the early morning through the swamp at today's Worthen Road and around back of the Common by the Burying Ground. Solomon grabbed his musket from Buckman's in time to fire at the Regulars from the shelter of the tavern and a stone wall at the site of today's Minute Men Memorial. As for young brother James, he stood in the ranks on the Common and, after the fighting started, jumped over a stone wall and fired back at the Regulars, he told historian Rev. W. Gordon. They fought alongside two cousins -- **Francis**, who was wounded that day, and **John**, who was killed. Young James marched to Cambridge with the militia in May, Solomon served there in June, and Solomon was a corporal at Roxbury in March of 1776. James left town on the first eight-month campaign of the war and on the second campaign of 12 months to New York. Solomon marched up to Ticonderoga that July before joining the Continental Army.

This was the earliest Brown farm in Lexington, purchased by **Joseph Brown** in 1710 when he came to town from Weston, and stretched from Tower Park to Maple Street. What is described as the newer of the two houses was on the site of today's 1133 Mass. Ave. Next to it was this house, which may have been a converted outbuilding for Benjamin says in his will that it was nicknamed "the shopp" -- not to be confused with the workshop on the corner of Marrett Road where Benjamin produced handmade nails. A. W. Bryant said this house appeared to have been built "long before" the other and featured diamond-shaped panes in the windows. When Deacon Benjamin died in 1802, he stipulated that his recently widowed daughter **Eunice** be allowed to live in part of the old house. James and his family moved into the newer house where his father had lived, and by the early 1800s his son **James Jr.** was living in the old house. James developed a great agricultural skill and was noted by Bryant as the first farmer in town to gravel and drain his property to reclaim meadowland. Solomon moved to northern Vermont after the war and operated a grocery business. Another brother, **Oliver**, supposedly commanded the group in 1776 that toppled the statue of King George III in New York City. He was another pioneer and settled on the Ohio River in West Virginia.

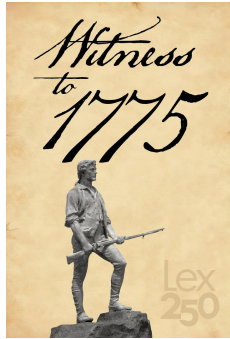
This house was renovated around 1830 and moved across the road to stand next to the nail workshop, probably by **Nathaniel Pierce**. **Horace B. and George O. Davis** moved the house a second time, up to its present site at 36 Woburn St. which they purchased in 1855. The Davises were among the wealthy Lexingtonians to invest in tenement properties in the new "Irish Village" section. They sold in 1892 to **Patrick Mulvey**, who lived at 2 Vine St. and owned a number of rental properties.

*Like many colonial-era families, having multiple children and often succeeding spouses was the norm.*

*This was particularly necessary in agricultural occupations as many hands were needed to work the farms and maintain the household. Multiple marriages helped to ensure care for the children. Childbirth and childhood mortality was high.*

*The family unit was also the social center of the community, where multigenerational homes and caring for the extended family were common practices.*

# *Witness to 1775 Houses*



Benjamin Merriam House

37-39 Woburn Street

Merriam/Viles House – c. 1730

*Home to a Revolutionary Soldier*



*Merriam House*

*Source: Edwin B. Worthen Collection,  
Cary Memorial Library*



# House History

This ancient saltbox has survived nearly three centuries, despite sustaining some of the worst damages of April 19 and being displaced by the construction of a new mansion in the 1890s. **Benjamin and Ginger (Porter) Merriam** made their home here in 1775, when the house was still located at 1536 Mass. Ave. on the corner of today's Winthrop Road.

Benjamin and Ginger were married by 1762, when their eldest son **Rufus** -- future proprietor of the public house at Buckman's Tavern -- was born. They were the second generation to inhabit a house built by Benjamin's father around the time of his own marriage in 1730. **Benjamin Sr.** was a blacksmith who had bought this land in 1727 from **John Fowle**, a cordwainer, along with two shops. A house was on the site as early as 1705 belonging to **Isaac Hunt**, a blacksmith, according to Canavan. Benjamin Merriam Sr. served in the militia in the 1750s and died in 1773. It was probably **Benjamin Jr.** whom the town paid £1 in 1767 for making a new bell-wheel for the Belfry when it still stood atop Belfry Hill. After a town dispute with the **Munroe** family, who owned the hill, the belltower was quietly moved to the Common in the dead of night in 1768 and Benjamin was appointed to the town's Belfry Committee to deal with maintaining it in 1769.

Benjamin Jr. was a member of the Lexington Militia on April 19. No record survives of his activities that day, but he must have felt moved to some type of action that afternoon when he sustained £217/4s in personal property damages (and £6 in real estate damages) "by the ravages of the British troops," as he later put it. The place must have been absolutely ruined when Ben and Ginger came ventured home with their eight young children, the youngest of whom -- **Tryphena** -- was less than 2 months old. Greater losses were suffered only by their neighbors the **Mulliken and Loring** families, whose houses were completely burnt to the ground, according to claims submitted to the Provincial Congress. A banner displayed on the house for the Centennial in 1875 said the British troops also used it for a hospital, similar to their bandaging of wounded soldiers at Munroe Tavern and at Amos Muzzey's house. The following March, town meeting excused Benjamin from serving as a constable on account of "his peculiar loss sustain'd by the Kings Troops." He did duty with the Lexington Company at Roxbury in 1776 but otherwise seems to have stayed in town with his young family during the war.

Benjamin and Ginger moved off to the wilderness of Pelham and sold this house with 72 acres to **Matthew Bridge and William Munroe** in 1783. Bridge and Munroe flipped it in 1787 to **Joel Viles**, a cordwainer who had served in the militia on April 19, 1775 and previously lived near the Common. The substantial farm passed down in the Viles family, and eventually Joel's granddaughter **Sarah Ann (Viles) Butters** lived next door at 1556 Mass. Ave. and another granddaughter, **Mary Bowman (Viles) Tenney**, lived here with her family. The Tenney family built the large new house at No. 1536 and moved this old saltbox to its new home on Woburn Street in 1894. A small shop wing was added to the west side of the house, which was operated by Austrian immigrant **Adolph Labes** from the 1920s to 1940s as a neighborhood grocery store called the Lexington Cash Market. After the end of Prohibition, the store was able to start selling beer. A dry-cleaning business filled the space after Labes' death in 1946.



Left: View of the Lexington Belfry from the Green minutes before the 5:15 a.m. Battle of Lexington reenactment, Patriot's Day 2024



Right: Restored Lexington Belfry  
Source: Lexington History Museums