Minute Man

Minute Man
National Historical Park
Massachusetts

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



The Minute Man statue by Daniel Chester French has been watching over North Bridge since 1875.
© GREG PARKER

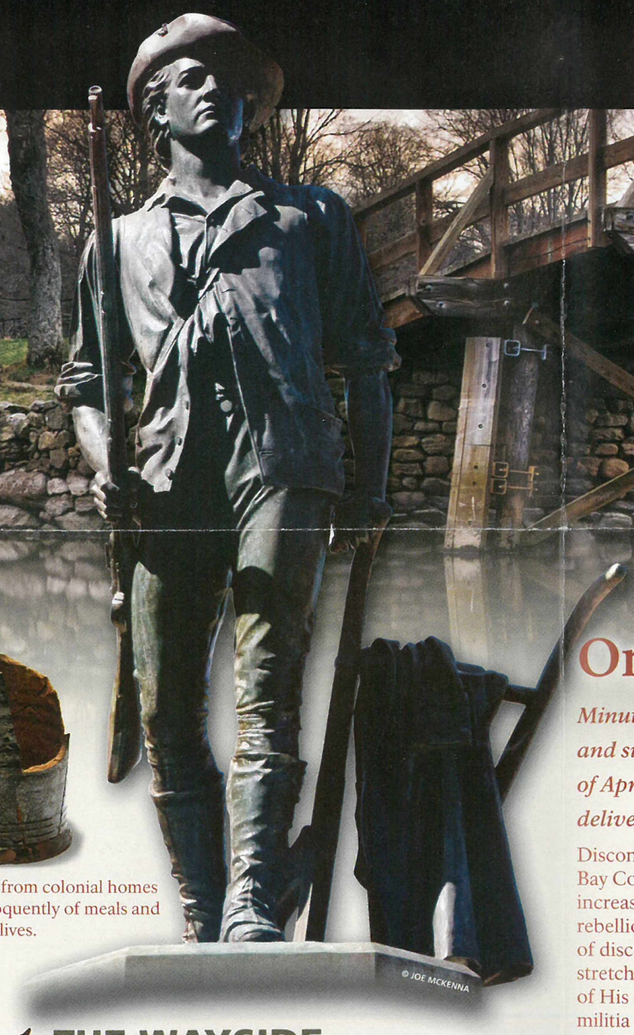


© JONATHAN HO



Artifacts from colonial homes speak eloquently of meals and changed lives.
NPS





© JOE MCKENNA

One Day, Forever Changed

Minute Man Isaac Davis left his wife and sick children at home the morning of April 19, 1775. He came home dead, delivered in a cart.

Discontent smoldered in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during the 1770s. Britain was increasing taxes and control over its most rebellious colony. On April 19, 1775, the years of discontent flared into fighting. Along a stretch of country road outside Boston, 1,700 of His Majesty's Army and 4,000 colonial militia men opened the American Revolution.

MINUTE MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Minute men belonged to militia companies, and trained to be ready at a moment's notice. Like all militia men, they were volunteers who worked full-time supporting their families. Most were farmers. Traditionally, a farmer divided his land among his sons. But after 100 years of subdivision, many farmers had little land left to give. Their children faced uncertain futures further clouded by increasing taxes and fading liberty. When militia men mustered that day, they were gathering to defend their way of life, their freedom, and their childrens' future.

LIVES INTERRUPTED

Hannah Davis watched her husband Isaac march away from their home around 7 am on April 19, 1775. Less than three hours later, he and Joseph Hosmer were dead, shot by British soldiers at North Bridge. Major John Buttrick ordered his militia men to return fire, an act of treason by the colonials. By the time darkness fell that day, 49 colonials and 73 British soldiers were dead.

OPPORTUNITY FOR FREEDOM

The Lexington Alarm of April 19, 1775, thoroughly disrupted many lives—including those of enslaved Africans. War offered them a chance for freedom. Some accompanied their owners into fighting. Others, freed by their owners, joined militia companies. Many others, particularly once the fighting moved to the South, joined the British Army in return for the promise of freedom and money.

EVOLVING MEMORY

Today, Minute Man National Historical Park commemorates the events of April 19, 1775 and the opening of the American Revolution. As you visit North Bridge, Battle Road, and other sites, reflect upon the lasting impact of that day and explore your own feelings about liberty.

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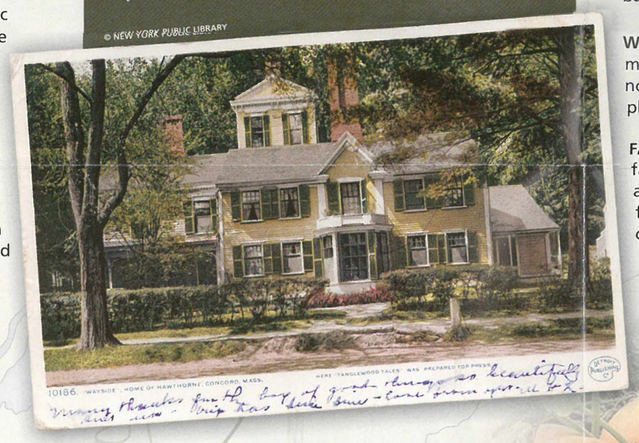
THE WAYSIDE

I like good strong words that mean something . . .

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

Visit The Wayside, which witnessed America's literary heritage develop. Alcott's parents, Bronson and Abby, encouraged debate about how the American Revolution continued to affect their lives. Other Concord writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau joined in these lively discussions. Perhaps they also knew the Alcotts sheltered at least one enslaved man traveling the Underground Railroad before the Civil War.

Nathaniel Hawthorne lived here after the Alcotts, writing his last works. Later in the 1800s, Harriett Lothrop, author of the Five Little Peppers series, moved into the house. Her daughter preserved The Wayside; now it is a national historic landmark.



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Follow the Morning's Events

It was an unusual field of battle: 20 miles of winding, hilly road connecting a port city and several country towns. Visit these sites to follow the morning's progress from the early alarms to the "shot heard round the world."

MINUTE MAN VISITOR CENTER Enjoy the award-winning multimedia introduction to the events of April 19, 1775.

JACOB WHITTEMORE HOUSE Explore colonial life at one of 11 "witness houses"—houses that existed on April 19, 1775.

PAUL REVERE CAPTURE SITE Here a British patrol ended the rides of Paul Revere and William Dawes; only Samuel Prescott reached Concord.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM SMITH HOUSE Imagine the sudden activity here when the alarm reached its owner, the leader of the Lincoln militia.

HARTWELL TAVERN Historical interpreters talk about colonial life and demonstrate musket firing. Three of the Hartwells joined the fighting on April 19.

MERIAM HOUSE British soldiers passed peacefully by this witness house in the morning but would be attacked here in the afternoon.

THE WAYSIDE Tour the home of Concord militia leader Samuel Whitney, who lived here with his family and a slave. The Wayside also witnessed literary history *(right)*.

NORTH BRIDGE Stand where the "shot heard round the world" was fired and consider what liberty means to you; visit graves of the first British soldiers to die.

MINUTE MAN STATUE With plow and musket in hand *(above)*, this iconic colonial silently honors the minute men where they took their stand.

NORTH BRIDGE VISITOR CENTER View exhibits and a movie about the minute men who fought at North Bridge.

COLONEL BARRETT HOUSE This was the British destination. British commanders were sure Barrett had hidden weapons here, but they found little.

Retreat along the Battle Road Trail

Walk or bicycle the **BATTLE ROAD TRAIL,** part of the colonial Bay Road, to experience the landscape that shaped the day's events. This description begins at Meriam's Corner, where the British retreat began, and heads east. See additional site descriptions at left and battle details on the other side of this brochure.

BOULDERS AND HILLS While at Meriam's Corner, look across the road: This steep, narrow ridge is typical of country shaped by glaciers. The Meriam family hid behind this ridge as the militia attacked the British Army, which had slowed to cross the stream. The running battle back to Boston began here.

WETLANDS Drained in colonial times to make hay meadows, the park's wetlands now support 23 kinds of reptiles and amphibians, plus many birds and mammals.

FARMS The trail passes through fields farmed since colonial times. To restore this agricultural landscape, the park permits farmers to grow hay, vegetables, and other crops.

BROOKS VILLAGE This quiet group of houses scarcely hint at the activity of the Brooks family, who lived here over 250 years. They farmed, raised livestock, and operated a tannery. Look for highland cattle, part of the park's work to recreate landscapes familiar to the minute men and their families.

VERNAL POOL Walk this short side trail near Hartwell Tavern to find out about the essential role these pools play in forest life.

SAMUEL HARTWELL HOUSE SITE View the massive brick heating system that was common in colonial homes but seldom visible.

BRITISH SOLDIER MONUMENTS These small monuments mark gravesites of British soldiers who died on April 19, 1775.

PARKERS REVENGE Notice how the road bends here to pass below a small hill—an ideal place for Captain Parker and the Lexington militia to ambush the British soldiers.

FISKE HILL Walk this last section of the Battle Road Trail and imagine being a British soldier bombarded by constant fire on all sides.

More Information

Minute Man National Historical Park
174 Liberty Street
Concord, MA 01742
978-369-6993
www.nps.gov/mima

In an emergency dial 911.

For **GPS** or mapping programs, enter the address for Minute Man Visitor Center: 250 North Great Road, Lincoln, MA. Do not send mail here.

For operating hours and seasons, call 978-369-6993 or visit the park website. For firearms regulations, see the park website.

We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Help support our programs and mission by joining the Friends of Minute Man National Historical Park. www.friendsofminuteman.org

Minute Man National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn more about national parks at www.nps.gov.

FOR YOUR SAFETY
Sections of the Battle Road Trail coincide with MA 2A. Because of heavy traffic, use caution.

Please respect the rights of private landowners within park boundaries.

Dogs must be leashed at all times.

No trash barrels in the park; carry out your trash.

Federal law protects historic and natural features in the park. Do not excavate, disturb, deface, or destroy any structure, exhibit, artifact, animal, or plant life. Report any criminal activity or safety hazard to park rangers:
508-254-7491.



The Regulars Are Out! They're coming!

Hoofbeats fade as the cloaked riders gallop down the road to the next house, raising the alarm in the early hours of April 19, 1775.

Wives, mothers, and children say goodbye to their husbands, sons, and fathers who grab their guns and head out the door. They will confront other British this day, mostly soldiers new to battle and three thousand miles from their families. One side standing up for their rights as British subjects, the other side following orders. They cannot know what we know now, that . . .



Volunteers portray minute men waiting to avenge their friends' deaths earlier that morning at North Bridge.

one day, 16 miles, and 8 years would bring forth a new nation.

1765–1768
TAXATION and REBELLION

To pay for the French and Indian War, Britain begins taxing its American colonies. Colonials protest; they do not believe Britain has the right to tax them. Tensions mount when British soldiers arrive in Boston to restore order. Soldiers fire into a mob, killing five colonists in what rebels call the "Boston Massacre."

1773–1774
TEA PARTY and TROUBLE

Britain repeals most taxes except on tea. The rebels respond with the Boston Tea Party, dumping tea into the harbor. Britain closes the port and strips Massachusetts of self-government. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress recommends towns raise companies of "minute men" from the militias who can respond "at the shortest notice."

1775
PREPARATIONS

The British Army begins patrolling beyond Boston. Militia companies and minute men continue to drill; colonists continue to stockpile gunpowder and supplies, enough to supply an army of 15,000. Rebels in Boston keep a close watch on British movements. In turn, subjects loyal to Britain spy on the rebels.

April 19th, 1775

ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA
Paul Revere learns the British Army is preparing to cross the Charles River and march to Concord to capture weapons. A man hangs two lanterns in North Church to alert colonials, using Revere's code: one if by land, two if by sea. Revere crosses the river, mounts a strong horse, and races west to spread the alarm. William Dawes gallops out along a southern route.

1 am CAPTURED!
In Lexington, Revere and Dawes encounter Samuel Prescott, who joins them in spreading the alarm. A British patrol surprises them and captures Revere. *(Blue on map)*

5 am FIRST BLOOD
Seventy-seven militia men await the British Army on Lexington Green. A shot rings out and British soldiers fire a volley. Eight colonials die.

7 am CONCORD'S EARLY LIGHT
Several hundred militia men watch from nearby hills as the British start searching Concord.

9 am HOMES ON FIRE?
British soldiers burn weapons and military supplies but militia men think homes are burning. They advance to North Bridge.

9:30 am NORTH BRIDGE
The militia men confront British soldiers, who fire and kill two colonials. The militia officer orders his men to return fire, an act of treason against the British government that would become known as the "shot heard round the world."

12:30 pm BATTLE BEGINS
After regrouping, the British Army begins marching back to Boston. Militia open fire at Meriam's Corner—and so begins the running battle back to Boston along the Bay Road. The map below shows locations of some skirmishes.

3 pm REINFORCEMENTS
Exhausted British soldiers stagger into Lexington while reinforcements fire cannon at the colonials. After a short rest, the British resume their march.

4:30 pm MENOTOMY
Militia men hide in deserted houses and open fire. Soldiers charge into the houses with their bayonets. More men die here than anywhere else.

6–7 pm BLOODY DAY'S END
The British reach safety in Charlestown; fighting ends. The British count 73 dead and 174 wounded soldiers. Colonials have 49 men dead and 41 wounded. The war has begun.

1776
INDEPENDENCE DECLARED

Through 1775, colonists keep fighting to restore their rights as British subjects while leaders consider a larger goal. In January 1776, New Hampshire declares its independence from Great Britain. On July 4, the Continental Congress issues the Declaration of Independence for the new nation.

1777–1781
LONG STRUGGLE

The Continental Army wins and loses many battles during 1777. They spend winter in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and emerge rested, well-trained, and supported by France. But another three years of war pass until British General Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 18, 1781.

1782–1783
PEACE

November 1782, Britain and the United States sign a preliminary peace treaty. General George Washington declares the war has ended in April 1783, exactly eight years after the Lexington and Concord battles. The Treaty of Paris is signed September 3. The war is officially over.

Defending the Colony



Until 1774, Massachusetts Bay Colony relied upon a part-time citizen militia for its defense. All free men ages 16 to 60 were required to serve in their town's militia company and attend regular trainings. They were farmers, artisans, merchants, and laborers. Rich men and poor served, as did some African and Native Americans. In 1775 many towns had also recruited elite "minute companies"—the minute men—who were ready to march at a moment's warning.



"The shot heard round the world."

The modern paintings on this page are known for the artist's attention to historic detail. The quotation above is from Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem, "The Concord Hymn." He wrote this poem for the 1837 unveiling of the first monument commemorating the fight at North Bridge.

In Service to the King



British regulars were professional soldiers who had volunteered to serve their king. The average British soldier was in his late twenties and had been in the army five to six years. All were far from home, and few had been in battle. On April 19, they were also sleepless, wet, and nervous. These factors and a breakdown in discipline may have led to the first shots being fired at both Lexington and Concord.

From Concord back to Boston

MILITIA

7 am The British Army arrives from Boston with orders to destroy weapons and supplies stored in Concord.

Colonel Barrett House

North Bridge

Concord

South Bridge

2 am Prescott warns Concord

Meriam's Corner

12:30 Militia ambush the British just south of the house as they slow to cross a stream. The running battle back to Boston begins.

MILITIA

Parker's Revenge

2 pm Captain Parker leads a surprise attack on the British to avenge his men who had fallen that morning in Lexington.

1 am Revere captured

Lexington

Dawes escapes

Bloody Angle

1:30 Militia next attack where the Bay Road veers sharply north and then east again to avoid marshes and streams.

Fiske Hill

2:15 Under steady fire, British soldiers hurry past Fiske Hill to Lexington.

3 pm Just as the British Army feels defeated, they hear cannon booming and see reinforcements coming to Lexington from the east.

BAY ROAD

Menotomy

4:30 Newly-arrived militia companies fight from within homes in Menotomy. The British storm the houses and rout the rebels.

Cambridge

BRITISH RETREAT FROM CONCORD

Lincoln

MILITIA

By afternoon, 4,000 militia from 27 Massachusetts towns have joined the fighting along the Bay Road to Boston.

MILITIA

Medford

MYSTIC RIVER

BUNKER HILL

Nightfall finds the British crossing Charlestown Peninsula to safety. The Battle of Bunker Hill will be fought in June.

Charlestown

10:30 pm Revere leaves Boston

BOSTON

By week's end, 20,000 militia have trapped the British Army in Boston. The siege lasts 11 months.

BRITISH CAMP

MILITIA

CHARLES RIVER

10:30 pm Dawes leaves Boston

Roxbury

N

about 16 miles

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