

American Perspective: Firsthand accounts

Lt. John Barker, British Soldier, 4th Regiment Diary Account on the beginning of the march to Lexington

[April] 19th... about 5 miles on this side of a Town called Lexington which lay in our road, we heard there were some hundreds of People collected together intending to oppose us and stop our going on: at 5 o'clock we arrived there and saw a number of People, I believe 2 and 300, formed on a Common in the middle of the Town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack tho' without intending to attack them, but on our coming near them they fired one or two shots, upon which our Men without any orders rushed in upon them, fired and put 'em to flight; several of them were killed...

Official Statement of John Robbins, Lexington Militia, April 24, 1775, on Lexington Green

I, John Robbins, being of lawful age, do testify and say, that on the nineteenth instant, the Company under the command of Captain John Parker being drawn up (sometime before sunrise) on the green or common, and I being in the front rank, there suddenly appeared a number of the King's Troops, about a thousand, as I thought, at the distance of about sixty or seventy yards from us, huzzaing and on a quick pace toward us, with three officers in their front on horseback, and on full gallop towards us; the foremost of which cried, 'Throw down your arms, ye villains, ye rebels;' upon which said Company dispersing, the foremost of the three officers ordered their men, saying 'Fire, by God, fire;' at which moment we received a very heavy and close fire from them; at which instant, being wounded, I fell, and several of our men were shot dead by one volley. Captain Parker's men, I believe, had not then fired a gun.

Narrative of Ensign Jeremy Lister of His Majesty's 10th Regiment of Foot, on the Fighting in Lexington

It was at Lexington when we saw one of their Compys drawn up in regular order Major Pitcairn of the Marines second in Command call'd to them to disperse, but their not seeming willing he desired us to mind our space which we did when they gave us a fire then runoff to get behind a wall. We had one man wounded of our Compy in the leg his name was Johnson also Major Pitcairn's Horse was shot in the flank we return'd their salute, and before we proceeded on our march from Lexington I believe we Kill'd and wounded either 7 or 8 men.

Statement of James Barrett, Colonel of Concord Militia, on the Battle at North Bridge

...I ordered said militia to march to said bridge and pass the same, but not to fire on the King's troops unless they were first fired upon. We advanced near said Bridge, when the said troops fired upon our militia and killed two men dead on the spot, and wounded several others, which was the first firing of guns in the town of Concord. My detachment then returned fire, which killed and wounded several of the King's soldiers.

Lt. John Barker, British Soldier, 4th Regiment Diary Account on Battle Road

We set out upon our return; we were fired on from Houses and behind Trees, and before we had gone ½ a mile we were fired on from all sides, but mostly from the Rear, where People had hid themselves in houses 'till we had passed and then fired; the Country was an amazing strong one, full of Hills, Woods, stone Walls, &c. which the Rebels did not fail to take advantage of, for they were all lined with People who kept an incessant fire upon us, as we did too upon them but not with the same advantage, for they were so concealed there was hardly any seeing them: in this way we marched between 9 and 10 miles, their numbers increasing from all parts, while ours was reducing by deaths, wounds and fatigue, and we were totally surrounded with such an incessant fire as it's impossible to conceive, our ammunition was likewise near expended.

Alice Stearns Abbott, Citizen of Bedford, Massachusetts, on the Beginning of Fighting

I was eleven years of age, and my sisters Rachel and Susannah were older. We all heard the alarm, and were up and ready to help fit out father and brother, who made an early start for Concord. We were set to work making cartridges and assisting mother in cooking for the army. We sent off a large quantity of food for the soldiers, who had left home so early that they had but little breakfast. We were frightened by hearing the noise of guns at Concord; our home was near the river, and the sound was conducted by the water. I suppose it was a dreadful day in our home, and sad indeed; for our brother, so dearly loved, never came home.