

**NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY
OF THE CONCORD FIGHT:
GROTON MINUTE-MEN AT THE
NORTH BRIDGE, APRIL 19, 1775**

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New chapter in the history of the Concord fight: Groton minute-men at the North Bridge, April 19, 1775 by WM. W. Wheildon

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NEW CHAPTER

IN THE

History of the Concord Fight:

GROTON MINUTE-MEN

At the North Bridge, April 19, 1775.

APPENDIX:

1. TOWNS ENGAGED IN THE FIGHTING AND MOVEMENTS, LOSSES, ETC.
2. MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS, ETC., ERECTED TO COMMEMORATE THE EVENTS OF THE DAY.

By WM. W. WHEILDON.

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1885.

1885. Sept. 23,

By exchange.

"The Nineteenth of April, 1775: a glorious day for Lexington and Concord, for the Towns of Middlesex, for Massachusetts, for America, for freedom and the rights of man. Every blow struck for liberty among men since the 19th of April, 1775, has but echoed the guns of that eventful morning."—[*Concord Sentiment*, 1875.

"If the retreat had not been as precipitate as it was, and God knows it could not well have been more so, the ministerial troops must have surrendered, or been totally cut off."—[*Washington*.

"Before the 19th of April, 1775, I never had heard a whisper of a disposition to separate from Great Britain."—[*Jefferson*.

Speaking of the Concord Fight, Abbe Raynal says, "English blood, so often shed in Europe by English hands, irrigates America in its turn, and the civil war is commenced."

Kossuth speaks of the occurrences of the 19th April, as "the opening scene of a revolution that is destined to change the character of human governments, and the condition of the human race."

In Hayden's "Dictionary of Dates," London, 1871, 13th edition, under the head of Battles, is given the following definition: "American War: Lexington, (Gage, victor, with great loss,) 19th April, 1775."

NEW CHAPTER

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History of the Concord Fight.

It is not very remarkable, perhaps, that the centennial period since the beginning of the revolutionary war should be the occasion of bringing to light some new matter in relation to its early incidents, in regard to which more or less secrecy was preserved and names withheld at the time. It seems, from evidence which has lately come to the knowledge of the writer, by a casually dropped remark concerning the Concord fight, that the alarm of the movement of General Gage to seize the cannon, stores, and ammunition in Concord, was more widely known in Middlesex County than heretofore supposed. It appears, from the testimony of Mr. Artemas Wright, of Ayer, who is a grandson of Mr. Nathan Corey, of Groton, that there were several members of the Groton company of minute men at Concord, on the morning of the 19th of April, who were in the fight at the North Bridge, and joined in the pursuit of the British troops in the retreat to Lexington.

MR. WRIGHT'S STORY.

Mr. Wright says: his grandfather repeatedly told him the story, and often talked of the scenes of that day. A part of his narration was, that on the day before the Concord fight, April 18th, while he was ploughing in his field, some distance from the middle of the town, he received notice of a meeting of the minute men, which, of course, demanded immediate attention. It was in the afternoon, toward evening, when he received the notification. He at once unhitched his plough, drove his oxen home, took down his gun and belt, told his wife Molly, as he called her, that he was going away, and could not tell when he should come back, and that she must take care of the oxen. He then hastened to the middle of the town and joined his comrades who had assembled there.

The circumstance which had induced them to call the meeting was the arrival of some brass cannon from Concord. Of course the presence of these immediately gave rise to discussion and speculation as to the cause and the reason of their being sent to Groton from Concord. Various suggestions were made, the most prominent of which was a proposition that the company should proceed at once to Concord; but this, when put to vote, was determined in the negative, most of the members preferring to wait for further intelligence.

This conclusion, it seems, was not entirely satisfactory to all the members of the company, and some of them

determined to go at once; so that, as the story is related to the writer, nine of them, with young Corey among the number, started for Concord the same evening. They travelled all night, carrying lighted pine torches a part of the way, and reached Concord at an early hour in the morning, entering one side of the town some hours before the British troops entered upon the other. Mr. Corey said they all went and got some breakfast at the house of Col. Barrett, which was afterwards visited by the British troops in search of the cannon, ammunition and stores, most of which had been fortunately removed, the day before, to places of safety. After getting something to eat they proceeded toward the centre of the town, and soon joined the men of Concord, and finally were in the ranks of the minute men, at or near the North Bridge, where the fight with the British troops occurred. They continued with the minute men, and followed the retreating troops to Lexington, or beyond.

This is the story related by Mr. Wright, as often repeated to him by his grandfather Corey; and this, according to the accepted history of the time, and as at present understood, appeared to the writer, on the instant, as wholly improbable. It must still remain so unless it can be explained and accounted for in the transactions and events of the period.

The objection to be met and answered is, how could the people of Groton, thirty miles from Boston, at about the time the British troops were moving toward their boats, on the evening of the 18th, know anything of

Gen. Gage's purpose or design to visit Concord? Of course they knew nothing, excepting such information as the presence of the brass cannon, which had arrived among them, indicated. Probably the men who conveyed the cannon from Concord could not explain the matter, and yet it may possibly be true that they had learned before they left Concord, or suspected, the reason why they were sent; and, if so, would be sure to communicate it to the people of Groton. This, when we come to think of it, is not very improbable, although no reason is given in the votes of the Committee for their action. However this may be, the improbable story of Mr. Wright may possibly be explained and accounted for by the action of the Committee of Safety in the matter, by showing that the cannon were sent to Groton, and why they came to be sent there at that particular time.

EXPLANATION OF THE STORY.

Almost every person familiar with the history of this period would, on the instant, reject the story as a fiction, and nothing but entire confidence in the truthfulness of the party referred to, and the little probability there is of his being able to invent such a relation, induced the writer to give it a moment's consideration. Turning the history of the period over in our mind, the points of which were very familiar, we thought we could see a possible explanation of the matter, as a consequence of

the cautionary action of Warren, and the important services rendered at this time by Paul Revere.

It is well known to most readers and students, who are familiar with the history of this period, that Dr. Warren, so far as is known by his own inclination, remained in Boston while the Provincial Congress was in session at Concord, expressly to observe the action and movements of Gen. Gage in this trying period. In consequence of some of these movements, especially that of launching the transport boats preparatory for use, and taking the Grenadiers and Light Infantry off duty, Warren determined to send notice of them, and of the preparations being made, as he believed, to capture the stores at Concord, to Hancock and Adams, then at Lexington.

This message was sent by Paul Revere, on Sunday, the 16th of April, 1775, to the effect that the British were preparing for an excursion into the country, and it was at once understood that the stores and ammunition, collected at Concord, were the object. Revere delivered his message promptly at Lexington, and returned in the afternoon, when, before going across the river from Charlestown, he made his arrangements about the signal lanterns with Col. Conant, — a matter which, no doubt, he had determined and arranged in his own mind, during his solitary ride from Lexington.