

The Second Strike of the Match (Start Music)

Shooters! Gather round for some Heritage!
Listen close and you will hear, the *truth* about the ride of Paul Revere!

Our First Strike of the match ended with the Regulars offering up a “victory volley”, followed by three shouts of “Huzaaah!” to the people of Lexington after shooting their neighbors and kinsmen in the back on Lexington green prior to continuing their march toward Concord.

The time is now, 6:45:AM.

The sun is low, but bright. Dr. Prescott has sounded the alarm in Concord, and more riders have gone out to spread the alarm from there. Dr. Prescott continues on to Acton, where he calls upon the local leader of the Minute Men, Captain Isaac Davis.

Isaac Davis is a 30-year-old blacksmith and farmer with a wife named Hannah and several children. On this morning, *all* of their children are sick, two with symptoms of the deadly “canker rash” (Scarlett Fever), a horrible disease that often takes entire families in New England. Isaac and Hannah are distraught, but when he receives the alarm, Isaac knows what he must do. He solemnly gathers his musket and gear and moves toward the door on his way to join his company of Minute Men.

At the door, Isaac pauses for a moment, eyes cast downward, deep in thought – Hannah’s heart leaps. She can see that he means to say something of great import. In the end, all he can muster is “Take good care of the children”, before he turns to meet his destiny.

Hannah later writes in her diary: “Isaac seemed thoughtful and serious, but never hesitated as to the course of his duty” – her pride in her husband well evident in her words. She also tells of a strange premonition from that fateful morning. She feared that she would never see her husband again on this earth. Alas, this will prove to be correct, for today will be Isaac Davis’ last day on earth.

In Concord, the prudent town Fathers wish to verify the alarm and so they send Rueben Brown to Lexington to see what is about. Rueben witnesses the beginning of what will be the slaughter at Lexington Green, although he does not remain to see how it will end. He returns to Concord in great haste and reports on the fighting he has seen. The men of Concord want to know - was the Regulars firin’ ball or just powder as a warning? I cain’t be certain, but I think it probable, they’as firin’ ball.

A great fear is now gripping the people of New England. It began at midnight with Paul Revere’s alarm. We see the War for Independence today as a great victory – a foregone conclusion, but the Colonist’s did not. They saw it as a very dark and ominous path, filled with much uncertainty and foreboding. You see, one does not pull on the Lion’s toe and simply walk away. This is a door that once opened, may never be closed again.

By now men from area Militias are streaming in from all parts of the countryside to Concord, their forms silhouetted against the rising sun on the tops of the hills above the road into town. The king’s soldiers take note of this, one writing later that they moved along with a curious half walk, half run. And although the 5-mile march goes off without incident, nervousness now prevails amongst the green troops wearing the red coats.

Militia leaders take stock of the situation and debate what to do. The *brash* young Minutemen, well they want to intercept the Redcoats outside of town – *right now*. The older, more experienced men of the Militia prefer to stand their ground in Concord. The town elders of the Alarm List want to wait for more men to arrive before committing to *any* plan. In the typical New England fashion, after some debate, it is decided that all three courses shall be pursued.

On the British come; banners flying, fifes and drums playing. The Regulars march in *perfect* cadence, making for an impressive display of military might. The Minutemen march out to meet the Regulars – *head on!*

Lord, the mere sight of them is stunning – like a great, long, red serpent, winding off into the distance, polished steel bayonets gleaming in the morning light. The young Minute Men wisely decide to return to town, but they do so in high order. It looks more like a parade, with the Minutemen just in front of the Regulars, marching back to town playing competing tunes – a surreal scene, utterly incongruent with the brutal events of this day.

The Militia join the Minutemen on through town and across the North Bridge until they concentrate just past their muster field on Punkatasset Hill. Men begin to assemble with them, until their number grows to over 500!

In the town below, Col. Smith finds Concord to be devoid of any Militia and has his men separate to search for contraband. He divides his troops up; Grenadiers to search the town; one company to guard the South Bridge and 7 more to the North Bridge where 3 will guard that bridge and the other 4 will go to the Buttrick and Barrett Farms in search of weapons. Can anyone tell me why Col. Smith was ordered to search these farms?

The troops begin to break open houses and search for war materiel, but aren't having much luck. They find a few hundred musket balls, which they toss into a pond (only to be recovered by the Colonists the very next day). They find some flour, a couple of gun carriage wheels, and some trenchers, (something we'd call a wooden plate today). They also cut down the town's "Liberty Pole" and pile it with the contraband in the common and begin to burn it all. This small fire spreads to the town meeting hall and in an odd irony, the Regulars help the town's people to put out the fire.

Major Pitcairn of the Royal Marines has reason to suspect that the owner of the town's inn, also its jailer, Ephraim Jones, has hidden three cannon somewhere in the area and he means to find them. He pounds on the door of the inn, and when Ephraim refuses to open up, has his men break it down. He confronts Ephraim Jones and *demand*s to know the whereabouts of the cannons. When Ephraim refuses to speak, he knocks him to the floor and claps a pistol to his head; "You will tell me where the cannon are sir or I *will* blow out your brains right now!" Mr. Jones relents and leads them to the three "24 pounders" buried in his yard. Upon excavating them, the soldiers knock the trunions off the pieces, rendering them useless.

Col. Smith has, aside from the cannon, come up dry for all his efforts. Even out at the Barrett Farm the soldiers find nothing. This is because the day and night prior, the locals have plowed fields and placed the muskets into the furrows; covering them over. The unsuspecting soldiers march right past the freshly plowed fields never knowing!

Up on Punkatasset hill, the Militia consults yet again and decide to move to their muster field – a hill about 300 yards from the North Bridge. When they arrive and see the smoke rising from the town, they think the Regulars have put it to the torch. A young man named Lt. Joseph Hosmer asks, “Will we stand here while they burn our homes?” Now, no Lt. in a traditional standing army would ever think of speaking to his commanding officer in such a manner, but this is the Militia, a far more democratic entity where every man has his say.

Col. Barrett at last decides to march to the bridge. He wants to place the Acton Minutemen in front, as they are the best equipped, having both cartridge boxes and bayonets provided by their leader, Capt. Isaac Davis. When asked if his unit will lead the march, Isaac Davis replies, “I have not a man who is afraid to go”. Into the jaws of the beast itself and not a one of them afraid to go!

Down below, in front of the bridge, the British soldiers watch as the militia now outnumbering them 4 to 1, begin to move down the hill toward them with much military precision. Some of the Regulars begin pulling up the planking on the bridge, which angers the thrifty Colonists. How dare these arrogant men destroy our property!

The Regulars are ordered back across the bridge, where they form up again, using a formation meant for street fighting. This is not a much-practiced formation, and it causes great confusion among the regulars. The formation is very narrow and deep, intended for clearing mobs on streets. The front ranks would fire, and then peel off to the rear to reload whilst the next 3 ranks fire. This continues, allowing a constant fire in a narrow area, but it is not well suited for open warfare, as it leaves their flanks exposed.

Maj. Buttrick tells his men the very same thing Captain Parker had only a couple of hours earlier in Lexington: “Do not fiya unless fiyad upon. Stand your ground!” They march down the hill in line of battle, and as they get closer a couple of the Redcoats fire without orders. Then a ragged volley follows with the same lack of discipline they had shewn at Lexington. The green troops fire high as soldiers unaccustomed to battle often do. As such, most of the balls whistle harmlessly over the heads of the Militia, but some do make their mark. Quiet Captain Isaac Davis goes down immediately, a ball piercing his heart; the men on either side are covered in his blood. Another of Acton’s Minute Men, Private Abner Hosmer falls as well, shot in the head.

The order of the Americans is better than that of the Regulars and they hold their formation gaining ground all the while, until finally arriving about 50 yards in front of the bridge – well within the range of their muskets. As men begin to fall around him, Major Buttrick shouts, “Fiya men! For God’s sake, fiya as fast as ye can!”

With the first volley, *half* the British officers go down! Through the musket smoke the Militia can see a shudder pass through the ranks of the British troops. Shortly, their line breaks in confusion and the Redcoats begin retreating, without orders, back down the road toward Concord, even leaving their wounded behind – running like skeered children from a bunch farmers and shop keepers, many of whom have never seen battle before this day.

Look at the effectiveness of our marksmanship in breaking the Regulars at the North Bridge. Capt. Parker’s men in Lexington were near as well trained as marksmen as these men at the North Bridge.

Does anyone think for a minute that if Parker's men had the opportunity of firing the first shots, that the Regular's casualties would have been one wounded man - with 17 Colonists dead or wounded? *The proof of who fired first is in the casualty list.* That's the answer - the Regulars fired first!

This leaves the Militia a bit stunned and wondering what to do next. Major Buttrick divides his men, placing half on the Concord side of the bridge, behind a stone wall, while the rest remain on the north side. Col. Smith is shocked to see his men running back into town pell-mell, and upon advancing and seeing the large number of militia in strong positions, withdraws his men back to town.

Breathe

Enter Ammi White, a young man perhaps not the sharpest knife in the drawer. He walks down to the one of wounded Regulars, and taking his hatchet, splits the soldier's skull, leaving him to die, partly scalped with his brains exposed. Ammi must have wanted..

The raiding party comes back from the Barrett Farm at the sound of the fight and is terrified at what they find. Between them and the rest of their men is a large band of Militia controlling the only way home: The North Bridge. They march rapidly across the bridge, and are allowed to pass unharmed by the Militia, who are still operating under the requirement of having to be fired on first, before returning fire – a costly ROE....

Many of the Redcoats take notice of their dead and wounded comrades lying on the field, most especially, they take notice of the man brained by Ammi White. They are angry at this atrocity and the rumors run as fast as they do. Soon the story goes that 4 men have been butchered, eyes gouged, noses and ears cut off. This is to change the tone of the fight and cause many atrocities this day and scandal as far away as England.

Still, Militiamen are streaming into the area by the thousands, many looking down at the king's soldiers from the hills above town.

In Concord, Col. Smith is resting his troops and forming them up for the long march ahead. This takes more than 30 minutes. Wounded officers are placed in "borrowed" carriages, while the walking wounded will go behind them, then the army will proceed. Badly wounded enlisted men are simply left behind as "expendable assets".

The entire operation in Concord lasts about 4 hours, and finally, around noon, the Regulars begin their return to Boston under the watchful eye of the Colonials who are now *spoiling* for justice. At first, the Militia simply shadow them, watching, waiting for an opportunity. Many are swept up along the way by the flankers Col. Smith places to keep the militia beyond musket range.

Again, the match of revolution has been struck. Again, there is a bright flash, a little smoke, and nothing as the match goes out. Had nothing else occurred this day, there would have been inquiries, hearings, hangings and promotions, and the revolution might have died then and there.

But a mile outside of Concord, at an obscure little place called Meriam's Corner, Patriot militias are pouring in, and the match is once again being readied to strike.

As I mentioned earlier, Hannah Davis kept a diary. It stands, to this day, as a record of sacrifices made for our Liberty.

Hannah wrote of the Acton Minute Men tramping into her kitchen – “filling that small feminine space with the strong masculine presence of their muskets, bayonets, tomahawks, and powder horns”.

She wrote that Isaac said only “Take good care of the Children” before disappearing into the darkness. That’s an odd thing for him to say – isn’t it? I mean, he *knew* that she would take care of the children; she was their mother after all and a woman of fine character. Did Isaac know he was going to meet his death that day?

I like to think that through Hannah’s diary, Isaac is in fact speaking to every one of us – are we taking good care of the children? Are we doing everything we can to ensure their Liberty? Isaac Davis gave his life for our Liberty. All we have to do is remain alert, informed, and involved in the political process handed down to us by his generation. Are we succeeding?

Hannah wrote “I knew in my heart, that I would not see him again in this world”. She was partly mistaken on that point. She did see him again, some hours later, his lifeless bloody body laid out on her parlor table beside Private Hosmer – a grim reunion to be sure.

She knew in her heart that she would not see him alive again.... yet she let him go. To lose a husband in New England in 1775, with a house full of sick children would have been a hardship of *desperate* measure and *still*.... she let him go. Hannah Davis placed a high price on Liberty. On April 19th, 1775, Hannah paid in full.

Congress twice suggested recompense for Hannah’s loss and twice voted to deny her. To do so would have been a violation of the Constitution and a failure to respect what Isaac Davis died for. To take from one by force of law and give to another; no matter how deserving, is a form of slavery and they would have none of it.

A little later this very afternoon, we will tell you the final chapter in the story of April 19th – the Third Strike. I would ask that you take a look around yourselves right now, at your fellow attendees. Some are business owners, some are carpenters, some are fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. The people you see here today are *not at all* unlike the men and women that wrested this great nation from the bonds of the King’s tyranny more than 230 years ago, so that we could live in Freedom today. America is *our* country, *our* birthright, and *our* responsibility.

I thank you for your time – now I say let’s get back to maintaining the tradition!

Hooozaahhhh!