

# One year of the American Revolution -- April 1775 to March 1776 -- viewed from Cambridge Common.

Graham & Parks School  
January 31, 2011



Americans know the Revolution began in Boston and at the Battles of Lexington & Concord.

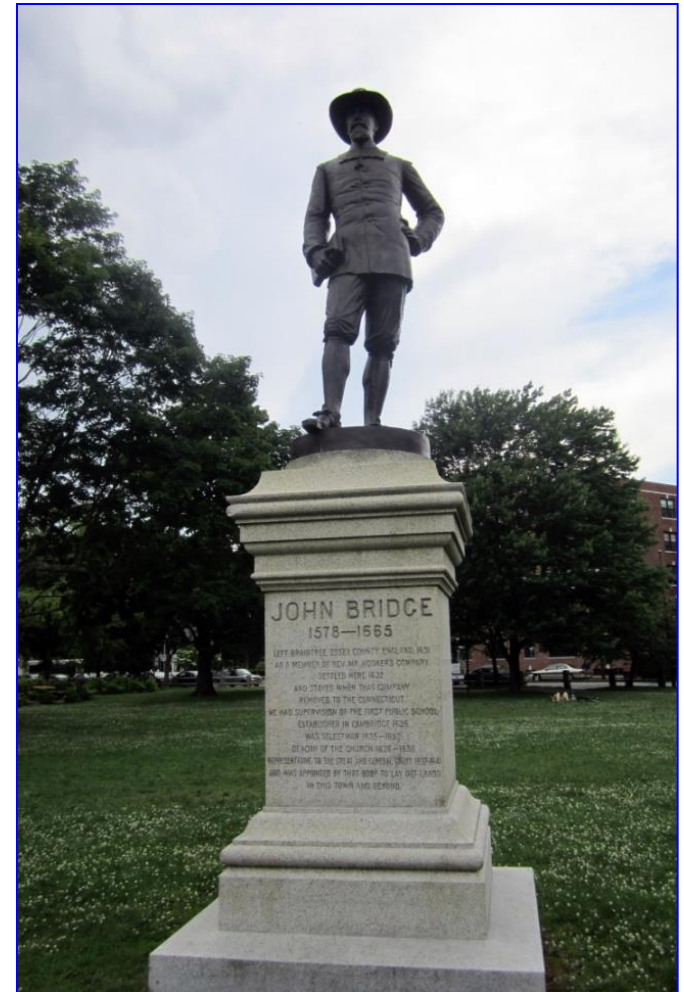


- But a lot of it happened in Cambridge:
- Everything important in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the Revolutionary War -- April 1775 to March 1776 -- passed through Cambridge Common !

# What is Cambridge Common?

- A Common was a place where all residents could graze their cows.
- Not long after the Mayflower, the Puritans started the town,
- and in 1630 established the Common.

*The Puritan*



# The Common

- In those days, Cambridge Common extended all the way up to present-day Linnaean Street.
- *In other words, the land where Graham & Parks stands was once part of the Common!*



On Linnaean Street,  
the oldest house in Cambridge  
shows where people's homes began again.



*Cooper-Frost-Austin House*

This plaque shows  
the view of two houses  
that were across  
Garden Street from  
the Common  
200 years ago.

Imagine you were  
a 9-year-old child living  
in one of them.

What could you have  
seen from your doorstep  
between April 1775  
and May 1776?

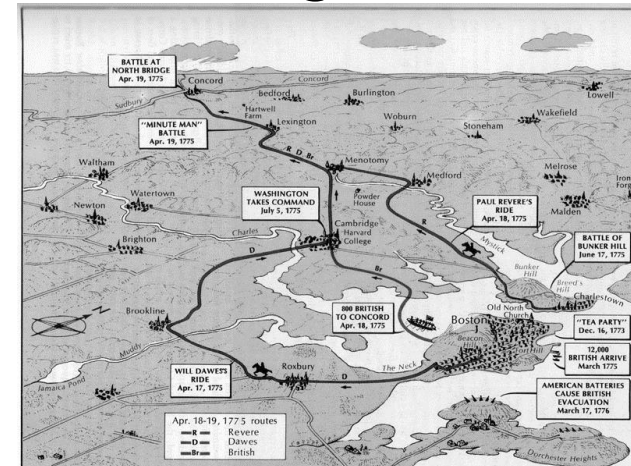


# The night of April 18, 1775



- William Dawes rode through Cambridge Common, on his way from Boston to Lexington to warn that the British army was coming.
- Paul Revere was riding from Charleston to do the same.
- Revere was supposed to come through Cambridge too, but had to circle north to evade a British patrol near present-day Union Square, before meeting up with Dawes.

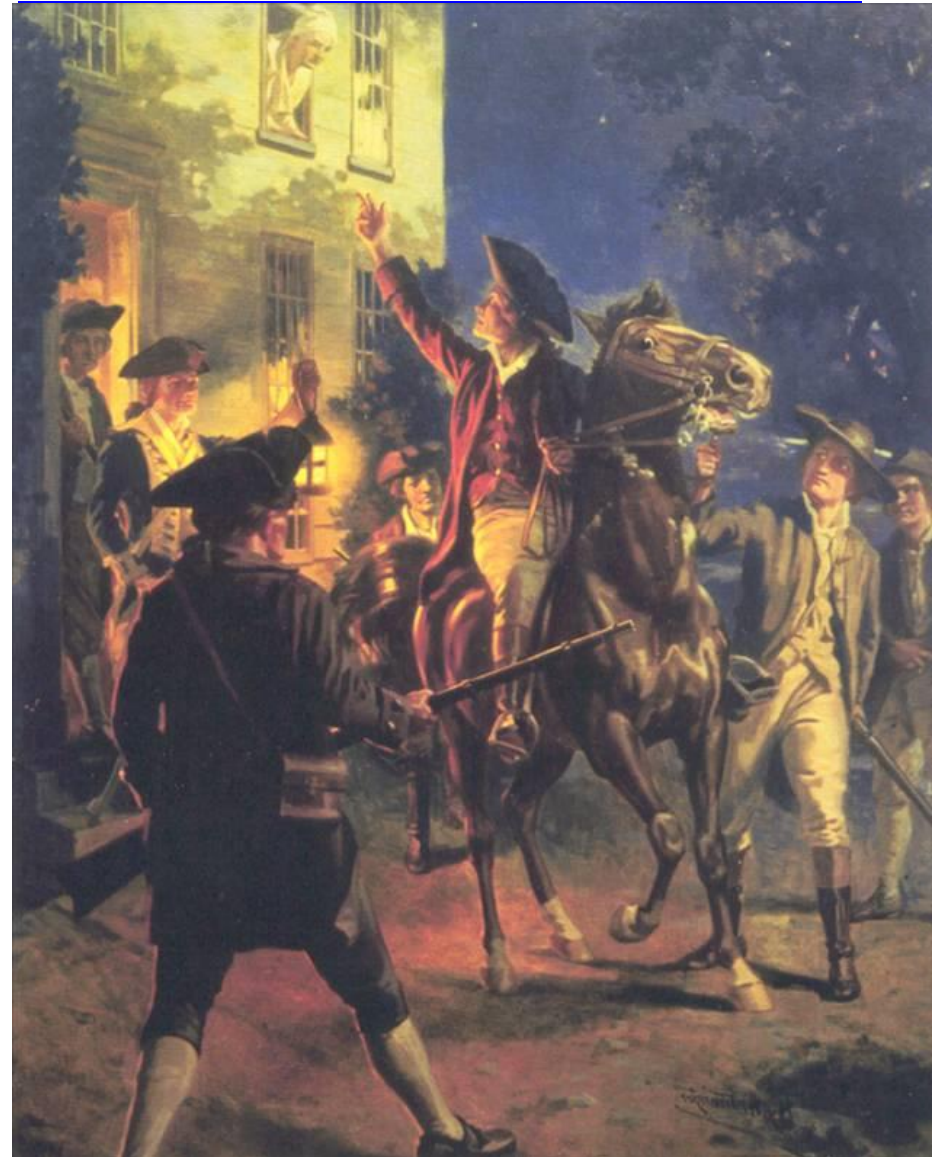
*The British came through East Cambridge (Second St. to Gore St.)  
Reinforcements came through the Common.*



The Boston Region at the Opening of the War of Independence, 1773-1776

# Paul Revere is more famous

- Longfellow wrote “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere.”





# The midnight ride

- Longfellow lived at 105 Brattle St. (“Tory Row”),
  - *Today it is the Longfellow Historical Site.*
  - *He is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery.*



# The midnight ride

- *“Dawes Island” at the southern tip of the Common has bronze horseshoes in the ground in commemoration,*



- *and signs explaining Cambridge history.*

# Signs at Dawes Island explain Cambridge history



# April 19, 1775:

## The battles of Lexington & Concord.

- In Massachusetts we celebrate April 19 every year as Patriot's Day.
- Some Cambridge Minutemen went to the battles.



# Cambridge Minutemen

- Others waited in North Cambridge to ambush the redcoats on their way back to Boston

*(where Rindge Ave. comes into Mass.Ave., "Watson's Corner." Marker at 2158 Mass.Ave.)*



- Several were killed by British soldiers
  - *and are buried in The Old Burying Ground.*

# *The Old Burying Ground is across the street from the Common*



# The cemetery contains the graves of 19 Revolutionary soldiers,

- including two African-Americans named Neptune Frost & Cato Stedman.

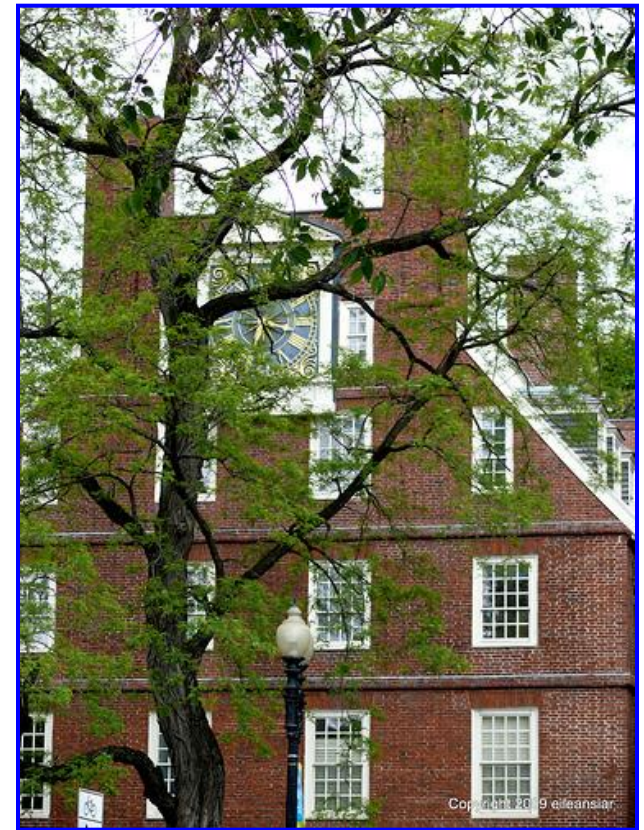


*A granite shaft was placed on the spot.*

# May 1, 1775: Harvard was evacuated.

- The officers of the new army moved in.

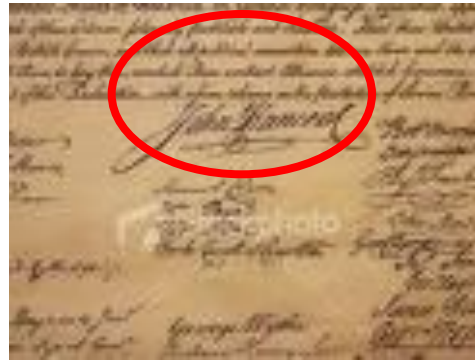
*Right across Mass. Ave. from the Common.*



*Massachusetts Hall is today the Harvard President's office.*

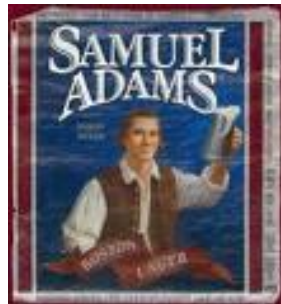
# Most of the major leaders of the Revolution in Massachusetts had gone to school at Harvard University

- John Hancock



*They took classes in Harvard Hall, which is still there.*

- Sam Adams



- John Adams

who was more important, but worried that nobody would remember him for anything !



- An army of 20,000 Americans gathered at the Common and pitched their tents.
- On June 13 they marched off to the Battle of Bunker Hill in Charlestown.

*They went along the Charlestown-Watertown path (now Kirkland Street).*

*Marker maps show the way.*



# The Battle of Bunker Hill

– June 17, 1775.



– “Don’t fire until  
you see the whites of their eyes!”

– *After the battle,  
the Ruggles-Fayerweather House at 175 Brattle Street  
was used as a hospital for the wounded.*

# George Washington

- After Lexington & Concord, John Adams proposed to the Continental Congress making George Washington commander of the Continental Army.
- He arrived in Cambridge July 2, 1775.



General Washington is shown July 3, 1775, taking command of the Continental Army.



From a drawing  
by Paul Hawthorne, 1941.  
<http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/chistory/section5.htm>

# A monument shows Washington taking command

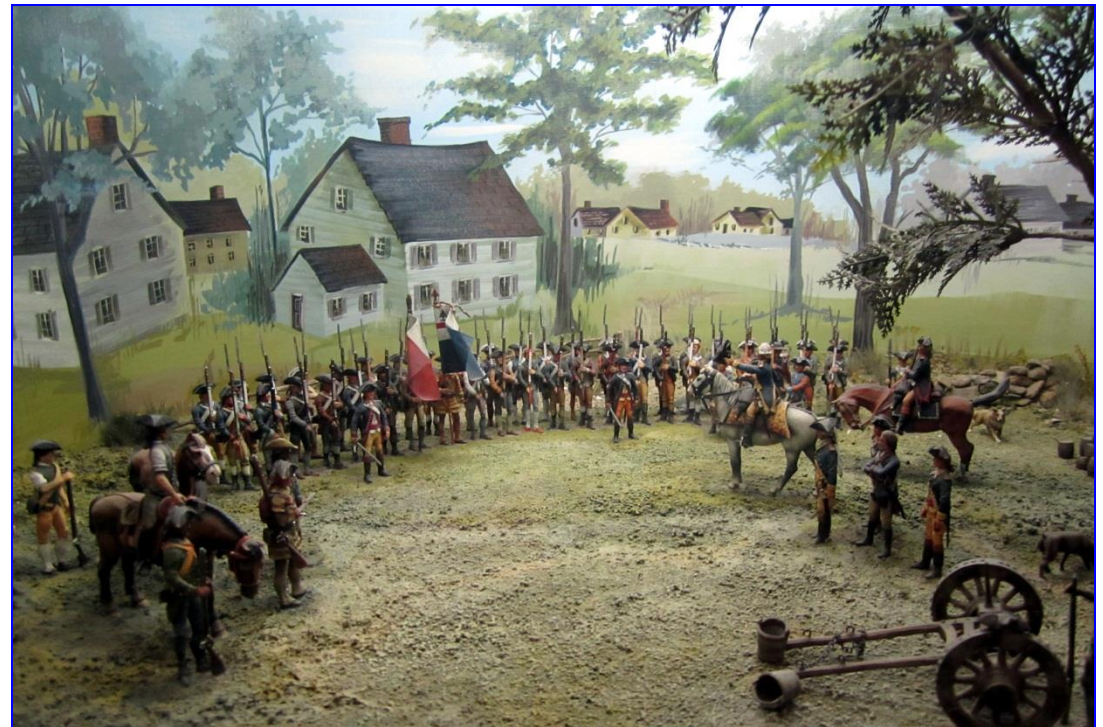


# The Sheraton Commander Hotel

- across Garden Street
- is called that because Washington was Commander in Chief.
- It has a statue of him.



The Sheraton Commander Hotel also has a “diorama” showing Washington taking command of the troops near a famous elm tree.



# The Washington Gate

explains to visitors entering from Harvard Square.



“Near this spot on July 3, 1775, George Washington took command of the American Army.”

# Where exactly *was* the Washington Elm?

- It sat in the middle of what became Garden St.
- The tree finally fell over in 1923.
- They paved the street and just moved the same monument to another tree !



# But the story of the tree is explained

- in other places.



- Across the park, a “scion” of the Washington Elm was grown from a cutting.



# Martha Washington

came from Virginia  
to join her husband  
in Cambridge.

They stayed on Tory Row in  
the same house where  
Longfellow later lived.

They attended a service at  
Christ Church across the  
street from the Common,  
Dec.31, 1775. *It is still there.*



Jan. 1, 1776:

The Continental Army got a new flag

The “Cambridge flag” (or “Union flag”)



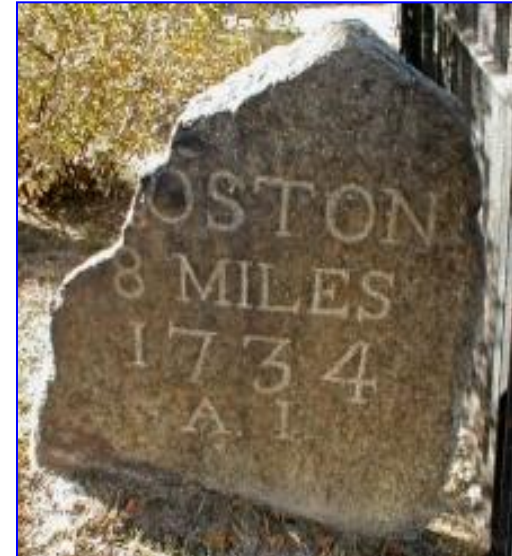
# The road from Boston to Philadelphia

January 24, 1776: John Adams passed through the Common on horseback, on his way to Philadelphia to help write the Declaration of Independence.



– The road from Boston to New York & Philadelphia passed through Cambridge.

– *The original stone marker lies across the street from Dawes Island. It points the way to the bridge across the Charles River.*

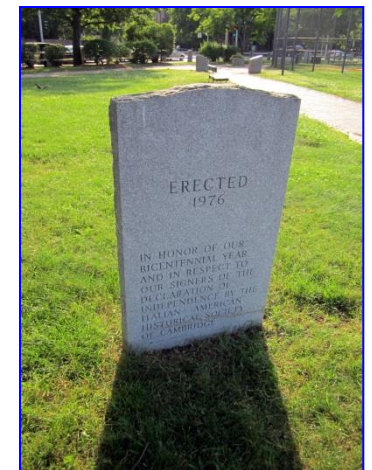


# The Declaration of Independence

- “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...”



- It was agreed on July 4, 1776.
  - So we celebrate the Fourth of July
    - as Independence Day



- The British army holed up in Boston all winter.
- Washington did not know how to get them out.

- Henry Knox, the 25-year-old owner of a Boston bookstore who had read a lot of military books, joined the army.



- He proposed a plan to Washington.

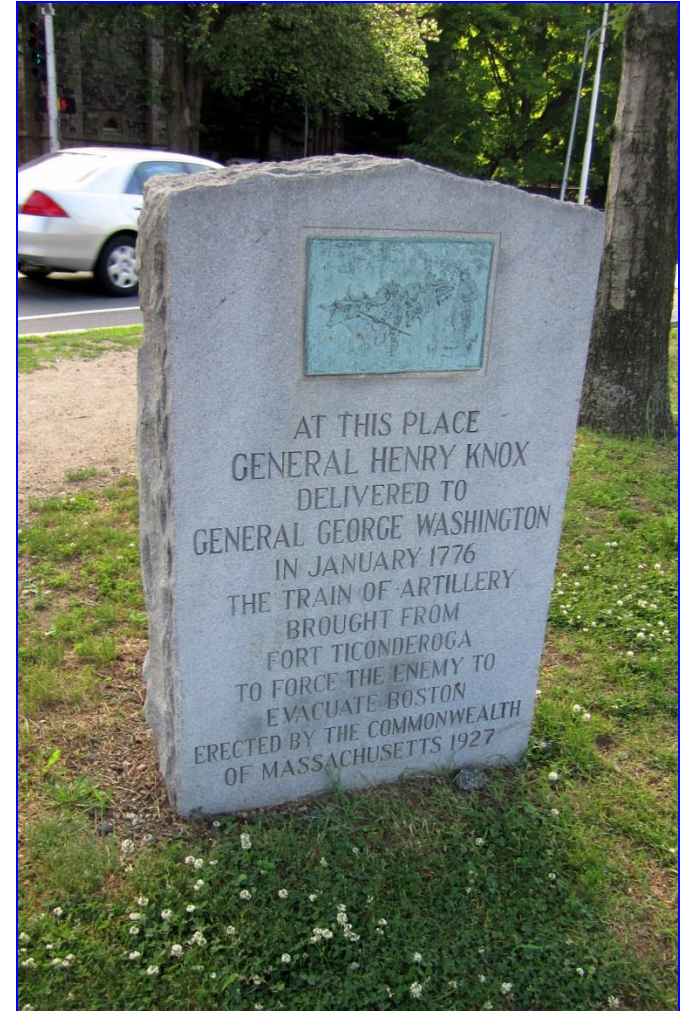
- He went to Fort Ticonderoga, 300 miles away in New York.

- It had been captured from the British in May.



Knox took the cannon from the fort, and dragged them across the snow in giant sleds,

- arriving back in Cambridge Common
- on Jan. 24, 1776,
- where he presented them to Washington.



# The British evacuation of Boston

- The British general Gage woke up and, looking at Dorchester Heights, saw Knox's cannons facing down at him from the hilltop.
- March 17, 1776: The British quickly left Boston.



# Evacuation Day, March 17

- Boston celebrates Evacuation Day each year.
- The fighting moved on to New York and then New Jersey, never to return to Massachusetts.

*Some cannon left behind by the British army were brought to Cambridge Common to mark the event.*



# The cannon on the Common were taken from Fort Independence *which you can visit today in South Boston*



# Abraham Lincoln

- 1863: Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address
- It begins by referring to 1776:  
“Four score & seven years ago our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”
- *The Civil War Memorial, with a statue of Lincoln, dominates the center of Cambridge Common.*





- Some famous fighters came from France & Poland to join the American Revolution.
  - They wanted to try out similar revolutions in their own countries.

*Memorials to Tadeusz Kosciuszko & Casimir Pulaski*



# Immigrants from Ireland

- Irish Famine (1847)

*monument*

