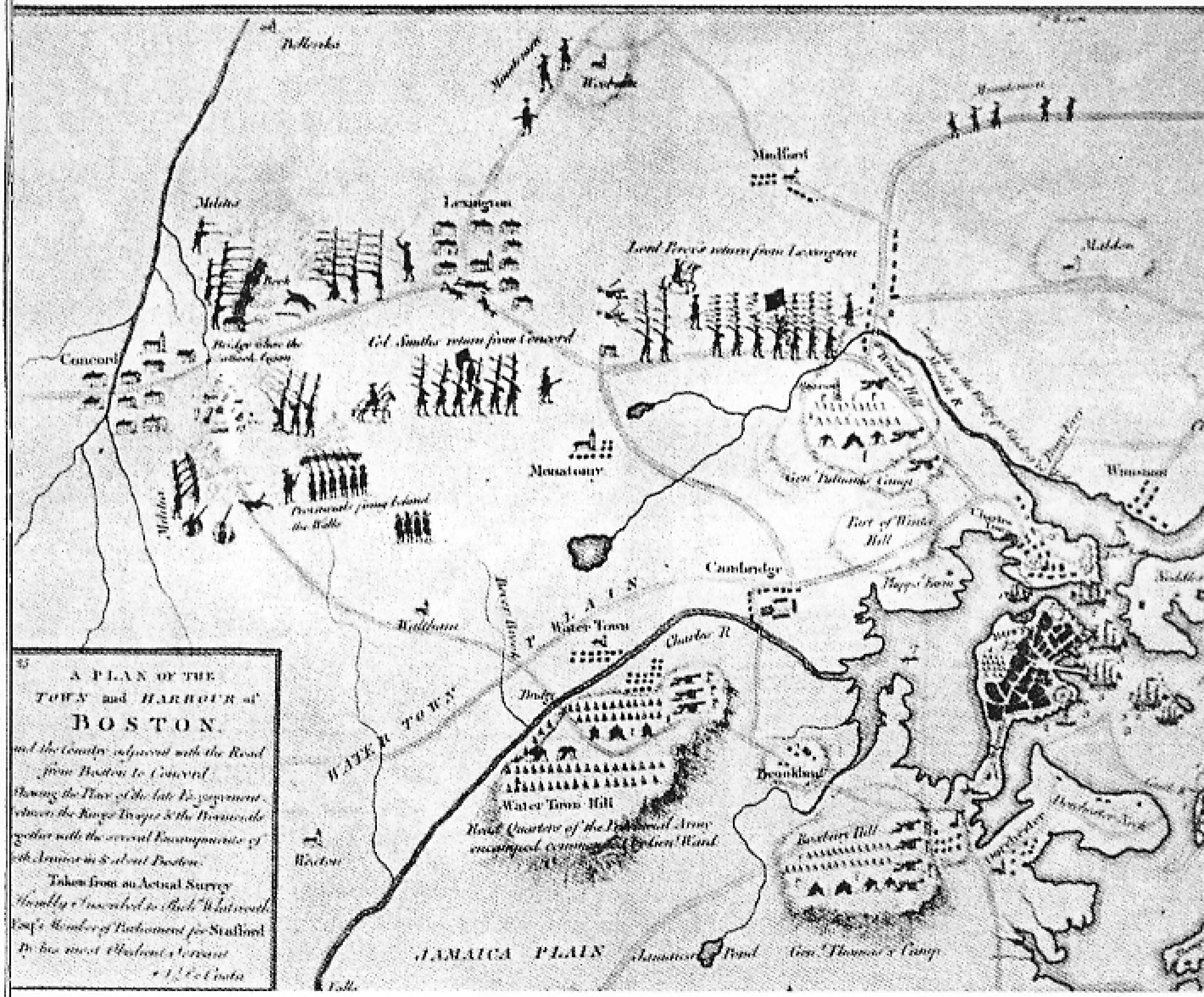
The Making of the American Revolution

Part 1

The Beginning or the End?


A PLAN OF THE
TOWN and HARBOUR of
BOSTON.
Taken from an Actual Survey
Lexington
Concord
Medford
Malden
Lord Percy's return from Lexington
Col. Smiths return from Concord
Cambridge
Water Town
Waltham
Charles R.
Water Town Hill
Roxbury Hill
JAMAICA PLAIN
Weston

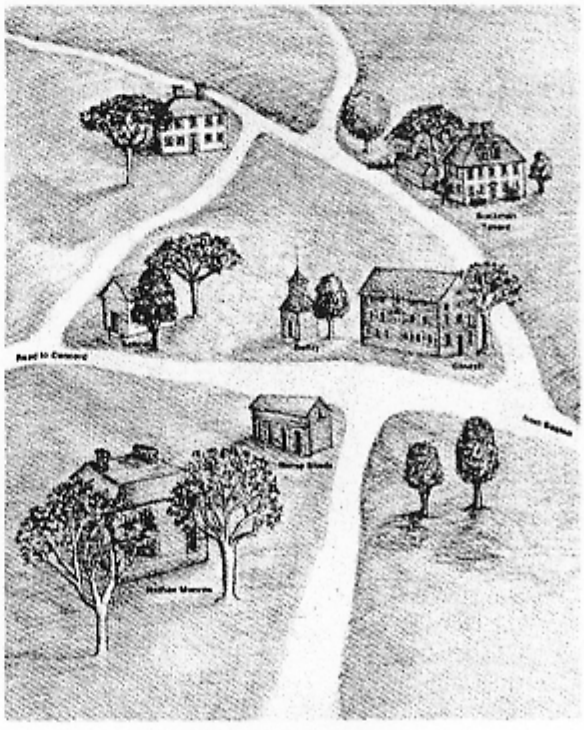
April 19, 1775: The Battle of Lexington

In the early morning hours of April 19, 1775, a handful of men stood at attention on Lexington Common. They were armed with guns, and they looked nervously down the road to Boston. "Minutemen" they were called, because they were supposed to be ready at a minute's notice to protect their town. They were ready now, but they were not quite sure what they were supposed to be ready for. British soldiers were reported to be on their way from Boston to Concord. That was what Paul Revere had told them. But no one had said what they were to do about it. They were certainly not expected to stop the British. Apparently they should just stand there with their guns, to show the British, as they went by, that Americans were not afraid of them.

Marching up the road from Boston was another group of men, much larger in number than the group on Lexington Common. These men had guns too, and they wore the bright red uniforms of the British army. They had been up all night. Starting from Boston in boats, they had rowed across the Charles River to Cambridge. There they began a march to Concord, where some troublemaking Americans were said to be gathering arms and ammunition. The soldiers' job was to seize these things and thus prevent any possible trouble.

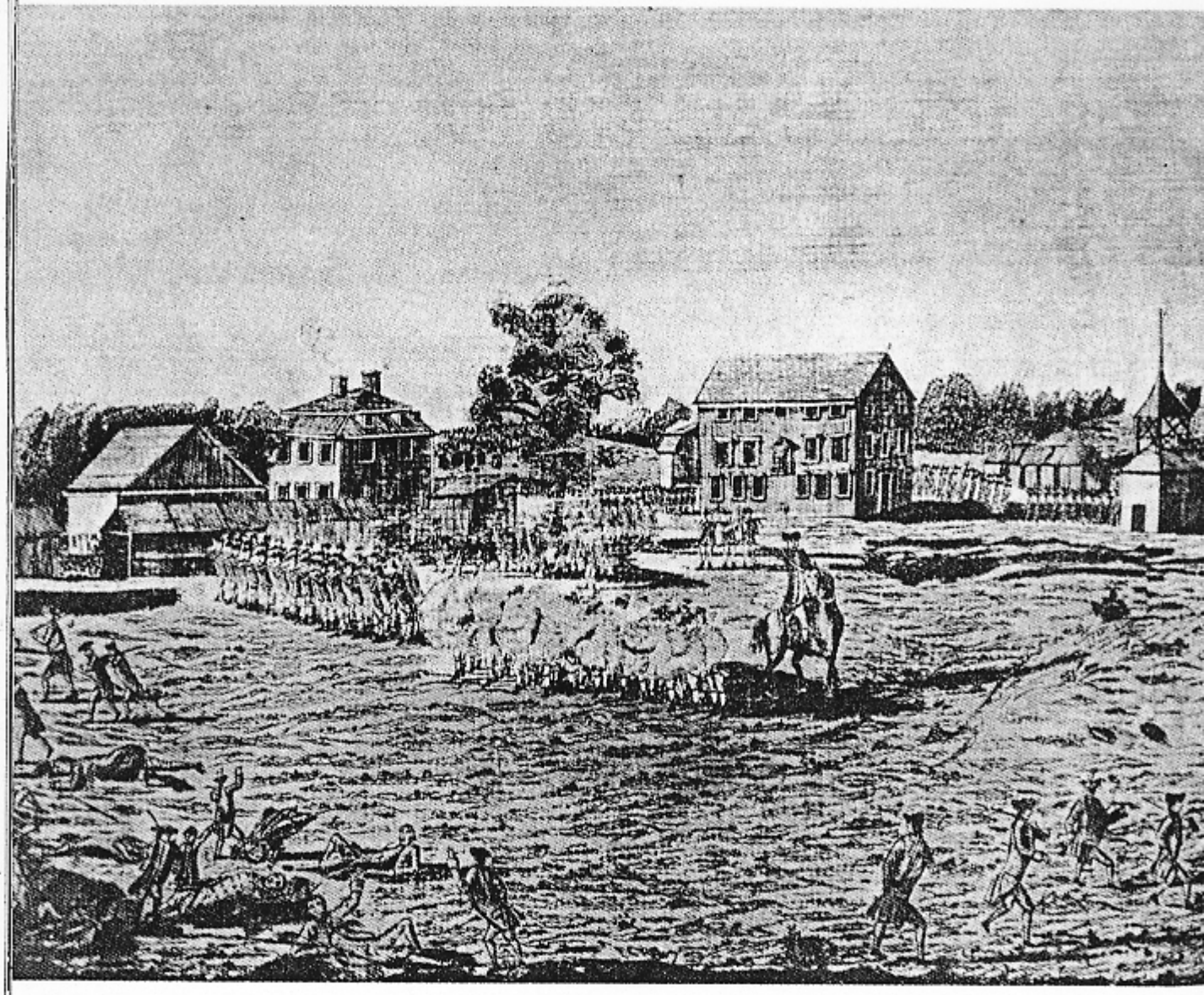
The march had begun at night in order to catch the culprits at Concord by surprise. But the news had leaked out, because church bells were ringing in alarm and people were stirring in every town the soldiers passed through. They could hear drums beating in some places. It seemed as though the troublemakers at Concord must have many friends.

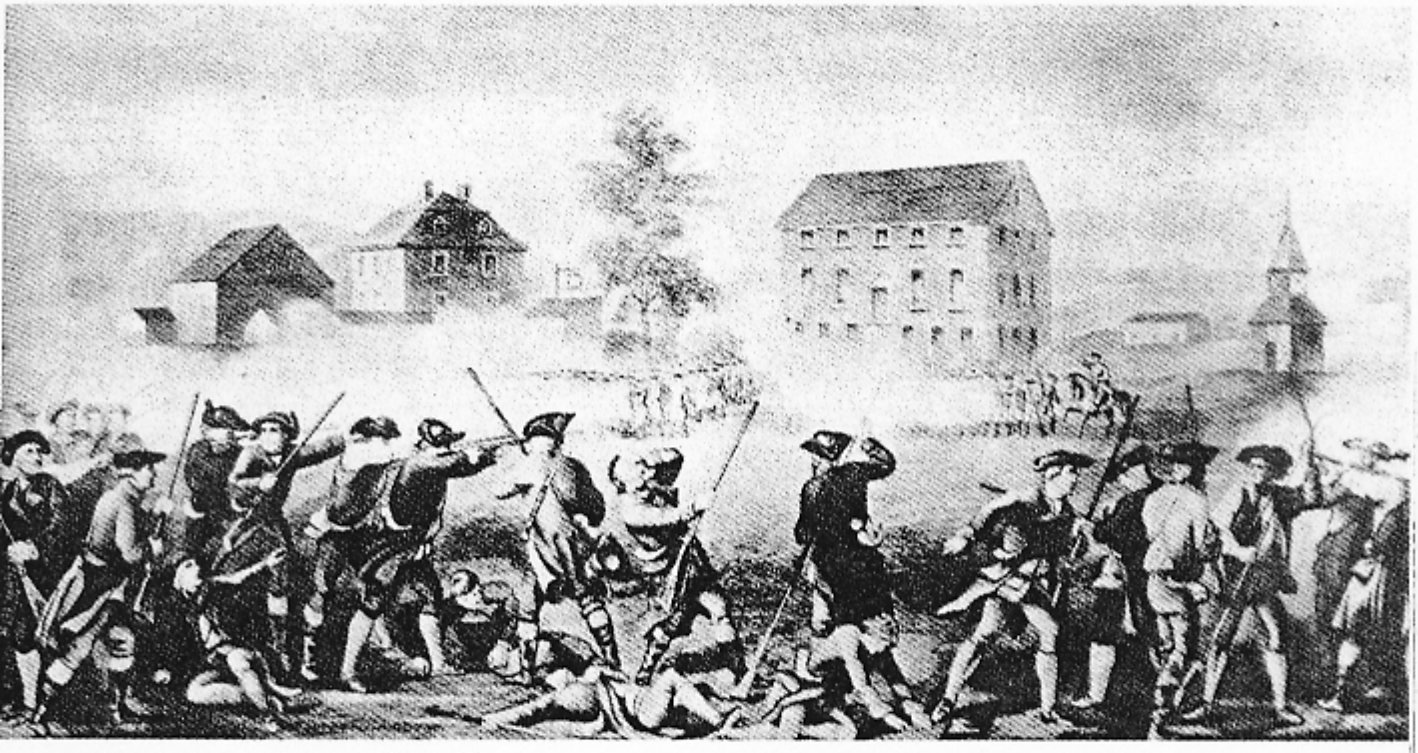
By the time the soldiers reached the outskirts of Lexington, the sun was up and they were getting nervous about the numbers of people that seemed to be watching them. As the British soldiers approached Lexington Green, the two groups, soldiers and Minutemen, caught sight of each other. Then something happened.



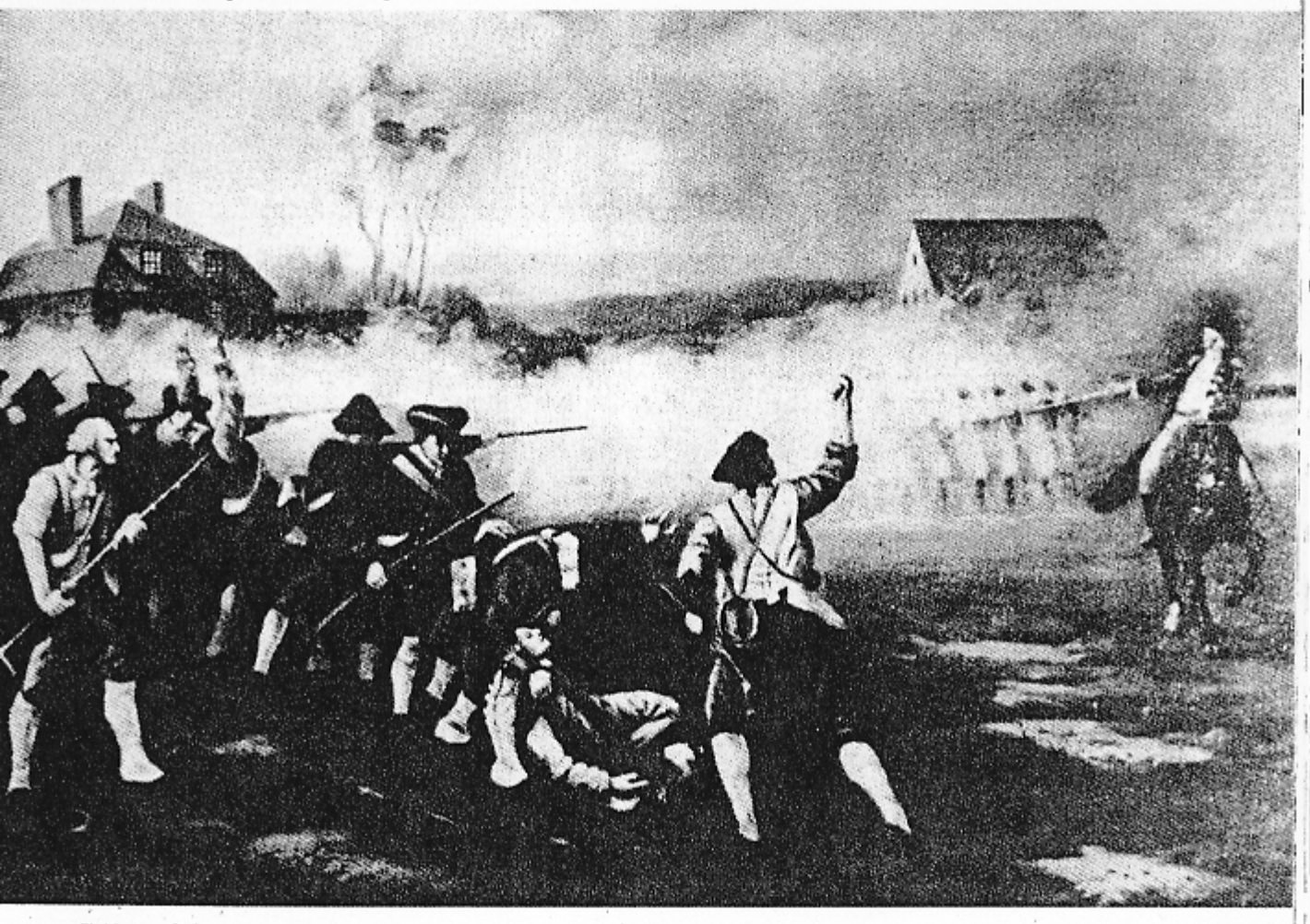
Lexington Green

The Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775, Amos Doolittle, engraver. From a drawing by Ralph Earl, a Connecticut militiaman, late April, 1775.

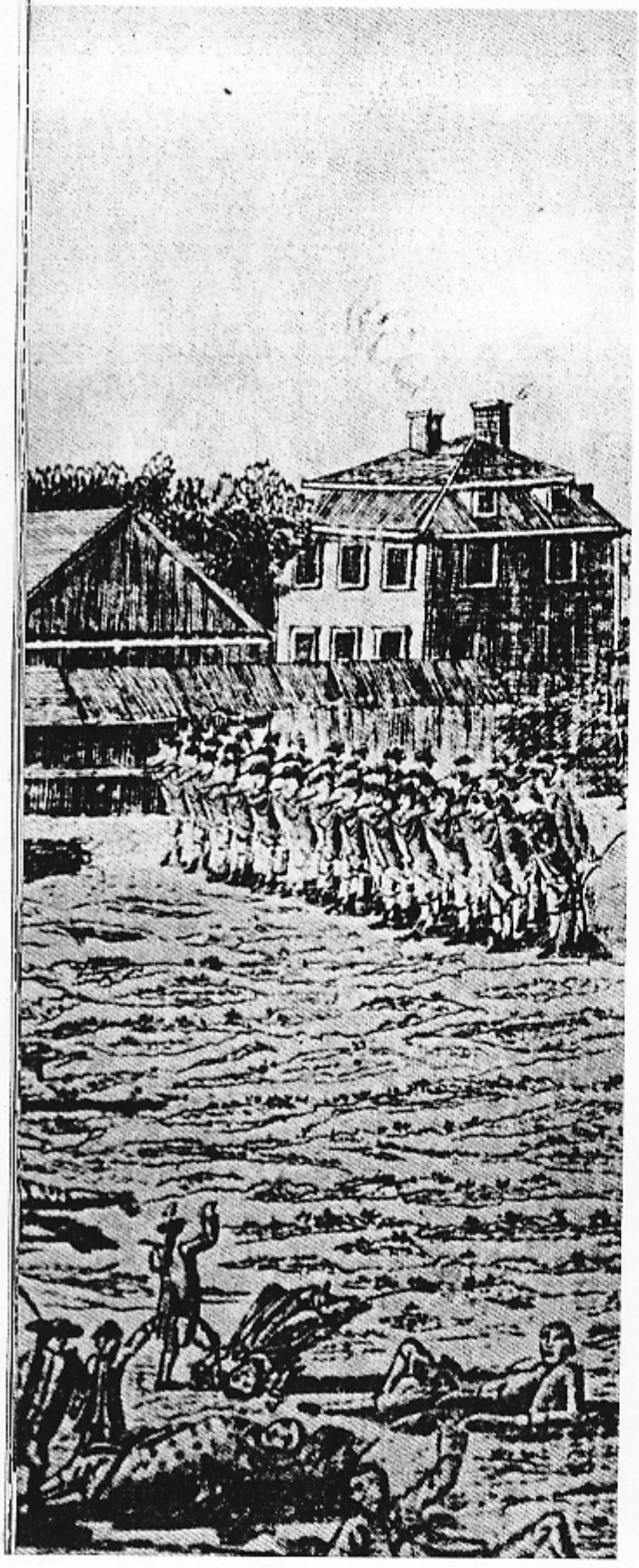




The Battle of Lexington, Hammett Billings. 1855.



The Dawn of Liberty, Henry Sandham. 1886.

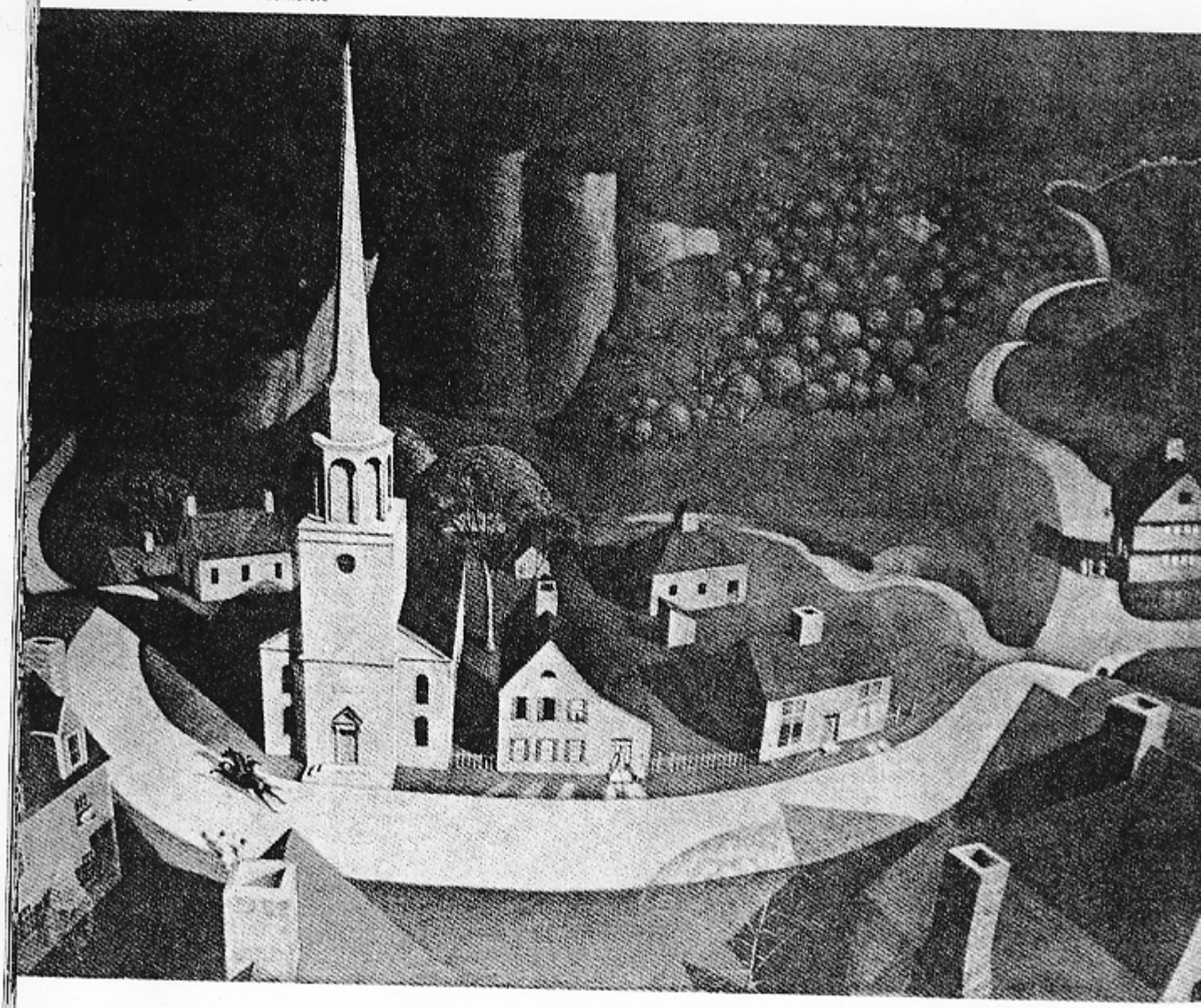


Three views: which is the most accurate?

Each of the three artistic interpretations of the events at Lexington represents a point of view. Why do artists differ in what they emphasize? Why are some details brought out in one painting and clouded over or omitted in another? Can a work of art ever be used as evidence to get at truth? Who is the most reliable artistic interpreter of what happened at Lexington?

What did happen at Lexington? How did the people who took part in the events or witnessed them tell the story? Following are accounts of what happened at Lexington written by three British soldiers and accounts written by three Americans.

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere



What Happened at Lexington?

British Accounts

DIARY OF LIEUTENANT JOHN BARKER, MEMBER OF THE BRITISH FORCE

1775, April 19th

Last night between 10 and 11 o'clock all the Grenadiers and Light Infantry of the army, making about 600 men (under the command of Lt. Col. Smith of the 10th and Major Pitcairn of the Marines), embarked and were landed upon the opposite shore on Cambridge marsh; few but the commanding officers knew what expedition we were going upon. After getting over the marsh, where we were wet up to the knees, we were halted in a dirty road and stood there till two o'clock in the morning, waiting for provisions to be brought from the boats and to be divided, and which most of the men threw away, having carried some with 'em. At 2 o'clock we began our march by wading through a very long ford up to our middles. After going a few miles we took 3 or 4 people who were going off to give intelligence.

About 5 miles on this side of a town called Lexington, which lay on 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 between 200 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, we could not tell how many because they were got behind walls and into the woods. We had a man of the 10th Light Infantry wounded, nobody else hurt. We then formed on the Common, but with some difficulty, the men were so wild they could hear no orders.[1]

REPORT OF MAJOR JOHN PITCAIRN, LEADER OF THE BRITISH EXPEDITION, TO GENERAL THOMAS GAGE, COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE BRITISH FORCES IN AMERICA.

26th April 1775

Sir, As you are anxious to know the particulars that happened near and at Lexington on the 19th |of this month|, agreeable to your desire, I will in as concise a manner as possible state the facts, for my time at present is so much employed, as to prevent a more particular narrative of the occurrences of that day.

Six companies of Light Infantry were detached by Lieutenant-Colonel Smith to take possession of two bridges on the other side of Concord. Near three in the morning, when we were advanced within about two miles of Lexington, intelligence was received that about 500 men in arms were assembled, determined to oppose the King's troops, and retard them in their march. On this intelligence, I mounted my horse, and galloped up to the six Light Companies. When I arrived at the head of the advanced company, two officers came and informed me that a man of the rebels |in advance of| those that were assembled, had presented a musket and attempted to shoot them, but the piece flashed in the pan. On this I gave directions to the troops to move forward, but on no account to fire, or even

attempt it without orders. When I arrived at the end of the village, I observed drawn up upon a Green near 200 of the Rebels. When I came within about one hundred yards of them, they began to file off towards some stone walls on our right flank. The Light Infantry observing this, ran after them. I instantly called to the soldiers not to fire, but to surround and disarm them, and after several repetitions of those positive orders to the men, not to fire, some of the Rebels who had jumped over the wall, fired four or five shots at the soldiers, which wounded a man of the Tenth, and my horse was wounded in two places, from some quarter or other. And at the same time several shots were fired from a meeting house on our left. Upon this, without any order or regularity, the Light Infantry began a scattered fire, and continued in that situation for some little time, contrary to the repeated orders both of me and the officers that were present. It will be needless to mention what happened after, as I suppose Colonel Smith hath given a particular account of it.[2]
John Pitcairn

LETTER FROM GENERAL THOMAS GAGE, COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE BRITISH FORCES IN AMERICA, TO LORD BARRINGTON, BRITISH SECRETARY AT WAR

April 22, 1775, Boston

I have now nothing to trouble your Lordship with, but of an affair that happened here on the 19th instant. I had intelligence of a large quantity of military stores being collected at Concord, for the avowed purpose of supplying a body of troops to act in opposition to his Majesty's government. I got the Grenadiers and Light Infantry out of town, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Smith of the 10th Regiment, and Major Pitcairn of the Marines, with as much secrecy as possible, on the 18th at night, and with orders to destroy the said military stores. [I] supported them the next morning by eight companies of the 4th, the same number of the 23rd, 47th and Marines under the command of Lord Percy. It appears from the firing of alarm guns and ringing of bells that the march of Lieutenant Colonel Smith was discovered, and he was opposed by a body of men within six miles of Concord; some few of whom first began to fire upon his advanced companies, which brought on a fire from the troops that dispersed the body opposed to them.[3]

American Accounts

REPORT OF JOHN PARKER, CAPTAIN OF LEXINGTON MINUTEMEN

I, John Parker, of lawful age, and commander of the Militia in Lexington, do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth instant, in the morning, about one of the clock, being informed that there were a number of Regular officers riding up and down the road, stopping and insulting people as they passed the road, and also was informed that a number of Regular troops were on their march from Boston, in order to take the province stores at Concord, ordered our militia to meet on the common in said Lexington, to consult what to do, and concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with said Regular troops (if they should approach) unless they should insult us; and upon their sudden approach, I immediately ordered our Militia to disperse and

not to fire. Immediately said troops made their appearance and rushed furiously, fired upon and killed eight of our party, without receiving any provocation therefor from us.
John Parker, Captain of Lexington Minutemen.[4]

LETTER FROM JOSEPH WARREN, PRESIDENT OF MASSACHUSETTS PROVINCIAL CONGRESS, TO TOWNS OF MASSACHUSETTS

April 26, 1775

Friends and fellow subjects:
Hostilities are at length |begun| in this colony by the troops under command of General Gage. . . .

It will appear that on the night preceding the nineteenth of April . . . a body of the King's troops, under the command of Colonel Smith, were secretly landed at Cambridge, with an apparent design to take or destroy the military and other stores provided for the defense of this colony, and deposited at Concord;
that some inhabitants of the colony, on the night aforesaid, whilst travelling peaceably on the road, between |Boston| and Concord, were seized and greatly abused by armed men, who appeared to be officers of General Gage's army;
that the town of Lexington by these means was alarmed, and a company of the inhabitants mustered on the occasion;

that the Regular troops on their way to Concord, marched into the said town of Lexington, and the said company, on their approach, began to disperse;

that, |notwithstanding| this, the Regulars rushed on with great violence, and first began hostilities, by firing on the Lexington company, whereby they killed eight and wounded several others;

that the Regulars continued their fire, until those of said company, who were neither killed nor wounded, had made their escape . . .

These, brethren, are marks of ministerial vengeance against this colony, for refusing, with her sister colonies, a submission to slavery. But they have not yet detached us from our Royal Sovereign. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and . . . are still ready, with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, family, crown, and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his cruel ministry we will not tamely submit; appealing to heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free.
By Order,
Joseph Warren, President [5]

SERMON OF THE REVEREND JONAS CLARK, PASTOR OF THE CHURCH AT LEXINGTON ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE, APRIL 19, 1776

Between the hours of twelve and one, on the morning of the nineteenth of April, we received intelligence, by express, from the Honorable Joseph Warren, Esq., at Boston, "that a large body of the king's troops (supposed to be a brigade of about 1200 or 1500) were embarked in boats from Boston, and gone over to land . . . in Cambridge; and that it was shrewdly suspected that they were

ordered to seize and destroy the stores belonging to the colony, then deposited at Concord."

Upon this intelligence, . . . the militia of this town were alarmed and ordered to meet on the usual place of parade; . . . to consult what might be done for our own and the people's safety; and also to be ready for whatever service Providence might call us out to, upon this alarming occasion, in case overt acts of violence or open hostilities should be committed by this mercenary band of armed and blood-thirsty oppressors . . .

The militia met . . . and waited the return of the messengers . . . Between 3 and 4 o'clock, one of the expresses returned, informing that there was no appearance of the troops on the roads either from Cambridge or Charlestown; and that it was supposed that the movements in the army the evening before were only a feint to alarm the people. Upon this, therefore, the militia company were dismissed for the present, but with orders to be within call of the drum—waiting the return of the other messenger . . . But he was prevented by |the troops'| silent and sudden arrival at the place where he was waiting for intelligence. So that, after all this precaution, we had no notice of their approach 'till the brigade was actually in the town and upon a quick march within about a mile and a quarter of the meeting-house and place of parade.

However, the commanding officer thought best to call the company together, not with any design of opposing so superior a force, much less of commencing hostilities, but only with a view to determine what to do, when and where to meet, and to dismiss and disperse.

Accordingly, about half an hour after four o'clock, alarm guns were fired, and the drums beat to arms, and the militia were collecting together. Some, to the number of about 50 or 60, or possibly more, were on the parade, others were coming towards it. In the mean time, the troops having thus stolen a march upon us and, to prevent any intelligence of their approach, having seized and held prisoners several persons whom they met unarmed upon the road, seemed to come determined for murder and bloodshed—and that whether provoked to it or not! When within about half a quarter of a mile of the meeting-house, they halted, and the command was given to prime and load; which being done, they marched on till they came up to the east end of said meeting-house, in sight of our militia . . . who were about 12 or 13 rods distant.

Immediately upon |the British troops| appearing so suddenly and so nigh, Captain Parker, who commanded the militia company, ordered the men to disperse and take care of themselves, and not to fire. Upon this, our men dispersed—but many of them not so speedily as they might have done, not having the most distant idea of such brutal barbarity and more than savage cruelty from the troops of a British king, as they immediately experienced! For, no sooner did |the troops| come in sight of our company, but one of them, supposed to be an officer of rank, was heard to say to the troops, "Damn them; we will have them!" Upon which the troops shouted aloud, huzzaed, and rushed furiously towards our men.

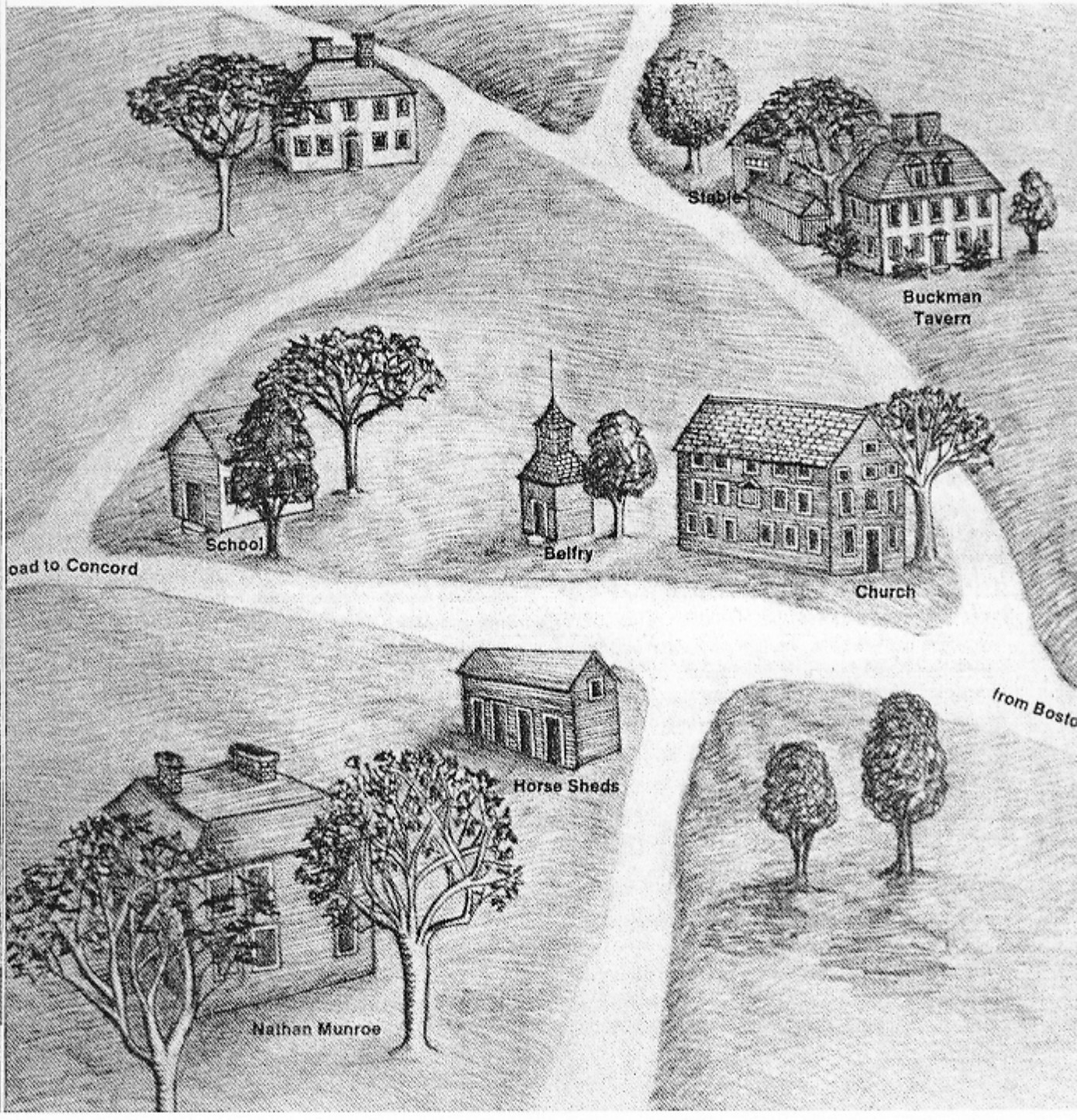
About the same time, three officers (supposed to be Colonel Smith, Major Pitcairn and another officer) advanced on horseback to the front of the body,

and coming within 5 or 6 rods of the militia, one of them cried out, "ye villains, ye Rebels, disperse; Damn you, disperse!"—or words to this effect. One of them . . . said, "Lay down your arms; Damn you, why don't you lay down your arms!" The second of these officers, about this time, fired a pistol towards the militia as they were dispersing. The foremost, who was within a few yards of our men, brandishing his sword and then pointing towards them, with a loud voice said to the troops, "Fire! By God, fire!"—which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from the said troops, succeeded by a very heavy and close fire upon our party, dispersing, so long as any of them were within reach. Eight were left dead upon the ground! Ten were wounded. The rest of the company, through divine goodness, were . . . preserved unhurt in this murderous action! . . .

One circumstance more before the brigade quitted Lexington . . . After the militia company were dispersed and the firing ceased, the troops drew up and formed in a body on the common, fired a volley and gave three huzzas, by way of triumph and as expressive of the joy of victory and glory of conquest! Of this transaction, I was a witness, having, at that time, a fair view of their motions and being at the distance of not more than 70 or 80 rods from them.[6]

Detail, Paul Revere

What Happened at Lexington on April 19, 1775?



Concord and the March Back to Boston

Following the skirmish at Lexington, the British column re-formed and continued to Concord. There on the other side of the North Bridge, which spanned the Concord River, they met another group of Minutemen. The British, jittery after the incident at Lexington, fired on the Minutemen. The Minutemen fired back.

The British soldiers found few traces of hidden arms and ammunition at Concord. After searching the town in vain, they began their return march to Boston. Now the shooting began in earnest. The words of one of the British soldiers are reflected in the accompanying drawing:

We were fired on from houses and behind trees and before we had gone half a mile we were fired on from all sides . . . The country was . . . full of hills, woods, stone walls, etc. which the Rebels did not fail to take advantage of.[1]

Just as the weary, panicked, bloodied troops reached Lexington Green again, they were joined by reinforcements sent out from Boston. There were 2,000 British soldiers now, but as they resumed the march to Boston, the Minutemen closed in again and harried and hounded them all the way to Boston. The British reached their headquarters with 73 killed and 174 wounded. The Rebels, as they now were called, had lost 49 dead; 41 were wounded. They encamped outside Boston, bottling up the British inside the town. Open warfare had begun.

A View of the South Part of Lexington

The Beginning or the End?

The picture of what happened on April 19, 1775, is not a perfectly clear one, because it is not certain how the fighting started. But it did start. Why? What caused the King's subjects to stand up against the King's soldiers? Why did the Americans rebel?

In reference to the event of April 19, 1775, a colonist wrote:

When I reflect and consider the fight was between those whose parents but a few generations ago were brothers, I shudder at the thought, and there's no knowing where our calamities will end.[8]

Only a few years earlier, many of the men at Lexington had fought side by side with the British against the French and Indians. Captain John Parker, whose account of April 19 is on page 00, had served against the French with Rogers' Rangers in the wilderness. Robert Munroe, one of the first to die on Lexington Common, had been a hero when New Englanders captured the Fortress of Louisburg (Cape Breton Isle) from the French thirty years before. All told, over twenty of the men in Parker's band had fought for England in the French and Indian wars. Only a few years before, in 1760, these men had rejoiced at the coronation of the young King, George III.

On that occasion bells rang and cannons boomed in celebration, and a Boston minister urged his people to rejoice in

. . . that royal youth whom you lately hailed to the British throne—Let all faction cease; be loyal; be public-spirited. And in him, as you have another George, expect also another friend to your liberties; another guardian of your laws; another father; another victor over your enemies, with extended empire and increasing glory![9]

Another minister, who was saddened by the death of King George II, found comfort in the fact that

. . . it has pleased God to preserve an heir of his illustrious house, who is now set over us. To him let us transfer that loyalty and obedience which was so cheerfully paid to our departed King. May he long wear the crown to which he is now advanced, and not till he is old and full of days resign it for a crown of immortality. May he be directed by wisdom from above, to go in and out before this great people and to rule them in the fear of the lord.[10]

John Adams, as a young Boston lawyer, noted in his diary that the King had declared himself

a friend of liberty and property in government. . . . He promised to patronize religion, virtue, the British name and constitution in church and state, the subjects' rights, liberty, commerce, military merit. These are sentiments worthy of a King—a patriot King.[11]

[June 30, 1766. The General Assembly of New York took] into consideration the innumerable and singular benefits received from our most gracious sovereign, since the commencement of his auspicious reign during which they have been protected from the fury of a cruel, merciless and savage enemy . . . In testimony therefore of their gratitude and the reverence due to his sacred person and character;

Resolved, that this house will make provision for an

Statue of George III

George III

equestrian statue of His present Majesty, our most gracious sovereign, to be erected in the city of New York to perpetuate to the latest posterity the deep sense this colony has of the eminent and singular blessings derived from him, during his most auspicious reign.[12]

The newspapers of the day describe the ceremonies at the erection of King George III's statue in the following words.

Thursday last |August 16, 1770| being the anniversary of the birth day of his Royal Highness Prince Frederick, an elegant equestrian statue of his present Majesty, was erected in the bowling-green, in this city, near Fort-George. On this occasion, the members of his Majesty's Council, the City Corporation, the Corporation of the Chamber of Commerce, the Corporation of the Marine Society, and most of the gentlemen of the city and army waited on his honor the lieutenant governor, in the fort, at his request, where their Majesties and other loyal healths were drank, and under a discharge of 32 pieces of cannon from the battery, accompanied with a band of music. This beautiful statue is made of metal, richly gilt, being the first equestrian one of his present Majesty, and is the workmanship of that celebrated statuary, Mr. Wilton, of London. We hear that in a few days a marble pedestrian statue of Mr. Pitt, will be erected in Wall-Street.[13]

Six years later, in 1776, Americans had different feelings about George III and his statue in New York.

The Destruction of the Statue of George III. July 4, 1776

Who Decides for Americans?

Who Decides?

What Television Programs to Watch?

When to Get a Haircut?

Who Goes to School?

Where to Live?

Where to Go to School?

Who One's Friends Will Be?

When to Tell on Someone?

Who to Take Out on a Date?

When to See a Doctor?

Who Is Guilty or Not Guilty in a Trial?

Who Wins an Election?

Who Has the Final Say?

John Adams

John Adams: Who Decides for Americans?

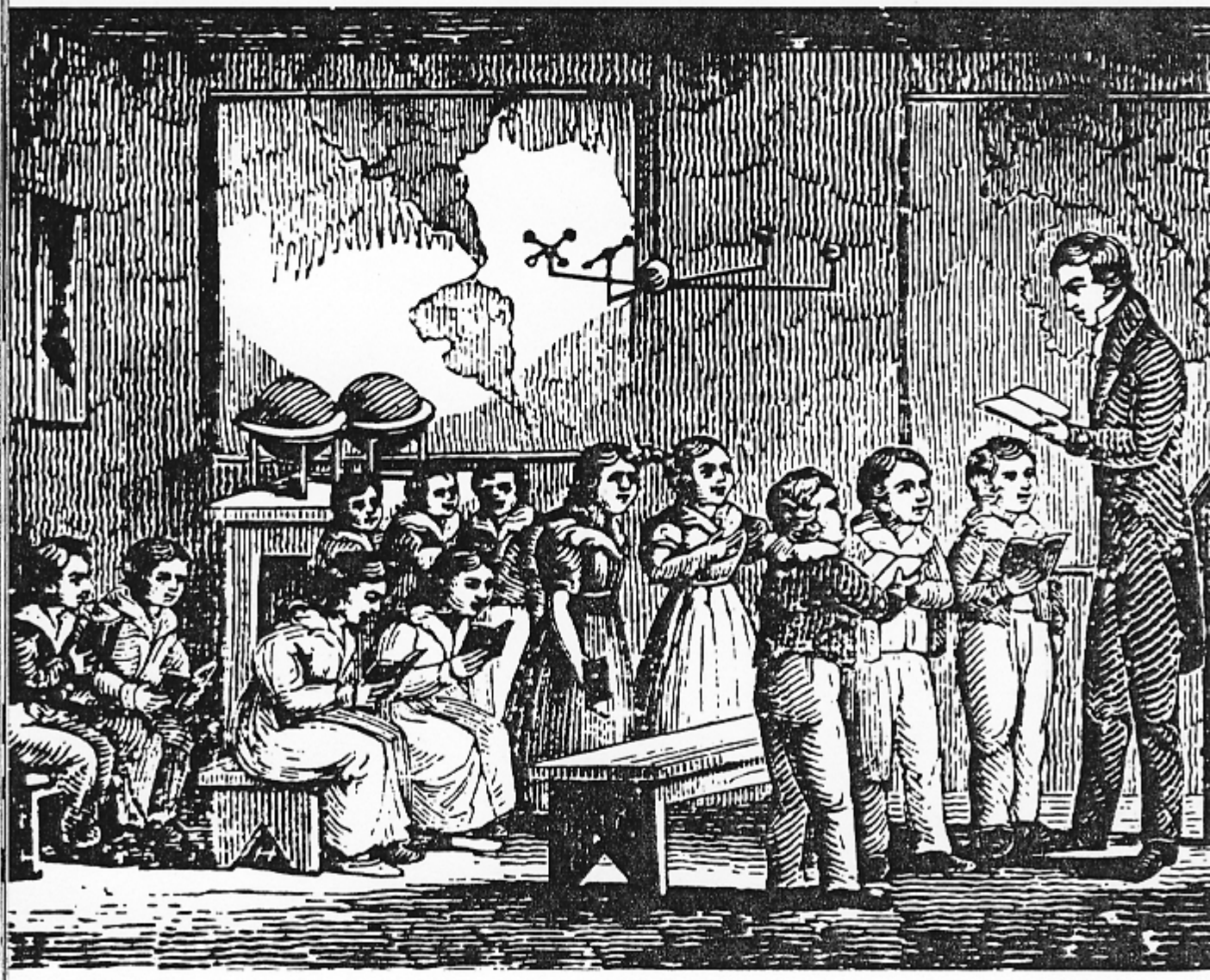
When George III came to the throne in 1760, the event was celebrated everywhere in America. Cannons boomed, bright flags floated from public buildings, men made speeches, and schoolchildren had a holiday. In Boston, there were other reasons for rejoicing in 1760. English and American troops had just conquered the French and Indians in Quebec, turning the tide in a long, bloody war. And, Massachusetts had a new royal governor, Francis Bernard, whose arrival called for more celebrations, cannon salutes, speeches, and a holiday.

The year 1760 was important for young John Adams, too. "I am just entered on the 26th year of my life and the fifth year of my studies in law."[1] Adams studied diligently and filled a journal with notes and observations on current events. After reading the King's first speech in the newspaper, Adams rejoiced that the new King had declared himself "a friend of liberty, and property in government." He felt the speech expressed "sentiments worthy of a King—a patriot King."[2]

As for Governor Bernard, his speech to the Massachusetts legislature, Adams noted, had "several inaccuracies in it." But "there are no marks of knavery in it: there are marks of good sense I think."[3]

Adams apparently had some ideas about what governments, kings and governors are supposed to do. To him, "government" had something to do with "liberty" and "property."

Children Playing



School Master

John Adams' Upbringing and Education

John Adams' notions of government and its relation to liberty and property evolved as he grew up in the small New England town of Braintree. As a young boy the words "liberty" and "property" probably meant nothing to him and, if someone had tried to explain them to John Adams, it would have been necessary to catch him as he left the schoolhouse to escape to the woods and hills nearby. When he was not in the woods with his gun, he spent his time

. . . in making and sailing boats and ships upon the ponds and brooks, in making and flying kites, in driving hoops, playing marbles, playing quoits, wrestling, swimming, skating.[4]

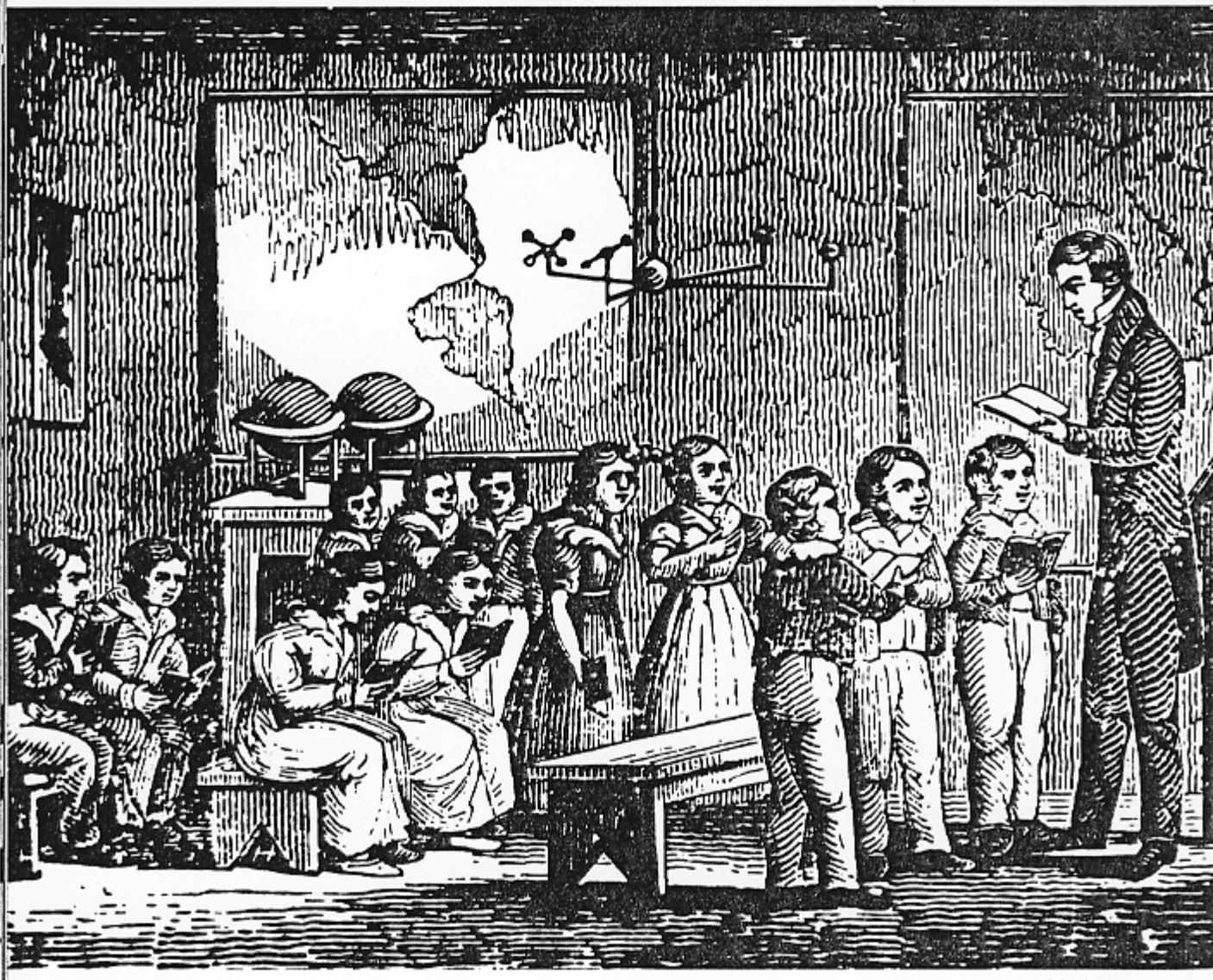
John's father was a successful farmer, much respected by the people of Braintree, who made him a selectman of the town, an officer in the militia and a deacon of the church. Mr. Adams had decided early in John's life that the boy must have a good education, and John's aversion to books disturbed him. He was even more disturbed when John said he did not want to go to college.

What would you do child? Be a farmer. A farmer? Well I will show you what it is to be a farmer. You shall go with me to penny ferry tomorrow morning and help me get thatch. I shall be very glad to go sir.—Accordingly next morning he took me with him, and with great good humor kept me all day with him at work. At night at home he said well John are you satisfied with being a farmer. Though the labor had been very hard and very muddy I answered I like it very well sir. Ay but I don't like it so well.[5]

When John Adams was fifteen he found himself in Harvard College, where he began to see that there was something in books after all. By the time he was graduated, they were more exciting to him than his gun or his skates, and his first job was, of all things, teaching school in Worcester. He tried to make learning more attractive to his pupils than it had been for him, because he had begun to take an interest in ideas like liberty and property. He could see that these ideas had something to do with people being able to read and write and think for themselves.

But John Adams did not plan to teach for long. He was trying to save money so that he could study law, become a lawyer and thus move into a larger world. After teaching school for a year he arranged with a local lawyer in Worcester to teach him and began an intensive reading in the laws of Rome, of England and of New England.

One of the authors whose writings he read was John Locke, an English philosopher who had published a book about government in 1690 after the struggle between the King and Parliament. Locke explained how both property and government began. First he imagined a country where people had no government (he called it "a state of nature"). A man in such a country might own nothing, to start with, except his own body. But if he did some work, say cleared a piece of land and planted corn on it, he would have "mixed" his labor with the land and thus made the land his property. When he did so, he



School Master

could enjoy the fruits of his labor: a good crop of corn to eat when he was hungry. But without government, he would be unable to protect his property, either his land or his corn, from people who had done no work but liked a good meal that someone else had prepared.

The enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a condition, which however free, is full of fears and continual dangers: And 'tis not without reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name, property.

The great and chief end therefore, of mens uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property.

Whensoever, therefore, the legislative shall transgress this fundamental rule of society, and . . . endeavor to grasp themselves, or put into the hands of any other, an absolute power over the lives, liberties, and estates of the people, by this breach of trust they forfeit the power the people had put into their hands . . . and it devolves to the people, who have a right to resume their original liberty, and by the establishment of a new legislative, provide for their own safety and security.[1]

Locke was an Englishman, and when he talked about government beginning this way, he was thinking about an event that had taken place in the past, before men learned to write and record their history. John Adams could see that in England the only way to get land was to buy it or inherit it. But America was still somewhat like the kind of place Locke had imagined.

The political theory expounded in John Locke's writing was easily understood by Americans. For many years, even before Locke wrote, they had been turning the wilderness into cultivated farms. In small communities they had also been forming and participating in governments that much resembled Locke's imaginary original government—a necessity for protection of "lives, liberty, and estates," a way of getting things done that men could not do alone.

"The meeting house, the schoolhouse and the training field are scenes where New England's men were formed." John Adams, 1789

John Adams loved his farm and the hills around it, the orchards and the pastures that his father and grandfather had carved out of the wilderness. In 1761, when his father died, John inherited the property. By this time he was well established as a lawyer, so he did not give up his practice, which was carried on mostly in Boston. But John Adams still loved the Braintree farm. As a property owner he began to participate more fully in the government of his community, and at town meetings he now found himself in a new role.

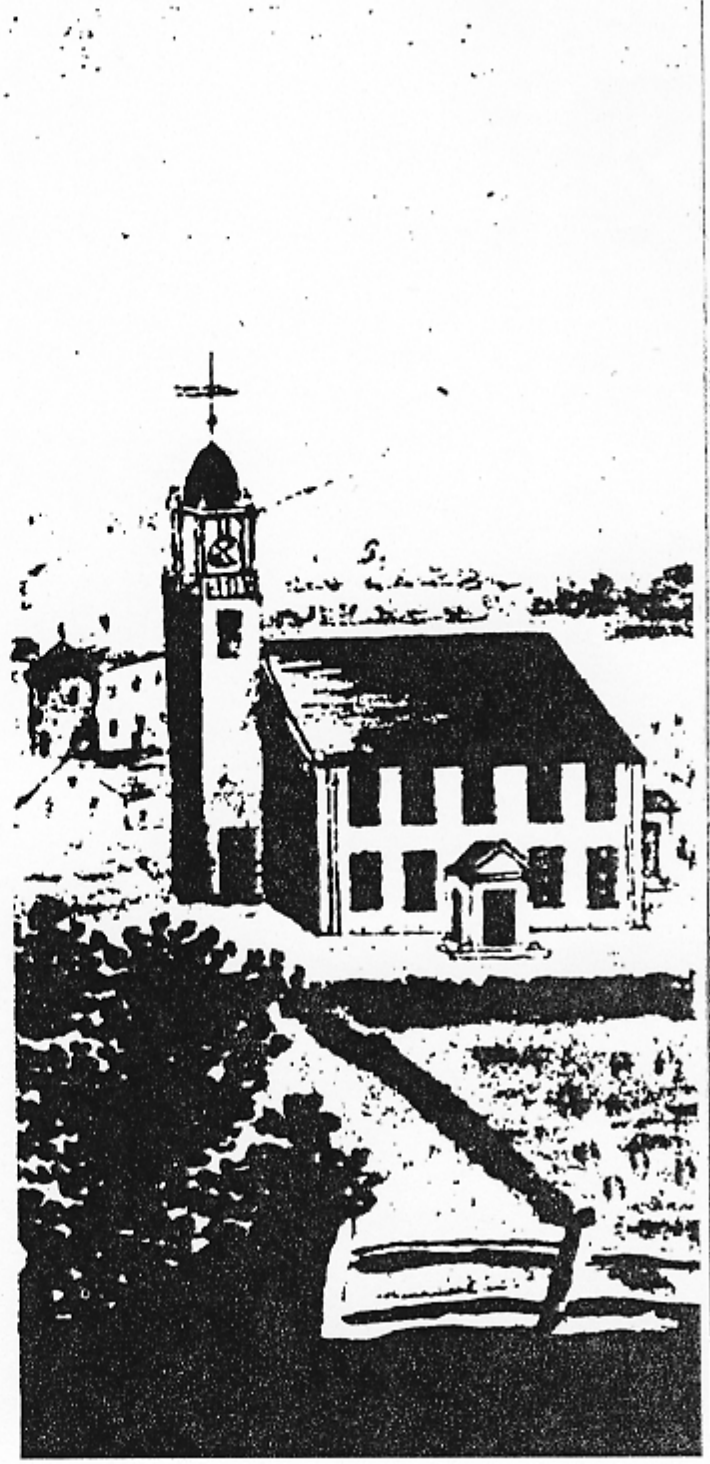
The meeting house

Now I attended the town meetings, as a member, as I had usually attended them before, from a boy as a spectator. In March when I had no suspicion, I heard my name pronounced in a nomination of surveyors of highways. . . . I said they might as well have chosen any boy in school, for I knew nothing of the business: but since they had chosen me, at a venture, I would accept it in the same manner and find out my duty as I could. . . .

There had been a controversy in town for many years concerning the mode of repairing the roads. A party had long struggled to obtain a vote that the high ways should be repaired by a tax, but never had been able to carry their point. The roads were very bad, and much neglected, and I thought a tax a more equitable method and more likely to be effectual, and therefore joined this party in a public speech, carried a vote by a large majority and was appointed [to] prepare a by-law to be enacted at the next meeting. . . . Under this law the roads have been repaired to this day, and the effects of it are visible to every eye.[7]

John Locke had said that men created governments to protect their property. And just as the carving of farm land out of wilderness gave meaning to property, so the Braintree town meeting gave meaning to government.

Any adult man living in Braintree could vote at the town meeting if he could meet the property qualifications. The town meeting was the place where landowners made important decisions affecting their property, decisions about where roads should go and how they should be kept in



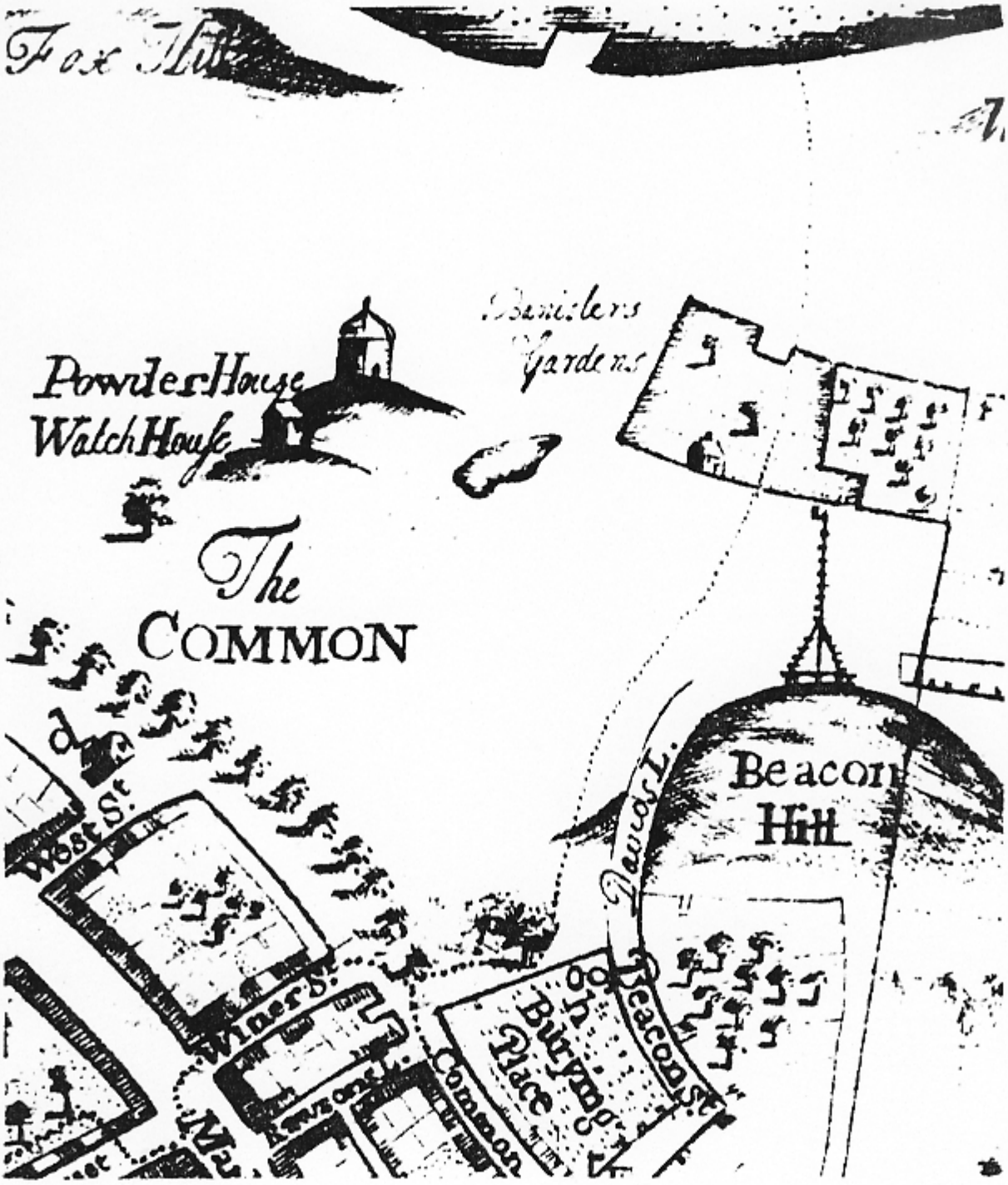
Quincy Meeting-House

repair, decisions about where to build a new meeting house or whether to repair the old one. The costs of government and of the services that government provided had to be met by taxes, and in a farming community the taxes were levied on land. Everybody who owned a piece of land had to give some money to the government in taxes, the amount depending upon how much land he owned.

New England towns did not usually need very heavy taxes, because they got most of their governmental work done by parceling it out among the residents, usually without pay. Between town meetings nine selectmen governed the town. They were not paid for their services, nor was the constable who had to collect the taxes, or the surveyor of highways. Town government required every man to serve the public at some time. It levied taxes only to carry out specific actions that a majority had voted for, and everyone who was taxed had a voice in deciding on the tax. The landowners had to think whether they could afford a new road or a new meeting house before they decided to build one, and they did their deciding in town meetings.

The training field

John Adams also approved another institution by which the people of New England in general and Braintree in particular protected their property. This was the militia, which stood ready to defend the colony against outside attack. Several times a year the able-bodied men of Braintree and every other town turned out with their muskets and went through their paces as a military company. They did not get paid for it, but the men enjoyed putting on a show for their wives and children and then joining in some convivial drinking. Few of the companies presented a very formidable appearance, especially after the rum began to flow, but since most New Englanders had grown up as John Adams did, with woods for hunting nearby, they knew how to use a gun. Many had participated in the wars against the French and Indians, the worst of which lasted from 1754 to 1763. The important thing about the militia in John Adams' view was that it could not be used against the people themselves. Since it was made up of all the able-bodied men in the population, it could not be turned against itself.



Boston Commons where militia trained

The schoolhouse

Years later, a Virginian asked John Adams for a "recipe for making a New England in Virginia." Adams replied that it consisted of "the meeting house and schoolhouse and training field."[1] The schoolhouse, which he had disliked so much as a boy, he now saw was essential to the functioning of the militia and the town government. Only educated people could manage their own affairs. Schools and colleges prepared people for self-government. Schools made town meetings work. From the earliest settlements New Englanders had been concerned about educating their children.

[The first settlers] made an early provision by law that every town consisting of so many families should be always furnished with a grammar school . . .

A native of America who cannot read and write is as rare an appearance as . . . a comet or an earthquake. It has been observed that we are all of us lawyers, divines, politicians, and philosophers . . . [Some criticize] this provision for the education of our youth as a needless expense, and an imposition upon the rich in favor of the poor, and as an institution productive of idleness and vain speculation among the people, whose time and attention, it is said, ought to be devoted to labor, and not to public affairs, or to examination into the conduct of their superiors. . . .

Be it remembered, however, that liberty must at all hazards be supported . . . And liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people. And the preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks, is of more importance to the public than all the property of all the rich men in the country."

The Representative Assembly

As schools helped to prepare people for participation in town government, so town government prepared them for service in the representative assembly that made laws for the entire colony. Every year each town in a New England colony chose one or two of its members to serve in the representative assembly, or General Court as it was called in Massachusetts. John Adams did not mention representative assemblies as an ingredient in his recipe for New England, probably because all the English colonies in America had assemblies, so the fact that New England had them did not make the New England colonies any different from those to the south. But Adams might have pointed out that New England assemblies differed somewhat from others because so many New Englanders were prepared to serve in an assembly by experience in town meetings.

When the people of a New England town sent a representative to the assembly, they did not give up their own interest in what the assembly might do. Whenever some important issue arose, a new colony tax, an expedition against the Indians, a contest over the salaries of government officers, the town meeting would discuss the question and draw up instructions to their representative, telling him how to vote and what actions to propose to the other representatives.

[Representation] . . . is in reality nothing more than

this, the people choose attorneys to vote for them . . . reserving . . . a right to give their attorneys instructions how to vote, and a right at certain, stated intervals, of choosing a new; discarding an old attorney, and choosing a wiser and better.[10]

Thus the people of a New England town participated in the government of the colony as well as the town and had their say in all the laws that the assembly made.

What a fine reflection is it to a man, . . . and consolation—I can be subject to no law that I do not make myself or constitute some of my friends to make for me. My father, brother, friend, neighbour, a man of my own rank, nearly of my own education, fortune, habits, passions, prejudices, one whose life and fortune and liberty are to be affected like my own, by the laws he shall consent to for himself and me![11]

Royal Government in America

But there was one part of their government in which most New Englanders (like other Americans) had no say. Although in Connecticut and Rhode Island the people elected the governor as well as the assembly, in New Hampshire and Massachusetts and most of the other American colonies the governor, the head of the government, was appointed by the king of England.

Most Americans never saw the governor or any other government officer of the colony from one year to the next. For most New Englanders, government was a matter of town meetings and representative assemblies. Their representatives might report to them what the governor said and did, but they did not concern themselves about it. To John Adams, too, government might have meant no more than this if he had had his original wish to be merely a farmer. But John Adams was a lawyer and had to argue his cases before the judges appointed by the governor, and he argued a good many of them in Boston. He even moved there for a time and was elected to represent Boston in the assembly. There he came into close contact with the governor and with the men whom the governor appointed. The experience enabled him to see some things about government that he could not easily have learned in Braintree.

The governor was a powerful man. He could veto any law passed by the assembly, which he could summon and dismiss whenever he chose, and he could appoint the judges and the justices of the peace who executed the laws as well as the various secretaries and clerks who helped to run the government and keep its records. The colonists had no say in the appointment of these officers, nor in the appointment of another set of government officials, the customs officers. These, like the governor himself, were appointed by the King, to enforce the regulations that the British Parliament made for the conduct of trade and commerce.

John Adams was not happy with the men who held these offices. Royal governors and the host of royal officials who surrounded him received salaries for their jobs. Royal government could be a way to make money. Town representatives had to do their government jobs and still tend their farms at the same time. Even a man who was elected as

representative in the General Court was likely to find the honor somewhat less than the expense. The town paid him a small daily allowance while the assembly was sitting, but usually he would have been better off staying at home to look after his crops.

John Adams could see that this was not the case with royal governors and officials. Francis Bernard had been given his job as governor because of his friendship with Lord Barrington, the English Secretary at War and one of the King's advisers. He continually tried to persuade the General Court to give him gifts of land in addition to his salary. Government in England found jobs or granted pensions for relatives and friends of the King and members of Parliament, and royal government in America was operating the same way. John Adams did not like it. He especially disliked Americans who surrounded English governors looking for favors.

But John Adams also knew that the assemblies could have some control over the governor because they paid his salary. They could threaten not to pay him unless he acted on the assembly's suggestions. Most of the time this was a successful weapon. Although royal governors had the authority to convene and dismiss the assemblies and could veto their laws, the assemblies usually got their way.

John Adams and Americans like him lived under what might be thought of as two kinds of government—one that grew out of their daily experiences in town meetings or representative assemblies, and another that came down from the king and Parliament in England through the royal governor. Although John Adams might criticize royal government, he was proud of being an Englishman and part of the British Empire. Most Americans were, and for some very practical reasons.

The men who founded the colonies and those who followed later were not sent there by England. England allowed them to go. England controlled their trade and made them buy English manufactured goods (like cloth and hardware) and made them send some of the things they grew to England if they sent them anywhere. But Americans did not work for the English government. They worked for themselves. They did not have to grow tobacco or sugar or build ships if they did not want to. They did not have to buy English cloth if they could make their own at home.

Another reason Americans such as John Adams liked being in the empire was that the alternatives seemed so much worse. There were fewer than two million Americans scattered through the Atlantic colonies, and they had never gotten along well with one another. The people of different colonies had quarreled with each other over boundaries more than they had ever quarreled with England. If they had not belonged to the British Empire, their ships would not have been safe on the seas. Pirates or the navy of some other country would have captured them. Without the protection of the British army and navy, it would have been easy, or so it seemed, for another European country like France or Spain to move in and conquer them. One of the things they liked most about being English, rather than French or Spanish, was that English government was the freest government in the world. To be English meant to be free, to have a say in the government, to

know that the king's men could never come at night to carry a person off to prison without a fair trial, to know that the tax collector could only collect taxes that the elected representatives in the government had agreed to. All in all Americans were proud to be Englishmen.

Francis Bernard

Francis Bernard: Who Decides for Americans?

Long before Americans and Englishmen stopped rejoicing over their victory in driving the French from Canada and the Mississippi Valley, some men on both sides of the Atlantic could see that trouble was brewing. The vast territories that had been won from the French in five years of fighting were a splendid prize. Men with vision could see a day when English colonists pushed across the Appalachians to the Mississippi and into the far reaches of Canada.

If such a vision made Englishmen proud, it also made them worried. For when they added up the costs of the war they were staggered at the price. When they realized that 10,000 troops had to be kept in America to defend the new territories from their old enemies the French and the Indians, they knew that somehow they had to raise another £200,000. What would Englishmen gain for all this expense? Would not the colonists benefit most? Should not the colonists help pay the costs?

There was no doubt in the minds of British ministers that somehow Americans must help pay their share. As they worried about balancing budgets and considered the possibility of taxing Americans, they never gave much thought to how Americans would react to the idea. But across the Atlantic in America some English ministers knew that before Americans were asked to share the tax burden someone had to think of a better way to organize the colonies. Any royal governor on the outposts of the empire in America knew that getting money from Americans was no easy matter, especially if the relationship between Parliament and the American assemblies was not straightened out first. One man who attempted to get this message clear to officials in England was Francis Bernard, royal governor of Massachusetts.

Francis Bernard was an unlikely man to help reorganize the colonial administration in America. The son of a country clergyman who studied law at Oxford, he might have spent his life in England as a small city lawyer. But he married the cousin of one of the most influential politicians of the British Empire, Lord Barrington. Barrington managed to get Bernard the job of governor of New Jersey and in 1759 he was launched on a career in American politics.

Bernard enjoyed his job, even when he found himself in the midst of major political fights.

I find I have a good deal of public spirit in me and take pleasure in doing my country service . . . I know of no greater service that this country affords for a public spirited Man (except the defending it from its enemies) than settling the disorders, healing the divisions and balancing the constitutions of the governments.'

Bernard performed well in New Jersey, especially in courting the favor of the Quakers, who held the balance of power in the colony. While he was governor of New Jersey there was unusual harmony between royal governor and colonial assembly. So well did Bernard perform, that Lord Barrington was able to have him transferred to the important but troublesome colony of Massachusetts, where the governor received a higher salary. With his large family money was always important to Francis Bernard, and he looked forward to his new office and greater financial rewards.

But to get money from the Massachusetts assembly was not easy. The salary of the governor had always been a sensitive subject, and Bernard knew it. For years the King's representative had come to office armed with royal instructions demanding that the assembly settle a permanent salary upon the governor. For years the assembly pointed to its charter and said they had the right to decide how and how much money to pay the King's governor. No governor, Bernard included, had ever been given a permanent salary.

Money was not the only frustration Bernard met with in his first years as governor of Massachusetts. He found that one very powerful segment of the population was not happy with him—the Boston merchants. Bernard felt that they were allied against him because he was enforcing the Navigation Acts, especially those against smuggling. He even found that the king's own customs officer was siding with the colonial merchants. Bernard felt this was a personal insult. "There never was a governor so ill treated by a subject since the colonies were first planted."

But personal insult was of less concern to Bernard than the insult to royal authority. It seemed to him to point to one of the evils of government in America that had been going on for years. Fifty years before his arrival in Massachusetts one of his predecessors, Governor Shute, had written to the Board of Trade the following report:

Upon arrival in the Massachusetts Bay in Oct. 1716, I soon called the General Assembly together. I found the House of Representatives, who are chosen annually, possessed of all the same powers of the House of Commons in Parliament, and of much greater.

This House consists of about one hundred, who by an act of assembly must be persons residing in the respective towns, which they represent: whereby it happens that the greatest part of them are of small fortunes, and little education . . .

The House of Representatives . . . have for some years past been making attempts upon the few rights that have been reserved to the Crown . . . By their assuming this . . . power to themselves, the people are taught to address them [the House] in cases where they should only apply to me, the governor.

I would with humble submission, further lay before your Majesty, that upon my arrival, I had good reason given me, to expect, that they would allow me for my salary £1500 per year. But they gave me no more the first year than £1200 of that money . . . But even that they don't give me, till I have passed the bills in the respective sessions, thereby to make me . . . consent to any bills they lay before me. In the last sessions of the assembly, they have voted me no salary at all . . .

To be fair to the province, after making these observations on the House of Representatives, and on too great a part of the town of Boston, humbly to acquaint your Majesty, that the whole clergy of the province, as well as the generality of the people, are zealously loving of your Majesty's person, and government; and the succession of the crown in your royal family.[3]

From his own experiences and those of his predecessors, Francis Bernard could see many things wrong with the government of the empire. A major problem, he felt, was that Americans had never been made to understand one thing: that their governments were subject to the Parliament of Great Britain, that is, that Parliament and king had the final say.

Indeed it may be surprising that in the course of 150 years since governments were first . . . |founded| in America there never had been an agreement on what was expected of the colonies in their relationship to England.[3]

Bernard knew that part of the trouble in America stemmed from the trouble in England a hundred years before. When Parliament had struggled to establish its power against the absolute power of the King, no one had raised the question of what this meant in America. When Parliament's relationship to the king was settled and the King's power limited, most Englishmen felt that a unique balance had been achieved and a remarkable victory won. But what did all this mean to Americans and especially to America's tie to Parliament?

Francis Bernard knew that Americans, too, had applauded these accomplishments from across the ocean. Bernard knew they identified the struggles of their own assemblies with Parliament's struggle. As Parliament had fought to hold the line against evil monarchs like Charles I, so too did the colonial assemblies see themselves holding a line against royal governors who might seek to grasp power to themselves if the assemblies were not watchful guardians. That to Francis Bernard was the real problem. Clearly the thirteen American assemblies considered themselves thirteen little parliaments. And clearly that could not be so.

But Francis Bernard did not limit himself to identifying the trouble with the American governments. He invented a cure, a scheme for setting things right in America, which he described in detail to his superiors in England. He hoped that he would be called home to England to help reorganize the empire according to his plan. He saw himself in a new role, a great official helping to conduct the affairs of empire from London. Although not many people in the right places ever listened seriously to his ideas, they are important because they illustrate the point of view from which England saw the colonies.

Bernard's Plan for America: Principles of Law and Polity

Bernard's scheme was based first of all on getting straight the rules or principles upon which America was tied to the empire.

Who has power in the empire?

The sovereignty |or absolute power| of Great Britain is in the King in Parliament; that is, in the King, acting with the advice and consent of the Lords and the Commons (by their representatives), assembled in the Parliament of Great Britain.

The Kingdom of Great Britain is . . . not |subordinate to or| dependent upon any earthly power.

What is the relationship of the colonies to the empire?

The external British dominions [or the colonies] . . . are subordinate to and dependent upon the kingdom of Great Britain, and must get all their powers . . . from it.

A separate legislation [or assembly] is not an absolute right of British subjects [living outside] . . . [the] empire . . .

No grant of the power of legislation to a colony, whether it comes from the King alone, or from the Parliament, can stop the Parliament of Great Britain from interfering in such dependent government, at such time and in such manner as they shall think fit. . . .

Who has the power to tax?

The rule that a British subject shall not be bound by laws, or . . . taxes, but what he has consented to by his representatives, must be confined to the inhabitants of Great Britain only; and is not strictly true even there.

The Parliament of Great Britain . . . has a right to make laws for, and impose taxes upon, its subjects in its external dominions [or colonies], although they are not represented in such Parliament. But, taxes imposed upon the external dominions ought to be applied to the use of the people, from whom they are raised.

Although the right of the Parliament of Great Britain, to raise taxes . . . is not to be disputed; yet it would be most advisable to leave to the provincial legislatures the raising of the internal taxes . . .

If the provincial legislatures should refuse to raise the sums required for the support of government, or should insist upon doing it by improper means, the Parliament might then take the business into their own hands.

The government [in the colonies] ought not to be dependent upon the people; and the particular means used in some of the colonies to keep their governments dependent, and the use which has been made of such dependency, afford ample proofs that they ought not to be so.[4]

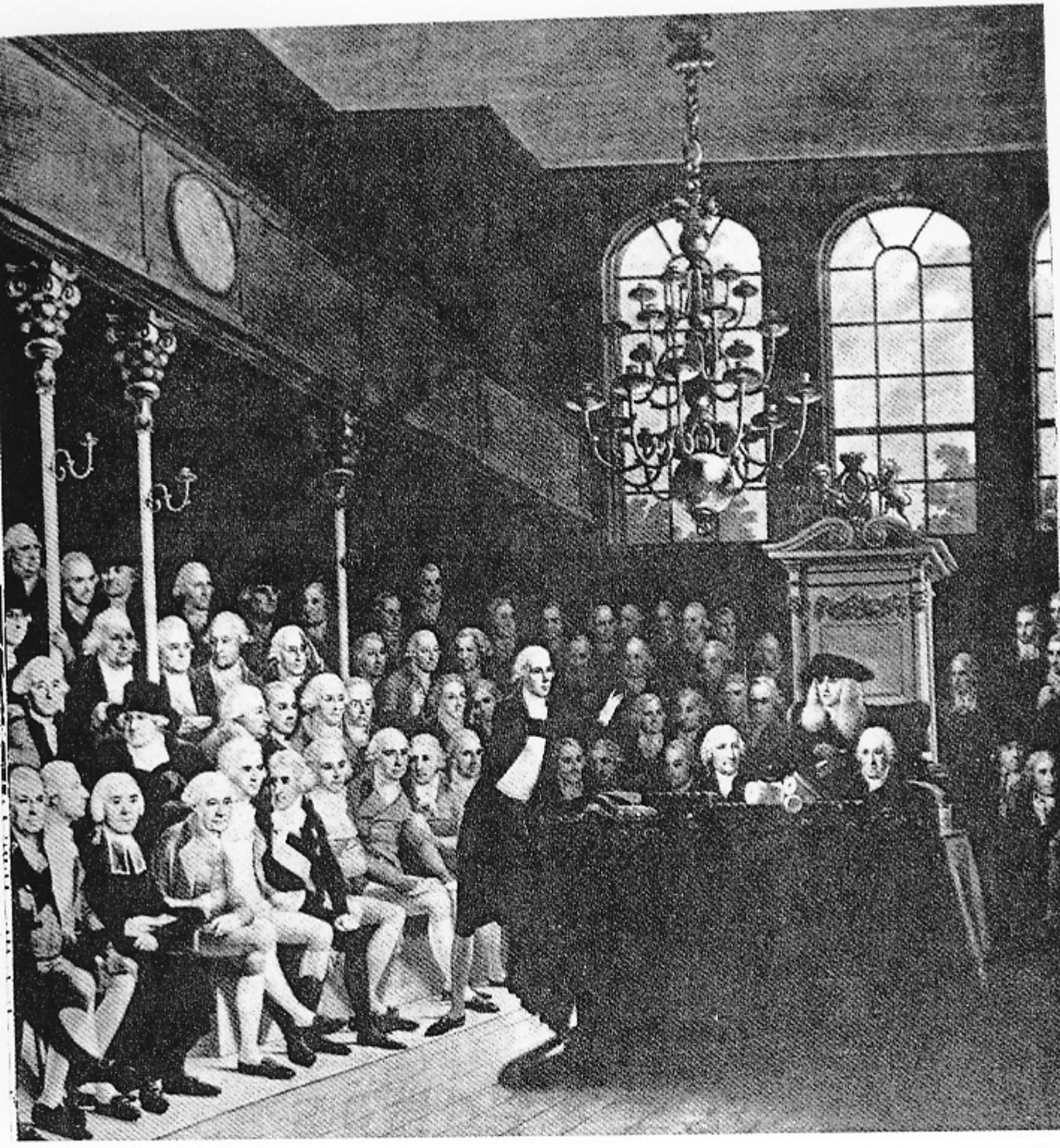
After Bernard made clear the relationship of America to Parliament, he went on to spell out some specific changes he wanted to see in American government.

Reforming American government

A nobility appointed by the King for life, and made independent, would probably give strength and stability to the American governments, as . . . an hereditary nobility does to that of Great Britain . . .

If there should be but one form of government established for all the North American provinces, it would greatly facilitate the reformation of them: since, if the mode of government was every where the same, people would be more indifferent under what division they were ranged . . .

This is therefore the proper and critical time to reform the American governments upon a general, constitutional, firm, and durable plan; and if it is not done now, it will probably every day grow more difficult, till at last it becomes impracticable.[5]



Francis Bernard never saw his ideas put into operation. For although ministers in England also began to see the problems of governing Americans, they were more concerned with finding ways to pay for the war with France. Bernard's plan was shelved, and he and other royal governors went about the task the King had given them, the task of governing colonies filled with men like John Adams, who had their own ideas of what government ought to be.

The House of Commons, 1793

Who Decides?

That John Adams Should Be a Lawyer?

That Francis Bernard Should Be a Royal Governor?

What Crops to Plant? Where to Sell Products?

To Fight the French and Indian Wars?

What Taxes a Person Should Pay?

What Salary to Pay the Governor?

When Men Should Form Governments?

Under What Form of Government People Live?

That Americans Are Subordinate to the Parliament of Great Britain?

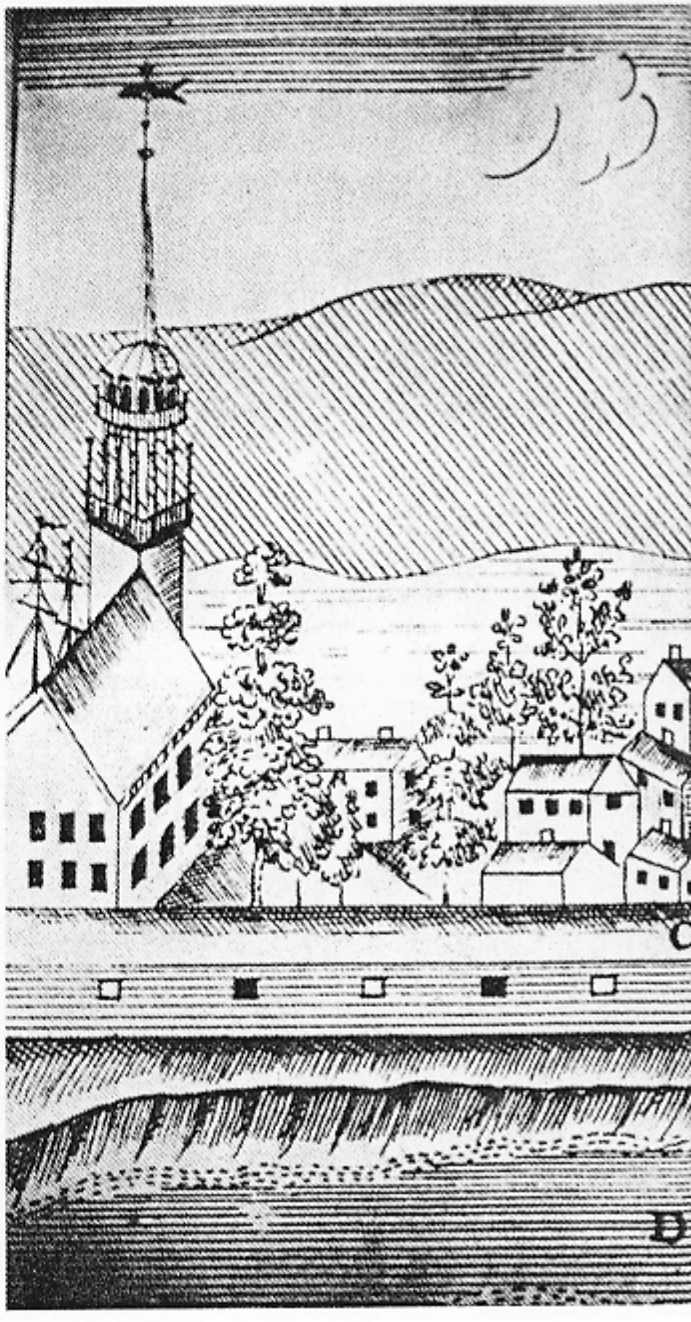
When the Law Should Be Changed?

Who Has the Final Say?

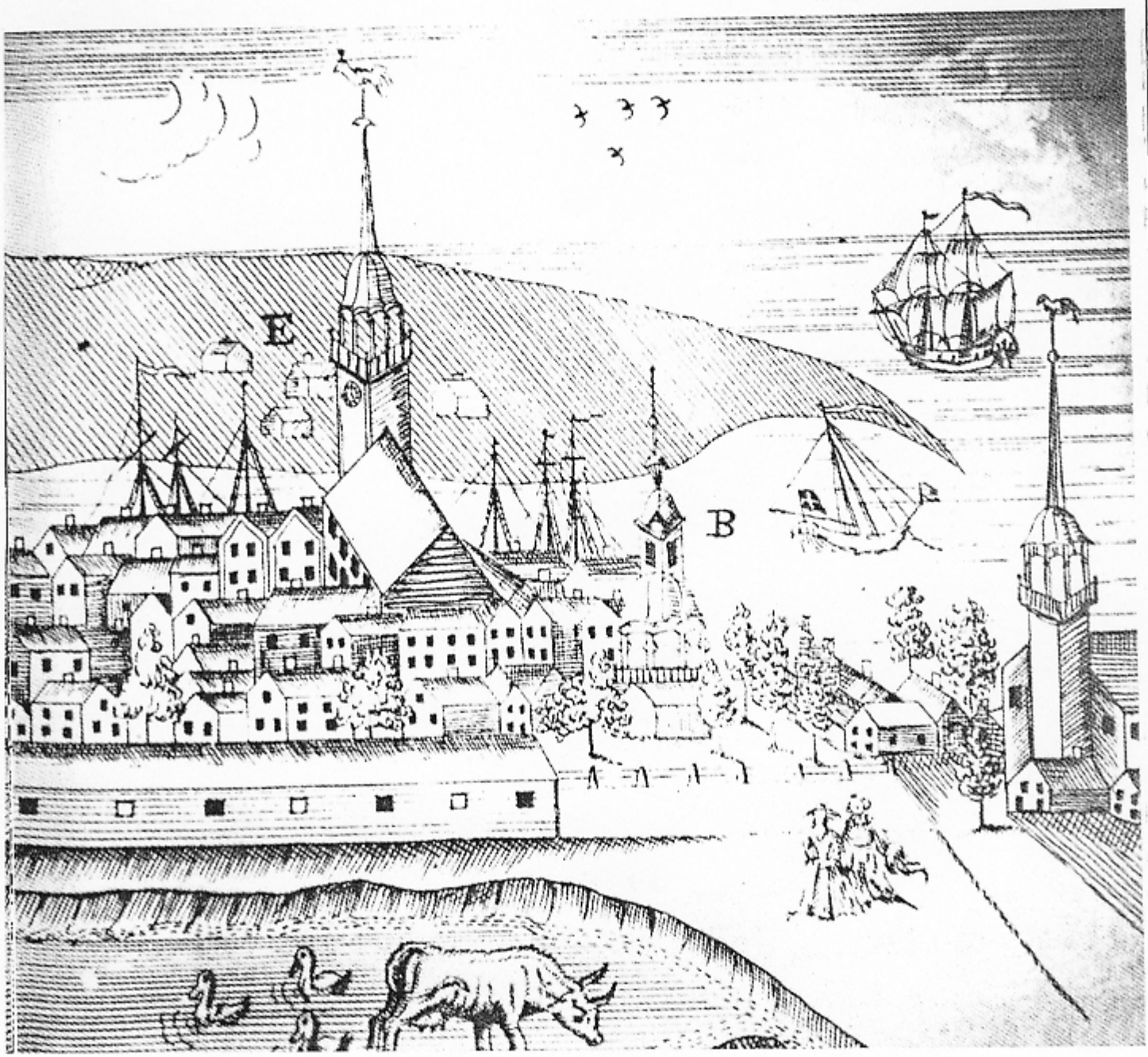
Newburyport: Who Decides for Americans?

In July of 1762, young Jonathan Jackson left his home in Boston to travel north forty miles to Newbury, at the mouth of the Merrimack River. Here he was apprenticed to Patrick Tracy, one of the town's wealthiest merchants. Being an apprentice meant learning the trade. Jonathan Jackson had chosen Newbury and Patrick Tracy's counting house to begin his career. Was it a wise decision? What kind of community was Newbury?

Merchants' Counting House



A Northeast View of Newburyport, 1774



Introduction to Newburyport

The town: The farming community called Newbury was settled in 1635. Shortly after, some settlers moved to the banks of the Merrimack to live off the rich resources of the river. Newburyport was incorporated in 1764 by a grant from Governor Bernard and the Massachusetts General Court from the area of Waterside, a part of the town of Newbury.

Site: Newburyport is located forty miles north of Boston at the mouth of the Merrimack River, which is navigable all year. Its harbor, well protected by a sandy island, is the port of all the up-river communities.

Natural resources: Oak forests of excellent quality line the Merrimack River for 120 miles upstream. Fishing is good in the river and offshore.

Local industries and products: Shipbuilding, fish-curing, lumber products, shingles, boards, barrel staves; farm products for local consumption only.

Imports: Molasses (for rum) from the West Indies; wheat from Quebec; clothes, hardware, household items, tea, and spices from England; fruit and wine from Malaga; rice from Charleston.

Statistics for 1764: 647 acres of land, about one mile square; 357 houses; 2,882 residents.

Other facts: 1756–1765: 427 Newbury-built vessels operated in the Boston area alone;
1766: 72 vessels were under construction along the Merrimack River;
1772: tradition claims Newburyport shipyards launched 90 vessels.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Merrimac River
Salisbury
Oak Forests
Deer Id
Eagle Id
Carr Island
Ram
NEWBURYPORT
Meadow Land
Pond
to Newbury
Salt Marshes
Woodbridge Id
Seal Id
Plum Island
Atlantic Ocean

Jonathan Jackson Learns the Rules of Trade

The merchants of Newburyport and of every other port in America made their livings by sending goods across the ocean to Europe or along the coasts to other colonies. As a merchant apprentice Jonathan Jackson had to learn the laws by which England governed the trade of her colonies. The merchants of Newburyport had no influence in the making of these regulations. They were made by the British Parliament, and the British navy enforced them. The laws were designed to favor British merchants over the merchants of other countries and even over the merchants of the British colonies. In return the British navy protected the ships and shipping both of Great Britain and of the colonies.

But to receive protection a ship had to be on a legitimate voyage. It had to abide by the laws of trade. Otherwise the navy could seize the ship and confiscate the cargo. So Jonathan Jackson had to learn the laws, which required that:

1. All goods shipped to or from any British colony had to be carried in ships belonging to and manned by British subjects (including British colonists).

2. All sugar, indigo, tobacco, cotton, furs and rice produced in British colonies could be shipped only to other British colonies or to Great Britain.

3. Goods produced in Europe (except wine and salt), Asia or Africa could be shipped to British colonies only from Great Britain.

As a merchant like Jonathan Jackson, learning the trade in Patrick Tracy's counting house, advise Patrick Tracy which of the following voyages will break the law and get him into trouble with the navy.

1. The ship *Bel Ami*, from Quebec, captain Jean LaCroix, arrives at Newburyport, offering to sell some French brandy in exchange for New England rum. Should Patrick Tracy do business with Captain LaCroix?

2. The ship *Polly*, owned by Patrick Tracy, is loaded with codfish. Jonathan Jackson has heard there is a good market for cod right now in Portugal. Can *Polly* take her cargo there?

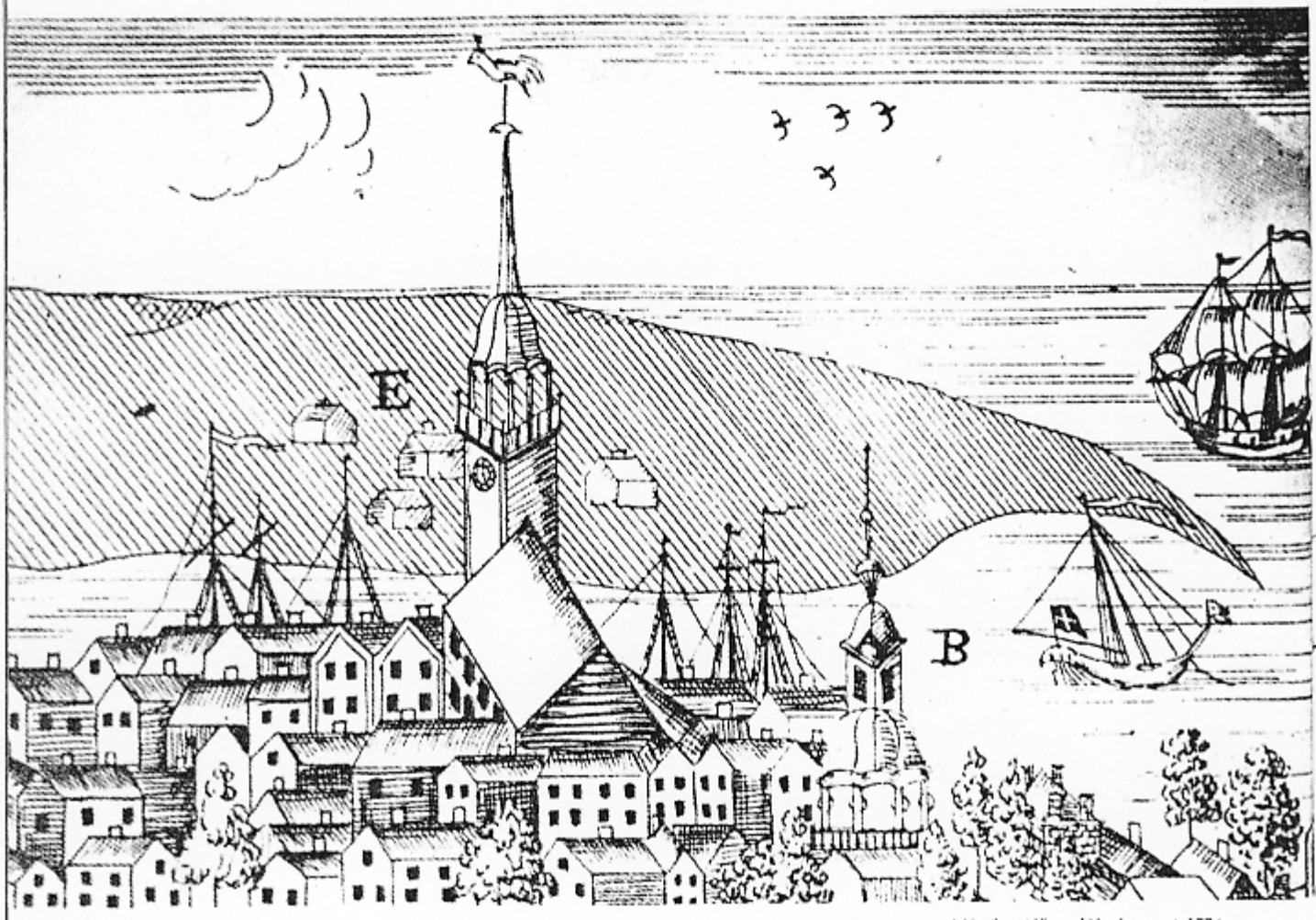
3. The ship *Sally*, owned by Patrick Tracy, is loaded with oak staves; Patrick Tracy wants to send *Sally* to Martinique in the French West Indies, sell the oak staves there, and then pick up a cargo of molasses in Jamaica and bring it back to Newburyport. Will this be legitimate?

4. The ship *Charming Polly*, owned by Patrick Tracy, is loaded with cheeses. Jonathan Jackson wants to send the ship to Virginia, exchange the cheeses for tobacco, and carry the tobacco to Amsterdam. Should Patrick Tracy agree?

5. The ship *Charming Sally*, owned by John Hancock of Boston, arrives at Newburyport directly from Malaga, Spain, with a cargo of Spanish wine and offers to sell it in exchange for oak timbers. Should Patrick Tracy buy the wine?

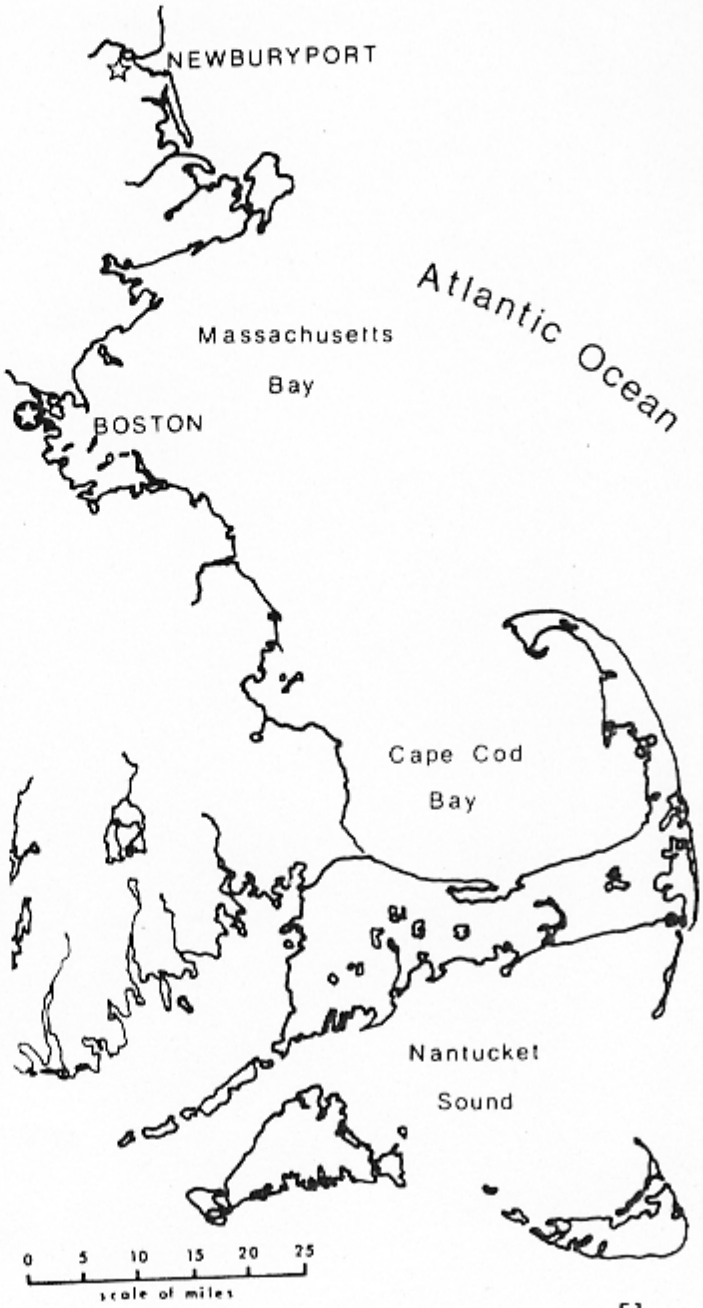
Patrick Tracy and Jonathan Jackson did not question the laws of trade. Although Parliament

Merchants' Counting House



A Northeast View of Newburyport, 1774


Wolfe Tavern
James Wolfe Esq
1762


NEWBURYPORT
Atlantic Ocean
Massachusetts
Bay
BOSTON
Cape Cod
Bay
Nantucket
Sound
0 5 10 15 20 25
scale of miles

changed some details of the laws from time to time, the main principles had remained the same for more than a hundred years. It seemed fair enough that Great Britain should lay down the rules so that she would benefit from having colonies. As long as the laws imposed rules, not taxes, the merchants of the colonies were free to make a profit in a variety of different kinds of trade; and the protection that the British navy gave to colonial shipping more than made up for the limits the rules imposed.

What the People of the Waterside Community Wanted

Although Newbury merchants were generally satisfied with their role in the empire and did not regret that they had little influence in Parliament, they were not happy with affairs of their own community. For some time the farmers in Newbury had controlled the town meeting and made decisions that were not favorable to the merchants along the riverside. In 1764 the merchants petitioned Governor Bernard and the General Court to establish a new town of Newburyport so that they could manage their own affairs.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY FRANCIS BERNARD ESQ. GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF IN AND OVER SAID PROVINCE. TO THE HONORABLE HIS MAJESTY'S COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN GENERAL COURT ASSEMBLED:

The Memorial of the inhabitants in and about that part of the town of Newbury called the Water side, humbly showeth:

That the said Town of Newbury is large and extensive. That that part of it where the memorialists |petitioners| dwell is become thick settled and very populous. That the inhabitants |there| are chiefly merchants, traders, mariners and artificers; those of the other parts of the town mostly |farmers|. That through an unaccountable and strange opinion of things, there |exists| a certain jealousy as to their public affairs and a high spirit of opposition which is a continual source of uneasiness.

And as the inhabitants in the outer parts and parishes are more numerous than at the Water side, they |the farmers| carry the vote in the affairs of the town and conduct the business of it in a way very different from the sentiments . . . of the Water side. |We| have great occasion of complaint on account of the several things hereafter mentioned of which we have not the least prospect of |correction| but from your Excellency and Honours . . . by a division of the town into separate communities and that part of it by your Excellency and Honors be sett and erected into a district. Your memorialists beg leave to observe to your Excellency and Honours some of the difficulties and grievances they labour under in the present state of the town:

And they |the petitioners| mention in the first place the want |lack| of public schools at the Water side for the instruction of children and youth.

Also fire engines so necessary for the preservation of populous places, the town do not provide (and there is not the least reason to think in their present state they ever will).

On the other hand most of the charge and expense in repairing the roads and highways in the town is expended in the out parts and upon roads chiefly used by the inhabitants there and for their particular good. The memorialists annually are taxed and pay very large sums of money for that purpose.

Your memorialists humbly think they have a right to a fair and proper disposal of the public monies as ***they pay a very large share of the public taxes . . .*** *Yet but one selectman from [our] part of the town has been chosen for many years past, or can be obtained, although for the present year, seven were chosen for the town.*

Wherefore, [we] humbly pray, your Excellency and Honors would take [this] into consideration and as the memorialists can't in the least see any reasonable prospect for the removal of the complaints and grievances before mentioned, in the present situation of the town, they, therefore, pray the same may be divided and separated by such bounds and limits as to this Great and General Court shall seem fit and that a committee may be appointed to determine the same, or that your Excellency and Honors would otherwise relieve your memorialists as in your great wisdom you shall think fit and they as in duty bound will ever pray.

In behalf of themselves and the other memorialists Wm. Atkins, Daniel Farnham, Mich: Dalton, Thomas Woodbridge, Patrick Tracy[1]

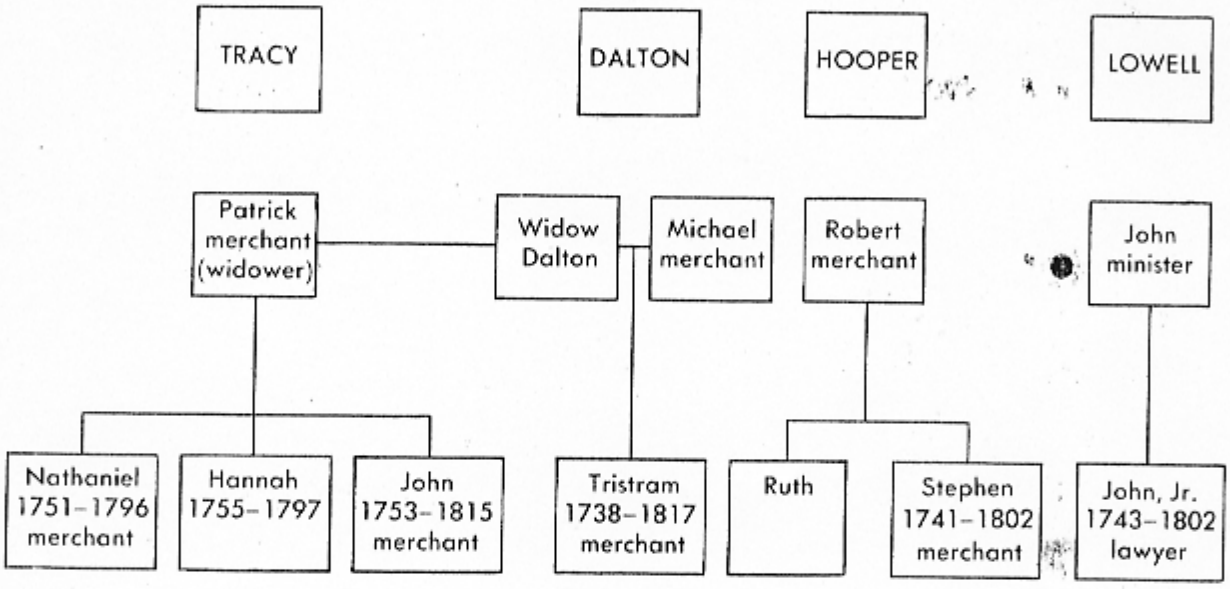
Who Decided for Newburyport?

Governor Francis Bernard and the Massachusetts representatives in the General Court granted the petition, and in 1764 the Waterside became the town of Newburyport. Over two hundred men signed the petition to Governor Bernard. Of course not all of these men were merchants, but most of them followed the political leadership of the merchants because their interests lay with this class. If the shipping industry and importing business did well, there was more money circulating in the town to buy products of the local artisans and to use the services of local laborers. Also in deciding on schools and fire protection, the merchants would uphold the entire community's interests. The following chart of voters and nonvoters by occupation in 1773 provides information of the social, economic, and political structure of this small community.[2]

Voters and Nonvoters by Occupation in 1773

	nonvoters	voters	% of total voters	Total
Merchants and professional men	36	137	32.8	173
Shopkeepers and innholders	6	21	5.1	27
Domestic artisans	64	113	27.1	177
Maritime artisans	66	70	16.5	136
Unknowns	59	48	11.5	107
Laborers and others	50	29	7.0	79
Total adult male population	281	418	100.0	699

From this chart it is clear that out of an adult population of 699 (women did not vote) only 418,



Jonathan Jackson: The Web of Family Connections

1743 Born into old Boston merchant family
1761 Graduated from Harvard as classmate of Nathaniel Tracy, John Lowell, Jr., Stephen Hooper
1762 Leaves Boston to apprentice in Patrick Tracy's counting house in Newbury
1765 Forms partnership with John Bromfield, Boston-born Harvard classmate, to import English goods
1772 Marries Hannah Tracy
1774 Forms partnership with Nathaniel and John Tracy
177? Builds house on High Street next to friend John Lowell
177? Children: daughter, Hannah Jackson, and son, Patrick Tracy Jackson

or 60%, met the property qualification for voting in town meetings and elections. (In a farming community with many small property holders there would probably have been more qualified voters.) Although merchants and professional men had the largest single block of eligible voters, one might have expected that the small men—shopkeepers, artisans and laborers—would control the elections because together they were 55.7% of the eligible voters and the merchants only 32.8%. But this was not the case. In the period between 1764 and 1773 the merchants dominated the office of selectman, holding it thirty-three times out of a possible forty-six. The town's representative in the General Court during this period was consistently a merchant or lawyer, and other political posts in the town—the assessors, wardens, and members of special committees—were often held by merchants.

If the merchants had been divided they might not have been able to dominate the elections and offices during this period. But they were usually fighting for the same objectives and were closely connected by their backgrounds, schooling, business ties and marriages.

The merchants were important people in Newburyport. They had separated the town from Newbury and filled the important offices of town government. A merchant usually represented the town in the General Court. At the General Court they could see that Newburyport's needs and interests were known throughout the colony, and they could have a share in making the colony's laws and deciding what taxes should be levied to meet the costs of government. Locally, then, they exercised a great deal of control over their own affairs. Once the Waterside was separated from Newbury, they could have their own fire departments and their own schools and spend their taxes on whatever they felt was important to the community.

What authority did England have over a small American community?

THE

Eſſex Journal

AND

Merimack Packet:

OR

The *Maſſachuſetts* and *New-Hampſhire* General Advertiſer.

THE Co-partnerſhip of the Subſcribers being mutually diſſolved the firſt inſtant, they requeſt all thoſe who have accompts open with them, to come and ſettle the ſame and all who are indebted to them by book or note, to make payment without delay, as they determine to bring their affairs to a cloſe as ſoon as poſſible.

JONATHAN JACKSON,
JOHN BROMFIELD.

Newbury-Port, March 22*d*, 1774.

THE Subſcriber having quitted the buſineſs he has been in of late years, deſires all perſons with whom he has accompts open, to call and ſettle the ſame—And all who are indebted to him, either upon book or by note to make ſpeedy payment, more eſpecially thoſe whoſe debts have been long ſtanding.

The buſineſs will be carried on as uſual by his ſons. PATRICK TRACY.

Newbury Port, March 22,

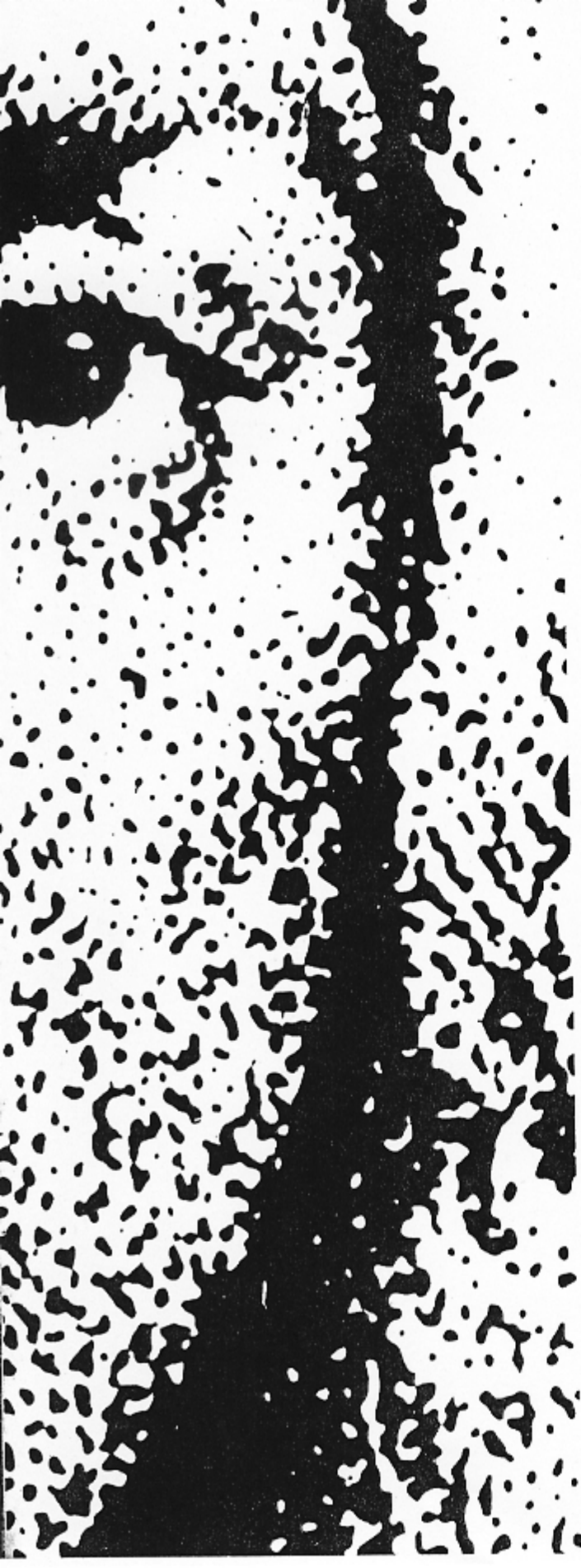
JACKSON, TRACY and TRACY.

BEG leave to inform the public that they have taken the buſineſs lately carried on by their honoured father, in which they requeſt the continuance of his good cuſtomers and the cuſtom of all others, with whom a mutual advantage is to be obtained. They ſhall carry on the diſtillery as uſual, they have by them an aſſortment of Engliſh Goods, which they will ſell by wholeſale upon reaſonable terms, and ſo as to afford a profit to the purchaſer.

POWDER by the Barrell,
And a few Firkins of
Choice BUTTER,
To be SOLD by
Jackſon, Tracy and Tracy.

A few Barrels of Carolina
PORK,
To be SOLD Cheap for CASH, by
Simon Greenleaf,
At his Store on the Long-Wharf, in Newbury-Port.

Newspaper Caller



Grenville's Decision

War Brings Increased Debt to England

The man who undertook to balance Britain's budget after the French and Indian War was George Grenville, prime minister of Great Britain. Grenville was a man with a mind and will of his own. When he looked at how much the eight-year war had cost, he looked more soberly at the vast new territories the war had added to the British Empire. He could rejoice that Englishmen and Americans had defeated the French and that the frontiers of Britain's American empire now extended from the Atlantic to the Mississippi and included Canada. But when he thought of the prizes of war, he also thought about the difficulty of holding on to them.

There was no doubt in Grenville's mind that the Indians who had sided with the French, and indeed the French themselves, would try to win back the land. It would be essential to keep a standing army in America to prevent that from happening. No one would question the wisdom of that. What Englishmen would really be worried about was who would pay the bill. The 10,000 troops needed in America would cost about £220,000 a year. Grenville was well aware that the problem of making ends meet was desparate.

Grenville's Plans to Balance the Budget

England's debt had risen from £73,000,000 in 1755 to £130,000,000 in 1764. Most of the increased expense had come from the war. In addition, England had already paid back £150,000 to the American colonies for their support of troops. If the war had been fought largely for the benefit of the colonies, and if the cost had largely been borne by Englishmen, what could England expect in return? Faced now with the added expense of keeping the troops in America, Grenville thought that in all fairness Americans should help support the army protecting them.

But Grenville had no intention of saddling Americans with the whole expense of the new standing army. The protection of the new territories was a concern of Americans, but it was also a concern of the whole empire. Grenville had to decide who should pay, how they should pay and how much. Somehow Americans had to share the costs.

Although during the war some of the colonies had contributed troops and supplies, others had not. The cost of America to England had always been great. England had protected American shipping by its navy and would continue to do so. The customs duties Americans should have paid to England were largely ignored. Smuggling was notorious in America and most customs officials were ineffective in preventing it.

To the Grenville ministry several broad outlines of a colonial policy were clear in 1763. A standing army had to be kept in America, new ways to raise money had to be found, and the American customs service had to be tightened up.

Grenville immediately took steps to enforce existing customs regulations. In 1764 he was able to get a new revenue act passed in Parliament called the Sugar Act. It changed colonial import duties, notably duties Americans would have to pay on foreign molasses, and it made smuggling more difficult. With that measure passed, Grenville looked for ways to pay for the troops in America. There were several choices open to him.

Grenville's Choices

Method One

Ask each American colony to give funds through their Assemblies to support the cost of troops.

Facts to consider:

1. A somewhat uncertain method. Royal governors have always had a difficult time getting their salaries voted by the assemblies. Some American assemblies, such as Maryland's, have never given any money to support English troops even during the French and Indian War. Most contributed only partial support.

2. Probably inefficient. It would take a long time to have funds voted, collected and sent from each separate colony. Since there is no one assembly for all the colonies, Britain would have to deal with thirteen separate assemblies.

3. This method might cause quarrels among colonists over who was giving how much. How could one decide on a fair amount for each colony to give when they differ so in size and wealth?

Method Two

By-pass the Assemblies completely by having Parliament pass a tax, to be paid by the people in the American colonies, on items used by everyone. Make the tax small enough so that it is not burdensome.

Facts to consider:

1. Taxes on everyday items have long been paid in England. They brought in £290,000 in 1760. This is considered a most acceptable way to raise money, and there is a precedent for it in England.

2. Taxes of this kind have been passed by some colonial assemblies themselves in the past.

3. Parliament has never before passed a tax directly on the American people. It has passed laws regulating trade and customs duties on imports and exports, but never a tax directly on the people. There might be some objection to this method, but Parliament is the supreme legislature. It has the power to make all laws, especially the power to raise taxes. Its jurisdiction must include the colonies.

4. Taxes on small items used by everyone, such as newspapers, legal documents or bills of sales, would not overburden any one person or group or colony. It would be a fair method and a fast way to raise money.

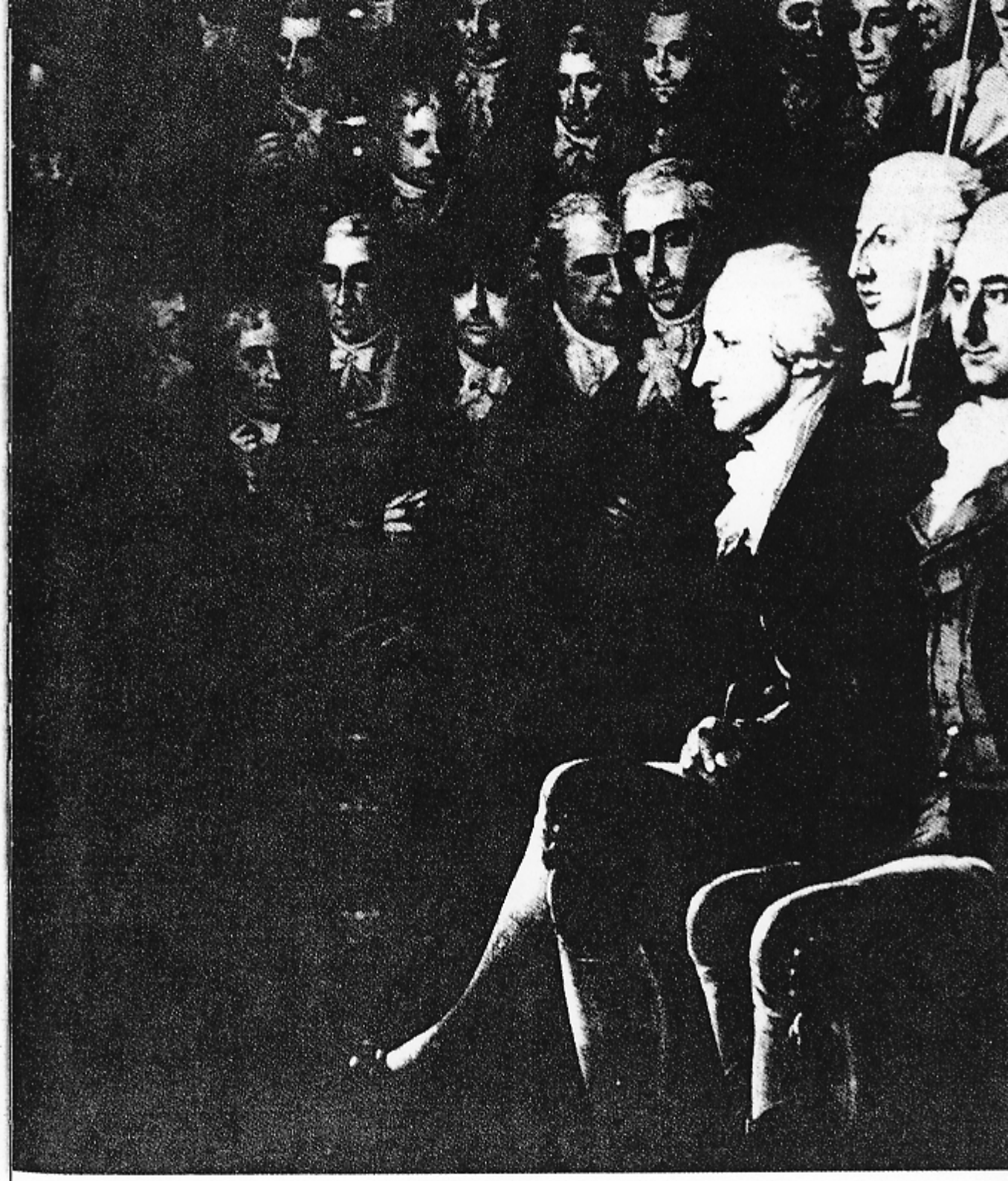
Method Three

Increase taxes on the people of England.

Facts to consider:

1. Taxes in England are the highest in the empire. English people now pay about twenty-six times as much in taxes as Americans do. When taxes on cider were increased in England, opposition was so strong that riots broke out in the cider-making counties.

2. Since the troops are to be used for the protection of Americans, the people in England cannot shoulder this burden alone.



Detail, The *House of Commons*, 1793