The Revolutionary Worlds of Lexington and Concord Compared

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ON the night of 18 April 1775, after a long day of plowing and an evening of militia drill, the farm folk of Lexington, Massachusetts, should have slept well. They did not. Rumors that several of the king's soldiers were on the road, "stopping and insulting People," had everyone on edge.[1] Some never went to bed, milling anxiously on the common and standing guard at the manse, where Pastor Clarke sheltered wanted men John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Others were roused abruptly about 1A.M. when the alarm rang out. Seven hundred British regulars were on the march, headed their way. Capt. John Parker hurried off to rendezvous with his company, while his wife "took all the valuables and hid them in the hollow of a tree standing some distance from the house."[2]

I would like to acknowledge my debt to Robert Gross, both for his insights in *The Minutemen and Their World* and for his remarks at the 2010 National Endowment for the Humanities Teacher Institute, "At the Crossroads of Revolution: Lexington and Concord in 1775." I thank Jeffrey Bolster, William Harris, Robert Gross, and the judges of the Walter Muir Whitehill Prize in Early American History for generously commenting on drafts of this paper and Linda Rhoads at *NEQ* for her masterful editing. I am also grateful to the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities for supporting my research on colonial Lexington through a scholar-in-residence fellowship at the Lexington Historical Society.

[1]Deposition of John Parker, 25 April 1775, as recorded in *A Narrative of the Excursion and Ravages of the King's Troops Under the Command of General Gage on the Nineteenth of April 1775, Together with Depositions Taken Per Order of Congress to Support the Truth of It* (Worcester, Mass.: Printed by Isaiah Thomas per order of the Provincial Congress, 1775), p. 7.

[2]Bradford A. Smith, "Kite End," *Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society and Papers Relating to the History of the Town*, vol. 2 (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Historical Society, 1900), p. 102.

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Sixteen-year-old fifer Jonathan Harrington was awakened by his mother, who "called out to me at three o'clock in the morning, 'Jonathan! Jonathan! Get up. The reg'lars are coming and something must be done!' "[3]

By the spring of 1775, few in Lexington doubted that something must be done. They had, in fact, been *doing* for a decade—resisting, protesting, boycotting, and preparing for hostilities. When the alarm came, the people of Lexington knew what to do—as their hasty response showed—and they apparently had no question as to why they were doing it. But why, indeed, *did* these Lexington farmers choose to fight? Why was this motley band of rural plowmen moved to take a quixotic stand against their king's soldiers? What were they trying to protect, or what did they fear losing, that April morning? For what were they willing to die?

In 1976, Robert Gross posed—and answered—these questions for the neighboring town of Concord. Drawing on records of Concord's daily life—births and deaths, taxes, and town meetings—*The Minutemen and Their World* recovers the patterns and structure of that particular community at that particular time in its history.[4] For a good part of the later colonial period, Gross found, Concordians were intent on fighting not the king's minions but each other. Concord, he claimed, was in decline on the eve of the Revolution, and the internal stresses and conflicts within the town distracted rural farmers from a

[3]Benson J. Lossing, interview with Jonathan Harrington, *Hours with the Living Men and Women of the Revolution: A Pilgrimage* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1889), p. 5.

[4]Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976). In method, Gross was indebted to the earlier New England community studies of social historians: Philip J. Greven Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1970); and John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). For an analysis of these and other early town studies, see Darrett B. Rutman, "Assessing the Little Communities of Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 43.2 (April 1986): 163–78. It has become common to dismiss community studies as passé and flawed insofar as many do not bear generalization beyond the subject town's borders. This is unfortunate, as close study of community dynamics, when linked to biography and intellectual and cultural history, can produce insightful microhistory "from the bottom up."

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growing imperial crisis beyond their town's borders. It was not until that crisis erupted in their precincts that the citizens of Concord attended to the dangers that their Boston brethren had been broadcasting during the past decade.

Gross's study, grounded as it is in local evidence, has withstood the test of time with few revisions.[5] However, Concord had a partner in rebellion on 19 April. As the oft-repeated phrase "Lexington and Concord" suggests, the two towns have been fused in popular memory, and so the findings of *The Minutemen and Their World* have generally been taken to apply to Lexington as well.[6] But Lexington was no Concord. Unlike those in their neighboring town, the citizens of Lexington did not drag their feet on the way to revolution but made the most of every opportunity to assert and defend the hard-won inheritance of their ancestors. Moreover, Lexington was not rent by factions and troubled by the local animosities that so disturbed the peace in Concord. Supported by a community that had longed challenged British authority and fomented rebellion, the militia on Lexington's common stood in, and for, unity. Surprisingly long overdue, an analysis of Lexington's social, demographic, political, religious, and ideological characteristics as against Concord's sheds light on the communities' radically different responses to imperial crisis, whereas identifying their commonalities reveals the shared motivations that prompted the inhabitants of both towns, when finally pressed, to take up arms against the forces of their king.

In the eighteenth century, both Lexington and Concord were farm towns, where working the land shaped the rhythms,

[5]Brian Donahue has challenged Gross's claim that poorly managed soil wore out farms in late colonial Concord. See *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[6]I am indebted to Professor Gross for his comments on this essay, as well as for insights from his presentation in the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Teacher Institute, "At the Crossroads of Revolution," August 2010, in which he urged a comparison of Lexington and Concord to determine why they responded so differently to the imperial crisis.

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structure, and meaning of life. In the spring, when Taurus ruled the skies, the farmers hitched up their oxen to plow; when Sirius ascended during the "dog days" of August, they took to their fields for the hot, heavy work of reaping. Pastor Clarke's interleaved almanac joined the heavens to his annual round of plowing and hoeing, haying and harvest, while his sermons echoed the cycle of birth and life, death and resurrection.[7] Like his fellow townsmen, as well as those of Concord, Clarke practiced mixed husbandry.[8] He did not grow one crop for market but strove instead to "live off the land," to produce, ideally, most of what the family needed to survive: food, clothing, fuel, and shelter.[9] Since no farm could be totally self-sufficient, however, families tried to produce more than they needed of at least one staple each year so that they might trade it with neighbors or use it to purchase what they lacked from urban vendors.[10] This was the work that shaped the patterns and purpose of life.

To yield the broad range of goods to sustain life—grains and vegetables, fruit and dairy, meat and fiber, wood for fuel and shelter—not just for a year but for the long term, farmers needed about sixty acres, carefully allocated for different

[7]Interleaved almanac of Jonas Clarke, 1766–75, Lexington Historical Society, Lexington, Mass. The annual round of work had changed little since medieval days, when illustrated calendars depicted farm work as associated with the monthly constellations. See Theresa Perez-Higuera, *Medieval Calendars* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997).

[8]For an explanation of mixed husbandry farming, see Donahue, *Great Meadow,* chap. 3, pp. 54–73.

[9]Lexington farmers did not fear or avoid the market; they occasionally made trips to Boston or Salem with nonperishable surplus or crafts produced specifically for that purpose. But in general, these trips were too arduous for regular marketing to be feasible. See my "Reckoning with the Parkers: Three Generations of Lexington Woodworking Accounts," unpublished lecture delivered to the Lexington Historical Society, April 2004. As Robert Gross comments, "given the limited markets and the constraints on production in the eighteenth century, surpluses were necessarily small. Most farmers lacked the incentive or the capacity to participate extensively in trade" ("Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's Concord," *Journal of American History* 69.1 [June 1982]: 45).

[10]See Bettye Hobbes Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *William and Mary Quarterly* 41 (July 1984): 333–64.

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purposes.[11] About two to four acres were dedicated to the *homestead* and its *orchard;* an additional twenty acres of *woodlot* offered a sustainable fuel supply.[12] To grow grains for bread and flax for linen, about six acres were set off for *tillage*. But that tillage had to be fertilized to remain productive, which generally required the manure of five or six cows, who also yielded dairy, meat, and hides. The cows, of course, had to eat; to graze six cows (along with a few sheep) required about fifteen acres of *pasture.* But cows could not graze during the winter months; to winter six cows required the mown hay from about fifteen acres of *meadow*. Preferred were the natural grasslands that lay near streams, rivers, and swamps. Each spring, when the waters rose and flooded the low-lying meadowland, nutrient-rich sediment renewed the soil. The floods fed the meadow, the meadow and the pasture fed the cows, the cows fed the tillage, the tillage fed the people, and the land remained healthy and fertile, ready to support the next generation.[13]

The farmers of Lexington and Concord understood this ecological calculus and strove to achieve it throughout the colonial era. On the eve of the Revolution, farms in both towns averaged between fifty to sixty acres, and land was generally held in set ratios: 10 percent as tillage, 25 percent each as pasture and meadow, and 40 percent as woodlot. The persistence of these ratios over time suggests that farmers continued not only to produce for general family consumption but to respect the value of holding their land in a sustainable balance (see

[11]Donahue outlines the ecological foundations of New England's sustainable, mixed-husbandry farms in *The Great Meadow,* chaps. 3, 7, and 8. For minimum subsistence requirements in colonial New England, see Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), chap. 5, "Farm Ecology: Subsistence versus Market."

[12]The average family burned about an acre of wood each year, and because it took twenty years for that acre to regrow, the farmer needed in general about 20 acres of woodlot to have a continuous fuel supply. Carolyn Merchant estimates that families needed 1.2 acres of wood per year, or a minimum of 30 permanent acres, for a sustainable woodlot; more recently, however, Brian Donahue suggests that 20 to 25 acres would have generated the minimum 20 cords of wood needed per household in neighboring Concord. Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions,* p. 182; Donahue, *The Great Meadow,* pp. 176–79.

[13]See Donahue, *The Great Meadow,* chap. 7, "The Ecology of Colonial Farming," pp. 155–96.

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TABLE 1
AVERAGE ACREAGE PER FARM BY USE IN LEXINGTON AND CONCORD, 1771

Land use	1771 Lexington valuation	1771 Concord valuation	Subsistence requirements
Tillage	5.1	7.5	3–7
Pasture	12.5	15.1	6–14
Mowing	14.7	15.1	6–14
Total improved acres	32.3	37.7	15–35
Total unimproved acres	21.5	25.1	20–30
Total acres	53.8	62.8	35–65

SOURCES: 1771 Massachusetts valuations from Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, *The Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771* (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1978). Acreage totals for Concord are based on 1771 valuation, as compiled by Brian Donahue, *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 205. Subsistence requirements are from Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 180–83; ranges are based on fertility of soil. Merchant combined meadow and pasture needs; they have been equally divided here for comparison with Lexington and Concord.
NOTES: A "farm" is here defined as any taxpayer's landholdings that include a house and at least one acre of land. Although the valuation does not include woodlot, Robert Gross noted that in 1771 unimproved acres accounted for about 40% of Concord farmers' holdings. See his "Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's Concord," *Journal of American History* 69.1 (June 1982): 56, and *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), p. 209n.

table 1). The average farm in both towns had just enough livestock—horses, oxen, goats, sheep, and swine—to meet the family's subsistence needs but more cows than were required, whose milk, meat, and hides were traded for necessities or used to purchase luxuries or pay taxes (see table 2). Appraisers and probate judges, who appreciated the logic of the sixty-acre farm, generally refused to subdivide any estate at or below that minimum, fearing that such a move would, as the judges said in probate determinations, "spoil the whole."

Owning a farm provided more than material sustenance. In both Lexington and Concord, land ownership granted a man the right to participate in town meeting, a reasonable restriction given that town expenditures were financed from taxes on assessed property. Moreover, the colonists maintained, only individuals who depended on no other for their survival could

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TABLE 2
Average Livestock Holdings per Farm by Type in Lexington and Concord, 1771

Livestock	1771 Lexington valuation	1771 Concord valuation	Basic subsistence
Horses	1.1	1.2	1
Oxen	1.4	2.9	1–2
Cows	5.1	4.3	1
Goats/Sheep	3.0	6.1	6–10
Swine	2.2	2.0	1–2

Source: Concord's figures are based on the 1771 valuation as calculated by Robert Gross, "Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's Concord," *Journal of American History* 69.1 (June 1982): 57; Lexington's are from the 1771 Lexington valuation.
Note: For Lexington, a farm is defined as any male taxpayer's holding that included a house and at least one acre of land on the 1771 valuation; for Concord, a farm is similarly defined as any taxpayer's holding that reported livestock or crops on the 1771 valuation.

exercise truly impartial judgment. Tenants, wage laborers, youth awaiting their farms, apprentices, women—all who relied upon a master for their daily bread—were subject to another's whim or susceptible to "the financial temptations of designing men."[14] In colonial Massachusetts, the widespread availability of land promoted the emergence of a yeoman society in which the majority of adult males could claim the security, identity, and liberty of freemen.[15] This was the yeoman's ideal: to live as his own master, unbeholden to lords, patrons, or creditors. Ownership of a farm was a publicly visible sign of full manhood and of self-determination in economic, personal, political, and religious terms.[16] To lose one's farm, to be reduced to tenancy, was to descend into peonage.

[14]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 11.

[15]This, I would claim, was a social transformation based not on the emergence of egalitarian ideals or libertarian aspirations but on the extension of previously restricted freehold to a broad sector of society. It gave a large proportion of the white male population the security of property, a place in community, and a voice in self-government; it did not transform hierarchical or monarchical understandings of social order.

[16]For a review of the literature on yeomanry, see Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 7–38. See also Richard Bushman's essay, "Massachusetts Farmers and the Revolution," in *Society, Freedom, and Conscience: The Coming of the American*

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New England's yeomen were fruitful. They multiplied. And therein lay a problem of limits. Settler families produced, on average, three sons who grew to maturity, each of whom would eventually need his own sixty acres to maintain his independence. Each generation, the population doubled and available land decreased. By the fourth generation, between seventy-five and one hundred years after settlement, both Lexington and Concord, like most colonial Massachusetts farm towns at that stage of development, were full.[17]

And so, the towns stopped growing. Fathers, who for years had practiced partible inheritance, dividing large landholdings equitably and settling their sons around them, increasingly willed the homestead to one "favored" son, whose brothers had to go elsewhere (see table 3). In the generation before the Revolution, two out of three of Lexington's young men moved away, as they did from Concord.[18] In fact, if they wished to maintain the economic status their fathers had achieved, these "extra" sons had no choice but to leave (see table 4).

Those who left town tended not to leave their farm identity behind (see table 5). Most moved west or north, to less expensive, unimproved farmland in new towns. To purchase this new land, they needed cash, which they hoped to receive from either their father or the brother who inherited the homestead.

Revolution in Virginia, Massachusetts and New York, ed. Richard M. Jellison (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), pp. 77–124.

[17]This demographic pressure has been well documented for colonial New England, beginning with Greven's aptly named *Four Generations.* The critical population density for eastern Massachusetts farming towns before the market revolution was forty to fifty persons per square mile. Both Lexington's and Concord's populations grew rapidly until they reached densities of about forty-five persons per square mile, then leveled off and remained static. Lexington's population density calculated from Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts,* 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 1:477; Concord's population density from Gross, *The Minuteman and Their World,* p. 222.

[18]According to the 1750 Lexington tax list, 117 fathers produced 354 sons who survived to 1774, an average of 3 sons per family. Of those sons, 126, or 36 percent, are known to have remained in Lexington permanently. Gross discusses Concord's corresponding population, land pressure, and emigration situation in "Culture and Cultivation," pp. 44–45, and in *The Minutemen and Their World*, pp. 79–82.

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TABLE 3
PARTIBLE AND IMPARTIBLE INHERITANCE STRATEGIES IN LEXINGTON, MASS., 1700–1799

	Family inheritance strategy by % and [N]		Total	
Probate Dates	partible	impartible	%	[N]
1700–1724	83% [5]	17% [1]	100%	6
1725–1749	57% [12]	43% [9]	100%	21
1750–1774	37% [14]	63% [24]	100%	38
1775–1799	46% [10]	55% [12]	101%	22

Source: Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.
Note: Based on an analysis of surviving legible male probates that specify real property divisions.

The majority of fathers, by the terms of their wills, required the inheriting son to reimburse his brothers for their share of the estate, in cash (see table 6). After mid-century, many of Lexington's sons who took over the family farm started life seriously burdened with this inherited debt. The problem grew increasingly critical over the two decades before the Revolution. Whether one stayed or moved away, then, the pressure to come up with cash for land increasingly burdened Middlesex families.

Lexington farmers had few opportunities for generating cash. Though many carried on a side craft, their market was generally restricted to the needs of neighbors, and debts were settled by non-cash trades in farmers' account books.[19] As Gross has commented, "markets did not exist to sustain comfortable livings on very small farms. Nor would the farming methods of the day have enabled [them] to produce substantial surpluses

[19]For example, Capt. John Parker was a woodworker. His account book reveals that four-fifths of his trade was for household or farm tools for neighbors in Lexington or contiguous towns. The majority of buyers was granted long-term credit and settled accounts through in-kind trade. Parker Family Account Books, vol. 2, Lexington Historical Society. For an analysis of Parker's trading network, see my "John Parker Family," unpublished study in the Education Department Archives of the National Heritage Museum, Lexington, Mass.

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TABLE 4
SONS' ECONOMIC MOBILITY, LEXINGTON AND CONCORD, MASS., 1750–75

Lexington: Economic Mobility of Sons in 1774 Relative to Their Fathers in 1750

Upwardly mobile	Stable	Downwardly mobile
26% [N = 22]	24% [N = 21]	50% [N = 43]

NOTE: Using vital records and genealogical information, I identified 86 cases in which a father from the 1750 assessment could be matched with a son from the 1774 assessment.

Concord: Economic Mobility, 1746–70

Upwardly mobile	Stable	Downwardly mobile
28% [N = 28]	31% [N = 31]	43% [N = 43]

SOURCE: Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), p. 221n.

Lexington: Economic Mobility of "Favored" Sons, 1750–74

Upwardly mobile	Stable	Downwardly mobile
38% [N = 14]	30% [N = 11]	32% [N = 12]

NOTE: A "favored son" is he who inherited the whole of the homestead.

Lexington: Economic Mobility of Sons When More Than One Son Remains in Town, 1750–74

Upwardly mobile	Stable	Downwardly mobile
16% [N = 8]	20% [N = 10]	63% [N = 31]

had the demand for them suddenly appeared."[20] Those Lexington families who tried to generate extra cash by keeping additional cows found that their tactic came at a cost.[21] To increase their stock, farmers began to plant some of their

[20] Gross, "Culture and Cultivation," p. 44.

[21] In 1735, the average Lexington farm had 4.2 cows; by 1771 that number had increased to 5.1. Lexington valuations of 1735 and 1771, microfilm, Special Collections, Cary Memorial Library, Lexington, Mass.

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TABLE 5

THE GEOGRAPHIC LIFE CHOICES OF LEXINGTON, MASS., MALE OUT-MIGRANTS, 1750–75

To Harvard University[a]	To urban or more densely populated eastern towns[b]	To farms within a 20-mile radius[c]	To farms in central and western Massachusetts[d]	Out of state (mostly northern New England)[e]
9% N = 13	6% N = 9	30% N = 45	33% N = 50	22% N = 33

NOTE: Working with genealogical records, I tracked the destinations of as many Lexington sons who left town after 1750 as possible. Of the 228 migrating sons, I was able to determine migration destinations for 150.

[a]Almost all of the 13 pursued a calling in the ministry; no Lexington son is recorded as entering any other institution of higher education.

[b]Urban centers include Boston, Charlestown, Cambridge, Brighton, Gloucester, or Salem; more densely populated nearby towns include Arlington, Medford, Watertown, West Cambridge, Newton, and Brookline. It is likely that these men were pursuing commercial or artisan opportunities.

[c]Most of these men (30 of 45) settled within ten miles of Lexington on land that would have been relatively expensive because already improved. The most popular choices included the adjoining towns of Lincoln, Concord, Waltham, Bedford, and nearby Weston, Carlisle (at that time part of Concord), Woburn, Billerica, and Burlington.

[d]The predominantly Worcester County central Massachusetts towns were young and land was still unimproved and thus less expensive. They included Shrewsbury, Lancaster, Northborough, Berlin, Pepperell, Townsend, Barre, Lunenburg, Ashby, Ashburnham, Templeton, Princeton, Westminster, Rutland, Winchendon, Spencer, Brookfield, Warren, Royalston, New Braintree, and Hubbardston. The one western Massachusetts migrant settled in Charlemont.

[e]Those who left Massachusetts went mostly north to New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine (still part of Massachusetts), and Nova Scotia. One each went to Connecticut, New York, Virginia, and South Carolina; two went to Pennsylvania.

upland for hay. These English mowings (fields planted to English clover), however, were not enriched by the spring floods and began to lose their fertility, a condition both Lexington and Concord suffered in the mid–eighteenth century. On the eve of the Revolution, Lexington farmers reported needing nearly twice the land required at mid-century to maintain a cow.[22]

The strategies farmers employed for coping with their demographic crisis—the shift to impartible inheritance, sending younger sons out of the community, farming more intensely—had consequences for the family and the community order. In

[22]According to town valuations, to feed a cow in Lexington required 1.5 acres of pasture in 1735, 2.9 in 1771. Concord required 1.4 acres in 1749, 2.2 in 1771, and 4.1 acres in 1791.

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TABLE 6
WILLS OBLIGATING SONS SOLELY INHERITING THE FAMILY FARM TO REIMBURSE SIBLINGS, LEXINGTON, MASS., 1700–1799

	Inheritor obligated reimburse siblings		Inheritor not obligated to reimburse siblings		Total	
Probate date	%	[N]	%	[N]	%	[N]
To 1739	83%	[10]	17%	[2]	100%	12
1740–49	50%	6	50%	6	100%	12
1750–59	31%	4	69%	9	100%	13
1760–69	32%	6	68%	13	100%	19
1770–79	42%	5	58%	7	100%	12
1780–89	62%	5	38%	3	100%	8
1790–99	40%	2	60%	3	100%	5
Total		38		43		81

Source: Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.

this regard, Lexington was no different from Concord. As fathers increasingly lacked the resources to grant their sons farms nearby, their authority to control the time and manner in which their children asserted their autonomy diminished.[23] Sons left home at an earlier age, and sexual mores loosened. In Concord, a third of all firstborn children in the two decades before the Revolution were conceived out of wedlock.[24] Lexington's youth were just as promiscuous (see table 7). Though they did not seize their independence to marry at a younger age, they chose more of their spouses from out of town (37 percent in 1700–1720 vs. 61 percent in 1755–57)[25] and elected to name fewer of their firstborn after the family-honored name of his or her same-sex parent. No longer automatically deferring to their elders, the emerging generation claimed an active role in town affairs at an earlier stage in their lives (see table 8). In short,

[23] Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 100, and Daniel Scott Smith, "Parental Power and Marriage Patterns: An Analysis of Historical Trends in Hingham, Massachusetts," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 35.3 (August 1973): 419–28.

[24] Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 100.

[25] *Vital Records of Lexington, Mass., through 1898* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co. for the New England Historic and Genealogical Society, 1898).

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TABLE 7
PREMARITAL PREGNANCY COMPARISON, LEXINGTON, MASS., 1700–20 VS. 1755–75

1700–20

	Number	Percent
Yes	6	17.6
No	28	82.4
Total	34	100.0

1755–75

	Number	Percent
Yes	23	31.1
No	51	68.9
Total	74	100.0

SOURCE: *Vital Records of Lexington, Mass. through 1898* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co. for New England Historic and Genealogic Society, 1898).
NOTE: Couples married in Lexington between 1700 and 1720, or between 1755 and 1775, in which at least one of the pair was from Lexington and for whom the date of birth of firstborn is known. Premarital pregnancy is indicated when the date of birth was less than 9 months after the date of marriage.

TABLE 8
PERCENTAGE OF SELECTMEN, BY AGE BRACKET, IN LEXINGTON, MASS., 1745–55 AND 1769–79

	70+	60–69	50–59	40–49	30–39	20–29
1745–55	2% [1]	31% [15]	53% [26]	12% [6]	2% [1]	0 [0]
1769–79	0 [0]	9% [5]	52% [27]	33% [17]	6% [3]	0 [0]

SOURCES: Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), vol. 1, and *Vital Records of Lexington, Mass., through 1898* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co. for New England Historic and Genealogic Society, 1898).
NOTE: Number of selectmen indicated in brackets.

in the years before the Revolution, the youth of Lexington, like those of Concord, appeared "no longer content to labor patiently on the farm until their fathers let them go."[26] The

[26]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World*, p. 76.

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young people's challenge to traditional generational authority had unsettling effects on the established social order.[27]

In addition to this social dislocation, farm families were experiencing increasing economic pressures. Lexington had never been an egalitarian community; it had always had its few esquires, broad base of landed yeomen, and small contingent of families with minimal landholdings. As the town matured, however, the way in which estates were passed on—impartible or partible—contributed to a growing disparity in the distribution of wealth.[28] Those Lexington families who divvied their estates into increasingly smaller parcels for multiple sons lost ground—both literally and figuratively—whereas the families of "favored" sons, despite their obligations to their siblings, for the most part held or improved their landed status (see table 4).In the generation before the Revolution, the percentage of landless men in Lexington rose significantly; by 1774, nearly a third of the men of both Lexington and Concord were without land, and many had no hopes of ever owning land in their native towns.[29] By the 1760s, the number of truly poor, landless, and dependent people in Lexington was rising significantly, a worrisome burden to the town, which was responsible for their

[27]Lockridge (*A New England Town,* pp. 139–64) calls this mid-eighteenth-century social turmoil an "opening" of society: a release from the strict patriarchal control of Puritanism and an increase in economic opportunities and mobility. Gross (*The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 105) labels it a period of decline, "a deepening social and economic malaise."

[28]Using the 1750 and 1774 tax assessments of Lexington (microfilm, Special Collections, Cary Memorial Library, Lexington) and the 1771 Concord tax assessments (microfilm, Special Collections, Concord Free Library), I determined that Concord's 1771 Gini coefficient (where 0 means perfect equality and 1 represents maximal inequality) was .50. Lexington's in 1750 was .47, but in 1774 the town's income gap had worsened to .52.

[29]In Lexington, based on tax assessments, landless men rose from 25 percent in 1750 to 29 percent in 1774; in Concord, the proportion held steady at 30 percent. Lexington figures from the 1750 and 1774 Lexington tax assessments; Concord figures from Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 106. An analysis of the fifty-three landless men in Lexington in 1774 indicates that about a third were landless only as a result of their place in the life cycle: they were either young men awaiting inheritances or old men who had already distributed their property. The other two-thirds were mostly transient laborers or non-inheriting sons who had remained in town. For a detailed study of these landless men, see my "Analysis of Lexington Taxes and Valuations," unpublished study, March 2003, Education Department Archives, National Heritage Museum.

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support.[30] Residents approved steps to prevent poor people from moving into town; allocated the fees and fines collected for civil offenses to the care the indigent; and repeatedly (though unsuccessfully) attempted to establish a poor house.[31] The visible evidence of dependence and poverty unsettled these yeomen.

More distressing still was mounting debt. Many favored sons, by virtue of their inheritance, were saddled with it. There were no banks in provincial Massachusetts; to cover their commitments, farmers traded interest-bearing notes with neighbors or family members who could supply cash. These debts were generally long term and fairly secure as long as the debtor survived. In this agrarian community, neighbors rarely took a man's property for nonpayment during his lifetime. In fact, debt was relatively invisible, and the farmer drew his status and security from the acres he owned without regard to the amount outstanding against those acres. However, at death, those debts came due, and increasingly in the generation before the Revolution, Lexington's farm families suffered the court-ordered sale of some or all of their land to settle unpaid obligations upon the death of the patriarch who had incurred them (see tables 9–11).[32] This rising tide of debt and the threat it posed of losing one's land and freeholder independence must have deeply troubled Lexington's and Concord's yeoman farmers.

[30]Between 1755 and 1775, the number of poor people who had to be supported by the town rose significantly. In the early years of this period, only two or three people—usually widows—were dependent on the town. In 1764, as the post-war recession set in, that number jumped to twelve, and it continued to rise for the next decade. On the eve of the Revolution, there was nearly twice as many dependent poor. See Lexington Town Meeting Records, 1755–75, transcript, Education Department Archives, National Heritage Museum, Lexington.

[31]Petitioners twice asked town meeting to build a workhouse, but the warrant articles were not enacted. Fines for breaking the peace were dedicated to poor support, as was any old or decaying wood located on town land. In 1767, as the town struggled to support twenty-one dependent poor, including families with children, town meeting voted to prosecute any resident who allowed non-resident poor to reside in their homes without informing the selectmen, as dictated by law. See Lexington Town Meeting Records, 1755–75.

[32]See my "The Battle for Freehold Farms: Lexington, Massachusetts, A Quantitative Study," unpublished paper, University of New Hampshire, Durham, Fall 2006.

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TABLE 9
MEAN OF RATIO OF DEBT TO TOTAL ASSETS PER DECADE, LEXINGTON, MASS., 1720–99

Date of death grouped by decades	Mean of debt ratio	N
1720–29	.152	4
1730–39	.187	8
1740–49	.303	12
1750–59	.277	13
1760–69	.457	18
1770–79	.395	16
1780–89	.616	11
1790–99	1.520	6
Total	.449	88

Source: Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.
Note: Data based on all surviving eighteenth-century records of Lexington males in which total assets and total debts were recorded.

TABLE 10
SOLVENCY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MALE DECEDENTS, BY DECADE, LEXINGTON, MASS.

Decade	Solvent		Illiquid		Insolvent		Total	
To 1719	100%	[2]	0%	[0]	0%	[0]	100%	[2]
1720–29	75%	[3]	25%	[1]	0%	[0]	100%	[4]
1730–39	90%	[9]	10%	[1]	0%	[0]	100%	[10]
1740–49	85%	[11]	15%	[2]	0%	[0]	100%	[13]
1750–59	79%	[11]	21%	[3]	0%	[0]	100%	[14]
1760–69	68%	[13]	21%	[4]	11%	[2]	100%	[19]
1770–79	47%	[8]	41%	[7]	12%	[2]	100%	[17]
1780–89	39%	[5]	39%	[5]	23%	[3]	101%	[13]
1790–99	29%	[2]	29%	[2]	43%	[3]	101%	[7]
Total								[99]

Source: Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass. Data based on all surviving eighteenth-century records of Lexington males in which total assets and total debts were recorded.
Note: "Illiquid" means debts were greater than personal property and thus required the sale of some real estate at settlement. "Insolvent" means that debts were greater than the total of personal and real property.

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TABLE 11
FORCED SALE OF ALL OR PART OF REAL ESTATE TO SETTLE DEBTS AT TIME OF DEATH FOR EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MALE DECEDENTS, LEXINGTON, MASS.

	Forced sale of part or whole estate				Total	
Decedents by decade	Yes %	Yes [N]	No %	No [N]	N = 140	
1700–1709	0%	0	100%	1	100%	1
1710–19	0%	0	100%	7	100%	7
1720–29	0%	0	100%	8	100%	8
1730–39	0%	0	100%	13	100%	13
1740–49	0%	0	100%	17	100%	17
1750–59	15%	3	85%	17	100%	20
1760–69	21%	6	79%	22	100%	28
1770–79	29%	6	71%	15	100%	21
1780–89	40%	6	60%	9	100%	15
1790–99	50%	5	50%	5	100%	10
Total	19%	26	81%	114	100%	140

Source: Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.
Note: Data based on all surviving eighteenth-century records of Lexington males in which total assets and total debts were recorded.

And just as they were pushed into insolvency by the demographics of their particular point in time, they were pulled toward a rising standard of living that further exacerbated their state. By the mid–eighteenth century, the consumer revolution in imported British goods had begun to penetrate the Middlesex countryside.[33] The availability of fine fabrics, ceramics, furniture, books, and other luxury goods in seacoast commercial centers fueled a new rage for self-fashioning as rural gentry aspired to ape English elites in displays of their newly refined dress, home, manners, and speech.[34] In Lexington, the "old pewter," crockery, and eight knives and forks that passed for acceptable tableware in the mid-century home of well-to-do Dr. Robert Fiske seemed meager in comparison to his son's

[33]T. H. Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pt. 1, "Empire of Goods."

[34]Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992).

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TABLE 12
MEAN VALUE OF LUXURY GOODS FOR MALE DECEDENTS, GROUPED BY DECADE, LEXINGTON, MASS., 1710–99

Decade of deaths	Adjusted mean value of luxury goods in 1700 shillings	Number of inventories
1710–19	191	5
1720–29	1,610	6
1730–39	5,174	11
1740–49	9,035	15
1750–59	31,762	14
1760–69	57,915	20
1770–79	89,436	15
1780–89	65,918	13
1790–99	61,274	8
Total		107

Source: All surviving probate inventories for Lexington males, 1710–99, Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.
Note: I have tracked the total value of five luxury goods—silver, brass, pewter, clocks, and looking glasses—as measured in shillings, adjusted for inflation and currency conversions. All values are expressed as Old Tenor equivalents. Lawful money (post 1750) is converted to Old Tenor by a factor of .133; dollars (post 1794) are converted to shillings by a factor of .166. All values are adjusted for inflation to a 1700 base using Weiss's Silver Prices for 1700–49 and the Rothenberg Price Index for 1750–99. See Roger W. Weiss, "The Colonial Monetary Standard of Massachusetts," *Economic History Review* 27.4 (November 1974): 586–87; Winifred B. Rothenberg, "A Price Index for Rural Massachusetts, 1750–1855," *Journal of Economic History* 39.4 (December 1979): 983–84. To verify that the rate of change in silver prices corresponds to the inflation rate for prices of farm commodities in Massachusetts for the volatile period of 1720–49, see Bruce D. Smith, "Money and Inflation in Colonial Massachusetts," *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Quarterly Review* 8.1 (Winter 1984): 10.

elegant spread of china, silver, brass, and pewter a generation later.[35] Although Joseph Fiske may have been especially acquisitive, the escalating number and value of luxury goods was not unusual in Lexington households, particularly from mid-century on (see table 12). These goods, it must be noted, could

[35]Probate inventory of Dr. Robert Fiske Sr., 14 January 1753, Middlesex County Probate Record #7652, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston: tableware consisting of 6 pewter dishes, 8 pewter plates, old pewter, earthenware, 8 knives and forks; probate inventory of Dr. Joseph Fiske Sr., 1802, Middlesex County Probate Record #7614: tableware consisting of lot of crockery, lot of china and server, 9 pewter plates, 4 pewter plates, 2 pewter teaspoons, 2 pewter porringers, 4 pewter platters, 2 silver tablespoons, 3 silver teaspoons, jug, coffeepot, one pair brass candlesticks, one pair tin candlesticks.

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not be had for trade-in-kind. Refinement had to be purchased with cash. Rising aspirations for consumer goods clashed with the need to purchase land for maturing sons. Debt and desire were a dual menace. Lexington's minister harangued against consuming finery, "the great degeneracy of the present times." "People are much for *the fashion,* and young people for those ornaments which they think beautiful and excellent, and they are apt to set much by them, and value themselves highly upon them, when obtain'd." Rev. Jonas Clarke urged his townsfolk to abandon these "vanities and temptations" and eschew "fashionable dress" for the "white robes of righteousness." "The merchandize of wisdom is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain therof than fine gold."[36] Despite such warnings, Lexington's consumption of luxury goods continued to escalate.

The pressure to acquire cash to purchase land and luxuries, the specter of debt and poverty, declining soil fertility, rebellious youth, and geographic mobility almost certainly sparked a degree of anxious insecurity in Lexington. They did so, Gross has asserted, in Concord. These stresses to the established social order were common in all Middlesex farming communities as they reached their demographic and ecological limits in the eighteenth century. But there were also critical differences between Lexington and Concord that likely shaped the disparate ways in which they responded to revolutionary rhetoric. It is to those differences we now turn.

Lexington and Concord were farming towns, and the people of both communities shared the essential yeomen's identity, values, and goals. But Concord was significantly older, larger, wealthier, more strategically located, and therefore more developed and more cosmopolitan than neighboring Lexington.

[36]Rev. Jonas Clarke, *The Best Art of Dress, Or Early Piety Most Amiable and Ornamental: A Sermon Preached at Lexington to a Religious Society of Young Men, On Lords-Day Evening, Sept. 12th, 1761* (Boston: D. and J. Kneeland, 1762), pp. 9, 18, 24, 28–29.

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Concord's relative maturity fostered diversity and divisions that Lexington had yet to experience. These differences arguably tempered the two towns' responses to imperial crisis.

Settled in 1635, shortly after John Winthrop's Puritans first arrived in Massachusetts Bay, Concord was one of Middlesex County's oldest towns.[37] By the eve of the Revolution, six generations had come of age on its expanding farms, but the town had long since reached its demographic and ecological limits. The contest for scarce land and the exodus of the young had first begun to trouble Concord in the 1720s, and the crisis grew progressively more acute over the next half century.[38] By the 1770s, two generations had struggled, adapted, adjusted, and resigned themselves to scarcity and its corrosive effects on the social order. Lexington, by contrast, had not formed a nuclear community until the 1680s and did not reach its demographic limit until the mid–eighteenth century. The generation that came of age in the two decades before the Revolution was the first to experience the disconcerting reality of limits and leave takings. The newness of this problem—and its coincidence with the imperial crisis—made Lexingtonians more likely to associate their recently felt hard times with imperial malevolence.

Concord's original settlers, who bore considerable costs in developing the town, had been accorded proprietary status by the province. Proprietors received generous allocations of land as well as rights to future "divisions" of acres still held in common by the town.[39] Proprietorship was a valuable privilege, which ensured the well-being of several generations and established the families so designated among the town's leaders.

[37]When Middlesex County was created in 1643, it was composed of seven towns, only three of which (Charlestown, Cambridge, and Watertown) had been established before Concord, whose settlement and incorporation date to 1635.

[38]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 79.

[39]For an explanation of proprietary rights and serial town settlement, see David Jaffee, *The People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pts. 1 and 2. Jaffee notes that proprietary grants were a type of monopoly and were frequently manifested in the leadership of town government.

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With its massive grants of land, Concord became one of the largest and wealthiest towns in Middlesex County. Some of her citizens, over the course of six generations, garnered influential positions in provincial affairs. Not a few of Concord's distinguished men managed to secure appointments from the Crown, high rank in the provincial militia, and the benefits of court patronage.[40] Lexington, by contrast, grew inward from its edges, as Cambridge and Concord expanded their settlements. By 1713, its farmers had secured incorporation as a separate town, but there were no proprietary rights. By the eve of the Revolution, few in Lexington had ever enjoyed a Crown appointment, and none had earned high rank in the provincial militia. Concord had two colonels and a major; Lexington had no one above the rank of captain before the Revolution. Unlike Concord, Lexington lacked men closely bound by Crown patronage and, thus, likely to be loyalists.

Concord had more than three times the acreage of its eastern neighbor.[41] Lexington's comparable compactness promoted internal cohesiveness, whereas Concord was rent with sectional divisions and rivalries. In a geographically expansive town, outliers inevitably came to "resent their subordination to the center."[42] The distance they had to travel to church, school, and town meeting hindered their participation in those institutions. Inevitably, those in far-flung districts felt alienated, and they routinely petitioned the General Court for the right to form a separate parish or town.[43] Separations, which cost towns dearly in tax revenues and political clout, were fiercely resisted. Four times in the eighteenth century, Concord's outliers petitioned to secede, and though all the petitions were eventually successful, three of the four engendered acrimonious struggles that

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[40] Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* pp. 51–52.

[41] By 1665, grants to Concord exceeded 36,000 acres of land, including the original grant of thirty-six square miles ("six miles square") and a later grant of an additional 13,000 acres. By comparison, Lexington at its founding was barely seventeen square miles, or 11,000 acres. See Donahue, *Great Meadow,* pp. 2, 122; Fuhrer, "The Battle for Freehold Farms," p. 10n.

[42] Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 15.

[43] Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 16.

challenged the ideal of the town as a consensual community.[44] Lexington, by contrast, was herself the product of a successful petition to separate from Cambridge. Only once, to neighboring Lincoln, did the town face the loss of a small part of its land. For the most part, Lexington remained whole.

Even after suffering its secessions, Concord was still significantly larger than Lexington, and its center could not hold. For town, tax, and political expediency, Concord divided into three sections—north, east, and south. Competition among districts was strong, with each promoting its own candidates for selectmen and battling over the location of schoolhouses, roads, and bridges. In 1771 a compromise was achieved and each section accorded its own selectman. As Gross comments, "the inhabitants [having] conceded the inevitability of separate interests in town life[,] . . . Concord was, in effect, redefined as a confederacy of smaller communities."[45] In Lexington, on the other hand, offices from General Court representatives to selectmen, moderators, assessors, and town clerks were evenly shared between districts—north and south, divided geographically by the main road and administratively for purposes of tax assessment—and no issues emerged in town meeting that seriously compromised the community's integrity.[46] For years each district's leading family—the Bowmans and the Reeds—alternately filled the town's most influential offices, but one historian suggests that their rivalry was not essentially political but social and reasonably amicable.[47] The interests of the center village and outliers were balanced by mid-century, when

[44]The seceding towns were Acton, Lincoln, Bedford, and Carlisle, the last of which was separated peaceably. See Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 15. On the consensual ideal, see Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970).

[45]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* pp. 16–17.

[46]The most significant change in election patterns came in 1770, in the midst of Revolutionary turmoil, when older, wealthier men were replaced by younger, active, Whiggishly inclined men.

[47]Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington,* 1:53–54. Tax lists were kept by the north and south sides, and in 1769 the ratio for assessment was set at 58 percent for the north, 42 percent for the south (Lexington Town Meeting Records, 28 December 1769). In February 1763, some residents petitioned the town to balance districts by setting some of the north side off to the south (the motion failed), but the action

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the town voted to rotate the school through the center and the four quarters of town. Later, the town agreed to keep the grammar school fixed in the center village and to have "dame" or "writing" schools for younger children located in each district. Nowhere in the town's records is there evidence of significant sectional rivalry. What contention did arise can apparently be attributed to a few disgruntled individuals who were annoyed at the placement of a road or a gate. The town belfry (a small structure separate from the church), stood on a hill on John Munroe's land until he complained about it in 1767. Moving and siting the belfry caused a fracas, but Lexington moved quickly "to pitch upon some place for the bell and belfry to stand in the future that have a tendency to make peace in the town."[48] Lexington's smaller, more closely bounded community was able to preserve the ideal, if not always the reality, of neighborly consensus and communal well-being.

One of the most striking distinctions between Lexington and Concord was a factor of location: Concord was among the province's leading commercial centers, whereas Lexington was a quiet farming village. A river ran through Concord—several rivers, in fact—and when a band of the colony's earliest settlers set about siting their farms, they leap-frogged over the undeveloped land that would eventually become Lexington in favor of a tract deeper into the wilderness that boasted an abundant supply of marshy meadow hay and water power. The Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet Rivers were as a highway through the wilderness, fed Concord's Great Meadows, teemed with fish, and powered early grist and saw mills. Having bridged its rivers, Concord developed itself into an interior hub, its roads branching out to trading posts, frontier posts, and surrounding farm communities.[49] Lexington, by contrast, had no river, no major crossroads, and little commercial culture. To outsiders, as British soldiers understood it on 19 April, Lexington was a

was intended to equalize the constables' and assessors' burdens rather than to change political influence.

[48]Lexington Town Meeting Records, February, September, and October 1767.

[49]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* pp. 6–7.

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stop on the way to somewhere else, and that somewhere else was the bustling hub of Concord.

At 1,500 residents, Concord had twice the population of Lexington. But it was not in numbers alone that Concord held the advantage. As a commercial center, Concord hosted a wide range of artisan services, some professional offices, and purveyors of both country and imported wares. Lexington had no retail stores, other than a pair of taverns licensed to sell spirits.[50] If they wanted to purchase store goods, Lexingtonians had to travel to Concord, joining farm folk from the surrounding countryside who brought their surplus produce to trade. According to Gross, Concord had "nearly as much business activity per capita as in the larger seaports of Essex County. Its six storekeepers bought and sold goods across a broad hinterland . . . and at least one merchant imported directly from England."[51] Concord's four warehouses (Lexington had none) along with its shops stocked nearly ten times the merchandise and of higher quality—imported finery, wigs, millinery goods, goldsmith's wares, and fine cabinetry—than that available in Lexington's workshops.[52] In addition, Concord's rivers powered five mills, several near the mill dam in the village center, that turned out meal, lumber, and fulled cloth; lacking a river, Lexington had only one mill, powered by the seasonal flow of a town stream.

As a commercial hub, Concord attracted sellers and shoppers. As a shire town, it drew lawyers and their clients, who attended sessions of the Middlesex County Courts. Militia recruiters enlisted men and launched expeditions from the busy village center. Transients seeking labor moved through town. Given the traffic in Concord, news, ideas, and fashions were exchanged regularly to a degree not common in more isolated

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[50]See the valuations of 1735 and 1771, Middlesex Court of Common Pleas for license approvals, and Lexington Town Meeting Records, 1755–75.

[51]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 92.

[52]The 1771 valuation lists the value of merchandise as well as the number and type of workshops in each town. Lexington's craftsmen—tanners, blacksmiths, potash makers, woodwrights, etc., with the exception of one itinerant clockmaker who married a local daughter—produced items for the rural trade.

rural villages. Concord was more cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and diverse than Lexington, and its nascent commercialization, with opportunities for choice, mobility, and material aspirations, had begun to fray the bonds of a once-authoritarian social order.[53] Concord had begun to move beyond the isolated, homogenous, local nature of traditional agrarian communities; Lexington had not.

But it was, perhaps, in the matter of ministers that the two towns diverged most dramatically. For both Lexington and Concord, the critical test of religious unity came in the early 1740s, when the Great Awakening rolled through Middlesex County. The "New Lights," caught up by the energetic, emotional preaching of itinerant evangelists such as George Whitefield, felt deeply convicted of their sins and utterly dependent on God's saving grace. They viewed "Old Lights"—local elites who favored the rational aspects of Puritanism, embraced church membership for all professing Christians, and despised the excesses of mass revival meetings—as enemies and heretics. Daniel Bliss, Concord's minister from 1739 to 1764, embraced the New Divinity, invited Whitefield to his pulpit, and rent his church asunder.

In neighboring Lexington, Rev. John Hancock (ministering from 1698 to 1752) pursued a middle path. By nature a conservative Calvinist, he found the emotional excesses and excitement of the Awakening distasteful. Yet he did not accept that man could earn his way to heaven through right

[53]Richard Bushman argued in *From Puritan to Yankee* that commercialization created a gap between competitive behavior and persistent ideals of religious, political, and social authority. In *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1995), Stephen Innes noted that Puritan culture was not resistant to ambition and commercial improvement but restrained that drive with an ethic that elevated common good over individual opportunism. Christine L. Heyrmann asserted in *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts, 1690–1750* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1984) that Puritan commerce and capitalism were not incompatible; in the maritime town of Gloucester, commerce created trust and civility that stabilized and strengthened the social order. Most scholars, however, have seen the story of New England as one of "decline" or "opening" from authoritarian Puritan communalism to competitive individualism. See Jack Greene's chapter on New England in *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

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belief but insisted that an inherently sinful mankind was dependent on God's grace for salvation. He eschewed New Light enthusiasms primarily because they instigated divisions in the church, but rather than condemn the Awakening's energies, as historian Dean Grodzins notes, he "used his personal authority to harness and direct the new spirit," adding eighty new members to his church.[54] Conservative and at the same time progressive, neither attempting to smother religious feeling nor fan its flame, Hancock managed to avail himself "of all the real advantages of the Whitefield movement without producing any of those convulsions which disturbed many parishes."[55] His successor, Jonas Clarke (ministering from 1755 to 1805), shared his tolerant approach. In his sermons, Clarke was orthodox yet by nature religiously liberal. Like Hancock, he respected his congregants' right to freedom of conscience. In lieu of theological dispute, which he studiously avoided for the sake of communal peace, Clarke preached and practiced an embracing piety. Even the introduction of a choir and Watts's hymnal in place of the ancient congregational limning of the Psalms—frequently a flashpoint for liberal/conservative strife—was serenely accomplished during his tenure.[56]

While Lexington experienced peace and felicity under the pastorates of Hancock and Clarke, who between them held that post for 104 years, Concord spent the half century before the Revolution alternately dismissing, defending, slandering, and promoting a succession of controversial ministers. Ultimately the town had to call upon an outside ecclesiastical council to restore order, if not peace. Disgruntled church members withdrew to form a competing congregation. At its core, the acrimonious row concerned theology, but ultimately it spread to town politics. Battles over matters of faith and conscience

[54]Dean Grodzins, *American Heretic: Theodore Parker and Transcendentalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp. 13–15.

[55]Hudson, *History of Lexington,* 1:316.

[56]Clarke noted the peaceful transition in his almanac in October 1766. See also Hudson, *History of Lexington,* 1:319–21.

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emboldened participants to confront and contend with their traditional keepers of social order, their magistrates and ministers. The result, as one Concord resident wrote, was "all Society and fammelyes in Confusetion."[57]

Concord, then, was quite a different community from Lexington: older, larger, more commercial and cosmopolitan, more divided by sectional, political, and religious rivalries, more experienced in asserting individual interests and in challenging the established order in home, pulpit, shop, and town meeting. These differences mattered. The ancient Puritan ideal was one of covenant, in which all individuals submitted to the discipline and authority of a united community for the sake of the common good. In New England's towns, religious dissent, political faction, cultural diversity, and individual striving were to be discouraged in favor of harmony, conformity, and submission to the general will. These basic values, though strained by private property and rising commercial opportunities, persisted as ideals in more static rural communities, where farmers continued to defer to the traditional authority of magistrates and clergy; in these select towns, cohesive and consolidated communities still managed, in some ways, to survive.[58] Lexington was such a town; Concord was not. And that fundamental difference would shape the ways in which the two towns responded to the imperial crisis.

[57]Quoted in Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World*, p. 28. Gross treats the church matter on pp. 18–28.

[58]This is Zuckerman's thesis in *Peaceable Kingdoms.* Gross identified the consensual ideal as under attack in Concord (*The Minutemen and Their World*, p. 14). The essentially communal nature of early New England towns has been disputed by scholars in the last twenty years, as reviewed in Claude S. Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 227–28. I believe that the perfunctory dismissal of Zuckerman's thesis should be reconsidered in the case of smaller agrarian towns such as Lexington, where a homogeneous, interdependent population shared a common farm identity, family networks so dense as to constitute a cousinhood, hierarchical and patriarchal ideas of social order, local governance, and strong traditions of covenanted church *and* town membership. Such traditional ideals were finally defeated in the early republic, with multiple evolutions in market, politics, citizenship, and democratized, nationalized culture. See my "This Wilderness World: The Evolution of a New England Town, 1820–1840" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Hampshire, 2010).

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The very man who so scrupulously preserved harmony within Lexington's religious community also had a knack for amalgamating contemporary political rhetoric, religious mandate, and the lived social experience of Lexington's farm folk into a powerful ideological justification—in fact, obligation—to protest incursions on colonial prerogatives. Articulating cherished ideals about the faith of their fathers and the virtues of their inherited farming world, Rev. Jonas Clarke, a Harvard-educated divine, warned his flock of a looming conspiracy to deprive them of both. Clarke preached resistance to Crown measures as a sacred duty to God, ancestors, and descendants.[59]

Clarke's wife and Boston merchant and patriot John Hancock were cousins, both grandchildren of Clarke's predecessor, the elder minister John Hancock, in whose home the Clarkes now lived and where the younger Hancock and his friend Samuel Adams were not infrequently entertained as guests. Several times each month, Clarke journeyed beyond Lexington, most frequently to surrounding towns for an exchange of pulpits but also to Boston for business, lectures, sermons, political events, or to effect visits between his children and those of his brother-in-law, eminent Boston bookseller Nicholas Bowes. He traveled long distances for ordinations, where he was often requested to speak, or to visit extended family in distant Worcester County. During the years of political excitement, his touring intensified, as he conferred with ministers, statesmen, and town committees.[60] He was well read. He subscribed to

[59]The many town resolves and instructions that survive in town meeting records were supposedly prepared by committees not always including Clarke, but Lexington historians insist that these documents were drafted by Clarke, or under his close supervision, and reflect his leadership. See Hudson, *History of Lexington,* 1:69, and Theodore Gilman, "The Rev. Jonas Clark [*sic*], Pastor at Lexington, Leader in Revolutionary Thought," an address delivered before the New York Society of the Order of the Founders and Patriots of America, Hotel Manhattan, New York, 19 October 1911, and printed by the society. Clarke's influence beyond his sermons bears further investigation.

[60]See my "Analysis of Jonas Clarke's Interleaved Almanac, 1765–1775," unpublished study, 2003, in the Education Department Archives of the National Heritage Museum, Lexington.

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the Whig newspaper the *Boston Gazette* and Ames's *Almanac,* owned a substantial library and borrowed from others, and purchased printed pamphlets. Over the years, he absorbed much in the way of republican and Enlightenment thought, along with theology.

Linking them explicitly to religious rights and responsibilities, Clarke claimed authority to speak of civil liberties and political rights from the pulpit. New England's Puritans had always considered the state's defense of Protestantism as essential to their prized English liberties, but the relation flowed in the other direction as well: religious faith was a bulwark of civil liberty. "The preservation of the rights and liberties of the people," Clarke argued, was in fact "the cause of GOD." Town militiamen "who engage in the cause of [God's] people, and set themselves for their defense, are therefore to consider themselves as guardians and trustees for GOD, having the rights, property, liberties, and lives of their fellow-men (a sacred trust!), committed to their charge."[61] Steeped in the tradition of New England as the New Jerusalem, Clarke drew an analogy between his parishioners and the subjects of Jehoshaphat, who reinstated Israel's purity of worship and virtuous conduct and then prepared to defend their land as the refuge of the elect. In the same way, Clarke suggested, the yeomen of New England were divinely called to defend their Chosen Land.[62]

Initially, Clarke defended colonial liberties on the basis of the new provincial charter issued in 1690. These charter rights and privileges, Clarke pronounced in 1765, "we always held sacred, wherein it is expressly granted to us and to our children that

[61] Jonas Clarke, *The Importance of Military Skill, Measures for Defense and a Martial Spirit, in a Time of Peace: A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston, New-England, June 6, 1768 Being the Anniversary of their Election of Officers* (Boston: Kneeland and Adams, 1768), pp. 15–16; hereafter referred to as *Artillery Sermon.*

[62] As Bernard Bailyn has shown, the conviction that the American colonies had a providential role in the history of freedom drew upon "covenant theories of the Puritans, certain strands of Enlightenment thought, the arguments of the English radicals, the condition of life in the colonies, even the conquest of Canada" (*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967], p. 140).

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We shall have and enjoy all Liberties and Immunities of Free and Natural Subjects within any of his Majesties Dominions . . . as if we were every one of us born in his Majesties Realm in England."[63] It was through these charter promises that the people of Massachusetts laid claim to ancient English constitutional (Magna Carta) rights, and it was these cherished rights that, Clarke insisted, Parliament had unlawfully violated when it imposed the Stamp Act. No tax shall be assessed except it be approved locally, Clarke reminded his flock, and no freeman imprisoned except by the lawful judgment of his peers. Because Parliament's acts and enforcement violated those rights, Clarke instructed his people to seek a "vindication of our Charter Rights and Liberties, and that the Same be so entered upon Record, that the World may see, and future Generations may Know, that the present both knew and valued the Rights they enjoyed, and did not tamely resign them for Chains and Slavery."[64]

As the years and grievances mounted, Clarke began to lay the groundwork for an assertion of rights independent of those granted by the Crown. As the Massachusetts assembly defied British ultimatums, some provincials, including Clarke, held that Crown and parliamentary powers were not without limit. Drawing on Enlightenment philosophy, he contended that

> in a state of nature, every man has a right to liberty, property and life: And no one . . . can, reasonably, deprive him of either. Society is formed for the preservation and defense of the common rights of mankind, to that end, that the blessings of life may be secured to all. The liberties and privileges, the property and possessions of society, ought always to be held sacred; and no one is at liberty to invade, violate, or even incroach upon them, upon any pretence whatsoever.[65]

Ultimately, Clarke would maintain that his townsmen's rights were bestowed by God, derived from nature, and confirmed

[63]Instructions to Representative to General Court, William Reed, Esq., Lexington Town Meeting Records, 21 October 1765.

[64]Instructions to William Reed, Lexington Town Meeting Records, 21 October 1765.

[65]Clarke, *Artillery Sermon,* p. 11.

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by constitution and charter—in other words, that they sprang from the fountains of faith, philosophy, and law.[66]

Imperial revenue-raising acts and the methods used to enforce them confirmed Clarke's Whiggish suspicions that corrupt lords and Crown officials were conspiring to destroy the critical balance of power in the colonies so that they might seize sovereignty and fund their private luxuries.[67] The townsmen of Lexington were losing their farms to debt. It was critical that they defend their land and liberty "or the system of Slavery will be compleat." In short, unless they acted, Lexington's citizens would descend into dependence, "tamely to bow to the yoke, and forever hereafter to be silent."

By late 1773, Clarke was boldly characterizing the British as enemies of "Americans":

> [I]t appears that the Enemies of the Rights and Liberties of Americans . . . are seeking to Avail themselves of New, and if possible, Yet more detestable Measures to distress, Enslave, and destroy Us. . . . We are allarmed at this masterly Effort of Iniquitous Policy . . . and further, we are more especially Alarmed, as by these Crafty Measures . . . the Rights and Liberties of Americans are forever Sapped and destroyed. . . . For nothing short of this will ever fill the Mouth of Oppression, or gorge the insatiate appetite of Lust & Ambition!—Once admit this subtle, wicked Ministerial Plan to take Place . . . the Badge of our Slavery is fixed . . . we shall soon be obliged to bid Farewell . . . and an everlasting Adieu to those Glorious Rights & Liberties for which our Worthy Ancestors so earnestly prayed, so bravely fought, so freely bled!!

But, Clarke was convinced, the people of Lexington were well aware not only of their privileges but of their duties as well:

> Our worthy ancestors after many struggles with their enemies, in the face of every danger, and at the expense of much treasure & bloode,

[66]Clarke, *Artillery Sermon,* and Lexington Town Meeting Resolves, 21 September 1768, transcription, Education Department Archives, National Heritage Museum, Lexington.

[67]See Bailyn, *Ideological Origins,* pp. 118–20 and 144–50.

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secured to themselves & transmitted to us their posterity a fair and rich inheritance, not only of a pleasant & fertile lande but also of invaluable rights & privileges both as men & christians. . . . We looke upon ourselves as bounde by the most sacred ties to the utmost of our power to maintain, and defende ourselves, in our charter Rights and privileges, and as a sacred trust committed to us to transmit them, inviolate, to succeeding generations.[68]

On the eve of 19 April, John Hancock and Samuel Adams asked Jonas Clarke if the men of Lexington were prepared to fight. According to tradition, the minister replied that he had "trained them for this very hour; they would fight, and if need be, die, too, under the shadow of the house of God."[69] Jonas Clarke was a prophet of republicanism, and he articulated its ideas and its ideals in a manner that captured his parishioners' attention and their allegiance. Until shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, the men in Lexington *unanimously* vowed to resist, and to this cause they pledged to "Sacrifice our Estates, and every thing dear in Life, Yea and Life itself, in support of the common Cause."[70]

While Clarke preached resistance in the name of God, Concord's William Emerson, who succeeded Daniel Bliss as Concord's minister in 1765, confined himself to salvation. Even if Concord had produced a Whig spokesman like Clarke, it is

[68]Lexington Town Meeting Records, 5 January 1774.

[69]*Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography,* vol. 1, ed. James G. Wilson and John Fiske (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), p. 629.

[70]Lexington Town Meeting Records and Resolves, December 1773. Lexington called for unanimous votes on their resolves, actions, and instructions as long as those articles included a statement of fidelity to the king. Only in the tumultuous year of 1774 did some few, such as Moses Harrington, enter a protest against the majority for what they believed were treasonous steps. When town meeting voted in December of that year to abide by the resolves of the Continental and Provincial Congresses and to pay their taxes to the provincial treasurer rather than the royal agent, Harrington "personally appeared and protested against the proceeding of the above meeting" (Lexington Town Meeting Records, 27 December 1774). Lexington historian Charles Hudson located what he believed to be a Lexington "Declaration of Independence," dated 1776, but the wording sounds suspiciously like a fealty oath and likely was administered to those suspected of loyalist sympathies (*History of Lexington,* 1:228–29).

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unlikely he would have been heard above the din of dissension or gained credence in a town where loyalists vied for power throughout the turbulent 1760s. Town meetings were taken up with tiffs and sectional squabbles and church meetings with contests between New and Old Lights.

In the autumn of 1765, Boston challenged the countryside to resist the Stamp Act. Urged on by John Adams, Braintree responded in September with a set of resolves that set the standard. While expressing loyalty for king and Parliament, Braintree declared that the tax and its measures for enforcement were unconstitutional and called for an assertion and vindication of provincial rights. Lexington followed suit a month later, in a statement, considerably longer (and less eloquent) than the Braintree Resolves, that laid out the basis of colonial rights, anxiously asserted the town's "Englishness," and urgently warned of the danger of enslavement if English rights were ceded. These resolves were unanimously passed and recorded in town records. In Concord, where a version of the Braintree Resolves was also passed, the town clerk neglected—perhaps intentionally—to record them, and Concord's representative to the General Court only reluctantly transmitted them, earning himself the Whigs' ire and the appellation "friend of the Stamp Act."[71] Then Concord lapsed into a long silence on imperial matters as it struggled with local crises.

Lexington was not silent. Repeatedly it submitted its strident town meeting resolves and instructions to the Boston Whig papers, which readily printed them. When Parliament passed the Townshend Acts in 1767, placing duties on imported paper, paint, lead, glass, and tea, Boston voted to promote local industry and home products and to curtail consumption of the enumerated imports. Shortly afterward, Lexington voted unanimously to "concur with ye Town of Boston Respecting Importing and using foreign Commodities."[72] Concord issued no formal response. In the spring of 1768, Samuel Adams, the

[71] *Boston Evening-Post,* 28 April 1766, p. 1, supplement.

[72] Lexington Town Meeting Records, 28 December 1767.

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influential clerk of Boston town meeting, circulated a letter specifying provincial grievances and seeking input from other town meetings. Having received news of the action, the British government presented the Massachusetts General Court with an ultimatum: rescind the letter or be dissolved. Ninety-two representatives, including Lexington's William Reed, refused. The ministry held to its word, as Jonas Clarke recorded in his almanac. The province's governing body having been disbanded, Boston called for a convention of towns to devise a "speedy redress" of the injustices they suffered. Within the week, Lexington set forth its concerns and selected a townsman to represent the people's interests at the proposed convention. In the midst of this turmoil, Clarke journeyed to Boston and delivered his *Artillery Election Sermon,* in which he defended the colonists' actions and praised the militia as guardians of a sacred trust, charged with defending the people lest someone "invade, violate, or encroach upon them."[73]

Angered by the Townshend Acts and the dissolution of the General Court, Samuel Adams, in his roles with both the Boston town meeting and the Massachusetts House of Representatives, encouraged his fellow colonists to boycott all British goods. Concord passed a mild resolution supporting frugality and home manufactures;[74] Lexington wholeheartedly embraced the cause. Although they recognized that they would not be able to cover all their needs, patriotic women organized spinning bees to demonstrate their political will to decrease their dependence on British imports. John Parker's woodworking account book reveals the extent of their commitment: though Parker usually filled orders for two or three flax wheels a year, in 1767 and 1768 that number spiked to an average of fourteen per year.[75] The Whiggish *Boston Gazette* took note of a Lexington spinning party of 31 August 1769:

[73]Clarke, *Artillery Sermon,* p. 11.

[74]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 39.

[75]Woodworking account book of John Parker Sr., vol. 2 of the Parker Family Account Books, Lexington Historical Society. Analysis of spinning wheel production from my "Reckoning with the Parkers," p. 22.

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Very early in the morning, the young Ladies of this town, to the number of 45, assembled at the house of Mr. Daniel Harrington, with their Spinning Wheels, where they spent the day in the most pleasing satisfaction: and at night presented Mrs. Harrington with the spinning of 602 knots of linen and 346 knots of cotton. If any should be inclin'd to treat such assemblies or the publication of them in a contemptuous sneer as thinking them quite ludicrous, such persons would do well first to consider what would become of one of our (so much boasted) manufactures, on which we pretend the welfare our country is so much depending, if those of the fair sex should refuse to "lay their hands to the spindle" or be unwilling to "hold the distaff." Prov. 31:19.[76]

In late 1772, Samuel Adams attempted to rouse public resistance yet again when he issued the Boston Pamphlet, an account of a town meeting in which Bostonians articulated their natural, religious, and constitutional rights, chronicled how those rights had been violated, and encouraged other towns in the province to form Committees of Correspondence to network with "fellow sufferers." Concord issued a moderately worded response.[77] Lexington immediately called a town meeting "to oppose oppression [*sic*] measures," as Jonas Clarke noted in his almanac. The meeting produced a strong statement of townspeople's rights, resolved that they looked "upon themselves in common with their Brethern and Fellow Subjects through the Province, to be greatly Injured and Oppressed in Various Instances by Measures of Government lately adopted," and unanimously instructed their representative to use his "utmost influence" to pursue measures "for a Radical and lasting Redress." Lexington's voters also affirmed their "Right to correspond with other towns upon matters of Common Concern."[78]

In the fateful autumn of 1773, the Crown shipped duty-free British East India tea to Boston. The city's Whig leaders feared this new policy would lead eventually both to a monopoly on

[76] *Boston Gazette and Country Journal,* 16 October 1769, p. 1.

[77] Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World,* pp. 44–45.

[78] Lexington Town Meeting Resolves, 21 December 1772; Instructions to Representative, 5 January 1773, Lexington Town Meeting Records; Town Response to Boston Circular Letter, 5 January 1773, Lexington Town Meeting Records.

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trade and to a new form of unconsented taxation. On the last day of November, Boston sent a letter to the selectmen of every town in the province regarding the tea, and shortly afterward, the citizens of Lexington met to discuss the matter.[79] Drafting their strongest resolve to date, they referred to "the British" as "enemies" of "the Americans"—language reminiscent of Clarke's—who were seeking their ruin and enslavement. Lexingtonians then vowed that they would oppose "the landing, receiving, buying or selling, or even Using any of the Teas." Moreover, they unanimously declared that they would treat "with Neglect and Contempt" and would look upon "as an Enemy to this Town and to this Country" any person who purchased or consumed any tea. And then, to advertise their united intentions, the townspeople gathered their household tea, paraded to the town common, and committed all to a giant bonfire.[80] As with the women's earlier spinning party, theirs was a communal act, a corporate display of defiance. Lexington's united front was lauded in Whig papers and emulated by other towns. A letter to the *Massachusetts Spy* declared, "The patriotic conduct of the town of Lexington is a matter truly worthy the notice and imitation of every town in the province, whose members are well wishers to the cause of liberty."[81] Lexington's act occurred, notably, three days *before* the Boston Tea Party.

By 1774, most towns in Massachusetts, including neighboring Concord, had been roused to what Lexington by then called "the Alarming Situation in Our Public Affairs."[82] As Ray Raphael has shown, instances of protest and resistance to

[79]Richard D. Brown, *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772–1774* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1970), pp. 67, 95.

[80]Lexington Town Meeting Records, 13 December 1773; *Massachusetts Spy,* 16 December 1773, p. 3.

[81]*Massachusetts Spy,* 23 December 1773, p. 3. Lexington's tea bonfire was also noted in *Boston Post-Boy,* 13 December 1773; *Boston Evening-Post,* 20 December 1773; *Boston Gazette,* 20 December 1773; *Essex Gazette,* 24 December 1773; and *Boston News-Letter,* 23 December 1773, as well as in newspapers in New York, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania.

[82]Instructions to Representative Deacon Stone, Lexington Town Meeting Records, 26 September 1774.

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imperial authority spread across the countryside, along with the organization, equipping, and training of independent town militia and "alarm" companies. By the winter of 1774–75, the province was preparing for war; Lexington voted not to abide by any of the Crown's orders and to adhere to the Resolves of the Provincial and Continental Congresses. Concord finally roused itself to action, though even as their militia trained in the spring of 1775, the town's minister entreated his parishioners to quell any mutinous, disorderly spirits they might harbor.[83]

It is revealing to compare the men who joined the militia in Lexington with those who did so in Concord. Concord's standing companies (approximately 200 men) divided into three units, with a captain for each; Lexington's corps of 144 served as one united company, with a single captain in command.[84] Even in war, the two towns reflected the unity of, or divisions within, their social order. Lexington's company, formed in the autumn of 1774 by command of the Provincial Congress, was not under military law; membership was voluntary.[85] Viewing the cohort of men between the ages of thirty and sixty who chose to enlist against those who chose not to do so is illuminating: enlistees held significantly more land than nonenlistees; in fact, nearly half of those men who declined to take up arms were landless (see table 13). Moreover, when we track the two cohorts through the remainder of their lives, militia members possessed twice as many assets (most value held in land) and were significantly more likely to be solvent at the time of death (see table 14). When they died, nonmilitiamen's estates carried more than twice the debt of militiamen's, and part or all of their real property tended

[83]Ray Raphael, *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord* (New York: New Press, 2002), esp. pp. 130–38; Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World*, pp. 72–74.

[84]Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World*, pp. 60–61. Evidence for Lexington's militia company is based on Frank Warren Coburn, *The Battle on Lexington Common, April 19, 1775* (Lexington, Mass.: Published by the author, 1921), pp. 33–34. See also Hudson, *History of Lexington*, 1:421–24.

[85]Andrew W. Bryant, "The Military Organizations of Lexington," *Lexington Historical Society Proceedings*, vol. 2 (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Historical Society, 1900), pp. 85–86.

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TABLE 13
Real Estate Holdings by Assessed Tax in Shillings for Men between 25 and 60 Years of Age, Lexington, Mass., 1775

Men Who in 1774 HAD NOT Joined the Militia

Tax Paid	Number	Percent
0	22	46.8
1–20	7	14.9
21–40	9	19.2
41–60	2	4.3
61–80	4	8.5
81–100	2	4.3
101–20	0	0.0
121–40	1	2.1
Total	47	100.1

Men Who in 1774 HAD Joined the Militia

Tax Paid	Number	Percent
0	16	20.5
1–20	15	19.2
21–40	23	29.5
41–60	11	14.1
61–80	4	5.1
81–100	7	9.0
101–20	2	2.6
121–40	0	0.0
Total	78	100.0

Sources: Lexington Tax Assessments, 1774, Cary Memorial Library microfilm, Lexington, Mass. Ages taken from Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts,* 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), vol. 1: *Genealogies,* and other genealogies; Lexington militia list from Hudson, *History of Lexington,* 1:421–24.

Note: This study is based on Lexington males between the age of 25 and 60 (the prime property-owning years based on the life cycle of wealth) in 1775 for whom 1774 tax deciles are known (N = 125). Only a fifth of the militia was landless, while nearly half of the nonmilitia men were landless. Some could argue that poor men could not afford a musket, but there were others who joined the militia who did not own a musket. It is possible that landless men, as hired labor, could not secure permission, or could not afford to forgo pay, for time off to train.

to be sold to settle their obligations (see table 15).Those who joined the militia had a better chance than their nonparticipating townsmen of enjoying a lifetime of financial stability and

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TABLE 14
Comparison of Mean Debt Ratios for Militia and Non-Militia at Time of Death, Lexington, Mass.

Member of Capt. Parker's Company, 19 April	Mean	N
Yes	.360	28
No	.792	12
Total	.489	40

Sources: Ages from Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts,* 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), vol. 1: *Genealogies,* and other genealogies; assets and debts from Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.; Lexington militia list from Hudson, *History of Lexington,* 1:421–24.
Note: The study was restricted to men who lived in Lexington and were at least 25 years old at the time of the battle, remained in Lexington until they died, and were probated with sufficient information to determine assets and debts at the time of death. Men who were over 60 and chose not to join the militia (2 cases) were excluded on grounds that they may have been infirm; men who were over 60 and chose to join the militia (2 cases) were included. In a comparison of solvency/vendue at time of death, militia members were more likely to be solvent (47% versus 36%) and less likely to have had part or all of their real estate sold to settle debts (42% to 64%).

TABLE 15
Comparison of Average Assets at Time of Death for Militia and Non-Militia, Lexington, Mass.

Member of Capt. Parker's Company, 19 April	Mean	N
Yes	$ 3,247.41	27
No	1,673.91	11
Total	2,791.92	38

Sources: Ages from Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts,* 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), vol. 1: *Genealogies,* and other genealogies; assets and debts from Middlesex County Probate Records, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Mass.; Lexington militia list from Hudson, *History of Lexington,* 1:421–24.
Note: The study was restricted to men who lived in Lexington and were at least 25 years old at the time of the battle, remained in Lexington until they died, and were probated with sufficient information to determine assets and debts at the time of death. Men who were over 60 and chose not to join the militia (2 cases) were excluded on grounds that they may have been infirm; men who were over 60 and chose to join the militia (2 cases) were included.

realizing the yeoman's ideal of sufficiency and self-determination. When 19 April dawned, they knew that their livelihood, their security, their identity, and their liberty must be defended against the English assault.

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Over the course of the eighteenth century, Concord had gradually evolved into a community that was more atomistic, contentious, materialist, and secular than it had previously been, but it was also more open, pluralist, and individualistic. This progress toward individual pursuits of happiness did not, however, make Concordians more likely to rebel; rather, it distracted them from the greater good. Concord had to rebuild or enforce consensus before it could act, whereas Lexington had maintained a relatively stable and cohesive society. Having just reached its fourth generation, Lexington was only beginning to feel the demographic pressures that had rent Concord. By accident of geography, Lexington had been denied the commercial and cosmopolitan influences that brought competition, innovation, and pluralism to Concord. Therefore, when Jonas Clarke enjoined his townsmen to attend to their sacred duty to defend God-given liberties and ancestral inheritances, he addressed an audience that was inclined to listen, and then to act, as one. The town's very unity as well as its relatively traditional mentality made it not only more sensitive to external crises than Concord but also more prepared to hold a common view of those crises and to adopt a corporate plan of resistance.

The war Lexington's men readily chose to fight and in which Concord's men more slowly, but ultimately no less willingly, engaged was a thoroughly conservative revolution, a determined effort to hold onto family farms and the powers of self-determination that freehold had conferred upon the towns' colonial ancestors.[86] The militiamen of Lexington and Concord were, most would say, victorious on 19 April, but they lost the greater battle to preserve the traditional yeoman ideal for

[86]Gross also argued that the men of Concord "had not gone to war to promote change but to stop it." He saw outside threats and the town's downward slide as working together to increase insecurity and fear of the loss of "their old, cherished ways. . . . Finally, they were forced to act if they wished to retain their traditional life. . . . They rose in fury against the assault on their autonomy, and at the peak of the Revolutionary movement they were attached more strongly than ever to the ideals and values of the past. They would restore order to their lives by clinging to custom—and making revolution" (*The Minutemen and Their World,* p. 190).

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which they fought. Concord, then Lexington, would undergo a market revolution in the decades after the Revolution, first in agriculture, then commerce, small shop industry, the spread of waged labor, and a marked rise in landless men.[87] John Parker, Lexington's captain that morning, seemed heroic to his men, but his heroism did not secure his future. He had inherited a substantial farm but was obligated to his brothers for their shares of it. When tuberculosis claimed his life shortly after the battle, he left his fourteen-year-old namesake a debt-ridden farm. Creditors waited patiently, but after eighteen years, they took all but the widow's thirds for debt, leaving John Jr. and his family to huddle in three rooms in his aging mother's farmstead. Not owning enough land to support the family, John supplied wooden pipes to his neighbors, including the early textile mills of the Boston Manufacturing Company. He was no longer an independent yeoman farmer but a struggling mechanic. His own son, Captain Parker's grandson, left the family homestead to become a Boston minister and the muse of the transcendentalists, who romanticized Americans' ties to the land. But Theodore Parker is best remembered as an abolitionist, ardently preaching that liberty is an inalienable right of personhood not, as his forefathers had believed, of property.

[87]Gross treats this transition and its cultural ramifications in "Culture and Cultivation"; Donahue treats ecological and social effects in *The Great Meadow*, chap. 9, "Epilogue: Beyond the Meadows."

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