

**Reuben Locke**  
**A Brief Biography**  
**By Bill Poole**

**Reuben Locke** was one of four members of the Locke family who responded to the alarm of April 19, 1775. The others were Reuben, Benjamin's brother, and their first cousins, Amos and Ebenezer. All were descendants of **William Locke Sr.** the first member of the Locke family to immigrate to New England. William Sr. was born in Stepney Parish, London, England in 1628 the son of William and Elizabeth. In 1634, at age six, and orphaned, William embarked for the new World on board the ship *Planter*, Nicholas Trarice, master. He traveled with his Uncle and Aunt Nicholas and Sarah Davies and his cousin, Joseph Davies. Nicholas and the family first settled in Charlestown and then moved to Woburn in 1642 when the town was set off from Charlestown. In 1648 Nicholas sold his house and land in Woburn and moved back to Charlestown. He later removed to York, Main where he died about 1669-70, leaving his nephew William "two silver spoons and five shillings in silver."<sup>1</sup>

William Sr. remained in Charlestown and then moved to Woburn, where on December 25, 1655 he married Mary Clarke (1640-1715) daughter of William and Mary Clarke of Woburn. Mary was only fifteen when she married, and William 27. They had nine children, all born in Woburn: 1. **William**, born December 27, 1657 but lived for only 13 days; 2. **William Jr.**, born January 18, 1659; 3. **John**, born August 1, 1661; 4. **Joseph, the Grandfather of Benjamin**, born March 8, 1664; 5. **Mary**, born October 16, 1666; 6. **Samuel**, born October 14, 1669; 7. **Ebenezer**, born January 8, 1674; 8. **James**, born November 14, 1667; and 9. **Elizabeth**, born January 4, 1681.<sup>2</sup>



**View of William Locke Home prior to destruction**

William Sr. became an extensive land owner in Woburn. He owned house-lots in town, and both he and his descendants would hold a great deal of land in western and northwest Woburn along the current-day Lexington and Lowell Streets. William's home was located at today's 183 Lexington Street in Woburn, but is scheduled for destruction. However, much of his land lay in that portion of Cambridge Farms that became Lexington near

today's East and North Streets. Several of his sons lived in this area in close proximity to one another their lands abutting. When the Town of Burlington, MA was incorporated in 1799, from lands set off from Billerica, Woburn and Lexington, the homestead of William's son, William, Jr., was to be included in the Lexington grant to Burlington. However, Thomas Locke, one of William's grandsons, then living on the estate, petitioned that the homestead remain in Lexington. His petition was accepted resulting in the unusual, triangular-shaped wedge on the northeast corner of Lexington that extends into Burlington.<sup>3</sup>

William Sr. was active in town affairs and was chosen a deacon of the Woburn Church. In 1687 he was one of the slate of Selectman in a controversial election held in contravention of the order of Royal Governor, Sir William Andros forbidding the holding of town elections unless warranted by "certain Justices of the County . . . or by direct authority from the government." When the usual date for holding town elections arrived, February 22d, 1687, the last Tuesday of the month, the voters of Woburn nominated and elected a slate of town officers opposed to the arbitrary rule of Andros. The governor promptly annulled the vote, and the inhabitants were directed to meet March 7<sup>th</sup> for a new election. They did so, and chose the same men previously elected. The next year the same thing happened. An election was held on February 28<sup>th</sup> the last Tuesday of the month and the same Board of Selectmen chosen. It was again annulled, but in a subsequent election the Woburnites held firmly to their choices and William was again chosen one of the Selectmen. He also served again in 1696. William died at Woburn June 16, 1720, Mary having predeceased him dying July 18, 1715.<sup>4</sup>

**Joseph Sr.**, the grandfather of Benjamin, lived in the part of Cambridge Farms that later became Lexington. His farm was probably located along present day Lowell Street and adjoined his brother William's land. Joseph Sr.'s first wife Mary (maiden name unknown) died April 17, 1708 having given birth to seven children: 1. **Mary**, baptized October 26, 1712 at Boston; 2. **Abigail**, baptized October 26, 1712 at Boston; 3. **Lydia**, baptized October 26 at Boston; 4. **Sarah**, born July 14, 1696 at Lexington; 5. **Joseph Jr.**, born March 19, 1699 at Lexington; 6. **Elizabeth**, born March 15, 1702/03; and **Huldah**, born June 28, 1706.<sup>5</sup>

When Mary Locke died April 17, 1708, Joseph Sr. married **Margaret Meade** who was born in Cambridge, MA on January 20, 1676 and died at Lexington on May 25, 1732, daughter of Israel and Mary Hall Meade. Margaret and Joseph Sr. had seven children, all born in Lexington. 1. **Margaret**, born May 6, 1710; 2. **Joanna**, born February 2, 1711/12; 3. **Ruth**, born March 9, 1713/14; 4. **Stephen, the father of Benjamin, the subject of this essay**, born January 26, 1718; 5. **unnamed child**, died 1695; 6. **unnamed child**, died March 31, 1707; and 7. **unnamed child**, died April 7, 1708.<sup>6</sup>

Margaret Mead Locke died on May 25, 1732, and Joseph Sr. than married Hannah Peirce of Weston on November 5, 1743. Hannah died on April 10, 1747, preceding Joseph Sr. who died between 1753 and 1755.<sup>7</sup>

In 1733, Joseph, Sr. sold his son Joseph, Jr. "15 acres in Lex. bounded S.E. by the town way; S.W. by Dr. Fiske; N.W. by Daniel Tidd; N. by Joshua Simonds and elsewhere by his own land. This would have been on today's North Hancock Street. Joseph, Jr. then purchased from his father 10 more acres abutting his own land; the western half of his father's "mansion house" and barn, and also half of 12 acres in Woburn, "bounded S.W. by Lex. Line, and elsewhere by Samuel Kendall and Samuel Locke. These purchases were obtained for £200 in "bills of credit," "and also partly in consideration of £240 to be accounted towards his portion" [of his inheritance]. Joseph lived in the one-half of his father's homestead and when Joseph, Sr. died, Joseph, Jr.'s step-brother, Stephen, inherited the other or eastern half. Stephen was the youngest son, and in accordance with the then rules of inheritance he would receive at least a portion of the parental homestead. Ordinarily, Hannah, his wife would also have inherited part of the homestead had not she died before Joseph, Sr.<sup>8</sup>

### **Stephen Locke, father of Reuben**

Stephen married on an unknown date, **Mehitable Raymond**, daughter of Jonathan and Charity Gale Raymond born October 12, 1721 in Lexington, and died October 29, 1815. They lived on Joseph Sr's estate and had five children all born in Lexington. 1. **Mehitabel**, born August 17, 1747; 2. **Reuben, the subject of this essay**, born

March 16, 1748/49; 3. **Stephen Jr.**, born March 29, 1750; 4. **Elizabeth**, born June 14, 1753; and 5. **Benjamin**, born May 7, 1756.<sup>9</sup>

Reuben Locke along with his brother, Benjamin, and his two first cousins, Amos and Ebenezer, hastened to Lexington Common when the belfry bell sounded the alarm on the evening of April 18, 1775. After waiting for quite some time, Amos and Ebenezer, after hearing a report from an individual who had come from Boston that he had seen no Regulars anywhere on his route, decide to return to their homes in Woburn. They would quickly return when they heard the firing on the Common and Ebenezer discharged his weapon at the Regulars on the Common.<sup>10</sup> It is presumed that Reuben and Benjamin had remained, either in Buckman's Tavern or in a nearby home, and at the sound of William Diamon's drum hastened to face off against the Regulars. None of the four Locke cousins were injured in the ensuing skirmish.

Reuben and his brother, Benjamin, were among those who signed a deposition testifying with regard to what had transpired on Lexington Common on the morning of April 19, 1775.<sup>11</sup>

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We Nathaniel Mulletkin, Phillip Russell, Moses Harrington, Thomas & Daniel Harrington, William Grimes, William Fidd, Isaac Hastings, Jonas Stone Junr, James Wyman, Thaddeus Harrington, John Chandler, Joshua Reed Junr, Joseph Simonds, Phineas Smith, John Chandler Junr, Reuben Lock, Joel Viles, Nathan Reed, Samuel Fidd, Benjamin Lock, Thomas Winthrop, Simon Snow, John Smith, Moses Harrington J. S., Joshua Reed, Ebenezer Parker, John Harrington, Emock Wellington, John Norner, Isaac Gozer, Phineas Stearns, Isaac burant & Thomas Headley Junr: all of Lawful age and Inhabitants of Lexington in the County of Middlesex and Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. do testify & declare that on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April instant about one or two o'clock in the morning being Informed that several officers of the Regulars had the evening before been riding up & down the Road and had detained & insulted the Inhabitants. saying the same. and also understanding that a body of Regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord with intent (as it was supposed) to take the



Stores belonging to the Colony in that Town. We were alarmed & having  
met at the place of our Company's Parade. were dismissed by our Captain  
John Parker for the Present, with orders to be ready to attend at the beat  
of the Drum - we further testify & declare that about five o'clock in  
the morning. hearing our drum beat. we proceeded towards the Parade  
and soon found that a Large body of Troops were marching towards us  
Some of our Company were coming up to the Parade. and others had  
reached it; at which time the Company <sup>began</sup> to disperse. whilst our backs  
were turned on the Troops we were fired on by them & a number of our  
men were Instantly killed & wounded - not a Gun was Fired. by any  
Person in our Company on the Regulars to our knowledge. before they  
Fired on us. and they continued Firing untill we had all made our  
Escape —

Lexington April 25. 1775

Nathaniel Mellekin  
Philip Russell

Reuben has the following entry under his name in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War*.

LOCKE, REUBEN, Lexington. Private, in a detachment from Lexington militia co. commanded by Capt. John Parker; service, 1 day; detachment reported on command at Cambridge from May 6 to May 10, 1775, by order of Committee of Safety; also, same detachment, service, 2 days; detachment reported on command at Cambridge from June 17 to June 18, 1775, by order of Committee of Safety; also Capt. John Bridge's co., Col. Eleazer Brooks's regt.; service from March 4 to March 8, 1775, 5 days; company stationed at Roxbury.<sup>12</sup>

Reuben may have served on board a merchant ship or privateer, for Hudson wrote that he "was taken prisoner at sea and confined in the seaman's prison at Forton, England." I wish I could find out more about Reuben's imprisonment, but so far I have not. There were at least 1,500 American seamen held in Forton during the Revolutionary War. Seamen captured close to the American shore were confined in the notorious prison ships scattered along the Eastern seaboard in which more than 11,000 soldiers and seamen died during the Revolutionary War. Those taken further at sea were taken to England and held at either Mill Prison at Plymouth or at Forton near Portsmouth. Conditions were bad at the two English prisons, but nothing compared to the loathsome and deadly environment within the prison hulks. The death statistics at Forton from June 1777 to November 1782 show that only sixty-nine Americans died, 5.75% of those confined. The prison at Forton was officially closed in the Summer of 1783. The American prisoners were released with the words "You all now have received His Majesty's most gracious pardon."<sup>13</sup>



Gosport, Hampshire, England, where Forton Prison was located, is part of the fortifications of the great naval base of Portsmouth.

I do not know how long Reuben was imprisoned or when he was released. If the story is true, based on the births of his children and the approximate months of their conception, his imprisonment could have been from: June 1776 to December 1779 — three years and six months; December 1779 to April 1781 — sixteen months; or April 1781 to September 1782 — seventeen months. The prison closed in the summer of 1783.



When Reuben returned to Lexington, it is said he lived and farmed on a part of the land owned by William Locke on North Street. In 1798, he was Collector of Taxes in Lexington.<sup>14</sup> He married about December 23, 1772, **Jerusha Richardson**, born in Stoneham, MA June 2, 1745, died November 15, 1833, daughter of Reuben and Esther Wyman of Stoneham, MA. They had eight children: **Jerusha**, born January 16, 1774, married David



Simonds, died March 16, 1867; **Mehitable**, born March 27, 1775, died unmarried October 3, 1841; **Lydia**, born March 23, 1777, died unmarried at Stoneham, MA, September 15, 1854; **Betsy**, born September 1, 1780, married James Wyman, Jr.; **Reuben Jr.**, born January 15, 1782, died in Stoneham, MA 1873, married at Stoneham, February 1, 1804, Mrs. Polly Wiley, died in Stoneham, 1876; **Loa**, born June 5, 1783, **Charles**, born June 16, 1786; **Unnamed** child, died April 8, 1791; and **Stephen**, born September 27, 1791, married April 6, 1813, Mrs. Sukie Willey of Stoneham, MA.<sup>15</sup> There seems to have been quite a connection of the Lockes to Stoneham.

I have not located the places of burial of Reuben and Jerusha Locke.

Reuben died intestate and his estate was probated between April 8, and July 27, 1823 with a final dispersal of some funds on May 17, 1825. His personal estate was valued at \$111.67 and real estate at \$589.72. The descriptions of his property place it bordering on the land of Amos Locke, which was on North Street in Lexington, and extending over the border into Burlington.<sup>16</sup>

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>John G. Locke, *Book of the Lockes, A Genealogical and Historical record of the Descendants of William Locke, of Woburn. With an Appendix Containing A History of the Lockes in England, also of the Family of John Locke, of Hampton, N.H., and Kindred Families and Individuals*, Boston, James Munroe and Company, MDCCCLIII, pp. 2-15; Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts from Its First Settlement to 1868, Revised and Continued to 1912*, Two Volumes, Lexington Historical Society, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1913. Volume II, *Genealogy*, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup>*Book of the Lockes*, p16; Hudson, p. 364.

<sup>3</sup>*Book of the Lockes*, pp. 16-17; Hudson, pp. 366-7.

<sup>4</sup>*Book of the Lockes*, pp. 16-17; Hudson, 364-5; Samuel Sewall, *The History of Woburn, Middlesex Count, Mass. From the Grant of Its Territory to Charlestown, in 1640, To the Year 1860, By Samuel Sewall of Burlington, Mass., Sometime Pastor of the Church There, With a Memorial Sketch of the Author By Rev. Charles C. Sewall*, Boston, Wiggin and Lunt, Publishers, 1868, pp. 128-30 and 177.

<sup>5</sup>*Book of the Lockes*, p. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup>Hudson, pp. 365-6.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 365

<sup>8</sup>*Book of the Lockes*, p19.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28; Hudson, p. 368.

<sup>10</sup>Frank Warren Coburn, compiler, *Muster Rolls of the Participating Companies of American Militia and Minute-Men in The battle of April 19, 1775*, Lexington, MA, Self-published, 1912, pp. 33-4.

*Lockes, A Genealogical and Historical record of the Descendants of William Locke, of Woburn. With an Appendix Containing A History of the Lockes in England, also of the Family of John Locke, of Hampton, N.H., and Kindred Families and Individuals*, Boston, James Munroe and

<sup>11</sup>Deposition #7 of Nathaniel Mullikin, Philip Russell, et al. Regarding the Events of April 18 and 19, 1775 at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts Bay Colony, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6883155>

<sup>12</sup>Massachusetts Office of the Secretary of State, *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A Compilation from the Archives*, Seventeen volumes, Wright and Potter Printing Company, Boston, 1896, vol. IX, p. 904.

<sup>13</sup><https://historicgosport.uk/forton-prison/>

<sup>14</sup>Hudson, p. 370.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Middlesex County Probate Files 1648-1871, Volume Middlesex Cases 14000-15999, pages 14258:1-14259:13.