



# The Lexington Minute Men, Inc.

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## John Parker

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Lexington, MA (March 4, 2019) --- "Stand your ground. Don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here," is what is etched on a commemorative stone that stands on Lexington Common. These words were allegedly said by Captain John Parker to the Lexington militia company on the morning of April 19, 1775. "I find those words stirring every time I hear them," says Larry Conley, Captain Commanding of the Lexington Minute Men.

Captain Parker was born on his father's farm on the present Spring Street in the western part of Lexington, Massachusetts on July 13, 1729. "His parents I am sure had no idea their son John would one day play such a prominent role in the first battle of the American War for Independence," reflects Alex Cain, author of *We Stood our Ground, Lexington in the First Year of the American Revolution*, Heritage Books, Westminster, MD, 2004, and a member of the Lexington Minute Men. "Not much is known about Parker's early life" adds Cain, "But we do know he served as a soldier during the French and Indian war and participated it is said in the Siege of Louisburg and the Attack on Quebec City."

"Parker was also active in his community, making his living as a farmer and craftsman (he was a talented woodworker) while also serving Lexington in various offices," reports historian Bill Poole, Past Captain Commanding of the Lexington Minute Men. "He was a natural selection for Captain because of his experience in the prior war. At the Battle of Lexington, he was one of the most experienced veterans on either the Kings' or Colonists' side."

"Parker had to have cold water running through his veins to stand up to 700 to 800 of His Majesty's Regulars (Redcoats) with just 80 militiamen," says Past Captain Commanding Jim Roberts, admiringly. "The amazing thing about Parker is that following the deadly skirmish on Lexington Common, that left seven of his Company dead and nine wounded, he was able to rally his men and lead them in pursuit of the Regulars," says Poole. "And to be able to summon the courage to do so after the morning's terrifying experience was perhaps the greatest act of courage that Parker's men exhibited that day."

The Lexington Company later ambushed the Redcoats at a location in Minute Man National Historic Park on the border of Lexington, a site now known popularly as Parker's Revenge. That engagement was one in a series of bloody encounters along the road from Concord to Charlestown; a day long battle that involved more than 3,500 provincial militia and over 2,100 of King George's finest troops.

"As members of the Lexington Minute Men we each portray one of the individuals who stood on the Common on April 19th, and we all feel privileged to represent them and honor their memories," said Conners. "The reenactment is a very moving experience for us and we hope that through our depiction we can share that emotion with the audience."

But did Parker actually say those immortal words? “The Lexington Minute Men have researched the event based on the testimony of those who assembled there in 1775,” explains Conley. “Based on our research, the actual words spoken by Captain Parker were ‘Stand your ground. Do not fire unless fired upon. Let the troops pass by and do not molest them...without they begin first!’ In the past 244 years, the words have been altered to the more popular saying but each year on the Common we use the original words of Captain Parker.”

As the Lexington Minute Men prepare for the annual Battle of Lexington re-enactment on Patriots’ Day April 15, 2019, they remember Captain Parker and the 80 men who stood with him. The reenactment takes place on the very spot where the first shots of the American Revolution were fired. “The annual re-enactment is a great opportunity to witness our common heritage and see the efforts of individuals like Captain Parker” says Conley. “Spectators begin to arrive at Lexington Common at 3:30 in the morning and some stay overnight to get a prime spot for the events that begin with the alarm bell sounding in the Old Belfry at 5:30am.”

The reenactment of the ‘Battle of Lexington’ is just one event in which the Lexington Minute Men will participate on Patriots’ Day – April 15, 2019. The Lexington Minute Men also take part in the Lexington Sunrise Youth Parade at 7:30 am, and in additional ceremonies honoring those who served on board The USS Lexington in World War II., and as well with the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The Lexington Minute Men is a civic organization dedicated to honoring the brave Patriots who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our Nation’s freedom. The Minute Men have a long proud history, from the militia that fought on the Green in 1775, to providing men to fight throughout the American Revolutionary War. The Lexington Minute Men gained attention again during the Centennial Celebration of 1875, when President Ulysses S. Grant saluted the men who stood on the Green. In the past 140 years, the Lexington Minute Men have been involved in a number of ceremonial, educational, and civic functions. During the Bicentennial, the Lexington Minute Men served as honor guards for President Ford and Queen Elizabeth. The Lexington Minute Men are under the command of Captain Larry Conley. For more information on the Lexington Minute Men visit <http://www.lexingtonminutemen.com>.

Press Notes: Media access to the reenactment of the Battle of Lexington is coordinated by the Lexington Minute Men. Advanced Credentialing deadline is April 12, 2019 at noon. Details can be found at <http://www.lexingtonminutemen.com/media-information.html>. Media inquiries should be made to [media@LexingtonMinuteMen.com](mailto:media@LexingtonMinuteMen.com). Because the re-enactors do not have sound amplification, any flyovers or news helicopters disrupt the event.

WE REQUEST NO FLYOVERS OR NEWS HELICOPTERS.

***Stand your ground. Do not fire unless fired upon; But if they mean to have a war let it begin here.”***

*-April 19, 1775 -Captain Parker*