

April 2025

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**



**Greetings**

Spring has arrived and the Billerica Historical Society is resuming our Open Houses and other activities. Our first open house of this year will be April 13 from 1 to 4pm. The Billerica Minuteman will be there and we will be talking about Billerica's involvement in

the activities of April 19, 1775. This year we will have vintage wedding dresses on display in the barn along with Vietnam War artifacts on loan from Frank Busalacchi. In May, we are giving tours of the Sexton House to 3rd graders from the Parker School.

Our fundraising activities have continued. We had a very successful Dining to Donate at Garrison's where we raised over \$650 for the Society. We continue to sell our T-shirts with the names of the 113 Billerica Militia who fought in Concord on April 19, 1775. This T-shirt is the perfect way to celebrate the 250th anniversary of battle and to wear for the 250th anniversary of the country next year.

We received a Community grant to reupholster the 150 year old loveseat donated by Jean Bushnell. The loveseat is now in the parlor of the Sexton House. The Community Preservation grant work should be completed this Spring. That work includes a new patio, stairs on the side yard leading to the barn basement, and repairs to the second floor bathroom and left front bedroom.

Our new website continues to contain more material of interest. Finally, please try to attend the Vintage Tea on May 17.

We are looking forward to another successful year.

Regards  
 John Bartlett

**Fundraising**

Fundraising events have helped to bring in funds to cover some of our expenses, however, much more is needed. The current and future fundraisers include:

**The Memorial Garden**

The Billerica Historical Society is selling personalized, engraved bricks that will enhance the walkway in our new Memorial Garden.

Donating a commemorative brick paver to be added to the new Memorial Garden in the Clara Sexton House is a great way to recognize a family or loved one, honor a veteran or first responder, remember someone close to you, or salute an organization. The bricks will be engraved with your personalized message and included in the pathway in our new Memorial Garden. This is an ongoing promotion. You may add additional bricks in the future. Each brick may be purchased for \$100.

**Dining to Donate**

Michele DeParasis is setting up dates with local restaurants to host a Dining to Donate event. When you show the appropriate flyer for the event, the restaurant will give us a percentage of the bill as a donation. This is a fun and easy way to raise funds. Be watching for more opportunities to support us.

**"Snapshots of Billerica"**

Diane Douglas assembled a Shutterfly book of "Snapshots of Billerica" for the **2124 time capsule**, capturing images of Billerica today. Copies are available for sale for \$20.



**Gift Shop Sales**

Nancy Sheffer has taken over managing the gift shop. We are currently selling T-shirts, replicas of period toys, plates, and historic books.

### April Open House

Come join us for our first open house of 2025 on **Sunday, April 13, from 1-4 PM**. The Billerica Minutemen will assemble to share the story of the 250th anniversary of the April 19th March to Concord and Lexington. In 1775, over 100 minutemen from Billerica participated in the march to Meriam's Corner.

### Vintage Tea Fundraiser

The Billerica Historical Society will be hosting our annual Vintage Tea fundraiser on **Saturday, May 17 at 3 PM**. Diane Douglas is coordinating this event. It is likely to sell out. Contact her at (978)807-4439 to purchase tickets or email her at SecDouglas@aol.com.

### June Bridal Open House

Join us on **Sunday, June 1 from 1-3 PM** for our bridal open house. There are ten antique wedding gowns on display in the museum. Carrie Midura, clothing historian, will be available to discuss the various gowns.

### Billerica: April 19, 1775

by Alec Ingraham

The story of the beginning of the American Revolution is well told, but the travails of John Hancock and Samuel Adams on that fateful day is oft overlooked. On the eve of the Battle at Lexington and Concord between the Colonists and the British troops, the rebel leaders were the guests of Rev. Jonas Clark. They, along with Hancock's aunt and fiancée, were spending the evening at the manse, which was on the Lexington Green. Late in the evening when it was learned that the British troops were on the march from Boston the minutemen in all the neighboring towns were alerted and made ready.

The British column was on its way to Concord to seize the Colonists' store of munitions. There was concern that the rebel leaders in Lexington were in grave danger. William Munroe, who was the sergeant of the Lexington Minute-men and tavern owner, stood guard at the front door of Rev. Clark's house. When Paul Revere arrived in Lexington he stopped at the manse. Col. Smith's contingent of Red Coats was progressing toward Lexington and both he and Munroe believed Hancock and Adams should be moved to a safer location.

Adams was keenly aware of his role as rebel

leader and knew his importance to the cause was not in fighting. Hancock, on the other hand, was preparing to fight and join the forces on the Lexington Green. His sword was polished and his pistol cleaned and operational. Eventually Adams, Revere and Munroe convinced him that he must leave.

Munroe and Revere, along with one of Hancock's aides, escorted the two men to the home of James Reed in Woburn's Second Parish (now Burlington). Reed's house is described as being on the old Lexington Road near the Burlington and Lexington town line. The site where the house stood is now under the parking lot of the Burlington Mall.

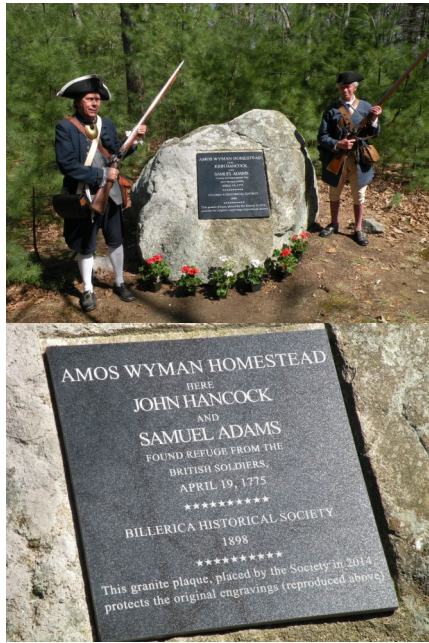
Munroe and Revere soon departed. After the Red Coats left Lexington, Hancock's coach was dispatched and soon arrived at Reed's. Among the occupants were his aunt and his fiancée, Dorothy Quincy along with a fresh salmon, which had been gifted to Hancock for his breakfast. It was the first of the season and considered a real delicacy at the time. Soon the entire party moved farther from the fray to the home of the widow, Abigail Jones. She was the wife of the Rev. Thomas Jones and lived on what is now Lexington Street in Burlington. The home was later known as the Sewall House. Although no longer extant, the Sewall House is pictured on the Burlington Town Seal.

In addition to Hancock and Adams, the other members of their group, and the widow, Rev. John Marrett, pastor of Woburn's Second Parish Church, was present. As the assembled party sat down to enjoy a rare feast of fresh salmon an ill-informed intruder burst in and yelled the "British are Coming." After Hancock's coach was secreted from view, the two patriot leaders left on foot and were guided through the woods by the Rev. Mr. Marrett and Cuff Trot, the widow's faithful domestic, to safety in Billerica at the isolated home of Amos Wyman. After delivering the patriot leaders, the Reverend left to witness the British retreat and Trot returned home. Needless to say, the remainder of the party enjoyed the salmon dinner.

When they arrived at the Wyman homestead, Hancock and Adams were hungry. They had been on the run the entire day with no time to eat. Mrs. Wyman (Kezia Kendall) prepared a simple meal of cold boiled salt pork, cold boiled unpeeled potatoes, and home-made brown bread.

Accounts of the contents of the meal vary, however. Here Hancock and Adams spent the night, returning to the Jones' estate in the morning. For the kindness shown by the rebel leaders, Hancock gifted a cow to Amos Wyman's family. A most generous gift for the times.

The site of the Amos Wyman house was donated to the Billerica Historical Society, in 1948, by the Minuteman Sportsman Club. A plaque commemorating the event



was affixed to a large boulder near the cellar hole which is all that remains. Unfortunately, it was stolen several years ago and replaced by etched words in the stone. The two-acre lot is located behind the building at 55 Middlesex Turnpike in Bedford and is north of the Homewood Suites parking lot, which is in Billerica.

Meanwhile, other events in Billerica on April 19, 1775 are summarized in Hazen's History on Page 235. *"The story of that day has been well told, and cannot be here repeated. It was certainly to Billerica one of the most exciting and important days in her history. The midnight riders spreading the alarm (to summon the minutemen to resist the advance of the British troops) were likely to come by the Woburn, Lexington and Bedford roads, and probably reached Billerica by two o'clock. ... Colonel Thompson and Lieutenant Stickney, living in the southeast part of the village, would be promptly notified; and Ebenezer Bridge, captain of the minute-men ... There was hurrying to and fro, we may be sure, and in the early dawn, when the first encounter took place at Lexington, few families, if any, had not heard the call to arms. Muskets and accoutrements were hastily made ready and donned; the alarm list no doubt turned out as well as*



*the trained band of minute-men; gathering at the Common for muster and orders they hurried off toward Concord.* Their route of march through Billerica was marked some years ago with custom manufactured signs installed by the Historical Society.

The Colonists had secreted the cachet of arms stored in Concord and successfully had thwarted the Redcoats objective. About half past the noon hour and roughly 8 and ½ miles from the Common, the Billerica troops, numbering over 100 men, along with units from Reading and Chelmsford, encountered the retreating British column at Meriam's Corner in Concord. Thus, began a protracted battle. According to Hazen's History Nathaniel Wyman from Billerica was killed during the hostilities and his fellow townsmen John Nickles and Timothy Blanchard were wounded. (Nathaniel Wyman is also attributed to Lexington which is another story and it is believed there were two or three additional members of the Billerica forces who were wounded.)

The significance of the Meriam's Corner is summed up on the Minuteman National Historic Park website: *"Meriam's Corner is the site where the Battle Road begins. It is where April 19 changed from a day of small violent skirmishes to a running 16 mile long battle that marked the opening salvo of an eight year war."*

### 2025 Membership Drive

It is time to renew your membership in the historical society. The dues are:  
 Senior/Student is \$25  
 Individual is \$30  
 Family is \$50



### Help Support the Billerica Historical Society

Please consider becoming a Preservation Patron in one of the following ways:

- Corner Stone \$1,000
- Landmark \$500
- Founders \$250
- Patron \$100

Last year, your various contributions allowed us to work toward balancing our Sexton House operational budget and was greatly appreciated.

Monetary donations can be sent to:

Billerica Historical Society  
 PO Box 381  
 Billerica, MA 01821

**Clara E. Sexton Memorial  
House Museum,  
circa 1723  
Headquarters of the  
Billerica Historical Society**

36 Concord Road  
Billerica, MA 01821

(978)667-7020  
BillericaHistory.org



**BHS Officers and Board 2023-2024**

**Officers:**

President	John Bartlett
Vice President	Richard Hawes
Treasurer	Rick Manley
Secretary	Cathy Burns

**Directors:**

Michele DeParasis	Diane Douglas
Alec Ingraham	Mary Jones
Richard Kunicki	



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**Upcoming Events**

**April 13:** Patriots Day Open House, 1-4 PM

**May 4:** Open House, 1-3 PM

**May 17:** Vintage Tea Fundraiser, 3-5 PM

**June 1:** Bridal Open House, 1-3 PM

**Billerica Minute Man T-shirts**

The historical society is currently selling T-shirts with the BHS logo on the front and the list of the minutemen who marched to Merriam's Corner on April 19, 1775 on the back.

Sizes include:

Men's - Medium, Large, XL - \$20

XXL, and XXXL - \$25

Women's V-neck - Medium, Large - \$25

To order, send request, size, number of shirts, cost of shirts plus \$5 for shipping to:

Billerica Historical Society

PO Box 381

Billerica, MA 01821



**Book & Gifts:**

Billerica Snapshots Book	\$20.00
Hazen's History of Billerica	\$55.00
Sexton House Cookbook	\$3.00
Commemorative Spode Plate	<b>\$10.00</b>

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PO Box 381  
Billerica, MA 01821