

Parker's Revenge: April 19, 1775 at the Lexington/Lincoln Border¹

By Bill Poole

Lexington Minute Men

The rocky hillside, which would later be called "Parker's Revenge," lay just to the west of a higher elevation known as Pine Hill on the border of Lexington and Lincoln. Captain Parker distributed his men and awaited the expected return of the Regulars from Concord.

The site chosen was excellent for the purpose of confronting the marching British column. The rock-strewn hillside rose abruptly to the left of the approach of the Regulars, and its boulders, trees and brush offered both concealment and protection for the men of Lexington. A marshy area to its front not only brought the road to the foot of the hill and within close range of the waiting militia, but also limited the ability of the British troops to maneuver. The approach to the right of the hill has been described as a rock-strewn pasture, but may also have been somewhat low and marshy. It was crisscrossed by irrigation ditches then and, in fact, a small pond can be found there today. This meant that the Regulars would either have to launch a frontal attack or send flanking forces far to the left or right to clear the militia from the hill. In the meantime the column would be subjected to a galling fire from the high ground.

As Captain Parker and his men waited, they could trace the movement of the British column by the clouds of musket smoke and the ever nearing sound of gunfire. Finally, the vanguard of the Regulars appeared, led by Colonel Smith himself. Parker could see that the Red-coated flanking party to the left of the column was being held up by Lincoln militiamen, perhaps reinforced by some of the men from Lexington, who were firing from the cover of the boulders and drainage ditches in the pasture to the right of the hill. The British right flank guard was forced to sloop through the brook and marshy ground to his front in order to reach the fields of Jacob Whittemore's farm to his left. It would take some time for either force to threaten the Lexington position. This left Colonel Smith's vanguard without the support of any flankers as they neared Captain Parker's ambush site.

Colonel Smith was desperate to keep the column moving in order to relieve the pressure on the rear guard which by this time was had-pressed to keep the swarming militia at bay. If the vanguard faltered holding up the rest of the column, the rear guard might be overwhelmed. Thus, the Redcoats approached Captain Parker's position at a half run. Captain Lawrence Parsons was in the lead with the remnants of his company of the 10th Regiment of Foot. Following the previous action at "bloody curve" he was the only remaining unwounded officer of the 10th. The men of Lexington held their fire allowing the first few Regulars to come right up to their position and begin to pass. Then as Colonel Smith appeared, Captain Parker gave the order to fire. The volley struck the first three or four companies with a sweeping fire that

unhorsed Colonel Smith with a wound in the thigh, wounded Captain Parsons in the arm, inflicted a number of casualties within the leading companies and stopped the column cold.

At this point Major Pitcairn rode up. He dispatched some of the grenadiers to attempt a wide sweep around the right of Captain Parker's position, while at the same time the British flankers on the left managed to drive the militiamen from the rocky field so as to bring pressure on the Lexington left flank. Pitcairn then urged the Red-coated infantry to charge directly up the hill to drive Captain Parker's men from their position. But, all this took time, and the men from Lexington continued to fire as fast as they could at the light infantry and grenadiers attempting to push them from their ambush site.

Then the Lexington Company began to take casualties. Jedediah Munroe, who had been wounded earlier in the morning, was struck again and died on the hillside, and Sgt. Francis Brown was wounded. The Regulars finally drove Captain Parker and his men up to the top of the hill and then down its eastern slope. There, threatened in front and from both flanks the men of Lexington were forced to scatter into the nearby woods. They did not abandon the battle, however, and continued to pursue the Redcoats back through Lexington until Colonel Smith's exhausted and demoralized troops were rescued by a relief force commanded by General Hugh the Earl Percy.

¹The following sources were consulted for descriptions of the participation of the Lexington Militia Company in the afternoon fight on April 19, 1775, but the above narrative is abstracted principally from Dr. David Hackett Fischer's and General Galvin's works cited below.

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