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GENERAL REPORT: HOUSES AND LAND IN THE
PARK

BY

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GENERAL REPORT- HOUSES AND LANDS
WITHIN THE PARK.

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PREFACE

~~about 1964~~
written between 1963 - 1968
by Robert Ronsheim, Park Historian.

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It should be understood that this is not a researched document. It is true that for certain portions, most of the research in certain types of documents has been done. Some sources have not been used, and the archeology has barely scratched the surface for any location. For an even larger portion of the land which will make up the park, no or very little research has been done. The information for this portion of the land is what appears today to be correct. It is very doubtful if it is. For another portion, initial research is well under way, but is not completed. And it must be remembered, that the research has been limited almost entirely to ownership of property and the age of houses. Without an existing conditions map, it is difficult to relate these findings to the landscape today. Almost no research has been done concerning the "stories" of the various properties as related to the 19th of April. Almost nothing has been done to establish the location of roads. Nothing has been done concerning the probable appearance of stone walls, of the use of wooden fences of various types, or general farming practices.

In summary, if used with caution, it will probably be safe to do some general planning on the basis of the information in this document and in Drawing NHP-MM 3008, which needs to be corrected so that it agrees with this document.

As indicated, this narrative does not attempt to follow the drawing NHP-MM 3008, if information discovered since the drawing was prepared has shown the drawing to be in error.

The documentation for this report has been kept at a minimum. Eventually, there will be a report with this title which will be backed by Historical Research Reports, Archeological Reports, and Architectural Reports. But that is years away.

Citations to documents have been informal. In most cases, copies of the documents are available in the park files. The Interim Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission is cited as NHSC Report. The few books which have been used will be cited in an informal manner.

FISKE HILL:

This was the scene of the last real resistance by the British Forces which had set out on the 18th; the place where Major Pitcairn lost his horse and horse pistols; the location of the Hayward incident. The County Road to Concord ran over the shoulder of the hill and the road to Bedford ran along the northwest side of the hill. In 1775 Ebenezer Fiske owned on the south side of the road, and a small piece on the north side bordering on the road to Bedford. His son, Benjamin, owned the land on the other side, described as 25A. This piece included the Bluff and the land between the Bluff and Fiske Hill. (BNHSC Report 51-53)

Interim Historical Base Map

Ebenezer Fiske (Fisk) Homestead.¹ (BNHSC Report 52-3)

This was the home of Lt. Ebenezer Fiske who died 19 December, 1775.² His real estate consisted of a Mansion House, Barn and other edifices and about 69 acres of land. His personal estate indicates that he was fairly well-to-do by Lexington standards.³

- 1 It is impossible at this time to know the precise location of many of the various buildings, so they will be treated as a homestead group. The current spelling of the family names will be used, but the 1775 common spelling, if there is such, will be shown in parenthesis the first time.
- 2 Charles Hudson, History of the Town of Lexington..., Revised ed. II:211. Hereafter cited as Hudson.
- 3 Middlesex County Probate Records. #7573. The listing of land may not be complete. Fiske had two oxen and two young oxen, a horse and a colt. A solid sampling of Lexington inventories and tax records is needed before sensible statements of comparative wealth can be made.

Benjamin Fiske lived in the house following his father's death and probably before that event. More information on the farm is found in his probate record.⁴ The buildings mentioned in this were: house, barn, shed, (probably was built after Benjamin's death by the widow) hog house and a kitchen built after 1785, perhaps as a separate building. An inventory of real estate made in 1799 broke the property into small pieces. There was a house on this site until 1955. In 1852, however, the owner of the house, Daniel Chamberlain of West Cambridge, had \$459 deducted from his valuation for the old house and out building. He had \$1200 added for a new house. It seems that the new house was built on the site of the old house - the archeological report of Mr. Foley will have more to say on this. Some of the material from the old house may have been included in the new house. At least some of the material which Mr. Martin Bashian said he salvaged from it in 1955 appears to be pre-1851.⁵

Some photographs of the house show a large barn in back of the house. H.M. Houghton wrote a letter concerning the house and events of the April 19, 1775. He labelled the large barn "1872."⁶

- 4 1771 Valuation combined their holdings. He died in 1785. The probate file is #7554.
- 5 Architectural Report by Architect Russell V. Keune.
- 6 The letter and map are in the Lexington Historical Society scrap book, beginning on page 77. The letter is undated, but was written after 1896. The letter is on Colorado SAR letterhead, and Mr. Tuttle was listed as president. He was president from 1896 to 1900. See H2215 Colorado SAR file, Minute Man NHPP.

April 19, 1775.

The action between James Hayward of Acton and a British soldier took place at the Fiske Homestead (BNHSC Report 52-3) There is a marker on the land now owned by the Lexington Historical Society noting this action. It was erected by the Town in 1885 "in the wall in front of Mr. Dudley's house and close to the well".⁷ How close the marker is to the site of the well is another matter. There is evidence which indicates that the well was in back of the house. A.R. Whitney, a great grandson of Benjamin Fiske, wrote that his father told him "fifty years ago" that when the British soldier came "out of the Kitchen door, near which was the hog pen, he saw an American drinking at the well." Other details of this story which was handed down by the children of Benjamin Fiske, concern items taken by the soldier and later found in the hog pen.⁸ This is not incompatible with the approximate location of the marker as the house did not face the road.

H.M. Houghton also wrote a letter concerning this area and drew a map to locate some of the sites. He located the Hayward Well south of the house, away from the road and said that it was filled and covered some years before he wrote. He also put a pump near the road, about the site of the Marker.⁹

7 Historical Monuments and Tablets Erected by the Town of Lexington, 1884. n.p. n.d. p.11. This is the report made by the committee which set up the markers.

8 Whitney's first initial is difficult to read, and it may not be A. Letter is in the Lexington Historical Society, page 75 of one of their scrap books. It is undated, and to an unknown party - unless more can be learned by examining the original.

9 Houghton's letter cited above appears to have been written to a child of Samuel Chandler. Thus it would not be the sketch which Mr. Houghton gave the Rev. Carlton A. Staples, cited by Coburn, The Battle of April 19, 1775, p. 108n. A privately printed pamphlet on Hayward has a photograph

10

Wounded British troops were put in the Fiske House. Dr. Joseph Fiske submitted a bill on June 6, 1775 for care of wounded troops at Ebenezer Fiske's on the 20th.¹¹

12

Benjamin Fiske's 25A:

Benjamin Fiske purchased this land from his father in 1756 and sold it to Amos Marrett in 1777.¹³ There is no record of any buildings on it. The present stone wall is assumed to be the boundary on the southeast.

Graves on Fiske Hill.

The Houghton letter said that three British soldiers were buried in "your father's wood lot on the Bedford Road" (Wood Street).¹⁴

9 cont'd.

of Fiske Hill with a pump on page 54. William Frederick Adams, James Hayward..., Springfield, Mass. 1911. This is in the Lexington Room of the Cary Memorial Library.

10 There is a well south of the house which is visible today. The top four or five feet of it are not filled. Mr. Martin Bashin says that there were three wells around the house when he lived there including the one near the marker.

11 Lexington Historical Society, Document #1141.

The Whitney letter says that the British put five mortally wounded soldiers in the Fiske parlor. Two might have died by the 20th, although Mr. Whitney said that when Mr. Fiske returned he found the five dead. They were buried, according to Whitney, at the bottom of the Fiske garden.

12 The site on MM-NHP 3008, sheet 1 marked "Tradition site where British soldier was shot" is based on a statement in the Houghton letter that one was killed by the big rock opposite the Fiske house. For some details on this see the section on the southeastern boundary of the 60A in the Historical Survey Report on Lex-3.

13 A purchase of land by the Town of Lexington from the two Fiskes in 1773 for improvement of the road helps to establish the view that the land in these deeds is the land under discussion.

14 Samuel Chandler?

The map with the letter shows the Chandler wood lot north of a "cross" wall with three graves near the wall and the road.¹⁵

A grave was shown at about this site on a map in Hersey's Heroes of the Battle Road.¹⁶ This land was owned by Benjamin

Fiske in 1775, thus Whitney's statement that the wounded who died in the Fiske House were buried in the Fiske garden nearly agrees with Houghton's statement, if there was a garden near the

¹⁷ wall. In 1799 there were several gardens on the Fiske homestead. One was called the close garden. The spot shown by Houghton and Porter would have been at the bottom of the garden, although outside it. If Houghton correctly located the grave near the road, it is not in the park boundaries, and was perhaps covered by the 1930 Wood Street. Houghton claimed to have seen the grave and the map follows his view.

15 Samuel Chandler acquired the eastern part of the Benjamin Fiske 25A in 1828. It extended to Wood Street and was described as pasture and woodland. It has been assumed that the southern boundary was Lex-D (NHP-MM 2004) along the current stone wall. The 1828 deed does not mention a wall along this bound, although there was a stone wall along this bound in 1756. According to 1828 deed there was a "cross wall" along the Chandler wood lot, but it was along the northern bounds, between it and the Muzzey farm and outside the area of the park.

16 This map was drawn for Rev. Edward G. Porter of Lexington by Francis B. Wheaton in 1894. Mr. Porter wrote various accounts of this area and of Boston, but a search of the Boston Public Library did not disclose any work by Mr. Porter for which this map might have been prepared.

17 If they were the same dead. Houghton claimed they died in his father's house. Houghton locates this toward Lexington from the Fiske house.

Houghton located another grave marked by an upright stone near the top of the hill, between what he calls the "old trail" and the road. Coburn in The Battle (p. 107-8) mentioned a grave, once marked by stones in the "little strip of ground between the old and new road". He followed Houghton's view of the roads which put the historic road at about the location of the present road. The modern road probably ruined the site. Another grave has been placed on the west side of the hill. This is shown on the map in Hersey. Coburn, in The Battle, reported a grave of two British soldiers "a little way from the bluff, over the wall on the opposite side of the road and in a southerly direction...." There was no marker, and it did not seem that Coburn knew the exact spot.

LAND USE: Ebenezer Fiske Homestead.¹⁸

The 1785 Benjamin Fiske homestead consisted of 76A and other pieces including two across the road from the homestead. A training field with an adjoining pasture totaling 11A, and a 12A piece of wood, mowing, and pasture were set aside for the use of the widow. She also had a stock yard of 7½ A, a small garden between the house and barn, and one-half the close garden. A hill field and pasture of 29A 126R was sold. This left in 1799 a pasture of 11A called Fiske Hill, a "Beaver gray Meddow" of 2A 150R, a south field of 7A 120R, the old house lot of 2A 114R, the west half of the "cloaths" ~~/close/~~ yard north of the barn - a small piece, the pasture south

18 The probate record for Ebenezer Fiske gives no details on the real estate, except that it was about 69A. The probate record for Benjamin Fiske contains more detail and is the basis for this section.

of the house of 1A 32R and a piece, 128R in size, east of the house.¹⁹ Other portions in the probate record give some detail about the location of the barn yards and some buildings.

The bounds of the 29A 126R piece sold in 1790 can be located. With this as a base, with the information from the probate records, with information from later deeds, and especially with the help of boundary lines and remains of land marks shown on the 1938 topographical map of Lexington, land use information has been shown on NHP-MM 3008, sheet one.

Benjamin Fiske's Land.

In 1756 this was described as improved land and woodland. This included the bluff which was probably woodland. The 1777 deed was silent on use. The land was then sold in three pieces. In 1828, a 21A piece - Lex-I on NHP-MM 2004 - was described as pasture and woodland. The middle piece of almost 4A between Fiske Hill and the bluff was also sold in 1828 and resold several times, but there was nothing in any deed to indicate the use of the land until 1851. At that time the grantor reserved the right to move the wood which was then cut. Today a pond covers about an acre of the land most of the year. The connection between this and the ditch which bordered the larger portion of Lex-A is uncertain.²⁰ The third and western most

19 The total is greater than 76A.

20 For a discussion of the ditch see the Jacob Whittamore Research Report, pp. 72-5.

piece was the Bluff, and was described in 1815 as wood land.

Changes in Fiske Hill.

The largest and easternmost portion of Benjamin Fiske's 25A was divided for a housing development about the time of the first World War. Some grading has been done in connection with the houses. A house was built on the piece between the hill and the bluff in the 20th century. The pond there may be a 19th century work of man.

The major change has been in the road. The current road which was built in the 20th century, has cut a gap through the hill and filled it on both the eastern and western end. There may have been 19th century road changes which also changed the historic scene. Route 128 has made it very difficult to conceive of what was probably the best portion of the Fiske farmland. And the 1962-63 relocation of Massachusetts Avenue has caused extensive damage to the southern portion of the land, especially to the stone walls.

A house was built on the western slope of the hill in the 20th century. Extensive land changes were made in the process. Other buildings do not seem to have caused extensive changes in the landscape.

ROADS:

The road to Bedford on the eastern slope of Fiske Hill is an old road. The portion near the park has been moved several times, but now may be in an early location.

The road over Fiske Hill was known as the Country, or County Road, on the road from Lexington to Concord, or variations on that. It was a part of the road from Cambridge to Concord. Despite late nineteenth century opinion, the current road is probably not the correct location for the 1775 road.²¹

The Country Road was part of the boundary between Benjamin Fiske and Ebenezer Fiske in 1775. Although only some of the deeds have been run from the present back to 1775, those studied indicate that what is now abandoned road was the approximate location of the 1775 road.²²

As the road comes over the hill and goes down the west side the picture is cloudier. One piece of land which came from Benjamin Fiske's 25 A, gained rights to land between the present Massachusetts Avenue and the

21 Without the modern cut, the current location would have been a steeper climb than other possible routes. Houghton expressed the opinion and indicated on his map that the old road was near the location of the modern road. Mr. Martin Bashian expressed the same opinion to me in 1963. He said the present abandoned road was built after the Civil War. A note on the 1885 deed for the Fiske farm excepting the land taken for the new Concord Road on the westerly side of the farm indicates that Mr. Bashian is at least partially correct. Bk.1706: 182.

22 This does not apply to the land to the north of the Fiske House, around what is now marked as the Hayward Well, where Ebenezer Fiske owned on both sides of the road. The old road can not be detected by observation in this area. There are photographs of the house taken about 1880 which might help.

To the north of the present road, on the east slope, there is a section for which some title work has been done, but more work needs to be done.

previous road. On down the hill there is a wall which seems to be accounted for by the road, especially when read in light of information from deeds, but which does not seem to fit with the expected location of an earlier road.²³

The 18th century right of ways were rather wide, and this might have kept shifts in the road bed from showing in deeds. There is information on the width of this road in 1738. At or near the western foot of the hill it was four rods or 22 yards wide. Part way up the hill the road was seven rods wide, then six rods, and against Fiske's house it was four rods wide.²⁴ In 1773 the town voted to buy land from Ebenezer and Benjamin on the north side of Fiske Hill for "the better Accommodation of Travelling." If this means that Ebenezer's land was on the north side of the road, it was on the east slope, near the house. The town

- 23 The Warren Breslin property, as purchased by the NPS, extended to modern Massachusetts Avenue. This was decided in Land Court, plan #22003 A of 8/22/49. Land Court Certificate issued 5/7/59, #101127, recorded Bk. 635:177. Research must go back of this to establish if the land between the roads was a part of Benjamin Fiske's land, or a part of the Ebenezer Fiske farm.

There is a 1790 deed which mentioned a wall on the western slope of Fiske Hill. An 1816 deed gave measurements, and it might be possible to establish if the present wall is the 1816, and hopefully the 1790 wall. The road was said to be near it in 1790. The current road and the road immediately prior to it are on the same location near this wall. On west, nearer the foot of the hill, a change in the road after 1824 might not be indicated in the deeds, for the land on both sides of the road was owned by the same man.

- 24 Lexington Town Records, III: 187.

voted money for this and to mend the highway on the entire hill.²⁵
 The last stretch of abandoned road is at the foot of the hill and
 by the bluff. The deeds indicate that this is in about the right
 location for the old road, although some questions of detail are
 raised by the location of the wall on the east side of the bluff.²⁶

THE BLUFF:

This topographical feature obviously dominated the road below it, if
 the road ran as close to it as the abandoned road does. The British,
 realizing this, attempted to check the Americans by controlling it.
 They were driven off. (BNHSC Report, pp.51-2. Troop Movement Map
 (TMM) 26-8)

Most of the bluff was owned by Benjamin Fiske as a part of his 25 acres.
 It was sold in 1815 as six acres of wood and became a part of the farm
 which had been owned by Fiske.

The southern end of the bluff was removed to make it possible to widen
 the road. Pictures of the bluff before this change are available.

The northwestern part of the bluff was a part of the Whittemore farm.

This portion is very sandy and some of it was recently hauled away.

25 Ibid., IV:216-17. No record of the purchase has been found.
 The town records have not been searched. These items were
 called to my attention by Mr. Edwin Worthen, Jr.

26 See Jacob Whittemore Homestead Research Report, pp.40-1 and
 especially 41n.
 The problem is that although the wall began in a fixed place
 and ended at the road, its length changed in various deeds.

Jacob Whittamore's Meadow

In 1779 when Jacob Whittamore sold his home and farm to Ezekial Hall, he included two pieces of meadow, one of five acres and one of two acres. Both abutted Josiah Mansfield's property on the east. The 2 acre piece was the southernmost and was probably outside the park boundaries. It is not shown on NHP-MM 3008. The 5 acre piece bordered the County Road between the Fiske Farm and Josiah Mansfield. It was part of the Muzzey estate when the estate was divided between John and his brother, Jonas, in 1838. In 1847 it was sold at auction. It has not been further traced. The 1779 and 1781 deeds described it as meadow; the 1838 and 1847 deeds described it as mostly meadow. It abutted a Fiske piece described as meadow in the Fiske real estate division.

Josiah Mansfield Owner. "Bull Tavern"?

The late Mr. Edwin Worthen in a paper entitled "Southwest Lexington" (p. 13) referred to Mr. Bliss' paper on "Old Taverns" which was read to the Lexington Historical Society in 1887. There Mr. Bliss said that Bull Tavern was invaded and the bar ransacked by the British on April 19, 1775.²⁷ Mr. Worthen said that the Rev. Edmund Foster's account was the basis for this statement. As printed in Ezra Ripley's History of the Fight at Concord (Concord, 1827, p.34.) there is nothing in Foster's letter about the British invading the tavern and quenching their thirst. The letter was written in 1825 and Foster knew the building as Benjamin's Tavern. (BNHSC, Report p.51)

27 Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society, I:78.

History of Josiah Mansfield holdings Prior to 1772: Joseph Brown of 1726?

A consideration of the buildings which might have been on the land, and the 1775 occupant, must wait until a historical problem which might relate to the land is discussed. This problem goes back to the early history of the Fiske farm. David Fiske, the grandfather of Ebenezer Fiske, died in 1710 possessed of much of what was to become the Ebenezer Fiske farm. In the division of David's land in 1721, the western portion of about fifty acres on the south side of the Concord Road was given to a Henry Baldwin and a Timothy Carter. The western abutments of this piece were Josiah Hobbs and Nathaniel Whittemore. In 1723 this fifty acres was divided and John Peirce, a Lexington cordwainer, acquired the westernmost twenty seven acres. It still bordered on the Concord Road on the north, and Nathaniel Whittemore on the west. Samuel Ames was also on the west, with the heirs of Samuel Stearns. In 1726 Peirce sold this land, with a mansion house to Joseph Brown, another cordwainer.²⁸ Brown bought another thirty acres with house and barn in 1729, in a different location in Lexington. His probate record seems to indicate that he did not own the piece of David Fiske land when he died. Efforts to follow the Brown purchase of 1726 have failed.

Based on the original size of the David Fiske farm, it did not seem possible that it could have extended far enough to the west to include the 1775 Josiah Mansfield holdings. (The other boundaries seemed to be fairly well fixed so that it was unlikely that the farm expanded to the east or south between 1721 and 1775.) Then research on the Nelson holdings done by

²⁸ The description was not exactly the same, and it was thirty acres. But there are too many points in common to really doubt that it was the same land.

Miss Maureen Dorion turned up enough information to make it likely that the Fiske holdings did extend farther west than had been considered likely. Rather, this research indicated that the western abutters of David Fiske were the western abutters of the Josiah Mansfield holdings. Specifically, although the key deeds are missing, the research showed how Nathaniel Whittemore probably built up his holdings south of the road, and this land abutted Josiah Mansfield on the west. The heirs of Lt. David Fiske were the eastern abutters of a portion of this land.²⁹

Conclusion: It is likely that Joseph Brown owned most of the land which became the "Bull Tavern" land, and that there was a house on it in 1726.

- 29 The relevant documents have not yet been discussed in a written report. Some of the key items can be mentioned here. In 1721 Thomas Nelson bought a five acre piece from Josiah Hobbs which was bounded by Nathaniel Whittemore on the north and the heirs of David Fiske on the east. It is assumed that this piece was then sold to Whittemore, and that this was part of Whittemore's 43 acres south of the road. Another piece was of twenty acres which Thomas Cutler sold to Samuel Ames on the south side of the Country Road. It was bordered by David Fiske on the east, and by Stearns, and had Josiah Hobbs on the north. In 1725 this went to Thomas Nelson. Nelson was on the north presumably the Hobbs five acres, and the heirs of David Fiske and Stearns on the east. It is assumed that this piece also went to Whittemore. In 1730 Nehemiah Abbott sold a part of his rights to the estate of the late Samuel Stearns to Nathaniel Whittemore. This 26 1/2 acre piece had Nathaniel Whittemore on the north, presumably the 20 acre piece purchased from Nelson, and Abbott and Daniel Brown on the east. Daniel is of special interest. Joseph Brown had a son Daniel who was married in 1728. This, and Joseph's purchase of another house and land in 1729, makes it plausible to believe that Daniel would have been on the piece of David Fiske's land Joseph bought in 1726. He appears to have been there in 1756 when Nehemiah Abbott got his father's 200 acre farm. Efforts to learn more about Daniel Brown's holdings have failed.

It is not known who owned this land and house between 1726 and 1772, or if the house stood all that time. It is possible that Joseph's son, Daniel, was an owner. Most of the possible avenues of research have been explored. Moses Reed did not own any land in 1771 according to the valuation returned in that year, yet in 1772 he sold the "Bull Tavern" farm. The most important possibility is the fact that the house owned by Mansfield in 1775 might have been fifty years old.

The Farm:

In 1772 Moses Reed sold Josiah Mansfield of Acton, a blacksmith, forty acres in Lexington which fits the description of the Bull Tavern site. That fall it was mortgaged and we have a more detailed description available: mowing, pasturing, tillage, woodland with a dwelling, a mill house and a barn. It was mortgaged again to Martha Salisbury in 1773. In 1782 Martha complained to the Middlesex Inferior Court that she had been unjustly ejected from the land by Benjamin Danforth. When this occurred is not stated. Her title to the land was confirmed by the court. Widow Salisbury was of Boston in 1773 and of Worcester in 1785 when she sold the tract to Nathan Dudley. Further deeds do not shed any great light on the land or the buildings on it.

Land Use:

There is little information about this. As mentioned, the 1772 mortgage said the land was mowing, pasturing, tillage and woodland. This would have included a 3 3/4 A piece Mansfield purchased from Jacob Whittenmore earlier that summer. This piece bordered the main farm on the west for 63 rods, which gave

Mansfield an extra six rods along the road. It was described as upland and swamp.

Mansfield sold a piece of meadow - later known as the "Hammond Meadow" - to Whittemore that same day. It was on the southeastern corner of the basic Tavern farm. Whittemore also owned a piece on the northeast corner which was also meadow. It thus is possible that the eastern part of the land was meadow. These are our best clues as to land use from the historical record.

According to present calculations the Tavern farm must have been a rather narrow, deep piece. This means it would have been in the rather swampy land south of modern Route 2A. Tax records and sales prices, when corrected for variations caused by inflation, depression, etc., and compared with the values of other pieces of land, might indicate if any unusual portion of the land was swampy.

Buildings:

There has been a house on this land as early as 1726, and this might have been standing in 1775. When Josiah Mansfield bought the land from Moses Reed in June, 1772, it had a mansion house and other buildings on it. When he mortgaged it that fall it had a dwelling house, a mill house and a barn.

What was a mill house? The only mill - saw, fulling or grist - listed in the 1771 valuation for Lexington was owned by Samuel Winship, Jr. The possibility of a good water supply on the Mansfield land in 1775 does not seem too likely, although road changes and other topographical changes might hide the 1775 possibilities. These two facts seem to point to some kind of mill other than

a saw or grist mill. The term "mill house" points the same way. It probably refers to the housing over a cider mill.³⁰

There is a sketch of Viles Tavern dated 1827 - at that date Viles Tavern was at this location which - shows a large house, a barn, stables, and another building. The sketch does not necessarily include all the buildings. The real problem is whether the sketch shows 1775 buildings. It seems certain from the architectural features - end chimneys for one - that if the 1775 basic structure was standing in 1827, it had been considerably modified by that date.³¹ The frequent changes of ownership at a time when we know that it was being used as a tavern make it possible that one owner decided to either rebuild or thoroughly remodel.

30 Mansfield bought the farm outright from Reed, and it might appear that his mortgage soon after that indicates large capital improvements. The mortgage deed, however, indicates that Mansfield was paying old debts by this mortgage. When he mortgaged the farm again in 1773 no specific mention was made of a mill house, so it probably was not a major building. By this time Mansfield was back in Acton.

31 Tax records and relative sale prices must be studied to see if a new house was built or changes made, but the hopes of success are not great. Real estate values are lumped in such records, and the value of many houses relative to the land was not great enough so that changes in the houses can be detected. See however, p. above for other evidence.

The 19th of April. Who Was There?

Josiah Mansfield owned the land on April 19, 1775, but as early as the March 1773 mortgage to Widow Salisbury he was described as a resident of Acton. (He was described as a Lexington resident in the summer and fall of 1772.) The widow's law suit was against Benjamin Danforth who had, she claimed, unjustly entered the land and ejected her. The suit took place in 1782 and when the widow sold the land in 1785 to a Nathan Dudley of Lexington, she gave Danforth a chance to redeem the farm. Danforth was the occupier in 1782. But when did he move in? At this time we cannot give a precise answer to the question. We do know, however, that Danforth did not move in as Mansfield moved out. We have seen that Mansfield was out by March of 1773. Danforth was licensed as an innholder in Bedford in September 1773. In May, 1774 another man was licensed as innholder in the house in which Danforth had operated.³² At a minimum, there was a period of six months when Mansfield was not in the house when Danforth could not have moved in. The Lexington or Bedford tax records might help.³³

When Did It Become a Tavern?

It will be difficult to establish when a tavern was operated on this site. The county licensed inns and retailers, but the records do not

³² Records of the Middlesex County Court of General Sessions, 1771-90, p.130.

³³ Occupiers of land were usually taxed for it. Neither Danforth nor Mansfield appear on the 1777 Lexington list. The next list is that for 1780. Mansfield was not taxed as a non-resident, while Danforth was taxed on an assessment of \$1,328. This was relatively low, although the forty acre farm was not especially large. (Daniel Brown a possible owner in 1771 had a relatively low assessment that year) Danforth was taxed for real estate in Lexington in 1783 and in a book which has not yet been dated. This assessment is in pounds and we have not yet calculated the relation between 1780 and 1783 values.

appear to exist for the time immediately before the Revolution and during the years of Revolution.³⁴ It is certain that William Benjamin was operating a tavern on this location in 1800. A petition for change in the road establishes this.³⁵ Benjamin bought the land in 1792.

The record before that date, which is our prime concern, is not clear.

We know that Danforth had been an innkeeper in Bedford. He was assessed for a faculty of £10 in 1783 and £12 in an unknown year.

(It seems that innkeepers were assessed for their faculty.) We know that Danforth was in the building in question in 1783, so it appears possible that he was keeping tavern there. If we can show that it remained as a tavern after he left, that is when Dudley took over, it would make the probability all the stronger.

The tax records on Nathan Dudley do not help too much. He was taxed for a faculty of £4 in 1783, 1784, 1785 and in the undated book. This appears to be low for a tavern keeper, but may not be. (The rates may have varied with the size of the tavern.) In 1785 his location on the tax list changed; he moved near to the spot that Danforth had vacated,

33 cont'd.

The Bedford records might reveal when Danforth left Bedford. It is not known if the records exist for the relevant years.

34 The volumes of records have been briefly examined. There is no record of licenses for 1775. There is a separate volume of license records which begins, I think, sometime in the 1790's. This will be of value only if the land began to be run as a tavern after the available record of licenses begins.

35 Court of General Sessions. 1790-1801, p. 516.

but not into it. In 1786 he had real estate and his faculty rating rose to £6. About the only sure thing is that between the 1790 and 1791 assessments, he moved to the north side of town and into more expensive real estate. He may have started his career as tavern keeper and flip maker in that year,³⁶

- 36 John Buckman was rated for a faculty of £18 in 1785, and it was believed that he was a tavern keeper then. William Benjamin's faculty rating in the 1790's moved up as the value of his real estate increased. Samuel Stone acquired a faculty with the "Bull Tavern" land in 1791, and lost it when he sold the land.

Some weight can be attached to the location of a name on a tax list, but it is not certain just how much. When Dudley moved from one page to another in 1785, his final location was just ahead of the heirs of Benjamin Fiske. Fiske abutted the "Bull Tavern" land. William Benjamin was in the same general location on the tax list after he acquired the "Bull Tavern" land.

As Dudley bought the land from Widow Salisbury in December, 1785, he would not appear on the tax list for that year as the owner of the land. I could not find Danforth on the 1785 list, however, nor the Widow as a non-resident.

The late Mr. Worthen said that Dudley bought land near the center of Lexington in 1785 and built a tavern on it. This deed has not yet been checked, but the changes in the tax records for 1790 and 1791 indicate that he built in 1790. Edward P. Bliss, in his article on Lexington taverns, said that Dudley came to Lexington in 1790 and kept a tavern until 1835 which was "most affectionately remembered by our old men...." The quality of his flip was one reason for the fond memories. Bliss' article is the first volume of the Lexington Historical Society.

Proceedings.

The tax records confirm the deeds after 1790, and some of the interpretation of evidence given above. In March of 1791 Dudley sold the land to Samuel Stone. In 1790 Samuel Stone was listed on the last page of the tax list. (Dudley was on the next to last.) Stone had no real estate. In 1791 he was found in the same place, but with £100 of real estate, and he had acquired a faculty worth £8. Dudley in 1790 was assessed at £100 and £8. In 1792 the real estate was valued at £130. He sold to William Benjamin in September 1792, too late for the 1792 assessment. Benjamin was a resident of Lincoln at the time. In 1793 Benjamin

Later History of "Bull Tavern."

The tax records seem to indicate that improvements were made in the tavern property from time to time. There was one more dramatic change, the value of William Benjamin's real estate rose from \$433 in 1796 to \$650 in 1797. He had not been assessed for faculty between 1794 and 1797, but was now listed at \$50. Although this might reflect land purchases not connected with the tavern farm, it seems very possible that these figures show when Benjamin built a new tavern on the old site.³⁷ Joel Viles ran an advertisement in December 1824 to inform the public that the "Old Bull Tavern" had undergone thorough repairs. The tax records reflect these improvements.³⁸

CONCLUSIONS - Very Tentative.

Sometime, probably between 1777 and 1779, Benjamin Danforth started keeping tavern in the house which had been owned in 1726 by Joseph Brown. The house burned or was torn down in 1796-97 and a new and

³⁶ cont'd.
is found on the Lexington records, about between the spot where Dudley had been found and where Stone was still found. Benjamin's assessment for real estate was \$130, and for faculty, \$6. Stone had no assessment for faculty and an assessment of \$30 for real estate, probably reflecting a purchase he made from Jonathan Smith, Jr. and Nathan Dudley of twenty-nine acres of land in January, 1793. (Bk.112:99.)

³⁷ The two years he was not charged for faculty would indicate that he was not in the tavern business then. Perhaps the old house had burned, or was taken down, or was completely remodelled. If it was the 1726 house, the first two courses would be the most probable.

³⁸ The ad was noted by Architect Keene from a photostatic copy in the Lexington Historical Society. The name of the paper is missing, but there was a reference to the distance from Boston. In 1823 and 1824 Joel Viles was assessed for real estate of \$874. In 1825 this increased \$100. Others near him on the list - alphabetical - did not change. Although there is no column headed "faculty" there is a column in the records without a heading for these years. Viles had

larger tavern built by William Benjamin. The absence of Danforth from the 1777 tax list, and the fact that, so far as we know, previous owners were not tavern keepers, make it probable that there was no tavern here in 1775.

The late Mr. Worthen wrote that the building burned in 1849. Before then the new road had separated a 3/4 acre piece with the buildings from the rest of the land. In the late 1850's a barn was put on the 3/4 acre piece and a house built across the road.

The Jacob Whittimore Homestead. (BNHSC Report 75-6. Photograph No. 22) 39

Introduction:

There is nothing that connects this house with the events of April 19, 1775 in any special manner, except that it later became the home of a Minute Man, John Muzzey.⁴⁰ The Americans who advanced on the British

38 cont'd.

15 entered in it in 1823 and 1824. This increased to 25 in 1825. Others have the word "income" written over their entry in this column. This might be a "faculty" assessment, and more evidence that the assessment rose with improvements in the tavern.

39 This section of this report is based on the Historical Research Report on the Jacob Whittimore Homestead. There is not necessarily a direct substantiation for each statement in this report. Some of the items reported here as fact were merely conclusions in the report.

40 There is some question in my mind as to which John Muzzey was the Minute Man. The father was 59 at the time of the Battle and had no previous military record. The son was 21 and saw considerable service in the Revolution. Even his younger brother Thaddeus was a member of the Lexington company. Neither is Thaddeus nor John Jr., credited with being on the Green. The problem is that some of the John Muzzey's credited with military service were called junior and some were not. If it can be shown that two Johns were serving at the same time, then it would be clear that the father did serve

on the bluff did move through the fields of this farm. There was a blacksmith shop on the farm in 1779, and perhaps in 1775. Mr. Houghton placed it north of the road, near the bluff, and said a British soldier was shot near it. Otherwise, this was but one of many farms on the Battle Road.

In 1775 Jacob Whittemore had a farm of 103 acres which was divided by the Lexington-Concord or County or Country Road. (This does not consider three small separated pieces of land.) The piece to the north of the road was 60 acres and ran between the County Road on the Southwest and the road to Bedford on the Northeast. It seems to have been part of land laid out in Cambridge Farm in 1683, when land was laid out in sections 80 rods wide with a rangeway or public access way two rods wide, between the sections. The southeast Jacob Whittemore border did not follow the rangeway for its entire length. The 25 acre holding of Benjamin Fiske bordered Jacob's 60 acres to the west of the rangeway, or where the rangeway would have gone if it had been laid out in a straight line. (The 1756 deed for Benjamin's land did reserve the rangeway which went through it.) The Whittemore house and corn house were on this 60 acre piece.

The other piece of Jacob's homestead was 43 acres bounded by the County Road on the northeast, by Josiah Mansfield's land on the southeast, by Joseph Abbott and Jacob Whittemore on the south,

40 cont'd.

and perhaps went to Bennington in 1777 at the age of 61. It seems more reasonable, however, that the "junior" was omitted from the records than that the father assumed a martial aspect in his later years. The junior tag was sometimes omitted on deeds.

and by Thomas and Josiah Nelson and a rangeway on the northeast. The rangeway on the northwest may have been a southern extension of the rangeway which bounded the 60 acre piece on the northwest. This 43 acre piece was narrower along the road than the 60 acre piece, for in 1772 Jacob Whittemore, the owner, sold a small part off the east side to Josiah Mansfield, his eastern abutter. This bordered the road for 6 rods.⁴¹ The 43 acre piece contained a barn. Jacob Whittemore was the son of Nathaniel. As Jacob bought his mother's rights to a property which greatly resembles this in 1761, it would seem that the house had been occupied by Nathaniel who died in 1754.⁴²

Buildings

Nathaniel's will, written in 1752, mentioned a dwelling house, a corn house, barn and cider mill. The 1761 deed clearing the widow's and her second husband's claim mentioned the same and added a shop. They were living in the house at the time, and her second husband was a saddler. The 1771 valuation did not include a shop, however. The 1779 deed called the house a "mansion house," mentioned a corn house, and the barn across the road. Whittemore also reserved - did not sell - a blacksmith shop on the 60 acres.

The 1784 probate record of John Muzzey gives little information.

41 The 1938 topographical map of Lexington has some markings which may outline this piece. It was 63 rods on each side and 13 rods at the bottom. NHP-MM 3008 reflects this.

42 Nathaniel Whittemore owned this land as early as 1738. His land was on both sides of the road when a committee set out the bounds of the road in that year. He had fences, walls, and an orchard. This would indicate that he had settled there. Lexington Town Records, III:187. (This information is not in the Whittemore Research Report.) Evidence of his ownership on the south side dates back to 1721.

LAND USE

Nathaniel Whittemore's will mentioned upland, pastureland, meadow, orcharding and yards around the buildings. He had an orchard along the north side of the road on the west part of his land in 1738. The 1761 deed was less specific. The small piece of the 43 acre piece Jacob Whittemore sold to Mansfield was called a meadow. In 1779 the 60 acre piece was called improved land, orcharding and woodland. The northwest border of this piece does include a portion of Pine Hill which would not be valuable as anything but woodland. From the foot of the hill, the land slopes gently down to a rather wet area which begins about 150' in back of the house. This rises before it gets to Wood Street. There would seem to be an abundance of land for tillage, meadow and pasture. The 43 acre piece was described as improved land and woodland in 1779. It is much flatter than the 60 acres and today is somewhat swampy.

In 1771 Jacob Whittemore was taxed for 15 acres of pasture, 6 acres of tillage, 6 acres of English and upland mowing, and 8 acres of fresh mowing. This included the three pieces he owned in 1771 in addition to the two main pieces. The piece on the south side of the road would have been larger than 43 acres since the slice had not yet been sold to Mansfield. The 1771 valuation was based on the figures the owners turned in. Unimproved land and wood land was not reported. Whittemore also reported that he would produce 20 barrels of cider "one year with another".

The northern portion of the bluff was owned by Jacob Whittemore. A modern use of this was to dig it away for sand. This has left a scar and a serious change in the topography.

Walls And Other Problems. The 60A.

There is a strong possibility that the wall up the bluff along the southeastern border is an historic wall. And the wall on the original northwest border which ran in a nearly straight line to the County Road is probably older than 1775. The southern portion of this wall is gone. In 1863 a triangular piece bounded on the south by the road and by the original northwest boundary was sold. Part of the price was the building of a wall around the piece sold. It is this wall which is labelled "historic" on MNP-MM 2004. There are other pieces of existing wall on the 60 acre piece which must be investigated. There is also a man-made hole about 20' by 30' and perhaps 5' deep on the property for which no explanation is known.

On the 43 Acres.

There is a wall which probably marks the western boundary of the 3 acre barn piece sold about 1783. When we know the location of the barn and something of the barn yard, we might be able to relate this wall with them. It may have existed when it was sold thus fixed the line when the property was divided. Or it may have been built to mark the line.

Tabitha Nelson Homestead: Was Tabitha Really There?

This was the home of Tabitha Nelson, the spinster daughter of Thomas Nelson, Sr., who had died in 1770. It had been the home of her father at the time of his death. Her two brothers, Thomas and Josiah lived across the Lincoln line.⁴³ The farm extended from Jacob Whittemore on the east into Lincoln on the west, perhaps to a line very close to Thomas Nelson Jr.'s house.⁴⁴

43 It has been usual to believe that Thomas, Sr. lived in that part of Lexington which was set off to Lincoln in 1754. George A. Nelson's sketch of the area with a house ruins in Lexington, labelled the first Nelson house, 1720, is the one modern indication that the father lived in Lexington. The contemporary sources are very definite, however. His death is recorded in the Lexington vital records. In 1770 Mr. Thomas Nelson was taxed by Lincoln as a non-resident, as was Tabitha in a tax list we think dated from 1774. She was taxed as a resident by Lexington in 1777. And she was assessed as a Lexington resident with a dwelling house in 1771. There is a 1767 deed with Tabitha and Thomas, the father of Josiah, Nelson given as Lexington residents. In 1779 Thomas (Jr.) quitclaimed 8 acres, partly in Lincoln and partly in Lexington, part of land of "our sister Tabitha Nellson desest" (she died in 1778), to Josiah.

44 The Nelson holdings are currently being studied by Student Assistant Maureen Dorion. The studies are not complete and the statements in this and the sections on Nelson land which follow are not final opinions.

The northern boundary of the farm was an eighty-two rods long ten acre piece of wood owned by Ebenezer Fiske in 1775 and by his son after that.⁴⁵ It does not appear that Tabitha woned any land south of the road.

The Land And the 19th. (Troop Movement Narrative, p.26)

It is not certain where Captain Parker's Lexington Company returned to action in the afternoon. It may have been on this farm, for the high land along the rangeway which divided it from Jacob Whittemore's holdings provided a good location for the Americans. Evidence of fighting was found near here in 1895.

The Buildings. The House.

On April 7, 1779 Thomas and Lydia Nelson deeded to Samuel Hastings, who had become their son-in-law on October 1, 1778, the dwelling house late of Tabitha Nelson of Lexington as it then stood by Thomas' other dwelling house. This indicates that Tabitha's house in Lexington, had been moved. A photograph of the "Hastings House" (MM-NHP #63-193), shows two gambrel roofed houses, side by side. Although a study of architectural styles for this area of Middlesex County has yet to be made, these appear to be houses built by 1750 or earlier. A chain of title puts a house on the

44 Cont'd.

Although the Josiah Nelson family saved deeds, plots, and other papers, the Thomas Jr. family did not. The family combined properties and failed to record the transactions, and it is very difficult to establish boundaries. Thomas Sr.'s land appears to have been very close to his son's house lot as late as 1707. (Bk. 3943:41-2) Thomas Jr., received some of his father's land just before he died in 1770, and also received the western portion of Tabitha's land after she died. (Thomas Sr.'s 1769 tax assessment was divided among his three children in 1770.) The western limit of Tabitha's land depends upon whether Thomas Jr. got the land by his house from his father or his sister.

45 It is not certain that Tabitha's land extended for the entire eighty-two rods.

land owned by Tabitha in 1775 as early as 1716. Thomas Nelson Sr. acquired this land in 1725.⁴⁶

The Barn.

When Tabitha's land was divided in 1779, the barn was also divided between Josiah and Thomas. Josiah got the southeastern portion of land which abutted Whittemore on the southeast and Fiske on the northeast. This latter line ran along a portion of the Fiske boundary then left it by running a more westerly course. It was this change, and perhaps some unrecorded small angles, which permitted Josiah to get the eastern portion of the barn. This probably means that the barn was north of the house, but we can not tell if it was east or west of it.

Where Was The House?

According to the act establishing the precinct of Lincoln in 1744, the line ran to a bridge in the road westerly of Thomas Nelson's house. In the 1754 act establishing the town, the same line was described as running "to a Little Bridge in the Countrey road a little westerly of Thomas Nelson's house." If it was only a little west of the line, the house site might be inside the property of the U.S. Air Force today.⁴⁷

- 46 Unfortunately, none of the deeds involved make a reference to prior deeds, and the chain must be based on the description of the land. Fortunately, some of the names involved are uncommon, and some of the owners were not large land owners.
- 47 If Thomas got Tabitha's house because it stood on the land he got from Tabitha - we do not have this deed - then it probably was outside the park bounds. On the other hand, Josiah's oldest child in 1779 was one, and he probably was in a relatively new house. Thomas' child had just married, and he lived in an older house. Perhaps Thomas got the house because he needed it, and it was of no use where it stood.

The topography of the land eliminates much of it as a possible house site, and a search for it might not be as difficult as it seems.

Land Use.

In the 1771 valuation, Tabitha was listed as having three acres of English and upland mowing in Lexington, and four acres of the same in Lincoln. The later deeds for the land in Lexington which would have been owned by Tabitha in 1775 indicate that most of it was woodland.

Walls etc.

An 1818 deed for the southeastern portion of Tabitha's 1775 land, that which bordered Jacob Whittimore, put a wall along the old Whittimore boundary. It is not there today. It may have been in 1775.⁴⁸ There is no written evidence for a wall along the northeast boundary. There is no wall there today.

There are deeds for the early nineteenth century for land which may have been the western part of Tabitha's, or even near her barn, which mention walls. It is not known where they were, or if they were on land which will be part of the park.

⁴⁸ See Jacob Whittimore Research Report, pp.77 ff.

The Nelson Bridge

A plan of the town of Lincoln made in 1758 by Stephen Hosmer, Surveyor, shows a "Nelson's Bridge" on the County Road at the Lexington-Lincoln line. The 1754 act establishing the town as given in the Lincoln Town Records says that the line ran to a little bridge in the Country Road.⁴⁹

Thomas Nelson, Homestead. (BNHSC Report 49-50, called the Hastings House.)

The 1758 and 1772 maps of Lincoln show this as the Thomas Nelson house. The Lincoln Tax Records support this. They also indicate that it became the Hasting House before Thomas Nelson died in 1802.⁵⁰

The Buildings: The House.

We have seen that in 1779 the Tabitha Nelson house was moved next to that of her brother's. The park has two pictures of these. One is very narrow with but two closely spaced windows and a door in front. The picture shows it to be but one story and an attic, but this might be because the ground in front of it was raised to form a ramp, as in a bank barn. The other house has two windows, more widely spaced to the left of a door, and another of a different type to the right. The "ramp" does not cover all of the front of it. We have seen that one house might have dated to 1716 or earlier. The other, Thomas Jr.'s, might have been built by Christopher Mudgin, who probably acquired the land in 1701

⁴⁹ The maps are in the possession of the Lincoln Historical Society. The words "Nelson's Bridge" are written on the Lexington side, but Thomas Jr. and Josiah Nelson lived in Lincoln near the bridge. Thomas Nelson, Sr. lived in the nearest house in Lexington.

⁵⁰ In 1792 Nelson was taxed for 1/2 a dwelling house and 1/2 a barn -

and mortgaged it in 1733.⁵¹

The Barn.

It is not known where the barn was located. In the late nineteenth century pictures, there appears to be a barn back of the house. There is a barn across the road today. It seems probable that Thomas Jr. owned this land across the road from his house. (It is also across the road from his father's house.)

Another Building? - Thomas as Retailer.

In 1771, and earlier, Thomas was licensed as a retailer of liquor in Lincoln. Where he did his business is not known. It might have been in his house.

The Bounds.

Except for the boundary between Josiah and Thomas, almost nothing is known about the boundaries and their marking. There are some walls today,

50 cont'd.

listed at the same value as the 1/2 Samuel Hastings paid taxes on. Neither was assessed for "other buildings." We have no idea how large or substantial a building had to be before being listed as another building.

51 He was declared non-compos in that year. The land has a complex history. In 1739 Thomas Nelson, Sr., was involved in a suit concerning the land as an occupant, although we do not know how he got a right to it. His son, Thomas Jr. bought it in 1746. In this deed there was no mention of a house. Thomas Jr. sold more than half of it to his brother, Josiah in 1755. He kept a small narrow strip between Josiah's purchase and his father's land on the east. The house appears to have been on this piece. This was probably before he - Thomas Jr. - married. One explanation of this strange narrow piece of land would be that there was a house at this location at that time. This is more likely than to say that Thomas Jr. planned to build a house there. Neither house in the picture is similar to the one Josiah built on his land, probably soon after he bought it in 1755. He had been married in 1751. It is also possible that Thomas Jr. moved a house to this location. It will be seen that there were a few houses to spare on down the road.

but it is difficult to relate them to boundaries, or to learn their age. There seems to be a wall on the Josiah - Thomas Jr. boundary, but an existing conditions map is needed to establish its location.

Thomas Nelson And The 19th.

There is a story about a British soldier who was looting in the house who was shot, wounded, lingered, died and was buried west of the house. There is a possibility that the Lexington Company returned to the fight, and the Cambridge Company entered it on this farm.

Site of British Graves (BNHSC Report 49, Troop Movement Map 23-24)

On a knoll on the south side of Nelson Road, two British soldiers are supposed to be buried. The precise location of the grave is not known.

Josiah Nelson Homestead. (BNHSC Report, pp.33-4, 49)

Moving from Lexington to Concord along the Country Road, the third Nelson house was that of Josiah Nelson, a brother of Thomas and Tabitha. Josiah's house was probably built by the Nelsons and the farm was built up of pieces formerly owned by several families. The farm land was somewhat flat, as was true of Thomas', and was on both sides of the road.

Josiah bought the land the house was built on from his brother, Thomas, in 1755. It was a twenty-one acre piece on the northwest side of the road. Before that time and after that date he purchased various pieces of land in this vicinity, on both sides of the road. Josiah had married in 1751. It is not known where he lived for the first years of his

married life, but there were no children to overcrowd the house.

The Buildings: The House.

The 1758 map of Lincoln shows the house of Josiah Nelson near this location. This is the earliest record of the house. There are photographs of a house which were taken around 1900 when it was unused. They show a rectangular house with an equal gable roof. There were two windows on the first floor in the front elevation, and three on the second floor. The one visible end has a window in the attic, one on each floor and apparently a door on the first floor. The house burned in 1908 after being unoccupied for over forty years. The last known occupant died in 1855. In 1798 the house was valued at \$250 the same as the Thomas Nelson house.

The Barn.

The 1798 Federal Direct Tax listed one out building for Josiah Nelson. This might be the barn.⁵² The photographs show a barn standing northwest of the house site. What appears to be the outline of the foundation can be seen there today. In 1792 Josiah was taxed for his house, barn and one other building. We can safely assume only that Josiah had a barn someplace in 1775.

52 This is found on list D. It is difficult to know what to make of it. For district four, specific buildings are named and their dimensions given on list C. In this district however, some persons with one outbuilding on list D have several barns and a shop. Others with one outbuilding on list D have but one barn on list C.

Land Use.

In 1774 Josiah was taxed for three acres of tillage, thirteen of mowing, one of orchard, and fifteen of pasture. The Federal Direct Tax of 1798 credited Josiah with two pieces of land, one of ten acres and one of ninety. It is probable that this was accomplished by combining pieces that did not actually bound each other, although long lists of pieces of land were reported for others.

Boundaries, Walls, Etc.

There are a number of walls standing today which may have been a part of the Josiah Nelson Homestead in 1775. The eastern boundary wall has been discussed. There are some other walls for which there is good evidence that they existed in 1770, or that a wall existed in the same location. In that year Josiah bought a piece of more than four acres from Daniel Brown. It was west, or southwest, of his house lot and abutted it. A plan was made of the piece, and it can be located on the map made by the Air Force in 1957. This accounts for the wall along the road - the most questionable as the width of the road may have changed, and the two running at about a right angle from the road.

There are a number of interior walls on the portion of the Josiah Nelson Homestead which will be within the park. There is no information as yet on these.

Josiah Nelson Homestead and the 19th of April.

There is a tradition that Josiah Nelson carried the warning of the approach of the British to the southern part of Bedford. He did own a horse in 1774.

This part of the story is plausible, although others did carry the warning to Bedford, and still others might have been in a better location for the trip. The added details of the story are much less plausible. In their simplest form they require a failure of Revere or one of his companions to awaken Nelson, or of Nelson to do his duty when awakened. The most elaborate form of the tale requires belief that a trip by Lincoln farmers to the Boston market would not have been unusual on the 19th of April. There are other difficulties.⁵³

The other incident which has been passed on by later generations is the story of William Thorning and the Minute Man Boulder. The traditional boulder, and several other possibilities, are in the field which Josiah bought from Daniel Brown in 1770.⁵⁴

Daniel Brown Homestead (1739) - Thomas Nelson Field?

The sale by Daniel Brown of land which adjoined this field on the northeast to Josiah Nelson has been discussed. The piece Daniel kept North of the road was of about three acres. There is no record of its sale, but it was acquired by Thomas Nelson, probably before 1774.⁵⁵

53 For reference see Troop Movement Map, 4n.

54 For a brief discussion see the Troop Movement Map, pp.23-4.

55 Daniel Brown was taxed as a non-resident in Lincoln in 1771, but not in 1774. In any case, Thomas Nelson is a more likely owner for 1775 than Daniel Brown.

The John Nelson House:

The documents for the construction of this post-Revolutionary house survive. A foundation was dug about 1811; the other portion was added about 1820 when John got married. There is a possibility that one room dates to the eighteenth century. It appears to be of eighteenth century construction. There is no documentary evidence for this portion except for the possibility that an item in the construction bill for altering an old chimney relates to this room.

It does not seem likely that there was a room in this location in 1775. The site was not on a road in 1775. And there is no evidence for the house. There is the possibility that this room was moved to this site - that it is one of the missing houses of this area. The Daniel Brown house is one possibility.⁵⁶ There is a barn with the house today. The front part might be of early or mid-nineteenth century.

Foundation Ruins

The foundation between Nelson Road and Route 2A is a mystery. It appears to be about 40' long. The inside of the back wall is about 25' from the near edge of the current Nelson Road, which is near the location of the

⁵⁶ The item for altering the old chimney indicates that the room was used as a separate unit, and this causes further complications.

old road, if the stone walls nearby are old. There appears to be a corner on one side, and it is about $10\frac{1}{2}$ ' from the inside of the back wall. In any case, it was a narrow building. Mr. Edwin Worthen Sr., suggested that it might be the site of what he called the Hoar Tavern.

This foundation might have been connected with the Daniel Brown house, one of the farm outbuildings. He had a little over seven acres on the other side of the road, but about twenty-three on the side with this foundation. There is no special reason to think that this was a Revolutionary building. The land by the foundation was acquired by Josiah Nelson before 1818. It is probable that Daniel Brown did not own it in 1774.

Other Land East of Old Concord-Lexington Line.

Josiah Nelson acquired the land along the south side of the Country Road between present day Mill Street and the old Concord-Lexington line before 1775. The westernmost piece was a triangular orchard of about one half acre.

The land on the north side of the road is more difficult, and perhaps more important. We can start at the Lexington-Concord line with a purchase by Thomas Nelson of four acres from Daniel Hager, a laborer of Lincoln in 1763. This piece had had a house on it in 1752, but in several deeds after that date, there was no mention of a house.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ebenezer Lamson had purchased it in 1752. Lamson mortgaged some land in Concord early in 1754 - before the formation of Lincoln - and was described as a Concord resident. Thus we know that in 1754 he did not live in the house he had purchased in 1752. The land was taken as judgment for a debt in 1760, and the next two deeds did not mention a house.

The land immediately to the east of these four acres purchased by Thomas Nelson in 1763 was owned by Nathaniel Whittamore at the time of the purchase. It is assumed that this was Nathaniel, the brother of Jacob of Lexington, who had inherited sixty acres in two pieces in Lexington and Concord in 1755 from his father. (The will was written in 1752 and this explains the towns mentioned.)⁵⁸ Nathaniel, the husband of Jemima, sold land south of the road to the Nelsons, and this is the reason for assuming that it was the same Nathaniel who owned the land north of the road.

Nathaniel, Jemima's husband, did not find it easy to settle down. His first child was born in Lincoln in 1754. In September of 1756 he was of Lexington, a husbandman. In May of 1757 he was a husbandman of Lincoln. In 1764, 1765 and 1768 he was the same. The Lincoln tax records confirm that a Nathaniel Whittamore lived in this area.⁵⁹ From this it seems logical, but perhaps erroneous, to conclude that this Nathaniel sold all his

- 58 There are some problems with the Nathaniel Whittamores'. There was one in Lexington and one in Concord, about two miles apart and both married Abigail. Both had sons named Nathaniel. The daughter-in-law of the Lexington Nathaniel was Jemima, and it is hoped that the other Nathaniel Jr. did not marry a Jemima. We also know that a Nathaniel Whittamore died in Lincoln in 1773. It has been assumed that this was Jemima's husband, although this is not so stated. Jemima did remarry in 1778 in Lincoln. We do not know when the Lincoln Nathaniel Sr., a man of some wealth, died, or if he remained in the area after selling 203 acres in 1758. There was another Nathaniel who died in Lincoln or Concord in 1780 with but a half acre and a poor dwelling house. His widow was poor and in debt, but she was not named.
- 59 In 1764, his real estate was assessed at £6, or one-third that of Thomas Nelson. He also had a horse and two cows. In 1769, 1770 and 1771 he was taxed for a cow and his poll tax. The family disappeared from the lists after that. In 1764, his name was among those who lived along or near the Country Road. In 1769-71 he followed Aaron Brooks who lived just south of the road and a little to the west of Folly Pond, and Josiah Nelson.

land by 1769, but remained in the area while living with another family. (They may have lived with another family while he still owned land, if there was no house on the land.)

The family stayed in the area after Nathaniel died.⁶⁰ It is impossible to say that they lived with a family whose house was within the park. Perhaps Aaron Brooks is the best possibility. It is interesting to note that they did not go to live with Nathaniel's brother, Jacob.⁶¹

Empty Houses.

We have two or perhaps three empty or missing houses in about one thousand feet from the old Lexington-Concord line to the four acres plus Josiah Nelson purchased from Daniel Brown in 1770; the Ebenezer Lamson house of his 1752 purchase, the Daniel Brown house of 1739, and the possible Nathaniel Whittemore house. Unless a deed is found for the land in question, we probably will never know if there were houses on these pieces of land in 1775. Nor can we be sure that an empty house would have been noted on a deed.

60 The widow was married in Lincoln in 1778, and a daughter was married in Lexington in 1782 to an Acton man.

61 It is assumed that Nathaniel did not live in a house owned by another on another's land after 1768, because, as far as we know, he would have been taxed for this. It is possible that he had moved an unused house onto the sixty acres of land he inherited from his father in 1754. This was in Lexington and Concord, or this area. The best possible site for his home in the new town of Lincoln is on the land north of the road, to the east of the four acres Thomas Nelson acquired which abutted the old Lexington-Concord line, assuming it was the last piece he sold. This could have been in a house he or his father built, although no house is mentioned in the will. Or it could have been the house Ebenezer Lamson bought in 1752, which was missing, according to the deeds, in 1760. Or it could have been the Daniel Brown house.

This is important for two reasons. An empty house would have been part of the historical scene. And there is the story of William Dawes tricking the British officers by drawing his horse up short at an empty house. The Lanson house is too close to the site of Revere's capture, but the other two, or one, empty houses are possibilities.

The "Other Land" and the 19th of April.

The capture of Paul Revere has been mentioned. It is not certain that this occurred on the Lexington side of the old Concord-Lexington line, or whether the monument which marks it was placed there. (An existing conditions map would help.) It appears possible that it occurred on the land of Thomas Nelson. Mr. Hersey tells how he started a movement to have the site of the capture marked, and how the site was marked, as closely as could be ascertained at that time - 1899. The marker was placed by bars in a stone wall, something that conformed to Revere's story. How they knew just which bars is not explained anywhere. The road has been changed and the monument moved.

The relation of a house on this land to William Dawes escape has been discussed above. The other event is that of William Thorning's first shot or shots at the British which were fired from a field west of the Minute Man Boulder. We do not know about any of the fields in that area to say which might have had the trenches of one version, or the hiding place of another version. But the story puts Thorning's shots and narrow escape in this area.

LAND WEST OF THE CONCORD - LEXINGTON LINE: North of the Road.

The first piece of land to the west of the old town line was purchased by Nathaniel Whittamore of Concord in 1750 at which time it had a house. Whittamore sold the portion of this land which was nearest the road - the piece which probably had had the house - to Elizabeth Dodge, the wife of William in 1758. No house was mentioned in this deed. This deed was passed in April and in October William Dodge rented the land to Elizabeth Procter for seven years. This was the last deed recorded concerning the land until 1780 when Dodge sold it to Rev. William Smith, of Weymouth. This deed is too general to give information about the piece of land - about ten to fifteen acres - in question. It is assumed that there was no house on it in 1775, although we do not know where it went.

62 In 1750 when Patience Lamson petitioned for permission to split the farm she had received from her husband, she said that she had a buyer who would move the barn and the house. Nathaniel Whittamore bought the land, and title to the buildings, but we do not know where he moved them, or if he moved them.