

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT TO THE TOWN OF WESTBOROUGH ON ITS TWO FORGOTTEN MILITIA COMPANIES

A Proposed Plan for a Monument Honoring the 101 men of Westborough Who Responded to the Alarm of April 19, 1775:

A proposed plan for a new monument in Minuteman Park honoring all of the men of the Westborough militia who responded to the Alarm of April 19, 1775, is set out in the enclosed Exhibit 1. It has been prepared using the muster rolls submitted by the company commanders to obtain payment from the Provincial Congress for the service of the men on the Alarm (see Exhibits A, B and C of my Report of April 2, 2021). It has the following introduction:

“Although not recognized by the Town when it created this Minuteman Park in 1975, three companies of Westborough militia, a total of 101 men, marched on April 19, 1775, in response to the British army’s advances on Lexington and Concord. Many of them also served at other times during the Revolutionary War. These are their names and ranks, as set out in the muster rolls from which they were paid for their services on the April 19th Alarm.”

Given that the logical location for the monument in Minuteman Park would be adjacent to or directly across from the location of the existing monument honoring Captain Brigham’s minuteman company, erected by the Bicentennial Commission in 1975, I believe that the appearance of the new monument should complement the appearance of the existing memorial. Thus my proposal is for a bronze metal plaque, mounted on a natural stone boulder, with the names of the men in the three companies arranged in three vertical columns. As the minuteman company was larger than the two regular militia companies, placing its roster in the center with a militia company’s roster on each side provides useful balance.

The muster rolls used to pay the men were drawn up in accordance with directions from the Provincial Congress that required men who enlisted in the Continental Army to be accounted for separately, at the bottom of the rolls. I believe that the information about these enlistments should be preserved but indicated by asterisks alongside the names of those enlisting rather than by the physical separation of their names, as in the muster rolls.

I believe that the order of names in the three companies should be more or less in the same order as on the muster rolls but without the separation of the names of men who enlisted in the Continental Army. It does not appear that there was any practice at this time of putting names in alphabetical order on muster rolls. Further, I think it is useful, with respect to Captain Brigham’s company, for the names to be placed in the same order as on the existing monument as it makes it easier to see where corrections have been made in some of the names and ranks.

Whatever the arrangement of names, I believe the goal of the monument is to show the totality of the Westborough response to this extraordinary event and to correct the existing record.

Correction of errors in the existing Minuteman Park plaque:

The documents which are now available make it clear that the existing Minuteman Park plaque has a number of errors in the names and ranks of the men in Captain Brigham's company of minutemen. In the main these were errors in the roll of the minuteman company compiled by Rev. H.P DeForest, whose 1891 *History of Westborough* was the source of the information used by the Bicentennial Commission for the monument.

In the *History*, Rev. DeForest set out a list of those responding to the April 19th Alarm which was based upon the November 27, 1775, training roll submitted to the Town by Captain Brigham seeking payment for minuteman training ordered by the Selectmen. This training roll and a roll of receipts for payments dated March 18, 1776, showing the signatures of all but four of the men who received payment for training, have been digitized and can be reviewed on line at <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:z316sd76w>.

It is puzzling that Rev. DeForest used a training roll for his account because, as he states in his *History* (Page 163, see Exhibit F to my Report of April 2, 2021), he had access to the "muster roll in the State Records" which was Captain Brigham's record of the actual event, now obtained from the Massachusetts Archives (see Exhibit A). Perhaps his knowledge of the muster roll in the Archives came at a later time, after he had drafted his text. In any event, it appears that he made use of the roll in the Archives as he sets out full first names of men whose first names were abbreviated on the training roll. He also listed the names of men who had enlisted in the Continental Army, which he refers to as "the service of the United Colonies".

A comparison of these documents with the existing plaque in Minuteman Park shows the following errors on the plaque:

- **Edmund** Brigham is the name on the muster roll (in several places) and the training receipt and is the name in Rev. DeForest's *History*. However, for unknown reasons the name became **Edward** Brigham on the Minuteman Park plaque.
- John Ball is described on the *History* list as a 4th **Lieutenant** when his position was 4th **Sergeant**, both on the muster roll and the training roll. This error was carried over to the Minuteman Park plaque.
- Asahel **Biglow** is the name on both the muster roll and the training receipt but the name became Asahel **Bigelow** on Rev. DeForest's list and then **Asabel Bigelow** on the Minuteman Park plaque.
- **Edmund** Entwishill's name is given on the *History* list as **Edward** Entwishill even though on the same page of the *History* Rev. DeForest noted that **Edmund** Entwishill was one of the corporals who had "enlisted in the service of the United Colonies". (see Exhibit F). The muster roll and the training receipt clearly show that his name was **Edmund** Entwishill. The Minuteman Park plaque shows him as Edward Entwishill,

- Joshua Chamber**lin**, a corporal, is the name on both the muster roll and the training roll but the name became Joshua Chamber**lain** on the *History* list (perhaps because there were two other Chamberlain's in the company) and this carried over on the Minuteman Park plaque. The rolls show other men with last names of both Chamberlin and Chamberlain.
- **Simon** Forbes is the name on the muster roll, the training roll and the training receipt but the name became **Simeon** Forbes on the *History* list and this carried over to the Minuteman Park plaque.
- Joseph **McCulloch** is the name on the muster roll and the training receipt but the name became Joseph **McCulloch** on the *History* list and this carried over to the Minuteman Park plaque.
- John **McCullar** is the name on the muster roll and the training receipt but the name became John **McCulloch** on the *History* list and this carried over to the Minuteman Park plaque.
- **Phinehas** Brigham is the name on the muster roll and the training receipt but the name became **Phineas** Brigham on the *History* list and on the Minuteman Park plaque.
- **William Woods** is named on the muster roll as having served in response to the April 19th Alarm and in his *History* Rev. DeForest noted that William Woods had been substituted for James Miller, Jr. on the muster roll "in the State Records". However, the name William Woods is not on the Minuteman Park plaque.

Conclusion:

I respectfully submit that the erection of a new monument in Minuteman Park, constructed along the lines of Exhibit 1, showing the names and ranks of the 101 men from Westborough who responded to the Alarm of April 19, 1775, is the proper way to honor these men and to correct the existing record.

Sincerely

David A. Nourse

May 31, 2021

Exhibit 1: Plan for a Monument