

## Calling out the militia after Lexington and Concord, 1775

### Introduction

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On the night of April 18, 1775, 700 British soldiers began to march toward Concord, Massachusetts, to seize and destroy arms the American patriots had stored there. Warned by Paul Revere and William Dawes, minutemen confronted and drove back the British at the towns of Lexington and Concord.

On April 19, Isaac Merrill, a colonel in the militia and a delegate to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, sent this pressing message to John Currier, captain of the Amesbury Militia, requesting assistance:

I have received intilgence that the ministeriel troops under the Command of General Gage did Last evening march out of Boston and marched to Lexington & there Killed a Number of our American Soldiers & thence proceed to Concord Killing and Destroying our men and interest: These are therefore to order you forthwith to Notify and muster as many of your under officers and Soldiers as you can possible to meet immediatly to Some Suitable place: and then to march of forthwith to Concord or Else where as in your Descretion you Shall think best . . .

Written in the heat of the moment, just hours after the encounters between Massachusetts patriots and British regulars, the letter is filled with grammatical errors and is vague in some details. It conveys the sense of urgency that was felt by participants in the incipient revolution. Local militias responded to letters such as Merrill's and laid siege to British-held Boston.

### Questions for Discussion

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Read the introduction and study the letter. Then apply your knowledge of American history to answer the following questions:

1. Explain why British troops engaged American patriots in battles near the towns of Lexington and Concord in 1775.
2. What kind of information about the events at Lexington and Concord did Isaac Merrill's letter provide? What were his requests? Be specific in your responses.
3. How would American patriots have reacted to the information in this letter? How would loyalists have reacted to it?

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### Transcript

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Isaac Merrill to John Currier, Essex County, Massachusetts, April 19, 1775.

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Isaac merrill

Coll

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Isaac Merrill to John Currier, April 19, 1775 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00303)