

Moses Harrington 3rd
A Brief Biography
By Bill Poole

The name Moses Harrington has caused a great deal of genealogical confusion. There were a number of individuals by that name living in Massachusetts in the mid-18th century. There were three Moses Harringtons in Lexington alone, and all were alive on April 19, 1775.¹ In order to distinguish among individuals with the same name and living in the same town, the practice was to call the eldest, Senior, the next eldest, Junior, and then number others 3rd, 4th, etc. or use Roman numerals III, IV and so on.

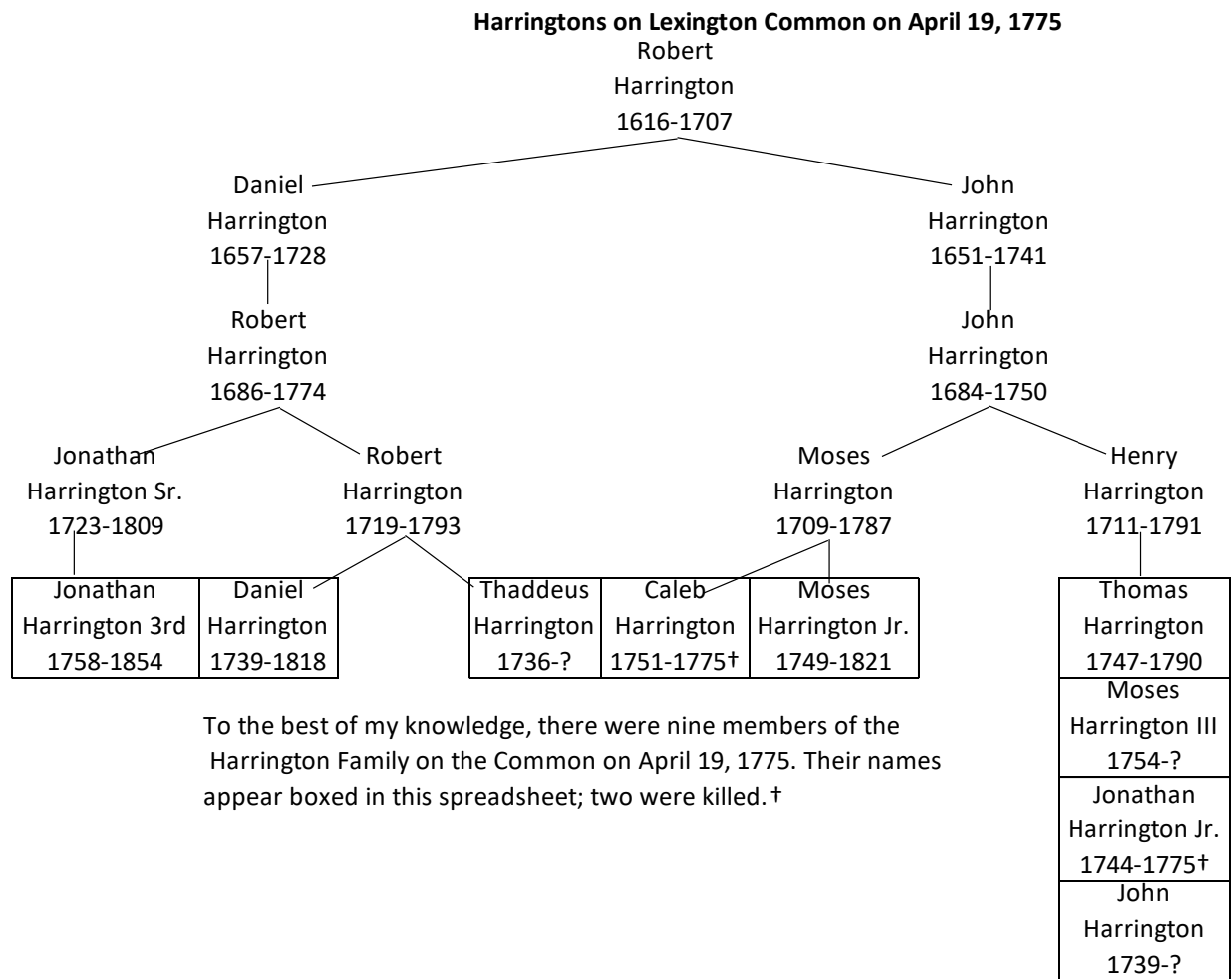
The three Moses Harringtons were Moses, Sr. born January 6, 1709-10 in Lexington who was in his mid-60s and thought not to have taken part in the activities of April 19th. His son, Moses Jr., was a participant as was his first cousin, Moses 3rd, son of Henry Harrington, and the subject of this essay. Their names appear on the Minute Men Monument on the grounds of Buckman Tavern in Lexington, and on April 25, 1775, both Moses Jr, and Moses 3rd signed their names to an affidavit testifying as to what took place on Lexington Common on April 19, 1775.²

The three Moses Harringtons from Lexington were all descendants of Robert Harrington — the first of the Harringtons to come to Massachusetts. Robert settled in Watertown in 1642 where he married Susanna George on October 1, 1649. Susanna predeceased Moses on July 6, 1694, and he died May 17, 1707.³ Their gravestones can be seen in the Old Burying Ground in Watertown.⁴ Robert and Susanna had thirteen children, the second of whom was John, born August 24, 1631.⁵ He married Hannah Winter at Watertown on November 17, 1681. She died July 17, 1741 and he followed on August 24, 1741.⁶ They lived in that part of Watertown that became Waltham and are buried in Grove Hill Cemetery in Waltham.⁷ They had twelve children, the second of whom was John, born October, 1684, died November 29, 1749-50.⁸ He married Elizabeth Cutter of Cambridge Farms (Later Lexington) on April 12, 1705. Elizabeth was born March 5, 1680-81 and died February 8, 1749-50.⁹ Their burial site is unknown. John and Elizabeth had nine children the fourth of whom was Henry born January 8, 1711-12, died December 25, 1791.¹⁰ Henry married Sarah Laughton in Lexington on June 4, 1735. Henry and Sarah had eleven children, the ninth of whom was Moses known as the 3rd, born March 22, 1754.¹¹

Moses 3rd was joined on Lexington Common by eight other Harringtons — four third cousins, a first cousin and three brothers [See spreadsheet on page two]. Two of the Harrington family were killed on the morning of April 19th. Before the Regulars arrived Caleb went to the meeting house, either to help distribute the powder stored there or replenish his own supply. As the Recoats rushed onto the Common, Caleb found himself surrounded and in trying to escape was killed.¹²

The rest of the Harringtons were already standing in line or hastening to join their comrades when the firing began. Jonathan Jr., Moses 3rd's brother, was gunned down not far from where his home stood on the west side of the Common. Moses 3rd along with most of the other members of the militia quickly abandoned the field. However, in addition to Jonathan Jr. and Caleb, six other men from Lexington lost their lives and nine were wounded. It was probably after the Regulars had departed and the survivors returned to assist the wounded that Moses 3rd learned that Jonathan Jr. had been killed. It is difficult to imagine Moses's thoughts as he gazed at the body of his beloved brother. Nor can we conceive of his

emotion as the body of Jonathan Jr was hastily buried with the other dead at the rear of the Burial Ground and the site concealed with brush to avoid the bodies being desecrated by the King's troops on their expected return.¹³



We do not know if Moses^{3rd} joined with Captain Parker's men when they ambushed the Regulars during their hurried return from Concord at the site now known as Parker's Revenge. According to Charles Hudson both Moses^{3rd} and his cousin, Moses Jr, served with Captain Parker's company for five days from May 6 to May 10, 1775 at Cambridge. However, one was given credit for five days and the other only one. Thereafter, neither Hudson nor the records in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* distinguish between the two cousins and the service recorded there could be for either one. It includes five days at Roxbury from March 4 to March 8, 1776 as a sergeant in Captain John Bridge's Company, Colonel Eleazer Brooks's regiment; and two months and nine days at Rhode Island from May 10 to July 10, 1777. Hudson also has a Moses taking part in the "Eighth Campaign Three Months to the Jerseys" with no date given.¹⁴

Moses 3rd disappears from the record following the single service entry in Hudson in which he was specifically named. Perhaps an investigation of other sources will reveal more. The *Lexington Vital Records* list the death of an apparently unaccounted for Moses in February 1835 and this may be he.¹⁵

Footnotes

¹Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts from Its First Settlement to 1868, Revised and Continued to 1912*, Two Volumes, Lexington Historical Society, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1913, Volume II, *Genealogy*, pp. 275-6;

²Kehoe, Vincent J.R., Compiler, *We Were There, April 19th, 1775: The American Rebels*, Vin Kehoe Enterprises, Self-published, Chelmsford, MA, 1973, p. 87.

³ Henry Bond, *Genealogies of the Families and Descendants of the Early Settlers of Watertown, Massachusetts, Including Waltham and Weston: To Which is Appended the Early History of the Town, With Illustrations, Maps and Notes*, New England Historic-Genealogical Society, Boston, 1860, pp. 272-3.

⁴Photos of their gravestones can be seen at:

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=20992084>

⁵Bond, p. 273

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 273-4.

⁷A photo of their gravestone can be found at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34308448/john-harrington>

⁸Bond, p. 273; Hudson, *Genealogies*, pp. 272-73.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Hudson, *Genealogies*, p. 274.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 275-76.

¹²Hudson, Volume I, *History*, p. 252;

¹³Letter of Elizabeth Clarke, daughter of Reverend Jonas Clarke, written to her niece, Lucy Ware Allen on April 20, 1835, describing the events of April 19, 1775, collection of the Lexington Historical Society.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 272-280; Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A compilation from the Archives Prepared and Published by the Secretary of the Commonwealth in Accordance with Chapter 100, Resolves of 1891, Boston, Wright & Potter, 1896-1908, Volume 7, p. 329.

¹⁵ Lexington, Massachusetts, *Records of Births Marriages and Deaths to January 1, 1898, Part 1 from Earliest Record to End of 1853*, Wright and Potter, Boston, 1898, p. 32, on line at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Lexington/>