

Benjamin Locke
A Brief Biography
By Bill Poole

Benjamin Locke was one of four members of the Locke family who responded to the alarm of April 19, 1775. The others were Reuben, Benjamin's brother, and their first cousins, Amos and Ebenezer. All were descendants of **William Locke Sr.** the first member of the Locke family to immigrate to New England. William Sr. was born in Stepney Parish, London, England in 1628 the son of William and Elizabeth. In 1634, at age six, and orphaned, William embarked for the new World on board the ship *Planter*, Nicholas Trarice, master. He traveled with his Uncle and Aunt Nicholas and Sarah Davies and his cousin, Joseph Davies. Nicholas and the family first settled in Charlestown and then moved to Woburn in 1642 when the town was set off from Charlestown. In 1648 Nicholas sold his house and land in Woburn and moved back to Charlestown. He later removed to York, Main where he died about 1669-70, leaving his nephew William "two silver spoons and five shillings in silver."¹

William Sr. remained in Charlestown and then moved to Woburn, where on December 25, 1655 he married Mary Clarke (1640-1715) daughter of William and Mary Clarke of Woburn. Mary was only fifteen when she married, and William 27. They had nine children, all born in Woburn: 1. **William**, born December 27, 1657 but lived for only 13 days; 2. **William Jr.**, born January 18, 1659; 3. **John**, born August 1, 1661; 4. **Joseph, the Grandfather of Benjamin**, born March 8, 1664; 5. **Mary**, born October 16, 1666; 6. **Samuel**, born October 14, 1669; 7. **Ebenezer**, born January 8, 1674; 8. **James**, born November 14, 1667; and 9. **Elizabeth**, born January 4, 1681.²



View of William Locke Home prior to destruction

William Sr. became an extensive land owner in Woburn. He owned house-lots in town, and both he and his descendants would hold a great deal of land in western and northwest Woburn along the current-day Lexington and Lowell Streets. William's home was located at today's 183 Lexington Street in Woburn, but is scheduled for destruction. However, much of his land lay in that portion of Cambridge Farms that became Lexington near today's East and North Streets. Several of his sons lived in this area in close proximity to one another their lands abutting. When the Town of Burlington, MA was incorporated in 1799, from lands set off from Billerica, Woburn

and Lexington, the homestead of William's son, William, Jr., was to be included in the Lexington grant to Burlington. However, Thomas Locke, one of William's grandsons, then living on the estate, petitioned that the homestead remain in Lexington. His petition was accepted resulting in the unusual, triangular-shaped wedge on the northeast corner of Lexington that extends into Burlington.³

William Sr. was active in town affairs and was chosen a deacon of the Woburn Church. In 1687 he was one of the slate of Selectman in a controversial election held in contravention of the order of Royal Governor, Sir William Andros forbidding the holding of town elections unless warranted by "certain Justices of the County . . . or by direct authority from the government." When the usual date for holding town elections arrived, February 22d, 1687, the last Tuesday of the month, the voters of Woburn nominated and elected a slate of town officers opposed to the arbitrary rule of Andros. The governor promptly annulled the vote, and the inhabitants were directed to meet March 7th for a new election. They did so, and chose the same men previously elected. The next year the same thing happened. An election was held on February 28th the last Tuesday of the month and the same Board of Selectmen chosen. It was again annulled, but in a subsequent election the Woburnites held firmly to their choices and William was again chosen one of the Selectmen. He also served again in 1696. William died at Woburn June 16, 1720, Mary having predeceased him dying July 18, 1715.⁴

Joseph Sr., the grandfather of Benjamin, lived in the part of Cambridge Farms that later became Lexington. His farm was probably located along present day Lowell Street and adjoined his brother William's land. Joseph Sr.'s first wife Mary (maiden name unknown) died April 17, 1708 having given birth to seven children: 1. **Mary**, baptized October 26, 1712 at Boston; 2. **Abigail**, baptized October 26, 1712 at Boston; 3. **Lydia**, baptized October 26 at Boston; 4. **Sarah**, born July 14, 1696 at Lexington; 5. **Joseph Jr.**, born March 19, 1699 at Lexington; 6. **Elizabeth**, born March 15, 1702/03; and **Huldah**, born June 28, 1706.⁵

When Mary Locke died April 17, 1708, Joseph Sr. married **Margaret Meade** who was born in Cambridge, MA on January 20, 1676 and died at Lexington on May 25, 1732, daughter of Israel and Mary Hall Meade. Margaret and Joseph Sr. had seven children, all born in Lexington. 1. **Margaret**, born May 6, 1710; 2. **Joanna**, born February 2, 1711/12; 3. **Ruth**, born March 9, 1713/14; 4. **Stephen, the father of Benjamin, the subject of this essay**, born January 26, 1718; 5. **unnamed child**, died 1695; 6. **unnamed child**, died March 31, 1707; and 7. **unnamed child**, died April 7, 1708.⁶

Margaret Mead Locke died on May 25, 1732, and Joseph Sr. than married Hannah Peirce of Weston on November 5, 1743. Hannah died on April 10, 1747, preceding Joseph Sr. who died between 1753 and 1755.⁷

In 1733, Joseph, Sr. sold his son Joseph, Jr. "15 acres in Lex. bounded S.E. by the town way; S.W. by Dr. Fiske; N.W. by Daniel Tidd; N. by Joshua Simonds and elsewhere by his own land. This would have been on today's North Hancock Street. Joseph, Jr. then purchased from his father 10 more acres abutting his own land; the western half of his father's "mansion house" and barn, and also half of 12 acres in Woburn, "bounded S.W. by Lex. Line, and elsewhere by Samuel Kendall and Samuel Locke. These purchases were obtained for £200 in "bills of credit," "and also partly in consideration of £240 to be accounted towards his portion" [of his inheritance]. Joseph lived in the one-half of his father's homestead and when Joseph, Sr. died, Joseph, Jr.'s step-brother, Stephen, inherited the other or eastern half. Stephen was the youngest son, and in accordance with the then rules of inheritance he would receive at least a portion of the parental homestead. Ordinarily, Hannah, his wife would also have inherited part of the homestead had not she died before Joseph, Sr.⁸

Stephen Locke, father of Benjamin

Stephen married on an unknown date, **Mehitable Raymond**, daughter of Jonathan and Charity Gale Raymond born October 12, 1721 in Lexington, and died October 29, 1815. They lived on Joseph Sr's estate and had five children all born in Lexington. 1. **Mehitabel**, born August 17, 1747; 2. **Reuben**, born March 16, 1748/49; 3. **Stephen Jr.**, born March 29, 1750; 4. **Elizabeth**, born June 14, 1753; and 5. **Benjamin, the subject of this essay**, born May 7, 1756.⁹

Benjamin Locke along with his brother, Reuben, and his two first cousins, Amos and Ebenezer, hastened to Lexington Common when the belfry bell sounded the alarm on the evening of April 18, 1775. After waiting for quite some time, Amos and Ebenezer, after hearing a report from an individual who had come from Boston that

he had seen no Regulars anywhere on his route, decide to return to their homes in Woburn. They would quickly return when they heard the firing on the Common and Ebenezer discharged his weapon at the Regulars on the Common.¹⁰ It is presumed that Reuben and Benjamin had remained, either in Buckman's Tavern or in a nearby home, and at the sound of William Diamon's drum hastened to face off against the Regulars. None of the four Locke cousins were injured in the ensuing skirmish.

Benjamin and his brother, Reuben, were among those who signed a deposition testifying with regard to what had transpired on Lexington Common on the morning of April 19, 1775.¹¹

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We Nathaniel Mullikin, Phillip Russell, Moses Harrington, Thomas & Daniel Harrington, William Grimes, William Fidd, Israel Hastings, Jonas Stone Junr, James Wyman, Thaddeus Harrington, John Chandler, Joshua Reed Junr, Joseph Simonds, Phineas Smith, John Chandler Junr, Reuben Lock, Joel Viles, Nathan Reed, Samuel Fidd, Benjamin Lock, Thomas Winship, Simon Snow, John Smith, Moses Harrington Jr, Joshua Reed, Ebenezer Parker, John Harrington, Emory Wellington, John Norner, Israel Green, Phineas Stearns, Israel Durant & Thomas Headley Junr all of Lawful age and Inhabitants of Lexington in the County of Middlesex and Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. do testify & declare that on the 19th of April instant about one or two o'clock in the morning being informed that several officers of the Regulars had the evening before been riding up & down the Road and had detained & insulted the Inhabitants passing the same, and also understanding that a body of Regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord with intent (as it was supposed) to take the

Stores belonging to the Colony in that Town. We were alarmed & having met at the place of our Company's Parade. were dismissed by our Captain John Parker for the Present. with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of the Drum - we further testify & declare that about five o'clock in the morning. hearing our drum beat. we proceeded towards the Parade and soon found that a Large body of Troops were marching towards us Some of our Company were coming up to the Parade. and others had reached it; at which time the Company ^{began} to disperse. whilst our backs were turned on the Troops we were fired on by them & a number of our

The following entries for Benjamin appear in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution*.¹²

LOCK, BENJAMIN. Private, Capt. John Bridge's co., Col. Eleazer Brooks's regt.; service from March 4 to March 8, 1776, 5 days; company stationed at Roxbury.

LOCK, BENJAMIN, Concord. Capt. Charles Miles's co., Col. Jonathan Reed's regt.; pay abstract for travel allowance, etc., from Albany home, dated Concord, Dec. 20, 1776; reported discharged; also, Private, same co. and regt.; pay abstract for travel allowance, etc., from Ticonderoga, sworn to Feb. 16, 1777; 190 miles travel allowed said Lock; service with Northern army; also, order on Capt. Miles, payable to Edmund Munro, dated Lexington, Feb. 17, 1777, signed by said Lock and others, for travel allowance, etc., from Ticonderoga; also, Capt. Miles's co.; company receipt, given to Edmund Munro, dated Lexington, Feb. 18, 1777, for mileage and travel allowance; service on campaign at Ticonderoga.

LOCK, BENJAMIN. Private, Capt. Samuel Farrar's co., Col. Reed's regt.; enlisted Sept. 29, 1777; discharged Nov. 7, 1777; service, 1 mo. 10 days; company detached from Col. Eleazer Brooks's regt. to reinforce army under Gen. Gates at the Northward.

These record Benjamin's service in the early days of the siege of Boston and also in support of the Northern Continental Army at Saratoga both prior to and during the battle in which he would have taken part and witnessed the surrender of General John Burgoyne.

Benjamin applied for a pension for his service in the Revolutionary War, and on August 23, 1833 he was awarded an annual sum of \$24 for service as a Private with the Massachusetts Militia. He was at the time aged 77.¹³

Reverend Samuel Stillman of Boston's First Baptist Church officiated at the marriage of Benjamin and **Elizabeth (Betsey) Wyman** in Boston on August 10, 1784.¹⁴ Elizabeth was born in Wilmington, MA on September 10, 1761, daughter of Reuben and Katherine (Wyman) Wyman. Betsey and Benjamin had eight children, all born in Lexington. **Betsy**, born February 10, 1784; **Benjamin**, born and died March 19, 1787; **Ruth**, born June 6, 1790; **Lucy**, born September 17, 1792, died October 4, 1793, just over a year old; **Benjamin**, born May 17, 1795; **Lucy**, born August 8, 1797; **Levi**, born December 1, 1798 and **Eusebia**, born June 26, 1802. It was customary at that time to honor children who had died young by naming another child for them. Such was the case with the first **Benjamin** and **Lucy**.¹⁵

According to Charles Hudson, “he resided at Burlington and Lexington for the greater part of his life, and afterward at Boston.”¹⁶ He probably lived among the other Lockes perhaps close to North Street or in that portion of Woburn that later became Burlington. When he removed to Boston is uncertain, but his children married in Boston or Arlington, MA beginning in 1805.

Daughter Betsey’s intention to marry to Timothy Tileston, Jr. was published in Boston on April 18, 1805.¹⁷ His daughter Ruth married Harvey Tileston in Boston on June 11, 1811.¹⁸ Lucy married James Parks Wallace in Arlington on April 25, 1824.¹⁹ Eusebia married in Boston on August 5, 1824, Lambert Maynard.²⁰ Levi married Susan Symonds in Boston on December 1, 1829,²¹ and Benjamin married Susan Tileston in Boston on October 9, 1832.²²

I have not yet found where Benjamin and Betsey Wyman Locke were buried

Footnotes

¹John G. Locke, *Book of the Lockes, A Genealogical and Historical record of the Descendants of William Locke, of Woburn. With an Appendix Containing A History of the Lockes in England, also of the Family of John Locke, of Hampton, N.H., and Kindred Families and Individuals*, Boston, James Munroe and Company, MDCCCLIII, pp. 2-15; Charles 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*, p. 364.

² *Book of the Lockes*, p16; Hudson, p. 364.

³ *Book of the Lockes*, pp. 16-17; Hudson, pp. 366-7.

⁴ *Book of the Lockes*, pp. 16-17; Hudson, 364-5; Samuel Sewall, *The History of Woburn, Middlesex Count, Mass. From the Grant of Its Territory to Charlestown, in 1640, To the Year 1860, By Samuel Sewall of Burlington, Mass., Sometime Pastor of the Church There, With a Memorial Sketch of the Author By Rev. Charles C. Sewall*, Boston, Wiggin and Lunt, Publishers, 1868, pp. 128-30 and 177.

⁵*Book of the Lockes*, p. 18-19.

⁶Hudson, pp. 365-6.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 365

⁸*Book of the Lockes*, p19.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 28; Hudson, p. 368.

¹⁰Frank Warren Coburn, compiler, *Muster Rolls of the Participating Companies of American Militia and Minute-Men in The battle of April 19, 1775*, Lexington, MA, Self-published, 1912, pp. 33-4.

¹¹Deposition #7 of Nathaniel Mullikin, Philip Russell, et al. Regarding the Events of April 18 and 19, 1775 at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts Bay Colony, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6883155>

¹²Massachusetts Office of the Secretary of State, *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A Compilation from the Archives*, Seventeen volumes, Wright and Potter Printing Company, Boston, 1896, vol. IX, p. 896.

¹³Revolutionary War Pension Roll of 1935, Volume I [314], p. 119. https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/20126:60514?_phsrc=PeA471&_phstart=successSource&gsfn=Benjamin&gsln=Locke&ml_rpos=1&queryId=a83e0d15c290e02a236953905676e0f0

¹⁴Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Benjamin Locke, Boston, Marriages and Death, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/8534579:2495>

¹⁵Hudson, *Genealogy*, p. 370.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

- ¹⁷Massachusetts, U. S. Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988, Boston, Marriage Publications 1798-1807 Vol. 7, at https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2495/images/40400_274789-01114?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=PeA422&_phstart=successSource&pId=45620463
- ¹⁸Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Harvey Tileston, Vol. 8, at https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2495/images/40400_274791-00079?treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=PeA420&_phstart=successSource&pId=46350297
- ¹⁹Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Lambert Maynard, Boston Marriage Publications, 1823-1828, Vol. 10. At https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/46365952:2495?tid=&pid=&queryId=64e83f9e0a3712cfc8a559dde0426772&_phsrc=PeA425&_phstart=successSource
- ²⁰Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Lucy Locke, Arlington Vital Records Transcript, Arlington Marriages, page 112, at https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/27234483:2495?tid=&pid=&queryId=c0097801b41263dbb34b583a2f83f354&_phsrc=PeA475&_phstart=successSource
- ²¹Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Levi Locke, Boston Marriages 1840-1849, Vol. 2 at https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/45751660:2495?tid=&pid=&queryId=267a98b2156828d055ecbe95e952e4be&_phsrc=PeA474&_phstart=successSource
- ²²Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 for Benjamin Lock, Boston, Births, Marriages and Deaths at <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/8534579:2495>