

Biography of Elizabeth Hoar Whittemore

Elizabeth Hoar Whittemore was the daughter of Lt. Daniel Hoar and Sarah Jones Hoar of Concord MA. She was the 5th of 6 children and born in 1722, though an exact date could not be verified. (Some accounts listed her as being born in 1718, but after locating her gravestone, she died in October of 1805 at the age of 83, which verifies a birth date of 1722). Elizabeth became the third wife of Jacob Whittemore (3/3/1722-6/21/1780) on December 5, 1754, when she was 32.

Jacob had previously been married to his 16-year-old cousin Esther Whittemore, the mother of his daughter Esther Whittemore Brown (born in 1748). Esther died shortly after giving birth to her daughter, and Jacob married Deborah Flagg on October 19, 1749. Deborah was born on February 13, 1719, so she was 30 when she married 28-year-old Jacob. A child named Artemus was born in 1749 and another named Jonathan was born in 1750. It is presumed that they died young because there are no records that mention what happened to either of them. A daughter named Sarah was born on November 1, 1751, and Deborah died shortly after giving birth to her.

Jacob is left with 2 little girls, possibly 2 little boys and lived as a single dad for about 3 years before marrying Elizabeth. There was one report that Elizabeth and Jacob had 2 children who either died at birth or shortly after, but this was not confirmed anywhere else. The family lived with various relatives in a crowded house Jacob inherited from his father Nathaniel, and the girls later married local boys who may or may not have assisted on the farm. Esther married Benjamin Brown and had 10 children, and Sarah married Moses Reed and had 11 children.

Between the 1771 land records, the 1780 probate inventory, and information compiled and provided by Polly Kienle who prepared materials for the NPS, we know that Mr. Whittemore inherited 114 acres which consisted of meadow, orchard, and woods both north and south of the Concord road. In addition to a “mansion” house (the surviving house is large but is not a mansion in the modern sense; this term refers to the basic 2 over 2 style of the house) there was a barn, a corn house, a cider mill, and a blacksmith shop not owned by the family. This was run by the Browns, possibly relatives of daughter Esther’s husband.

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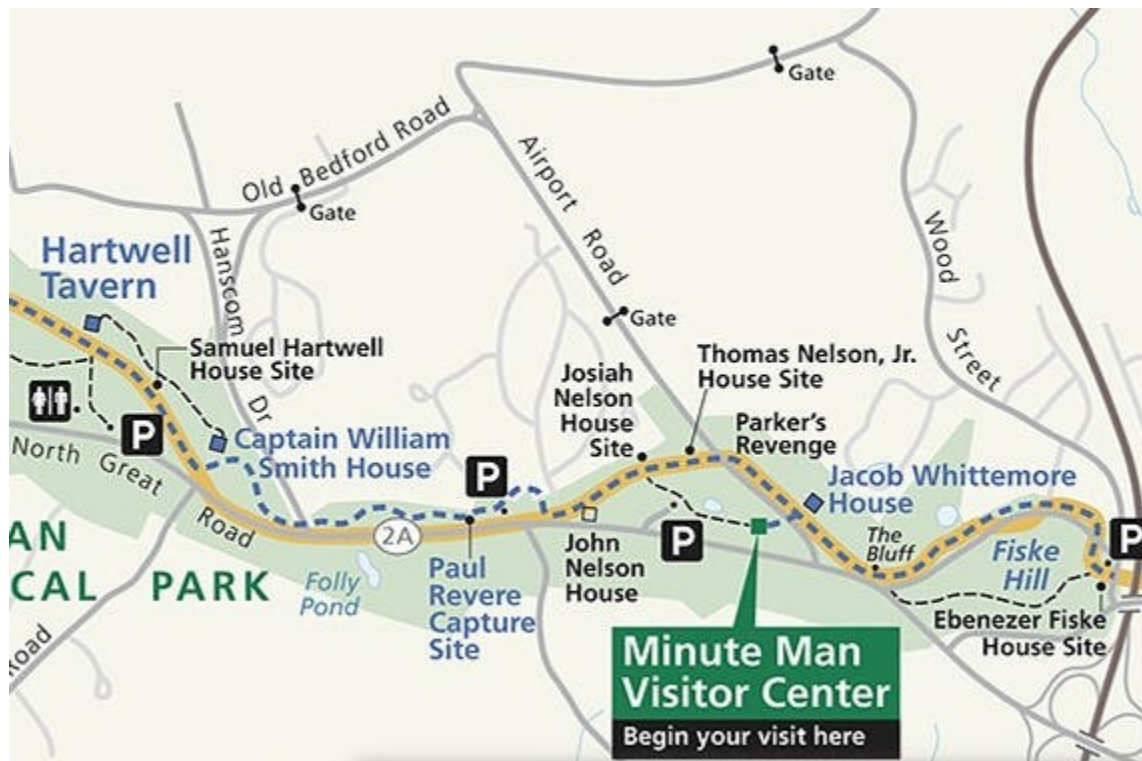


The Jacob Whittemore house, Lexington, MA. Photo by Kristel Henry

Exact numbers varied between the 1771 records and Jacob's probate inventory at the time of his death in 1780, but the family had horses, a pair of oxen, cows, sheep, and swine. They likely also had chicken and/or geese, but those are not mentioned, nor are dogs (for sheep herding) or cats. They had 20 barrels of cider from the orchard in their cider mill, as well as 3 tons of English hay and 5 tons of meadow hay. It appears that the family was neither particularly well off, nor particularly poor; rather they would have been the "middling sort" managing a working farm.

Significantly, they did not have "servants for life", which meant that there were no enslaved people living with the family. We assume that Mr. and Mrs. Whittemore and their children worked the farm. Since there were 3 women and 1 man before the daughters married, it is likely that there were local young men from neighboring families helping with the heavy work. We don't know this for certain, but it is a reasonable conclusion to draw. Moses and Sarah Reed remained on the farm after they married, so there were at least 2 adult men to take care of the heavier work.

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Map from MMNHP/NPS website

At some time between 1 and 2 in the morning of April 19, the Whittemore and Reed families would have been awakened by the pounding of hooves and possibly the alarm cry of “the Regulars are coming out!” Paul Revere was captured just west of the Whittemore house at around 2 a.m. so it is highly likely that he and William Dawes, and possibly Samuel Prescott rode from Lexington Common along the road past the Whittemore house, though there is no documentation indicating that anyone in the house spoke to the riders.

The adults in the family likely passed a mostly sleepless night, though they no doubt tried to get the little children back to sleep and perhaps encouraged their ill daughter to take some rest. In the early morning hours, the church bells began to toll the warning, and signal gunshots (typically 3 shots in a row) were being fired to call out the militia to Lexington Common.

Moses Reed was 26 and Jacob Whittemore 54, so although Jacob was on the older side, both men must have been expected to turn out with the militia. Son in law Moses had 3 family members in Captain Parker’s Company (Uncle Nathan Reed, his father’s first cousin Joshua Reed Sr., and his 2nd cousin Joshua Reed Jr.) who did take part in the conflict on the green that morning. Elizabeth’s eldest brother John, who would have been 68 years old, reportedly fought at North Bridge in Concord later that morning, a member of a company led by his son Samuel.

The family at that time consisted of Jacob and Elizabeth, daughter Sarah and her husband Moses Reed, their 2 little boys: 4-year-old Whittemore and 2-year-old Moses, and baby Sarah, born on

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April 1, 1775. Sarah was considerably unwell following the birth (she recovered, had 8 more children and lived until 1830). The family buried their valuables and fled the house just before the King's troops leaving Concord came back through on their return to Boston amidst heavy fighting.

Significantly, neither man elected to join their neighbors confronting the King's army. Instead, they carried Sarah out on a mattress to a wagon and hid in the woods some distance away from the house. Some reports stated that it was behind the house, but there was a conflicting report that indicated that seeking woods behind the house would have taken them straight into the Parker's revenge site, and that the safer woods were opposite the house south of the Concord Rd.

Soon after the family departed at around mid-afternoon there was a skirmish on the property, and a wounded soldier may have been brought to the blacksmith shop for medical treatment. I found no accounts of damage to the Whittemores' house or personal property, (though that doesn't necessarily mean they escaped entirely unscathed) but other neighbors were not so fortunate. Many had furniture, crockery, and looking glasses smashed, and furniture and houses or barns burned by the retreating soldiers.

Why didn't the men join the Lexington company on the green? They were likely not Tory sympathizers or conscientious objectors, as Moses Reed later joined the Continental Army. Of course, we have no way of knowing for certain, but it is likely that Jacob, having lost 2 wives to complications of childbirth, and possibly having lost several children to early death, was not inclined to leave his daughter alone in a state of ill health with 2 children under the age of 5 and a newborn to care for. He had to have known that if she couldn't walk, her stepmother could not possibly have assisted her and the children out of the house alone, thus putting them in danger of molestation by the troops. He may also have encouraged his son-in-law Moses to remain behind to keep the family together and keep him from danger while his wife was ill. They may also have initially believed that the King's troops would never molest or fire upon the citizens.

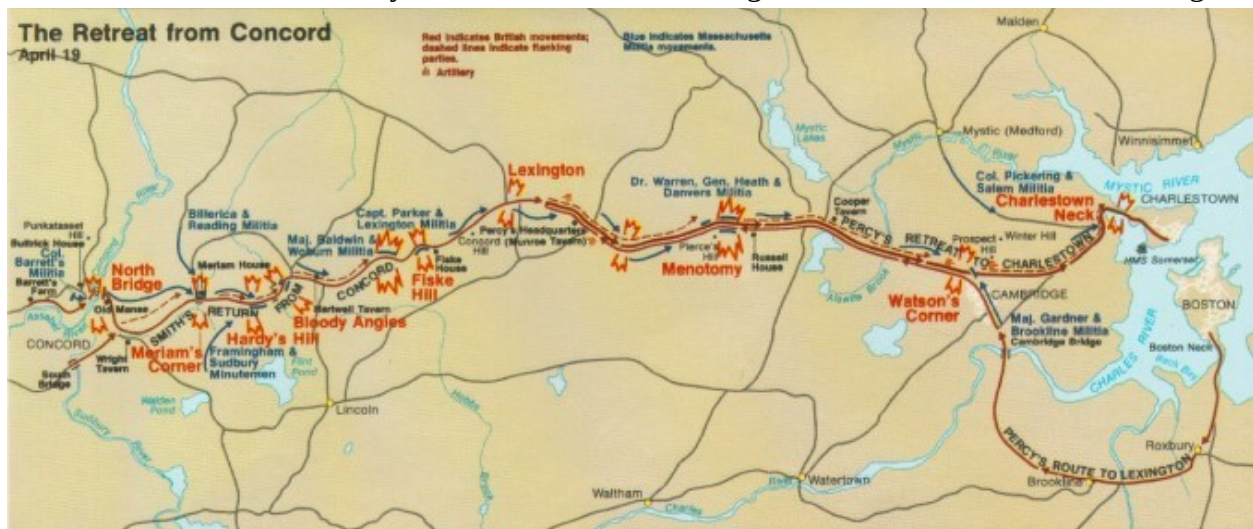
At approximately 5 a.m. the conflict on Lexington Common occurred, and it is possible that the noise from the guns and the shouting could be heard at the house from 2 miles east. Almost certainly the Regulars passed the house in the early hours of the morning as they marched toward Concord, 7 miles away, and the family may have seen them out the windows.

Farming in the 18th-century was extremely labor intensive, and did not spare the women from difficult, outdoor work. Thus, it is likely that Elizabeth Whittemore would have had to leave the house and visit the barn to help her husband feed the animals, as well as feed the children and the rest of the family their breakfast amid the anxiety and turmoil, then pack and hide the household valuables in case the worst should happen. There is no record of what sort of relationship Elizabeth had with her stepdaughter, but she raised her from the age of 3, and Sarah later named one of her daughters Elizabeth, so it is likely that she loved and was worried about her.

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As the Regulars left Concord to march back toward Boston the fighting became heavy, and the neighbors began to become alarmed as the fighting moved closer. As the troops came further east, the more officers they lost and the more casualties they suffered, the angrier they became. They began to destroy property, to shoot into the houses, and to set buildings afire. Some people hid in cellars and attics, but for the most part, the women and children fled to safety. The family would have heard the shouting and the gunfire coming, seen livestock running free through the fields (after likely opening their own barn and gates), having been set free in anticipation of barns being set ablaze by the soldiers, and seeing panicked friends and neighbors running down the road and through back fields seeking safety. They would not have known if they would even have a home to which to return and surely feared for the lives of Sarah and the baby.

Fortunately, their house is still standing, though the outbuildings no longer exist, is now part of MMNHP and is the only “witness house” along the Battle Road in Lexington.



Map of where the fighting occurred on the afternoon of April 19, 1775. The Whittemore House is near Fiske Hill, where the fighting was heavy and near where “Parker’s Revenge” took place. Taken from MMNHP/NPS website.

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Jacob and Elizabeth help Sarah and the baby to leave the house, while Moses brings a wheelbarrow of the family's possessions that were not hidden, as they head for the woods. Incidentally, baby Sarah was born just prior to the start of the American Revolution in April 1775 and died at the age of 90 in April 1865 just after the end of the Civil War. Photo by Josh Hasbrouck. (We were asked to portray this family twice for the Battle Rd. events)

Jacob Whittemore died in 1780. In his will, he left Elizabeth all of the money that came from her own father's estate, along with all of his household furniture, his "wearing linen", his sidesaddle, the sole use of the easterly half of the house throughout and the cellar under that end of the house, with the free use of the well and yard, as long as she remained his widow. He also gave her the use of a horse "to ride to meeting on" and one good milk cow. While she remained a widow, he allowed her 14 bushels of Indian meal and six bushels of rye meal, nine score of pork, five score of beef, four barrels of cider, one bushel of malt, with a "sufficiency of firewood cut for her use and brought to her door". He also provided for ten pounds of flax yearly, four pounds of sheep wool, and "a sufficiency of Saus and Appels for her own eating". Note: the house at the time of his death was a different farm he purchased after selling the current Whittemore house and 110 acres to Ezekial Hall, a distiller from Watertown, in 1779.

In 1789 widow Elizabeth remarried Benjamin Clark of Concord (5/7/1717-2/17/1809). Until that time, she had lived in the Reed household with her stepdaughter and son-in-law and their children. She died on October 5, 1805, and is buried in the Old Hill Burying Ground in Concord MA. She was buried as "Mrs. Clark" with no mention of her marriage to Jacob Whittemore.

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Her gravestone reads “In Memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Clark, wife of Mr. Benjamin Clark who died Oct. 5, 1805, aged 83”.

- Find a Grave, database and images

(<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/151885111/elizabeth-clark>:

accessed December 8, 2025), memorial page for Elizabeth *Hoar* Clark (1720–5 Oct 1805), Find a Grave Memorial ID [151885111](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/151885111), citing Old Hill Burying Ground, Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, USA; Maintained by Suzy & Rob (contributor [46950534](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46950534)).

