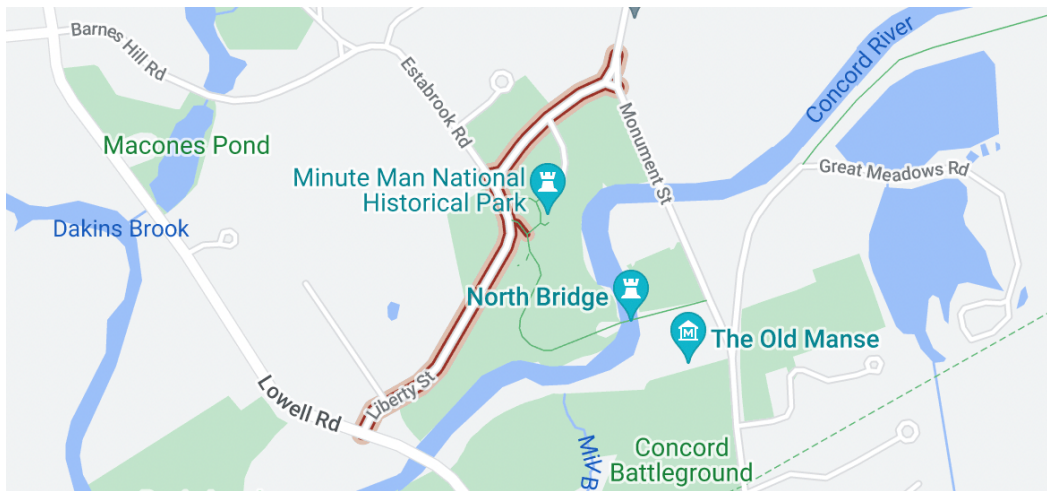


Concord Scenic Roads Liberty Street



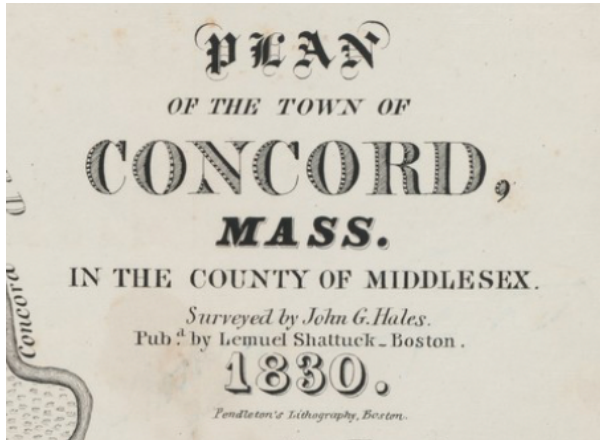
Countless roads in America may share the name, but Concord's Liberty Street is one that most definitively has earned its appellation. Though only half a mile long and slightly off the beaten track, many of the most important historic sites that tell the story of the first battle of the Revolutionary War - the event that launched this country towards liberty - are situated along its path: the Muster Field, where the colonial militia and minute men assembled in the early morning hours of April 19th, 1775; the battlefield itself, which was then a farmland pasture; the (now reconstructed) North Bridge that can be seen in the distance across that field, where the British Regulars were about to cross just before shots were fired; and the house sites of two patriot officers who played consequential roles in the skirmish.

Quiet Liberty Street runs parallel to a curvy stretch of the Concord River for a short distance between its busier endpoints, Lowell Road, and Monument Street. Significantly, most of this short road either abuts or passes through a portion of Minute Man National Historical Park, which was established in 1959.

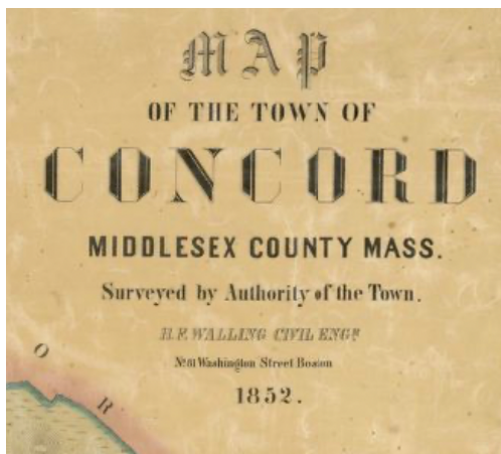
Liberty Street, however, did not exist in 1775. At the time of the battle a different route, the old Groton Road that began as a bridleway in the 17th century, served this sparsely populated, agricultural part of Concord. From the North Bridge, it cut through the field that belonged to Captain David Brown (b. 1732 – d. 1802) and turned westward, passing next to the Brown's farmhouse, and continued towards what is now called Barrett's Mill Road, and then to the town of Groton. In 1793 a new road, Liberty Street, was laid out, in part replacing the short section of Groton Road that bisected through David Brown's property. Over time all traces of the older road between the Concord River and Liberty Street disappeared. A practical and visual change was thus imposed on what was then already recognized as a hallowed battleground site. While the historic landscape that visitors see today from Liberty Street appears as an uninterrupted expanse of open field, in the 18th century it was not only occupied by an active farmstead, but also by a road cutting through it. Today, visitors who walk over the North Bridge on the main path leading to the National Park's Visitor Center can also follow the route of this

old road by turning left and following the secondary signposted path that leads to the foundations of the Brown farmhouse.¹

Liberty Street is shown on three important 19th century maps: John Hales's 1830 *Plan of the Town of Concord*, Henry Walling's 1852 *Map of the Town of Concord*, and Walker & Co.'s 1889 *Part of Concord* from their *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*. It is notable that the old Groton Road still appears on the earliest of these, but not on the later ones.



Detail from Hales's 1830 map of Concord showing Liberty Street and the old Groton Road (these are not labelled)



Detail from Walling's 1852 map of Concord showing Liberty Street - again the road is not labelled

¹For a detailed description of Groton Road, see the entry for it on the Minute Man National Historic Park website.



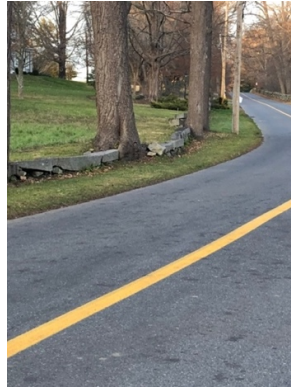
Detail from Walker & Co.'s 1889 map *Part of Concord*, from the *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts* showing Liberty Street. Note that Lowell Road still ends where it meets Liberty Street.

Historic and Scenic Liberty Street

This gently winding country road is almost entirely lined on both sides with old stone walls, close observation of which reveals a variety of interesting constructions. From Lowell Road the traveler first sees woodland on the right, blocking views of the river. Near the intersection, also on the right and just next to the road, is a curiously positioned, upright standing, notched block of granite.



On the left, a long-running stone wall is distinctively capped with long, thin pieces of granite that were placed with their notched sides facing downward. In two places mature trees are causing erosion of this stone wall.



Approaching Minute Man National Historical Park, three openings disrupt the stone wall along this portion of Liberty Street on the right side. The first is framed with short upright stone posts (below, left), the second with tall cement posts (below, center) and the remnants of an old wooden gate. The latter opening provides close access to the nearby foundation ruins of Captain David Brown's farmhouse, built in 1750 (below, right). Brown was an active member in Concord society, but most memorably the leader of a group of minute men, among them his son Purchase, at the famous battle. As the National Park sign at the site points out, he was in part defending his own farm that day. Near this spot would have been where the old Groton Road joined what became Liberty Street.



From its elevated vantage point Liberty Street provides a sweeping panoramic view over an iconic historic landscape, the place where America gained its first glimpse of freedom. From where the Brown house once stood, one can also see in the distance Daniel Chester French's *Minute Man* statue (1874), the reconstructed North Bridge, and the 1836 Battle Monument obelisk. It is also possible to spot the Old Manse (built 1770) across the river, then home to the patriot minister Rev. William Emerson (b. 1743 – d. 1776) and his family.



View over the battlefield from Liberty Street, with the stone marker at the site of Captain David Brown's farmhouse.

Continuing north on Liberty Street the road is further lined on both sides with more lovely, old stone walls. On the right side, the stone walls within the National Park are higher. In one place there an unusually large piece of granite is notable (below, center). Approaching the National Park's Visitor Center, the top of a portion of the wall on the right is coated with a thin layer of cement.



On the left side, a granite marker embedded within the wall identifies the field that rises behind it as the Muster Field, where some colonial militia and minute men from Concord and outlying towns assembled early in the morning on April 19th, 1775. This was also another pasture then owned by Captain David Brown.



Muster Field



The 1911 Stedman Buttrick house and gardens that now serve as the National Park's North Bridge Visitor's Center is across the street from the Muster Field.



Stedman Buttrick House

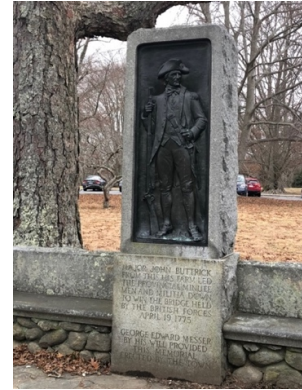
Liberty Street curves sharply to the right here, with Estabrook Road veering off from it. Past this intersection on the left, across from the Stedman Buttrick House, is the Major James Buttrick House, built 1710-1717.



Major Buttrick (b. 1731 – d. 1791) led the advance at the North Bridge on April 19th, and famously gave the order to fire upon the British soldiers. He is honored by the bronze relief, designed by Daniel Chester French, and executed by Edmond Thomas Quinn in 1915, that is located across the street from his home in front of the Visitor's Center parking lot.



Major John Buttrick House



On the road's descent to Monument Street, stone walls and open land views continue to line the roadside. Some walls are in disrepair and obscured in the brambles. Turning off Liberty Street, the more densely sited houses on Monument Street signal a change from a quiet country road transitioning to a busier townscape.



Bibliography

Historic Resources Masterplan of Concord, Massachusetts, Concord Historical Commission, 1995, updated 2001. [accessible online]

Minute Man National Historic Park website.

Maps

Plan of the Town of Concord, Mass. In the County of Middlesex, Surveyed by John G. Hales, Pubd by Lemuel Shattuck – Boston, 1830

Map of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County Mass., Surveyed by Authority of the Town. H[enry]. F. Walling, Civil Engr, No. 81 Washington Street Boston, 1852

Part of Concord, Copyright 1889 by Geo. H. Walker & Co., Boston, from Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Compiled by Nancy Fresella-Lee, April 8, 2022

Photographs taken January 2022