

Captain Walter Laurie

British Officer in command at the North Bridge. Light Infantry Company,
43rd Regiment of Foot

Letter to General Gage:

“During the time the Grenadiers were employed in destroying the magazine of flour, gun carriages &c at Concord, six companies of Light Infantry under the command of Capt. Parsons were detached to a Bridge about one mile from Town, in order, as I was informed, to destroy some guns and military stores, supposed to be collected thereabouts. As we advanced to the Bridge a large body of people under arms, assembled on the hills near the Bridge, immediately retreated over it, and took post on the rising grounds on the other side; As soon as we got possession of the Bridge, Capt. Parsons ordered my company and the company of the 5th Reg’t to remain at the Bridge, whilst he and the other four proceeded; on his advancing towards the height the Country people retired at a great distance to the woods. In less than half an hour the Light Company of the 23rd reg’t with Capt. Brown of the 52nd and Lt. Grant of the Artillery, came past me in a chaise to join Capt. Parsons, who immediately sent an order to the 5th Company to advance, leaving my company at the Bridge. We remained in this situation, I believe, for near an hour, when a Country man on horse back, rode past me, with whom I spoke, demanding where he was going, he told me he was a doctor going to see a patient, that he did not trouble himself with the disputes of the Country, nor did he in any shape belong to the Militia, that in a short time after, this same doctor returned, and passing us, was observed to go towards the wood where those men in Arms were drawn up: In a very short time after I saw there whole body moving towards me, and as they came nearer the Light Company of the 4th Reg’t posted on a height immediately retreated to me at the Bridge, as did likewise the Light Company of the 10th reg’t who also had been at no great distance. Upon this I sent Lt. Robertson of my own company to acquaint Col. Smith of my situation, desiring he would send some of the Grenadiers to support me in case of their attacking. Mr. Robertson brought for answer that two companies would be sent me. By this time the body of the Country people, arrived on the heights, which the company of the 4th reg’t had occupied, and there drew up with shouldered arms to the number of about 1500—they halted for a considerable time looking at us, and then moved down upon me in a seeming regular manner. After consulting with Lt. Southerland of the 38th Reg’t, I determined to repossess the Bridge with the three companies, retreating by divisions, to check their progress, which we accordingly did, lining the opposite side of the river with one company, to flank the other two in case of attack. By this time they were close upon us, and I imagine myself, that a man of my own company (afterwards killed) did first fire his piece, though Mr. Sutherland has since assured me that the Country people first fired. A general popping then ensued, the company of the 4th Reg’t gave afire, as did a few of my own from the flanks, after which the whole went to the right about, in spite of all that could be done to prevent them. The Enemy did not think proper to pursue us, and two companies of Grenadiers coming in view, with our main body at a small distance behind, we readily regained our order, and became under the command of Lt. Col. Smith, who on the Enemy’s retiring to their first heights returned to Concord.

At the Bridge 4 officers were wounded, 3 privates killed, a sergeant and four wounded. The Enemy’s loss uncertain.”

Walter S. Laurie
Captain, 43rd Reg't
Boston, 26th April, 1775