

Jason Russell House 2025 Tour Outline

NOTE: Guide instructions appear in **blue text**. **Bullet hole information** appears in **red text**, preceded by a hollow text bullet.

1. INTRODUCTION

- **Map Hallway Optional:** Briefly point out the location of the **JRH, Concord Road** and **Menotomy's crossroads center**.
- **April 19th Room**
 - You may **choose one artifact to highlight in the exhibit** that connects with the content of your tour (i.e. Adams chest) then begin your tour in the kitchen.
 - Please refrain from guiding visitors through the exhibit. Instead, **tell them they may return to the exhibit after their tour** to enjoy the other artifacts and stories.

NOTE: Please keep the **door to the JRH kitchen CLOSED** and the **cellar door OPEN at all times**.

2. GUIDED HOUSE TOUR **Remind visitors not to touch the artifacts, furniture or woodwork.**

- **Kitchen - April 19th and Construction of the House**
 - The **Jason Russell House** is an **18th century colonial farmhouse** situated on Concord Road (now Mass Ave), the main road to and from Concord in 1775.
 - The crossroads village of **Menotomy** was the site of the **most intense fighting on April 19, 1775**, the first day of the American Revolution. The **multiple bullet holes** in Jason's house are evidence of the violence that occurred here on that day.

April 19, 1775: (Guides may refer to the reproduction of *The Battle at the Jason Russell House*, the 1975 painting by Ruth Berry. **The original now hangs in the Exhibit Hall.**)

- Around 10:30 p.m. on April 18, 1775, **Lt. Col. Smith and his 700 British grenadiers and light infantry departed Boston** in small boats over the Charles River on a **secret mission to capture arms and ammunition in Concord**.
- **As Smith passed through Menotomy around 2:30 a.m. on April 19th** he realized its citizens had already been alerted and that he had lost the element of surprise. It was in Menotomy that he sent word to General Thomas Gage in Boston **requesting reinforcements**. That message was delayed twice, so **Brigadier General Lord Hugh Percy** and his **1100 reinforcements** with wagons of provisions and artillery didn't leave Boston until 9 a.m. taking the long and slow land route over Boston Neck.
- After the skirmish in Lexington and their failed mission later in Concord, **Smith's troops retreated**. They were pursued by a growing number of militia from surrounding communities in a **running battle** back to Lexington.
- Smith's wounded, exhausted and hungry troops finally **met up with Percy and his reinforcements at Munroe Tavern**. There they tended to the wounded, rested briefly and plotted a strategy for their treacherous retreat back to Boston.

- When the combined British forces departed Lexington, Percy ordered **northern** and **southern flankers to protect the main column** on Concord Road which resulted in numerous ambushes along the retreat route. He also ordered soldiers to **enter and clear every dwelling of snipers**.
- The **fighting intensified** as British forces **entered Menotomy** in late afternoon. Colonial militia gathered in this crossroads village from surrounding communities and as far away as Salem, Beverly, Danvers, Lynn, Dedham and Needham. Estimates of the number of militia converging on Menotomy range from 2000 to over 3000.
- Under the strain of an exhaustive retreat and incensed at the relentless resistance by colonial combatants, discipline began to break down among British troops as soldiers began **pillaging, and burning homes and businesses**.
- While the **British Regulars in Boston** were very well trained, **the majority were under the age of 25** and were **not battle tested**. In General Gage's effort to send a large and intimidating force to Concord, he assembled the best men from **different companies** into a **patchwork force**. As a result, these **soldiers were not serving under their regular commanding officers** for this mission. As they became outnumbered and overwhelmed in Menotomy, many were no longer following orders.
- As the main column of troops on Concord Road approached the Jason Russell House, their **southern flankers ambushed the militia** gathered in Jason's yard.
- The **colonials scattered**, some running toward the house to seek shelter. Unable to take cover fast enough, **Jason Russell**, 59 years old and lame, **was shot and bayoneted to death** near his front door.
- **British soldiers pursued the colonists into the house**. After firing at British troops, **two men from Lynn** Daniel Townsend and Timothy Munroe, ran into the house and **jumped out the south-facing kitchen window** in an attempt to escape. Townsend was killed but Munroe survived.
- **Eight militiamen from Beverly ran into the basement** closing the door behind them and aiming their muskets up the stairs. After a likely exchange of gunfire, the eight men in the cellar survived.
- **Women and children of Menotomy** had been sent away to safety earlier in the day. They returned to a **devastating scene** of bullet-ridden buildings with broken windows, dead livestock and looted and burned homes and businesses.
- **Jason's wife Elizabeth came home** to find her husband and **11 others laid out on her kitchen floor**.
- **40 British regulars and 25 colonials were killed in Menotomy**. Among colonial fatalities **3 were from Menotomy**: Jason Russell and two young men, Jabez Wyman and Jason Winship, Elizabeth's cousin. They were both unarmed and killed in Cooper's Tavern (Starbucks current location).
- The **12 colonists were buried** in a common grave **in the Old Burying Ground** behind the First Parish Church. The fallen British soldiers were buried there in unmarked graves.
- An **obelisk monument erected in 1848** in the Old Burying ground marks the colonial graves. In **June 2024 a memorial** near the obelisk was **dedicated to the 40 British soldiers** who died in Menotomy.
- **A ballistics study in 2020 used laser and forensic technology** to track the **trajectory of bullets**, pinpointing where the shooters were positioned. It was established that **most shots were fired from Concord Road**.
 - However, the study revealed that the **bullet holes in the kitchen** were made by **shots fired at close range** by a shooter **inside the kitchen**. (The original bullet-ridden cellar door was kept on the property for many years but was later lost. Attempts made over the years to locate the original door have been unsuccessful.)
- **3 bullet holes** in the cellar entrance: **2 straight ahead, 1 in the left side of the inner door casing**.

About the House:

- The house was built between **1740** and **1745** and is an example of **colonial-era New England post and beam construction**.
- Jason used **new lumber** for **structural beams** and repurposed lumber for walls and floor supports, possibly collected from his grandfather's farmhouse dating from 1689. **The floor was replaced in 1867**.
- The **ceiling support beams** are original. The **spotted design** on the ceiling is a decorative treatment from the mid-18th century that rarely survives in homes of this period.
- In the 18th century, the kitchen was known as the "hall" and was the **center of family life**. Usually **south-facing**, it the **warmest room in the house** in winter and may have also been used as sleeping quarters.
- **Front Entry Hall** **Grazed stair post, 2 exit holes** from the kitchen in stair risers, **bullet mark in upper stair post**.
 - The front hall was expanded in **1814**.
 - The **stairs and posts are original**.
 - The **English tall clock** originally belonged to Jason's neighbor **Deacon Joseph Adams** and is mentioned in the exhibit. The interior workings of the clock and the face were **stolen by British troops** along with the church's communion silver and **pawned off in Boston**. The church managed to locate the silver items and **bought them back**.
 - **1 grazing of the front stair post** made by a bullet shot into the parlor from Concord Road.
 - **2 exit holes** in the stair risers from the shots fired in the kitchen can be seen from the staircase.
 - **1 angled bullet mark** through the upper stair post visible as you go up the stairs.

NOTE: Visitors may use the handrail going up the stairs.

- **Children's Room** (Kitchen Chamber) - **Jason's Farm and Family** **2 bullet holes**
 - This room shares the rustic look of the kitchen with its **original floor boards** and **wall paneling**.
 - The **foldaway rope-support** bed, a precursor of the Murphy bed, allowed for multi-purpose use of the room. The **rope tightener** was used to maintain the bed's support.

Jason's Farm and Family:

- In 1775, Menotomy was bucolic farmland. Jason was considered a **prosperous farmer** with **100 acres of land** in separate parcels which he **inherited from his grandfather**.
- In addition to owning **livestock**, Jason had a **barn**, an **apple orchard** and a **vegetable and herb garden** for cooking and medicinal purposes.
- Jason had **6 children** who survived into adulthood. Jason's **three oldest sons moved to Mason, NH** to farm their own land as acreage for farming was becoming scarce in this region. Another son, **Thomas** opened a **general store in Menotomy's village center** which was looted on April 19th. (There is a plaque on one of the brick buildings across from the Robbins Library marking the store's original location.)
- **In 1775** his **daughter Elizabeth** (age 19) and his **son Noah** (age 12) were living in the house with **Jason** (age 59) and his **wife Elizabeth** (age 51).

- A young **enslaved African** woman by the name of **Kate** (age 21) could have been living in the house in 1775. Little is known about her but we do know that she was baptized in 1754 and was entered into the minister's journal as a "gift" to Jason. The **1770 Menotomy assessors** (exhibited in the April 19th room) noted that Jason **owned "one slave,"** presumably Kate. She likely worked inside the house and may have slept in the kitchen or attic.
- **1 bullet hole** below the south-facing window opposite the fireplace.
- **1 bullet hole** to the left of the doorway near the ceiling (This bullet's exit mark is on the other side of the wall visible from the hall.)
- **Upstairs Hall and Attic** **1 exit hole, 1 skid mark; 2 bullet holes in the attic (not visible).**

Guides may **talk about the attic and secret compartment** but should **NOT OPEN THE DOORS.**

- **1 exit hole** in the hall wall to the right of the doorway of the Children's Room. The exit hole was made by the bullet that was **shot into the Children's Room by southern flankers.**
- **1 skid mark** on the ceiling from the same Children's Room bullet
- **2 bullet holes in the attic wall** under the window facing Mass Ave. (not visible)
 - The **paneling** in the upper hall is **mostly original.**
 - The **attic** would have been used for **storage** and for **drying foodstuffs** like corn and beans during the long winter months.
 - When the house was fully occupied with many Russell and Teel children, the attic was likely used as additional **sleeping quarters.**
- **Best Bedroom** (Parlor Chamber) - **After Jason's Death and Inheritance of the House 1 bullet hole**
 - **1 bullet hole** in the paneling to the left of the fireplace
 - The **paneled fireplace** and **plastered** walls and ceilings reflect a more refined style reserved for "best rooms" in mid-18 century New England.
 - This **more formal room** may have served as a **bedroom for Jason and Elizabeth** and as a room for entertaining family and close friends. Rooms in colonial homes needed to be **multipurpose** for growing families and evolving needs.
 - **When Jason died** in 1775, his wife **Elizabeth inherited the northern half** of the house with shared use of the kitchen and barn and his son **Noah inherited the southern half.** They lived together in the house until **Elizabeth's death** 11 years later in **1786.**
 - **Noah remained in the house** raising his family there as did **his daughter Lydia** (Jason's granddaughter).
- **Parlor** - **Sale of the House, Rapid Suburban Development and AHS Acquisition 1 bullet hole**
 - **1 bullet hole in the paneling** shot from Concord Road, grazing the stair post in the front hall
 - This room looks much like it did at the height of the **Federal period** in 1814.
 - The light **Prussian blue paint** was popular in the Federal period. A **paint analysis in the 1980s** discovered this color was the **second layer** painted over a reddish brown oil stain on the woodwork.

- The **wallpaper** is a Federal period reproduction. In **Jason's time, the walls would have been whitewashed** and not papered since wallpaper was prohibitively expensive in the mid-18th century. The **floor boards are original**.
- The parlor was the **most formal room** in the house and was the setting for **important family rituals** like weddings, christenings and social gatherings. It may have also been used as a **bedroom** for Jason and Elizabeth when the house was crowded with their growing family.
 - The **English knife box** on the Federal period sideboard is **one of the few objects belonging to the Russell family**. It was a **wedding gift to Jason's granddaughter Lydia** and her groom Thomas Teel in 1814.
 - Hanging over the fireplace is a **reproduction of a painting from our collection** depicting the center of **West Cambridge c. 1817** as it was transitioning away from being a farming village.

You may show visitors the photograph of Lydia, Abbie and daughters in front of the house.

- This **photograph** shows **Jason's granddaughter Lydia Russell Teel** (seated), her daughter **Abbie Teel Dupee** (standing) and Abbie's two daughters Emma and Effie. It is one of the last photographs taken before the land was subdivided and Jason Street was laid down.
- **Jason's granddaughter Lydia Russell Teel** inherited the house. She raised her family here and lived in the house until a few years before **her death in 1886**.
- Lydia divided her property among her children, leaving the house to her son **George in Chicago** who **sold it** outside the family **in 1892**. The house subsequently became a **rental property**.
 - During a period of **rapid suburban development** in Arlington in the **1890s** and **early 1900s**, **three more houses were added to the lot** blocking the Jason Russell House from view.
- **In 1923 the Arlington Historical Society purchased the house. It was restored by the end of 1924 and had its grand opening in 1925 for the 150th anniversary of April 19th.**
 - **Jason's great granddaughter Abbie Teel Dupee** (standing in white in the photo) was born and raised in the Russell house. When the Arlington Historical Society acquired the house she was living across the street in the green house/office building. She was an active member of the society and was able to **identify most of the bullet holes** for them. **She lived to the age of 101**.
 - It wasn't until the **1960s** that the additional houses were removed and a **clear view of the historic Jason Russell House was finally restored**.
- **Remind visitors that they may return to the April 19th Room, visit the Exhibit Hall and browse the merchandise table there.**
- **When exiting the Parlor, you may point out the trajectory of the Parlor bullet hole to the grazing mark on the front hall stair post.**