

## Jason Russell House 2023 Tour Outline

### 1. SELF-GUIDED EXHIBIT 8-10 minutes “Menotomy: Road to Revolution”

**Map Hallway** Guides point out the JRH, Concord Road and Menotomy’s crossroads center on the map.

- Tell visitors that the self-guided exhibit features events that occurred on April 19, 1775 in different locations throughout Menotomy.
- Visitors may return to the exhibit after their guided house tour.
- Let visitors know you are available to answer questions.
- Have visitors let you know when they are ready to start their guided tour. Guide may wait in the front hall.

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

### 2. GUIDED HOUSE TOUR 25 minutes **Remind visitors not to touch any of the artifacts, furniture or woodwork in the house.**

#### • **Kitchen**

- The Jason Russell House is an 18th century colonial farmhouse situated on what was the British route to and from Concord on April 19, 1775.
- **Menotomy** was the site of the **worst fighting** on the first day of the American Revolution.
- The **multiple bullet holes** in the house are evidence of the violence that occurred here.

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

- In the early morning hours of April 19, 1775, **Lt. Col. Smith led 700 British grenadiers and light infantry** through **Menotomy** on a secret mission to capture arms and ammunition in Concord. Realizing that Menotomy citizens were alerted and that he had lost the element of surprise, Smith sent word to General Thomas Gage in Boston requesting reinforcements.
- After the skirmish in Lexington and their failed mission in Concord, British troops were pursued by a growing number of militia in a fighting retreat back to Lexington where they were met by **1100 reinforcements led by Brigadier General Percy**.
- As Percy and the troops departed Lexington for Boston, he ordered soldiers to **clear dwellings of snipers**. He sent **flankers north and south of the main column** on Concord Road, resulting in numerous skirmishes all along the retreat route.
- The **fighting intensified** as British forces **entered Menotomy** in late afternoon. More than **2000** colonial militia gathered in this crossroads village from points as far away as Salem and Dedham.
- Under the strain of an exhaustive retreat, discipline broke down and British soldiers **pillaged and burned homes**.
- As the main column of troops on Concord Road approached the Jason Russell House, the **southern flankers ambushed the militia** gathered in the yard.
- The **militia scattered**, some running toward the house to seek shelter. **Jason Russell**, a lame 59-year-old farmer, **was shot and bayoneted to death** on his property.

- British soldiers pursued the militia into the house. **Two militiamen from Lynn** ran into the house and **jumped out the south-facing kitchen window** in an attempt to escape. One was killed and the other survived.
  - **Eight militiamen from Beverly** ran into the basement and defensively aimed their muskets up the stairs. The Beverly eight survived.
  - **Elizabeth Russell** arrived home to find her husband **Jason** and **11 other militia laid out on the kitchen floor**.
  - The **12 colonists are buried in the Old Burying Ground** at the First Parish Church in today's Arlington Center. An **obelisk monument** marks their graves. **Two British soldiers** are also buried there in **unmarked graves**.
  - **40 British regulars** and **25 colonial militia were killed in Menotomy**. Among the colonial fatalities, **3** were from **Menotomy**.
- **A ballistics study in 2020 used laser and forensic technology** to track the **trajectory of bullets**, pinpointing where the shooters were positioned. Most shots were fired from Concord Road.
    - The study also revealed that the **bullet holes in the kitchen were made by shots fired at close range** by a shooter or shooters **inside the kitchen**. (The original bullet-ridden cellar door was kept on the property for many years but was later lost. Attempts have been made to locate the original door.)
  - **3 bullet holes** in the cellar entrance: **2** straight ahead, **1** in the left side of the inner door casing

#### **About the House and Kitchen:**

- 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 unique decorative treatment from the mid-18th century and is rarely found in surviving homes of that 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** **2 exit holes: grazed front stair post, 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 featured in the exhibit. The interior workings of the clock and the face were stolen by British troops.
  - **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** 2 bullet holes

- This room shares the rustic look of the kitchen with its **original floor boards** and **wood 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.
  - **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).
  - An **enslaved African** 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 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 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 to the Children's Room. The exit hole was made by the bullet that was shot into the Children's Room.
  - **1 skid mark** on the ceiling from the 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 **sleeping quarters**.

- **Best Bedroom 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 could 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 changing needs.
- When Jason died in 1775, his wife **Elizabeth inherited the northern half** of the house and his son **Noah inherited the southern half**. They shared the house until **Elizabeth’s death** 11 years later in **1786**.
- Noah remained here with his wife and children.

- **Parlor 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, social gatherings. It may have been used as a **bedroom** for Jason and Elizabeth when the house was crowded with young children.
  - 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 from being a farming village.

**Guide shows 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 where she raised her family and lived until a few years before **her death in 1886**.
- Lydia divided her property among her children, giving the house to her son **George of Chicago** who **sold it in 1892**. The house became a **rental property**.
  - During a period of **rapid 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 and restored it. The house opened to the public in 1924.**
  - Jason's great granddaughter **Abbie Dupee lived to the age of 101** and was living across the street in the green house. She was able to **identify the bullet holes** for the **Arlington Historical Society**.
  - 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.**
- **Guides remind visitors that they may return to the Menotomy exhibit, visit the Smith Museum exhibit and browse the book cart.**
- **When exiting the Parlor, guides may choose to point out the trajectory of the Parlor bullet hole and the grazing mark on the front hall stair post.**

**NOTE** to Guides about this outline:

- Guide instructions appear in **blue text**.
- Bullet hole information appears in **red text** and is preceded by a hollow text bullet.