

American Patriot: Solomon Bigelow

by Patricia Kelleher Bartram

This article is one of a periodic series of “portraits” of some of Boylston’s earliest families and key figures in our community’s history. This is particularly relevant as we look toward commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War beginning April 19, 2025.

Solomon Bigelow was the son of Captain Joseph Bigelow and his wife, Martha Brigham, born to them in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts Bay Colony on 13 October 1746.¹ His parents had married in Marlborough, Massachusetts Bay Colony on 22 February 1725.²

At that time Boylston was the North (2nd) Precinct of Shrewsbury, with Boylston not being incorporated as a separate town until 1786. Solomon was actually one of the petitioners requesting separate status for Boylston as early as 1774.³ The surname Bigelow can be found in various records with different spellings including Biglo and Biglow.

From a Large Family

Solomon’s parents had moved to Shrewsbury early and his father became one of the leading men in the town, serving as a Selectman in 1748 and also prominent in the church.⁴

Joseph and Martha had a large family. Solomon was their youngest son and the eighth of the nine children born to his parents. His siblings were: Joseph Bigelow Jr., born 9 November 1726; Martha, born 3 May 1728 and who died in infancy; Charles, born 22 April 1729; Martha, born 10 May 1733; Stephen, born 10 January 1735; Anna, born 14 January 1736; Mehitabel, born 14 September 1739; and Mary, born 18 September 1748. All of the children were born in Shrewsbury.⁵

A Business, a Home and Marriage

By 1768 Solomon, then age 22 years, had become a blacksmith. He built his house, with a shop and forge nearby, on the southerly side of Stiles Road in the Straw Hollow section of town near the junction of today’s Reservoir Street. The Solomon Bigelow House sat between the William A. Moore House and a cider manufacturing facility.⁶

Solomon married 20-year-old Mary Damon (also seen in records as Dammon, Demmon or Denmon) in Shrewsbury on 6 April 1769, where both parties were residing at the time of their marriage.⁷ Mary had been born on 4 August 1749 in Uxbridge, Massachusetts Bay Colony, the daughter of Deacon Joseph Damon and Mary Nichols.⁸

Militia is Formed

As upheavals arose between the Crown and the colonies, in July 1774, fearful that General Gage would send troops from Boston to compel the Worcester County Justices to support the Crown, a conference took place in Worcester County. The conference decided that the Justices of the Worcester Supreme Court must swear allegiance to the cause of the people, ordering the formation of seven companies of Militia. This organization of militia companies was formed in August of that year. The Sixth Worcester Regiment was composed of companies from Shrewsbury, Grafton, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough. The Officers chosen for the North Precinct of

¹ Birth Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1746, digital image, ancestry.com

² Marriage Records, Marlborough, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1725, transcription, ancestry.com

³ Filgate, Bruce, Boylston Historical Series (2012), Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc., Boylston Massachusetts

⁴ Genealogy of the Bigelow family of America: from the marriage in 1642 of John Biglo and Mary Warren to the year 1890, Page 52, digital image, ancestry.com

⁵ Birth Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1726, 1728, 1729, 1733, 1735, 1736, 1739 and 1748, digital images and transcriptions, ancestry.com

⁶ Boylston Historical Series, Filgate, Bruce, 2012

⁷ Marriage Records, Shrewsbury, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1769, digital image, ancestry.com

⁸ Birth Records, Uxbridge, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1749, digital image, ancestry.com

Shrewsbury Militia company that year were: Ezra Beaman, Captain Ephraim Beaman, Lieutenant Jonathan Fassett, and Lieutenant Solomon Biglo [Bigelow].⁹

Marching on the Alarm of 1775

On the morning of 19 April 1775, the men of Shrewsbury, including the North Precinct, were roused by the Alarm that had gone out during the night alerting the towns west of Boston that British troops were marching toward Lexington and Concord. The aim of the British Regulars, as they were called, was to seize the horde of the military supplies the colonists had been amassing and arrest revolutionaries. Resistance from Minutemen – men trained, equipped with arms and ready to respond at a minute’s notice – resulted in the first battle of the Revolutionary War.

It is thought that Shrewsbury received the warning about 10:00 a.m. that morning of 19th April, which meant that by the time the Shrewsbury company, led by Captain Robert Andrews, reached Concord and Lexington by way of the Boston Post Road they had missed the fighting at those locations. Instead, they proceeded on to Cambridge, where they made camp and participated in the Siege of Boston. It was during this siege that the colonial militiamen effectively contained British troops within Boston, and following the Battle of Bunker Hill, then to the Charlestown peninsula.



Battle of Bunker Hill

Wikipedia Commons

Solomon “Biglo” was a private in Captain Andrews’ company and served for a total of 12 days. Many of the men like Solomon, who had homes and businesses requiring their presence, only served for a relatively short time. Others, who could, stayed on and ultimately enlisted in the Continental Army.^{10,11,12}

Death

Sadly, Solomon and Mary did not have any children and were not to have a long marriage. Solomon died in Shrewsbury sometime in 1775, although the records do not specify a date or cause of death. While it was said he was buried in Boylston’s Old Burial Ground, there is no marker for his grave.¹³ Was his death a result of being wounded during his service? We may never know.

A book about all of the Boylston Minutemen who served on the Alarm is currently being researched and written by a team of volunteer researchers from the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc. Stay tuned for its publication in 2025!

The BHSM is open for research – now with internet service thanks to a grant from the George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation (!) – as follows: Sundays, 2:00-4:00pm; Tuesdays, 9:00am-12:00pm; and Saturdays, 9:00am-12:00pm, as well as by appointment by calling (508) 869-2720 or emailing info@boylstonhistory.org. Assistance with genealogical research is also available by appointment. Visit our website: boylstonhistory.org.

⁹ Filgate, Bruce, Boylston Historical Series (2012), Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc., Boylston Massachusetts

¹⁰ Lexington Alarm Muster Roll, Military Records for Solomon Biglo, digital image, ancestry.com

¹¹ Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War, Vol 2, Page 29, digital image, ancestry.com

¹² Filgate, Bruce, Boylston Historical Series (2012), Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc., Boylston Massachusetts

¹³ Solomon Bigelow, 1775, Memorial #71843420, findagrave.com

Editor, Nancy O’Loughlin Filgate, Boylston Historical Society and Museum Inc. Director, Boylston, Massachusetts