In the early months of 1775, General Thomas Gage, commander of the British forces occupying Boston, learned that the colonists were storing arms in nearby Concord. On the evening of April 18 he ordered over 800 of his finest men to conduct a raid and destroy the weapons stored there. Colonial intelligence learned of his plans and riders, including Paul Revere, were sent to alarm the countryside that the British Regular troops were on the move.

On the triangle of land behind the Minuteman Statue (b), the first conflict of the American War for Independence began on the morning of April 19, 1775. Due to delays in British movements, the Regulars did not arrive at the Green until almost 6:00 AM. Seventy-seven of Captain John Parker's militia had moved from Buckman Tavern and were now assembled on the Green (c). They were ready to defend their town and their rights, a dangerous endeavor against trained soldiers. They were under orders, however, not to fire unless fired upon first. The approaching Regulars marched onto the Green to deal with this "band of rebels". The Redcoat muskets were loaded and their bayonets attached. They then formed up about fifty yards from the militia (d) where the flag pole is today. British officers at the front on horseback, attempting to defuse the situation, ordered the militia to lay down their arms and disperse. Capt. Parker, now seeing the great discrepancy in manpower and arms, ordered his men to disperse and not to fire.

As his men began leaving, a gun shot suddenly rang out and mayhem began. Who fired first is still a mystery. The rank and file Regulars, however, apparently believing they were being fired upon, and itching for a chance to act forcibly against these rebels, spontaneously opened fire. Several of the militia were felled during this ferocious volley. In very few minutes, eight of the colonists were dead and nine others wounded. Some of the militia did respond with musket fire of their own, but only slightly wounded one Regular in their response. British officers, unhappy at this turn of events, quickly ordered their men back into formation. After a brief discussion among the officers, they decided to proceed to Concord to complete their mission. Little did they know a long calamitous day awaited them.

Enjoy your walk through the Battle Green, and be sure to visit our three historic properties: Buckman Tavern, the Hancock-Clarke House, and Munroe Tavern.