Hezekiah Wyman

On April 19th, 1775, Hezekiah Wyman celebrated his 55th birthday in the town of Woburn. He had not been included in the town militia or Safety Brigade, but was a veteran of the French-Indian war in 1745. He also had one of the few rifles in the area.

Hearing early in the morning of the massacre at Lexington Green, he was very angered that the British had fired upon men whom were both friends, as well as relatives of his.

He began to gather shooting items & prepared to leave his home.
His wife was hectoring him by saying: "You're too old to fight the British!! What do you think you're doing, you old fool! There's no way you'll be able to keep up with the young men from town. Where do you think you're going?"
Turning in the doorway, Hezekiah merely looked at her and said: "***Just watch***...."
then left, after saddling his white mare.

Heading towards Concord, he heard that the British were returning after a fight with the Concord Militia, and were heading back to Lexington under fire from the colonials. He rode out towards the approaching British column.
Stopping about 250 yards out, he would dismount, lay his rifle across the seat of his saddle, then carefully fire a shot, dropping a British soldier, or officer. Reloading, he would repeat this process until the column drew within about 100 yards, at which time he would mount up again, & ride off a ways, then dismount & repeat the process.

The British had no way of knowing who he was, but his very long white hair, & pale complexion, along with his all white horse, made him very easily identifiable.
The soldiers who survived this march wrote in their letters home & reports about his shooting, and several called him simply "DEATH!", or "DEATH on a pale horse", since every time he appeared, one or more of them would fall to the wayside, mortally wounded.

Stopping several times to procure more powder & ball, he would appear at random times on the flanks, or in front of the British, and they would know he was there by his accurate fire, or by seeing him on his horse.

His testimony later was that he pursued the British right down to Charleston, then shot at them a last time as some of them were gathering in a boat to get to the warship "HMS Somerset". He returned home, tired but unscathed, living in Woburn until he finally died in 1779. His family still lives in this area.

Hezekiah Wyman (cont.)

From a newspaper article of 1789, giving an account of his exploits:
"His tall gaunt form, his gray locks floating in the breeze, and the color of his steed distinguished him from the other Americans, and the British gave him the name of 'Death on the Pale Horse.' The utmost endeavors of his enemy to kill him were unavailing. He passed through the whole melee unscathed and unhurt.

"Once a bayonet charge drove the old man and the party with which he was acting to a distance from the foe; but he was out of ammunition and was then compelled to pick up some. But he ere long returned to the charge and this time killed an officer, and after that exploit the report of his piece was frequently heard till the close of the fight. "His powerful white horse, careering at full speed over the hills, with the dauntless old man on his back, was continually to be seen. The British learned to dread the frequent appearance of this dire rider at unexpected points along the route of their passage, for his aim was true, and the economical principals in which he was trained forbade his wasting powder or ball.

"He lingered at Arlington long enough to aid in a plot laid by Ammi Cutter for taking the British baggage-wagon and their guards [with the old men of Menotomy] ... The story says that Hezekiah pursued the British even after they had entered Charlestown and that he followed the enemy to their very boats; and then, turning his horse's head, returned to his home."

Other references:

- Francis Wyman Association: www.wyman.org
- https://nutfieldgenealogy.blogspot.com/2011/04/hezekiah-wyman-and-legend-of-white.html