

University of Southern Maine  
Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education

Osher Library Associates' Meeting

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Hugh, Earl Percy and his Map of New England  
at the Start of the American Revolution

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UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MAINE

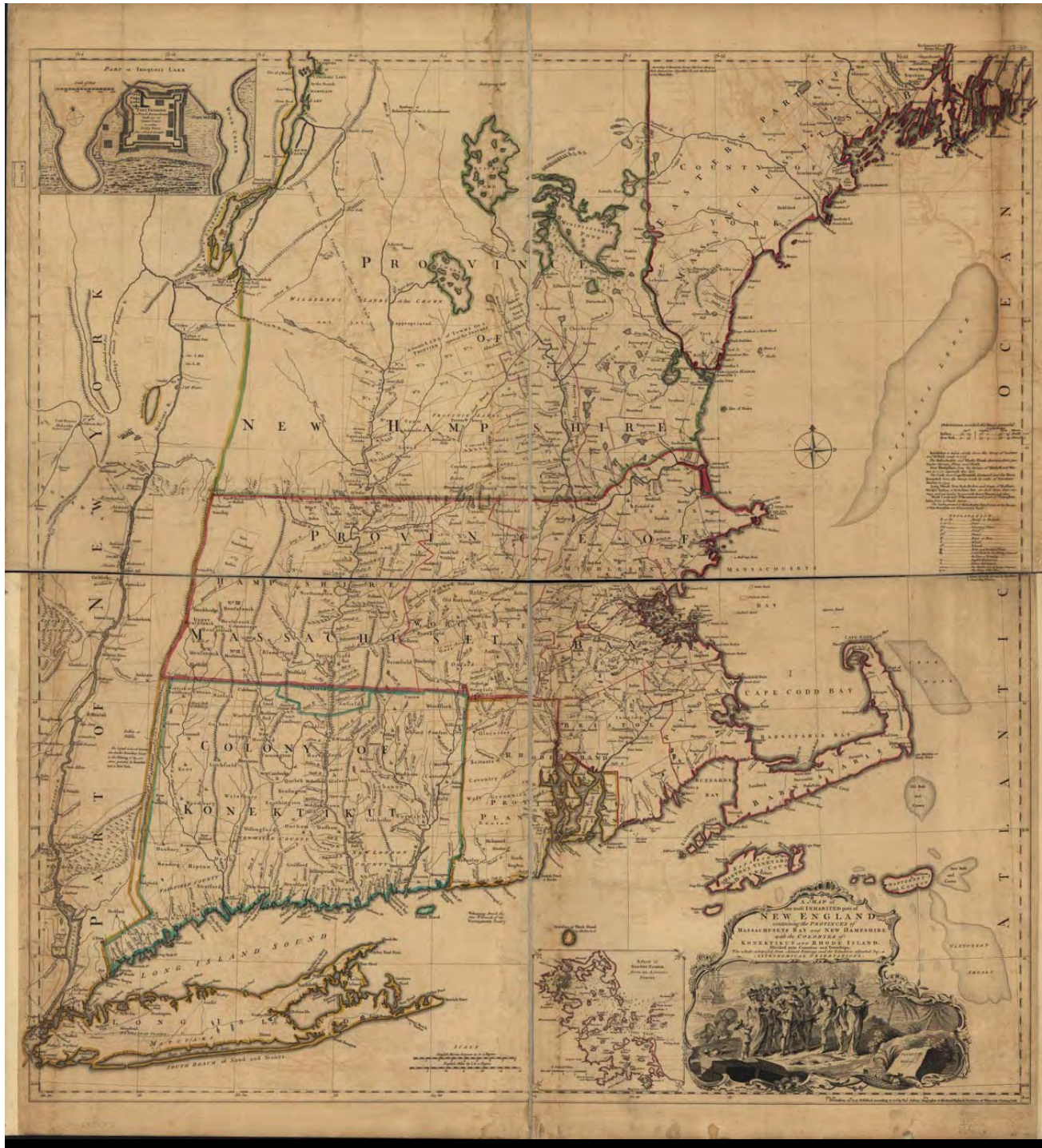


## The Percy Map

- so called after its original owner, Hugh, Earl Percy
- Was held in the Percy family archives until auctioned in 1997 along with a number of other maps and prints
- The original is in the OML seminar room, ready for close inspection after this presentation

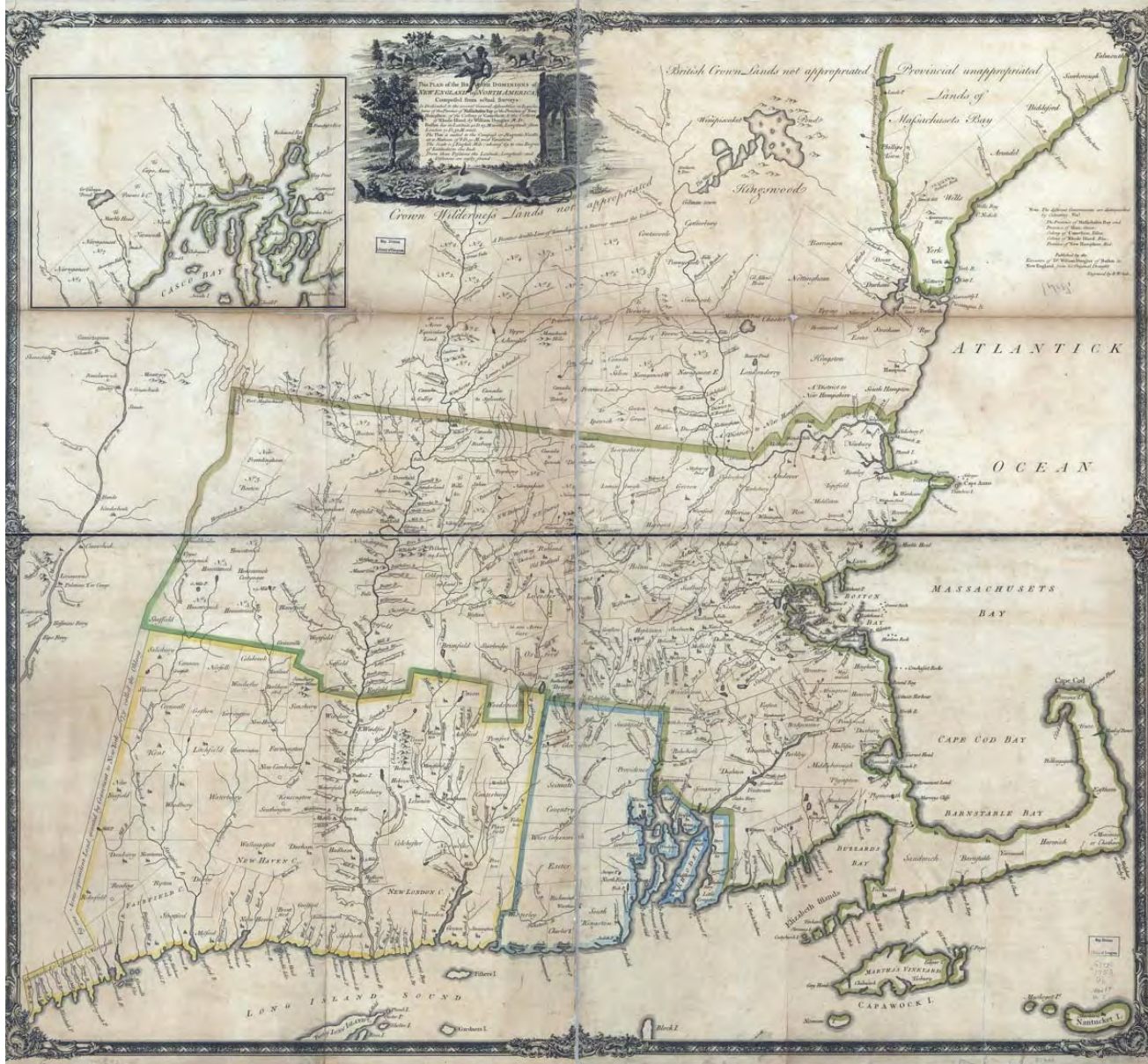


← 98 cm / 38½ in →



The map itself is a later issue of **Map of the most Inhabited Part of New England**, first published by Thomas Jefferys in London in November 1755 (shown here)

- originally prepared by the critical (and rather infamous) geographer John Green (né Bradock Mead) from ...



Plan of the British Dominions of New England, originally prepared by William Douglass M.D. of Boston and published, after his death, in London in mid-1755.



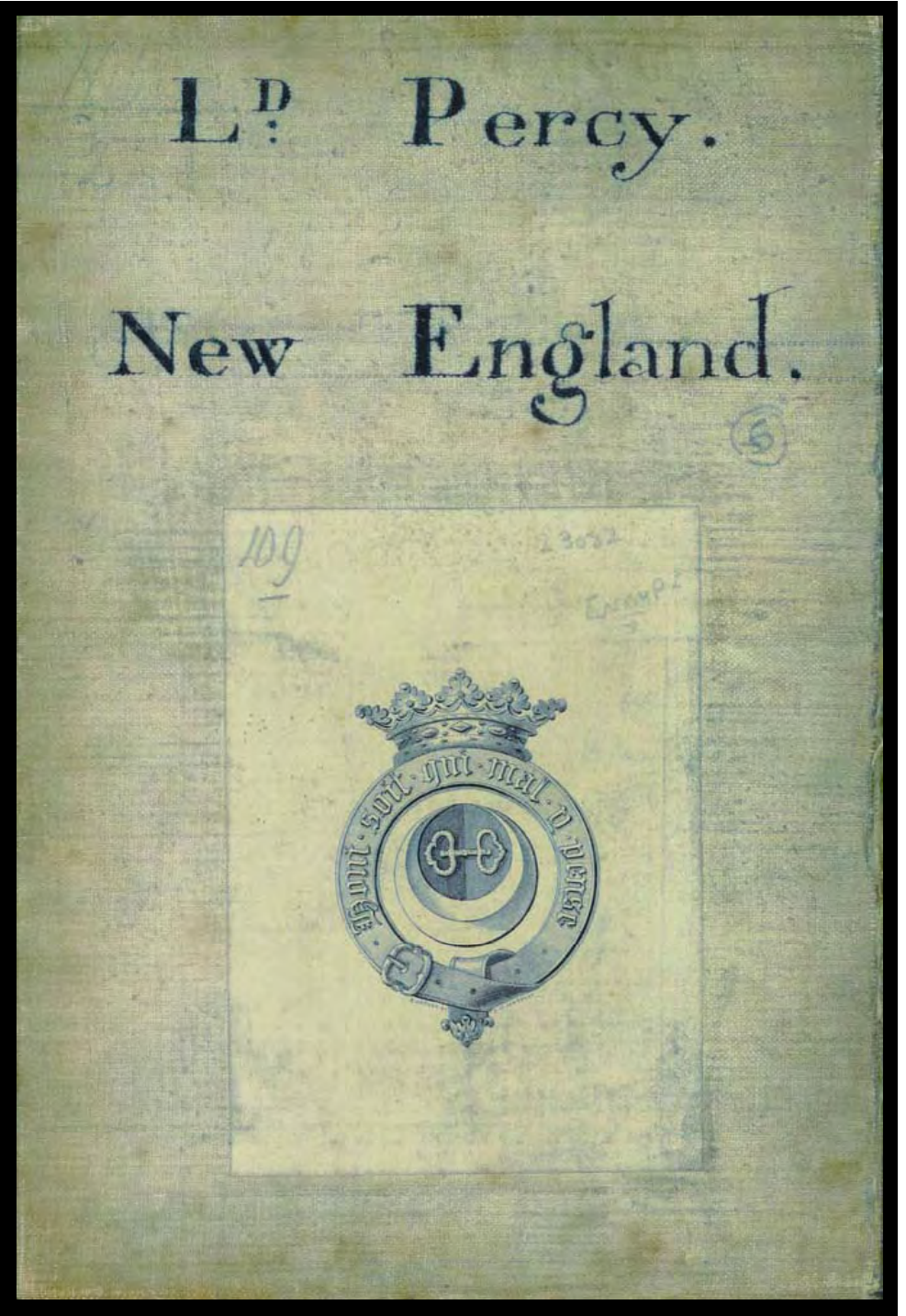
- Percy evidently acquired the map shortly before setting sail for Boston in May 1774
- this issue of the **Map of the most Inhabited Part of New England** was the most detailed then available



- divided into 35 panels (5 x 7) and backed onto cloth
- permits the map to be repeatedly folded and unfolded without damaging the actual image; the stress would be borne by the cloth, not the more delicate paper.

## Title and bookplate on the back of the cloth:

- grubbiness indicates that the map was not stored in a case
- manuscript title added before 1786 (when Percy became duke of Northumberland and ceased to be “Lord Percy”)
- similar titles can be found on Percy’s other maps of American colonies
- the printed bookplate (with the Perc\_ bad\_e, , robabl\_ added after 1802, when Percy enrolled in the Order of the Garter.



## Hugh Percy (1742-1817)

- son of the 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Northumberland (3<sup>rd</sup> creation)
- active in politics, first in the House of Commons as MP for Westminster (1763-1776) and then in the House of Lords
- with his father, opposed the Stamp Act in the 1760s
- **generally**, was **sympathetic** towards the colonists' complaints
- illegitimate half-brother was James Smithson (of Smithsonian Institution fame)



*By Sir J. Kneller*  
HUGH EARL PERCY. Engraved by J. Kneller, Engraver to his Majesty, and to the Elector Palatine.  
*In his own Right, Baron PERCY, LUCY, POININGS, FITZ-JAINE, BRYAN, and LATIMER,  
& Major General of his Majesty's Forces in Great Britain, and  
Lieut. General now serving in America, 1777.  
Late Representative in Parliament for Westminster.*  
*This Plate engraved from a Portrait presented by the DUKE of NORTHUMBERLAND to the MAGISTRATES of WESTMINSTER, & placed by them in their Guild-Hall, in Commemoration  
of his LORDSHIP'S FIDELITY SERVICES, to the late JOHN FIELDING Esq. Chairman, & to the rest of the MAGISTRATES, most respectfully dedicated, by these devoted Brethren, Servants - F. GILPIN.*  
*Printed and Sold by S. Smith, Stationer & Bookseller in Strand, 1777.*

- Percy joined the army in 1759 (aged 17), was a full colonel by 1764, and received command of the 5th Foot in 1768
- despite his sympathies, Percy accompanied the 5th Foot to Boston in 1774



*By J. G. Kneller*  
**HUGH EARL PERCY.** Engraved by J. G. Kneller, Engraver to his Majesty, and to the Elector Palatine.  
*In his own Right, Baron PERCY, LUCY, POININGS, FITZ-JAINE, BRYAN, and LATIMER,  
 Major General of his Majesty's Forces in Great Britain, and  
 Lieut. General now serving in America, 1777.  
 Late Representative in Parliament for Westminster.*  
*This Plate engraved from a Portrait presented by the DUKE of SOUTHBURGH to the MAGISTRATES of WESTMINSTER, & placed by them in their GUILD-HALL, in Commemoration of his LORDSHIP'S FIDELITY SERVICES, to the SAID CITY, & to the MAYOR, & the ALDERMEN, & the COMMONS, most respectfully dedicated, by these devoted Burghers, & Citizens. - 1767.*



*By an Engraver*  
HUGH EARL PERCY. Engraved by Valentine Green, in his Majesty's Service, and in the British Parliament.  
*In his own Right, Baron PERCY, LUCY, POININGS, FITZ-JAINE, BRYAN, and LATIMER,  
& Major General of his Majesty's Forces in Great Britain, and  
Lieut. General now serving in America, 1777.  
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of his LORDSHIP'S FIDELITY & SERVICES, to the KING, JOHN FIELDING Esq. Chairman, & the Rest of the MAGISTRATES, most respectfully dedicated by these devoted Brethren, Servants - V. GREEN.*  
*Printed and Sold by W. Green, Stationer & Engraver, in Strand, 1777.*

- Percy commanded the relief for the ill-fated mission to disarm the magazines at **Concord** on **19 April 1775**, becoming the **(British) hero of the hour**
- the new British c-in-c, Sir William Howe, did not trust Percy – although Percy would serve well in New York, the conflict with Howe eventually led him to quit in May 1777.
- this mezzotint published in London by Valentine Green in January 1777, when Percy (still in the colonies) was at the height of his military reputation in Britain.

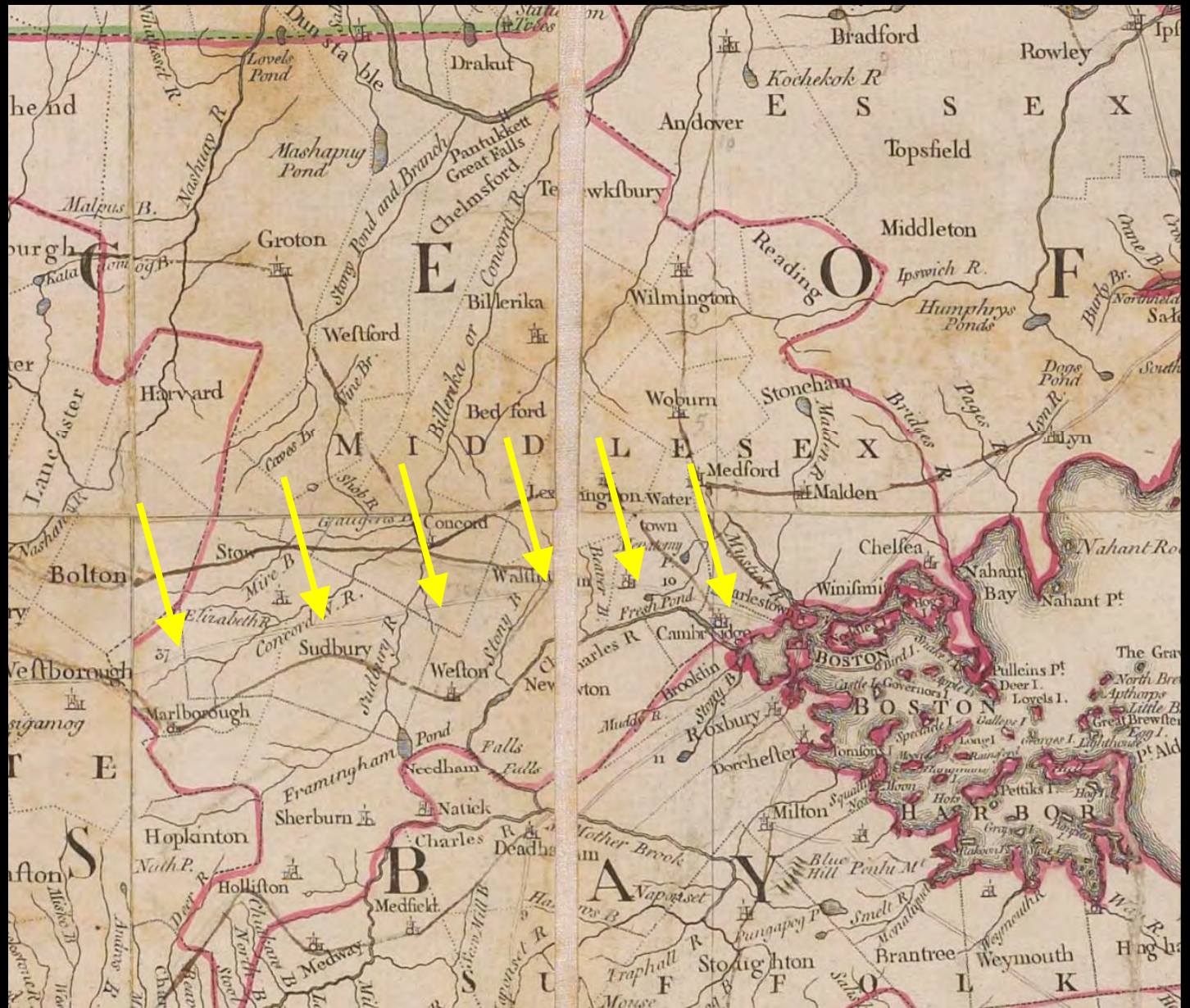
## How did Percy use the map?

It is actually quite hard to reconstruct in precise detail how people used maps in the past.

But Percy (or other officers) added a series of routes to the map in ink, and these annotations tell a story ...



- the engraved map already included some routes, as rather faint, double lines
- just one of these routes is flagged here





Some of the routes corrected errors in the original map, such as its failures

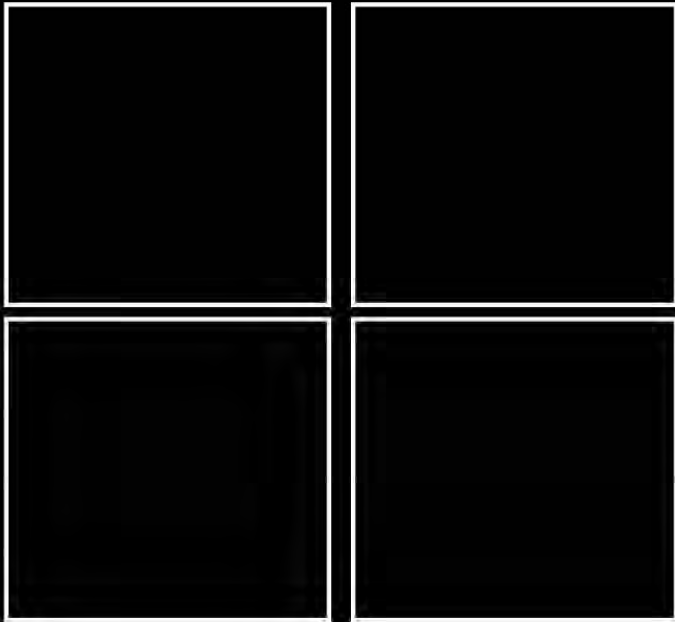
- to extend the road west from Providence across the boundary between two sheets
- to show the Post Road south from Providence to Tower Hill



Subtle variations in how the lines cross the various seams in the map give us important clues about just how Percy used this map.



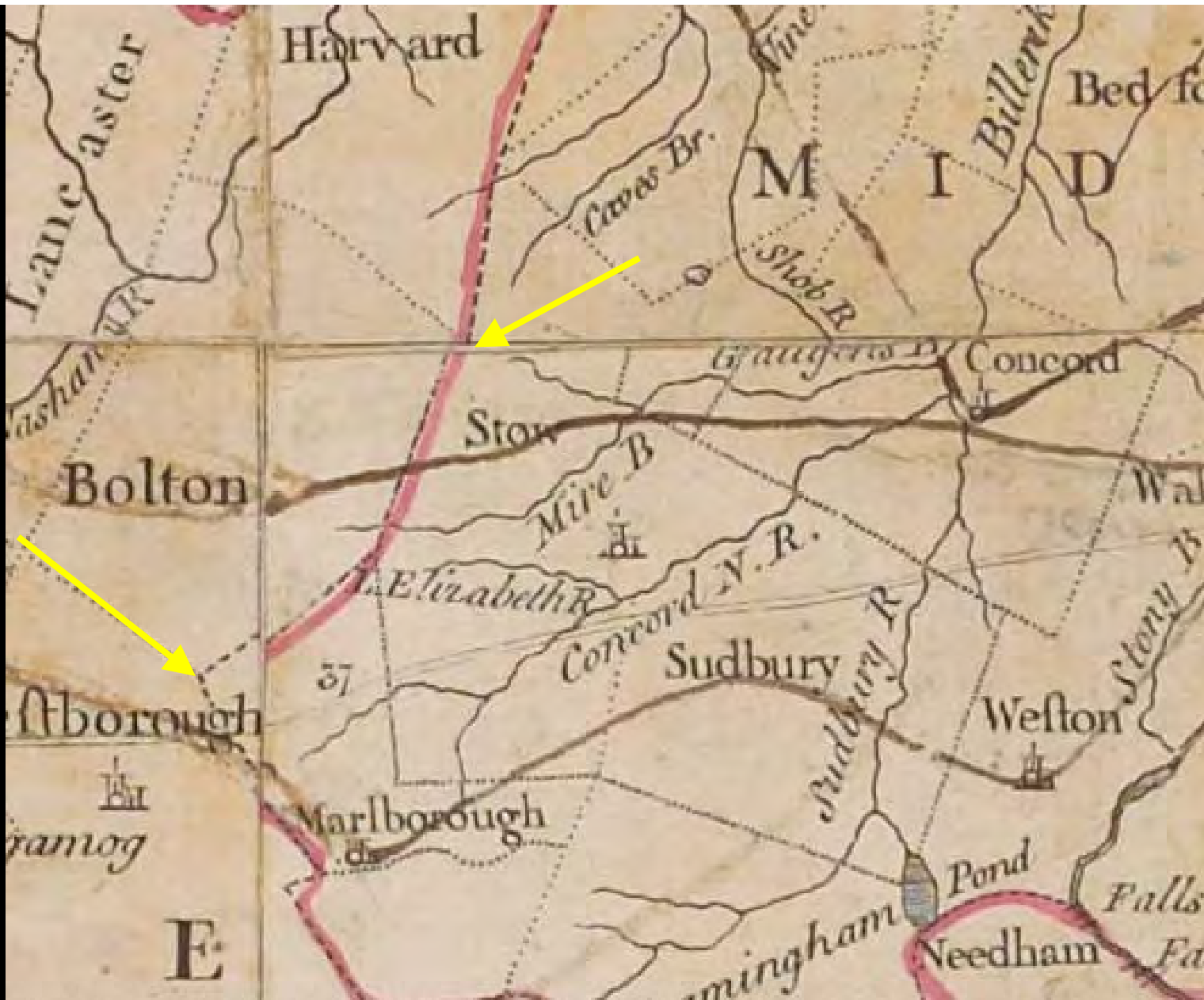
## Reminder re the map's physical configuration:



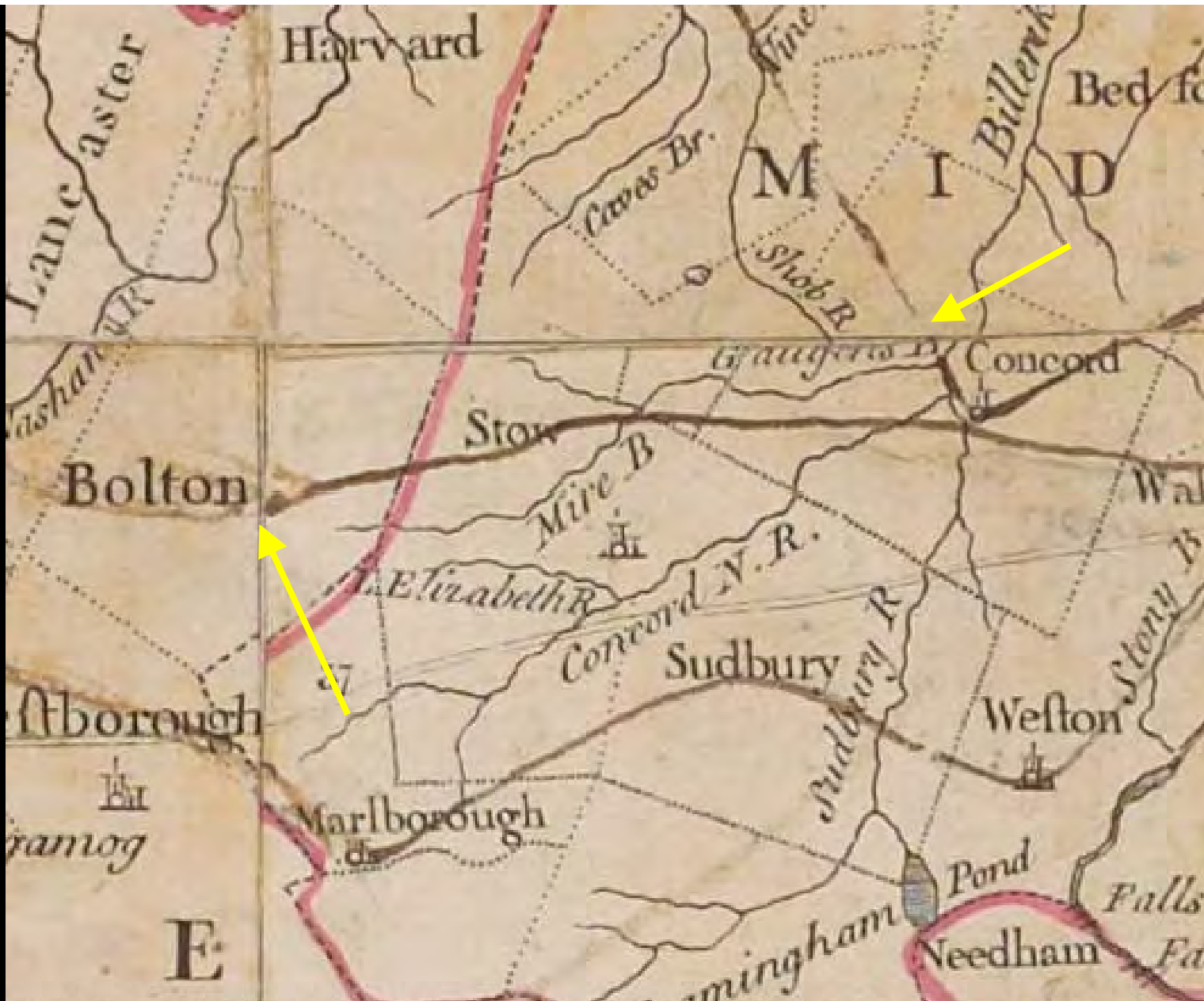
1. Originally produced as four separately printed sheets that (at some point) were glued together

(2) Then the whole map cut up into 35 panels (7 x 5) and pasted onto cloth backing  
=> **two sets of seams**





(1) Notice how the outline coloring inconsistent between the sheets  
=> sheets colored **separately**, so sold unjoined together



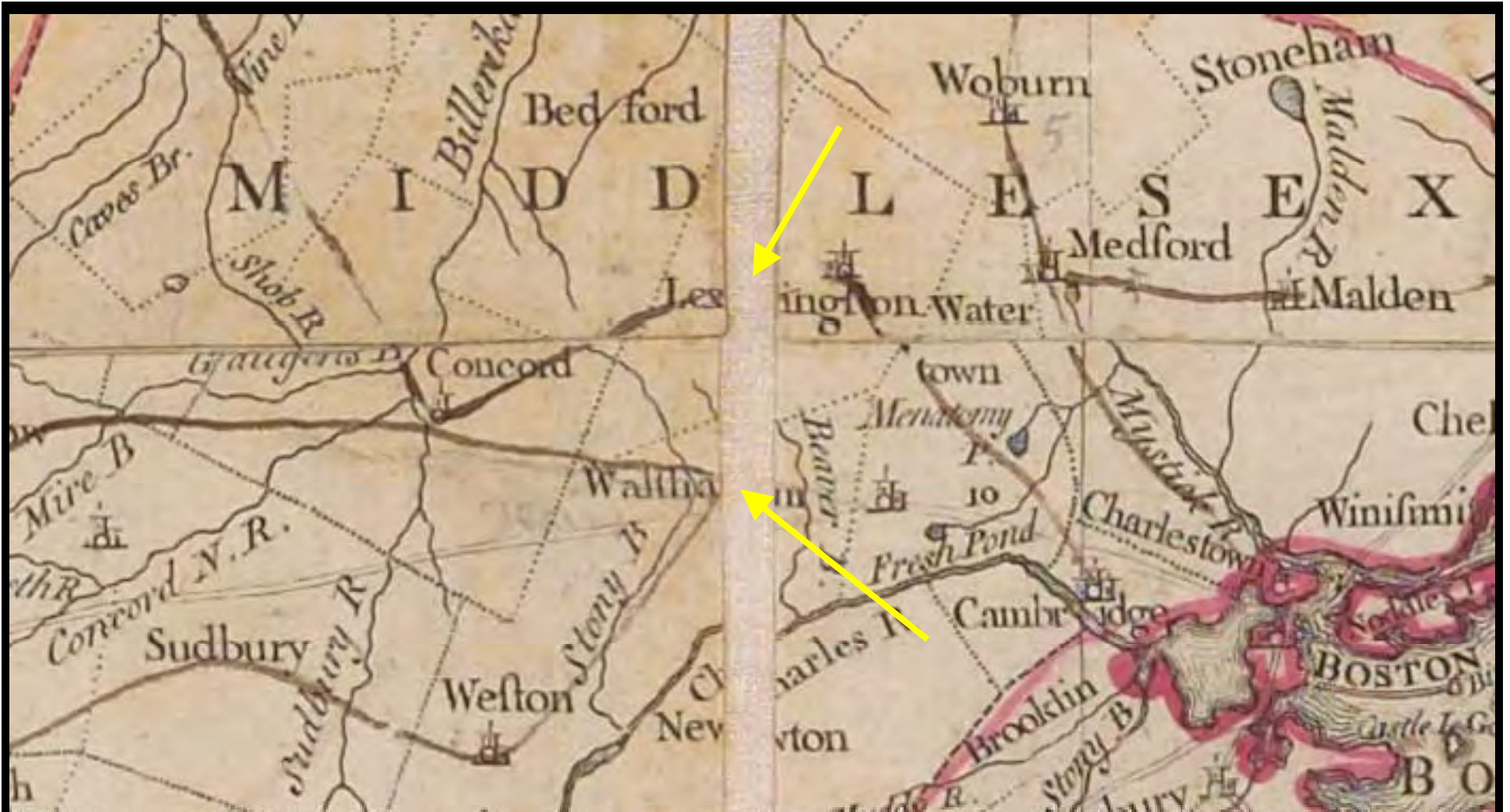
(2) most of the lines “stutter” at the boundaries of the original four sheets  
=> Lines were inked **before** the sheets assembled into whole map



(3) that the lines were inked **before** the map sheets were assembled and then dissected is also indicated by the manner in which

- the inked lines do not cross the exposed cloth
- ends of inked lines are staggered on either side of the breaks





(5) and some inked lines seem to be defined by dissection breaks => these lines were inked **after** the map was dissectioned

=> the map was a **working document**



We therefore see a **long process of use:**

- Percy began to use the sheets when still physically separated
- he then had the sheets assembled to make the map, perhaps for wall display
- then had the map dissected and backed onto cloth
- all the while adding more routes!



The routes themselves were for **strategic knowledge** ... giving idea of where routes ran, but not the precise details of how actually to navigate ... can see this with respect to the events of 19 April 1775



Percy led the relief column along the south bank of the Charles River from Boston, across the bridge at Cambridge, with the intention of meeting the retreating column at Lexington ... **but where was the road to Lexington?**



Army columns directed by scouts, local informants, and tactical exigencies ... for example, **how to return when the bridge at Cambridge destroyed?**



Answer: follow a route, known as "Kent's Lane," identified by scouts, that ran across country to Charlestown and the protection of the British guns

## The Percy Map

- a fascinating document recording the continuing efforts of a British colonel to understand the outline of a military theater
- where, in broad terms, were routes that army columns might follow (should they ever need to do so)?



This slide show has already been put online, on the OML web site:

<http://www.usm.maine.edu/maps/>

Much of the information, but not the recent work, is explored in more detail at

<http://www.usm.maine.edu/maps/web-document/3/home/the-percy-map>

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