



Scouters of the Isaac Davis Trail  
P. O. Box 763  
Acton, MA 01720

## REGISTRATION

To: The Scouters of the Isaac Davis Trail  
P. O. Box  
Acton, MA 01720

We plan to hike the Isaac Davis Trail on \_\_\_\_\_  
Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Council \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth \_\_\_\_\_ Adults \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**ORDER FORM FOR AWARDS**

Send to: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Isaac Davis Trail Medal	\$3.50	_____	@ \$3.50	_____
Isaac Davis Trail				
Embroidered Patch	\$1.50	_____	@ \$1.50	_____
Isaac Davis Hat Pin	\$2.00	_____	@ \$2.00	_____
			Total \$	_____

Please send check or Money Order with this form to:

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## THE ISAAC DAVIS TRAIL

The Isaac Davis Trail is an official Boy Scout Historical Trail sponsored by the Scouters of the Isaac Davis Trail. It is the same trail used by Captain Isaac Davis of the Acton Minutemen in their historic march to Concord where "the shot heard around the world" was fired.

**Trail:** The trail is seven miles long and takes 2-3 hours to cover. It begins at the home of Captain Davis where the original Minutemen met and ends at the Old North Bridge in Concord. Most of the route is on paved road. Only small stretches are cross-country. The trail is open year round and maybe hiked at any time.

**Awards:** The award for hiking the trail and meeting other requirements consists of a medal suspended on a white ribbon. For hiking only, the award is a four-colored embroidered patch. The awards are sent to the unit leader upon completion of the requirements and payment of the proper fee. The patch may be worn on the right pocket of the uniform and the medal over the left pocket.

**Requirements:** Any registered Cub, Scout, Venture, Girl Scout or Scouter may qualify for the award. Hikers must wear an official uniform on the trail and two adults over 21 must accompany each group on the trail. It is recommended that a ratio of adults to Scouts be at least one to ten. All units must have a tour permit signed by their local Council Office with them. The trail is to be hiked as a Pack, Troop or Crew, and no individual hiker will be recognized for an award. Some of the trail is over private land, so be courteous and clean is important for the continued use of the trail. Participation in the hiking of the trail in no way obligates Isaac Davis Trail Committee, its sponsors, or the Boy Scouts of America in case of accident or injury. To qualify for the shirt patch, the applicant must hike the entire trail from the Isaac Davis House to the Old North Bridge by the designated route. To qualify for the medal, the applicant will study the attached history of the march and satisfy the unit leader that the youth understands the material by answering the questions in the back of this book. Some answers require observations along the trail.

**Procedure:** Reproduce copies of this booklet as needed. After the hike, submit the Awards Order Form with the proper fee. The purpose of the questionnaire is to insure comprehension of the trail history. A suggested list of questions is found in this booklet. It is the responsibility of the unit leader to administer the questionnaire in a manner to evaluate each hiker's comprehension. The quiz can be retaken if necessary.

**Other Information:** For those units wishing to retrace the line of march at anytime other than the annual celebration, it is suggested that all but one car in the group be parked in the parking lot adjacent to the Old North Bridge in Concord. The drivers of the cars who will be hiking the trail can return in one car to the start of the Trail and park at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School lot on Hayward Road. Eating facilities are available in Acton and Concord. For a quick meal, there is a McDonald's at the corner of Routes 111 and 27 in Acton. **There are no toilet facilities** along the Trail. Toilet facilities are available at the end of the Trail at the North Bridge Visitors Center.

We would like to acknowledge our sincere appreciation and thanks to the Acton Historical Society, for their help in the preparation of the following historical background of the Isaac Davis Trail.

## **THE REVOLUTIONARY YEARS**

In 1775 Acton was a town of approximately 750 people. Within its bounds were two companies of militia and one of minutemen. In theory, the militia companies, under the command of Colonel Francis Faulkner and Captain Joseph Robbins, were under orders from the Crown. In practice, this had ceased to be true.

Davis' minuteman company was particularly noted for its zeal. It met twice weekly for drill to the accompaniment of fife and drum. The fifer, Luther Blanchard, and the drummer, Francis Barker, often played "The White Cockade" and that tune became the recognized musical signature of the company. The company was also unusual in that all the muskets were fitted with bayonets many of Davis' own manufacture.

Throughout Massachusetts, military supplies were being accumulated by the colonists. The British in Boston under the command of General Thomas Gage, who was both military commander and Governor, were aware of this. Spies were sent out to discover the location of these stores, and British soldiers were frequently marched several miles out of Boston to the countryside. Since the colonists could never be sure whether the purpose of the march might be the capture of the supplies or just to "show the colors", their apprehension mounted. Many colonists, particularly the minutemen, began carrying their muskets at all times.

Concord had become a center of colonial political activities, since it was an inland center of population just far enough from Boston not to be under the eye of the Crown. Minutemen and militiamen from neighboring towns met to muster in Concord, although the musters were sometimes more social than military. In late March 1775 a second Provincial Congress met in Concord.

On the 15th of April the Congress adjourned. No sooner had the delegates left than word was received of an impending British march on Concord. Couriers were sent to the surrounding towns alerting militia and minutemen that it might soon be necessary for them to provide a show of strength at Concord. The cannon and heavy supplies stored in Concord were hastily moved to neighboring towns. Tradition has it that the two brass mortars sent to Acton were hidden behind Captain Joseph Robbins' house in what is now part of Woodlawn Cemetery.

The report of the impending march was accurate. On Saturday, April 15, 800 British regulars and marines were taken off regular duty for special maneuvers. General Gage, under pressure from England and local Tories, had decided to send an expedition to Concord to destroy the military supplies known to be stored there and to capture any colonial leaders who might be in the area. Through couriers, the colonists soon learned every thing about the expedition except when it would arrive.

On the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, ten Redcoats were sent to patrol the road between Boston and Concord with orders to intercept any messengers bound for Concord. At ten o'clock that night the British expedition, each man supplied with one day's food ration and ammunition, embarked in long boats across Boston Harbor to Lechmere Point. From there they waded through marshlands to begin the march to Lexington and Concord.

William Dawes and Paul Revere had been selected to alert the countryside when the march began. Dawes was to take the long overland route through Roxbury, Brookline, and Harvard Square. Revere was assigned to ride from Charlestown through Medford and Menotomy (now Arlington) to Lexington and towns west. Revere was rowed across Boston Harbor to Charlestown within sight of British warships. There he received the storied signal from the Old North Church belfry as to whether the British were taking the sea or overland route. Arriving in Lexington, Revere alerted Samuel Adams and John Hancock of their danger and persuaded them to flee. Half an hour later Dawes arrived and the two left to carry the alarm to Concord.

On the outskirts of Lexington the two riders met Dr. Samuel Prescott, who was returning to Concord from a visit to his fiancée in Lexington. The three had ridden about halfway to Concord when they were surprised by the British patrol. Dawes, who was riding in the rear, almost managed an escape but eventually the three were herded into a stone-walled field. At a shout from Prescott, the colonists made another try for freedom. As Dawes and Revere rode for the back of the field, Prescott spurred his horse for a leap over the wall and got away. It was Dr. Samuel Prescott who brought the alarm to Lincoln and Concord and to Acton and Stow.

Prescott's first stop in Acton was at the home of Captain Joseph Robbins. He did not dismount, but pounded on the corner of the house and shouted "Captain Robins, Captain Robbins! The Regulars are coming." He then raced on to alert Colonel Faulkner in South Acton and thence to Stow.

Captain Robbins rushed from the house with his musket and fired three shots as rapidly as he could reload. This was the signal for each Acton minuteman and militiaman to report to the home of his captain, armed and prepared to march to Concord. The alarm was picked up, and the sound of three musket shots could soon be heard repeated across the countryside. John Robbins, the Captain's 13-year-old son, mounted the family mare and rode off to carry the news to Captain Davis and to Captain Simon Hunt who would be leading the Faulkner Company that day. Soon the volunteers began to arrive. At the Faulkner home, women gathered to begin preparation of food to be carried to the men at noon by sons too young for military service.

Thirty-seven minutemen arrived at Captain Davis' house before dawn on April 19, 1775, each outfitted with musket and bayonet, powder horn, bullet pouch, and a ration of bread and cheese. Among them was James Hayward, Acton's schoolmaster, who was not a regular member of the company, being exempt from military duty because of a foot injury.

The march to Concord began to the tune of "The White Cockade".

The last time the minutemen companies had mustered in Concord, it had been on Concord's common; but as Captain Davis and his men reached Barrett's Mill Road, they were told that Colonel James Barrett, who was in general command of the militia at Concord, had ordered his men to the brow of Punkatasset Hill on the west side of the Concord River. The Acton minutemen joined him there. As on muster days, the companies took up their positions: militia on the left, minuteman companies on the right facing the North Bridge.

In the meantime, the British expedition had reached Concord. A raiding force was ordered to cross the Concord River at the North Bridge and continue to Barrett's farm to burn supplies they had been informed were stored in the barn. While the colonists watched from their vantage point on Punkatasset Hill, seven companies of British regulars reached the bridge. Four of these companies crossed the bridge and proceeded via a causeway to Barrett's farm, while the other three companies remained to guard the bridge.

Soon after the arrival of the Davis Company, the colonial officers called the first council of war in what was to become the American Revolution. Colonel Barrett was in command. Rumors of shooting and killing in Lexington were spreading, but the stories were confused and unverified. As the officers conferred, smoke was seen rising over the town of Concord. Thinking the British were setting fire to the town, the colonial officers decided to force a crossing of the bridge and save the town.

Colonel Barrett ordered Major John Buttrick to have an advance made over the bridge and into the town, but not to fire unless fired upon. Major Buttrick, needing a company to lead the march, turned to a Concord Captain who declined to lead. Buttrick then asked Captain Isaac Davis, whose company was the only one completely outfitted with bayonets, if he was afraid to go. Davis was heard to reply, "No, I am not and I haven't a man that is afraid to go".

Davis' men marched down toward the bridge, accompanied by Major Buttrick and Lieutenant Colonel John Robinson of Westford. They were followed by three Companies from Concord, then the Acton Company under Simon Hunt, a Bedford company, a Lincoln company, and the Robbins Company from Acton.

As the colonists approached, the British guarding the west side of the bridge retreated over it, leaving behind a few men who began to tear up the planks. Buttrick shouted at them to stop and they fell back with their comrades to form for action. When the American column was about 160 feet from the bridge, the redcoats fired a few random shots. One ball creased the forehead of Luther Blanchard, the fifer, slightly wounding him and a Concord man in the ranks behind. At this, Major Buttrick gave the order to fire.

Only the Acton men were in a position to fire. As they lifted their muskets, a volley was fired by the British. Isaac Davis was killed instantly. Abner Hosmer of Acton was mortally wounded with a bullet through the head.

The volley returned by the Acton minutemen had killed one redcoat, fatally wounded a second, and wounded several others. The British retreated toward Concord, followed by a few colonists; but the colonists were disorganized. About 200 gathered on Ripley Hill to watch the British, but most of the others returned to the bridge. The bodies of Davis and Hosmer were carried up the hill to Major Buttrick's home, to be taken back to the Davis home in Acton later that day.

The retreating British were reinforced by two or three companies coming out from Concord, but for the most part there wasn't any further fighting. When the British troops returned from their foray to Barrett's farm, unaware of the action at the bridge, they were allowed to pass over the bridge untouched.

About 500 angry, armed colonists were now assembled at the muster field and more were arriving. By midmorning it seemed to the British commander that his force might soon be outnumbered. His men had not slept the preceding night, and several were wounded. He ordered them back to the center of Concord. There was a delay as transportation was sought for the wounded, but by noon the march back to Boston had begun. It was too late, other minutemen and militia companies had arrived from more distant towns. The colonist now numbered almost 2000, all eager to get in the fight. As the British retreated, they fired on colonial companies at Meriam's Corner. The fire was returned and from thereon it was continuous for the 16 miles back to Charlestown. At first the regulars stayed on the road as their pursuers fired upon them from behind trees and stone walls. Finally, the British put flankers on either side of the road and these men were responsible for most of the colonial casualties of the day.

At Fiske Hill some redcoats entered the farmhouse for pillage. While they were there, James Hayward the lame schoolmaster of Acton, stopped at the well for a drink. He was surprised by a British soldier who stepped from the house, shouting, "you're a dead man!" "And so are you!" replied Hayward. The men fired simultaneously: the regular to die immediately and Hayward some eight hours later.

At Lexington, the British were met by reinforcements from Boston. They pillaged and burned part of the town and killed some civilians before starting off again for Boston. But at Menotomy, they were attacked by about 1800 well-armed colonists and there suffered their greatest casualties of the day.

Thus end April 19, Patriot's Day as it is now celebrated. Ralph Waldo Emerson memorialized the first shot at the bridge as "the shot heard 'round the world". In local, more chauvinistic terms, the events of the day were characterized as "the battle of Lexington, fought in Concord, by men of Acton".

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How were the Acton Minutemen notified that the British were coming?

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2. Who was the officer in charge of the Acton Minutemen?

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3. How many Minutemen answered the call for Acton?

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4. What are the three names on the Acton Monument at Acton Center?

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5. What is the bridge made of at Nashoba Brook?

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6. How many British are buried at Concord Bridge?

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7. Who is the statue of at the Concord Bridge?

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8. What did Isaac Davis say about his men?

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9. What is the day, month and year the march took place?

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10. Why did the British come to Concord?

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COMMENTS



LINE OF MARCH FROM  
ISAAC DAVIS FARM  
TO  
NORTH BRIDGE  
APRIL 19, 1776

