

brief history of acton

Acton, a town with a population of 20,000 is situated twenty-five miles northwest of Boston and was originally a part of the neighboring town of Concord. Beginning in 1655 approximately 8,000 acres were granted to Concord for pasturage by the General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony-predecessor of our State Legislature. Within a year Concord had established on it the sheep belonging to the local inhabitants in the care of a shepherd, John Law, thought to have been a Scottish prisoner-of-war, transported to America and sold as slave labor for a term of about seven years. The land remained largely public land, called the New Grant, for over seventy-five years, although some grants of land were made from it - one in 1661 to a man who had lost his arm. In 1669 the dry cows of Concord were brought out for pasturage under the care of Thomas Wheeler, Captain of the horse militia of Concord. Wheeler died seven years later after an engagement with the Indians. Although towns to the north and west were attacked and abandoned during King Philip's War, leaving Concord a frontier town, Concord itself and its New Grant were never attacked. After 1730 a division of the land was made and general settlement began.

By 1735 there were seventeen families in what was now known as Concord Village which petitioned the General Court for permission to form a separate town because the heavy snows of winter and spring floods made church attendance, compulsory in Puritan Massachusetts, so difficult. Permission was granted on condition that a church be built and a minister engaged. The meetinghouse was set on a knoll in the geographical center of the town, a site now a town park known as Meeting House Hill.

In Oct. 1774 the town elected a Committee of Correspondence and chose delegates to an illegal Provincial Congress, an event now commemorated annually by the Acton Minutemen as Crown Resistance Day. Early in the morning of April 19, 1775 Dr. Samuel Prescott who, after Paul Revere was captured in Lexington, carried on to Concord word of the approach of British soldiers, then continued on to Acton where some of the colonial war supplies were hidden. Three companies, one of minutemen and two of militia, gathered and marched for Concord. The minuteman company of Capt. Isaac Davis assembled at his home and marched on the old road to Concord, a part of which is now a town park known as the Isaac Davis Trail. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Luther Blanchard, the fifer, piped them along the way to the tune of "The White Cockade". The militia gathered at the Faulkner House, oldest house still standing in town and also listed in the National Register. At Concord the Acton company of Capt. Davis was asked to lead the advance toward the bridge over the Concord River. There Capt. Davis and Private Abner Hosmer fell dead in the first volley fired by the British. Luther Blanchard, the fifer suffered a wound at this time. Capt. Isaac Davis was the first officer to die in the American Revolution. Later in the day, during the British retreat, James Hayward of Acton was also killed. These three are buried under the monument in Acton Center.

The population of the town in 1860 was 1726. On April 19, 1861 the Davis Guards of Acton were the first company of the first regiment of the Union Army to arrive in Washington in response to President Lincoln's call for volunteers. When crossing Baltimore the regiment was fired upon by Southern sympathizers, the first Northern regiment to be under fire and to suffer casualties.

Acton remained a small country town of 2500 inhabitants until the close of World War II. The burgeoning of Rte. 128 as a science center and the updating of Rte. 2 toward the west opened the way for a tremendous expansion as a suburban town, largely residential, of the outer Boston area.

ACTON

Massachusetts



Acton Bicentennial Medallion

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On The 1975 Celebration

Prepared By
The Acton Historical Commission

First Settled 1656

Incorporated 1735

sites of interest

1. Site of home of Captain Joseph Robbins who led East Militia Company to Concord Fight. Here Dr. Prescott sounded the first alarm in Acton.
2. Woodlawn Cemetery. Earliest marked stone, 1743
3. Meeting House Hill
4. Acton Memorial Library
5. Acton Town Hall
6. Capt. Isaac Davis Monument
7. Line of March of the Minutemen (Isaac Davis Trail)
8. Site of Capt. Isaac Davis' house
9. Site of home of Abner Hosmer where Luther Blanchard also lived
10. Jones Tavern - Acton's only existing Revolutionary Tavern
11. Faulkner House - open to the public on April 19 and summer Sunday afternoons
12. Liberty Tree House - home of Lt. Simon Hunt who led West Militia Company to Concord Fight.
13. Site of birthplace of Isaac Davis
14. Site of home of James Hayward

