

ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BECOMING AMERICANS

The Fourth of July is a national holiday honoring the day that the Declaration of Independence was signed. On that day the colonists informed the King of England that they were no longer under British control. There is another very important date in American history and that date is April 19th. Some historians believe that on that date in 1775 the British colonists changed their nationality and became Americans.

Tensions were running high in the Colonies, especially in Massachusetts. The British troops were informed that weapons and ammunition were being stored in the area of Concord and they set out to destroy them. Paul Revere, Samuel Prescott, and several other riders set out to warn the colonists.

The towns in the area were alerted and the signal was given for the militia to gather. Each town had their own group and they referred to themselves as Minutemen since they were to gather within minutes.

In the Town of Acton, Captain Isaac Davis assembled his men. The militia consisted of farmers, shopkeepers, and even the schoolmaster. They were especially proud of the fact that each man in Acton not only had a musket but also a bayonet. This was because Captain Davis was a blacksmith and gunsmith. He made sure all his men were prepared.

They marched to Concord to meet with the militia from other towns. At the Concord line Davis told his men if they wanted to leave, now was the time. Not one man left and they marched the seven miles to the tune of the White Cockade. Sergeant Forbush, Josiah Hayward, and James Hayward, the teacher, were among the men in the group.

They gathered at the North Bridge in Concord and faced the British who had the greatest army in the world. When the order to step up was given, the Acton group moved in first. No one knows who fired the first shot, but a British bullet pierced the heart of Captain Davis killing him instantly. History records that David Forbush, who was standing ten feet away, was covered by the blood of Davis who became the first American officer killed in the American Revolution. The British retreated back to Boston. Abner Hosmer and James Hayward, the teacher, also died at Concord.

When the men of Acton and the other militia fired on the British army, it was also an attack on King George III. The morning the militias set out they were British subjects. By noon, they had surrendered their loyalty to the King and became Americans. Historians often point to this day as the birth of the American nationality.

Forbush and Hayward were related by marriage. A number of years after the Revolution, the Forbush family left Massachusetts and moved to Chautauqua County. Eventually the members of the Forbush family moved to Cattaraugus County. Today, the descendents of David Forbush live in Franklinville, Gowanda and Cattaraugus.

There are at least 115 soldiers who fought in the American Revolution and either lived in Cattaraugus County or they are buried there. In the first line of the Cadiz Cemetery, there is a stone for Theophilus Howard III. His father, Theophilus Howard II, was one of the men who dressed up as an Indian and dumped tea into Boston Harbor. This incident became known as the Boston Tea Party.

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The last known soldier of the American Revolution died at the age of 109 years, 5 months and 21 days on April 5, 1869. His name was Daniel Frederick Bakeman and ironically he died in the Town of Freedom in Cattaraugus County.

Submitted by: Bruce D. Fredrickson, Town of Franklinville Historian, descendent of David Forbush, and related to James Hayward and Abner Hosmer.