



Lexington and Concord. For some people, these are simply names out of a history book.

But there's a funny thing about history: When you look closer, new names start to appear. It's like holding a magnifying glass over a photograph, seeing details leap at you where there were none before. The same is true for the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Look closer and other names will soon emerge.

Names like Isaac Davis.

An early Patriot

Isaac Davis was a gunsmith from Acton, Massachusetts. An early Patriot, Davis was so respected by his comrades, he was elected captain of his local company of Minutemen, a volunteer militia famously required to be ready for action at a minute's notice.

As tensions worsened between the colonies and the British, Davis worked hard to prepare his unit. He ensured every man had the proper equipment, which was rare, as few Minutemen had been professional soldiers. And he trained relentlessly on proper marching and marksmanship. As a result, there were few companies as well-prepared as his for the coming fight.

A fight that would take place in the spring of 1775, on an old bridge near the town of Concord.

“I haven't a man afraid to go.”

The shooting started in nearby Lexington, prompting several Minutemen companies from the surrounding area to turn out in response. Davis heard the news just after sunrise. By 7:00 AM, he had his company formed and ready to march.

Just as they were about to leave, Davis called for a halt. As his men looked on, Davis dashed back to his house.

“Take good care of the children,” he told his wife.

Two hours later, Davis reached the bridge near Concord where the other Minutemen had assembled. Davis arrived last, finding his fellow captains debating what to do next. At least a hundred British soldiers were just across the bridge, and more were in Concord itself, searching for supplies and burning what they found.

When the Americans saw the smoke, they made their decision: It was time to launch an attack. The question was, who would lead it?

Davis stepped forward. “I am not afraid,” he said, “and I haven't a man afraid to go.”

The shot heard round the world

The Minutemen advanced on the bridge in a column of two abreast. At the head of the column was Davis. Years later, many of his friends would recall that Davis seemed to have premonitions of what would happen next. Yet true to his word, he was calm, confident, and unafraid.

Across the bridge, the British watched in awe. No one had expected a group of volunteers to march with such precision.

Panicked, a British soldier fired a shot. Decades later, Ralph Waldo Emerson would immortalize it as “the shot heard round the world.” The shot that would truly open the Revolutionary War. The shot that would pave the way for democracy and popular government, changing the world forever.

Thinking they'd been ordered to fire, the other British soldiers launched a volley of musket balls. Leading the advance, Isaac Davis was among the first hit. The round passed through his heart. He died as he fell, but his work outlived him. His company returned fire, their accuracy stunning the British into an immediate retreat. It was the first American victory.

It would not be the last.

Our history books are filled with distant names like Concord and Okinawa, Gettysburg and Inchon. But look closer and you'll see the names that truly matter...the names of people who gave their all.

Memorial Day is a chance for us to look closer. To see that our country isn't just made up of words on paper, marble-clad buildings, or pieces of cloth. It's made up of *people*. People who all contributed, in their own ways, large and small, to the building of our nation. People with stories. People who trained. People who told their partners, "Take care of the children." People who said, "I am not afraid to go."

People like Isaac Davis.

This Memorial Day, let's remember the names of as many of those people as we can. Whether it's cracking open a history book or walking amidst the headstones of the local cemetery, let's look a little closer at all the men and women who were unafraid to go.

We wouldn't be here without them.

Sincerely,



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