

# JACOB DAVIS

(September 14, 1741 – April 9, 1814)



Born in Oxford, Massachusetts, Jacob Davis was the third child and son of Edward Davis and Abigail Learned. Like his future associate Ebenezer Crafts, with whom he co-founded Leicester Academy, Davis believed wholeheartedly in the far-reaching value of education.

But unlike Crafts, Davis himself received little formal schooling. His principal occupation was farming, first with his father and brothers in Oxford and later on a 265-acre farm of his own in Charlton, which he eventually expanded to more than 1,550 acres.

Davis married his cousin Rebecca Davis on January 9, 1765; six of their nine children lived to be adults. Deeply respected and well liked, Davis was heavily involved in the affairs of his community, including serving as a selectman and as captain of the Charlton militia. Almost immediately upon hearing of the battles at Lexington and Concord, Davis and his militia joined Colonel Ebenezer

Learned at the Siege of Boston, serving their time in Roxbury. A devout patriot, Davis remained in the Continental Army after the Siege ended in 1776, ultimately attaining the rank of colonel.

To date no portrait or drawing of Jacob Davis is known to exist. The written description of Davis included in a family genealogy provides a general glimpse:

“...he was of large, tall and compact frame, handsome features, and a dignified and noble manner. His great physical strength was shown in the fact that he felled and cut into log lengths an acre a day of average forest growth while clearing his lands.”

Davis and Ebenezer Crafts first discussed locating an academy, or college preparatory school, in Sturbridge. However, upon learning that a large building on Leicester Common was to be sold, they resolved to purchase the structure for their school,\* which opened June 7, 1784. Davis was a member of the original Board of Trustees, which persevered in creating a sturdy foundation for Leicester Academy during the uncertain initial years of its existence.

In another parallel with Crafts, Davis was one of a group of settlers from Massachusetts granted a charter for a township in Vermont. A principal proprietor, Davis was the first permanent settler and the original surveyor of the township, which he named Montpelier. The last child born to Jacob and Rebecca Davis was also the first child born in the new settlement. Today, Montpelier considers Davis the founder of the now small city and state capital.

Davis moved to Burlington after he was judged against for a payment that he could not prove he had made. The claim was essentially dismissed, but not until more than 12 years had passed. Sadly, Jacob Davis died before his plans to return to Montpelier were fully realized.

*\*Asa Sprague of Spencer joined Davis and Crafts in purchasing what had been the Aaron Lopez mansion, but sold his portion of the property to Crafts soon after the original sale.*