

Troop 160 Lexington
Bedford Flag Trail Hike - 2011
Sunday 30th 2011



The Bedford Trail Hike will take place on Sunday May 30th

Sunday May 30, 2011: Meet in St Brigids parking lot at **11:30 AM**. We will drive by car-a-van to the Old North Bridge in Concord and then Hike along the Bedford Flag Trail all the way to the Bedford Public Library where we can view the flag. We must answer several questions on the BFT form along the way to be eligible to purchase the BFT medals/patches (see attached).

In a day pack, bring pencil (not pen), 2 water bottles (minimum), bag lunch, snacks, rain gear, personal first aid kit, sunscreen, bug spray. Wear appropriate hiking clothes, Class B T-shirt, Hiking boots, hat, light jacket or fleece. Hike will be about 6 miles and will take about 4 hours.

There may be opportunity to have pizza dinner at end of hike so bring xtra \$5

Need adults to drive to Old North Bridge and to Pick up at Bedford Library

Leave home i-pods and any electronics, See follow-on page for historical info.

The leader of the trip will be John Woodhouse (or designate). He can be reached at any time via his cell phone at 781 454-9729. Please return bottom portion of this slip to John Woodhouse with check for \$6.50 made out to Troop 160 (Pays for the nifty medal above)

Cut Form along this line and send in to John W at 2 Bloomfield St, lex, 02421 by 5/24

My son(s) _____ has (have) my permission to participate in the Bedford Flag Trail Hike as described above.

E-mail: _____ Check# for \$7.50 _____

I can / cannot be available to give _____ (how many) scouts a ride to Concord at 11:30 AM

I can / cannot be available to give _____ (how many) scouts a ride to from Bedford Library at 4:30 PM

Emergency phone numbers during event: _____

Additional Cell phone #'s; _____

Please indicate if any serious dietary restrictions (food allergies i.e.)

Please indicate if any medical issues, medications or restrictions that we need to be aware of

I give permission to the leaders of Troop 160 Lexington to render first aid should the need arise. In the event of an emergency, I give permission to the physician, selected by the adult leader in charge, to hospitalize, secure proper anesthesia, order injection, or secure other needed medical treatment. I further agree to hold Troop 160 and its leaders blameless for any accidents which might occur during this outing except for clear acts of negligence or non-adherence to BSA policies and guidelines.

Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/11 Phone: _____

The Bedford Flag is believed to be the oldest complete flag still existing in the United States. It is celebrated as the flag carried by the Bedford Minuteman, Nathaniel Page, to the Concord Bridge on April 19, 1775, the beginning of the American Revolution, but it was already an antique on that day. It was made for a cavalry troop of the Massachusetts Bay militia early in the colonial struggle for the continent that we call the “French and Indian Wars.” The flag is a piece of crimson silk damask measuring about 27” long by 29” wide. This small square shape indicates that it was meant to be used as a cavalry flag. Into the rich red damask is woven a pattern of pomegranates, grapes, and leaves. The design is painted on both sides of the flag, mainly in silver and gold. The emblem consists of a mailed arm emerging from clouds and grasping a sword. Three cannonballs hang in the air. Encircling the arm is a gold ribbon on which the Latin words “VINCE AUT MORIRE” (Conquer or Die) are painted. On the reverse of the flag, the design is slightly different: the sword extends in front of the ribbon instead of behind; it is held left-handed; and the motto is read from bottom to top instead of top to bottom. A narrow area to the left of the emblem would have been stitched to make a sleeve for the pole to go into. Some of the holes the needle made are faintly visible. A silver fringe which is thought to have originally edged the flag has been lost to history.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FLAG

Exactly who made the flag and when it was made are not known, but recent reframing and conservation work has made

further research on it possible. The floral pattern woven into the damask has been dated by textile experts as appropriate to the early 1700s. The width of the fabric and the fact that the pattern repeats three times across it suggest it was woven in Asia and subsequently imported to America. Testing of the crimson dye used in the silk may soon lead to further conclusions.

Displayed with the flag in the Bedford Free Public Library is an original commission dating 1737. It names Minuteman Nathaniel Page’s father John “Cornett of the Troop of horse.” A cornet was the cavalry officer just below lieutenant whose duty it was to bear the flag. In fact, Nathaniel’s father, uncle and grandfather are all mentioned within the Bedford and Billerica Town Records as “Cornet Page,” indicating that a Page had been carrying the flag for the local militia troop at least as early as 1720.

The emblem, an arm holding aloft a sword, is a common one during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is not unique to the Bedford Flag. A microscopic and spectroscopic analysis of the paint used on the emblem reveals a pigment called “Prussian blue” that did not exist before 1704, so the flag cannot date from before that year.

THE FLAG’S ROLE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

The flag was still in the possession of the Page family at the time of the American Revolution, and it is believed in Bedford that Minuteman Nathaniel Page took it with him to the battle at Concord. Nathaniel told the story to his grandson, Cyrus, and it was written down after his death by the nineteenth century historian, Abram English Brown. This account says “Our people were not surprised when the messenger reached this house... We had agreed at the last drilling to meet, in case of alarm, at the tavern in the center of the town, kept by Jeremiah Fitch, sergeant of the militia company. The horseman banged on the house and cried out, ‘Up, Mr. Page, the regulars are out.’ We were not long at our preparations, and were soon at the tavern.”

E. Brown continues, “On the arrival of the [Bedford] Company at Concord, they assisted in removing the stores to places of greater safety. Tradition says that Cornet Nathaniel Page laid down his flag and went to work, and when returning to look for it ‘found the boys had got it and were playing soldiers.’” He took it up and went to face the British regulars at the North Bridge.

In 1838, the battle at the North Bridge was vividly memorialized by poet Ralph Waldo Emerson in his famous Concord Hymn:

By the rude bridge which arched the flood,
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

With acknowledgment and many thanks to **Sharon Lawrence McDonald**.

View the Bedford Flag exhibit at the Bedford Free Public Library.