

Primus Jacobs
(ca. 1745-1818)

On April 30, 1754, Daniel Epes sold a young enslaved boy named Primus to Ebenezer Jacobs. Primus grew up working on the Jacobs farm in Danvers. There are many things unknown about Primus. When was he born, who were his parents and how old was he in 1754?

This is what we do know about Primus Jacobs. In 1776 Primus married Dinah Smith who was also an enslaved person. A year before his marriage on April 19, 1775, the American Revolution had begun. If an enslaved man joined the Continental Army to fight, they were promised their freedom. In 1777, Primus Jacobs decided to join twelve other enslaved men from Danvers in Captain Samuel Page's regiment. Captain Samuel Page was also from Danvers. (Read page 14, Activit #1 in your **Our Town** Activity book to learn what these soldiers had to carry with them.)

Captain Page's regiment marched to New York to join General George Washington and the Continental Army. They fought in the Battle of Saratoga in October, 1777. The Continental Army won that battle. The army then went to spend the winter at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Primus Jacobs was one of 12,000 men who spent that cold winter in Valley Forge. Captain Page's regiment with Primus Jacobs fought in the war until it ended in 1783.

After the war, Primus returned home to his wife, Dinah. They were now both free and moved to Salem. They had three children. Their son, Primus, died as a child. Their daughters, Anna and Elizabeth, later married and had many children. Primus died in 1817. As a veteran of the American Revolution, he received a pension. After he died, Dinah Jacobs continued to apply for his pension to help support her and her family. She later moved to Boston to live with her daughter Anna who had married Jethro Freeman. Dinah died in 1842.

Primus Jacobs was not famous, but he represents many of the enslaved men who fought in the American Revolution. This makes his story important.