

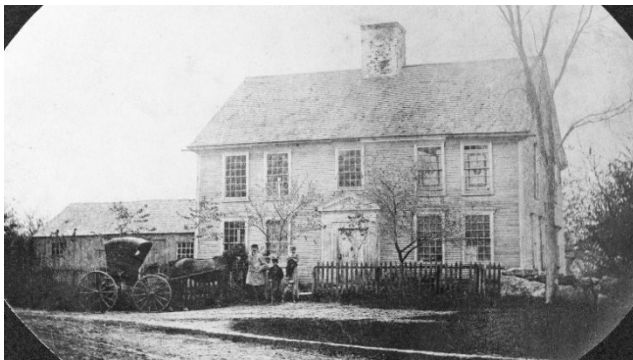
The Boston Tea Party

December 16, 1773 - Members of the Sons of Liberty executed a carefully planned raid to protest the Tea Act passed by Parliament on May 10, 1773, granting a monopoly to the East India Tea Company with ongoing taxes diverted to pay off Tea Company debt. The tea was in the harbor on the ships Dartmouth, Eleanor, and Beaver, and would be taxed once unloaded the next day. During the night teams of men disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded the ships, smashed open 340 chests of tea weighing over 92,000 pounds, and dumped it all into the harbor. Residents came out in small boats the next day to make sure any floating clumps of tea were soaked with sea water.

Chelmsford's association with the Boston Tea Party began back in 1721 when Sarah Pitts married William Stoddard, son of Chelmsford's Rev. Sampson Stoddard. Her brother James married the daughter of James Bowdoin (a future governor of Massachusetts) in 1732, and had sons John, Samuel, Lindall, and daughter Elizabeth. Samuel was in the shipping business with his father James, trading in the Bermudas. James and his three sons all participated in the dumping of the tea, with Lindall commanding the team that boarded the Brig Beaver.



Samuel Pitts Portrait by John Singleton Copley



Rev. Sampson Stoddard House, 11 Academy St.

After leaving Boston as wanted men, they stayed in Chelmsford with widow Sarah Stoddard at 11 Academy Street (where the First Baptist Church was later built) until things cooled down. Samuel remained at the house with his wife Joanna (Davis) and raised their children Samuel, Thomas, James, John, William Lindall, Sarah, and Mary. From Waters' History: "Daniel Goodwin, Jr., in his Memorial of the Pitts, says that after the revolution Samuel Pitts came to Chelmsford and lived in luxury, devoted to domestic comfort and a noble

hospitality." Samuel purchased the house at 11 Academy Street from Levi Wilder, administrator of the Sampson Stoddard estate, in 1789.

Joanna Pitts died in 1796 at age 45, and in 1797 Samuel married her sister Mrs. Polly (Davis) Carns. His brother John Pitts Esquire of Dunstable (the portion that became Tyngsboro in 1809), was married to Mary Tyng and held two mortgages on a house constructed in 1794 at 16 Westford Street for the Rev. Hezekiah Packard. As the Stoddard house was a bit small for Samuel's large family and entertaining style, he acquired 16 Westford Street in 1801 with financial help from his brother John.



Rev. Hezekiah Packard House at 16 Westford Street

Samuel died in 1805 at age 60 and John, as administrator of his estate, sold the house to Rev. Wilkes Allen. Does that name ring a bell?

Boston Tea Party - The Rest of the Story

This is a compilation of historical fun-facts surrounding the Boston Tea Party but not directly relevant. One thing that jumped out was the popularity of certain names at the time and how they appeared across generations. Rev. Sampson Stoddard's first and second wives were Elizabeth and Margaret, and his son Col. Sampson Stoddard's first and second wives were also named Elizabeth and Margaret! Thank goodness for the Rev. and Col. titles. Rev. Stoddard's father was Sampson Stoddard, and Col. Stoddard had a son Sampson Stoddard, Jr.

Rev. Sampson Stoddard

Rev. Stoddard was born in 1681, graduated from Harvard College in 1701 at age 20, and was ordained as minister of the church in Chelmsford in 1706 replacing the late Rev. Thomas Clarke. His pay was set by vote at Town Meeting, causing some stress as its value would depreciate over time. He married his first wife Elizabeth Davis in 1707 and they had nine children between 1709 and 1725. He married his second wife, Mrs. Margaret Halkerston of Boston in 1726.

In 1736 and 37 he found it increasingly difficult to perform his Town school teaching duties and became depressed. By 1738 he had to give up his ministerial duties as well, but the parish voted to continue his salary and "supply the pulpit." His physical and mental health continued to deteriorate until 23 August 1740 when he was found dead at the bottom of his well at age 59. This well was located where the gasoline service station is today on Littleton Road across from Forefathers Burying Ground.

Sarah Pitts and William Stoddard

The "History of Chelmsford" by Wilson Waters on page 299 states that Samuel Pitt's aunt Sarah Pitts married William Stoddard in 1721, which could not be confirmed from independent sources. William Stoddard, the son of Rev. Sampson Stoddard, was 9 years old in 1721 and died on 22 January 1741 at only 29 years of age, and only five months after his father's death in that well. If Sarah married this William, it would have to have been around 1731.

Col. Sampson Stoddard had a daughter, also named Sarah, who married Levi Wilder of Lancaster, MA, on 26 August 1779. They lived in the Stoddard house and Levi was administrator of the Stoddard estate when the house was purchased by Samuel Pitts in 1789.

Col. Sampson Stoddard

The eldest sons of the first four ministers in Chelmsford, Rev. John Fiske, Rev. Thomas Clarke, Rev. Sampson Stoddard, and Rev. Ebenezer Bridge all became leading citizens of the town. Their contributions included keeping a store, holding the local liquor license, participating in local and state government, military service, and legal duties. Here are a few notes on Rev. Sampson Stoddard's son:

- **1730** – Sampson Stoddard graduated from Harvard College at age 21.
- **1748** – Col. Stoddard was Chelmsford Town Moderator.
- **1749** - Col. Stoddard received his commission as Lieut. Col. on 12 September as recorded in the diary of Rev. Ebenezer Bridge.
- **1752** - A charter for the New Hampshire territory known as Monadnock Number 7, and locally as Limerick, was granted by the Masonian Proprietors on 10 May to a group of men that included Col. Sampson Stoddard of Chelmsford. The charter was renewed in 1767, and when the town

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was incorporated on 4 November 1774, it was named Stoddard in his honor, even though he never settled there.

- **1752 to 1771** - [Col.] Stoddard Esq. was a licensed retailer, and for several years was the only legal retailer in town. His son Sampson Stoddard Jr. was licensed in 1770 and 1771.
- **1762 to 1768** – [Col.] Stoddard Esq. was Chelmsford's State Representative.
- **1763 to 1774** – Col. Stoddard was Chelmsford Town Moderator except for 1765.
- **1763** – Rev .Ebenezer Bridge and his brother-in-law Col Stoddard were the two most influential men in town, and at the time associated with the most prominent people in the Colony including leaders on the loyalist side. On 13 June they entertained royal Governor Francis Bernard and Hon. James Bowdoin at Col. Stoddard's house.
- **1765** – On 21 October the Town voted to form a committee to compose an official response to the Parliament's Stamp Act to be delivered to the Great and General Court in Boston by Chelmsford's Representative [Col.] Stoddard Esq. In short, the response was a request directed at the King and Parliament to quickly repeal their Stamp Act.
- **1767** – Rev. Bridge gave a speech on 24 June to the general assembly in Boston speaking favorably about King George III and parliament, suggesting the colony remain loyal. This was at odds with the general assembly that had already accepted the patriotic views of Samuel Adams.
- **1771** - Rev. Bridge's good friend Thomas Hutchinson became governor this year and wrote letters to King George III requesting more troops to suppress the American rebels. These letters were secretly copied and provided to Benjamin Franklin in 1772.
- **1773** - John Adams published the Hutchinson letters in the Boston Gazette in June. When Rev. Bridge read these letters, he abandoned his royalist views and "became a firm supporter of the patriot cause." Col. Stoddard, on the other hand, held on to his Tory views in sympathy with British authority rather than independence during the revolution now underway. This met with strong disapproval from the residents of Chelmsford to the point where "his house was assailed with stones and his fence destroyed." Although there is no documentation, he may have had a change of heart before allowing the Pitts family to take refuge in his house after they participated in the Boston Tea Party.
- **1776** - The selectmen recommended that Col. Stoddard and his son Sampson Stoddard Jr., Esq. be allowed to sell liquors at their houses. At the June Town Meeting, the members voted that they were dissatisfied with the selectmen's recommendation.
- **1777** – Col. Sampson Stoddard died on 28 April at age 68.