

The Adams family started when...

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Most Chelmsford residents today are "newcomers"; that is, their families came here after 1700. However, there are still a few who are direct blood descendants from the original settlers.

History tells us that "a few families came in and settled upon this tract before the grant was made in 1653. They were here, doubtless, in 1652 as the first birth is recorded early in 1653, viz.: 'Joseph Parker, the son of Joseph and Margaret his wife () 30 days of March: 1653.'" Among the names of the first families who came here and settled permanently were Butterfield, Learned, Chamberlin, Fletcher, Adams, Proctor, Hildreth, Parker, Blodgett, and Thompson.

The memory of some of these early families has been preserved through present day names of streets and buildings. One example is the Adams family. We have the Adams Library, behind which passes Adams Avenue. In North Chelmsford there is Adams Street and Adams Farm Condominiums.

We have several current residents by the name of Adams but the present writer is familiar with the genealogies of only a few. It must be remembered that there are also many who are directly descended from the early Adamses (as is this writer) but, having come down through the female lines, do not bear the Adams name.

To bring things into perspective, the first Adams to come to New England was Henry, who settled in Braintree, Mass. (later to become Quincy) in 1632 or 1633. He had eight sons and a daughter. Two of these sons, Lt. Thomas and Capt. Samuel, came to Chelmsford in the 1650's. Their brother, Joseph, was the great grandfather of John Adams, the second president of the United States and also of the famous Samuel Adams "The Patriot," second cousin of President John.

The way It was

By George A.
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(Our Samuel should not be confused with "Sam, The Patriot", who came three generations later.) The Chelmsford Adamses at the time of the American Revolution were third cousins of the president.

Lt. Thomas Adams owned the land upon which the Garrison House stands, and it is believed that his son, Peletiah, built the historic home. Thomas was active in Town affairs, serving as town clerk, selectman, and representative. He was ensign (1678) and lieutenant (1682) in the company of which his brother, Samuel, was captain.

In 1659 Thomas had been proposed as the "Chiefe Sergt & military Officer" of the town. However, he was denied this appointment at that time because of his religious and political views. Rev. Fiske was among the opposition and wrote to the governor that "the sd Tho: does adhere to some Principles, destructive in their nature & end, to or (our) present government & the established Order of or (our) Churches." A year later he was approved.

Capt. Samuel Adams was granted 100 acres of land if he would set up a corn or grist mill. He was further given 450 acres for setting up a saw mill for the convenience of the townspeople (the nearest mills then being in Woburn and Concord). His mill was on what is now Mill Road at Russell's Pond. He was also granted the right to set flood gates to control the water flow from Heart Pond. These mills continued to be operated

by five successive generations of the Adams family and were finally sold to Abbott Russell, who with his son, continued to use them until 1899.

In addition to being captain of the local military unit, Samuel served as selectman from 1664 to 1688 and, during 19 of these years, was also town clerk.

Descendants of these early Adamses continued to be prominent in Chelmsford. Amos Francis Adams donated the Adams Library to the town in 1894. Ten years earlier the Town had been given land for the Common in North Chelmsford. This had been owned by two members of the Adams family. The map of 1875 shows a line from the point of the Common to the center of the Wright Street end. Land on the N.E. side of the line was owned by Timothy J. Adams with the other half belonging to Major General Benjamin Adams.

Timothy lived across Middlesex Street from the Common and owned several parcels of land around Vinal Square. The present Adams Farm Condominiums were built on part of his farm. Adams Street was laid out through land belonging to Timothy.

Gen. Benjamin Adams' house was on Princeton Street (known as Turnpike Street in 1875) about where the North Chelmsford Congregational Church stands today. He is listed in the records as "merchant of Chelmsford," State Senator, and Director of the Prescott Bank in Lowell. Born in 1801, he died in 1876.

Of the many Adams families in Chelmsford today, several were probably descended from the original Lt. Thomas and Capt. Samuel.

George A. Parkhurst is a Chelmsford historian whose family has lived in town since 1654. This is part of an occasional series on prominent Chelmsford families.