

# Indeed, a town of 'primary' importance

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Policies, national and international, or at least the candidates' interpretations of them, will be discussed ad nauseam by every facet of the news media between now and the November elections. These will be interspersed with recitations of past indiscretions of the "opponents," designed to show that only the "opponents" are imbued with human frailties, making them unfit to serve in public office.

We can't help wondering if similar tactics were practiced in the olden days when "kissin' cousins" of Chelmsford residents were elected to the presidency.

Although Chelmsford has never had any native sons who moved in to the Executive Mansion, at least four chief executives have had Chelmsford connections.

President John Adams, successor to President George Washington, had several fourth cousins in this town. They were descendants of two brothers, Lieutenant Thomas and Captain Samuel Adams, who both demonstrated an interest in politics more than a century before President John.

Thomas, one of the original grantees of the town in 1653, owned land on Garrison Road which he deeded to his son Peletiah Adams, who, it is believed, built the historic Garrison House sometime between 1683 and 1690. Thomas was a Selectman from the first Town Meeting in 1654 through 1677 and was a lieutenant in the military company of which his brother was captain.

Captain Samuel (not to be confused with

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## The way It was

By George A.  
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"Sam the Patriot" Adams of Revolutionary War-time fame) was granted 550 acres of land as an incentive to set up a saw mill and a gristmill at what is now Russell's Mill Pond on Mill Road. Samuel served on the Board of Selectmen for twenty years beginning in 1663. He was also Town Clerk from 1668 to 1687.

There are still several descendants of President John Adams' cousins, in Chelmsford today, including the present writer.

One of the more famous was Major General Benjamin Adams, who lived in the mid-19th century about where the North Chelmsford Congregational Church stands today. He and his neighbor, Timothy Adams, donated the land for the Common at Vinal Square.

Since John Quincy Adams, the 6th U.S. President, was the son of President John, he had similar connections with Chelmsford.

Another Chief Executive who had a Chelmsford connection was Grover Cleveland, the 22nd and 24th President. He tra-

ced his ancestry back to Aaron Cleveland, brother of the Samuel Cleveland who lived in what is now Westford (but was then Chelmsford) in 1682 when he married Persis Hildreth. Some of Samuel's descendants are still to be found in the Chelmsford/Westford area.

The President with the closest ties to Chelmsford was Franklin Pierce, our 14th President. He was a direct descendant of Steven Pierce, who was granted "a small parsill to sett a house upon (the) south west side of Beaver Brook Bridge" in 1671. Beaver Brook Bridge crossed the brook at what is now Central Square. Steven was one of the first tailors in town.

Steven's greatgrandson was Benjamin Pierce, who was one of the Chelmsford Minutemen who answered the alarm on April 19, 1775. He fought at "Bunker Hill" and continued serving in the army until 1784. In 1786, he moved to Hillsborough, N.H. and was elected governor of New Hampshire. His son, Franklin Pierce, became the 14th President of the United States.

Although the President did not live in Chelmsford, we can claim his father as "a local boy who did well."

In recent years, our politicians (and their relatives) have not made it to the White House, but...

That's the way it was.

*George Adams Parkhurst is a Chelmsford historian whose family has lived in town since 1654.*