

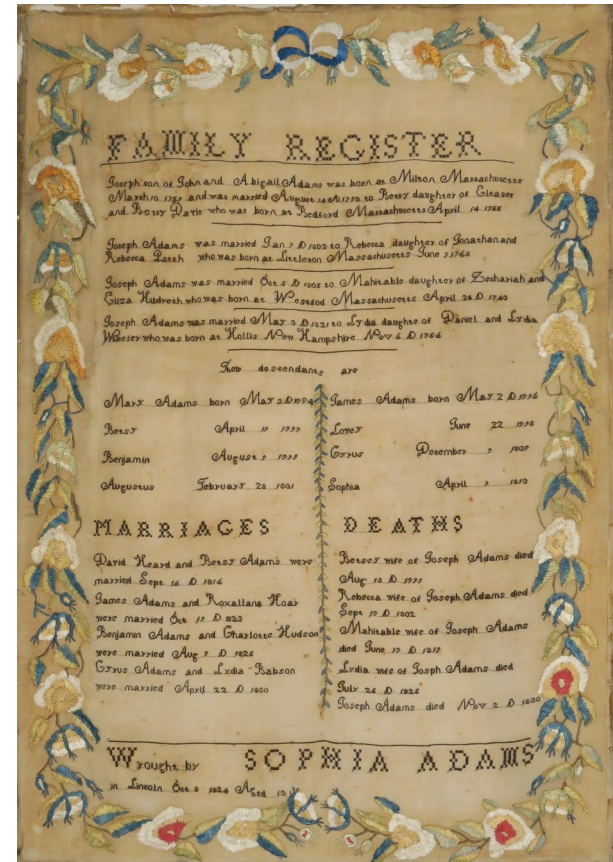
This agreement was very unusual during a period when a wife's holdings normally become the husband's property to control. Perhaps this was due to a lesson learned from the previous owner of the land, Catherine Louisa (Salmon) Smith. Catherine Louisa had received the land from her stepfather, but upon her marriage to William Smith, it became the property of her husband. William Smith had financial difficulties, so the farm was mortgaged to Catherine Louisa's father-in-law a number of times, but he eventually returned it to her and her children. There were two houses on the Smith property: one where the Smiths lived, that is still standing across from the end of Bedford Road; the other was a rental that became the Foster-Winship-Adams residence where Sophia worked on her sampler. While her home is no longer standing, the site is now part of Minute Man National Historical Park.

Sophia's father was a housewright by trade, more commonly known today as a builder, and he likely built some of Lincoln's early houses during his years living here. In 1827, for \$500, he sold his right to lease the 90-acre farm. Joseph died in Concord in 1830, leaving notes in hand (cash assets) to the value of \$2133.73 and \$178.18 worth in furnishings and tools. Sophia herself later married and had two sons and a daughter.

The residents of Lincoln approved a Community Preservation grant at the 2017 Annual Town Meeting to restore Sophia's important Lincoln sampler to its finest glory and prepare it for public display at Town Offices, including framing it with museum-quality UV filtering acrylic. This is truly a beautiful piece of art, made by young Sophia Adams during her youth on Lincoln's historic Battle Road. Lincoln is very fortunate to have it as a permanent reminder of our community's historic roots and of the fabric of families who once called Lincoln home.

—Valerie Fox

Sophia's Story: Unveiling of the 1826 Sophia Adams Sampler



Lincoln Town Offices
Friday, February 3, 2023
Lincoln Town Archives
in collaboration with Lincoln Historical Society

A sampler is a piece of embroidery worked in various stitches, commonly created by girls and young women as a specimen of their skill and a testament to their perseverance. Many samplers are family registers, recording the births, marriages, and deaths in the life of a family.

The Town of Lincoln has been fortunate to have a beautiful 19th-century sampler donated to it by Cynthia Williams. When she decided to move from Lincoln in 2015 to be near her children, she felt the sampler, which was created in Lincoln, should remain in Lincoln. It was wrought by her late husband's great-grandmother, Sophia Adams, at 13 years of age. The register records the birth, four marriages and death of Joseph Adams, born March 10, 1759, to John and Abigail Adams of Milton, Mass. He was a distant cousin of President John Adams.

When Sophia made it in 1826, this young teenager lived in Lincoln on Route 2A, the Battle Road. Then popularly known as Foster's farm, her home was very close to the Paul Revere capture site. It had once been part of the property owned by William Smith, captain of the Lincoln Minute Men, who fought the British on April 19, 1775.

At 31.5 inches x 21.5 inches, it is especially significant because it is quite large compared to other samplers of its time. The stitching was embroidered onto a particularly fine plain weave fabric and has a plain weave cotton backing. The yarn used was plied and unplied silk, and the stitching includes cross, satin, split stem, and French knot stitches. Due to the fineness of the backing—unlike the coarser linen backing used on many samplers—this exquisite work would have been especially challenging for a 13-year-old to stitch.

The sampler gives interesting insights into Joseph's life. It lists his first marriage to Betsey Davis and each of the five children that marriage produced. Betsey died at age 34, less than two weeks after her youngest son's birth. Ben was born August 7, 1799, and Betsey died on August 18. Having five young children to raise, Joseph married Rebecca Patch just over two years later. This was short-lived as Rebecca died within nine months. The sampler records that he then married Mehitable Hildreth, who bore him three children, the youngest being Sophia, who created the sampler. Mehitable died when Sophia was six.

Joseph married for the last time in 1821. He wed Lincoln widow Lydia Winship, nee Wheeler, who may have taught Sophia to sew. Lydia owned the Foster property, which had been left to her on the death of her first husband, Benjamin Winship, in 1819. Winship had originally purchased this land from widow Catherine Louisa Smith, whose husband Captain William Smith was a younger brother of Abigail Adams, wife of the second President. Benjamin and Lydia Winship had only one daughter, also named Lydia, who died at age 16. All three of them have their final resting place at Meeting House Burial Ground behind Bemis Hall.

Joseph Adams moved to Lincoln with his family when he married Lydia Winship. Interestingly, Lydia wrote an agreement—with her husband's consent—that the land would not become Joseph's, as was tradition, but it remained in Lydia's name. Just before Lydia Adams's death in 1825, she leased the property to her dear friend Susan Brooks with conditions, engaging her friend to lease it back to her husband Joseph "to hold to him the said Adams for and during the term of his natural life provided the said Joseph does not again get married." Lydia provided that if Joseph remarried, he would lose the option to lease the property.