

# What's in a name?

## 10 of the most recognizable names in Lincoln, Massachusetts

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*Editor's note: The Journal researched the history behind 10 of Lincoln's most recognizable names that you might see on street signs, buildings and other landmarks around town. Source materials were John C. MacLean's "A Rich Harvest" and the Archives/Special Collections of the Lincoln Public Library. This is by no means an exhaustive list nor are the names listed in any particular order. To suggest other names for future articles, contact us at [lincoln@cnc.com](mailto:lincoln@cnc.com).*

According to tradition, Chambers Russell was given the honor of naming the town. He selected "Lincoln" because many of his ancestors had lived in Lincolnshire, England.

**Hartwell** — William Hartwell emigrated either from Bedfordshire or Kent, England, and settled in Concord around 1636 when he was around 23 years old. Around the early 1690s, one of his grandsons, Samuel Hartwell, built a house along the Bay Road in the future Lincoln area of Concord. The Hartwells would be an active Lincoln family from the 18th century through the end of the 19th century and they had owned many Lincoln acres from the beginning.

The 17th-century house was constructed around a massive center chimney and it began with four rooms on each of its two floors. It continued in the family until 1875. It became a restaurant known as Hartwell Farm during the 20th century, but a series of fires, beginning in 1968, destroyed the wooden structure.

Cordwainer, farmer and innkeeper Ephraim Hartwell was one of Lincoln's first selectmen in 1754.

The school building was built in 1957-58 and was originally referred to as the William Hartwell School because of an incorrect belief that immigrant William Hartwell of Concord had a home in Lincoln and was the first white settler here (rather, he lived in Concord his whole life). Its "Hartwell School" name, nevertheless, recognizes one of the town's prominent early families.

**Flint** — English immigrant Thomas Flint owned at least part of the extensive Flint farm, which incorporated the future center of town.

This farm appears to have been the first functional farmstead within Lincoln's bounds. Significantly, some of the earliest documents relating to a Middlesex County farm have to do with the operation and crops found upon this farmstead. When Flint's possessions were inventoried in 1653, they included "one Bed at the farme." The house in which that bed was located was no doubt the first house constructed within the future Lincoln.

The pond in this part of town was called Flint's Pond as early as 1647, with Thomas Flint evidently owning the pond and having rights to its fish and to future milling.

The land was eventually inherited and occupied by Thomas' son, Ephraim. He was to be Lincoln's first town clerk, first treasurer and one of the first selectmen. One of his nephews, Edward Flint, was one of the first important developers of Lincoln's lands. While in his mid-20s, he acquired some family farmland and began operating a sawmill. Later he inherited and purchased more land from his kindred, sold the mill and a substantial part of his holdings, and formed a new farmstead of about 110 acres. As a result of his many transactions, beginning in the mid-1720s a number of other families settled on the remote Flint farm — new families that would seek a new community. He also donated the land on which the Meeting House was built.

By the mid-1980s, the Flints were not only the last 17th-century family, but also the last pre-1850 Lincoln family with descendants still living on the same farmstead.

**Baker** — As a convenience for the Billings and other families in the southwest part of Lincoln, "Baker Bridge Road" was formed as a less circuitous route to the Meeting House. It was likely named for the prominent Baker family, many members of which lived in Lincoln and surrounding towns.

Nathaniel Baker was born 1746 in Concord, and his brothers James and Amos were born in Lincoln in 1749 and 1756, respectively. Nathaniel and James were members of the Lincoln Minute Men, and Amos was in the Massachusetts militia. James was also a Lincoln selectman for one year, when he was 39.

Amos fought in the battle of Concord and at the Old North Bridge. As the last surviving member of the Concord Bridge fight of April 19, 1775, Amos Baker gave a statement in 1850 recalling those events, including the following line: "I verily believe that I felt better that day, take it all the day through, than if I had staid at home."

Amos and Nathaniel became the administrators of their father's estate, and inherited all their father's property in Concord and Lincoln, comprising almost 70 acres. Amos was buried at the Old Burial Ground in Lincoln.

**DeCordova** — Julian de Cordova was born in New York in 1851. His father Rafael J. de Cordova was a Jamaican of Spanish descent educated in England.

In 1877, Julian married Mary Elizabeth. Following his marriage, Julian had a three-year partnership in her father's company, Thomas Dana & Co., during which time they spent part of the year renting in Lincoln.

Julian and his mother-in-law, Elizabeth Dana, were both living in Lincoln in 1881, when they jointly purchased 20 acres adjoining Flint's Pond for \$2,150. Within the next year, they constructed a wooden Victorian home atop the lot's small hill. Paths and extended lawns were soon part of the grounds, and the estate was named Stoneyhurst by the family.

The wealthy family spent much of their time traveling around the world, during which Julian collected enthusiastically. He added a large brick gallery at the rear of his home to fit his curio cabinets, paintings, statuary, tapestries and furniture. Eight ancestral coats of arms were painted upon the expensive ceiling.

Julian ultimately envisioned his place as a "Castle for Youth," and in 1930, he presented the property to the town of Lincoln, retaining a life tenancy. He not only included the land and building in his gift, but also "all my pictures, engravings, etchings, bric-a-brac, coins, curios and tapestries, and certain rugs ... and all the carved furniture."

The site was to be maintained "in perpetuity as a public museum under the name of 'The deCordova and Dana Museum' in memory of myself and my wife for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Town of Lincoln." Julian also gave the town two trust funds totaling \$160,000 to support the museum and park.

**Smith** — Charles Sumner Smith was born on the family's farm on Sandy Pond Road in 1857. He began his career as a farmer but, along with his father, invested heavily in the stock market, particularly the Old Dominion Copper Mining and Smelting Company at Globe, Ariz. Smith became president of Old Dominion in 1902 and he was president of the Arizona Commercial Mining Company.

He was a leader in the town throughout the first quarter of the 20th century and had particular interests in improving the appearance of Lincoln's center and improving its

schools.

He “sold” a lot to the town for the price of \$1 in 1907. Under the terms of the transfer, a schoolhouse had to be built there within two years, and the land was “also conveyed subject to the restriction that it shall only be used for a schoolhouse or houses and for uses incidental and connected therewith...” Smith also offered \$20,000 towards the construction of the new Center School, which was built in 1908.

When he died in 1927 he gave \$50,00 toward the building of a new schoolhouse, a high school. A junior high school was built instead, and it was named the Charles Sumner Smith School. The Center School later became the current Town Offices.

**Brooks** — Thomas Brooks, an English immigrant, had three sons who all owned land in Lincoln. Eventually, the northwesterly part of Lincoln and the neighboring section of Concord became known as Brooks village. There were eight Brooks houses in this area by the mid-18th century. By the end of the century, nine Brooks homes stood in Lincoln alone. That number gradually decreased, with the last of the Brooks line continuing into the early 20th century. Thomas Brooks and his son, Joshua, were common ancestors to all the Lincoln Brookses, with the various Lincoln branches descending through Joshua’s two oldest sons: Noah, born in 1660, and Daniel, born in 1664.

Several members of the Brooks family were politically conspicuous. Eleaser Brooks, born in 1721, was a farmer and was elected to the first of three consecutive terms as town treasurer in 1765. He also served as a selectman, town moderator, and member of Lincoln’s Committee of Correspondence, as a Massachusetts representative, senator, and councilor, and as a Revolutionary War brigadier-general and a church deacon.

**Bemis** — The Bemis family, which first settled in Lincoln in 1792, owned a very desirable farm, better than the average farmstead, with woodlands, cleared areas, and a varied fruit orchard.

George F. Bemis was born in 1809 to Amos and Susanna Bemis. Educated at the center district’s schoolhouse, he later taught for a couple of winters. After working on the family farm while young, he later learned the printing trade in Amherst. He likely used much of his inheritance to acquire Concord’s Yeoman Gazette newspaper in 1834, which gave him a prominent voice in the region, but was financially unsuccessful. A county representative was authorized to seize his property in 1840 because of his large debt. He went to Boston in 1843 and with the assistance of his brothers-in-law, established a large printing office at 25 School St.

His real wealth came through investments, mostly in real estate. He owned the Boston Daily Advertiser building at the corner of Washington and Devonshire streets, which he sold in 1886 for \$250,000.

He donated about 13 acres for an expanded cemetery off Lexington Road. In his will, he made three bequests to his native Lincoln that would change the town's history and appearance: He left \$5,000 to the First Congregational Society to help them build a new church, \$30,000 to the town to form a perpetual lecture series, and \$20,000 to the town to erect a new Town Hall.

**Pierce** — Abijah Pierce acquired the former Josph Brooks farm. He started his civil involvement as a Deer Reeve, with subsequent tenures as tythingman and surveyor of highways. By the early 1780s, Pierce's career would incorporate 13 years as a selectman, two as treasurer, three as town clerk, and years of service on Lincoln's Committee of Correspondence.

Abijah's great-grandson, John Howard Pierce, was an important Lincoln benefactor. He purchased 11 acres on the east side of Lincoln Hill for \$1,500 and built one of Lincoln's earliest Victorian country estates. He continued living here until 1884, when the house was sold to George Ropes.

In 1899, John H. Pierce purchased about 19 acres in the center of Lincoln from his brother, extending along Weston road. In 1900, he built his second Lincoln estate, a Georgian Revival mansion.

Pierce died in 1910 and willed that \$5,000 plus his farm and house be given to the inhabitants of Lincoln following the decease of his daughter Elsie Pierce. He wanted it to be used for a hospital and park for the use and enjoyment of the inhabitants of Lincoln.

**Codman** — Charles Chambers, a Charlestown merchant, bought many lots in Lincoln, one of which included L-shaped, high-ceilinged, two-story Georgian mansion that was evidently constructed between 1736 and 1741. This became the home of Chambers Russell, a grandson of Charles Chambers. It was later owned by other Russell-Codman relations and was enlarged greatly.

The Russell-Codman estate was Lincoln's largest property for many years. Although the estate was confiscated during the Revolution, Chambers Russell II, of Charlestown, gained title to the property through a process involving the purchase of an outstanding mortgage.

He died in 1970 and willed the estate to a 6-year-old nephew named Charles Russell Codman.

Charles Russell Codman was the son of Boston merchant John Codman and of the late Margaret (Russell) Codman. John co-administered the youth's Lincoln property and sought to follow English examples as he transformed the estate into a grand country seat where the family summered. The house was worth six times as much as the next best house in town.

Following the death in 1968 of Dorothy Codman (a great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Charles Chambers), the mansion became a museum owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and is now managed by Historic New England. Much of the surrounding farm is conservation land maintained by the town of Lincoln.

**Farrar** — Immigrant Jacob Farrar had moved from Lancashire, England, to Lancaster, Mass., in the 1650s. Indians attacked his community twice during the 17th century. The first attack was in 1685, during King Philip's War, when two of Jacob Farrar's sons were killed. One son left behind a young widow and four sons. Widow Hannah Farrar was from Concord, and she returned there with her children.

One of Hannah's sons, George Farrar, was apprenticed out to the Goble family until he was 21. He then married Mary Howe, and acquired part of the Goble farm along the road to old Sudbury. It is believed that he had the Farrar homestead constructed in 1692. The house remained in the family until it was torn down in the 1950s, with the Farrars long recognized as one of Lincoln's most prominent families.

Samuel Farrar began a strong family tradition of political service to the town of Lincoln, of concern for education, and of service to the church. He was one of Lincoln's first selectmen in 1754. It is arguable that he was Lincoln's foremost local leader during its first two decades. As Lincoln's minister told the assembly during Farrar's funeral services in 1783, his passing was truly "the death of one of the Fathers of your Town."