

Samuel Hastings
A Brief Biography
By Bill Poole

The first of the Hastings family to come to the Massachusetts Bay Colony was Thomas, the great grandfather of **Samuel Hastings Sr.** Thomas was born somewhere in East Anglia, England in 1605, and at age 29 along with his wife, Susanna, age 34, embarked on the ship *Elizabeth* that sailed from Ipswich, England on April 10, 1634.¹ He settled at Watertown, MA where he was admitted as a freeman on May 6, 1635. There, he was a Selectman from 1638 to 1643 and 1650 to 1671. He also served as Town Moderator, clerk of the town in 1671, 1677 and 1680, and was Representative to the General Court in either 1671 or 1673 or both. He was also active in church affairs and served as deacon.²

Susanna Hastings died February 2, 1650, and Thomas married in April 1651, Margaret Cheney, daughter of William and Martha Cheney of Roxbury. They had eight children: 1. **Thomas**, born July 1, 1652; 2. **John, the grandfather of Samuel Hastings Sr.**, born March 4, 1654; 3. **William**, born August 8, 1655, drowned in August, 1669, age fourteen; 4. **Joseph**, born September 11, 1657; 5. **Benjamin**, born August 9, 1659; 6. **Nathaniel**, born September 25, 1661; 7. **Hepzibah**, born January 31, 1663; and 8. **Samuel**, born March 12, 1665.³

During his lifetime, Thomas accumulated 127 ½ acres of land.⁴ He died in Watertown in 1685 at age 80. His will, dated March 12, 1685, was proved September 7, 1685. His estate was valued at £421.⁵ In the will, Thomas bequeathed £40 to each of his sons John, Joseph, Benjamin, Nathaniel and their sister Hepzibah. To his eldest son, Thomas Jr., he left just £5 stating “I have been at great expense to bring him up a scholar, and have given him above threescore pounds to begin the world with.” Thomas Jr. had been somewhat of a disappointment to his father having become embroiled as a nineteen year old in a rancorous paternity suit. He was let off when he admitted his paternity and his father agreed to support the child.⁵ Thomas Jr. removed to Hatfield, MA, took up the practice of medicine and became a well-respected member of the community. He is remembered for having treated the victims of the attack on that town by Native Americans and writing a well-respected history of the 1704 attack on Deerfield, MA.^{6*}



Watertown Founders Monument

Thomas Hastings is considered one of the founders of Watertown and his name is inscribed on the Watertown Founders Monument, whose sculptor was Henry Hudson Kitson, the artist who also created the Minuteman Statue (Captain Parker) in Lexington Center.

John Hastings, Grandfather of Samuel Hastings

John was the second son of Thomas and Margaret Cheney Hastings. He served during Metacomet's (King Phillip's) War in the fall of 1675 under Captain Daniel Henchman; under Captain Nathaniel Davenport November 25 to December 3, 1675, under Captain Joseph Sill January 25, 1676 and with Lieutenant Edward Oakes April 24, 1676. He was at Lancaster, Massachusetts. where the troops encamped on February 10 1676. On February 21, 1676, the troops were Medfield, Massachusetts.⁷

In Watertown, he was chosen Surveyor of Highways on November 5, 1683 and again on March 2, 1712/13. He was designated a Hog reeve on March 21, 1693/94. He was appointed Constable for 1696/97, 1700/01, and 1701/02. He was a Tithingman 1703/04. He served on a committee of three appointed on November 27, 1705 to locate a site for the grammar school. He was picked as a Hayward on March 3, 1706/07, and Surveyor of Highways on March 2, 1712/13. Although not as influential a person as his father, he did serve the community in numerous functions.⁸

On June 8, 1679 he married Abigail Hammond, daughter of Lieutenant John and Abigail Salter Hammond, born June 21, 1659 in Watertown. In 1690, Lieutenant John had the highest tax assessment in town, and she received from his estate a considerable inheritance.⁹ Suspicion fell upon John and Abigail when she gave birth to her first child only 26 weeks after the marriage. Abigail was brought into court where she, her mother and other local women testified that the baby was born "very small and sickly," and Abigail swore that she went to her marriage bed "a true maide."¹⁰ Premature babies born less than 28 weeks very seldom survived in the 17th century, thus the suspicion. As with today, the testimony of the respected grandmother may have influenced the court to accept the explanation.

John and Abigail lived in that portion of Watertown that later became Waltham. His home was on the north side of Trapelo Road.¹¹ The couple had nine children: 1. **Abigail**, born December 8, 1679; 2. **John**, baptized December 4, 1687; 3. **Elizabeth**, baptized December 4, 1687; 4. **Hephzibah**, baptized December 4, **1687**; 5. **William**, baptized **July 13, 1690**; 6. **Samuel**, baptized **September 8, 1695, died young**; 7. **Samuel I, father of Samuel Sr**, baptized July 10, 1698; 8. **Thomas**, born September 26, 1697; and 9. **Joseph**, baptized July 10, 1698.¹²

John died on March 28, 1717/18 and Abigail just 10 days later on April 7, 1717/18, They were buried in the Grove Hill Cemetery in Waltham, MA.



Gravestone of John and Abigail Hammond Hastings Grove Hill Cemetery Waltham, MA

Samuel Hastings Sr., Father of Samuel Hastings

Samuel Sr., was a tailor by trade and served as selectman of Waltham in 1742, 1743 and 1744. His home was located on the south side of Trapelo Road on land that he had inherited from his father. He sold that land in 1747 to John Dix, consisting of "20 acres of mowing, orchard and pasture with a dwelling house and barn." After the sale, he removed to Lexington where his son Samuel lived.¹³ He was Married in Medford on May 29, 1719 to Bethia Hollowell (Hallowell), of Malden.¹⁴

Samuel Sr. and Bethia had eight children, all recorded in Watertown 1. **Samuel, the subject of this biography**, born March 30, 1721; 2. **Thaddeus**, born October 15, 1723; 3. **Mary**, born December 15, 1725; 4. **Abigail**, born March 4, 1728; 5. **Abijah**, born May 9, 1730; 6. **Philemon**, born April 2, 1732; 7. **Anna**, born March 8, 1734; and 8. **Martha**, born March 23, 1726.¹⁵

Samuel Sr. died in on March 3, 1758 and Bethia on June 1, 1774 at age 80, both in Lexington. I have not located their burial sites.

Note: With several generations of Samuel Hastings, it is easy to get confused. The names chosen to be placed on the Minuteman Monument in Lexington were of those who gave depositions in 1775. **Samuel Hastings** was one of them and his name appears as such. However, for much of his life he was known as **Samuel Jr.** and his name appeared that way in recording the births of all his children. His son, Samuel, was designated **Samuel 2nd** to distinguish him from his grandfather and father. To add further complexity, Samuel 2nd, was later called Samuel Jr., but his name does not appear on the monument. However, on the list of the characters the Lexington Minute Men have chosen to portray, Samuel, the father, appears as just Samuel Hastings, and Samuel 2nd, the son, as Samuel Jr. In this biography, I have chosen to follow the names on the character list of Samuel Hastings for the father and Samuel Jr. for the son.

Samuel Hastings

Samuel's home was located in the southwestern part of Lexington close to the border of Lincoln. Like the Wellington family, succeeding generations of the Hastings had moved from their first homestead in Watertown, up Trapelo Road and eventually into southwest Lexington. He was chosen a Selectman in 1768, 1773 and 1778. He served on the Committee of Correspondence (Committee of Safety) in 1781, which was "generally composed of the most intelligent and reliable men in the town."¹⁶

Samuel on January 16, 1755, married in Lexington, Lydia Tidd, daughter of Daniel and Hephzibah Tidd, and sister of Lieutenant William Tidd of the Lexington Militia whose biography also appears on this website. Samuel and Lydia Tidd Hastings had nine children, and the parents experienced the tragic loss of seven of them prior to their reaching age 30.¹⁷

1. Isaac, born December 16, 1755, whose biography appears on this website.
2. Samuel 2nd, born July 11, 1757, whose biography appears on this website.
3. Lydia, born November 29, 1759, died July 22, 1788, age 28.
4. Bethia, born March 23, 1761, died August 3, 1765, age four.
5. Hephzibah, born July 3, 1762, died May 17, 1789, age 26.
6. John, born July 13, 1764, died June 15, 1789, age 24.
7. Bethia, born June 25, 1766, died July 28, 1786, age 20.
8. Abigail, born April 20, 1868, died May 10, 1788, age 20.
9. Thomas, born April 27, 1772, died October 9, 1775, age three.

Five of Samuel Jr. and Lydia's children died between 1786 and 1789, all in the spring or summer. I have not yet found the cause of their deaths. Smallpox, chickenpox and rubella peak in May; mumps, measles and pertussis (whooping cough) in April; and Respiratory diseases such as Asthma and COPD peak in the summer and spring enhancing the susceptibility to other diseases. Influenza can extend well into the warm months and flourishes in high humidity. Lyme disease is prevalent from May through July.

Only one other Lexington family, the Parkers, was so affected in that period. Betty (age 24), Thaddeus Sr. (age 58), Thaddeus Jr. (age 21), Sarah (age 26) and William (age 28) all died of consumption between August, 1788 and September 1789.¹⁸

Taking the years 1788 and 1789, of the 22 deaths recorded in Lexington, ten were in their 20's comprising 45.5% of the total; 8 were over 70 or 35.4%; 2 were in their teens or 9.1%, one was an infant and another unknown or 4.5% each. The one age group that seems to stand out is that of the twenties.¹⁹

Charles Hudson in his Genealogical Volume of the History of Lexington, stated that Samuel Jr. and his two sons, Samuel 2nd and Isaac all were "on the Common" on April 19, 1775.²⁰ Samuel Jr. was one of fourteen individuals who signed a joint deposition concerning the engagement on Lexington Common on the morning of April 19th.

We, Nathaniel Parkhurst, Jonas Parker, John Munroe, Jun., John Winship, Solomon Peirce, John Muzzy, Abner Mead, John Bridge, Junior, Ebenezer Bowman, William Munroe 3d, Micah Hagar, Samuel Sanderson, Samuel Hastings, and James Brown, of Lexington, in the County of *Middlesex*, and Colony of *Massachusetts Bay*, in *New-England*, and all of lawful age, do testify and say, that on the morning of the nineteenth of *April* instant, about one or two o' clock, being informed that a number of Regular Officers had been riding up and down the road, the evening and night preceding, and that some of the inhabitants as they were passing had been insulted by the

officers, and stopped by them; and being also informed that the Regular Troops were on their march from *Boston*, in order as it was said, to take the Colony Stores then deposited at *Concord*, we met on the parade of our Company in this Town; and after the Company had collected we were ordered by Captain *John Parker*, who commanded us, to disperse for the present, and to be ready to attend the beat of the drum; and accordingly the Company went into houses near the place of parade. We further testify and say, that about five o' clock in the morning, we attended the beat of our drum, and were formed on the parade. We were faced towards the Regulars, then marching up to us, and some of our Company were coming to the parade with their backs towards the Troops, and others on the parade began to disperse, when the Regulars fired on the Company before a gun was fired by any of our Company on them; they killed eight of our Company, and wounded several, and continued their fire until we had all made our escape.²¹

Samuel Jr.'s son, Isaac, was one of thirty-four militia members who also signed a joint deposition describing the events leading up to and the action on Lexington Common.²² Samuel Jr., if he took part in the engagement, might have been considered too young to be deposed.

Whether any of the three Hastings participated in the afternoon engagement on the border of Lexington and Lincoln, called Parker's Revenge is not known. Charles Hudson stated that Samuel, the father, "was with the army at Cambridge when Gen. Washington took command."²² This may be true, but entries in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* do not appear to support this.

Samuel died in Lexington on February 7, 1820 in his 99th year. Lydia died November 10, 1802 age 70. They are buried in Lexington's Old Burying Ground. Lydia's gravestone survives, but apparently Samuel's does not.



IN Memory of
Mrs. Lydia Hastings
wife of
Mr. Samuel Hastings
who died Novr. 10. 1802
aged 70 years.

*Altho' I turn to native dust
and lie for ages here:
The grave my body will restore
When Jesus shall appear²³*

Footnotes

- ¹Hudson, Charles, *History of the Town of Lexington from First Settlement to 1868 Revised and Continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society*, in Two Volumes, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912, Volume II, *Genealogies*, p. 290; <http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships/elizabeth1634.shtml>
- ²Hudson, *Genealogies*, p. 290; Henry Bond, M.D., *Genealogies of the Families and Descendants of the Early Settlers of Watertown, Massachusetts*, including Waltham and Weston; To Which Is Appended the Early History of the Town, Boston, New England Historical Society, 1860, p. 285.
- ³Hudson, *Genealogies*, p. 290; *Vital Records of Watertown, Mass. to the End of the Year 1849* at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Watertown/>
- ⁴Historical Society of Watertown, Mass., *Watertown Records Covering the First and Second Books of Town Proceedings with the Lands Grants and Possessions Also The Proprietors' Book and The First Book and Supplement of Births, Deaths and Marriages*, Watertown, Mass., Press of Fred G. Barker, 1894, Lands, Grants, Divisions, Allotments, Possessions and Proprietors Book, pp. 18-19.
- ⁵Buckminster, Lydia Nelson Hastings, *The Hastings Memorial, A Genealogical Account of the Descendants of Thomas Hastings of Watertown, Mass., from 1634-1864*, with an Appendix and Index, Boston, Samuel O. Drake Publishers, 1864, p. 6.
- ⁶Thompson, Roger, *Divided We Stand, Watertown, Massachusetts, 1630-1680*, Amherst, MA University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, pp. 189-90.
- ⁷New England Historic Genealogical Society, data base, *Colonial Officers and Soldiers in New England 1620-1675*, p. 118.
- ⁸Historical Society of Watertown, Mass., *Watertown Records Comprising the Third Book of Town Proceedings and Second Book of Births, Marriages and Deaths to the End of 1737, also Plan and Register of Burials in Arlington Street Burying Ground, Watertown, Mass.*, Press of Fred G. Barker, 1900, Third Book of Town Proceedings, pp. 15, 70, 97, 111, 137, 140, 142, 153, 164, 170, 211.
- ⁹Buckminster, p. 25.
- ¹⁰<http://www.jeaniesgenealogy.com/2013/04/john-hastings-and-abigail-hammond.html>
- ¹¹Sanderson, Edmund L., *Malden as a Precinct of Watertown and as a Town 1630—1884*, Waltham, Mass. Published by the Waltham Historical Society, 1936, p. 108.
- ¹²Hudson, *Genealogies*, p. 291.
- ¹³Sanderson, p. 109.
- ¹⁴*Vital Records of Malden, MA to the End of the Year 1849* at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Malden/>
- ¹⁵Hudson, *Genealogies*, p. 291; *Vital Records of Watertown, MA to the End of the Year 1849* at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Watertown/>
- ¹⁶Hudson, Charles, *History of the Town of Lexington from First Settlement to 1868 Revised and Continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society*, in Two Volumes, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912, Volume 1, *History*, pp. 427, 431, 458 and 463.
- ¹⁷*Vital Records of Lexington, MA to the End of the Year 1897* at <https://ma-vitalrecords.org/MA/Middlesex/Lexington/>
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*
- ²⁰Hudson, *Genealogies*, pp. 292-93.
- ²¹Vincent Kehoe, *We Were There, April 19th, 1775: The American Rebels*, Vin Kehoe Enterprises, Chelmsford, MA. circa 1974 – 75, p. 89.
- ²²*Ibid.*, p. 87.
- ²³Brown, Francis H. M.D., *Lexington Epitaphs, A copy of Epitaphs in The Old Burying Ground of Lexington, Massachusetts*, The Lexington Historical Society, 1905, p. 54.