

Joseph Shed, Patriot
By Mrs. Warren M. Breed

To go back to the causes which led up to the famous historical event known as the "Boston Tea Party" would entail the writing of a paper of a length which would occupy more time than I am allowed, to say nothing of the demands such a paper would make on your patience. As a preface to this sketch of Joseph Shed, Patriot, may I remind you that the Stamp Act of 1765 was repealed in 1766 after Pitt, in one of his greatest speeches, denied the absolute right of Parliament to tax the colonies, as taxation went hand in hand with representation. In spite of this however, *another* act was passed in 1767 imposing duties on paper, printers' colors; glass and tea. known as the Townshend Revenue Act. This, on account of opposition, was to a certain extent repealed, the tax on tea continuing. From this injudicious exception of the duty on tea, an association was formed not to drink tea.

With these few exceptions (and those in Boston) the merchants refused to import it. Three hundred women of Boston, among whom were heads of families of high standing, signed an agreement as early as 1770 not to drink any tea until this tax was lifted. The feeling was strong among the Daughters of Liberty, north and south. The young women of Boston, imitating the example set by their mothers, subscribed to the following pledge: "We, the daughters of those patriots who have and do now appear for the public interest, and in that principally regard their posterity as such, do with pleasure engage with them in denying ourselves the drinking of foreign tea in hopes to frustrate a plan that tends to deprive a whole community of all that is valuable in life." The amount of the tax on tea was paltry and had never been in question. Their case was not, as in most revolutions, that of a people who rose against real and palpable oppression. It was an abstract principle alone for which they contended.

Prominent in Boston at this time there lived two men of rare ability, the one Thomas Hutchinson, Royal Governor, the other Samuel Adams, loved of the people. Both were natives of Boston and both graduates of Harvard College. Unfortunately for Hutchinson's peace of mind and the public estimation, he took a decided stand against the new movement which had grown to be a very vital thing with the American Colonists. His adversary, Samuel Adams, had become the man of the hour, sympathetic and understanding. He had, since the year 1769, been an ardent advocate of independence.

This man was an intimate friend of the subject of this sketch, Joseph Shed, for whom a son and grandson were successively named.

Joseph Shed was born in Boston in June 17, 1732 (and baptized in New South Church, now Old South, the next day), on the site once occupied by the Equitable Life Insurance Building, but since demolished to give way to the First National Bank. Joseph Shed was the son of Joseph, who was the son of Zechariah, who was the son of Daniel, the original settler of that name in America. "He ventured into matrimony" four times. It is recorded that his second wife died leaving no issue, but bequeathed to her niece, Hannah Gammel, then seventeen years old, "both her property and her husband." According to statistics, the niece promptly accepted the thirty-eight-year-old husband. Joseph Shed was a carpenter by trade and worked upon Fancuil Hall during its building. He entered the grocery business the latter part of his life and became very successful. The store was situated at the corner of Milk Street and Theatre Alley (now Devonshire Street), only a short distance from the Old South Meeting House, then the New South. At one time he was constable of Boston. He took a decided stand with Samuel Adams and other patriots before and during the Revolutionary War, and later became a zealous Jeffersonian Democrat.

At his residence on Milk Street a party of patriots disguised themselves as Indians on the night of December 16, 1773, and repaired to Griffin's Wharf, where, boarding one of the tea ships, they destroyed the chests and threw chests and contents into the waters of Boston Harbor. The night was clear, with a full moon. There was no noise nor confusion and no destruction of other private property, but during the night 312 chests of tea, valued at £8,000, were broken open and chests and contents thrown overboard.

Samuel Adams was a frequent guest at the home of Joseph Shed. A punch bowl, once the property of Joseph Shed, is still in the possession of a descendant of the family. From this punch bowl the patriot Adams drank when American Independence was first celebrated in Boston.

On August 3rd, 1796, Joseph Shed purchased from Samuel Barrett, his brother-in-law, the latter's interest (or one-third part) of Tomb No. 69 in the Granary Burying Ground, formerly the property of Jonathan Williams. He died October 18, 1812, being survived by his wife and two of his eight children, Samuel Adams and William Shed.

A part of the purpose of this meeting is, later, to gather at the burial place of Joseph Shed and to do honor to his memory and his patriotism. His was the spirit shared with all true lovers of freedom at that time and that late animated the Colonists to throw off the yoke of dependence, to rise in their might and "fire the shot heard round the world."

**(From the *Boston Herald*) September 30, 1926)
New Line Added To Shed Tombstone**

Work in Granary Burial Ground Draws Crowds

Feeling that credit should be given where credit is due. the Shed Family Association is having the inscription on the tombstone of Joseph Shed, revolutionary patriot, in the Granary Burial Ground, Tremont Street, recut and the line "Member Boston Tea Party" added.

All day yesterday Joseph Mellard, stonecutter for the George R. Sands & Son Company of Cambridge, chipped with chisel and hammer while large crowds watched him. The grave is next to the fence, on the right of the gate, near the electric light pole.

Because of the exactness of the work it will take until tomorrow to complete. The slab is of slate and the letters Roman, one inch in height. When finished, the inscription will read:

**John Shed
Born June 17, 1732
Died October 18, 1812
Revolutionary Patriot
Member Boston Tea Party**

Hubert C. Shedd of 15 King Avenue, Medford, is in charge of the work. Under the tombstone, he said, there are more than ten members of the Shed family buried.

Joseph Shed was a prominent grocer of Boston just before the Revolution. He sympathized heartily with Samuel Adams, and named one of his sons after the great patriot. The two were the closest of friends.

In the attic of the Shed home on Milk Street, where the First National Bank now stands, a band of men met on the night of December 16, 1773. They dressed themselves as Indians, went to Griffin's Wharf and threw 114 chests of English tea, on which stamp taxes were to be paid, into the sea.

Mellard, a stonecutter for thirty-five years, declared that he was fully aware of the honor bestowed upon him by his employers. One slip, of his chisel and the work would be irreparably marred. From a bending position over the slab which rests flat on the ground he directs his chisel. He has worked in England, Italy, Germany and Canada, but declared that the work in this country is far superior. In the old world and Canada the craftsman must hurry his work. In this country, because of the competition, each job must be perfect, thus giving the stonecutter a chance to do his best.



The Shedd Homestead – October 1926

The Shedd Homestead was built about 1732 by John Shed. It was not the first home of the Shed family, for across the field may be seen an old cellar hole said to be the site of the home of Samuel Shed when, in 1702, he brought his family from Billerica to Groton, now Pepperell.

Samuel Shed's son, John Shed, built the house now standing about the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Shattuck. Three of their four sons were Revolutionary soldiers.

The house is a well constructed ten-room house of the Colonial type, with heavy beams. The inside walls are paneled in wood, and the house is still heated by seven huge fireplaces.

About 1820 Capt. Joshua Shedd set out more than one hundred maple trees near the house and on the roads by the farm.

For one hundred and thirty-five years this house was the home of four generations of Shedd, who were thriving and prosperous farmers, prominent in the affairs of the town. In 1873, Mrs. John Dickson Shedd, then a widow, gave up the old house and it passed into other hands.

The present owners (1926) are interested in the house and have done much to preserve and restore it.

The illustration is from a photograph taken years ago while the barns and outbuildings were still standing.

