

JOHN IVES (bapt. 1644-1681/2)

HANNAH MERRIMAN (1631-after 1688)

John Ives was the son and second child of William and Hannah (Dickerman) Ives (4-10). He was bapt. Dec. 29, 1644 at New Haven where his parents had made their home at the early establishment of the settlement. His father died, 1648, when John was about six years of age and his mother was left with a family of six or seven very young children. However, Hannah, his mother married William Bassett and so John grew to maturity in the Bassett home in New Haven.

John's growing-up years saw many changes in the infant colony of New Haven. He was born six years after the establishment of the place as an independent colony. Fourteen years later, when he was 20, most of those of commanding influence at the town's beginning were gone. Governor Eaton died in 1657 when John was 15. Probably the men who thought out this enterprise and did their best to work it out all died with the feeling that their project had failed.

Those men of influence in the founding of the New Haven Colony were friends and close associates of John's father, William Ives (4-10) and his story makes reference to both Gov. Eaton and John Davenport who had envisioned an ideal commonwealth and had hoped to make it actual in their own day. But their planting was for a longer growth and a more distant harvest.

Edward D. Dickerman spoke of the great disappointment in the merging of New Haven Colony with the Connecticut Colony in 1664, in these words:

"...The pastor, John Davenport, bereft of his early co-laborers, remained to bear, without their sympathy, the bitterness of that great disappointment in the union with Connecticut..."

"New men now came to the front to guide the affairs of the community, and they were men of a different kind; not so great, but more practical in dealing with everyday concerns. The founders were scholars, thinkers, masters of the deeper things in the life of men and of society. They had many traits of the seer. They saw visions—saw a kingdom to be established of so high an order that the age was not ready for it. Those who followed were more common men, and for that reason, better fitted for what now had to be done..."

"Such men were, of course, in the background during the legislation of ecclesiastical dominance, but he was to live till this period had passed, growing strongly to realize the needs of the practical everyday life of the place and make himself master of its affairs..."¹

So great was Rev. Davenport's disappointment that in 1668 he removed himself and family to Boston, Mass., to accept an invitation to the pastorate of the First Church in Boston. His ministry there was of short duration. He died in less than two years after his removal from New Haven. His departure doubtless helped to erase the bitter feelings produced by the controversy between Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut. It turned out that the

dream of a kingdom which had been thought to remain till the coming of the Lord was a dream beyond realism. The union of the two colonies was in itself very desirable and the results were in the best interests of the colonies that were to sprout up between the two plantations; one soon to be a thriving seaport and the other a commercial center of the interior.

Those first twenty or twenty-five years had seen not only the disappointment of the dream of a Colony apart from the world, but other things went ill:

"Their near neighbors, the Dutch at Manhattan, were not friendly; malaria prevailed, the darker traits of human nature came out now and then, for with all their devotion to a religious conviction, they were far from perfect. Crimes were committed and punished. Members of the church misbehaved and were put under discipline." 2

No wonder the founders felt that their project had failed. But a contrasting view of the settlement, to be seen in its community setting, paints a more serene picture of the local life of the more stable and stalwart pioneer who was striving as best he could under trying circumstances to survive and enjoy a fulness of life.

"The settlement was small. This brought about a close familiarity. Children were playing together; youths and maidens were chatting merrily over their work, and the older people talked of business concerns, discussed the political aspect of things in England, or gravely argued on questions of theology.

"Those who have lived for any time in a frontier settlement of the present day know how free and spontaneous is the social life to be found there. We may suppose that it was not altogether different in this case..." 3

It is not surprising that a young man of 21 of that place should have formed an attachment for Hannah Merriman and asked her to become his wife. John and Hannah were married November 12, 1668. Among the group of community friends was Nathaniel Merriman, Jr., Hannah's brother, who, though four years younger than John, appears to have been a very close associate. We read in the writings of Arthur Ives that:

" 'The committee formerly appointed for ye new seating of persons in ye meeting house (this seating as referred to in the story of John's parents, 4-10, was made periodically as the growing membership increased or changed) presented what they had done which was read to the towne and is as followeth:--seates in the Gallery,... John Ives and Nath' Merriman'. This action was taken about the time of the founding of the Wallingford plantation. We are suspicious that John Ives and Nathaniel Merriman found the gallery a convenient place to discuss the proposed plantation and lay plans for settlements there, unmindful of the tragedy that stalked in their path: Merriman was killed in the Great Swamp fight during one of the Indian uprisings (1676) of the King Philip's War; John Ives followed him into the Great Unknown, at the early age of thirty-seven." 4

John and Nathaniel, as well as Nathaniel Merriman, Sr. (4-13) made plans to be among the first to settle further up the Quinnipiac River. The marriage of John, age 24, and Hannah, age 17, took place in New Haven and the couple must have went directly to the new area that was to become known as Wallingford, for all of their five children are recorded as having been born in the new

settlement. Hannah was the daughter of Capt. Nathaniel and Abigail (Olney) Merriman, who, along with their family of possibly ten members, accompanied their daughter, Hannah, and her husband, John, on the migration from New Haven.

According to the author, Arthur C. Ives, who wrote, "The Ives Family", in 1932, the circumstances that led to colonizing the interior are stated in these words:

"Thirty years after the New Haven Colony was established, it was confronted with that ever recurring problem of a rapidly growing community and the disposition of its surplus population...plans for new colonizations were always methodical and deliberate." 5

Not all lands were suitable for settlements and frequently a considerable distance intervened between them. It required courage to open new lands, especially inland any distance for the Indian tribes occupied the valleys along the streams for the cultivating of corn, fishing in the many streams and hunting through the woods. Indian trails were easily detected and too often the Indians roamed the woods and showed up at unexpected times and places.

All arrangements for opening new settlement areas had to be approved and granted by the General Court at Hartford. As mentioned earlier, New Haven had been merged with the Connecticut Colony to the north. John Ives was among the original thirty-nine persons to enter in a covenant for the settlement of Wallingford. (map #6) The signing of the covenant was made at New Haven in 1667. Eight of these persons, though granted lots in the townsite, (map # 9) chose not to possess a small area alone. There were those who chose to farm to the north of Wallingford. John and Hannah's farm land became a part of the area of Meriden which was set off, years later, from the mother town of Wallingford. (map #13) (appndx. #8)

The progeny of John and Hannah became numerous in both the towns of Meriden and Cheshire, which were in close proximity to each other and Wallingford. (see maps #s 5, 6, 8, and 12) We are told that no town in Connecticut has more of interest for the descendants of William Ives, the immigrant, outside of New Haven, than either Meriden or Cheshire.

"...it may be that John and Hannah's wedding trip was made on horseback or with ox cart over the wilderness trail along the Quinnipiac River. Indeed, if we accept the statement that 'all his children were born in Wallingford', their settlement of farm land north of the town lots must have been made before that of the village colony, as their first son was born, Nov. 14, 1669." 6

It is interesting to note that this same migration included another young couple, traveling about the same time under similar circumstances, who were likely acquaintances of John and Hannah. They were Samuel and Hope (Parker) Cook (4-6). The daughter of John and Hannah, in due time, married the son of Samuel and Hope Cook.

John and Hannah, with a few other families, were settled in the area that was early referred to as the "North Farms". (maps #10, 12) Some of

these families include the Royces (1-2), the Merrimans (4-13) and the Atwaters, (probably the son of the New Haven Atwaters)(7-69). (map #13)

"...One cannot study the records of the Connecticut settlements without being profoundly impressed with the reliance which our ancestors placed on the church and its teachings...In all fairness, it must be admitted that some of the regulations imposed by the governing committees of the Wallingford plantation were severe. But those who would ridicule the so-called 'blue laws' of our ancestors, should remember that theirs were days of stern necessity; the very lives of the inhabitants depended, often, on a strict observance of regulations. All honor to those sturdy Puritans who, through hardships that tried men's souls, stood firm to their religion!"⁷

The strict requirement of church attendance gave the outlying planters a difficult problem. They struggled to establish their own village with separate schools and churches away from Wallingford because of the distance of the North Farms and the slow means of travel, but it was many years later before their petition was granted. The same problem concerned the people "westward of the Blew Hills" across the New Haven East River, named "ye Fresh Meddoe". This area was referred to as "West Farms", which later became the town of Cheshire. (map #12)

The early settlers in and around Wallingford were very poor; they had suffered greatly during the years of Indian uprisings. Arthur C. Ives gives us a colorful picture as he describes how the colonial houses of the time were built to withstand the ravages of time.

"The first structures erected by the pioneers were of logs, the roofs being often thatched with hay or straw. Some were set on fire by the flaming arrows of the Indians; others yielded to the process of decay. In their place, substantial frame buildings were erected.

"The timbers of these new structures were of white oak held together by wooden pins. This 'frame' was covered with oak boards, which were 'sawn or slit' by hand; the roof-boards were covered with shingles 'riven' from sections of logs with sharp wedges. 'Clabboards' were sometimes obtained in this manner, though the 'saw mill' made its early appearance...There were no cellars in many of these old houses, but a pit was dug in one end, which could be reached through a door cut in the floor. The chimney, with its huge fireplace and oven, was built first. The stones in this chimney were held together by a tenacious lime mortar which defied the elements. Masons declare the secret of its composition has been lost, but some think it was made from oyster and clam shells.

"Wooden pins held the boarding in place, though 'wrought iron nails, costing one dollar a pound' were used to fasten the shingles. Doors were constructed of thicknesses of boards, the outer ones being vertical, the inner ones placed at an angle of 45 degrees, with nails driven through and clinched on the inside. A latch which held the door closed was lifted from without by a thong of leather passing through a hole in the door. At night, the 'latch string' was withdrawn, and the occupants of the house slept in security. 'You will find our latch-string out', an expression in use even today, had its origin in Colonial times."⁸

In the settlements of early New England, pioneers grouped themselves in villages which was necessary for mutual protection. Barricading a central

gathering place and even one's house or barn was the usual thing to do in times of Indian uprising.

Bitter disputes often arose over boundary lines of farms and villages, as the people tried, in their crude way, to mark out their grants of land. The Court of Hartford intervened at times to settle bounds and that, too, often caused prejudice and contention. It was a hard life and the countenance of the frontier man fit well into the ruggedness of his environment. During the next thirteen years that John lived, Hannah bore five children. John Ives, like his father, died early, at the age of 38, about 6 years after the death of his friend, Nathaniel Merriman, brother of Hannah. He left his young family to face the rigors of pioneer life, to be sustained in a character building existence of hard work. His children's ages at the time of his death ranged from 12 years to 1 year:

- "1. John Ives, b. Nov. 14, 1669, died at Wallingford 15 Apr., 1747; md. 6 Dec. 1693—Mary Gillette
2. Hannah Ives, b. abt. 1672; md. March 3, 1692—Samuel Cook (4-7)
3. Joseph Ives, b. 14 Oct., 1674, died at Cheshire 18 May, 1755, ae. 79; md. 11 May, 1697—Esther Benedict, who was born abt. 1679 and died 1 Jan., 1752, ae. abt. 52
4. Nathaniel Ives, b. 30 May, 1677, died 6 Nov., 1711; md. 5 April, 1699—Mary Cook; she md. (2) 20 Mar., 1722—Jonathan Penfield.
5. Thomas Ives, b. abt. 1679; md. 2 Dec., 1702, Abigail Howe
6. Gideon Ives, b. abt. 1680; md. Mary Royce, Feb. 20, 1706. She died 15 Oct., 1745. He was an Ensign." 9

Hannah, John's wife, married (2) Joseph Benham, Aug. 17, 1682, and had three more children. (The authors differ on the data of the Benham children) Davis records them as:

"Ebenezer Denham, md. Elizabeth _____
 Samuel Denham, b. June 5, 1696
 Benjamin Denham, b. Nov. 22, 1699." 10

This record shows evidence of error for Hannah would have been 48 years of age in 1699. Jacobus' account would seem more realistic. He gives the children of Hannah Ives and Joseph Benham as:

- "1. Mary Benham, b. 18 May, 1683, md. Thomas Yale
2. Joseph Benham, b. 15 Dec., 1685, md. (1) Hope Cook; md. (2) Mary Curtis
3. Abigail Benham, (prob. named for her grandmother Abigail (Olney) Merriman) b. 14 Apr., 1688, md. Samuel Durham of Guilford, Conn." 11

Jacobus relied heavily upon the vital records, rather than upon the early writers for his data.

It can be noted that Joseph Benham, Jr. (2) above, married Hope Cook, daughter of Samuel and Hope (Parker) Cook (4-6), on 18 Dec., 1706, and that Hannah Ives (2) above, married Samuel Cook (4-7), son of Samuel and Hope (Parker) Cook and brother of Hope Cook, wife of Joseph Benham, Jr., above.

John, the oldest son of John and Hannah, acquired his father's homestead in Meriden and it passed on to his posterity for several generations. When

Joseph (3) and Nathaniel (4) married, they settled in that part of Wallingford that later became known as Cheshire. Hannah (2) and her husband, Samuel Cook (4-7) lived to the west of Wallingford (Cheshire). Gideon (5) remained for awhile on properties in the 'North Farms', but for certain quit-claim deeds given to his brother, John, and his son, we find him taking up residence in Wallingford. 12

An anonymous poem was written as a memorial to the early Ives family at a reunion held in the area of Meriden and Cheshire, where it was estimated that the number of Ives posterity in America is at least 400,000 and 20,000 at least of these, have the surname "Ives". It was stated at the time of the Ives gathering, mentioned here, that "The rapidity with which the John Ives' descendants spread throughout this country is one of the most striking things in connection with our family history." 13 Following is the poem of mention:

Old Cheshire seated on thy hills,
And Meriden with all
We hail thee royally today,
We answer to thy call.

From out the fast receding past,
Familiar forms arise
Against the background of these hills,
Men of heroic size.

Ives and Brooks, and Capt. John
And Hitchcocks half a score,
And Hall, their minister who preached
For fifty years or more.

Plain-spoken men, hard-working men,
God-fearing men were they,
Who loved the truth, lived righteously,
And rough-hewn made the way. 14

Arthur C. Ives visited Meriden in 1929, and stated that:

"At the summit of 'Meeting House hill', on the outskirts of the City of Meriden, is an old and, to the casual visitor, a little known cemetery. Most of Meriden's early settlers buried here are marked by mere fragments of stones; but in one corner of this graveyard, two sandstone monuments were found. The one at the left bore the inscription: 'In memory of Mrs. Hannah, wife of John Ives, Dec'd. She died Novbr. ye 5th, 1770 in ye 70th year of her age.' The second stone could not be deciphered, but, undoubtedly, marks the last resting place of her husband who may have been a descendant of John in a later generation. Perhaps a grandson.

"We cannot, however, logically conclude that John and Hannah were buried here; the Meriden Church was not organized at the time of his death. It is more likely that he and his wife were interred at Wallingford. Their bodies must repose somewhere among the crumbled stones in the oldest part of the Center Street graveyard. What a pity that some older generation has not suitably marked the exact spot!" 15



Home of H. E. Ives, Cheshire, ca. 1890. (Clark Photograph Collection)

The children of John who settled in Cheshire and reared their families were Hannah (2); Nathaniel (4); and Gideon (6); and they and their descendants became important factors in building up the Cheshire community, and to this day many are still found there, though most of them are widely scattered. The picture reveals the architecture of the Ives home shown here to be typical of many houses built during the later 1600's and early 1700's. It is possible that it was the home of John and Hannah Ives. One would like to think so. It compares favorably with other homes of that early time. See the picture of the Nehemiah Royce home shown in (1-2) and the Nathaniel Merriman home in (4-13), both of which were built during the early settlements of Cheshire, Meriden and Wallingford. This architectural premise justifies an assumption that the house of H. E. Ives could well have been the pioneer home of the Ives ancestor of Cheshire.

At the Ives' family reunions held occasionally in New Haven and in the area of Wallingford the entertainment often was given a bit of 'spice' for those of the assembly who might want a good laugh. A. C. Ives repeats one of these so-called 'spiced' stories in his 1932 writings.

"The Ives family has always been known for its thrift, probably the reason they were able to accumulate more wealth than their neighbors. The story is traced to a teacher who boarded 'round' the neighborhood, and runs thus: This father had three daughters. The oldest married and, to the surprise of the neighbors, received from her father as a wedding gift a thousand dollars in cash. As the second and then the third daughter

wed and were given a like sum, mild surprise changed to utter amazement. How did that farmer manage to save so much money! The teacher explains:

"Each morning the family ate a breakfast of 'mush and milk'; the noon meal consisted of milk and much; and there was always enough 'left over' to make a frugal supper. Recognizing the value of variety in a ration, the mush was served rather thick in the morning, less so at noon, and very thin at night. Occasionally, too, there was 'fried mush'. But Sunday was the real feast day, when frugality was thrown to the winds, and the housewife set before her family (and teacher boarder) a sumptuous repast—two or three raisins were added to the mush, and its name changed to 'corn meal pudding'. 'No wonder,' said the teacher, 'the Iveses save money'." 16

1. #34, pp. 138, 139
2. *ibid*, p.138
3. *ibid*, p.136
4. #33, Chap. 3, p.25
5. *ibid*, Chap. 4, p. 29
6. *ibid*, p.31
7. *ibid*, pp, 32, 33
8. *ibid*, pp, 38, 39
9. #9, pp. 139, 140
10. #7, p.824
11. #9, pp. 58, 140
12. #33, Chap. 4, pp. 108-9
13. *ibid*, p.112
14. *ibid*, Chap. 5, pp. 54-5
15. *ibid*, p.106
16. *ibid*, p. 111