

ELKANAH BABBITT (1665-1735)
 ELIZABETH BRIGGS (abt. 1666-)

Elkanah Babbitt was the sixth child of nine born to Edward and Sarah (Tarne) Babbitt, all born in that part of Taunton, now known as Berkley, Massachusetts. Elkanah's birthdate is given as Dec. 15, 1665 and he was nine years of age when his father was killed by Indians in 1675 (see 7-1). As he grew to manhood, Elkanah and his older brother, Edward, assumed the farming operations of the lands that the family had inherited from their father, thus providing for the needs of their mother and six sisters. According to the information given in the writings of William Bradford Browne, 1912, Elkanah married Elizabeth Briggs, born 1672, daughter of William and Sarah (Macomber) Briggs. ¹ There is an earlier writing "The Briggs Family" by Sam Briggs, 1880, which tells us that "William Briggs, of Taunton perhaps a brother of Jonathan, md. Nov. 1666, Sarah Macomber, perhaps dau. of William of Marshfield, who had children: William, b. 25 Jan 1668; Elizabeth b. 4 Nov. 1672; Mary, b. 14 Aug. 1674; John, b. 19 Mar. 1680; Thomas and Sarah (twins) b. 9 or 10 Sept. 1669; Matthew, b. 5 Feb. 1677." ² It is a likely fact that Mr. Brown, the later writer, took his data from the earlier writer, Sam Briggs, 1880.

According to the records of the DAR, Elkanah Babbitt married Elizabeth Briggs, b. abt. 1666, on June 25, 1689, Taunton, Mass., daughter of Johathan and Experience Briggs. ³ According to Brainard T. Peck, the great New England genealogist, who recorded in a pedigree chart submitted to the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, Inc. in 1968, Elizabeth Briggs' parents are given as Johathan and Experience (Harvey) Briggs and her husband was Elkanah Babbitt, the son of Edward and Sarah (Tarne) Babbitt (Bobet) born 15 Dec. 1665; md. 25 June 1689. ⁴

It may be that the above William Briggs, father of Elizabeth born in 1672, was a cousin, or at least a relative of Johathan Briggs, but the DAR lists no William as a brother. Even though both William and Johathan lived in Taunton, Mass., there seems no record to show their relationship. William's daughter, Elizabeth, and Jonathan's daughter, Elizabeth, have confused the genealogists. They both lived in Taunton and were only a few years apart in ages. We can only hope that the DAR and also Mr. Peck were successful in separating these two Elizabeths to give us the correct wife for Elkanah Babbitt and establish her correct parentage and lines of ancestors. The records selected and included as a part of this ancestral treatise was considered to be the more reliable.

When records do not agree upon the parentage of Elizabeth, the reader needs to be familiar with the reasons for such discrepancies and know why the writer selected the information used herein to identify Elkanah Babbitt's wife, Elizabeth Briggs. (note: Experience Harvey, the mother of Elizabeth, came under the same difficult scrutiny when records of confusing data were examined. Before the Harveys, the maternal grandparents of Elizabeth Briggs, were accepted and included along with other Harvey ancestors as an authentic part of this study, many hours were spent in concentrated searching from several sources to avoid the errors of the earlier writings.) (see 7-9)

The information found in "The Briggs Family," according the father of Elizabeth to be Johathan Briggs and her grandfather to be Clement Briggs, was accepted as correct for it was in agreement with more recent research. ⁵ (see 7-8 and 7-9)

Elkanah and Elizabeth made their home on a piece of the large land holdings that they had acquired from Elkanah's father, Edward Babbitt. When the boundaries of the two townships of Dighton and Berkley were set off, Elkanah's land is found to be in one and the other of these two townships. As Elkanah and Elizabeth's sons grew up they allotted them acreages from the large holdings they had inherited.

"Feb. 14, 1711-12, Elkanah Babbitt, senior of Taunton, Husbandman, in consideration of parental love and affection for well-beloved son Elkanah Babbitt, husbandman, give said Elkanah, land lying on east side of dwelling house between that and the Island Road, so-called, about 100 acres, adjoining Isaac Hathaway, Samuel Richmond and John Crane.

"Feb. 17, 1728-29. Elkanah Babbitt of Taunton, yeoman, In consideration of love and natural affection which I bear my son, Josiah Babbitt of said Taunton, yeoman, deed him 1-3 part on the northeast corner of my homestead or farm.

"Feb. 17, 1728-29. Elkanah Babbitt, yeoman, in consideration of love and natural affection I bear my son Benjamin Babbitt of Taunton, yeoman, deed him 1-3 part on the westerly side of my homestead or farm lying partly in Taunton and partly in Dighton, on each side of township line, about 473/4 acres. (deed mentions the place where Elkanah Babbitt's house formerly stood which was burnt.)" 6

The primitive life of the times was much the same for Elkanah and Elizabeth as it had been for the generation earlier. Farm and domestic tasks were all-consuming efforts for every household was a self-sustaining institution. The planting, the harvesting, the hunting and fishing, the growing of food and its preparation for the table were a "do or die" endeavor. Cloth must be woven and stitched into clothes. Hides must be tanned for clothing and bedding. A large family, working together, became necessary for providing for the wants and needs of its individual members.

The population of the area grew rapidly but land was prevalent with no need as yet for migrations into new areas. The Indians were seldom a threat following so closely the "King Philips War" and farming went on without any molestations. Neighbors helped one another and communities carried out many cooperative endeavors. Grist mills, blacksmithing, smelters, leather shops and the like were beginning to show signs of industrial growth on a small scale. The Babbitts and others of the area kept the Old Taunton Iron Works active and shops began the manufacture of crude hand-made farm implements from the Babbitt ore to replace some of the more primitive wooden farm and household appliances.

Because of the difficulty of travel, mail service in this colonial period was for the most part poor. Letters were usually carried by post-riders on horseback from one locality to the next. The post-riders often had side-lines such as peddling and sometimes went out of their way or made delays in order to transact private business. In areas where there were no post stations, the letters came in by any itinerant traveler who happened to be going that way. This does not mean that a settler, who lived or moved to some part further inland, had no contact with the outside world, for such was not the case. Many letters have been found that were addressed and delivered to outlying points long before the establishment of any official postal service to that area. They prove conclusively that some one or perhaps a number of individuals rendered volunteer mail service even many years before the coming of the post-riders.

The children of Elkanah and Elizabeth (Briggs) Babbitt are listed by Browne in the following sequence.

1. Elkanah Babbitt, b. April 22, 1690; md. (1) Mary Hathaway, dau. of Isaac and Mary (Pitts) Hathaway; md. (2) Mehitable Crane, dau. of Stephen and Mary (Denison) Crane of Braintree, Mass. (7-3)
2. Damaris Babbitt, b. June 18, 1691; md. Isaac Hathaway, son of Isaac and Mar (Pitts) Hathaway
3. Dorcas Babbitt, b. Aug. 12, 1693; md. Ebenezer Harvey and had no children
4. Hopedstill Babbitt, b. Sept. 11, 1695; md. Dec. 10, 1717, at Dighton, James Phillips. She died after 1756.
5. Elizabeth Babbitt, b. Mar. 6, 1698; md. Malachi Hollowell as his second wife
6. Mercy Babbitt, b. Dec. 30, 1699; died young
7. Josiah Babbitt, b. in Berkley; md. June 4, 1725, Abigail Briggs, dau. of John and Abigail Briggs of Dighton
8. Benjamin Babbitt, b. about 1706; md. (1) about 1726, Abigail _____, died Oct. 15, 1737. (2) Jan. 5, 1738, Abiah Crane, dau. of Gershom and Susannah (Whitmarsh) Crane. Will proved Mar. 15, 1761
9. Joseph Babbitt, b. in Berkley; md. Jan 26, 1736-7, Mary Thayer, dau. of William and Sarah (Babbitt) Thayer
10. Sarah Babbitt, md. David Briggs, Jr. died Mar. 23, 1798 ⁷

The Will of Elkanah Babbitt provided land and properites for his son Joseph and to his sons-in-law. His Will was signed Dec. 22, 1735. He died after that date, either in 1735 or early in 1736. His wife's death date is evidently not available, but she survived him, according to his Will. ⁸

The autograph following was on a petition remonstrating against the building of a grist-mill dam on Mill River Aug. 7, 1711.

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"His Will and deeds of gifts made to his first three sons appear to show that Elkanah's inherited land amounted to about 400 acres." ¹⁰

1. #38 p. 26, 31-34
2. #45 p. 108
3. #71 p. 10
4. #2 Vol. 2 sheet (17-42)
5. #45 p. 111
6. #38 pp. 31,32
7. ibid p. 31
8. ibid pp. 32-34
9. #133 p. 762
10. #41 p. 6