

ELKANAH BABBITT (1690- )  
 (2) MEHITABLE CRANE (1702-after 1773)

Elkanah Babbitt was the first child of ten born to Elkanah Sr. and Elizabeth (Briggs) Babbitt (7-2). He grew to manhood on the family farm that had been an inheritance from Edward Babbitt, his grandfather (7-1).

Elkanah married (1st) Mary Hathaway daughter of Isaac and Mary (Pitts) Hathaway. Mary was born in 1691 and her father, who served in King Philips War, inherited the south half of Street farm in Berkley. This farm was next to the Babbitt property. Her great grandfather, Nicholas Hathaway, came to Boston in 1638 from Gloucestershire, England and migrated to Taunton, Mass. in 1640. He was one of the original purchasers of land in the area of Taunton and his son, John, Mary's grandfather, is frequently mentioned in the records of the town. <sup>1</sup>

Elkanah and Mary lived on land that his father allotted him. William Bradford Browne tells us that "they resided in Berkley on a farm set off to Elkanah by his father from his own lands, in some deeds called 'of Dighton' into which town his land extended." <sup>2</sup> ". . . In this connection it must be remembered that Dighton was set off from Taunton in 1712 and Berkley was set off from both Dighton and Taunton in 1735." <sup>3</sup>

Elkanah and Mary had eight children and when the last child was but a baby, Mary died on August 15, 1729 at the age of 38. Browne lists the children as follows:

1. Mary Babbitt
2. Elkanah Babbitt
3. Jacob Babbitt. The parentage of this child was questioned because Erasmus Babbitt also had a Jacob but Jacob's descendants frequently used the name, Elkanah, which seemed conclusive evidence of Jacobs position in the family.
4. Isaac Babbitt, b. Aug. 15, 1717
5. Hopedstill Babbitt, b. Jan 7, 1720
6. Phoebe Babbitt, b. June 6, 1722; md. July 11, 1745, Caleb Eddy of Halifax, Mass. They removed to New Jersey.
7. Marcy Babbitt, b. July 14, 1726; died young
8. Deborah Babbitt, b. (perhaps) 1728; md. Robert Bostwick of Brooklyn, Connecticut, as his second wife. She died May 5, 1794. <sup>4</sup>

On April 2, 1730, Elkanah married (2nd) Mehitable Crane, daughter of Stephen and Mary (Denison) Crane of Braintree, Massachusetts. She had relatives living in Taunton and may have been a visitor which might account for her becoming acquainted with Elkanah and his family. She was 27 years of age at the time of her marriage to the widower, Elkanah Babbitt, and he was 40. Mehitable's birth, then, is established at 1707. Elkanah and Mehitable had eight children bringing the number of Elkanah's children to 16. Following is the listing of his family by the second wife:

9. Marcy Babbitt, b. Dec. 31, 1730
10. Stephen Babbitt, b. Dec. , 1732
11. Zephaniah Babbitt, b. Jan. 5, 1735, in Berkley, Mass; md. Abigail Hamlin, dau. of Cornelius and Mary (Mudge) Hamlin of Sharon, Conn. He died about 1777 (7-4)

12. Samuel Babbitt, b. Sept. 30, 1737; served in the military 1756-1759 inlisting in Berkshire County, Mass. Died 1807
13. Amariah Babbitt, b. May 16, 1743; md. Mary Burgess, dau. of Jacob and Ruth (Wood) Burgess who was one of the first settlers of New Ashford, Berkshire County, Mass., about 1762. Amariah lived also at Lanesborough Berkshire County. Died Mar. 6, 1798, in New Ashford where he is buried.
14. Zerah Babbitt, bpt. 1748
15. Mehitable Babbitt
16. John Babbitt, b. 1750; md. Mercy \_\_\_\_\_ Lived in Lansborough, Mass. and Vienna, New York state where he died Aug. 30, 1805, aged 55 years. Mercy died Nov. 9, 1838, aged 82 years. <sup>5</sup>

One needs only to glance through the listing of the children of Elkanah's second family to realize that some of them did not remain in Taunton, Massachusetts. Once on the move, Elkanah and Mehitable settled for nothing less than the frontier. (7-2)

New England was experiencing its growing pains. Towns as far as the Hudson River and the western mountain barriers of the Appalachians were being settled by restless, land-hungry planters. Beautiful, fertile lands lay in the area of what is now western Connecticut and Berkshire County, Mass. (map #14)

Amariah Babbitt, #13 above, was born the year that the Babbitt family decided to sell their property that lay in what was called the "Taunton Farms." Browne gives us the following portions of Deed extracts:

"June 1, 1738. Elkanah Babbitt of Berkley, Gent. deeds son Isaac Babbitt (#4 above of 1st fam.) of Berkley, laborer, one-half of my homestead, being the south half thereof, bounded on the east by land of Daniel Axtell.

"March 31, 1743. Elkanah Babbitt, Gent, and Isaac Babbitt, laborer deed Benj. Chase, boatman, 50 acres, it being the north half of said Babbit's homestead farm. Signed by Elkanah, Isaac, and Mehitable Babbitt. This would seem to be the date upon which they removed to New Jersey." <sup>6</sup>

According to the DAR report some of Elkanah's sons had already moved west into western Connecticut and Berkshire County in western, Massachusetts. The DAR report has this to state:

"Elkanah was for years a leading figure in the town life of Old Berkley. When Berkley commenced its separate government, the first town meeting was held in his house, May 12, 1735 (that would be when our Zephaniah, the third child of Elkanah and Mehitable, was about 4 months of age). His sons early removed to western Connecticut and Berkshire County in western Mass., and were situated in towns along the western bounds of those areas from New Milford, Connecticut to New Ashford in Berkshire County, Mass. In 1743, Eklanah seems to have disposed of his land in Berkley and appears in some of the towns where his sons lived." <sup>7</sup>

Browne goes on to state in his discourse on Elkanah's activities:

"In 1743 Elkanah Babbitt seems to have disposed of all of his land holdings at Berkley and he appears thereafter for brief periods in some of the towns where his sons had settled. He perhaps accompanied his son Isaac to New Jersey; at any event he owned lands there and in April, 1754, was living in Mendham, New Jersey, at which date he and his wife Mehitable deeded lands in Mendham situated near Malachi Holloways. It is presumed that he finally reutrned to Berkley and died there after an adventurous and active life." <sup>8</sup>



Mehitable could have lived longer than her husband for Browne tells us that she was living in 1773, at New Ashford, Mass., with her son Amariah as shown by a disposition recorded in Morristown, New Jersey. <sup>9</sup>

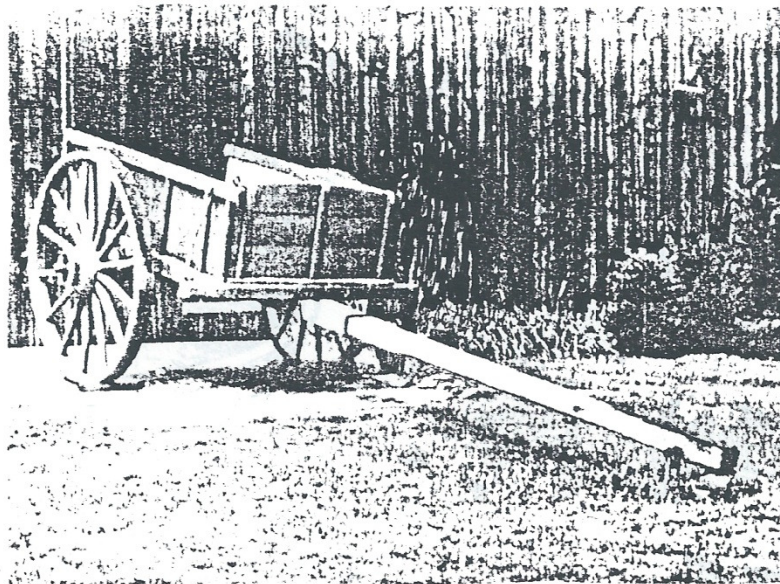
This same author gave some further details about Elkanah as it was gleaned from separate notes:

"Elkanah Babbitt 'Centinal' Capt. Oultons Co. at Richmond, Berkshire County, Mass. April 1, to Sept. 23, 1747; also at Richmond, Berkshire County, Sept. 24 to Oct. 8, 1747.

"Elkanah Babbitt 'Victualled' (provided food stuffs or other provisions) in Worchester County, Massachusetts, 1758." <sup>10</sup>

These incidents of record indicate that Elkanah resided in both Berkshire County of western Massachusetts and Worcester in central Massachusetts. (see maps #2, #14)

Elkanah would seem to be one of daring adventure; prone to embark on many enterprises as he traveled from place to place. It is certain that as he traveled the primitive roads of the frontier by primitive means of conveyance, his experiences must have been varied and interesting. Much of the traveling in his day was done either on horse-back or with crude ox-drawn carts. His goings, as he moved his family to New Jersey and then north to areas of western Massachusetts were, no doubt, attended with many risks that required courage. Mehitable was busy with her children's needs and such travels were bound to be difficult for her.

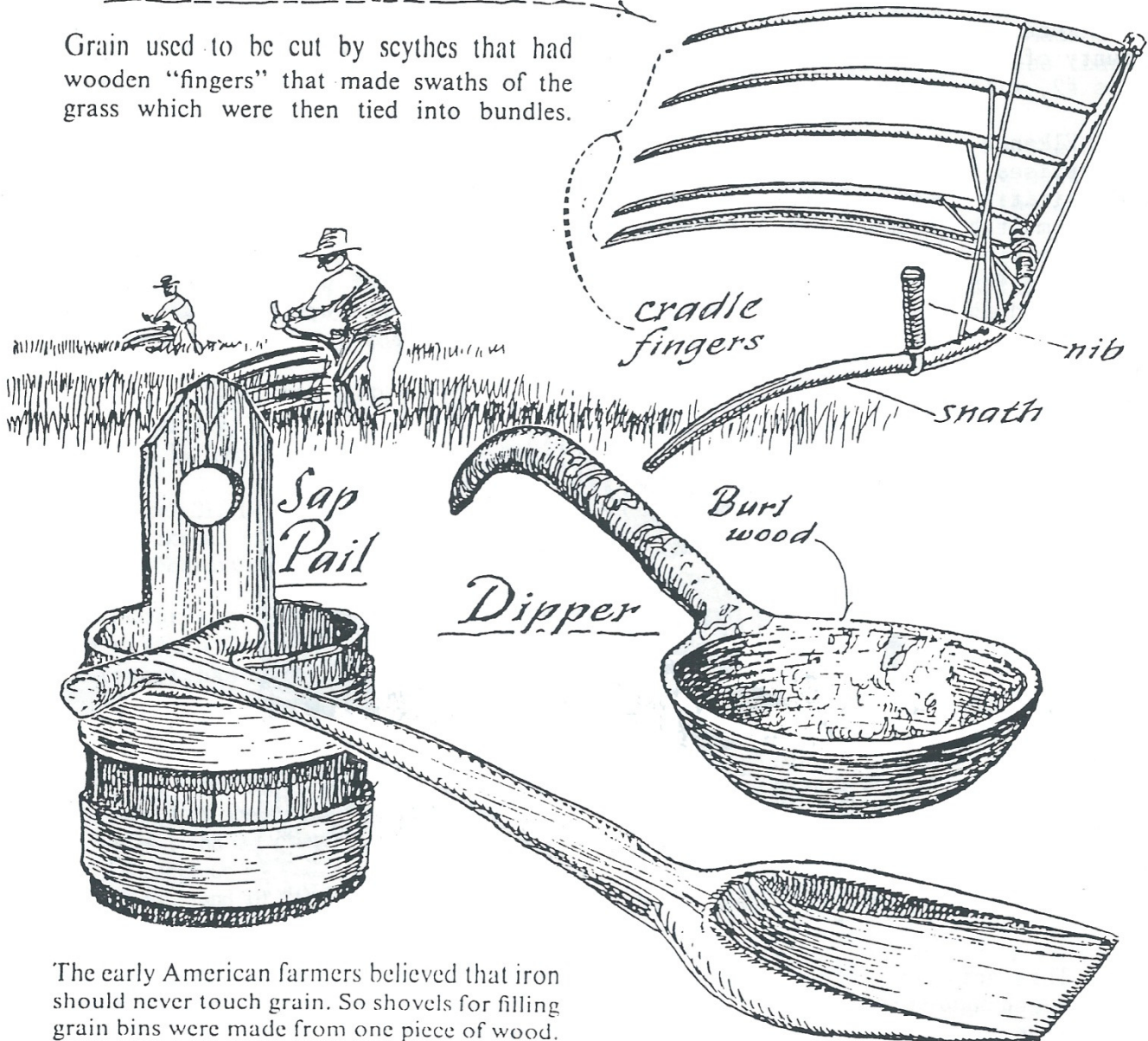


This antique ox-cart is shown as it stands with its original 4 ft. 2 in. wheels and hand-forged iron tires. We see it only as a relic now of the old days when oxen were the first bulldozers that cleared land and built stonewalls and roads. The first handcarts were built in this fashion with two hand staves replacing the single tongue and the earliest built had solid wheels made from cutting across huge tree trunks in thicknesses of about six inches.

The early frontiersmen of Elkanah's day had the advantage of blacksmith and leather good shops that could be found in the more settled community centers. Iron articles could be had for purchase or barter trade and custom leather shoes and other items could be had from skilled artisans. The means of transport, however, remained primitive and continued in use for several generations beyond Elkanah's time. Oxen were still preferred as man's beast of burden and travel was necessarily very slow. Most of the domestic tools, household furniture and kitchen utensils were hand-made of wood by the settler. Examples are shown below.

## GRAIN CRADLE

Grain used to be cut by scythes that had wooden "fingers" that made swaths of the grass which were then tied into bundles.



The early American farmers believed that iron should never touch grain. So shovels for filling grain bins were made from one piece of wood.



Much needs to be said of such as Mehitable, whose responsibility must have been equal to, if not greater than, that of her husband. She helped in the rearing of Elkanah's motherless children as well as the eight more she bore of her own. Our Zephaniah, the eleventh child, was eight years of age when his father left Berkley, Massachusetts; Samuel was 5, and Amariah was a new baby. Zerah, Mehitable and John were born in other parts. The family endeavored to stay together but they had a tendency to leave for distant parts as they matured and married. Elkanah and Mehitable, without doubt, had traveled to these several outposts of civilization where some of their children had settled. They had entered into the life style of the frontiersmen of the time and learned to pioneer new areas.

Mehitable was at New Ashford, Berkshire Co., Mass. (map #14), with her son, Amariah, at a later date when the children were all grown (1773), as recorded by Browne. At 1773 she would have been 71 years of age. We are left wondering, as searches fail to reveal any record of either Elkanah or Mehitable's death date or burial place, where their final days were spent and where their final resting places are located.

1. #100, p. 15
2. #38, p. 47
3. ibid, p. 26
4. ibid, p. 47
5. ibid
6. ibid, p. 48
7. #71, p. 21
8. #38, p. 48
9. ibid, p. 47
10. ibid