

EDWARD DENISON (1614-1668)
ELIZABETH WELDE (abt. 1625-1716)

E. Glen Denison and Donald L. Jacobus worked together compiling the "Denison Genealogy" in 1963. In this volume we find recorded Edward's birth as 1614.¹ The DAR report gives a baptism date, 3 Nov. 1616 at Bishop's Stortford, England. He was the son of William and Margaret (Chandler) Denison. He came to America with his father, mother, an older brother, Daniel, and a younger brother, George, on the ship "Lion" when he was about 16 years of age. An older brother, John, who was educated at Cambridge University and Queens College, became a minister and remained in England. The Parish Church in England where Edward was baptized was the house of worship of his parents and grandparents and perhaps many of his earlier forefathers.² This church is depicted in his grandparent's story (7-23).

Ringling of the church bells was the accepted manner in honoring distinguished guests who visited towns. The story is told that during the period of time in England when Archbishop Laud was enforcing restrictive edicts upon the people who showed any form of non-conformity to the established church of England, the bell ringing was restrained on one particular occasion. The Archbishop sent his chancellor to Bishop's Stortford. The church warden, whose attitude toward Laud was far from favorable "paid the bell ringers 5 shillings for not ringing the bells when the chancellor came, and 2 shillings and 2 pence for ringing on the morrow at his going away."³ By this we can know that the edicts of Archbishop Laud were unpopular to the non-conformist groups that were beginning to increase in numbers at this time. It was near the time of this bell ringing incident that Edward with his parents left Bishop's Stortford, England, to sail in the ship "Lion" for America (map 1 #27).

William Denison, Edward's father, is described as a man of "goodly" estate. Of this we may be sure, for Edward and his two older brothers went to Cambridge University as young boys. During the two months passage across the Atlantic, Edward's father engaged the Rev. John Eliot, the future 'Apostle to the Indians,' to tutor his three young sons. The youngest son, George, continued his studies under this good man, at Roxbury, Massachusetts where the ships company that included the Denison's settled.⁴

Edward, like his parents, resided in Roxbury all his life where he died at the age of 54, April 26, 1668. He married Elizabeth Welde of Roxbury on the 20 March, 1641 when she was 16 years of age and he about 25 years of age.⁵ Elizabeth's parents, Joseph and Elizabeth (Wise) Weld or Welde (7-32), had arrived in America in 1632 on the ship "William and Francis" when Elizabeth was 7 years old and they, too, had settled in Roxbury, Massachusetts (see story 7-31,32).

Francis S. Drake writes, "The Roxbury colonists were people of substance, many of them farmers, none being 'of the poorer sort.' They struck root in the soil immediately, and were enterprising, industrious, and frugal. It is the testimony of an eye-witness, that "one might dwell there from year to year and not see a drunkard, hear an oath, or meet a beggar. . . .Outside of Boston, no New England town can show such a roll of distinguished names as have illustrated the annals of Roxbury unless Cambridge be an exception."⁶

We might see Elizabeth, who undoubtedly had an excess of worldly goods, measured by the standards of that time, caring for her several children, in a steep roofed one room house built either of clay and mud, or hewn logs, covered with poles and thatch. The fireplace, made of rough stone, was broad and deep and large enough for burning four foot logs. The room may have been 20 feet square and the thatch roof may have eventually been replaced by boards and shingles, thatch having finally been prohibited in consequence of frequent fires. Four of Elizabeth's twelve children died shortly after birth.

The domestic life in a New England community was simple, laborious, and economical. Candles of tallow dip afforded the only light. Carpets were unknown and often clean white sand served for a floor covering. Where floors were of slab boards they required scrubbing and, of course, there was spinning, weaving, brewing and soap making and other toils of a pioneer, now unknown to the housewife. With all this, and the large families of children which were almost always the rule, it is no wonder that those who sustained themselves, as did Elizabeth, to the age of 91, were accounted marvels of capability.

Mr. Drake goes on to speak of the modes of regulations and manners of the people in establishing the unity necessary for maintaining peace and safety. "For any evil practice such as violations of the Sabbath, traveling out of town on the Lord's day, even the possession of cards, dice or participation in any form of gambling was prohibited by statute. Offenses could be listed in numberless lengths and the punishment ranging from dunkin stools to fines." 7

We are told by George Thomas Little in 1909 that Edward and his father "bore a prominent part in the social and religious life there (Roxbury, Mass.). Both were men of learning and professional capabilities." It is stated that Edward "was a man of mark" in his community. He became a freeman in 1648; was a representative of the General Court of the Colony of Massachusetts in 1652-3 and was the first town clerk of Roxbury. 8

"The Ancient Transcript is an ancient book which contains a list of the lands owned by the respective inhabitants of early Roxbury. This record is of great value in tracing the titles of individuals and in rendering genealogical information. The present book is probably not the first or original but a copy made about 1666 to 1670; the original was by Goodman Denison." 9

In the same source is found the following review, Edward Denison married Elizabeth Weld in 1641. He was a representative three years, and died in 1668. Edward was appointed to the office of a Selectman in 1650 through 1653. The duties of a selectman was to hear an accused person's plea. In case any person shall find himself aggrieved or judge himself wronged shall first complain to the selectmen and if he is not satisfied with them he can be heard by the body of the town and if his cause is just find redress or if causeless then he must pay double the fine imposed.

Edward and Elizabeth lived on their land along side Stony River. Their estate was valued at over 1227 pounds. The children of Edward and Elizabeth are listed as follows:

1. Elizabeth Denison, b. 8 Aug. 1642
2. John Denison, died 1643
3. John Denison, b. 14 May 1644
4. Edward Denison, born and died 1645
5. Jeremiah Denison, b. 6 Dec. 1647; died 1649
6. Joseph Denison, b. 8 Apr. 1649
7. Margaret Denison, b. 15 Dec. 1650; md. Captain Daniel Mason; died 13 May 1678
8. Mary Denison, b. 27 Mar. 1654; md. 2 July 1676, Stephen Crane; died June 17, 1721, ae 67. He died 1738, ae 54 (7-21)
9. Hannah Denison, b. 10 Sept. 1656
10. Sarah Denison, b. 4 Nov. 1657; md. Thomas Robinson
11. William Denison, b. 18 Sept. 1664; md. Dorothy Weld, dau. of Thomas and Dorothy (Whiting) Weld
12. Deborah Denison, b. 30 Oct. 1666; died in 1667." 10

Mary Denison (#8 above), our progenitor, married Stephen Crane, July 2 1676 (see story 7-22). Edward Denison died at the age of 54, April 26, 1668, leaving Elizabeth with eight living children between the ages of 26 and 4. Four of their twelve children had died while very young. Elizabeth's responsibilities at that time must have been great. There seems to be no record of a second marriage for Elizabeth so it may be that she spent 48 years as a widow but it is thought that her husband had left her with some monetary means and a good home by standards of those days. She died at the age of 91 in 1716.

1. #53 p. 575
2. #71 p. 42
3. #107 p. 11-12
4. # 53 p. Preface ix
5. #71 p. 42
6. #129 pp. 9-10
7. *ibid* p. 61
8. #55 p. 273-275
9. #128 p. 9
10. *ibid* p. 95 and # 71 p. 42