

NATHANIEL WILLETT (-1698)
 SARAH (HANNAH) ADAMS (abt. 1641-after 1698)

Nathaniel must have been just a young boy when he left England associated with Rev. Hooker, arriving in the Boston Harbor in 1633. He was a young man in his teens or early twenties when he crossed the wilderness areas from Boston to Hartford, Conn. in 1636 with a company of Rev. Thomas Hooker's congregation of religious enthusiasts.

"The company consisted of about an hundred men, women and children who took their departure from Cambridge and traveled more than a hundred miles, through a hideous, trackless wilderness to Hartford. They had no guide but their compass, and made their way over mountains, through swamp, thickets and rivers which were passable but with great difficulty. They had no cover but the heavens, nor any lodgings but those which simple nature afforded them. They drove with them an hundred and sixty head of cattle and by the way subsisted on the milk of their cows. Mrs. Hooker, (being in a feeble state) was borne through the wilderness upon a litter. The people, generally, carried packs, arms, and cooking utensils, being nearly a fortnight on their journey.

"Such were the men who founded Hartford, and such the circumstances under which they began the settlement.

"They were men of sound hearts, firm and fixed resolution, and persevering effort . . . They kept constantly in view the grand design of their coming to this wilderness. Their notions of religious liberty were far from being mere speculations. Their views were intelligent and rational. Their purposes were strong; their aims high; their principles were not to be swayed by flatteries or frowns . . . To carry out their designs, they brought with them their Pastor, and among the first of their acts were those which made provision for the support of Christian institutions, and of education. The fire of their enthusiasm never went out upon their family alters. The Sabbath was a day of rest from worldly cares and labors, and it was their great concern to imbue the minds of their children with religious principles, and to hand down to succeeding generations those virtues which sustained them in all their trials and persecutions, and rendered them happy amidst all their hardships . . . From such men none need be ashamed to have derived their origin." 1

"Nathaniel Willett was married in 1642, at Hartford, to Elizabeth, widow of Samuel Wakeman who had been killed in 1641. Samuel and Elizabeth had 4 children. In 1645 the court gave all of the property of Wakeman to Nathaniel Willett, charging him to pay the son, on reaching 21 years 40 shillings and each of the three daughters 20 shillings at age 18 years." 2

Arthur Adams, in a statement made in his record of 1955, said, "Sarah Adams dau. of Jeremy and granddaughter of John married Nathaniel Willett, who came to Hartford about 1642, as his second wife . . ." 3 The DAR record states that "Nathaniel Willett married (2) Hannah Adams daughter of Jeremy Adams." 4

Nathaniel was much older than Sarah or (Hannah), whichever it was, though Arthur Adams, above, claims that Hannah married Jonathan Smith and also states that she died soon after without issue.

Nathaniel and Sarah had four children, all born in Hartford and listed in the records by both the DAR and Mr. Adams as:

1. Rebecca, married in 1690, Thomas Ranney, of Middletown.
2. Abigail, married John Bishop of New Haven, a son of Lieutenant Governor James Bishop. (7-55)
3. Sarah, married Zachary Sanford, of Hartford
4. Hannah, married in 1697, Baysey Baker, of Hartford. ⁵

The home lot in Hartford, if readable, could be located on map #24. Though this was not all of his accumulated land holdings we can at least know the area where he and his family lived.

"Nathaniel was a soldier in King Philip's War serving under Capt. Scotow, from Oct. 19, 1675 to June 24, 1676. Was in the Blackpoint Garrison, Oct. 12, 1676." ⁶

From his Will dated July 13, 1697, we find that he gave to his wife "the use of a third part of all my lands during her natural life and if she sees fit to live in Hartford, I give her the use of my house, barn and homelot, besides the third portion, during her widowhood. Also I give to my wife two plows, one-third part of my sheep, one-third part of my household good, with the provision in the house, in full of her dowry, she keeping housing and fences in repair . . . I give all my lands, meadow, upland, and out-lands whatsoever, to be equally divided between daughters, two-thirds after my decease, the other third after the decease of my wife . . ." ⁷ signed by an X, Nathaniel Willett.

From the above source, Nathaniel is said to have died Jan. 4, 1698, leaving widow and 4 married daughters.

Through the posterity of the second daughter, Abigail, and her husband John Bishop, we find a great granddaughter Lydia Bishop who in 1785 married William Babbitt linking two lines of progenitors who were all New England pioneers that included as many as thirty or more immigrant ancestors.

The Babbitt name continued, as later generations moved westward, and was bestowed upon the oldest son of Elizabeth Almira (Babbitt) Rice on April 1, 1850. (1-8). She named her first child, a son, Leonard Babbitt Rice. He was the progenitor of a posterity of Rices in the west, including the writer.

1. #60 pp. 11-12, 13
2. #71 p. 112
3. #97 pp. 4, 5
4. #71 p. 112
5. ibid p. 113
6. ibid p. 112
7. ibid, pp. 110, 111