

No Place for Weaklings – Haverhill, Massachusetts

Joseph Goddard; Salem, Mass.

The Adventures of Hannah Heath

Haverhill, in Massachusetts Bay Colony lay 22 miles up the Merrimack River from the seacoast, on the frontier. It was often the target for raids by Indians, incited by the French, and presumably from the Indian town of St. Francis (at present-day Odanac, Quebec, near Trois Rivieres). St. Francis is 300 miles north of Haverhill.

Our Bradley ancestors were in the thick of the troubles.

1689

On Aug. 13, 1689, Daniel Bradley the immigrant was killed by Indians near his home in Haverhill. He was two weeks shy of his 76th birthday.

His son, Joseph Bradley (b. 7 FEB 1664/65) was 24 at the time of that attack. When he was 26, he married Hannah Heath (b. 3 MAY 1673 – she was two weeks shy of 18).

Six months after the 1689 attack, the town of Haverhill established six garrison houses (mainly built of brick) and four houses of refuge. Joseph Bradley was placed in command of one of the garrisons.



1 - Dustin Garrison House, ca. 1697, Haverhill, Masstts.*

* http://www.newenglandfrontier.com/home_files/Photos/Large/Dustin.jpg

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1697 – 27 killed, 13 captured

On March 15, 1697 (1696 O.S.), when Joseph was 32 and Hannah 24, the Indians attacked again. At the time she had borne three children: Mehitabel had died as an infant; Joseph was 4 years old and Martha was 2. It was in this attack that the famous, vengeful, Hannah Dustin was carried off – to escape after killing her captors. In any case, young Joseph and little Martha were killed[†], and Hannah (Heath) Bradley was captured. Her captors were traveling ahead of the group who had taken Hannah Dustin, and our Hannah talked to a woman who escaped from Dustin's wrath and fled to our Hannah's group. It is not clear what happened next, except that we presume Hannah (Heath) Bradley was taken to Canada, sold to the French, redeemed by her own people, and brought back home to Haverhill.

Also in the 1697 attack, the family of Joseph's brother Daniel Bradley was destroyed. Both Daniel and his wife Hannah Dow were killed, as were their daughters Mary (age 4) and Hannah, an infant. Their son Daniel, age 6 ½, was captured and taken to Canada. Only 11-year-old Ruth got through the attack. (Ruth was later killed in the 1708 raid on Haverhill.)

1704

In February 1704 (1703 O.S.) a party of six Indians attacked Joseph Bradley's garrison in the afternoon. They shot and wounded the sentinel. Hannah Bradley (now 31) was boiling a kettle of soap, and killed one of the attackers with a ladleful. The remaining Indians captured Hannah and several others, and took the trail for Canada. At the time of this attack, Joseph and Hannah had two surviving children: Martha (our ancestor) aged 4 and Sarah aged 2. Two children had been killed in the 1696/97 attack. Sarah was killed in this 1703/04 attack.

After some days on the trail, pregnant Hannah bore a baby, who was tortured and presently killed in a gruesome manner and "piked on a pole". Ultimately the Indians brought Hannah to Canada and sold her to the French for 80 livres. The family who bought Hannah treated her kindly.

In March, Joseph Bradley learned of Hannah's survival and whereabouts, and set off on foot. He took with him a bag of snuff, on a dog-sled, as a present from the Governor of Massachusetts to the Governor of Canada. He ransomed Hannah from the French family, and Joseph and Hannah sailed from Montreal to Boston, and at last reached home in Haverhill.

[†] Chase in "History of Haverhill", 198, says "Joseph, Martha, and Sarah Bradley, children of Joseph Bradley" were killed. We have a Sarah born 26 Jan 1701/02 and died two years later; there is a gap of 4 years after Martha Bradley who was killed in the 1697 raid ... could there have been a baby Sarah in 1696/97?

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1706

In the summer of 1706 a small party of Indians attacked the garrison on a moonlit night. In addition to Joseph and Hannah, the garrison contained our ancestor Martha, now aged 8, a new baby Joseph born in 1706/07, and a hired man. The grownups armed themselves, and Hannah told Joseph that she would rather be killed than be taken again. As the Indians forced the door open she shot the first man dead; at this the rest of the attackers retreated and the garrison was left in safety.

1708 – 16 killed, 35 captured[‡]

In the Spring of 1708 a body of two dozen men under Capt. Samuel Ayer pursued an attacking party; Joseph and a small group captured the medicinebox and packs which had been cached about three miles from town. As a result of Capt. Ayer's pursuit, nine of the attackers were killed. Between the casualties and the loss of their packs, many of the French with the party surrendered, and some of the captives were recovered.

In an attack on August 29, 1708, Ruth Bradley was killed; she was the 20-year-old daughter of Joseph's brother Daniel Bradley and Hannah Dow, both of whom were killed in the 1696/97 raid which Ruth had survived.

Aftermath

Although other attacks continued for a few years throughout the region, Haverhill was basically spared until peace came in 1712. When hostilities resumed in the 1720's, the frontier had moved north along the Merrimack River, and Haverhill residents found themselves well behind the lines.

As a curious illustration of this, in 1724 the French and Indians captured another of Edna Gill's ancestors, Thomas Smith, in the Scotch-Irish settlements of Derry and Chester, New Hampshire. (He subsequently escaped, lucky for us.)

Relationship

Hannah Heath was the ancestor of Edna League Gill (b. 22 Oct. 1888, Colby, Kansas; d. about 1950, Oklahoma City, Okla.).

- Edna's parents were Joseph Albert Gill (b. 17 Feb 1854, Wheeling, Virginia [W. Va.]) and Nannie Donahue (b. 15 Apr 1865, Clinton, Ill.)
- Joseph was the son of John Wallace Gill (b. 23 Nov 1809, Mt. Pleasant, Ohio; d. 3 Oct 1872, Springfield, Ill.) and Rhoda Abigail Smith (b. 23 Dec. 1821, Columbus, Ohio; d. Sept. 1908, Springfield, Ill.).
- Rhoda was the daughter of David Campbell Smith (b. 2 Oct 1785, Frankestown, N. H.; d. 4 Feb. 1865, Manchester, Ohio) and Harriet Byron Mitchell (b. 23 Dec. 1802, Haverhill, Mass.; d. 11 Aug 1833, Columbus, Ohio).

[‡] In the August 29 attack; Chase, p. 225

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- Harriet was the daughter of James F. Mitchell (b. 27 Jan 1732/33, Haverhill, Mass.; d. 1813, Haverhill, Mass.) and Hannah Leitch (or Leach; b. 17 Apr 1759, Haverhill, Mass.; d. 23 Mar 1814, Haverhill, Mass.).
- James was the son of Capt. James Mitchell (b. 1695; d. 19 Dec. 1745, Haverhill, Mass.) and Martha Bradley (b. 7 Nov 1699, Haverhill, Mass.; d. after 1734).
- Martha was the daughter of Joseph Bradley (b. 7 Feb. 1664/65, Rowley, Mass.; d. 3 Oct 1727, Haverhill, Mass.) and Hannah Heath (b. 3 May 1673, Haverhill, Mass.; d. 2 Nov 1761, Haverhill, Mass.).

Hannah Heath was the daughter of John Heath and Sarah Partridge. She married Joseph Bradley in Haverhill on 14 Apr 1691. Hannah and Joseph had 11 children; one died in infancy, four were killed in Indian attacks, and six grew to adulthood.

References

George Wingate Chase, *History of Haverhill*, 1861.

Medium: Internet. Location: Google books;

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The Adventures of Hannah Dustin

From Kathryn Whitford, “Hannah Dustin, the Judgment of History”

Internet, viewed 16 Feb 2009, Joseph Goddard

<http://www.hawthorneinsalem.org/Literature/NativeAmericans&Blacks/HannahDuston/MMD2169.html>

Prof. Whitford quotes Rev. Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1702:

On March 15, 1697, the salvages made a descent upon the skirts of Haverhill, murdering and captivating about thirty-nine persons, and burning about half a dozen houses. In this broil, one Hannah Dustan, having lain in about a week, attended with her nurse, Mary Neff, a body of terrible Indians drew near unto the house where she lay, with designs to carry on their bloody devastations. Her husband hastened from his employments abroad un-to the relief of his distressed family; and first bidding *seven* of his *eight* children (which were from *two* to *seventeen* years of age) to get away as fast as they could unto some garrison in the town, he went in to inform his wife of the horrible distress come upon them. Ere she could get up, the fierce Indians were got so near, that, utterly despairing to do her any service, he ran out after his children; resolving that on the horse which he had with him, he would ride away with that which he should in this extremity find his affections to pitch most upon, and leave the rest unto the care of the Divine Providence. He overtook his children, about forty rod from his door; but then such was the *agony* of his parental affections, that he found it impossible for him to distinguish anyone of them from the rest; wherefore he took up a courageous resolution to live and die with them all. A party of Indians came up with him; and now, though they fired at him, and he fired at them, yet he manfully kept at the rear of his *little army* of unarmed children, while they marched off with the pace of a child of five years old; until, by the singular providence of God, he arrived safe with them all unto a place of safety about a mile or two from his house. But his house must in the mean time have more dismal tragedies acted at it. The nurse, trying to escape with the newborn infant, fell into the hands of the formidable salvages; and those furious tawnies coming into the house, bid poor Dustan to rise immediately. Full of astonishment, she did so; and sitting down in the chimney with an heart full of most fearful *expectation*, she saw the raging dragons rifle all that they could carry away, and set the house on fire. About nineteen or twenty Indians now led these away, with about half a score other English captives; but ere they had gone many steps, they dash'd out the brains of the infant against a tree; and several of the other captives, as they began to tire in the sad journey, were soon sent unto their long home; the salvages would presently bury their hatchets in their brains, and leave their carcasses on the ground for birds and beasts to feed upon. However, Dustan (with her nurse) notwithstanding her present condition, travelled that night about a dozen miles, and then kept up with their new masters in a long travel of an hundred and fifty miles, more or less, within a few days ensuing, without any sensible damage in their health, from the hardships of their travel, their lodging, their diet, and their many other difficulties.

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Figure 2 - Hannah Duston Statue, Haverhill, Mass.



Figure 3 - Hannah Duston statue, Penacook, N. H.

These two poor women were now in the hands of those whose "tender mercies are cruelties;" but the good God, who hath all "hearts in his own hands," heard the sighs of these prisoners, and gave them to find unexpected favour from the master who hath laid claim unto them. That Indian family consisted of twelve persons; two stout men, three women, and seven children; . . . This Indian family was now travelling with these two captive women, (and an English youth taken from Worcester, a year and a half before,) unto a rendezvous of salvages, which they call a town, some where beyond Penacook; and they still told these poor women that when they came to this town, they must be stript, and scourg'd, and run the gantlet through the whole army of Indians. They said this was the fashion when the captives first came to a town; and they derided some of the faint-hearted English, which, they said, fainted and swoon'd away under the torments of this discipline. But on April 30, while they were yet, it may be, about an hundred and fifty miles from the Indian town, a little before break of day, when the whole crew was in a dead sleep, (reader, see if it prove not so!) one of these women took up a resolution to imitate the action of Jael upon Sisera; and being where she had not her own life secured by any law unto her she thought she was not forbidden by any law to take away the life of the murderers by whom her child had been butchered. She heartened the nurse and youth to assist her in this enterprize; and all furnished themselves with hatchets for the purpose, they struck such home blows upon the heads of their sleeping oppressors, that ere they could any of them struggle into any effectual resistance, "at the feet of these poor prisoners, they bow'd, they fell, they lay down; at their feet they bow'd, they fell; where they bow'd, there they fell down dead." Only one squaw escaped, sorely wounded, from them in the dark; and one boy, whom they reserved asleep, intending to bring him away with them, suddenly waked, and scuttled away from this desolation. But cutting off the scalps of the ten wretches, they came off: and received fifty pounds from the General Assembly of the province, as a recompence of their action; besides which, they received many "presents of congratulation" from their more private friends: but none gave 'em greater taste of bounty than Colonel Nicholson, the Governour of Maryland, who, hearing of their action, sent 'em a very generous token of his favour.