

A BRIEF NOTICE

OF THE LATE

THOMAS KEYES,

OF WEST BOYLSTON,

TOGETHER WITH A SHORT

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF HIS DESCENDANTS,

AND ALSO OF HIS ANCESTRY;

WITH SOME INCIDENTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED
THEREWITH.

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BRIEF NOTICE.

THOMAS KEYES was born at Westminster, Mass. January 20, 1767, and died at West Boylston, June, 25, 1856, in the ninetieth year of his age. He was the eldest son of Thomas and Mary Keyes, who had settled in Westminster, but removed to the north-west part of Shrewsbury, afterwards Boylston, and now West Boylston, about six weeks after his birth.

His parents had to depend upon their own active exertions, to obtain a living and get along in the world, consequently he was trained to habits of industry and frugality, to which he strictly adhered during the whole period of his life.

He often admonished his descendants and others to adopt the assiduous habits, and pursue the economical course by which he had at all times been governed, and which had, apparently, resulted in his success and prosperity in the world, enabling him ever to possess and enjoy a competency of the the necessary comforts and luxuries of life, and also to accumulate, and leave a valuable patrimony for those who should succeed and come after him.

Although his predominant feelings were somewhat of a parsimonious tendency, yet he often manifested a spirit of benevolence, by his acts of charity and kindness for the relief of want and suffering.

In his childhood, he was instructed by his parents in the principles of morality and religion, and he frequently spoke of the salutary effect produced on his mind by the

admonitions and example of his pious mother, for whom he ever cherished a high respect and veneration.

Although, while young, he had received religious instructions from his parents, and enjoyed the ministrations of a pious evangelical minister, and always cherished, and manifested a sacred regard for religion and its institutions, yet he did not allow himself to believe that his heart had been savingly changed, or his feelings brought into true submission to the character and government of God. In this situation he seemed to remain for many years, until his only surviving daughter, on whom his hopes and expectations for care and assistance for the remainder of his life were fondly placed, was taken from him by death.

This solemn event, severe and trying as it was, seemed eventually to result in the production of a decided change in his views and feelings. and in a short time he cherished a hope in the mercy of God, and after serious thought and careful reflection relative to his situation and duty, he made a public profession of his faith in Christ, and although he entertained views and sentiments of minor importance, thereby differing somewhat from christians of the present day, he clung to the cross, and always firmly adhered to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; and, it is believed by those who were well acquainted with the history of his life, that he has left this world of trial and sorrow, and gone to inherit that rest which remains for the faithful children of God.

He was a friend and advocate of such of the benevolent institutions of the age, as he had good reason to believe were based upon right premises, and managed in a judicious and proper manner, cheerfully contributing such aid and assistance, from time to time, as occasion and circumstances seemed to demand.

He was an early friend and patron of the American Board of Missions, but for several of his last years, he steadily refused to contribute to its funds, on account of its connection with slavery, and its refusing to repudiate

that vile system of oppression and wickedness, which curses and degrades our country.

He manifested a strong attachment to the American Missionary Association, more especially on account of its strictly anti-slavery character, having from the time of its organization, annually and on special occasions, contributed to its funds, and at his death, leaving a donation for its treasury.

He was deeply interested in the anti-slavery cause, in whatever aspect it might be viewed, whether religiously, morally, or politically considered, manifesting much feeling and sympathy for the poor slave in his wretchedness and degradation, frequently giving something for the benefit of down-trodden humanity. He justly appreciated his political rights and privileges, and always attended the State and national elections, and voted. Although nearly ninety years of age, and destitute of sight, he was seen at the last annual State election, previous to his death, depositing his ballot in favor of liberty and freedom.

He was an original actor in the temperance movement, being among the first who declared in favor of total abstinence ever afterwards denouncing intoxicating liquor as a beverage, believing it to be injurious and destructive, and consequently immoral and pernicious.

On account of the loss of his sight, which suddenly occurred about eighteen years previous to his death, he was ever afterwards unable to read, and although this event in its effect was trying and severe, at once depriving him of a source of much satisfaction and enjoyment, yet it is believed that he never uttered a murmur or complaint on account of this affliction, but always seemed to manifest a cordial submission to his situation. He never became totally blind, but during several of his last years, he could only distinguish between day and night, and barely discern a brilliant light, as the sun or moon or burning candle.

He naturally possessed an active, vigorous mind, with firmness and decision of purpose and character, always ready after proper reflection, to express his opinion rela-

tive to any subject presented for consideration, without reference to the judgment of others, or waiting to ascertain whether his opinion or position would accord with the general feeling or otherwise. He was regarded by his fellow townsmen during the active portion of his life, not only as a man of honesty and integrity, but also possessing the requisite capabilities and qualifications for the faithful and proper discharge of duties of a social public character.

He was frequently chosen by the town to fill important offices of trust, discharging the duties thereof to the satisfaction and acceptance of those who bestowed upon him their confidence and support.

He was originally a federalist, being an ardent friend and supporter of the administrations of Washington and John Adams, but decidedly opposed to the succeeding administrations and policy of Jefferson and Madison. He approved of the administration of John Quincy Adams, highly appreciating the patriotic course of that distinguished and venerable statesman. He manifested a deep feeling and interest in regard to national affairs, almost to the close of life; believing that an important crisis was approaching, and fearing that those whom he was about to leave, might be called to witness scenes and encounter difficulties of a serious and perplexing character.

As monuments that may serve to perpetuate a recollection of him who had an existence here, but has now taken his departure and gone the way of all the earth, are two large elm trees, set out by him about sixty-five years ago, standing on the road side opposite the dwelling house, which he erected and occupied more than fifty years. Also on the same side of the road, a few rods distant, stands a large, handsome rock maple tree, set out by him in the spring of 1800, being taken up before sun-rise and set out after sun-set, on the day of the annual fast, thus avoiding a desecration of the day consecrated to sacred purposes.

The farm on which he resided almost the entire period of his protracted life, was first taken up and occupied

by Benjamin Bigelow, who became the legal proprietor thereof about the year 1735. Mr. Bigelow retained the possession of the farm and resided thereon about fifteen years, during which time, he erected a dwelling house and made other improvements, when he sold out to Ephraim Temple, who became the owner and occupant in 1750, or about that time. Mr. Temple erected a barn in 1753, and retained the possession of the farm until 1767, when he sold it to Thomas Keyes, who held it in possession and resided upon it until his decease in 1812, when by a provision of his will, it became the property of his eldest son, the late Thomas Keyes, who continued to be the legal owner thereof until the close of his life, when by lawful inheritance, it descended to his son and only surviving child, Benjamin F. Keyes, whose residence has been on the homestead from the earliest period of his life.

The whole number of births on this farm since it was first settled, is thirty, and the number of deaths during the same period is twenty-three. *to grand father*

A new dwelling house was erected on this farm in 1784, by Thomas Keyes, who was then the legal proprietor thereof, the frame being raised on the 9th day of June of that year. After the family had removed into the new house, the old one was taken down, having been occupied about forty-five years. *136*

✓ In 1791, another dwelling house was erected by the late Thomas Keyes, on the spot where the original one stood, for his own accommodation and occupancy.

In 1792, another building was erected erected for a granary, and other purposes, the frame being raised on the 14th day of September. This building was used for the purposes for which it was designed, until 1812, when it was taken down and a more spacious one erected in its place, for the double purpose of a granary and a cider mill, the frame of which was raised on the 4th day of June. Since that time the business of making and vending cider having become disreputable and immoral, the portion of

the building designed for that purpose has been appropriated to other uses of a more beneficial tendency.

In 1797, the old barn being too small and much decayed, it was taken down and a larger and more commodious one erected nearly on the same ground.

Another small barn has been erected the past year, 1855, by the present occupant.

Thomas Keyes, of whom a brief sketch has already been given, was married to Lydia, daughter of Micah Harthan, of Boylston, May 26, 1791. She was born Feb. 18, 1765, and died Oct. 25th, 1824, in the sixtieth year of her age. She was an amiable woman, possessing a kind, sympathetic disposition, friendly to all, being one of the best of mothers, justly deserving the high esteem, and warm affection of her children, and others with whom she was associated and connected in life.

They had six children, three sons and three daughters, viz.: Benjamin Franklin, born April 15, 1793; Polly, born Jan. 13, 1795, died Sep. 18, 1800; Betsey, born Nov. 17, 1796, died May 11, 1839; Sally, born March 2, 1799, died Sep. 18, 1800; Thomas, born April 20, 1802, died Oct. 30, 1831; Jonathan, born Nov. 17, 1808, died Aug. 12, 1813.

Benjamin Franklin was married to Lois, eldest daughter of Thaddeus Nichols, of Holden, December 10, 1822, when they took possession of the house built, and formerly occupied by his grandfather, Thomas Keyes, which has been their dwellingplace ever since. She was born July, 17, 1797. They are professors of religion, having connected themselves with the christian church several years previous to their marriage.

Betsey resided with her parents during the whole period of her life, and died of consumption, in the forty-third year of her age, having been a professor of religion more than twenty years.

Thomas was a son of more than ordinary promise, possessed of an amiable disposition, endowed with talents and capacities of a peculiar character, thereby fitting him for

extensive usefulness in the world. He was married to Eveline, daughter of Dea Artemas Murdock, of West Boylston, April 13, 1827, with whom he lived only eighteen months, when she suddenly died, September 24, 1828, in the twenty-fifth year of her age. He survived his lamented wife about three years, when he was attacked with a fever, which, eventually, terminated his life. He and his wife were each exemplary professors of religion, and died in anticipation of future blessedness.

Benjamin F. Keyes and wife, have lived in the marriage state thirty-four years, having had eight children, six sons and two daughters, four of whom have died, and four now living.

Their first child was born Oct. 9, 1823, and lived two days and died.

Jonathan Mason, their second child, was born Aug. 13, 1825.

Their third child was born Jan. 9, 1827, and died the same day.

Eveline Murdock, their fourth child, was born July 1, 1828, and died Oct. 25, 1829.

Thomas Nichols, their fifth child, was born March 18, 1830.

William Wirt, their sixth child, was born Jan. 29, 1832.

Lydia Eveline, their seventh child, was born July 15, 1835.

John Quincy, their last child, was born Oct. 13, 1837, and died Feb. 20, 1838.

Jonathan Mason Keyes was married to Esther Damon, of Kirby, Vt., March 20, 1849. They reside in West Boylston, and have had one child, named George Harvey, born Sept. 28, 1850.

Thomas Nichols Keyes was married to Thankful, eldest daughter of Jerry and Lucy Smith, of Marathon, N. Y., Dec. 4, 1856. They also, reside in West Boylston.

Thomas Keyes, who was the father of the late Thomas Keyes, was the third son of Dea. Jonathan Keyes, of Shrewsbury, now Boylston, was born Jan. 4, 1738, and

died Dec. 21, 1812, in the seventy-fifth year of his age. During his childhood and minority, he was instructed by his parents, in the doctrines and principles of the Puritans, and taught carefully to observe their habits and customs. The parental instruction thus early received, was tenaciously regarded, and the general course of his after life was in accordance therewith. Although he never made a public profession of religion, he always manifested a proper regard for divine institutions, and performed many of the practical duties, regarded as particularly incumbent on christian professors.

He was a patriot and true friend of his country, and at the commencement, and during the progress of the American revolution, he was active in devising plans, and assisting in the execution thereof, for the benefit and advantage of the cause of the country in her struggle for liberty and independence.

He was married to Mary, daughter of Isaac Temple, of Shrewsbury, April 25, 1765, when they went to Westminster and settled on a farm given him by his father, as a remuneration for three years faithful service after he was twenty-one years of age. Here he resided until 1767, when he sold out and removed to Shrewsbury, now West Boylston, where he purchased a farm, on which he resided through life. His wife was a laborious, enterprising woman, and a valuable house-keeper. She was a professor of religion, and it is confidently believed that she lived and died a consistent, humble christian. She was born March 9, 1741, and died January 21, 1800, aged 59. They had seven children, five sons and two daughters, viz. : Lucy, born August 18, 1765, died April 4, 1776, aged 11 years ; Thomas, born January 20, 1767, died June 25, 1856, aged 89 years ; Asa, born Sep. 21, 1768, died Dec. 27, 1850, aged 82 years ; Francis, born Apr. 15, 1771, died Apr. 18, 1851, aged 80 years ; Luther, born Sep. 21, 1772, died, Nov. 5, 1773, aged 1 year ; Lucy, born July 27, 1778, is yet living, being in her seventy-ninth year. Luther, born May 8, 1781, died Aug. 26, 1826, aged 45 years.

Thomas was married to Lydia Harthan, of Boylston, in May 1791, and resided on the homestead with his father, assisting in the management of the farm, receiving a share of the produce in return for his services.

Asa, was married to Sarah Thurston, of Westborough, May 31, 1798, when they went to Sterling, and settled on a farm which he had previously purchased, where they resided so long as they lived. She died suddenly, Feb. 26, 1807, in the forty-first year of her age, leaving him with four young children to lament her early departure.

She was a woman possessing good capacities, always pleasant and cheerful, combining the various qualifications necessary to render her a useful and valuable housekeeper. He was again married to Tamer Eager, of Sterling, May 31, 1808, who survived him, and died Dec. 29, 1854, aged 81 years.

He possessed a kind, benevolent disposition, frequently furnishing assistance to the unfortunate and destitute. He and his wife, who survived him, were professors of religion, possessing those christian hopes, which apparently, fully sustained them in the final issue, when called to take their departure from this world to their final abode.

He had five children, two sons and three daughters, viz.: Asa, born February 4, 1800, died Aug. 31, 1803; Sarah, born July 15, 1801, died Dec. 12, 1830; Mary, who was the wife of Simeon Patridge, of Boylston, was born April 25, 1803, died April 18, 1836; Asa, was born Sept. 17, 1805, and resides on the homestead. Lucy, wife of Welcome Johnson, of Nahant, was born January, 25, 1807.

Francis, was married to Thankful Fairbank, of Sterling, May 2, 1805, resided in Boylston until Dec. 1807, when they removed to Cincinnatus, now Marathon, N. Y., where she died suddenly, Nov. 21, 1814, aged forty-one years. He was again married in August 1816, to Lydia Surdam, from Salisbury, Ct., who survived him, and died April 21, 1853, aged 82 years.

He had three children, viz.: Persis, born April 9, 1806, the wife of Ira Surdam, of Hector, Pa.; Thankful,

born May 22, 1809, the wife of Jonathan Nichols, of Sterling, Mass.; Lucy, born Nov. 21, 1811, the wife of Jerry Smith, of Marathon, N. Y.

In 1841, he removed to Hector, Pa., where he resided until his decease in 1851.

Lucy, the youngest daughter of Thomas and Mary Keyes, was married to Lewis Glazier, of Gardner, January 15, 1805, are yet living, having been connected in the marriage state almost fifty-two years.

They have had seven children, three sons and four daughters, viz.: Betsey Coolidge, wife of Harvey Bancroft, of Ashburnham, born Nov. 17, 1805; Thomas Edwin, born March 1807, resides with his parents in Gardner; Mary Ann, born May 1812, died Jan. 8, 1813; Smyrna Sylvester and Lewis Lysander, born Dec. 2, 1813, and died on the 23d of the same month; Lucy Ann, born Oct. 1816, died Feb. 15, 1838; Mary Keyes, born June 3, 1818.

The parents have long been professors of religion, and have been permitted to see all their children, who have lived to mature age, follow their example.

Luther was married to Lydia Parker, of Concord, May 8, 1803, and settled in Hubbardston, and afterwards removed to Cincinnatus, N. Y. where he resided until his decease. His wife died March 3, 1816, aged 37 years. He was again married to Mary Benedict, who still survives. He had five children, viz.; Brighton, who died after arriving at mature age; Sumner and Grosvenor, now living, and two others, who died in infancy.

Dea. Jonathan Keyes was the second son of Dea. Thomas Keyes, of Marlborough, was born November 19, 1702, and died June 25, 1778, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. In 1727, he was married to Patience, daughter of Joseph Morse, of Marlborough, and settled in Shrewsbury, now Boylston, on a lot of new land, which he had purchased a year or two previous, on which he had made preparations for a future residence, and on which they resided during the whole period of their life.

One of the first things done after clearing and preparing a suitable piece of land, was the setting out of an orchard, some of the trees of which are yet standing, and in a productive condition.

The first dwelling house erected on this farm, was destroyed by fire, when another was erected, which is now standing, and in good condition. having been built more than one hundred years ago.

They had eleven children, six living to mature age and five dying young, as follows: Jonathan, born January 21, 1728, died when about 60 years of age; Miriam, born Oct. 27, 1729, died young; Dinah, born August 22, 1731, died 1733; Timothy, born 1733, died 1810; Miriam, born Dec. 14, 1735, was the wife of Artemas Maynard, died when about 80 years of age; Thomas, born Dec. 24, 1737, (Jan. 4, 1738, N. S.), died 1812; Benjamin, born Jan. 29, 1740, died when about 65 years of age; Asa, born 1742, died 1745; Catherine, and Dinah, born August 15, 1743, died in infancy; Catharine, born Oct. 9, 1747, was the wife of Warren Smith, and lived to be nearly 100 years of age. Patience, the wife of Dea. Keyes died after an illness of only two days continuance, May 1, 1776, in the seventy-first year of her age.

They early made a profession of religion, and lived and died exemplary christians.

Dea. Thomas Keyes, was born Feb. 8, 1674, was the son of Elias Keyes, of Sudbury, was married to Elisabeth, daughter of John Howe, Jr., of Marlborough, Jan. 23, 1698. She was grand daughter of John and Mary Howe, who were the first white settlers in Marlborough. Dea. Keyes died Aug. 25, 1742, aged 68 years. Elizabeth, his wife, died Aug. 18, 1764, aged 90 years.

Dea. Keyes and wife, when married, settled on a new farm in the east part of Marlborough, on which they resided during their life time, and which is still in the possession of one of their lineal descendants.

They had five children, four sons and one daughter, as follows: David, born Oct. 30, 1699, killed suddenly by

accident when twenty one years of age; Jonathan, born Nov. 19, 1702, settled in Shrewsbury, now Boylston, where he died suddenly of apoplexy, in 1778; Cyprian, born Sep. 15, 1706, settled in Shrewsbury, near his brother Jonathan, where he died June, 18, 1802, in the ninety-sixth year of his age; Dinah, born March 4, 1710, was married to John Weeks in 1731, when they settled on the homestead with her father, where they resided during their lifetime; Thomas, born Sept. 29, 1713, and died young.

Elias Keyes, was probably the son of Robert Keyes, and settled in Sudbury, where he was married to Sarah Blanford, Sep. 11, 1665. Robert Keyes, is supposed to have been one of the early emigrants to New England, and was in Watertown in 1633, which is the most that can be ascertained respecting him.

Elizabeth Howe, afterwards the wife of Dea. Thomas, Keyes, while on a visit to her sister, who had been married to Peter Joslyn, and settled in Lancaster, on the 18th of July, 1692, was taken captive by the Indians, and carried to Canada, where she remained in captivity about four years, when she was redeemed by the government and returned home, to the great joy and comfort of her friends and relatives, and especially of him to whom she was afterwards married, and to whom she was engaged previous to her captivity.

While with the Indians, she endured much unavoidable hardship and suffering, but was always treated humanely, and received as good fare from them as they enjoyed themselves. During her captivity, she acquired many of the habits and usages of the Indians, which she retained for a time after her return, but they gradually wore off and disappeared.

John Howe, grandfather of Elisabeth Howe, settled in Marlborough, in 1655. He lived in peace with the Indians, who regarded him as their superior, believing him to be an honest man, and their true and faithful friend. The following incident is related: two Indians disputed about

an article, both claiming to be the rightful owner thereof. The case was submitted to Mr. Howe for decision. After patiently hearing the parties, he divided the thing in dispute, giving half to each of the claimants. Both parties extolled the equity of the judge, and cheerfully acquiesced in the decision.

