

Eunice Whiting Ray (born 1746 in Wrentham, Mass)

Presented by Jessica Dorr

- I married David in 1770. My David was a hard working man, dedicated to whatever task was set before him. I was settled in my religious convictions and we raised our family in the fear and admonition of the Lord. I was also an excellent horsewoman, often traveling to Portland on horseback and once all the way to Wrentham! Thanks to my skillful weaving, our family always had fine clothes to wear. My well trained fingers could spin the finest quality of linen thread. As was my way, I would retire to an upper room of the house for quiet prayer many times a day.
- We had 4 daughters: Eunice in 1771, Polly in 1773, Betsey in 1781, and Abigail (Nabby) in 1790
- David served in the Militia prior to the Revolution. His company was mustered to march toward Cambridge after the alarm from Lexington on April 19th, 1775 (Patriot's Day)
- He also served at Ticonderoga for 6 months under General Gates. His Captain's name was Whiting, just like my 2 brothers!
- He served in the "Secret Expedition to Rhode Island" with a man we'd meet later again in life, Enoch Spurr
- He left his family behind, called by his duty to service to serve the first 5 years of the War for Independence. Life was not so easy for us, trying to survive on the meager soldiers wages he was rarely able to send and missing him very much. I would, however, receive a pension of \$103 a year from 1831 until my death in 1843.
- After seeing enough of war, he heard tell of land inducements in a place called Maine and headed out there in the Fall of 1779. He deemed it a worthy place indeed to settle and we moved our family here in 1780. Our first homestead was in a place they now call Naples, on the west side of the Crooked River. He made a clearing, built our house and planted some apple trees there. Our third daughter, Betsey, was born here in October of 1781, on a day much like today (Betsey born October 3, 1781). My Betsey would be the first girl born in Otisfield to survive to adulthood. Here he would cut hay and our girls would haul it from the field by hand sled. They were about 8 and 10 years old at that time. I hear tell that even 100 years later, some of those apple trees were still there.
- Under an agreement with the Proprietors he got to work building a Grist mill for grain near the outlet of Saturday Pond. he hewed out the millstones himself, as there is no replacement for hard work. He started his operation there in June of 1781, traveling to the mill and grinding for 2 days a week and then back home to our family. Daniel Cobb had the first grist of Rye ground at my mill. People came from as far away as South Paris and Hebron to his mill! Sometimes he'd have an unfortunate soul come to the mill who couldn't pay for the job of milling. He would mill their grain anyway as he always thought it best to be kind to strangers for thereby you may entertain angels unawares. The gristmill would pass down to our eldest, Eunice and her husband Dan Morse in her dowry. Dan and our grandson David built the frame house in 1798 which would come to be known as the Joe Holden house, another grandson of ours. I heard tell that he was a bit, well, strange in his later years.

- You'll see his headstone is inscribed with Doctor and that would be because he was the first Doctor here in Otisfield. No one seems to know exactly where he got his education in medicine though he did bring some textbooks with us from Massachusetts.
- He built a log house near the mill and moved our family there in 1783. We used an oxen and cart as far as Mr. Patch's place but could go no further with that and had to use an ox sled the rest of the way. You see the road had not been cut any farther than the Patch place at that time!
- In 1786 he again entered into a contract with the Proprietors to build a sawmill that he would complete within 1 year. He received a deed of the "Mill Lot" for the building of these 2 mills as well as 2 lots lying on Saturday Pond. Our daughter Abigail and her husband Henry Holden would inherit this mill. Henry came here at the age of 9 and lived with Esquire Peirce for 7 or 8 years. He and Abigail would move into the homestead, per our wishes and live there for a time. They had 11 children that all survived to adulthood, including Grinfill and Joe Holden. I hear Grinfill was a learned man, unlike perhaps his brother "Professor Joe"
- Beginning in 1787, around the time it was decided it would be important to have some form of local governance, he began his 25 year career in public service. He was Moderator of Town Meeting from 1787-1799, and again in 1806 and 1809. He was an assessor as well from 1787-1798 and again in 1804. He also served as the first Treasurer in 1794, when he was also elected to present a petition for an abatement of taxes to the General Court in Massachusetts. He would attend the General Court again after being elected in 1810. **In 1812 he was also elected to be a delegate at the Convention in Gray at the age of 70. (War of 1812?)**
- As it was very important to the settlement of Otisfield, in 1793 he gave an acre of land for a Meetinghouse and an acre of land for a cemetery, the very cemetery you now stand in! He built the frame of the Meetinghouse and for doing so was paid 51 pounds. He also received 6 pews inside the Meetinghouse in payment for providing the materials and paying the carpenters. That Meetinghouse was moved down the hill after his departure and a new one built. Unfortunately, our daughter Abigail would take offense at a new Meetinghouse being built on that same acre in 1837 and sued the Congregational Society to prevent it from happening! She was awarded \$37.50 after agreeing to a deed for part of that acre and another \$50, for some reason, in 1854 for the rest of the acre. As David had deeded this land to the town in 1813, I have no knowledge of why this happened! Abigail's sister, Betsey, on the other hand, married Timothy Fernald, a very talented master carpenter who would follow in David's footsteps to build the first mill in East Otisfield and, with our grandson Otis, the Free Meetinghouse in 1828. Otis' son, Granville, served in the Civil War and lived in far away places like Philadelphia and Washington where he worked in the Civil Service for the War Department and Interior Department. He would be instrumental in preparing the Centennial History of Harrison
 - 1795 was a busy year for David
- He built a frame addition to the family log house for a schoolroom and employed Major William Swann to educate our 4 girls. This was several years before the first school house would come to exist in town. Our eldest daughter, Eunice, though married at the time, attended school regularly. As we lived some ways from larger towns, writing paper

was hard to come by and expensive at that. Our girls, being hard working as they were, made their books of birch bark to learn to write.

- David began construction on our final homestead, a 2 story frame house boarded with 2" oak planks. We had a 15' square chimney, which was the talk of the town for some time. It had 3 large open fireplaces and 2 brick ovens. I'm proud to say the largest oven could take wood six feet in length and each oven was large enough for a village bakery! The First Congregational Church was organized right in that house in 1797. As the dedication ball was held up the road at our son-in-law Dan Morse's house, and the spirits freely flowing, the ministers chose to come down to our place for a quiet game of cards and a moderate amount of West India Rum. Unfortunately, our pastor, Mr. Roby had to be dismissed in 1803 after some *issues* he had with imbibing spirits and using profane language
- The first valuation of the town took place in 1795 as well. David was listed at the very top of that list with the house, barn, sawmill and gristmill. He also had 15 acres of improved land and 240 acres of unimproved land which all totaled \$263. He also had one yoke of oxen, four neat cattle, four swine, twenty pounds in money, a half ton of hay and ten bushels of potatoes that were valued at \$177. As it turns out, he was the wealthiest man in town!
- Around town David was frequently on a "Committee of one" on building and repairing bridges and for the sale of ministerial and school lands and more. Once he retired from public life, if someone came to the grist mill with grain he always made sure it was ground. Sometimes in town, you'd see a neighbor or friend fallen off their horse on the side of the road and he always made sure they got back in the saddle and headed home. Up in the orchard, young boys liked to play and club the apple trees but he would just look up at them and pass them by.
- His time here came to an end in December of 1822, but he had a life well lived. I would not join him until 1843 when I passed peacefully. In fact, when asked by visitors how old I was, I would answer "E'en a'most ninety-seven" when I was really 94 and someone in the family would correct me, saying, "Grandmother, you are only 94". And I would answer, "Well, I suppose I was mistaken; you may have it your own way". I would answer the same way an hour later. I passed just 38 days shy of her "E'en a'most ninety-seven"
- 125 years after David's birth, many of our descendents would come back to the homestead for a gathering in 1867. What you folks might now call a family reunion was held much in the same way as he spent 25 years serving the town, a meeting was called which began with the election of a President, our great-great grandson Alpheus and a Secretary, our grandson Grinfill. A great bounty of food was enjoyed after a prayer as well as much reminiscing about the past.