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A SHORT  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
OF  
ELLIS BAKER USHER

OF HOLLIS, MAINE

BY HIS GRANDSON

ELLIS BAKER USHER

OF LA CROSSE, WIS.

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Elli B. Usher

March 29. 1902.



## ELLIS BAKER USHER.

ELLIS BAKER USHER of Hollis, York county, Maine, was a man of high character, of large business affairs, for his day, of prominence in his community and throughout the state. He died when I was too young to recollect him, but an incident in my own experience will illustrate his character and the impression he made upon those with whom he came in business contact, and the estimate that it conveys is in harmony with everything I have ever heard of him, from his family or from others who knew him.

I was riding upon a railway train, some years ago, in Wisconsin, and presented a pass to the conductor. He looked at the name and remarked: "I once knew a man of that name, away back in the state of Maine. He was a big lumberman."

I replied: "He was probably the man for whom I was named."

The conductor, whose name was Kilgore, went on with his work until he had collected his fares, then returned to me. I had known him for some years, but he had never before connected me with Maine. He sat down with the earnest exclamation: "Ellis B.



Usher's word was as good as his bond!" and proceeded to tell me how he and his father and brother had put in logs for Grandfather, on the upper waters of the Saco, in New Hampshire.

One of my early recollections is of being told by my mother that, when it was reported to him that I had been named after him, he remarked, dryly: "I don't know about having all the fools in the country named after me and George Washington." There were already one or two namesakes in the family, and "Ellis B." had been popular along the Saco, among a number of families in no way related to him, so his jest was not without the serious aspect to give it point.

The father of Ellis B. Usher, Abijah Usher, was a man of prominence in Medford, Mass., where Ellis was born. He was a revolutionary soldier, having enlisted at sixteen at Merrimack, N. H., serving in Capt. Barron's Company in the expedition against Canada, that took Ticonderoga the second time. He was, later, several times a member of the Massachusetts General Court, and a captain of militia, in Medford; a man of blameless life and character. But I am of opinion that it was to his mother that my Grandfather owed much of his force and energy.

She was the daughter of Joseph Weld, of Roxbury, Mass., a family of ministers and school-masters long



noted in that community, whose descendants of the name are still conspicuous. Her mother was Mary Ruggles, another well known Roxbury name. For a second husband she married Samuel Sumner, of Ashford, Conn.

It cost me no little search and labor to discover where my Grandfather got his name—"Ellis Baker." His mother, Mary Weld, had a brother, Joseph, who settled in Troy, N. Y. His wife, Lois Baker, was the daughter of Lieut. John Baker of Roxbury, Mass., and the sister of Capt. Ellis Baker. Both were revolutionary soldiers, and their names are to be found in the published rolls of Massachusetts.

My grand-father, his brother, Col. Abijah Usher, and his sister, Mary Ruggles Usher, who married John Lane and was the mother of the late Hon. M. D. L. Lane, of Portland, Me., were all conspicuous, among the members of our branch of the Usher family, for ability and force, and it may, I think, be fairly attributed, in large measure, to Mary Weld.

I am not to be understood as in any way detracting from the standing or abilities of the Usher blood, in making this statement. All of the Ushers who have attained to any considerable prominence or distinction in recent generations, belong, I believe, to our branch of the family, and are the descendants of Robert Usher of Stamford and New Haven, who was the brother of





Hezekiah, the first book-seller in Boston. From Robert was descended Judge John Palmer Usher, who was a member of Lincoln's first cabinet, and Col. Roland G. Usher of Medford, a cousin of my Grandfather, and long a prominent man in the politics and public life of Massachusetts.

Abijah Usher, my great-grandfather, was not a successful business man. His first wife, Mary Weld, died when Ellis, his brother Abijah, and his sister, Mary Ruggles, were quite young, and their grandmother, Mrs. Sumner, had somewhat to do with their early training, Mary, especially, having lived with her.

When Ellis was twelve years old, in 1797, his father gave him and his younger brother, Abijah, a horse, and they started out, two small boys, for the wilderness from which the township of Hollis, York county, Maine, was subsequently made. Presumably the boys were directed in their journey to the township of Buxton, on the opposite side of the Saco river from Hollis, because their uncle, Zachariah Usher, lived there. Zachariah was married there in 1792 and was a tavern keeper as early as 1793, and licensed to sell liquor. In those days it was evidence of a man's good standing in the community to be a licensed retailer of liquors.

Ellis went to work for the Rev. Paul Coffin, the first Congregational minister in that section, and later worked for Col. Isaac Lane, who conducted a store



and saw mill, for five dollars a month, from which meager salary he is believed to have aided his father and relatives.

It is related of him, at this time, that on a Sunday morning some of Col. Lane's men, having in mind the fact that Ellis's clothes were hardly suited to such service, derisively asked him if he was going to church. The boy's eyes snapped and he said, quietly, "I shall see the day when I can afford to give clothes to all of you."

About 1804, when he was nineteen and had been at work but seven years, Ellis bought for his father a small farm in Hollis, near Bonny Eagle. Later he bought an interest in a saw mill and kept a store. He was prospering, until a freshet swept away all he had and \$5,000 worth of logs for which he was owing, leaving him penniless and in debt. But he always said that this misfortune was a blessing in disguise, for the freshet left his mill-site on an island and created a pond inside it that forever after furnished secure storage for logs. He was in no way disheartened by this disaster but rebuilt, on credit, and soon recovered himself, financially.

A secret of his success was his reputation for strict integrity. He used to say to his children that he never borrowed money unless he could foresee that he had at least three ways of repaying it.



During the financial crash of 1837 he became embarrassed. It was difficult for him, as it was for everyone else, to manage his own business. For several years previous to this crash what was then known as the "Eastern Land Speculation" had been going on. It was an excitement over the purchase of pine lands in Eastern and North-eastern Maine. With others Ellis B. Usher was heavily interested. He was on over \$80,000 of paper as endorser for men who were dealing in these lands. He was obliged to call his creditors together and ask for time. They gave him five years and he paid every dollar within the limit.

For many years before his death he was the largest mill owner and lumberman on the Saco, and when he died, on May 21, 1855, he left an estate valued at \$100,000 or thereabout. His operations were of very large magnitude for his time and in the present day he would have been one of the many millionaires, for he was careful and methodical, as well as broad-gauged in his methods.

Necessarily the education of Ellis was very meagre, but he had a taste for books and absorbed knowledge. His penmanship, his style of expression, and his exactitude in the use of words, are illustrated in his letters and business papers. The taste for books and the ability for fluent speaking and easy writing that was manifested among his children, was an inheritance from him.



He was liberal and hospitable, and his large brick house, a capacious dwelling of eighteen rooms, was always full of guests. It was the "stopping place" for men with whom he had business, and was a home to which much of the best society of the region constantly gravitated. When the "Brick House," as it has always been known in the family, was opened, there was a great party given in honor of the event, which was attended by people from Portland, Saco, and all the region around.

Ellis B. Usher's first wife, to whom he was married on Nov. 12, 1812, was Rebecca Randall, daughter of Capt. Benj. Randall of Cape Elizabeth, whose mother was the second wife of Col. Isaac Lane. The only living issue of this union is Mrs. Sarah Ellen Bacon, wife of Dr. Elbridge Bacon, of Hollis, now in her eighty-fifth year. His second wife was Hannah Lane, daughter of Col. Isaac Lane and Ruth Merrill, who was born Jan. 1, 1795, and died Aug. 22, 1889. They were married Nov. 26, 1820.

Hannah Lane was a remarkable woman. She lived to great age and retained her faculties until the last. She came from a long line of sturdy pioneers and was related on both sides to some of the most noted of New England's early settlers. Her father, who commanded the 33d U. S. Infantry regiment in the war of 1812, was a private in his father's company in the revo-





lution, and back of her grandfather, for four generations, the Lanes had been captains in the colonial wars. Her grandfather, Lieut. Merrill, fought at Bunker Hill, and a long line of Coffin, Woodman, Davis, Davidson, Hutchinson, Pike and other well known names are to be found among her progenitors.

She had breakfasted with President Monroe and met, with her father, the Marquis de La Fayette, when he last visited this country. She told me, with pride, how Gen. La Fayette greeted her father as "compatriot."

Illustrative of my Grandfather's character, Grandmother used to relate how, on a certain occasion, Grandfather was preaching economy to her, and she, pointing to the side-board, said: "When that goes out of this house you can preach economy to me. That costs enough to clothe my children." Grandfather said no more but left the room with his head bowed, thoughtfully. Within a week the sideboard was emptied and it was never replenished. When it is considered that it was the rule and not the exception of the day, to have a well-stocked sideboard, this incident has significance.

The public services of Ellis B. Usher were few. They were confined, so far as I am aware, to early service as town clerk of Hollis, to one term in the Maine state senate to which he declined re-election, and to his service in the constitutional convention of Maine. He



was in the senate in 1823-4. The reports of the proceedings and debates of the constitutional convention of 1819-20 show that he was one of a very distinguished delegation from York county and that he took an active part in the proceedings, which was exceptional for a plain business man, as York county had such men as Judge Ether Shepley, Judge Thatcher, and John Holmes, all lawyers and public men of note, among its delegates.

As a husband and father Ellis B. Usher was kind, indulgent and generous. He was deeply beloved by all of his children and he left to them and to their descendants, forever, that best of legacies, a good name. I have written and printed this brief sketch to help preserve, in the breasts of his kindred, the respect which is his due.



ELLIS B. USHER'S LINE.

1. **Robert Usher** of Stamford, Conn. Admitted freeman at New Haven, July 1, 1644. Constable 1662, Representative to General Court 1635 and 1667, Selectman 1668.  
Married, May 13, 1659, Elizabeth, widow of Jeremy Jagger. He died Oct. 1669. They had—
2. **Robert**, of Dunstable, N. H., who married Jan. 23, 1694, Sarah, daughter of John Blanchard, and had—(other issue),
3. **John**, born May 31, 1696, of Dunstable and Merrimack, N. H., died Aug. 1766. Ensign fourth company, sixth regiment, N. H. militia in 1744, selectman in 1742-3. One of the original owners of Wilton, N. H. Also one of the original owners of what is now Gilsam, N. H. Married Hannah Blanchard, and had—(other issue),
4. **Robert**, of Merrimack, N. H., and Medford, Mass., born April 9, 1730, died Oct. 13, 1793. Married Sarah Stearns, of Bedford, Mass., who died Feb. 4, 1794, aged 59, and had—(other issue),
5. **Abijah**, of Medford, Mass., and Hollis, Me., born Feb. 15, 1757; died 1836. Enlisted July 15, 1776, in Capt. Wm. Barron's company, Col. Isaac Wyman's regiment. He was mustered at Amherst, N. H., July 16, 1776. This regiment was raised for the expedition to Canada and was at the second taking of Ticonderoga. See N. H. War Rolls and Documents, pp. 335-6, Vol. 1, p. 62, Vol. 4. Selectman 1805-8-10. Representative to General Court of Massachusetts, 1809-10-21. Married, 1st, Mary Weld, daughter of Joseph Weld and Mary Ruggles, of Roxbury, Mass., and had—(other issue),
6. **Ellis Baker**, born Nov. 7, 1785, died May 21, 1855. The subject of this sketch married, 1st, Nov. 12, 1812, Rebecca Randall, step-daughter of Col. Isaac Lane, and had—
  - I. **Henry E.**, b. Feb. 14, 1814; d. April 27, 1827.
  - II. **Benjamin Jones Randall**, b. Dec. 25, 1815; d. Dec. 23, 1816.
  - III. **Sarah Ellen Randall**, b. Oct. 20, 1817; m. 1st, Horace Sand; 2nd, Dr. Elbridge Bacon, of Portland and Hollis, Me. Both living. Issue—He married 2nd, Nov. 26, 1820, Hannah, daughter of Col. Isaac Lane; born Jan. 1, 1795; died Aug. 22, 1889, and had—



- IV. Rebecca Randall, b. Aug. 31, 1821.
- V. Martha Hooper, b. May 1, 1823; d. Feb. 27, 1893; m. Dr. Joseph G. Osgood, Sept. 27, 1848. No issue.
- VI. Isaac Lane—
- VII. Jane Maria Lane, b. Dec. 1, 1828; d. Aug. 5, 1832.
- VIII. Hannah Lane, b. Sept. 1, 1831; d. Aug. 21, 1832.
- IX. Mary, b. July 21, 1833; d. Aug. 8, 1833.
- X. Jane Maria Bradley, b. Oct. 12, 1836; married June 17, 1867, Judge Nathan Webb. Issue.
- 7. Isaac Lane, of Hollis, Me., and La Crosse, Wis., b. May 12, 1825; d. Nov. 7, 1889. Was Sheriff of La Crosse county in 1863-4; Deputy Collector of United States Internal Revenue, 1867-9; Colonel on Staff of Governor Randall, 1860. Married June 13, 1851, at Hartford, Conn., Susannah Coffin Woodman, b. May 20, 1854; d. Jan. 9, 1880, and had—
  - I. Ellis Baker, b. June 21, 1852.
  - II. Herman, b. Oct. 7, 1853, in Buxton, Me., d. in 1854, in Muscatine, Iowa.
  - III. Jane Maria, b. Jan. 3, 1858, in Onalaska, Wis. Married, in Hollis, Me., Dec. 22, 1897, Algernon S. Dyer. Issue, a son, b. Feb. 23, 1900, at Saco, Me., d. Feb. 27, 1900.
  - IV. Leila Woodman, b. Aug. 26, 1859.
  - V. Susannah, b. Jan. 14, 1863.
  - VI. Ellen Bacon, b. June 14, 1866.
- 8. Ellis Baker, of Buxton, Me., and La Crosse, Wis., b. June 21, 1852. Married Nov. 27, 1888, Anna Myers Bliss, daughter of Henry I. Bliss, of Hartford, Conn., and La Crosse, Wis., and Harriet Homes Partridge, daughter of Samuel D. Partridge, of Hatfield, Mass., and Brooklyn, N. Y., and had—
  - I. Dorothy Bliss, born March 16, 1892.





Please paste this slip in the booklet upon Hannah Lane Usher, published by me in 1903. Ellis B. Usher, 1136 Wells Bldg., Milwaukee, Wis.

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### CORRECTIONS.

On page 5. Third line from the bottom, John Gorham, Nathaniel's brother, was Paul Coffin's chum.

On page 21. Col. Isaac Lane's grave had a stone over it. In September, 1911, a boulder, bearing a bronze tablet, was placed over the graves of Captain Daniel and "Molly" Lane, by some of their descendants.

On page 21. Captain Daniel was born in Broad Bay, now Waldoborough. "Waterboro" was taken from the Lane genealogy by the Revs. Chapman and Fitts, which is very unreliable as to the Buxton Lanes.

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