

Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn

FAMILY HISTORIAN



Benjamin Rathbun
1790-1873

Devoted to
the perpetuity of
our common heritage
an honorable
Name.

Story on Lincoln Connection Brings Us More Information

Our story in the last issue about our family's several links to the life and death of Abraham Lincoln has stirred considerable interest — and has brought your editor an invitation to speak next spring before the Lincoln Society of New York City.

More importantly, the mail has brought us two more family connections to the Lincolns in what is becoming an almost unbelievable series of coincidences.

First, one of our members, Gerald Reser of Rossville, Kan., reports that his great-grandmother, Hannah Rathbun, wife of William⁶ Rathbun (Ami⁵ Job⁴ Benjamin³ Joseph² John¹), claimed to be a cousin of Lincoln, and told her grandchildren stories of playing with him when they were children together in Kentucky. Mr. Reser and your editor are working now trying to confirm the relationship.

Secondly, a friend called our attention to a close friendship be-

tween the Lincolns and the widow of Edward Rathbun (Salah⁵ Simeon⁴ Benjamin³ Joseph² John¹).

After Edward Rathbun died in 1854 in Brooklyn, N.Y., his widow, Hannah (Miner) Rathbun, moved to Springfield, Ill., with her two sons, Edward and James Miner Rathbun. In 1858, she married Dr. John H. Shearer and they moved into a house directly across the street from the Lincolns. The families became close. The two Rathbun boys were about the same ages as the Lincolns' youngest sons, Willie and Tad, and the four boys were friends and playmates.

In 1859, the Shearers moved to Wellsboro, N.Y., hoping to alleviate

Dr. Shearer's tubercular condition.

Mary Lincoln became especially fond of Mrs. Shearer and the two maintained a correspondence until Hannah's death in 1879. Several of Mrs. Lincoln's letters to Hannah have been published and provide an insight into their deep friendship.

On Jan. 1, 1860, describing Willie Lincoln's ninth birthday party a few weeks earlier, with more than 50 youngsters present, Mrs. Lincoln wrote Hannah in Wellsboro: "... I wish your boys had been in their midst."

Later that year, after Lincoln had won the Republican nomination for

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Letter From the Editor

We are still awaiting the final results of our *Historian's* first big test — the number of resubscribers for our second year. As this first issue of our second year goes to press, we have received renewals from less than 150 of the 255 subscribers on our list.

We are assuming that most of you who have not yet sent in your renewal checks are planning to do so, and have simply forgotten or maybe mislaid the renewal form. If this is the case, just send your \$20 check made out to the Rathbun Family Association, with your name, address and telephone number, to 11308 Popes Head Road, Fairfax, Va. 22030.

This issue is being sent to all our 1981 subscribers, even to those who have not yet renewed. This, of course, is a financial gamble, due to the printing and mailing costs, but

we are confident that most of you who have not yet responded will resubscribe.

It is vital that we retain at least 200 subscribers at the \$20 rate if we are to continue the *Historian* at its present size and level of quality. Comments received with 1982 renewal forms indicate that our members do appreciate and enjoy the *Historian*. We will do all we can to keep it going.

This month's genealogical section begins the fourth generation of our family in America. It will probably take three or four issues this year to complete it before we begin the fifth generation.

Some of you have not yet responded to our continued appeal for family data. If you have not yet done so, *please* send all the information you have on your line, back as far as you can.

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President, and two weeks before his election, Mrs. Lincoln wrote Hannah: "Our boys often wish they could see Ed and (James) Miner."

In November 1864, Edward Rathbun died when he was about 14, and Mrs. Lincoln wrote Hannah a touching letter, recalling the death nearly three years earlier of little Willie Lincoln of malaria when he was 11.

"... in this, the hour of your deep grief, with all my own wounds bleeding afresh, I ... express my deepest sympathy, well knowing how unavailing words are when we are broken hearted. ... Doubtless ere this, our Angel boys are reunited for they loved each other so much on earth."

The letter ends with "... so much love ... from your truly attached friend Mary Lincoln."

One of the nation's leading Lincoln scholars, James O. Hall of McLean, Va., has provided us with new material on the illfated Major Henry R. Rathbone and his step-sister, later wife, Clara Harris.

Of special interest is a letter written to a friend by Clara only two weeks after Lincoln's assassination:

"That terrible Friday night is to me yet almost like some dreadful vision. I have been very intimate with Mrs. Lincoln and the family ever since our mutual residence in Washington ... and we have been constantly in the habit of driving and going to the opera and theatre together.

"... The night before the murder was that of the general illumination here and they (the Lincolns) drove all through the streets to see it; a less calculating villain might have taken that opportunity for his crime, or the night before, when the White House alone was brilliantly illuminated and the figure of the President stood out in full relief to the immense crowd below, who stood in the darkness to listen to his speech. He spoke from the center window of the Executive Mansion. I had been invited to pass the evening there and stood at the window of an adjoining room with

Mrs. Lincoln, watching the crowd below as they listened and cheered. Of course, Booth was there, watching his chance. I wonder why he did not choose that occasion, but probably knew a better opportunity would be offered. After the speech was over, we went into Mr. Lincoln's room. He was lying on the sofa, quite exhausted, but he talked of the events of the past fortnight ... and Mrs. Lincoln declared the past few days to be the happiest of her life."

Clara went on to describe Lincoln as "one of the gentlest, best and loveliest men I ever knew. I never saw him out of temper — the kindest husband, the tenderest father, the truest friend, as well as the wisest statesman.

"Our beloved President," she continued, "when I think that I shall never again stand in his genial



presence, that I have lost his friendship so tried and true, I feel like putting on the robe of mourning which the country wears."

She then discussed Henry R. Rathbone and her recollections of the assassination evening.

"We four composed the party that evening. They drove to our door in the gayest spirits, chatting on the way — and the President was received (at Ford's Theatre) with the greatest enthusiasm.

"They say we were watched by

the assassins; aye, as we alighted from the carriage. Oh, how could any one be so cruel as to strike that kind, dear, honest face! And when I think of that fiend barring himself in alone with us, my blood runs cold. My dress is saturated with blood; my hands and face were covered. You may imagine what a scene! and so, all through that dreadful night, when we stood by that dying bed. Poor Mrs. Lincoln was and is almost crazy.

"Henry narrowly escaped with his life. The knife was struck at his heart with all the force of a practiced and powerful arm; he fortunately parried the blow and received a wound in his arm, extending along the bone, from the elbow nearly to the shoulder. He concealed it for some time, but finally was carried home in a swoon; the loss of blood had been so great from an artery and veins severed. He is now getting quite well, but cannot as yet use his arm."

Other data provided by Mr. Hall sheds new light on Major Henry R. Rathbone.

Clara's brother, William Harris, gave a press interview shortly after the murder of his sister in 1883. He recalled some interesting memories of Rathbone:

"In 1857, when I was working hard as a lawyer in this city (Albany), and had a good practice, Henry Rathbone, who had just been graduated at Union College, came to me and asked if I would take him as a law student. He was rich, worth about \$200,000, but he desired to work and wanted a profession. I gave him a seat by my side and he worked hard at law books for a year, and then in 1859 he went to Europe and traveled about the Continent until the War of the Rebellion began. That brought him back to this country. I obtained him a commission in the Regular Army."

Harris also commented on the murder.

"My belief is that Colonel Rathbone was ... insane when he killed his wife. He was one of the kindest men toward his wife and family that

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Far-Sighted Builder-Promoter Creates Vast Financial Empire

Few persons today would recognize the name of Benjamin Rathbun, but he was as well known and respected in western New York state 150 years ago as the Rockefellers are today — and for the same reasons: He was rich, influential and powerful.

He was without doubt the leading citizen of Buffalo in its early days — village president, hotel owner, merchant, financier, building contractor and land developer. His fortune was estimated at more than \$3 million, a fantastic amount for that day.

At the peak of his career in 1836, Benjamin employed more than 2,000 persons—nearly one-third of Buffalo's entire work force. He paid out \$10,000 a day in wages, owned three banks and a score of other businesses, and had erected practically all of Buffalo's early buildings.

His extraordinary career came to a tragic halt in 1836, when he was convicted of forgery and his multi-million-dollar empire collapsed in ruins. His downfall was credited with helping bring about the Panic of 1837, the nation's most serious financial crisis prior to the Great Depression of the early 1930s.

The story of his rise and fall is one of the most exciting and tragic tales in our family's annals.

Benjamin Rathbun was born Dec. 1, 1790, in Ashford, Conn., the eldest son of Moses⁵ Rathbun (John⁴ Joshua³ John²'1) and his first wife, Patience James. He spent his first 17 years in Ashford, and later Westford, where his father was an ambitious young store clerk.

Moses Rathbun, the father, set up a trading business on the side, trying to accumulate enough money to open his own store. He was seeking to emulate his older brother, John, who after clerking as a young man in Connecticut, and also trading on the side, had saved enough money to move to New York City and open

a wholesale merchandising business in 1791. By the early 1800s, John was on the way to becoming one of the city's wealthiest men.

Benjamin's grandfather was the Rev. John Rathbone, a stern and devout Baptist minister, who instilled deep religious beliefs into his sons. Moses, it was said, did not smoke, drink, dance or gamble. His major interest, in addition to making money, was clothing. Most Americans of that day wore suits only on Sundays — their Sunday go-to-meeting dress — but Moses was well dressed every day. He was considered something of a foppish "dandy" because of his elaborate clothing. Benjamin inherited this love for fine clothing from his father.

In 1807, Moses decided he had enough money to strike out on his own. He moved to the town of Mon-

ticello, in Richfield Township, Otsego County, N.Y., where his brother David, a minister, had preceded him. There he opened his own store.

Benjamin, then 17, did not accompany his parents, brothers and sisters to Monticello; he instead went to New York City to visit his wealthy uncle, John Rathbone (who had changed the spelling from Rathbun). Benjamin went to New York City from Albany in a historic manner that summer of 1807 — on Robert Fulton's famous steamboat, the Clermont.

"I was a passenger from Albany to New York on the first vessel ever moved by steam in the world," he later wrote, "when Robert Fulton the inventor was his own engineer."

In New York, Uncle John Rathbone had a thriving wholesale business, importing goods from up and down the coast, and from Europe, and supplying a widespread network of retail stores scattered throughout New York state. Among his customers were two of his cousins, Ransom and John⁶ Rathbone (Moses⁵ Joshua⁴ Jonathan⁴ John²'1) in Oxford, Chenango County, N.Y.

John Rathbone was impressed with his young nephew, and sent him to Oxford to work for the Rathbone brothers, who were planning to expand their operations.

At Oxford, young Benjamin was assigned to the Rathbone brothers' new branch store in Leslie Township, in adjacent Broome County. Here, according to a contemporary account, the new store created considerable excitement, in part because of Benjamin's "fine appearance and fashionable style of dress, which were the subject of remark and admiration among his wondering rural customers."

Benjamin remained at Leslie until 1809, when he decided to join his family in Monticello.



The only known likeness of Benjamin Rathbun, first printed in 1888 by a Buffalo newspaper. (Courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society including the Buffalo Savings Bank/Roy Nagle Collection.)

He almost immediately antagonized his father by joining the local Episcopal Church, ignoring the local Baptist Church which Moses himself had just organized. In 1811, Benjamin was married in the Episcopal Church to the town belle, — 18-year-old Alice Loomis, the beautiful daughter of one of the town leaders.

Benjamin proceeded to build a home and then a general store, apparently with the help of his father, who sold his own business to join his son's operation. They added a shoemaker's shop, and became active in real estate speculation.

There were no banks, as we know them today, in that frontier area, and there was little cash. As a result, most business was transacted with personal notes, sometimes drawn on bank accounts in major cities, but often based only on the borrower's credit and reputation or on the value of his property. Moses and Benjamin established their own "exchange office," which functioned as a bank for local businessmen. The office exchanged bank notes, collecting a fee of course, and bought and sold personal notes, usually at a discount. The Rathbuns probably issued their own notes at their "bank" to trade for others.

As their business expanded, young Benjamin erected the town's first tavern — a three-story wooden structure so well built it was still standing as late as 1922.

It was 50 feet long, 25 feet deep, and had a long covered porch in front so that stagecoaches could pull up and discharge passengers in bad weather. It was one of the first stagehouses built west of Albany, and was entirely designed by Benjamin. On the ground floor, it had a large sitting-dining room, a barroom for male customers, and a parlor for women, who were not allowed in the bar.

The second floor contained sleeping rooms, and the third was one large room that could be used for mass meetings or as a men's dormitory.

Rathbun's Tavern became the regular stop for all stagecoach travel in the area, giving him a big

advantage over rival taverns which began to spring up.

Moses and Benjamin were partners, but it appears that Benjamin, although only in his early 20s, was the driving force behind the business. He had taken his teen-aged brother, Lyman, into the business as one of his helpers.

Things were looking up for the family by 1817, but that year saw the beginning of a national depression. Benjamin, who was apparently deeply in debt, saw his business wiped out as cash disappeared and credit was tightened.

There are vague stories of a \$12,000 fraud involving Benjamin and Moses, but they have never been confirmed. Whatever happened, the Rathbuns left Monticello rather abruptly that year, never to return.

Moses took his family to Batavia in Genesee County, but Benjamin and Alice decided to go "west," taking with them their son, Thaddeus Loomis Rathbun, named for Alice's father. He was born within a few years of their marriage and was to be their only child.

They went first to Buffalo, then a small frontier village still in the pro-

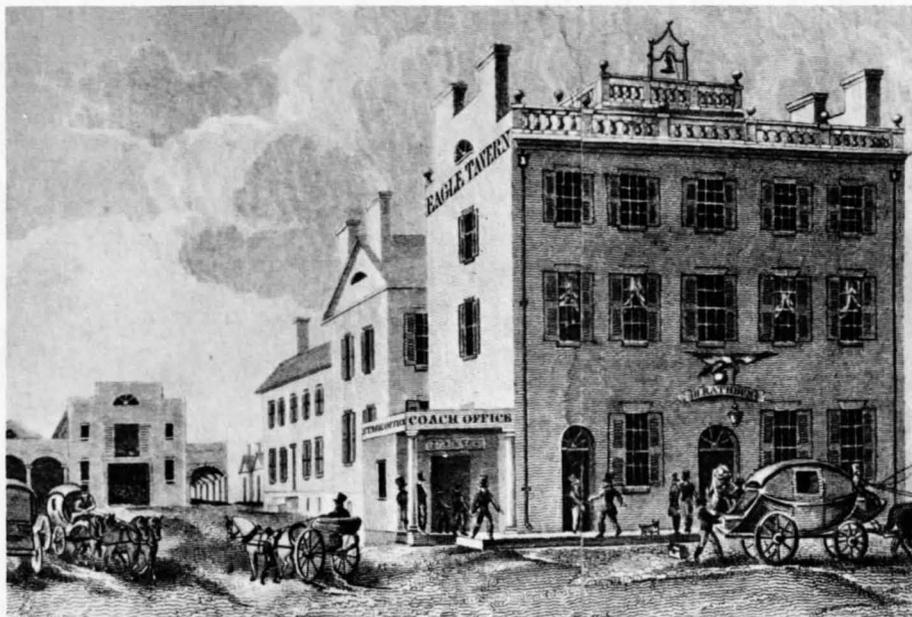
cess of rebuilding after being burnt by the British in the War of 1812. From there, they took a Lake Erie boat to Toledo, then known as Maumee, which was a virtually uninhabited, swampy wilderness, but its location had prompted a rash of real estate speculation. Benjamin Rathbun bought the first lot ever sold there. He recounted his visit there in later years:

"I was once in Toledo in the spring of 1818 while it was being surveyed into village lots. I took up the first lot ever sold in Toledo as a village lot. The title of that company failed for nonpayment and of course I lost my lot."

Benjamin, his wife and son spent an unpleasant summer in Toledo. There were only two buildings at that time. One was the cabin of a Frenchman who sold rum to the Indians. The other was a log warehouse built on the banks of the Maumee River, partly dug into the bank and partly overhanging the river. In this log building, Rathbun, his wife and son, and another man spent the summer.

"The miracle was that we were

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Contemporary drawing of Benjamin Rathbun's Eagle Hotel, which he operated from 1821 until he sold it in 1833 to devote full time to his many other interests. (Courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society including the Buffalo Savings Bank/Roy Nagle Collection.)

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not devoured alive by mosquitoes," he later wrote, "for they were the largest, smartest and in the greatest number that could be found in any other part of the world."

The loss of title to his lot, the desolation and the mosquitoes prompted the Rathbuns to leave Toledo in August. They went first to Sandusky, Ohio, but after a short stay decided to take up residence in Buffalo, where they moved about 1819.

Benjamin must have salvaged some money from his ill-fated Monticello venture, for about 1821 he purchased a three-story brick hotel, the Eagle, built a frame addition, and expanded it into one of the biggest and best-run hotels in all of western New York. Travelers from the east commented on its luxury and efficiency, and Rathbun entertained such famous guests as Daniel Webster, and the Marquis de Lafayette when he visited Buffalo in 1825. Public meetings were held there, and it was a center of village life, particularly on holidays.

Independence Day was then a major holiday. In 1828, Benjamin was town marshall of the day's celebration. A few years later, he advertised a July 4 special — green turtle soup to be served at the Eagle from 11 a.m.

Benjamin's parents and brother, Lyman, soon joined him in Buffalo, and the family began laying plans for the future.

Buffalo at that time was a small village of less than 8,000 residents, but the Erie Canal, then under construction, was about to change the situation. It may have been the Erie Canal, in fact, that attracted Benjamin to Buffalo.

Buffalo was one of the villages under consideration to become the western terminus of the canal, which began in Albany and was designed to "open" the west to trade and immigration.

The canal commissioners met in Buffalo in 1822, and in a meeting at Rathbun's Eagle Hotel, they picked Buffalo as the site where the canal was to open into Lake Erie.

Benjamin was elated, and with

good reason. The decision guaranteed that Buffalo would become a major city, and that its population would increase, along with land values.

In 1824, Lyman Rathbun and Company opened a general retail store not far from the Eagle Hotel. Lyman, of course, was Benjamin's young brother, now 25. The "and company" referred to Benjamin and his father Moses, who put up the money. Moses and Lyman ran the store, with Benjamin as a silent partner.

With a limited market in the small village, and with little cash available, the store did not do well. Benjamin blamed this partly on his father, who seemed to pay more attention to attractive women customers than to the business (see related story).

In 1826, Lyman Rathbun and Company moved into a new store in

a business block Benjamin had purchased. They advertised "a fine assortment of chintz, calico, silks, dry goods, liquor, crockery, etc."

Meanwhile, the Erie Canal had been completed, and opened in 1825. Lyman Rathbun was a local militia captain and his Rifle Company led a huge parade which highlighted the celebration in Buffalo. Food and drink were dispatched in huge amounts that night at Rathbun's Eagle Hotel.

Lyman Rathbun, then aged 26, was married in 1825 to Maria E. Clark, daughter of a local minister.

Lyman and Moses were running the family's new store, but things were still not going well. Part of the trouble may have stemmed from Moses' romantic problems, but economic inflation, which plagued our ancestors as well as us, caused the business finally to collapse. Interest rates soared, and creditors

Moses Rathbun Proposes by Mail After Seeing Woman's Picture

Benjamin Rathbun's father, Moses, was an interesting character in his own right.

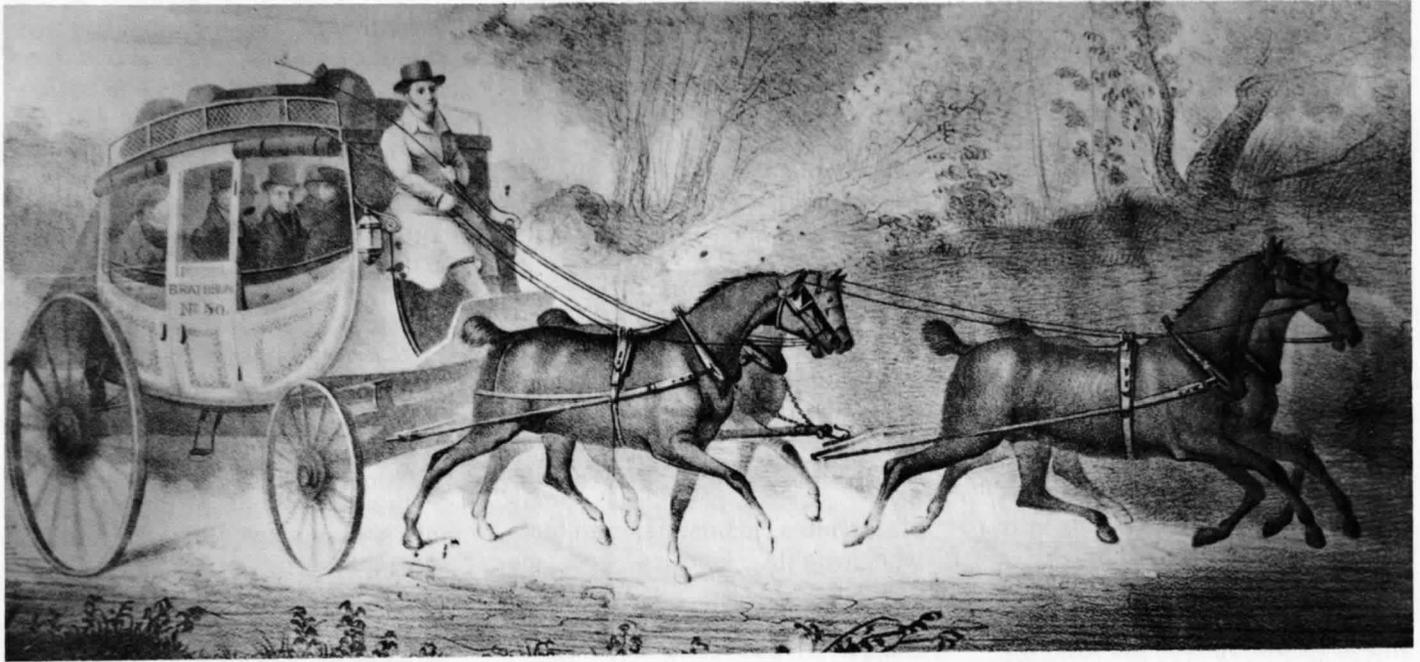
Moses' wife, Patience, had died in 1823, and Moses had immediately set out to find another wife. In February 1824, he proposed by letter to a woman he had never seen but whose picture had been shown him by a friend.

In the letter, filled with religious references, Moses wrote: "I was in the habit of praying much in secret, begging of God if he saw fit to spare my life, (to) permit me to unite again with one of the fair sex."

Explaining that he had seen her picture and wanted to meet her, Moses wrote, "I must confess (exuse my weakness) I never saw a picture that gave me such feelings before. I could hardly help exclaiming aloud — this is the one God has allotted for me. . . . I do anticipate Dear Miss

that when I come to see you!!! I shall love you above all others in this world . . . Oh Lord, may there be a union of hearts, may our hearts be cemented in one and may we twain one flesh and live and walk together. . . ."

There is no indication that the object of his desire showed any enthusiasm for a meeting, but perhaps he had written several such letters, for nine weeks later, in early May, he was married to Charlotte Moore, a 42-year-old widow (Moses was then 54). Possibly it was someone he had known while living at Batavia, N.Y., since they married there. This marriage lasted only 14 months, when Charlotte died, and Moses again looked for a wife. In October 1825, he married Roxanna Bates, a 32-year-old widow. They remained married until her death 32 years later, and had one child, a daughter, born in 1829, when Moses was 59.



Contemporary drawing of one of Benjamin Rathbun's stagecoaches in the 1830s. The name "B. Rathbun No. 50" can be seen on the door. Rathbun operated dozens

of stages in the Buffalo area. (Courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society including the Buffalo Savings Bank/Roy Nagle Collection.)

began to demand payment of outstanding notes and mortgages. Lyman and Moses could not meet their debts, and were sued by their creditors.

At this point, Benjamin stepped in. He paid off the debts and took over the business, renaming it "B. Rathbun's." Lyman and Moses became his employees.

Benjamin by now was becoming an influential man in Buffalo. In 1826, he was elected to the village board of trustees; in 1827, he became village president.

In his business, Benjamin demonstrated a skill and foresight that were far ahead of his time. He saw the economy of buying in bulk, rather than buying goods as needed. He developed the concept of a department store long before the modern term came into being.

He also began branching out into other fields, especially construction. He contracted to build houses, stores and shops, and established a reputation as a skilled and dependable builder.

His brother, Lyman, was his salesman, and under Benjamin's management, the construction

business flourished. Benjamin displayed a unique ability to mesh his business interests, using the assets of one to finance the others. In the absence of cash or credit, he became a master of barter, trading goods and services for such things as brick, lumber and even labor. His general store was an ideal medium for these activities.

Benjamin's multi-trade agreements and his complicated barter system became the envy and admiration of his peers. He also mastered the art of handling people, and was able to attract loyal and dependable employees.

A born promoter, he became adept at bringing men of money and influence together to finance his projects. He supplied the ideas, the plans, material, labor and supervision—everything except the money.

In 1830, he was elected to the board of directors of the First Bank of Buffalo, and that same year won a contract to build a Buffalo branch office for the United States Bank.

As his construction business boomed in the early 1830s, he was unable to devote sufficient time to

his hotel, so he sold it in 1833 to devote all his time to construction and land speculation. His business mushroomed in the next two years.

In 1835, he erected 99 buildings, including 52 stores, 32 homes, a theatre, a hotel, warehouses, barns and other buildings, with a total value of more than \$500,000. He was laying plans for construction totaling \$1 million in 1836. Several three- and four-story brick business buildings he built in this period are still standing.

Meanwhile, he had turned his attention to other fields. He opened new stores and several machine shops. He built a tannery to produce his own leather. He saw the coming growth of the railroad industry and bought stock in two rail companies.

By 1836, Rathbun virtually dominated Buffalo's business and economics. A commentator that year said: "Rathbun is the same to Buffalo that Astor is to New York"—a reference to John Jacob Astor, whose financial power had helped make New York City a world center.

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Benjamin

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Other contemporaries compared him with Napoleon. Like the famous French leader, Rathbun was comparatively short—just over five feet, six inches. He had a square face, firm lower jaw, and what one associate, Samuel Welch, described as a “silent almost clerical mannerism.”

Another early friend, Thomas Farnham, later wrote: “Mr. Rathbun was always a gentleman in appearance. Of medium size, he dressed with taste and wore black, cut in the latest fashion with a white cravat, appearing more like a clergyman than a business man. He was retiring in manner and seldom seen by the men in his employ.”

However retiring he may have been in manner, his impact was felt and seen throughout the city. Buffalo's streets were filled with his employees and vehicles. His stores and warehouses were centers of activity. He owned a carpet store, grocery store and several dry goods stores, as well as the general retail store which had been the foundation of his business. Coaches, carriages, railroad cars and canal boats were built in his machine shops. His stagecoaches linking Buffalo with surrounding communities were running 500 miles a day.

As early as 1823, he had become interested in the idea of a local bus system, but was unable to find financing. In 1835, he launched his plan, using three horse-drawn, lavishly upholstered carriages, seating 16 persons, naming them the “Experiment,” the “Encouragement” and the “Enterprise.” They ran all day on half-hour schedules, nearly two miles through the heart of the city.

The city of Chicago is generally given credit for the first local bus system in 1852, but Benjamin Rathbun had done it nearly 20 years earlier as a small side business among his expanding interests.

He had bought sawmills at Cattaraugus Falls, purchased controlling interest in banks at Granville, Ohio, and Paterson, N.J. He was opening his own bank at Fort Erie, in Canada, and had a financial office in New York City.

His warehouses were bulging with lumber, bricks, stone, sand, mortar, glass, nails, paint, hardware, groceries, dry goods, carpets, copper, tin, zinc, lead, coal, salt, corn, leather, gold leaf and lace. His stables housed several hundred horses, for his dozens of stages, 50 lumber wagons and of course his local omnibuses.

It was estimated that he had more than 2,000 men on his payroll, including 96 top assistants—agents, superintendents, foremen, overseers, bookkeepers, clerks and cashiers. He also hired sawyers, carpenters, roofers, masons, bricklayers, glaziers, plasterers, tanners, blacksmiths, teamsters, architects, wheelwrights, laborers and mechanics.

His daily payroll exceeded \$10,000. It was estimated that he employed 15 percent of Buffalo's some 16,000 inhabitants in 1836—nearly 30 percent of the city's total work force.

Most of the information on the life of Benjamin Rathbun is found in the collections and printed materials of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, including Benjamin's own account of his financial activities and two extensive manuscripts of his life story. Special thanks are due to Mrs. Joyce Hory of Snyder, N.Y., who has spent many hours seeking out and copying information for us in the society's library. The story of Benjamin Rathbun is so extensive we have divided it into two parts. This article deals with his early life through 1836, just as his financial empire was about to crumble. In the next issue, we will continue with the story of his arrest, trial, conviction and sentence to prison, and the second half of his long and extraordinary career.

To handle this immense operation, he divided the administrative functions, naming several agents to direct various activities and assigning his brother, Lyman, in 1832, to handle all his finances. He even had his own attorney—Joseph Clary, law partner of Millard Fillmore, future President of the United States. Clary had married Benjamin's cousin, Maria⁶ Rathbone (Samuel⁵ John⁴ Joshua³ John²¹).

Not content with his huge operations, Benjamin Rathbun's wide-ranging mind now conceived the idea of building a complete new city.

In conjunction with several financiers, he surveyed and laid out the present day city of Niagara Falls, 12 miles north of Buffalo, and made plans for sawmills, stone quarries, brickyards, and other businesses to employ the settlers he hoped would buy homes there.

Plans were made for a public auction on Aug. 2, 1836, to sell lots in the new community. He expected to raise at least \$300,000.

Meanwhile, work was underway on his greatest construction idea—the equivalent of a modern-day shopping center.

It was to be a huge structure, covering a full block, with stores and shops lining each of the four fronts, and a paved court in the center. There was to be a hotel, post office, bank, merchants' exchange and offices for lawyers, doctors and other professionals. The whole complex was to be topped by a huge dome rising 222 feet into the air.

Expected to cost \$700,000, it was to be called Rathbun's Buffalo Exchange. Foundations were begun in 1835, and were being completed that busy summer of 1836.

At age 46, Benjamin Rathbun was on the verge of becoming the wealthiest and most influential man in Western New York.

But events already in motion were about to shatter Benjamin Rathbun's financial empire and send him to prison for five years.

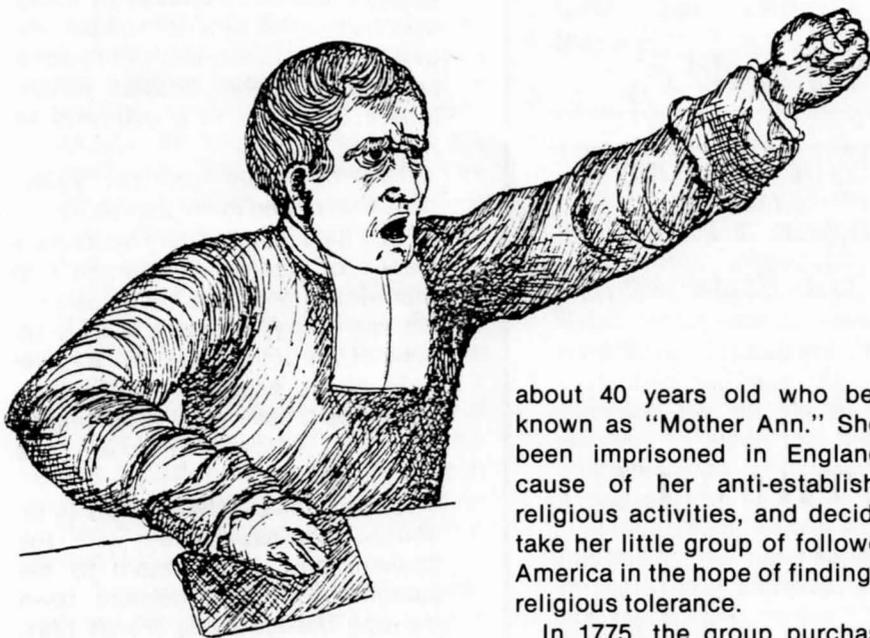
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Old Warrior Leads New Fight Against Religious Radicals

In our last issue, we traced the early career of Valentine⁴ (Joshua³ John²) Rathbun from his birth and early childhood in Stonington, Conn., through his marriage and migration about 1769 to Pittsfield, Mass. At Pittsfield, he bought and operated a fulling mill, and organized the town's first Baptist Church, with himself as preacher and ruling elder. He was one of the area's leaders in the drive for American independence and held many important local and county offices during the war.

In 1780, as the war was nearing its end, he was a respected and influential town leader; his mill was prospering and his little Baptist congregation, founded in his own home, had become Pittsfield's second largest church.

We ended our story by pointing out that Valentine, now 56, was not destined for a quiet and peaceful middle age. Trouble of another kind was in store for him.



Valentine was a deeply religious man, and had instilled the same feeling into his children. Four of his sons—Valentine Jr., Reuben, James and Benjamin—and several of his daughters lived in Pittsfield, and were active members of their father's church.

But they and their fellow Pittsfield Baptists were about to face a severe crisis.

In 1774, a little band of religious enthusiasts who called themselves the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming arrived in New York City from England. They were known as "shaking Quakers" or "Shakers" due to their practice of "singing, dancing, shaking and shouting" during religious meetings.

Their leader, Ann Lee, was a devout, strong-minded woman

about 40 years old who became known as "Mother Ann." She had been imprisoned in England because of her anti-establishment religious activities, and decided to take her little group of followers to America in the hope of finding more religious tolerance.

In 1775, the group purchased a tract of land at Nisquenias (now Watervliet, about eight miles northwest of Albany, N.Y., on the Hudson

River and some 30 miles west of the Massachusetts border). Here they erected a small village and began to seek converts.

"Mother Ann" Lee must have been a woman of great personal magnetism, for by 1780, converts were joining the Nisquenias settlement in a steady flow.

The Shaker philosophy was based on simplicity, pacifism, and common ownership of property, but their most controversial belief was a complete repudiation of sexual cohabitation. Lust, they believed, was the ultimate sin, and their male and female members lived in separate quarters.

It was inevitable that Valentine Rathbun should hear of the Shakers, and just as inevitable to his deeply religious mind that he would investigate them.

In May 1780, he was invited to attend a church conference at Stillwater, N.Y., not far from the Shaker settlement. He later wrote:

"... being disposed to go, two of my brethren offered to bear me company, provided I would return back by the way of Nisquenias with them, to see a new and strange people living there. I consented to their proposition, in consequence of their company in my journey, and on the 26th of May we arrived at Nisquenias."

The Shakers, he reported, "received us very kindly and told us they knew of our coming the day before; this set me a wondering at their knowledge."

Valentine and his companions remained with the Shakers that day and night. He talked with the Shaker leaders for hours and reported:

"I felt greatly shocked and confounded; yet a secret belief kept prevailing that they were the people of God... In this tumult of

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thought, I left them in the morning, about 8 o'clock, and returned home."

Valentine went back several times to Nisquenian, and soon became an ardent believer in the Shaker faith. Several of his sons followed him into the new religion, as did his two brothers, Daniel and Amos, and many members of his Baptist church.

Following the Shakers' anti-war, anti-government philosophy, Valentine ended his service on the local war committee and as delegate to the state assembly. With typical energy and enthusiasm he threw himself wholeheartedly into his new religion, convinced that the Shakers were the "people of God."

Within a few months, however, Valentine had a change of heart.

"The effect of this new work, in many, appeared so wild that it troubled me much," he wrote. "As the work went on, more inconsistencies and falsehoods appeared." One day, he "made mention of some imperfections I had seen in their teachers."

This, he reported, "made them rise in such a clamour, hiss and uproar as though the infernal den had broke loose. This gave me such a shock that I could go no further til I had examined the scheme over again. For this purpose I attended to my bible more carefully, and my eyes began to open and I was as though I had come out of a dark cellar into the brightest beams of the noon day sun."

Valentine broke with the Shakers and became their most implacable enemy. One modern scholar has suggested that he was disap-

pointed at not achieving a leadership role in the Shaker Society.

Smith's 1869 *History of Pittsfield* offers an interesting analysis of Valentine Rathbun's brief connection with the Shakers:

"It was not strange that a man like Mr. Rathbun should be carried away by the contagious enthusiasm of the hour, or that he should be fascinated by the new doctrine. . . . It is not unlikely also that his sensitive and nervous mental system, which had been for years held at its extreme tension by his active duties in regard to the cruel contest with Great Britain, may have been ready to react to the other extreme of holding all war sinful.

"But if the conversion of Mr. Rathbun to the Shaker faith is not unaccountable, it is still less strange that he soon found the practices of his new associates unsatisfactory and hastened to renounce his connection with them. . . ."

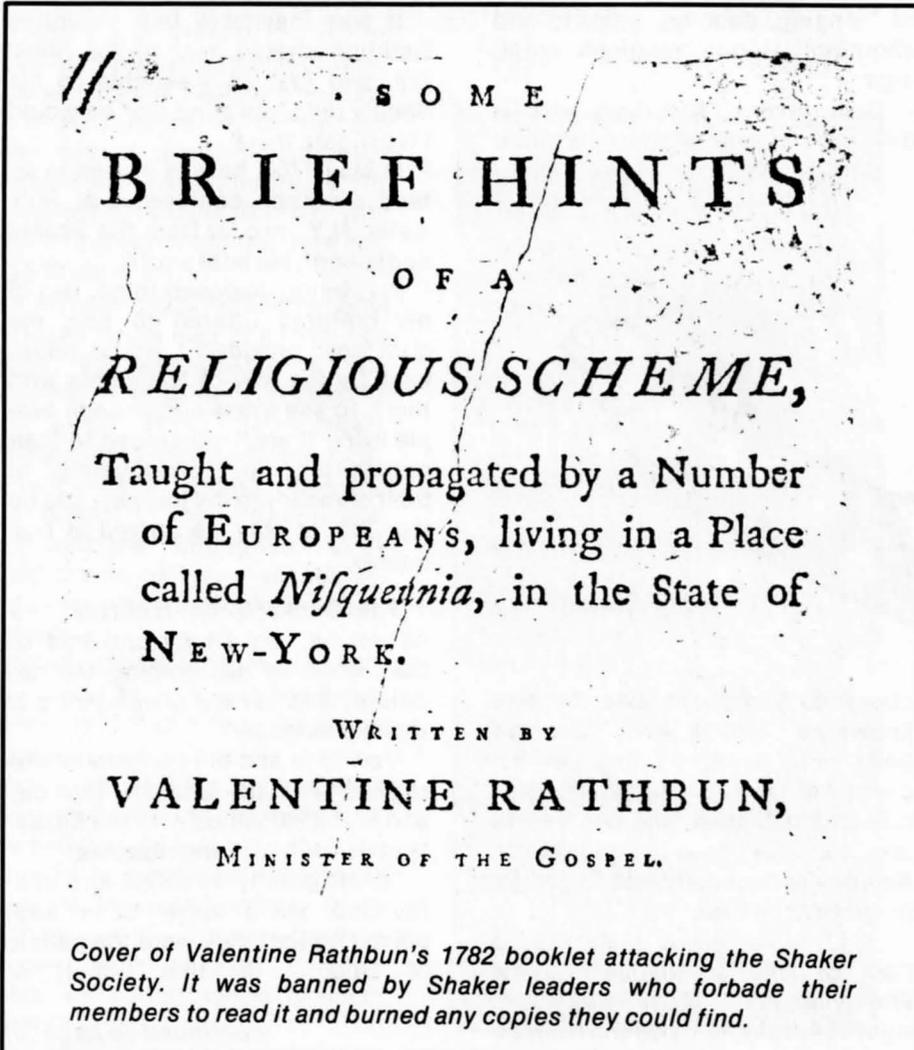
In December 1780, Valentine wrote and published a 24-page pamphlet bitterly attacking the Shakers, calling them false prophets, and subtly appealing to the anti-Catholic and anti-European feelings of that day.

Valentine's defection from the Shakers was not followed by many who had joined him in the new religion. His brothers, two of his sons and many of his Baptist parishioners remained firm believers in the Shaker faith.

This obviously bothered Valentine, who stated in his pamphlet:

"If I have been in any measure a means of leading any person into this wicked and dreadful delusion, I am very sorry, and as I heartily repent of my folly, I ask the forgiveness of all, especially those that, like myself, have been attending to creatures, instead of looking to God."

He was not satisfied simply to renounce his association with the Shakers and attack them in his pamphlet. In the Pittsfield town meeting the following March 1781, he offered a resolution, which was adopted, to appoint a committee to find "measures to take with these people known as Shakers." Valen-



tine was one of the five men named to the committee, which apparently did little but publicly denounce the Shakers.

In 1782, Valentine published another tract in which he redoubled his efforts to link the Shakers to Catholicism, and referring to them as the "Principal Enemies of America."

With such bitterness, violence was inevitable, and it came in 1783. Early in August, "Mother Ann" Lee and her elders attended a revival meeting in Richmond, near Valentine's home, which drew a crowd of Shaker sympathizers and curious citizens.

An anti-Shaker mob soon appeared on the scene, led by Valentine Rathbun. According to a contemporary account:

"A Baptist minister by the name of Rathbun was the instigator and leader of the mob. . . . He entered the house with a part of his company and began to revile Mother and the Elders, calling them deceivers and false prophets. His own son . . . reproved his father, saying, 'I think it is a shame for a man of God and a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as you profess to be, to come here at the head of a mob, to abuse an innocent people.'

"The reproof only aroused more anger and . . . he then mounted some steps and taking advantage of the position leveled several strokes with a hickory staff at his son's head, with such violence that his skull was laid bare nearly three inches in length. The next moment the cane was thrown upon the fire. . . ."

This son was undoubtedly Reuben Rathbun, then 23 years old and a devoted, active member of the Shakers.

Valentine no doubt regretted his act of violence almost immediately and hurled his cane into the fire in horror and repugnance at what he had done. The incident was to haunt him in later life.

Two years later, in 1785, Valentine's brother Daniel dropped out of the Shakers and wrote a lengthy letter to their chief elder, James Whitaker, explaining his decision.

The letter was published as a 128-

page booklet, with a nine-page introduction by Valentine, who was no longer subtle in likening the Shakers to Roman Catholics.

" . . . their doctrines in general exactly agree with the doctrines of the Church at Rome," he wrote.

Like Valentine's earlier pamphlets, Daniel's work received a harsh reaction from the Shakers. Their members were forbidden to read it, and all the copies they could find were destroyed.

Despite the efforts of Valentine, and probably Daniel, the third brother, Amos Rathbun, remained firm in his devotion to the Shakers, and remained with them for the rest of his life as a teaching elder. His wife and sons left him to live elsewhere.

Valentine's son and namesake, Valentine Rathbun Jr., also remained a Shaker until his death. So did at least one of his daughters and a granddaughter.

"He leveled several strokes with a hickory staff at his son's head . . . with such violence that his skull was laid bare nearly three inches."

Valentine resumed his position as pastor of the Pittsfield Baptist Church, which continued to flourish under his leadership. In 1786, he listed 24 members, including his sons Saxton, James and Benjamin.

In 1796, at age 72, Valentine renewed his efforts to persuade Reuben to leave the Shakers, inviting his son to the family home for a discussion.

A letter from Reuben to his father describing the meeting still exists in the Shaker archives. Addressed "to my natural father," the letter reads in part:

"You requested me to come and see you, an instance which you had not signified before in my knowl-

edge for more than 16 years. According to your desire, I came to see you in a friendly manner, expecting to be treated as such. . . . But instead of that you exercised yourself in a very extraordinary manner to dissuade me from the only means of everlasting life . . . you also accused us all as a people of being the most wicked of all people on earth."

Reuben told his father: "I desire you may forever be discouraged from trying to gain me to your manner of faith, or more properly, to your unbelief. . . . I say in vain may you try to dissuade me from my hope in the gospel by . . . slanderous accusations."

Despite his religious problems, and his difficulties with his own family, Valentine had not lost his popularity with his fellow citizens.

In 1788, he was elected Pittsfield's delegate to the Massachusetts state convention which debated adoption of the newly drafted United States Constitution. The convention approved ratification by a vote of 187 to 168, with Valentine among the opposing minority. Like Patrick Henry, who also opposed the new Constitution in Virginia, Rathbun felt it gave too much power to the Federal government.

The following year, Valentine was a leader in still another religious battle, this time a successful fight against the payment of taxes to help support the local Presbyterian Church, which was considered the official or "state" church.

But the years were taking their toll. At 75, Valentine was weary after decades of political and religious battles. He had lost the fervor and energy of his younger days, and he found his church membership falling away.

In 1798, he asked the governing Baptist Association to drop his church from its membership rolls.

His sons Saxton and James had migrated to what was then "west"—central New York State, in Onondaga County—and his son, Benjamin, was preparing to join them there.

Reuben, apparently his favored

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and once most beloved son, was still an active Shaker leader. Valentine must have been a lonely and discouraged old man.

But, as so often happens, good fortune came in an unexpected way—Reuben decided to quit the Shakers after 18 years. A woman's love apparently succeeded where theological arguments had long failed.

In July 1799, he left the Shaker community with 35-year-old Elizabeth Deming, and the two were married a short time later.

Reuben's former associates spread the word that Reuben and Elizabeth had been more than just friends while they were still Shakers.

Whatever the reason, old Valentine must have been delighted to have his son back in the fold. He

mustered his old spirit and worked with Reuben on still another pamphlet.

Published in February 1800, it was entitled "Reasons for Leaving the Shakers," and Reuben left no holds barred.

"I believed it was my duty to change my condition by . . . leaving them and renouncing that which I believed was in error," he wrote. "But the cross I had to take up for that purpose I believe was seven fold greater than it was to forsake my father's house and join the people at first . . ."

Then he refuted the rumors about him and Elizabeth:

"... I have understood it has been intimated that while I lived in the church and professed to be strong in its faith that I lived in unlawful connexion with a certain woman which is since my wife . . . I will tell you the simple truth, as I ex-

pect to answer it to God my creator: from the time that I first professed Christianity (which was a year or two before I heard of the people called Shakers) to this day, I have never had any unlawful connexion with any woman . . . as to the woman which is now my wife, I never knew whether she was male or female until after I was legally married to her . . . I never spoke a single word to her . . . til a few minutes before I came away; then I spoke with her and gave her the offer of my friendship and protection, if God spared my life, if it were her choice to follow me. . . ."

Reuben and Elizabeth had a son by the time the 1800 census was taken, and sometime that year or the next they moved to Marcellus, N.Y., with his parents, Valentine and Tabitha, and his brother, Benjamin, and his family.

Valentine and Tabitha made their home at Marcellus with Reuben and Elizabeth, and the old warrior, now nearing 80, looked forward to spending his last years in peace with his sons and grandchildren.

It was not to be.

In 1807, while Reuben was out burning and clearing timber with his brothers, a burning tree fell on him and crushed his skull, killing him instantly. He was 47 years old.

Valentine, aged 83, was outside greeting his younger brothers, John and Daniel, who had just arrived for a visit, when he saw the body of his son being carried in from the fields.

Twenty-four years earlier, he had struck this same son on the head with a hickory staff, and now Reuben lay dead, his head crushed by a falling tree. The symbolism could not have escaped Valentine then, nor in the days of grief that followed.

He lived seven more years, dying in early 1814, aged 90, after a life filled with drama, excitement, passion and tragedy. His wife of 64 years was alive when he made his will in 1808, but the date of her death is unknown.

They had 12 children and at least 50 grandchildren. Among their many descendants are several of our magazine's subscribers.

Writings Reveal Insights

Valentine Rathbun's writings attacking the Shakers give some interesting insights into his character and personality as a man and as a minister.

His writing indicates that he was well educated for his day. Several passages show that he was well read in history and the classics — references to Scylla and Charbydis, and to the eruption of Mount Etna.

In comparing the Shakers with Roman Catholics, he comments that he had "been in the Romish dominions." It is not likely that he ever visited Italy, but was probably referring to French Quebec. He had apparently traveled widely.

In some of his language the power of his preaching can be felt. Some of his passages read like sermons, and indeed it is likely that he used some of the same thoughts and phrases which he delivered in his Sunday sermons. For example:

"Consider the great and noble

ends of your creation. You were not made to be the mere playthings of time, nor to furnish Satan with materials to carry on his dark designs and horrid intrigues against the Most High, but to honour and glorify God.

"Let your conduct speak forth your belief of the Deity, and judgment to come, and by becoming holy we shall be a happy people and shall see the return of God's Blessings, Satan disappointed and blasted, and the glorious Kingdom of Christ advancing.

"There never was a day that more loudly called for faithful watchmen than the present time, while we see Satan transforming himself into an angel of light and bringing forward his deep-laid scheme to undermine the glorious plan of redemption by Christ . . . oh, then, what need there is of skillful pilots and experienced helmsmen to steer the ship of Zion and keep her in the true channel of faith and love to God."

Genealogy: The Fourth Generation in America

See "Discrepancies" 02-2 p 29

1. JOHN⁴ RATHBUN (Jonathan³ John²¹), born Jan. 15, 1715, at Colchester, Conn., and married there March 30, 1737, Ann Tennant, born about 1715, daughter of Daniel and Ann (Green) Tennant. He died Nov. 27, 1755, at Colchester, leaving an estate which included 14 cattle, eight hogs and three horses. His widow married about 1756 (Ichabod?) Randall, who also died, and she moved to Nova Scotia about 1758 with her children. Her death date is not known.

CHILDREN

AMOS, born March 5, 1738; married Humility Randall.

JOHN, born April 28, 1742; Cooley says he married late in life, and died in 1827. John is not mentioned, however, in his grandfather's 1766 will, but his two brothers are. He probably died young.

ANNA, born July 2, 1745; married James Harris.

ABEL, born Dec. 17, 1746; married Anna Gates.

See "New Data" 04-4 p 62

2. JOSHUA⁴ RATHBUN (Jonathan³ John²¹), born Sept. 7, 1723, at Colchester, Conn., and married there Dec. 4, 1745, Sarah Tennant, born about 1725, the daughter of Daniel and Ann (Green) Tennant. He was a church deacon at Colchester, where he died June 3, 1807. His wife's death date is not known.

Second wife - ABIGAIL (?)

5/22/1807
will
Probated

With this issue, we begin the fourth generation of our family in America, continuing only with the male lines in the interest of space. Each male member is numbered within his generation, beginning with the eldest son of the eldest son.

CHILDREN

ELIZABETH, born June 9, 1747; no further information. *married Joshua RATHBUN*

TABITHA, born Aug. 4, 1749; married (1) ~~_____~~ Treadway; (2) Samuel Holmes, Feb. 1, 1770.

JOSHUA, born May 7, 1751; married Eunice Martin.

SARAH, born Nov. 23, 1752; married _____ Chamberlain.

MOSES, born Nov. 12, 1754; married Olive Ransom.

LUCY, born April 29, 1756; no further information. *DIED YOUNG - NO MENTION OF HER IN JOSHUA'S 1807 WILL.*

SAMUEL, born Sept. 12, 1758; married Lydia Sparhawk.

ANNA (twin), born Sept. 12, 1758; married John Holmes Sept. 1, 1775.

3. ISAIAH⁴ RATHBUN (Jonathan³ John²¹), born Sept. 7, 1723, at Colchester, Conn., and married there Jan. 9, 1763, Molly Gates, born about 1740, daughter of Hezekiah Gates. She died Oct. 15, 1763, only 11 days after the birth of their first child. Isaiah married again, March 9, 1764, Fanny Lamphere, birthdate and parentage not known. He served in the French and Indian War, in 1756 as a private in Colonel William Whiting's Connecticut militia, and in 1761 in Captain Giles Wescott's 9th Company of Major General Phineas Lyman's First Connecticut Regiment. Cooley says he died in June 1789, at Pittstown, Rensselaer County, N.Y., but National Archives pension records show that his son Jonathan was discharged from the Revolutionary Army on Feb. 20, 1783, on account of his father's death. Fanny died March 16, 1806, according to Cooley, who does not say where she died.

CHILDREN

By Molly Gates

ASHLEY, born Oct. 4, 1763; married Sarah _____.

By Fanny Lamphere

JONATHAN, born Jan. 6, 1765; married Hannah Adams.

ELIZABETH, born July 13, 1766; no further information.

MERCY, born June 28, 1768; married Asa Wilcox Nov. 29, 1791.

?JOSEPH, listed by Cooley, but not mentioned in any known records.

4. JONATHAN⁴ RATHBUN JR. (Jonathan³ John²¹), born about 1726 at Colchester, Conn., and married there Nov. 8, 1744, Abigail Avery, born about 1726, daughter of Benjamin and Sarah (Dennison) Avery. She died by Feb. 18, 1750, when he married Irene Scovil, born about 1720, daughter of Arthur and Elizabeth Scovil. Jonathan died Dec. 5, 1755, possibly in an epidemic which had claimed his brother, John, a week earlier.

His widow married Nov. 18, 1761, Daniel Morgan, at Colchester, Conn., as his fourth wife. Her death date is not known.

CHILDREN

By Abigail Avery

ELEANOR, born March 1746; apparently died young.

By Irene Scovil

ABIGAIL, born about 1751; married (?) Ebenezer Sweet.

5. JOHN⁴ RATHBUN (John³²¹), born about 1722 at Block Island, and moved to Exeter, R.I., where he married about 1744 Olive Perkins, birth

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and parentage unknown. In January 1744, as "John Rathbun Ye 3rd," he signed a petition protesting high taxes in Exeter. He was admitted a freeman at Exeter on May 5, 1747, and was an officer in the Exeter militia from 1747 to 1750. Olive died about 1782, and John married about 1784, at the age of 62, Elizabeth _____, by whom he had two children. John died in 1810 at Exeter, aged nearly 90. His second wife died in November 1826.

CHILDREN

By Olive Perkins

ALICE, born about 1745; married Randall Lewis Nov. 21, 1765.

CHARITY, born about 1747; married Daniel Barber August 11, 1767.

JOHN, born June 13, 1750; married Sarah Casey.

HANNAH, born about 1752; married _____ Hawkins according to Cooley, but is called Hannah Rathbun in her father's 1790 will. *MAY HAVE MARRIED LATE IN LIFE.*

ELIZABETH, born about 1754; married Sheffield Corey.

DANIEL, born about 1760; married Elsie Nichols.

ROWLAND, born Sept. 10, 1765; married Frelove Brown.

JONATHAN, born April 7, 1770; married Judith⁵ Rathbun (Thomas^{4,3} John^{2,1}).

RUTH, born about 1772; apparently died young. She was mentioned in her father's 1781 will, but not in 1790, when he made his final will.

By Elizabeth _____

OLIVE, born May 17, 1785; married Joseph Lawton.

THOMAS, born Dec. 26, 1786; married Hannah Lillibridge.

6. JONATHAN⁴ RATHBUN

(John^{3,2,1}), born Oct. 1, 1734, at Exeter, and married there March 3, 1757, Susan Barber, born about 1737, daughter of Joseph and Rebecca (Potter) Barber. Jonathan was admitted a freeman in Exeter in 1755, and was still living there when the state's 1774 census was taken. By

the following year, he was in Tyringham, Mass. His wife, Susan, apparently died by the 1790s and he married again, for in 1800 "Jonathan and Polly Rathbun of Tyringham" appear in a land transaction. He apparently died that year, since the 1800 census shows a Mary Rathbun in Tyringham, presumably his widow.

CHILDREN

EDMUND, born about 1758; married Anna Carpenter.

PATIENCE, born about 1759; married (1) Asa Allen Jr. Dec. 10, 1778; (2) John Gould.

CLARK, born about 1760; married Abigail Tillinghast.

JONATHAN, born about 1762; married Elizabeth Clark.

JOSEPH, born Jan. 28, 1763; married Olive Pearson.

REBECCA, born about 1765; married David Wainwright.

SUSANNAH, born about 1768; married Bryant Milliman June 1, 1791.

?LYDIA, born July 27, 1770; married Reuben Marsh Aug. 11, 1791, at Tyringham. She is not listed as a daughter by Cooley, but the 1774 Rhode Island census and the 1790 Massachusetts census indicate Jonathan had other daughters.

Two errors were detected in our last issue. On page 57, in the story of Valentine Rathbun, his grandfather, Valentine Wightman, married Susannah (not Mary) Holmes. Susannah's mother was Mary Holmes. This error was caught by members Francis Decker of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Howard M. Rathbun of Loveland, Colo. On page 61 in the genealogical section, the wife of Jonathan³ Rathbun (William² John¹) was Sarah Rathbun, daughter of Thomas² Rathbun (John¹) and Mary (not Sarah) Dickens. This mistake was noticed by Mrs. Betty Drake of Borger, Texas.

7. GIDEON⁴ RATHBUN (John^{3,2,1}), born about 1736 at Exeter; married there Feb. 18, 1759, Dorcas Kenyon, born Aug. 4, 1737, daughter of John and Mary (Gardiner) Kenyon. She apparently died about 1766, and he married about 1767 Ann Nichols, probable daughter of Stephen and Sarah Nichols. Her death date is not known, but Cooley says he had a third wife, Joan Austin, of whom nothing is known. Gideon was living in Exeter in 1790 and 1800, but by 1810 was in Chenango County, N.Y., where several of his children had moved. He presumably died between 1810 and 1820.

CHILDREN

By Dorcas Kenyon

PARIS, born about 1760; married Elizabeth⁵ Rathbun (Thomas^{4,3} John^{2,1}).

JOB, born about 1762; married Sarah Crooks.

CYNTHIA, born about 1764; married Noyes Lawton.

GREENE, born about 1766; married Sarah Nichols.

By Ann Nichols

GIDEON, born April 10, 1768; married Abigail Harrington.

DORCAS, born about 1770; married (Stephen?) Nichols.

ASA, born about 1772; died unmarried, according to Cooley.

STEPHEN, born about 1774; married Lucy Lewis.

DANIEL, born October 1776; married Patience Nichols.

NEWMAN, born Dec. 10, 1778; married Olive⁵ Rathbun (Simeon⁴ Thomas³ John^{2,1}).

ALLEN, born April 1780; married Betsey Barber.

JOANNA, born about 1785; married Timothy Nobles about 1806.

By Joan Austin (?)

JONATHAN, born about 1793; married Sally Smith.

8. EDMUND⁴ RATHBUN

(John^{3*2}), born (?) Dec. 8, 1737, at Exeter, R.I., and married there about 1759 Mercy Carpenter, possibly the daughter of Jeremiah and Elizabeth (Reynolds) Carpenter, born March 13, 1739. They moved by 1774 to Berkshire County, Mass., and in the 1780s to New York State. He was at Little Hoosick, Albany County, in 1787, when he sold land there, and later at Delhi, Delaware County, where he was among the first settlers.

Family tradition says he was a mill owner and moved in the late 1790s to the Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia) area, where he died in the summer of 1801 "from the effects of drinking too much water while overheated from working." A heart attack would be a more likely explanation, since he was then 64 years old. Mercy died May 7, 1827, aged 89, in Washington County, Ohio, where several of her children had settled.

One of our earliest members, Arthur Burris of Minneapolis, has suggested that we cite the sources and documentation for our genealogical data. We decided against this when we began the magazine, both to save space and to avoid complex footnotes and references. For the serious genealogists among our readers, let us explain our research methods. We have used Cooley's *Rathbone Genealogy* as a starting point, but have confirmed or changed his information, and expanded it as much as possible, through a wide variety of sources — vital records, family bibles, probate and land records, gravestone data, census records, local history books, other genealogies, military pension records in the National Archives, and information in the 1892-94 *Rathbone Family Historian*. We are continually seeking new data.

CHILDREN

See New Data 16-2 p 38

JOHN, born about 1760; married, apparently as a second wife, Amelia

PERRY, born about 1762; married Mercy Babcock.

ELSIE, born about 1764; no further information.

GIDEON, born Oct. 3, 1766; married Anna Newberry.

DAVID, born about 1768; married Elsie Lewis.

ELECTA, born about 1770; no further information.

EDMUND, born May 25, 1777; married Deborah Taylor.

LOVICA, born about 1779; married Stephen Taylor July 21, 1804.

9. ANNA⁴ RATHBUN (John^{3*2}), born about 1739 at Exeter. (We have not been following the lines of Rathbun daughters, but since four of Anna's children married Rathbuns, we have included her). She married at Exeter, Jan. 13, 1757, Joseph Nichols, born April 30, 1732, the son of Stephen and Sarah Nichols. He died in 1816 in Exeter. Anna was still living when he made his will in 1808.

CHILDREN (Surname Nichols)

ANNA, born July 27 1758; married _____ Parker.

STEPHEN, born about 1760; married (probably) Dorcas⁵ Rathbun (Gideon⁴ John^{3*2}).

SARAH, born about 1768; married Greene⁵ Rathbun (Gideon⁴ John^{3*2}).

ELIZABETH, born about 1770; married _____ Chase.

PATIENCE, born in 1773; married Daniel⁵ Rathbun (Gideon⁴ John^{3*2}).

ELSIE, born about 1775; married Daniel⁵ Rathbun (John^{4*3*2}).

MARY, born about 1777; married _____ Gates.

10. JOSHUA⁴ RATHBUN (John^{3*2}), born Nov. 29, 1741, at Exeter, and married there Jan. 13, 1767 (according to Exeter records, but most likely 1763), Elizabeth Kenyon, born June 20, 1743, daughter of

John and Mary (Gardiner) Kenyon. Joshua served in the Rhode Island militia during the Revolution. He was a tavern keeper. On June 19, 1786, the Exeter Town Council granted him a license to "keep a tavern and sell all sorts of strong liquor by retail and at any quantity in his now dwelling house in Exeter." He died March 8, 1827, at Exeter, just two weeks after the death of his wife on February 18.

CHILDREN

PAUL, born March 2, 1764; married Patience (Kenyon) Wilcox.

PENELOPE, born March 10, 1766; married John Bates.

ELIAS, born June 23, 1767; married Mary Morris.

WILLETT, born Feb. 6, 1769; married Ann Lillibridge. They had no known children. He died Feb. 5, 1840, at Exeter; she died Oct. 10, 1849.

DORCAS, born Oct. 12, 1772; married John Barber.

RHODA, born April 18, 1774; married John Ellis Dec. 25, 1791.

LARAHUMA, born March 25, 1776; no further information.

JOSEPH SHEFFIELD, born Jan. 8, 1780; married Olive⁶ Rathbun (John^{5*4*3*2}).

(To be continued)

Queries

WANTED — Information on Artemus Martin⁶ Rathbun (Hubbard⁵ Job⁴ Benjamin³ Joseph² John¹), born in 1821 in Howard, Steuben County, N.Y. According to Cooley, he married Mary Rumsey, possibly a first wife. In 1850, he married Caroline Dunn. After service in the Army during the Civil War, he left home and never returned. Descendants seek his birth date, first marriage, and date and place of death.

WANTED — Information on Jacob Rathbun, born in the 1790s, who was living in Victor, Ontario County, N.Y., in the 1830s.

People

JAMES COLBURN RATHBONE celebrated his 100th birthday on October 30 with his wife and three children in Exeter, N.H. Mr. Rathbone, whose life story appeared in our July issue, is the son of David⁸ Rathbone (Nathan⁷ Amos⁶⁻⁵ Thomas⁴⁻³ John²⁻¹).

MALCOLM W. RATHBUN, a first class petty officer at the Naval Communications Station in Stockton, Calif., has been named Sailor of the Year at his base. Rathbun, who enlisted in the Navy in 1970, is married and has three children. Malcom, 29, is a son of the late George Malcolm⁹ Rathbun (William⁸ Jonathan⁷ Thomas⁶⁻⁵⁻⁴ Ebenezer³ William² John¹) and Velma Scott Sherwood.

MARK ROBERTS, a Rathbun grandson, arrived in Irvine, Calif., October 1 after a 5,500-mile bicycle trip through 14 states. He left his home in Phoenix, N.Y., on June 30, after graduating from high school. Mark is the grandson of Mrs. **Edith Rathbun¹⁰ Roberts**, one of our members. She is the daughter of Henry H.¹⁰ Rathbun (Henry⁹ Charles⁸ William⁷ Alfred⁶ Wait⁵⁻⁴ Joshua³ John²⁻¹).

See Corrections 02-2 p 31

DIED — Oct. 15, 1981, Beatrice E. (Eichmann) Rathbun, aged 88, at Hartford, Conn. She was the widow of Charles William Rathbun (1895-1963), the grandson of William and Harriet (Terry) Rathbun, whose ancestry is still unknown. She is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Joyce Spadone and Mrs. Lydia Littlefield, both among our members.

Newest Subscribers

(We will keep listing all new subscribers, but not the names of those who resubscribe.)

Mrs. Ellen Coates
Modesto, Calif.

Rhoda Durkan
Fairfax, Va.

Mrs. Mary Helen Fasing
Livonia, Mich.

Rhea C. Lafferty
Riverside, Calif.

Margaret (Rathbun) Lamb
Torrington, Wyo.

Laurin Landis
Canton, Ohio

Rhonda (Rathbun) Leonard
Las Vegas, Nev.

Delores (Rathbun) Neenan
Dubuque, Iowa

Arlyce B. Rathbun
Sioux Falls, S.D.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rathbone
Austin, Texas

Charles M. Rathbun
Warner Robins, Ga.

James J. Rathbun
Sioux Falls, S.D.

Orson H. Rathburn
Athol, Mass.

Paul W. Rathbun
Whitman, Mass.

Ruth Rathbun
Superior, Neb.

Vera M. Rathbun
Topeka, Kan.

William A. Rathbun Sr.
Coventry, R.I.

Virgil and Ruth Streeter
Sparta, Wisc.

Lt. Richard Williams
Galena, Alaska

Additional Family Links Found

(continued from page 3)

I ever knew. His whole life seemed to be concentrated in his family. . . . His wife loved him devotedly and was a gentle, kind-hearted Christian woman."

Harris pointed out that Rathbone's problems could not have been due to financial troubles.

"... he was in easy circumstances. He had a large fortune. He must have been made insane by dyspepsia."

Harris then recalled an incident about a year earlier "which made a powerful impression on me at the time."

Rathbone, he said, came to visit him just before leaving for Germany with his family in November 1882.

"He came into my law office . . . looking very ill. I asked him what was the matter and he then said he was suffering from dyspepsia. He described to me in a vivid way all the horrors of that disease. . . . I have no doubt that he killed his

beloved wife when his mind was clouded by the disease."

The Rathbones had gone to live in Germany after the major had been appointed to a post in the U.S. Consul General's office at Hanover by President Cleveland. Letters to her family by Clara indicated that he continued to suffer constantly from headaches and dyspepsia.

Harris told the press that, on the night of the tragedy in Germany, Rathbone had first gone to his children's room, followed by his wife. She, fearing for their safety, had led him back to their bedroom, where a few minutes later he shot her to death and tried to commit suicide.

Friends and relatives theorized that he had brooded so much over his failure to protect President Lincoln that his mind finally snapped. In shooting Clara and stabbing himself, they felt, he was reliving the tragic events of the assassination, when Booth shot Lincoln and stabbed Rathbone.