

**THE LIFE OF DANIEL  
WEBSTER,  
PP.129-269**

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**THE LIFE OF DANIEL  
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**THE LIFE**  
OF  
**DANIEL WEBSTER**

BY  
**EDWARD EVERETT**  
*(1794 - 1865)*

FROM  
The Makers of American History



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

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The author of this biographical memoir of Daniel Webster was one of the noted men of his time. An eloquent Unitarian clergyman, Edward Everett was sought and served as Professor of Greek Literature in Harvard College, was elected ten continuous years in Congress, then four years successively as Governor of Massachusetts, was United States minister to England during Mr. Webster's secretaryship of state under Presidents Harrison and Tyler, and was the successor of that great man in the State Department after Webster's death. He was President of Harvard for three years, then elected United State Senator from Massachusetts, but feeble health compelled his resignation within a year. He was a noted orator, of a polished and elaborate style, and much sought after on occasions of literary or political importance. From youth to death he was a friend, admirer, and intimate associate of Daniel Webster, and therefore his account of the public services of the Massachusetts Senator are sure to be authentic and to represent matters from Mr. Webster's point of view—a matter of concern, if we would understand a man's words and deeds, and, further still, his motives.

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The Memoir is naturally very full in explanation of certain disputed matters, which, however significant in their day, have passed out of remembrance. It contains many noble passages from Mr. Webster's speeches, and correspondence throwing light upon matters of discussion; it enlarges upon some points of importance in solving questions yet in abeyance when the memoir was written—in Mr. Webster's lifetime, but not now; and in other ways it presents matter which has been deemed unnecessary to the purposes of this Series, aiming to give authentic, readable, terse biographies of our greatest Americans. Material of that nature, therefore, has been eliminated; but the interest and the authority of the memoir stands unquestionable, the abridgment serving merely to relieve it of details no longer of concern to the general reader of to-day.

# LIFE OF DANIEL WEBSTER

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## CHAPTER I

Parentage and Birth.—Early Education.—Exeter Academy.—Dartmouth College.—Study of the Law.—Fryeburg in Maine.—In the Office of Hon. Christopher Gore.—Admission to the Bar.—Commencement of Practice.—Removal to Portsmouth.

THE family of Daniel Webster has been established in America from a very early period. It was of Scottish origin, but passed some time in England before the final emigration. Thomas Webster, the remotest ancestor who can be traced, was settled at Hampton, on the coast of New Hampshire, as early as 1636, sixteen years after the landing at Plymouth, and six years from the arrival of Governor Winthrop in Massachusetts Bay. The descent from Thomas Webster to Daniel can be traced in the church and town records of Hampton, Kingston (now East Kingston), and Salisbury. These records and the mouldering headstones of village graveyards are the herald's office of the fathers of New England. Noah Webster, the learned author of the American Dictionary of the English Language, was of a collateral branch of the family.

Ebénézer Webster, the father of Daniel, is still recollected in Kingston and Salisbury. His personal appearance was striking. He was erect, of athletic



stature, six feet high, broad and full in the chest. Long service in the wars had given him a military air and carriage. He belonged to that intrepid border race, which lined the whole frontier of the Anglo-American colonies, by turns farmers, huntsmen, and soldiers, and passing their lives in one long struggle with the hardships of an infant settlement, on the skirts of a primeval forest. Ebenezer Webster enlisted early in life as a common soldier, in one of those formidable companies of rangers, which rendered such important services under Sir Jeffrey Amherst and Wolfe in the Seven Years' War. He followed the former distinguished leader in the invasion of Canada, attracted the attention and gained the good-will of his superior officers by his brave and faithful conduct, and rose to the rank of a captain before the end of the war.

Captain Webster was one of the settlers of the newly granted township of Salisbury, and received an allotment in its northerly portion. More adventurous than others of the company, he cut his way deeper into the wilderness, and made the path he could not find. At this time his nearest civilized neighbors on the northwest were at Montreal.

The following allusion of Mr. Webster to his birthplace will be read with interest. It is from a speech delivered before a great public assembly at Saratoga, in the year 1840:

"It did not happen to me to be born in a log<sup>\*</sup> cabin; but my elder brothers and sisters were born in a log cabin, raised amid the snowdrifts of New Hampshire, at a period so early  
1 the smoke first rose from its rude chimney, and

curled over the frozen hills, there was no similar evidence of a white man's habitation between it and the settlements on the rivers of Canada. Its remains still exist. I make to it an annual visit. I carry my children to it to teach them the hardships endured by the generations which have gone before them. I love to dwell on the tender recollections, the kindred ties, the early affections, and the touching narratives and incidents, which mingle with all I know of this primitive family abode."

Soon after his settlement in Salisbury, the first wife of Ebenezer Webster having deceased, he married Abigail Eastman, who became the mother of Ezekiel and Daniel Webster, the only sons of the second marriage. Like the mothers of so many men of eminence, she was a woman of more than ordinary intellect, and possessed a force of character which was felt throughout the humble circle in which she moved.

About the time of his second marriage, Captain Ebenezer Webster erected a frame house hard by the log cabin. He dug a well near it and planted an elm sapling. In this house Daniel Webster was born, in the last year of the Revolutionary war, on the 18th of January, 1782.

The interval between the peace of 1763 and the breaking out of the war of the Revolution was one of excitement and anxiety throughout the Colonies. Like so many of the officers and soldiers of the former war, Captain Webster obeyed the first call to arms in the new struggle. He commanded a company, chiefly composed of his own townspeople, friends, and kindred, who followed him through the greater portion of the war. He was at the battle of White Plains, and was at West Point when the

treason of Arnold was discovered. He acted as a Major under Stark at Bennington, and contributed his share to the success of that eventful day.

If the character and situation of the place, and the circumstances under which Daniel Webster passed the first years of his life, might seem adverse to the early cultivation of his extraordinary talent, it still cannot be doubted that they possessed influences favorable to elevation and strength of character. The hardships of an infant settlement and border life, the traditions of a long series of Indian wars, and incidents of two mighty national contests, in which an honored parent had borne his part, were circumstances to leave an abiding impression on the mind of a thoughtful child, and induce an early maturity of character.

It may well be supposed that Mr. Webster's early opportunities for education were very scanty. Something that was called a school was kept for two or three months in the winter, frequently by an itinerant, too often a pretender, claiming only to teach a little reading, writing, and ciphering, and wholly incompetent to give any valuable assistance to a clever youth in learning either.

From the village library at Salisbury, also, Mr. Webster was able to obtain a moderate supply of good reading.

The year before Mr. Webster was born was rendered memorable in New Hampshire by the foundation of the Academy at Exeter, through the munificence of the Honorable John Phillips. To this Academy Mr. Webster was taken by his father in