

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CAPT.
BENJAMIN WEBSTER: TO WHICH
IS ADDED EXTRACTS FROM THE
DIARY OF MRS. BENJAMIN
WEBSTER**

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Autobiography of Capt. Benjamin Webster: to which is added extracts from the diary of Mrs. Benjamin Webster by Benjamin Webster

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Benjamin Webster

AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
Capt. Benjamin Webster

TO WHICH IS ADDED EXTRACTS
FROM THE

DIARY

OF
Mrs. Benjamin Webster

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I.

JOHN WEBSTER.

John Webster, my grandfather, was born in Cold Kirby, ^{east} coast of England, September 15, 1749. He learned the tailor-trade there, and at the age of about twenty-one, embarked for Boston. He landed there in a strange country, without relatives or acquaintance. One guinea was all his earthly treasure. Doubtless he was lonely so far away from his native home. In one of his walks, he wandered down on one of the wharves, where he found a small vessel,—a coaster. He went on board, and engaged in conversation with the Captain—Captain Young. He inquired where Yarmouth was, and how far, and told the Captain he would like to go there, but had no money to pay his passage. Captain Young must have discovered something in this young man, for he became interested in him, and told him he would take him with him. They arrived at Yarmouth Foreside, came to anchor, as it was low water they couldn't go up the river. Captain Young invited him to go ashore with him and go up to his house, about three-quarters of a mile from the landing, and as they entered the house, Mrs. Young had a piece of cloth spread on the table, just in the act of cutting out a new pair of pants from another pair.

Captain Young said to his wife, "This man is a tailor. Perhaps he can assist you in cutting out those pants." She said, "I wish he would." He replied, "You must send for the boy. I can't cut by another pair."

The boy came, was measured, and the pants cut. Then the tailor said, "Madam, if you have a needle and thread, I will make these up for you." Before he finished the pants, it was known over the neighborhood, that Captain Young had brought a tailor home. He had other work offered him before those pants were done. He continued working at his trade in this same house until he had accumulated some money and bought the house, and about forty-seven acres of land, having money enough to make the first payment in cash.

About this time he became acquainted with and finally married a girl by the name of Patience Winslow. They began housekeeping in this same house. His tailoring business not

bringing in money rapidly enough, he built himself a tan-yard, and engaged in the business of tanning leather. He also built him salt-works. There he was for years tanning and making salt. Here five children were born to him, three daughters and two sons; John Webster, Benjamin, my father, Betsey, Hannah, and Jane. All lived to grow up, and started prosperously in life. I think he must have been a rather eccentric man, from the stories my father has told me about him.

One was that he was put out with one of his neighbors, would have no dealings with him and would not even speak when they met. About this time the minister preached a sermon in which he said a good deal about loving one another. A Monday morning, one of the brothers of the Church called on my grandfather, and had a talk with him about living in that way with his neighbor, whose name, by the way, was Deacon Hayes. He says, "It's not my fault, for if I should speak to him he wouldn't answer." The neighbor replied, "O, I think he would."

About this time, Deacon Hayes was seen coming up the road on his old white horse. As he came along, my grandfather said, "Deacon Hayes, I think you look blacker than ever this morning." The Deacon made no reply, but hit his horse a tap with the whip, and was soon out of hearing. My grandfather, turning to the kind neighbor, said, "I hope you are convinced it is not my fault. I spoke to him and he didn't answer, as I told you he would not."

As my grandfather did not wish to reside in a place unless he could live at peace with all men, he sold out all his property, and moved with his wife and five children into the town of Freeport, where he had bought quite a number of hundred acres of land, and built him a house and barns. He cleared up the lands, till he had large fields. About this time, he built him a vessel, up at his own door. He hauled her down to the river about a half a mile on sleds, loaded her principally with spars from his own land, put my father in command of her, a lad nineteen years of age, he himself taking passage with them, arriving home at Cold Kirby, his native place, inside of thirty-one years from the time he left it, possessing this time, instead of the one guinea with which he left it, the entire vessel and cargo, with his nineteen year old son as master.

He found a ready market for his cargo, and returned to his adopted country well pleased with his voyage.

It appears that he lived some ten years afterwards. He gave his son John the home place, and my father land for a large farm. A short time before his death, he took his two

boys up to the division line. There they measured off and staked out a lot for a burying-ground. Then he put up stakes where he was to be laid, and he said to his two sons, "I give this lot for a district burying-ground, and here is where I am to be laid. There is no person to be laid here until I am laid here. I want you to remember this burying-ground is between your two farms, and if ever you quarrel, it will be over the grave of your dead father."

This is about the last that I know of him. He died at the age of sixty-two, loved and respected by all that knew him except Deacon Hayes.

This burying-ground has been increased in its size twice from land from my father's field, and is called and always will be known as the Webster Cemetery, and the road that extends to it and on through to the town of Pownal, as the Webster Road. I have taken a great deal of pains the last fifteen years with this cemetery, and have a granite base around the lot that contains my grandfather and grandmother, my father and his two wives, three sisters and a brother.

This is about all that is known of my grandfather.

Cold Kirby March the 20—1801

Loving Brother those lines [] ns With tender Brotherly Love to you Hopeing thay Will find you in good hiltth Likewise All your famly as thay leave me & my three Sons I Bles God for it I Received your Letter that Was Dated December the 16th 1800 With joy for I thought I Should Never hard of you more & I Received it jenuary the 26th 1801 & I Should have Rote Sowner But I have had Sum meetings With Docter Ness But I Cannot Dow No Good With him and as for his Son he tels me that he have not heard of him for a Consederable time & the Last time that he had a Letter from him he Wass at New-York in A Martion Vessell But if Ever he Returns home A Gain I Will try him to the Bottom for his Bad Conduct If he have Any prinsable at all But I thout M^r Ness WOULD a Discharged Sum part of the mone But I Cannot Git him to Dow nothing till that he Cee his Son & than I have my Douts on him Still if Ever that he Dow Return But I Will take Cair of his Note till You hear from me forther Loving Brother I am Glad to hear that you Git forwards in the World and likeWise that Benjeman is Got to Be Sutch an A Suport to you I Should Be Glad to Liv to Ever have the opertunty of Ceing him in Old England I pray to God for him that the Lord WOULD Giv him that peas that paseth all understanding Which the World Can Neather Giv nor take a Way Likewise to you & my Loving Sister your Wife & all the Rest of

your Childring that you all may Becom the famly of the Houshold of fath in Rite^{us}ness and true Holeness & as You & me Grow in years that Wee may Grow in Grase & in the Knowledg of our Lord jesus Crist Which is our Reasonable Sarvis.

Brother What a Stoneshing thing it is to all my Nibers to hear of the holeing of your Vessell & I am Sùpprised that Your farme at North Yarmoth is Worth No more than 8 pounds par Year But to Leave hear I Will give you an account of our Contry I Rote to you in my Last Letter how Corne & other things Sold in old England but thay are Wors Now Wheat is Sold hear from 18^s Shillings to 20^s Shillings par Bushel Righ at 14^s Shillings a Bushel Barley 12^s Beans 12^s Otes from 5^s & 6^s & 7^s & 7^s and 6 pens par Bushel I my Self hass paid 7^s and 6^d pens a Bushel for forty Bushels for Seed the Rest I want I will Sow of my owne I have Sold tow hundred & Sixty Bushels of Otes this year I have Wheat to Sarve my Self this year & potatoes is 3^s to 4^s par Bushel Green Bacon is from 8^s to 9^s par Stone Now when Solted & Dryed it is sold from 11^s & 6^d to 12^s par Stone Rice 6^d par pound Beef & mutton 7^d & 8^d par pound & Every thing Els as Solt Chanels Sope Shugar treakel at very high prises Chees Old milk 5^s & 6^s par Stone Butter Was Sold Last Sumber for 3^l 5^s 0^d par ferken 4 Stone to the ferken the Lord help the poor for You may Sopose hear is Great Want I Bles the Lord I have plenty Loving Brother I have had tow Langishing ileneses Sins You Was in Enland But thanks be to God I am in good hiltth Now You Rote to know how your Sister Did & how She Was Supported your Sister is Still Living & much as She Wass When you Ceed hor She is With a farmar in Cleveland at John Hindersons & my Expens But I am the most the farmers helps us But I am Near twenty pounds Out John Not Sò much She is very harmlas & Enofensif to all I Did Not Rite to you about hor for She Never is Likle to have hor Reason more She troubles me When I Ce hor that I Did Not Wish to trouble you tow boot according to your Desire I have made mention on it to you And as Long as I have it She Shal not Want

Brother had you comed to England With a Cargo of Wheat this Sumber You Would maid a profittable Voige but your Wood is Nearly Worth as much more as it Wass When You Wear hear Last Both plank Staves & timber you Are Showr to make A very advantages Voige I think Lode With What you Will & Brother if you Should Colect timber to Build a vessel to Com to England if Benjeman Come Captan my tow Eldist Sons have Sattedel thair minds to Com to try thair fortions in Amereca John my

Eldest Son he is forman With One of Our Leeding farmers he is not with the Same master that he wass With Last year But he is With his Last masters Brother for thay Wowld not part With him he is Yong Sound & Strong, & he is very Cairful of his mone & Can Go throu his Bisenis in plowing Sowing mowing hedging Ditching Stacking Both Corn & hay that if Sutch A thing Should fole out I hope you Will find him a plase With Sum Gentleman farmer prette Near you for thay ar Detarmined to Go by Your Derections & As for the Yonger I think he must Eader Stay With you or Els With Benjeman at North Yarmoth he is 22 years of Age he have Lived Last year With his Brother Which he put him forwards in Bisanis & he Livs this year With Richard Bar Your Compannean Yhen you Came to Amereca he is Capabel of ondertakeing and maniging a tolarrable farme & he is vere Cairful of his mone that I am not much afraid of them if thay have thair hilths you Desired me to let you know Con-sarnning my Wifes famly She Came from Near Bedel the west of Yorksher She is fefted in hor Substans that She had in one hundred & forty five pounds But you are not Likely to know None of them pray Giv me a Line as Soune as Binjiman Come home Which I shall Lowk for So no more at prisant from your Loving Brother

W^m Webster

To M^r John Webster
at freeport in Cascay Bay
New England Near
Boston to Go By Halefax
packet Novescotia With Caire

My grandmother remained a few years at the home-place, then went to live with her daughter Hannah, Mrs. Holbrook. Her husband was considered rich for those times. She died there somewhere near 1820. The old house is still standing, and when I go to Freeport, I look at it. It was there that I saw my grandmother, and this is the only time that I have any recollection of her. She lies at the side of her husband in the Webster Cemetery.