

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF  
THE CENTENARIAN, MRS.  
ABIGAIL ALDEN LEONARD,  
OF RAYNHAM, MASS.**

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Biographical Sketch of the Centenarian, Mrs. Abigail Alden Leonard, of Raynham, Mass. by  
Enoch Sanford

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**ENOCH SANFORD**

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE CENTENARIAN,

Mrs. Abigail Alden Leonard,

OF RAYNHAM, MASS.

BY

REV. ENOCH SANFORD, D. D.

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"That Life is long that answers Life's great end."  
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RAYNHAM, MASS.

1887.

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MANY biographies of eminent men have within a few years been given to the public, which, embodying their virtues, must have an extensive influence in forming the character of youth; but the great excellencies of the human character are found more frequently in woman, though not so often proclaimed in the public ear. Not only the domestic virtues, but patriotism, self-denial, patience and general benevolence are found most prominent in woman.

Believing that the influence of woman in forming pure morals, and in preserving peace and good order in society is not generally appreciated and acknowledged, I consider that I have ample reason for presenting a sketch of the life of an eminent lady of Revolutionary times, who, though she long ago passed away, should be allowed to speak to the living, and have a memorial more complete and more durable than the simple record of her birth and death. My acquaintance with her began in April, 1823, when, invited to preach in this town, I was a guest at her home. After the lapse of sixty-four years, when all of our contemporaries have passed on, it is a pleasure to me, a nonagenarian, to recall the memory of this saintly centenarian.

ENOCH SANFORD.

THE MANSE, RAYNHAM, MASS.

June 15th, 1887.

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MRS. ABIGAIL LEONARD was the seventh born of the eight children of DAVID ALDEN and JUDITH PADDLEFORD. He was a descendant of JOHN ALDEN, one of the company of the "Mayflower." Her father lived in North Middleborough, Mass., near the bridge over Taunton River, called Alden's Bridge. He was a large landholder. His farm was situated principally on the south side of the river. The lands, consisting partly of natural meadows, and partly of fields, which had been planted with corn by the Indians, were pleasing to the English settlers. Here Winslow and Hopkins, from Plymouth, arrived in 1621, on their way to visit Massasoit, and were hospitably entertained one night by the natives. The place was called Titiqunt in the Indian tongue. It was an inviting region. The river was navigable for small boats, and full of fish, the fields suitable for tillage, and the natives friendly. To the admirer of nature it was an enchanting spot, varied in its surface, richly wooded and flowered, full of paths and grassy lanes, and checkered with merry brooks. The river here bends in the form of a cross-bow, its banks for many miles covered to the water's edge with abundant herbage. It was a sweet scene of rural simplicity, beautiful by nature,



and seemed made a retreat suitable for poets and sages. Mrs. Leonard was born May 19th, 1745.

The house in which she spent her childhood has long since disappeared. It was one of those ancient structures, two stories in front, the rear roof reaching within five or six feet of the ground, containing spacious fire-places and rooms twenty feet square. From its windows, whose sashes were made of lead, could be seen the river, the extended lawn and the meeting-house. That region, which nature had much embellished and made musical with the songs of birds, time and industry have changed, and covered with a busy and happy people. Where once the wild rose bloomed and breathed in the trackless forests now waves the yellow grain. The plain farm-houses have long since given place to the pleasant homes of villagers, whose style of living shows little of the olden time. Scarcely could a more desirable place be found for the lover of natural scenery, or for the merchant retiring from business to spend his days in quiet repose.

Passing her youthful days amid these scenes of natural beauty, one might expect they would imprint a sweetness on her mind as lasting as life. These were the altars on which she offered the love and worship of her early years. The favorite river with which many pleasant associations were connected, was, like an old friend, ever welcome; and when settled in married life, it was her lot to be still near it, though some five miles down the stream.

On this pleasant farm, annually teeming with abundant harvests, she spent her early years. Her family attended public worship in Middleborough, with the church under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. Conant, but when the church in North Middleborough was formed they worshiped there with the venerable and reverend Solomon Reed, grandfather of the late Governor John Reed, as their pastor.

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The pulpit at that day, far more than now, was the oracle of weekly instruction on almost all subjects interesting to the people, for, as newspapers and books were in very few families, men's eyes and ears were turned more