

## The Family of Isaac Jennings

*Russell H. Bosworth*

### Introduction

Recently, my cousin, Robert Firing, showed me a book that had been given to his mother – Eleanor Winslow Burton Bosworth Firing. She is my father's sister and the grand-daughter of Sarah Elizabeth White Bosworth. The book, a genealogy of Edward Winslow of the *Mayflower* and his descendants from 1620 to 1865 by Maria Whitman Bryant, daughter of Elizabeth Winslow and (Judge) Kilborn Whitman of Pembroke, Massachusetts, was given to Sarah Elizabeth on December 25, 1915 when she was 78 years old.

Sarah Elizabeth was born in Marshfield and had been a genealogist in the Pembroke, Massachusetts area all her life. She was a direct descendant of William White and her husband, Henry Bosworth, was a direct descendant of Edward Winslow; thus, when she received the book, she felt it incumbent upon her to provide her descendants with all she knew of the descendants of these two men.

The book was printed in a most unusual fashion for between the printed pages were many blank pages for those descendants of the author of the book to add additional family information. I found that Sarah Elizabeth had filled blank page after blank page with fascinating comments and information about the two families. My wife, Leora, and I have spent many hours since we got the book deciphering her handwriting and putting 22 pages of her comments on our computer so that I can give them to Sarah's living descendants.

We have not tried to edit her comments or correct spelling so that the reader can get the flavor of these words penned during the last five years of her life.

### Sarah Elizabeth White Bosworth's Comments

#### The Family of Isaac Jennings

**Isaac Jennings**, born March 16, 1779, married Eleanor Burton Bishop of Pembroke, Massachusetts in May 1800. They had four daughters and one son:

1. Elizabeth Burton Jennings - born 2/23/1801
2. Abigail Bearce Jennings - born 9/20/1803
3. Mary Barnes Jennings - born 2/13/1806
4. Isaac Jennings, Jr. - born 10/11/1808
5. Charity Jennings - born posthumously 4/30/1811

Isaac Jennings died of typhus at age 31, leaving a void that had serious consequences for his family. Following are the comments of Sarah Elizabeth regarding each of his children.

**Eleanor Burton Bishop** (our grandmother Osborn), daughter of Nathaniel and Abigail Bearce, was born in the "Burton House" 4/3/1781, married first Isaac Jennings May 1800. Isaac Jennings died of Typhus Fever 11/5/1810 - 31 years, 7 mos., 18 days. His loss was so great, so terribly appalling, that even now after the lapse of nearly a century, I shrink from writing of it, and always think - yes, know, cruel, cruel wrong! The moral, mental, and physical qualities were so blended in him, so well cultivated, that nature could stand proudly up and say in the face of the whole world, "This was a Man." So needed, so needed!

"My Captain does not answer, his lips are white and still  
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse or will  
 The ship is anchored safe and sound, the voyage closed and done  
 From fearful trip, the victor ship comes in with object won,  
 Exult o shores, and ring o bells!  
 But I with mournful tread walk the deck,  
 my Captain lies fallen cold and dead."

So he was mourned - so his children mourned - Mrs. Bosworth, his oldest child, and who really remembered him best, lived to be 95 yrs. of age - and cried for that father - saying over and over, "Poor fatherless child, poor fatherless child!" He took great care of his children, not only for the present - but planned for their future. He gathered about his hearthstone all of his own and his wife's relatives who were needy. He had his mother, grandmother, and wife's father and mother, and Uncle Bonney with his own family, and he took care of them with the labor of his hands working on his farm and caulking vessels on North River and sometimes in Medford. He was the "dependence of them all." Can we wonder that Granny Bishop said so often to his children, "If your father had lived." But alas the fearful blow fell in all its force, leaving sorrow and desolation in its path never to be recovered from. The world needs good men and can never be so well off for ...

Mrs. Jennings, mar. sec. Martin Osborn, of Halifax, 6/14/1818, and purchased and occupied the Jennings' estate of her first husband. Our grandmother Osborn's memory will go down to generations yet unborn with loving, grateful remembrances. She was a woman of sterling qualities, maintaining her womanly dignity through all the vicissitudes of her long eventful life, and unborn generations will continue to rise up calling her blessed. Her first marriage to Isaac Jennings was the last one in the "Burton House." Her oldest child, Elizabeth Burton Jennings (in 1801) was the last birth in the Burton House. Aunt Bonney's death in 1807 was the last death in the Burton House. Then that estate passed into the hands of strangers, and that house with all the hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows felt by its inmates was removed, and only the old porch remains; and even from that has been removed the diamond paned windows, with the glass set with lead as the girls who took that lead to do their hair up to make it curl. Also that Burton

House has gone and all those who loved it so dearly. Grandmother Osborn was the last to go of those. She, it was, who gave these reliable facts. It was the place of her birth, the home of her childhood and girlhood, where she was married to the men she loved and mourned all her life, and the birthplace of her first born. How sacred it all was to her. She often visited the place saying, "All gone, all gone but the porch!" She saw faces we could not see; she heard voices we could not hear. She never "lost her mind" or faculties and was a dear lover of that past in which she began to be with her loved ones. Her accounts of men, events, and places - I have always found very instructive and very accurate and reliable. She never grew deaf or lost her eyesight. After 90 years of age she read, with the aid of a tallow candle, the daily paper and never used or needed spectacles. She loved flowers and children. Every school child felt welcome to tell of their troubles and joys - show her their rewards and cards, and always receiving words of cheer and something nice to eat or look at. God bless her!

**Elizabeth Burton Jennings**, dau. of Isaac and Eleanor Burton Bishop Jennings - born 9/23/1801 - mar 6/27/1827 to Nathaniel Bosworth, son of Asaph and Elizabeth Thompson Bosworth. He was born in Halifax 6/4/1801 - he died 1/13/1887, 86 yrs, 9 days, in Pembroke. She died 5/15/1897, 95 years, 7 mos., 23 days, in Pembroke.

If her ancestor, Gov. Josiah Winslow, gave his strength and life for his country - Mr. and Mrs. Bosworth gave theirs as truly for their country - and lived so it could be said of them, "The world was better for their having lived in it." The impression left on her by the early death of her beloved father was as lasting as it was great and almost overwhelming. She never forgot it - often said, "Whenever I heard of the death of a father, the old pain came back, and I've felt sick." She was little more than 9 years of age at that time, but said (and it was true), "I felt the responsibility of the family as the property was entailed for the support of the great grandmother (Granny Jennings), it was not available for the support of the family. And something must be done, and it was decided to do (about all that could be done then) "to put the children out," those children of that dead father's loving care. She felt the full keenness of it so she went to live with Mr. and Mrs. John Young (where John W. Beal lives, 1916). The first Sunday at church she found to her horror that she was not to sit with them but had a seat in the "Poor Pew!" (How short-sighted mortals are.)

She was sent to school (and what a most excellent scholar), but when she spelled correctly a word missed by one of the pupils was not allowed to take her place above her, but was left at the foot of every class. Then the spirit, teachings, and care of that dead father arose, and she left - went back to her desolated home - ran away. Her mother found her after dark walking back of the house and said, "Eliza, you must go back there - there is no other way to keep from starving." Her reply was, "Ma, you can send me back, but I will not stay, and next time I

will run the other way." She stayed, and that little child went out to work to Elisha Smith's, Micah Foster's, Isaac Macgoun's, and other places. (Did Our Father note the pittance she got?) And after all doors seemed closed to her, a factory was started in Kingston, 1812-13, and that little girl proved to her descendants for all time that energy will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities will make a man, will make a woman, without it. A window opened, and she went into that factory to work. Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Sampson, "run the factory," and boarded the help. Ms. Sampson put the little girl to sleep in the "trundle bed" with her own children. Ah, those were the first happy days she'd known since the death of her father. Those were long days of work, (from sun to sun and often more), but they were days she always recalled with great pleasure - and never a day so long or worked so hard but she could dance an hour or two at night. The pay was small, (but it was the beginning of better things for women); her board, "4 and 6" a week, half store pay at that. The first money she got paid the minister's tax; the next built that division fence that separated her father's estate from the "Old Jennings Property" claimed (according to an unjust will) by her Uncle Nathaniel Jennings. However hard and cruel all these things seemed, (and were) you children have this to recall with pride and reverence - every thing, every claim, every debt was paid and settled right. Those happy days were broken into by her mother going to Halifax boarding house and needing her help. She knew it would be better for the other children, and they were always carried very near her heart. After years of working and planning, those children could care for themselves and, in 1827, she married and kept house in Halifax. Mr. Bosworth had that energy which strives to make conditions better, so he took the "cloth to dress" at the factory, hiring men to help him. The settlement was to be at the end of the year, but about that time Mr. Fletcher, (the man who ran the factory) failed, and a big debt stared the young couple in the face. And again, you children remember, not an atom was shirked, but all paid and their name cleared. It was hard times (the factory shut down), there was no work, but their energy and grit was not gone, and they heard that Nathaniel Jennings wished to sell his estate with its partly furnished house, and they bought it for \$700 - moving into the house 1/1/1829 (which was their home until their death). It is now owned by their grandchildren (1916), who are the eighth generation to own this estate, bought first by Isaac Jennings in 1730 for a home.

And now come another long pull, viz. to pay for it; debts were terrible things to them. There was no work, at that time, but Mr. Bosworth was looking for something to do. The first job he got was from Rev. Morrill Allen, who always made man's necessity his opportunity, thereby counting his measure of success - cutting wood "50 cents per cord and trimming out the refuse," but that ... was harder to him than the hard times.

He then worked for Isaac Hatch cutting wood, then in his factory at E. Pembroke, boarding at home. Then began buying wood lots, "cutting and ..." He

built his new barn in 1835-6, then worked for Lawyer Howard S. Abington – later was superintendant of the Alms House for more than 12 years. Every debt was paid, and there was no sitting in “poor pews.” Even Mrs. Young would have felt and been honored to sit beside them. But sorrow was yet to come into their lives, another crushing sorrow, when their son, their “Benjamin,” went into the army to suffer and die in a strange land among strangers. Their youngest born, died in New Orleans, LA, 8/3/1863 - twenty-five years, 3 months. He was of Company I, 4th Mass. Reg. Another descendant of Gov. Josiah Winslow who gave his young life in the service of his country (Edwin). Then his parents knew the fulness of “that chamber over the gate,” and could cry with that “old man desolate” “Oh, Absalom, my son! Would God I had died for thee, oh, Absalom, my son.”

“They make no mourn, they shed few tears  
 They feel no thrill of pride or joy,  
 For looking back across the years,  
 They see a little, little boy;  
 They hear the lisping baby speech  
 That begs for some beloved toy.  
 They feel the clasp of little arms  
 That tells a love without aloy.  
 They have no thought for glory won.  
 They only know that he has died.  
 Their son, their son, their youngest born.”

Draw the veil that is too sacred a subject for strangers to even speak about or write upon. Now he's listed with the Prince of Peace. In Zion's field he rests beneath the sheltered tent of love.

Their lives were lived, and living is as needful as dying for their country. They fought the fight of life valiantly, without flinching, and now:

“The marching and the working o'er  
 Safe falls the restful night  
 The taps are sounding from afar  
 Goodbye, 'Put out the light.'”

This, my children, ends your connection with that Burton House. Your ancestral home, your grandmother having been the last birth in that house before it passed from your family. So say goodbye, old house, goodbye! Your grandmother Osborn loved it so dearly she often visited the site, and told to me how the old house was situated, set by compass facing South, with “Sun Mark” on the front window seats and the porch on the west end taking in the well. She would talk it over (seeming to talk to it), putting her hand caressingly on the old porch and saying over and over, “All gone but this.”

I hope I've given you some idea of that good ancestry which has been yours,

coming from these people who traveled over an often rough road, often with sorrowful tears and hearts riven with storm and tempest, making this path easier for you. Never dare say "those good old times were easier, happier than these times." I am in awe and reverence as you review their lives and work. They did "want things" – then more than you can imagine now. If they had not, and been so carelessly happy, as some now so thoughtlessly say; this world would have lapsed back into a state of semi-civilization. They hewed those steps you so proudly stand in today, and will hew higher steps for those to come. You've had that, "good ancestry." Dr. Holmes says every child has the right to demand, and I add, that ancestors have the right to demand a good posterity. Then and then only shall we be growing into a Christian civilization demanded by the Prince of Peace, who has given into our hands this life and what it should do to bring in the Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of Man, and the Sisterhood of Woman. Then can be said – "Children's children are the crowns of old men, and the glory of the children are their fathers."

And I know only too well that you have taken for your Coat of Arms, that which has been said and proved so successfully, viz., "Energy will do anything that can be done in this world – and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities will make a man, will make a woman without it." And now I leave this Burton House, and its connection with you with that consecration and benediction, given so long ago by your grandfather, Thomas Burton – "Pray God to Bless."

**Abigail Bearce Jennings**, daughter of Isaac and Eleanor Burton Bishop Jennings, was born 9/20/1803 at Pembroke in the Perry Harding house - married 1/7/1838 John Miller Damon. Mrs. Damon died 8/27/1873 - 69 yrs, 11 mos., 7 dys. Mr. Damon died 1/15/1855 - 73 yrs, 4 mos. No children. This family extinct.

I have only this high praise of Mr. Damon. He loved his wife and provided for her with all his means. I can speak personally of "Aunt Nabby Damon." She was always kind and helpful to me, and my children found in her a friend who they will never forget – and Aunt Nabby will go down the generations as one to be remembered with loving reference.

Aunt Nabby began her hard life with two years less of the care and training of her father. In the Spring of 1811 she was "put out" in Bridgewater to a Mr. Abieger(?) Algers with the conditions of board (care in sickness), clothing and education until 18 years of age. That is an object lesson drawn from "those good old times." The schooling consisted in being sent to school one half day (the law required this). Her clothing, well I cannot tell you how poor, meager and scanty it was. Her real education was at the wash tub and other weary hard, work. Was she, poor little girl, of more value than a sparrow – not with them surely. Mr. and Mrs. Algers were people high in church and society; being very zealous to maintain that elevated position – standing apart and praying and thanking God "they were not like other men." Yet forgot – or did not care – to see His face in that of

the little fatherless girl within that home. I heard her mother and Mrs. Bosworth tell many times of her homecoming when her "time was out," crushed and ignorant. But her father's child could not stay crushed - she rallied, taught herself, and became our Aunt Nabby - a truly wonderful woman that I only wish I could do full justice to. Gov. Josiah Winslow never had a worthier descendant than my children's Aunt Nabby Damon, who I am sure will waken in that House of Many Mansions and find herself crowned with "Well done!" ...

**Mary Barnes Jennings**, dau. of Isaac and Eleanor Jennings, born 2/13/1806 in Pembroke (Perry Harding House), married William Bessie of Maine, son of Rubin and Celia Bessie, 6/25/1834. Mrs. Bessie died 8/19/1867 at her home in Pembroke - 61 yrs, 6 mos. 6 days. Mr. Bessie died at his home in Pembroke, 10/19/1887 - 77 yrs.

Mrs. Bessie was still greater handicapped than her sisters were by having had 4 less years of her father's love, care and training than her sisters had had; her memory of him was an indistinct feeling of someone gone who she needed, and would cry in the night from her loneliness for that one to care for her. She was "put out" (awful words) to Capt. Nathaniel Smith's, another family high in church and society, who also stood apart, "thanking God that they were not as other men were," (for which those other men should have been profoundly thankful). But her living with them bore bitter, hard fruit which never softened or sweetened during her life here. There the tomb has burst and hope is born. I have personal recollections of her and recall many kind acts, and better still, kind words from both Aunt Mary and Uncle Wm. Bessie. She loved children. Her blighted childhood and girlhood made her very kind toward the young people she met. I always thought her very handsome. I can see now her shining bands of very dark hair and her pleasant, expressive blue eyes. Her mother often said, "Mary looks like her father" and it seems to me she would have been like him if she had not been "born a woman." ...

She was a handsome woman with her father's physique of sturdy strength, energy, ambition and pride. She was one of the most devoted mothers I ever saw, counting all sacrifice and labor on her part, but a gain and pleasure if it but added an atom of pleasure to the happiness of her children.

But her life was again broken into by the death of her first born child (age 29), 8/31/1864, and she lived in that, "chamber over the gate," crying, "oh Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee, oh Absalom, my son" - brokenhearted until death gave her release 8/19/1867 ...

**Isaac Jennings, Jr.**, son of Isaac and Eleanor Jennings, born at Pembroke in the Jennings House, 10/11/1808 - deceased unmarried in the same house 11/25/1873 - 68 yrs, 1 mo., 14 days.

As soon as possible (when very, very young), he went to Halifax with his mother and when seventeen years of age was taught a blacksmith's trade in the

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company shop. When about 23 years of age, being by nature very resolute and determined, he was injured shoeing a vicious horse and for more than ten years was unable to work at his trade; then he built a shop on the site of Benjamin Jennings, working there for several years. In 1849-50 there started, at the ctr., a union store, and a building was erected. In a few years he bought out all the shareholders and became the sole proprietor. "Isaac Jennings's store" was a landmark long remembered, and some of the younger generations still recall the stories of their parents. He revolutionized in a great measure the methods of "store keeping." And his store became really a benefit to all, especially to the poorer classes. He took an active part in the war of 1861-1865, keeping by his influence, the patriotic loyal spirit of Pembroke in rather more than normal condition. No call for money was made, but he responded liberally. And hardly a soldier left town without something from Isaac Jennings, and not a few of their families received necessary aid. After the death of Mr. Osborn, he purchased the estate of his father's and continued to live there with his mother til his death.

**Charity**, child of the late Isaac and Eleanor Jennings, was born 4/30/1811, at Pembroke at the Jenning's house and died in her sister's house of shock and la grippe, 1/12/1892 - 80 years, 9 mos., 12 days. As hard as the lot of the other children was, to this poor little posthumous child, her lot was harder, yes hardest, for she had never felt the embrace of that brave young father's arms, who felt able to protect his children from the whole world. She never heard that loving benediction which so often fell from his lips - "my little girls." "Nellie, I want my girls to be dressed as well as the others." Alas, alas my brother! In those days of school physicians and State guardianship, she would have been called a "Feeble child" too frail to attend school, but in those "good old times," she was not paid much attention to. She went to school some, but early went into the Halifax factory. Now that "energy and ambition" (gifts from her dead family) buoyed her onward - helped make opportunities and choices for her - would not let her stop (there were people in abundance who then, as now, chose the easy side, wailing - complaining bitterly, "I've had no chance.")

Later she went to Dedham to work, and by that energy, thrift, and ambition accumulated a large property. Mrs. Parris and Mrs. Howland often told me of seeing her as she came home for a visit from Dedham. They said she had really elegant clothing and how handsome she was. As her mother grew infirmed, she sent for her to come home. She returned and cared for her mother until her death. After the death of Isaac, she became the owner of the homestead - the last of the Jennings family to own it (now owned by J.T. Ford - 1916).

I have some kind acts to myself and children to remember of her. I have done my best to record, for my children and grandchildren, a few imperfect annals of a worthy family (their grandmother's family). I would that a worthier pen than mine could have done more - a more complete justice to that family. So

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