

Benjamin and Lucy (Belknap) Ball

Benjamin Ball first appeared in Ebenezer Parkman's diary in 1765 when "Several Lads came to assist in getting our Muck and placing it in the Hills." The lads included Benjamin Ball and Benjamin Whitney who were sent by Parkman's neighbor, Levi Warren, and Jonathan Forbes, who was sent by Benjamin Tainter (May 17, 1765). By "lads" Parkman probably meant boys in their teens – strong enough to load manure onto carts and spread it on newly planted fields. That the lads were sent by Levi Warren and Benjamin Tainter suggests that they were hired workers, probably living with the Warren and Tainter families for the agricultural season. If Benjamin was born on March 31, 1750,¹ the son of Phenias and Martha Ball of Holden, he would have been fifteen years old in 1765 when the lads came to load, cart, and spread muck for Parkman.

Six years after carting muck, Benjamin Ball was among eleven cutters who came to cut and cart wood from the ministerial lot: "Benjamin Ball for Mr. Morse." Benjamin may have been Seth Morse's seasonal worker, or, more likely, Morse hired him as his replacement. All but a few of the cutters stayed for supper, although "Messrs. Abraham Bond, Abraham Beeman, and Benjamin Ball" went home with their teams (Nov. 25, 1771). Parkman's use of "Messrs." suggests that he ascribed a greater maturity to Benjamin.

Benjamin Ball married Lucy Belknap on May 22, 1777.² Like Benjamin, she was not born in Westborough, and her place of birth remains to be determined. Her first pregnancy resulted in a stillbirth, with Parkman "solemnizing the Burying of his [Ball's] New born, but Dead Child, and prayed there" (Apr. 7, 1778). Benjamin did not record the death of that child with the town clerk, nor did he record the birth of three other children. Benjamin and Lucy Ball joined the Westborough church on July 4, 1784, and their two children and namesakes were baptized on October 10. A third child, Lydia, was baptized on June 24, 1787.³ Benjamin Ball appeared in the federal census of 1790, with his household consisting of one free white male of sixteen years of age or older; one free white male under sixteen; and three white females – undoubtedly Benjamin himself, his son Benjamin, his wife Lucy, and daughters Lucy and Lydia.⁴

Benjamin Ball died in 1795, signing his last will and testament on February 4, 1795, with Amos Bradish, a blacksmith of Upton, posting bond as executor on July 7.⁵ A guardianship was recorded for Benjamin Ball, presumably the son who had been baptized in 1784. Rufus Forbush, described as a gentleman of Westborough, was appointed guardian for Benjamin Ball,

¹*Vital Records of Holden, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Worcester, MA: Franklin P. Rice, 1904), 12. There is no record of his marriage or death in the Holden vital records.

²*Vital Records of Westborough, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1749* (Worcester, MA: Franklin P. Rice, 1903), 118.

³Westborough Church Records (Westborough Public Library), [393]. Westborough Vital Records, 12.

⁴https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/5058/4440869_00710?pid=101433&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Rwd22&_phstart=successSource#?imageld=4440869_00710 (accessed Mar. 19, 2019).

⁵https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/9069/007439279_00855?pid=5943975&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Rwd27&_phstart=successSource#?imageld=007439279_00880 (accessed Mar. 19, 2019).

“a minor of his own Election aged fifteen years.” That is, Benjamin (born about 1780) chose Forbush as his guardian.⁶

Ball made provision for his wife Lucy for as long as she remained his widow. She was to care for their daughters Lucy and Lydia who, when they reached eighteen years of age, would each receive 100 dollars in silver. His son Benjamin was to receive his lands and possessions in Westborough and Upton when he reached the age of twenty-one.⁷ The estate was valued at £494 5s 7d.⁸ The “books,” valued at one pound, may have included the Bible from which Benjamin and Lucy Ball cited scriptural passages such as Matthew 11:28, Revelation 22:17, Isaiah 1:18, and Proverbs 28:13 in their relations. Lucy Ball’s death, like her husband’s, was not recorded in the Westborough vital records. She was still alive several months after Benjamin’s death when Breck Parkman noted, “Attend A Vendue at Widow Lucy Balls.”⁹

⁶https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/9069/007439279_00855?pid=5943975&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=Rwd27&phstart=successSource#?imageId=007439279_00859 (accessed Mar. 19, 2019).

⁷https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/9069/007439279_00855?pid=5943975&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=Rwd27&phstart=successSource#?imageId=007439279_00884 (accessed Mar. 19, 2019).

⁸https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/9069/007439279_00855?pid=5943975&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&phsrc=Rwd27&phstart=successSource#?imageId=007439279_00874 (accessed Mar. 19, 2019).

⁹Diary of Breck Parkman (Parkman Family Papers, American Antiquarian Society), Oct. 12, 1795.