

Eleazer Beeman

Eleazer Beeman was fifty-eight years old when he joined the Westborough church on October 18, 1741.¹ His wife, Hannah, who joined the church on the same day, was forty-nine. Their decision to join the church came at a relatively late stage in life: men and women most often joined the church in their twenties and thirties.² It was not as if they had had little or no connection to the church: they were among the original inhabitants of Westborough, and they had owned the church's covenant and had their first child, Abraham, baptized on September 10, 1727.³ As Eleazer stated in his relation, there were "many ways" by which he had been "mov'd and perswaded to come up to the Duty Before me." He had been "Stirred" by the "word preachd," and what he had "read in private has not been with out Effect."

Most important, however, "Gods holy Dealings and Dispensations" had "greatly awakend" him." In the past winter his whole family had been sick, resulting in the death of "Three of my Dear Children." In late December 1740, Ebenezer Parkman learned that the Beemans' youngest daughter, four-year-old Abigail, had died. He visited the family and found twelve-year-old Eleazer "exceeding bad and all the rest sick" (Dec. 30). The next day he went to Abigail's funeral and learned that Eleazer was "thought to be irrecoverable." Indeed, the boy died on January 1, and eight-year-old Sarah died on January 9.⁴ "I desire and beg," wrote Eleazer Beeman, "that these and later Afflictions I have met with may prove for my Spiritual and Eternal Good." There is no record of Beeman's "later Afflictions," that is, events in the nearly ten months after the death of his children.

Eleazer and Hannah Beaman had six children. Their first, a son name Abraham, had died as an infant, and his name was given to another son.⁵ With the deaths of their son Eleazer and daughters Abigail and Sarah, there remained two children, Abraham and a daughter named Hannah.⁶ The elder Eleazer died in 1750 at the age of sixty-seven,⁷ with Parkman leaving a description of his funeral and that of thirty-seven-year-old Daniel Warrin:

P.M. at the Funerals of Mr. Beeman and Daniel Warrin junior which were carry'd on thus, we went to the House of the late Mr. Beeman and pray'd there. (N.B.

¹Westborough Church Records (Westborough Public Library), [vi], 61; hereafter cited as WCR. Eleazer was b. June 6, 1683, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Beman; Hannah (How) Beeman was b. July 3, 1692, dau. of Elliezer and Hannah How. Eleazer and Hannah were mar. Mar. 2, 1726; *Vital Records of Marlborough, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Worcester, MA: Franklin P. Rice, 1908), 26, 99, 220.

²Douglas L. Winiarski, *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 94-95.

³WCR, 6.

⁴Abigail, b. Feb. 9, 1736, d. Dec. 30, 1740; Eleazer, b. Apr. 26, 1728, d. Jan. 1, 1741; Sarah, b. Sept. 10, 1732, d. Jan. 9, 1741; *Vital Records of Westborough, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Worcester, MA: Franklin P. Rice, 1903), 15, 228. Parkman's diary is not extant for 1741.

⁵The first Abraham was b. Dec. 1, 1726 (*WVR*, 15) and bapt. Sept. 10, 1727 (WCR, 6). There is no record of his death. The second Abraham was b. Dec. 1, 1729 (*WVR*, 15).

⁶Hannah was b. Apr. 23, 1730 (*WVR*, 15).

⁷Nov. 7, 1750 (*ibid.*, 228).

his only Son Abraham is taken Sick and so bad he keeps his Bed) then I hasted to Mr. Warrins, and both the Corps were Sett in the Yard on their Biers, and I pray'd again there. A Sorrowful Sight -- both the hoary Head and the blooming Youth going to the House appoint'd for all the Living. (Nov. 9, 1750)

By 1755 widow Hannah Beeman was living with her daughter and son-in-law, Hannah and Jonathan Bruce (Nov. 12, 1755, Mar. 20, 1760).⁸ At a later date she talked with Parkman "about her leaving her son Bruce's etc. etc." (Oct. 8, 1765), but she was still there when Parkman visited many years later and found her "yet alive" (June 19, 1782). She died three months later, "90 Years old last May. God Sanctiie this Death to especially such of us as are hoary!" (Sept. 8, 1782).

⁸Nineteen-year-old Hannah Beeman mar. twenty-two-year-old Jonathan Bruce, May 24, 1749 (ibid., 121). Jonathan was b. Sept. 4, 1726, the son of Abijah and Mary Bruce (ibid., 29).