

Case 26 Ebenezer Valentine Austin (Eb), born 2 Sep 1836 at Randolph, Norfolk, Massachusetts and died 07 Jan 1905 at Togus, Kennebec, ME Buried at Wendell Cemetery, Holbrook, Norfolk, MA

The register #7678 of Eastern Branch of National Homes for Volunteer Soldiers in Togus, ME, lists a military history for Ebenezer V. Austin. He enlisted first on 19 Apr 1861 in Medford, Massachusetts as a Private, in Co. E of the 5th Massachusetts Infantry. A discharge from service was given to Ebenezer on the 31st of July 1861 at Boston, MA. But on the 3rd of December, 1861, Ebenezer reenlisted in Boston. He was made a full Corporal on 24 Mar 1862. He fought in several engagements with the CSA in Company H. of the 23rd MA Infantry. His last discharge for the expiration of his enlistment term occurred on the 4th of February 1865.

At the Battle of Drury's Bluff on May 16, 1864 he was taken prisoner by Confederate soldiers and was taken to the notorious Andersonville Stockade in Georgia. He suffering greatly while there. The lack of nourishment, shelter and unsanitary conditions of the prison during the last eight months of his service, probably led to his disability. The Home Register shows that Ebenezer had a disability on May 1879 of Sciatic Rheumatism at Avon, MA.

The domestic history for Ebenezer V. Austin, describes him as five feet, eight inches tall, and of a fair complexion. He had blue eyes and brown hair on May 4, 1891 when he was admitted to the Home. At that time he was age 55, and said he was a widower. His relative was Mrs. Helena Bart of Holbrook, MA. Ebenezer was working as a Porter at the time he was admitted. His Pension Certificate was #308.744.

For fourteen years Ebenezer lived in the Eastern Home in Maine. The U. S. Census taken on 4 Jun 1900 listed Ebenezer V. Austin, age 64, born April 1836 MA, a widower, whose parents were both born in Massachusetts. It is listed on the Register that Ebenezer died of Cerebral Hemorrhage on 7 Jan 1905. His personal effects were sold by the staff to other soldiers in 1907. The body of Ebenezer was shipped to Avon, MA. A cemetery record at Holbrook in Norfolk County, MA shows a record of his burial in 1906 and it lists his birth date as 2 Sep 1836. His parents and other family members are also buried there.

A Sketch of Ebenezer's Life

Ebenezer learned the trade of bootmaker from his father and was able to support himself and a wife, by the time he reached maturity. He married Matilda A. Sherman on Jan 21, 1858 in the town of Randolph, MA when he was age twenty-one and she was only age seventeen. Matilda's parents were listed on the record as Josiah H. Sherman and Mary. The Austin parents were named Ebenezer and Maria (Maria Louise Shepard). The 1860 Census of 18 Jun 1860 shows the couple had a son

named Forrest R. Austin. Town records of Randolph show that Forrest was born Aug 25, 1858.

After the Civil War, in 1865 Ebenezer, Matilda and Forrest were at living with Ebenezer's parents in Randolph Town, and working as a bootmaker in a boot factory. By 1870, Matilda, had moved to Boston, and was living in a boarding house, listed as a divorced woman. Her eleven year old son, Forrest R. Austin lived with her, and attended school in the daytime.

By 1880, young Forrest was age 22. In Boston, he worked as a bootmaker and lived in the household with a master bootmaker who manufactured boots at his residence. Three other young men were boarders and apprentices.. At the same time, Forrest's mother, Matilda Austin who said she was divorced, worked in a shop and lived as a boarder in the home of Edwin P. Jones, a Boston fireman. The Jones had a daughter Isabella who was introduced to Forrest. The next year Forrest married Isabella F. Jones on Sep 29, 1881. She was age 21. They were married by Joseph H. Mansfield at the United Methodist Church in Boston. Unfortunately, the couple did not have any children. Forrest died on Jul 1, 1884 in Dover, MA at age twenty-six. Four years later Isabella Jones Austin married a second time to Charles Bowman, a railroad fireman. Charles and Isabella had three children.

Meanwhile, Ebenezer Valentine Austin kept making boots and shoes until his health failed him. The 1890 Veterans Schedule of Brockton, Plymouth, MA shows that Ebenezer was still living on his own. The next year he applied to the National Home at Togus, Maine and was admitted.

Family Background

Twentieth Century survivors of this family line are from the sisters and aunts of Ebenezer V. Austin and do not have the Austin surname.

It is interesting that in this family history, the skill and trade of crafting boots and shoes was traditional for two centuries. This Austin family group and their relatives by marriage, contributed to the important Eastern Massachusetts industry of boot making.

The Craft of Making Boots

Colonial manufacturers did not have large factories. They put out the work of making the boots to farmers who had a "craft corner" in their homes or built a "ten-footer" shoe shop on their property. The leather from the tannery was cut into pattern pieces in the factory and they were given to the area families to do piece work, hand sewing the shoe uppers together. Then the boot pieces were fitted and shaped over a wooden last. The men attached the soles and heels, bottoming the boots with hand tools. Workers received wages from the shoe merchants for their labor, which supplemented their family income.

By the Nineteenth Century central shops began to obtain power driven machines for sewing uppers and

welting soles. It is supposed that the Austin families learned the new processes as the trade developed. The occupations listed on the census for these Austins were: bootmaker, boot fitter, shoemaker, and boot manufacturer.

First Generation

William Austin, the grandfather of Ebenezer Valentine Austin was born before the Revolutionary War, about 1770, probably in Easton, Bristol County, MA. The tradition of handcrafted boots made by the four generations of residents in the East Massachusetts towns of Easton, Taunton, Holbrook, and Randolph began with him. William married Miss Elizabeth Taunt, on Dec 29th, 1796. She was born on Sep 3, 1772 to Ebenezer Taunt and Elizabeth Holmes. The couple was married in Stoughton at the bride's home. They returned to William's home in Easton after their marriage.

William, had four daughters and three sons, all born in Easton. This was calculated by using the age groups of the males and females listed on the 1810, 1820 and 1830 census. The names of the daughters are not known. William and Elizabeth's sons were: 1. William T. Austin (1802-1881); 2. Simeon Austin (1803-1853), and 3. Ebenezer (1807-1875). William died Oct 21, 1824. His grave is marked at Central Cemetery, Easton. This old cemetery was established in 1803.

Second Generation

(1) William T. (Taunt?) Austin, born Jun 16, 1802, remained in Easton all of his long life. He owned a farm in Bristol County, near Bay Road, Northeast of Easton. It might have been his father's farm. He was also a painter by trade. He married Mary W. Phillips (1807-1875). Their children were: 1. Elizabeth Ann Austin, born about 1830, [married: first, Emory B. Reed; second, Stephen Henry Fowler; third, Henry A. Plympton]; 2. Abby E. Austin born 20 Mar 1833, [married first, Clifford N. Raymond; second, Holder P. Mosher]; 3. Sarah R. Austin, born Jun 1837, married James Webster Butler; 4. William A. Austin, a bootmaker, born Jun 14, 1839 died Apr 24, 1864 of Typhoid Pneumonia at age 25; 5. Emily Arvilla Austin born Oct 7, 1848 married John Eddy and moved to Des Moines, Polk Co., Iowa [sons-William A. 1877 and George Frederic Eddy 1883]; 6. Luella Austin born 1853.

The farm and home of William T. Austin and Mary was valued at \$500 in 1870 and they had \$100 of personal goods. He and Mary were prosperous although they were in their sixties. Only one daughter, Emily, was living at home to help her mother keep house. Mary only lived five more years. William died of Nephritis (kidney disease) on Oct. 1, 1881 at age 79. Easton Death Register confirmed his parent's names as William and Elizabeth of Easton.

(2) Simeon A. Austin was born 1803 in Easton. According to the Census of Sep 10, 1850, he was single at age forty-five, and was working as a shoe cutter in the

residence of Daniel Faxon, a shoe manufacturer of Randolph. He died of Consumption three years later, on May 12, 1853, and was buried at Wendell Cemetery, Holbrook, Norfolk Co., MA. He never married.

(3) **Ebenezer** was born in September of 1807 at Easton. In 1850 and 1860 he was a bootmaker. He also owned a farm valued at \$1000. He had \$200 in personal property. As a young man, Ebenezer married Maria Louise Shepard who was born in 1815. Their intention to marriage was posted on March 22, 1835 in Randolph, MA. The parents of Maria were Thomas Russell Shepard (d.1888) and Mehitable Clark (1790-1818)

The children of Ebenezer and Maria were: 1. Ebenezer Valentine Austin (1836-1905); 2. Helena M. Austin (1839-); 3. Mehitable "Hettie" Russell Austin (1845-1926); and 4. Mary Josephine Austin (1850-1879)

The 1870 Census of Randolph lists Ebenezer as a farmer. Did he give up making boots? Maybe, not. It was common for farmers in Easton to have a cottage industry of bookmaking on their property. The Industrial Age and use of machinery after 1870 caused a decrease in income for the home bootmakers. Ebenezer's obit says that his death on May 28, 1875, at Holbrook, was caused by suicide. He hung himself at age 67, 8 months, 12 days. It is not known what tragedies might have caused him to take that action. Could it have been a financial or personal problem?

Ebenezer's wife, Maria, lived thirteen more years and died in 1888. The couple has a fine stone monument at Wendell Cemetery in Holbrook, Norfolk, MA. The daughters of Maria and Ebenezer had several families that will be mentioned in the next generation.

Third Generation – Children of Ebenezer

(1) **Ebenezer Valentine Austin** – see page one

(2) Helena M. Austin married Freeman Bard on 22 May 1862 at Randolph. She was age 22 and the groom was age 25. He was born in Hatfield, Maine. Freeman's parents were William and Mehitable Bard. Freeman was a bootmaker of Hatfield and Bridgewater. The couple were married by W. F. Stubbart, Clergyman. After their marriage Helena and Freeman lived in Holbrook, near her parents, where Freeman continued his trade as a boot and shoe cutter and manufacturer.

It was Ebenezer Valentine Austin's sister, Mrs. Helena Bard, who was mentioned as next-of-kin on his application to the National Home in 1891. Helena Bard died Jan 15, 1896 in Holbrook, MA. Her husband, Freeman Bard died Aug 7, 1906 at age 70 in Holbrook of acute Nephritis and heart failure. They are buried at Wendell Cemetery.

Helena and Freeman's children were: 1. Ernest J. Bard b. 1867; 2. Ethel M. Bard born Aug 1875, a Stenographer; 3. Mabel Evelyn Bard b. Nov 1876, a stenographer; and 4. Annie Louise Bard born July 15, 1877.

Ernest J. Bard died Dec 1, 1888 when he was age 24 of Consumption. He was not employed at the time.

Ethel M. Bard died of Lumbar Pneumonia when she was age 64, on Feb 2, 1938. She was single. Her sister, Mabel E. Bard who was also single, a retired stenographer, died of Chronic Myocarditis on Jan 13, 1945 in Holbrook. Sister, Annie Louise married Dec 8, 1909 to Berton C. Tebbetts, an insurance agent and machinist. Annie was age thirty and Bert was only twenty-one when they married. Annie and Bert had no children. Berton, died May 23 1947 of Cancer. Annie survived him a few years.

(3) Mehitable Austin, named for her great grandmother, Mehitable Clark, was born in 1841 and died as an infant on Nov 8, 1841 at home in Randolph. She was buried by her parents at Wendell Cemetery in Holbrook.

(4) Mehitable "Hettie" Russell Austin, the second child of this name, was born June 1, 1844 in her father's house on Franklin St., Randolph, MA. Her father Ebenezer was called a shoe manufacturer. Her mother was named Maria Louise Shepard. On her marriage record of May 1, 1867 in Stoughton, Norfolk Co., MA. On later records she used her nickname, "Hettie R. Austin. She married to George Forrester Littlefield, a machinist of Stoughton, who was age twenty-two. Rev. C. M Smith officiated at the ceremony.

In her later years, Hettie joined The Daughters of The American Revolution. Her qualifications for membership were based on the ancestry of her mother. Maria Louisa Shepard was a great granddaughter of Patriot, Paul Clark, a Minuteman of 1775, and a Pvt. Under Col Thomas Marshall. Hettie and George had a daughter named Edna Georgina Littlefield who also joined DAR.

(5) Mary Josephine Austin was born in 1850. She married Alvin L. Jones of Holbrook, an expert bootmaker from N. Abingdon on July 23, 1872. Mary had two daughters who died as infants: 1. Eloise Josephine Jones (b 1873 d. 1873); and Edith Josephine Jones (b. 1879). On Nov 27, 1879, soon after Edith was born her mother Mary died of Liver Cancer. Mary's husband, Alvin Jones, remarried to Emeline Altonia Leonard in 1881 and continued working successfully as a boot and shoe manufacturer. In 1900 he lived on South Franklin St. in Holbrook with Emmaline. Their son, Paul S. Jones founded the famous shoe last company of Jones & Vining. This company is still in business, manufacturing shoe lasts, soles and other component parts using computerized production in their factories in Massachusetts, Arkansas, Maine, Vietnam, Taiwan and China.

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Images:

(1) "Alvin Jones in Hunting Boots" brother-in-law of Ebenezer. V. Austin ca 1870, Randolph, MA. Permission given by Dale Green Family Tree <http://www.Ancestry.com>

(2) The First Boot from Frye Boot Co., Boston, MA. Boot Manufacturing Museum.

(3) "Shoemakers in a Ten-Footer Shop" David N. Johnson Sketch. Bing Images.

(4) The Bottoming Room of the B. F. Spinney & Co. Factory. Lynn, MA. (1872) <http://www.peachridgeglass.com>



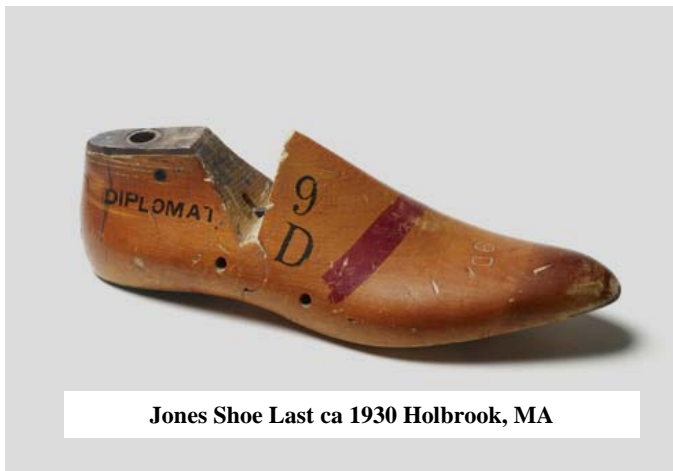
Alvin Jones in Hunting Boots



The First Boot from Frye Boot Co., Boston, MA



Shoemakers in a Ten-Footer Shop



Jones Shoe Last ca 1930 Holbrook, MA



Bottoming Room at B. F. Spinney Factory ca 1872