

"Let Love Abide Till Death Divide"

Story

for

1961 Annual Rice Family Reunion

by

Elsie Hawes Smith, Historian

EDMUND RICE (1638) ASSOCIATION, Inc.

Old Sturbridge Village

Sturbridge, Massachusetts

September 30, 1961

This is the story of a RICE wedding ring now almost two hundred years old. It belonged to Mrs. Thomas Rice of Barre, Mass.

(306) Thomas Rice (#821 in Ward's Rice Family) was a grandson of Jonas Rice, the first settler of Worcester, whose son Jonas bought a "Great Farm" in Barre in 1753. Here Jonas and his wife brought up six children most of whom pioneered to distant places, while Thomas remained in the home farm with his father.

Early in 1774 Thomas' wife died leaving him with three small children. In November of that year he married for his second wife Sarah Nurss of Rutland, giving her this wedding ring bearing the inscription, "Let Love Abide Till Death Divide". They had twenty-five years together adding six other Rice Children to the family. Besides caring for the children Sarah was busily occupied with all of the heavy tasks that fell to a woman in those long gone days, spinning, weaving, candle and soap making, and sewing by hand all of the clothing the family required. We may infer that besides her household duties Sarah assisted Thomas in outside work whenever necessary, for at some time several years after her marriage she lost her treasured wedding ring while working in a flax field. In 1799 she died at the age of 50, wearied with the many tasks the hard years following the Revolution had required of her.

Fifty or sixty years later a farm hand working for Sarah's son Francis Rice, while digging a ditch turned up the wedding band, which could be identified by its inscription. In the last one hundred years this ring has passed through several hands and traveled far.

One of the daughters of Francis Rice, marrying another Rice, distantly related, died young leaving three small children who were taken by her two sisters, each married and childless. To one of these, Eliza, came years later this ring, presumably given her by her aunt, Mrs. Elam E. Shattuck of Worcester, who had brought her up. Eliza married her cousin, Joseph Rice Torrey, a well known businessman of Worcester, and had an only daughter Annie. She in turn having married a Barre man, inherited this precious heirloom from her Mother. After Annie's death the ring was taken with other keepsakes to Florida by the husband, where it reposed for several years in a little black box, made especially to contain mourning jewelry. A few years ago the keepsake box with the wedding ring passed to Annie's only surviving daughter, Mrs George McGrath of Long Island, the 6th generation from Sarah Nurss Rice, who wore it before the Revolutionary War.

This Francis Rice, son of Thomas and Sarah, lived to an advanced age, riding horseback as chief marshal in the Barre Centennial parade at the age of ninety-two. One of his sons, another Thomas, lived to be ninety-seven. He was the Treasurer of the New Haven Railroad for many years, returning after his retirement to his native town where he was a familiar sight upon the streets, a tall man with a strongly boned, craggy face and longish hair, a man highly respected and admired by townspeople and relatives alike.

On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday a party was given in his honor in the vestry of the First Parish Church which his ancestor Jonas had helped to found. There was present a descendant of every branch of the ten generations of the Rice families, which was a remarkable showing.

The following verses about the RICE family were read at the occasion:

Come all you little Rices and sit at your Grandmother's knee;  
Put up your toys and rest awhile and study your A. B. C.

Now what in A. B. C. Grandma? I've been to school a year,  
But I never heard of A B C. What is it Grandma dear?

Now what's the world coming to, children, that boys of your age don't know  
Your A B C from your X Y Z! And you call the old folks slow!  
The school marm's may teach by sentences, in spite of their elders and betters,  
But with this big book to study from, little Rices must learn their letters.

"A" is for Abraham, Abel and Amos;  
For Anson the farmer, with the cider mill famous;  
For Allen from Chelsea, substantial and tall,  
And another, J. Allen, with a good word for all.  
For Albert, a veteran, for Arthur, gone West,  
And a carpenter-hunter, as "Ab" known the best.

"B" is for Benjamin, father and son,  
There were many Rice B's, but their names were all one.

"C" is for Cyrus of days long ago,  
For Carlo, whom we all remember, I know.  
For Charles, long ago wagon maker of fame;  
And later, a carpenter of the same name.  
And Clarence today is a carpenter, too;  
If there's any more, I will leave them to you.

"D" is for Davids, at least half a score;  
For the Dexter we knew and how many more?  
The Daniels were legion; a score if there's one;  
Here's the Deputy Sheriff, and Daniel his son.

"E" for Earl, Ezra, Emery, long was their stay;  
And also Ezekiel who moved far away.  
For Ernest, a genius, and Edward whose zeal  
Is sometimes spent cranking an automobile.

"F" is for Freeman that some have forgot;  
For Francis and Franklin whom others have not.  
For Frederick the jolly, who's now passed away,  
And the Fred who comes home on a nice summer's day.

"G" stands for many who love the Rice name,  
But always twas George, of excellent fame.

"H" stands for Horatio, of days long since past;  
For Henry respected by all to the last.  
While Hobart and Herbert, we're looking to you  
To show what great things the Rices may do

"I". Isaiah, Isaac, Israel, their names surely show  
That they were Rices of long ago.

"J" for Joel and Jonas and Josephs galore;  
 For Johns without number and Jothams still more;  
 For Justin, town father, quite proud of his name,  
 And we'll finish with five generations of James.

There's never a "K" in the whole Rice line  
 Excepting Keziah and Katherine.

"L" is for Larkin or Lot as you choose;  
 For Lyman who used to ask, "What is the news?"  
 For Lemuels plenty, fathers, sons, brothers,  
 and Larned who was not a kin to these others.  
 For Lewis, and Lukes and Luthers a score,  
 And Leonard and Lucius and Lawrence and more.

For "M" there was Moses and Marshall at least  
 And Martin the miller who lives over East.

"N" stands for Nathan and Norman and Noah.  
 For Nathaniel and even perhaps a few more.

"O" is for Oscar, just one, that is all.

"P" is for Phineas, also for Paul.

Queer that in all this Rice review  
 There's never a name beginning with "Q"

"R" is for Ralph, for Rufus and Roy  
 And also for Raymond who's still a small boy.

"S" is for Samuel, Sparhawk and Seth,  
 For Stanley, too, if you're not out of breath.

"T" is all right for Tilly and Timothy,  
 And for Thomas, the one whom we honor tonight.

"U" for Uriah of a time long gone by;  
 "V" is for Vernor, a Senior at High.

William, Willis and Warren are allowed,  
 And Willard who lived far away from the crowd.

Excellent men were the Rices, they say,  
 And "Y's" beyond words, years ago and today.

"Z" is the very last letter you know,  
 And Zibeon and Zebulon are the last Rices we shall show.

Now, little folks, study the Rice book every minute that you can get,  
 For Grandma will be very proud of you when you know your alphabet.

- - - - -

Note: Do you have a Family story? If so send it to our Historian,  
 Mrs. Elsie Hawes Smith, Barre, Massachusetts.