

Bond, Mahitable TR
 mehetable CR
 Mehitable GR

Brown, Isachar TR
 Isachar GR

Brownell, Darling McIntire TR
 ✓ Darling M. GR

Browning, Marianne TR
 Mary Ann GR

Charles, Almira TR
 Elmira GR

Fenton, Adeline L. TR
 Adeline S. CR
 Adeline L. GR

Fenton, ✓ Asely TR
 Achzah B GR

Lumbard, ✓ Willard W CR
 Philip W GR

Morse, ✓ Sophia TR
 Zorvah GR

Sherman, ~~Beryl~~ TR
Beryllai CR
Beryl GR

Stebbins, ~~Edna~~ Endotia TR
Endosia CR
Edosie GR

Taylor, Laura Ann TR
Lorryan GR

Vaill, Ann Kirkland TR
Anne Kirkland GR

Robinson, Angenette TR
Louise H.J. GR

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection

Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

September 29, 1975

Ms. Carroll York Belknap
25 Club Road
Riverside, Connecticut 06878

Dear Ms. Belknap,

I was very excited to receive your letter regarding the information concerning Zebakiah Belknap. There are many questions to ask you and probably more than I could cover in a letter.

The project regarding Belknap has been going on for over a year now and will hopefully culminate in an exhibition of the artist's works. At the moment, I am working on an article for Antiques Magazine and have several questions to clear up regarding facts concerning the artist's life. The most puzzling problem is the proper spelling of Belknap's first name. His gravestone, which is located in the family cemetery in Weathersfield, Vermont reads, "Zebakiah". One of the last living relatives, Mrs. Helen Wheeler, who is the grand-daughter of Zebakiah's sister, Betsy Belknap, claims that her grand-mother spelled the name, "Zedikiah". Finally, in several written sources, I have found the name spelled, "Zedekiah". Unfortunately, in the approximately 130 portraits that have been discovered by this artist, all of the signed examples have the signature, "Z. Belknap". If you have any positive proof of the correct spelling, I would be most grateful to hear from you. In any event, I am most anxious to get together with you for a possible exchange of information.

At present, I am living in South Kent, Connecticut and would very much like to plan a meeting. I have a great deal of information that might be of use for your geneology. Please let me know of a convenient time for a meeting. My phone number is : 927-3701, and my address: Mankin Hill, South Kent, Conn. 06785.

Thank you so much for contacting me and I will hope to hear from you shortly.

Sincerely Yours,

Betsy Mankin

Elizabeth R. Mankin

28 August 1975

Miss Betsey Marken
South England Street
Williamsburg, Va. 23185

Dear Miss Marken:

Your inquiry about Zebakiah Belknap, in N Y History magazine, has been passed along to me because I'm engaged in the preparation of a comprehensive Belknap genealogy. Perhaps the information in my files will be of value to you.

Properly, this man's name was Zedekiah Belknap -- though it appears once or twice as Zebakiah, in records written in days when many names were often misspelled.

I have not personally worked on his record, as it seems to have been covered competently, back in 1914, by the pioneer Belknap genealogist Henry Wyckoff Belknap, curator of Essex Institute, Salem, Mass. The following information comes from Henry's notes -- which indicate that Zedekiah was much more than an itinerant portraitist.

Zedekiah Belknap was the third child of Zedekiah Belknap (Sr) and Elizabeth Wait. He was born 8 March 1781 at Ward, Mass. (now called Auburn). His father was a tailor, who moved to Wethersfield Vt. in later years. Zedekiah (Jr) was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1807, where he had studied divinity. (Chapman, Alumni of Dartmouth) He served as a chaplain in the War of 1812 (no details stated in HWB's record). On 30 April 1812 he married Sophia Sherwin in Waterville, Maine -- marriage record reads "both of Waterville." HWB says he lived in Waterville, but gives no source for this information. In a pencilled note added later, HWB says "Probably he was taxed in Weston, 1814." (If this was Weston in Maine, it was in NE Maine, near the New Brunswick border -- far from Waterville.) His occupation is given as "portrait painter" as stated in record of his death in Vermont Vital Records. He died 8 June 1858 in Wethersfield Vt., where his father had lived and where some of his brothers were then living. HWB's notes say that information about Zedekiah appeared in the genealogical column of the Boston Transcript 24 June 1914. If you wish to consult this, it is available on microfilm in most large libraries.

I hope this will be of some value to you. And I'll be most grateful for anything you can tell me about Zedekiah, for I try to cover more than mere parentage and dates.

Cordially,

HWB 211.6 (100)

2 Oct 1975

Miss Elizabeth R. Mankin
Mankin Hill, South Kent, Conn. 06785

Dear Miss Mankin:

You're quite right to ask for "positive proof" of the name of Zedekiah Belknap. I should have included it in my first letter, but was too intent on giving you information about the man's life; and no doubt was influenced by my knowledge that "Zebakiah" was merely one of the aberrations that are found so often in grave-stone records.

not

There is and never was any reason for calling him "Zebakiah." The proof for Zedekiah is found in Vital Records of Auburn, Mass., which shows the birth of Zedekiah and his sisters and brothers -- and in Vermont Vital Records, which shows his death: transcript by Henry W Belknap. "Belknap, Zedekiah, died 8 June 1858, single, portrait painter." If you wish to quote the exact wording in these original sources, the two books are easy to obtain, perhaps by Interlibrary Loan from Yale, or by loan from New England Historic Genealogical Society, 101 Newbury St., Boston, which was where I got them years ago.

The only known mention of "Zebakiah" comes from what has been said about his grave-stone. HWB found it in an unpublished manuscript Burial Ground Record, at NEHGS. Now I must ask where you got it, for the answer to this question determines what may accurately be said if you feel it necessary to say anything about "Zebakiah." In your letter to me, you write: "His gravestone, which is located in the family cemetery in Weathersfield, Vermont, reads 'Zebakiah'." The use of the present tense implies that the stone has recently been inspected, is still legible, and shows that spelling. If that interpretation of your wording is correct, then the error was made by the stone carver. But if you got your information from some written or printed record, as HWB did, the error may have been made by the person who miscopied the inscription -- which is probably much more likely, I think, for such miscopying is very common, and the record that HWB found contained an obvious error of the date of the death of Zedekiah's father, a mistake that HWB noted and I have confirmed. . . So I hope you will tell me what your source was.

Looking at my record of the father, Zedekiah (Sr), I find two small bits of information to pass along to you, though they may be of no interest:

-- The grandfather of Zedekiah (Jr) -- Jedediah Belknap of Holden, Mass., was what was then called a "cordwainer", i.e., a shoemaker.

-- I suggest you disregard my praenetical note that the Weston mentioned by HWB might be the one in Maine. I now think it more likely that it was the Weston located a few miles west of Weathersfield.

I think you are right in using the present day spelling of Weathersfield, instead of the spelling I adopted some years ago when I found it consistently appearing in old documents that I unearthed when I was trying to complete the record of Zedekiah's uncle Hezekiah.

At the obvious risk of telling you things you already knew -- for which I beg pardon in advance -- I think I should tell you ~~about~~ anything I knew that might possibly be useful to you in writing about Zedekiah's life.

** In naming Zedekiah and his father, I have used (in writing to you) the old device of adding (Jr) and (Sr) -- in which the use of parentheses means that I knew of no instance in which either of them is actually on record as Sr or Jr. My use of the parenthetical terms is simply a means of avoiding possible confusion in the mind of a reader of what I write.

** If anyone has told you that the father's name was "Zedecah," don't be misled. It is true that this spelling appears in the first known mention of him, but in all later records he is shown as "Zedekiah." The controlling record is his signature as Zedekiah in a deed in 1795.

** If you wish to say it, that deed warrants you in writing that Zedekiah (the artist) was "about 15" when his family moved to Weathersfield. In 1795 his father (the tailor) sold ~~the~~ two-acre lot in Ward, which he had bought in 1782. As this is the only property he is known to have owned in Ward, and as there is no further record of him in that area, it is reasonable to conclude that he left Ward in 1795. It is known that he took his wife and all his children with him when he made this move.

** Most people find difficulty in writing about places in which old names have been altered. In my first letter to you, I took the usual shortcut by writing that Zedekiah (jr) was born in "Ward, now Auburn." The full record is more complex. At that time Auburn was a district called Ward, from which it and other districts eventually broke off, so that "Ward" disappeared from maps and other records. In the Federal Census of 1790 it was called "Ward Town." (or 1800? I forget which.)

** It is possible -- but unproven -- that when Zedekiah (sr) moved from Ward to h Weathersfield he was following his brothers Hzekiah and Joseph, who may have gone there sooner -- from their locations in the Worcester area. They are known to have lived and died there, in what seems to have been a sort of "Belknap colony." . . The brother Ebenezer, however, moved from the Worcester area to Marlborough, N.H.

** People writing about the lives of artists and authors often wish to speak of a man's inherited background. So perhaps you may want to mention that ~~Zedekiah~~ (6th generation in America) had an hereditary background of four generations of skilled craftsmen: His first American ancestor, Abraham, was a farmer and nothing else. Then came: Samuel, a "joiner" and later a farmer; Ebenezer, also a joiner and then a farmer; Abraham, a "turner" and then a farmer (and town officer in Framingham); Jedediah, a cordwainer; and finally ~~Zedekiah~~, a tailor. . . What interests me is that these craftsmen plainly took pride in their trades. Long years after some of them had ceased working at their trades and had become farmers, they continued to call themselves "joiner" or "turner," etc., when they bought and sold land in their old age. (Perhaps I should add that the odds are that Zedekiah the tailor became a farmer at Weathersfield. Jedediah died too young to ~~have made~~ this normal change in occupation.)

** The fact that I listed no children of Zedekiah the artist, doesn't necessarily mean he had none. It merely indicates that neither HWB nor I have found any -- nor have we found proof that he was childless, in which we would have said "No children." case

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Of course I'd be delighted to meet you. But I think a trip to my home would be merely a waste of your time, for I've given you all the information that I have and the only questions I could answer would be ones about the man's ancestry, back to the year 1460, which can't possibly be of interest to you -- or questions about the marriage of his sister Betsey, which no doubt you already knew.

I shall look forward to reading your article in Antiques Magazine. Please let me know when it will run. And I hope you will put my name on the list of people to whom publicity for the exhibition of Zedekiah's work will be sent.

Cordially,

(Mr, not Ms)

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~~- Can 29~~

RIVERSIDE YACHT CLUB

RIVERSIDE CONNECTICUT 06878

Return Requested



Martin

Zedekiah (J)

Mr. C. Y. Bolknap
25 Club Road
Riverside, Conn. 06373

THIRD CLASS MAIL

DO NOT FOLD
OR BEND