

Eric Weber

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August 19: The birthday of Eunice Belden Graves (1815-1860). She was the youngest surviving child of John and Eunice (Porter) Graves, who in 1803 began buying the many parcels of land that have become the Graves Farm Audubon Sanctuary. She married in 1844 Deacon Elam Graves (1815–1879), a Haydenville butcher and storekeeper, and they lived on Main Street in that village, in the house that was later the Marks family's. Her death at 45, leaving two children, was caused by a recurring breast cancer. It was described wrenchingly in letters written by her sister-in-law Elizabeth Strong Graves, whose obsessive piety sounds horribly overwrought today, but who was at that time mourning the death of her own firstborn son Eddie a few months earlier. Bereavement had brought Elizabeth's relationship with God into the forefront of her consciousness, and in her letters that summer (WHS has several) she sounded like she was struggling to reaffirm her faith — as if she were worried that God was looking over her shoulder and watching for any lapses.

August 21, 1860: "Eunice had a cancerous tumor in her — Last October she had the breast removed and the wound healed. A short time after Eddie's death, and while I was still in Northampton the sore broke out again. She has been doctoring it all summer and within a week or two has grown very feeble — and it would not be surprising if she did not continue long."

September 2: "O Lord thou art dealing with this family mysteriously, thine hand is laid heavily upon Eunice, be pleased to grant unto her much of thine Holy Spirit to enable her bear all that is laid upon her and may her peace of mind be like a river till she reaches the paradise of God; be with her husband and children; and may they bow meekly before thy chastening hand."

September 4: "This has seemed to be an eventful day — Sister Eunice seemed to be upon the verge of the eternal world, consequently all the family seems to be in commotion. Martha watched with Eunice last night, Rizpah and Minerva tonight. Mother has been down to see her — Uncle Jonathan & Aunt Ruth — and Asahael Nash's wife, child, and brother were here and took dinner — and Rizpah here in the PM, after she went home Bessie and her children came and staid for an hour — and Charles and Glissy this evening after the ___?___s, and upon the whole it has been one of the harried days, when one thing has seemed to tread hard upon the heels of that which went before it — Without Minerva I know not what I should have done."

September 6: "Our Sister Eunice has gone to be forever with her Maker. Her spirit took its departure about 1/2 6 this AM. Poor Charlie & Eliz, I feel sorry for them. I can not forget how he felt when he said, 'Mother is dead.'"

Eunice's daughter Ann Elizabeth married, in 1869, Haydenville physician Dr. William Trow, who was very influential in calling for an inquest into the causes of the 1874 Williamsburg Reservoir disaster, and who served on the coroner's jury that rebuked everyone associated in any way with the shoddy dam. Elam Graves married (2nd) in 1870, Lucinda (Parsons) Judd of Southampton.