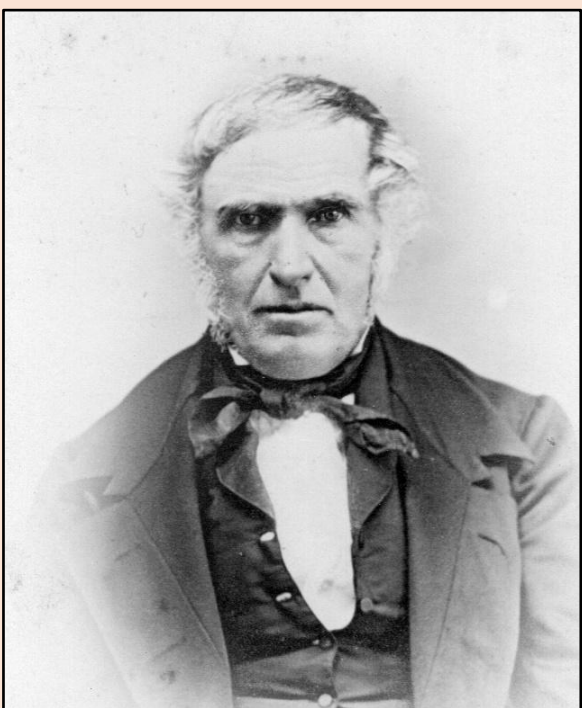


# Tragedy befalls Boylstonian

by  
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*Edward Moore was born 28 January 1823 in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts to Pitt Moore and his second wife, Esther Hastings.<sup>2</sup> His parents had married in Boylston on 5 September 1822 following the death of his father's first wife, Abigail Sawyer, on 11 January 1822.<sup>3,4</sup> Edward had two older half-brothers from that marriage: Asher Moore born 21 November 1815 and Elliot Moore born 25 April 1819, both in Boylston. Edward's birth was followed by that of his sister, Abigail Moore on 8 September 1826 in Boylston.<sup>5</sup>*

*The story of Edward's life, which has been so greatly enhanced by access to his family's historical documents, as well from details from a recently published book, is extraordinary and at the same time very sad. It provides a very direct look into that period of time, cutting across the dynamics of family life, the military, travel to other parts of our country, farming life, religious views and the devastating effects of mental illness.*



Pitt Moore  
1787-1877  
*Father of Edward Moore*  
Boylston Historical Society Photograph



Esther (Hasting) Moore  
1800-1879  
*Mother of Edward Moore*  
Boylston Historical Society Photograph

In 1828, when Edward was 5 years old, his family moved from Boylston to Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts. The Moore family moved to a farm known as the Hinds Place located near Little Watatic Mountain in Ashburnham. In December of 1839, Edward's father extended his holding when he bought a large farm in Ashburnham.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1840 census, one male between the ages of 15-20 years old was reported living in the home of Pitt Moore. As Edward was age 17 years at that time, it is assumed to be him, still living at home with his parents and sister.<sup>7</sup> That year he was also among the men listed in Ashburnham's Volunteer Militia.<sup>8</sup>

It was in the 1840s when Edward went west. In a February 1847 letter written from Nauvoo, Illinois to his older half brother, Elliott Moore, he said he had been honorably discharged from Major Jackson's Battalion. The letter, transcribed below (underlined words are best guesses):<sup>9</sup>

Nauvoo (Illinois) Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 1847  
Dear Brother  
Yours of the 20<sup>th</sup> finds me in good health and spirits in the city of mobs but as far as I am concerned living in peace with all men. I recd (received) an honorable discharge from Majer Jackson's Battalion when he left the city and his army with the exception of self and others who arnt scart yet and can have our row with any man that can brag. We was armed with sharp steels and have lain many a knight (night) expecting each moment to use them. Have herd the midnight parah pres open (or upon) the door and drove him away, but those names are on the records of the past. Peace is now in our border and deads (deeds) of blood are no more. Religon and it are now growing up around us and this city is now in the hands of the people and its maker Safhys(safely?) is as good as the word. My enlistment was on this wise move. Cash \_\_\_\_\_ eny H \_\_\_\_\_ els (else?) a growing, otherwise don't fear for me. The whole W \_\_\_\_\_ cab't command me for one moment. I would sooner be shot than be a soldier but I have no fear and will soon be a western chap. I have faught its battles had its fevers and agnes aynes (aches?) and am more safe and expect to stop in Ms Soenes and was you here in good health it would take? No bands to hold you but yours is \_\_\_\_\_ and of cash this of beauty? Enterprise and sickness. I will not urge anyone but here? For the west I am now engaged at \_\_\_\_\_? It is a good business. I am boarding with one of my comrads in armes who married since he came in.

Cousin Moores wrights often, he has had young in the camp, a girl crownes his joy and love I have recd (received) refreshing letters from you, Asher, Father, which are like a drop of water to the man in the flames off \_\_\_\_\_. I wish Abigail would tell us something of bubs first talks, was he born with a jack plum (reference to Little Jack Horner?) in his mouth and \_\_\_\_\_. Tell Asher I Sorrow? with him but would like to meet him on the shores of Lake Mishigan, that is the place my barges?

Brother I won't thank you for your kindness, words won't do it. Actions will come and \_\_\_\_\_

Father said in his letter that he aught to have a note of \$100 dolls, wright more about it.  
Yours E Moore

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts, Nancy Ann Filgate, Nadine Ekstrom, Victoria Triolo, Patricia Kelleher Bartram, Nathan Rollins, Boylston Historical Collaborative, 2022  
<sup>2</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1823  
<sup>3</sup> Marriage Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1822  
<sup>4</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1822  
<sup>5</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1815, 1819 and 1826  
<sup>6</sup> History of Ashburnham, from the grant of Dorchester Canada to present time, 1734-1886. With a genealogical register for Ashburnham families, Ezra Scollay Stearns, 1887, googlebooks.com  
<sup>7</sup> United States Federal Census, Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1840, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>8</sup> United States, Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988, Ashburnham, Worcester County, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>9</sup> Letter from Edward Moore to Elliot Moore, 1847, Marble Family Papers, Pamela Marble Sherman (words underlined in all Marble letters in this research are best guesses by P. Sherman)

While not certain, considering Edward’s location, his words and the corresponding dates, it is probable that Edward was part of the Nauvoo Legion, a military force or militia of about 2,500 troops similar to the Illinois State Militia, with powers granted to it in late 1840 by the governor of Illinois. Its leader was Lieutenant General Joseph Smith. His staff included Aide-de-Camp Joseph H. Jackson who had been appointed in January 1844, and who may have been the Major Jackson of whom Edward spoke.<sup>10</sup>

Nauvoo, Illinois, which lies along east side of the Mississippi River, had been established in 1839 by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), also known as Mormons, under the auspices of Joseph Smith, the Church’s founder and first prophet (same person as aforementioned Lieutenant General). The LDS community was initially welcomed to the area and quickly expanded. But as the Mormon population grew, other citizens felt threatened by their large voting bloc and political power, and violence erupted. In 1844, LDS founder Joseph Smith was murdered during an anti-Mormon raid in Carthage, just some 20 miles to the east. Led by Brigham Young, the Mormons left Nauvoo shortly thereafter seeking a new home further West. Upon the state’s revocation of the Nauvoo Charter in the winter of 1844–1845, the Nauvoo Legion was no longer a recognized state militia and its members returned the majority of its government-issued arms.<sup>11</sup> On 10 September 1846, a mob of anti-Mormons besieged Nauvoo resulting in this religious group eventually fleeing from the religious persecution of Nauvoo led by Brigham Young to Salt Lake City, Utah.

In the spring of 1848, still in Nauvoo, Edward wrote to his father in Ashburnham about his life and his marriage (transcripted text below):

*Nauvoo (Illinois) April 10, 1848*

*Kind parent I red yours with much pleasure and in \_\_\_\_\_ turn would beg to be excused for not answering it sooner. My health is good and has been so far the last year. My circumstances are much the same with the exception of one new partner by the name of Rachel Monohon and as she fries all the sausages I am so much better off. We spliced (slang for getting married) last winter and have got along very smooth so far. She is a native of Ohio, younger than I am and it is said pretty good looking. So much for her. This city you wrote to know something of it. Its population is about 2,500 of all nations? We have #? denominations of profession and one of Black Leggs (strike breakers) but is nothing uncommon for shooting or stabbing to go on in broad daylight. This week one of the merchants was shot through the liver in the act of D\_\_\_\_king his neighbor (or drinking with his neighbor?). For all this I feel safe. Nothing harms one that minds his own business. I expect to farm it this seson (season). I have a good outfit for the business. Corn is selling at 12 cts, pork at 200 p \_ hd? Yet it is a money business on this soil, of all places this is good for bread and cheese. One of my neighbors says he can support his family killing game. There is abundance of it and fine fish in the river. I have seen some that weighed over a hundred. The place is gradually improving and with its advantages of water power and soil will make one of the finest cittees of the west to say nothing of the temple. It has some as fine blocks streets and grand buildings as any in the East. The river below town falls 12 feet in 12 miles stopping boats in low stages of water – This is to be turned into water power and would be sufficient to \_\_\_\_\_ Lowell. I am receiving letters from Moores. He is well and is about to have an addition to his family. He is farming largely but it is too unhealthy in that place. That is more to be looked at than all other things.*

*Elliot, Asher, Abigail and Mother, I long to hear from you all but I must leave you in the hand of god that rules the fate of \_\_\_\_\_ hoping that we may meet soon but how soon none can tell.*  
*E Moore*<sup>12</sup>

The records show that Edward had indeed married Rachel Monohon on 8 January 1848 in Hancock County, Illinois. He was 25 years old at the time of their marriage. Rachel was the daughter of Owen Monohon and Ann Eliza Strong<sup>13,14</sup> Edward and Rachel’s son, Edward Bailey Moore, was born later that same year.<sup>15</sup>

The “Moores” Edward speaks of in his letter was his older first cousin, Moores Bailey, who had been born in Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts on 4 April 1812, the son of Abigail Moore and Benjamin Bailey.<sup>16</sup> Moores’ mother, Abigail Moore Bailey, was the sister of Edward’s father, Pitt Moore. By the early 1840s, Moores Bailey was living in Sangamon County, Illinois, and it was there that he married Mariah Dill on 28 April 1845.<sup>17,18</sup> During this period, Moores was farming, but also was a missionary Baptist preacher, 1 of 2 ordained ministers connected with Lebanon branch of the Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois.<sup>19,20</sup>

...Upon leaving for the Gold Rush, Edward did send his wife Rachel and their young son, Edward Bailey, to live with his cousin, Reverend Moores Bailey who by then was residing Lick Creek, Sangamon County, Illinois.<sup>21</sup> Rachel apparently showed up on Moores' doorstep with nothing but the child. Moores and his wife took them in and it turned out Rachel was pregnant with their second child. Rachel bore Edward’s daughter, Abby Maria Moore, in Ashburnham on 28 October 1850. The baby’s birth record confirms her father was Edward Moore, a mechanic born in Boylston and her mother, Rachel Moore, was born in Ohio.<sup>22</sup> While Rachel was in Ashburnham giving birth, Edward and Rachel’s son Edward Bailey appears to have been left in Sangamon County, Illinois in the care of Edward’s cousin Moores Bailey and his wife, as he was enumerated with that family in the 1850 federal census as Edward Moore, age 2 years<sup>23</sup>...

...In late 1853 Edward wrote to his parents, having spent the past year mining for gold...letters to his parents and Charles Hastings c/o Jotham Hastings of Boylston indicate his hunt for gold in Hungry Creek, a tributary to Beaver Creek, which flows into the Klamath River, west of Coles near the Oregon border. There was probably mining there as early at 1850.<sup>24</sup> Marysville today is a city and the county seat of Yuba County, California, located in the Gold Country region of Northern California.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>10</sup> josephsmithpapers.org/back/nauvoo-legion-officers-1841-1844

<sup>11</sup> blogs.bu.edu/guidedhistory/historians-craft/mormon-conflict-and-controversy-at-nauvoo-1839-1846/

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Edward Moore to his parents, 1848, Marble Family Papers, Pamela Marble Sherman

<sup>13</sup> United States, *Illinois, Compiled Marriages, 1790-1860*, database, *ancestry.com* [NOTE: This surname is spelled differently in various records, including: Monehan, Monahan, Monohan, Monehon, Monohon.]

<sup>14</sup> History of Ashburnham, from the grant of Dorchester Canada to present time, 1734-1886. With a genealogical register for Ashburnham families, Ezra Scollay Stearns, 1887, googlebooks.com

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Edward Moore to his mother, 1850, Marble Family Papers, Pamela Marble Sherman

<sup>16</sup> Birth Records, Sterling, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1812, digital image, *ancestry.com*

<sup>17</sup> United States, *Illinois, Compiled Marriages, 1790-1860*, database, *ancestry.com*

<sup>18</sup> United States Federal Census, Sangamon County, Illinois, 1850, digital image, *ancestry.com*

<sup>19</sup> Maria Dill Bailey Gardner Obituary, *The Belleville Telescope*, Belleville, Kansas, 6 Jun 1902, *newspapers.com Obituary Index, 1800s-current*, digital image, *ancestry.com*

<sup>20</sup> History of the Springfield Baptist Association: With Sketches of the Churches of Which It Is Composed and Biographical Sketches of Deceased Ministers, Springfield, Illinois, H.W. Rokker, printer and binder, 1991

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Edward Moore to his cousin Moores Bailey, 1850, Marble Family Papers, Pamela Marble Sherman

<sup>22</sup> Birth Records, Ashburnham, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1850, digital image, *ancestry.com* [NOTE: Recorded as “Abby” on her birth record, her first name can be found in various records spelled: Abby, Abbie, Abbey, Abi, Abbe, Abigail, Abigal.]

<sup>23</sup> United States Federal Census, Sangamon County, Illinois, 1850, digital image, *ancestry.com*

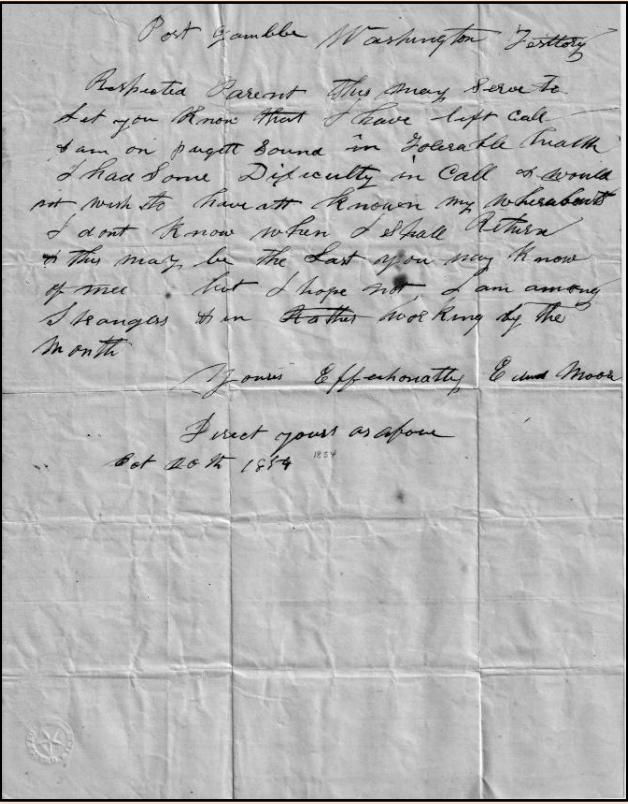
<sup>24</sup> California Gold Camps: A Geographical and Historical Dictionary of Camps, Towns and Localities Where Gold was Found and Mined, Gudde, Erwin G., April 2009, googlebooks.com

<sup>25</sup> Wikipedia.org



It was later in that year of 1854 when Edward’s life turned really tragic and his story at this time has been documented and recounted in the 2021 book by Josephine Ensign, *Skid Road: On the Frontier of Health and Homelessness in an American City*. She identifies Edward Moore, known to have come from Worcester County, Massachusetts, as Seattle’s first documented homeless person.<sup>26</sup>

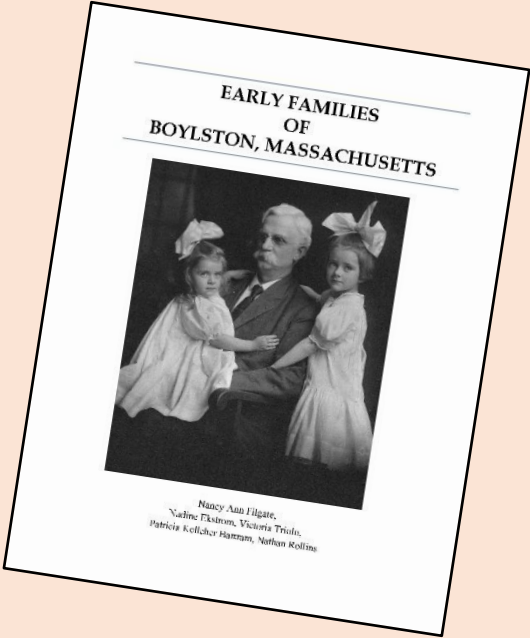
...The first sign of his trouble is found in October 1854, in a letter Edward wrote to his father...



Letter from Edward Moore to his parents saying he has come on hard times and this may be his last letter  
Dated October 1854  
Letter courtesy of Pamela Sherman

... two months later in December 1854, Edward was discovered by area settlers on a beach in Seattle, King County, Washington, in the area then called Babaqwab, now known as Belltown just north of Pike Place Market. He appeared to have been living there for some months in a makeshift tent and subsisting on raw shellfish and was thought to be a sailor who had been washed up or abandoned by his captain after a shipwreck. His feet were severely frostbitten and wrapped in rags. As the community did not have a hospital, Edward was carried to the town’s only rooming house. The tragedy of his life does not end but continues as he returns to Massachusetts.

To read the letters of Edward written to his family and other Boylston residents and glean the details of the life of a Boylstonian seeking gold, becoming Seattle’s first homeless person, and his return to Massachusetts, stop by The Fuller Research Library in the Historic Town Hall, 7 Central Street, Boylston, to read about Edward Moore in *The Early Families of Boylston, Massachusetts* or pick up your copy today.



<sup>26</sup> Skid Road: On the Frontier of Health and Homelessness in an American City, Johns Hopkins University Press, August 2021, Josephine Ensign