CHAPTER ONE

Educating a Young Yankee

The powerfully creative visions of Edwin Ginn, publisher and peace promoter, somehow emerged out of a strongly independent, free-thinking, hardscrabble childhood in northern Maine; a liberal Christian background and upbringing; a family tradition of seafaring, shipbuilding, and lumbering; a compelling zest for education and self-improvement; and a determination to improve the lives of fellow New Englanders.

Ginn reached well beyond his origins. Yet, he constantly harked back to his early Maine days. They provided the compass by which he oriented his commercial and international aspirations. The lessons learned in those hard years guided his growth in wealth and wisdom. They inspired his civic conscience and provided the moral lodestar by which he explained his motives and his goals. Ginn always ascribed his accomplishments and his acquisition of wealth to the rock-like discipline and strict principles of his youth; for him, the tough soils of Maine were the sure foundation of every subsequent personal advance and progressive initiative.

Edwin Ginn was born on Feb. 14, 1838, in North Orland, Maine, ten miles east of Bucksport. James and Sarah Blood Ginn, his parents, farmed, but his father also lumbered and constructed small sailing vessels. Farther back, the Ginns (or Genns), with their Welsh name (meaning white) sailed from Plymouth, England, in the late seventeenth century, to Virginia. There James Ginn (or Genn) grew tobacco in North Umberland County, in the northeastern corner of the Northern Neck peninsula. An owner of extensive land in several counties—at least 1,000 acres—he was also a prominent and esteemed surveyor. He in-

structed the young George Washington in surveying, not least during a 1748 expedition to the South Branch of the Potomac River.[1]

A grandson of James Ginn, also James, was born in Orangetown, Virginia, in 1745. He is the James Ginn, great-grandfather of Edwin, who moved from Virginia, where he and his two brothers had begun building ships, to Gloucester, Massachusetts. There, in 1768, he married Ann Riggs, daughter of Joshua Riggs and Experience Stanwood and the great granddaughter of the first settler and first teacher in Gloucester. They lived there until 1776, and then sailed to Brewer, Maine, across from Bangor on the Penobscot River. In Brewer, in 1787, James was commissioned by John Hancock, governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to be captain and commander of the 1st Company, 5th Regiment, 2nd Brigade, of the Commonwealth's militia.[2] He also was Lincoln (Maine, but then still part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) County's only slave-owner (with a single slave).[3]

In 1797, Captain James Ginn, his wife and children, and one slave sailed down the Penobscot River to Orland, today a pleasant, tiny, valley village 2.5 miles from Bucksport, where he ran the local mill and continued to construct ships. In Bucksport (Buckstown until it changed its name in 1817), to which location on the Penobscot they moved in 1800, James Ginn built a wharf, a store, and the town's largest house, and then began to construct larger and larger ships. Indeed, he transferred to Bucksport primarily in order to have access to the deeper reaches of the lower Penobscot River, where he could best launch seagoing vessels, a livelihood that two of his sons continued until 1883. During that period, they constructed eighteen ships, including three schooners, nine barks, three brigs, and two barkentines. The Ginns constructed the largest ship ever built in Bucksport, a 1400 ton square rigged vessel, 200 feet in length, that was lost on an early voyage from Rangoon to Liverpool with a cargo of rice. Some of the Ginn-built schooners were used in the fishing and coastal trades, faster ones being employed to carry passengers and freight to Portland, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Several sailed to the Caribbean or Europe, and many foundered at sea.[4] Captain Ginn was reputed to have been the first trader to import foreign goods into Bucksport.

James and Ann Ginn had six sons and six daughters, one of whom was William Riggs Ginn, also a successful shipbuilder, who stayed in Bucksport. Another was Abraham, born in 1773 and listed as a leading man in Orland. He married Hannah Downes in 1794.[5] Together,

living in North Orland, ten miles from Orland village proper, on land purchased by Captain Ginn, they had sixteen children, the fourth of whom was James (1801–1878), Edwin Ginn's father. There were eight issue from James Ginn's marriage in 1824 to Sarah (Sally) Blood (1799–1856), a daughter of Dr. Daniel and Esther Rideout Blood, of the Long Pond district of East Bucksport (a village near Dedham and northeast of North Orland). Long Pond lies east of East Bucksport, toward the hamlet of Santiago, under Peaked Mountain.

The Bloods were of Puritan stock, descended from settlers in Salem in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The father of Daniel, also Daniel Blood, was born in Groton, Massachusetts in 1749 and killed during the Revolutionary War. Daniel Blood the younger (1777–1850) gained his medical training privately, not at one of the new American nation's four existing medical colleges.[6] He also farmed in East Bucksport. In 1796, he married Esther Rideout, also from Hollis, the daughter of a Revolutionary War survivor. She was the fourth of nine children. In addition to Sarah, the third born, she gave birth to seven children.

Dr. Blood was the elder brother of Mighill Blood (1777–1852), Bucksport's first permanent Christian minister, whose portrait hangs in the town's Congregational church. Preceded in the 1790s by Abraham Cummings, an eccentric Baptist; Jonathan Sewall; and Abijah Wines, Mighill Blood arrived in 1803 after the town meeting had appropriated $300 ($3,615 in 2002) for his annual stipend. Mighill Blood was a Dartmouth College graduate (in 1800) who had studied theology privately in Charlestown, Massachusetts. In Bucksport, he first preached in various houses provided by Captain Ginn and others. Then the church members constructed the First Trinitarian Church, where Blood presided until 1840. The first chronicler of Bucksport described him as less than a brilliant preacher, but sound in theology, "strong in argument, wise in council, and highly esteemed by his people." Moreover, "it may truly be said of him," Buck continued, "that he was a man of peace."[7]

When James Ginn and Sarah Blood married, she was heavy with her first child, who was born four months later. Four years later the second arrived, with others following at close and steady intervals. Edwin was the seventh child and fourth son.[8] In his own slim autobiography, Edwin Ginn mentions only one of his siblings, Frederick, born in 1830.

The area of what is now Orland was originally termed Alamoosook, an Abanaki word meaning place of many fish—alewives, shad, and bass; the lake that today defines Orland carries the same name. The

river which flows through Orland was and is called Narramassic, or "hard to find," in the same language. Later, in colonial times, Orland was named Eastern River after the branch of the Penobscot that bounds Orland on the west. Lake Alamoosook and Toddy Pond feed the Narramassic River, which is called the Orland River as it bisects the village and before it runs into the Eastern River.

Orland, by whatever name, has thus always been focused on its access both to the tidal salt water lower Penobscot River and to freshwater lakes and streams. Supplies of good water, vast stands of white pine, and a pioneering spirit attracted the first settlers to the region, not necessarily to the acidic soils of the scraggly farms which they carved out of forested land, and on which generations of tough women and men attempted to feed and keep themselves.

The first colonial expedition to the area was led by Governor Thomas Pownal of Massachusetts in 1759. He sought to prevent raids from French Canada; Fort Pownal consequently was erected on Cape Jellison on the western side of the river. He and his accompanying soldiers also found the nearby lands enticing. Three years later, the Great and General Court (the legislature) of the Massachusetts Bay Colony issued major land grants for the region. A group of worthy petitioners from Haverhill, Massachusetts, received one of those grants, for the vast forested expanse between the Penobscot and St. Croix Rivers (i.e., to the northern borders of what is today Maine).

The captain of the sloop that sailed in 1762 to explore the new lands along the lower reaches of the Penobscot River was Jonathan Buck. He and his co-religionists from Haverhill set out the six townships (originally "plantations") of what today are the towns of Bucksport, Orland, Castine, Sedgwick, Blue Hill, and Surry. By 1763, Buck had begun building his own town in the wilderness, cutting down massive virgin pines and reserving one lot for a parson, one for schools, and one for Harvard College.[9]

A year later, Joseph Gross, who had helped build Fort Pownal, settled in Orland, Buck's Plantation #2. Others, including Gross's brother and a handful of well-connected Bostonians, followed, and the village's first road was laid out. Two years later, the town had a sawmill and a gristmill, but a poor harvest in 1775 produced severe difficulties for Orland's twelve families, and the revolutionary war years were not at all comfortable.

Buck raised the 5th Militia Company of Lincoln County from among

the local men of all six "plantations." This Company sought to contain a British force that had landed on the Castine Peninsula. The British constructed earthen Fort George, which dominated the commerce of Penobscot River and Bay and the surrounding townships. In 1779, a large fleet of thirty-seven ships and over 2,000 men from the Massachusetts Bay Colony attempted to relieve the Bucksport and Orland settlers, but the much smaller British force, composed of seven ships and 750 men, administered a major defeat. It was one of the most telling American naval losses before Pearl Harbor. Afterwards, the British burned Bucksport, and Buck and others trekked to Bangor and then laboriously home to distant Haverhill.

After the war, the fortunes of Bucksport and Orland revived, and settlers once again began arriving from Massachusetts. Buck and others returned and rebuilt the eponymous settlement, which held its first town meeting in 1792. Within a few years, the inhabitants of Bucksport had begun transforming their towering pines into masts for schooners, barks, and brigantines. Orland was also growing, and throughout the 1790s annual town meeting warrants contained articles seeking a proper name for Plantation #2. "The person who would pay the most money could name the town," stated an article in the 1798 warrant. Received Orland history suggests that Joseph Lee, of the Virginia Lee family, had been making a fortune procuring timber locally for ships' masts, and selling them to the British. One of his ships, a brig built in the town in 1798 by Captain James Ginn, was called the *Orland*, and Lee, the elected town clerk in 1800, proceeded to purchase the rights to name the town; Orland was incorporated in that year.[10]

It may say something decisive about the character of both Orland and Bucksport that, when Maine voted in 1819 to separate from Massachusetts, all forty-eight male Orland voters (and ninety-three of the 101 voters in Bucksport) cast their ballots against the split. However, Hancock County, in which new jurisdiction both towns were then situated, voted narrowly in favor of secession. Earlier, in 1816, the male heads of households in Orland town meeting voted 13 to 8 against separating from Massachusetts, but there is no record of which side the Ginns favored.

In 1840, Orland's population (including persons in North Orland and East Orland) numbered 1,381, including four Ginn families. Bucksport, in 1840, counted 3,015 inhabitants and three families of Ginns.[11] Maine then had a total population of 501,000. In 1880, when Maine had

grown to 649,000, Orland was a town of 1,689 citizens and Bucksport had 3,047 persons. In 2000, Orland's census listed 2,134 persons.

Ginn himself, the future publisher, describes the isolated, north-facing high hillside farm on which he was born as full of rocks and rocky outcrops. With distant views of Brewer Lake to the north and Bucksport and the Penobscot River to the west, the land must have been purchased for its trees (for shipbuilding), and not for its stunning outlook or the richness of its soil. The farm, Ginn writes, "gave me plenty of exercise in picking the stones from the newly plowed land, in spreading the hay, raking after the cart, cutting the firewood, taking care of the horses, the cows, and the sheep, and in doing other chores. . . ." Ginn describes his youth as "*blessed* with poverty."[12] Despite the existence of older brothers and sisters, he reports that he did the responsible work of the large household. When he was seven, he milked two cows morning and night. At nine, a slight young man weighing seventy pounds, he reports being left "entirely alone" during the winter to take care of the animals, cut the firewood, draw the water, and do other tasks. He built the morning fires and hugged the old kitchen stove for warmth. Where were the other children?

"I always dreaded" searching for straying cows on a foggy night, Ginn remembered. But from following them and discovering where the cows had gone, and being able to discern them only from atop the highest tree stumps, Ginn learned a practical lesson: "the importance of climbing an eminence that would command the situation, whatever it might be."[13] Another of his favorite aphorisms flowed from being a poor youth. He gathered beechnuts, a very slow process, in one year selling the entire harvest for 50 cents. But he considered himself well paid. He also gathered old pieces of discarded scrap iron, selling them for a half cent a pound. "I shall never forget the few dollars I earned in these ways . . . ," he wrote. "We make it altogether too easy for our children to get the things they want."[14]

Ginn was proud of his early frugality and self-reliance. "When I wanted playthings I had to make them"—water wheels, sleds, and sawmills. "If every boy and girl could have the benefit of the lessons learned on a farm they would make better men and women," Ginn decided much later. Young persons nowadays, he said in about 1906, "turn away from manual labor as irksome, and are too young to realize the part it plays in the building up of character."[15]

Going to school in Ginn's youth provided welcome relief from farm

chores. In addition, said Ginn, "some of us . . . had a real thirst for knowledge, which was not lessened because of the meager opportunities for acquiring it."[16] Ginn was regarded as bookish, a propensity that he inherited from his mother, along with a strong interest in formal education. (His father supposedly contributed a commercial flair and strong business ethics to the emerging character of young Ginn.) Locally, Ginn was known as a smart lad who seemed strange because he preferred reading in the farmhouse rather than playing with the other boys.

The school year in his youth was but two months in winter and two in summer, largely devoted to reading, spelling, history, geography, "parsing," and "ciphering," or arithmetic. The village school itself was in North Orland, not far from his home and across from North Orland's "Granite Cemetery." No matter how brief and episodic Ginn's short spells of schooling may have been, they whetted his appetite for a lifetime of further intellectual growth.

In 1855, by which time Ginn's local schooling had largely concluded, the town's 741 pupils (half of the town's population) between 4 and 21 were taught by 10 men (in the winter) and 15 women (in the summer) in 9 school houses. These schools were located about two miles apart because the students were "stiller in school and prosecute their studies with more success when required to take active and brisk exercise in the open air. . . . A 2-mile walk is not too much for a person who is confined 3 hours to hard study." Anyway, children in 1855, said an Orland teacher, were being brought up "too tenderly."[17]

The pupils used the inside layers of birch bark for their slates or notebooks, and wrote on them with pens made from goose quills and ink from maple bark. If they failed to apply themselves to their lessons, teachers switched them with cattails. Whispering was punished by putting cayenne pepper on their tongues; mouths were closed with sticking plaster.

Attendance was not made mandatory in Maine until 1875. Before that time, about 50 to 60 percent of eligible and registered students actually attended school in Orland. However, although most Maine men ended their schooling at 18, in Orland during this period the men stayed in school until age 20. Parents, said an 1868 instructional sheet in Orland, had a "special and primary responsibility in securing the regular and prompt attendance of their children. . . ." Parents were asked to "manifest an interest in the progress and studies of their children,

encourage them to study and talk about the lessons of the day and those of the morrow . . . and show them that their success [was] recognized and appreciated." Parental neglect caused pupils to fall behind.[18] Whether or not these tough-minded but progressive sentiments accurately reflected an enlightened approach to schooling and its merits among Orland's Yankee leadership and his own parents, Ginn had long left Orland, for good. Although bookish, he, at least, had received a less formally intense education than that to which the youth of Orland were later exposed. Indeed, James Ginn sought to round out young Edwin's character in other ways.

Because his health may have been regarded as "tenuous," Ginn's father decided that the boy needed to gain "some ruggedness" for his constitution.[19] Consequently, Ginn was sent at age thirteen by his father to cook for a crew of lumberjacks felling trees in a remote camp. "I enjoyed the work immensely," writes Ginn, who fed the lumbermen on pork and beans, good bread and molasses, salt, and fresh meat. He was also responsible for fetching water from a nearby brook on dark winter evenings, a chore that made him fearful after the lumberjacks had told wild and frightening stories about bears and wolves prowling around the edge of the camp. Such experiences build character, Ginn conceded, but he was willing that his own children should be spared similar bouts of character building by fear.

When he was fourteen, as befitted the son of a sometime shipwright, Ginn set sail on a fishing schooner, cooking for a crew bound for the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. He did not see land for four and a half months. Later he well remembered long watches on the deck on calm moonlit nights when the only sounds were a slight creaking of the boom as the ship rolled. Those were times for "deep thought, with no living thing to disturb one's meditation." Ginn acquired a feeling for and knowledge of tides, winds, ocean currents, fogs, and the fishing industry. The lessons for life learned on this voyage were many, Ginn relates, but a key one was "if you want to catch fish, keep your hook well baited."[20]

For the next five years, Ginn sailed to the Grand Banks each summer. During the rest of the year he helped his parents with the farm and the farm chores. Meanwhile, he also attended secondary school, first at Orland's High School Institute, which had eighty-two scholars studying English and the classics in 1851, and then at the Bucksport Seminary. The Institute had no one to teach Latin well, hence Ginn's shift to the

Seminary in Bucksport. By this time, Ginn's family had moved off the farm into the very center of the village of Orland, occupying a modest wood frame house along the Narramassic River, where the shipyards were. It now is the manse of the local Methodist church. Ginn walked 2.5 miles each day to the seminary in Bucksport, and 2.5 miles home.

That seminary was unable to satisfy Ginn's educational aspirations. As a boarder, aged sixteen, Ginn therefore went to the Universalist Church's Westbrook Seminary, in southern Maine, then near Portland, now a part of the city. His elder brother Daniel preceded him and his young sister Harriet also attended the Seminary and its allied Female College with Edwin, although he mentioned neither sibling in his slim account of his time there.

Edwin Ginn entered Westbrook in 1854 and graduated in 1858, studying arithmetic, grammar, and Latin in the autumn term of 1855, and Latin, bookkeeping, arithmetic, natural history, and rhetoric in the spring term of 1856. (The course listings for his other terms—three each year—are not available.) All classes were held in a two-story, square, Federal-style, brick building with tower and cupola, now called Alumni Hall.

Ginn was elected in 1855 to the school's prestigious Eromathian Adelphi Society, its premier debating club, so clearly he was popular. Ginn was one of about 193 students in those years, 71 of whom were girls. Tuition costs varied, from $1 per term for penmanship to $5 for basic English instruction and $7 for "highest" English tutoring. Individual music lessons cost $6 per term. Students also paid $2.40 a week if they lived and took their meals in the Seminary's gentleman's boarding house, or privately.[21]

At some point during these years of secondary schooling, Ginn felt that he lacked the power of concentration. This supposed deficiency turned him to the game of chess, which he found "a great help . . . in learning to put my mind upon the great thing in hand. . . ."[22]

Westbrook Seminary, a coeducational boarding school founded in 1831 (but opened in 1834) by the Kennebec Association of Universalists to promote piety and morality, was much more secular than denominational. Yet, the Seminary was established so that Universalist young people could be educated in an environment that would not conflict with or refute their religious beliefs. They also were compelled to attend the Universalist church on the Seminary's grounds. The Seminary was self-described as a place unsuited for the idle, the wayward, or

those who were averse to study. Long after Ginn's time, the Seminary added a women's junior college (1925) and, in 1970, became Westbrook College, once again a co-ed institution. Subsequently, in 1996, it became the Westbrook campus of the University of New England, focusing on preparation for the health professions.

Universalism provided a central focus of Ginn's young life. His grand-uncle's pursuit and creed clearly provided one of several crucial compasses during the formative years of his youth. Indeed, it is evident from an examination of Ginn's educational record that his early life was shaped by Universalists and the liberal beliefs and spiritual approaches of Universalism.

As late eighteenth-century defectors from orthodox Congregationalism, the early Universalists were uncomfortable with the predestinarianism of the majority of their fellow New England Protestants. They favored the possibility of ultimate, universal, salvation and believed in the universal fatherhood of god and the universal brotherhood of humankind. Universalism challenged its followers to reach out and embrace marginalized members of society; it was the first denomination to ordain women, in 1863. Many of its prominent adherents were abolitionists before the Civil War. Others were prison reformers, and Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross.

Universalists were optimistic theologically, affirming a benevolent deity. Universalists were truth seekers. They were theologically humane, ethical, democratic, suspicious of aristocratic privilege, and antagonistic to anything that even hinted at theocratic governance. Indeed, the whole notion of creating a "church" was anathema; early adherents preferred to think of themselves as belonging to a society or a meetinghouse, like the Quakers. Their leaders were preachers, not clergy.

Thomas Starr King was a Universalist preacher credited with defining the distinction between Unitarians and Universalists. The latter were more evangelical, and Horace Greeley even took Universalism into the West. According to King, Universalists believed "that God is too good to damn people, and . . . Unitarians believe that people are too good to be damned by God."[23]

Many of the first converts to Universalism were Baptists, and some were disgruntled or new-thinking Methodists or Congregationalists. The first "church" was established in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1779, and the first general meeting to establish the Universalist Church took place

in Oxford, Massachusetts, in 1785. There the believers adopted a charter and became a new denomination. Later, Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence and a convert to Universalism, helped to promote a national organization and a "declaration of faith" to which Universalists could subscribe, but most of the then recently developed societies of the denomination preferred to remain locally independent.

Until about the time of Ginn's birth, Universalism continued to be regarded as a heretical sect. There may have been a mere fifty Universalist preachers in 1820, and the existing state and other societies of the church were small, scattered, and defensive. Universalists were barred well into the nineteenth century from testifying under oath in court proceedings in several New England states. But by the 1840s, Universalists were sufficiently secure and numerous to advocate temperance and oppose slavery. One of their own became an outspoken pacifist and launched an experimental utopian community in western Massachusetts. Others promoted education, chartering a dozen academies or secondary schools for their flock before 1852. By that time, if not a few years before, Universalists would have ceased thinking of themselves as religious outsiders. By mid-century, amid the rapidly moving kaleidoscope of American Christianity, Universalism was regarded as an acceptably mainstream Protestant pursuit, especially in Maine and the remainder of New England. Nearly a century later, in 1942, the Universalist General Convention became the Universalist Church of America. Nineteen years later it merged with the larger American Unitarian Association to become the Unitarian Universalist Association.

At seventeen, when Ginn was at Westbrook, he contemplated training for the ministry. Fortunately, as Ginn himself later recalled, he consulted with the Seminary's leader. The principal, President Rev. James Partelow Weston, suggested that Ginn should instead focus on a general preparation for higher learning, with particular emphasis on achieving a broad liberal education. Ginn reported that Weston, 40, was "sympathetic, considerate, a wise counselor, kind to the well-intentioned, and judicious to the erring." Weston, a Bowdoin College graduate, suggested that a liberally educated man would be prepared for all kinds of work, and that Ginn should not rush a decision until after he had graduated from the seminary. That was divine providence at work, Ginn subsequently wrote, for "I would probably have made but a second-rate preacher, whereas I have been able to do pretty good work in . . . publishing. . . ."[24]