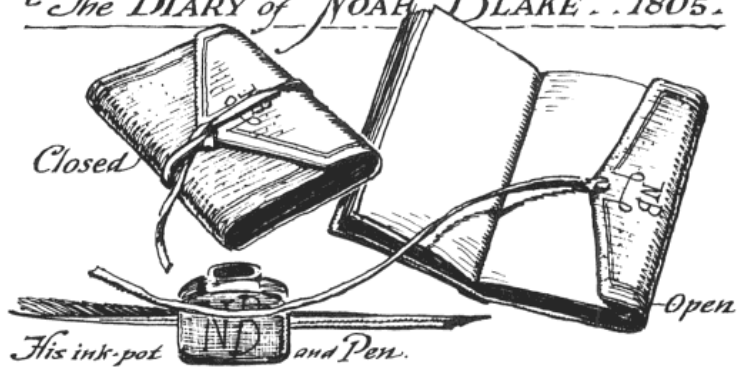
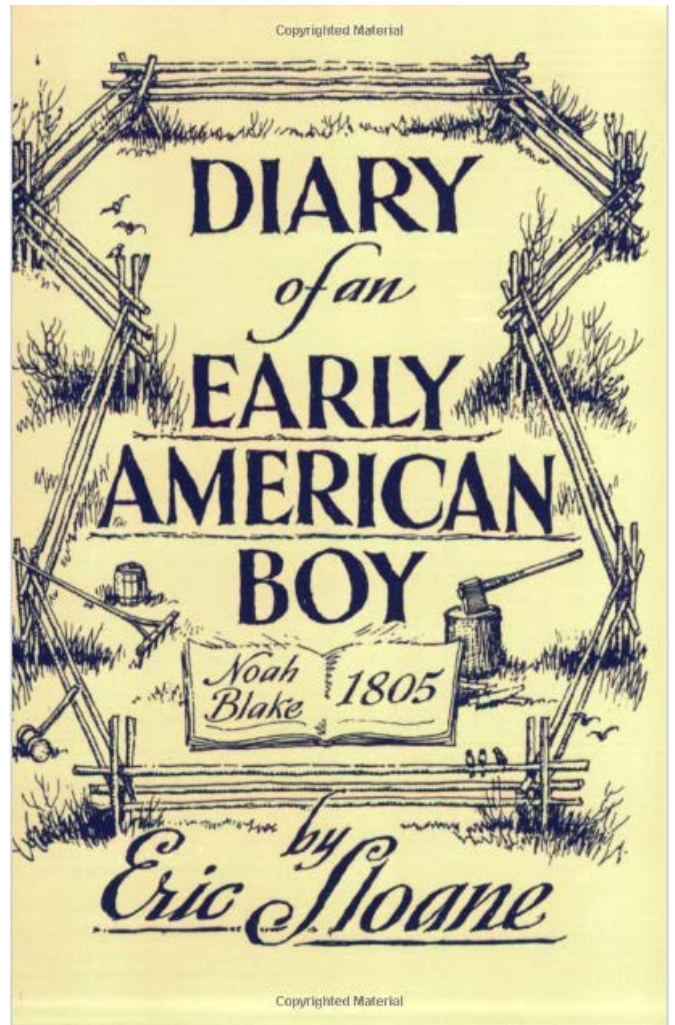


*The DIARY of NOAH BLAKE . . . 1805.*

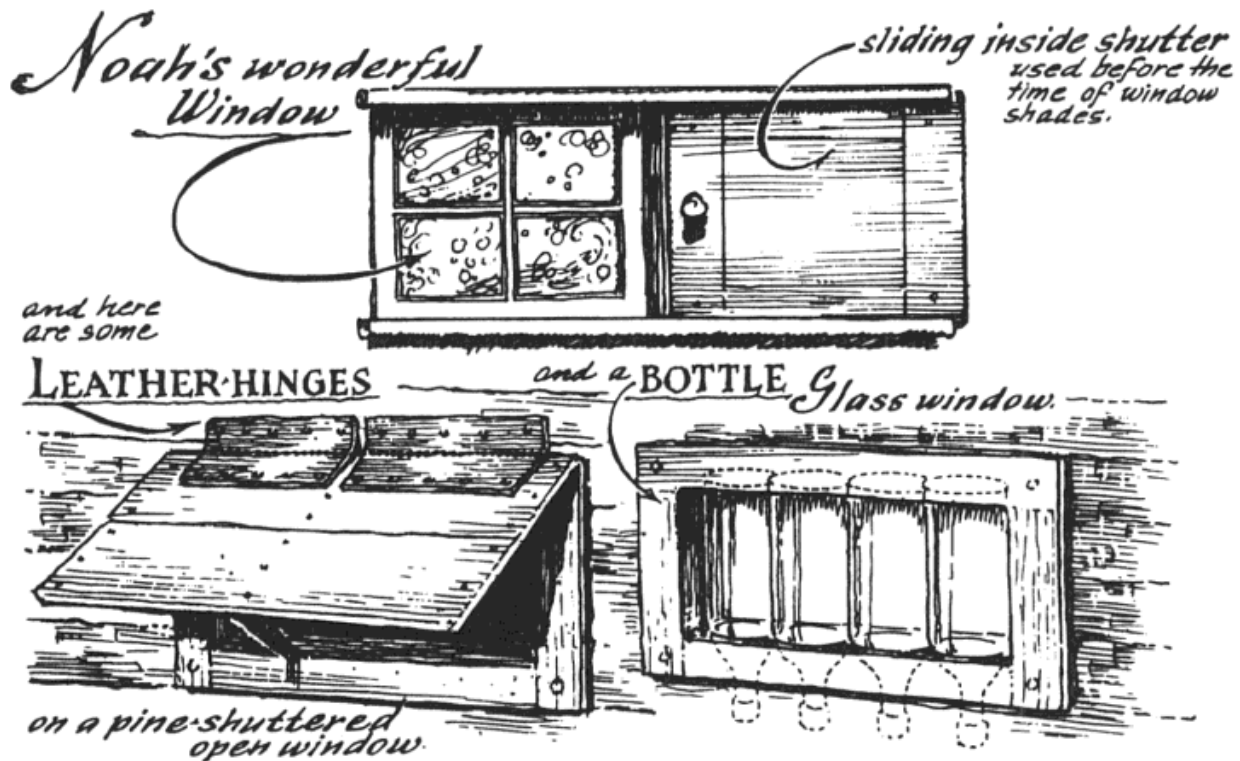


# Chapter I



That March dawn in the year 1805 seemed like any other dawn. Yet to Noah there was something different. Clearer and more crimson than a sunset, the morning sun blazed out of the east and struck the four small panes of his window as if they were its prime target. Glass was hard enough to come by in pioneer days, but these panes had special meaning. Made in faraway London, they had been Noah's tenth birthday gift from his mother and father five years ago. Before Noah's tenth birthday the window had been covered with one pine slab that swung outward on leather hinges along the top. This made it possible to leave the window open all during warm weather except for the stormiest days; the rain fell away from the opening, running off the pine slab as if it were an awning. In the winter the slab was closed upon a room that would have been totally dark except for the light of a candle.

The four glass panes of Noah's window were unlike present-day glass.



Being hand-made, they were full of irregular ripples and bubbles that changed the appearance of everything viewed through them. The moon was a special treat, assuming almost every shape but its own whenever you moved the slightest bit. In even a slight breeze the straightest trees wiggled and swayed as if they were blowing in a big storm.

There was only one other glass window in the house, and that window had six panes in it. Those six panes and Noah's four made up the set of ten pieces of glass which was once the allowable limit in a house, without a tax charge. Some people saved the glass tax by using oiled paper for their windowpanes, but that didn't let much light through; others made their windows of rows of bottles cemented into the windowframes, though all too little light filtered through the greenish glass of the old bottles. The double thickness of rounded bottle glass, however, was good protection against arrows and even gunshot. Of course you couldn't open a bottle-glass window.

Glass-paned windows were actually so rare in the early country houses that people often carried their windows with them from house to house whenever they moved. You often rented a house "without benefit of glass!" Few of us today could imagine how a simple glass window could bring such unending joy to a child.