

# George Edward Merchant

(1853 - 1929)



George E. Merchant

## George Edward Merchant

Born on Sept 9, 1853, G.E. Merchant was the second child and first son born to George Merchant, Jr. and his wife Mary Douglass. Unlike so many other members of his Merchant family, Geo E. was not to be a life long man of the sea. He tried the life of a fisherman -- he was serving as the cook on a fishing vessel at age 16, and after eight years concluded that he needed to head in another direction. In 1870, Geo. E. answered an ad placed in the Gloucester Telegraph, and entered into employment with John S.E. Rogers, the printer and publisher. He remained in that line of business for many years, and was still in that employ when he wrote some of his notes about himself in 1923. During his time in the printing trade, he worked for the Cape Ann Breeze and the Gloucester Times, where he worked as a pressman. For time he also worked for the Allen Show Print Company of Beverly until ill health forced him to retire.

On March 6, 1879, Geo. E. married Charlotte Estelle Lufkin, the daughter of Samuel Lufkin and Mary Potter Brown. She was born on Aug. 5, 1857 and died in 1945. They were married by the Rev. Dr. John M. English at the First Baptist Church of Gloucester. Notes left by Geo. E., show that he was a member of the old Company G, Eighth Massachusetts Regiment, and claims it was the shiny brass buttons and gold braid that won him his bride. On March 6, 1929 Geo. E. and Charlotte celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary, just two weeks before Geo. E. died. The couple had four children. Charlotte became a member of the DAR, and is included in the list of members in a 1903 publication listing the members.

George E. Merchant was also actively involved in Gloucester politics, entering into that scene in the 1870's. He was first elected to political office in 1886, and served in positions such as ward officer, member of common council and alderman, serving in that position for six years. In 1900 he was elected Mayor of Gloucester. After leaving that position, he was named a member of the water board, serving twice as it's chairman. From 1909-13 he was again elected as alderman.

Many hobbies and activities help occupy his free time during his life. Geo. E. spent time working with music, photography and the raising of fruits and flowers from seeds. He was known to have a record garden with the "earliest" and "latest" and "off-season" blooms and growths. His interest in printing resulted in his eventually have a hand press at home, which he frequently used to print his own articles.

Much of what has been recorded about the Merchant-Marchant family of Cape Ann is related to Geo. E.'s passion for genealogy. He created hundreds of hand-written notes and recollections about the family members,

primarily for the purpose of creating an accurate genealogy of the Merchants of Cape Ann, which he self-published and printed in 1914. All of this came about in 1889 when the four generations of the George Merchants sat for a photo. Geo. E. asked the question, "Who is grandfather's father?", and that began his longing to know more of his ancestors. As he embarked on this task it involved researching public records (which he found at times to be woefully lacking in accurate detail), family bibles and tombstones (which also proved to be somewhat unreliable), personal interviews, as well as correspondence sent across the country and overseas.

### **Honorable and Mrs. George E. Merchant Wedded 50 years Ago Today**

After many weeks of anticipation, Hon. and Mrs. George E. Merchant of 31 Eastern Avenue are observing their golden wedding anniversary today. Although the occasion is not so cheerful a one as had been anticipated since Mr. Merchant was stricken with a shock while leaving the Sawyer Library Saturday noon, and has since been confined to his bed.

Mr. Merchant had visited in the Times office and had left material for another of the G. E. M. articles which have been ready with such interest. He was in fine spirits and in talking with the Times staff had expressed approval of the moderns -- stating in effect that the young women were as wholesome and worthy as those of his younger days. At that time, he showed two photographs, one of himself and the other of his wife, taken in the early days of their romance. Only a few days before both Mr. and Mrs. Merchant had visited at the Times office.

He attends the Methodist Episcopal Church on Prospect Street, as does his wife, and she has been a teacher in the Sunday School for many years.

A capable and industrious woman, Mrs. Merchant is a keen and able helpmate for her husband.

The couple have two sons, Ernest and George E., Jr.

Though confined to his bed, but a little better today, Mr. Merchant and his wife, have been remembered generously with cards of greetings and gifts.

(from a March 6, 1929 news article ... one section was omitted, as it repeated information in his obituary)  
thirteen days after the article above, George E. passed away

### **EX-MAYOR GEORGE E. MERCHANT DEAD WELL-KNOWN MEMBER OF OLD CAPE ANN FAMILY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN 1900 PASSED AWAY YESTERDAY AFTERNOON**

Another distinct loss to Cape Ann has come in the death of Hon. George E. Merchant, a former mayor, who passed away at his home, 31 Eastern Avenue, yesterday afternoon, at about 1:30 o'clock, after a brief illness following a shock sustained in March 2nd.

The deceased who was born of Old Cape Ann stock, was a Gloucesterite, born and bred, and was 75 years, six months and 13 days of age. He was the son of the late George Jr. and Mary Douglass Merchant, and had but little schooling ere he joined his fellow schoolmates aboard ships on fishing trips. He has often related to the Times reporter his experiences as cook at 16 years of age, and told of his first batch of bread baked for a husky, hungry crew. He recalled having been fond of assisting about his home kitchen in his boyhood days and of a natural aptitude in that line.

On March 6, 1879, Miss Charlotte E. Lufkin became the bride of George E. Merchant, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Dr. John M. English of the First Baptist Church, this city.

After giving up the fisheries, Mr. Merchant entered on the trade of printing, being with the Cape Ann Breeze for a long period and later with the Gloucester Times as a pressman. He was associated with the Allen Show Print Company of Beverly for several years until ill health compelled him to retire.

His interest in the lure of the printer's ink has never decreased and today at his home is a handpress on which he occasionally printed his hand-set articles.

In his early years, Mr. Merchant was a member of the old Company G. Eighth Massachusetts Regiment in which he held office as the secretary and treasurer. (In fact, Mr. Merchant claims it was the brass buttons and gold braid of his uniform that won him his bride.)

### **ENTERED POLITICS IN 1870**

Entering into the city's political life in 1870s, he was first a ward officer, then a member of the common council for four years, being first elected in 1886. He later became alderman, serving in this capacity for six years and mayor in 1906. In 1906, he was named a member of the water board for three years, serving twice as its chairman. He was elected as alderman under the present amended charter, serving from 1909-13. Municipal finance has for many years been a pet topic with Mr. Merchant and in this, as on all his interests, he was one of the best -- posted men in this section.

Of his friendship with the late Rev. Jeremiah J. Healy of St. Ann's Church, Mr. Merchant told further interesting and worthwhile stories, as well as of his association with the "A.P.A." group of past years.

Besides his inveterate love of fact-gathering, which placed him as an authority on genealogy, Mr. Merchant had as additional avocations, music, photography and the raising of fruits and flowers from seed. In this last classification, he was well-known for he had a record garden with "earliest" and "latest" and "off-season" blooms and growths quite regularly to be expected.

### **SELF-EDUCATED**

A self-taught and self-educated man, his writings were of a scholarly tone, with the touch of conviction which stamped them always reliable and authentic.

He was an inveterate reader and information seeker, and had at his finger tips much valuable data, while stored in the attic of his home are many valuable reference books.

He served on the Republican city committee for more than 20 years and was secretary, treasurer and acting chairman. He attended the Prospect Street Methodist Episcopal Church, and was a member of the Wingersheek Tribe, I.O.R.M., and a past sachem.

Recently celebrated his Golden Wedding.

He leaves besides his wife, a faithful helpmate and cheery companion throughout the 50 years of their wedded life, which was observed on March 6, two sons, Ernest H. of New York and George E. Merchant, Jr. of Philadelphia PA.

(from a March 23, 1929 newspaper)

### **Special Note**

George E. Merchant was the first of this line of Merchants to gather and record the genealogy, which he published in his 1914 *The Merchant's of Cape Ann*. This important task was later taken up by Robert Douglass Merchant, the great nephew of George Edward Merchant, and Frank R. Merchant, a third cousin of RDM, this family history was expanded and eventually published in a more detailed form in the book noted below.

portions of this history came from  
**the House of Jabez -- Chronicles of the Merchant-Merchant Family by Frank R. Merchant**

## The children of George E. and Charlotte (Lufkin) Merchant

Eugene Howard  
Fitz Otis

1880 - 1880  
1880 - 1880

Ernest Howard

1886 - 1956

George Edward, Jr.

1888 - abt. 1942

additional information about their children

Ernest Howard first married Florence Adelia Robinson, and later married Lucille Hine -- there were no children:

George Edward, Jr. married Margery Susan Griest and they adopted the following child: Milton W.



**Private George E. Merchant**

member of Company G., 8th Regiment of Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia who attended the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia representing the City of Gloucester.

(this photo was originally identified as George Merchant, Jr., seine-repairer, head of harbor)

taken in 1876 by Erastus G. Rollins  
77 Front St. Gloucester.



The photo on the left must show George E. Merchant in the uniform he describes as having won him his bride back before they married in 1879.



above: the four generations of George Merchants

below: George E. Merchant holding George E. Merchant, Jr.

