

George Merchant, Sr.

(1807 - 1899)



George Merchant, Sr.

Captain George Merchant

The venerable Capt. George Merchant passed away from earth-life about 6:30 o'clock Saturday evening (January 16, 1899) after a brief illness of pneumonia, in the ninety-third year of his age.

Capt. Merchant was a native of this city and a descendant in the fifth generation from one of the early settlers of Cape Ann, Jabez Merchant, who first appears in the history of Gloucester in 1721, when he was married to Mary Babson, and in 1823 was granted an acre of land at the head of Lobster Cove, and who came to Gloucester from Yarmouth, Cape Cod, and whose ancestor settled in Braintree in 1836.

He was the last survivor of a family of ten children, seven brothers and three sisters, and leaves a large number of descendants, nine out of thirteen children surviving him, beside over fifty grandchildren and sixty great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren, he being thus represented by four generations. His family has been remarkable for its longevity, many of its members reaching a ripe old age.

Like most of his ancestors, Mr. Merchant followed the vocation of the fisheries until reaching his eighty-fifth year and since that time has exhibited unusual activity for his advanced years. Several of his brothers also have been prominent in the fisheries of Gloucester, as well as in its business affairs, among them being Messrs. Epes W, Henry, Addison, Samuel and Gorham Merchant, while his descendants have been prominent in official circles in municipal affairs, his son George having represented his ward in the common council for two years, and his grandson, George E. has seen extended service in the aldermen and common council, and has been a prominent candidate for mayor.

Think of what an experience this aged son of Gloucester has enjoyed. Of a remarkable retentive memory, endowed with good health and a genial disposition, it has been a pleasure of the writer to oft-times listen to his narratives of the old time fisheries. How his eyes sparkled as he related incident after incident of the "pinkey" and "jigger" fleets, recalling the names of some who took an active part. In his early years the whole of Gloucester fisheries, with the exception of the Grand Bank fishing, was carried on by these small and light craft. Their trips were seldom extended to more than two or three days or a week, according to the success they might meet with. They were mostly occupied upon the fishing grounds in the vicinity of the Cape,

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

sometimes running down along the coast of Maine and occasionally dropping their lines upon Georges. These boats were from ten to twenty boats, with standing room or berths, for they had no rail or bulwarks above the deck, the only protection being a narrow waist about eight inches in height. They carried foresail and mainsail only, and were good sailers. The "cuddy," a small apartment forward, contained two berths and a fireplace built of bricks just aloft the foremast. The chimney was made of wood and plastered on the inside to prevent its taking fire. Cooking stoves were then unknown.

Some of the names of the pinkey fleet were as follows: The Lion, Capt. Simeon Burnham; Mary, Capt. James Marchant; Nabby, Capt. Epes W. Merchant; Heart of Oak, Capt. William Parkhurst; America, Capt. Nathaniel Merchant; Fin Back, Capt. Samuel Norwood; Sukey, Capt. Benjamin Parsons.

The fitting out of this fleet commenced about the first of April. Their stores for the trip comprised two quarts of molasses, five pounds of fat port, four pounds of flour, seven pounds of hard crackers (baked by Capt. Currier or Capt. "Kier" as he was familiarly called), half a barrel of water, and a little New England rum, which in those days was considered both victuals and drink.

The change from the "pinkeys" through the various styles of fishing craft, to the splendid yacht models which comprise the fishing fleet today, has all been witnessed and participated in by our venerable friend, who has now closed his earthly life and entered into that of the immortal. What a welcome awaited him from the many who had gone on before, who had sailed with him and participated in the experiences of a fishermen's life. They are united in that port above toward which we are all hastening.

Mr. Merchant possessed a remarkable native musical talent, the violin being his favorite instrument, which he began to play at the age of 14 years, and he was a great favorite among his associates on account of his musical abilities. He was a great friend of Prof. J. J. Watson, the protege of Old Bull, who received a considerable amount of his musical inspiration from Mr. Merchant's music.

taken from the obituary of George Merchant that was published back in 1899

[George Merchant had a younger brother Benjamin, who was lost at sea. In writings by George E. Merchant (the grandson) it is noted about George Merchant "One of hardest trials of his early life was to stand upon the deck of his vessel and see his younger brother Benjamin swept into the sea, the fingers of each almost touching as one sank beneath the waters."]

Lucy (Norwood) Merchant

Lucy Norwood became the wife of George Merchant on November 18, 1826. He was 19 and she was 17 at the time of their marriage. Lucy was one of the twin daughters born to John Norwood and Betsy Bray in 1809. (In addition to twin daughters, John and Betsy Norwood also had twin sons as part of the ten children born to them.) In 1853, twenty-six years and four months after her marriage, Lucy gave birth to the last of her thirteen children. At that time she was about forty-three and the first of her children were married and had made her a grandmother. Lucy's youngest son was only seven when she passed away on May 5, 1860 from trouble with her heart.

(From the notes of Frank R. Merchant: *Mrs. LaFond, a descendant of Lucy's fifth child, noted that there was a family tradition that said Lucy and her twin sister Nancy were so identical that even their own children could not tell them apart.*)

FIVE GENERATIONS REPRESENTED.

George Merchant of Gloucester Quietly Observes 90th Birthday.



THE FIVE GENERATIONS.

Aug 12
1897

GLoucester, Aug 11—George Merchant of this city quietly observed his 90th birthday today at his residence, a number of his relatives and acquaintances calling to wish him many happy returns of the day. He is in good health and spirits with his faculties unimpaired, and his fair to see several more of these anniversaries.

What made the occasion especially notable was the presence of five generations, his own descendants, represented in the picture. His daughter, Mrs Sarah F., the one holding the baby, is the wife of Solomon News, a soldier of the rebellion. To the right of the old gentleman is his granddaughter, Mrs Leonard Friend, Mrs Rowe's daughter, her husband, the night watchman at city hall, also being a well-known soldier and sailor of the civil war. To the left of Mrs Rowe is her granddaughter, Mrs F. W. Sylvester, Mr Merchant's great granddaughter. The babe of two months, Mary Ella Thomas Sylvester, constitutes the fifth generation.

Mr Merchant began to follow the sea at an early age, continuing in active fishing until he was 73. He had quite a reputation as a violinist in his younger days, in fact was a born musician, having what is called the "fiddler's elbow," and many a weary night on the deep has been made pleasant by the strains from his violin.

He married Miss Lucy Norwood, now dead, 12 children being born to them.

The group was photographed by Alderman George E. Merchant, who is also the genealogist of the family.

The first Merchant, according to this authority, settled in Braintree in 1534. His descendants settled at Yarmouth, Cape Cod, and from that place came Jabex Merchant to Cape Ann in 1721, and

was given a grant of land near Lobster Cove, Amesquam.

Merchant was a family name in Gloucester long in 1224. They were also a prominent family on the island of Barbados, and one of the name were considered as slaves to the Barbadoes for complicity in the Monmouth rebellion.

The grandfather of Mr Merchant who celebrated his birthday today was William, one of the grandsons of Jabex, the original settler. Mr Paul, the Rockport merchant, gives William as a lieutenant in a militia company, and the town records show that he advanced money to pay for the services of one of the three-months' companies who fought at Bunker Hill.

William's son Esop and two other brothers served as coast guards, patrolling the coast from Eastern point to Rockport during the war of 1812, one being captain of the East ward company. Jabex, the original settler here, married Mary Butman Babson, who was a descendant of Abraham Robinson, said to be a son of Rev John Robinson of pilgrim fame.

William, the grandson of Jabex, and four sons came from Pigeon Cove and settled at the head of the harbor, so-called, and were pioneers in the fishing business in that section. The original site of their fish place is occupied by the warehouses of a descendant, Shute & Merchant.

The descendants of the subject of this sketch have multiplied. He has 60 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. His reminiscences of the sea are very interesting, as are also his tales of the first of the century when Gloucester was a struggling fishing hamlet of three or four thousand inhabitants, including the whole of Cape Ann. Mr Merchant can still evoke tuneful strains from his beloved violin, which is a solace to him in his declining years.

The children of George and Lucy (Norwood) Merchant

Lucy Ann	1827 - 1872	Edwin	1842 - 1914
George, Jr.	1828 - 1906	Isabell Bowen	1843 - 1878
Sarah Ellery	1829 - 1912	Emily Curtis	1845 - 1923
Julia Ann	1832- 1891	Laura Jane	1848 - 18__
Mary Elizabeth	1834 - 1910	Gorham Alfred	1850 - 1897
Sidney	1837 - 1909	Albion Howard	1853 - 1940
Miranda	1839 - 1921		

additional information about their children

Lucy Ann married George E. Thurston, and they had the following children:

Lucy Ann, George, Mary Elizabeth, Lucy Ann, George Everett, Ada Jane, Daniel Albert, Charles Sharer, John Kimball and Henry Rasmus Maddison

George, Jr. married Mary Doulass and they had the following children:

Mary Jane, George Edward, Orlando, Flora Estelle, Eugene Howard, Robert Clifford, Joseph Carlton, an unnamed son and Percy Washburn

Sarah Ellery married Solomon Rowe, and they had the following children:

Mary C., Samuel/Solomon, Eliza A., unnamed son, William A., Lucy Marchant, Caroline A. and Fred W.

Julia Ann first married William Rittal, and they had the following children:

William and William

she then married Thomas H. Martin, and they had the following children:

Alice Elizabeth, Helen Frances, Thomas Edwin, Sidney Franklin, Julia ClifCharford, Addison, Flora Estelle and Joseph Albert

Mary Elizabeth married Elisha Lufkin, and they had the following children:

Elisha, Herbert, Laura Alice, Mary Elizabeth, Bessie and Lucy Jane

Sidney married Eunice Elizabeth Martin, and they had one child who died in infancy.

Miranda married Charles H. Jackman, and they had the following children:

Emma Estelle, Edith B., Charles H., Jr. and Carrie/Annie May

Edwin first married Augusta Watson Pew, and they had the following children:

Clara Augusta, Annie Elizabeth, Laura Alice and Joseph Edwin

he then married Alice White, and they had the following children:

David Sherman, Forest Edwin, Alice May, Everett Ray, Emma Winsor, Harry Austin, Sumner Quimby and Percy Sherman

Isabell Bowen married James H. Place, and they had the following child:

James H.

Emily Curtis married Abraham Tarr, and they had the following children:

Emma Alice, Julia Clifford and Isabell Place

Laura Jane married Edwin McIntire, and they had the following children:

Edwin Clifford, Laura Jane and Forest Howard

Gorham Alfred married Mary Elizabeth Thurston, and they had the following children:

Gorham Alfred, William Thurston, Sidney and Frank

Albion Howard married Ada Frances Saunders, and they had the following children:

Albion Howard, Isabel Place, Ethel, Lucy Ellen, Lucy Ellen, Alice May, Alice May, Albion Howard, Leland Gordon, Eunice/Edna, Albion Howard, Ada Francis



Emily Curtis (Merchant) Tarr



Emma Alice (Tarr) Nichols

**Death of Mrs. Emma A. (Tarr)
Nichols**

Mrs. Emma Alice Tarr, wife of Clifton H. Nichols, passed away on Sunday morning about 8.30 o'clock from the Addison Gilbert hospital, where she underwent an operation for an organic trouble, last Wednesday, performed by Dr. Thomas Chandler, a Boston specialist, assisted by Drs. Whittaker and Shields. The patient seemed to rally somewhat, but the extremely hot weather was not in her favor and despite every effort to save her life, she succumbed and passed away peacefully on Saturday. The deceased was born in Gloucester, September 5, 1870, being the daughter of Mrs. Emily C. and the late Abraham Tarr. She was held in universal high esteem of old and young. She loved children and they in return loved her. Her sincere, open manner, easy to make friends and keep them always, won for her a very large number who regret exceedingly to hear of her demise. She was always devoted to her home and her relatives and to these sorrowing ones, her presence in their midst will be greatly missed. She was a member of St. John's Guild.

She leaves her husband, Clifton A. Nichols, two sons, Dr. George C. Nichols, the dentist, who has returned home from service overseas, and another son, Corporal Morton R. Nichols, who was a member of 104th regiment, 26th Division, serving "over there." She also leaves her mother, Mrs. Emily C. Tarr and one sister, Mrs. Julia, wife of John J. Robinson, both residing at 36 Bass avenue. The funeral will take place on Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock from the home of the deceased, 20 East Main street and Rev. Joseph H. C. Cooper of St. John's Episcopal church will officiate.

if you are interested in more detailed information about any of these Merchant families, please use the contact link on the web page -- a pdf with more data for all the Merchants who are known to have descended from Jabez Merchant (1695-1773) is available