

## James Edward Reynolds (1832-1868)

A Biographical Sketch of the Earliest Reynolds Ancestor I Am Sure About

By Nona Kelly Smith, February 18, 2022

My 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandfather, James Edward Reynolds, was part of the industrial and economic growth in Wilmington, Delaware. His occupations that I can document reflect that time and place: first cooper in Brandywine, then waterman, then sailor, then sailor for the Union during the Civil War, and finally hotelier and proprietor of a saloon at the waterfront on the Christiana River.

I have old photographs of my Reynolds ancestors. I have learned a great deal from land records, burial permits and the will of his mother, my 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandmother, Providence Reynolds, who as a widow purchased two homes, and raised seven children. But there is much I do not know, especially the birth and death of Providence's husband, John Reynolds, so I am beginning my story with the earliest Reynolds ancestor I am sure about, James Edward (1832-1868).

James Edward was born in Delaware on 9 April 1862, the youngest of five children born to John Reynolds, Cooper, of Brandywine Hundred, and his wife Providence Millen Reynolds.

I can place James Edward with certainty at the Wilmington and Brandywine Cemetery, in a large plot of Reynolds and others, interred in a group, most with impressive headstones: Section 11, Lot No. 21. I am fortunate to have some of the burial permits of this group, and it is from those burial permits that I continue to discover a complex family.

However, James Edward's father John is not buried in this plot, or in this cemetery. John died probably around 1833 or 1834, when James Edward was only an infant. I feel certain that James Edward's mother Providence was a widow in 1834 because her two daughters are listed in the Brandywine Manufacturers Sunday School roster in 1834, with the girls' parent listed not as their father, as was the norm with the other students on the roster, but as Mrs. Providence Reynolds.

James Edward would have been two years old in 1834. Providence is listed as occupation in the cotton mill, Presbyterian, residing in Rokeby, which I believe is Rising Sun near Henry Clay on the Christiana Hundred side of the Brandywine River.

James Edward's mother, Providence, remarried in 1838 to Thomas Robert Wood (b. 1790 England) and had two more children.

I found Providence and Thomas Wood's Divorce in the October 1993 Delaware Genealogical Society's Journal, Volume #7, #2, Delaware Divorces Before 1850. It stated that the divorce was

documented in New Castle County on 20 May 1848 (three years after Providence's death) from a marriage on 20 May 1838 – Thomas Wood to Providence Reynolds.

The listing in Delaware Divorces added a Note: *She was a widow, with 6 children, of John Reynolds, dec'd. cooper, at Brandywine. She had two children by Wood, Thomas aged 3 or 4, Clara, age 6 months. He went to Elkton and remarried.*

I have not been able to find my gg grandfather James Edward in the 1850 census. He would have been 18 in 1850, and he may have been an apprentice or indentured to learn his trade. I am continuing to look for him. I found his younger siblings, Thomas and Clara, living separately with relatives in 1850.

James Edward married Mary Ann Donaldson, on 29 June 1851 when he was 19 years old. They were wed by a traveling Methodist Episcopal minister, Reverend Joseph Carlisle, in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania. (Recorded in Delaware Genealogical Society Journal entry)

Mary Ann was born on 18 January 1832 in England (or possibly Ireland). Mary Ann was just a year old when she made the transit to America with her mother, Ann Donaldson, described on the manifest as Lady, and two older siblings, John and Jane. I found them on the Philadelphia, Passenger and Immigration Lists arriving in Philadelphia on 1 June 1835 from St. John's, New Brunswick, on the ship *Ann*, place of origin Ireland.

Mary Ann always stated her place of birth on the Federal Censuses as England, but her mother and siblings stated their place of birth as Ireland. Perhaps Mary Ann was born while the family was in England, awaiting passage to America.

I have never found Mary Ann's father. Her mother Ann and sister Jane appear in Mary Ann's life in Wilmington. Her brother, John Donaldson, was a sailor or waterman I believe, but I do not know for sure. I have a photograph of a man in a nautical uniform seated with Mary Ann's only daughter, Agnes Venona, probably about 1870. My guess on the photograph's date is based on Agnes Venona who looks about 10 years old.

In the 1860 census, James and Mary Ann had been married nine years and lived in Brandywine Village, Wilmington, Delaware.

Mary Ann's mother, Ann Donaldson, was a member of their household in 1860, along with four of the five children: John Wilson, Charles, William Henry, and Agnes Venona. Their youngest child, (my great grandfather) James Edward was born after the Census, in 1863.

Ann Donaldson died two years later, on August 4, 1862, of consumption, at age 74. From the Wilmington and Brandywine permit for her interment, she is recorded as buried in an unmarked grave with James Edward's mother Providence and two older sisters in Section F, Lot 52 at Wilmington and Brandywine Cemetery. This large plot has no headstones.

According to the 1860 Federal Census, James Edward's occupation was Cooper. There were many independent cooper shops in Brandywine Village, an area that emerged to support the flour mills, cotton mill and grain transports along the Brandywine.

To quote the Foreword in Dr. Carol Hoffecker's book *Brandywine Village* "Brandywine Village is today almost in the center of greater Wilmington, but it was outside the corporate bounds of the city until 1869. Nevertheless, it was principally this industrial village that brought a degree of fame and fortune to northern Delaware in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries." Page 9

"...more workmen were employed as boatmen or as coopers than in the milling process. The art of manufacturing watertight wooden barrels from staves and hoops was essential to the operation of gristmills, especially merchant mills that exported flour overseas. Barrels were the only containers then available in quantity that could ensure the preservation of this perishable commodity. Coopering was a trade that was taught through apprenticeship and required a great deal of skill, experience, and judgement in the shaping and aging of wood." Pages 33-34

I followed gg grandfather James Edward's occupations in the City of Wilmington Directories, in a listing on his youngest son's birth certificate, and on tax records.

In 1862 City of Wilmington Directory, James Edward's occupation was listed as a waterman.

In Dr. Carol Hoffecker's book *Brandywine Village*, she tells of the development of roadways to bring grain in from the farms in not only Delaware but also Pennsylvania and Maryland, and the transport of the grain and flour on boats from the Brandywine mills to the Christiana River and out to the Delaware, on their way to Philadelphia, Baltimore and beyond.

On James Edward's youngest son's birth certificate in 1863, James Edward's occupation is Sailor. I have a photo of the Brandywine near the mills, showing small schooners transporting goods and people among the factories as well as larger boats moving goods to larger ports.

Civil War: (1861-1865) In June of 1863, James Edward is listed in the U.S. Civil War Draft Registration Records as residing in Duck Creek, Married, a Sailor, with a note: *Said to be on transport for Government*. On an undated Enrollment for Military Duty in the Fifth Ward of Wilmington, James Edward is listed as a Waterman at 108 East 12th Street. I have not found a record of his service, where he served or when he returned to his civilian occupation.

In 1865, James Edward's home and business are listed in the City Directory at 103 E. Water Street, a proprietor of a hotel.

James Edward was aboard the Ship *Aleppo*, arriving back to New York from Liverpool, England on October 22, 1867. Was this the government assignment during the Civil War?

In 1868 James Edward's occupation lists Saloons, Liquor, 102 E. Front Street.

James Edward died on July 15, 1868 at the age of 36. The Delaware death record states that cause of death was congestion of the brain. He is buried with a large headstone in Section 11, Lot 21, the large family plot at Wilmington and Brandywine Cemetery, a cemetery on a bluff overlooking the Brandywine River, which began in 1843 and has no religious affiliation.

James Edward left behind a wife, Mary Ann, four sons: John Wilson, Charles, William Henry and James Edward and a daughter, Agnes Venona, who were living at a hotel and restaurant near the Christiana River's Wharf.

The list of the goods and chattels of James E. Reynolds, August 6, 1868 certified by his wife and Administrator, Mary Ann Reynolds, who could not write her name and signed with a "mark", included bedsteads, carpets, tables, chairs, settees, kitchen tables, dishes, goblets, wine and liquors, ale, 16 bar room chairs, clock, looking glass, decanters and glasses. The inventory was appraised at \$497.50.

His probate record also includes, by name, a list of debts and credits due him. Some names were cited as "desperate". It appears Mary Ann was able to collect \$77.00 due the estate. But a great deal more was owed.

His sons went on to operate Malta House, a restaurant and salon on the waterfront.

Next generation: Only one child of this marriage lived to marry and raise a family, my great grandfather, James Edward (1863-1912).