

Transatlantic Ties – an Emigration Case Study

Scammers, Presidents and Boatmen

James Merton of Aldingbourne, emigrated 1832

James Merton is listed among 60 people listed on page 220 in the Aldingbourne Parish Minutes (WSRO ref. Par 1/30/1) who were to be sponsored by the Parish Overseers to emigrate to America in 1831/2.

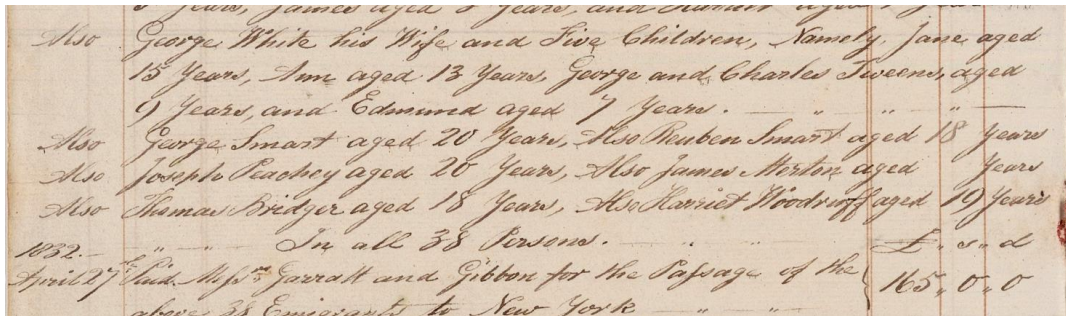


Figure 1- Aldingbourne Parish Minutes (Par 1/30/1. ff220v-221r)

Later records (see *Westmoreland* ship record below) suggest his date of birth was around 1814. Although unable to locate a baptism in Aldingbourne parish registers, nor in those for surrounding parishes. the Aldingbourne Parish Register Transcripts lists probable parents as John and Ann Merton (nee Keats):

- **James Martin** (sic, probably Merton), baptised in Chichester 3rd March 1814; father John, a labourer from Greylingwell (sic Graylingwell, probably on a farm); assumed to be our James Merton as the date coincides with the date listed on his Find-a-Grave page and in the Fulton cemetery register (see entry below).

MERTON, James Lot 7 Row 31
Died: 4 December 1881
Age: 67 years 10 months 3 days
Wife: Jane White

Figure 2 Grave entry for James Merton at Mount Pleasant North Side Cemetery, Volney

- **Rebecca**, baptised at Chichester, St Peter the Great, 26th April 1816; father John, a labourer from Greylingwell (sic); the 1851 census shows she was a dress maker living with her father and siblings in Boxgrove (Halnaker), and died unmarried on 24th October 1852 aged 36.
- **William**, baptised at Aldingbourne, 26th September 1819.

- **Susannah**, baptised at Aldingbourne, 25th June 1822.
- **Mary Ann**, baptised at Eastergate, 1824.
- **John Myrton** (sic?) baptised at Aldingbourne, 11th February 1828; may have married Mary Ann Saunders in Birdham 1856 (name transcribed as James Norton.)
- **Ann Myrton** (sic?) baptised at Aldingbourne, 12th May 1832; married Francis Grigg on 21st October 1854 and died in 1866; the couple had five sons:
 - Francis John, baptised at Boxgrove, 8th April 1855
 - George, baptised (at Boxgrove?), 14th December 1856
 - Albert, baptised at Boxgrove, 27th February 1859
 - Walter, baptised at Boxgrove, 23rd February 1862
 - William, baptised at Boxgrove, 19th June 1864
- **Harriet** baptised at Aldingbourne, 19th July 1835, died 27th March 1853 aged 17.
- **Edward Mark** baptised at Aldingbourne, 1841; he married Harriet Best/Bent ? at Chichester in the April quarter of 1872 and by 1901 was a widower. He died in the December quarter of 1908 and had at least two sons:
 - Edward
 - John

It's impossible to tell if these are actually James' siblings and parents as people spelt names how they sounded and the Sussex accent could have provided many variations – Merton; Morton, Myton, and Martin to name just a few. In addition, contemporary writing can be difficult to read or interpret.....for example it might also be Heston or Herton. However, for James, the surname Merton seemed the most likely and provided the most results:

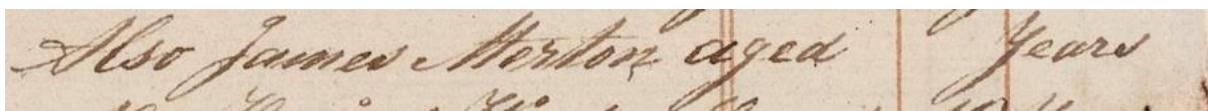


Figure 3 Par 1/30/1 ff 220v - 221r

Certainly James arrived in New York aboard the ship *Westmoreland* on 14th June 1832 (see below) and was 18 years old at the time. The passenger list shows he travelled with other emigrants from Aldingbourne, including George Smart, the

Whites and the Sothertons. This travelling party included his future wife Jane White who emigrated with her family and moved to Volney, Oswego New York, where they became farmers. According to censuses James also settled in the same location, becoming a boatman.

New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 for ...

Date > 1832 > Jun > 14 > Westmoreland

| Age | Sex | Occupation | Country of Birth | Religion | Marital Status |
|-----|--------|------------|------------------|----------|----------------|
| | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| 11 | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| 20 | Male | Graduate | Chb. | | W. S. |
| 19 | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| 22 | Female | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| 19 | Male | Graduate | Chb. | | W. S. |
| 24 | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| 22 | Female | Wife | Chb. | | W. S. |
| 4 | Male | Chb. | Christians | | W. S. |
| 20 | Male | Graduate | Chb. | | W. S. |
| 21 | Female | Wife | Chb. | | W. S. |

Figure 4 – extract from the Westmoreland ship's manifest



Figure 5 US, indexed county land ownership Maps 1860 -1918 - (Volney, Oswego 1867)

While most emigrants went in search of jobs in agriculture in the Volney area and neighbouring Fulton, the Oswego River and Canal also provided employment

opportunities such as those involved in the manufacture and transport of flour to Syracuse and salt to Oswego. Hotels, bars and taverns provided further jobs while the Nestle chocolate factory was to employ over 400 people at its peak.

The marriage record of James to Jane White hasn't been found but 8 children were born to them between 1837 and 1855:

1. **John H Merton** (10th October 1837 – 26th August 1900), according to one online biography¹ John H Merton was born in Lysander, Onondaga County New York before the family moved to Volney. He married Adeline Jewett in about 1859. His obituary dated 27th August 1900 and transcribed on Find a Grave.com suggests that John, a grocery shop keeper, had served the community of Fulton twice as President and as a tax collector. They had two children, though the biography suggests a third child was born but not shown on censuses. The known children were:
 - Elizabeth (Libbie) (1861-1912), a chiropodist, married a man with surname of Corsea or Corseo, and they had:
 - Florence Caseo (born July 1881)
 - Charles Merton (2nd May 1867- 5th July 1914) married three times: to Lillian Parks (1867 – 1890) on 28th August 1887 at Fulton, secondly to Alice Hannibal on 21st May 1896 in Cleveland Ohio and thirdly to Fannie Newman (nee Osgood) on 27th March 1909. He worked for Cleveland Automotive in Ohio. No records of children from any of these marriages has been found.

From Charles' probate record it appears that he and his father John H Merton were involved in a genealogical scam involving the Lawrence -Townley Estate in Burnley, Lancashire, UK. Recognising the opportunity to make money from a growing interest of American genealogy, fraudsters seduced many to part with money in suits to collect inheritance from unclaimed estates in England's Court of Chancery. The Lawrence – Townley Estate scam related to a long-lost daughter and her descendants who emigrated to America, and an unclaimed estate in Lancashire. The daughter never existed, and the estate had already been claimed. More information of the scam can be found via the Townley Hall Society's online PDF file Tracing the Townley's 2004. ²

Those caught up in the scam were given impressive-looking certificates stating that for every \$20 subscribed, it entitled them to a \$1000 share of the recovered estate. Charles's probate mentioned the estimated return from the certificates but it appears the almost \$1000 dollars he and John spent on these share certificates was never recouped. See figure 5 below.

Then whatever property of any and all description, shall be given to Mrs. Florence MacManemy, and if I should die before the Lawrence Townley estate is settled, I hereby bequeath to Mrs. Florence MacManemy the Eighteen Thousand Five Hundred (\$18,500.00) Dollars certificates, the same certificates being in the name of J. H. Merton, of whom I am the only heir.

Figure 5 - Charles J Merton Last will and testament; Cleveland, Ohio probate, October 1914

2. **Adeline E** (1839 – 1899) married Nathan Locke between 1865 and 1870. Nathan was the son of Wilbur Locke and Martha Ann Timmerman. Adeline and Nathan had two children:

- Nada E Locke (1870 – 1952) married David Watson Van Buren and had four boys:
 - Nathan Lee (1889 – 1940)
 - Henry Earl (1892 – 1963)
 - David Glen (1894 -1957)
 - William Albert (1897 -1975)
- Nathan Albert Locke, known as Bert (1872- 4th September 1920), married Jennie M. Shaver on 27th January 1894. His Find-a-Grave page has a transcript from the Fulton Patriot in September 1920, remarking that he died from a fall coming to the aid of an employee at his garage business on North Seventh Street, Fulton.

NATHAN A. LOCKE DIED FROM INJURIES RECEIVED IN A FALL WEDNESDAY

Nathan Albert Locke, the well known garage proprietor of 112 North Seventh street, died at the Lee Memorial hospital at 1 o'clock Saturday morning from injuries received in a fall Wednesday evening.

J. E. Buehl, a neighbor of Mr. Locke, was repairing his truck, when one of his hands became caught in the machinery, and he called for help. Mr. Locke responded and ran to Mr. Buehl's assistance, and while running slipped and fell, causing a rupture of the intestines.

He was removed to the Lee Memorial hospital, where his case was soon apparently hopeless and he died early Saturday morning.

Mr. Locke had been a resident of this city for the past 27 years. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan E. Locke of Volney. He came to Fulton and entered the employ of the Hunter Fan & Motor Company, where he soon became an expert machinist and was promoted to the position of foreman. About ten years ago he resigned his position and went into the business of repairing automobiles and soon had one of the largest garages in the city on North Seventh street. He was considered the best auto mechanic in this section of the state. In his sudden death Fulton loses one of its highly respected citizens and a master mechanic, whose place will be hard to fill.

He is survived by his widow, his father, Nathan E. Locke and one sister, Mrs. William VanBuren, all of this city. The deceased was 48 years of age.

Funeral services were held from his late home on Monday afternoon under the auspices of Noaktiwanta Lodge of Odd Fellows; interment in Mt. Adnah.

Figure 6 - Death of Nathan Locke The Fulton Patriot 8th September 1920.
<https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>

3. **William Albert**, known as Albert, (1841 – 1930), married Alice Van Buren, daughter of David Van Buren. At the time of his death in 1887, aged 89, David was the oldest resident of Fulton having been born in the town in 1798. His father, Alice's grandfather, John Van Buren was the third ever settler in the town and the family owned vast tracts of land and businesses associated with the Oswego river, including a tavern built in

1820. Albert is listed as a boatman on the census and may have worked for his father-in-law David, who was a canaller at heart and still worked on the boats even after becoming prosperous.

The Oswego Local History Society published an article on David Van Buren in 1967: "They rafted logs, boated, canalled, and after a time became proprietors of several riverside business ventures."³. The article stated that the Van Buren's were 'Society' and demonstrates what opportunities America offered emigrants, and, in this case, the son of the sponsored emigrant James Merton from Aldingbourne.

It may also be interesting to note that Alice's grandfather John was cousin to the 8th President of the United States Martin Van Buren.

William and Alice had 4 children:

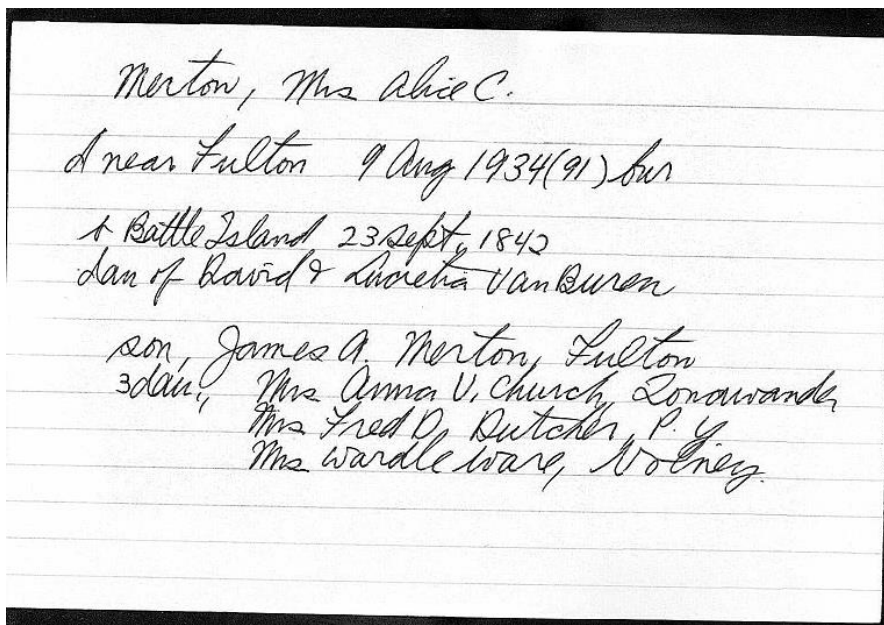


Figure 7 - Yates County, New York US, Swann Vital Records Collection, 1723 - 2009 (Alice C. Merton)

- Anna (1866/7 - 1944) married George Church, a fireman at Tanawanda, Erie, New York.
- James (1869), a baker, pedler and according to the 1910 census a gunsmith. He married his sister-in-law (George's sister) Cora Church around 1892/3 and they had at least one son, William A Merton (1893 - 1966)
- Melvina (1871 -1940) married Fred Dutcher 4th January 1904 and had one son Fred Edwin Dutcher, whose US WW2 enlistment card and headstone application records that he was born in Syracuse, Monroe, New York on 13th May 1919 and was killed in Action on 26th April 1945 (see below).

ORIGINAL

APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER WW II
(Please make out and return in duplicate)

CHECK TYPE REQUIRED
(See Instructions attached)

UPRIGHT MARBLE HEADSTONE
 FLAT MARBLE MARKER
 FLAT GRANITE MARKER
 BRONZE MARKER (NOTE RESTRICTIONS)

ENLISTMENT DATE: ABOUT Nov. 1943
 DISCHARGE DATE: WITLED ACTION

SERIAL No. A 42 026 759
 PENSION No. _____

EMBLEM (Check one)
 CHRISTIAN
 HEBREW
 NONE

NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)
DUTCHER, FRED E.

STATE N.Y. RANK S/SGT
 COMPANY _____

U. S. REGIMENT, STATE ORGANIZATION, AND DIVISION
261st INFANTRY REGIMENT
Co B - 65th Inf. Div.

DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) MAY 13, 1919 DATE OF DEATH (Month, Day, Year) APRIL 26, 1945

NAME OF CEMETERY MT. ADAM'S CEMETERY LOCATION (City and State) FULTON, NEW YORK

SHIP TO (I CERTIFY THE APPLICANT FOR THIS STONE HAS MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO TRANSPORT THE STONE FROM THE FREIGHT STATION TO THE CEMETERY)
 SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: Joseph A. Young

NEAREST FREIGHT STATION (City and State) FULTON, NEW YORK
 POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF CONSIGNEE 324 ONEIDA ST, FULTON, N.Y.

DO NOT WRITE HERE

FOR VERIFICATION
 ORDERED W. Chelmsford, Mass. 23 FEB 1949
 B/L 5J16314
 SHIPPED _____

I certify this application is submitted for a stone for the unmarked grave of a veteran. I hereby agree to assume all responsibility for the removal of the stone promptly upon arrival at destination, and properly place it at the decedent's grave at my expense.
 APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: Elsie Davis DATE OF APPLICATION: 1/28/49
 ADDRESS (Street, City, State) 96 Lyons St, Fulton, N.Y.

DDMG FORM 623
 REV 15 APR 47

IMPORTANT—Complete Reverse Side

16-11453-6 GPO

Figure 8 - U.S., Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1970 for Fred E Dutcher

- o Alice E (1876 -1940) married Wardle Ware and had three children:
 - Ethel M. (1903 – 1974) a teacher who married James Reid
 - Albert Jay (1906) who served during WW2
 - Elsie Maude (1911 -1972) who married Harold Davis in 1931
4. **Charles W** (1843 – 1855?) An image on Find-a-Grave suggests that Charles was a veteran, but he died aged 12 in 1855 10 years prior to the American Civil War. There may be some confusion with his brothers John and William who are both listed on the Civil War draft registration records. See below:

SCHEDULE I—CONSOLIDATED LIST of all persons of CLASS I, subject to do military duty in the _____ Congressional District, consisting of the Counties of _____ and _____ State of _____, enumerated during the month of _____, 1863, under direction of _____ Provost Marshal.

| RESIDENCE | NAME | AGE (1st July, 1862) | WHITE OR COLORED | PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE | MARRIED OR UNMARRIED | PLACE OF BIRTH (Nearing the State, Territory, or County.) | FORMER MILITARY SERVICE | REMARKS |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Volney | McDonnell James | 24 | White | Cooper | Single | N.Y. | | 1 |
| | Shop Andrew | 24 | | Farmer | Married | | | 2 |
| | Merton John | 24 | | Postman | | | | 3 |
| | Merton Albert | 22 | | | | | | 4 |
| New Haven | Miriam August | 20 | | Merchant | Single | | | 5 |
| | Moak William | 21 | | Farmer | | | | 6 |

Figure 9 - US Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863 - 1865 (Albert and John Merton)

5. **Minerva M.** (born and died 1846)

6. **(Sarah) Jane** – (1848 – 1922) married George Ives and had:
 - George (1868)
 - Addie (1869)
 - Chester (1872)
 - John (1873)
 - Edgar Andrus (Jan 1875)

7. **James E** (born and died 1850)

8. **[Mary] Eva** (1855 - Jan 1892)

Our emigrant James Merton became a naturalised US citizen on 9th January 1866 and the record below confirms he was born in Sussex, England, in 1814. The witnesses were John Van Buren Jnr. and Truman White.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family name MERTON | Given name or names JAMES |
| Address VOLNEY, NEW YORK | Title and location of court 2315 OSWEGO COUNTY COURT |
| Certificate no. (or vol. and page) # 2527 | When born (or age) 1814 |
| Country of birth or allegiance ENGLAND (SUSSEX) | Date of naturalization JANUARY 9-1866 |
| Data and port of arrival in U. S. | |
| Names and addresses of witnesses JOHN VANBUREN JR. TRUMAN WHITE | |
| U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Immigration and Naturalization Service. Form No. 1-IP. 14-3202 | |

Figure 10 - New York, County Naturalization Records, 1791 - 1980 found via Family Search

James died 4th December 1881, aged 67, and his wife Jane had died nearly 4 years earlier, on 29th January 1878 aged 60. Both are buried at Mount Pleasant, North Side Cemetery, Volney, Oswego, New York.

¹ <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nyoswego/biographies/mertonjames.html> Biography of James Merton, England >Volney, New York, A Canal Family by Ester Rancier. Accessed 11th November 2021.

² <https://www.towneleyhallsociety.co.uk/Towneley.pdf> Towneley Hall Society's online PDF file Tracing the Towneleys 2004. Accessed 11th November 2021

³ <https://www.rbhousemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/sm-ochs-issue-1940.pdf>