

The Marrington Seamen

Approximately four miles east of Bishop Auckland, twenty miles south-southwest of Sunderland, in the Palatine of Durham, lies the ancient parish of Merrington. With a population of only 228 people in 1801, the ancestors of the seafaring Marrington family of Sunderland most likely originated here at an earlier date. Sometimes spelled Merrington and sometimes Marrington in the records of Sunderland, the family is fairly small and probably all closely related.

When the Marrington family lived in Sunderland, it was the greatest ship-building place in the world – a position it held in the days of the wooden ships and later in the days of iron ships, right down to this century.

The earliest mention of the name I have found is in 1343. In this year a coal-mine is mentioned in the church records of the vicarage of Merrington. Eight years later Roger of Merrington appears in the same records as a proctor (supervisor of students) in the prior and convent of "Gyseburn."

Four hundred years later the Marrington place name is established in the Sunderland area with Catherine Marrington, who was born in either 1701 or 1702. She was most likely the mother of the Sunderland Marrington family, and is mentioned as a widow aged 71 years, who was buried at Sunderland on August 18, 1779.

In England during this period there was a custom used in naming children. The first son of a family was usually named after the father's father or paternal grandfather. The first daughter of a family was named

after the mother's mother or maternal grandmother. The next son and daughter are named after the other grandparent respectively. It appears that the Marrington family used this naming convention at least some of the time, and it is useful in projecting who the parents might be if all of the children of a family can be found.

On Christmas Day in 1768 John Marrington married Margaret Park. Their first four children, Ann, Matthew, Thomas and Catherine would indicate that John's parents were Matthew and Catherine and that Margaret's parents were Thomas and Ann if the naming conventions were used. It appears that there is little doubt that the Catherine Marrington mentioned earlier was the mother of this John.

This couple had at least eight children. Five of these children are known to have died young. Of the remaining children, Matthew married Elizabeth Thompson and I have not found further information about Catherine or Robert.

Matthew and Elizabeth also raised a family of at least eight children. Their first son is missing in the records. This is known because later sons are listed in the records by number, such as third son or fourth son. The missing child was probably named John if the naming convention were followed. This child would have been born in 1796.

Also in this area was Peter Marrington. Peter may have been a brother to Matthew. Peter married Elizabeth Hall on May 31 1791, four years before Matthew married Elizabeth Thompson. On January 12, 1792 their first child arrived, a son named John Marrington. Perhaps Peter Marrington was a son or grandson of the Peter Marrington that was christened on February 10, 1738 at Long Newton, but if the

naming convention were used, Peter's father was named John.

When asked, "How certain are you of the birth date of your grandfather, John Marrington," Aunt Eugenie Pettersson Dea replies, "Absolutely." John Marrington, my second great-grandfather, was born on the twenty-fifth day of September in 1818 at Sunderland, Durham County, England. In the church records for that date the only entry states that John Donnison Merrington was born, the son of John Merrington and Elizabeth Donnison.

There were two John Marringtons of approximately the same age who could have been the father of John Marrington, my second great-grandfather. A family tradition claims that my ancestor, John Marrington, had an uncle named Matthew and another uncle named Robert that was shanghaied and never heard from again. If this is true then Matthew Marrington and Elizabeth Thompson have children that fit those conditions. There is a question if they were uncles or great-uncles.

Based on the arguments above, one possibility is that Catherine, the earliest known Marrington at Sunderland, was the mother of John Marrington. John Marrington married Margaret Park and is the father of Matthew Marrington. Matthew Marrington married Elizabeth Thompson and is the father of John Marrington. This John Marrington could be the father of John Marrington, my second great-grandfather.

Another possibility is that Matthew is the great uncle of my ancestor, John Marrington. That would mean that Peter Marrington was the brother of Matthew and that his son, John Marrington the ship builder, was the father of my John Marrington.

Whatever the possibility, the records have been

searched for some time without success for positive proof. My notes can be found in another work, the "Pettersson Papers," in regard to this search. At this time I can only leave this information in the hope that in the future another clue will be found to tie it all together.

John Marrington was a seaman. At age 16 he can be found as an apprentice on the ship Danube. By age 21 he was a seaman on the ship Sea Flower. He was later on the ship Restless, and by age 23 he was a cook on the ship Gironde.

Matthew and Robert Marrington also served on ships at this time. Matthew later became a master mariner and Robert a mate. Matthew was buried in the Sunderland Cemetery on the seventeenth of December in 1891 aged 84 years. I cannot find a burial record for Robert Marrington.

The father of John Marrington is listed as a pilot when John Marrington married Ann Lacey. The father of Ann is listed as a mariner.

John Marrington lived at Number 10 Burlington Road in Sunderland, England at the time of his death on the third day of August in 1893. At the time of his death he was listed as a mariner in the merchant service. His wife was Ann Lacey who died on the first day of March in 1904. She was living at Number 2 Northcote Avenue in Sunderland at that time.

Eugenie Marrington, daughter of John and Ann Lacey Marrington, married Olof Niclas Pettersson and is found in earlier pages of this book.