

William and Ann Richards

Gone to America

In 1831 William and Ann Richards emigrated to the United States, taking their children with them. William Richards, Baptist minister in Hooky since 1821, was attracted to emigration by the growing popularity of the Baptist faith in America. In the new world, the family had to come to terms with the growing crisis between North and South over slavery.

The Richards were among five adult Baptists in Hook Norton who were recorded in 1831 as "gone to America". On the same document were John and Ann Timms and Mary Phipps, though we do not know if they all travelled together. The Richards arrived in New York on 19 September 1831 on the "Salem".

DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK—PORT OF NEW-YORK.

Sold by Elliott & Palmer, No. 39 William-street.

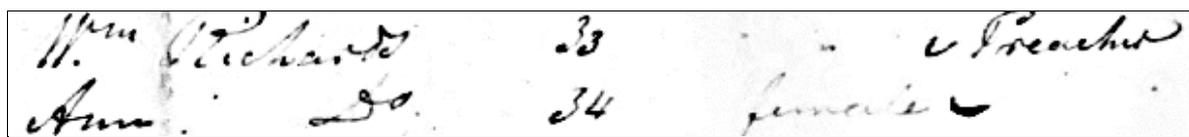
I, *Edward Richardson* do solemnly, sincerely, and truly *swear* that the following List or Manifest of Passengers, subscribed with my name, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs for the District of New-York, contains, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a just and true account of all the Passengers received on board the *Salem* whereof I am Master, from *London* So help me God.

before me, *19 Sept 1831*

LIST OR MANIFEST of all the Passengers taken on board the *Salem* whereof *Edward Richardson* is Master, from *London* burthen *470.50* tons,

NAMES	AGE.		SEX.	OCCUPATION.	The Country to which they severally belong.	The Country to which they intend to become inhabitants.	Died on the voyage.
	Years.	Months.					
<i>John Wilson</i>	<i>46</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>Botan Printer</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>		
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>42</i>		<i>Female</i>				
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>10</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>1</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>15</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>12</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>10</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>13</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>7</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>10</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>22</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>							
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>20</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>							
<i>John [unclear]</i>							
<i>John [unclear]</i>							
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>22</i>			<i>Botan Printer</i>			
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>24</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>3</i>						
<i>John [unclear]</i>							
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>40</i>			<i>Male Merchant</i>			
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>23</i>			<i>Preacher</i>			
<i>John [unclear]</i>	<i>24</i>						

The passenger list is difficult to read, but William Richards (second from bottom on this copy) can be identified by his profession:



The seven children who accompanied them were William, aged 13, Thomas, 12, Jabez, 10, Sam, 7, Catherine 5, Ellen and Amelia, 3. Another son, Henry, would be born in the USA in 1833.

After three years as minister to a Baptist community in Hudson, New York, William Richards took his family to Baltimore where he worked as agent for a publisher of religious books and as a voluntary preacher. Soon William was attracted to the thriving Baptist communities further south: the family moved to Georgia, first to Forsyth and then a year later to the new settlement of Penfield in Greene County.

Penfield was named after Josiah Penfield who had donated a considerable sum to the Georgia Baptist Convention in 1829: the money was used to found a literary and theological school – no doubt William Richards's motivation for moving there as he became a charter trustee. Greene County also had a thriving cotton-growing industry, and the black slaves outnumbered the white population.

Baptists in Britain had been strongly anti-slavery and participated warmly in the struggle to abolish slavery in the British Empire, joining thousands of individuals and religious organisations in petitioning parliament. The British Anti-Slavery Act came into force in 1834.

In the United States, too, there was a strong abolitionist movement, but not in Georgia. The Richards family seem to have accepted that they lived in a slave-owning society. The 1840 census for Greene County lists William Richards's household as 10 free white people, six under 20 and four between 20 and 50. It also included two slave children under ten, and two female slaves.

The Richards children inherited their parents' loyalty to the Baptist church, and William's aptitude for business as well as the arts. Pursuing successful careers they went their separate ways. The eldest son, William Carey Richards, was a writer and

publisher as well as a respected preacher, moving to New York and then Providence, Rhode Island. He and Thomas Addison Richards had travelled extensively in the South, producing a number of illustrated guides. Thomas Addison established himself as a painter and also left for New York.

Thomas Addison's paintings give glimpses of the landscape that must have become familiar to his parents, a world away from their homeland. His work now hangs in elite galleries both North and South. "River Plantation", below, was painted between 1855 and 1860.



Both William Carey and Thomas Addison stayed in the North through the turbulent years of the civil war.

The other children stayed in the South. Jabez Richards and Samuel Pearce Richards became business partners in Georgia, firstly in Macon and then also in Atlanta. Henry, the youngest, worked for Sam and Jabez. Kate, a poet, married Charles Dubose, a lawyer.

The 1850 census shows the children scattered, and the parents living on St Helena Island in South Carolina. There they were closer to their youngest daughters, Ellen Jane (Nell) Whitehead and Amelia (Amie) Williams who had both married into the planter community.

St Helena was one of the South Carolina sea islands, which had developed an economy based on rice, indigo and cotton that provided a high level of prosperity

for the white planters. St Peter's Parish, though, was also known as one of the prime areas for the Baptist revival of the late 18th century, and one of their tenets was the conversion of slaves to the faith. Some devout Southern Baptists worked hard to educate the slaves but believed that slavery was justified by the Bible. One leading minister, William Henry Brisbane, who converted to abolition in 1835 had to leave the state three years later and move North for his own safety. He took 33 slaves with him whom he freed; later he became a well- known abolitionist preacher.¹

Our family hitherto has been united in feeling and affection... but now we are widely separated indeed

Sam Richards, 7 September 1861

The Richards family lived in a nation irrevocably divided on the question of slavery. Though for a long time Sam, the fourth son, opposed secession, he had come to adopt the convictions of his home state, Georgia. At the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, he was 37, married, and co-owned shops selling books and stationery in Macon and Atlanta: he moved his family and the business to Atlanta in September that year. His diary records not only family activities but also the major events of the war:

December 22, 1860: South Carolina has declared herself out of the Union and yesterday at noon our Church bells were rung and one hundred guns fired in her honor. I think they had better have tolled the bells for the death of the Union. A letter from Amelia shows that even quiet she has caught the "So. Ca. fever" and talks as hot secession doctrine as anyone and Charlie DuBose tells me that Father is the same say.²

In the North William Carey became a vocal Unionist, to Sam's disgust. The family in Georgia and South Carolina were staunch supporters of the Confederacy.

¹ Lawrence Sanders Rowland, Alexander Moore, George C. Rogers Jnr, *The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina: 1514-1861* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 297,

² *Sam Richards's Civil War Diary*, edited by Wendy Hamand Venet (Athens, Ga., and London, 2009).

Kate presented a flag to soldiers in her county, and wrote a poem for the occasion:

Onward brave spirits with patriot devotion
Shrink not from duty though death be your meed.

Unluckily for William and Ann Richards, Beaufort County was taken by the Unionists in November 1861 in a move to blockade the Confederate coast. The couple, by then in their early sixties, fled first to their daughter, Amelia, and went on to join their sons in Atlanta. Within a few days William was preaching at the local church, and would return often to South Carolina to participate in the Baptist missionary movement. The 1860 census on the eve of the Civil War showed that William and Ann had owned \$2,000 in real estate and personal property, including two slaves. One of the slaves, Chloe, took refuge with the invading Northern forces, but her daughter, Sue, remained with the Richardses until 1870. In December 1862 William, enterprising as ever, was considering going into the "salt boiling trade".

Sam and Jabez did their best to avoid conscription, and carried on a flourishing business, while buying parcels of land as investments for the future. They also became slaveowners. Jabez was first, in July 1862, returning from a trip to Rome, Georgia, with a slave, Sally, for whom he had paid \$1,000. Sam had in the past hired slaves but on 27 December 1862, he wrote in his diary, "So now I had committed the unpardonable sin of the abolitionists in buying a negro."

The following year Jabez bought a family of slaves, and Sam concluded a deal for \$4,250 for a couple and their three year old child.

May 2, 1863: I was very doubtful as to the advisability of investing in this property but Father and Jabez were so much in favor of it that I gave in, hoping that it may prove for the best. The negroes were very glad to be bought by us.... It is said, and I think with truth that when we come to a successful end to this war that negroes will command very high prices as there will be so much demand for labor to raise cotton and a great many will have been taken away by the Yankees.

This seems, in retrospect, an over-optimistic view of the military situation, which turned against the Confederacy in July with the reverses at Gettysburg and

Vicksburg. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had already promised that slavery would be abolished, and slave property lost.

Sam and Jabez had bought a farm of 202 acres in January 1863 which they wanted their father to run for them. He demurred. But on 31 May that year Sam reports that "the old folks and Jabes family" moved out to the farm, four miles out of Atlanta, renaming it Pleasant Hill. It lay on the path of Sherman's March in 1864 across Georgia, from Chattanooga to the Atlantic. Sherman by-passed Macon.

May God deliver us from our bloodthirsty foes

Sam's Diary, 29 May 1864

In early September, after weeks of shelling, Atlanta surrendered to Union forces. Sam's shop was looted, and the remaining slaves in the city were freed. "So our negro property has all vanished into air," Sam wrote. Forced to leave Atlanta, he borrowed \$75 in gold, but to get to New York he needed to prove his loyalty. Luck was with him. An officer on General Sherman's staff came to buy some of Sam's furniture and proved to be an old friend of Thomas Addison Richards.

In New York Sam was reconciled with his brother William Carey who offered to set him up in business, but Sam was longing to return to Atlanta. In August 1865 he was home, and found his parents at Jabez's house.

This afternoon Jabe and I walked to town and a dirty, dusty ruin it is, but still, busy life is resuming its sway over its desolate streets and any number of stores of all kinds are springing up as if by magic in every part of the burnt district.

Before long Sam was back in business with Jabez. Though their partnership ended in 1884, the company flourished and still exists today.

William and Ann Richards remained in Atlanta. The 1870 census shows them living with Jabez. The following passage about their twilight years is from the

memoir of Annie Hathaway Richards Lively, *A Mosaic of Memories*, which drew on her journals and those of her father, Jabez Richards:

It was near the end of April, '65 - just after the surrender - that we returned to Atlanta. Our home there was still standing - one of the few that escaped Sherman's wrath - but the farm buildings were only charred remains. As soon as the house was renovated and our family settled, William and Ann returned to us; and in this home, except for periodical visits to their scattered children, North and South, they remained for the rest of their lives, visited quite often by their daughters who all had southern homes. The families of Sam and Henry were residents of Atlanta.

The latter activities of our pioneer (Rev. William Richards) were confined to home-gardening, writing, Bible-reading and occasional conducting of religious services. He lived on during the upbuilding of the city and the trying period of reconstruction, but took no part therein.....

After the war, Grandfather had the little negro girl, Sue, bound to them, and she was with them in our house for all the years from '65 to '70, receiving food, clothing, care, training and education. The girl seemed greatly attached to her benefactors, especially to her indulgent mistress, whom she always called "My Missy". But she was her mother's child; and one summer morning in '70 when she was thirteen years old, Sue and her bundle of clothes were missing. We found out where she had "hired out" but since she had renounced the guardianship assured to her till maturity and chosen to undertake her own support, no steps were taken to bring her back; and eventually we lost track of her entirely...

William died on 14 July 1871; Ann on 14 March 1872. Through all the vicissitudes and moral conflicts of their life in the new world, they believed they had remained true to their Baptist faith.

© Gill Geering

30.06.2015

Further Reading

Wendy Hamand Venet (ed.), *Sam Richards's Civil War Diary* (Athens, Georgia, 2009)

Annie Hathaway Richards Lively, *A Mosaic of Memories*, accessed on

<http://home.ancestry.com/>