

Adams

The origin of the name is Scotch. The family of Adam in Scotland is descended from Duncan the son of Alexander Adam who lived in the time of Robert Bruce who was Robert 1st King of Scotland from 1306 thru 1329.

The first person of this family to come to America was Captain Alexander J.C. Adams who was born in the county of Fifeshire Province, Edinburgh, Scotland in 1773. His father and mother were Alexander and Agnes Boorel (Boviel) Adams. Captain Adams' wife was Jane Christine Beaufeu (beautiful fire). She was born on St. Catherine Street in Bordeaux, France on October 21, 1783 and died in Baltimore December 24, 1862, aged 79.

Family tradition is that Alexander met her when he was invited to her home by her brother. Alexander and Monsieur Beaufeu were both students at Heidelberg University, Germany. Alexander married Jane, bought her to Baltimore on his own ship and made their home on Market Street in Fells Point.

Their Marriage Certificate reads as follows; On the 19th of November (i.e. Ventose the year 10 of the French Republic, 1802) A Marriage certificate between Alexander Adams, 28 years old, born in Edinburgh, Province of Scotland in the year 1773, ship Captain and a citizen of the United States of North America, residing in Bordeaux on Saint Pierre street number 5, son of deceased Alexander Adams and Agnes Berrel, deceased in Edinburgh on one side and Christine Beaufeu, 18 years old, born in Bordeaux October 21st, 1783 residing on Saint Catherine street number 66, daughter of Mathurin Beaufeu (merchant in gloves) and Marie Conne, residents of Bordeaux being a minor and having consent from father and mother, the father being here present on the other side. Reference: Bordeaux Archives Municipales, 71 rue du Loup Year 1802-Act 146-94; Adams, Alex. Beaufeu, Chris.

The preliminary act done at Bordeaux the 10th of this month is extracted from the register of Marriages Publication, proclaimed and posted according to law requirements. The identifying certificate entered the 15th of this month by the Citizen Collignan (notary public) and witnessed by the attorney at law in Bordeaux in due form was added to the birth certificate of said Citizen Adams, and to the birth certificate of Beaufeu all of which acts were by myself, Public Officer, undersigned the two parties here present have declared taking each other in marriage in presence of Frederick Leclere, 60 years old, manufacturer of chintz, Saint Catherine street number 84; Francois Bruno, 47 years old manufacturer of chintz residing at the formerly Carthusian Way; Felix Mallet, 30 years old, wholesale dealer small Wolf street number 1 and Jean Rousseau, 44 years old, cultivator Saint Pierre Carpenteyre street Number 5, all being unrelated to the parties after what Jacques Sacher, deputy-mayor taking function of registrar have proclaimed in the name of the law that Alexander Adams and Christine Beaufeu are united in marriage and have such husband and wife, the father of the bride and the witnesses signed with us.

Captain Alexander Adams was later signed as commander of the sailing ship "Amelia" which was armed with two nine pounder cannonades four 4 pounders and a long twelve. Adams raised a crew of 68 men and cleared Baltimore about March 16, 1814 with instruction from the

ship's owners to cruise off Nova Scotia. Adams did well. He took the brig "Joan" (Bristol to Quebec) with a cargo of rum, hardware, copper and dry goods; removed some of the articles and sent in the prize. His next victim was another brig the "Commerce", 300 tons (Liverpool to Halifax). She too was ordered for an American port. A third brig, the "Liddell" (Liverpool to Newfoundland), Adams divested of her valuables and then dispatched her to Halifax as a cartel with prisoners from the "Joan" and the "Commerce".

On May 16, the "Amelia" captured a fourth brig, the "Jessie" and a schooner, the "Ann". Aboard the "Jessie" were ten passengers. These with her crew were transferred to the "Ann" and most of the latter ship's cargo was removed and she was allowed to proceed. The brig "Jessie" was burned.

Adams had now been out two months. His food supply and water were much diminished and his crew depleted by manning prizes. He began a leisurely trip home making, however for New York which was closer and easier than Baltimore. On the way he took the schooner "Union" with fish and oil and manned her for the United States. A few days later Adams fell in with a Spanish brig which was already a prize of the British. The privateersman removed the prize crew of nine men and restored the Spaniard to her master. The "Amelia" spoke the Baltimore privateers "Grampus", (Murphy, Commander) and "Patapsco", (Moon, Commander), two days out of New York on a cruise. Murphy warned Adams to keep watch for HBM raze "Saturn" which was blocking the port. The "Amelia" arrived off Sandy Hook in a calm and escaped from the heavy man-of-war by using her sweeps.

The goods taken out of the captured vessels were enough in themselves to make the cruise profitable for both owners and crew despite the fact that the "Joan" and "Commerce" were retaken by the British. The "Union" arrived safely.

Adams required about six weeks to prepare his schooner for her second cruise and sign on a crew of 75 men. This done he had to wait another two weeks before conditions were favorable for running the blockade off Sandy Hook, but on August 18th he got to sea once more and started across the Atlantic by way of the Grand Banks. The events of the first month are described by Captain Adams himself in a letter to Mr. Karthaus which was published on October 10, 1814 by the Baltimore American.

On September 12, the masthead of the "Amelia" reported a sail which proved to be the U.S. Corvette "John Adams". She was returning under a flag of truce from Gothenberg with dispatches from American plenipotentiaries discussing peace terms with representatives of England. Adams persuaded the commander to carry a report home and to "heave to" long enough for it to be written. The letter said: Private Armed Schooner "Amelia" at Sea, Lat.44. Long. 39.

September 12, 1814

Dear Sir,

I seize the present opportunity of writing you per the U.S. Corvette John Adams and have only time to give you a short account of our cruise to the present day, August 26, captured the British brig Coaliers, from Cork to Quebec, cargo bread, flour and pork, burnt her. Same day

captured the ship Nancy from pool (Liverpool) to N.F. (Newfoundland), cargo tea, fishing tackle, leatherwear and dry goods manned her. August 30 captured the brig Harmony from Alicant to N.F., cargo salt and a few cask of wine, took the one out and gave the brig up to prisoners. September 1st captured the brig “Ann” from Liverpool to N.F., cargo salt, coal and provisions, manned her. Same day captured the brig “Elizabeth” from Cork to N.F., burnt her. September 4, captured the British ship Neptune, from Greencock to N.F., cargo dry goods, coal and wine. This is our last capture. We chased her about 18 hours and had a smart action with her for 55 minutes, 40 of which was with grape and musketry. She mounts 8 guns and had 18 men, but fortunately no person was hurt on either side. After taking out a few packages of dry goods, we manned her. We have now 58 of our own men on board and 32 prisoners who are very troublesome and I am anxious to fall in with something in order to get rid of them. We are well and in good spirits. I remain, dear sir your very ob’t serv’t

Alexander Adams

On the day Adams wrote his report, the “Amelia’s owners were far too busy to worry about her; their houses were threatened by the British who were preparing to attack Baltimore. After leaving the Corvette Adams had gone about his business in his usual workmanlike way.

An item in the Marine News of the Baltimore Patriot for October 22nd reported the above letter and also gave the details of the arrival in New York on October 20th of the “Amelia’s” prize the “Neptune”, Riese, prize master.

It was three months before Karthaus and Hurxthal (the owners) heard about the subsequent events of the “Amelia’s” cruise. When the news came the privateer was in Philadelphia where she arrived on January 20, 1815. After parting from the “John Adams”, the schooner had run into a violent gale which became so bad that Adams heaved overboard five of his guns. The “Amelia” rode out the storm and on September 19th touched at the island of Graciosa (Azores) where she got rid of her prisoners. The winter weather struck again eleven days later and the schooner carried away her bowsprit. Her master laid a course for L’Orient to refit. He stopped on the way long enough to remove some English property from the Danish ketch “Caroline” (London to Lisbon).

Guns and a new bowsprit were Adams greatest needs and he was compelled to remain in the French port until the last of October before he could get them and finish repairing the storm damage. It is probable too that he did not hasten his departure as he was received with great hospitality. The “Amelia” was ready the first of November and Adams sailed across the Bay of Biscay to cruise off the coast of Spain.

On November 24th the privateer went in pursuit of a brig which opened heavy fire with her stern chasers. Adams replied and gradually overhauled his quarry until he was alongside and could open with his broadside. The brig’s people continued to resist but at the end of a 20 minute running fight they hauled down their colors and the privateer took possession of the English letter of marque “Pallas”, formerly the French privateer “Sans Souci”. The brig was armed with eight guns, carried a crew of 21, had a cargo of codfish and was bound from Newfoundland to

Alicant. Adams took the prisoners aboard the “Amelia” and ordered Moses Page, a prize master to take the “Pallas” to the United States. The vessels parted company and immediately ran into a series of heavy gales. Adams after the weather moderated picked up the prevailing winds and ran southwest across the Atlantic to the West Indies where on December 22nd he captured the schooner “Susanna” and gave her up to the prisoners from the “Pallas”.

The “Amelia’s” was now both bad and low and her master attempted to get a fresh supply at St. Bart’s but the governor refused him to get even one cask. Adams then headed for home.

On January, 3rd, however, he sighted a schooner and clapped on sail in chase. He caught her, but only at the end of twelve hours fast sailing in which he needed all his skill and the “Amelia” all her speed. When the Englishman surrendered, Adams learned the reason for her fleetness. Although her papers showed she was the British schooner “Mary” (Bermuda to Nassau) in ballast, Adams also discovered that she had originally been the letter of marque “Climax”, built in Baltimore. She had been captured on April 6, 1814 by the HBM brig “Moselle” and sold at Bermuda.

Adams placed a prize crew aboard and ordered them to keep company. Together the schooners made for Delaware Bay which they reached on January 10th after they had been chased several times and escaped by superior sailing. On one occasion the “Amelia” was pursued for 53 hours and lost a member of her crew, Levi Paul, overboard. Adams took his command to Philadelphia where she was lying when news of the peace arrived. The vessel was later sold to Lyde Goodwin who put her in the West Indies trade.

Scharf in his chronicles of Baltimore (pages 369,370) states; the “Amelia” of Baltimore captured the following vessels: Brigs “Colier”, “Harmony”, “Ann” and ship (name not included) of eight guns. She had a short combat with the “Neptune”. The privateer “Amelia” of Baltimore arrived safe at Philadelphia in April, 1815 with a full cargo of valuable goods taken from the enemy. During her cruise she captured 10 British vessels amounting to 2,270 tons, 112 prisoners and 2 carriage guns. She was frequently chased by the enemy and once for 53 hours but she was fortunate enough to evade all her pursuers.

In Scharf’s History of Baltimore City and County on page 110, he states further: the “Amelia” of Baltimore in 1814 captured the brig “Liddelle” and made a cartel of her; the brig “Jessie” (six guns) was burnt and the schooner “Ann” was sent as cartel to Halifax. The “Amelia” arrived in New York after 85 days during which time she had taken 1,400 tons of shipping with property valued at \$1,000,000 and 80 prisoners. Among the list of vessels captured by her was the brig “Polly”.

Alexander J.C. Adams resided at Cowpens Lane in 1796. By 1803 he was a shipmaster residing at 34 Queens Street, Fells Point and/or north Liberty Street. From 1804 through 1819 his home was 96 Market Street, Fells Point. In 1822 his family lived on Caroline Street on the west side north of Gough Street.

Alexander died at sea on June 23rd 1822 or 23 aged 49 or 50 years and was buried in Edinburg, Scotland. He and Jane had eight children. William F., the second son died on May 2nd

1891 at his late residence "Thornfield" at the age of 87 and was buried at Bonnie Brae cemetery, Baltimore. He was a retired ship Captain who died at his home near Harrisonville, Baltimore County. For 50 years he was a seafaring man who had been in every prominent part of the globe. He was married twice. His first wife was Helen Wyvill. His sister Mary Jane married Richard C. Kemp. (See the Hooper family). The "Amelia" was one of a considerable fleet of vessels operated by Peter Arnold Karthaus as a "letter of marque". Freight lost its charm as a sole source of income when privateering profits began to be talked about around the Merchants Coffee House. Among many other ships he owned outright was the "Comet" (the ship James Hooper served on in the battle of Baltimore) and the "Kemp". The "Amelia" (143 tons) was one of Karthaus' most important vessels. It was smaller than the other vessels but it was the newest. She was built in Baltimore in 1813/14 and was lying in the harbor in February 1814 lacking guns and crew but otherwise ready for sea. Before Captain Adams assumed command of her, he was commissioned Captain of the "Pioneer" on March 27, 1813. He assumed Command of the "Amelia" on March 16, 1814. The "Pioneer" was a schooner of 220 tons built in Talbot County, Maryland in 1810; 41 men; 1 long 9, 4 -9 pounder guns; Captain, Alexander Adams. The ship went ashore at Egg Island (???) on January, 1st, 1814 and bilged.

Reference: Men of Marque, Cromwell and Crane, page 294

: British Invasion of Maryland 1812/14, W.H. Marine, page 402

: History of Baltimore, Scharf

: Chronicles of Baltimore, Scharf, page 369

Alexander and Jane's issue:

: Alexander b 2/20/1803

: William b 5/9/1805

: Julia b 12/16/1807

: Emma b 11/1809 wed 12/27/1832 Dr. Silas Larsh

: Alfred b 3/13/1/1812

: Amile b 9/14/1814

: Jane b 9/1817

: Peter Frederick b ????

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