

[Article from unknown newspaper, 1899-1900. Courtesy of Patty Luthy, pattyluthy@yahoo.com, 2003].

JOHN COLLINS A New Jersey Sea Captain

"The subject of this sketch, Captain John Collins, a native of Port Republic, N.J., is still living at the advanced age of 93 years. He is active and up to date, having all his faculties and represents a type of sea captain of the days gone by.

His son, Richard, with whom he lives, owns the homestead and planing mill at Port Republic. The other son, Lewis [Levi], is a well-known sea captain.

Of his grandsons, D.C.N. Collins of Bayonne, N.J., is an architect, G.H. Collins and John C. Cake are mining engineers of Pittston, PA, C. Warren Collins is a naval architect, William and Samuel French are attorneys-at-law in Camden, N.J., and T.J. Collins operates a coffee plantation in Guatamala, Central America.

During the first half of the century Captain Collins made numerous sea voyages. In 1825 he had the schooner Gloucester, of 100 tons burden, built at Nicholas Vansant's shipyard on Nacut Creek. Her first long voyage was made in 1828. Mr. Morse, a nephew of Commodore David Porter, was mate. The crew consisted of Josia Endicott, Jonas Mathis and Thomas Brown.

The Gloucester left New York with a cargo of general merchandise. Stopping at Appalachicola, then consisting of a tavern and two houses, Mobile and New Orleans. Striking a fierce gale she was blown back three days and on arriving off Tampico took on board eight Spanish pilots well armed with machetes. They stationed themselves at the helm. Four of them standing in a row on each side. They steered the vessel badly, trying to run her aground. The captain ordered one of his men to take possession of the helm but the pilots drove him away. Captain Collins finding that his vessel was touching bottom determined to manage the helm himself. So stepping up to the tiller he gave the men on each side of it a push which knocked them all down like a row of ten-pins. Finding it impossible to outwit the captain, they left the vessel without waiting for refreshments, all the while heaping a multitude of Spanish curses on the Yankee.

While at Tampico Captain Collins superintended the repairing of the schooner Commerce, owned by parties in Tuckahoe and New York, for which he received \$500.

On the outbound voyage the English consul accompanied them part way out of the harbor. After he was put ashore the pilots set out in their boat to board the vessel again. The Gloucester having a favorable breeze they could not overtake her. The captain seeing that he was out of their reach felt safe in giving them a parting salute from the ten-pounder which he carried. This caused a Spanish gunboat lying near to hoist sail and follow, but it was of no use for them to try to compete with the sailing qualities of any American built boat.

After going as far south as Rio Janeiro, the Gloucester returned home. It was a gala day when the vessel anchored in Nacut Creek off Shell Landing again, for having been gone so long many people supposed her lost.

The last years of his long life have been passed uneventfully on his farm at Chestnut Neck, where he is honored and respected by all who know him."

[Pictures of schooners of the size of John Collins's "Gloucester" 1825].

