

THOMAS WHITAKER, a waterman and ELIZABETH his wife were living in Stepney, England. Their issue, a son named THOMAS WHITAKER was christened the 20th June 1682 in Southwark, England. This Thomas also had a son named THOMAS WHITAKER, born in 1704. In 1719, he was apprenticed to his father as a tailor.

Emerging is a picture that connects the Whitaker's to the clothing trades, mainly weavers in the silk manufacturing district which is promising since, Thomas William Whitaker had knowledge and experience to try his hand at silk-weaving, a trade that had to be taught.

Residing in Southwark, a district that covered the whole area on the Surrey bank of the Thames river, facing the City of London, was Thomas Whitaker, tailor, whom on the 14th of April 1732 married MARY HAWKINS at St Mary Magdalene, a Parish Church of Bermondsey.

Issue:

- X (1) THOMAS WHITAKER - chr. 18 Mar 1733/4-Stlav, Bermondsey
- (2) ROBERT WHITAKER - chr. 11 Feb 1735-St Saviour, Southwark
- (3) JAMES WHITAKER - chr. 20 Aug 173 8-St Saviour, Southwark
- (4) JOHN WHITAKER - chr. 20 Aug 173 8-St Saviour, Southwark

THOMAS WHITAKER, son of Thomas the tailor, took up the trade as a caulker, whose duties were to make tight the boats/ships using a oakum to do this with. In Bermondsey on the 16th of Jan 1759 he was married to MARY SMITH at St. Mary's Church.

Issue:

- (1) THOMAS WHITAKER - brn. 13 Mar 1760-Bermondsey
- X (2) ROBERT WHITAKER - brn. 1 Apr 1763-Bermondsey
- (3) WILLIAM WHITAKER - brn. 16 Feb 1767-Bermondsey

Roberts father was not a wealthy man, and had no influence in which to bring his children into careers. If Robert had no other help, he would probably have ended up a ships carpenter, though, since he was obviously a perceptive and ambitious man. he would have done well to start his sons on the way to becoming masters of their own trades.

As a lad in 1777, Robert was apprenticed as a waterman, working on a small vessel on the Thames river, and we might have expected him to remain in a trade connected with the water, gradually working his way up, however.

The marriage of ROBERT WHITAKER, which occurred in 1785, to his wife ANN, represented a sudden improvement to Robert's fortunes. There is reason to believe that Robert and Ann were married at St. Mary's, Lewisham, which fell down in 1775. As to the church in Lewisham, it was reconstructed, and heretofore, sufficient rich traders and

merchants had moved into the leafy lanes of the village to make the parish a rich one, and no expense was spared in the redecoration. A great deal of money was used to build elaborate pews, and projecting canopies, so that each family could sit in semi-private comfort to hear the minister preach his sermon. When the church was finished, it was a credit to the village, which at times was a really high class suburb of London. A terrible fire blazed merrily in 1830, with all the wooden furnishings and silk hangings helping the fire along. Among things, which burnt were the parish registers in their wooden and iron

chests. When the fire died down, the church officers collected up what they could,

but the oldest registers, those before 1700 were reduced to a few halves of pages. The marriage register from 1754 to 1830 burnt up to a few charred fragments. The clerics did their best to collect some names and dates from parishioners then living in Lewisham, and managed to reconstruct most of the marriages after 1800, but those marriages which took place before this period were neglected.

Quite sudden, Robert blossomed forth not only as the owner of a ship-breaker's yard, which cost money to buy and equip. He also became a member of the Patten-Makers Company, which was totally unconnected with the ship yards, and purely a social club then, which took money and influence to enter. He became a senior customs officer at a time when such posts in the customs service went by preferment and recommendation from someone influential. The date of his sudden rise in the world coincided closely with what must have been the date of his marriage. It is therefore a reasonable assumption that Ann was the daughter of ISAAC RIGG and that the source of Roberts advancement was his wife's family since it was Mr. Rigg's that gave Robert his endorsement. It was a custom in those days for a young man to go to his bride's parish to marry, especially if she came from a well-to-do family.

Robert and Ann went to live in Camberwell, it was the place for young gentlemen to reside when having a business in the southern London Docks. Although, it was customary for a young man to go to his bride's parish to live, Robert having his own wealth by this time decided to reside at what became a home of their own in a classy suburb of Camberwell. This agrees with the evidence of the Rate Books, in which Robert is shown as paying rates on the house and garden up to 1821. By 1823, Roberts wife Ann died.

Immediately next to the Swallow Galley Public House, in a large house worth 20 pounds on Rotherhithe Street, lived Robert, and living next door was a man by the name of Thomas Beech, who leased a large garden valued at 2 pounds. This means that Roberts house was quite large.

Thomas Beech was like Robert, a ship-breaker, and he had a yard on the north side of the road worth 75 pounds. During that year Robert went into partnership with Thomas Beech and James Brannon.

Robert made his riches, sold out and retired to the life of a gentleman. On the 23rd of Apr 1831 while living at Canterbury Place, Old Kent Road, Robert died.

Issue:

(1) ROBERT WHITAKER - chr. 7 Jan 1786-St. Mary's, Rotherhithe  
-Dd.15 Jun 1862

(2) JOHN WHITAKER - chr. 3 Mar 1788-St John's, Rotherhithe

(3) SAMUEL WHITAKER - chr. 12 Oct 1790-St George's, Rotherhithe

X (4) THOMAS JAMES WHITAKER - chr. 14 Nov 1792-St. Mary's,  
Rotherhithe.

-Md. 17 Apr 1819-Rotherhithe

-Dd. 5 Mar 1879