

RALPH ISHAM

June 25, 1776 – September 29, 1845

While the lion's share of Americans living today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are third or fourth generation American's, the first Ralph Isham was already a third generation "American" when he was born just two weeks shy of the Nation's birthday in 1776. And although there might not be anything historically significant about the birth of Ralph Isham in Colchester, Connecticut, he is an Isham icon in that his Puritan roots were becoming appendages rather than the body of his personality.

What he shared with his ancestors who fled England for religious freedom was largely "ancient history."

Ralph Isham was, in more ways than one, a founding father. His childhood was spent during the War of Independence and he came of age when a fledgling nation was carving out a Constitution that was a reflection of the democratic spirit of his Puritan ancestors. He married at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and lived to see 20 grandchildren born.

Ralph Isham represented the forward thinking entrepreneurs who would eventually help turn America into the financial leader of the world. Unlike his father, grandfather and great grandfather who were farmers, Ralph was a merchant. Some of his business dealings are recorded. While providing us with only a small window into his life as a merchant, they are historically interesting.

**Saturday, July 7, 1792:** Taintor & Isham have just received from Bristol, a very large assortment of brass kettles, and from London, an assortment of pewter, of an excellent quality, and from New York, a few articles of dry goods.

Their present necessity for money will oblige them to sell the above articles very cheap for cash.

**Saturday, August 17, 1793:** Notice is hereby given, that the co-partnership of Taintor, Isham and Co. will be closed on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of October next; as it will be very inconvenient for them to settle with each other before the accounts of the Company are closed, they earnestly request every person that has an account with them unsettled, to call and settle the same previous to said 6<sup>th</sup>.

The records do not list the first name of the Taintor in the partnership of Taintor, Isham and Company,

but it can be assumed that the Taintor was one of Ralph Isham's relatives.

**Saturday, May 10, 1794:** Alfred & Ralph Isham, have just received from New York and ready for sale at the store lately occupied by Taintor, Isham & Co., an elegant assortment of English and India goods, also good rum, brandy, gin, sherry and Lisbon wine; good French indigo, cotton, wool, and Sweed's Iron for cart-tires, and old Iron, which they will dispose of cheap for cash or credit.

**Saturday, February 14, 1795:** Alfred & Ralph Isham wish to notify their customers and others,

that they have moved across the road to the store lately owned by Ebenezer Backus - who was also a relative.

**Saturday, November 14, 1795:** Alfred Isham gives notice that he will be at Windham, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the last of the present month, for the purpose of settling the accounts of Alfred and Ralph Isham.

All those that have unsettled accounts with the said Ishams, are desired to call and settle the same.

Note: Alfred H. Isham was Ralph's older half brother. His mother Sarah Bulkeley, was Joseph Isham, Jr's first wife. Joseph and Sarah had another son they had named Alfred. He died young. Alfred married, Clarissa Loomis. Clarissa was **Nathaniel (C 18)** and Elizabeth Moore's great, great granddaughter. Nathaniel's parents were Joseph and Mary White Loomis, direct ancestors of today's Ishams. Nathaniel's first wife was **Hanna Fox (C 19)**.

**Ralph Isham married Laura Worthington (D 1),**

ten years his junior, in 1804 in Colchester, Connecticut. Ralph was 28 and Laura was 18.

Ralph and Laura had eight children (all born in Colchester, Connecticut):

Laura Esther b: 29 JAN 1805

Lucretia b: 3 FEB 1807

**Ralph Henry b: 17 FEB 1809 (E – Generation Five)**

Joseph Giles\* b: 15 JAN 1811

Ann b: 13 JUN 1813

Asa Worthington b: 11 MAY 1815

Fances Fedora b: 11 MAR 181.

Catherine b: 14 JAN 1819, died at age 12 in 1831

\* Isham genealogists have failed to consider Joseph's middle name: Giles. The name Giles was not given to any other Isham son. And the reason why this should be a point of interest is because the name Giles is the only connection, weak or otherwise, with the Isham family of which Thomas Jefferson was a member.

Joseph Giles Isham also held a US patent (1848) for the improvement of sandpaper.

The following appears in the records of the trademark office in Washington, DC:

The patentee says,—"The nature of my invention consists in coating both sides of sheets of paper with sand, glass, emery, or other reducing and polishing substance, cemented thereto, and extending around the sides thereof."

Claim.—"What I claim as my invention, and desire to secure by letters patent, is glueing, or otherwise cementing, sand, glass, emery, or other reducing or polishing surface, on to both sides of sheets of paper, substantially as set forth, whereby the coating on both sides will unite and form well-rounded edges, and thus produce what may be termed a reducing or polishing tool, presenting the advantages of greater cheapness and durability, and better adaptation to the various kinds of work to be done, and at the same time economizing the time of the operator."

Four years later Joseph applied for a second patent: " an improved machine for cutting and shaping bottle and other corks."