

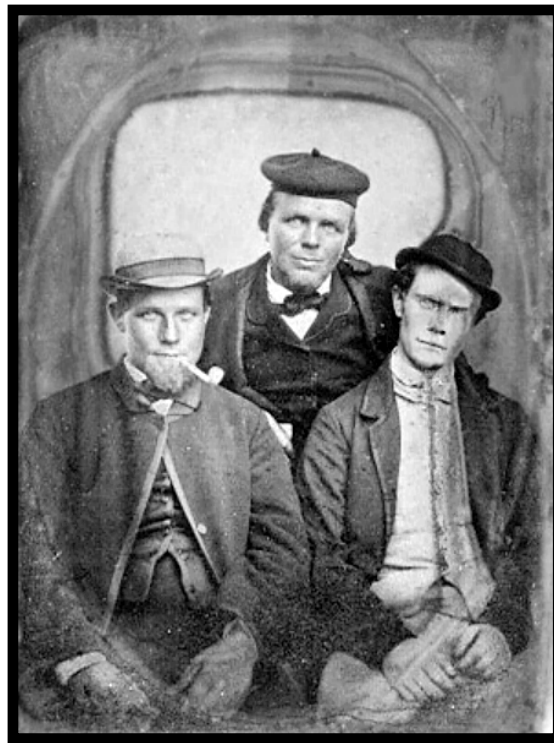
Samuel Wickenden

Born 1798 -- died perhaps 1871

Indenture papers

Freeman of the City of Rochester papers

Rochester in the early 1800s



Three Sons of Samuel Wickenden, c. 1860

This daguerreotype, taken in about 1860, shows the three eldest sons of Samuel Wickenden (b.1798). Unfortunately we have no known photo of Samuel himself.

The sons are, (L > R), Samuel, b.1836, Thomas, b.1826, and Henry, b.1838. There were three labels on the back of the photo. The label at the top said "Your Grandfather". The label on the back left says "Uncle Harry," and the one on the back right said "Uncle Sam." The writing appears to be that of Thomas Rogers Wickenden.

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Samuel Wickenden

Samuel Wickenden, son of **James Wickenden** and **Elizabeth Gardener**, was born in Rochester, Kent, England in 1798. He married **Eliza Wellbeloved** (b. 17 January 1808) on 17 April 1826 in Halling, Kent, England. Our family line is from his oldest son, **Thomas Wickenden** (b. 29 December 1826) who married **Charlotte Quaife** (b. 26 October 1827) on 31 October 1849 in Rochester, Kent, England. Their son **Robert John Wickenden** (b. 8 July 1861) married **Ada Louise Ahier** (b. 12 February 1866) on 29 April 1885 in Jersey, Channel Island. Their 3rd son, **Jean François Wickenden** (b. 19 January 1896) married **Annie Catherine Eliza French** (b. 29 March 1898) on 15 December 1923 in Cookshire, Quebec, Canada.

This document contains Samuel Wickenden's indenture papers, his freeman of Rochester oaths and some background material about Rochester in the early 1800s. The documents show that Samuel was first apprenticed to his father, James Wickenden, in 1805 or 1806. Samuel would have been a young boy of eight at the time. Apprenticeships were for a period of seven years. James was a fisherman and dredgerman (oyster dredging) and this is the trade that Samuel apprenticed to learn. However, when Samuel completed the apprenticeship it appeared that he wasn't keen on taking up the trade. There may have been several reasons for this. The Medway River was becoming badly polluted and perhaps Samuel didn't see a future in the trade. Young men were being pressed (drafted) into service with the Navy at that time, however, if you were an apprentice, you couldn't be pressed, perhaps a reason why Samuel took on a second apprenticeship. In 1813 he apprenticed to Arthur Adams to learn the trade of shoemaking. This is the trade he would continue with for the rest of his life.

Samuel completed his apprenticeship in 1820 and in 1823 he took his first Freeman of the City of Rochester's oath. As a freeman Samuel would have had the right sell and buy at the Rochester market before a non-freeman. He would have had several other rights such as rights on Rochester Common, voting rights, water rights etc. For reasons currently unknown, Samuel took a second freeman's oath in 1858.

THANKS !!!

Digital images of the indentures and oaths were kindly provided to me by **Janice Halls**, a descendant of Samuel Wickenden and Eliza Wellbeloved's youngest daughter, Eliza Wickenden (b. 1847). In addition, Janice has done a great deal of work in assisting me in transcribing these documents so that they are easier to read. We are also very fortunate to have two excellent articles written by Janice's father, **Brian O'Leary** that provide insight into the life and times of Samuel Wickenden. So, many thanks to both Janice and Brian for their wonderful work and for sharing this information with our family.

Ken W. Watson
December 4, 2004

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THIS Indenture witnesseth, That

James Wickenden (son of James Wickenden of the County of Kent, Esquire) and Elizabeth his wife have put themselves Apprentices to the said James Wickenden to serve as Apprentices to be

to learn his Art, and with him (after the Manner of an Apprentice) to serve from the day of the date hereof unto the full End and Term of Years, from thence next following to be fully compleat and ended. During which Term the said Apprentice, his Master faithfully shall serve, his Secrets keep, his lawful Commands every where gladly do; he shall do no Damage to his said Master, nor see to be done of others; but to his Power shall let or forthwith give Warning to his said Master of the same; he shall not waste the Goods of his said Master, nor lend them unlawfully to any; he shall not commit Fornication, nor contract Matrimony within the said Term; he shall not play at Cards, Dice, Tables, or any other unlawful Games, whereby his said Master may have any Loss; with his own Goods or others, during the said Term, without Licence of his said Master he shall neither buy nor sell; he shall not haunt Taverns or Playhouses, nor absent himself from his said Master's Service Day or Night unlawfully: But in all Things, as a faithful Apprentice, he shall behave himself towards his said Master and all his Family during the said Term. AND the said

James Wickenden in Consideration of such

his said Apprentice in the Art of a Shoemaker and Saddler, which he useth, by the best Means that he can, shall teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed, finding unto the said Apprentice

such other necessary and use other necessary things as may be required

And for the true Performance of all and every the said Covenants and Agreements, either of the said Parties bindeth himself unto the other by these Presents. IN WITNESS whereof the Parties above-named, to these Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals, the said Day of the said Month of the said Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord by the Grace of God, of the united Kingdom of Great Britain, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and

Sealed and delivered (being first duly stamped) in the Presence of



James Wickenden

Elizabeth

James Wickenden

James Wickenden

James Wickenden

Samuel Wickenden's Indenture to his father, James Wickenden

THIS INDENTURE witnesseth, *That Samuel Wickenden (son of James Wickenden of the City of Rochester in the County of Kent Fisherman and Dredgerman) of is own free will* doth put himself Apprentice to *the said James Wickenden his father his Executors Administrators and Assigns* to learn his Art, and with him (after the Manner of an Apprentice) to serve from the *day of the Date hereof* until the full End and Term of *Seven* Years from thence next following to be fully compleat and ended. During which Term the said Apprentice his Master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands every where gladly do: he shall do no Damage to his said Master, nor fee to be done of others: but to his power shall let or forthwith give Warning to his said Master of the fame: he shall not waste the Goods of his said Master, nor lend them unlawfully to any: he shall not commit Fornication, nor contract Matrimony within the said Term; he shall not play at Cards, Dice, Tables, or any other unlawful Games, Whereby his said Master may have any Loss: with his own Goods or others, during the said Term, without Licence of his said Master he shall neither buy nor Sell: he shall not haunt Taverns or Playhouses, nor absent himself from his said Master's Service Day or Night unlawfully: But in all Things, as a faithful Apprentice, he shall behave himself towards his said Master and all his family during the said Term. AND the said *James Wickenden in Reconsideration of such service* his said Apprentice in the Art of a Fisherman and Dredgerman which he useth, by the best Means that he can, shall teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed, finding unto the said Apprentice *good and sufficient Meat, Drink Lodging Washing apparel and all other necessaries during the said Term*

And for the true Performance of all and every of the said Covenants and Agreements, either of the said parties bindeth himself unto the other to these Presents. IN WITNESS whereof the Parties above-named, to these Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals the *twenty second* Day of *October* in the *Forty fifth* year of the Reign of our sovereign Lord *George the Third* by the Grace of God, of the united Kingdom of Great Britain, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and *Five*

Samuel Wickenden

James Wickenden

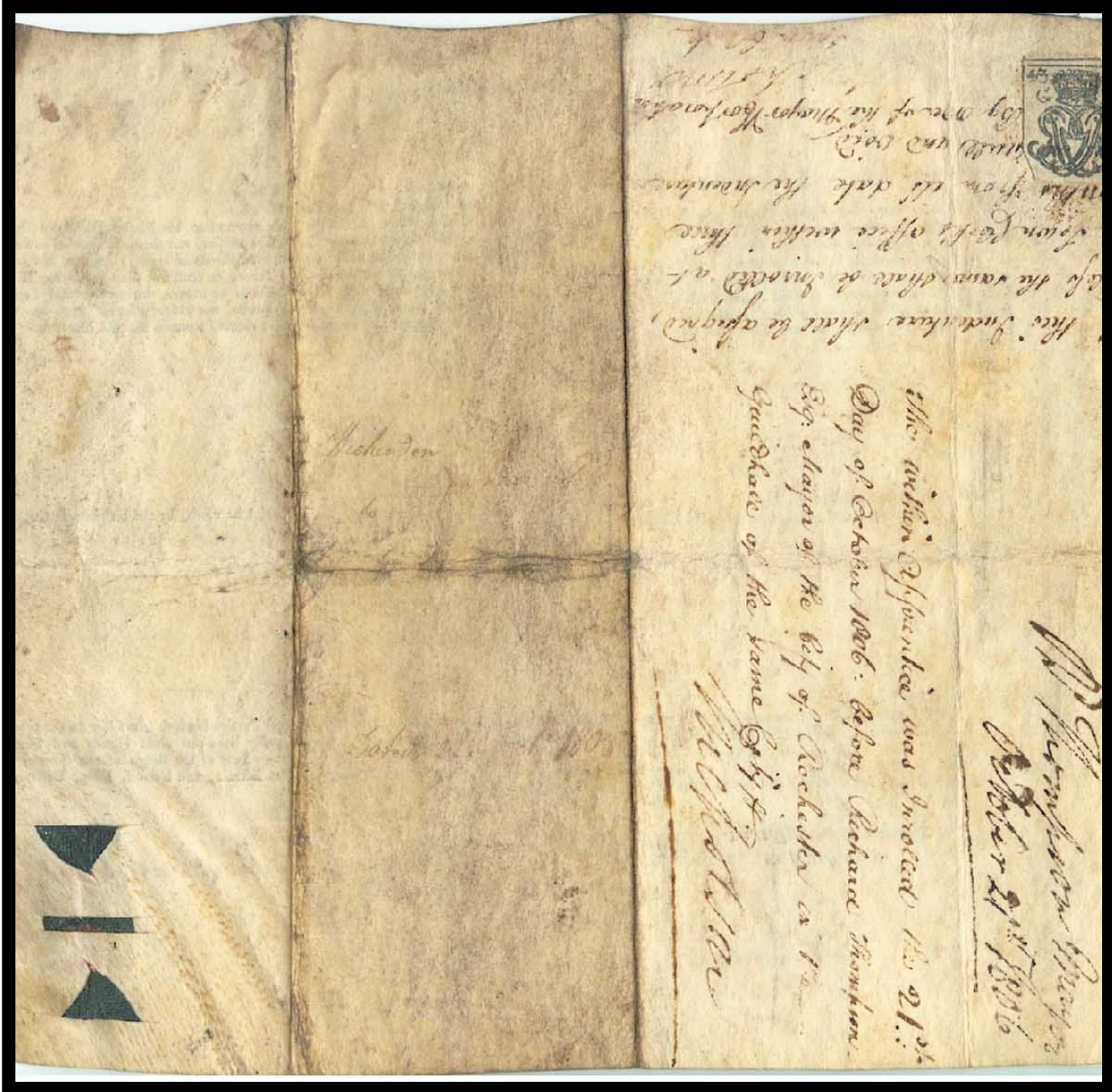
Sealed and delivered (being first duly stamped) in the Presence of

P. Barnard

Clerk to Mr. Nicholson

Attorney of Rochester

Note: this side of the indenture indicates 1805. This also makes sense for a seven-year indenture, since it would have ended in October 1812 – and then in March 1813, he took a new apprenticeship with Arthur Adams. However, the back of the indenture (see next page), says that Samuel was enrolled on Oct. 21, 1806. Perhaps the apprenticeship started in 1805 but they never got around to doing the document and officially enrolling Samuel until 1806?



These Indentures shall be signed
by the said John de Boscage
and the said John de Boscage
shall from the date hereof
perform the office within three
months from the date hereof
by one of the High Sheriffs
of the County of Middlesex
and the said John de Boscage
shall be sworn to do the same
by the said High Sheriff
within three months from the date
hereof

W. Wickenden
October 21st 1806

The within Indentures was produced to
me the said John de Boscage
on the 21st day of October 1806
before Richard Thompson
Esq. Mayor of the City of Rochester
a Justice of the Peace for the
County of Kent
W. Wickenden

Richard Thompson

Richard Thompson

The within Indenture was Inrolled the 21st Day
of October 1806 before Richard Thomson
Esq., Mayor of the City of Rochester in the
Guildhall of the same City.

Nicholson

N.B. If this Indenture shall be assigned, unless
the same shall be Inrolled at the Town Clerk's
office within three months from its date the
Indenture shall be null and void

By order of the Mayor and Corporation

Nicholson

Town Clerk

Samuel Wickenden's Indenture to Arthur Adams –1813

This Indenture Witnesseth *That Samuel Wickenden son of James Wickenden of the City of Rochester Dredgerman of his own free will and accordingly by and with the consent of by said father testified by all sealing and delivering these presents*

doth *him* self Apprentice to *Arthur Adams of the Parish of Saint Nicholas – in the said City of Rochester, Shoemaker his Executors administrators and assigns* – to learn his Art and with him after the Manner of an Apprentice to serve from the *day of the date of these presents from and during and -* unto the full End and Term of *seven* Years from thence next following to be fully complete and ended, During which Term the said Apprentice his Master faithfully shall serve his secrets kept his lawful commands every where gladly do he shall do no damage to his said Master nor see to be done of others but to his Power shall tell or forthwith give warning to his said Master of the same he shall not waste the Goods of his said Master not lend them unlawfully to any he shall not commit fornication nor contract Matrimony within the said Term he shall not play at Cards or Dice Tables or any other unlawful Games whereby his said Master may have any loss with his own good or others during the said Term without Licence of his said Master he shall neither buy nor sell, he shall not haunt Taverns or Playhouses, nor absent himself from his said Master's Service day or night unlawfully: But in all Things, as a faithful Apprentice, he shall behave towards his said Master and all his Family during the said Term. AND the said *Arthur Adams for and in consideration of the good and faithful service to be done and performed by his said Apprentice doth hereby for himself his executors and assigns- and agree to and [?] the said Samuel Wickenden his executors and administrators*

his said Apprentice in the Art of *a book and shoemaker* --- which he useth by the best means that he can shall teach and Instruct or cause to be taught and instructed. Finding unto the said Apprentice Sufficient Meat Drink *and Lodging during the said seven years*

of the said Lodging and all other [?] during the said Term And the said James Wickenden for himself his executors and administrators and assigns promise and agree to and with the said Arthur Adams his executors and administrators that he the said James Wickenden his executors and administrators shall and [?] find and provide for the said apprentice during the said seven Years of the said Term [provide?] Drink Lodging Washing Wearing apparel and all other necessities and during the said seven Years wearing apparel and washing and mending thereof and all other necessities except board and lodging

And for the true performance of all and every the said Covenants and Agreements either of the said Parties bindeth him self unto the other by these presents. In Witness whereof the Parties above name to these Indentures interchangeably have put their Hands and Seals the *fifteenth--* day of *March* --- and in the *fifty-third* Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord *George the third* – by the Grace of God of the united Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland King Defender of the Faith in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and *Thirteen*.

Sam Wickenden

Jas. Wickenden

A. Adams

Sealed and delivered

?? duly stamped in the presence of

??? ??? ???

??? Town Clerk Rochester

Dated 10th Jan 1813

to
Messrs Adams

of
London

The undersigned having
acknowledged before me the above
to be signed by J. Thompson Mayor
March 16th 1813

Sheweth in compliance
with the Statute
March 1813 before
Thompson Esquire
Mayor of
the City of Rochester in the County
of the same City

Ball Town Clerk

Note - If this Indenture be assigned
the same shall be enrolled at
the Town Clerk's Office within
three Months from its date
otherwise the Indenture will be
null and void
By Order of the Mayor & Corporation

Ball

Dated 15th March 1813

Wickenden
to
Adams

Apprenticeship
Indenture

The within Indentured having been
acknowledged before me let the apprenticeship
be invoked(?) R Thompson Mayor
March 16, 1813

The within apprentice was
Inrolled the sixteenth day of
March 1813 before Richard
Thompson Esquire Mayor of
the City of Rochester in the ??
of the same City

Crall(?) Town Clerk

Note – if this indenture be assigned (?)
the same shall be Inrolled at
the Town Clerks Office within
three months from its date
otherwise the Indenture will be
null and void

By order of the Mayor of Rochester
Crall



The Oath of every Freeman of the City of ROCHESTER.

YE shall swear, that ye shall be true and faithful to our SOVEREIGN
Lord the King
to the Heirs of our said Sovereign Lord the King, obeysant and obedient
shall ye be to the Mayor and Ministers of this City. The Franchises and
Customs thereof ye shall maintain, and this City keep harmless in that that
in you is. Ye shall be contributory to all manner of Charges within this
City, as Summons, Watches, Contributions, Lot and Scot, and to all
other Charges, bearing your Part, as a Freeman ought to do. Ye shall
implead or sue no Freeman out of this City, while ye have Right and Law
within the same City. Ye shall take no Apprentice for any less Term than
for seven Years, without Fraud or Deceit; and within the first Year ye
shall cause him to be enrolled, or else pay such fine as shall be reasonably
imposed upon you for omitting the same. And after his Term ends
within convenient time (being required) ye shall make him Free of this
City, if he have well and truly served you. Ye shall also keep the King's
Peace in your own Person, ye shall know no Gatherings, Conventicles,
nor Conspiracies, made against the King's Peace, but ye shall warn the
Mayor thereof, or let it to your Power. All these Points and Articles ye
shall well and truly keep, according to the Laws and Customs of this City,
to your Power: So God you help. *God Save the King.*

Samuel Wickenden was admitted to the Freedom of the
said City, the *twentieth* Day of *September* 1623
Edward Boyes Esquire, then MAYOR

Boyes
Town-Clerk.

The Oath of every Freeman of the City of Rochester

Ye shall swear, that ye shall be true and faithful to our Sovereign

Lord the King

to the Heirs of our said Sovereign Lord the King, obeysant and obedient shall ye be to the Mayor and Ministers of this City. The Franchises and Customs thereof ye shall maintain, and this City keep harmless in that that in you is. Ye shall be contributory to all manner of Charges within this City, as Summons, Watches, Contributions, Lot and Scot, and to all other charges, bearing your Part as a Freeman ought to do. Ye shall implead or sue no Freeman out of this City, while ye have Right and Law within the same City. Ye shall take no Apprentice for any less Term than for seven Years, without Fraud or Deceit; and within the first Year ye shall cause him to be enrolled, or else pay such fine as shall be reasonably imposed upon you for omitting the same. And after his term ends within convenient time (being required) ye shall make him Free of this City, if he have well and truly served you. Ye shall also keep the King's Peace in your own Person; Ye shall know no Gatherings, Conventicles, nor Conspiracies, made against the King's Peace; but ye shall warn the Mayor thereof, or let it to your Power. All these Points and Articles ye shall well and truly keep, according to the Laws and Customs of this City, to your power. So God you help. God Save the King.

Samuel Wickenden boot and shoe maker(??) was admitted to the Freedom of the

said City the twenty ninth Day of September 1823

Edward Boys ----- Esquire, then Mayor

Boys

Town Clerk



The Oath of every Freeman of the City of Rochester.

YE shall swear, that ye shall be true and faithful to Our SOVEREIGN
Lady Queen Victoria
and to the Heirs of our said Sovereign Lady the Queen: Obeysant and obedient:
shall ye be to the Mayor and Ministers of this City: the Franchises and Customs
thereof ye shall maintain, and this City keep harmless in that that in you is. Ye
shall be contributory to all manner of charges within this City, as Summons,
Watches, Contributions, Lot and Scot, and to all other charges, bearing your part
as a Freeman ought to do. Ye shall implead or sue no Freeman out of this City,
while ye have Right and Law within the same City. Ye shall take no Apprentice
for any less term than for Seven Years, without Fraud or Deceit; and within the
first year ye shall cause him to be enrolled, or else pay such fine as shall be reason-
ably imposed upon you for omitting the same; and after his term ends within
convenient time (being required) ye shall make him free of this City, if he have
well and truly served you. Ye shall also keep the Queen's Peace in your own
Person; Ye shall know no Gatherings, Conventicles, or Conspiracies, made against
the Queen's Peace; but ye shall warn the Mayor thereof, or let it to your Power.
All these Points and Articles ye shall well and truly keep, according to the Laws
and Customs of this City, to your power. So God you help.

God save the Queen.

Samuel Wickenden was admitted to the Freedom of the
said City the *seventeenth* — Day of *September 1858*

John Thomas — Esquire, then MAYOR.

J. Lewis,
Town Clerk.

John Thomas Mayor.

The Oath of every Freeman of the City of Rochester

Ye shall swear, that ye shall be true and faithful to Our Sovereign

Lady King Victoria

And to the Heirs of our said Sovereign Lady the Queen: Obeysant and obedient shall ye be to the Mayor and Ministers of this City: the Franchises and Customs thereof ye shall maintain, and this City keep harmless in that that in you is. Ye shall be contributory to all manner of charges within this City, as Summons, Watches, Contributions, Lot and Scot, and to ll other charges, bearing your part as a Freeman ought to do. Ye shall implead or sue no Freeman out of this City, while ye have Right and Law within the same City. Ye shall take no Apprentice for any less term than for Seven Years, without Fraud or Deceit; and within the first year ye shall cause him to be enrolled, or else pay such fine as shall be reasonably imposed upon you for omitting the same; and after his term ends within convenient time (being required) ye shall make him free of this City, if he have well and truly served you. Ye shall also keep the Queen's Peace in your own Person; Ye shall know no Gatherings, Conventicles, or Conspiracies, made against the Queen's Peace; but ye shall warn the Mayor thereof, or let it to your Power. All these Points and Articles ye shall well and truly keep, according to the Laws and Customs of this City, to your power. So God you help.

God save the Queen.

Samuel Wickenden was admitted to the Freedom of the
said City the *seventeenth* Day of *September 1858*

John Thomas ----- Esquire, then Mayor

???

Town Clerk

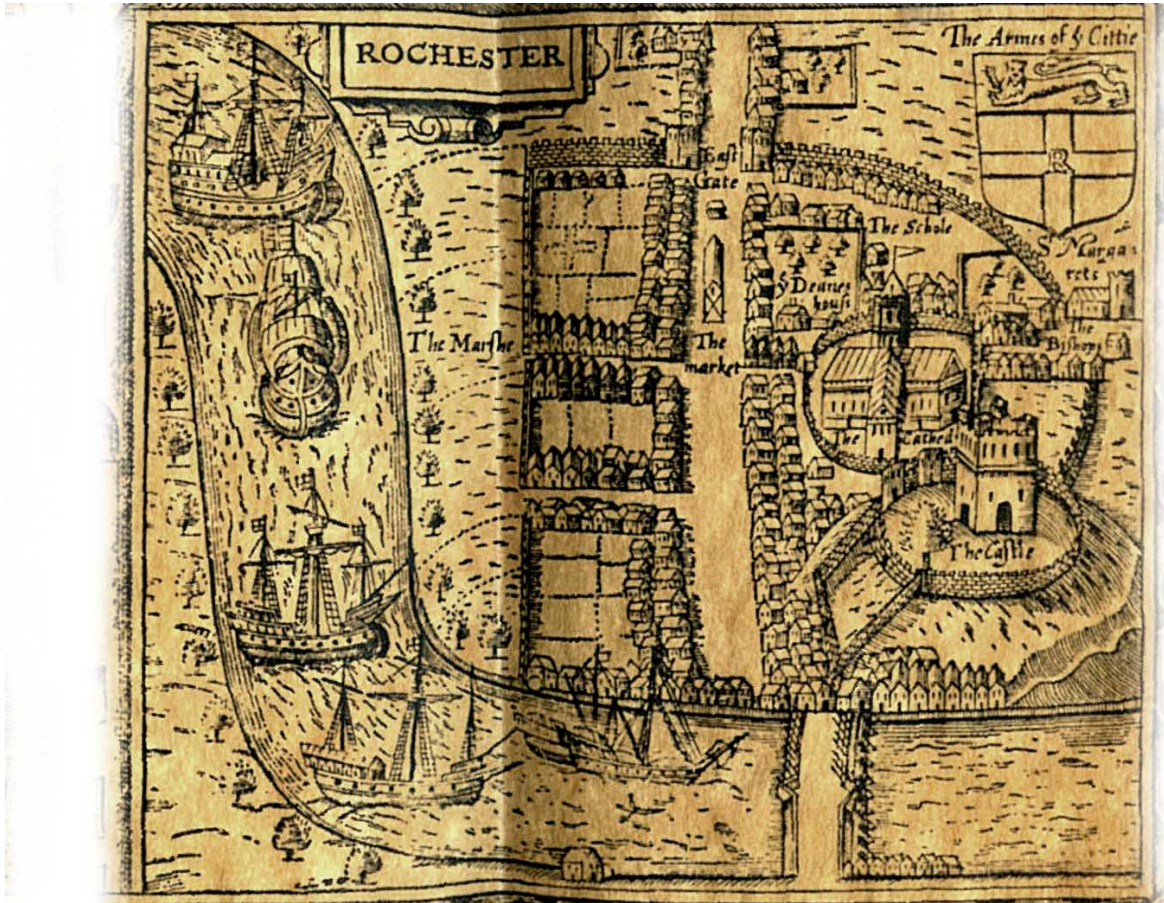
John Thomas Mayor
Mayor

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ROCHESTER IN THE early 1800s – the era of Samuel Wickenden

by

Brian O'Leary



This seventeenth century map shows Rochester almost as it would have been in Samuel Wickenden's days.

The market was held in the High Street in those days. Today it is held in the area marked as The Marsh which then was common ground for the city freemen. To the right, or south side of the map, St Margaret's Church is marked. The south land beyond the town arms is all known as the Delce. Then it was nearly all cattle pasture, orchards and arable land.

The bridge is offset from the High Street. The original bridge made of wood became so ruinous due to purposeful neglect that a new stone bridge was built. The esplanade is the stretch of bank between the city west gate and the stone bridge's end. The wooden bridge was pulled down once the stone one was completed. The near side of the river (Strood) also needed an esplanade because the new bridge didn't match the end of Watling Street at Strood either.

In earlier days the heads and quarters of Jutish rebels (for so various acts of Parliament described the men of Kent) were displayed on spikes above the city gates.

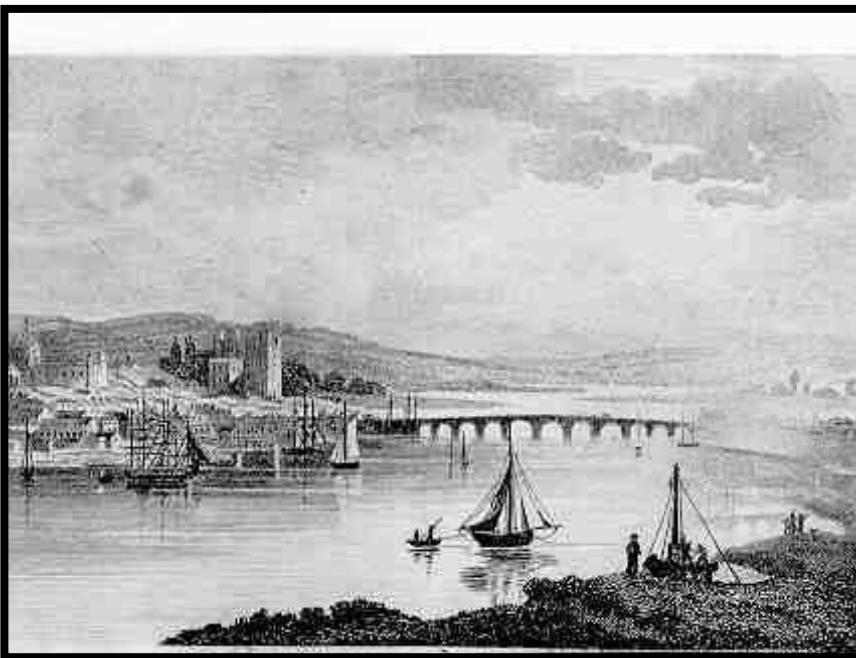
The artist has tried to show round trading ships (built like Dick Whittington's cargo cat!) and long lean fighting ships in the port.

By Sam's time the stocks and the pillory still held their victims in the High Street. Public hangings always drew a good attendance. (A bit like modern rock concerts!)

A new stone bridge was constructed and endowed in 1388 by two captains of Edward's French Wars, Sir John de Cobham and Sir Robert Knollys. Charitable works like this were done by people in fear for the future of their mortal souls. (Old people were charitable of course, young people have no thought of shriving their souls of sin before death). Knollys, for instance, made a hell of a profit during the fighting, in one year alone he took 100,000 gold crowns in plunder and ransoms and butchered God alone knows how many French people. He felt he needed to be purged of greed and death. At the Strood end (left) of the bridge the two knights built a chapel so that bridge users could pray for their souls.



This is the bridge of Sam Wickenden's fishing days. The drawbridge in the middle is there to allow tall-masted ships to pass upriver to Maidstone. However, look at the starlings, (the broad boat-shaped bases of the arches). Think how they would constrict the flow of water. When the high tide went out and the water level dropped some twenty-five feet then going between the starlings was a white-knuckle ride because the boat/ barge/ whatever shot down a fall of six feet or more on a current moving at least ten knots. Many boats were smashed and watermen were killed there. In winter the bridge was sometimes damaged by lumps of ice.



View of Rochester and the bridge from the Strood bank, downriver. There is a fishing boat in the foreground, and ships in the port. This is close to the sight that apprentice Sam would have seen when returning upstream after a day's fishing in the estuary.



This shows sailing barges upriver from Rochester, somewhere closer to Aylesford or Maidstone. The river barge was built with a flat bottom so that it could rest on the mudbanks when the tide went out. However, in order to sail a vessel a keel is essential if the wind is to exert leverage against the water so that the barge may be guided. Sailing barges were equipped with a rounded board on each side of the hull that turned on a pivot. When the barge grounded the board rose clear of the mud to be lashed up against

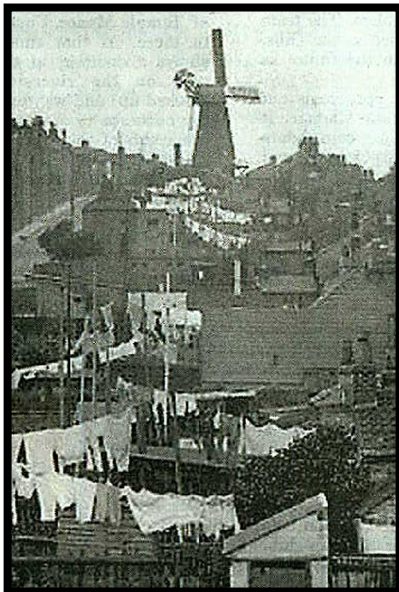
the hull. When the tide turned and the water deepened the boards were dropped to act as the needed keel. Barges were about 90 feet long, 14/15 feet wide and carried the vast bulk of the coastal cargo.

Sailing barges were in still use through the Second World War because their wooden hulls did not attract magnetic mines and they had no engines to attract acoustic torpedoes.

About two hundred of them entered and left the Medway on every tide.

Windmills ground out wheat, oats, rye, barley, gunpowder, fuller's earth, rag paper, cement and lime for building, rape and linseed oils, charcoal, etc. Some were sharpening mills. Much of their produce supplied the Navy at Chatham and the Nore.

Barge skippers relied on the many windmills on the hills to indicate changes in the wind for the mill caps always turned to face it. Also prominent mills were maintained as Admiralty navigation marks. Many of them lasted until after the Second World War. The last ones were pulled down by about 1950.



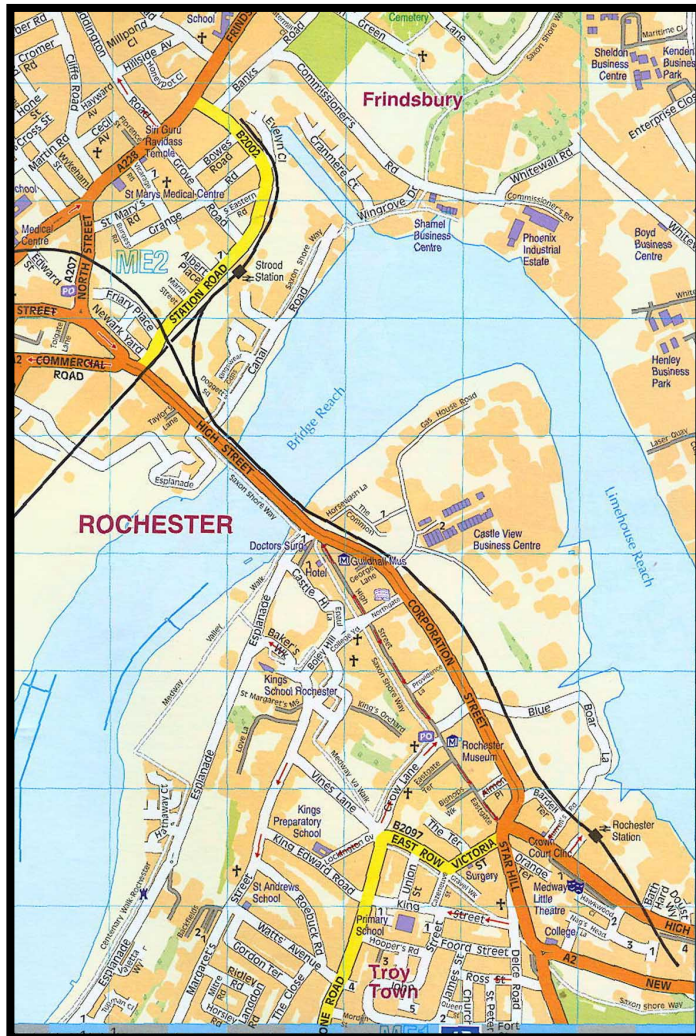
This (left) is the Delce Mill in Cossack Street about 1920. When Sam was alive all the land around the mill was farmland.

More like this (right) land around Star Mill.





In this aerial view taken from upriver, if Sam had wanted to visit Elizabeth Wellbeloved at Halling then he probably rowed/sailed upriver towards the camera as water travel was a lot easier than going by road) the steel bridge is standing. The old stone bridge was demolished by the RE's in 1856, an explosive event that rattled the city windows but not as bad as the attempts made in 1728 to demolish the castle when large chunks of Norman masonry crashed through the town roofs until the demolisher was forcibly ordered to leave. The new bridge was built where the old wooden bridge once stood so the high streets lined up with the bridge again. The gasholders at Gashouse Point were first put up in about 1819 as Rochester was the third city in this country to have gas lighting. The port of Rochester is largely within Bridge Reach and Limehouse Reach, see map below. The area to the right of the aerial view is the Delce Cazeneuve Street where Henry Wickenden had his Boot Shop in 1881 is show in this map.



Pretty much all of the area from St Margaret's Church to the foot (south) of the map is the Delce. The last trace of Delce Farm was the area known as Delce Farm playing fields for the area has been much built over. A little bit of the old Rochester common land is still labelled The Common.

Today's market still operates there under its old Royal Charter. Horsecwash Lane runs straight down into the water and was used as its name implies. Near Canal Road in Strood the old workhouse stood. (The Christmas dinner 100 years ago was beef but not much of it! Women and men were kept separate in the workhouse lest they should breed more children as dependents on the parish and children were set to work as early as might be.)

The original barge basin with its lock gates is still there. Flooding of the whole riverside area still occurs, also Canal Road in Strood, and the black riverside rats are much disturbed by it.

St. Margaret's Church, The Delce, Rochester, 1807, where so many Wickendens were born, married and buried.



St Margaret's Church, today





View of the north side of Chertsey gate where Samuel Wickenden once lived. It was once the gate of the monk's walled priory.

View from the south side of the gate.



A coaching inn of Samuel Wickenden's times still stands in Rochester High Street. The entrance was wide and high enough for six-horse teams to enter the inn. Beyond the red car may be seen the arches of the steel bridge.



By the time came that Victoria sat on the throne it was the age of steam. The first steam ships were built about 1837 and in Sam Wickenden's later days he would have seen the new fangled inventions like this paddle steamer cruising on the Medway among the sailing vessels. The Admiralty were obliged to keep their sail-powered men-o-war for fighting but bought steam tugs to get the battleships in and out of port.

St. Nicholas Church, Rochester, 1807. Again Chertsey Gate is in the far left of the picture.



Samuel Wickenden.

Born 1798 -- died perhaps 1871.

Background to his life.

by

Brian O'Leary

Families.

It was a time of cottage industry. Families were large because primarily children provided the labour force. They were generally expected to be helpful from the age of two or three years in small ways. They learnt the family trade as they grew up. Disease was rife, smallpox and cholera were common killers, so parents produced as many children as they could in the hopes that not all of them would die. Samuel must have attended school for a time because he was literate at a time when many people could not even write their names. The Medway marshes were the only place in the country where mosquitoes carried malaria. Sailors had brought it back from foreign parts.

Fishing.

Medway fishing was governed by the tides. There were two main types of fishing craft, smacks and yawls (different mast arrangements). Below Rochester the Medway runs for 20 miles to its mouth. Beyond that Medway fishermen might become embroiled in combat with Thames fishermen or with Whitstable oystermen who fiercely contested their 'rights' to the Nore estuary grounds. Navigation must have been hazardous due to the great numbers of sailing barges, merchant ships and naval vessels using the river. Apart from the mobile river hazards there were also the hulks, old dismasted floating naval hulls that were used to imprison thousands of French prisoners of war. Once the wars ended after Waterloo the French were released and the hulks became a home to thousands of English convicts for there was no room in the prisons. Eventually these men were transported as bond servants (slaves) to the colonies but the Americans rebelled, other countries did not want them for they had enough crooks of their own so finally they were sent to Australia. Sam could have seen the First Fleet sail.

Fishermen would have been cautious about laying out their lines of drift nets or they would have lost expensive nets or been run down by heavier craft. Oysters were scooped from their beds with dredge nets. Fish had to be landed and sold quickly, there were no means of storing fish then except for drying and salting. There was a saying of the time that fish and guests both stink after three days. Probably the girls and women of the family had to assist with washing and sorting the fish and laying them out in shallow rush baskets for sale at the market or to be cried through the streets. They probably had to gather river rushes and weave the sales baskets as well as helping to repair holes in the nets. Bulk oysters were sold in bushel baskets or by the barrel, otherwise by the dozen. Expert knife hands were needed if the oysters were required to be opened. When the steam railway came the fish trade increased for it meant that fish could be sold in London on the day they were caught. It was hard, heavy, cold, wet dangerous work and it may be that Sam preferred indoor work with no heavy lifting for he at the end of his seven years he abandoned the fish trade and went in for shoemaking

Sam was born at the beginning of the French Revolution. He grew up during the Napoleonic Wars. He would have been in permanent danger of seizure by the naval press gangs; his sole protection was the evidence of his apprenticeship. Smuggling reached its height during his lifetime and those who did not participate in the trade certainly bought its goods. Tobacco, tea, silk, newspapers and French brandy came into Kent, gold and newspapers went out. Tea was pricey and kept locked in caddies. At least one inn in Rochester High Street was identified as being a smuggling den and quite likely the sea-going Wickendens helped to keep it supplied. Excise men and soldiers fought pitched battles against smuggling gangs.

Crime reached an all-time high in the Medway towns during the eighteen hundreds. Most folk went armed with swords, pistols, knives or clubs for personal and home defence. There was no police force. Parishes elected a householder as their constable. One clever village elected a woman, but she had twelve strapping sons! In the event of real trouble the magistrates called in troops. Not far from Rochester a company of soldiers killed and bayoneted some thirty countrymen during a riot about the rising costs of bread. (the price of flour increased by at least 8x during the wars and a corn cartel kept the prices high when the war was over.) There were also parties of men that smashed machines (the Luddites) parties of men executed or transported for trying to form trades unions, parties of labourers rebelling against the conditions imposed by farmers who burned haystacks in protest, parties wanting democratic reform and equal votes (the Chartists) etc. All reformers and protesters were met with military violence including cavalry charges and threats of artillery use.

Hundreds of hop-pickers came to Kent from East London in the hop season and they were regarded as mobile vicious thieves.

During the Napoleonic Wars the whole Medway area was fortified against invasion, several local forts were built and the 3½ kilometre long Higham barge tunnel was first proposed as a means of moving troops quickly from Rochester on the Medway to Gravesend on the Thames. In fact it was built as a barge canal and tested by an RE engineer officer who barged through it firing a mortar at intervals to see if the roof would collapse. Due to the differences in the tides between the Medway and the Thames steam pumps had to keep up the canal level and it lost money so it was converted to a railway. The first locomotive had to be halted whilst some twelve inches of its funnel were sawn off since it was too tall to clear the tunnel roof.

By then Sam had completed his apprenticeship and had set up shop in the city of Rochester. Presumably he in his turn kept his children busy in his workshop skiving, processing and cleaning hides. In those days leather was partially cured by dog dung known politely as 'pure.' Some two and a half thousand children were employed as pure collectors in London. They paraded each morning with their pans and brushes before they were released onto the streets. Well, you can't sell shoes reeking of the tanning pits can you?

He may very well have made shoes for Charles Dickens, then resident at Gadshill. Dickens wrote about the hulks in 'Great Expectations' and mentioned parts of Rochester in 'Pickwick Papers'. The old devil Dickens was lucky because he left his mistress's bed and made it to his own bed about twenty minutes before he died!

Shoes were quite expensive items. The more work, decoration and colour that went into them and the higher the quality of the leather and the metal value of the buckles (pewter, silver or gold) they more they cost. With the town boasting admirals, naval captains and military officers

as well as gentlemen and city men Sam should have been reasonably well off. No doubt he charged in guineas at a time when many men's' annual wages amounted to a few shillings!

As a freeman Sam would have had the right sell & buy at Rochester market before a non-freeman. This was important, as food had to be bought fresh every 2-3 days unless the house had an ice cellar. He would have had rights on Rochester Common, voting rights, water rights etc. He would have seen the earth beaten roads being laid with cobblestones. He would have seen the turnpikes (gates at the Angel, Strood High Street and the bottom of Star Hill, far end of Rochester High Street) where all travellers by coach, carrier, or horseback had to pay to use the road. Gas lighting was installed in Rochester in 1820. He probably would have worn knee high boots. All traffic was horsedrawn and manure was a problem. Rules were made in 1825 – 1830 to stop butchers from throwing offal from slaughtered beasts onto the street. Coins were large and heavy, a one-penny piece weight one ounce and a two-penny piece weighed 2 ounces.

Local elections were lively and candidates issued free beer and hired teams of thugs with clubs to rough up opponents voters.