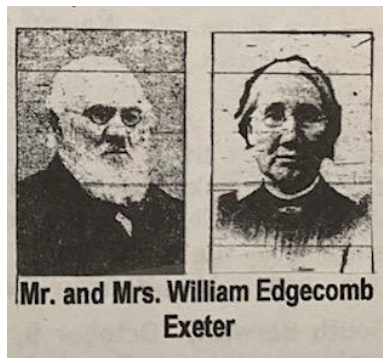


The Oldest Couple Contest



In 1903, six years before the Boston Post Cane, Edwin Grozier, publisher of the *Boston Post* launched a lesser-known promotion known as “The Oldest Couple”. For a period of three months married couples from the New England states were asked to send their photographs along with a 200-word sketch of their lives. The winners of the contest would be the couple who had the highest combined age. They would win a prepaid Morris Chair and Rocking Chair that would be delivered to them free of charge.

About 40 couples from Maine entered into the contest, but ended up losing to an Orange, Vermont couple with a combined age of 188 years. One of the Maine couples who entered the contest was William and Mahala Edgecomb of Exeter.

The following is the Edgecomb’s section of Barbara Staples’ book, *More Boston Post Canes: The Pine Tree State and Little Rhody*. This entry also included the two individual photos of Mr. and Mrs. Edgecomb.

“171 years: Mr. and Mrs. William Edgecomb, Exeter.

Mr. and Mrs. William Edgecomb of this place have been married 65 years. Their aggregate 171 years. William Edgecomb was born August 20, 1819 at Gardiner, Me. Mrs. Edgecomb was born July 2, 1814, at Brighton, Maine. They were married in Exeter, January 1, 1838. Ten children were born to them, five of whom are living. Two sons reside in Dorchester, Mass., and two daughters at Everett, Mass., and one daughter with them at the old home where they married 65 years ago. Mr. and Mrs. Edgecomb are in good health. Mrs. Edgecomb is very active and does a good deal of fancy work, as well as plain sewing. Each year she receives premiums at the country fair for excellence in needle work. Of the 23 guests who were present at the wedding only one is now living. William Edgecomb died April 21, 1904”

In the group photo it shows Mahala sitting with her daughter, Sarah Footman; granddaughter, Gertrude Smith; and great-granddaughter, Dorothy Smith. The photo comes from an article in the Sun-Journal dated November 28, 1903 and was a great addition to find after learning about the Edgecomb’s entry into “The Oldest Couple” contest. To add to the details of this family, Mahala’s great-grandfather was George Shaw, an Exeter resident who was a Revolutionary War Veteran.

