

Penny & Murrells, Wivenhoe ship-owners

James Penny (1803-1875) and William Murrells (1805-1881) were partnership as ship-owners and were related by marriage, Elizabeth Penny's first husband John Bacon (1791-1833) was the brother to William Bacon (1820-1855) William Murrells sister Mary Ann's first husband. James and his wife Elizabeth had lived on The Quay in Wivenhoe for many years and James is shown in various directories as a ship-owner, seafarer and he was a Master Mariner (CN 45312) born on the 26th April 1803 in Colchester. William and Eliza Murrells joined them on the Quay during the 1860/70's and are shown as living next door in the 1871 census.

Lloyds Register shows that the ships *Isabella*, *Fanny*, *United*, *Vedra* and *Nethania* were registered to Penny & Co of Colchester. Prior to the Companies Act ' & Co' simply inferred that there were other shareholders involved in a joint venture.

The *Isabella* a 128-ton schooner, registered no 5070, was built in Liverpool in 1821, and registered in Colchester on the 19th August 1845. James's Masters log shows that he was Master of the Isabella from the 12th April 1838 until November 19th 1850 and that he was involved in both coasting and foreign trade. The 1846 to 1850 Lloyds registers show the Master as Penny and the owners as Capt & Co. Ebenezer James Penny completed part of his apprenticeship on the Isabella between May 1855 and May 1859.

The *Fanny* was a 70-foot schooner built on the Tyne in 1844 by William Parkin of St Lawrence Yard, registered no 5240. 'David' Murrells bought her on the 10th October 1848 and the ship was registered to Colchester in November of that year. Lloyds register of 1848 shows that the ship was owned by Penny & Co of Colchester with William Murrells as Master and trading between Shields and the Baltic. There were 64 shares in the Fanny with a James Moore (shop keeper) holding 22, William Murrells 21 & James Penny 21; all 3 were from of Wivenhoe. On 5/2/1853 William mortgaged his 21 shares to James.

Masters Certificates and Lloyds registers show that William was the Master until 1855 with Frederick Murrells as his Apprentice. Completing his Apprenticeship Frederick was promoted to Mate in 1855 and Benjamin Murrells then joined as an Apprentice. Frederick then became Master from 1856 to 1859 with his brothers Benjamin and Joseph as Apprentices. Joseph completed his apprenticeship in 1858 he was 'promoted' to a crewman before becoming Master from 1860 to 1862 and Benjamin became Master in 1863.

In 1859 Daniel Simmons, Mary Ann Murrells second husband had joined the crew as mate under Joseph and Benjamin before becoming Master in 1864, a post he held through to 1873. The Fanny's final entry in Lloyds was in the 1854 edition, which had

still shown William as Master, Penny & Co the owners, and the ship trading between Shields and the Baltic. On the 8th February 1874 the Fanny sank in a collision with the Maldon ketch barge *Triumph*.

The *United*, registered number 4315, appears in 1857 with William as Master, a post he held until 1876. There were 3 shareholders initially, James with 32, William 16 and James Moore 16. In December 1870 James Moore sold his shares to James Penny with this shareholding lasting until James's death on 13th December 1875. During 1876 James's widow Elizabeth sold her inherited 48 shares to Hugh Anderson with William following and selling his in December '76.

United was a brig built in Sunderland in 1851 and the 1858 Lloyds register shows that William was Master with Penny & Co the owners and that the ship was an Ipswich coaster. Joseph completed part of his Apprenticeship on the *United* before becoming her Mate between February 1857 and January 1860 before handing over to his brother Benjamin who was Mate from January 1860 to January 1862.

The 1861 census lists the *United* under 'Ships at sea or abroad' with a crew of 8, William as Master, Benjamin as Mate, 3 Able Seamen – William Hurring (35) of Mistley, Brett Baker (21) of Fingringhoe, David Ennow (22) of Wivenhoe and 3 apprentices – John Bruce Gentry (18) and William Harvey (16) both of St Osyth and George Glover (15) of East Donyland.

Daniel Simmons had moved from the Fanny in November 1873 and was Master of the *United* to January 1874 for at least one voyage. Penny & Co were the registered owners until 1876 and the ship's fate is unknown.

The *Vedra*, a 189 ton brig of 1845 by R Thompson of Wearmouth registered number 5222, was built for James Penny (22 shares), James Moore (21 shares) and William Murrells (21 shares). William was Master from 1845 until he handed over to Ebenezer Penny in January 1850. Benjamin Murrells was appointed Master in October 1863 until April 1867 when Ebenezer Penny resumed the post.

The Ipswich journal of Saturday 19th February 1870 records the "The brig *Vedra*, of Colchester, founded off the Ferne Islands, on the 14th. The crew were picked up by a Norwegian schooner, and afterwards transferred to a Shields steam tug, and landed at Sunderland the same evening." And then on Saturday 26/2/1870, "The hull of the *Vedra* of Colchester, wrecked on the Ferne Islands, as reported last week, has entirely broken up, and been washed away. A few sails and some running rigging have been landed at Holy Island."

John Murrells and Isaac Appleby bought the *Effort of Colchester* in 1835 with both holding 32 shares, Isaac was John's brother-in-law, William Murrells was Master. In 1841 John sold his 32 shares to William who in 1844 sells them on to Charles

Appleby. Charles, Isaac's son, had sailed on the effort from 1837 as a seaman, mate and from 1847 as Master. Charles's Masters Certificate (CN 50039) shows that the Effort was trading in British waters and that whilst mortgaging their shares a number of times the Appleby family maintained their ownership of the ship until she is lost at sea in 1854 with Charles on board. *The Morning Chronicle* of Thursday 29/12/1854 reported, "Wivenhoe, Dec. 27. The brig ***Effort***, of this port, sailed from Middlesborough for London on the 27th ult., and has not since been heard of."

The ***Ocean Queen*** was built on Prince Edward Island in 1840, she was bought in 1846 by William Murrells (22 shares), George Lay (21 shares) and George Chevely (21 shares) with William as Master. The ship was sold out of the Murrells family ownership in September 1846 when William sold his shares to George Lay.