

## THE JAMES THORNTONS

The most well-known Thornton in Merrimack, was Matthew Thornton, who signed the Declaration of Independence. His father, the **First James** married Elizabeth Jenkins in Ireland, before moving to America. They had four children: Matthew, **James (the second)**, Andrew and Hannah (married Wallace).

Matthew, who was born in 1714 and his wife, Hannah Jack, had five children: **James**, Andrew, Matthew Jr., Mary (McGaw) and Hannah (Betton). Matthew and Hannah Jack are buried side by side in the Thornton Graveyard in Thornton's Ferry.

This **third James**, born in ? married Mary Parker and, as a wedding gift, Matthew built the Thornton Tavern (now the Common Man Restaurant) for them. James later committed suicide in that tavern. James and Mary had five children: Matthew, Thomas, Hannah (Greeley), Mary and **James Buonaparte Thornton**. He is buried in ????

This James B, the **fourth James**, born in ?? married Sophia Sheppard. James and Sophia had two children: **James Sheppard** and Mary P Thornton. This James Sheppard Thornton (the **fifth James** and great grandson of Mathew) was the last direct descendant of Matthew Thornton to carry the Thornton name. James Sheppard married his cousin, Ellen Thornton Wood. They had no children. He is buried in??

The **fourth James**, born in ?? was named James Buonaparte, after the French ??????, He served our country well as Ambassador to Peru, dying there in January 1838, with great acclaim from Peruvian and other officials. He is buried in???

The **fifth and last James** named James Sheppard after his mother's family, was born in February, 1817. After his father's death, he was raised by his guardians and family friends, the future President Franklin Pierce and Senator ??? Atherton. At the young age of 14, he was appointed as midshipman in the US Navy, where he served on the frigate Columbia and the sloop John Adams. Five years later, he was sent to the US Naval Academy and the next year went to sea. By 1850 he was doing surveying in the Pacific, and resigned his commission to work in the gold fields in California, as did many people during the **great** Gold Rush. He rejoined the US Navy in 1854, where he was wounded in a duel. At the start of the Civil War, he was Lieutenant Commander, executive officer on Admiral Farragut's flagship, the Hartford, where he was recognized for covering the sides of the ship with chains to protect it from cannon fire. In 1862 he commanded the Winona and then of the Kearsarge.

This famous battle between the Kearsarge and the Alabama, in 1864 has gone down in Naval History, when the Alabama sank. James Sheppard Thornton received a Congressional vote of thanks and was given command of the Kearsarge. He was promoted to the rank of Captain at the Portsmouth Navy Yard in 1872. His last duty assignment was on the USS Monongahela, when he was injured aboard ship in the Pacific and sent home from South Africa. Upon arrival in the US, he died in 1875 in a hospital in Germantown PA, after which his body was returned to Merrimack, where he is buried today. He is further honored by having a torpedo boat, "The Thornton" named after him.