

[English, James]

OBITUARY NOTES

James English, a retired shipbuilder, died Tuesday, in his eighty-second year, at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Samuel Wood, [in] Katonah, N.Y. Mr. English was born in New York. During the war he built several gunboats for the United States Government. A son and a daughter survive him. Funeral services were held yesterday in the Third Universalist Church, Brooklyn, and were conducted by the Rev. A. E. Wright. Burial was in Evergreen Cemetery.

*New York Times*, New York NY, Fri. 8 Jul 1898

JAMES ENGLISH.

Death of This Well-Known Old-Time Greenpoint Shipbuilder

Boat and ship carpenters of Greenpoint, men of the old school, were shocked this week to hear of the death of James English. They had worked with him and under him in the years gone by, and they all remember him with pride and even affection. James was the "boss" as they knew him in intimate contact in the shipyard, while John, the older brother, was the financier and the office manager, etc. Of course it was needful that there should be two of them to make the complement, and James always remained to the end of his days quiet, modest and retiring, avoiding rather than seeking attention. In the winter of 1895 he was domiciled with members of his family at 105 Milton street, and the family was willing that he should be written up in the STAR, with his picture, but it was feared that he would object. However, the "story" was obtained and the picture appeared, and Mr. English was known to have expressed himself as satisfied.

It was noticeable in him that he continued to adhere up to the time of his death to the spelling of the surname English with the final "h." His brother's family had dropped the "h" and were known as Englis.

HIS DEMISE.

Mr. James English was eighty-two years of age at the time of his decease on Tuesday of this week at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Samuel Wood, at Katonah, Westchester County. He was ill for only four days. He remained strong and sturdy nearly all his life. He was over six feet tall and

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was indeed remarkably well preserved. He was never a drinking man, but was a great smoker.

The funeral of Mr. English took place at the Church of the Reconciliation [Universalist] on North Henry street, on Thursday at 11:30 o'clock. The Rev. A. [Alfred] E. Wright officiated. The interment was in Evergreen Cemetery.

In the church during the service were noticed a number of the old ship carpenters of Greenpoint, there to look for the last time on the face of their old "boss."

Of the family of Englishes there were two brothers, John and James. They were the founders of the firm. James died on Tuesday, and John some time ago. John, sr., as above, left a son John, Jr., who is now the representative head of the celebrated establishment. John, jr., has a son Charles. James, just deceased, leaves George E., who was in the Brooklyn Navy Yard; Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. S. H. Wood.

FARM LIFE.

John English was at one time enamored of farm life and he resided on a farm in Westchester County, but he disposed of the farm about four years ago. He also made his residence at 229 Monroe street, near Nostrand avenue, in the Twenty-Third Ward, removing there in the spring of 1895. He was married twice.

James English lived in Greenpoint when the place was no more than a hamlet, when the school house stood on a hill on the site of the present station house, and when nearly all the village was clustered on Franklin street along the shores of the East river. It was ship building that gave life to Greenpoint and made it grow. The earlier illustrated papers of New York often contained pictures of boats of fame that were built in Greenpoint, and the place, in the estimation of many, was one vast shipyard, where the sound of the hammer rarely ceased, and there was a delightful odor of new timber and tar. Many ship carpenters removed from New York to Greenpoint and were among the first settlers. These ship carpenters brought their families with them, and as they were usually of the sturdy old stock, Greenpoint soon took on the characteristics of the typical American village. It is not the province here to discuss causes of the decay of American ship building, which began so auspiciously in Greenpoint. It is enough to say now that it is dead; though American battleships and cruisers have recently shown that America is still a ruler of the seas, and when this [Spanish-American] war is over, an American Congress, aroused to new possibilities, may do as other nations do and help to make again an American merchant marine.

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The Englishes were prominent of course in those days, being heads of a leading industry, and James English at the head of his faithful band of workingmen was the happiest man of all at a launching, and a launching in those days was an event, a holiday, which often brought people from the city across the river, and from out in the country—farmers and their entire families would come in from Jamaica, Hempstead, and even Oysterbay.

Mr. English always watched the progress of the Unadilla, built by him, and the first government gunboat of the war. She was built in the yards in sixty-three days, and there was a great hustling to complete the vessel in that time. There was continual danger from Confederate spies as they were everywhere.

The Monitor was built in Greenpoint in 100 days and cost \$276,000. Her victory over the rebel ram Merrimac in Hampton roads in 1862 marked the end of wooden ships of war.

#### DECADENCE.

Decadence in ship building in Greenpoint came in the early sixties in consequence of the great strike of the ship carpenters. The strike was unsuccessful, and the shipyard owners transferred their industry down east to Maine, and to Chester, Pa., and other points. The "bosses" moved away, and numbers of ship carpenters followed them, but Greenpoint was then becoming too big to be killed by the ending in the place of any industry.

The last big boat built by the Englishes was the Adirondack of the People's line. The present office of the firm is near the foot of Greenpoint avenue, and considerable business is done in a small way at their yards in Ravenswood, but nothing of great moment. The revival of the industry as a great factor in the economy of the place, was look[ed] for in the building of the Adirondack, but it did not come.

Among the later boats built by the firm are the Grand Republic of the Coney Island route, seven years ago; the Drew and the Dean Richmond of the People's line; also boats for the Fall River line. Boats built by the Messrs. English are now running on rivers, lakes and coast of the United States.

The recent new steamboat of the Portland line is called the John Englis.

At one time the ship yard of the firm was at the foot of East Tenth street, New York.

#### THE OLD NINTH WARD.

James English was born in the old Ninth Ward of New York. It is a charming district of the metropolis, retaining many old-fashioned characteristics amid wondrous changes continually going on. A statement was made by an old New Yorker recently that the Ninth Ward was the only part of America left on Manhattan Island. Indeed it is a fact that there is

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more of a home like settled feeling in the Ninth Ward. Neighbors know one another and there is a community of interest in the old Greenwich village. It was from this stock and atmosphere that James English came. He attended the old Ninth Ward School, and afterward went to school at White Plains. He reached White Plains by going in a sloop to Tarrytown and thence by stage.

When Mr. English removed to Greenpoint he built a residence on Kent street, below Manhattan avenue, and later at 103 India street, where he had a splendid flower garden. He was also very fond of books.

He was one of the organizers of the Church of the Reconciliation [Universalist] in a small hall on Franklin street. The society afterward worshiped on Noble street, between Franklin street and Manhattan avenue in a church erected by Congregationalists, now occupied by Temple Beth-El. The next change was to the present site on North Henry street. He was at one time president of the official board of this church.

It was the half-brother of James English, Mr. George Bell, who built the cassions of the Brooklyn bridge.

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