

WHY JOHN LORIMER WORDEN JOINED THE NAVY: AN ADDENDA

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In 2018 I presented a theory as to why Rear Admiral John Lorimer Worden (1818–97) joined the United States Navy. My article, “A Partiality for Nautical Pursuits’: Why John Lorimer Worden Joined the Navy,” appeared in *Wordens Past*, vol. XXXIX, no. 1 (May 2018), pages 3446–48. I now have additional information to support my theory. It is based on the standard genealogical research and the influence that family tradition might have on career choices.

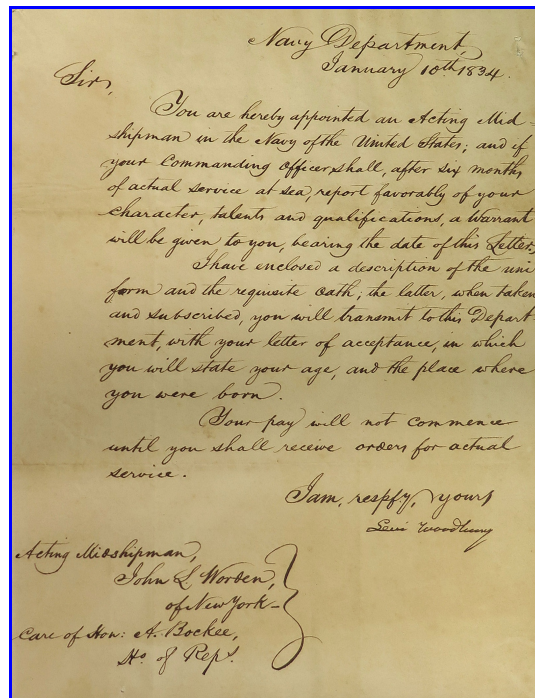
The 2018 article tells how, around 1827/28 John Worden’s parents and siblings moved north from the Mount Pleasant, Westchester County, New York, to Fishkill, Dutchess County. Around the same time, he went south to New York City to live and study with the family of the man after whom he was named: John Lorimer Graham (1797–1876), his mother’s first cousin. Graham and his father, John Andrew Graham (1764–1841), were both lawyers, and it might have been expected that young John Worden’s studies could lead to a career in the legal profession. However, it is likely that Worden met John Lorimer Graham’s half brother John Hodges Graham (1794–1878), a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. At the time, Lieutenant

Graham was assigned to the New York Navy Yard. The New York Navy Yard is located in Brooklyn (and often called the Brooklyn Navy Yard), across the East River from Manhattan. The Grahams owned real estate in both cities.

John Hodges Graham was a veteran of the War of 1812, who lost one leg in combat and went on to fight again in the war. Afterward, he had a long Navy career and retired as a commodore in 1867. My 2018 article offered the assumption that John Hodges Graham was his young cousin’s inspiration for entering the Navy (*see Chart A*).

Recently I was looking again at John Hodges Graham’s naval career and was reminded that early in the War of 1812 he served under Commodore Isaac Chauncey (1792–1840), commander of American naval forces on the Great

Lakes. This fact was included in my 2018 article. What I was not thinking about in 2018 was how the Grahams and Chaunceys were related. Worden’s second great-grandmother was Abigail Chauncey (1701–abt. 1784), the wife of Rev. John Graham (1694–1774). Abigail was a first cousin, two times removed of Commodore Isaac Chauncey. Their common ancestors were Rev. Israel Chauncey



John L. Worden’s letter of appointment as an Acting Midshipman, January 10, 1834, FICm.023.0396, U.S. Naval Academy Museum, Annapolis, Maryland

Chart A

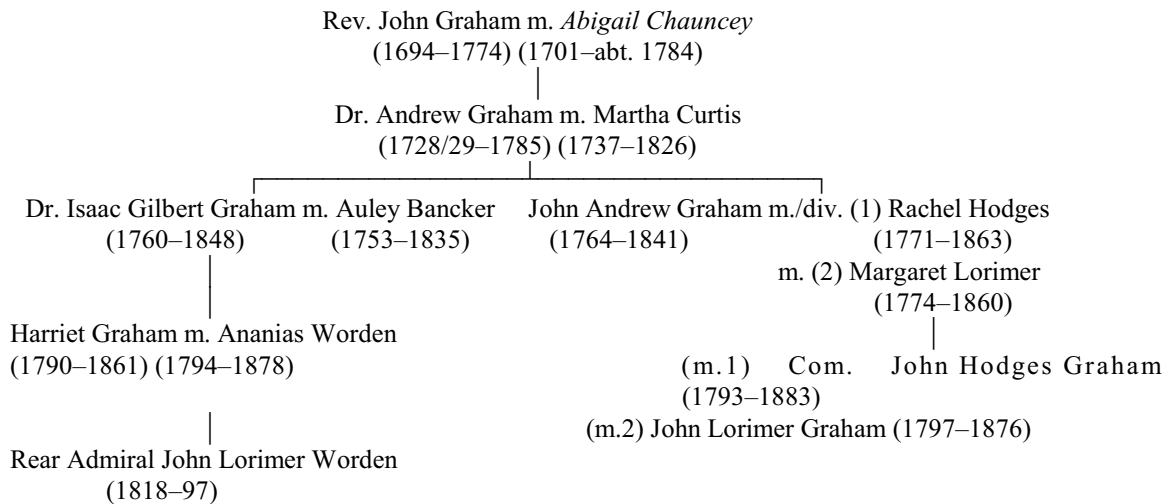
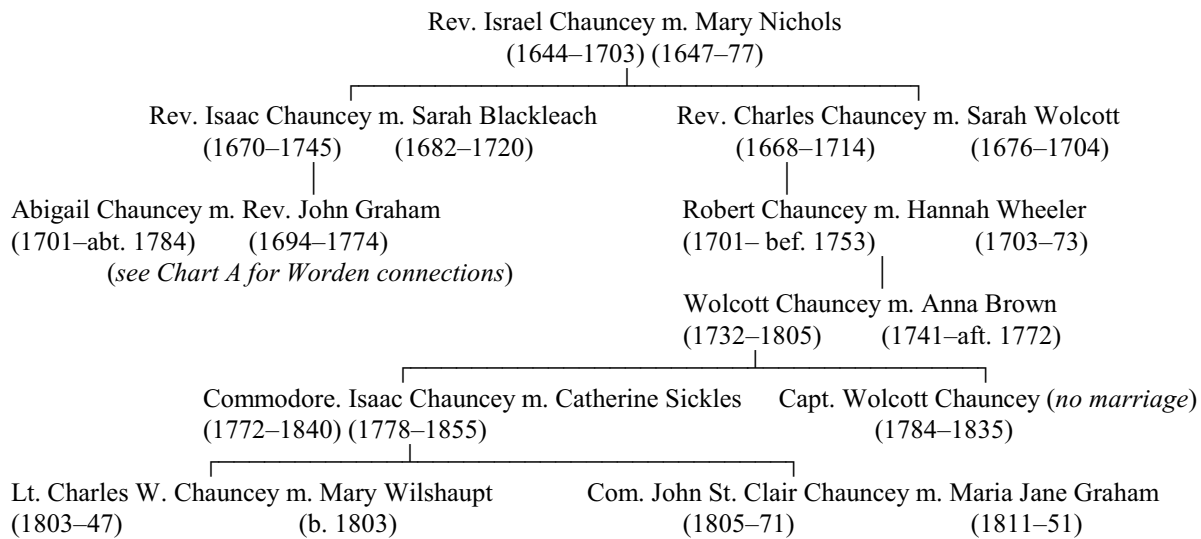


Chart B



(1644–1703) and his wife, Mary Nichols (1647–77) (see Chart B). Thus, John Lorimer Worden was a third cousin, two times removed of Commodore Isaac Chauncey and a first cousin, one time removed of John Hodges Graham. The Worden-Chauncey connection is not a particularly close one, but families were more cohesive in those days, lived in closer proximity to each other, and likely had knowledge of how they were related. But there is more. Commodore Isaac Chauncey was commandant of the New York

Navy Yard from 1824 to 1832. Lieutenant John Hodges Graham served there during some of these same years. So it is possible, even probable, that if John Lorimer Worden became acquainted with Lieutenant Graham, he also met cousin Commodore Chauncey at the Navy Yard or in his host family's home in Manhattan. Either or both of these senior generation relatives might have encouraged their young cousin to join the Navy. A little more digging turns up even more possible inspiration.

Commodore Chauncey's brother was Ichabod Wolcott Chauncey. He was known in official records as Captain Wolcott Chauncey, USN (1784–1835). Like his younger brother, Wolcott was a veteran of the War of 1812. He also was an intimate friend of the celebrated author James Fenimore Cooper. They served together in the Navy before the War of 1812 and maintained a life-long friendship. During the time Worden was living in New York City, Wolcott Chauncey was officially on leave of absence after having supervised in New York the construction of two frigates that were to be sold to the Greek government. The project experienced serious cost overruns, missed completion dates, and news reports of scandal. In 1829 Wolcott was still in a leave-of-absence status but, as a native of New York, he may have had the opportunity to meet his young cousin, John Worden. Wolcott Chauncey later went on to command the Pensacola Navy Yard, where he died in 1835 while on active duty.

Finally, two more Chaunceys were Navy officers and both were sons of Commodore Isaac Chauncey. One was a passed midshipman (equivalent to today's ensign), Charles Wolcott Chauncey (1803–47), who was assigned to New York Navy Yard in the late 1820s. So he too could have met Worden and, as a member of the younger generation, he might have related more closely with the youngster. During the Mexican-American War, Charles Wolcott Chauncey was a lieutenant in command of the gunboat USS *Spitfire*, which saw considerable action at Tampico and other nearby points. Unfortunately, he died of yellow fever near Vera Cruz, Mexico.

Isaac Chauncey's other Navy son was Lieutenant John St. Clair Chauncey (1805–71). He was a veteran of the War of 1812 and was serving on board the ship-of-

the-line USS *Delaware* of the Navy's Mediterranean Squadron during John Worden's time in New York City, so they would not have met, at least not at that time. John St. Clair Chauncey was promoted to captain in 1855, commanded the Atlantic blockade ship USS *Susquehanna* at the onset of the Civil War, and retired in December 1861. In 1869 he was retroactively promoted to commodore on the Navy's retired list. Several sources mistakenly give John S. Chauncey's middle name as Sickles, which was his mother's maiden name. His widow's Federal pension file, however, repeatedly states his middle name as St. Clair. His widow was his second wife, Cecilia Bogert Culver (abt. 1837–1927), whom he married in 1857. His first wife was Maria Jane Fitzgerald Graham (1811–51) whose father is believed to have immigrated from Northern Ireland and settled in Brooklyn, New York. John Lorimer Worden's second great-grandfather, Rev. John Graham Sr. (1785–1839) also immigrated from Northern Ireland, so Maria Jane, the first wife of John St. Clair Chauncey, may have been a distant cousin of the Grahams from whom John Worden was descended.

In conclusion, John Lorimer Worden had five cousins who were on active duty with the United States Navy when he himself was appointed as an acting midshipman in January 1834. Any one of them—or all of them—may have inspired a sixteen-year-old lad to embark on what became a fifty-four-year career of service to the nation and gained him international and lasting fame.

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2018): 3446–48.

Several Find a Grave records and genealogy sites
were helpful in sorting out the Chauncey-Graham
relationships, beginning with Isaac Chauncey:
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www.wikitree.com/wiki/Chauncey-293. ❖