

**FITZ WHO?
THE
ARTIST LATTERLY KNOWN
AS
FITZ HUGH LANE**

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On September 20, 2004, at the Cape Ann Historical Association in Gloucester, Massachusetts, Prof. John Wilmerding¹ gave a lecture titled "Fitz Hugh Lane at 200: What's Next?" In his conclusion he pointed out that there are still unanswered questions about the 19th century Gloucester artist known as Fitz Hugh Lane. Some of these questions deal with the paintings themselves, and are a matter of connoisseurship and artistic judgment. Some are about the facts of Fitz Hugh Lane's life, and as such are a matter of research. We at the Gloucester Archives Committee considered it possible that, hidden in the records of the Town and City of Gloucester, were answers to at least one of Prof. Wilmerding's challenges:

When and why did Fitz Hugh Lane become Fitz Hugh Lane, since he was born as Nathaniel Rogers Lane?

In the course of our subsequent inquiries little was revealed about the 'why' but we discovered both the when and a surprising fact. Nathaniel Rogers Lane was twenty-seven when he officially petitioned to change his name. However, the new name he asked to be known by was not Fitz *Hugh* Lane, but Fitz *Henry* Lane. This paper deals with that discovery.

Nathaniel Rogers Lane was born December 19, 1804² and was baptized on March 17, 1805, as "Nathaniel Rogers Lane, son of Jonathan Lane."³

Nathaniel was probably the third, not second, son of a sail maker Jonathan Dennison Lane and Sarah Ring Haskell. We postulate that a first son Stephen (named after both grandfathers) was born about 1800 and died in 1815;⁴ there was a brother Edward (1802-1870) and then Nathaniel Rogers. A daughter was born in 1806 but died in 1808.

¹ Professor of American Art at Princeton University and author of at least three books on Fitz Hugh Lane.

² Gloucester Vital Records, vol.1 Births, p. 418 [with name change to "Fitz. H. Lane" noted from Private Record 565 (belonging to Franklin S. Lane in 1923.)]

³ Babson's Church Records, 1703/1835. Cards. [CC259]

⁴ There is no record of a birth or baptism of this Stephen Lane, but in the account books for Master Moore (a Gloucester instructor of mathematics and navigation) there are entries of bills to Jonathan Lane for teaching "Steven", that cease in May, 1815. Babson's Church Records list a "child of Mr. Jon. Lane, buried April 28, 1815." The same Jonathan Lane was then charged for teaching Edward beginning in May 1815 and ending in April 1816.

Another girl, Sarah Ann, was born in 1809, and later married Ignatius Winter.

We were unable to determine the reason for the name Nathaniel Rogers. It does not appear in either the Lane or Haskell ancestry. There are three possible eponymous Nathaniel Rogers: one was a prominent Ipswich minister who died in 1775; another, a schoolmaster in Salem in the 1790s;⁵ and a Gloucester youth aged eighteen at the time of the artist's birth. None seems a convincing model.

Gloucester's extant school records of the early 1800s do not mention him under either name. Nor do we know what he was called when he supposedly worked for a shoemaker and a printer in Gloucester.⁶ We do know that in 1831, while he still lived in Gloucester, he changed his name legally from Nathaniel Rogers Lane, not to Fitz *Hugh* Lane, but to Fitz *Henry* Lane.

On December 26, 1831, Nathaniel R. Lane wrote a letter:

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled. -- the subscriber Inhabitant of the town of Gloucester beg leave to petition your Honorable Body, that he may take the name of Fitz Henry Lane, instead of Nathaniel, Rogers, Lane. Gloucester, December 26th - 1831. [signed] Nathaniel R. Lane.⁷

The back of the paper says:

A Petition of Nathaniel Rogers Lane of Gloucester praying for Change of name, Presented by Aaron Plumer, Jan'y 9, 1832, Com. On Change of Names.

The petition was granted on March 13, 1832.

There is as yet no known explanation for the name change to Fitz Henry Lane. There were no Fitzes in the Lane or Haskell families. There were Fitz Williams related to Ignatius Winter, the man his sister Sarah Ann would marry two and a half years later. From this point on in his life, however, he signed his papers and artwork with variations of the name Fitz Henry Lane.

At some time after this name change, the young artist moved to Boston. He is not found in the *Boston Directories* until 1841, but from then until 1847, he is found as "Fitz H. Lane", marine painter or lithographer, at a series of Boston addresses.⁸

Fitz Henry Lane returned to Gloucester in 1848 with a blossoming reputation and

⁵ Diary of Rev. William Bentley, Mar. 1, 1792.

⁶ Wilmerding, John, *Fitz Hugh Lane, 1804-1865: American Marine Painter*, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1967 [reprint of Essex Institute, c. 1964], p. 19.

⁷ Massachusetts Archives, packet of documents dated March 13, 1832, accompanying 'Laws of the commonwealth of Massachusetts passed at the several sessions of the General Court, Boston': Dutton & Wentworth, 1833. Vol XII, May 1831-Mar 1833. Chap. CXXIV, p. 383 *

⁸ *Boston Directories*, on microfiche at Massachusetts Archives, searched 1832 - 1849.

referred to himself as Fitz H. Lane. As Fitz H. Lane, he bought land on Duncan's Point on October 11, 1849,⁹ and built the well-known stone house there where he lived for the rest of his life. He appeared in the Gloucester Assessor's Valuations of property from 1850 to 1865 as Fitz H. Lane.¹⁰ The Winter family shared the house through 1860¹¹, and his mother lived with them until her death in 1853.¹²

Fitz Henry Lane died on a Sunday in 1865. The death announcements name the artist "Fitz H. Lane." The official record in Gloucester Deaths, Book 11, reads:

August 13, 1865: Fitz. H. Lane, Single, [age:] 60 years 8 months 0 days, Artist, [cause of death:] cancer of neck, of Bladder; [born:] Gloucester, [parents:] Jonathan, b. Gloucester and Sally R. (Haskell), b. Gloucester; [buried:] Oak Grove.¹³

The *Gloucester Telegraph and News* of Wednesday morning, August 16, 1865, had his death notice: "DIED In this town, 13th, Mr. Fitz H. Lane, 60 yrs. 8 mos." The obituaries in the *Cape Ann Light*, Saturday, August 19, 1865, the *Cape Ann Light & Gloucester Telegraph* and the *Gloucester Telegraph & News* all referred to him as Fitz H. Lane.¹⁴

The use of the name "Fitz H. Lane" was prevalent. He wrote his will as Fitz H. Lane.¹⁵ His friends and executors Joseph L. Stevens, jr. and T. Sewall Lancaster referred to him as Fitz H. Lane when corresponding with the town of Gloucester after his death.¹⁶ Other letters of Joseph L. Stevens jr.,¹⁷ refer to him as Fitz H. Lane or just "Lane". John J. Babson, in his *History of the Town of Gloucester, Cape Ann*, first published in 1860, thanked "...our distinguished marine painter, Fitz H. Lane" for furnishing "sketches for the engravings" in the book.¹⁸

However, there is ample proof that his friends knew his true name to be Fitz Henry Lane. The legal papers filed by Stevens and Lancaster to settle the estate were in the full name of "Fitz Henry Lane."¹⁹ A brief biography of Lane's student Mary B. Mellen, written while Mrs. Mellen lived in Taunton, Mass., includes the sentence: "She was instructed by the late Fitz-Henry Lane of Gloucester, Mass."²⁰ A 1913 newspaper article entitled, *Painting by Lane of Town in 1852 Presented by Washington Lady as Memento*

⁹ Essex County Reg. Of Deeds, Bk.455 P.289. E.H.Stacy to F.H.Lane, Oct. 8, 1849.

¹⁰ Valuations, Harbor Parish, East Ward, 1847+. Gloucester Archives [CC223].

¹¹ US Census, Gloucester, 1860, roll M653-499, p. 485. In the 1870 census, Ignatius [Eylacius] Winter lived in Boston, Ward 9, Suffolk, #1178,1599.

¹² Gloucester Deaths, Bk 10, p. 12, # 55. His father Jonathan Dennison Lane had died of "fever" on August 25, 1816, when Nathaniel Rogers Lane was 15. The Town of Gloucester collected taxes from his widow Sally Haskell Lane on the estate in the Harbor Parish East Ward until 1818. In 1819 the tax was abated and in 1820 the reason for the abatement was given: "supports a lame child / ought not to be taxed." The name of that lame child is not given, but was certainly Nathaniel Rogers Lane. The cause of the infirmity is still unproven.

¹³ Gloucester Deaths, Bk 11, p.34, #13. Gloucester Archives [CC205].

¹⁴ Newspapers on microfilm at the Sawyer Free Library, Dale Avenue, Gloucester.

¹⁵ Essex County Probate Records, October 3, 1865. Bk. 124, p. 34. Will written, and signed by "Fitz H. Lane", on March 17, 1865.

¹⁶ Gloucester Selectmen's Records, Vol.8, p.239. Gloucester Archives [CC60].

¹⁷ Collection at the Cape Ann Historical Association, Library.

¹⁸ Babson, 350th Anniversary Edition; Gloucester: Peter Smith 1972, p. 258.

¹⁹ Essex County Probate Records, New Series, vol. 238, #1464. Massachusetts Archives, Box 876147, vols. 237-238, 1862-1867, #133.

²⁰ Hanaford, Rev. P.A.C. 'Daughters of America': Truet Co., Augusta, ME, 1882. p. 309

of *Her Grandfather Mason*, describes the painting as "executed by its noted native artist, the late Fitz Henry Lane."²¹

The artist was still known as Fitz Henry Lane in 1915. On October 14, 1915, Fitz H. Lane, a carpenter and the son of the artist's brother Edward, died from a fall from a roof, and his obituary in the *Gloucester Daily Times* includes the following:

Mr. Lane was a native of this city, being the son of Edward and Eunice (Norwood) Lane, and was a nephew of Fitz Henry Lane, the famous marine artist of this city, for whom he was named.²²

Nevertheless, sometime in the next twenty-five years, Fitz *Henry* Lane became known as Fitz *Hugh* Lane. We set out to search for the first uses of the new, erroneous name.

The earliest instance of "Fitz Hugh Lane" we found was on a squib of a newspaper from the collection at the Cape Ann Historical Association library and with the date 1938 entered in ink. It states the following: "FOR SALE - View of Gloucester, 1859, Drawn by *Fitzhugh* Lane. L.H. Bradford lithograph. Large and fine. Price low. Richard Nichols Co., 22 Bromfield St., up one flight. Boston, Mass."²³

Maxim and Martha Karolik had given their collection of Lane paintings to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston by 1949. These paintings were ascribed to "Fitz Hugh Lane".²⁴

We searched for paintings or lithographs signed "Fitz Hugh Lane" and found none. His works, if signed at all, were signed "F.H.Lane", or, more commonly, "F H L." We have so far found only two paintings with a complete signature, and that signature was "Fitz Henry Lane". One is the painting *Clipper Ship 'Sweepstakes'*, 1853, in the Museum of the City of New York. The other is *The Golden State Entering New York Harbor* (1854) owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.²⁵ There may be others, for this was not a thorough search.

Certainly by 1952, Fitz Hugh Lane was the artist's accepted name. In Gloucester, Alfred Mansfield Brooks, Thomas Babson and Hyde Cox, all of the Cape Ann Scientific, Literary and Historical Association (now the Cape Ann Historical Association), referred to him as Fitz Hugh Lane.²⁶ It was they who introduced John Wilmerding to Fitz Hugh Lane's work. For them, there was never a doubt but that the H. in Fitz H. Lane stood for Hugh. In fact, in 1960,²⁷ the Cape Ann Historical Association set up a low tombstone at Lane's burial site in Oak Grove Cemetery marked: "FITZ HUGH LANE / PAINTER /

²¹ Collection of newspaper articles on Lane, CAHA 759.13 L24, Cape Ann Historical Association, Library. The donor was Mrs. Carrie Mason Myers Julian-James, granddaughter of Sidney Mason.

²² *Gloucester Daily Times*, October 15, 1915, p.5 col.1-2. Sawyer Free Library microfilm.

²³ CAHA 759.13 L24.

²⁴ MFA Art of the Americas: www.mfa.org/handbook.american/g12.htm

²⁵ City of New York Museum: [wysiwyg://5/http://www.mcny.org/Collections/paint/Painting/pttcat26.htm](http://www.mcny.org/Collections/paint/Painting/pttcat26.htm)

²⁶ Gloucester City Manager's papers, CAHA folder, 1965-1971. Gloucester City Archives [in process of being catalogued].

²⁷ Wilmerding, John. *Fitz Hugh Lane*. NY: Praeger, 1971, p.93.

GLOUCESTER / 1804 - 1865.”

Conclusion

It is clear that sometime after 1915 and before 1938, the artist's true name Fitz *Henry* Lane disappeared and the name Fitz *Hugh* Lane gained prominence and acceptance.

Therefore, the question is not, why did Nathaniel Rogers Lane change his name to Fitz Hugh Lane? He didn't. Instead we should ask: Why did Nathaniel Rogers Lane change his name to Fitz Henry Lane? And: Who first called him Fitz Hugh Lane, when and why?

For a fuller account of research relating to the name change, genealogy, schools and residences of the artist and his family, (and for sources and bibliography) contact the Gloucester Archives Committee, City Hall, 9 Dale Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930. Tel: (978) 282-3043; e-mail: archives@ci.gloucester.ma.us.

**See a facsimile of the letter asking for the name change on page 16 of TEG.*

