

# The Mercer Surname

The name Mercer is a very ancient one in Scotland, in England and in Ireland, where there was a William Mercer, bishop of Connor in 1353-75.

It is believed that the term mercer, anciently used in England and still more in Scotland, has its origins in the Low Countries. It is further believed that it is older even than the term merchant, which is of Norman-English origin, the language of the dominant race in England.

Mercer is by no means a common name in England, unlike that of Smith or Smyth, Saddler, Glover and Hawker, which, taking into account that early England was a warlike country, such that when men first took surnames from land, trades or other accidents, there were smiths, saddlers and glovers in almost every town or village of England; hence the frequency of these names.

The early Mercer's however were sellers of fine silks, velvets and later cottons, with silks being an article of the greatest luxury, confined only to the use of the high nobles.

The name appears as le Mercier in French, Mercator in Latin, Mercatori in Italian and Mercer, Le Mercer and even Marcer in Scotland, Ireland and England.

Two families of the name have been settled in Scotland from a very early period - the Mercer's of Innerpeffry, in Strathern, and those of Aldie, in Perthshire, with the latter being closely connected to the city of Perth. An inscription in the family vault of the Mercer's in the church of St. John there, records that one of them, John Mercer, died in 1280.

The founder of the baronial family of Aldie was John Mercer, who about 1340 was an opulent merchant burghess of Perth. He was provost of that city in 1357, 1369 and 1374, and several times commissioner for the burgh of Perth to the Scottish Estates of Parliament. He was also a frequent ambassador to England, France and Holland.

Another prominent member of the family was Sir Andrew Mercer, the Scottish Admiral, who made a successful attack on the English fleet at Scarborough. His father John Mercer, mentioned above, had been wrecked off the coast of Northumberland in 1376 and had been seized and imprisoned in Scarborough castle.

In 1214, Serle Mercer, a wealthy merchant was for eight weeks Mayor of London. He was again elected in 1217 and retained his office until 1222.

A certain John Mercer who flourished in the 17th century was the Town Clerk of Perth. He purchased Potterhill, near Perth 'from Mr James Mercer, only son of William Mercer, son and heir of the late Andrew Mercer, Burgess of Perth,

on the 15 May 1639.'

Lord William Murray, 4th son of the Duke of Athol married the heiress of Lord Nairne. His 2nd son Robert Murray Nairne married Jean, heiress of the Mercer's of Aldie.

One Lieutenant-Colonel William Mercer was the author of 'Angliae Speculum,' or England's Looking-glass, published in London, 1646 by David Laing, Esq. He was born in Scotland, went to England when young, with his father and from there emigrated with his family and others from Yorkshire and Lancashire, at the instance of James I, of England, by whom was formed the plantation of Ulster. He was last heard of as being at Cork in 1699.

He married four wives, the first of whom, with her children perished in the rebellion of 1641.

A Captain Bernard Mercer, Royal Marines, who married the heiress of the Slaughters was descended from one Bernard le Mercer, who signed the Ragman's roll in 1296 at Perth. Marcus Hill Mercer, who served in the Army and Trevor Mercer, Royal Navy, were also of this family.

The surname Mercer also occurs in Kent and it is believed that they are a branch of the Flemish Merciers who settled in Kent. A branch of this family went to America and some of them distinguished themselves in the Navy of the United States

X I have traced my Mercer roots from South Africa back to William Mercer who died in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire in 1815 and who, family legend says, came from a small village named Maltby in Yorkshire; with his two son's Joseph and William. X

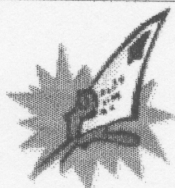
I have been unable yet to prove any connection to the prominent Mercer's named above. My intention is however to trace the Mercer family back from the above named William Mercer as far as it is possible to do so. I also intend expanding my knowledge of the descendants of those Mercer's listed on the other pages at this site.

To this end any assistance from anyone reading this page would be most appreciated.

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For additional information, comments or feedback, please email me.

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