

## George Mifflin Bache ( - 8 Sep 1846 )

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*The National Intelligencer, September 22, 1846*

### Violent Gale at Ocracoke

#### Newbern, N.C., September 15.

We experienced a stout breeze here on Monday, the 7th instant, which continued all night and the most of the next day; the wind blowing first from northeast, but veered to northwest. Our fears were much excited for vessels on our unfortunate coast; and our latest intelligence confirms our worst fears. By the kind attention of our friend, Capt. John B. Hunter, at Portsmouth, we are furnished with the following distressing particulars. Of the twenty vessels lying at and near Ocracoke, eighteen were driven ashore, and one driven out to sea. The following were driven ashore:



Captain George Mifflin Bache  
Smethurst Family Tree

*Birth:* 14 Feb 1811 - Delaware, USA  
*Marriage:* 23 May 1837 - Arkansas, United States  
*Death:* 08 Sep 1846 (8 Sep 1846) - Washington, D C  
(District of Columbia)  
*Parents:* Richard Bache, Sophia Burrell Dallas  
*Spouse:* Elizabeth "Eliza" Catherine Patterson

Brig. *Washington, Montford*, loaded with lumber; schooner *C. Slover, Davis*, naval stores, and *Frances Fulford*, naval stores, all of this place, are on the beach.

The following are also ashore, but we are not advised where they belong:

Schooners *Patrick Henry, Smith*, lumber; *Sophia, Toller*, iron etc.; *E. Townsend, Smith*, salt; *Conquest, Bensley*, corn; *Defiance, Kline*, shingles; *Paragon, Wayhab*, wheat; and *Lucius, Styron*, corn. Schooner *Emeline* was driven to sea with three men on board. Schooners *David Farrow, E. Farrow, Paradox, Williams, Industry, Manumit, Nancy*, and *G.C. Merchant*, lighters are all ashore.

Several lives are said to have been lost during the gale, and fears are expressed that few, if any, of the vessels can be gotten off. A passenger who came up yesterday in the *Ann Hyman* states that, so far as he could learn, the schooner *Isabella* was the only vessel which outrode the gale.

We are glad to learn that most of the vessels from this port which went over the bar on Friday and Saturday before the gale have arrived safely in New York.

In addition to these dreadful particulars, we learn that the gale was so violent at Cape Hatteras that not more than six houses were left standing.--Newbernian.

*The National Intelligencer, Saturday, September 26, 1846*

The U.S. Brig *Washington* -- This vessel arrived at Philadelphia on Friday, having been towed to within fifty miles of the Capes by the frigate *Constitution*, which vessel was bound to Boston, and continued on her course. She was last from Rio with a convoy, and is reported all well.

The *Washington* arrived in command of Lieut. John Hall. The names of those lost in the gale are Lieut. Bache, Benj. Dalloff, James Dorsey, John Washburn, Samuel Schroeder, Peter Hanson, Edward Grennen, a seamen named Counsel, William Stanford, and two colored servants, Francis Butler and Lewis Maynard.

*The National Intelligencer, Monday, September 28, 1846*

**The U.S. Brig Washington**

*Philadelphia, September 22, 1846*

*To the Editor of the Baltimore Patriot:*

Sir: Should you deem the enclosed details of the wreck of the United States brig Washington, in the hurricane of the 8th instant, off Cape Hatteras, worthy a place in the columns of your valuable paper, they may prove not uninteresting to some of your readers, as being connected with the fate of a gallant officer, well known in your city, and wherever known beloved.

A Naval Officer.

After a pleasant cruise of about a month in the Gulf Stream, where she had been employed surveying, the United States brig Washington, Lieut. Commanding George M. Bache, stood in on the 7th instant for the Capes of Virginia. As the weather appeared threatening, the wind fresh and blowing on shore, great anxiety was felt to reach an anchorage. The night came on dark and lowering, and, as we neared the land, all eyes were turned to windward to catch the glimmer of the light for which we were striving, (that upon Smith's Island,) through the haze and squalls, now beginning to obscure the horizon to windward. About eleven, our hearts were gladdened by the welcome cry of "light ho!" from the lookout; but the joy was doomed to be of short duration. The light upon Cape Henry, without making which the harbor cannot be entered, must have been obscured by a squall, for when we brought by the wind, after bearing up for it, expecting every moment to make the looked-for beacon, always cheering to the mariner, (in our case we felt it to be our only hope,) the terrible cry of "breakers ahead!" struck a pang to hearts throbbing with hope, and told that we were abandoned to the horrors of a lee shore, and that our only prospect of safety lay in being able to carry sail against the wind. Sea and current forcing us upon Cape Hatteras, the terror of seamen, this all felt to be a forlorn hope, for the gale, now increased in violence, howled ominously through the rigging, and already our little vessel staggered under her canvass. The sky was obscured by flying masses of dark clouds; the crests of the waves, heaving their dark volumes to the sky, flashed with the ghastly phosphorescent light often observed in storms, and once the sea ahead was lit up for a few seconds by a pale blue light, known to seamen as the Corpus Santo, and whose appalling appearance they superstitiously regard as the precursor of misfortune and wreck; the barometer fell rapidly, and every thing foretold a terrible strife of the elements.

Upon discovering the breakers, the brig was immediately worn with her head off shore; the courses reefed, her topsails double reefed and set. Nobly the gallant craft did her part; groaning in every timber, her tall masts bowing to the blast. Daylight found her still dragging on and rising to the seas which appeared pressing on to her destruction; it brought an increase of wind and most gloomy prospect; the sea ran fearfully high, and appeared one sheet of foam as far as the eye could reach. We had lost during the night the lee boats, which had filled and torn from the davits; jib and flying-jib booms, topmast, staysail, etc. The lead, every cast of which had been watched with deep anxiety, told that we were rapidly drifting upon the shore. By seven the wind had increased to a hurricane; sail after sail had either been taken in, or, splitting with a noise like thunder, blew into ribands to leeward, the yards shivering like pipe-stems. Nothing remained but the fore-topsail, unbonnetted, under which the brig "lay to" until 11 a.m., when the hurricane had reached its height, and raged with extraordinary violence, surpassing any thing we had ever seen. The brig lay over completely on her side, the water boiling over the lee rail; we were obliged to cling to the rigging to prevent being blown or washed overboard, for the sea, appearing uprooted from its bed, and borne in huge masses through the air, constantly swept our decks. The lee guns were thrown overboard, and subsequently the weather ones, and the helm put up; she refused to answer it, and the order was given to cut away the mainmast; it was promptly obeyed, as was

every other, our noble crew behaving with the steadiness and discipline characteristic of "men-of-war's men." In its fall the mainmast carried away the head of the foremast, topmast, and fore topsail yards, which hung in a mass to leeward; every exertion was made to get clear of the wreck, and the shattered hull of the Washington steered wildly on before the hurricane to the shore she had striven so well to clear. The anchors had been prepared for letting go as the last hope; yet no one imagined that the cables would hold for a moment in that furious sea. The horrors of the scene baffled description. The fierce howling of the hurricane, the roaring of the waves, breaking in irregular masses around us, and pressing on madly in our wake, as if eager to be in at the death, were added to the crashing of spars, which, falling from aloft or launched on board by the sea, now made sad havoc among us. Two officers and several of the crew had been borne wounded below; scarcely one among us escaped injury; and yet throughout this trying scene not a sign of flinching; fore and aft not a blanched cheek, was to be seen; orders were given and executed with the coolness of every day maneuvering. Never did the writer feel so proud of his country's seamen as then. As we neared the breakers, each man awaited the inevitable fate with a calmness and self-possession almost incredible.

At or near meridian the helm was put down, and the starboard anchor let go; as she came to the wind a heavy sea broke on board, throwing the brig upon her beam ends, shifting tanks, ballasts, etc. in the hold, carrying away on deck cabin, wheel, boats, bulwarks, etc., and washing overboard nearly every soul; but thrown aboard by the sea, as she righted half full of water, or clinging to fragments of the wreck towing, all succeeded in regaining the deck, except our lamented commander, Lieut. Bache, and ten of the crew, whose names are subjoined. In a moment they were swept from our view; that moment showed them calm and composed--the determined spirit which supported them on board seemed still to animate them. One noble fellow, as he passed astern, waved his hat in token of adieu, and the driving spray hid them forever from our sight. We supposed ourselves among the breakers, and that our unfortunate shipmates had but anticipated our doom--still it was a bitter pang to see them thus cut off from among us, and many an eye which had calmly confronted death mistrusted at their fate. They were among the flower of our crew; better seamen never trod a deck, and long will be cherished the memory of their generous, kindly natures. My pen is unequal to the task of paying a fitting tribute to the memory of our departed commander. To rare professional accomplishments, he added every virtues which ennoble the human character. Never was a commander more sincerely beloved and respected by those who served under him; his duty was always uppermost in his mind, and the last words we heard him utter were addressing his officers when they stood together upon the brink of eternity: "Gentlemen, I hope you think I have done my duty--have used every exertion to save the vessel." He had indeed done his duty, with the skill and courage which distinguished him; no mortal could have done more. Yet, when there appeared no earthly hope, God was mercifully pleased to succor us; the hurricane abated, our cables, veered to the "better end," (contrary to all expectation,) held, and the anchors dragging checked her drift; soon after the wind suddenly shifted to the northward and westward, the sea went down considerably, and, still dragging, the brig tailed off shore. She was lightened of kentledge, etc, the foremast cut away, and rode easily; at sunset Cape Hatteras was seen close aboard. Until the 12th, we rode to a heavy gale from the northward, with two anchors ahead--the stream cable had parted. It was a period of painful suspense. Our cables bearing a heavy strain, we expected every moment to part, and the breakers upon the cape roaring astern. We were employed rigging jury masts, but, having saved only a few light spars, managed badly. Upon the evening of the 12th, the wind dying away, hove in on the larboard chain, and found the anchor gone. In heaving up the starboard one, when near the bows, its shackle-bolt drew, and it was also lost; made sail upon the jury masts and stood to sea. The next day spoke the brig J. Peterson, of New York, and by her was kindly supplied with an anchor and a few spare spars, and the next day the steamer "Palmetto," obtained from her a small boat. Upon the 15th, wafted by light airs from the southward, got within thirty miles of Cape Henry, when the wind again coming out fresh from the northeast, were again in great peril--barely

succeeded in weathering "Hatteras Shoals," and again were blown into the Gulf stream, where she "lay to" in a gale from the northward and eastward until the 17th,, when it abated, and in the afternoon, to the great joy of all hands, a man-of-war, showing American colors, was descried standing towards us. As she neared us we recognized with emotions of pride and pleasure the well-known figure-head of the "Constitution." We were immediately boarded, and taken in tow by her, and upon the evening of the 21st exchanging with her gallant crew three hearty cheers, we cast off and stood in to the Capes of the Delaware, where we anchored upon the 22d, accompanied by a pilot boat. We were nearly destitute of water, provisions, and of every comfort, when we fell in with "Old Ironsides," and shall long remember with gratitude the kind sympathy extended towards us by her officers, and the alacrity and generosity with which they supplied all our wants.

The following is a list of those who perished upon the 8th: Lieut. Com'g Geo. M. Bache, Benj. Derloff, John Fishbourne, Jas. Dorsey, quartermasters; Henry Schroeder, sailmaker's mate; Thos. Stanford, Francis Butler, Lewis Maynard, Wm. Wright, seamen; Peter Hanson and Edward Grennian, ordinary seamen. The surviving officers of the Washington are John Hall, R.N. Stembel, J.R.M. Mullany, Lieuts.; S.D. Trenchard, acting master; E.J. Rutter, passed assistant surgeon; Edward Donaldson and J.K. Murray, passed midshipmen; J.J. Ricketts, captain's clerk; B.F. Ricketson, master's mate.

*The National Intelligencer, October 23, 1846*

#### **The Late Lieut. Bache**

*Extract from the minutes of the Philosophic Society, Princeton, New Jersey, October 12, 1846.*

Whereas we have heard with feelings of the deepest regret of the melancholy and untimely loss of Lieutenant George M. Bache, United States Navy, while in command of the United States brig "Washington," from the deck of which he was washed during a violent storm on the 8th of October last, and, with ten of his crew; perished in the waves: Therefore --

Resolved, That in our sad bereavement, we recognize the hand of an all-wise and mysterious God, whose ways are unsearchable, and whose power none can resist. We bow in humble submission to his will, while we deeply lament the loss which we, our navy, and our country have sustained.

Resolved, That we tender our warmest sympathy to the family, relations, and friends of the deceased, with the prayer that our Heavenly Father may comfort and bless them in this sad hour of their affliction.

Resolved, That in testimony of our esteem and respect for the deceased we wear the usual badge of mourning thirty days,

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the family of the deceased, and be published in the Princeton Whig, in the National Intelligencer and Daily Union, in the Pennsylvanian, and in the New Orleans Jeffersonian.