**Henry Sargeant, 1797–1868 [Draft 3]**

A marine painter working in Portsmouth in the mid-19th century, who can be identified as the ‘Henry Sargent’ (son of Henry and Sarah Sargent) who was baptised at Botley, Hants., on 26 November 1797, after birth sometime after mid-August from his age at death (71). By about 1836 he held the appointment of Marine Painter to HRH the Duchess of Kent (Queen Victoria’s mother) according to inscriptions on locally published prints after his work. One issued by J. Miller of Portsmouth, presumably late in that year or in 1837, is an impressive lithograph of ‘H.M. Brig Serpent (Commander R.J. Warren) dismasted whilst lying at Anchor at Spithead by a Tremendous Hurricane on Tuesday the 29th of Novr 1836’. The appointment may have arisen in some connection from the Duchess and Princess Victoria having been at Portsmouth when they came to stay at Norris Castle, East Cowes, I.o.W. in both 1831 and 1833. When Victoria and Prince Albert made a formal royal visit to Portsmouth in early March 1842, the elaborate evening illumination of the town included ‘a beautiful transparency of the stern of her Majesty’s ship Queen’ by ‘Mr Sargeant, painter’ among those in Broad Street.

Sargeant’s prime business, however, seems to have been as a glazier, plumber and decorator, both his work and home premises being at 85 High Street, Portsmouth, according to Robson’s Hampshire directory for 1839. This lists him as ‘Marine Painter and Glazier’ and the 1841 census notes him there, aged 40, with his wife Sarah (35), and seven of their eight children ranging from 20 to 2 years old: four were boys, and girls the first (another Sarah), the fourth and the last. His wife was Sarah Elcock born in 1799 at Hythe, Hants. They had married at Fawley on 22 September 1817 and had an older son, Henry (1818–59), who became a painter-decorator in Gosport.

From some point before 1842 to at least 1845 the family were in Broad Street, Portsmouth, where Sargeant’s business failed by the latter year. Described as a ‘marine painter’ he was arraigned for insolvency that April before a Commissioner of Bankruptcy at Winchester (see *Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, 9 March). He somehow appears to have recovered and at the 1861 census was back in High Street (probably at no. 63) with his wife but only his second-eldest son, Arthur (24), also at home. His age is then more specifically stated as 63 and his wife’s as 62 and he is listed as a ‘Painter employing 3 men 1 boy’, undoubtedly meaning a painter/decorator on this occasion.

Sargeant’s parallel artistic output appears to have been largely local coastal and yachting views in oil, some exhibited in the Portsmouth area. The ‘Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition’ at Gosport in 1860 included two of his works lent by a Mr Harding, ‘Pilot Boat – Old Agenoria’ and ‘Pilot Boat – New Agenoria’, while a Mr Dashwood contributed his ‘Schooner Yacht America’ (*Portsmouth Times and Naval Gazette*, 15 Sept. 1860). At the similar follow-up exhibition in 1861, held at the Queen’s Rooms, Portsea, the *Portsmouth Times* (19 Oct.) noted that ‘Captain Parnell exhibits a very nice picture by Mr. Sargeant, a local artist of some repute, illustrative of a yacht race.’

The National Maritime Museum also has a signed oil showing the yacht *America* outsailing the Marquess of Anglesey’s *Pearl* in informal but reported circumstances in the Solent (not in a race) on 14 August 1851. Some uncertainty is introduced by there also appearing to be a marine painter called Sargeant working in a similar style in the 1880s who may have been his grandson (see below). There is also a landscape view of ‘Taunton, looking towards the Quantock Hills’ in the Somerset Museum of Rural Life, attributed to a ‘Sargeant’ with working dates stated as *c.*1835–41. This is so different in subject terms that it is hard to take a view on whether by the Portsmouth man, given lack of comparable examples.

Sargeant’s wife predeceased him on 25 October 1867 and on 29 January 1868 he was again declared bankrupt with his address given as 63, High Street, Portsmouth. In mid-February 1868 he was again before the local court for an interim hearing, described as ‘a painter, plumber, and glazier’ (*Hampshire Telegraph*, 19 Feb.). The report continues:

The bankrupt stated that he had been in business for 50 years, and his present difficulties he attributed to sickness of himself and family and badness of trade. His liabilities amount to 156*l*. 3s. 9d., and the assets, consisting of furniture and stock-in-trade, were estimated to realise about 19*l*., in addition to 44*l.* 7s. 7d. book debts, most of which were stated to be good.

He was told to appear for final resolution of the case on 30 March but matters were still being resolved the following January, well after his death in Portsmouth on 13 August 1868, just short of 72.

While Sargeant’s eldest son Henry died in 1859, his widow Emma (née Jelley, 1823–1913), whom he married in 1841, published an intention to continue his decorating business at 84 High Street, Gosport, calling herself a ‘Decorative, Yacht, Ship & House Painter, Plumber, Etc.’ but is also reported as running a ‘fancy repository’ and stationery business. She was declared bankrupt on 19 October 1864. Their son Henry Edwin (1846–1911) was recorded as a ‘painter’ in the censuses of 1861 and 1901, and a ‘photographer’ in Gosport in 1881 and in Somers Road, Portsmouth, in 1891. It is possible that painter meant ‘artist’ rather than ‘decorator’ since a painting of steam shipping dated 1883 signed H. Sargeant has been sighted in a style sufficiently close to that of the *Pearl* and *America* to be wary of confusion between the two. Henry Edwin never married and in 1901, aged 55, was still living with his widowed mother (76) and unmarried elder sister, Emma (57 and a music teacher) by then at 75, Justia Road, Portsmouth.

*Summarized from Art UK discussion of Sargeant’s ‘The Yacht* America *outsailing the* Pearl, *15 August 1851’ (NMM)*

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