

Bio: Vincent Mathews

by Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2016, 2018

Much has been written about General Vincent Mathews, "Father of the bar of Western New York". He was born in 1766, son of James Mathews and Hannah Strong of Orange county New York. In 1791 he was married to his cousin, Juliana Strong (1774-1850). About the time of their marriage, they moved with other family members to Elmira, Chemung county New York.

For a brief, but informative account of his public life:

Vincent Mathews . . . He was educated under Noah Webster, studied law in New York city, was admitted to the bar in 1790, and settled in practice at Elmira, New York. He was a member of the state house of representatives in 1793, and of the senate in 1796, was commissioner to settle the bounty land-claims in 1798, and in 1808 was elected to congress as a Federalist, serving from 1809 till 1811. He was state district attorney in 1812-1815, removed to Bath and subsequently to Rochester, represented Monroe county in the legislature in 1826, and as chairman of the committee on finance in theft body prepared the report in which he opposed schemes of internal improvement. Mr. Mathews served as district attorney of Monroe county in 1831-1833, and at the time of his death was senior member of the bar of western New York, and one of its ablest practitioners.

[source] Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Wilson and Fiske, 1887-1889.

A biographical account of Vincent Mathews, published in an early Rochester New York newspaper, give a further account of his move from Orange county to Elmira:

. . . In the spring of 1791 he married Julianna Strong. That winter, leaving his wife behind, he emigrated to the newly made county of Tioga and settled at Tioga near Elmira (then Newtown). The embryo village contained but three or four log buildings, one of which was used for a court house. His practice extended to Ontario county, and he was present at the opening of the first court in Cananadaigua. He adopted at the beginning of his practice a rule which he always followed - never to plead a case in court in which he found his client was making a false or unworthy issue.

[source] From a newspaper feature, titled "Early Rochester Family Records", that ran in the Rochester Post Express from 1910-1912, written by Anah Babcock Yates.

There were others besides those sent by Colonel Hollenback who were attracted to settle in the newly opened country [Tioga county New York]. They were lawyers and doctors who came to practice their professions. They had for their homes log houses scattered along through Sullivan street and up and down Water street. As for lawyers Vincent Matthews was the earliest one to make Newtown [later known as Elmira] his home. He came from Orange County, where the family had long been one of great prominence. He was a man of unusual abilities, and during his prime was one of the most distinguished men of the State. He came to live in Newtown in 1792, and at once assumed the conspicuous position to which his natural qualifications entitled him. He was member of Assembly from the county in 1794 and 1795, was one of the representatives of the western district of the State Senate from 1796 to 1803, and was the member of Congress from the district from 1809 to 1811. Mr. Matthews lived, while his home

was in Newtown, at the foot of what is now Matthews street, named for him. It was a mere lane then. The house stood on the bank of the creek, and was a large roomy building with a wide and long porch in front looking toward the west. Later on, when the trees had grown about it to a considerable size, it looked from Lake street like pictures one sees of the homes of planters in the South or the headquarters of some great farmer. It was in the family a number of years and is now a portion of the estate of Samuel Hall, esq., in the Seventh ward of Elmira. The Matthews family was a large one, and many of them came from their old home in Orange County to Chemung . . .

[source] Our county and its people: a history of the valley and county of Chemung, from the closing years of the eighteenth century; Towner, 1892.

Vincent Mathews and his family removed to Bath, New York for a time, and then on to Rochester, New York by 1821. About 1830, when he was past the age of sixty years, he formed a law partnership with his nephew, Selah Mathews (son of his oldest brother Selah Mathews). They practiced law together until Vincent Mathews' death in 1846.

Vincent Mathews and Juliana Strong were the parents of five identified children:

Rebecca Mathews (b. abt 1795); married Thomas Mathews; married William Everett; no surviving children.

Mary Mathews (1797-1813); died at the age of sixteen; buried with her parents in Rochester, New York.

James Emmet Mathews (1799-1872); married Ellen Reynolds; buried at Somerset in Niagara county New York.

Elizabeth Mathews (d. 1872); died unmarried; buried with her parents in Rochester, New York.

Julia Mathews (1808-1889); married Albert Howell Porter in 1829; buried in Niagara Falls, New York.

Index to Episcopal Church Records 1820-1851; Trinity Episcopal Church of Rochester New York Prepared and published by members of the Rochester Genealogical Society (1982); digitized (2007).

edited slightly - Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2018.

Miss Elizabeth Matthews; confirmed 8 September 1828.

Albert Porter to Miss Julia Mathews, by Rev Dr Rudd of Auburn; 14 Oct 1829.

Julia Matthews and Vincent Matthews; confirmed 29 August 1830.

Mary Matthews and Rebecca Matthews; confirmed 21 August 1831.

George Edwards Matthews, Julia Elizabeth Matthews, Vincent Matthews; children of Thomas and Rebecca Matthews; baptized 28 Aug 1831; sponsors Miss Matthews and General Matthews.

George Mathews; grandson of Gen V Mathews, age 14; funeral 15 June 1838.

Mary Mathews; daughter of Gen Vincent Mathews, aged 31 years; funeral 11 Dec 1841.

Vincent Mathews; aged 80 years; funeral 25 September 1846.

Elizabeth Mathews; 26 years; funeral 1 May 1847.

Julianer Mathews; relict of the late Gen Vincent Mathews; died 29 December, aged 77 years; funeral 31 Dec 1850.

1850 Census of Monroe county New York; Rochester
Julia Mathews; 77 (1773) New York
Rebecca Everett; 53 (1797) New York
Elizabeth Mathews; 42 (1808) New York
Isabelle Brown; 16 (1834) Ireland



Vincent Mathews and his wife Julia Strong Mathews were buried at the Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, New York.

Photo: 1874 Gate House at Mt Hope Cemetery, taken by Patrick Ashley in 2011, and shared with Creative Commons License.

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Vincent Mathews in the database](#)

[Sketch: An Account of the Mathews Family](#)

Further Reading -

As part of a class project at the University of Rochester (New York), students research and prepare a paper on a gravestone in Rochester's Mount Hope Cemetery. The project is noted as Speaking Stones. Ann Carr's work on Vincent Mathews (2000) is of interest.

Links -

[Ann Carr's paper](#)

[speaking stones project](#)

Biography of Vincent Mathews; written by Pamela Hutchison Garrett for John Markham of Chesterfield website; 2016, 2018.