

History of A.B.Duncan Jewelry business.

At Saratoga Springs, N. Y., July 9, 1850, aged sixty years, is the record, in the Portsmouth Journal of July 13, 1850 of the death of John W. Abbott of Portsmouth, N. H. He had gone there for the recovery of his health.

The Portsmouth Oracle of Aug. 9, 1817 contains the advertisement of John Abbott Jr. announcing that he had taken the shop on Daniels Street as a dealer in gold and silver goods, looking glasses, etc. This place, No. 6 Daniel Street, had been vacated four months previously by Robert Gay, who on May 31, 1817 advertised that he had removed his gold and silverware store from Daniel Street to Congress Street, where he remained while in business, at least forty years. His store during that period, was where James R. Connell now is.

Mr. Abbot took the vacant store and began then the business, which after eighty-eight years, covering two removals and half a dozen changes of firm names, is now the flourishing establishment of Arthur B. Duncan, on the corner of Market and Daniel Streets.

Please notice that the original name of John Abbot Jr. had been changed to John W. Abbott, the middle name William having been added and doubtless put at the end of his surname by act of legislature. There was another John Abbot in Portsmouth, a tanner, and the mere addition of Jr. to the name of our John did not prevent misdelivery of mail matter, and some other kindred troubles--hence the change to John W. Abbott.

Mr. George P. Abbott states that his father, John W. was born in Portsmouth. His first wife (a sister of Elisha Plaisted) lived but a few years after her marriage, but was the mother of all the sons and daughters:- John E., George P., William E., Martha Ann, Catherine E. and Fances, the two who died young. George P. is the only survivor and lives on Congress Street in this city. The second wife was a daughter of John Davenport, who had a boarding house at the corner of State and Fleet Streets, where Mr. Abbott probably served his apprenticeship as a clerk with Rice and Drown, and as before stated, at the age of 27 years, opened a store on his own account at No. 6 Daniel St.

April 22, 1820, the advertisement appears in the Oracle of his store on Congress Street, fronting the Parade. He had evidently just removed to that location--where F.W. Knight shoe store is now. The old Court House, formerly the State house, was in front of the North Church, and the Parade was at the eastern end of the Court house. He continued at this location all the time he was in business, and his store is well remembered by all who knew Portsmouth fifty-five or more years ago. It had little of the outward show of magnificence that prevails now-a-days, but some of the good old substantial unassuming appearance of the prosperous establishments of the olden times. He was evidently prosperous and a good business man who drew and held customers. His residence was on Court St., between the Unitarian chapel and the birthplace of Thomas B. Aldrich--opposite the engine house of the Col. Sise S.F.E. Company.

In 1850 failing health necessitated the relinquishment of business and he sold out to Charles T. Emery, who appears to have taken the store about May 11th of that year. Mr. Emery was a son of

Thatcher Emery of this city. He married a daughter of Judge James Pickering of Newington. The store took on a more modern appearance and flourished more or less.

March 7, 1868 appear the advertisements of Hutchinson and Rowell, who had just then purchased the store of Mr. Emery. They came from St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Mr. A. D. Rowell had learned the business and was a practical watchmaker and jeweler. John H. Hutchinson had little if any experience in those lines. They did not meet with as much success as they hoped for, and after two years Mr. Hutchinson bought Mr. Rowell's share in the business. The partnership was dissolved March 19, 1870. Mr. Hutchinson then sent to Wells River, Vermont for James R. Connell, a watchmaker and a man of experience in all branches of the business. Mr. Connell remained in his employ for several years until 1873 they formed a co-partnership under the style of Hutchinson and Connell, and so continued until about 1876. Mr. Connell then left the firm and the business was carried on by J. H. Hutchinson.

Nov. 1, 1893, the store was removed to its present location, on the corner of Market and Daniel Streets, and the firm name became J. H. Hutchinson & Co., his daughter Mattie and Samuel Kingsbury assisting in the business.

Mr. Hutchinson died June 7, 1907 and his daughter took charge of the store and continued to run it until Nov. 24, 1902 when Mr. Arthur B. Duncan came from Bridgeport, Conn. and bought it; since which time it has been greatly improved and is now an up-to-date establishment, as completely equipped as any store in a city of the size of Portsmouth in New England, as its elegant window display indicates.

Arthur B. Duncan continued his business in Portsmouth for 59 years, keeping the old atmosphere and beautiful paneled show cases and wall cases which have long been admired by visitors from far and near. His standards and service of "The old school" combined with integrity and courtesy have earned a fine reputation in this area of a store of fine quality and dependability. The unusually large old safe is still in use.

Mr. Duncan retired at the age of 80, in 1961, and died later that same year. This business continued under the same name, under the management of his daughter and son-in-law, Harriet and Charles Paisley until 1967 when Mr. Paisley died. His wife carried on the business until 1971, October 12th when it was sold to A. E. Alie & Sons of Dover, N.H. whose family Jewelry business continues now both in Dover store and at this old location in Portsmouth, corner of Market and Daniels Sts. And a new era has begun, a new chapter in an old business establishment, being carried on by another fine old business of equally fine repute, under the competent management of a family of jewelers, whose standards of quality and service should assure them of years of continued success.