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VIRGINIA MAGAZINE

OF

HISTORY and BIOGRAPHY

VOL. XLV

APRIL, 1937

No. 2.

THE ORIGIN OF THE DABNEY FAMILY OF VIRGINIA

Same Notes on Sources of Information¹

BY CHARLES WILLIAM DABNEY

When Commissioner for the Government and State Exhibits at the Cotton States Exhibition in New Orleans in 1883-84, I saw one day a packing case bearing a label which read: "Forwarded by Charles W. Dabney's Sons, Fayal." Learning that Mr. W. H. Dabney of

Boston was one of these sons, I wrote him and on his invitation visited him. Having recently completed a history of his family, Mr. Dabney expressed himself as very much interested in his "Virginia cousins," and, beginning with addresses I gave him, went to work collecting informaton about the Dabneys of Virginia. As he had access

¹ Other printed sources of information are:

A Synopsis of the Dabney Family of Virginia, Collected and Collated by Alice Davis Miller, published in the Report of the Huguenot Society.

Cavaliers and Pioneers, Vol. I, by Nell M. Nugent, Custodian of the Virginia Land Office.

Memorials of a Southern Planter, by Susan Dabney Smedes.

The Edward P. Valentine Papers, Vol. I (which contains much of genealogic value but nothing earlier than the 18th century.)

Manuscripts and letters:

Papers found in Colonel Charles Dabney's Revolutionary war-chest. These begin with George Dabney first's will; supposed to be the son of the immigrant, Cornelius Dabney, and include many valuable papers of four generations of his descendants.

The "*Sketches and Reminiscences*" of John Blair Dabney, great grand-

to no records, his sketch was based entirely on the information supplied him by members of the family. This information was mostly traditional. Unfortunately, Mr. Dabney died in 1887 before he had completed his work. The results of his efforts were compiled and published as he left them by his daughter, Miss Frances Dabney, in 1888.

Accepting the traditions of the time, this author tells the story of the Virginia Dabneys in three groups: "The descendants of John d'Aubigne, the oldest of the two brothers d'Aubigne, must have been born previous to 1670, and thus have been at least sixteen to seventeen years of age at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. He was married in England (the name of his wife is unknown), and he must have been well advanced in years when he came to Virginia, and his children grown, or nearly so."²

(a) "The descendants of George Dabney, the son of Cornelius d'Aubigne, the original settler, and his first wife, born in England or "Wales, previous to his parents coming to Virginia."³

(3) "The descendants of Cornelius d'Aubigne and his second wife, Sarah Jennings, of Jennens."⁴ Mr. Dabney appears to have accepted the conclusions of his correspondents without

son of George I, which belongs to the family of Mrs. Robert A. Lancaster. Mr. R. A. Lancaster, Jr., kindly gave me a photostatic copy of the part pertaining to the Dabney family. A copy was also deposited in the Virginia State Library. One other copy of this manuscript is known to have belonged to Rev. Chiswell Dabney, dec'd, of Chatham, Va.

The Virginia Land Office supplied information on the grants and patents referred to below:

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Trist Wood, 2521 General Taylor Street, New Orleans, La., and to Dr. William Minor Dabney of Ruxton, Md., for notes and discussions of this paper.

Mr. Parke P. Flourney of Baltimore, Md., kindly supplied a copy of the records of old St. Paul's Church.

I wish to thank Mr. R. A. Lancaster, Jr., for taking me to see the old Dabney brick house in King William County.

To Captain Charles William Daubeney, the Brow, Combe Down, England, I wish to express my gratitude for his courtesy in supplying

information about his English ancestors.

² Dabney, W. H., *The Dabneys of Virginia*, p. 51.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴ *Dabneys of Virginia*, p. 47.

study. Published after his death, the book contains many errors in names and dates.

The delusion of an estate to be recovered from the Chancery Court in England by the descendants of a Sarah Jennings or Jennens attacked the Virginia Dabneys in the last century and, with the encouragement of fraudulent agents in London, kept many members of the family busy collecting genealogies for some fifty years. Two conventions were held, and Bibles and letters were collected and turned over to Dr. Charles Brown, of Albemarle County, Virginia. After Mr. James Russell Lowell, minister to the court of St. James, investigated and exposed the fraud, the agitation was dropped.⁵ Unfortunately, the papers thus collected were scattered and lost after Dr. Brown's death.

Fortunately, my uncle, Captain Charles William Dabney, of Aldingham and later of Dalton, Virginia, refused to adhere to the above described scheme. The valuable records of Colonel Charles Dabney of the Revolution, which had been preserved in his war chest along with those of his successors, were saved. The history of this chest is interesting. It was handed down from Colonel Charles to his nephew, Charles Dabney, Jr., of Cub Creek, and from him to his oldest son, Charles William Dabney, my uncle. At three different times my uncle sent some of the war records of Colonel Dabney to the Virginia Historical Society, but most of the papers were retained in the chest. Some of these papers, being looked upon merely as souvenirs, were given to different grandchildren. These were recovered in part and restored to the collection by the writer. Photostats of the most important of them are deposited in the Virginia Historical Society. It is hoped that a sketch of Colonel Dabney and a description of these papers will be published in a later number of this magazine.

On the occasion of a visit to my uncle during his last days, he told me of these papers for the first time and asked me to look through them. The oaken, iron-bound box, about three

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-46.

by two feet and eighteen inches deep, with a hinged lid and a hasp for a lock, was found open in an out-house. It was crammed full of papers in a great state of confusion. A hasty examination showed that many of the papers would be of great value in tracing the history of the family. I told my uncle this and urged him to have them better cared for. Following the rule in the family, which had ordained that the papers should go to a Charles William Dabney, they passed to his son, Charles, and finally to my nephew, Charles William Dabney, Jr., of Houston, Texas. When I examined the papers again and found them going to pieces, my nephew, at my request, placed them in my hands to be preserved, photostated, and arranged with a view to depositing the originals in the library of the Virginia

Historical Society, where my uncle evidently intended them to be deposited ultimately.

The Huguenot Theory

There are two different views of the origin of the Dabneys of Virginia. The earliest view was that the original founders of the family were Huguenots who first fled to England, married there, and then came to America. This was a persistent tradition in all branches of the family for many years and was widely promulgated by the publication in 1888 of Mr. W. H. Dabney's book, *The Dabneys of Virginia*, referred to above. This belief began to be questioned, however, when it was learned from old Colonial records that there was a Dabney in Virginia certainly as early as 1664 when he received land-grants, at least twenty-one years before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In fact, Cornelius, the first immigrant who had established himself, learned the language of the Indians and been made agent of the Colony to the Indians, must have been in Virginia ten or twenty years before 1664.

The second theory was that the Virginia Dabneys were originally Norman-French and came over with William the Conqueror. There are numerous Dabneys in England whose genealogies, given me by Captain Daubeney of England, show their origin from a Knight D'Albini who served with William

the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Roll of the Battle Abbey (this is a document) shows two D'Albinis, one a knight and one a soldier. But we do not put too much reliance upon it, for Freeman has shown that this Roll was prepared some two centuries later by priests to flatter important families.

Mrs. Susan Dabney Smedes, in her *Memorials of a Southern Planter* (her father, Thomas Gregory Dabney, of Virginia and Mississippi, 1798-1885), although adhering to the Huguenot theory, which claims that the first Dabney immigrants came to Virginia only shortly before 1721, nevertheless quoted the record of the land grants to Cornelius De Baney (spelled variously de Bonis and deBoney) of 200 acres in New Kenton, September 27, 1664, of 640 acres on Tottopotomoy's creek, York River, granted June 7, 1666, and of the grant of 179½ acres to Sarah, Dabney on April 25, 1701, "next to land of sister Dorothy and brother James Dabney," grants which are listed below page — under Items I, II and V. Mrs. Smedes does not undertake to explain this discrepancy between this theory and these records.

Such a widely prevalent tradition is, however, to be considered. The first thing we note in investigating this Huguenot theory is that the tradition on which it is based did not find any expression until in the middle part of the nineteenth century when the glorious history of the Huguenots became more widely known and their descendants to be honored among us. It was at this period that the claim was put forward by Virginia Dabneys that they were the descendants of the old Huguenot hero, Theodore Agrippa D'Aubigné (1550-1630), soldier under Condé, and war lord of Henry of Navarre and his councillor, who, refusing to recant his faith when Henry did, fled to Geneva, where he married his second wife. There were no children of this marriage. Here the old hero spent the remainder of his life writing his *Histoire Universelle depuis 1550 jus' qua lan 1601*. In

his book he denounces his son, Constant, who remained in France, and by adhering to the Catholic faith, secured his father's estates there. From this Constant the

Huguenot theorists would trace the Dabneys of Virginia.

The registrars of the Huguenot Society of America dug diligently into the ancient records to prove their theory. Here is the statement in its support from "*A Synopsis of the Dabney Family of Virginia*," "Collected and Collated by Alice Davis Miller," published in the Report of the Huguenot Society, ("based on information said to be derived from the *Histoire de Madame de Maintenon* by the Duc de Noailles"). After giving the line of descent of Theodore Agrippa from "Geoffrey, sire d'Aubigne, Chevalier, Lord of Aubigne, near Saumur, who lived during the reign of Louis VII (1137-1180)," we read: "Theodore Agrippa, Seigneur de Lander et la Chaillon, born near Pons, Saintogne, February 8, 1552, died at Geneva April 29, 1630, married first, 1583, Suzanne Lezay, who died 1596. Issue: 1. Constant, born 1584-5 . . . and three daughters). Constant, Baron de Surimeau; held other titles; married, first, October 10, 1608, . . . Ann Merchant of Rochelle." Other documents show that for some crime Constant was put in prison in France and then sent to Martinique. Mrs. Miller refers to his criminal record as follows: "His most unfortunate career is on record elsewhere. Lack of space in these pages prevents even a short synopsis thereof." And she continues: "By his first marriage Constant had one son, Theodore. He married, second. 1627, Jeanne Cardillac, by whom he had three children: Charles Chevalier, a son who was drowned in youth; and Françoise, born 1635, Madame de Maintenon."

According to Mrs. Miller, the above Theodore, son of Constant and Ann Merchant, born at Rochelle in 1609 (?), after living in France during his youth, went to Martinique, where his father had colonial interest, "and from thence to England or Wales, or perhaps Holland." Mrs. Miller reports further: "In Hotten's *List of Emigrants to America*, there is recorded as sailing from London on the ship 'Alexander' April, 1635, for the Barbadoes one 'Tho. Dabb', which abbreviation, in the opinion of the writer, is none other than Theodor

D'Abb(igné)." "His age was given as 25, which tallies exactly with his birth record. . . . It is not known as yet whom he married, but according to reports he had the following children, which reports have not been challenged:"

1. Robert, who settled in Boston (vide Susan Dabney Smedes' *Memorials of a Southern Planter*);
2. Elizabeth (O'Abyn, Dubbin, Dabbin), who married, 1652, John Savage, of Concord (vide Savage's *Genealogical Dictionary*);
3. Cornelius, of age in 1664, "who, Mrs. Miller supposes," settled in Virginia. Mrs. Miller has no records of this marriage or of the children born of it.

This is an impossible supposition, for the records we cite below show that Cornelius Dabney, who was granted land in 1664, had come from England with a wife named "Eedeth" and had at least two sons and had been an Indian agent for the Colony for some years. He could not have been the son of this "Tho. Dabb" who is supposed to have come to America in 1635. Moreover, there are no records whatever of Tho. Dabb's locating anywhere in Virginia or any of the Colonies.

In *The Dabneys of Virginia*, "The Life of Mr. W. H. Dabney" is published as an introduction. In it it is said: "William Henry Dabney was a descendant of Robert d'Aubigné (supposed son of Tho. Dabb?), who immigrated to Boston about the same time that his brothers, Cornelius and John, the progenitors of these Dabneys, settled in Virginia." (No records given there.)

Finally, we learn that if there were a Robert d'Aubigné, who went to Boston, and brothers, Cornelius and John d'Aubigné, who went to Virginia, it is certainly wrong to call them Huguenots, for their grandfather, Constant, who was a criminal and a renegade, had renounced the Protestant faith, if he ever held it. Such then is the case, as far as I am able to discover it, for the theory of the descent of the Dabneys of Virginia, from Theodore Agrippa d'Aubigné! The reader will draw his own conclusions.

The Theory of Norman-English Origin

When we go to the records in Virginia, as we shall next do, it will be found that not only are there no grounds for supposing that the Virginia Dabneys are descendants of any Huguenot, but that, on the contrary, there is every reason for believing they were of English origin. It will be noted that, in Mr. Dabney's book, all those reporting traditions said that the Huguenot refugees had come to America "by way of England, where some had remained long enough to marry and rear children." But the insuperable difficulty in the theory of the Huguenot origin of this family is the fact that the ancestor of the Dabneys had been in Virginia at least thirty years before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which was the occasion of the dispersion of the Huguenots. Not knowing this, the advocates of the Huguenot theory claim descent from a Cornelius Dabney who married Sarah Jennings for his second wife in 1721, when, as a matter of fact, this Cornelius was the son or grandson of the Cornelius who was in Virginia in 1664 and died in 1693.

When we come to consider traditions, we find that the Huguenot tradition was not the only one. My uncle, Captain Charles William Dabney, of Aldingham, writing to Mr. W. H. Dabney, says: "We claim to be of the same origin as the Daubeney's of England, who are descended from Sir William D'Aubigné, Knight, who came over to England with William the Conqueror."⁶ My father, Robert Lewis Dabney, wrote from the University of Texas in 1887 to Mr. W. H. Dabney: "The tradition which I heard from my parents was that the stock from which we were sprung emigrated from Cambridgeshire or Norfolk, England, and that they were of the same lineage as the Daubeney's still to be heard of there."⁷ Judge William Pope Dabney refers with pride, in writing to Mr. W. H. Dabney, to the Daubeney's who served under William the

⁶ Dabney, W. H., *The Dabneys of Virginia*, p. 27.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 24. These statements of my uncle and father are confirmed by the latest investigations, as are those of Judge William Pope Dabney and of Mrs. William L. Dabney and of Col. Payson.

Conqueror, whose names appear on the Roll of Battle Abbey, and adds: "Among the nobles who took care that wily King John should keep the terms of Magna Carta (1215) is also found the name of

Daubeney."⁸ Mrs. William L. Dabney, of Chicago, wrote: "Three of our ancestors served under King Richard the First in the Crusade."⁹

Mr. William Winston Dabney, of King William County, Virginia, quotes the records showing that Cornelius Dabney received a grant in 1664, and Sarah Dabney a grant in 1701, etc. To explain this, Mr. W. H. Dabney can only suggest that this Cornelius must have been a man who came over earlier, perhaps an uncle! Finally, it is to be noted that the Rev. John Blair Dabney says his grandfather, William, told him "that the patriarch of the Virginia Dabneys was an English farmer, who settled in this state at an early stage of our Colonial history, and he concludes: "I have no doubt . . . that all the Dabneys of Virginia derive their origin from this old English farmer."¹⁰

These traditions seemed worth following out. When in England in 1924, therefore, I inquired into the history of the Daubeneys of England to see if I could find anything bearing on the origin of our Virginia Dabneys. Learning that the family had for centuries had their chief seats in Somerset and Dorset, I visited the library of the Archaeological Society in The Castle at Taunton, Somerset. Mr. H. St. George Gray, the secretary, told me much about the numerous families of Daubeney in many parts of the country and suggested that I visit the South Petherton Church and search its graveyard, and see the various manor houses, King Ina's palace in South Petherton, Barrington Court, four miles away, and Wayford House, near Crewkerne—all of which were built by Daubeneys.

⁸ Ibid. p. 28. See Col. Payson's statement on page 131.

⁹ Ibid. p. 28. (See below reference to article from the London Times, which tells of Daubeney the Crusader who served with Richard I.)

¹⁰ Dabney, John Blair, Sketches and Reminiscences, p. 4.

A chapel in St. Peter and Paul Church in South Petherton¹¹ is devoted to the Daubeneys. Here on a handsome monument is a brass to Sir Giles Daubeney, Knight, sheriff of Counties Bucks, Bedford, etc., about 1445, and another one by his side to a wife of noble family. Another wife, not of noble family, has a brass on the floor at the side. In the church-yard are stones to many Daubeneys and some to Daubenetts, a barsinister.

A grandson of this Sir Giles Daubeney of South Petherton was Lord Daubeney, K.G., Esquire to King Edward VI, Constable of Bristol Castle, made Lord Daubeney in 1485, Governor of Calais and Lord Chamberlain, died 1507 and buried in the Chapel of St. John in Westminster Abbey. His son, second Lord Daubeney, born 1494, died 1546, was created Earl of Bridgewater in 1538. He was a wealthy grand courtier and impoverished himself by his lavish expenditures at the Court of Henry VIII during the tournaments on the "Field of the Cloth of Gold," and is one of the Lords referred to by Abergavenny in Shakespeare's play, "Henry VIII." where he says (Act I, Scene I):

"... I do know
Kinsmen of mine, three at the last, that have
By this so sickened their estates, that never
Shall they abound as formerly."

I also visited Barrington Hall, a noble old manor house of another branch of this family, but found nothing more there.

Mr. Gray informed me that Captain Charles William Daubeney, The Brow, Combe Down, Bath, was the head of the family and its historian. A letter to Captain Daubeney brought a cordial invitation to visit him. He is the great-grandson of Charles Daubeney, LL.D., Archdeacon, Sarum (d. 1827), and a lineal descendant of Sir Giles Daubeney, interred in South Petherton. Captain Daubeney is a retired officer of the British Army who served many years in India. He gave me a full

¹¹ *South Petherton in the Olden Time*, by Hugh Norris. Very rare. Published at Crewkerne in 1882 by Wheatley and Mumford.

account of his family and has since sent me his line of descent from Tresney, grandson of Ivar (A. D. 800), who accompanied Hrolf, known as "Rolf the Ganger," to the conquest of that part of France later known as Normandie. From him, through a long line, descended William D. Albin, who accompanied the Conqueror to England and became the founder of the Daubeney family at South Petherton. The family had many distinguished members. Captain Daubeney sent me also a copy of the London Times of February 2, 1926, which has an article about Daubeney the Crusader, whose tomb is in the pavement of the forecourt of the Holy Sepulchre, bearing the epitaph: HIC IACET PHILIPPUS DE AUBINGNI CUIUS ANIMA REQUIESCAT IN PACE. AMEN. Captain Daubeney, as head of the family, was instrumental recently in having this tombstone restored. Another Daubeney was one of the barons of Magna Carta.

Inquiry revealed the fact that the Daubeney family was a large one, widely scattered, especially in Somerset and Dorset, and also in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and East Anglia. Cornelius is a common Dutch and Flemish surname in these counties, and Captain Daubeney called my attention to the fact that many Flemish and Dutch were brought to England in the time of James III to teach the people how to make lace and weave fine cloth. I did not make any investigation in these counties, but Colonel Francis L. Payson, a retired U. S. naval officer, of "Bagatelle," Florence, Italy, who is a descendant of the Dabney family of Boston, Mass., and has been making such investigations, writes to Mr. Trist Wood that he has found the name Cornelius Daubeney in East Anglia and has come to the conclusion that the Dabneys of Virginia sprang from this Norman-English stock.

Meeting Mr. C. G. Lart, the chief authority on the genealogy and history of the Huguenots in England, at the Authors' Club in London. I asked him about the origin of the Dabney family. He told me that while he believed they were originally from

France, he was sure that the "English family of Daubeney is not of Huguenot descent."

Now let us examine the records found in Virginia. Dr. William Minor Dabney, of Ruxton, Md., has made up a list of the early land patents and grants recorded in the Virginia Land Office, as follows:¹²

- I. Sept. 27, 1664; Cornelius DeBaney (his name, appearing several times in the patent, has been incorrectly copied as deBonis and deBoney); 200 acres on Tottopotomoy's

Creek, South Side of York River, a little below the fort of Manaskin. For the transportation of four persons.

- II. June 7, 1666; Cornelius Debney, 640 acres on the lower side of Tottopotomoy's Creek, York River, next land of Robert Anderson and John Fleming. Purchased from Mr. Littlepage and James Turner. For the transportation of thirteen persons.
- III. March 16, 1667; Cornelius Dabony, 300 acres on South Side of York River and upper side of Tottopotomoy's Creek. For the transportation of two persons, Jone Winter and Besse, an Indian.
There is no further record of any grants of land to any of the name until 1701, when a new line of names appears.
- IV. April 25, 1701; George Dabney, 293 acres in St. John's Parish, King and Queen County, cornering on Pamunkey River and lying in Pamunkey Neck.
- V. April 25, 1701; Sarah Dabney, 179½ acres, St. John's Parish, King and Queen County, Pamunkey Neck, next to land of sister Dorothy and brother James Dabney.
- VI. April 25, 1701; William Anderson and Dorothy his wife; 179½ acres, St. John's Parish, King & Queen

¹² Some of these records have been published in Volume I of *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, by Mrs. Nell M. Nugent. The spelling in original records is followed.

- County, Pounce's Swamp, Pamunkey Neck. Next sister Sarah Dabney and brother James Dabney's land.
- VII. April 25, 1701; James Dabney, 204 acres in St. John's Parish, King & Queen County, Pamunkey Neck; divided from his sister Sarah's land; mouth of Pouncey's Swamp. For the transportation of four persons.
 - VIII. April 1, 1702; James Dabney, 1000 acres, Pamunkey Neck, King & Queen County; divided from Bradley's and Esq. Wormeley's land. For the Transportation of twenty persons.
 - IX. July 9, 1724; Captain George Dabney of King William
(1) County, 400 acres lying on both sides of Cub Creek, Hanover County. Price 40 shillings. (The original patent, bearing the signature of Governor Drysdale, was found in the old army chest.)
 - IX. July 9, 1724; Captain George Dabney of King William
(2) County, 400 acres new land in Hanover County. Both sides of Cub Creek and Deep Branch. Price 40 shillings.
 - IX. July 9, 1724; Captain George Dabney, 400 acres new land
(3) on both sides Cub Creek, Hanover County. Next Richard Phillips.
 - X. December 10, 1724; Cornelius Dabney of King William County, 400 acres of new land in Hanover County, north side of South Anna River next Thos. Merriwether and Richard Phillips' land. Price 40 shillings. (Probably the Cornelius who married Sarah Jennens or Jennings in April 1721. A grandson of the immigrant?)
 - XI. Sept. 7, 1729; Cornelius Dabney of King William County,

400 acres of new land in Hanover County, next his own land and that of Richard Phillips and Thos. Merriwether. Price 40 shillings.

- XII. Jan. 2, 1737; George Dabney, 94 acres in Hanover County next his own and Launcelot Armstrong's land.

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- XIII. August 30, 1763; James Dabney, 400 acres in Albemarle County, South Side of the Rivanna River on Cunningham Creek and Bremo Road. Price 40 shillings.
- XIV. July 7, 1765; William Dabney, 354 acres, Bedford County. Price 40 shillings.

From items IV, V, VI, VII and VIII it appears that James, Sarah and Dorothy were brothers and sisters, and that George Dabney was probably a brother. And it seems probable enough that they were all children of the original Cornelius who patented the 200 acres in New Kent County in 1664. All these tracts of land were in Pamunkey Neck, which became a family settlement.

Next let us examine the records found in London:

In Sainsbury's *Abstracts of Colonial State Papers*, extant in the Public Records Office in London, which Dr. W. M. Dabney was permitted to see and to copy, there are two letters from Cornelius Dabney, the "Interpreter to the Queen of Pamunkey." The first is a state letter from the Queen of the Pamunkeys translated by Dabney in his official capacity, and transmitted to Colonel Francis Moryson, of the Royal Commission to Virginia. The second is a personal letter to Colonel Moryson, dated Virginia, Jun ye 29th, 1678, in which Cornelius Dabney reports that "Foreign Indians" were responsible for recent attacks on the English and says that only his sense of duty to the Government causes him to continue in his capacity as interpreter. From a photostatic copy of this letter I give the concluding part as follows:

"... Sr. my Wife Eedeth¹³ has her humble service
p'sented unto y' Hono'. would gladly send
y' one of her Boyes a yeare or two hence, my
humble service to y' Hono'.
I am: Sr:
y' Hono's most humble servant in all
obedience Cornelius Dabney:"

¹³ Eedeth was a pure English name.

Note that he signs his name Dabney.

Mr. Flournoy calls attention to letters in this file, dated September and October, 1686, from William Byrd in Virginia to Perry and Lane in London requesting payment of £6, S37 drawn on them by Cornelius Daboney. Perry and Lane were London agents for most of the wealthy Virginia families in the latter part of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. (There are also records among the Colony's papers in Richmond of the payment in tobacco of Cornelius Dabney's salary as agent to the Indians.)

Here we have evidence that Cornelius Dabney was a British citizen of age, for no alien or minor could receive land grants or hold

office, and that he had an English wife and at least two boys, one at least old enough in 1678 to be sent to England to school. To have acquired land and to have learned the language of the Indians, Cornelius Dabney must have been in Virginia at least twenty years when this letter was written in 1678.

Mr. Flournoy writes me that "the St. Peter's Vestrybook, which starts in 1680, shows that Cornelius Dabney was a member of the vestry of that church and had attended eighteen meetings, nearly every one, from 1684 to October 25, 1693 (he died soon thereafter, as shown by the burial records), and that he was present at a meeting in 1684, the year before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This indicates early residence in New Kent, for only matured men were admitted to the vestry. Accordingly on May 1, 1694, a vestryman was appointed to serve as church warden for two years—the customary term—"in ye place of Mr. Cornelius Dabboni," deceased. All this shows that Cornelius Dabney was an Englishman and a member of the Church of England and ranked among the best men in the county. St. Peter's Vestry was for a century probably the most aristocratic vestry in Virginia.

This parish book also records the deaths of "Elizabeth, daughter of Cornelius Dabonie, on April 4, 1688, and of John, son of Cornelius Dabonie, on April 7, 1688." (Their ages not

given.) From an old Carr family Bible we have the following: "Mary Dabney, daughter of Cornelius Dabney of King & Queen County, born January 22, 1688." also "Mary Carr, departed this life Sept. 7, 1748, aged 60." In 1704 she married Major Thomas Carr, 1678-1737, of Topping Castle in King and Queen. Thomas Carr is mentioned in the will of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Susanna Anderson, filed in Hanover County, 1724. They were grandparents of Dabney Carr, 1743-73, of King William County. Mrs Anderson is supposed to have been the second wife of the first Cornelius Dabney.

The same vestry book contains records: "Eliz. daugh. Geo. Dabney bapt. in November 1698—Nelthan daugh. James Dabney bapt. 8 Jan. 1698."

From Dr. E. G. Swem's Virginia Historical Index, Mr. Flournoy has collected references to George Dabney, Gent., of King William County, showing that he was Justice of King William from 1701, the year of formation, to 1716 and perhaps later. He owned a plantation bordering on the north side of the Pamunkey River. The quit-rent rolls of 1704 record him as holding 290 acres in King William County. He is listed as one of the feoffees of the newly established Delawaretown (now West Point) in 1706. An Act of Assembly of May, 1722, for new ferries over York, Rappahannock and Pamunkey Rivers mentions one as "from George Dabney's landing over said (Pamunkey) river."¹⁴

There is no record of the birth of this George Dabney. The parish records before 1680 were destroyed. He died in 1729. But I am convinced that he was the son of Cornelius Dabney, the vestryman of St. Peter's, to whom the land was granted in items I, II and III above. This George Dabney, who is spoken of as Gent and Captain, was the man mentioned in items IX 1, 2 and 3. Sarah, Dorothy and James were his sisters and brother, also children of Cornelius Dabney, the immigrant. There is no record of John Dabney who Mr. Trist

¹⁴ Virginia Historical Index. H. S. IV, 113, V. M. I. 368, 2V.7, 6V.436, 8V.370, 385, 24V.391. 3IV.340. 32V.70.

Wood thinks might have been the father of this George except that he died in early manhood and his widow married an Anderson.

In Colonel Charles Dabney's war chest we found a copy of the will of this George Dabney, Gent and Captain, certified by his son William. In this will he specifies the following children: George, William, Susannah, Sarah, Judith, and makes his wife, Elizabeth, and his sons executors. (Another daughter, Elizabeth, baptized 1698, died early.) He also left a bequest to a grandson, George Anderson, with certain conditions, suggesting that he did not approve of the boy's father, or because his mother was dead at the time he made his will. Elizabeth, another daughter, may have been the wife of Anderson and mother of the boy George. Mr. Trist Wood thinks there was another daughter, Mary, who married a Pettus; but Dr. William Dabney thinks that either Susannah or Judith, or both, married Pettuses, and that one of them was the parent of Dabney Pettus, a well-known character. . . . The daughter, Sarah, married Colonel William Winston, the founder of a distinguished family.

Cornelius Dabney, of King William County, who was granted "400 acres new land," Item IX, December 10, 1724, in Hanover County, and Item XI, September 7, 1729, "next to it," was probably a grandson of Cornelius, the immigrant, and brother of George I.

Mr. Trist Wood thinks it possible that George Dabney, Gent, was the son of a John Dabney, who, according to traditions and stories current in some of the branches of the family before the Civil War, was a brother of Cornelius, and who, if these traditions are to be relied on, emigrated to Virginia some years later than Cornelius did. I do not know any ground for this. However this was, they were certainly all of one family and English.

Beginning with this George Dabney, Gent, known also as Captain George Dabney, we found in the war chest of Colonel Charles Dabney a complete line of records—wills, bonds, let-

ters, invoices of sales of tobacco and of goods bought, etc.— of his successors down to and including Charles W. Dabney, of Aldingham. In this chest was the grant to Captain George Dabney from George III, dated July 9, 1724 (Item IX above), signed by Drysdale, Governor General, for a portion of the Cub Creek plantation, now Louisa County, which was held by Samuel Dabney and his son, Charles Dabney, Jr., my grandfather, and his children down to the present generation, when the writer sold his portion of it.¹⁵ This is proof that my family is descended from George Dabney the first, called Gent and Captain, who died in 1729, and was the son of Cornelius Dabney, the immigrant.

Dr. William M. Dabney tells us about the Dabney brick house, located about two miles from Enfield in King William County, and his discoveries there. When he visited the place first in 1913, he met Mr. Joseph Atkinson, one of the owners, who showed him a parchment, which read as follows:

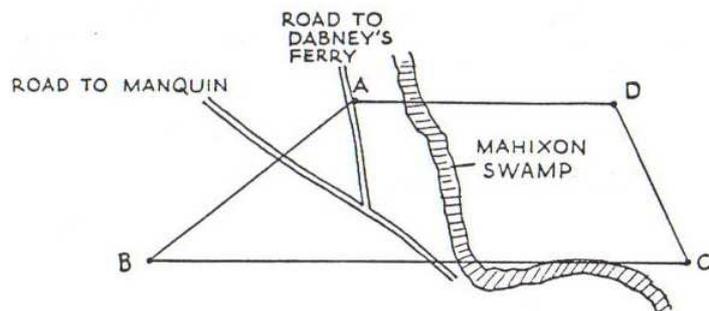
"This indenture made this first day of January, 1802, between James Dabney and Judith, his wife, of the county of Louisa, and William Dabney and Sarah, his wife, of the county of King William,

the current paper, Samuel Brown Dabney of Houston, and Lewis Meriwether Dabney of Dallas, Texas."

Captain George Dabney of "The Grove" was the father of Judge John Dabney, who in turn was the father of the Reverend John Blair Dabney, the author of "Reminiscences". Judge Chiswell Dabney of Lynchburg was of this line and became the ancestor of a numerous and distinguished family. Colonel Chiswell Dabney Langhorne of Albemarle County who left several children among them being Irene, Mrs. Charles Dana Gibson, and Nancy, Lady Astor, was his grandson.

Regarding his discoveries in King William County, Dr. William M. Dabney continues: "Mr. Atkinson told me that the property had come to his wife from her father, A. B. Pullen (?), in whose family it had been for about a century. According to Mr. Atkinson, the house was built by Captain George Dabney I, probably for his son, George II, since it is almost certain that George I lived much closer to the ferry; but regardless of who built it, it was built in 1732. This is certain, because about thirty-five years prior to 1913, while repairing the house, a piece of board was removed from one of the dormer windows and on which was written 'Built by W. F. Cheekings, 1732.'

"In addition to the indenture, Mr. Atkinson showed me an old survey and plat of the property, as follows: 'Survey of



DABNEY FAMILY OF VIRGINIA

Mr. George Dabney's property, 1753; William Parry Surveyor; William Tatem (?), Matthew Fowler, Chainmen, King William County.'

"A, B, C, D—Boundary Stones marked G. D. 1744.

"I saw two of these stones on my visit in 1913. In the description of the boundaries of the property the names of John Fowler (?), Randolph (?), Thomas Butler, Col. Philip Aylett and Sam'l Davis are mentioned. The writing has become quite illegible but I am sure of all the names except Fowler and Randolph."

Three miles to the northeast near the Pamunkey River is Dabney's Mill, supposed to have been built by George II, a brick and frame structure, with a twenty-five foot over-shot water wheel. It has been, it is said, frequently repaired and refitted, but a mill on the original foundation was running until 1935, when the canal was washed out by a flood. (See picture).

The Coat-of-Arms

Mrs. Susan Dabney Smedes in her *Memorials of a Southern Planter* describes the arms of the Virginia Dabneys as "an elephant's

head, three footless martins and the fleur-de-les of France." This is such unheraldic language that it is difficult to understand. By "footless martins" she probably means "martlets." The sketch of the arms on the cover of W. H. Dabney's book, *The Dabneys of Virginia*, seems to suggest that he got his insignia from the same source. Mr. Trist Wood thinks that this design "came from a partly obliterated trick of arms, showing its general outline and vertical lines of field, but with other indications of tinctures lost or obscure." In Burke's *General Armory* we find the following: "Dawbeney—Gu. five fusils in fesse ar. each charged with a fleur-de-lis sa. in chief three martlets ar. Crest—an elephant's head erased per fesse vert and or." Dr. William M. Dabney, of Ruxton, Md., in a recent letter says: "With regard to this coat-of-arms, my reasoning is that it is certainly strangely significant that among the dozen or mere coats-of-arms of Daubnev, Daub-

ny, Dawbeney, etc., given in Burke's *General Armory* the one we use should have been singled out unless it were the real arms of our forefathers. Our arms as at present used were first granted to Oliver Dawbeny, citizen of London, etc., in the reign of Henry VIII." This is the only coat-of-arms I have known in connection with the family. Though not generally used, it points also to the English origin of the family. (See picture.)

Conclusion

With these records before us, we are prepared to accept the theory that Cornelius Dabney belonged to the so-called Cavalier immigration that took place as a consequence of the execution of Charles I in 1649. We know from history that the Daubeney of England were loyalists. The question may be asked: if the Dabneys who settled in Virginia were Cavaliers, why was not this claimed for them at the time? Professor T. T. Wertenbaker explains this. He says: "Although it is impossible to determine with accuracy the lineage of all the leading families of Virginia during the seventeenth century, it is definitely known that many of the most wealthy and influential houses were founded by men who could boast of no social prominence in England."¹⁶ He cites the Byrd family as an illustration, whose founder was a wealthy goldsmith. John Fiske says: "Much confusion has resulted from the assumption, so common with Southern writers, that the English Cavaliers were all of distinguished lineage or of high social rank. The word "Cavalier," as used in the time of Charles I, denoted not a caste, or a distinct class of people, but a political party. . . . Thus the fact that a man was a Cavalier or a Roundhead proved nothing as to his social rank or his lineage."¹⁷

But if these Dabneys were not of the nobility, they had all the characteristics of the English aristocracy. They went to work speedily to acquire land and to build up great estates. In three generations they became great landlords and leaders of the people. Captain George Dabney the first was sheriff of

¹⁶ Wertenbaker, T. J., *Patrician and Plebian in Virginia*. pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ Fiske, John, *Old Virginia and her Neighbors*, Vol II, p. 12.

his county, and his sons and grandsons were magistrates, sheriffs, colonels of militia and burgesses. His grandson, Charles Dabney, organized the first legion to go into the Revolution from Virginia

and became the trusted officer of General Washington, fighting with him at Monmouth, suffering with him at Valley Forge, and assisting him at the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Letters in his chest show that Lafayette, Patrick Henry, and John Marshall were his intimate friends.

I am cognizant of the fact that it still remains to be proven that Captain George the first was the son of Cornelius I, the interpreter of the Indians, who received the grants I, II and II above in 1664, 1666 and 1667, and wrote the letters to Colonel Francis Moryson, etc. But as there was no other Dabney in Virginia at that time to be his father, the probability is strong that he was the son of Cornelius Daubeney or Dabney I. There are other gaps that will have to be filled in before we have a complete genealogy of the early Dabneys of Virginia. Their descendants are invited to consider the facts submitted here and to contribute what they can in the way of records to the complete solution of the problem and thus help to make a record of all the descendants of their Virginia sires.