

## “KENTUCKY HISTORY CAN BE FUN”

It is amazing, how many Americans say ugly things about the French. Many of the liberties we have in this country came down to us, via French thinkers, such Rousseau, Voltaire, etc. At the Battle of Yorktown, there were three times as many French soldiers as American troops. Moreover, the French Navy had the British Navy bottled up in the bay. The British could not escape. Had they been able to do so, it is we who would have lost the Revolution, not the British.

In 1917, when America's Expeditionary Force landed in France, Colonel Charles Saunders, a man familiar with history, a man who could speak French, went to the Cemetery of Pere la Chaise, and found the grave of the Marquis de la Fayette. He came to attention, saluted, and said: "La Fayette, nous voici." (Layette, we are here!) It was later claimed that General John ("Black Jack") Pershing performed that symbolic act, and spoke the words in English, but that story is not true.

Then, there's the business of family. Many Eastern Kentuckians are descended from French émigrés, and just don't know it. The Anglins, for example, may not know their family is of French origin. Most of the Stuarts/Stewarts living in Eastern Kentucky are the descendants of Mary Anne Lafferty (1720-1783). She was married to James Stuart, whom Indians burnt at the stake, during the French and Indian War. Though her surname seems to be quintessentially Irish, it isn't. "Lafferty" was how the Irish said: "la Fertie." That's French for "pride," in a good sense. The LaFertie's were protestants who, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (an Edict for religious toleration, revoked on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Oct., 1685, by Louis XIV), were driven out of France. The British were only too happy to take in rich protestants.

Family names such as Dudit (it is, really, pronounced "Dude-wee," but, unfortunately called "Didway," in Scioto Co., OH, by those whose French is wanting) have suffered a postmortem mishandling. They are my latest French ancestors. My dear old Granny James' great, great grandparents, Guillaume Dudit, and Agnes Dessot Dudit, came to Gallipolis, OH, on the 19<sup>th</sup> Oct., 1790, to escape the axe, during the French Revolution. My family has been driven out of France, twice: Once in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; once, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The day after the people murdered King Louis XVI, those who fled the Revolution were condemned to death. The Edict from the Committee of Public Safety, said: "You have no inheritance in France. If you ever return, you will be put to death."

That fact is somewhat ironic. Guillaume Dudit, who was born in Paris, in 1770, was a corporal in the Militia Bourgeoisie. The Militia Bourgeoisie was a company of gentlemen who bought their own weapons, their own uniforms, and they were supposed to defend the rights of king, against the Paris mob. But, the Militia attacked the Bastille (the royal prison), in Paris, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1789. A hundred years later, in 1889, a committee of scholars met in Paris, to determine what event was the

mother of the Revolution: It was the storming of the Bastille, they said. So, I can truthfully say: “Mon ancêtre, Dudit, ete un soldat avec le Militia Bourgeoisie, dans le jour premier de la Revolution, a Paris.”

What? You can't read French? I just said: “My ancestor, Dudit, was a soldier with the Militia Bourgeoisie, on the first day of the Revolution, in Paris.” On Bastille Day, “the Fete National de la France” (14<sup>th</sup> of July) if there are others around me, I like to begin to sing “La Marseillais,” the French national anthem, in French. I get to a point, stop, and say: “Join right in here!” No one ever does. I have inferred from that experience, that most Americans cannot read, write, or speak a single word of French! Encroyable! (Incredible!) After all, the French used to arrogantly claim they had a “mission civilatrice,” i.e., “a mission to civilize the rest of the world.”

Guillaume and Agnes (said to be a nobleman's daughter) came to the United States, with le Cinque Cents Francais (the French Five Hundred), most of whom came to Gallipolis, OH. Indeed, it is said, by those who say they know, that twenty-five percent of all the French fleeing the Revolution, came to Gallipolis. There, they found a place with twenty log cabins, without floors.

Americans (The Scioto Company) sold them land, which they, themselves, did not own, for five times its alleged value. When the French got to Alexandria, VA, they were supposed to be met by the land-sellers. But, no one met them.

Being no fools, the French formed two committees, one to attend President Washington, to lodge a complaint; the other met with Alexander Hamilton, Sec. of the Treasury. (Try sending a committee to meet Hamilton and Washington's modern successors, and see where that gets you!) They knew (as did Hamilton, whose assistant, a man named Druer, was instrumental in the fraud), that the French had been robbed. Nevertheless, the emigres pressed on. What else could they do? To return to France, having fled the “glories” of the Revolution, was punishable by death.

They made it to Gallipolis. You will be able to tell how little they knew about frontier existence, by what they did that night. They held a ball. They had brought ballet slippers, and the accoutrements of upper middle class, to upper class existence. There were noblemen among them. Ironically Dr. Guillotine, the designer of the machine that removed so many heads, during The Terror (beginning 1793) in France, had a sister who came to Gallipolis, with her doctor husband. The doctor knew how to make sulfur matches, to light fires. It must have seemed magical to Americans, at the time.

Louis Philippe, who later became known as “The Citizen King,” in Paris, came to visit Gallipolis, in 1795. The émigrés held another ball to celebrate the future king's appearance. Louis pressed on, to Bardstown, KY. While The Terror raged in Paris, Louis was safe in Kentucky. Bardstown, KY was the second largest community of Roman Catholics, in the whole country. There were two bishops of the Roman Church in America, at that time: Baltimore, and Bardstown.

Here's my favorite Louis Philippe story—and you likely can't imagine how hard it is to have such a thing: Louis Philippe stopped in Marietta, OH, on his way down river. Marietta, should anyone ask, is

named for Her Majesty, Marie Antoinette of France. (She sent the town a bell, now to be seen in the Campus Martius Museum, Marietta, to honor the honor, as it were.)

Why did Louis Philippe stop in Gallipolis? It was January, and the Ohio River had frozen over. He couldn't go on. However, Americans couldn't get the émigrés any of their promised food, either. That winter, they lived on dried beans and water, and on whatever game could be killed in the forests around them. Nevertheless, they shared what they had with the future king, and were delighted by his presence.

A citizen of Marietta, Thierry, a baker, was so fascinated by Prince Louis Philippe, he decided he would go with Louis, and share his fortunes. It was only after the man came to his senses and realized he had left a wife behind in Marietta, that he had Louis put him ashore. We know that Thierry made it back to Marietta, because (and this is the part that is my favorite part of a story about The Citizen King): After Louis was made king of the French, and living in Paris, an American from SE Ohio was in Paris, and somehow made it to a public reception, where he was allowed to speak with the king.

His Majesty asked: "Do you happen to know a baker in Marietta named 'Thierry'?"

"Yes," the astonished American answered, "but how does Your Majesty know him?"

"I ran away with him, once," King Louis replied.

Not every émigré was as fortunate as Louis. In 1795, the Congress of the United States, evidently chagrined by the knowledge that some of the very leaders of this nation had robbed the French, gave the émigrés a grant of 4,500 acres at what is now called Haverhill, Scioto County, Oh. It's within sight of the Greenup Dam, on the Ohio. And, it's still barely a wide place in the road.

Logically enough, the place came to be called "The French Grant." There, too, is The French Grant Cemetery. Therein, lie buried my great, great, great, great grandparents, their friends and relatives, in the middle of a corn field. Though the Emperor, Napoleon, offered émigrés an amnesty, should they wish to return to France, and that offer of Amnesty was renewed by His Majesty, Louis XVIII (Louis XVI's brother, "Louis Egalite"; Louis XVII was Louis XVI's son, who, at the age of ten, died of abuse and the hands of the revolutionaries), few could afford to go "home".

Having paid twice for the same land---and paid the same people!---they had become poor farmers. Great Grandfather Guillaume died, in 1835, while threshing wheat. "Guillaume," is the French equivalence of "William," which is what it used to say his name was, on his tombstone, until I made an issue of it. Now, thanks to my "Didway" cousins in Portsmouth, there's a marker that gives our Grandfather the dignity of having the name his parents gave him. It even calls him "Partriarch" of those of us who are his descendants.

Guillaume's father, also Guillaume, came here and died, in the American Revolution. When Americans are wont to say such hurtful things as (and I've heard this): "The French can't fight," it invariably calls up in me sense of outrage. My great grandfather (X5), Guillaume Dudit, gave his life for

American freedom. I, once, in a newspaper, threatened (in French) to dig him up and return with him to Paris, because, I said: "I would not want my ancestor to lie buried in the midst of ingrates!"

So, how did that French family get to Kentucky? Their daughter Augustine Marguerite Dudit (even spelled "Didway," in the marriage records, in Scioto County), married a man with an Indian mother. His name was John Waugh, Jr. His mother was a woodland Indian (a Seneca?) in Washington Co., PA, where John, Jr. was born. So, all John Waugh, Jr.'s descendants are part Indian.

That would mean that (given Kentucky's "Day Law," the law of the commonwealth, until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, forbade the teaching of white children in the same classroom as non-whites): Technically, all John's descendants were excluded from attending "white schools". The penalty for mixing the races was this: Any student who attended such a class was fined \$10 a day, and each day was a separate offense; any teacher who taught in such an integrated class, was fined \$100 a day, and each day was a separate offense; any school which allowed any such (shocking!) thing to go on, was fined \$1,000 a day, and each day was a separate offense. Hence, "the Day Law." But, we all look as though we were "white," so, we got away with it.

Augustine (often, in the records, illiterately spelled "Augusteen") and John Waugh, moved to Kentucky, and bought slaves. They had a daughter whom they named Lucinda. Lucinda married Levi Dickenson. They produced a son, Benjamin Franklin Dickenson, who came to spell the family name "Dickerson." Why? He wanted no part of being associated with his brothers, who fought for the North, in what some Southerners then called "the Late Unpleasantness," i.e., the War Between the States, or as the North calls it "The Civil War."

Benjamin fought with the 6<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Confederate Regiment, then, the 9<sup>th</sup>. The 9<sup>th</sup> was under the command of "The Thunderbolt of the Confederacy," General John Hunt Morgan. On a raid into Athens County, OH, General Morgan and his raiders were captured. They were thrown into the old Ohio Pen (torn down, in recent years), as though they were common criminals. The General managed to escape. He made his way to Cincinnati, crossed the river to Covington, KY, caught the train to Lexington, and returned to his troops.

It's a long time since 1865, when the War Between the States ended, and our time. In the interim, members of my father's family forgot which side their grandfather supported. They had no idea why he changed the spelling of the Dickenson name. They were vaguely aware that it had something to do with the Civil War.

"Dickinson" is what the family is called, on Lucinda Waugh Dickenson's grave, near Grahn, KY. My father's generation thought Benjamin had freed his slaves, and gone off to fight for the Union. He did not. Circumstances caused him to be the only man left in Company G, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Confederate Regiment, but, there he was, a Confederate. God bless him!

Those very same Dickensons/Dickersons/Dickasons/Dickinsons/Dickisons might be interested to know how the family got its name. Legend (which I happen to believe) has it that our ancestor crossed the English Channel, from Normandy, France, in 1066, with Guillaume le Conquerant (William the

Conqueror), and that ancestor came to be called "Gautier, de Caen's son." Caen (pronounced "Kawn") is a town in Normandy. It's only a step or two from saying "De Caen's son," to saying "Dickenson." The Conqueror came from Normandy. It all makes senses.

Can anyone actually know all these things, as a fact? Well, yes. I was once asked: "How far back can you trace your family?" My answer was: To the 5<sup>th</sup> century. There was a man named "Erk," whose existence is never in doubt, though historical records do not go beyond him. He was the father of Fergus MacErk ("Fergus, Son of Erk"), king of Dalmatia, in what came to be called Scotland. I have that on the authority of Sir Iain Moncreiffe, the Lord Lyon King of Arms for Scotland, whose opinion on genealogical questions is taken as a "matter of fact, in law," in the courts in Scotland.

The Dickensons, through Henry Dickenson, who, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, married Agnes Jennings, made us all eligible to participate in what is known as "The Sir Humphrey Jennings Fraud." It isn't that Sir Humphrey (Lord Humphrey) was party to the fraud. It's just that his family was so rich, he was baptized in Westminster Abbey, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and His Majesty, King William III stood godparent for him. When Lord Humphrey died, he left behind an enormous fortune, and thereby hangs the tale.

As lately as 1935, conmen, in England, were still reaching out to persons of the Jennings surname, to offer to represent them, in the British Courts, so that they might recover some of the fortune which was allegedly "rightfully" ours. "For only \$5,000, up front, we can . . ." It was the 18<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of an Email from Nigeria.

To show you how pervasive was the illusion of getting part of that great wealth, let me merely mention William Jennings Bryan, the oftentimes candidate for the presidency of the United States. His "Cross of Gold" speech, at the Democratic Convention of 1896, makes him reasonably well-known. "William Jennings"?

"William Jennings" is not a name which one just fetches out of the air. There was a Capt. William Jennings: Sir William Jennings, a captain in the British Army, who died in Virginia, in 1775. He was the ancestor of my Dickensons, through his daughter Agnes. He wanted no part of the revolutionary processes then going on. He asked to be buried in his British Army uniform.

He was buried with his sword, and the uniform draped over his corpse. He had grown too corpulent to fit into the uniform, in death. And, yes, some of us are his great grandchildren, several times over. But the fortune has been gone, since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

All that money, land, the titles, and anything else of value went to Lord Corzon, formerly Governor General of India, whose grandmother was a daughter of Lord, Sir Humphrey Jennings. Ah, but the illusion of something for nothing! How hard it is to live with the hope that someday the Tooth Fairy is going to give us what we want, rather than what we deserve. As Shakespeare (in "Hamlet") once put it: "Treat every man after his just desserts, and who should escape whipping?"

And all of this comes out of history? Well, yes. I can demonstrate everything that is in this article. It would only take me a short time to print out proof of all this from "Ancestry.com." Benjamin F. Dickerson, Granny James' father, was the son of Levi Dickenson, my great, great grandfather, who was the son of Archelaus, who was the son of Archelaus, who was the son of Henry Dickenson, who married Agnes Jennings, a daughter of Captain Sir William Jennings, said to be Lord Humphrey's son, though not by everyone. (No matter what you think, somebody thinks you are wrong.)

Never mind all those aristocrats, are the Jameses in Carter County related to "the real" Jesse James? Yes. In September, 2007, The Kentucky Journal ran an item about my great, great uncle James Dickenson, Levi Dickenson's son, who "entertained" four men who came to his house at Grahn, after dark, asking for shelter for themselves and their horses. My uncle gave them what they asked. He didn't realize it, until later, but that was The James Gang. He thought they were the Cole Younger Gang. He, evidently, mistook Jesse for Cole Younger's brother. No. He was "the real" Jesse Woodson James, son of the Rev. Sallee James, a Baptist preacher, Robert was the son of The Rev. John James. Carter County Jameses come down to us from the Rev. John James.

(The Rev.) Robert Sallee James moved his family to Missouri. He was an extraordinarily well educated man, for his day. He had an undergraduate degree, and a Master of Arts degree, from Georgetown, KY College. But, mysteriously, he came to feel called to go preach to the gold miners, in California. He was mistaken. He was called to go to California, to die of typhoid fever, and be buried in an unmarked grave.

His wife always said: "If Robert had stayed home, the boys might not have turned out as they did." But, then, they wouldn't be world famous, would they? There's always a price to pay.

My grandfather Andrew L. James was a little boy, when the James Gang came to visit the Eastern Kentucky Jameses. My great aunt (by marriage) Lula James Dickerson, a first cousin of Andrew James, married a brother of Andrew's wife, Mary Elizabeth Dickerson James. Aunt Lula told me when she was in her nineties, that: "When Jesse James robbed the bank at Ceredo-Kenova, W.Va., he came by to visit the family, in Grahn, and, as a little girl, I sat on his lap."

There wasn't television in those days. A great outlaw's visit would make for a good story, but it would also be very exciting. Evidently, Grandfather Andrew Lee James was impressed by the outlaws; he named my father "Jesse." Alas, my father hated that name all his life. So, yes, I am the son of Jesse James. My father was as real any other "Jesse James."

If it helps to redeem my family, we also (through a great grandmother of mine, Elizabeth Stuart Blizzard, who died in 1934, in Carter Co., and through her ancestor, David Peyton Clay) we have common ancestry with Henry Clay "the Great Compromiser." Henry's compromises are partly responsible for the necessity to fight the War Between the States. Through that same grandmother, we also have common ancestry with General Robert E. Lee, and (through the Martiaus, another French protestant family, forced to leave la France) and we have common ancestry with His Excellency, General George Washington.

That common ancestor was Nicolas Martiau (1591-1657; the name is pronounced "Mar-tee-oh"; he sailed from England, in 1620). Yorktown, VA, used to be his plantation. Nicolas Martiau was a great, great grandfather of General Washington. He was the general's earliest Virginia ancestor---and mine. Nicolas is buried in Grace Episcopal Church's cemetery. Like the Lafferties, he had been forced to leave France, at the Revocation of the Edit of Nantes, by Louis, XIV. And, like them, he came here from England.

It is interesting to note that General Washington was standing on his great, great grandfather's farm, when he forced Lord Cornwallis to surrender his sword to a subordinate. The British had insulted the general, by sending him a note addressed to "Mr. George Washington." Washington refused the note. The next note which came was addressed to: "His Excellency, General G. Washington." But, it was too late to try to make up! General Washington was sensitive about his status.

General Washington once ran against my great grandfather (X8) Thomas Van Swearingen, for a seat in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Col. Washington was too grand to actually campaign. He claimed he was fighting Indians, and didn't have time. On Election Day, Col. Washington had friends "suggest" his name. My grandfather won. (That can be found in a book published in 1940, by the University of Alabama Press, called *The Virginia House of Burgesses, 1740-1760.*)

In 1758, when the seat was up for grabs again, Col. Washington was still too grand to campaign, but he had surrogates campaign for him. On Election Day, the surrogates passed out whiskey (distilled at Mt. Vernon, by slaves). Guess who won?

Col. Washington never left the House of Burgesses, from 1758 to 1776, when the House had no purpose in being. The Revolution took care of all that.

The general had no descendants. Thomas van Swearingen came down to me, in the form of my great, great grandmother, Nancy Swearigen, of Greenup Co., KY. By the time the name got around to her, the family had forgotten "van" signals ennoblement, by the Dutch government. Nancy's father's first name? "Van."

It only takes one generation of illiterates, for a whole history to be forgotten. And yes, though I can't prove it: Al Swearingen, sheriff of Dead Wood City (remember the TV show?), was descended from Gerrit van Swerigen, the Dutch official who became Sheriff of St. Marys City, MD, after the British dispossessed the Dutch, following the Third Dutch War, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Gerrit died there, in 1696. Some things seem predestined.

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