

THE BURNETTS OF AMERICA

THOMAS BURNETT AND DESCENDANTS

Thomas Burnett, born in Virginia about 1755, was the progenitor of the American Burnetts of this book. The approximate date of his birth was arrived at by earlier generations from the known fact that he died in 1780 close to the age of twenty-five.

His Virginia birth would mean that his parents or earlier ancestors had emigrated from Scotland or England to America before the middle of the 18th century. Unfortunately, despite prolonged and intensive search of Virginia records the identity of his parents, among the many Burnetts of that colony, has not been determined.

Word-of-mouth information concerning Thomas Burnett's antecedents died with his sons or older grandchildren. Of the family into which he was born the private records, if such there were (and most families did keep Bible records of births, marriages, and deaths), have been lost. This loss is irreparable. Searchers for clues to Thomas' parentage and the exact date and place of his birth have had to rely solely on public documents in Virginia. The extent to which such papers were examined and the inconclusive results will be discussed a little later.

The only piece of personal information preserved in writing concerning Thomas Burnett, his wife Elizabeth Littleberry, and their two sons is contained in the letter that follows. Written by Jefferson Burnett, one of Thomas' youngest grandsons, from Del Rio (formerly Big Creek), Tennessee, it is addressed to his nephew, Dr. Swan M. Burnett, distinguished ophthalmologist of Washington, D. C. The original letter, in Jefferson Burnett's handwriting, was found among the papers of Dr. Edmund Cody Burnett.

Big Creek, Cocke Co. Ten.

Sep 29th 1886

Dr. S. M. Burnett

My much esteemed Nephew—

I received a letter from you a year or more ago, asking for