

THE COBBS.

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GA Since the old colonial days the Cobb family of Georgia has been conspicuously and brilliantly identified with the public life of the nation; and statesmen, soldiers, orators, and authors have sprung in almost every generation from the nursery lap of this distinguished household of the Empire State of the South. It is the traditional belief of the Georgia Cobbs that the pioneer immigrant who brought the family escutcheon to the western world, during the early days of American colonization, came from Wales. www.georgiapioneers.com But the antecedents of the family, so far as actually investigated, raise some doubt upon this point. GAR Much of the documentary evidence on file traces the primitive country-seats of the family back to Bedford, Kent, and Norfolk counties in England, and creates the quite natural supposition that the tradition may have arisen from the various matrimonial alliances which the Cobbs made with the Lewises, a family whose Welch derivation is direct and immediate, and, therefore, not open to question.

However, an independent body of tradition has been handed down from time immemorial which insistently asserts that the family is of Welch extraction and that under "the buckle of the British boot", Cobbs have fought and feasted,

married and multiplied, since the days of Llewellyn. This prevalent notion is confirmed by the fact that some of the given names which have long been family favorites with the Cobbs in America, antedating any nuptials between the Cobbs and the Hewises, are still to be found among the Welsh mountains, borne by living representatives of the ancient house, and lettered upon crumbling head-stones in the country churchyards.

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(GAY) The primitive colonial records of Virginia show that Cobbs were passengers on board the earliest boats whose prows were turned toward the new west after the initial settlement at Jamestown; and this disclosure happily tallies with the adventurous spirit which has long been recognized as one of the patrimonial assets of the Georgia Cobbs. www.georgiapioneers.com In those days of wide acres and large revenues, the family name was pluralized into Cobbs, but, with the sloping inclinations of the funnel, produced by times less spacious, the final sibilant was eventually dropped as an unnecessary extravagance, which was well meted to baronial domains but was wholly unwarranted by town lots. Joseph Cobbs began to fell the timber and to kindle the fires of his cabin home in the wilderness, on the banks of the James River, as early as 1613---six years after the first permanent English settlement was planted in North America---nor was he slow in calling the district Cobbham, an shodal name which was probably brought over from England and which has since been found wherever the Cobbs have dwelt. During a sojourn in England in 1906 I found that in the county of Kent the Cobb name was still memorialized in one of the most picturesque of the old Tudor structures, known as Cobbham Hall.

The surrounding park contains seven square miles of beautiful English woods. Not far away is Gad's Hill, the famous country seat of the great English novelist, Charles Dickens; and the neighborhood is also savory with the recollections of Jack Falstaff, who performed some of his most celebrated exploits in the immediate environs.

(GAR) Ambrose and Nicholas Cobbs, who were probably brothers of Joseph, came over soon thereafter. The exact date is unknown, but it must have been prior to 1636. Ambrose located on the slopes of the Appomattox near Petersburg. During the next century, when the Blue Ridge border-land, which the Knights of the Golden Horse-shoe, under Spotswood, have made so famous in Ticknor's poem, was at last swept by the skirts of civilization, most of the Cobbs left the tide-water region, following in the wake of Ambrose, to find homes on the rich Virginia uplands, from which were afterwards carved Goochland, Cumberland, and Albermarle counties. (GAR)

Glancing over the Virginia records, during the early colonial days, we find that the Cobbs shared liberally in the frequent partitions which were made of the Virgin soil and obtained numerous grants of land from the crown. There was no better blood in the colony of Virginia than the fine old strain, whether Welch or English, which the Cobbs brought to America; and they soon became allied through marriage with other aristocratic families of Cavalier origin in the Old Dominion, among them not only the Lewises, but the Lees and the Randolphs. One of the earliest branches of the Lee family in Virginia took its name from the Cobb connection, and those who are known as the Cobb Hall Lees.

According to the records, it was not until after the Revolution that the Cobb name was brought to Georgia by two members of the family, Thomas and John. These were not brothers, as tradition has so often asserted, but uncle and nephew. Thomas seems to have come in advance of John, who tarried for quite a while in North Carolina. Other bearers of the name doubtless followed, but most of the Georgia Cobbs, including all who have risen to distinction, have sprung from these two pioneer settlers. (GAR)

(GAR) Thomas Cobbs, who settled in what was then Richmond, afterwards Columbus County, Ga., some few miles north of Augusta, not only became the head of a distinguished line of descendants but reached a patriarchal age which puts him in a class entirely to himself among the early pioneers of Georgia. He died in his 112th. year. This almost puts him in a class with Methuselah, among the antediluvians. It will tax the credulity of some, no doubt, to accept this statement. But it can easily be proven by documents, which bear the accredited seal, that he was born in Virginia in 1724 and died in Georgia in 1835. His will is on file in the ordinary's office, at Appling, in Columbia Co., Ga., and a copy of it is in the writer's possession.

Born eight years before George Washington, he was enrolled among the grandfathers of Georgia, when he came into this state at the close of the Revolution, but he seems to have witnessed service in the struggle for independence as well as in the colonial wars; and surviving not less than ten presidential inaugurations, he was still able to discuss politics when slavery was beginning to threaten the Union.

Dr. George G. Smith, one of the leading antiquarians of Georgia, is authority for an interesting incident which is said to have occurred during the home stretches of this long pilgrimage. The old man, who had been a widower for many years, was now approaching the hundred-year mark, but he nevertheless fell desperately in love with a certain widow, whom he made up his mind to woo. He could still ride horse-back, so the story goes; and having his best mare saddled, he rode several miles across the country, and drew up at the house of Chester Postwick, in Augusta. A servant came out to help him alight. But the old man brushed him aside with an impatient air. ^{GAR}"Tut, tut", said he, "I don't need any help. I've come a-courtin'". ^{GAR}

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It is not surprising, therefore, that the irreverent swains of the country-side, even while holding him in affectionate regard, should have dubbed him as "Grand-daddy Cobb". This is likewise the name by which he is best known to the numerous descendants of his own loins, and in fact to the whole Cobb connection. But the title which he honorably achieved ~~achieved~~ in battle and which an old commission shows that he received in a military way was that of "Colonel". Besides owning an extensive domain, which increased from year to year, he became one of the most influential men of his day, was a conspicuous figure in Virginia, before he came to Georgia, and was active in colonial, revolutionary, and commonwealth affairs. In some of the old Virginia records, he is designated as "Thomas of Cobbland".

Thomas Cobb, his son, was also a patriot of the Revolution and bore arms in Virginia; and through him, he became

the ancestor of an illustrious Confederate general and commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department: General Edmund Kirby Smith. The younger Thomas Cobb had a number of children, one of whom was Nancy Cobb, named it is thought for the famous Nancy Hart, who lived only a few miles distant in this same section of Georgia, and who performed her famous exploit in capturing a bunch of Tories, about the time when Nancy Cobb made her advent. ~~GA~~ ~~GA~~ At any rate, Nancy was her name, and she married a Mr. Smith, becoming in after years, through this marriage, the grandmother of General Smith (1824-1893).

This distinguished soldier became after the war an educator of some note, emulating in this respect the example of General Lee. Both were trained to arms, in the Military Academy, at West Point, but ~~www.georgiapioneers.com~~ ~~www.georgiapioneers.com~~ the sword they began to lead the youth of the South in the gentler ways of peace and to end a life of great usefulness, so to speak, in the school-room. General Smith was for a number of years President of the University of Nashville, after which he became a professor in the University of the South, at Sewanee, Tenn.

John Cobb, a brother of Thomas, Jr. was likewise among the band of patriots. He came to Georgia with his father, the old patriarch, and though sometimes confused with his cousin, John, who stands at the head of the Athens line of Cobbs, his identity is nevertheless well established. He was constantly associated with his father, and was probably the youngest son. He sometimes signed himself John Cobb, Jr., though his father's name was Thomas; but this was for the reason above given. Except for a few old documents to which his name is attached, all trace of him is lost, but he

was the father of ~~an~~ Hon. Thomas Willis Cobb, who represented Georgia in the United States Senate, and was one of the greatest of our ante-bellum statesmen, spending his last days on the superior court bench. He is the only member of the Cobb family in Georgia who has worn the senatorial toga, though several have occupied seats in the other branch of Congress. Cobb county in this State was named for Senator Cobb. He was also the guardian of Robert Toombs and was probably more influential than any other man in directing the inclinations of the future Mirabeau toward the law. It was in the office of the great William H. Crawford, at Lexington, Ga., that his own training for the bar was received, but he afterwards settled at Greensboro, where he spent the remainder of his days and where he lies buried. www.georgiaphotographers.com Joseph Beckham Cobb, his son, also achieved some note, and except for his untimely death might have attained to the highest political honors. Removing to Mississippi in early manhood, he was rapidly advancing to the front when his brilliant career was prematurely cut short. He wielded the pen of a ready writer, and wrote several books, among them, "Mississippi Scenes", "Leisure Hours", and "The Creole". The last named was a novel; the other two consisted of short stories and sketches.

Grandpa Cobbs had an only daughter, Sarah, who married John Benning, of Columbia County, Ga.; and from this union sprang several children. Pleasant M. Benning became the father of General Henry L. Benning, who was dubbed by the gallant men under him with the soubriquet of "Old Rock", a name which became familiar to the whole Southern army, and which adhered to him until his death. General Benning

was also a great lawyer, and elevated to the supreme bench of Georgia, he made one of the ablest judges which the State has ever known, though his career on the bench was entirely too brief. Louisa, one of the daughters of General Benning, married Samuel Spencer, afterwards president of the Southern Railway system and one of the South's industrial captains. Another daughter married Reese Crawford, Esq., a bright young lawyer, the son of Judge Martin J. Crawford, of the Supreme Court of Georgia. Susan Benning, daughter of John Benning and Sarah Cobb, married Thomas Moore, a pioneer in the manufacture of cotton, and from this union sprang Judge Benning B. Moore, of the Superior Court bench. Elizabeth Benning married a Thompson, and from this line came the great peace-maker between the sections, famous alike both as editor and as orator, Henry Woodfin Grady. Henry Grady's mother was a Bartrell, and her mother was a Thompson. Sarah Cobb Benning married Colonel Peter Lamar, of Lincoln County, Ga., forming the first marriage union on record between the Lamars and the Cobbs. (GM) He was the father of Capt. Lafayette (GAR) Lamar, who surrendered his life in 1861 at Warrenton, Va. He was also the writer's great grandfather.

The wife of the old patriarch Thomas Cobb was named Sarah, and she was either a Moore or a Dandridge, and through her this branch of the Cobb family includes among its Virginia connections, the Spotswoods, the Henrys, and the Washingtons.

Surviving all his children and most of his grandchildren, Grandpa Cobbs was nevertheless surrounded by an off-spring great in number, and was probably at the time

of his death the patriarch of the largest tribe in Georgia. Under the terms of his will, which was probated in 1835, most of his property went to Sarah Lamar, whose husband, Colonel Peter Lamar was named executor. The rest was divided between grandchildren and great grandchildren. Col. Cobbs called the place of his residence Cobbham, a designation which this locality still retains. On the separation of McDuffie County from Columbia, Cobbham became one of the land-marks of McDuffie. The famous old Cobb home is near the county line, a few miles to the north-west of Thomson, where the noted Thomas E. Watson lives, now a United States Senator.

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John Cobb ~~www.georgiapioneers.com~~ to have been a nephew of the old patriarch above mentioned, settled in middle Georgia, in what was then Washington County, but his home was afterwards in Jefferson. He also lived in various other places. Before coming to Georgia, he married Mildred, daughter of Howell Lewis, of Granville, N.C. John does not seem to have been as fortunate as Thomas in his financial investments, and lost heavily, it is said, through speculative ventures. But he was undoubtedly favored both in mind and person. This is evident not only from the brilliant matrimonial alliance which he made, but also from the character of his immediate offspring. He became the father of two distinguished sons, Howell Lewis Cobb and John Addison Cobb, who appear to have been born in North Carolina. Surviving his wife, he married again, and died finally at his uncle's home, in Columbia County, Ga. He seems to have died comparatively

young.

Howell Lewis Cobb, or Howell Cobb, the elder, as he is best known, was born at Granville ~~EXHIBIT~~ N.C., in 1770 and died on his plantation in Houston County, Ga., in 1830. He represented Georgia in Congress, and resigned his seat to become a Captain in the War of 1812. ^{GAR} John Addison Cobb was also born at Granville, N.C. He was ^{GAR} a man of great force of character, who took a deep interest in public affairs, but cared nothing for political honors. He became one of the largest planters of the State, and wielded a powerful influence, chiefly in promoting the welfare of others. He married Sarah Rootes, daughter of Thomas R. Rootes, of Fredericksburg, Va., and from this union came two of the most illustrious sons of Georgia, Howell and Thomas R.R. Cobb, brothers not only in blood but in intellect.

Howell Cobb became Speaker of the national House of Representatives, Governor of ~~www.georgiapictures.com~~ Georgia, Secretary of the Treasury in President Buchanan's Cabinet, President of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States, and a Confederate Major General. He married Mary Ann Lamar, daughter of Colonel Zachariah Lamar, of Milledgeville, and from this union sprang the following children: Judge Howell Cobb, judge of the City Court of Athens; Major Lamar Cobb, long secretary of the Board of Trustees of the University of Georgia, a lawyer of Athens; Capt. John A. Cobb, of Americus, Ga., ordinary of Sumter County; Judge Andrew J. Cobb, who has served the State on both the Supreme and the Superior Court benches, and who

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has played the part of Gamaliel to hundreds of young law students in the Lumpkin Law School at Athens; Mary Ann, who married Judge Alexander S. Erwin, of the Superior Court bench; and Sarah, who married Hon. Tinsley W. Rucker, afterwards a member of Congress.

Thomas R.R. Cobb was not less distinguished than his gifted brother Howell. Before he was thirty five he was the author of "Cobb on Slavery", one of the masterpieces of the legal profession, setting forth both the history and the law of servitude; and he was also admittedly at the head of the Georgia bar. On the election of President Lincoln, in 1860, he entered politics for the first time, and became an uncompromising advocate of secession, arousing the whole State with his eloquence. ^{GAR} Alexander H. Stephens called him another Peter the Hermit, and declared that on the floor of the great Secession convention he made the most effective argument. He was also largely instrumental in shaping the Confederate Constitution.

Organizing Cobb's Legion at the outbreak of the war, he commanded it as Colonel until made a Brigadier General. He was killed by a shell at Fredericksburg, Va., in 1862, almost in sight of his mother's birth-place. General Cobb married Marian, daughter of Chief Justice Joseph Henry Lumpkin, and was the father of three brilliant daughters, Mrs. Henry Jackson, Mrs. A.L. Hull, and Mrs. Hoke Smith. The last named was the youngest. Her distinguished husband afterwards became Secretary of the Interior, Governor of Georgia, and United States Senator.

Besides Howell and Thomas R.R. Cobb, the other children of John Addison Cobb were: Major John B. Cobb, Laura,

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wife of Prof. Williams Rutherford, for years professor of mathematics at the University of Georgia; Mildred, wife of Col. Luther J. Glenn, a successful lawyer, of Atlanta, Ga.; Mary, who married first ^{Benjamin Franklin} ~~an~~ Erwin,* afterwards Dr. J.M. Johnson, of Atlanta, Ga.; Martha, wife of Major John C. Whitner, of Atlanta, Ga. Two of the daughters of Prof. Rutherford became noted educators, Mrs. M.A. Lipscomb and Miss Mildred Rutherford, both in connection with the famous Lucy Cobb Institute at Athens, as principals of this splendid school. The latter has been the Historian General of the U.D.C., has written a number of books, and is widely known as a woman of letters. Hon. John T. Glenn, a son of Col. Luther J. Glenn, by his wife, Mildred Cobb, was a distinguished lawyer, www.georgiapioneers.com and, at one time, mayor of Atlanta.

* Spalding County, Ala.

Mildred Lewis Cobb, a sister of John Addison Cobb, married William H. Jackson, a son of the famous old Governor James Jackson, who, by means of a sun glass, called down fire from heaven, in front of the court house, at Louisville, Ga., to consume the official documents which bore record of the Yazoo fraud, and to extinguish all trace of it forever. From this union sprang Martha, who married Col. John T. Grant, one of the wealthiest men in the State, and the father of Capt. Wm. D. Grant, who still further increased the family fortune and built the magnificent office building in Atlanta which bears his name. ^{GAR} ^{GM} Capt. Grant left two children: John W. Grant, a successful financier and man of affairs, and Sarah Frances, who became ~~af~~ the wife of Hon. John M. Slaton, afterwards Governor of Georgia. There was also born to Wm. H. Jackson, by his wife, Mildred Lewis, a son, Hon. James

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who became a member of Congress, and afterwards Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia. It was the father of Judge Jackson, who deeded to the famous old Jackson oak, in the city of Athens, the land which lies immediately around it, thus making the tree a property owner, and perhaps the only tree on the globe which enjoys this somewhat unique, if amusing, distinction. The deed making this conveyance to the tree is still on record in the court house at Athens, and has often been seen by visitors.

John Cobbs, who married Mildred Lewis, had a brother Samuel, who married Mary Lewis, as appears from the will www.georgiapioneers.com which he executed in 1758; and also a brother Edmund Cobbs, who married Sarah Lewis. Samuel was the ancestor of John Meriwether McAllister, who was one of the joint authors of a work dealing with the Lewis family in America (The Lewis and Kindred Families, by J.M. McAllister and Lura B. Tandy, E.W. Stephens Publishing Co., Columbia, Mo., 1906). Edmund was the grandfather of the distinguished Bishop Nicholas Hammer Cobbs, who became the first Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama, dying in 1861. Bishop Cobbs retained the name in its plural form.

So also did Chancellor Cobbs, of Alabama, though the latter belonged to an altogether different branch of the family from Bishop Cobbs. The Bishop, like most of the Georgia Cobbs, was descended, from John of Goochland, father of the John who married Mildred Lewis, and brother of the old patriarch, Thomas of Goochland. He was a descend-