

Chapter XIV: Chastain-Staton-Soblet

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In an earlier chapter, we have seen that Sarah Chastain, who married James Vanderpool, was the daughter of Peter Chastain and Rebecca Stark. Peter Chastain was the son of **GEORGE CHASTAIN** and **REBECCA JANE {STATON} CHASTAIN**. One source cites Christian as the middle name of George Chastain, but there is no documentary evidence that is correct, and most Chastain researchers do not use this middle name when referring to him. George is said to have been born in Buckingham County, Virginia, about 1766. Based on the ages Rebecca reported for herself on the 1850 and 1860 censuses and other information, she was born about 1772.

We are fortunate in the case of George Chastain and his ancestors to have some relatively detailed, reliable information about their relationships, physical movements, and lives. This information is not entirely free of gaps and errors, including about how the Chastain generations fit together, but it provides an excellent foundation for our understanding of this family. A good deal of what follows draws upon research done over the years by members of the admirable Pierre Chastain Family Association, which has published a very thorough book on the first five generations of the family in America, as well as its European origins.¹

¹ Refer to my copy of the Association's book; another volume, on the fifth generation in America, was published in 2000. The family name Chastain is French in origin and was originally spelled with a silent *g* at the end that would ultimately be dropped in an English-speaking environment. This is another family name that has been spelled variously: Chasteen, Chastine, Shasteen, even Shatteen. It is correctly pronounced "SHAStain," which accounts for the spellings that begin with *S*. The name apparently derives

As late as 1779, George Chastain was still present in his father's household (in the section of Henry County, Virginia, that would in 1786 become Franklin County). His name is also on a May 24, 1779, list of petitioners asking that this area become a new county. (Either his reported birth year of 1766 is not accurate or else George signed the petition as a teenager – or both.) He was shown as a taxpayer in Franklin County on July 16, 1791, and on August 18 in that year he and Rebecca were married in this same county.² George and Rebecca's property was situated on the west bank of Little Otter Creek, where they first purchased 168 acres on April 11, 1794, and then another 80 acres on December 22, 1801. The latter purchase was made from Thomas and *Lucy* Staton of Buckingham County, Virginia, not the Thomas and Ann Staton who, we believe, were Rebecca's parents; the exact family relationship of these Statons is not clear. George Chastain was an active member of the Pigg River Baptist Church, a church that also counted among its members the Staton family we will meet a little later in this chapter.³

from chestnut, (*chataigne* in French) and may have its source in the red hair that has been prominent in the family. Another explanation is that the name comes from *chatelain*, which in French means "living in a castle"; some of the early generations appear to have been in the nobility.

² There seem to be two separate county records for their marriage, with different spellings for the names of the two parties. In the Franklin County records, the marriage bond is dated August 13, 1791, and the marriage date is shown as August 18, 1791.

³ See the USGS maps for Endicott/Virginia and Ferrum/Virginia for the Little Otter Creek area. Also see digital images 00777-00785, taken in 2010, for views of Otter Creek and the areas where the Chastains and Statons lived. Pigg River Baptist Church, founded in 1773 and still in existence, is approximately eight miles west of Rocky Mount, Virginia, on Route 750 – just east of the Blue Ridge Parkway. See the USGS map for Ferrum/Virginia and slides 09656-57, taken in 2000.

On September 1, 1803, George and Rebecca sold their 248 acres in Franklin County. Either then or during the next spring they moved to Kentucky, where several of George's brothers had already gone to live. Here the couple resided first in Shelby County, where George paid taxes in May 1805. By June 23 in the same year, though, George and Rebecca Chastain had relocated to the Floyd's Fork region of nearby Henry County, Kentucky, where he also paid taxes that year. George became a member (by letter of transfer) of the East Fork Baptist Church⁴ in Henry County on August 31, 1805, and Rebecca was made a member (by experience) the very next day. George Chastain would become a leader in this church, serving as its messenger and hosting its meetings in his own home. From 1805 onward, George can be found on Henry County's tax rolls. On July 23, 1810, he and Rebecca purchased 100 acres on Floyd's Fork, and by 1815 he had added 100 acres on Drennon's Creek (part of Floyd's Fork). Ten years later, he added to his land holdings a little over 100 more acres on the Little Kentucky River, two miles west of Smithfield, also in Henry County.⁵

⁴ This church, first called the East Floyd's Fork Baptist Church, was organized on September 11, 1802. In 1872 its building was moved to Smithfield, Kentucky, where it still stands. See the USGS map for Smithfield/Kentucky for the location of this town and slide 12893 for a view of the church in 2008. The church's original location was about two miles west of Smithfield, on land adjoining that of George Chastain. (See the next footnote in this chapter.) Only the huge slab rock that served as the front step remains at the first location. So many Starks attended this church, said to have been founded by our Abraham Stark, that it was commonly called "Stark's Meetinghouse." It fell into decline after most of the Stark families moved to Indiana around 1810.

⁵ Floyd's Fork meanders over quite a bit of this section of northern Kentucky. See the USGS maps for Ballardsville/Kentucky, Crestwood/Kentucky, Fisherville/Kentucky, and Smithfield/Kentucky for the areas it touches and slides 12887-90 for some representative views. Some of the views are of areas quite near the Chastain property and the original site of the East Fork Baptist Church. The East Fork of the river is on the first of these USGS maps. Drennon's Creek is shown on the USGS maps for Worthville/Kentucky and Franklinton/Kentucky. See slide 12891 for a view of this creek. For a view of the Little Kentucky River, see slide 12892. All these slides were taken in 2008.

Census information from 1810 forward generally corroborates these movements.⁶ In Henry County, Kentucky, in 1810, George Chastain's name is obscured by the census taker's smudged handwriting (caused, no doubt, by the enumerator's attempt to record correctly this unusual name he could not figure out how to spell), but it appears to read Shateen. George and Rebecca are listed in the two columns for 26 to 45 years old, which would be accurate for them in 1810. (He was about forty-four years old, and she was about thirty-eight years old.) The presence of Rebecca's father on the same census sheet strengthens our belief we have the right Chastain couple. In that same county in 1820, George's name was spelled Chasteen. A farmer, he is again described as being twenty-six to forty-five years old, when he was in fact about fifty-four years of age. Two things lead us to think that we have found the right couple again, though: there is a female in the right age column (forty-five years old and older), where Rebecca, who was about forty-eight years old in 1820, should have been placed, and this couple was enumerated immediately next to Rebecca's father on this census. The exact place of residence in 1820 of all these people was West Port, Kentucky, close to the Ohio River and across it from Clark County, Indiana.

In 1830, George was recorded on the census in Henry County under the name Shatteen. He was correctly placed in the column for 60 to 70 years old (he was sixty-four years old that year), and Rebecca is in the proper age category as well: she was fifty-eight years of

⁶ The Virginia census for 1790 does not exist, and there are only fragments for 1800. Franklin County's information is among the missing portions.

age and is in the column for those 50 to 60 years old. For the third consecutive time, Rebecca's father is listed on the same census sheet where Rebecca and her husband are recorded. This ongoing proximity thus helps us to verify the identities of both our Chastain couple and Rebecca's father, George Staton.⁷

In early September 1830, George and Rebecca sold all of their Kentucky property (one piece on Floyd's Fork and the other on the Little Kentucky River, together a little over 200 acres) and moved north across the Ohio River, again as George's Chastain brothers had done earlier. Their move was not to Indiana, as we might expect, but to Edgar County, Illinois. On September 27, 1830, they purchased 240 acres near Bloomfield in the county of the same name; on October 16 in that year, George also entered 80 acres of public land there.⁸ This location is about ten miles north of Paris, Illinois. George and Rebecca, now in their sixties, probably made this move in order to remain near some of their children – probably including our Peter, their son, and his family – who were, as we saw in a previous chapter, possibly seeking to avoid a cholera pandemic in Washington County, Indiana. It is likely that the older Chastains were also active in the Mt. Pleasant

⁷ The growing list of George and Rebecca's children also helps to identify the couple during these years. Rebecca, it should be noted, bore children over a period lasting more than twenty-two years.

⁸ George Chastain's purchase was the east and west halves of the southwest quarter of Section 5, Township 15 North, Range 11 West and the nearby west half of the southeast quarter of Section 6. The public land he patented was the west half of the northeast quarter of Section 7, Township 15 North, Range 11 West, on June 6, 1831. The latter cost him and Rebecca \$100. (The actual purchase of this public land was made by James Chastain, probably their son, who bought his own land close by.) See slides 11949-50 for 2006 views of George Chastain's properties in Sections 6 and 7, respectively. See Appendix II for a description of how public lands were surveyed and sold by the United States government. The application for purchase in 1830 has George Chastain's signature, which suggests that he had had some education.

Church in Edgar County while they lived in that county.⁹ Less than two years later, however, on May 17, 1832, George and Rebecca pulled up stakes in Illinois and (following their children, including Peter, once more) moved to Washington County, Indiana. Here they purchased 180 acres on September 17, 1832. The Chastain couple's home is said to have been on a hill east of Livonia Road, across the Lost River from the Union Baptist Church.¹⁰

Deed and census information hints that George and Rebecca Chastain may have experienced some health problems during the late 1830s. On March 11, 1839, they deeded to their son Barnett 100 acres in language suggesting this action was in return for his support of his parents. The 1840 census for Washington County, Indiana, bears this out: it does not record George and Rebecca by name, and the only George Chastain who listed is listed there was far too young for our George, who was about seventy-four years

⁹ This was probably the Mt. Pleasant Primitive Baptist Church, which began to meet in the courthouse in Paris, Illinois, in 1823, and then in the Minerva School. About the time the Chastains were living in Edgar County, Bethlehem Church, four miles from Grandview, was formed out of the Mt. Pleasant Baptist church. A family identified as "Statens" are listed among the early members of the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, but the incomplete records of this church do not show Chastains as well.

¹⁰ George and Rebecca Chastain's purchases on September 7, 1832, consisted of 160 acres in the southwest quarter of Section 23 and 20 acres in the northeast quarter of Section 22, both in Township 2 North, Range 2 East. Next, on October 1, 1834, they patented public land: the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 22, Township 2 North, Range 2 East (40 acres). To these properties they later added another 40 acres, purchased from their son George on January 27, 1838. This was the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 14, Township 2 North, Range 2 East. See slides 12075 (Section 23), 12071 (Section 22), and 12072 (Section 14), all taken in 2006, and the USGS map for Livonia/Indiana for these properties. Another land patent to George Chastain (40 acres in the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 17, Township 2 North, Range 2 East, on September 9, 1835) may have been to George and Rebecca's son named George, who was also making purchases in this same area at this time. Evidence from later deeds of sale seems to verify that the properties mentioned here were the only ones that our George and Rebecca Chastain owned in Washington County. Also see the USGS map for Beck's Mill/Indiana for the location of this land. Other USGS maps to consult for the Lost River area include Campbellsburg/Indiana and Smedley/Indiana.

of age in 1840. But there were two older (seventy to eighty years of age) persons, a male and a female, living with Barnett (called “Barnard” on the census) in Vernon Township. In fact, Barnett was the only Chastain in all of Indiana with a male our George’s age in his household. Thus George and Rebecca Chastain must have moved into son Barnett’s household between 1830 and 1840.

Sometime before the 1850 census, however, George and Rebecca resumed maintaining an independent household, presumably on land they had continued to own. In that year they were again living in Vernon Township of Washington County, Indiana, but unfortunately the census does not tell us exactly where in that township. He is accurately shown as eighty-four years old and she is correctly shown as seventy-eight years old. George Chastain died in Vernon Township on May 28, 1854. He was buried on the couple’s farm near the original Lost River Primitive Baptist Church, but the cemetery in which he was buried has since been neglected and seems itself to be buried in a thicket.¹¹ Three years later, on October 24, 1857, his widow Rebecca sold to Barnett all her land interests in the county (the couple’s remaining 120 acres), and went to live with him again. The 1860 census confirms this: Rebecca is shown in Barnett’s household in the northern part of Vernon Township (near Campbellsburg); she is described as eighty-eight years old, totally deaf and blind, and unable to read or write. According to the Chastain

¹¹ The 1850 census shows George owned real property worth \$450 in 1850. That census also reveals he could read and write. The old family cemetery, buried in its thicket, is a short distance due south of that of the Lost River Primitive Baptist Church.

family histories, she died in Washington County, Indiana, on August 10, 1865, and was buried next to her husband in the cemetery on their farm.

At this point we will begin to explore the lines of George Chastain and Rebecca {Staton} Chastain, starting with those of Rebecca. We have already met her father, who was **GEORGE STATON**.¹² It is possible that George was often called, or even formally named, Simeon: both a George Staton and a Simeon Staton are said to have married a woman named **SALLIE**¹³ **{ROBERSON} STATON**, who would become Rebecca's mother, and Staton researchers seem to be divided over this man's actual given name(s). It is possible that he bore both names, George and Simeon, and that references to him have used both of them. It is also possible that Sallie married first one Staton brother and then a second when the first died, as this practice was not uncommon then. We know nothing about where and when Sallie was born, or where and when she died – except that Sallie must have been deceased by July 21, 1808, if (as some Staton researchers believe) our George Staton married Lydia {Combs} Van Cleve then. Sallie and George had probably married about 1770, based on Rebecca's estimated year of birth, but we have no documentary information about the date and place of their marriage, either.

We do know something about the Roberson line, however – hardly more than a list of names and dates, but more information than we have about some other families. Sallie

¹² This family name is often spelled Staten, both during the period we are studying and today.

¹³ Sometimes this name is given as Sara.

was evidently the daughter of **THOMAS ROBERSON** (who lived from about 1718 to sometime between 1790 and October 1798, when his will was probated) and **JANE MAGDALINE {LEGRAND} ROBERSON**. The LeGrand line, like that of the Chastains, was Huguenot in origin. Jane was the daughter of **JEAN LEGRAND**, who was born in LeHaye, the Netherlands, on December 5, 1694, and died on May 18, 1731. Jane's mother may have been named Catherine, but that is all we know about her. Jean was the son of **PIERRE LEGRAND**, possibly from S^odan, France, who died in Virginia on March 29, 1707. He had come to Virginia aboard the *Peter and Anthony* in 1700 as part of the Huguenot migration we will discuss in detail later in this chapter. Pierre LeGrand had married **JUDITH VEREUL** (daughter of **JEAN VEREUL** and **MADELEINE DU FAY**) in London, England, on July 10, 1662.

Thomas Roberson was the son of **JOHN ROBINSON** (as the name was originally spelled before a clerk in Franklin County, Virginia, evidently misspelled it and the family accommodated themselves to the Roberson spelling) and **TABITHA {JONES} ROBINSON**. John was born in Henrico County, Virginia, about 1688 to 1692 and died in Cumberland County, Virginia, between December 11, 1767, and April 1768. His parents were **THOMAS ROBINSON** (born about 1670) and a woman named **ELIZABETH**, whose family name is lost to history. Tabitha's birth is estimated to have occurred from 1694 to 1702, in either Henrico County or Goochland County, Virginia.

Tabitha's parents were **EDWARD JONES** and **MARY {FIELD} JONES**, who married Charles Scruggs after Edward Jones died – apparently sometime during the 1690s. The Jones line is totally unknown to us. There is considerable information about the line of Tabitha Field, although some of it may be guesswork. Information contributed to the LDS names **PETER FIELD** and **JUDITH {SOANE} FIELD** as Mary's parents; they were married in Chickahominy Parish in James City County, Virginia, on October 21, 1678. Peter Field was born in April 1647¹⁴ and died in New Kent Parish, Virginia, on July 24, 1707; he seems to have been affiliated with St. Peter's Church there. Since there is conflicting information about Judith's birth we cannot be sure when she was born,¹⁵ but she is thought to have died in Henrico County, Virginia, about 1703. It also seems clear that her father was **HENRY SOANE** (1618 to about 1666). Based on information contributed to the LDS and corroborated by evidence in Virginia land grants, Henry's wife was also named **JUDITH** (possibly Fuller). Both Henry and Judith were apparently from Surry County, Virginia, but died in James City County in that colony. There is more information about this family in what has been contributed to the LDS, but until the conflicts in this information are resolved we cannot accept any of it.¹⁶

¹⁴ One source says 1642.

¹⁵ One source places Judith Soane's birth in James City County, Virginia, in January 1645. Another states that she was born in Henrico County, Virginia, in 1628. Information contributed to the LDS suggests that Judith married Henry Randolph on December 12, 1661, but this may be another woman with the same name – especially in light of the date for her death that is given in the text.

¹⁶ One plausible account says that Henry Soane's parents were Henry Soane and Elizabeth {Worger} Soane, who were married on November 5, 1621, and that Henry died in Sussex County, Virginia, in 1632. Elizabeth evidently survived Henry. These would be the parents cited in the text, who are described in the Virginia records as Henry, Sr., and Elizabeth, Sr.

Henry Soane, described as a “gentleman” in the records, owned a good deal of property in James City County, Virginia. He began with a land patent for 297 acres on the east side of the Chickahominy River (*Hoggsland*) in November 1651, which he had obtained for the transporting of six persons, including himself, his wife, his father, and his mother. Five years later, he purchased 2,200 acres on the northeastern side of that river. In 1662 he added 500 acres at the head of the river for having transported 10 persons and 500 more on the northeast side for brought over another dozen persons. At first, it seems that Henry Soane’s widow, Judith, continued the land purchases after his death: she acquired 450 acres in March 1666 on the north side of the James River near the Chickahominy River. It turns out, however, that Henry had claimed this land in return for transporting nine persons but did not take possession of it, and so Virginia’s government granted the land to his widow after her petition.

If the information contributed to the LDS can be believed, the Field line is a very long one. The father of Peter Field was **JAMES FIELD**, who was born in England in 1604 and died in Henrico County, Virginia. The parents of James were **THEOPHILUS FIELD** and a woman known to us only as **ALICE**. Theophilus was born in England on January 22, 1574, and died in Hereford, England, on June 2, 1636. His wife Alice died after July 26 in that year. The father of Theophilus was **JOHN FIELD**, born in East Ardsley, Yorkshire, England, in 1519; he died in St. Giles, England, on March 26, 1588. John’s father, named **WILLIAM FIELD**, was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, in

1470 and died in East Ardsley, Yorkshire. William's father was also named **WILLIAM FIELD**. He was born in Bradford in 1388 and died in April 1480; this man's wife, who was named **KATHERINE**, was also born in Bradford.

At about this time, the spelling of this family's name was making the transition to Field from the earlier spelling of Delfield or Del Field. William Field's father was **THOMAS FIELD/DELFIELD**, and his mother was named **ISABEL**. Thomas lived between 1360 (when he was born in Sowerby, Yorkshire) and 1429 (when he died in Bradford). His parents were **THOMAS DEL FIELD** (born in 1330, died in Bradford in 1391) and a woman named **ANNABELLE**, who was probably from Sowerby in Yorkshire. Three earlier generations of the Delfield or Del Field family males are identified in information contributed to the LDS: **JOHN DELFIELD** (born in 1300), **THOMAS DELFIELD** (born 1278), and **ROGER DELFIELD** (born in 1240).

This trip back into the 13th century takes us to the end of the known line of Rebecca {Roberson} Staton, so now we can examine that of her husband George. George (or possibly Simeon) Staton is thought to have lived from about 1735 or 1740 until sometime during the 1840s, and one account claims that he lived to be one hundred and six years of age. As we shall see, the evidence for this longevity is not conclusive. Some accounts place George Staton's birth in Ireland, but to me it seems likelier that he was born in Accomack County or Amherst County, Virginia. By 1786, perhaps earlier, George was

living in Franklin County, Virginia, where in that year he is on the personal property tax list with three horses and nine head of cattle. Thus he was definitely born before 1765. Here in Franklin County he, like the Chastains, belonged to the Pigg River Baptist Church. During the late 1780s and the 1790s, George Staton acquired more than 300 acres, mainly on the south fork of Otter Creek. He subsequently sold some of this land during that same time period. On at least one occasion, he paid for the land he was buying with cattle and horses.¹⁷

Probably between 1802 and 1804, George Staton left Franklin County, Virginia – as George Chastain also did about this time – for Henry County, Kentucky. In Kentucky, he resided for some years near Good Hope Meeting House, which was located about twelve miles from Louisville. On July 6, 1805, George asked to have his church membership transferred to a congregation in Henry County (possibly Good Hope), but we do not know much more about his time in Kentucky. He is mentioned in the court order books later that year when he was responsible for laying out a road from the courthouse to the county line in the direction of Man's Lick.

We have already considered census information from 1810 through 1830 that shows George Staton was consistently living near his daughter Rebecca and her husband, George Chastain, in Henry County, Kentucky. We can now focus on what these censuses

¹⁷ See an earlier footnote in this chapter for more information about the Pigg River Baptist Church, which once fined George Staton for participating in a card game.

tell us about George Staton himself. The situation in 1810 is slightly confused by the fact that the George Staton on this sheet (and identified as such in published indexes) was described as being only twenty-six to forty-five years of age, which would be wrong for Rebecca's father if he had been born about 1735 to 1740 (and so more than seventy years old in 1810). More to the point, our Rebecca {Staton} Chastain was thirty-eight years old in 1810 (born in 1772), so her father had to have been born prior to about 1750 at the latest. On this same census sheet, however, is another man whose name as written by the census enumerator is difficult to read but probably is also George Staton. (He is not in any published indexes under this name.) This second man and his wife, the only persons in the household, were both forty-five years old or older (and born before 1765, therefore), which seems more plausible for the older Staton couple we are trying to find in 1810. We can be reasonably sure that one or the other of the two men named George Staton on this census sheet was the father of our Rebecca, and I believe the second one is by far the stronger candidate. The younger man was in fact probably George Staton's son, who bore the same given name as his father.

As we have seen, ten years later, in 1820, George Staton was recorded immediately next to George Chastain in West Port, Henry County, Kentucky. He was a farmer forty-five years old or older. There was no older female, which suggests if George did have a second wife (he is said to have married Lydia in 1808), she too had died between 1810 and 1820. But there was a female in this household who was in the age category for 26 to

45 years old, along with two children under ten years of age – but no male of a comparable age. She may have been a daughter of George Staton who had returned to her father's household, with her children, but the presence of this group of younger people raises the possibility that George Staton had married yet again after Lydia's death and that we are seeing here in 1820 his third wife and their two children (or perhaps her children from a previous marriage). This younger family, if that is what it is, was present in George Staton's household in 1830 as well, but not thereafter.¹⁸

In 1830, George might have been recorded as either eighty to ninety years old (making him born in 1740 to 1750) or as ninety to one hundred years old (making him born in 1730 to 1740): the census enumerator made his mark between these two age categories. We cannot say for certain which age was the correct one for George Staton in 1830, but my analysis of where this particular census taker tended to put his marks on this page argues for his having recorded George Staton in the column for 80 to 90 years old in 1830, which would make him born between 1740 and 1750.

Identifying George Staton's land purchases and sales in Henry County is complicated by the fact that those of both George and his son George (born about 1770) are found in the deed books, usually without additional information about which Staton was involved.

¹⁸ As we have seen, it may be that George Staton married a woman named Lydia {Combs} Van Cleve, widow of Ralph Van Cleve, in Henry County, Kentucky, on July 21, 1808. Lydia and Ralph had been married by 1770, however, which would have made Lydia too old (having been born around 1750) to have been the supposed new wife we see living with George Staton in 1810, 1820, and 1830.

The county's tax records, though, often show the elder man was paying the levy (for 128 acres) from 1805 onward – even though if he had been born by 1750 he presumably would have been eligible for removal from those rolls by reason of age. Between these and the census records, we can establish that George Staton, Sr., was indeed living in Henry County until about 1830, when, according to Staton family information George sold his property there and lived the final years of his life with his children on Little Raccoon Creek near Ladoga in Montgomery County, Indiana.¹⁹

At the time of the 1840 census there was no George Staton residing in Clark Township of that county, where Ladoga and Little Raccoon Creek are located, and the only man named Staton who was living there, a Joseph Staton, did not have an elderly male in his household. Very near to this Joseph Staton, however, there was a man more than one hundred years old in the household of a Joseph Ragsdale. Ragsdale may have been George's son-in-law (Staton family researchers differ on this – there is almost no information about our George Staton's children), and so it could be that our George was indeed living with Ragsdale in 1840. It is also possible that this very elderly man was Ragsdale's own father. Thus we cannot verify that George Staton died in Montgomery County, Indiana, sometime between 1840 and 1850, when he is absent from the latter year's census. He is said to have been buried with military honors back near Louisville,

¹⁹ See the USGS map for Ladoga/Indiana for this area.

Kentucky.²⁰ We cannot be positive that he was in fact over a century old when he died, but we can be sure that he lived to be very old indeed.

There is a good deal of confusion, too, about George (or Simeon) Staton's possible antecedents. In one unverified account, he is said to have been born in Ireland, to have come to America just before the War of Independence, and to have fought in that war for seven years.²¹ Other accounts state that he descended from a Virginia family that can be traced to that colony's first recorded Statons (perhaps originally Stauntos or Stauntons). I lean toward the second of these explanations for the origins of George and his family, but there is considerable disagreement among Staton researchers even about how this line developed in America, something that we must clarify before we can determine its origins. What follows are my best guesses about that topic.

Some Staton researchers believe that George was the son of Thomas Staton and Anne {Matthews} Staton. Thomas was the oldest son of a Warrington and Catherine

²⁰ It is also possible that George Staton returned to Kentucky in order to die there, and perhaps he is buried at the Good Hope Meeting House where he attended services while he lived in Henry County. This church no longer exists; its burial ground may be the one called Hopewell Cemetery, but there is no certainty of this. See slide 12923, taken in 2008, for a view of this cemetery. Ragsdale died on July 5, 1842, which may account for why George Staton would return to Kentucky during that decade. Information about the Ragsdales, let alone about the Statons, in Montgomery County is sparse and inconclusive, but Joseph Ragsdale's properties in that county were quite extensive: a good portion of Section 35, Township 17 North, Range 5 West and other parcels in other sections. See slide 11947 for a 2006 view of some of Ragsdale's property.

²¹ I have found no evidence that George (or Simeon) Staton had a military record during the Revolutionary War, the military conflict that seems most likely for his supposed service. It may be that he was in militia forces, or in some other conflict we cannot identify, though given the loss of many such records we cannot be sure that he did not do so.

{Hesten}²² Staton. Thomas and Anne lived in Russell Parish of Bedford County, Virginia, one of the two counties from which Franklin County would be created in 1786. Thomas Staton had moved to Bedford County from Accomack County, Virginia (located in Virginia's portion of the peninsula that makes up the Eastern Shore). He prepared his will on March 9, 1778, and evidently died a few days later as it was probated in Bedford County on March 23 in that same year; George Staton was a witness to the will and participated in the sale of Thomas Staton's estate.²³

If our George Staton was the son of Thomas and Anne, though, he would have to have been born later than 1735 to 1740. The children of Thomas's parents, Warrington and Catherine, including Thomas himself, logically would have been born during the 1730s, judging from Warrington's life span of about 1716 to sometime between December 5, 1760, and March 31, 1761. Thomas's own children, therefore, would not have been born until the 1750s, which is too late for our George if his ages on the censuses we have examined are correct – assuming, of course, that we have the right George Staton in our sights. A line of descent from Warrington Staton to Thomas Staton to George Staton is plausible but not yet proven, therefore, and it cannot be proven until we have better information about the life span of both George and the others mentioned here.²⁴

²² This name is possibly spelled Hasten. Some sources identify her as Catherine Crippen instead.

²³ A son also named Thomas Staton married the same day his father's will was probated, March 23, 1778. It may be that March 23 was court day in Bedford County.

²⁴ These are the dates when his will was made and proved. After Thomas's death, his widow Anne moved to Amherst County, Virginia. Both Bedford County and Amherst County are near to Franklin County, where we first see George Staton.

Warrington Staton's parents were probably Joseph Staton and Susanna {Warrington} Staton.²⁵ Susanna's parents are not known, but good candidates are Thomas and Elizabeth Warrington, who lived in Delaware during the 1740s. They – along with a Thomas Steaton – were members of St. George's Episcopal Church in Indian River, about nine miles from Lewes, Delaware.

Things get even more tangled when it comes to Joseph Staton's parents. He might have been the son or grandson (in the latter instance, through yet another man named Joseph Staton) of a Joseph Staton born about 1666 and a woman named Jane {Stockley} Staton, who was born about 1663. Jane came from either Pokomoke, Somerset County, Maryland, or Assawoman, Accomack County, Virginia – both on the Eastern Shore peninsula shared by Virginia and Maryland. (It may be noteworthy that a Joseph Statin registered a cattle mark in Somerset County in 1686.) According to one source, Joseph and Jane were married on June 14, 1687. Jane was the daughter of John Stockley and Elizabeth {Watkins} Stockley. John was born in 1621 and Elizabeth was born about 1633 or 1634; they were married in Assawoman, Virginia, about 1652. John died there before August 18, 1673, and Elizabeth died there prior to August 6, 1707. John Stockley was the son of another man of that same name, who was born in Stoke-on-Trent, England, about 1600. His wife was Elizabeth {Woodman} Stockley, also born in Stoke-

²⁵ Their marriage is dated as 1710 by some researchers and on April 25, 1715, by others.

on-Trent about 1600. The elder John Stockley was the son of yet a third man bearing that name, who was born in Stoke-on-Trent about 1570 and died in Virginia after 1620.

It is agreed by most Staton researchers that the earlier Joseph Staton (born in 1666) died in Accomack County, Virginia, in March 1710 (his will is dated March 7). It is not agreed whether or not Joseph's three youngest children were apprenticed to their older brother, also named Joseph, but this remains a possibility.²⁶ The consensus among Staton researchers is that this Staton line probably traces to a John and Anne Staton who emigrated from England to America, but the precise link of the later Statons to this English couple is unclear. This John Staton was born in Stratford-on-Avon, England, in 1640 to 1644, perhaps to a couple named Mark Staton and Elizabeth Kirby; Anne {Matthews} Staton was born there in 1646; John and Anne were married in 1665.²⁷ Anne was the daughter of a John Matthews, born in Stratford-on-Avon about 1614, and an unknown wife. This couple married in Stratford-on-Avon about 1640.

John and Anne Staton emigrated to America, arriving in Pennsylvania in 1666.²⁸ They settled somewhere near to Delaware Bay, perhaps at Milford in what is today the state of Delaware. Evidently it was here that their children, including the earlier Joseph we have referred to, were born. An alternate account has Joseph and a brother already youngsters

²⁶ The younger Joseph may have been born about 1687 to 1689 and died on April 25, 1715; on December 5, 1724; on December 5, 1726; or in 1741 – all of these dates can be found in various accounts.

²⁷ Thus one account, which gives Joseph's birth year as 1663, must be incorrect in this aspect at least.

²⁸ Another account gives the date as March 18, 1690.

when John and Anne arrived in America. We note with interest that the latter account identifies the second child of this Staton couple that arrived in 1666 as a male named Simeon, which hints at a connection with our George or Simeon Staton, the father of the wife of George Chastain. John and Anne Staton both died in Delaware.

None of the above is proven, and some of it is only conjecture. There are other possibilities, too. One of the younger children of Warrington and Catherine Staton, in addition to the Thomas we have met, was a George. This George was born at about the right time – during the 1730s or 1740s – to have been the father of Rebecca {Staton} Chastain, who was born about 1772. This George Staton, however, married another Anne Matthews (the third woman of that same name in this narrative), not Sallie Roberson, who was the wife of our George Staton. (It is conceivable, of course, that Anne died, after which George married Sallie.) Another possibility we must consider is that our George Staton was not at all connected with these Statons from Stratford-on-Avon but came from an entirely different Staton family – both in America and in England. For example, a John Staton was living in Buckingham County, Virginia, by 1774; he had a son named George about whom we know little.²⁹ We have, in sum, scattered information and theories about the Statons before Rebecca's father George (or is it Simeon?) but nothing we can prove.

²⁹ This John Staton, whose wife was named Mary Damron, died between May 13 and December 14 in 1789. These Statons lived in Tillotson Parish of Buckingham County, Virginia.

Having dealt with the several Staton enigmas as best we can, we return to the much-better-understood Chastains – only to find a problem or two facing us there as well. The Chastain family histories generally agree that George Chastain was the son of **WILLIAM CHASTAIN**, which is the hypothesis that the Pierre Chastain Family Association favors. I believe the circumstantial evidence for this link is strong, but we will probably never be completely sure about it because the documentary evidence to prove it does not exist. William’s wife was named **SARAH** (often spelled Sary); this woman’s last name is not definitely known but was probably Barnett.³⁰ We know nothing more about Sarah. William Chastain was born in 1744 in the part of Goochland County, Virginia, that would become Albemarle County later that year and then Buckingham County in 1761. William and Sarah were married about 1764, perhaps in Albemarle County.

Our first definite sighting of William Chastain is a tax record in Henry County, Virginia, in 1782.³¹ This portion of Henry County, as we have already seen, became Franklin County in 1786. His property was along the Little Otter River and Otter Creek, about ten

³⁰ Other possibilities for this woman’s family name are Allen, Martin, and Cave. Barnett seems the most likely one because she and Peter Chastain named a son Barnett, a name that continued to be used in the Chastain family for generations. (The youngest son of George Chastain and Rebecca {Staton} Chastain was named Barnett, which is another clue that it had been the family name of George’s mother.) Several Barnett families were living in Albemarle County, Virginia, at about this time, but there is no evidence linking any of them to Sarah. Because Peter and Sarah named a son Robert before they used the name Barnett, a man named Robert Barnett might be considered the leading contender for Sarah’s father. The Robert Barnett in Albemarle County, however, does not mention a daughter named Sarah in his will. Other contemporary Barnetts include James and John.

³¹ So says the Chastain family association’s book; I could not find William Chastain in the published index to Virginia tax rolls for this period, but this may be due to their use of a spelling variation that is not obvious in the index.

miles west of present-day Rocky Mount, Virginia.³² This section of Virginia was a remote area close to the western frontier during the 1780s, which may account for Chastain family lore that the young men of the family (presumably there to put crops in and build housing for those other family members who would follow the next spring) avoided starvation the first winter only by roasting ear after ear of the corn that they had managed to gather.

William Chastain too was a member of the Pigg River Baptist Church and, like our George Chastain, signed the petition on May 24, 1779, asking the Virginia legislature to create Franklin County. Thus he was a neighbor of both George Chastain and the Statons, with whom he was presumably well-acquainted. Since William Chastain was in the militia (as County Lieutenant – that is, commander – of the Second Battalion), he may have taken part in the Revolutionary War or in Indian fighting, but if he did we have no evidence of his military service. He is on personal property lists in Franklin County from 1786 to 1794. In 1788, the Virginia tax list shows William Chastain with two males over sixteen years of age. One of them would have been William's eldest son our George, age twenty-two years, who made his own appearance on the tax lists three years later, followed by William's other sons in turn. At least twice, William and George Chastain paid their taxes on the same day.

³² See an earlier footnote in this chapter for Otter Creek and Little Otter Creek.

We do not know when either William or Sarah Chastain died, but their deaths probably occurred in Franklin County, Virginia, sometime during the 1790s or shortly after 1800: there are no Chastains listed in that county by 1803, when their son, our George, sold his land there. Nor did any of the large number of Chastains who had moved to Kentucky by the time George finally did the same have any older adults living with them. It is quite possible that our George tarried in Virginia until his father or mother had died, soon after 1800, after which he felt free to go to Kentucky himself. But because a daughter of William and Sarah Chastain was married in Franklin County in 1795 without her parents having consented by signing the required form, as was customary, they both may have been dead by that year.

Thus although we do not have specific documentation linking our George to William and Sarah Chastain, there is good circumstantial evidence that our George was indeed their son. Continuing to work on the assumption that he was, we move back a generation earlier than William Chastain. Here we encounter our second less-than-secure link: we cannot be sure who his parents were, either. We *can* be very sure that William's father was one of the three sons of Pierre Chastain the immigrant (a man we will meet presently), but missing or destroyed records will always keep us less than positive which one of the three it was.³³ These sons were named Pierre, Jr. (who was usually called

³³ Another complicating factor is the fact that Chastains not only were numerous but repeated the same given names so often that sorting them out is a stiff challenge. The members of the family frequently added nicknames or the fathers' names so that they themselves could keep all those with similar given names straight. As late as 1967, Chastain was still the most numerous last name in the Washington County, Indiana, telephone book.

Peter), Renø, and Jean (sometimes called John). The Chastain family histories generally conclude that the most likely candidate for the father of William Chastain is Pierre, Jr., with Renø a weaker candidate and Jean an unlikely one. I concur with this conclusion but feel obliged to include some information about all three brothers in case the accepted wisdom turns out to be wrong.

PIERRE (PETER) CHASTAIN, JR., was born in Manakintown, Henrico County, Virginia, in 1707. A child of the union of his father and Anne {Soblet} Chastain, Peter was willed his father's original grant of 111 acres of land in Manakintown. He sold this property on March 3, 1729 – in order to pay off a gambling debt, according to Chastain family lore – and moved elsewhere in Goochland County, which had been formed out of Henrico two years before. His whereabouts for the remainder of the 1730s are not known, but by 1740 he had reappeared in Albemarle County, Virginia, where he was granted property on both sides of Hunt's Creek.³⁴ This area later (1761) became part of Buckingham County, Virginia, and Peter is on a 1764 list of tithables in that county.

Peter's wife, whom he married about 1730, is thought to have been **MILDRED {ARCHER} CHASTAIN**, a woman who was usually called Middy. She was born about

³⁴ Hunt's Creek is a branch of the Slate River. The location of this man's property – first 400 acres and then 396 more – was near the present Buckingham Baptist Church and New Canton, Virginia. See the USGS map for Arvonnia/Virginia. Peter received the first grant on December 1, 1740, and the second on August 16, 1756. A Peter Chastain also received a grant of 69 acres on both sides of Bear Creek in Charlotte County, Virginia, on August 1, 1772. I have not seen this last property attributed to the Peter Chastain who was the presumed son of Pierre Chastain, Sr., but Charlotte County is south of Buckingham County – and in the direction of South Carolina.

1709, but we know nothing more about her or her family.³⁵ Peter is the only one of the three sons of Pierre Chastain, Sr., for whom there is no will. As a result, the names and dates of the children of Peter and Middy are not definitely known. Chastain researchers have come to think, however, that the couple had at least nine sons, including our William. Several of these sons were born during the 1740s, about when William would have been born, and most of them seem to have gone south rather than west, as William did. Peter himself may have moved to South Carolina and died there, but the Chastain family historians list his place and year of death as Buckingham County, Virginia, sometime after 1775.

Thus we cannot be positive that Peter Chastain, Jr., had a son named William, but there is also good circumstantial evidence connecting our later Chastain line in Kentucky and Indiana to Pierre Chastain, Sr., the first member of the family in America, through Peter, Jr. Chastain family tradition in Indiana relates that it was the emigrant's son Peter who lost the original Chastain homestead in Virginia, and the given names in the branch of the family of Peter, Jr., are rare in those of Rendø and John. In addition, young Peter Chastain's closest friend and neighbor in 1744 (when William was born) was a William Allen, and both of this man's names show up afterwards as given names in our particular branch of the Chastain family. So do the names George and Valentine, names of the sons

³⁵ A minority opinion holds that Middy Archer's family name was Allen. Another researcher states that her name was Ann Middy Isham. Two Archer males who lived in proximity to the Chastains would seem to be good candidates for Middy's father: John (who died about 1717) and George (who died prior to September 1738). Some researchers believe, though, that Middy's Archer family, which originated in Maryland, had gotten to know the Chastains through their business contacts instead of as neighbors.

of William Allen.³⁶ In fact, our George Chastain's presumed father, William, seems to have been the very first Chastain who bore that given name, which would become common in the family afterwards. Another family story states that our Peter Chastain born in 1795 was specifically named for his great-grandfather, the Peter who was the son of the emigrant, Pierre Chastain, Sr.

Reinforcing this circumstantial evidence that we connect to Pierre Chastain, Sr., through Peter are reasons why the emigrant's other two sons are unlikely to have been William's father. The second son, René Chastain, was born in Manakintown about 1713, also the child of Pierre and Anne {Soblet} Chastain. In 1732, he married Judith {Martin} Gevedon Chastain³⁷ and died sometime in 1786 in the portion of Ninety-Six District, South Carolina, that would later become Abbeville County.³⁸ René lived in Buckingham County, Virginia, at about the same time that his brother Peter did. Since his will does not mention all of his sons, René Chastain cannot be completely ruled out as William's father, but there was no William among the sons René did refer to.

³⁶ Peter Chastain witnessed the will of William Allen in 1751.

³⁷ Judith was the widow of a man named Gevedon.

³⁸ The South Carolina districts were short-lived administrative divisions that preceded the present counties. Ninety-Six District was in the western part of South Carolina. There was another, even larger, migration of French Huguenots to South Carolina during the 1680s, but this other migration was unconnected to the one in which the Chastains and the families with which they intermarried would later participate. So far as I can tell, these two resettlement movements were separate phenomena: they involved different French Huguenot populations, different reasons for selecting the southern part of America as a destination, and different paths to the New World, and there was little or no contact between them before or after they arrived in America. Huguenots also migrated in great numbers to New York and other areas of what would become the United States, again mostly earlier than those who settled in Virginia. The Manakintown Huguenots were unique among the refugees from France in that they had spent a dozen or more years in exile in Europe before relocating to the New World.

Jean Adam Chastain, the oldest of Pierre's three sons of the emigrant, was probably born in Vevey, Switzerland, in May 1690. His mother was Pierre's first wife, Susanne {Reynaud} Chastain. Born about 1667 or 1668, Susanne was the daughter of Pierre (one source says Jacques) Reynaud, chief tax collector in the town of Issoudun, France, and his wife, Anne {Jupille} Reynaud. Jean Chastain had two wives, Marianne (whose family name was probably David) and Charlotte Judith {Amonet}³⁹ Chastain. Like his younger brother René, Jean is not known to have had a son named William. Jean died in Cumberland County, Virginia, in December 1761. He may have been a physician like his father.

So it is that through one of these three brothers, by process of elimination probably Pierre, Jr., (who was usually called Peter), our Chastain line connects to the immigrant **PIERRE CHASTAIN, SR.** Thus it is similarly likely that our Peter's mother was Pierre's second wife, **ANNE {SOBLET} CHASTAIN.** Anne was born in Sedan, in the French province of Champagne, where she was baptized on October 27, 1675.⁴⁰

Pierre was born in Chârost, France (near Bourges), on or about April 9, 1659, the day he was baptized. Although the Chastain family evidently resided in Chârost, it probably worshipped, as Protestants, in the nearby town of Issoudun. It was in the latter town's

³⁹ Charlotte Judith was likely descended from Jacob Amonet of Loudoun in Poitou, France, who, along with Pierre Chastain, Sr., was a member of the original group of 700 Huguenot settlers of Manakintown (described later in this chapter).

⁴⁰ One source states that our Anne was born in Germany in 1684, after her parents had fled from Sedan.

Roman Catholic Saint Cyr Church, however, where Pierre had married his first wife, Susanne, on January 27, 1687. As we shall see, this site was probably chosen less for the couple's adherence to the Roman Catholic Church's teachings than out of prudence or a sense of necessity, for the Chastains and the families related to them were, broadly speaking, Huguenots and so an unwelcome religious minority in France. To understand how this influenced the Chastains and led to their emigration to America, we must pause to discuss this religious phenomenon.

Huguenot was the name applied to all of the Protestant dissenters in France, whatever sect they belonged to. More strictly speaking, the Chastains were members of the Waldensian or Vaudois sect, members of which originally lived in the Piedmont area between Italy and France before being driven out of there by the troops of France's King Louis XIV. The Waldensians, named for a 13th-century evangelical named Waldo, claimed to have been converted to Christianity by St. Paul himself and practiced a religion notable for its stark simplicity. The Roman Catholic Church regarded them as heretics. The French Huguenots, most of whom (about 83% in one estimate) lived in southern France, constituted only 4% of the French population. Many of them came from the educated and well-to-do classes, were artisans or in commerce and the professions, or (like Susanne Reynaud's father) held lower-level positions within the provincial government; a few Huguenots were in the aristocratic class.

The Huguenots increased in number in France during the 16th century, particularly after Martin Luther's teachings became better known there and John Calvin provided leadership to dissenters everywhere in Europe during the first half of the 16th century. Active repression of dissent in France had begun as early as 1545, and religious wars tore that country apart for decades after 1562. Flights of Huguenots to safety elsewhere began during the latter year. A notorious massacre of Huguenots in Paris and elsewhere on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24) in 1572 forced many French Huguenots to flee for their lives and led to sporadic conflict within France until 1592. The royal Edict of Nantes of 1598 theoretically brought official tolerance to France, supposedly guaranteeing Huguenots and other dissenters freedom of conscience and worship, their own churches and pastors, no discrimination in education and office-holding, their own special courts, and even their own fortified towns, though restrictions on Huguenots remained in these and other aspects of life.

Between 1598 and the 1670s, religious freedom in France was only nominal and violations were common. In fact, the Edict of Nantes had represented a departure from the long-term goal of the French royalty: making France 100% Roman Catholic. The Edict reflected France's immediate political situation in 1598, both internationally and within: a desire to cultivate non-Catholic countries in Europe who might be useful as allies in case of war and a need to mollify disaffected Huguenots at a time when French internal political unity was required for the country to achieve its external purposes.

The political environment changed after the 1670s, when France had become the major power in Europe. The return to the policy of achieving Roman Catholic “reunification” brought increasing suppression of Huguenots and other non-Catholics. Steps were taken to make their lives and worship difficult. Their churches, regarded as “illegal” if located in non-Protestant areas, were subject to destruction. The political influence of Huguenots on the local level was diminished. They were forced from many trades and the professions, some of their religious practices (psalm-singing, use of their own cemeteries) were forbidden, their pastors were monitored and harassed, and their educational institutions were closed down. Moreover, there were increased efforts to compel or encourage religious dissenters to convert denounce their “heresy” and convert to Catholicism.

Violence was used in many cases to enforce the renewed royal policy of discouraging dissent, most notably in the housing of soldiers in the homes of Huguenots – soldiers who then destroyed not only the religious objects and writings of their unwilling hosts but sometimes the house itself. Making matters worse, the French dissenters were officially denied the option of emigrating to another country (though eventually some 200,000 of them did manage to escape). The Waldensians were among the Protestant dissenters affected by the repression France experienced during the first half of the 17th century.

When in 1655 an army was sent to eradicate them, the flight to safety in the Netherlands or elsewhere became an attractive option for many of them.

Even the partial and fragile protection of the Edict of Nantes ended when King Louis XIV, under the influence of his queen, Catherine de Medici, revoked it on October 18, 1685. Persecution against Huguenots then mounted in France, and many more thousands of its Huguenots fled the country. Most went to Germany, Switzerland, or the Netherlands. In the latter country, several Dutch states invited them to settle and the city of Amsterdam granted them full citizenship and the right to practice their trades. From these countries, often with a stop in England, Huguenot refugees would go on to a large number of locations in the New World, from Canada to the West Indies (including all thirteen of the original American states). Often among the most skilled and most venturesome within French society, they took their talents and energy to these new homes.

Pierre Chastain must have felt threatened by the upsurge in France of repression and hostility, because he left Chârost for Switzerland sometime between 1687 (the year following that politic cathedral wedding) and before 1690 (the year he was first recorded in Switzerland). Some researchers think, however, that Pierre left France primarily because as a Protestant he would be unable to study medicine in that country's universities, which were controlled by Roman Catholic clerics, and so went to

Switzerland to study there. The evidence suggests that Pierre renounced his Calvinist beliefs in 1682 when the rest of his family did, though such an act of abjuration may have been a mere formality enabling Protestants like the Chastains to pay lip service to what was required while they continued to worship (or marry) as they wished or their consciences dictated. In this context, and because Pierre did not try to return to France after his studies but continued on to England and then Virginia, I am inclined to think that religious impulses more than anything else motivated his departure from France about 1690.

Whatever his reasons, we know that Pierre Chastain crossed the rugged Jura Mountains to Canton Vaud, Switzerland, staying first in Yverdon and then more permanently in the Baillage de Vevay on the northern shore of Lake Geneva. Here he would appear on three censuses between 1690 and 1698. Pierre is said to have left France alone, but from baptismal records in Switzerland we know that his wife and their living children (and probably Susanne's mother as well) were in Vevay by mid-1690, when Jean Adam, the oldest of the three brothers we met earlier in this chapter, was baptized there. Thus it seems likely that the rest of Pierre's family had joined him in Switzerland not long after he himself had gotten there, but how soon and how they made their escape from France is something we can only guess at. At some time after September 1698, the Chastain couple and their several children went on to The Hague in the Netherlands. They later lived in the South Holland Province town of Wallone, Leyden, where another child was

born to them, and then left the Netherlands for London, England. It was from London that Pierre and his family would emigrate to America, specifically to the colony of Virginia in North America, which had previously welcomed small groups of Huguenots who were seeking refuge.

In London, Pierre was evidently one of those who negotiated permission during the late 1690s for approximately 207 French and Swiss Huguenots to journey to Virginia. They would be the first of an estimated 700 or so Huguenots who would settle in that colony at about this time.⁴¹ (The London Huguenot group that included the Chastains also considered locations in Florida and the Carolinas.) A public collection to help pay the costs of the emigrants' trip was organized by the Archbishop of Canterbury and received support from the English royal family, among others. Such interest in the Huguenots was not entirely altruistic: the skilled French Huguenots brought competition for English workers, and Church of England leaders who were discouraging dissent within England could hardly be glad to see the Huguenot dissenters around them worshipping so freely. In addition, there were those in England who had large land holdings in America and hoped to settle the French on their vacant properties. In Virginia, some viewed a prospective colony of Huguenots as a welcome western buffer against both the raids of hostile Indians and, ironically, any efforts by the even more hostile French in Canada to

⁴¹ There was a Vignes in the Huguenot group that emigrated to Virginia in 1700. This family might have been related in Europe to the French and Belgian de la Vigne family that came to New Netherland very early and became part of the Vanderpool line, as we have seen in a previous chapter. It is worthy of note that the Vanderpool and Chastain lines, joined in 1837 with the marriage of James Vanderpool and Sarah {Chastain} Vanderpool, both had Huguenot roots.

extend their influence southward into the western reaches of the colony of Virginia, which then claimed a large part of what is now the eastern United States.

Pierre, Susanne, and their five children left Gravesend (London) on April 19, 1700, aboard the 250-ton ship *Mary and Ann*, whose captain was George Haws. They must have welcomed the opportunity to build their own community, and a permanent sanctuary, in a new land. And, having quarreled with Captain Haws frequently on the voyage, the Huguenots must have welcomed the sight of Virginia when the *Mary and Ann* arrived at Hampton Roads, at the mouth of the James River, on July 23, 1700.

Virginia's Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson, a royal appointee who was in charge of the colony, met the Huguenots personally (a mark of the importance with which he viewed these people who had attracted his monarch's support). Many of those Nicholson greeted were so sick that they could travel no further. The Huguenot group had originally been destined for a site near Norfolk, on the Atlantic coast, but the influential William Byrd evidently persuaded Nicholson to send them instead to property he would donate about twenty miles above (that is, west of) the falls of the James River (the future site of Richmond). Nicholson used the weak condition of the newcomers and the unhealthy climate of the Norfolk area in order to justify the change in plans, but he also observed that in the new location the Huguenots would serve as a convenient buffer against the western Indians. The new destination for the French dissenters, called Manakintown,

was some seventy miles from the ocean. Once it had been the site of a Monacan Indian settlement, until these Indians had been driven westward and virtually wiped out. It seemed an ideal place for the Huguenot settlers.

To create the Huguenot refuge at Manakintown, Virginia set aside 10,000 acres on the south bank of the James River.⁴² Byrd, fellow Council member Benjamin Harrison, and some soldiers personally escorted many of the refugees from Jamestown (still Virginia's capital) up the river to their new home. In the hottest season of the year, the party had to traverse the twenty miles from the falls on foot; perhaps that was a good thing, actually, since the baggage they had put aboard one of their boats was mostly lost when it capsized in the James River. Some of the Huguenots evidently chose to stay in the Jamestown area, or remained too ill to travel, but Pierre Chastain and his family were among the 120 or so persons who headed up the James River to their new home in the wilderness.

And wilderness it surely was. Byrd had been generous to furnish this land, but there was no real town at Manakin, only a few huts, some semi-cleared land the Indians had used for their slash-and-burn style of agriculture, and a great many square miles of forested acres surrounding the Huguenots' new home.⁴³ In addition, the site was not only

⁴² See the USGS map for Midlothian/Virginia and slides 08715-08740 (taken in 1996) for Manakintown and the Chastain family locations there. The entire Manakin site was 10,033 acres in all after being surveyed.

⁴³ Without meaning to sound too cynical, it might be pointed out that Byrd retained ownership of the land surrounding Manakintown, in case the Huguenot community grew, and he also owned the only mill nearby. If the Huguenots were to become successful and also form a buffer against the Indians, moreover, Byrd would profit from the increased safety – and value – of the land he still owned.

physically remote and isolated but inconveniently located above the fall line and so (at a time when the river was the only real roadway) without direct access to the tidewater, the ocean, and any trading opportunities. In actuality, Manakintown was at the edge of the Virginia frontier, truly on the very fringe of European civilization in North America in 1700.

Arriving in midsummer after most crops should already have been planted, the Huguenots faced a bleak future. Moreover, the extra travel to the site of Manakintown and other immediate needs had depleted the Huguenots' modest common fund and they had to sell some of their personal property for a little ready money. Byrd and other Virginians also made contributions to help the group with those immediate needs and through the winter ahead, and the Virginia legislature allotted the newcomers a small ration of cornmeal from Byrd's mill. The needs grew when a second large contingent of these French Huguenot refugees, having arrived from England on the *Peter and Anthony*, showed up just as the warm season was drawing to a close. The first winter was a trying period, and many of the immigrants died. Dissension and inadequate leadership also took a toll on the morale of the newcomers. Among those who did not survive the scarcity, discomfort, and disease of that first winter were Pierre's first wife, Susanne, and some of the couple's five children. Additional aid came in 1701 and 1702 from both London and Virginia, and the worst period was over.

The refugees, for the most part urban tradesmen, craftsmen, and professionals like Pierre, a physician, struggled to learn how to farm, and in time the basically fertile soil would begin to produce. By 1706 about half of the 10,000 acres was apportioned among the settlers, usually, in the French manner, in 133-acre lots just fifty paces wide that stretched far back from the James River. There were additional allotments of undistributed land by 1710. A square little village, also in the French style, was laid out as a home for the farmers. On these long, narrow strips of land the Huguenots began to raise fruit, grapes for wine, flax for linen, and cattle, but like the rest of Virginia they soon turned to tobacco – and to slave labor. They sent the tobacco eastward and traded for other goods, and so the community succeeded.

In return for agreeing to settle at Manakintown, the Huguenots had wangled some concessions from Virginia's English leaders. They received full citizenship immediately, provided they took the prescribed oath. (War between England and France in 1704 accelerated the process of naturalizing the Huguenots.) They were granted freedom of worship, were permitted to engage their own clergy, and were made exempt from all but parish taxes for seven years. Like most French Protestants who settled under the English flag, the Virginia Huguenots were quite comfortable in the Church of England. The Manakintown settlement was made into a separate and autonomous Anglican parish, the Parish of King William.⁴⁴ These were significant concessions from a colony that had

⁴⁴ The parish was originally in Henrico County, but part of Manakintown was assigned to the new Goochland County in 1727. The Parish of King William, which was much smaller than most of the other

remained a closed society for nearly a century, and the arrival of the Huguenots in 1700 is regarded as a major turning point in Virginia's progress toward religious freedom. All in all, the Huguenots probably considered the bargain a good one, despite their hardships and sacrifices.

Along with all the other adult males among the settlers, Pierre Chastain received 133 acres when the 10,000 acres the Huguenots had been given was divided among them. His narrow strip of property stretching back from river frontage adjoined the parson's glebe land. As some of the other first settlers moved on or died, Pierre added to his first holding some additional land on the south side of the James River: first 111 acres (on March 23, 1715) and then a little over 379 more acres on the west side of Jones Creek southwest of Manakintown (on July 9, 1724). Sometime after 1705 he also obtained approximately 574 acres on Lower Manakin Creek, by then apparently renamed Bernards Creek. At the time of his death Pierre Chastain owned something over 1,000 acres, along with a slave named Robert. (The acreage mentioned was then in Henrico County, was afterwards in Goochland County and Cumberland County, and is now in Powhatan County, Virginia.)

Pierre is usually described as a physician, in both Europe and Virginia, and the collection taken to support the Huguenots' emigration to America included some funds for

Anglican parishes in Virginia, was therefore chronically underfunded and over time lost members to other churches.

medicines and medical instruments that he could take to their new home. In fact, in France he was a “surgeon,” who performed such routine tasks as drawing blood, dressing wounds, helping with births – and cutting hair, which probably explains his frequent depiction in contemporary accounts as a barber and wigmaker. Pierre’s ancestors on both sides of his family evidently had also engaged in these professions before him. How much advanced medical training, if any, he had received in France or later in Switzerland is not known. Records from that period confirm that Pierre continued to practice as a physician in Virginia.

Pierre seems to have been regarded as one of the new community’s leaders. He was listed near the top of the roster of those arriving in Virginia and apparently served as a civil magistrate. One visitor in 1702 described him as “Captain” Chastain, and several surviving documents use the same term. This may reflect either his nominal rank in the county militia or a courtesy title of some sort. It is clear, in any event, that Pierre Chastain had considerable influence among the Huguenots. One sign of this is that he served in the first vestry of King William Parish (about 1701) and also as one of its two church wardens. This put him in an important role, as the parish calculated and collected the annual tithe, disbursed funds, and in many ways served as the community’s local government. The fact that the church was also the center of Huguenot life in Manakintown drives home how high Pierre Chastain’s prestige must have been. The Virginia Huguenot community soon became widely known for its “piety, thrift, and

successful industry,” as one observer put it. The refugees, many of them intellectuals and other leaders of French society before they fled, also gained a reputation for culture and intelligence. In later years the French Huguenots who arrived in 1700 would produce a disproportionate share of the leadership of colonial Virginia, as they did in the other places where they lived in America.

As more and more English (and slaves) came into the Manakintown community, its distinctiveness began to wane and the French Huguenots became assimilated into the surrounding culture. In some ways, the changes at Manakintown epitomized the transition many immigrant communities in America have made throughout our history. Services at the Anglican church, originally held entirely in French, later were divided between those in French and (increasingly) those held in English, a sign of growing tension between the two groups. Many of the refugees never learned English, but by the time the second “new” generation had reached maturity later during the 1700s, it became difficult to find French speakers and writers in Manakintown. (Virginia’s government had soon required the refugees to communicate with it only in English.)

Some of the original settlers sold to English purchasers, and many of the children of the Huguenot pioneers began to scatter across Virginia and beyond, as our younger Chastains did. The original village at Manakintown also dissolved by about 1750 as the need to huddle together against the environment and possible Indian attacks disappeared and the

immigrants learned how their concept of the French village clashed with farming realities in America, or at least in the South. Today there is little to evoke what the isolated community of French refugees must have been like during the first few decades of its existence. The original church is gone, too, although a more recent structure housing the Manakin Episcopal Church does stand on the same site. Pierre's original house, somewhat dwarfed by a more modern brick addition, lives on, however.⁴⁵

After Susanne died, sometime between February 1701 and November 10, 1701, Pierre married again. His second wife (our Peter's mother), whom he wed on the latter date, was Anne {Soblet} Chastain. She was born about 1674 and lived until April 3, 1723, when she died in Manakintown.⁴⁶ Following Anne's death Pierre was married one more time, to Mary Magdalene {Verrueil} Chastain, the widow of Antoine Trabue. This marriage took place between May 19, 1724, and October 3, 1726. Mary survived him.⁴⁷ Pierre had no children with Mary, but from his three sons with his first two wives came the very large Chastain-named family that is especially prominent in parts of the South and in Indiana.

⁴⁵ The present Manakin church building, erected in 1895, does hold a pew from the original church. Pierre Chastain's property was divided in 2004, and the portion with the house was sold. His original house and the later brick addition are in fact two essentially separate structures with their own foundations and a weatherproof passageway linking them. A corn crib that Pierre built in 1712 still stands between the house and the river.

⁴⁶ Anne was buried the next day, April 4, 1723.

⁴⁷ Mary was the daughter of Moise and Magelene Verrueil. She died between 1729 and 1733.

Pierre Chastain, Sr., died in Virginia sometime between October 3, 1728, when he made his will in Goochland County, and November 20, 1728, when it was probated there. He was buried on what is now called Monacan Farm, which lies between the river and the Manakin Episcopal Church. In 1982, members of the Pierre Chastain Family Association cleared and marked his grave site, which is a few hundred yards from Pierre's house but now very difficult to reach.⁴⁸

Pierre's second wife Anne was the daughter of **ABRAHAM SOBLET**⁴⁹ and **SUSANNE {BRIAN} SOBLET**. They, too, were French Huguenot refugees but from Sédan, in Champagne. In this part of France religious toleration survived the longest because from medieval times until 1685 Sédan functioned as an independent principality within France. It may even have had a majority of Protestants. Abraham was born in Sédan on December 4, 1648, and was baptized there two days later; Susanne was born about 1652. Abraham and Susanne were married in Sédan on March 31, 1674.⁵⁰

The Soblets had taken a quite different route to Virginia than the Chastains did. This family had arrived in Sédan only in 1637 (their original domicile in France is unknown). They fled to Protestant Germany sometime between 1681 and 1686; here they lived in

⁴⁸ See slides 08715-08740, which include views of Pierre Chastain's grave site as of 1996. This site is no longer accessible, owing to the 2004 sale of the Chastain property, and development of this valuable portion, which fronts on the James River, seems inevitable.

⁴⁹ This name is sometimes spelled Sublette.

⁵⁰ The former Huguenot church where they presumably were married is now the Roman Catholic Church of St. Charles.

Mannheim and then in Wesel. Abraham joined the army of the Dutch sovereign, William of Orange; most of the soldiers in this army were mercenaries, and Abraham probably was too. William's army invaded England at Torbay in Devon and clashed a few times with the forces of King James II before the monarch's support collapsed and he went into exile. William of Orange was then crowned King William III of England (his wife, Queen Mary, reigned with him) in what is known as the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. After King James II had thus been deposed, Abraham Soblet sent for his family to join him in England, where they lived in Littlebury on the outskirts of London.⁵¹ Abraham and two of the children left for Virginia aboard the *Mary and Ann* with the Chastain family in April 1700, but his wife and some other children – including our Anne – sailed later (on September 20, 1700) aboard the second ship, the *Peter and Anthony*. In Virginia, Abraham plied – but perhaps first had had to learn – his trade as an *ouvrier en tabac*, a "worker in tobacco." He too was prominent in the leadership of the Anglican church the Huguenots founded at Manakintown, like Pierre serving as a church warden. Abraham Soblet died in Manakintown sometime between 1716 and 1719.⁵²

⁵¹ A 17th-century map in the Library of Congress shows two English towns named Littlebury, both of which are in Essex. One of them, just south of Chipping Ongar, is in the southern portion of Essex and so relatively close to London, whereas the other is close to the border with Cambridgeshire. My guess is that the Soblets lived in the former town. This Littlebury is not shown on modern maps, having been absorbed by the larger town of Chipping Ongar, as it is now spelled. Littlebury was a surprisingly common given name among numerous families in the American South during the 18th century; one wonders if this reflects the fact that so many refugees spent some time there before emigrating.

⁵² Abraham Soblet's will was presented at court on June 6, 1720. A small community near Manakintown today is called Subletts, and the use of this name probably is a clue that the Soblet family lived nearby. See the USGS map for Midlothian/Virginia.

We know something about the lines of both of Anne {Soblet} Chastain's parents. Her mother Susanne was the daughter of **JACQUES BRIAN** and **SUSAN {GERARD} BRIAN**, who were married on October 6, 1637. Susan was born about 1612 and died in Corcy, France, on April 10, 1659. We know her parents were named **JEAN GERARD** and **JEANNE {D'ORLEANS} GERARD** but nothing more about them. Jacques was the son of **PIERRE BRIAN** and **MARIE {POUPART} BRIAN**, who were married on August 6, 1609.⁵³ Pierre had been born about 1581 and died in February 1641. He was the son of **GUILLAUM BRIAN**. Marie was the daughter of a man named **MATHIAS POUPART**. We do not know the mothers of either Pierre or Marie.

Anne's father, Abraham, was the son of **JEAN SOBLET** and **JUDITH {LOMBARD} SOBLET**. Jean, born in Beaumont, France, was the son of **ELIE SOUBLET** and **SUSANNE {RENAUDIN} SOUBLET**. Jean died in Virginia. We know nothing else about the Soublet line, but Susanne was born about 1590 and died in Sédan on February 7, 1653.

It remains only to pursue the early Chastain line in France. The family that produced Pierre in 1659 seems to have originated in the area around Bourges in central France. It also appears to have been living there at the time of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

⁵³ One source gives the date of this marriage as August 11, 1601.

in Paris on August 24, 1572. Pierre was born three years later in the province of Bourges, Berri (now the Department of Cher).

Pierre's parents were **ESTIENNE CHASTAIN** and **JEANNE {LAURENT} CHASTAIN**, who were married prior to 1652. We know nothing more about Jeanne and her family except that, according to one unconfirmed source, her father may have been named Moyse. Estienne was born in Chârost, France, on March 30, 1625, and died in 1694 or later. He was the son of **JACQUES CHASTAIN** and **JEANNE {AUDET} CHASTAIN**. Jacques, who was born about 1598 to 1600, is thought to have been the son or grandson of an earlier **ESTIENNE CHASTAIN**, who fled the city of Bourges after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre took place in Paris in 1572.

Three of Pierre's immediate male ancestors had served as a *notaire royal* at Chârost: his father Estienne in 1648-1694, Jacques in 1633-1659, and the elder Estienne in 1579-1604.⁵⁴ The duties of a *notaire royal* included drafting wills and contracts, caring for such documents, and making them available to those who needed to consult them – some of what an archivist does today. Holding such a position, and as physicians and barbers, the Chastains were the solid professional and middle-class citizens typical of the French Huguenot community.

⁵⁴ A list of the Chastains who served as *notaire royal* includes a Jean in 1611-1647, which may indicate this Jean should be placed between Jacques and the earlier Estienne in Pierre Chastain's lineage, but the evidence is too ambiguous to cause us to insert Jean there.

The Chastain trail thus wends its way back from Sarah {Chastain} Vanderpool to her father Peter Chastain to George Chastain to (probably) William Chastain to (again, probably) Peter Chastain to Pierre Chastain the immigrant to the French Chastains we have identified in this chapter. Along the way, there are several interesting collateral lines, including Starks, Statons, Soblets, and others.

And with that comment we have exhausted *all* of the lines that can be identified in the ancestry of my father's mother, Glenn Vanderpool, who married Charles M. Neal in 1905. What a rich ancestry and heritage she brought to our family!