

**March 11, 2017 - Presentation to Spring Meeting of the Huguenot Society of Virginia  
Accompanied by slideshow of Visit to La Rochelle, France, May 2007**

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### **My Huguenot ancestor's d'Aubigne family and more:**

I'm going to try to give a fast track view of the Huguenot movement through the eyes of a Presbyterian which is the denomination of the Christian Reformed Church that I know best.

First, I will introduce John Calvin, a name that most of us readily recognize. During one of my church's Lenten series of classes, I signed up for a class on John Calvin. The female pastor who served as our instructor was an interim Pastor for our church and left to accept a permanent position with the National Presbyterian Church. We were very sorry to see her go. John Calvin was born in France in 1509 and studied Latin, logic and philosophy at the University of Paris. Later he studied law and classical literature, in obedience to his father's wishes.

Calvin became convinced of the truth of Reformation ideas, which stressed a DIRECT relationship with God, which is how I've been raised to believe. Consequently, he was forced to flee from Paris after publicly stating his new beliefs. He found refuge in Switzerland where he began his writings that became the guidance for Protestants and established Calvin as a religious leader. He led the Protestant Reformation there and it continued as his life's work. The Council of Geneva accepted his "articles" setting forth ideals of church structure and government.....which led to what became his temporary exile because he refused to accept the power of civil authority over church liturgy. He had been temporarily exiled to Germany (1538-41) where he continued his beliefs. Protestantism continued to grow and he was invited back to Geneva and the city became the center of the Reformation in Europe and the church was the model of basic Presbyterian organization and is the basis for our Founding Father's form of government, which has continued in America today.

Calvin taught the sovereignty of God, the priesthood of all believers, and his ideals of morality, ethics and democracy helped shape western thought. As this concept spread through Europe, it resulted in eventual triumph over persecution.

Despite the threat of severe persecution, many French people were attracted to the Reformed Church and were called Huguenots, who established the first Reformed Congregation in 1555 and convened the first Synod in 1559. (Note: Synod = an assembly of ecclesiastics gathered to discuss and decide ecclesiastical affairs) Approximately 500,000 Huguenots fled in all directions, choosing not to resume the horrors of the Religious Wars approx. only 80 years earlier. 37.5 % went to the Netherlands; 25% to England; 15% to Germany; 12.5% to Switzerland; .05% to Ireland; .05 % to U.S., Denmark, Sweden and South Africa, as shown in the Huguenot Genealogical Research by Charles M. Franklin, 1985, p. 3.

Now, to continue with my Presbyterian denomination that began in Scotland and Ireland, thanks to John Knox, who after studying under Calvin in Geneva, returned to Scotland in 1559 and established the Presbyterian faith. Soon after, it spread to Northern Ireland ....a trail leading to America. Renewed forms of religious persecution drove many Protestants to America, along with major groups of emigrants including

English Puritans; French Huguenots; Dutch, German, Scottish and Irish Presbyterians. The largest single group was an exiled community of Scots who had lived in Ireland in the 1720s.

As we already know, many immigrant Huguenots settled with others of their French heritage and religious beliefs, but eventually assimilated into various denominations of Protestant beliefs as they migrated west.

My maternal grandmother, Rachel Letitia Virginia Moore Miller, started genealogy research of our family after seeing an English newspaper picture of my mother with Lady Astor in Plymouth England in the late 1940s when the U.S.S. Columbus anchored in that harbor. Plymouth, England was the new homeport for the American ship on the first Good Will tour of the NATO countries after WWII. Lady Astor had somehow learned that my mother, Rachel Moore Miller Lotterhos was a descendant of the Moore family of Virginia. This first female member of Parliament, Nancy Langhorne Astor, who became Lady Astor, later Mayor of Plymouth at the time we had moved there, was very helpful in helping the American families assimilate into their new surroundings.

As it turned out, I later learned that Lady Astor, Nancy Langhorne, born in Danville, VA, who married Waldorf Astor and moved to England, and my mother shared the same Huguenot ancestor.... but branched off through different children. My grandmother had begun research of her own Moore family and decided to join DAR on her ancestor Capt. James Gaines, with the hope that her daughter, my mother, would also become interested in her own family history, but time never permitted that luxury for my mother. However, my grandmother during her visits with us while living in Arlington, VA, saw to it that I became a member of C.A.R. while I was in H.S. in Arlington, VA. My H.S. French teacher who became my C.A.R. leader then became heavily involved with approx. 35 more lineage societies and wanted to make it possible for me to do the same. My busy life raising two very energetic and happy children along with being the Corporate wife of a husband who was happily employed with IBM Corp. did not allow that to happen!

My grandmother died in 1970 and my mother brought to me the cardboard box containing the bits of paper, notes and many, many pages of research and old blank lineage society applications that my grandmother had collected with thoughts of one of us using them eventually. I wanted to complete those goals for my grandmother who had obtained notarized copies of Bible records, wills, and other items that she had collected as proofs for her lineage, after my grandfather died. I took classes to learn how to do genealogy and how to organize her research efforts. Among the societies she had wanted to join was an application for membership in the National Huguenot Society using her Dabney line, and she listed several references, but as it turned out, I still had to prove the Dabney line! As I soon found out, it was NOT going to be EASY!

In an attempt to explain my relationship to my proven Huguenot ancestor, and for the sake of my own clarity, and perhaps yours, I will start with my approved DAR ancestor, Capt. James Gaines, son of William Henry Gaines and his wife Isabella Pendleton. Capt. Gaines of the American Revolution was born in Culpeper, VA, raised there as the sixth child among the ten children of Wm. Henry and Isabella Pendleton Gaines. As an adult, James Gaines married first a Miss White who died shortly after giving birth to their only child, a girl. His second wife was Elizabeth Strother, daughter of Francis Strother, b. 1700, d. 1752 in Culpeper, VA, m. 1722 Susannah Dabney, b. 1698-1702, d. aft. 1752. Susannah Dabney was the daughter of John Dabney, b. abt. 1670, d. abt. 1750 and m. 1701, wife, Sarah Jennings, b. 1673, d. 1740. John Dabney was the son of Cornelius Dabney, b. 1644, d. 1740, m. abt. 1662, wife Sarah b. abt. 1646.

I found several sources about this family in Haag, Eugene & Emile's *La France Protestante*, Paris, 1877; Susan Dabney Smedes, *A Southern Planter: Social Life in the Old South*, Pott, 1887, p. 7, 8 and *Some Prominent Virginia Families*, J.P. Bell Co., 1907; p. 87-93; Hon. W. E. Gladstone, a liberal and the oldest Prime Minister of UK wrote to Mrs. Smedes that all the branches of this d'Aubigne family in America claim a common ancestry. In France they have the motto in Latin, *Fidelis et Gratus*, and in the US, in English, "Faithful and Grateful." The name of d'Aubigne can be found on the rolls of Battle Abbey among the list of knights who fell at the Battle of Hastings (October 14, 1066). Some survived the conquest and are mentioned in Hume's History as champions of Magna Charta.

The d'Aubigne/Dabney family is thought to have become so well known because of soldier and poet, Theodore-Agrippa d'Aubigne, born 8 Feb. 1552 in Pons near La Rochelle, France, d. 29 April 1630 in Geneva. According to tradition, he was not the first of his name known at the French court. A d'Aubigne was at the court of Louis XII and commanded a company of Swiss guards. Agrippa d'Aubigne studied in Paris, Orleans, Geneva and Lyon. He joined the Huguenot forces and served throughout the Wars of Religion on the battlefield and in the council chamber. He wrote a very interesting history of the times in which he lived. He was leader of Huguenots in France, "master of horse" under King Henry of Navarre. After Henry's accession to the French throne as Henry IV (1589) and his abandonment of Protestantism, d'Aubigne withdrew to his estates in Poitou. Under the regency of Marie de Medici, her influence on the King caused d'Aubigne to take refuge in Geneva where he remained until his death.

Constant, his only child, born into a Huguenot family, first embraced Protestantism and then the Roman Catholic causes, then betraying the Protestants by revealing English plans to take La Rochelle. As a result he was disinherited by his father. Constant married twice. First wife was Ann Marchant, who gave birth to Theodore. His second wife, Jeanne de Cardilhac, was the mother of Charles, (father of Francoise Charlotte d'Aubigne, aka Mme de Maintenon and Chevalier d'Aubigne; Chevalier never married).

The d'Aubigne line was continued through Anne Marchant's son, Theodore (1613-1760). Richelieu had d'Aubigne and his family imprisoned at Niort in 1629 for correspondence with the English. Released in 1639 following the death of Richelieu, the family went to the French West Indies, where Constant d'Aubigne had been made governor of Marie-Galante, though he and his family remained on Martinique. D'Aubigne returned around 1645, nearly destitute and died, in 1647. His wife and children returned to France the same year.

[surname spelling changed many times since the American branch left France hundreds of years ago.... probably as they crossed the ocean]

Cornelius d'Aubigne, born in 1644 in France and perhaps first went to Wales and was number 126 of 470 refugee settlers to receive an allotment of land at Manakintowne's, 10,000 acre abandoned Monacan Indian reservation, as shown in the book, *The Diligence and the Disappearance of Manakintowne's Huguenots*, by Allison Wehr Elterich, copyrighted in 1999. However, we also read that not all opted to accept that land divided into 133 acre individual holdings. No plats survive showing the original survey. Three miles wide at its greatest and one mile wide at its smallest, the 10,000 acres followed the southern bank of the James River for approx. 11 miles. Many of the refugees were long time city dwellers and were in competition for jobs in London and had never farmed and had no knowledge of agricultural skills. They were in dire need of learning how to subsist on the land for survival. Supplies and the means to pay for additional supplies had dwindled and by the time the next shipload of 191 refugees arrived, conditions were such that the new arrivals were encouraged to go elsewhere throughout the Old Dominion. Indeed,

some saw better opportunities elsewhere and moved away. Out of 767 passengers originally intended for Manakin, only 148 were present for the 1701 census.... Byrd recorded an additional 55 people who were settled outside of Manakin. Did my Cornelius stay in Manakin or did he move directly to New Kent Co.? I find no mention of his life there in Manakin. Was my Cornelius one of those recorded by Byrd who settled away from Manakin? Continuing research shows the name of Cornelius Dabney obtaining a grant of land of 200 acres in New Kent Co. He is listed in Parish records. John Dabney, father of my Susannah Dabney, has been found in New Kent County and parish records. Was he the son of the same Cornelius Dabney who with brother John went to Wales, then immigrated and settled in New Kent Co. as the Pamunkey Indian Queen's Indian Interpreter, as several have indicated. Janet Ariciu's "family bush" shown on Roots Web's World Connect also claims this achievement for Cornelius Dabney? This is a new additional office found to be acceptable by Jamestowne Society for ten additional qualifying ancestors.

We all know many who have made pilgrimages back to France in search for the origins of their French Huguenot ancestors. Frances M. duBois happily made the trip to France in 1997 and had created a very interesting little booklet that tells of the stops they made with a small description of each location with the roster of others on that same trip and I have brought my copy of that booklet with me.

Ten years later, my husband, Duane Wills, and I were delighted to be able to return to France together during our celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2007. We had reason to believe we both had Huguenot ancestors who came from the region of La Rochelle. Indeed, we even found a WWI monument there with the names of those lost during that war and there was the name of Louis Blanchard among them. His grandfather's name was Louis Benjamin Blanchard! No, it could not have been his grandfather, but.....? A very eerie feeling stirred in us though. I brought several books that I purchased in La Rochelle that might be of interest to you. Do you ever watch Dancing with the Stars on TV? The host, Tom Bergeron was featured on Who Do You Think You Are in one episode. He visited the city of his French ancestor and there were some beautiful views of La Rochelle as well as his amazing story of his lineage.

It was at the Castle of Angers built in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century and expanded in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century in the Loire Valley, that Henry IV in 1598 ended the League of Troubles by marrying the daughter of the Duc de Mercoeur, the last hope of the Leaguers, to the son he had by Gabrielle d'Estrees. The bride and groom were ages 6 and 4 respectively. A week later he signed the Edict of Nantes which ended the Religious Wars, granting freedom of worship to Huguenots throughout France.

That Edict of Nantes (signed on 13 April 1598 by King Henry IV of France, granted the Calvinist Protestants of France [also known as Huguenots] substantial rights in the nation, which was still considered essentially Catholic at the time):

Separation of civil and religious unity; opened a path for separation of the state from religious institutions or discrimination against anybody in the name of religion and therefore, tolerance; offered freedom of conscience to individuals; amnesty and reinstatement of their civil rights, including the right to work in any field or for the state; to bring grievances directly to the king. Frances duBois, a fellow member of The National Huguenot Society who had been a member of the Huguenot Society of the District of Columbia, further expounded on the freedoms shown below.

1. Freedom to live anywhere in France without molestation
2. Right to worship in public in many more cities and on grounds of Protestant homes

3. Equality for all students regardless of religion
4. Freedom for Protestants to have their own church and schools
5. Right to own graveyards
6. Civil Equality before law with right to hold public office
7. Seats for 6 judges among 16 of the Paris Parliament
8. A fund in royal treasury of 45,000 crowns for Huguenot use
9. Extension of 8 more years of Huguenot control over cities they governed

It has been hundreds of years since Richelieu made good his promise to King Louis XIII, son of Henry IV to devote all his energy to the destruction of the Huguenots and to Louis XIV who early in his career also made it well known, but believed to have mellowed in his later years. A dyke was built across the harbor to cut off the sea approach of English help. Jean Guiton said, "I will be mayor since you absolutely want it, but you see this dagger? "I swear to thrust it into the breast of the first who speaks of giving up and I want that I myself be pierced if I propose to capitulate." La Rochelle held out for 15 months until the defenders literally were dropping dead on the battlements from hunger after being reduced to eating rats and boiled shoe leather. Approx. 23,000 starved to death. About 5,000 survived. Finally forced to surrender, the grim defenders would do so only on their terms, which were granted. The Huguenot military power was broken in France, but La Rochelle remained strongly Protestant.

The city and surrounding country provided some of the finest sailors for the French Royal Fleet. After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a military engineer told his king that the Revocation had cost France 9,000 best sailors, 600 finest military officers and 12,000 serving soldiers. To the later sorrow of France, men fled to serve military leadership in the American Revolution and wherever they fought, the Huguenots maintained their great ideals of valor and dedication to cause and belief. This doesn't even begin to speak of the talented and skilled artisans, teachers, doctors, attorneys, musicians, goldsmiths, jewelers, etc. middle classes of all sorts of talents and skills that left France.

The La Rochelle harbor is commanded by two towers; St. Nicholas (1384) and La Chaine (1375) the lantern tower of 1468 is huge and once a lighthouse. The largest building is the Hotel de Ville, one of the loveliest of France's Town Halls and a renaissance masterpiece. Charles IX allowed Protestants to worship there in La Rochelle and the heroic Mayor Guiton was baptized in 1555. After the siege the church was given to the Roman Catholics and the Protestants were given a new Temple outside of town until the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) which began the period known as the "Desert" when secret services were held.

The monks built the present church in 1691. In 1789, after the revolution, it became a public building. However one of the reformers bought it and the church remains active today.

The Protestant museum (building with blue doors in the slide show) was closed while we were there and we were told it had been closed for about five years. However, the street signs still pointed the way to the location of the museum that still stands. Inside, we have reason to believe that several original artifacts remain, such as: The pulpit and table which could be taken apart; the communion cup which when unscrewed was a candlestick, the miniscule Bible that could be placed under a hat; the "mereau" markers that were given to the minister when the faithful took communion; and Huguenot crosses. At one time,

the Huguenot crosses could be purchased in the shop there, but that shop could not be found, so we visited several jewelry shops and finally made the selection that I often wear, the Cross of Languedoc.

My husband, Allen Duane Wills, seeks to prove his mother's Blanchard line having been proudly told by her that they are descendant of Huguenots. He has one weak link in VA. during the Revolution as they proceeded from the Boston, Mass. area toward what became their final home in GA., approximately in the mid-1800s. Indeed, if the Marion Brunson book about the Blanchard family can be believed, the Blanchard family that lived in the Alsace region of France had provided shelter for John Calvin as he sought to find a route to Geneva that was not guarded and already blocked. During Calvin's sojourn with that branch of the Blanchard family, the family was persuaded by the fervor and views of their guest, John Calvin. They sought to assist the movement to place a protestant king on the throne of France. Having failed in that attempt, they fled from France on their boat, the Jonathan and sought refuge in England. For whatever reason, they left England on the same boat, the Jonathan and continued their flight toward the Boston, Massachusetts area of the colonies and continued their new protestant beliefs throughout the centuries as they slowly migrated south toward southwestern Georgia.

Many of the Huguenot clergy in England had accepted ordination by the Anglican Church which obviously undercut the maintenance of a distinct Huguenot identity. Conformist Huguenot churches often received preferential treatment in terms of financial support. Those that resisted the Anglican influence were deemed non-conformist Huguenots. Anglican influence was exerted to avert growing tensions in England over a large refugee community which sapped the public relief resources and created job competition in a depressed economy. Conformism also relieved the fears of French Catholics in the guise of Protestant refugees infiltrating England. Cooperation and acceptance between the Reformed Churches of France and the Anglican Church had existed since Calvin's time. Able to overlook differences in church polity when the doctrine was sound, Calvin had no dispute with the organizational choices of other Protestant Churches. He advocated church unity and maintained friendly relations with many English reformers and bishops. However, by the time French refugees were flooding England and subsisting on its generosity, the pressure to conform intensified. The Church of England now made ordination by the hands of bishops a rigid condition for the exercise of the ministry.

King William and William Byrd sought to alleviate some of the difficulties by offering the 10,000 acres of the abandoned Indian reservation as an inducement to the Huguenot refugees to "move on."

The History of the Presbyterian Church by Channing L. Bete Co., Inc., 1983

A Huguenot Pilgrimage with Frances M. duBois, August-September 1997

A Southern Planter, Social Life in the Old South by Susan Dabney Smedes, NY, James Pott & Co., 1914

Sketch of the Dabneys of Virginia, with some of their Family Records, collected and arranged by William H. Dabney of Boston, Dec. 31, 1887, Chicago, 1883

The Diligence and the Disappearance of Manakintowne's Huguenots by Allison Wehr Elterich, The Reprint Co., Publishers, Spartanburg, SC, 2000

Jean Guiton, Maire de La Rochelle et le Siege de 1628, Reimpression de l'edition de 1880, Quartier Latin, La Rochelle

La Rochelle a city between towers, by Michael Augeron & Christophe Gauriaud

La Rochelle, English version

La Rochelle capital atlantique, capital huguenote