

The Collett Family

JOHN D. COLLETT

History records the name of this family as having been spelled *Colet* in France, where members of the family were merchants of Normandy. In 1066, the family went to England with William the Conqueror, where they were given large landed estates as loyal subjects. The family name was spelled *Colet* and *Collet* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but is now spelled *Collett*, both in England and America, by all the living descendants.

In 1221-1222, it is recorded in Gilbert's Documents of Anglo-Normans in Ireland and in the Calender of Justiciary Rolls of Ireland that William Colet and his brother Edward, sons of Walter Colet of England, established the "first of the Kings Inns or Courts" known as Collett's Inn, a school of law, in Dublin, Ireland. In 1362, this Law School was granted to the Prior and Friars of the Augustinian order of Dublin, and the Colets returned to England.

Sir Knight Henry Collett, wealthy merchant of London, England, in his will spelled his name both *Colet* and *Collet*. He was Lord Mayor of London in 1486 and again in 1495. The Arms, which were originally granted to him, appear on the Jacobean Monument in Chelsfield, Kent, to Peter Collet, an Alderman of London, who died in 1607. They are also to be seen on a Brass in the Church of Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, and were borne by Thomas Collett, barrister, who died in 1675, son of John and Susanna Ferrar Collett, of London, all descendants of Humphrey Collett.

Seebohm states that John Colet, son of Sir Knight Henry Collet, was born in 1467 and died in 1519, graduated from Oxford in 1494, became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and, in 1512, founded and fully endowed St. Paul's School for Boys, which is in operation today.¹ Maurois writes of John Colet, of St. Paul's, as Latinist, educator, and rich burgess—the most representative figure of his generation in England, a man of great learning.²

John Collett, who was born in 1578 and died in 1650, was a merchant and member of the Virginia Company of

¹ Frederick Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers: John Colet, Erasmus and Thomas Moore* (London, 1912), 8, 9, 84, 128, 311.

² Andre Maurois, *Miracle of England (An Account of Her Rise to Pre-eminence and Present Position)*, translated by Hamish Miles (New York, 1937), 201-211.

London, England.³ In 1600, he married Susanna Ferrar, who was born in 1581, and died in 1657, the daughter of Nicholas and Mary Woodnoth Ferrar, of London. To them were born eight sons and eight daughters. In 1650, three of their sons came to Virginia: John, Fellow at Clare College, Cambridge University, married Ann Goldsmith Collett and had three sons; Richard, graduate of Middle Temple, College of Law, married Elizabeth ———; James, graduate of Middle Temple, College of Law. James remained in Virginia, while John and family, and Richard and wife later relocated at Baltimore, Maryland. There, Richard followed his profession, and John became the first Clerk of the Court at Baltimore. The records of the court contain the following:

Since it has pleased God to take away John Collett, Clerk of this County, and the county business being neglected for want of a Clerk, by the advise of Jerome White we have, for the present, chosen one Thomas Salmon to act as Clerk. Done this November 29th, 1669, Thomas Atwell, Godfrey Bayley, Jo. Vanluke, Commissioners. To the Honourable Governor.

The author has a photostat of John Collett's will, recorded at Annapolis, Maryland, and also a photostat of two letters written in 1650, found by Prof. A. L. Maycock in the Magdalene College manuscripts, Cambridge University. One of the letters is written to his sister Mary, and one to his uncle John Ferrar.

John Collett was born at Baltimore, Maryland, in 1760, died on January 22, 1834, and is buried at Terre Haute, Indiana.⁴ He married Elizabeth Stevenson at Baltimore in 1782. In 1786, they removed to Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, and, in 1797, to Chillicothe on the Scioto River, Northwest Territory. Here this Mr. Collett was elected Trustee and his eldest son Josephus was elected Sheriff for the years 1818-19. Elizabeth, John's wife, died at Chillicothe, where she was buried in 1803 in the year that Ohio was admitted to the Union as a state.

In 1812, when Columbus, Ohio, was founded, John Collett was one of the first fourteen men to buy lots in the new

³ John Collett (1578-1650) was a descendant of John Colet (1467-1519). This has been fully established and the writer of this article has adequate proof.

⁴ John Collett (1760-1834) was a descendant of John Collett (1578-1650). This has also been fully proved. The author has omitted some of the early history of the family to save space. Mr. Henry Collett of 64 Cornhill, London, EC3, England, has full data on the Collett family in this early period, and there is a history of the Collett family in the British Museum, the first volume of which includes matter pertaining to the family prior to 1760.

town. He bought lot number 262 on High Street, a half block from the present State House. There he built the first brick building in Columbus. His daughter Mary's marriage, in 1813, to Josephus Dillow is recorded as the second marriage performed in Columbus. On September 8, 1818, John Collett sold his realty holdings in Columbus, Ohio, to Robert Russell and removed to Terre Haute, Indiana, where he and his sons, Josephus and Stephen, had been appointed government land surveyors for Indiana. The father, John Collett, surveyed Townships 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16, ranges 4 and 5 West; Josephus surveyed Townships 17, 18, 19, and 20, ranges 2 and 3 West; Stephen surveyed Townships 12, 13 14, 15, and 16, ranges 1 East, and 1 West.

Stephen S. Collett was born on December 26, 1791, at Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. He died on December 28, 1843, at the Browning Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, while serving in the Indiana Legislature, and was buried in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was married on November 8, 1821, to Sarah Groenendyke of Terre Haute. Sarah was born on July 6, 1804. She was a daughter of John and Lucretia de Rapalje Groenendyke. She died on March 2, 1852, and was buried in Terre Haute. Three sons and six daughters were born to Stephen and Lucretia Collett. Mr. Collett, having retired from Government service, became a merchant in Terre Haute, 1822-1826, a partner of William C. Linton. Later, Chauncy Rose joined the firm, which then became known as Rose, Linton and Collett. In 1824, Mr. Collett established the townsite of Newport, and in 1826, the townsite of Eugene, both in Vermillion County, Indiana. In 1827, he removed his family to Eugene where he and his brother Josephus entered the mercantile business. They successfully operated a store for a number of years. Stephen S. Collett was a Representative from Vermillion County, 1833-34, in the state Legislature and State Senator from Vermillion, Parke, and Warren Counties in 1835-36. He was also Senator from Vermillion and Parke counties in 1843-44.

Children of Stephen S. and Sarah Groenendyke Collett:

Emily—b. Terre Haute, Dec 12, 1822; d. Aug. 5, 1886; buried at Newport, Indiana; m. (1) Dr. W. C. Montgomery, and (2) Oliver P. Davis.

Mary—b. at Terre Haute, Oct. 20, 1824; m. J. Paxton

Campbell; d. Feb. 28, 1882; buried at Crawfordsville, Indiana.

John—b. Jan., 1828, at Eugene, Indiana; d. Mar. 15, 1899; unmarried; buried at Terre Haute. (John was a graduate of Wabash College, class of 1847. He was granted an honorary degree in 1852, and a Ph.D. degree in 1879. He was state senator, 1871-73, from Vermillion and Parke counties and Indiana State Geologist, 1879-84. He prepared and published the first geological map of Indiana and twenty-seven geological maps of various counties. He prepared and published a series of geological reports, numbering five large volumes, a set of which may be found in the Indiana State Library. These volumes were illustrated by 143 multiple plates of fossils in which there are 1730 separate figures. Of these, 1217 were copied by Professor J. P. Leslie of the Pennsylvania Department of Geology, for which Mr. Collett was given credit. With his brother Josephus, he founded and fully endowed Collett Home for Orphans located in Eugene Township, Vermillion County, Indiana, which institution is still in existence.)

Stephen S., Jr.—b. Dec. 13, 1829, at Eugene, Indiana; m. Sarah Dunlap (b. Illinois, Aug. 15, 1841; d. July 17, 1920; buried at Newport); d. Nov. 8, 1902; buried at Newport, Indiana. (Stephen S. was a graduate of Wabash College, class of 1850. He became a merchant at Newport, in partnership with his brother Josephus, 1860-1869. During the years 1869-72 Josephus and Stephen S. built the E. T. H. & C. R. R.,⁵ of which Josephus became president, and Stephen, secretary and treasurer. They operated the road successfully until 1881, when it was leased to the C. & E. I. R. R.⁶ In 1880 Stephen organized the Collett and Company Bank, Newport, which he operated until his health failed when he retired.)

Josephus—b. Aug. 17, 1831, at Eugene, Indiana; d. Feb. 13, 1893; buried at Terre Haute; unmarried. (Josephus Collett was graduated from Wabash College in 1857. He became a merchant. With his brother Stephen, he was associated in building the E. T. H. & C. R. R. He built and owned the following roads: Austin and Northwestern R. R., Texas; Otter Creek Valley R. R., Indiana; Genesee Valley R. R.,

⁵ Evansville, Terre Haute and Chicago Railroad.

⁶ Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad.

New York; Nevada Central R. R., Nevada; and other lines. With Mr. Babcock he built and owned Coronada Beach Hotel, San Diego, California. He gave to Terre Haute Collett's Park. He served as president of the Board of Trustees of Rose Polytechnic Institute, to which he gave \$75,000. On July 24, 1873, as a conditional gift, he deeded to Northwestern Christian University twenty-five acres in Irvington, a suburb of Indianapolis, for the location of the college. In 1877, the name of the school was changed to Butler University. Josephus was associated with his brother John in founding and fully endowing Collett Home for Orphans, located in Eugene Township, Vermillion County, Indiana.)

Ellen—b. Feb. 9, 1833; Eugene, Indiana; m. D. M. Jones; d. Jan. 31, 1924; buried at Newport, Indiana.

Sarah—b. Jan. 12, 1835, at Eugene; d. Sept. 11, 1839; buried at Terre Haute.

Jane—b. Dec. 10, 1837, at Eugene; m. James H. Turner; d. June 23, 1915; buried at Terre Haute.

Clara—b. Aug. 14, 1840, at Eugene; m. Crawford Fairbanks; d. Feb. 9, 1911; buried at Terre Haute.

Children of Stephen S. Collett, Jr., and Sarah (Dunlap) Collett:

John D.⁷—b. Mar. 15, 1862; m. Olive Parrett (b. Nov. 16, 1869); graduated from Wabash College in 1886.

Eva—b. Mar. 10, 1864; m. Adam B. Littlepage (b. April 14, 1859; d. July 1, 1921; buried at Charleston, West Virginia); Mrs. Eva (Collett) Littlepage survives.

Sam—b. Oct. 27, 1868; m. Genevieve Westlake; d. Dec. 26, 1933; buried at Brooklyn, New York; graduated from Rose Polytechnic Institute, 1890.

Ben—b. Aug. 25, 1873; d. June 1, 1880; buried at Newport, Indiana.

Fred—b. Nov. 7, 1875; m. Blanch Howard (d. before her husband); d. Richmond, Virginia, Aug. 21, 1930; buried at Newport, Indiana.

Son of John and Olive (Parrett) Collett:

John P.—b. May 19, 1902; m. Mary Hamilton (b. Dec. 11, 1901; graduate of Smith College, 1926); A. B. Wabash College, 1924; M. A. Harvard University, 1926.

⁷The author of this article, John D. Collett, of Collett and Company, Fletcher Trust Building, Indianapolis, Ind.

Children of John P. and Mary (Hamilton) Collett:

Anne—b. Aug. 30, 1930.

Jane—b. Dec. 20, 1933.

Mary—b. Mar. 24, 1939.^s

^sIn the collection of data on the Collett family, the author of this article has been aided by Mr. Henry Collett, 18 St. Anns Villas, Holland Park, London, W. 11, England, and Miss E. Cruwys Sharland, 8, Celia Road, Tufnell Park, London, N. 19, England. It may be added here that Sir Knight Charles Collett was Lord Mayor, London, England, 1934, and that Mr. Montague Collett Norman, whose mother was a Collett, is the present Governor of the Bank of England.