

**SAMUEL GRIFFIN, OF NEW  
CASTLE COUNTRY ON THE  
DELAWARE, PLANTER; AND HIS  
DESCENDANTS TO THE SEVENTH  
GENERATION**

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Samuel Griffin, of New Castle Country on the Delaware, Planter; and his descendants to the seventh generation by Thomas Hale Streets

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**THOMAS HALE STREETS**

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DELAWARE, PLANTER;

AND

HIS DESCENDANTS TO THE  
SEVENTH GENERATION.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

There is a statement in one of the books of Robert Louis Stevenson, that the proper summit of any Cambrian pedigree is a prince. I can give no better reason than this for the claim that has been made that we are descended from Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, the last Prince of Wales. For my part, I have not been able to trace the family beyond the narrow confines of Delaware. In that State they were "children of the soil." They are characterized in deed and will as "yeomen" and "planters."

Griffith is a very common surname in the county directories of Wales. Griffin, the English corruption of the same name, is seldom seen in those books, but is quite common in the English border counties.

THOMAS HALE STREETS.

U. S. NAVAL HOME,

*Philadelphia, Pa.,*

*24 February, 1905.*

## THE FAMILY TRADITION.

Why does the number three appear in so many family traditions; as, for instance, "there were three brothers?" Three is the holy number of the old Chaldeans, and its use may be a mysticism inherited from remote ancestors. We are also told that the early Britons had a passion for the figure 3.

In the tradition of the Griffin family three brothers came from Wales and settled in Delaware. This story has been handed down through several lines of descent, and is substantially the same in its several versions. Yet, it is apparently unsubstantiated by any documentary evidence; in fact, the evidence of the public records is in direct variance with the tradition. It is not to be supposed, however, that it is altogether an invention—that it had no foundation in facts. There must have been some reason for its existence, which careful investigation may discover. Most traditions, even when founded upon real events, become so modified after being transmitted orally through several generations, as to be as far from the truth as the story of the "three black crows."

All our chroniclers are agreed that three brothers came from Wales. I will show later that they were a part of a larger family, and it can almost be

proven that all were born in this country. Why three, only, are remembered may be explained, I think, by the fact that these alone, as far as is known, left descendants of the name in Delaware. Why the father failed to impress his personality upon his posterity, and was so soon forgotten, may also be explained, I think, by the circumstance of his early death, while his children were young. With all recollection of an earlier generation obliterated by reason of his early death, it would have been natural for the later generations to look upon the heads of their respective lines as the founders of the family in this country. This undoubtedly is the correct explanation of the three brothers, emigrants, in the tradition.

One legend relates that they brought their aged parents with them "in cribs or cradles." I have no explanation to offer for this remarkable story. It rests upon the authority of Sarah Cowgill, the Quakeress preacher and abolitionist. This story, which is accredited to her, is the only one that makes any mention of the first generation ; all other accounts begin with the second generation.

Sarah Cowgill was of the fourth generation, and was born before the death of her grandfather, William Griffin, who, according to her, was one of the emigrants. William was the oldest of the children of Samuel Griffin. Although unmarried at the time of his father's death, he was old enough to



have land settled upon him, and was probably nearing the time when young men married in those days. Sarah Cowgill was seven years old when her grandfather died ; she lived to be 88 years old. She should have been, therefore, a valuable repository of family lore.

One source of our information says that William Griffin changed the spelling of his name to conform to the pronunciation of his English neighbors. Another relates that two of the brothers wrote the name Griffin, whilst "a third would always write his name Griffith, different from the rest." This statement is correct. In the line of Samuel, the elder branch of which remained in Delaware, the name of Griffith was retained in the family records until about 1780, when Griffin was substituted. Griffith often appears in public documents pertaining to this line.

In regard to the name itself, it is from the Welsh word *gruff* (pronounced *greef*), and which Jones, in "Cymri of the Revolution," says, means "fierce, terrible," whilst Anderson, in "Genealogy and Surnames," says, signifies "having great faith." The correct Welsh spelling is Gruffydd, the Anglicised Welsh is Griffith, and the English is Griffin.

Some decades ago the family was infected with the "fortune-in-chancery" disease. There was in connection with this malady an awakening of family interest which emigration westward was gradually

obliterating. Old pedigrees were hunted up, old records were searched for, old members were interviewed to prove descent in order to share in this mythical fortune. It has been my good fortune to read many of the old letters that were written during that period. The information which I obtained from them has been considerable.

“SAMUEL GRIFFIN, OF NEW CASTLE  
COUNTY ON DELAWARE, PLANTER.”

(1) SAMUEL GRIFFIN, born — ; died December, 1729, in New Castle county, on Duck Creek ; married, — — .

CHILDREN.<sup>1</sup>

- (2) I. William, born — ; died 1771 ; married Eleanor — .
- (3) II. James, born — ; died between 1729 and 1746. He was living at the date of the father's will, but was not a signer of the deed of division.

<sup>1</sup> The names of the children were taken from Samuel Griffin's will, and from the deed of division of the Kent county property. There is no record found of the division of the property in New Castle county. The early records of this county are defective. In relation to this matter, the solicitor of the city of Wilmington wrote me as follows: "At the time when the British captured Washington, it is said, that all our records were removed, some people say to Lancaster, others to York, Pa., in order to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy. They were never all returned to New Castle county after the war. It is said that all the records, prior to 1809, of the settlements of accounts in the Register's Office disappeared in this way, as well as eight or ten of the Deed Records in our Recorder's Office." The records of the county are not only incomplete, but they are badly indexed.

I have also read that during the Revolutionary War, Knyp-hausen's Hessians plundered the county-seat and carried away some of the records, and that part of them were afterwards recovered in the State of New York.