

# Notes on the Origins of the Southern Dobbs

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## Surname Origin

On the origin of the DOBBS Surname: spelling variations include: Dobbs, Dobb, Dobbe, Dobbes, and others. First found in Lancashire. *Iuonis Dobbs* was one of the first of the name recorded and he held manors and estates in the county of Lancashire before the year 1202.

The origin of the name is English and the Coat of Arms contains Black and silver, with a chevron between three unicorns heads. The Crest is A lion holding a dagger. The family motto is *Proximi summa*.

From a correspondent in the UK:

*"Regarding the Dobbs' and where the name comes from. One log I came across was from Northern England in a parish now engulfed by the city of Sheffield, of a Margaret Dobbs in approx 1325. From other sources I have been told that Dobbs was first given to a female lover as a pet name. Dob is an old English word meaning Valley, and as the story goes, She was called Dobbs or Dobbsy, because she was indeed from the valley's, and so the name was adopted by this new family when she married. I am not sure whether you know, but there is a very prominent Dobbs family in Ireland who left for Ireland in about 1596, there is a Dobbs Castle in Carrickfurgus, and this property was built in about 1790, however this has always been the land of the Dobbs family, but as their wealth grew, they built a stately home. This home is now the property of Michael and Elaine Dobbs, The Dobbs family in Ireland married very well, in approx 1850 Harriett Dobbs married the 6th Earl of Manchester and her sister married wealthy naval captain. I have heard from other sources that a Dobbs was also the Lord Mayor of London in the 18th century, however I have found no supporting evidence of this. The Irish Dobbs family have seemed to progress quite well. Many of them have traveled and settled in other parts of the world. Arthur Dobbs the Governor of the Carolina descendant of the Irish Dobbs. I know for definite that the Dobbs' are not originally Irish and I have only ever heard that the Dobbs' either came from the Sheffield or Southern England, in the Somerset region. The largest area I have found with Dobbs' in the UK is in South Wales."*

## Who is the Father of...?

The following post by R. L. Guffin on the RootsWeb Dobbs Forum on 10 Oct 2000 provides a summary of some of the issues regarding the origin(s) of the Dobbs of North Carolina, Georgia, etc.:

*Ruth*

*First, it is so nice of you to volunteer to do lookups for any of us Dobbs researchers. And there is some useful information in Mary Margaret's book. However, I think it would be most helpful for our fellow researchers to know about the two best known Dobbs books. Mary Margaret Dobbs from Gainesville, GA was a descendant of Lodowick Dobbs who died in 1814 in Pendleton District, SC and who fortunately left a will naming his children. She descended through his son, Rev. Silas Dobbs, who moved to Pickens Co., AL fairly early and then into Mississippi. So her interest was mainly in the lineage of Lodowick and particularly the descendants of Rev. Silas.*

*The second major Dobbs book was written by E. J. Ladd who was an engineer from Ft. Payne, AL and an excellent gatherer of records. E. J. and I were in contact in the late 1960's and early 1970's and he gave me a copy of nearly all the Dobbs research he had done. He later published his book, *Gone to Alabama*, in which he primarily traces the descendants of Lodowick Dobbs simply because so many of Lodowick's descendants moved into Dekalb Co., AL.*

*So essentially E. J. expanded on what Mary Margaret Dobbs had already done. Having known both Mary Margaret and E. J. Ladd as I did, I am certain that they would want whatever errors they had in their books to be corrected.*

*Both had relied on some earlier research by an amateur genealogist by the name of Dr. Carey C. Dobbs of Cleveland, MS back in the 1920's. Unfortunately, Dr. Dobbs did not have access to the broad array of genealogical primary sources that we have today. He found a Fortunatus Dobbs living in Abbeville Co., SC in the 1790 census and somehow figured that Fortunatus was the father of Lodowick Dobbs. He never found the records we now have that clearly indicate that Fortunatus was in South Carolina during the American Revolution while Lodowick was still living in NC during the Revolution.*

*Dr. Dobbs also speculated on the other children of Fortunatus without giving us any evidence whatsoever. The sad results of these speculations have been that they were passed on by others and published in books. And now Ancestry World Tree, Rootsweb World Connect, and many Family Tree Maker CD's show that Fortunatus was the father of Lodowick when there is not one thread of evidence to support it. I suppose there is a lesson in all this and I hope those of us who are serious Dobbs researchers will take heed.*

*Thanks for staying with my ramblings.*

*R. L. Guffin<sup>1</sup>*

The author of the RootsWeb post above provided me with further insight on this topic in a email dated February 8, 2000:

*" It appears that the first southern Dobbs researcher was a Carey Dobbs who was a professor at Delta State Teachers College in Mississippi back in the 1920's. Unfortunately, genealogical research was not scientifically oriented in those days and with the limited resources he had, he*

*concluded that most all of the Dobbs in western SC and eastern GA were members of one family. He indicated that all were sons of a Fortunatus Dobbs who appears in the 1790 census of Abbeville Co., SC. He indicated that Fortunatus came from NC and was one of the cousins of Gov. Arthur Dobbs who was a colonial governor of NC in the 1700's.*

*"Dr. Carey Dobbs, speaking authoritatively as many professors chose to do in those days (and I can say that since I am a professor), concluded that Fortunatus was probably born ca. 1727 in Ireland, that he settled in NC and left for SC when Tory activity became too strong during the American Revolution. He said that Fortune (for short) had seven sons and three daughters. He concluded that the seven sons were Fortune Jr. b. ca. 1755, William b. ca. 1757, Lodowick Adams b. ca. 1759, Josiah, Samuel, Lott, and Joseph.*

*"After 37 years of combing and analyzing the primary sources on the Dobbs in the south, I have concluded that Dr. Carey Dobbs was considerably off base. The only mention of a man who might be considered Fortunatus was a man who signed a petition in Guilford Co., NC in 1773 as Fortus Dobbs. And Dr. Dobbs concluded that that was Fortunatus. Also, a Forlin Dobbs also signed the petition at the same time and he concluded that Fortus and Forlin were twins. Forlin's name has never been found again.*

*"In time I discovered a Forton Dobbs who was in SC as early as 1765 and since Fortunatus was sometimes called Fortune, I suspected that this Fortunatus Dobbs may not have been the same as the Fortus in NC. Meanwhile I had discovered that Lodowick and John Dobbs were in Wilkes County, NC in the early 1780's, at the close of the American Revolution. In time and for several reasons I began to suspect that Lodowick was the son of John and not the son of Fortunatus.*

*"Dr. Carey Dobbs had suggested, after talking with one of Lodowick's descendants, that Lodowick was named Lodowick Adams Dobbs. However, southerners very rarely gave children two given names before 1800 and I doubted that was true with Lodowick. Dr. Carey then figured that Lodowick's mother must have been an Adams. Again, no documentary basis. In all my years I have never found a document which gave his name as Lodowick Adams Dobbs.*

*"After much study, I now believe that John Dobbs and his son, Lodowick, came down to the GA-SC border ca. 1784-86. Lodowick is found over the next thirty years in both Franklin Co., GA and Pendleton Dist., SC. John Dobbs Sr. received a grant in Pendleton Dist., SC on the Savannah River of 324 acres of land in 1786. Two years later he received a headright grant in Wilkes Co., GA across the Savannah River. This land was later taken into Elbert Co., GA when the new county was formed in 1790. Land records show that John Dobbs lived on Cedar Creek in Elbert County and that among his neighbors living on Cedar Creek were Josiah, Silas, Lott, and Peter Dobbs. As we have indicated Josiah died in Elbert ca. 1810 and there seems to be no trace of John Sr. in the land records after about 1795. In the 1810's Silas, Lott, and Peter all move to Hunter Creek in Franklin Co., GA. Shortly after the death of Lodowick in Pendleton Dist., SC in 1814, his widow, Sarah, moved over to live on Hunter Creek in Franklin Co., GA near Lott and Peter. As a matter of fact, Lodowick (Jr.) married one of Peter's daughters. So that is a good indication of a*

*relationship that already existed between old Lodowick and the Dobbs of Cedar Creek. Many records, unsubstantiated, have shown that Lodowick was born in 1759. I suspect that was a little early. I would not put a date on the birth of Josiah but I would think no later than 1765. We know Silas was born around 1770 because he was still living in 1850. Lott was probably born in the 1770's and Peter in the 1780's. He was still living in 1850.*

*"At no time have I ever found any of our Dobbs living in the same county as Fortunatus who showed up in Spartenburg Co., SC before he moved to Abbeville.*

*"It is my theory that John Dobbs Sr. came from Virginia because he was in a major route of migration from Virginia when he was in NC.*

*He was on the tax rolls of Rowan Co., NC in 1778, the tax roll of Wilkes Co., NC in 1782 and is mentioned in a deed there in January of 1784. I have not found enough evidence to link him to Henry County although we have proof that Nathan Dobbs who later came to GA was a Revolutionary soldier from Henry Co., VA. He may well have descended from the John Dobbs family who was in Middlesex Co., VA in the early 1700's and who had sons named John and Josiah.*

*"I also understand that a Josiah Dobbs left a will or an estate record in Isle of Wight Co., VA in 1778 but I have not seen a copy of it. So I feel that it is best not to speculate on the parents of our John Sr. at the present time or to speculate on a time of his birth.*

*"You may have heard that Maynard Jackson, the former black mayor of Atlanta was the grandson of a John Wesley Dobbs, an influential black man in the early part of the 20th century in that area. When the Olympics were coming to Atlanta, one of the editors of the Atlanta Constitution was given a leave of absence to write a book on Ivan Allen and Maynard Jackson, the two most influential mayors of Atlanta in recent history. The editor called me to find what I knew on the Dobbs family. In time he traced John Wesley Dobbs back to one of the slaves of Josiah Dobbs, brother to your David who came to Cobb County. It was a fascinating story. I feel confident that all the early Dobbs on Cedar Creek in GA were part of the same family and that the males were sons of John Sr.*

*"The jury is still out on whether there was a John Jr. There well might have been and he may have moved to another state. There is some indication that he might have moved to Tennessee but not enough evidence at the present.*

*"One source on the family name says that it came from the short form, Dob, which was another form of Rob, a shortened form of Robert. But again, that may have some basis in fact or may be speculative. If it was brought over by the Normans, then the story would be different since the Normans were speaking French by 1066 and Norse before that.*

*"I'll try to find the military company for David Judson Dobbs. I do know that your Dobbs were pillars of the First Baptist Church of Marietta at one time. My own grandfather was a deacon in*

*that church at one time. And if I remember correctly, Dobbs Street runs by the side of the church. My grandmother (the Dobbs descendant) was buried in the Marietta Citizens Cemetery where David and Elizabeth and David J. and Mattie were buried. It is in sight of where the GA Military College stood where David J. attended.*

*"Many report that Fortunatus (or Fortune) Dobbs is the father of Josiah Dobbs, but there is absolutely no evidence to support that. Instead, it appears that John Dobbs came down from Middlesex County, VA, in the 1780s and got a tract of land on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River and lived there for a year before moving over to Wilkes County, GA, and settling on Cedar Creek. In 1790 Elbert was taken from that portion of Wilkes and over the next few years the Dobbs taxpayers living around John were Silas, Josiah, Lodowick (Lott) and Peter. It is almost certain that Lodowick Dobbs was the oldest son of John. Lodowick lived in both Franklin County, GA, and Pendleton District, SC, where he died in 1814.*

*"There has been some confusion between the names Josiah and Joseph for John's son. No Joseph ever shows up in the tax records, and I am confident that Josiah was the son of John and the father of eight children who can be identified [including Josiah].*

*"I am almost certain that the Dobbs family came from Virginia. The Christ Church records of Middlesex County, VA, register a John and Elizabeth Dobbs who had a number of children between 1719 and 1732, but it appears that none lived to adulthood except perhaps the last son, Josiah Dobbs, who was born on Aug. 28, 1732.*

*[It appears likely that John and Elizabeth Dobbs were the parents of Josiah, the father of this John, who moved to GA and from whom our Dobbs family is descended.]*

## **Other Considerations**

Once possibility that I have considered is that John Dobbs and others came over to America as indentured servants. The indenture system in England was quite old, dating back to the medieval ages, and it was the process by which a laborer under contract to agreed to work for another person or corporation for a specified period time without any compensation except in exchange for accommodation and food. This was sometimes used to pay off debts. The period of servitude was traditionally set at seven years. During the 17th century most of the white laborers in Maryland and Virginia came from England as indentured servants. In some cases these workers were treated as no less than an apprentice to the master. In other cases they were sorely mistreated and their status was no more than slavery. I have found a number of records where a John Dobbs is listed as either one who indentured another, a indentured servant or as British deportee (convict laborer). In the records of the Mayor's Office of Philadelphia there is listed a John Dobbs in St. Eustatia in 1772 who indentured one William Logan for a period of 4 years. A similar record is to be found in the "Record Of Indentures Of Individuals Bound Out as Apprentices, Servants, Etc." for the city of Philadelphia . In Peter Wilson Coldham's "Bonded Passengers to America" (1983) there is listed a John Dobbs as having arrived either

arrived in or born in 1745 (1751). In Clifford Neal Smith's "British Deportees To America" (1987) there is listed a John Dobbs as having arrived in 1774.<sup>23456</sup>

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Subject: RE: [DOBBS] Book --- Dobbs Family History Date: Tue, 10 Oct 2000 09:48:15 -0500  
<http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/DOBBS/2000-10/0971189295>

<sup>2</sup> "Indentured servant" Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 1 Feb 2006, 03:38 UTC  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php>

<sup>3</sup> Mayor's Office, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Record of Indentures of Individuals Bound Out as Apprentices, Servants, Etc. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania German Society, 1905.

<sup>4</sup> "Record Of Indentures Of Individuals Bound Out as Apprentices, Servants, Etc. and of German and Other Redemptioners in the Office of the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, October 3, 1771, to October 5, 1773." In The Pennsylvania-German Society Proceedings and Addresses, vol. 16 (1905), Lancaster, PA: 1907. 325p. Reprinted with added index by Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, 1973. 364p.

<sup>5</sup> Coldham, Peter Wilson. Bonded Passengers to America. 9 vols. in 3. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1983. Vol. 7. Norfolk Circuit, 1663-1775: Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. 57p.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, Clifford Neal. British Deportees to America. (British-American Genealogical Research Monographs, 4-7.) McNeal, AZ: Westland Publications. Part 7: 1774-1775. Monograph 7, 1987. 37p.