



The Story of Daniel Mathena, who immigrated to America from England around 1663.

by Ed Powell

Presented at a Matheney family reunion on August 14, 1999

According to genealogical research accomplished in the late 1930s by William Blake Metheny, Esquire, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Daniel Mathena was born at Bossenden Farm on the Faversham Road near Canterbury, County Kent, England sometime around the year 1638 A.D. His father was William Matheny, the great-grandson of a Huguenot refugee from Flanders at the end of the Protestant Reformation. Interestingly, according to William Blake Metheny, Jean Metteneye, Chavelier, Seigneur de Marcke, Marquillies and Poelvoorde, who was the father of the Huguenot refugee, served as Conseiller, Chamberlain, Premier Pannetier and Maitre d'Hotel in the court of the Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor before dying in Spain in 1532. Apparently, Protestantism had reached right into the very court of the Defender of the Catholic Church.

Records indicate Daniel was descended from the "baronial family of de Vaudrey, styled Comtes de Vaudrey, who were cadets of the princely houses of de Thoire and de Villars that ruled the countries of Bresse and Bugey for four centuries." Many of Daniel's ancestors were French noblemen of the chevalier (knight) class who held important offices in the courts of several Dukes of Burgundy and as previously stated in the court of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.

The family name originated in approximately 1180 with Guy de Vaudrey, Chevalier, who gained the title Seigneur de Mathenay following the family's war against the Abbey of Rosieres. The abbey was located on land that became the estate of Guy de Vaudrey after the abbot's army was defeated. That estate was known as the Sieigneurie de Mathenay. According to Fernand Braudel in his book, *The Identity of France*, a sieigneurie is "the feudal domain over which the seigneur or lord could claim rights (e.g. corvee) even if he did not own the land." Today, in Franche-Comte in the Jura region of France are two villages, Vaudrey and Mathenay where the family lines of Mathena, Matheny, Metheny, Metteneye, Mathenay, Methenay, Methaney and various other derivations of the family name had their beginnings.

Daniel immigrated to the Virginia Colony sometime around the turbulent mid-1600s. We do not know on which ship he arrived, but it is generally believed he first set foot in the new world at or near Jamestown, Virginia with his brother Michael. The records of Surry County, Virginia in which Jamestown is located, reflect that a Michael Metteneye purchased a parcel of land in Surry County and that his wife's name was Sarah. Beyond that nothing is known about Michael. After docking at Jamestown, Daniel apparently made his way to Maryland, the Protectorate of Sir

George Calvert, Lord Baltimore. Maryland was established as a Catholic colony under Lord Baltimore but was ostensibly a place where people were free to worship God according to their conscience and thus welcomed people of all faiths. We know that Daniel's grandfather Jean Metteneye was born in Flanders but baptized at Christ Church, Newgate Street, London, on May 28, 1550. Thus, some of the family, which at one time had been Catholics, were by then Protestants and members of the Church of England.

Daniel acquired several small parcels of land or plantations in Charles County, Maryland on the Mattawoman Creek. These plantations were known as: "Mathena's Folly," "Cowland," "Portowne," and "Fernes." Before 1663, he married Sarah Wentworth, the daughter of Thomas Wentworth, Gentleman, of "Wentworth's Rest" and "Wentworth-Woodhouse" Plantations in Charles County. Daniel later acquired Wentworth-Woodhouse Plantation from his father-in-law. Thomas Wentworth was a descendent of the venerable Wentworth-Woodhouse (Wodehouse) families of England. He was a distant relative of Sir Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, Lord Protector of Ireland and Chief Minister to Charles I of England who was beheaded in 1641 on a bill of attainder issued by Parliament in opposition to the Stuart rule of England.

In 1681, Daniel became embroiled in an early Protestant uprising against Lord Baltimore's Catholic dominated government in Maryland. He, along with many Protestant planters on the western shore of Maryland, particularly in Charles County believed there was a Catholic conspiracy with the French and the Seneca Indians to kill all of the Protestant landowners in the area. There had been several Indian raids in Maryland and Virginia during which colonists had been killed. Since the raids took place in areas populated mainly by Protestants a rumor started that Lord Baltimore was behind these attacks and was in league with the French Catholics and Indians. There was a strong hatred of Catholics in both the mother country and in the colonies at this period of history. Lord Baltimore had been a Protestant but had converted and this made Protestants in the New World even more suspicious of him and his motives.

The leaders of the uprising were John Coode and Josiah Fendall. Fendall was a former Lieutenant Governor of Maryland who sided with the Protestants, perhaps for his own ambitious reasons, hoping that he might become the governor of the colony if Lord Baltimore were deposed. Coode, a minister of the Church of England, later successfully led another Protestant uprising in 1689. Coode was described by James McSherry in his book, *History of Maryland*, (Baltimore Book Company, 1904), as "a man of loose morals and desparate habits." Both Coode and Fendall were arrested and convicted of treason but were not sentenced to death. Fendall fled to Virginia following the aborted uprising in 1681. Daniel Mathena was also arrested along with several other men who had gathered at the home of one of the group and were plotting to take up arms to set Coode and Fendall free. They were brought before the Charles County court and were examined by the justices on August 9, 1681.

At the Charles County proceedings, Daniel was accused with spreading rumors to incite rebellion by telling a tale of an Indian who came to his farm with a basket of letters, purportedly from Lord Baltimore that he was taking to the Seneca Indians. When Daniel's wife Sarah allegedly asked the Indian why he was taking letters written in English to the Senecas who could not read them, the Indian reportedly said that the French would translate them for the Senecas. This story was seen by the other Protestants as clear evidence that the rumors of a conspiracy to destroy

them were true and further inflamed the situation, according to court documents relating to the hearing and subsequent trial. Daniel was taken to St. Maries City, the capital of Maryland at that time, where he testified before a Council on August 12, 1681 that he did not know the name of the Indian who was now dead. In his defense, he said that if he had said anything "undecent or injurious it had been for want of witt."

According to William Blake Metheny, only Fendall, Coode and one other leader of the uprising where actually tried before a court, found guilty and sentenced to banishment from Maryland. He reasons this was because Lord Baltimore was under pressure from many in the British government at the time who sided with the Protestants. He also said, "It is possible, and even probable under the circumstances that Daniel Mathena was offered the choice of standing trial or leaving the colony. In any event, he is described as a planter of Stafford County, Virginia, on December 4, 1682, when he sold 'Wentworth-Woodhouse' and 'Cowland' plantations situated in Charles County, Maryland, apparently not daring to return for the transaction through his attorney-in-fact, John Munn, who appears by subsequent proceedings of the Council of Maryland to have failed to account to Matheny for the purchase price, apparently relying upon Matheny's state of informal exile and the unfriendliness of the Maryland authorities to accomplish his object." Thus, it appears that Daniel, who was then living in Stafford County rather than face trial in Maryland was the victim of an unscrupulous lawyer who stole the proceeds of the sale of Daniel's Maryland property. Fendall and, perhaps Coode, also fled to Stafford County but Coode subsequently returned to lead the successful 1689 Protestant Rebellion that forever changed Maryland.

In 1683, Daniel and his son-in-law Solomon Day, the husband of Daniel's daughter, Susanna, jointly purchased 500 acres of farmland on the Aquia Creek that was part of a parcel of land known at the Hope Patent. Daniel farmed 300 acres and Solomon Day farmed the other 200 acres. By November 26, 1683, Daniel fell ill and wrote out his last will and testament which reads as follows:

"In the Name of God Amen I Daniell Mathena this 26th Day of November 1683 being sick in body but of Perfect memory doe make & ordain this my Last Will & Testamt. First I bequeath my Soule into th hands of God my maker & my body to the Earth with Christian Buriall att the discreation of my Executrix hereafter named and as for my Corporall Estate I bequeath in manner & forme followinge-Item first I give & bequeath unto my Daughtr: Susanna Day A Mair now in her husbands Possession & one Cow called Yellow both them & their increase to her and heirs of her owne body fore Ever -Item I give and bequeath unto my sone Wm one hundred Acres of Land Lyinge in Mattawoman in Maryland after the decease of his Mother also one Mair Called Ginney & three head of Cattle viz one three year old heifer one two yeare old & Earling Mair beign Cropt & Overkeeld on the right Ear, Cropt & Overkeeld & underkeeld on the left Eare

-Item I give & bequeath unto my Daughtr Mary Mathena one Cow & one heifer being Cropt & slit & the underpart taken out of the Right Ear, crop overkeeld & A hole in the right Eare

-Item I give & bequeath to my Daughtr Eliz. Mathea three head of Cattle two Cows & one heifer Binge Crop & overkeeld & hole in the Right & A Crop & overkeeld & A nick under the left all which Cattle & female increase to bee my Childrens till they Come of age or married & then the Male also

-Item I give unto my Daughtr Sarah Mathena one yearling heifer with increase as aforesd

-Item I give unto my sone Danll. Mathena one younge Mair & one yearling heifer with all the increase of the Mair & the heifer as also the Rest,

And all the Rest of my Estate personall & Realle I give to my Loving wife Sarah Mathena & appoint her my said Wife my whole & Sole Execx. of this my Last Will & Testam. To which I have hereunto putt my hand & Seale this Day & yeare above written Soe help me God

-Signim Dannel Mathena:

Signed & Sealed before ye Martin Scarlett and John X Cogen-Capt Scarlett came here in Court & made oath to the Will this 8th Day of Sepr Anno Dom 1686. And was then Recorded."

Daniel is believed to have died on October 14, 1685 and to have been buried on his Hope plantation. In 1991, Mrs. Alice Brown, a Matheny descendant and family researcher located the remains of a head stone that once stood on property now owned by Mr. George Fillipovich. The stone which had long ago been removed from the grave site by persons unknown was photographed in 1971 and was shown to bear the inscription, "D. M. October 14, 1685." A stone of this description was also reported by George Harrison Sanford King as a footnote on page 75 of his book, *The Register of Overwharton Parish Stafford County Virginia 1723-1758 And Sundry Historical And Genealogical Notes*, published in 1961. At the time the stone was located by Mrs. Brown, it had fallen over and had been severely damaged by lawn mowing that had chipped away all but the "1685" portions of the inscription. Mr. Fillopovich speculated that a former owner of the land may have moved the headstone to make way for a gravel road on the property. The stone was originally found by Fillipovich propped against a tree several feet from the gravel road. To preserve the stone from further damage, Mrs. Brown, with the permission of Mr. Fillipovich removed the stone from the Aquia Creek property and turned it over to the Rector of Aquia Church for safekeeping. It is now located in the Anne E. Moncure building used as the Aquia Episcopal Church office. Mr. Fillopovich subsequently released a negative and several copies of the photograph taken of the stone when it was in good condition to the author of this biographical sketch. The photograph on the back of this program shows the stone as it appeared in approximately 1971.

According to Stafford Court records, an inventory of Daniel's estate was made on November 16, 1686 and showed that at that time his estate consisted of: "4 Cows and three calves by their Syeds; 2 Cows and one yearling and advantage; 1 bead (bed), 1 bolster, one Rugg and blanckett; a parcell of Flax; a parcell of old Coopers Tools; 2 broken Iron potts, a pcell (parcel) of old pewter, two old guns, one payle, one piggin, 3 old trays; one table." The court records also

reflect that Sarah Metheney, as Daniel's executrix appeared before the court on March 9, 1686/7 to verify the correctness of the inventory.

Sarah Matheney lived for several years after the death of Daniel but there is no indication that she ever remarried. She was a frequent petitioner in Stafford County Court in disputes with her son William over disposition of her "widow's third" of the land and other property matters. She and William also became embroiled in a court case over a manor house, which may have been the home of her deceased daughter Susanna Day, which was claimed by their Catholic neighbor and political rival George Brent, a local lawyer and Attorney General of Virginia. Brent apparently claimed the land under escheat laws and rented the home to a Joseph Eyres. When Eyres tried to take possession of the house, Sarah and William refused to give him the keys. This led to them being taken into custody by the Sheriff and a court case ensued. William was not able to produce documents to establish ownership of the property and Brent, eventually, won the case and took possession of that parcel of land. The remaining property (300 acres) passed down to Daniel's son William Wentworth Matheny, thence to William's son Daniel, and finally to Daniel's son William. Thus, Daniel Mathena's great grandson disposed of the land by indenturing it to John Peyton of Stony Hill on July 31, 1756. Peyton was, at the time, a vestryman at Aquia Episcopal Church and the owner of Peyton's Ordinary, located just south of the church on what is now US Highway One.

From Stafford and Aquia Creek, the Matheny family spread westward and then to the "Four Corners" of America over the next two centuries. While the name has been spelled many different ways, e.g. Matteneye, Mathena, Matheny, Matheney, Metheny, Metheney, Matheneye, Mathenay, Methenay, and so forth, most of these families have traced their ancestry directly back to Daniel and Sarah Wentworth Mathena of Charles County, Maryland and Hope Plantation, Aquia Creek, Stafford County, Virginia. For this reason, many of Daniel and Sarah's descendants have joined together on August 14, 1999, to honor the memory of these early immigrants to the American colony.

They, like most of the people who came to the New World, were not rich and had to work hard for what they owned. They were products of their turbulent times. They knew religious strife and persecution. They knew fear as they faced the perils of an Atlantic crossing and death at the hand of native Americans. Their religious prejudices and political views were shaped by the events that were taking place in England and on European Continent and by the history and traditions of their past. They carried the seeds of ideas and the lust for freedom that were instrumental in the birth of a new nation described by Abraham Lincoln as one "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

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