

ADDENDUM

to

A HISTORY OF THE SHIELDS FAMILY

Compiled by John Edgar Shields

December 1969

1. Introductory letter from the author
2. The Shields Family Prior to 1600
3. Origins of the American Shields Families
4. Table: The Descent of William Shields of Antrim (c. 1600--1655)
5. The "Ten Brothers"
6. Shields Family History (by William Hathaway, written 1790)
7. The Shields Family (by Z. Armstrong, from Notable Southern Families)
8. An Early View of the Emmitsburg District
9. The Household Effects of William Shields of Armagh
10. Shields Family Wills: Jane Williams Shields; James; Henry
11. Tennessee Migrations of the Children of William Shields of Armagh
12. Table: Children of William and Jane Williams Shields
13. The Story of Shields Station Tavern
14. The Lincoln--Shields Duel
15. Obituaries -- John Henry Shields line

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December 1969

Dear Shields relative:

Several years ago, after several decades of procrastination, I set about the task of compiling a brief history of my own immediate line of the Shields family in America. The end result, published in 1968 through the kindness of my cousin J. Richard Hollenbaugh of Triangle Press in Harrisburg, Pa., had grown, by the time of its publication, to proportions far beyond what I had originally envisioned. Notwithstanding the detail I was able to include, however, there was much missing from the book concerning the European background of the family as well as the many collateral lines in America, many of which, both logic and the weight of evidence indicated, derived from a common ancestor in the British Isles.

It seems inevitable in assembling a work of genealogy that the moment publication is accomplished new and fascinating data suddenly appears and previously unknown relatives, each seemingly possessed of reams of relevant information, make their presence known. The wide distribution made of my 1968 book has given rise to a flow of correspondence of rather awesome proportions and the resultant discovery of much additional information on the family.

In addition to the many documents, genealogies, and sometimes just "scraps" of information which this correspondence has brought me, I have had the distinct pleasure of expanding my own personal acquaintance among distant Shields relatives ranging from second- to seventh- or eighth-cousins. Visits with such persons, some in northern Maryland and southern Pennsylvania, and a great many in East Tennessee, have elicited many new insights on our family and have formed the basis for a number of warm--and, I am sure, continuing--friendships.

I have compiled a few of the documents which have come to my attention, and have, additionally, written several commentaries and assembled several tables on aspects of the family which I hope will prove of interest to those of our many relatives to whom it has been possible to send this addendum. May I ask that its recipients make the compilation available for the examination of other members of their families and other Shields' of their acquaintance who share an interest in our family.

A few comments are in order about the enclosures and about several inaccuracies or incomplete statements in my book which subsequent research has disclosed.

POLITICS: Of interest to his many descendants are the politics of William Shields of Armagh (1728-1797). Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh's Maryland Records--Colonial, Revolutionary, County, Church, Vol. I (William & Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1915) lists William Shields as having been registered as a Democratic-Republican in the Presidential election of 1796. The presumption is that he voted for Thomas Jefferson in the latter's unsuccessful campaign of that year against Federalist John Adams. While William in all probability had supported the Presidency of his former commander-in-chief George Washington, by the time of the 1796 elections (one year before William's death), differing regional interests had given rise to the beginnings of political parties. In general, the urban seaboard and New England adhered largely to Federalist views, the western

frontier and the South supported policies advanced by Jefferson and Madison, and the middle States--away from the seaboard--were mixed. Later Democratic preferences in our own line of the family are suggested by my second-great-grandfather Ebenezer's choice of names for his sons, including Andrew Jackson, Jefferson, and William Van Buren. Politically, the family later became quite diverse, but in its early generations in America its allegiance seems predominantly to have been with the candidates who espoused the views of the farmers and frontiersmen, rather than with those who reflected the views of seaboard mercantilism.

SECOND GENERATION IN MARYLAND: In my book I had suggested that by his middle years, Ebenezer, eighth son of William of Armagh, was the only one of William's children remaining in the Emmitsburg district of north central Maryland. In actuality, William Shields II, fourth son of William of Armagh, continued to reside in the area throughout his life, and his onetime home still stands, restored by its recent owners. William II did, as I reported, die in Fairfield County, Ohio; he did so, however, in the course of a visit to his children and grandchildren who were there resident, but was not himself an Ohio resident. Ebenezer, who remained associated with the Emmitsburg area throughout his life, I had described as a farmer. This was only partially correct; he, like his father and his own son John Henry, was also a surveyor.

FAMILY WILLS: Perhaps more than any other single documentary source, wills offer insight into the mode of life, family relationships, and character of their makers. My inclusion of the wills of William and Ebenezer Shields in the Shields family history added a dimension to our understanding of their circumstances and, perhaps, of their characters. In the attached compilation I have included the texts of three additional wills: those of Jane Williams Shields (wife of William of Armagh), James Shields (William's second son), and Henry Shields (William's third son, and the apparent family pioneer in the Tennessee migrations which most of the second generation made). James' will is of particular interest for its exposition of his perhaps contradictory views concerning slavery and its intimations concerning the settlement of his father's estate. Additionally, I have included notes appended to the will of William Shields which reveal certain developments relative to its subsequent administration.

CHILDHOOD OF WILLIAM SHIELDS: The arrival of nine-year-old William Shields of Armagh in America, orphaned enroute by the death of his father and younger brother, has occasioned much speculation on how he fared in the years immediately following his arrival. Histories of other branches of our family, including those of William's two great-uncles (William and James, deported to America by Cromwell in the 1650's) clarify to a great extent the question of how and with whom William lived (see attached account). Until he reached the age of independence and moved westward to the mountains of Frederick County, it is evident that he lived with his deceased father's first cousin-William (and probably later with that relative's daughter, Eliza, William's second cousin) in New Castle, Delaware, and later in Cecil County, Maryland. At one point in his youth, it appears that William visited the above William after the latter had moved to Rockingham County, Virginia. My suggestion in the Shields family book that William may have learned the surveyor's profession in this period through apprenticeship, while not disproven by more recent discoveries, becomes much less likely. It is highly probable, however, that his assorted cousins included those conversant with this area of knowledge, and his own abilities in this regard may well have been acquired at this point in his life.

GIVEN NAMES: The extensive repetition of given names characteristic of many families in former as well as present times is particularly evident in the several branches of the Shields family. Most common appear to be John, James, Robert, David, and William--with the latter probably winning the prize for

frequency of use. In my own immediate line, every generation in the very direct line since 1600 has had one or more Williams; William of Armagh's fourth son was so-named, and his descent, as well as that of his brothers and sisters, included a plethora of Williams. William of Armagh's father was William, as also was his great-uncle (oldest brother of his grandfather John), and his great grandfather, born in County Antrim in 1600. A number of these earlier Williams could properly be referred to as "William of Armagh." Rather than parochialize the commentaries which I include in this compilation by referring to "our William," however, I simply use the "William of Armagh" term to refer to my third great grandfather, born in Armagh in 1728, who founded my own line of the Shields family by coming to America in 1737.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR SERVICE: In my Shields family book I mentioned the formation by William Shields of the Second Frederick County Militia Company at Emmitsburg in 1775. In January 1776, the Maryland State Convention ordered a levy of 1,440 men for the defense of Maryland; these were procured in part by new recruitment and in part by assimilation of the existing independent militia companies, including that of William Shields. The State was divided into several districts for this purpose, one of which comprised Frederick County. With Brigadier General Thomas Johnson, Jr., in overall command, there were four battalions formed in the county. Officers of the Third Battalion were Colonel Jacob Good, Lt.-Col. William Blair, 1st Major Samuel Shaw, 2nd Major William Shields, and Quartermaster Joseph McKilip.

The degree of participation in the Revolution by William's sons is of considerable interest to their respective posterities. John, the eldest, as I noted in my book, served as Ensign in his father's original militia company (he reached his twentieth birthday in 1775, its year of organization), and is presumed to have remained with that organization after its assimilation into the Maryland component of what would become the Continental Army. I had indicated that William's second son, James, was enrolled as a sergeant in the same company, but this appears to have been erroneous conclusion on my part. A study of sources beyond those I originally consulted shows a James Shields, Sr., and James Shields, Jr., resident in upper Frederick County in the 1770's. The former attended political meetings with William Shields in 1770 and later; it appears to have been this person's son, James Shields, Jr., who was enrolled in William's militia company, and not William's own son James. (Only one source of those several which identify the officers and noncoms of the company included the "junior" after James Shields' name--thus the natural but incorrect earlier conclusion that it was William's son. James and Henry, sons of William, did indeed see military service in the 1790's in Tennessee as officers of militia under Governor John Sevier; additionally, they and other members of their family may have seen service in the Revolution, since by the time of its conclusion in 1783 James would have been 25 or 26, Henry 23, William II 21, and Samuel 19.

SCOTTISH ANCESTRY: Attached documents describe a connected ancestry for the family in northern Ireland as early as 1600, and suggest ancestry many generations before that time in the same country. This would appear to confute my earlier speculation on a family tradition of Scottish ancestry or, at the very least, would render my estimate of the time of migration from Scotland to Ireland clearly in error. Curiously, however, the stories of Scottish ancestry continue to appear; a number of the documents which I have encountered in the past year or more, including even some of those which establish the family in Ireland before 1600, are insistent that the family is Scotch-Irish--that is, of original Scottish blood become resident in Ireland. None is explicit, however, on how this ancestry--assuming it to be a fact--was established. I have offered some comments on this in the attached article, "Origins of the American Shields Families."

TENNESSEE MIGRATIONS: As will be noted in the attached, William of Armagh's great-uncle, James Shields (1635-1710), had grandchildren and great-grandchildren who settled in East Tennessee (originally a part of North Carolina, then the independent State of Frankland--later Franklin, then reannexed to North Carolina prior to achieving territorial status and ultimate Statehood on its own) several decades prior to arrival in that wilderness region of the first of William of Armagh's children. As a consequence, there are a great many Shields' and Shields-related families in the State today, most of whom can claim as a common ancestor William of Armagh's great-grandfather, the William Shields born in County Antrim, Ireland, about 1600 (see attached table). In the case of William of Armagh's immediate family, nine of his eleven children ultimately reached Tennessee, and several of them established families which remained in the area to figure large in its economic and political history. The story of these brothers and sisters of my own ancestor Ebenezer is far from complete. From very piecemeal records and oral sources I have compiled a brief article on this migration of our family, which is attached. It does not pretend either to completeness or absolute accuracy, but does serve to expand the story of the development of our line of the family in its second generation in America.

THE TEN BROTHERS: Repeatedly in my research I have encountered references to "the ten brothers" of the Shields family--children of Robert and Nancy Stockton Shields. Robert was of the fifth generation from William Shields of Antrim; his father, John Shields, was a first cousin of William of Armagh. I have included in the attached an article containing highlights of the lives of these courageous pioneers--for such, indeed, they were. One story, which remains to be written, would hold particular interest to students of American history as it developed in the southern Appalachian highlands. This Shields branch settled in Cade's Cove, high in the western reaches of the Great Smoky Mountains, and remained in that isolated and anthropologically fascinating region for a number of generations.

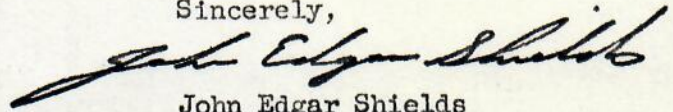
Several excellent works exist which describe with authenticity the East Tennessee locale of so much Shields family history. A recent work by F. Van Wyck Mason, Wild Horizon, set in the East Tennessee of the 1770's, offers many insights on life in the area at the time that the ten brothers were building Shields Fort (see attached), a decade before the arrival of Henry Shields, first of William of Armagh's children to reach the area. There are many other excellent works on this fascinating region. The July 1962 National Geographic Magazine includes an article on Cade's Cove in which frequent mention is made of the Shields family. Christy, by Catherine Marshall, while set in a much later period, also offers an excellent picture of life in the Anglo-Saxon enclaves of the Southern Highlands.

SHIELDS STATION: In recent months I have had a most interesting correspondence with a young man living in Knoxville, Tennessee, named Thomas Roach. A few years ago, Mr. Roach purchased the old Shields Station Tavern at Blaine, Tennessee, a few miles northeast of Knoxville. Since that time he has spent much time and money restoring the structure which for more than one hundred and thirty years was owned by Dr. Samuel Shields and his descendants. Dr. Shields, a younger son of William of Armagh's second son, James, left an exhaustive record in the form of letters, invoices, deeds, and other documents--all found in a barrel in the attic of the tavern by Mr. Roach. He has kindly offered me full access to this collection for whatever research purpose I might wish to put it to; while my own time and the remoteness of the family line concerned may preclude my taking full advantage of his offer, it is a most fascinating prospect. I have enclosed the text of a recent newspaper article describing his efforts and the history of the Shields Station Tavern in which he rightfully takes much pride.

RELATED GENEALOGIES: Perhaps the most common type of document which communication with distant branches of the family has brought me over the past year or two is the genealogical table, outlining vital statistics of members of Shields-descended lines in many instances previously unknown to me. There are too many such tables to identify each in this work, but they range from short sketches to detailed family charts. I welcome further accretions of this nature, since a substantial portion of my mail from remote Shields' has to do with locating "missing links" in the correspondents' lines of descent.

I commend the attached compilation to your attention in the hope that you will find it as intriguing in the reading as I have in the writing, and that you will share it with other Shields relatives who have in common with us an interest in the subject of our family. It has been truly said that the person caught up in the avocation of family history is like the man who rides a tiger: the ride is enjoyable, but getting off presents major difficulties. I find the ride most enjoyable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Edgar Shields". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John Edgar Shields

The Shields Family Prior to 1600

(The following account is quoted verbatim from Kansas Pioneer Families by John A. Shields, late of Seymour, Indiana.)

"The 'connected line of descent' of the Shields Family begins about the year 1600, but for more than a thousand years before that the early historical records of Europe are replete with reference to the various members of this family.

"The ancient chronicles of Ireland are the oldest and most complete historical records of early European civilization. Land records, court records, church records, and records of other proceedings were officially registered for many centuries during the Middle Ages, and enormous quantities of them are now available. The 'ard Righ Records' are especially valuable. Only certain families had the 'right' to own land; the land itself passed from father to oldest son, but the other sons inherited the 'right' to acquire land. This right, being very valuable, was carefully guarded by registration in a kind of land-record court. Through these records, students of early Irish history have traced the Shields name back to the man who first bore it.

"The Irish Shields Family is an offshoot of the clan of O'Brien. Pre-Christian Ireland comprised of five Kingdoms, the southernmost of which was Munster. The O'Briens were the royal family of Munster, whose capital was at Cashel. In the third or fourth century, so runs the record, a younger son of the O'Brien who was then King, upon attaining his majority, traveled over Europe for some 20 years. On his return, he was made a Knight and invested with the honorary title, 'Shields.' (The Old Irish form of the title is 'Siadhal,' the Latin is 'Sedulius,' the Modern Irish and English is 'Shields.') The word means 'cultured, cosmopolitan, polished, mannerly, scholarly,' and refers to the qualities the man acquired during his travels. He assumed it as his Family name and registered it in legal form. All of the Irish Shields are descendants of this Family.

"Charles Shields (he signed his work in Latin--Sedulius Caelius) was one of the first of the family to gain prominence in history. He was a native of Munster, lived in the fifth century, and spent most of his life in Milan, Italy. He is known as 'The Christian Vergil.' He wrote 'Carmen Paschale' and introduced rhyme into Latin poetry.

"There are six of the Munster Shields (usually referred to as 'The Six Siadhals') mentioned in 'Annals of the Four Masters,' a monumental collection of chronological history of Ireland between the years 758 and 855. One of these was present at the Council of Rome in 721; another was Abbott of Kildare, and died in 828. The most eminent of them was a teacher in the University at Liege, Belgium, during the reign of the Emperor Lothair, 840 to 855.

"John Duns Shields was perhaps the most outstanding member of the early Family of Shields. He usually signed his work Sedulius Scotus, or merely Scotus, as it was in Latin. (Scotus is Scotia, the early name of Ireland.) He was a Franciscan friar. Both 1265 and 1275 are given as the date of his birth; he died in Cologne Nov. 8, 1308. He was born in Munster, studied in Merton College, Oxford, where he became a Fellow, began teaching in Paris in 1304, then went to Cologne, and is buried in the Franciscan Church there. He was a famous scholar and wrote many Commentaries on the Philosophy of Aristotle. Finally he summarized his work in 'Opus Oxoniense,' which comprises his whole philosophical and theological teaching. Soon after his death decrees were passed requiring that his doctrine be taught in all Franciscan schools, which they are even to this present time. There are two great theological doctrines: the Thomist, founded by St. Thomas Aquinas and adopted by the Dominicans; and the Scotist, founded by Sedulius Scotus (John Duns Shields) and adopted by the Franciscans. His rank among philosophers was and is the highest. The theological question of the Middle Ages was 'predestination' versus 'Freedom of the will.' Scotus was, and is,

the pre-eminent authority favoring the latter. Among his outstanding treatises (or text books) are 'De Rectoribus Christianis'--Concerning Christian Rulers. They are noteworthy contributions to Christian Ethics, still used for the instruction of Christian Princes on the ethics and duties peculiar to that state of life. He produced many other works that are looked upon as standard authorities by the Catholic Church, not the least interesting of which are his 'Letters,' published in the 'Neuses Archiv, II, 188 and IV, 315.' In them he narrates the vicissitudes of the Irish exiles in Europe. An excellent article about him appears in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

"Scot Schields was another prominent member of the Munster Family who was connected with the Court of Charlemagne. He also called himself Sedulius Scotus, but should not be confused with John Duns Shields, though he lived at about the same time, 742 to 815. A biography of this scholar, by Hellmann, was written in German and published in Munich in 1906. It is not entirely clear that his actual name was Scot; some believe the name was adopted from Scotia or Ireland, and referred to his place of origin. He is referred to as a philosopher, but he was more of a lawyer and diplomat than a theologian. He largely directed the political affairs of the reign of Charlemagne and was the originator of the political trend that the continent of Europe followed for more than a thousand years after his death.

"There was still another Scot Shields (Sedulius Scotus) in the ninth century who taught in St. Lambert's College, in Liege, Belgium. He was a famous Greek scholar, scribe and poet. According to Montfaucon, it was he who copied the Greek Psalter, now 'Number 8047' in the Bibliotheque de L'Arsenale, in Paris. His poems to the number of 90 were published by Traube in the 'Poetae Aevi Carolini,' which is a portion of the 'Monumentae Germania Historica.' It is believed that toward the end of his days he established a school in Milan, and it is quite probable that he died there.

"For many centuries, beginning before the Christian Era, Ireland was the chief center of culture in Europe. Scores of Shields are mentioned in European historical records prior to 1600. They were distinguished as scholars, founders and conductors of schools, authors of poems, hymns, and religious commentaries, and teachers in Royal Courts all over Europe for more than a thousand years. Many were Priests, Bishops and Cardinals who participated in the great Church Councils of the Middle Ages. One branch of the family became the hereditary guardians of 'medical secrets'--the 'Apothecaries' and Chemists' Guild.' Vast quantities of historical data concerning them are to be found in the Sorbonne in Paris, the University of Dublin, the Vatican Library in Rome, the Congressional Library in Washington, and in other libraries throughout the world."

Note: The cited work from which the above is quoted does not appear in any of the catalogs of the Library of Congress and is therefore presumed to have been unpublished and perhaps circulated in duplicated form. Its author, John A. Shields, was extremely active during his lifetime in matters historical and genealogical; among other works, also unpublished, which he authored is "The Family of Dr. Seth Wesley and Isabelle Brown Shields." John A. Shields was a descendant of one of the famed Ten Brothers of the Shields family, descendants in turn of James the Immigrant (b. 1635). There are many Shields' and Shields-related families in the Middle West today; many of those in Indiana are descended from the two oldest Shields brothers--William and James--who were born in County Armagh in the early 1600's and who, as deportees, reached America via the West Indies. Indiana Shields' descended from William (oldest son of William Shields of Ireland, born in County Antrim in 1600) are commonly referred to as "Brownstown Shields" after the community in which a prominent member settled; descendants of James in the area are styled the "Seymour Shields."

Origins of the American Shields Families

---John Edgar Shields

(Note: This account, while expressed in my prose and containing a number of historical and geographical interpolations the result of my own research, is based in very large measure on the work of the late John A. Shields of Seymour, Indiana, whose family line in America descended through that of the "ten brothers." For purposes of brevity I have rearranged and condensed information taken both from his correspondence and his several monographs on the Shields family--of whose history he was a dedicated and widely informed scholar. To his data concerning lines far-removed from his own--particularly that of my own descent, through William Shields of Armagh (1728-1797)--I have made corrections and additions based on a closer familiarity with some personalities and events than he could have been expected to develop.---J.E.S.)

Histories of the Shields family most commonly ascribe its origin to the O'Briens, ruling family of the Kingdom of Munster, southernmost of the five kingdoms which comprised Ireland for much of the medieval era. The story of how one of the O'Briens had the name Siadhal ("debonair") conferred upon himself as a title of knighthood and the subsequent evolution of the name to Shields is recounted in many early sources and is generally accepted as being genealogically creditable. The capital of the Kingdom of Munster, and thus the probable home of many of the original Irish Shields' for a number of generations, was Cashel, which lies slightly to the east of Tipperary in the present Republic of Eire.

Some time prior to 1500 a branch of the Shields family, presumably from the Munster area of southern Ireland, settled in the northern part of the country in what would later be known as County Tyrone. From there the Shields' spread into the neighboring regions of Antrim and Armagh. Branches of the family were thus in Ulster (as the area has been styled since the time of the "five kingdoms") by the time that James VI of Scotland became the first King of Great Britain. James I, as he was then styled, created in the early 1600's the Ulster Plantation in northern Ireland, into which area he brought about the immigration of large numbers of Scots, mostly from the Lowlands. Between 1610 and 1620 counties were formally created to replace the former loosely-defined chiefdoms and other political entities of the Kingdom of Ireland. Ulster thereafter consisted of the nine northern counties of Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan, Antrim, Down, Armagh, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone. The latter six, which ultimately became predominantly Protestant (chiefly as a result of the heavy Scottish immigration), were constituted in the present century as Northern Ireland. It was in this area, and particularly in Counties Antrim and Armagh, that the direct ancestors of the most numerous Shields family in America dwelt from at least the fifteenth century onward.

Before describing the connected line of the family, which dates from about 1600, it is appropriate to treat with certain traditions of ancestry which have developed over the years. Many of the Shields' in the subject line in America regard their ancestry as being Scotch-Irish. As that term is most accurately employed, it refers principally to those families which migrated from Scotland to Ulster in the 16th and 17th centuries. In Ireland the Scottish identity was maintained. Intermarriage with the Irish was the exception rather than the rule, for a variety of national and cultural reasons most prominent of which were religious differences. The Lowland Scottish were mainly Calvinists (the term "Presbyterian" would not come into use until some time later), while the Ulster Irish, despite the impact of the Reformation, remained predominantly Roman Catholic. However, there were--as will be noted--a number of the Ulster Irish families, including our own, which over the period from about 1510 to

1550 became Protestant. Among such convert families the incidence of inter-marriage with Scots was greater than was the case with the Catholic Irish. The resultant mix in Ulster, which included both native Irish and the largely unassimilated "Scotch-Irish," as they became known, later comprised a major wave of migration to North America; their role in opening and defending the expanding frontier of European settlement in the New World is celebrated in American history.

From a number of sources with the appearance of reliability, it is accepted generally that the Ulster Shields families ancestral to the subject American line were in northern Ireland well before the main Scottish migrations into the area began. It is, of course, not impossible that a Scottish immigrant into Ulster was the progenitor of the present Shields line; there are, indeed, Shields' to be found in Scotland, even though the name is accounted principally Irish and English. In some American branches of the family, a tradition of descent from the Scottish clan MacLeod persists; the existence of the Scottish town of Shielraig adjacent to the ancestral MacLeod seat of Dunvegan and the presence of nearby Lake Shiel are cited as confirmation of the claimed connection. It has been suggested that the tradition of Scottish ancestry may have arisen after several Shields' of the subject line reached the New World and were indiscriminately termed Scotch-Irish because they had come from Ulster. A variety of beliefs appears to exist within the family concerning nationality of its ancestry. One school maintains that, despite some generations of residence in northern Ireland, the Shields' who came to America were originally from Scotland (place and clan, if any, generally unspecified) and maintained, through their years of "exile," their national integrity--their line untainted by Irish blood. The reverse attitude is also encountered among Shields' who point out that over a significant period of early medieval history Ireland was a leading center of European culture while Scotland was a pagan wilderness whose inhabitants were little better than animals; according to this view, the Shields' were--and are--purely Irish, and thank God (either Protestant or Catholic) for it!

The question will perhaps remain unresolved, but in laying it aside it seems fair to observe that no known evidence exists which would confirm the tradition of Scottish ancestry. Conversely, there is much to demonstrate the presence in Ireland over many centuries of Shields' circumstantially associated with--if not related to--members of the connected line, which begins about 1600. The possibility of early Scottish connections with the family is by no means disproved by existing family history, but neither is it in any wise confirmed. The weight of evidence seems sufficiently heavy in support of the thesis of ancient Irish ancestry, however, that the burden of contrary proof must lie with those who challenge it. It is nevertheless worthy of note that several members of the connected family in America possessed of impeccable credentials of scholarship--including, among others, the late internationally respected theologian, Charles Woodruff Shields of Princeton University--were unequivocal in asserting their ancestry in Ulster was Scotch-Irish.

There were, to be sure, other European Shields families, including the Norman, German, Scandinavian, and English. In America, those Shields families which came from Ireland and England are the ones principally represented, with the Irish Shields' by far the most numerous. Of the Irish Shields', those from Ulster predominate, and of the Ulster families, that which has become most populous in America is generally acknowledged to be that which descended from one William Shields who was born on the shores of Lough Neagh in northern Ireland about the year 1600.

William Shields of Antrim

Ireland's Lough Neagh (pronounced "lock nay"), lying to the west of Northern Ireland's capital city of Belfast, is the largest lake in the British Isles, washing the shores of five of the Ulster counties. In the year 1600 a number of Shields families were well-established in areas adjacent to the Lough, particularly in Antrim and Armagh. At this time these jurisdictions were part of one of the two principal earldoms which comprised the province of Ulster, and were not yet formally constituted as counties. Within a few decades, however--by 1620--they would become so.

The area was sparsely populated, essentially rural with some small villages but no cities worthy of the name. (In 1604 Belfast, northern Ireland's most populous community, was a village of some 500 persons.) Farming, the raising of sheep for wool, and some fishing in the Lough were the principal sources of livelihood. While some flax was grown, it was not until the 1690's and later that the Irish linen industry became a significant factor in the economy of the region. Lacking information to the contrary, we must assume that the Shields' families in Ulster engaged in one or more of these most common pursuits. It is known that by the early or middle sixteenth century some of these Shields' had given up the Catholic faith and turned to the doctrines of the growing Protestant movement. To one such family was born about 1600 a son named William.

Little is known of his life or of his immediate origins. He is believed to have spent the greater part of his life in County Antrim where he had been born, "on the shores of Lough Neagh." Family tradition holds that he was "resettled" in Armagh about 1650, when Cromwell's soldiers killed, deported, and otherwise scattered over 100,000 inhabitants of the area. It is generally accepted that William was a victim of the Cromwell persecutions, and his death in 1655 is attributed to the rigors imposed on those who supported the restoration of the British monarchy.

William had four sons, born over the years from 1630 to 1650. They were William, James, Daniel, and John.

The Exiles

From all evidence it seems clear--and not a little ironic--that the first Shields' to reach North America did so involuntarily. Rather than intrepid adventurers seeking opportunity and new worlds to conquer, they were political dissidents sentenced to "transportation" by the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. William and James, the two oldest sons, had grown to young manhood in Ireland during a period of widespread unrest and violence which touched every corner of the British Isles. The nature of their offense against the Commonwealth is not known; the fact of their deportation at such an early age (rather than being "resettled"--the lot of many of their contemporaries), even allowing for the summary justice of the time, suggests that their opposition to Cromwell took the form of more than mere vocal expression of disaffection.

Sometime between 1653 and 1655 both brothers were deported to the Barbados Islands in the West Indies. Here they remained for several years. In the same period their father died in northern Ireland (in 1655), his death either caused or hastened by Roundhead oppression. Their two younger brothers still in Ireland, Daniel and John, were but children at this point--Daniel in his early teens, and John several years younger.

In 1658 William and James secured passage on a chattel boat (slave ship plying between Africa and Virginia, and not "cattle boat," as some members of the family have misconstrued it), and landed at Williamsburg, Virginia--- in all probability the first Shields' in the New World. It was at this point that the careers of the two brothers diverged.

I. William Shields the Immigrant

Born in County Antrim in 1630, William, oldest of the four sons of William Shields of Antrim, arrived in Virginia in 1658, a bachelor in his late twenties. His arrival year was that in which Oliver Cromwell was succeeded as Lord Protector by his ~~brother~~^{son} Richard; the mounting unrest in the British Isles which accompanied the disintegration of the Commonwealth had resulted in a progressive decline in colonial administration, and it would appear that neither William nor his brother James was impaired in the undertaking of a new career by his status as an exiled dissident.

William was twice married. The name of his first wife is unknown; by her he had several children, including a son, James. Both father and son attained prominence in Williamsburg through their ownership of a tavern and participation in the public life of the area. The names of both appear with some frequency in records of the colonial capital, including those of the Bruton Parish Church. James' wife was named Hannah (surname unknown); their children, born in the early 1700's, included James, Matthew, William, Elizabeth, and Mary. James died in 1727.

His son, also named James, the grandson of William the immigrant, became Surveyor of York County and is prominently mentioned in the early history and records of Virginia. He died in 1744. A daughter of James the Surveyor, Anne Shields, married Robert Armistead, and their daughter, Mary Armistead, became the wife of Governor Tyler and the grandmother of John Tyler, tenth President of the United States. General John Page Shields, who lost his life in the Confederate Army, was a grandson of the surveyor. William Tyler Page, author of the "American Creed" (adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives in 1918), was also a descendant of William the immigrant through his son, James.

The second wife of William the immigrant was a widow, Mary Norcott-Mason, whom he married when he was 65 years of age. Mary, of English ancestry, had been born in 1668, and was thus 38 years younger than her second husband. She had three children by her first husband, Richard Mason, whom she had married in 1690: Ruth (b. 1691), and two other children who died young. Following Mary's marriage to William Shields the immigrant, she gave birth on April 17, 1696, to twins, a son named Delight and a daughter named Comfort. The daughter died unmarried. William the immigrant died in 1699.

After William's death, his widow and her children moved to Accomac County, Virginia, where Delight Shields, William's son, married Jerusha Stalker of Kent County, Maryland, in 1719. That same year their son, John Shields, was born; in 1747 he married Mary Chipman, a "Mayflower descendant." John and Mary had three children, Abel (b. 1748), Reuben (b. 1750), and Elizabeth or Perusia (b. 1753).

To follow this selective line of descent a generation or two further, John's son, Abel, born in Sussex County, Delaware, married Grace Freeman in 1773. At some time in the late 1770's or early 1780's Abel's family settled in Rowan County, North Carolina, on the Yadkin River. Many Quakers and Baptists from Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, including some of the Stalkers and Lewellings from Kent County and some of the Shields' from Rockingham County, emigrated to the so-called "Yadkin Settlements" between 1760 and 1780, seeking religious tolerance and relief from burdensome taxation. Also, at about this

time, several Coffin families from Nantucket Island, Mass., settled in North Carolina. The most important Quaker-Baptist settlement was in western Guilford County, some 40 miles northeast of Rowan County, and evidently the Abel Shields family later moved there, as the deaths of both Abel and his wife Grace are recorded at Kernersville, N.C. He died May 7, 1833; she died May 20, 1830. They had nine children: John (b. 1775), Mary (b. 1776), Sarah (b. 1779), Elizabeth (b. 1781), Rachel (b. 1783), Ann (b. 1786), Reuben (b. 1788), Deborah (b. 1789), and Grace (b. 1793).

The history of this particular line of William the immigrant's descent, including a selective genealogy from the above Abel Shields forward, is described in some detail in the work on which the above is largely based: The Family of Dr. Seth Wesley and Isabelle Brown Shields, by John A. Shields, Ethel Shields Cummings, and Margaret Shields Heller (1951).

II. James the Immigrant

James, second of the four sons of William of Antrim, was born in 1633 while his father was residing in County Armagh. (Since his father was later "relocated" from Antrim to Armagh about 1650 by Cromwell, James' recorded place of birth suggests that the senior William, born in Antrim, had lived in both areas, but was back in County Antrim at the beginning of the Commonwealth period.)

James appears to have been the subject of more treatment by family historians than any other member of his generation of the subject line. In part, this is probably because his later descent included several especially prolific historians of the family's past, and doubtless reflects, as well, the fascination with which Shields' of every branch in America have viewed the experiences of James' second-great-grandsons, the "ten brothers," on the Tennessee frontier.

Although James arrived in Williamsburg from Barbados in company with his brother William, he did not remain there long but ventured north to Baltimore at some time before 1660, and then to Kent County on the Maryland Eastern Shore, directly across the northern tip of the Chesapeake Bay from Baltimore. It is possible that he had more than one child, but the only one of whom we presently have record is William, born in Kent County, Maryland, in 1668.

At some later point, presumably while his son William was still in his childhood, James moved his family to New Castle County, Delaware, to the northeast of their Kent County home. It was there, in 1692, that William married Jeanette Parker; three years later he was bequeathed property by his father-in-law, Thomas Parker, who died in 1695. William and Jeanette had two daughters and four sons, one of whom died in childhood. Those who survived to maturity were James (1694-1749), Jane (1696-1750), Thomas (1699-1765), Eliza (1704-1742, married a Hathaway), and John (1709-1772).

(Of interest to descendants of William Shields of Armagh, 1728-1797, who arrived in America an orphan in 1737, is the fact that the above branch of the family at New Castle County, Delaware, for more than a decade provided a home for the youthful immigrant. While it is possible that William, son of James the immigrant, was still in this area at the time, it is more likely that the orphaned William of Armagh lived with the family of his second-cousin, Eliza Shields Hathaway, until his own move westward to Frederick County, Maryland.)

Later in his life, William, son of James the immigrant, moved to Chester County, Pennsylvania, then to nearby Lancaster County, and finally to Augusta (now Rockingham) County, Virginia, where he was killed by a falling log in 1741 while helping his sons Thomas, James, and John build a house on their farm near Harrisonburg. It is through William's youngest son John that the line of this account is carried forward.

John Shields, great-grandson of William Shields of Antrim, was born to William and Jeanette Parker Shields in Chester County, Pa., in 1709. In 1740, with his two brothers and his father, he moved to Augusta County, in the lower Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. They located in what is now Rockingham County, near Harrisonburg. The names of John and his brothers Thomas and James appear often in the records of the area, generally in connection with the purchase and sale of land and the proving of wills. John's brother James was a cordwainer, or shoemaker. (James' wife was Jean Armstrong; their son John married Margaret Finley, and several of their sons settled in Tennessee.) John and his other brother Thomas were both farmers. John is recorded as having purchased 225 acres of land from Beverly Manor in 1742. His will, filed in 1772, refers to him as a freeholder and mentions his wife, Margaret (believed to have been Margaret Perry), his sons John, Thomas, Robert, and William, and a daughter Mary.

There are several archival references to a William Shields in the Delmarva Peninsula area. During the Revolution a Private William Shields of Talbot County, Maryland, is recorded as having deserted from the Continental Army. A William Shields (whether or not the same person is not known) in 1781 purchased Hog Island in the Delaware River below Philadelphia from Robert Loller for fifteen pounds; this island, known for some time as Shields Island, is presently the location of shipbuilding facilities. Since most Shields' in the area at the time were of the descent of William of Antrim, it is likely that the above William (or Williams) was related, probably to the line descended from James the immigrant; a specific connection, however, has not been determined.

The line of James the immigrant's descent, meanwhile, is carried forward in the person of his grandson John Shields' son Robert. The latter was born near Harrisonburg, Va., about 1740. In 1761 he married Nancy Stockton, and they were the parents of the "ten brothers," around whom a notable body of family history evolves (see separate article).

III. Daniel Shields

Daniel, third son of William Shields of Antrim, was born in Ireland in the middle or late 1630's. He was in all probability too young to have been involved in the events during the early years of the Interregnum which resulted in the deportation of his two older brothers to the West Indies and in the harassment of his father to his death. He remained in Ireland, the progenitor of the family's principal Roman Catholic line.

Daniel Shields was an officer in the army of James II late in his life. He was killed in 1690 in the battle fought on and across the river from Boyne in Ireland (the "Battle of the Boyne") in which the forces of James II were defeated by the Protestant army of William III. Daniel is recorded as having been a hero of this battle which cost him his life.

His son, who married a prominent Catholic lady who had "connections" with Spanish royalty, later became Governor General of Cuba.

A descendant of this line was General James Shields (see separate article) who was born in County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1806, the son of Daniel's great-grandson Charles and his wife Katherine (McDonnell) Shields. James, U.S. Senator from three different States, and a soldier with a brilliant military record in the Mexican and Civil Wars, is frequently cited as the most distinguished of the American Shields'.

How this line of the family became Catholic is not clearly established. Daniel's ancestry had been Protestant since about the time of the Reformation, and each of his three brothers sired lines which were--and have remained-- staunchly Protestant, except for infrequent Catholic intermarriage. We can only

speculate on whether the line's reconversion to Catholicism was a result of Daniel's action, or resulted from his son's marriage into Spanish Catholic "royalty." Daniel did, indeed, serve prominently in the forces of the Catholic James II at Boyne, but at what point in time and what factors influenced this change are not presently determinable.

IV. John Shields

John Shields, fourth son of William of Antrim, was born in northern Ireland about 1645. Since the Stuart Restoration, occurring in 1660, would have found him about fifteen years of age, it is unlikely that he was directly involved in the political events which had resulted in the deportation of his two oldest brothers. He was, nevertheless, to feel the impact of the Cromwellian era; his father's death in 1655, when John was about ten years old, is generally felt to have been connected with the persecutions imposed by Cromwell on those guilty of the "crime" of loyalty to the king.

The story of John Shields which has survived the years is indeed a sparse one. Who he married, what career he followed, how many children he had, what manner of life he knew as a child after the death of his father---all are unknown. It is probable that he spent all of his life from early childhood on in County Armagh. The name of only one of his children is known to history, that of his son, William, born probably about 1685 to 1690.

William, son of John, had at least two children--William (born July 14, 1728) and Robert, whom family tradition holds was a younger brother. Family histories are as devoid of information on John's son William as they are about John himself. It is possible that by 1737 his wife, whose name is not known, had died; in that year William and his younger son, Robert, both died at sea while enroute to America. His older son, William--known to many of his descendants as "William of Armagh"--appears from existing records to have been the only surviving member of the family, and it was he who sired what might be termed the fourth line of the family in the New World (even though that of his great-uncle Daniel seemingly did not reach America until somewhat later, comprising a "third" line).

Events surrounding the early life of William of Armagh are known, in part, from his own family Bible which relates that "William Shields . . . Embarked Aboard A sloop Commanded by Capt. Alexander Smith for America on the twenty sixth day of July 1737 Being the Ninth Year of his Age Arrived at Newcastle State of Delaware . . . on the voyage lost his father and Brother Robert, who was taken away by the unrelenting hand of death . . ." The circumstances under which father and son died at sea are not known; since disease was commonplace on the long ocean voyages of the time when congested and primitive quarters, ignorance of sanitation, contaminated water, and tainted food were all among the accepted perils of sea travel, it requires little imagination to surmise the likely general--if not specific--causes.

Those Shields descendants of William of Antrim through his fourth son John about whom the most information is available are those sired by John's grandson, the above William of Armagh, who arrived in America in 1737 a nine-year-old orphan. A number of his progeny are enumerated in such works as Armstrong's Notable Southern Families (1916) and A History of the Shields Family (1968) by the present author.

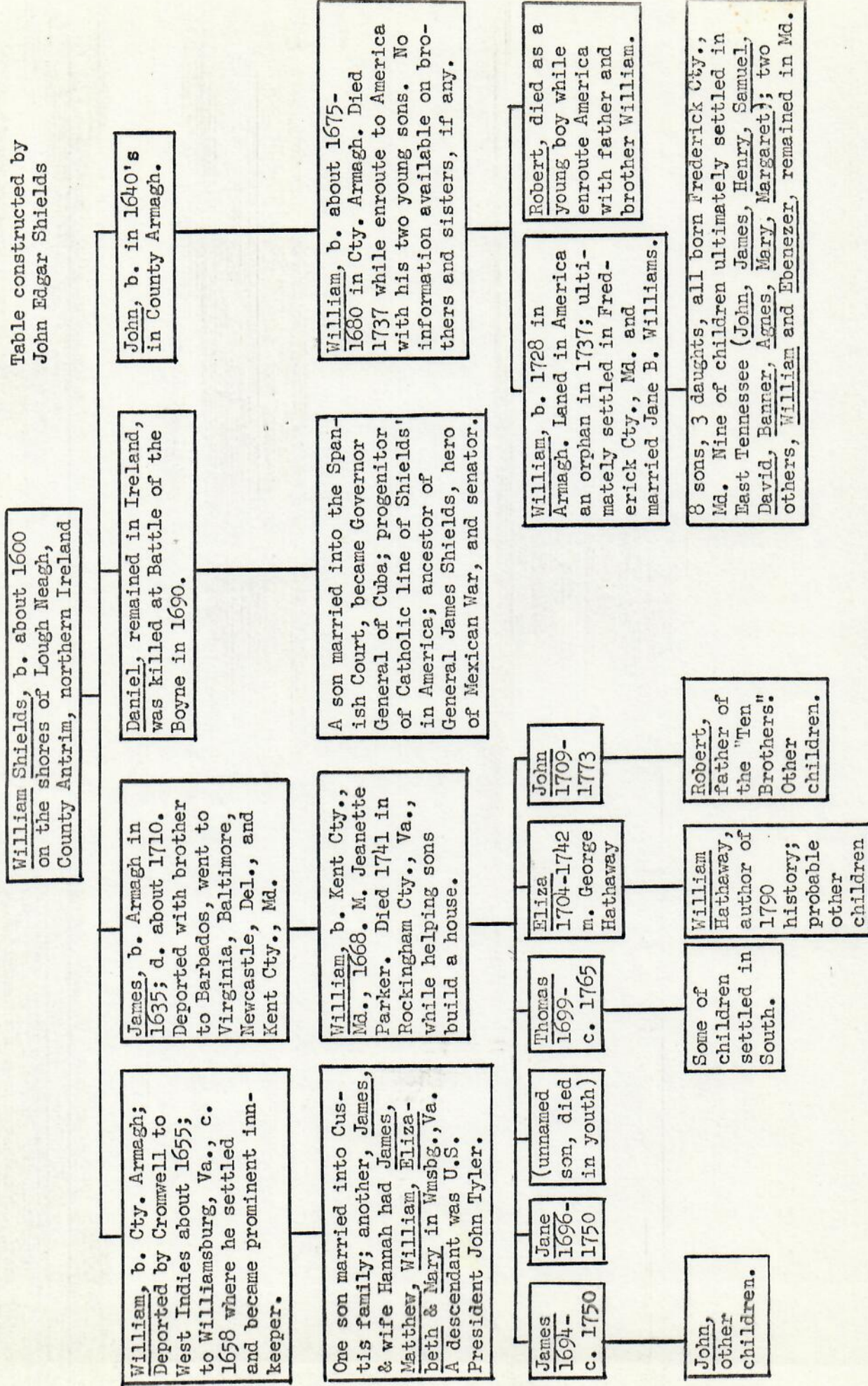
(It is of note that some family histories, including several by the late John A. Shields of Seymour, Indiana, eliminate the generation of William of Armagh's father, William the son of John, and hold that John Shields himself was the father of the young boys who set forth for America in the 1730's. This view, however, conflicts with oral family tradition among William of Armagh's descent and with

records in this same line which identify William of Armagh's father who died at sea as also named William Shields. The view that it was John Shields, fourth son of William of Antrim, who came to America in 1737 with his "sons" William and Robert would require that John have sired both children when he was in his eighties, and that--perhaps even more unlikely--he set out when he was in his nineties on a long and perilous sea voyage whose rigors were feared by men half his age.)

These, then, are the origins of the principal American Shields families--- a common ancestor named William Shields, born on the shores of Lough Neagh in the Antrim region of northern Ireland at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and his four known sons. The story of their immensely varied descent is indeed a saga of America; it is a story which has no end.

* * * * *

Table constructed by
John Edgar Shields



Note: Upon arrival in America in 1737, the orphaned William Shields of Armagh (1728-1797) resided for some time with his first cousin Eliza Shields Hathaway and perhaps with other cousins at Newcastle, Delaware, and at other points on or near the Delmarva Peninsula.