

The Courtenay Family

by Austin Matlack Courtenay, 1898.

The following material was provided to the Courtenay Society by Thomas Thatcher who is a descendant of Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay.

The following chronicle of my branch of the Courtenay family was written around 1898 by my great-great-grandfather, Austin Matlack Courtenay. Notes in (parentheses) are his own, [square brackets] are my best guesses at reading his handwriting, and comments in italics are mine, added 1994-1996. I have also edited the text slightly - Tom Thatcher, 1996.

We have seen how in the times of Sir William, 5th of Powderham, died 1535, and of Sir William, 7th, b. 1553, d. 1630, large settlements were made by them on forfeited lands in Ireland. On these manors were placed some of the cadets of the family, and among them, Edward, second son of Francis Courtenay, 8th of Powderham, who was baptized 17 July, 1631.

Austin's record of this family tradition is at variance with records provided by St. John Courtenay III of Arlington, VA, and with corroborating records from the Dublin Public Records Office. Edward Courtenay, brother to Sir William and son of Francis, born at Powderham in 1631, was an Ensign, later Captain, in Col. Thomas Coote's company of foot in Ireland. He probably died childless in 1681. Austin's ancestor is probably Ensign Edward Courtenay of Lish (or Lisk). The line of descent is from Richard Courtenay, a younger son at Powderham who came to Ireland circa 1603, through his son Captain Francis Courtenay, to his sons Hercules, Conway, Francis, and Edward. William Ashmead Courtenay of South Carolina is descended from the same Ensign Edward Courtenay of Lish who married Frances Moore, through his son Charles Courtenay.

He had three sons; (1) William of "Bally-Edmund," county Cork, whose descendants still remain, I believe; (2) John, of "Knock-Barrow," near Ross Trevor, county Down, from whom descended the Rev. Carlisle, and the Rev. Charles S. Courtenay, Rector of Culpeightrim; both of whom my father met when in Ireland in 1865. The copy of "Debrett's Peerage" which I have was a gift from the latter, and had in it his crest, which is identical with that which Father brought with him from the old country; and (3) Edward "of Dundalk," county Down. He was a Colonel of Cavalry in the Army of William III, and was Deputy Grand Master, A. F. and A. M. in 1692.

Ensign Edward Courtenay of Lish, county Armagh, married Francis Moore in 1681. He had three sons: John Courtenay of Lish, county Armagh and later of Lisburn, county Antrim; Henry Courtenay of Harrymount (Knockbaragh), near

Rostrevor, county Down; and Charles Courtenay of Lish, county Armagh, and later of Ballybot, county Armagh. Some of these names are similar enough to suggest where Austin Matlack may have heard them. The Reverend Charles Seaver Courtenay was Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay's first cousin as his father, Henry Courtenay, was the elder brother of Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay's father Charles Courtenay; their mutual grandfather was Edward of Harrymount. There was a Reverend David Carlile Courtenay, who was Thomas Edgeworth's third cousin, being, as was Thomas Edgeworth, a great-great-grandson of Captain Francis Courtenay.

His son was Henry, who died in 1776. *This is Henry of Harrymount.* And his son was Edward, who was married 8 Sept 1765 to Eleanor, and had the following children: Henry, born 30 April, 1767; Mary, born 19 April, 1769; John, born 23 May, 1771; William Major, born 1 April, 1772; Edward, born 13 Mar, 1773; Charles, born 31 July, 1775.

Either this John, or a brother of his father Edward, I am not sure which (I have heard Father speak of him as "My Uncle John") was the John Courtenay Esq. who for many years "represented Tamworth in the Imperial Parliament, and was one of the Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury."

John Courtenay, M.P., of Tamworth, was Henry of Harrymount's brother, and therefore Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay's great-uncle.

William, the fifth child of Edward, has in the list of this family the word "Major" following his name. Whether it indicates rank as a military man, or was a second name, I cannot say. Be that as it may he was something of a fire-eater to judge from the following letter:

"36 [Plumvuer]? Str. Aty Road. June 11th, 1812

Sir:

From a vile and treacherous calumny you have imputed to my character, which has been communicated to me from unquestionable authority; calls on you loudly to step forward and vindicate that immaculate character you so proudly boast of. I repeat again I have twice call'd on you for an explanation and left in writing my indignation at your conduct to which no notice has been taken, therefore in my opinion it implies cowardice and a guilty mind, tomorrow I attend the Admiralty when I shall take the opportunity to repel any invidious attack to appear to be guilty of. I can call him by no other appellation than that of a rascal that will endeavor to sow discord between two Brothers, the aspersions you have been guilty of I pronounce to be a series of the grossest falsehoods.

I am at your service,

W. M. Courtenay"

This signature would indicate that his name was William Major. The youngest of this family, Charles, was my grandfather. He early entered the Navy as Midshipman. He rose to be Post-Captain, but resigned to enter the Merchant-Service, as more lucrative, since the needs of a large family (of thirteen children) pressed him, who being the youngest son of a younger son in a family of no great wealth, had no patrimony. Moreover I have heard my father say that his great-great-grandfather "Edward of Dundalk" impaired his estate by extravagance. It is said his wine merchant's bill was such, "he might have given his coach-horses claret to drink."

For the same reason probably Charles at an earlier period, undertook the adventurous but profitable career of Privateersman, then accounted honorable in war. I have the manifest of the French ship "Aurelia," captured by the ["Brisbey"], Privateer of Liverpool, Chas. Courtenay, Master, which bore evidently a West Indian Cargo.

And one of the pictures, which you have often seen, represents a tops'l schooner with great spread of canvass, above which is written, in a corner, the following, in my grandfather's hand:

Lynx Chs. Courtneay [sic] Master Of Martinco. Privateer Capured [sic] on 25 Decr. 1800 by the La Crecorvance of 16 Guns and 80 Men and La Republick 12 Guns and 60 Men after An Action of 12 Hours the Lynx Mounting 12 Guns and 40 Men in which 5 Men was killd. and 6 Woun[ded] La Crecorvance 17 Killd. and 10 Wou[nded] La Republick 10 Killd. and 10 Woun-[ded] Off the Gulf of Carico [Gulf of Cariaco] on the Spanish Main and carryd. me into Cumana where I remaind. a Prisoner for 6 Months.

Cumana is at the entrance to the Gulf of Cariaco, about 200 miles east of Caracas in modern Venezuela

Finally he left the sea, and was made Harbor Master of Belfast in June, 1822, which position he retained until his death in Nov. 1832 in his 58th year.

He married Mary Anne Forrest, born 6 May 1782, of whom I must speak more particularly.

Henry Edgeworth, Esq. (of the Edgeworth[town] family, but just how connected with Maria Edgeworth, I have not learned. Her miniature, painted on ivory, which we have, is an heirloom from my grandmother's family) and Ann

Forrest were married 19 day of July 1752 and had children as follows; Elizabeth, born 23 May 1753; Sarah, born 15 June 1754; Catherine, born 25 June 1755; Anne, born 14 Feb 1758; Henry, born 8 June 1759; Essex, born 19 June 1760; and Deborah, born 29 June 1761. The father died 11 April 1762, aged 29, so that he must have married at 19 years of age.

His daughter Anne Edgeworth married Charles Forrest, a Sea Captain, who was killed by a passenger on his ship Aug. 1784, leaving two sons and one daughter. The widow afterward married (in 1793) her Joseph Andrews of Dublin who was a "Sheriff's Peer" (whatever that means) and a merchant, "Weaver," as shown by his certificate of admission "by Girth" to the "Franchises and Liberties of the City of Dublin." Of this marriage there was one son. Mrs. Anne Edgeworth Forrest Andrews died in Dublin April 8, 1831.

The Forrest daughter was Mary Anne, born 6 May 1782, who married Charles Courtenay. She survived her husband some sixteen years, dying in Belfast, Ireland, 21 April 1848, in her 66th year.

She was a woman of decided piety. I have a scrap of her writing, on the inside of an envelope, addressed to "Mr. Thomas Edgeworth Courtenay, 58 [Caulf]? Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, via Boston," postmarked 1843. It says:

"My D'r Thomas, I hope you will take God for your Guide in all your undertakings believe me if you do not, and trust to man you will find yourself mistaken from my experience I can tell my children that the Lord Jesus is our strength in every trouble look at the ungodly man is he not ever in want no peace for himself of for them around him God bless you all my D'r children. My next will be to William."

I may mention as a singular fact that when I became a Methodist, father, with his old country prejudices, strongly disapproved, yet I learned long after that both of my grandmothers, one in Ireland and the other in Kentucky, had been Methodists. Both died before I was born and I did not know that any of our immediate relatives were other than Episcopalians and Presbyterians.

Charles and Mary Anne (Forrest) Courtenay had thirteen children. Most of these died young. I have the names of only the following who lived to maturity;

- (1) William Forrest, who came to America, and was a merchant in New Orleans and in Memphis and Vicksburg, Miss. He was Lt. Col. of Militia in Mississippi. He never married, and died in Liverpool, while seeking health, 28 Oct. 1848, in his 39th year.

- (2) **Charles.** He also came to the United States, and went to California among the early gold-seekers. He was in St. Louis during my early boyhood, and I remember him as a tall, grave man. He returned to California, and died unmarried some years since. He was also for a time in the 1840s at New Orleans, as a planter on the Yazoo.
- (3) **Henry,** who remained in Ireland, and was living in Belfast in 1866, since when I have heard nothing of him. He also was unmarried.
- (4) **Charlotte.** She married a Capt. Smith, and having no children, accompanied him on all his voyages. I can recall her being at our house in my boyhood, a merry, kindly woman, loquacious of the many lands and strange people she had seen in every quarter of the globe. After her husband's death she went to San Francisco, and there died about fifteen years ago. *about 1883*
- (5) **Anna, b. (Belfast, Ireland) Jan 17, 1815, d. Cincinnati, Oh., 9 Dec. 1884, md. Archibald Macbrair (b. 26 Feb 1805, d. 22 Feb 1882, Cincinnati, Oh.) 4 Nov 1833. They had ten children.**
- (6) **Thomas Edgeworth,** who came out to America, under his brother William's protection in the year 1842. He was born at Belfast, Ireland, 19 April 1822 and died at Jordan Springs, near Winchester, Virg., 3 Sept. 1875. Before leaving Ireland he sought employment there. In the portfolio there is a memorial to "His Excellency, Earl de Gray, Ld. Lt. and Gov. Gen'l. of Ireland" asking a position in the Constabulary; also an autograph letter from the then Earl of Devon, to this effect:

"Thos. Edgeworth Courtenay, Esq., 9 Upper Sackville Street, Dublin.

Sir:

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. I am aware of the relationship between the family to which you refer, and myself, but be this as it may, as I have 8 nephews and many other near relatives wholly unprovided for I cannot hold out any hope of being able to be of service to you.

I am, your ob'dt svt.

Devon. 4 [Bryaustove?] Place (London) Feb 12, 1842."

This was William, 10th Earl, 1835-59.