BRYANT LESTER

OF

LUNENBURG COUNTY, VIRGINIA

AND HIS DESCENDANTS

BY

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By THOMAS McADORY OWEN.*

The name Lester is a corruption of Leicester. The latter as a surname is taken from the locality of that name. Edmunds† derives it as follows: "Leicestre E[nglish.] from Ligera-cestre, afterwards Leir-cestre, and Leycester, the camp on the river Ligera, which is probably a corruption of the British 'Lloegr,' the name of the Midland Britons. Leire (Leices.) preserves the second Saxon form of Lloegr." Leire is the ancient name of the Soar river, principal tributary of the Trent, in the County of Leicester. As a surname it has been borne by many of the most powerful nobles of Great Britain. The names Lister and Leister also, while not in every instance, are generally corruptions of Leicester.

Hotten's Original Lists gives the following, which are the earliest references found to the name in America: June and July 1635, John Lester, master of the ship Blessing, is named; July 6, 1635, Thomas Lister, aged 22, bound for Va. in the Paule; Feby 16, 1623, Thomas Leister, aged 33, living at or near James Cittye, in Va.; and 1680, Mary Lister was living at the town of St. Michaells, Barbadoes. While not relatively numerous in the United States, very few of the families are known to be connected. Bryant Lester, whose descendants appear below, had one brother, Andrew Lester, but no data as to his posterity are at hand. Families, from their earliest settlements and at the present time, are to be

^{*} Washington, D. C.

[†] Traces of Hist, in Names of Places (London, 1869), p. 209.

found* in the New England States, as well as in New York, Virginia, South Carolina and Mississippi, apparently unconnected with each other or with the family below.

I. Bryant Lester is first found in Lunenburg Co., Va., where he is a land and slave owner. He was born about 1730-35, but where is not known. He was a member of the Established Church, and June 4, 1787, at a meeting of the members of the Episcopal Church at the Court House, with others, he was elected a vestryman to f Cumberland Parish, Lunenburg Co. His name is signed in a bold hand to the proceedings in the old Vestry Book.

His will, dated May 25, 1795, was probated at a court held June 9, 1796, and is recorded in Lunenburg Co., Book, 1791-1799, pp. 131-132. To son Frederick he gives "the tract of land whereon I now live," located on Juniper creek, on which was a "Mill" and a "Saw Scaffold"; contains numerous other bequests of land, slaves, and movable property. He married, about 1750, Sarah Winbush, of whose parents nothing is known. She died about 1798. They are buried on Juniper creek, waters of Meherrin river, four miles S. E.

^{*} Durrie's Genealogical Index gives but four references, all to New England families. See William and Mary College Quarterly, iii, 245, for short Lister genealogy; and in same, v, 260, for reference to Major Wm. Lister, burgess, 1705-6, from Lancaster Co., Va. For several Lester biographies see Memoirs of Ga., ii, 358, 647; Avery's Hist. of Ga. 1850-1881, and Goodspeed's Memoirs of Miss., i, 1124.

[†] In VIII Hening's Virginia Statutes, p. 132, the name of Bryan[t] Lester, of Lunenburg Co., appears among those who rendered aid in the Indian wars, 1758, his claim being for £4. The act, 1765, providing for their settlement, recites that "there is now due on such account several sums of money, as well for the arrears of the pay of such militia, as for provisions, arms, and other necessaries furnished for them, by several persons, an account of some part whereof is hereunto annexed," etc.

[‡] Meade's Old Churches and Families of Va., i, p. 487.

[§] This book, with quite a number of others, is preserved at the Theological Seminary, near Alexandria, Va. For account of these invaluable old records see Va. Mag. of Hist. and Biography, July 1895, iii, 85.

from the Double Bridges, and four miles from Lunenburg C. H. Children, order conjectural:

II. (1) Henry Lester,2 m. Elizabeth McConnico.

(2) John, went to Ky.

III. (3) Bryant,2 m. Alice Hooper.

- (4) Alexander, moved to the West. IV. (5) Archibald, m. Elizabeth Crymes.
 - (6) Ermin,2 m. William Richards; moved to S. C., probably Greenville, or Spartanburg District. He was a Revolutionary soldier.
 - (7) Sally,2 m. William Smithson, a family early seated in Lunenburg. From her father's will, prob. 1796, she appears to be dead and her three children are named:
 - i. Sally Smithson,3

ii. Nancy.

- iii. Frank,3 m. Mary, dau. of Bryant Lester; she being his first cousin. He was drowned soon after marriage. ·
- (8) Frederick,2 m. Mrs. Pollard, née Robertson, of the Lunenburg family of that name. Removed to Ga., then near Russellville, Ala., where he d. No sons; dauts. have descendants, it is thought, in North Alabama. He was the largest beneficiary under his father's will.
- (9) Martha, m. Atkins. (10) Rebecca, m. Estes.
- (11) Samuel,2 d. unm.

II. Henry Lester (Bryant, Sr. 1), was b. in Lunenburg Co., Va., about 1752; and m. Nov. 4, 1771, in same Co., to Elizabeth McConnico, b. about 1752-57, daughter of Jarret and Kezziah (Hervey) McConnico of this Co. Soon after marriage he entered the Baptist ministry. His work extended over a wide scope of country in lower Va. He was for a while, including 1787-89, pastor of Grassy Creek Baptist Church, Granville Co., N. C. He was instrumental in gathering the church at Ash Camp, Charlotte Co., Va., in 1803, and from that time to 1808 was its pastor.* About the latter year he removed to Tenn., where he continued to

^{*} Semple's Hist. of Va. Baptists, p. 212-213; Taylor's Lives of Va. Baptist Ministers, p. 327; Devin's Hist. of Grassy Creek [N. C.] Baptist Church, p. 111-12.

preach until too old to fill appointments. He d. 1826, and is buried three miles east of Franklin, Tenn. His wife d., and is buried at Pulaski, Tenn. He was a large man, of good appearance. He was fluent in the delivery of his sermons; and had much success in revival work. Children, order conjectural:

- (1) Bryant Winbush Lester, b. about 1772; m. (1)

 Lewis, of Dinwiddie Co., Va.; (2) about 1807-8, Elizabeth Friend, of Charlotte Co., Va. In the 30's he removed to Ill., where he d. Children, by first wife:
 - i. Elizabeth Lester,4 m. Archer Davidson, of Va. Children: 1. Sarah Frances Davidson, m. Rev. Saml. G. Mason, parents of Lewis Fountain Mason, Richmond, Va.; 2. William Bryant, m. (1) dau. of John Johns, of Lunenburg Co.; (2) ----East, of Charlotte C. H., Va., by first wife one son, Robert Carson Davidson,6 at one time Mayor of Baltimore, Md., and now residing there; by second, three dauts.; 3. Andrew F. Davidson, Baptist Minister, of Buffalo Lithia Springs, Va.; m. (r) — Jordan, no issue; (2) Jennie Johnston, I dau.; 4. Bettie, m. Rev. Thomas Walters, Baptist preacher, and once Prof. in Wake Forest College; 5. Jennie,5 m. Benj. Marable, Baptist preacher, of Lunenburg Co.; 6, Louisa,5 m, Rev. Luther R. Gwaltney,* long the Pres'dt Shorter College, Rome, Ga.; 7. Luther D., d. unm.
 - ii. Francis H.* m. ——— Roach, in Va., and removed to Ill. with her father; 7 children. By second wife, several children.
- (2) Sarah,8 m. Pettus; d. in Charlotte Co., Va.
- (3) Mary.⁸
- (4) Robert, m. Mosely, and with his father-inlaw moved to Ga.
- (5) Fountain,³ m. _____, merchant and farmer; lived many years in Giles Co., Tenn.
- (6) German, m. (1) ———— Read; (2) Catharine Cleaveland; (3) Elizabeth Massie; (4) Elizabeth Lewis. Maria L., dau. of last mar., and wife of O. P. Asher, now lives at Memphis, Tenn.
- (7) Nancy Hervey, m. William Barksdale; t lived in Rutherford Co., Tenn., where she d. July 1825. Children:

^{*} Jones' Education in Georgia (1889), p. 76-7.

[†] See Genealogy of Barksdale Family, by Sarah Donelson Burt. Atlanta, 1895. 8 vo. pp. 46.

i. Harrison Barksdale, m. — ; children of whom Lester Barksdale, m. Lucy Hogan, and lives at Yazoo City. Miss.

Fountain, m. ——. Lives at Yazoo City, Miss. Children: I. Lizzie Barksdale, m. T. B. Craig; 2. Fountain, m. Annie Williamson; 3. Others d. in infancy.

iii. William. b. Aug. 21, 1821. He pursued a partial course of studies at the Nashville University. Was Quartermaster of the 2nd Miss. Regt., Col. Reuben Davis, in the Mexican War, 1847; member of the Miss. Convention called in 1851 to discuss the Compromise measures of 1850; was a member from Miss. in the 33rd, 34th and 35th Congresses, serving on Committee on Foreign Affairs. When Miss, seceded from the Union he was elected Col., and promoted for gallantry on the field to the rank of Brig.-Gen. He fell in the last deadly charge made at Gettysburg, July 1863.* He resided at Columbus. Miss., and was a lawyer. He m. Narcissa Saunders, of La. Children: 1. Ethelbert Barksdale,5 m. Frances Whiless, lives in Tex.; 2, William. d. young unm.

iv. Ethelbert.* Received a classical education: removing early to Miss, became a journalist; was in the 1st and 2nd Conf. Congresses from Miss.; presidential elector and President of the Miss. College of Electors, 1876; and was in the 48th and 49th Cong. from Miss. "Barksdale was the ablest paragraph writer the State has ever afforded. . . . In person he was small, and his manner was grave and dignified." Resided at Jackson, Miss., where in conjunction with I. L. Power he published "The Mississippian," the leading paper of its time, and now continued as the "Clarion-Ledger." † He m. Alice Harris. Children: 1. Harris Barksdale,5 m. Mary Craig; 2. Edwin,6 m. (1) ______ (2) Jennie Charlton; 3. Ethel, m. Dr. G. K. Harrington, and resides at Jackson, Miss.

(8) Sterling Henry,⁸ his youngest child, b. in Charlotte Co., Va., June 4, 1798; m. in Davidson Co., Tenn., June 15, 1824, Martha Ann, b. Mar. 8, 1808, dau. of William and Judith Wharton. Was Clerk of the

^{*}Lanman's Biographical Annals, 1887, p. 24; also Davis' Recollections of Mississippi and Mississippians, for many references. For portrait see Lowry and McCardle's School Hist. of Miss., p. 199; also in La Bree's Confederate Soldier in the Civil War, p. 176.

[†] Lanman, p. 23; La Bree, p. 27; and Davis, pp. 352-3.

Court, Giles Co., Tenn.; held same office in Lowndes Co., Miss.; later became a farmer, and d. at Jackson, Miss., in 1876. Married, (2) Mary Todd of Maury Co., Tenn. Children, by first wife:

i. Mary Eliza Lester, d. in childhood.

ii. William Wharton,* m. Feb. 9, 1858, Elizabeth J. Walker, at Washington, D. C. He was for awhile editor "Sun and Sentinel" at Vicksburg, Miss.; held several important Departmental places in Washington; was in Confederate Governmental service at Richmond; now resides with family at Branchville, Md. Children: 1. Mattie Wharton Lester, dead; 2. Annie, m. Frank Olmstead; 3. Ethel B., m. James Mallison, of Birmingham, Eng.; 4. Wharton E., m. Mrs. Kate Baker, nee Walker, of Baltimore, Md.; 5. Walker Beard; 6. Grace D.; 7. Delia E.

iii. Sterling Henry, Jr., unm., killed in late war.
By second wife:

iv-xvi. German, killed at Cold Harbor; Sarah, m. Judge Robert Bowman (2 sons, Robert and Lee Bowman), live at Yazoo City, Miss.; Lucy; James; Andrew; Mary; infant; Christopher; Henry; Bryant; Ida Wallace; Bernard; and John.

III. Bryant Lester² (Bryant, Sr.¹), was born in Lunenburg Co., Va. Here he lived, and here d. at an advanced age. He m. Alice Hooper. Children, b. probably in Lunenburg Co.:

- (1) Frances Lester, b. Nov. 19, 1774; m. Welch.
- (2) Richard, b. March 25, 1776; d. 1858. In 1855 was living in Atlanta, Ga.
- (3) Bryant, b. May 28, 1778; d. 1854. Lived and d. in Lunenburg Co.
- (4) Nancy, b. Aug. 29, 1780; d. 1860; m. William Smithson; about 1855 was living in Va.
- (5) Henry, b. Nov. 23, 1782; went to Ky.
- (6) Mary, b. April 29, 1786; m. (1) Frank Smithson, her first cousin. (2) ——— Crenshaw; went to Ky.
- (7) Charlotte, b. Sept. 16, 1788; m. Phillip Cheaney; d. in Ky.
- (8) Frederick, b. Feb. 16, 1794; d. Oct. 5, 1871. Lived and d. in Lunenburg Co., Va. He m. Martha, dau. of William Craghead, of this Co. Children:
 - Sterling Henry Lester, b. in Va. Sept. 17, 1827; d. unm. in Ky. May 1877.
 - Missouria Frances, b. Feb. 6, 1829; d. Aug. 17, 1851 in Va.;
 m. A. A. Erambert and had I dau. Mary, who d. in Ky.

iii. William Bryant, b. Feb. 28, 1831; m. Ellen Echols.

iv. Sarah Elizabeth, b. Sept. 4, 1832; m. J. B. Lester; live in Henderson, Ky.

v. Areila Williamson, b. Oct. 21, 1834; m. G. P. Pruitt; live in Henderson, Ky.

vi. George Craghead, b. Oct. 29, 1837; m. — Watts in Va.; live in Ky.

vii. Louisa Adelaide, b. June 28, 1840; d. June 7, 1876; m. James Norment, of Ky.

viii. Emma Madeline, b. Sept. 26, 1842; m. Thomas B. Cheatham. They live at Henderson, Ky.

(9) Benjamin Franklin, b. Dec. 9, 1798; d. 1867; went to Ky.

(10) Whitfield, b. March 19, 1801; m. ———— Hatcher; went to Ky., with his brothers Henry and Benjamin, probably about 1815-20.

IV. Archibald Lester 2 (Bryant, Sr.1), was b. in Lunenburg Co., Va., June 4, 1761. Between Feb. and June, 1785, he was m. to Elizabeth Crymes,* by Rev. James Shelburne, in the same Co. About 1805 he removed to Greenville Dist.. S. C., settling about twelve miles S. E. from the present Greenville, where he spent the remainder of his life. He was an extensive land and slave owner; and lived in the fashion of the old times. His neighbors were the Kilgores. Brockmans, Stones, Austins, Westmorelands, and others. He and his wife were Baptists. She d. Jan. 24, 1826; he d. Oct. 31, 1826, and both are buried on their old homestead. Will, dated Oct. 9, 1826, names his seven children, and makes several bequests; exs.—son Philip C. Lester and Josiah Kilgore; wits.—Saml. B. Hill, Benj. Kilgore, John Bruce: recorded in Greenville Co., S. C., Book "B," pp. 90-91. The Greenville [S. C.] Republican, Nov. 4, 1826, has this brief obituary: "DIED—On the 31st of October last,

*The Crymes family was early seated in the Co., and has representatives there at this time. Satisfactory deductions for early generations have not yet been made. George Crymes' third wife is believed to have been Alice, or Permelia Bellamy. Three children are known: (1) Elizabeth Crymes, m. Archibald Lester; (2) Alice, m. Louis Cantalou, parents of Louis, who m. Rebecca Lester, his first cousin; (3) George, m. Nancy Dudley, parents of Nancy, who m. Philip C. Lester, her first cousin.

at his residence on Gilder's creek, Mr. Archibald Lester, in the 66th year of his age." Children, all b. in Lunenburg Co., Va.

- (1) Rebecca Lester,⁸ m. Louis Cantalou, her first cousin. Lived in Augusta, Ga. Children: six, two of whom lived:
 - i. Peter Cantalou, m. Anne Cogburn, of Edgefield Dist., S. C. Removed to La., then to Tex., and d. wealthy, with a family.
 - ii. Eliza, m. William Frazier, of Edgefield Dist.; and removed to Montgomery Co., Ala., where they died.* Children: I son and 6 dauts. One dau. Mary, m. Dr. Junius Dillard, whose son Albert J. Dillard is now a journalist at Montgomery, Ala.
 - On the death of his wife, Louis Cantalou m. (2) Mary Rainsford, of Edgefield Dist. Lamar Cantalou, Wetumka, Ala., is a son of this mar.
- (2) Mary,* m. Paschal Rutledge, of Lunenburg Co., Va.; about 1830-35 emigrated to Marion, Ala.; several children, but definite whereabouts of descendants unknown,
- (3) Ermin,³ m. Thomas Greene. Both buried at Greenville, S. C. Descendants in Greenville, S. C.: A dau., Caroline Greene m. Matthew Gray, and a son, Gen. J. Walter Gray, now lives at Greenville.
- (4) Alice,³ b. about 1793; d. about 1852; m. Daniel Beacham, b. about 1783; d. about 1838, son of Wm. Beacham, a native of Ireland, who came first to Va., and then to S. C., and his wife Margaret Lowery, of Spartamburg Dist., S. C. Daniel Beacham was a school teacher. He and wife are buried at the Archibald Lester burial ground on Gilder's Creek, Greenville Dist., S. C. Children:
 - Mary Winbush Beacham, b. 1814; m. James Cannon, of S. C.; removed to Calhoun Co., Ala.
 - ii. William Archibald, m. Mary Montgomery, of Greenville Dist., S. C.; both buried at Jackson Grove Church, this Co.
 - iii. Hartwell Lowery,⁴ d. March 1892; buried at Greer's Depot, S. C.; m. Louisa Shepherd, of Greenville, S. C. One son, William C. Beacham,⁵ is cashier of the People's Bank, Greenville, S. C.
 - iv. Phillip Franklin. m. Nancy Wright, of N. C.; he and wife both d. 1862 and are buried at Jacksonville, Ala.
- v. Amanda Adeline, m. William Laird, of Ala.

^{*} Robertson's Recollections of Early Settlers of Montgomery County [Ala.], (1892). p. 55.

- vi. Louisa, m. George Shuford, of N. C. One son, George Shuford, lawyer and ex-judge, lives at Asheville, N. C.
- vii. Christiana Elizabeth, m. (1) Columbus Orr, of N. C.; (2)
 Perry Moore; both reside at Greer's Depot, S. C. One
 son, Waverly C. Moore, lives in Birmingham, Ala.
- viii. Margaret, m. Marcus Carpenter, and both live at Harden, N. C.
- ix. Alice Elvira, b. 1830; m. Tandy Goodlett; both reside at Traveller's Rest. S. C.
- (5) Philip Crymes, b. Apr. 14, 1794; d. May 1, 1862; m. his first cousin Nancy Crymes, Oct. 16, 1817. She was b. Oct. 23, 1794; d. March 5, 1859, and was the dau. of George and Nancy (Dudley) Crymes. He owned and operated a cloth factory, on Enoree river, twelve miles from Greenville, S. C. He was a Baptist and a pious, useful man. He and wife, as well as his wife's parents, are buried at this place. Children:
 - i. Thomas Crymes Lester, b. June 10, 1821; m. Anne Happoldt; was physician at Asheville, N. C.; d. Nov. 1854. One child, Eva, m. C. A. David, Greenville, S. C.
 - Wm. Francis,⁴ b. Feb. 14, 1823; m. (1) Mary E. Walker;
 (2) Sallie, dau. of Dr. A. B. Crook. One child by last mar., Nannie,⁵ m. Dr. Black, Greenville, S. C.
 - iii. Elizabeth, b. Dec. 26, 1824; m. Thomas Lowery Fowler; 4 children, of whom, Mrs. Daniel Bolton lives at Columbia, S. C. Mrs. Fowler's husband is d., and she resides with Mrs. Bolton.
 - iv. Archibald H., b. June 12, 1828; m. (1) Maggie Miller; (2) Susan J. McCollough, of Williamsburg, S. C.; (3) Mrs. Harriet Rowland Flemming, née Walker. 3 children by second wife only, one of whom survived, Dr. William McCollough Lester, who now resides at Columbia, S. C. Archibald Lester was a Methodist minister, and now lives, retired, with his son at Columbia.
 - v. Nancy Dudley, b. Nov. 19, 1830; m. L. B. Austin of N. C.; d. Sept. 5, 1888 in Pine Bluff, Ark., where she is buried.
 - vi. George Washington, b. July 30, 1833; m. Corrie Drummond, Spartanburg Dist., S. C.; lives at Columbia, S. C.
- (6) Hartwell,3 m. (1) Elizabeth Ann Beacham, sister of Daniel Beacham, who m. Alice Lester; (2) Mahala———. He d. at Cassville, Ga. Harriet, dau. by the second marriage, m. Col. Moseley, and is living at Greenville, S. C.
- V. (7) Permelia, b. May 10, 1801; m. (1) George Stairley; (2) William Rabè.
- V. Permelia, ("Mildred") Lester (Archibald, Bryant Sr.') was b. in Lunenburg Co., May 10, 1801. On Oct. 14,

1810, she m. (1) George Stairley, b. Sept. 7, 1783. He was the son of George Stairley (killed in the Revolutionary War) and his wife. Mary Ursula Eichelberger (b. May 1, 1760; d. Oct. 25, 1838), both of them belonging to German families of the "Dutch Fork," Newberry Co., S. C. After the death of her husband Mary Stairley m. (2) Frederick Joseph Wallern, a Lutheran minister. The Eichelbergers, originally from Pa., intermarried with the early settlers, until now hardly an old family is to be found in Newberry Co. that is not connected with them. George Stairley, Jr., lived on a splendid plantation, situated on May river in Beaufort Co., S. C. Here he d. June 4, 1835, and is buried near the banks of the river. On March 17, 1839, Permelia Stairley m. (2) Dr. William Rabè, of Germany. She d. in 1852 and is buried at the Lester graveyard, 12 miles from Greenville, S. C. Children by first husband:

 Benjamin Franklin Stairley, b. Nov. 25, 1820; m. Elizabeth K. Stone; he lives at Greenville, S. C., 7 children. Waverly Stairley, a son, resides at Red Bluff, Calaf.

- (2) Mary Elizabeth, b. Nov. 9, 1822; and now resides at Fayette, Ala. She m. (1) Nov. 15, 1853, James Henry Brockman, b. July 19, 1822; d. Sept. 15, 1844, son of Col. Thomas Patterson Brockman, and wife, Mary Kilgore (dau. of James Kilgore and wife Keziah Greer), prominent in Greenville Dist., S. C. She m. (2) Lauchlen McAuley. Children, by first Insband:
 - i. Tallulah James Brockman, m. Nov. 13, 1866, John Hollis Bankhead, son of James Bankhead and wife Susan Flemming Hollis, of Marion Co., Ala. John H. Bankhead is a Representative in the 55th Congress from the 6th Ala. Dist., and previously served in the 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd and 54th Congresses. He and wife reside at "The Summit," Fayette, Ala. Children: 1. Louise B. Bankhead, m. Col. Wm. H. Perry, live at Greenville, S. C. Chil.: (1) Tallulah Louise and (2) Wm. H., Jr.; 2. Marie Susan Bankhead 6 m. Thomas McAdory Owen, of Jefferson Co., Ala., now in Washington, D. C., 2 sons: (1) Thomas M. Owen, Jr.,7 and (2) John H. B. Owen 7; 3. John Hollis Bankhead, Jr., 6 m. Musa Harkins, live at Jasper, Ala., I dau. Marion 7; 4. William Brockman Bankhead,6 in New York City; 5. Henry McAuley Bankhead, in College.

Children, by second husband, Lauchlen McAuley:

ii. Son,⁵ d. young.

- iii. Virginia Tacoa ("Pearl") McAuley, m. Dr. Thomas Moore. She d. March 11, 1883. Children: I. Ethel Elise ; 2. Maude Ellen.
 - Children, by second husband, William Rabè:
- (3) Francisco Louisa Rabè, b. April 16, 1840; m. Dec. 22, 1859. Henry Barroilhet. No children. She resides at San Mateo, Calaf.
- (4) Virģinia Rosalie, b. Aug. 7, 1842; m. (1) James Fuller, no children; (2) George Shipley, and has a son, Paul Shipley. They reside at San Mateo, Calaf.