



March 2009 Newsletter

Frau Doktor Nancy Stafford of Georgia: From Slave to Physician

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Chapter 1

In 1850 a cotton planter named Robert Stafford fathered a daughter (later named Cornelia) by a woman named “Juda.” Three years later Juda bore him a second daughter (later named Nancy). On an inventory made for Stafford’s tax records they were simply young females, listed only by age, not by name or family. One was six years old, the other was nine years old. They were the only female mulattos in their age group. All the others in their age group were black. “Mulatto” indicated to the county tax assessor that, in this case, their father was a white man.¹

Their first appearance in the historical record was in an 1860 inventory in Camden County, Georgia. It was a slave inventory. They were slaves because Juda was a slave.

These events were not so unusual on the southern plantations of the United States, but ensuing developments were remarkable. This paper focuses upon Nancy’s life, for she grew up to follow a career. It was an unusual one for an African-American girl born before the Civil War. Considering that she was born of a slave mother, her choice of career was downright incredible. The child grew up to become a physician, to practice in Europe. She died in 1933. The location of her grave is unknown. Although her descendants told us she was buried in London, no confirming evidence has appeared.²

¹ U. S. Population Census, Slave Schedule, 1860, Georgia, 9th Militia District (Captain Clarke’s District). Slave property was listed by gender, age, and race only. In 1887 Nancy gave “Judy” as her mother’s name (Zurich Marriage Index). For this article, genealogical data involving slaves/ex-slaves was found either by authors or by Paul K. Graham of *The Genealogical Company*.

² Nancy Stafford’s remains were cremated. An exhaustive search was made in 2002 among the few British crematoria of 1933-1934. We wonder if she may have been laid to rest in Bad Durrheim.

The story is also one of Robert Stafford, an independent thinker, who did not follow the usual pattern of slave master. Nonetheless, he was a southerner and a Georgian. The location of his plantation is important for it throws some light upon the special circumstances of Nancy Stafford's life. The people with whom Robert Stafford grew up were unenthusiastic about slave ownership, although its usefulness for them was absolute.

A long chain of barrier islands shields the coast of Georgia from the Atlantic Ocean. Toward its southern end at Jekyll Island the chain curves inwards. Two miles south of Jekyll lies Cumberland Island, the last of the Georgia sea islands, whose southernmost sand dunes and marshes mark the Georgia-Florida border. Amelia Island, the next southern sea-island, is in Florida. A narrow channel, called St. Marys Inlet, separates Cumberland from Amelia.



Figure 1. A main road on Cumberland Island (1950).

Robert Thomas Stafford (1790-1877) was born on Cumberland Island to Thomas and Lucy Stafford, who in the 1790s resided on its southern end. He was born poor. Robert's father, Thomas Stafford, acted as superintendent to the famous Revolutionary officer from Rhode Island, General Nathanael Greene, who had recently acquired acreage on the island. The impoverished general, in an effort to profit quickly from his new property, hired two or three superintendents to supervise cotton planting and to protect Cumberland's valuable pine forests from illegal logging. Thomas Stafford was one of them; his brother Robert was another. The Stafford brothers owned and operated a coasting schooner, and it may be that it was their

ownership of the *Camden Packet* which got them the job.³ The boy was named after his father and his uncle.



Figure 2. Cumberland Island shore line (1960).

We have said he grew up to be an independent thinker. But he was influenced by his father and his uncle. We think his forebears were overseas Britons who emigrated to the New World. The Stafford brothers may have come from the British West Indies from which they went to East Florida, where they hired out respectively on the Wilkinson plantation and on the vast holdings awarded Lord Hawke in 1769.⁴ Neither of the Staffords had been a land-owner (as far as we know) until they took up land grants in Georgia. They had not been members of the Caribbean plantocracy. Co-habiting with “coloreds” was more a matter for the white gentry, although coercion and money were, of course, familiar to all.

Planters, superintendents, and white specialists, however, occasionally did take a colored mistress from among the slaves, and even more acceptable was taking a concubine from

³ A typical coasting vessel of this period had a square-stern, a cargo-carrying capacity of 20 tons, was schooner-rigged, and carried a crew of three. In the 1760s such vessels ferried commercial cargo between Charles Town, Savannah, Pensacola, Mobile, and the Caribbean islands. The Stafford brothers’ *Camden Packet* carried South Carolina rice to St. Augustine (FL), whose garrison of Spanish-Cuban soldiers often lacked rations.

⁴ The Staffords may have been Scottish. The rather small John Wilkinson plantation was on St. Johns River, not far from Green Cove Springs. In 1769 Admiral Sir Edward Hawke acquired 20,000 acres on the St. Johns. In the late 1760s Richard Oswald, promotor and agent for the East Florida Society, advertised widely in England and Scotland for plantation personnel. In the mid-1780s London-based planter-merchants investing in Florida found it economical to procure slaves from the British West Indies.

the “free colored” class. Although it was most unusual for the white planter to devise property to children born of such liaisons, it did occur. Legally unacceptable, white acknowledgment of half-caste slave offspring as legitimate heirs was an issue which the courts were forced to address.⁵

In 1784-1785 both men emigrated to Georgia where they hoped to obtain land of their own. On departing Florida, they declared themselves to the Spanish customs officers. Thomas Stafford, a carpenter, owned a vessel and one Negro who was not termed “slave.” Robert Stafford, a tenant farmer on the Wilkinson tract, owned one male slave and a horse. The Negro men were possibly trained deck-hands. Possibly the Staffords were plantation specialists who were familiar with shipping, coastal navigation, and vessel repair. General Greene had visited St. Augustine in 1785 where he may have recruited them. Both men successfully persuaded Greene to use their services, and Thomas Stafford, now married, took over administration of the Greene family’s few slaves, perhaps twenty in all.

Thomas died when his little son was ten years old. His brother stepped forward to help his sister-in-law, and with the sympathetic assistance of the general’s widow, Lucy Stafford took over most of her late husband’s duties, to live on Cumberland Island in a house and land owned by the Greene family.

Young Robert Stafford saw a lot of the Greene children. Mrs. Greene remarried Phineas Miller from Litchfield (Connecticut) which meant that, from having been her children’s tutor, Yale-educated Miller became their stepfather. The marriage was a happy one, and Miller became a much loved addition to the late general’s family. Impressed by young Stafford, Miller paid for him to attend a good common school in New London (Connecticut). Miller had deep reservations about the morality of owning negroes. Young Stafford discussed the institution of slavery with young Nathaniel Greene as well as Phineas Miller. The general’s son did not want to own slaves. Having made his wishes clear on this subject, in 1818 Nat and his family departed Georgia to make their permanent residence in Rhode Island. Not only was Stafford influenced by his own relatives but also by the Greens.⁶

⁵ David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity During the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge University Press: NY, 2005). Co-habiting and having children with enslaved women, treating and acknowledging their children as legal heirs, and attempting to leave property to them, ran counter to dominant social norms in the British West Indies.

⁶ Phineas Miller: “I have not determined in my own mind yet ... whether enslaving the Negroes is right or not.” Mary R. Bullard, *Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island: Growth of a Planter* (University of Georgia, 1995), 31.

With other Cumberland Islanders, he witnessed mass departure of the island's slaves with the British in 1815. Curiously, Stafford seemingly reported no runaways from his own family's slaves. To choose freedom was to make a rational choice. In antebellum Georgia, to make a rational choice of this sort automatically created a fugitive from labor, and the slave was penalized for making a rational choice. Freeing one's slave property was not an option in antebellum Georgia. In his case, when his slaves "ran", Stafford apparently accepted his loss philosophically, an unusual reaction.⁷

In view of Robert Stafford's (he dropped the "Thomas") long life, we think his attitude toward slavery was inherited from the mind-set, first of his parents and his uncle Robert, then of the Greene family. It was not that they were anti-slavery. The Greenes had been Quakers; the Staffords probably had been Methodist or Presbyterian. In order to take advantage of Georgia's agricultural opportunities, all of them were obliged to consider slave labor. Although anti-slavery Presbyterians did exist, they were not easily found in coastal Georgia with its vast rice fields and its stands of valuable pine and cedar, calling (it seemed) for slave labor. In 1818 the Resolution of the Presbyterian Assembly began with an eloquent indictment of slavery. The slave-holding sections of the United States desired to exterminate slavery; however (said the resolution), it would be a long and painful process. Hasty emancipation might prove to be a curse. The issue should be left to local judicatories. This left decision-making on a sectional basis, which probably suited the senior Staffords very well. As Christians, the Stafford family may have preferred to let their pastor guide them through moral dilemmas of this sort.

Any religious anxiety they may have felt was merely the final ripple of a scientific wave of discovery called the "Common Sense School", marking the culmination of a fifty-year period (1740s-1790s) of intellectual ferment in Scotland. Historians have named this ripple the Scottish Enlightenment. One of its pillars declared orthodoxy was not to be questioned. Since orthodoxy said mankind descended from Adam and Eve, the orthodox were sure that mankind, in all its diversity, descended from a single human union. To say otherwise was an attack upon orthodoxy. That was *Monogenesis*.

⁷ In 1815 Lucy Stafford and her son administered about 16 slaves on Cumberland Island. No claims for losses to the British were submitted by the Stafford family. National Archives, Record Group 76, *Records of the Mixed Claims Commission*, Entries #184, 185, 190, 191, 192, 193, and 194. On the other hand, the Stafford slaves may have returned to them.

Polygenesis, highly unorthodox, promised that rational examination would explain mankind's many differences. Explaining the existence of so many different human societies, however, required more natural scientific knowledge than was available in the eighteenth century. A widely-read Scottish university professor and philosopher, James Beattie (1735-1803) tried to tackle racial differences.

Beattie declared the humanity of Negroes was a matter of theological importance in the Enlightenment battle between Orthodoxy and its critics. To solve the problem, a Christian moral philosophy required a reliable scientific account of the origins of Amerindians and Blacks. Dr. Beattie condemned all claims that Negroes were not fully human, saying such arguments assaulted scriptural authority. If we are to find a truly believable account in Holy Scripture of the origin of mankind (said Beattie), then we must believe that we are all of one blood.

Beattie died before Darwin and evolutionary theory burst upon the Scottish scene. Until that time, environmental conditions provided the obvious solution. Edinburgh's Royal Medical Society, the leading scientific society for medical students, immediately developed a feverish interest in the topic of racial differences and how they might be reconciled with Monogenesis.⁸ Intellectual discussion on these matters was by no means confined to Scottish academics.

Elements of the "Common Sense School" were to enter American scientific life in the 1840s-1870s. If Robert Stafford read the newspapers and other periodicals (and we know he did), he read current literature about the science of race.⁹ We think Robert Stafford believe that, as a rational human being, it was his duty to educate his mulatto children. In this determination he was perfectly consistent with his religion. As a Christian, he felt it was his duty to run his Negro slaves in a rational way. He lived with his slaves, in a separate, well-built, two-story frame house, administering their lives as a reasonable master should do, and as time went by, took one of them into his family life. By 1836 Stafford had named his home "Planter's House." It was an

⁸ Scottish medical, geographic, and cartographic societies presented a systematic defense of Monogenesis. Scotsmen were well able to discuss climate, soil, oceanic, mountainous, and other geographical and topographic variation creating separation which, in turn, might account for racial taxonomy. Nutrition was presented as a variable. Various papers suggested that exposure to the elements explained differences of complexion: "Hot winds made west Africa warmer than other parts of the world." Enlightened Monogenesis accounted for phenomenon of albinism. Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 100-105.

⁹ Miscegenation and amalgamation, popular terms for inter-marriage, reflected antebellum curiosity in interracial sex. William James, *Brazil through the Eyes of William James: Letters, Diaries, and Drawings, 1865-1866*, ed. by Maria Helena P.T. Machado (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006), 35-37.

unusual name, considering his fellow agriculturists in Camden County. We do not know whether he was making a statement for his white neighbors or for his slave property, which lived nearby in its own village.

Stafford's nearest neighbors were the French-speaking Bernardeys, slave-holders probably from the Caribbean. When Elizabeth Bernardey (*Zabette*) was about eighteen years old, she bore a daughter fathered by Robert Stafford. The small island community soon knew of his paternity. In 1841 Mrs. Bernardey sold him her girl "Zabette" and her two-year old child, Mary Elizabeth, for the nominal sum of one dollar. Zabette would be a nominal slave – a slave in name only. A special relationship underlay Stafford's purchase, which was indicated by the language of the deed of sale. Because Elizabeth was purchased for the remarkably low price of one dollar, the document was recorded as a "deed of gift." In the deed itself Mrs. Bernardey mentioned her gratitude to Stafford for his assistance in helping her administer her land and field hands in the past decade. Evidently Stafford had helped her run her place. Mrs. Bernardey also owed money to Stafford, who by the 1850s had become a strikingly successful grower of Sea-Island cotton. Young female slaves, generally prized because they could breed more slaves, fetched higher prices. Perhaps he said he would cancel Mrs. Bernardey's debt to him by accepting Elizabeth's true value (about \$650 or \$800) and taking the young woman.

To run plantations operated by slave property required a thorough accommodation with Georgia laws of slavery. Robert Stafford's entire life was spent coping with slavery, the "peculiar institution." Belonging peculiarly to the American South, the American system of inherited enforced servitude for persons of color, was adapting itself to white norms. Even though Stafford personally benefitted from slave ownership, he was sufficiently independent-minded to discuss with friends and employers the pro's and con's of slave-holding and manumission. Stafford familiarized himself with Georgia law regarding manumission and fugitive slaves. In 1853, eight years before the Civil War, he had already completed a succession of financial maneuvers that brought his six children by Elizabeth Bernardey to Connecticut, a free state.

At the date when Stafford took up with "Judy", he was approaching sixty years of age. Although he treated his Bernardey family quite differently from the way he handled Judy's children, Stafford went to considerable trouble for both his slave families to endow each with civil, denominational, and financial rights. They could be educated only if they found civil

freedom from slavery. He backed up his beliefs by making wise investments based upon his profits from slave labor.

Although evidence is scanty, a Presbyterian tradition existed on Cumberland Island. In 1808 the small seaport of St. Marys built a frontier church called the First Presbyterian Church. Its earliest subscription list (1808) had over thirty subscribers, a substantial number of them residing on Cumberland Island at Dungeness. They were later assisted by Robert Stafford, on whose property a mission church for Cumberland slaves was built in about 1837.¹⁰

In February 1833 a small audience in St. Marys had listened to an address given by Thomas Savage Clay, wealthy plantation owner of the plantation “Richmond” on the Ogeechee River, home to some 200 slaves. Clay was a Presbyterian elder at the Bryan Neck Presbyterian Church.¹¹ Attending the conference had been St. Marys’ young Presbyterian minister, Reverend Horace S. Pratt, who, envisaging a mission church for the islanders, had recently invested in a Cumberland tract. When Pratt died unexpectedly in 1840, Tracts 6 and 7 were sold at public sale to Robert Stafford in 1843.

Stafford was owner of the highly successful Rayfield Plantation (also purchased from the Greenes in 1834). It is easy to see why Cumberland’s mission church was placed close to Stafford’s house and slave quarters. Their central position made church attendance easier for all island residents. By the early 1850s, when Juda had borne two daughters to Robert Stafford, we are probably correct in supposing that the little mission church was intended to be biracial.

Chapter 2

Nancy Stafford was born on Cumberland Island, Camden County, Georgia, on 20 June 1853. The St. Marys River marked a long-standing division between Spanish Catholic sovereignty on the one hand, and the southern frontier of England’s North American colonies on the other. Incoming settlers after 1790 were almost uniformly Protestant. Their slave property was apt to embrace Protestant denominations, particularly Baptists and Methodists.

¹⁰ Mary R. Bullard, “Ned Simmons, American Slave: The Role of Imagination in Narrative History”, *The African Diaspora Archaeology Network* (Urbana, Illinois: June 2007 Newsletter). An archaeological site may exist for this church.

¹¹ Clay’s speech, *Detail of Plan for the Moral Improvement of Negroes on Plantations*, was widely reprinted. Original from Harvard University, digitized Aug 4, 2006, 23 pages.

Nancy's parents were Juda (presumed African-American) and cotton planter Robert Stafford (white). Her elder sister, Cornelia, was born in Florida.¹² Persons of creole or Mediterranean descent, such as the Minorcans immigrants who settled in Florida, were thought of as *whites*, even though their skins were swarthy. Spanish soldiers stationed at St. Augustine were often drawn from the groups called "free blacks" or from Cuba, where inter-racial marriage had been common for almost two centuries. Most incoming migrant groups from the North American colonies to Florida and Georgia frowned upon racial admixtures.

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century Cumberland Island had only a few plantation units. One of them was called Rayfield. Juda was a Rayfield plantation slave. We think she may have been a slave belonging to the Greene family. In 1813 Catharine (Greene) Miller listed in her will a female slave named "Juda." Juda was among the thirty slaves Mrs. Miller was devising to her grandchildren, offspring of her son Nathaniel, who was to inherit Rayfield Plantation on Cumberland. Nat having resolutely declined to receive human beings as property, his mother devised them instead to his children.

Juda's next appearance in the Cumberland records was in connection with the 1834 sale of Rayfield Plantation by Nat Greene to Robert Stafford. Although her name "Juda" was spelled differently this time, it was the same woman, for in each slave inventory she appeared in a list containing what appears to be a nuclear family. The name Juda, perhaps African in origin, was not common on Cumberland Island.¹³ If she was about nine years old in 1834 (the Rayfield sale date), she would have been in her twenties in the 1850s, the decade which held Nancy's presumed birth-date.

Although born on a Cumberland plantation, the two little girls resided with their mother.¹⁴ Wherever she moved, they moved too. We think Juda was Stafford's plantation nurse.

Cumberland was an isolated place. Getting medical help there had always been difficult. Among the constants of plantation life were disease, accidents, and poor sanitation. One of

¹² The 1880 U.S. census gave Cornelia's birthplace in Florida. According to her U.S. passport, Cornelia was born on Cumberland Island. Quite possibly Cornelia was uncertain where the island was.

¹³ Records of Camden County, Georgia [RCCG], Will Bk. "A": 122-128. Will of Catharine Miller. Will dated 2 September 1814. Will recorded 12 April 1815; RCCG, Deed of sale of land [*Rayfield*] and Negroes. By N. R. Greene and his children, to Robert Stafford. Deed Bk. "M": 191-194. Dated 2 April 1834. Recorded 27 May 1834. N.R. Greene testified that his mother had devised slave property of hers to his children, not to him.

¹⁴ "Dr. D.S. Lamb in his *History of the Howard Medical School*, supplemented by statements of her personal friends in Washington, has in it elements of unusual interest. Nannette W. Stafford, born in Brunswick, Ga., in 1853 ..."

Stafford's friends in St. Marys was Henry S. Bacon, M.D., Stafford's plantation doctor. So great was his admiration for Stafford that in later years Dr. Bacon named one of his sons after him. Elizabeth Bernardey had almost certainly served as midwife for Stafford's slaves, but occasionally Dr. Bacon was called in. Robert Stafford's immediate family seems to have been greatly influenced by his mother, Lucy, who had picked up many of the self-reliant ways, including home doctoring and homeopathic principles, of frontier living on southeastern Georgia's war-torn border with Florida. Thomas Drew Hawkins, M.D., one of Stafford's nephews, became a physician in St. Marys, probably with the assistance of his uncle. While Stafford respected doctors, of necessity he practiced good home care. Stafford is said to have built a slave hospital on his plantation, which was somewhat uncommon in Camden County. Young slave women tended to avoid white male doctors.

Like many country women, black and white, Juda found many of the plants whose leaves and roots they used to make medicine, in outlying woods. Juda, being enslaved, would have been fully aware of the slaves' view of their natural environment. Slave healing practices believed medicinal herbs and roots were animated by spiritual forces. The plantation nurse practiced a limited repertoire of homeopathic techniques. Sassafras, a valued curative, grew in great quantity upon Cumberland.¹⁵

Although she did not appear on Glynn County's tax lists as slave property owned by Stafford, Juda may have been leased out to work on her own, a common hiring device in antebellum days.¹⁶ After the end of the war we think she moved to Brunswick (Georgia) where she may have had relatives. In 1870 there was a Judah [sic] Williams, age 61, living there with her farmer husband, James Williams. She gave "nurse" as her occupation. This Williams couple lived outside the present-day Brunswick, in what is known today as the Pennick area. She died before 1887.¹⁷

¹⁵ Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2004), 46.

¹⁶ This process, called "self-hire" in antebellum days, granted a limited amount of freedom to qualified slaves. See Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge and London, 2004).

¹⁷ Statement by Nancy Stafford to marriage register (1887).

We feel safe in supposing that Stafford told Juda to keep house for her daughters, but, since he did not intend to lose her services, she would receive her own dwelling on his plantation. Juda might also have been permitted to rent a home for herself in Brunswick. Although inter-racial liaisons of this sort were generally viewed with hostility by his mainland neighbors, Stafford was by no means ashamed by his alliance with Juda, but those of his more tolerant Cumberland Island neighbors would certainly consider these liaisons socially imprudent. Stafford may have some compunction about seeing his two concubines live at his island plantation.

After observing Stafford's lifelong actions in regard to Elizabeth and her children, we see he took his parental responsibilities very seriously. Between 1839-1853 Robert Stafford and Elizabeth Bernardey had six children together, four girls and two boys. One by one, they were taken away to live in Connecticut, a "free state," to obtain the education denied them in Georgia. As war clouds thickened over the entire United States, Stafford carefully read and re-read the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act.¹⁸

In 1860 Dr. Bacon identified to the census enumerator his ward, Robert Stafford. Born to Elizabeth, Georgia's stiffening racial laws of the 1840s required the mulatto boy to have a white guardian. Stafford sent both sons to Connecticut to live at the home of a friendly school-master named Samuel Lamb. We think this boy may have been mentally slow. In 1860 the lad was entered at the Meriden School for Boys, a farm school not far from Hartford (Connecticut) for troublesome boys. In Connecticut not only would he have access to doctors, but he would be able visit his mother and sisters in Stafford's handsome new house on the Thames River at New London. Most of the boys at the school had their crime listed (theft, trespass, forgery, and the like), but next to the name of this Robert Stafford is written just: "Boarder."¹⁹

Stafford readied his little Bernardey family for the effect of the Fugitive Slave Act (1850). Foreseeing their extended residence in the northern states, he established trust funds in Connecticut with which to continue his children's education. And finally, when Georgia's legislature initiated (1851) a new and punitive tax schedule for slave-owners who claimed

¹⁸ Elizabeth Bernardey's children were placed at the home of Belton Copp, a close friend of Robert Stafford. Copp looked after their interests until his death in 1858.

¹⁹ Young Robert Stafford was remembered in Georgia for "having come to a bad end." James S. Silva, *Early Reminiscences of Camden County, Georgia, by an old St. Marys Boy in his 82nd Year* (Kingsland, Georgia: The Southeast Georgian, Inc.) Doubtless Silva understood only that the lad had been sent to a reformatory farm.

ownership of “nominal slaves,” he removed Elizabeth from Georgia. She and the younger children were sent to a large, comfortable house with its own small farm and stables which Stafford built for them in Groton, on the Thames River. Their daughter Medora, their sixth and last child, was born in Groton in 1853. Elizabeth Bernardey was not to reside again on Cumberland Island until after the Civil War – their children, never.

Although Stafford visited his Groton family every year in the period before the outbreak of war, his heart evidently lay in Cumberland Island and his plantation. The nearest seaport to the south was Fernandina, Florida; to the west, St. Marys, Georgia. St. Marys was to prove the less successful port, because of shoaling waters in the great tidal rivers and salt marshes that fringe southeast Georgia. Stafford grew remarkably fine sea island cotton which he could load and ship from his own dock. In the same year when Elizabeth with the three youngest children took passage to Connecticut, Stafford took up with Judah.

Between 1854 and 1860 Robert Stafford regularly went north to investigate business opportunities in banking and investments. He was an early and successful investor in some of the great American railway companies. An admirer of good horses, he regularly visited the races and auctions in Saratoga, New York. Stafford regularly called upon his lawyer, Lafayette S. Foster, in Norwich, New London County (Connecticut). Staying at a hotel in New London, Stafford would also investigate the academic progress of his eldest daughter, Mary Elizabeth, whom he later sent to college. Stafford regularly visited his bank, The Whaling Bank, in New London; he went often to New York City; and he visited his friends and neighbors among the Greene family in Newport, Rhode Island.

In politics Stafford was a Southern Whig. Strangely enough for a slaveholder, he also made friends among the growing number of New Englanders who advocated the abolition of slavery with increasing stridency. He needed slaves to make money from his plantation, and he knew no other way to obtain cheap agricultural labor. As a Whig, he was fully aware of the possibilities of civil war looming over the expansion of slave states. Yet he felt it his duty to educate his slave family. We think this mind-set came from his Presbyterian beliefs.

Stafford’s two extralegal families were apparently ignorant of one another’s existence. He may have built his Groton house believing that if war came, he might have to depart his

island home forever. His mistress Elizabeth and all their children were safely in Connecticut by the beginning of the Civil War.²⁰

During the war years (1861-1865), Stafford's travels to the north were necessarily greatly restricted. When war was finally declared, he realized immediately both his livelihood and his property would be threatened. President Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of the seceding states. The Union naval blockade, at first somewhat ineffectual, soon greatly affected shipping of cotton from St. Marys and Fernandina. European as well as Confederate vessels were unable to enter these ports to pick up cotton for overseas or domestic markets. Georgia's coast became occupied territory long before other Confederate states or even Georgia itself. In March 1862 Union warships entered the Florida and Georgia waterways at the point where the two states shared the St. Marys River as a common boundary. In March 1862 through the Cumberland River – part of the Inland Waterway – steamed and sailed a large U.S. naval squadron, commanded by Commodore Samuel Francis Dupont, its gunboats and transports carrying a brigade of infantry commanded by General Horatio Wright. Fernandina became an armed Union post in 1862, attracting refugees and contraband alike.

Soon the cotton buyers began to appear in Florida-Georgia waters. These men, representing the great cotton interests of New England, started to show up as early as 1862. Their eagerness to buy Confederate cotton at almost any price reflected the desperation of New England textile manufactories, faced with a wartime cut-off of their supplies.

In September 1862 the Union garrison in Fernandina learned that slaves on Stafford's plantation were in a state of mutiny. Stafford, pleading illness, needed a guard placed over his plantation, enabling him to go to Fernandina for aid. He departed for a brief visit sometime between the 6th and 25th September 1862. About forty-nine slaves including numerous children departed Cumberland Island in the course of that year. On 1 January 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. Immediately after that date, about thirty-one more slaves departed Cumberland Island. All but four of these slaves departing Cumberland were property of Stafford.²¹

²⁰ Mary R. Bullard, "Deconstructing a Manumission Document: Mary Stafford's Free Paper," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* [GHQ], vol. LXXXIX (Fall 2005) no. 3: 285-317.

²¹ Cooper, Pamela J. and Kathlyn Graham, eds., Florida State Genealogical Society. "Census", *Department of the South, 1864, for Jacksonville, Fernandina, and St. Augustine: Ordered by the Department of the South, Hilton Head, South Carolina* (Heritage Books, 2002, Bowie, MD)

In 23 July 1863 Stafford sold to Union troops 2,943 feet of yellow pine lumber. In this quiet backwater, the timber sale and loading of livestock on Union vessels were highly visible (and, since sound carries over calm water, highly audible!) procedures. Colonel Hawley, commanding officer of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteers, was present, as were various quartermasters and numerous officers.²²

We suspect some sort of threatening incident occurred in 1863. A man named George Stockwell, personally hostile to Stafford, was silently watching his sales to the Union. Stockwell, “resident of the island”, who had piloted a British crew and their captain to Fernandina, was wanted by Union officers. “Knowing certainly that the rebels were constantly in the habit of crossing in the night and visiting at his house made me resolve to arrest him.” They were unable to catch him.²³

The islanders practiced open-range grazing. Stockwell owned some of the livestock. To the Union quartermasters, Stafford sold cattle and horses, some of which were not his property. Although Stockwell was a staunch Confederate, we doubt he was motivated solely by patriotism. More likely he wanted his share of the sale money. For decades Stafford had operated a store on Cumberland, where he maintained open accounts from the islanders, his chief local customers. Stafford was accustomed to crediting them with proceeds of sales made by him on their behalf.²⁴ Stockwell almost certainly insisted that Stafford pay him his share of those livestock sales. Ignoring Stafford’s protests that he had not yet received payment, Stockwell would threaten retaliation.²⁵

Here lay Stafford’s dilemma. He was a wealthy resident in a rebel state. Technically he was a Confederate, and Union officers were forbidden to trade with the enemy. In actuality, however, Stafford was a Union sympathiser. His Unionist views were well-known locally.

²² Bullard, *op. cit.*, 239, for sales to the Union of yellow pine, livestock, and other commodities.

²³ W.T. Gillespie, Acting Master *Braziliera*, reported Dec. 15, 1863, on the total loss of a British schooner off Cumberland beach. Her captain and 4 of his crew escaped to Fernandina in a boat loaned to them by Stafford and piloted by Stockwell. Gillespie regretted his inability to arrest the pilot owing to Stockwell’s familiarity with Cumberland’s bypaths. South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 174.

²⁴ In 1860 Stafford had reported his ownership of only 150 head of cattle. *RCCG*, tax digests. But in 1863 Stafford sold 800 head of cattle to the Union. Bullard, *ibid*, n. 51.

²⁵ In 1862, in an effort to terrorize Unionists, Stockwell held hostage the young wife and children of Edmond E. Spalding, Federally-appointed Cumberland Island lighthouse keeper. *id.*, 228-9.

Because his basic allegiance was to whomever would buy his cotton, he had fine raw cotton to sell to anyone who would pay for it. Potential buyers included British commercial houses, Confederate traders who would sell it to Great Britain, and Yankee mills.

The Confederacy viewed him suspiciously. Small detachments of militia landed upon Cumberland in 1863 to take his food crops. His 1862 cotton crop was lost to arson. According to Stafford, he fired his own cotton.

The confederates came in boats to remove his corn and his cotton; he understood they were coming to remove his cotton, and he determined they should not have it . . . He had, as he informed me, six hundred bales of sea-island cotton of his own raising, piled up and in his gin houses. He set his negroes to work piling up that cotton, and on the approach of the confederates to carry it away, rather than they should have it, he fired it and he burned it up.

Stafford feared that if he burned his corn cribs he would lose the buildings, so he did not torch his stored corn. The Confederates carried it away.²⁶

Regardless of Stafford's public stance, the fact remains that in 1862-1863 Stafford sold profitably to the Union army, technically his enemy. The enabling technique for cotton sales, worked out by the United States Treasury and the War Department, was to declare the cotton owner a rebel. After such a declaration, confiscation of his property was legal. The Second Confiscation Act of 17 July 1862 authorized the taking of property belonging to any person who had given aid and comfort to the rebellion. Receipts would be given on proof of loyalty, toward eventual post-war restitution by the U.S. Treasury.²⁷ Stafford sold as much as \$56,000 worth of cattle, horses, beef, pine, corn and potatoes. A number of army officers witnessed the sales. Appraisers were certainly present. And to top it off, Colonel Joseph R. Hawley, Seventh Connecticut Volunteers, accompanied his regiment to Cumberland Island to supervise the transaction. Colonel Hawley was an abolitionist, known to Stafford through the latter's extensive acquaintance in Connecticut.

²⁶ "Reconstruction", submitted by the Select Committee on Reconstruction, a report by H. S. Wells to House of Representatives, of his conversation (1864) with Mr. Robert Stafford of Cumberland Island, p.112. *Report to Congress (1866) 39th Congress, 1st session, House of Representatives, Report No. 30, pt. 2.* In referring to Gen. Sherman's order, Stafford was referring to Circular Order No.13, Article III (2 July 1864) defining "abandoned land." This order preceded the more far-reaching order which established the "Sherman Reservation" in 1865.

²⁷ Bullard, *id.*, 233-243. Stafford's claims against the U. S. government were partially repaid. He claimed about \$56,000 but was repaid about \$31,00.

More than once Stafford was threatened by the Camden County Home Guard. Contemporary county diaries complained the Home Guard were a worse threat than the Yankees. The Home Guard visited Cumberland Island several times to kidnap blacks. Nothing would have suited Stockwell better than to harm Stafford's slave family.²⁸ We think that Stafford begged Hawley for assistance. The two men knew of each other from Connecticut.

In 1863, when General Hawley met Stafford at his Cumberland plantation, he wrote friends at home about it. His regiment, the Seventh Connecticut Volunteers, was quartered there for about six weeks (March-April 1863). At that time Brevet-General Hawley and his wife were residing in Fernandina, where he commanded the garrison.

Both Hawleys were from Hartford, Connecticut. Joseph Roswell Hawley, son of a Congregationalist minister then living in North Carolina, grew up to become a well-educated, intelligent, and highly principled man, resident of Connecticut where he set out, in about 1850, to be a lawyer. Having a taste for politics, Hawley left his practice and turned to newspapering, which he found more to his liking. Together with a partner, he bought out the Republican newspaper, and commenced in its stead the *Hartford Evening Press*, of which he assumed the editorship. The *Press* was a decided success, where he employed his considerable political talents as a highly respected editor. When the war broke out in 1861, Hawley immediately enlisted.²⁹ He soon became colonel of the Seventh Connecticut Volunteers.

His wife, Harriet Ward Foote Hawley, equally versatile, was a frail but indomitable woman. The Hawleys lived in a neighborhood where many of Hartford's intelligentsia resided, including the already famous Samuel Clemens. She and her family displayed considerable literary and oratorical ability (she was a cousin of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Although delicate, in 1862 Harriet Hawley worked in the Sea Islands of South Carolina with the missionaries to teach and to help in the hospitals. The Seventh Connecticut Volunteers was stationed in Fernandina from 13 January 1863 to 12 April 1863, then at St. Augustine until 2 August 1863. In poor health, Harriet Hawley was at first uncertain whether or not to go to

²⁸ Freedman's Bureau agent W. F. Eaton reported (1864) that Stafford's "concubine" was residing with him. National Archives, RG 105. She would have been Juda.

²⁹ Hawley's post-war career: Republican Governor of Connecticut, 1866-67; delegate to Republican National Convention from Connecticut, 1868; U.S. Representative from Connecticut 1st District, 1872-75, 1879-81; U.S. Senator from Connecticut, 1881-1905; candidate for Republican nomination for President, 1884. Brockett, Dr. L. P., *Men of Our Day; or Biographical Sketches of Patriots* (Ziegler and McCurdy, Philadelphia., PA , 1872)

Georgia; but after her husband sent for her, she accompanied him to Fernandina, where she set up housekeeping, did nursing, made friends, and wrote letters.

While both would have heard some local gossip about Stafford, the fact was that he and the Hawleys knew of one another from mutual friends.³⁰ We think it very likely that the Hawleys assisted Stafford in getting his daughters away from the island. Perhaps it was Harriet Hawley who listened to a frightened Robert Stafford when he went over to Fernandina where she was then residing. Stafford's "illness" and his trip to Union lines may have been an effort to get help for his daughters and possibly their mother.³¹

The leavetaking of Stafford's daughters would have taken place in two stages. First, possibly for their immediate personal safety, we think the young girls were sent to Fernandina to board with incoming missionaries. If the girls left in September 1863 they would have been safely received in Fernandina where the commandant's wife would have attended to them. The young sisters would have attended school in Fernandina.³²

The Army's involvement in the educating of Florida's freedmen began almost as soon as the war itself. Federal troops had coastal fortifications at Hampton, Virginia, and quickly added other possessions along the coasts of South Carolina and northern Florida. While most African American men were organized into army units, their displaced families were often left destitute. Frequently, women and children arrived in Union camps seeking clothing, food, and shelter. This large influx of slaves, officially referred to as "contrabands," soon overwhelmed Union officers. By 1862 Brigadier General Rufus Saxton, commander of the region, asked Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton for assistance. Stanton, in turn, issued General Order No. 9 on 6 February 1862, calling for the "immediate action" of a "philanthropic people." The army requested teachers to address basic needs in caring for former slaves.

³⁰ Stafford's retarded son boarded at the Meriden School for Boys in Connecticut. Its superintendent (1855-1858) was Roswell Hawley, M. D. (1813-1867), a relative of the general. U.S. Federal Census 1860; Saul Spigel, *Connecticut Reform School History* (Internet).

³¹ L. P. Brockett and Mary C. Vaughan, contribs., *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience* (Philadelphia 1867)

³² Laura Wallis Wakefield. "*Set a Light in a Dark Place*"/*Teachers of Freedmen in Florida, 1863-1874*. Thesis, Master's Degree, University of Central Florida (Orlando, FL, 2004) This excellent paper summarizes a turbulent period in Fernandina (FL).

Missionaries quickly responded. The first National Freedmen's Relief Association (NFRA) teachers founded schools in Fernandina by late November 1862. Among the first teachers to arrive were Chloe Merrick and Cornelia Smith from Syracuse, New York. They found a native school of "seventy or eighty pupils" already operating out of an abandoned Episcopal church. Merrick noted approvingly that many could read fairly well. Under her persuasive leadership, freedman schools were quickly established in both Fernandina and St. Augustine. John Hay, President Lincoln's secretary, while visiting Fernandina in 1863, noticed Merrick "as one of those in charge of the high school in the little Florida town, leading light mulatto and white children together in a song." By March 1863, enrollment in Fernandina's sole native school had grown to 330 students. We think Cornelia and Nancy boarded in Fernandina and attended school there.

The second stage of their departure could not take place until the naval blockade was lifted in 1864. Stafford accompanied them. Possibly they travelled by military steamer to Manhattan or Brooklyn. Colonel Hawley himself was ordered to New York in 1864 to maintain

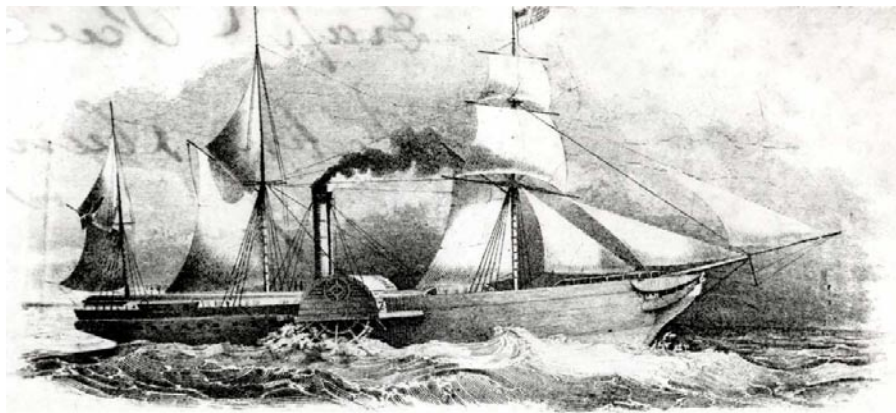


Figure 3. Example of a full-rigged sailing vessel with steam auxiliary, circa 1850s.

a Federal military presence during the 1864 presidential election (Lincoln's last campaign), but since supply steamers came regularly to Fernandina, its commanding officer could order refugee status at any time for the three Staffords.³³ They could thus have departed under military protection. They were met by two white women, previously contacted as prospective adoptive

³³ In 1864 Hawley was recalled to New York to help supervise the election in Manhattan where violent riots had taken place. While there, Hawley's headquarters were on the small steamer, *Moses Taylor*, anchored at the foot of Twenty-third Street, New York.

parents. The girls arrived in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1864, a year in which one of those women purchased property for her family's new home. Stafford personally handed custody of his children over to them.³⁴

Chapter 3

Hawley's anti-slavery friends in Connecticut may have recommended George Webb and his daughter, Sarah E. Webb, as guardians for Nancy and Cornelia. Webb was from Windham County, Connecticut. We do not know how the Hawleys met the Webbs.

In 1860, one year before Fort Sumter, George Webb, then aged sixty, lived with his wife, Eliza, and daughter Sarah Eliza; and Amos White, his wife's eighty-eight-year old father, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. They had two Irish servants. Webb had moved to Elizabeth from a smaller house in Brooklyn, and he appeared to have risen financially in the world.³⁵

The Webbs were abolitionists. Not all anti-slavery Americans were abolitionists. Abolitionists embodied something far more controversial. They spoke for the idea that only violence could destroy slavery. True abolitionism thus required direct, even bloody, action against slaveholders.

Between 1810-1852 Americans were in the process of discovering their deepest feelings regarding slavery. As new territory was acquired by the United States, perceptions regarding slavery sharpened. While thousands of immigrants poured into the United States, perceptions of racial differences underwent serious modification. And since cheap agricultural labor was sought by most southern states, so did the entire United States feel called upon to voice its opinion about whether slavery wasn't, after all, a necessary evil. Anti-slavery advocates separated themselves from abolitionists when the issue was over the use of violence.

The Webbs were called *abolitionists*, because on this issue they were becoming activists. Even so, they did not approve of violent speeches or armed action. Robert Stafford was a slave holder because he needed slave labor. That was the economy that he knew best. We think the

³⁴ "... both Sarah E. Webb and Sophia Sargent Boggs will testify to the fact that Robert Stafford presented your orators to Sarah E. Webb as his children . . ." Court testimony, suit filed in a US District Court, Brunswick, GA (1907), Equity Book K, pt. 7, pp. 480-491.

³⁵ Amos White, a Connecticut merchant, had been living in New Jersey. After his wife's death, he moved in with the family of his son-in-law, George Webb. No young black female children were listed in his household. *US 1860 Federal census*.

Webbs and Stafford agreed upon the moral case against slavery. Stafford had been shaped by his father and uncle, by Phineas Miller, by the Scottish Enlightenment, and by personal experience in slave-supported agriculture. George Webb, molded by public outcry rather than personal experience, was an idealist who had no need for slaves. Both Stafford and the Webb family, however, were undeniably *pragmatic*. Although Stafford and George Webb subscribed to competing personal moral and political standards, both men were reform-minded. Call George Webb a *pragmatic abolitionist*; call Stafford a *pragmatic slave-holder*; and in this way we begin to understand their thinking. In each case they were forced to take more active positions.³⁶

From his childhood on, George Webb was taught the fight for liberty was unceasing. He came from a New England farming family, and his father had fought in the American Revolution.³⁷ The Webbs originally lived in the rural countryside at Windham but later moved near Norwich where a few early cotton manufactories had been built.³⁸ One of his sisters, Maria Webb, married Isaac Southgate, prosperous Massachusetts landholder and highly respected state legislator. She was an early contributor to a fund for defence of the captured slaves in the *Amistad* case in Hartford.³⁹ The Southgate family held property in Leicester (Massachusetts). Born into the country gentry, they were beginning to enter the manufacturing world and were well on their way to becoming prosperous.⁴⁰

³⁶ “[George Webb] assisted many slaves in gaining their freedom ...” Obituary of George Webb (*New York Tribune*, 4 January 1883, p. 5)

³⁷ “His father was a soldier in the Revolution, and the son remembered many incidents connected with the War of 1812.” Obituary of George Webb (*New York Tribune*, 4 January 1883, p. 5)

³⁸ Sarah gave Norwich as her home in her souvenir album, which she filled in upon graduating from Dr. Nott’s academy in 1841.

³⁹ “Prisoners of the *Amistad*,” Jan. 6, 1841. From documents held at Leicester Public Library, Leicester, MA. Donors consisted of eleven men and one woman. Largest donation, \$3; smallest, 50 cents. Maria Southgate donated \$1 toward the legal defence of the captured slaves. Defender for the slaves was John Quincy Adams, second U.S. president.

⁴⁰ In 1810 Isaac Southgate created a successful new company that manufactured card-machines. Carding, an ancient technique, is the process of brushing raw or washed fibers to prepare them for use as textiles. A large variety of fibers can be carded, but cotton was what the new Norwich mills wanted.

When he was a young man, George Webb had worked in the cotton mills of southeastern Connecticut as a specialized mill hand.⁴¹ Possibly he was promoted to *grading*, assisting the mill managers in selecting raw cotton to become yarn. Grading was a skilled job. To have been a skillful grader was essential for the cotton agent. No man who hoped to be a textile broker could afford to be without knowledge of grading cotton. As George Webb assumed greater responsibility in the cotton business, he travelled more widely. Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), then a leader in the textile industry, especially in cotton manufacturing, was one of the textile centers where he was employed.⁴²

George had another abolitionist sister named Laura (1794-1875). Laura finished her education in a genteel Boston school.⁴³ She was intimate with her niece, Sarah E. Webb, probably because both remained spinsters, sharing similar points of view. Laura became a teacher, which she viewed as an honorable calling rather than as an onerous chore.⁴⁴ When Maria Southgate died in 1865, she willed to her sister Laura her real estate in the village of Leicester for her life use. Excepting certain named nieces and grandchildren, “the rest and residue” of Maria’s estate went to her sister, and after her death, to Maria’s niece, Sarah E. Webb. Laura was named executrix of her sister’s will. Sarah Eliza evidently struck her family as unusually intelligent and efficient. The Webb family was small and close-knit. Maria’s legacy favored the women on her side of the family.

George Webb’s business offices were in New York City where he was listed as a commission merchant. Although Webb sold a number of commodities, he may have begun his mercantile career as a cotton broker.

⁴¹ “Webb worked in a cotton manufactory in Connecticut and later in Philadelphia.” Obituary of George Webb (*New York Tribune*, 4 January 1883, p. 5)

⁴² See “A Survey of Mills in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, 1826-1880” by Robert P. Case, for *The Mills Project*, Delaware County Community College, Delaware County Historical Society, Media PA (1994). List of cotton manufactories on pp. 72-75. In *Collections of Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, UPA/DC T24.P45 C3, 1994 I am grateful to Jack Gumbrecht, director and curator, for sending me this useful study.

⁴³ Laura Webb of Windham, Conn, completed (ca. 1806) painting watercolor of girl with a hand-harp, date c. 1810-1820, at Miss Rowson’s boarding school (Boston, MA), the equivalent of a finishing school for country gentry. The Webbs were not a Boston family.

⁴⁴ In 1854-1855 Laura Webb taught or headed a department at Leicester Academy (MA), so we conclude she was a teacher. She was only there for one year. *The Centenary of Leicester Academy Held September 4, 1884*, by William Whitney Rice (1884). She did not enjoy good health.

By the time of the outbreak of civil war, Stafford undoubtedly felt he had perfected a foolproof technique whereby he could educate and maintain his illegitimate slave children in a free state. If he had done it once, he could do it again. As he always did, Stafford followed Georgia law.

Free blacks were no longer allowed in Georgia. His children would have to leave the state. When Stafford first planned to move his extra-legal Bernardey family from Georgia, he almost certainly planned to live with them, but not immediately. More pressing was Stafford's need to maintain his profitable plantation. To do this, his presence was required in Georgia. First of all, he had to find a sensible, law-abiding person to act as a surrogate parent who would look after the children's education. Since to free one's own slaves was illegal in Georgia, Stafford was obliged to be inventive in order to get his Bernardey children out of Georgia into a non-slaveholding state. To send his children away was not his only problem. Once in a free state, slave children had to be cared for. In Stafford's mind, a child growing up without an education was hopelessly disadvantaged. He intended that his illegitimate slave children should be educated – and well-educated at that. This took more than money.

Many residents within the “free” states bitterly opposed admitting black children to schools. In 1852 Stafford undertook the beginning of lifetime subsidies for his Bernardey progeny. Before the Civil War, he prepared a statement which could be shown to civil authorities what his plans were for Mary, eldest child in his first family. Such a document could not have been prepared in Georgia. On 26 August 1852, he signed a deposition stating he “hereby manumitted and forever set free a female child, Mary Stafford, then residing in Groton, Connecticut.” Stafford, stating he had brought her from Georgia in 1847, declared that he did not intend ever to return her to Georgia. Finally, he relinquished all rights to the control of her labor or to her custody, and he recognized her, in the largest and most general sense, to be a free person. Stafford signed it in New London.

On the same day that he signed the deposition, Stafford established a trust fund for his Bernardey children.⁴⁵ The trust was funded by the transfer in Connecticut of a city lot with a building called the Buswell Building, to be held in trust for three children. Rental income from

⁴⁵ Mary R. Bullard, “Deconstructing a Manumission Document: Mary Stafford's Free Paper,” *GHQ*, vol. LXXXIX (Fall 2005) no. 3, pp. 285-317.

the building replenished the trust. Its income was distributed among his Bernardey children by a trust officer.

We think that in 1860 Stafford intended to follow somewhat the same plan for his daughters Nancy and Cornelia. First, he would select a sensible United States citizen of Union sympathies, with a respectable local reputation and proper religious affiliations. Then Stafford would buy real estate in New Jersey or New York in the name of the girls, thereby establishing their status as property owners. He would have selected as valuable a rental property as he could afford. We believe his concept of valuable property was *rental property in a growing city community*. By the 1850s Stafford had become a rich man.

Finally Stafford would open a bank account in the name of a trust. The bank would appoint a trustee who would look after the trust funds, and Stafford would suggest the appointment of a co-trustee whom the bank would pay for taking care of the trust beneficiaries. His plans were definitely modeled upon his successful strategies for Elizabeth's children.⁴⁶

The end of the Civil War forced Stafford to alter his plans, however. Because of the Union's victory, Nancy and Cornelia were no longer threatened by slavery, but Stafford's plantation was ruined. A demoralized labor force threatened successful cotton planting; bad weather for two years furthered agricultural disaster; and the appearance of the deadly boll weevil ended the hopes of coastal planters. No viable social future existed for the sisters if they remained in Georgia. A pragmatic man, Stafford surely doubted their ability to administer Stafford Plantation, and he was too old to start again. Stafford was well-acquainted with his sisters' children (three nephews and one niece), and he had intended to leave Stafford Plantation to them.⁴⁷ Stafford was determined to give Cornelia and Nancy an education nevertheless.

Stafford himself was familiar with the problem of finding schools for colored women. He had influential friends in New London, many of whom were abolitionists. One whom he knew, for example, was Henry Philemon Haven, chairman of New London's Board of Education, whose half-sister, Frances Mainwaring Caulkins, was a prominent abolitionist. Haven, a wealthy businessman engaged in various mercantile pursuits, especially whaling, was a devout believer in public education and a strong supporter of Caulkins in her efforts to provide

⁴⁶ For Stafford's successful efforts to subsidize Cornelia and Nancy, see Appendix A.

⁴⁷ Stafford's island plantation went to his sisters' children. One of them, Dr. Thomas D. Hawkins of St. Marys, Georgia, having bought out the interests of the others, in 1882 sold Stafford Plantation to Lucy and Tom Carnegie. The other nephews and a niece emigrated to the western states.

superior education for females. In 1848 Stafford loaned \$1,350 to Haven. The security was his half-sister's own house which Haven had purchased for her some years earlier. Haven may have taken out the loan to support some educational scheme of Caulkins's. Abolitionists were curious friends for a prominent slaveowner from Georgia, but Frances Caulkins was a strong advocate for women's education. Perhaps Stafford had found her to be a sympathetic listener during his search to find schools for his Bernardey-Stafford children.⁴⁸

It may have been General Hawley who first suggested George Webb as *trustee* for a business arrangement which Stafford might establish for the girls' benefit. Hawley would be apt to suggest Webb because he knew him to be a prudent man, morally and politically. In the early 1850s even the most fiery anti-slavery New Englanders hesitated to support abolitionists. They were considered either *irresponsible* or *murderous*. While Webb and Stafford possibly knew of one another through the brokerage business, we do not think George Webb was Stafford's sole cotton broker. Robert Stafford dealt with a New London crowd who do not seem to figure in George Webb's life.

Sarah Eliza Webb, born 1825, was George and Eliza Webb's only child. All three Webbs were born in Connecticut of a long line of Protestant white forebears.⁴⁹ Sarah E. Webb epitomized the religious, rational, and sturdy New England spinster of the period, deeply interested in promoting women's education, improving facilities for the insane, abolition for slaves, homes for truant girls – solidly behind many good causes. The small Webb family lived in Meriden, Windham County (Connecticut), then a prosperous small rural community near the larger town of Norwich. In the early 1840s she attended school in the neighboring village of Franklin. Her school was directed by the famous Dr. Samuel Nott, Congregationalist minister and Yale graduate, who ran it for forty years. Sarah was almost sixteen years old when she graduated from Dr. Nott's academy in about 1841.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Mary R. Bullard, "Deconstructing a Manumission Document: Mary Stafford's Free Paper" *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, vol. LXXXIX (Fall 2005) no. 3: 285-317.

⁴⁹ George Webb referred familiarly to his Congregationalist connection with Connecticut; and he attended South Congregational Church in New York. Among New England Protestant denominations of their day, Unitarians were the free-thinkers and rationalists. Close behind them were the Congregationalists.

⁵⁰ American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, MA) holds an album catalogued as belonging to Sarah E. Webb. Marie Lamoureux, Collections Manager, pers. comm., 9-12 April 2007. Dr. Nott's signature prominently displayed as first in album; others were classmates.

With her graduation, George Webb decided to strike out into a larger business world. He moved his little family to Brooklyn, then a green and leafy suburb of New York City, where they had relatives. Family relationships may have influenced them to move. Webb went into business for himself to become a *commission merchant*, with an office at 68 Broad St., Manhattan. The Webbs lived at 206 Henry St., Brooklyn. Occasionally he and his wife took in young relatives as boarders. Called “merchants,” they were clerks engaged in mercantile businesses, probably ambitious young men like Webb. Not until the early 1850s did Webb begin calling himself *broker*. Although his expertise had been in cotton, it was not the only commodity he handled. He had an office at 18 Nassau Street, near Wall Street in Manhattan. Because Webb gave different addresses identifying his commercial affiliations, we had trouble making sure we were looking at the right man. Our conclusion, however, was that Webb was associated with several principals. Acting as commission merchant for unknown principals, Webb sold wool, cotton, stone, and – when the Civil War finally ended – lumber.⁵¹

Occasionally he advertised himself as George Webb & Co. He had few partners, but a W. L. Haskins was once mentioned as a partner. Webb’s office was generally 34 ½ Pine St. In 1855 he advertised himself as “wool broker” at Pine St.; at the same address, also acting as wool broker, was S. E. Webb, almost certainly his daughter, acting as an associate.

The Webb family was well-connected. Among their kinfolk were the prominent Denny family from Massachusetts, themselves investors in cotton manufacturing.⁵² A woman named Sophia Sargent from the Denny side of the family, a second cousin of Sarah Webb, married William Boggs, a man from western Massachusetts. Although a Massachusetts native, Sophia made Brooklyn her home for fifty years.⁵³ When the Webbs moved to Brooklyn, Sophia and

⁵¹ Doggett’s *New York City Street Directory for 1851*; *New-York City Directory for 1853-1854*; Wilson’s *Business Directory of New-York City*, published annually, for 1852.; same for 1855; same for 1856-1857; and *New York City, Mercantile and Manufacturers’ Business Directory*, May 1st, 1857. “Malone stone” was the soft brown stone from up-state New York, which Manhattanites wanted for their front steps. In post-bellum Georgia, impoverished planters marketed their remaining lumber.

⁵² “Capt. Isaac SOUTHGATE and Col. Henry SARGENT, both of them enterprising and public-spirited citizens of Leicester, began the manufacturing of machine cards in 1810, as the firm of SOUTHGATE & SARGENT, in Col. Thomas DENNY’s house.” The original Southgate (Richard) came to America with Daniel Denny from Coombs, Suffolk, Eng. in 1715. In March 1718 Southgate and Denny removed to Leicester and settled there. From having been substantial Suffolk farmers, they became large landowners in colonial Massachusetts. Emory Washburn, *Historical sketches of the Town of Leicester, Massachusetts* (Boston, John Wilson and Son, 1860).

⁵³ As late as 1888 Sarah E. Webb was still giving Sophia Boggs’s name as her contact in New York. (U.S. passport.)

Sarah became friends. The two young women worked as volunteers in a New York institution, a home for blind and mute children – New York Institute for Blind Children, still extant. Young Boggs also worked there as principal teacher; probably the school is where he met Sophia. The school was something of a Denny family project; head of school was Matron Denny, a Sargent relative, and the principal was a Simeon Jones, also a Denny relative. The Southgate, Denny, and Sargent families, linked through the American Revolution, remained closely connected and socially influential in New England.

We know George Webb and his little family were living in Elizabeth by 1860. In 1864 Sarah Webb made a significant purchase, one which affected her family. On 20 May 1864 she bought land at auction. The property included the lot on which the Webb household lived.⁵⁴ We think that 1863 may have been the date when Stafford or a friend first contacted the Webbs. In early 1864 Stafford (perhaps through an agent) may have offered a line of credit to Sarah enabling her to buy residential property in Elizabeth (the Webbs were in a financial muddle of some sort involving the New York court of chancery). The young Stafford sisters arrived in New Jersey in 1864, although some slight evidence suggests they attended school in Baltimore for a short period of time before being sent to the Webbs.

The difference between a broker and a commission merchant was largely a social one, based on wealth. A broker worked in a brokerage house: his firm covered a multitude of assignments, some quite lowly. A commission merchant is one who transacts business in his own name. Not only does he have physical control over the goods consigned to him, he negotiates their sale. The whole business is one of contract for personal services. The *principal* is the owner of the goods being shipped, and the *commission merchant* is his agent, with permission to sell. A reputation for personal honesty was all-important.

Cotton manufacturing was an especially risky business for a commission agent. To say Webb arranged for the sale of *cotton* to a *manufactory* over-simplifies the transaction. Among the few certainties of stored raw cotton is that it is inedible. In all other respects, baled cotton is extremely risky to store. The bales are bulky, highly flammable, and valuable until stained.

⁵⁴ Sarah E. Webb bought land at auction, 20 May 1864, at a Sheriff's sale, in a Chancery Court case involving 20 lots in Elizabeth, on Meadow and Bond Streets. Grantor, Nathaniel Bonnell (sheriff). Defendants in the Chancery Court case were George Webb, Marsh H. Tucker, James M. Quimby, William W. Gitt, and James Frank. The lots included the lot on which the Webb household lived. She sold most of them the next month, with the exception of her family's home. Carol Sundeen, researcher, *Union County Deed Bk.* 15, pp. 425-28. George Webb and others were entangled with the Court of Chancery, and a court decision went against them.

A commission agent was expected to be knowledgeable about insurance. Fortunes were lost when stored cotton, which is spontaneously combustible, smoldered away in unsupervised warehouses. George Webb was, we notice, elected a director of the Manhattan Life Insurance Company of New York in 1853.⁵⁵

George Webb's ardor for abolitionism is unmistakable, although we have few specifics. He inherited his sympathies in part, but during the 1850s while working in Manhattan, he attended various speeches and lectures on the slavery question which poured forth from public platforms. Occasionally he wrote for publication. Webb met Garrison and later wrote him an admiring letter.⁵⁶

If any abolition brother comes into Connecticut, give him my address. I keep open house for abolition and temperance lecturers. I would like to have you just notice that a prophet has arisen in Connecticut, and send him a paper. Your friend and admirer for truth's sake,

GEORGE WEBB

We do not know exactly what Webb did during the Civil War. Along with thousands of others, he busied himself with aiding the war effort. He worked for the Sanitary Commission.⁵⁷ The United States Sanitary Commission was founded in September 1861, by establishing depots of supplies in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Cincinnati, and Wheeling (West Virginia). These and their village sub-stations funneled into the Union army impressive supplies of food and clothing. By degrees, the administration of this unsupervised and often pathetically disorganized supply system, the Commission quickly grew into a businesslike distributing office, with one great headquarters in Washington, D.C., and another in Louisville, Kentucky.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Manhattan Life Insurance Co., 146 Broadway (NYC) listed "George Webb" as a director (1853). *New York Times*, 7 March 1853.

⁵⁶ Letter to William Lloyd Garrison ("Dear Garrison") published in *The Liberator*, datelined 9 March 1845, Manhattan, entitled "The Gallows – Right of Suffrage", praises abolitionist clergyman Rev. E. Chapin. Webb referred familiarly to his own Congregationalist connection with Connecticut; where he attended South Congregational Church. Published 20 March 1846. See *Antislavery Newspapers and Periodicals, v. II, Annotated Index of Letters in the Liberator*, eds., John W. Blassingame and Mae G. Henderson (pub. G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, MA) p. 11.

⁵⁷ "During the war Mr. Webb was associated with the late Dr. Bellows, and others in the work of the Sanitary Commission." Obituary of George Webb, *New York Tribune*, 4 January 1883. A distinguished Unitarian divine, the Reverend Henry W. Bellows was President, Founder, and Chief of the Sanitary Commission, which later became the American Red Cross.

We do know Webb gave his name and address to some hospitals attending the wounded.⁵⁹ In 1865, one Watson Jackson was discharged from U.S. Colored Troops, 36th Regt., Company C, on January 4, at Willets Point General Hospital, New York, on a surgeon's certificate. Jackson gave as his address: "Care of George Webb, Elizabeth, New Jersey." Perhaps Webb had helped this soldier at an earlier time.⁶⁰ Webb was said to have joined the "the Anti-Slavery society" and to have taken an active part in its work.⁶¹

Webb was a personal friend of Greeley. Webb's obituary included mention of what the newspaper considered his most singular achievement: his "adoption" of Nancy and Cornelia. Speaking of Webb and abolition, the newspaper said Webb "displayed his practical view of the subject by taking two colored girls – the children of a slave woman – into his family."⁶² The newspaper displayed great familiarity with Webb's personal family life.⁶³

The first time Nancy and her sister were named on the United States federal census was in 1870. Nancy W. Stafford was about seventeen years old; Cornelia W. Stafford, about nineteen. They were stated to be residents at the home in the city of Elizabeth, Union County (New Jersey) of George Webb, age seventy, and his wife Eliza A., age seventy-four. With the

⁵⁸ Henry W. Bellows, D.D. *The United States Sanitary Commission* (reprinted from Johnson's *Universal Encyclopaedia for Private Distribution*). George Webb's name was not among its founding officers.

⁵⁹ Watson Jackson was a 35-year old black man who had enlisted for a 3-year term in U.S. Army. Promoted to sergeant, he was reduced to ranks after a shooting fracas. He later was shot accidentally and hospitalized. On demobbing Jackson received a medical certificate and gave the address as above. Ed Bush, pers. comm., 19 Dec. 2006, from file: "36th Regt., U.S. Colored Troops."

⁶⁰ "He was an agent of the 'Underground Railroad' before the Rebellion and assisted many slaves in gaining their freedom." Obituary of George Webb, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ A man named George Webb joined the Pennsylvania Anti Slavery Society [PASS] on 14 January 1837. Although no George Webb was found in Philadelphia, he might have joined at an abolitionist meeting held elsewhere. Prof. Christopher Densmore, Swarthmore College, pers. comm., February 22, 2007. PASS was formed in 1837.

⁶² Obituary of George Webb, *ibid.* Horace Greeley, its famous editor, died in 1872 before his friend Webb's death.

⁶³ Greeley's rival newspaper ran an item which the Webb family undoubtedly read. In 1866 a Northern newspaper reporter visited Stafford on Cumberland Island, to write a vivid account of their conversation. The war correspondent may have been Whitelaw Reid, who accompanied generals Fullerton and Steedman in their journey of inspection through the South. See *Robert Stafford, Cumberland Island*, 265-266, for news item published 12 June 1866 (*New York Times*) and 13 June 1866 (*New York Daily Tribune*).

Webbs lived their one daughter, then forty-five years old. The two Stafford girls were described as black.⁶⁴

Not only were the girls being raised respectably, but they were receiving Protestant doctrine. At sixteen, Nanny was awarded a Bible for her successes in Sunday School.⁶⁵ We think their middle initial stood for “Webb.”⁶⁶

We suggest that George Webb, approached by Stafford or an emissary, had agreed to become a co-trustee, to be paid for taking care of the two children until they reached their majority or until Webb resigned. A bank would appoint a successor co-trustee, to work with Nancy and Cornelia, the trust beneficiaries. The new trust would not have been dependent upon cotton sales alone, for Stafford had other ways to replenish the trust. We think owning a valuable rental property (by which Stafford would have meant *a city lot with a building upon it of the sort which can be profitably rented*) was his method of replenishing the trust account. His daughters would own their own property and would thereby learn to be self-reliant.

To carry out his plan, we think Stafford turned to a newly-created bank, the Brooklyn Trust Company. We think his two daughters were beneficiaries of a trust, perhaps called the Homestead Trust. We are pretty sure the realty which the girls owned was a bank building. Although we feel positive such a trust remained in existence from 1866-1933, terminating only upon Nancy’s death, we have been unable to locate the trust document.⁶⁷

In 1872, Eliza Webb died at the age of about seventy-six years. Her death, probably age-related, may have promoted closer medical supervision at home. Her daughter, a capable spinster in her early forties, took charge of running the Webb household. Nanette may have started medical training at home as early as 1873.

⁶⁴ U.S. Federal Census, 1870, Elizabeth, NJ. We think the girls may have gone to Baltimore, MD, to attend school, before going to Elizabeth, NJ. Dr. Bacon and Robert Stafford, in a passenger list of about 20, took passage 7 July 1868 on steamship *San Jacinto* from Savannah-New York. The girls were not on its passenger list, indicating they had already departed from Georgia.

⁶⁵ Nancy received (1869) a Bible from the Union County Sunday School Convention, in Rahway, New Jersey. The Bible was presented by George Jacques, County Secretary. Family to author, pers. comm., 14 February 2004. Bibles have always been a favorite form of award to Sunday School students for some achievement, usually for committing a required number of verses to memory. In New Jersey the presentations were usually made on Children’s Day, in June. William Frolich, Union County Historical Society, pers. corres., 7 Sept. 2004.

⁶⁶ In 1913 Nancy gave her name as Mrs. Webb-Stafford. *Villengen district office* (Germany), 20 February 1913.

⁶⁷ See Appendix A, *Our Search for the Trust*.

Chapter 4

While it is tempting to suggest Nanette obtained Robert Stafford's approval of a medical education before his death, it is much more likely that Stafford had already informed the Webbs of the existence of a trust fund well before that event. We suggest one of Nanette's reasons for adopting a medical career was the Webbs' knowledge of such a fund. She may have been influenced, however, by her father's personal admiration for the medical profession. We have noted that we think her mother was nurse for Stafford's plantation.

Women were not welcome, however, in the world of professional medicine. Before the Civil War, women in the service sector depended upon the healthy unspecialized females, often young immigrants, as yet unmarried. Too often nurses were selected from a pool of older, untrained women who were known to a specific neighborhood and selected by the attending physician. Women doctors were almost unheard of. "The late nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase in women doctors in America. Their numbers rose from a mere two hundred or fewer in 1860 to 2,423 in 1880 and to more than 7,000 by 1900."⁶⁸ School attendance by black women from slavery states was impossible until after the end of the Civil War. Free black women had all they could handle in the way of teaching and supervising without trespassing upon the physicians' domain. Doctors and surgeons deeply resented the female presence, white or black, at clinics.

In the 1870s and '80s women, hitherto barred from medical schools, gradually found acceptance. Doors were opening for them to a major profession. Several medical schools were founded for blacks in post-Reconstruction American South. At one time seven such institutions flourished. Only two have survived.

One of them was Howard University Medical School in Washington, D.C., chartered in 1868. It was supported by the United States government as an institution to train blacks for the medical profession, even though in its early years the university actually had more white students than black. Its founders were all Union Army officers, including Dr. Alexander T. Augusta, the

⁶⁸ Darlene Clark Hine, "Co-Laborers in the Work of the Lord: Nineteenth-Century Black Women Physicians" in Ruth J. Abram, ed. *"Send Us a Lady Physician": Women Doctors in America, 1835-1920* (W.W. Norton & Co.: New York, 1985), 108.

only black on the original faculty. Howard University worked hard to keep up with evolving medical standards and equipment. A distinguished trustee was General Oliver Otis Howard.

Howard University was originally founded with the aim of becoming a normal school (a teachers' college) and a theological institution. It hoped to become a university supporting six or more departments for the education of youth. At a meeting held 20 November 1866, the trustees offered to erect a suitable building for such a "seminary." Both building and land were obtained through generals Howard and George W. Bulloch.⁶⁹

They found a large three-story red frame building, once a beer saloon and dance hall, available for \$12,000. This sum was found by tapping the Veterans' Bounty Fund, which was created for Negro soldiers recruited by agents in Northern and Middle states. General Bulloch, a trustee and treasurer of the prospective university, was instructed to lease the building from the Freedmen's Bureau beginning 1 January 1867, at \$1,200 a year. They met with almost immediate disappointment and unfavorable publicity.

Although the trustees' benevolence merely reflected a few shortcuts by experienced older officers struggling to cope with post-war bureaucracy, Washington's political world saw their involvement in real estate as a conflict of interests. To their dismay, the officers involved soon became known as "Freedmen's Bureau Ring." Tremendous public criticism followed these sales, most of it aimed at the well-known General Howard and his connection with the freedmen, but also aimed at the BRFAL and its connection with Howard University and the Freedmen's Hospital. Much of this hostility reflected widespread racial bias against blacks.

By the end of fiscal 1869 the young university was free from debt. The BRFAL, which had done so much to introduce training and education for the newly-freed, was closed by Congress in 1872. The infant university financed its initial years by selling residential real estate.⁷⁰

Howard University's Board adopted its first by-laws in 1867. Every person on it had to be a member of "some Evangelical Church," which meant a Protestant denomination. From the beginning the Theological Department was the "poor cousin" in the University, depending

⁶⁹ General Oliver Otis Howard (1830-1909) after whom Howard University is named, was a notable Union general in the Civil War. A West Pointer and evangelical Congregationalist, Howard had been appointed commissioner of the Bureau of Freedmen, Refugees, and Abandoned Lands [BRFAL] in 1865.

⁷⁰ Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University: The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967*. (New York University Press: New York, NY, issued under the Auspices of Howard University, 1969), 27-63.

primarily upon financial support by the American Missionary Association of the Congregational Church. Howard's first students were white, daughters of a trustee who himself later became a faculty member.⁷¹

The medical school intended to change American race relations. At its opening in 1868, the Medical Department listened to an address identifying the two great founding principles of the new school. Dr. L. Loomis, dean of the faculty, quoting Acts 17:26, said, "God made of one blood all nations of men," and "Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," were to be their guiding principles.⁷² At least one of these guiding principles touched upon the new social guidelines. *Amalgamation*, a sensitive subject in Victorian America, meant discussing and moralizing about white and black social encounters in church and school relationships, as well as sexual union in racial intermarriage. Evidently the dean subscribed to *Monogenesis* and the Golden Rule.

In the spring of 1875 the land of the Freedman's Hospital belonging to Howard University passed out of university ownership and was therefore no "longer in the lease of the Hospital." The university president reported (July 1876): "The Hospital is now open for the reception of invalids without distinction of nationality, race, color, condition or disease. In fact this Hospital is now the only real general hospital in the District of Columbia."⁷³ In Nancy's first year, the trustees elected a new university president, Dr. W.W. Patton of Chicago.

Coeducational from its beginning, Howard filled a significant role in educating black women physicians. Some medical colleges protested violently about its gender-blind policy. In December 1877, Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, one of the oldest medical schools in the country, objected to admission of Howard Medical College to the Association of American Medical Colleges, because no charge was made for admission, and men and women were educated together in the same class. Not only did Howard University permit men and women to be taught in the same classes, it even encouraged women professors.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Logan, *op. cit.*, 28, 51.

⁷² Walter Dyson, "Founding the School of Medicine of Howard University, 1868-1873", *Howard University Studies in History*, no. 10, November 1929 (Howard University Press, Washington, D.C., 1929), 9.

⁷³ Daniel Smith Lamb, *A Historical, Biographical and Statistical Souvenir*. Howard University Medical Department, Washington, D.C. (City of Washington, R. Beresford, 1900) 34.

⁷⁴ Darlene Clark Hine, "Co-Laborers in the Work of the Lord: Nineteenth-Century Black Women Physicians" in Abram, 108-110.

From 1876-1878 Nanette attended Howard University Medical College, in Washington, DC.⁷⁵ It is possible that Nanny solicited Stafford's approval before commencing a medical education, but we doubt it. We know nothing of their relationship in Stafford's old age, but we suspect their correspondence had become infrequent. We think it unlikely she tried to visit him on Cumberland Island.

Attendance at the Medical School was measured by the number of sessions the student had entered and passed. Nanette attended sessions 9 and 10 and was graduated as medical doctor in 1878. Each session was five months. The ninth session opened 2 October 1876. Despite its coeducational policies, in its early years very few women doctors were graduated from Howard. No women were graduated in medicine in 1875, 1876, 1879 or 1881. In 1878, a year when Howard's Medical College produced a bumper crop of ten doctors, Nancy was one of only two women graduating in medicine.⁷⁶

We think she must have previously attended another medical school before applying to Howard's Medical School. Three years of clinical training was required in order to obtain the degree. Nancy seems to have been in Washington only two years. The student's final two years were to be spent at Howard. Nancy's final year opened at the Tenth session, on 1 October 1877. We think that she may have transferred to Howard from another college or training school, perhaps a homeopathic school in either New York or Pennsylvania.⁷⁷

In its early days the School of Medicine was an evening school. The school day extended from 5 PM to 9:30 PM. From 1870 on, clinical lectures began at 3:30 PM every day except Sunday. Commencement was on 1 March. The District of Columbia experiences notoriously hot summers.

Howard's medical school curriculum included Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, Materia Medica, Therapeutics, Obstetrics, Hygiene, Practice, Surgery, and Diseases of Women and

⁷⁵ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Howard University from March, 1876, to March, 1878* (Washington, D.C.: W. M. Stuart, Printer, 1878.)

⁷⁶ Logan, *ibid*, 98-99; p. 94, Table 11. "Total Graduates, Professional Departments, 1875-1889." Nancy was among the only 11 graduates of Howard University that year. Medical Department and Theology were the only two departments. producing graduates in 1878. Med.: 10; Theolog.: 1.

⁷⁷ On October 18, 1877, N. Stafford testified she had studied medicine for 3 years, and that she was "at Howard University now." Nancy Stafford may have applied for admission to Howard because of its new (1874) policy of free tuition. Boarding and food were not free.

Children. Special lectures would be delivered on Microscopy, Botany, Medical Jurisprudence, and Pathological Anatomy. Weekly oral and monthly written examinations were the rule. Matriculation fee was \$10.00; graduation fee, \$30.00; there was a small fee for dissecting material.

In 1874 the medical department had become a free medical school, and all sessions of the college became “without expense to the student in the matter of tuition.” The college was insufficiently endowed, however, and the abolition of tuition was accompanied by severe personal difficulties for faculty. Congress appropriated funds for the medical college; but in 1876 the appropriation was so limited that “the usefulness of the institution is very much impaired.” Congressional appropriation made no provision for payment of laundresses, watchmen, steward, house physician or clerk. The number of medical officers was practically cut down to two people. “The number of hospital deaths should be attributed not to incompetence but to fact that it served as a place of last resort for the old and indigent to go to die,” wrote an anonymous reporter defending the Freedman’s Hospital.

In the year after Nancy’s graduation Howard University’s Medical Department changed its requirements. It was among the earliest of the medical colleges to adopt the three-years graded course, having adopted it in the session beginning 1879-1880.⁷⁸

In the “General Statement” made in Howard’s catalogue (1878), the university placed particular emphasis on the clinical opportunities for resident students offered by the nearby hospital.

Clinical Instruction

Arrangements have been made for the admission of the students of medicine, under proper restrictions, to the Freedmen’s General Hospital and Asylum, situated within the grounds of the Institution, for the purpose of studying diseases at the bedside. Surgical, medical, and obstetrical cases will be seen by the class, under the supervision of the professor, and operations will be performed in their presence in the ampitheatre. Clinical instructions occur twice a week.

Hospital Facilities and Resident Students

The hospital contains several hundred patients, and presents unusual facilities for the study of practical medicine and surgery. Resident students are selected every quarter from the graduating

⁷⁸ Robert Reyburn, M.D. (1833-1909) born in Scotland, was a founder of Howard University’s Medical Department and twice Dean. He was one of Nancy Stafford’s professors. She must have been the last medical student admitted under a two-year schedule. Reyburn’s statement to the *Medical Record*, v. 40 (November 7, 1891) p. 586.

class to serve in the wards of the hospital. They will write prescriptions, under the directions of the Professors, and keep histories of all the interesting cases, and assist at clinics.⁷⁹

At first the Freedman's Hospital was badly administered. Congress failed to appropriate enough money to run the hospital, and patients and staff suffered from its lack of support.⁸⁰ While a resident student, Nancy was formally charged in a Senate investigation of hospital corruption and bribery at the Freedmen's Hospital (the name change was made in 1869).⁸¹

As part of an investigation of alleged mismanagement at the Freedmen's Hospital, the Senate adopted a resolution (1 January 1878), directing a committee to examine the affairs of the Freedmen's Hospital. The three-man subcommittee consisted of Senator Aaron Augustus Sargent from California (whose daughter was a classmate of Nancy's) and two other senators. An inmate patient brought charges first against Dr. Palmer,⁸² then against Nancy.

I propose to prove that ~~Miss~~ Nancy Stafford, the witness last examined, was intercepted and tampered with yesterday in this Medical College Building after she had been summoned by the Commissioner to appear as a witness before this Commission and that under corrupt manipulation or malign influences and with criminal intent to screen the Respondent from an exposure of his official malfeasances in embezzling public money, defrauding the government of Washington funds appropriated by law to the Freedmen's Hospital. Said Stafford ~~wickedly and premeditatedly~~ in contempt of the Government and to the detriment of the public interest, ~~deliberate~~ premeditatedly and wickedly testified to manifold falsehoods and basely attempted to deceive the Commission by deliberate misrepresentation ~~or~~ fabricated to shield

⁷⁹ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students/ of Howard University/ from March 1876, to March, 1878* Washington, DC (W. M. Stuart, Printer, 1878), p. 19.

⁸⁰ "The tenth session opened October 1, 1877 ... About November 1, there was an investigation of the Hospital." Lamb, *op. cit.*, *Souvenir* (reprint), 35. Since the subcommittee first met in January 1878, the editor meant a complaint was made in November 1877. The complaint was made by patient Felton.

⁸¹ Logan, *op. cit.*, 41.

⁸² Gideon Stinson Palmer, M.D. (b. 1813, Gardiner, Maine-d. 1891, Washington, D.C.) was appointed Surgeon-in-Charge of the Freedmen's Hospital in 1875. From 1871-1881 he was Dean of the Faculty in Howard University's Medical Department. Dr. Palmer resigned in 1881. Lamb, *Souvenir*, 112-113.

the Respondent and I conscientiously believe that unless said charge is forthwith investigated the ends of justice will be likely to be defeated [sic].

Franklin E. Felton, Counsel + C.H.
Washington, Oct. 18, 1877

Nancy's interrogator was a quarrelsome patient, viewed by most of the hospital staff as a trouble-maker. It was true that hospital conditions were often deplorable. Felton, a college graduate down on his luck (his well-connected relatives had given up on him) was anxious to show how lax medical attention was becoming at the Freedmen's Hospital. Felton condemned any physician who handed over his duties to a third-year medical student. By getting paid, Nancy was acting as a government employee. A lawyer, Felton presented himself as an expert witness and cross-questioned Nancy. He asked Nancy how she could answer the other gentleman's questions but not his. Nancy, becoming rattled, responded that she answered the same to both of them.

Q. Has that conversation on with Dr. Purvis had any influence upon you?

A. I consulted with him as my physician only.

Q. How do you account for that singular phenomenon that you answer every one of the gentleman's questions and not mine?

A. I answer you just the same as I do him. I try to tell the truth in everything. If I can answer the questions I know [,] I answer them as far as my ability [sic].

Felton asked Nancy a direct question on just exactly what was her capacity. *Was she an employee?* Evidently flustered by the word "capacity," Nancy answered she didn't know what "you may call it." Perhaps beginning to realize the ambiguity of her position, she said she was in the dispensary only part of the time. Although she was merely a resident student, Nancy said she took charge of the ward in Palmer's absence.⁸³ Nancy said she never went in the wards in the night time (after supper). A more sympathetic interpretation might have been that, in Nancy a weary Dr. Palmer found a responsible medical student willing to assist him in his work

⁸³ As resident student and as a senior, Nancy Stafford was allowed to serve in the wards. "Resident students were selected every three months from the graduating class to serve in the wards of the Hospital. They wrote prescriptions at the dictation of the Professors, kept histories of interesting cases, assisted at clinics, etc." *Announcement of the Medical Department ... effective as of 1872-1873*. Nancy, in accordance with Howard's requirements, was being trained in hospital administration.

Apparently she accompanied him on his rounds. Just as the catalogue had promised, she was getting valuable experience. Nancy was learning how to run a hospital.

Part of the Hospital's administrative problem was jurisdictional. Both Interior and Army administered the Freedman's Hospital. Howard University, although physically close to the hospital, was built upon a nearby hill. Little overlap existed between the personnel of the two institutions, and there was constant friction between them. Two particular issues stood out. One was over water consumption. Water was carried to the University by pumping it up hill. There were constant complaints from the patients about getting enough water to the hospital wards and kitchens. The second difficulty was over the disposition of the dead. The patients entertained the darkest suspicions regarding the hospital's "Dead House" (the morgue). The senators noted with distaste frequent mention of an un-named female medical student whom the patients considered overly active in her search for body parts.



Figure 4. Medical students at play (Drexel).

Although in the end the charges came to nothing, Nancy's answers at the Senate hearing indicate her guilelessness. The subcommittee commended the administration of Dr. Palmer. The hospital was suffering from a lack of public support. The subcommittee, while admitting the hospital was inadequately financed, stated that Dr. Palmer was doing the best he could.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ *Reports of Committees of the Senate of the United States for the First and Second Sessions of the Forty-Fifth Congress, 1877-1878*, Washington (GPO, 1878).

Among Nancy's classmates was "Lizzie" Sargent.⁸⁵ Together they attended the male paupers, who reportedly were often ill-attended. The two young women became friends, doubtless sharing their observations and comments with Lizzie's influential family.

. . . I should like to state one more fact. During my sojourn as the hospital no female physician or female medical student ever visited ward No.1 or 2 [the men's wards] while I was a patient therein except Miss Sargent and Nannie Stafford . . .⁸⁶

Nancy's commencement took place 4 March 1878, at Washington's First Congregational Church.⁸⁷ In addition to parents and friends, the public press also attended. An article described the proceedings.

A Dose of Doctors

Howard University Develops a Batch of Physicians

A large and highly intellectual audience at the Congregational Church last night witnessed the annual commencement services of the Medical Department of Howard University. A number of distinguished officials, Senators, and Representatives, with other prominent citizens and their families, filled the body of the church. The graduates were . . . NANNIE W. STAFFORD of New Jersey . . . Dr. NANNIE W. STAFFORD, of Elizabeth, is a deep brunette about 22 years old, tall and imposing in presence, weighing probably 160 pounds, large black eyes and very handsome features. She was dressed in a rich black silk, cut high neck and *en traine*. Her luxuriant black hair was twisted up and worn in artistic style at the back of the head and ornamented with a pink bon soline rosebud, festooned with a spray of smilax. Button gaiters, No. 2 in size, enclosed her feet, and diamond earrings hung pendant from her ears. Her other ornaments were a handsome gold watch chain and bracelets, and cameo gold encircled finger rings. A rich lace collar, four inches deep, surrounded her neck. Upon receiving her diploma, she was presented with thirteen or fourteen bouquets. . . The exercises commenced with prayer, followed by music ... and a

⁸⁵ Elizabeth R.C. Sargent, M.D., attended Howard University, Medical College, sessions 9-11, 1876-1879, overlapping with Nancy Stafford. Sargent ("Lizzie") received her M.D. in 1880 from Cooper Medical College, San Francisco, California. She then spent 3 years abroad, at the Medical Department, University of Zurich; and also at Vienna, Austria. Her father, Aaron A. Sargent, a shrewd New Englander who had taken advantage of the Gold Rush to move to Nevada County (CA), served California in Congress for three terms beginning in 1860. Lizzie attended Howard's Medical Department because her parents were then residing in Washington. She died of endocarditis 6 February 1900. Her mother, Ellen Clark Sargent, a notable advocate for women's rights, supported the woman suffrage cause until her death in 1911. Thousands attended her memorial service in San Francisco.

⁸⁶ *Reports, Senate, Forty-Fifth Congress 1877-'78*, 209.

⁸⁷ *Washington Post*, 5 March 1878, article, "Howard University Develops a Batch of Physicians."

charge to the class by Prof. D. S. LAMB, M. D. Dr. R. S. WATTS delivered an address to the Alumni, and Hon. G. B. LORING of Massachusetts, preceded the benediction, after which the new doctors went home to their skeletons and the audience to their beds.⁸⁸

Nanny's father did not live to see her graduation from Howard University. On 1 August 1877, Robert Stafford died at his home on Cumberland Island. Since we have no information on Stafford's attitude toward her or her education – other than his willingness to better her life – it is impossible to say whether or not he was pleased by her achievement. He was eighty-seven years old. The “mother of his children” was with him, but since she was unnamed, we do not know which freedwoman is meant. We think Elizabeth Bernardey watched over Stafford's final moments. She had returned to Cumberland Island and was residing there at that time.

Of one thing we may be certain. Stafford seems to have discussed his second family with no one on Cumberland Island. Nephew Hawkins was very anxious to obtain a copy of his uncle's will. His anxiety was based, however, on possible claims by the Bernardey children. Hawkins feared either that his uncle might have left them the plantation or that they might contest Stafford's will. At no time did Hawkins mention another slave family. Possibly he felt their obvious illegitimacy disqualified them from claims upon his uncle's estate.

Chapter 5

According to *Souvenir* (which obtained its information from a questionnaire sent directly to Nancy),⁸⁹ after her graduation she continued her medical education in hospitals at Osnabruck, Saxony, Germany. On the face of it, her claim to have done so seems debatable. She seems not to have remained very long in Saxony. Perhaps she had intended to do so, but upon applying, found that she was unqualified in some way. Equally possible is a journey to Osnabruck where she perhaps found that either the university's medical faculty or the town's residential accommodations did not meet her expectations.

Friendship with Lizzie Sargent's family may have prompted Nancy's quick post-graduation departure to Germany. They may have invited Nancy to accompany them on a short

⁸⁸ Lamb, *Souvenir*. Nannette [sic] W. Stafford, class of 1877-1878, from Elizabeth, NJ. Male students gave initials only for Christian names.

⁸⁹ Nanette, like other graduates, received a printed explanatory circular accompanied by a return information blank, dated 31 July 1899. In responding to the school's questionnaire, Nanny called herself “Nanette.”

trip to Switzerland. Lizzie Sargent continued her ophthalmology studies at Zurich, and later, at Vienna. In 1882 her father was appointed ambassador to Germany, where his family accompanied him. What we are sure of is that one year after her graduation from Howard in 1878, Nancy went to Switzerland. Zurich was to be her home for the next sixteen years.

North American women went to Zurich to study for different reasons. In medicine, women in the United States did have access to women's medical colleges and some homeopathic medical schools that were co-educational. But American women did not have access to the highest quality medical schools and had limited access to clinics. Women went to Zurich, because they could work in labs and clinics side by side with the men. They were treated with remarkable respect and generosity by many of their professors. They simply had to ask for certain types of lab work and they were given it. Women also had access to a larger variety of patients in the hospitals. In medicine, as well as in other fields, women came to Zurich, because it was an excellent university that admitted women relatively early. Women could receive the quality clinical training at a European university without having to struggle to be the first woman admitted, as was the case with the German universities. Between 1868 and 1915, fifty-four women from the U.S. and Canada studied medicine at Zurich. Nine of these women already had completed a medical degree before coming to Zurich. Seven of these women completed their medical degree at Zurich.⁹⁰

In 1879 Nancy enrolled in the school of medicine at the University of Zurich where she remained until 5 May 1884, a period of five years.⁹¹ From 8 October 1884 to 7 April 1887, Nancy studied at the medical department of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, where she became assistant to several chairs in medicine.⁹² Regardless of her many assistantships, she was enrolled as *student*.⁹³ By 1882 Nancy had become a Swiss citizen.⁹⁴ While associated with the university she used the name "Nannie."

⁹⁰ Professor Sandra Singer to Mary R. Bullard, pers. comm., August 25, 2004.

⁹¹ An "Elizabeth Stafford" from New Jersey enrolled in medicine on October 15. University of Zurich Student Registry. The entry was mis-read. Intended meaning was: "A female Stafford from Elizabeth, New Jersey, was enrolled as a student."

⁹² Lamb, *Souvenir*.

⁹³ No record from Zurich shows her as a teaching assistant. Possibly her student duties and privileges were not fully recorded. University of Zurich, letter from bursar's office, 1991, to George Gassman's granddaughters. Also letter

Her sister was choosing a different route to happiness. In 1880 Cornelia turned up on the U. S. Census as being thirty years of age, married to one Raymond Phillip Williams, age thirty-two, and residing in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Both were described as mulatto. Her husband called himself a *caterer*. They had a black servant girl. They were the only mulattos in a middle-class white neighborhood. Cornelia and Philip evidently married in the 1870s, at an unknown date.

Nancy went to work at Zurich, where she could hope to escape the terrible burden of nineteenth-century American racial discrimination.

American women medical students could enjoy life at the University of Zurich. One of them, who later became a prominent woman surgeon in the United States, wrote in her diary:

I decided to go abroad and . . . went to Zurich. My opportunities in [the] laboratory were varied, ranging from the study of the circulation of the blood in the tail of a tadpole and searching for nerve endings on striped muscular fibre, to the pathologic from the hospital wards to the post-mortem room and finally to the laboratory for microscopic examination of the diseased tissues. . . . There were most valuable lectures and bedside clinical cases . . . Every moment one felt in an atmosphere impelling to most earnest study. To this was added the pleasure of occasional trips to other parts of lovely Switzerland which could be taken without interruption to the course of study, as the not infrequent short holidays gave the necessary freedom for these little excursions.⁹⁵

In 1882 Nancy returned to New Jersey, arriving in July. George Webb was becoming more feeble, although his death was unexpected.⁹⁶ He died in early January 1883 at age of eighty-two in his home in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He was buried 4 January 1883 in Evergreen Cemetery, Hillside, NJ. His daughter Sarah had been living with him.⁹⁷ Furthermore, she

of June 2004 from University of Zurich's archivist to family. She was recorded as *Nanny Stafford* from Port Elizabeth, NJ.

⁹⁴ U.S. passport, 1882. On 17 July, Nancy departed Bremen (Germany), destination New York, ship *Mosel*. Residence, Switzerland. For *Ethnicity/race/nationality* she answered "Swiss." Source: Year: 1882; Arrival: *New York, United States*; Microfilm serial: *M237*; Microfilm roll: *M237_454*; Line: 44; List number: 986.

⁹⁵ Singer, *op. cit.*, 38.

⁹⁶ "He had been receiving calls for several hours and had gone to bed, when he was seized with pains in the side supposed to be explained by the rupture of a blood vessel." Obituary of George Webb (*New York Tribune*, 4 January 1883, p. 5.)

⁹⁷ Resident in his household, 1880 census.

appeared to own the land on which stood the Webbs' home. He left no will. Sarah may have sent for Nancy to help her handle some sort of transition, perhaps in relation to her future finances.

In 1887 Nancy contracted typhoid fever in Switzerland, probably in April-May. She was very sick and was forced to give up her work.⁹⁸ Typhoid is caused by tainted water, which Nancy may perhaps have caught from exposure in the hospital wards, or even from drinking from one of those beautiful Alpine brooks.

In the autumn of that same year (19 October 1887) on September 20 Nancy married a Swiss, Gustav Arnold Gassman, a music dealer and composer.⁹⁹ It is from her marriage license that we learn her mother's name: "Judy [*sic*] Stafford." Both her parents were deceased.¹⁰⁰

On 28 October 1888, Nancy bore a son, Georg Arnold Gassman. He was born in Zurich. More than likely his mother named him "Georg," spelled in the German fashion but in memory of George Webb. Her capable friend and mentor Sarah Webb may have been with her at this time.¹⁰¹

She was well on her way to becoming a Swiss householder. Nancy enjoyed Zurich enough to become a Swiss citizen. But her marriage was breaking up. After their marriage, they lived in an apartment rented to them by Gassman's mother. The old lady was not particularly clean, and it seems she wanted to charge the couple for living there.

Shortly after their marriage, the couple began to argue, and their quarrels only intensified over time. One of the first disagreements came over money. Dower rights in Swiss courts permitted a husband to claim his share of his wife's money. Gustav first came to this tribunal to petition for his wife's income, claiming it as his legal right. Nannie, however, had put a hold upon it, whereupon the Swiss judge placed a hold on her bank account on 12 July 1889. Although Nannie protested this action, her protest was dismissed on 1 August 1889. It was here that the tribunal began to suspect Gassman had married Nannie for her money.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Souvenir*.

⁹⁹ Zurich Marriage Index. From it we learn Nancy's birth date: 20 June 1854 (not 1853) Taking a year off one's age is not uncommon in women.

¹⁰⁰ *Souvenir*; also see family, Cornwall.

¹⁰¹ In March 1888 a single woman named "S. Webb" took passage on *La Bretagne*, from Le Havre, France to New York. U.S. Immigration lists: microfilm serial #237, microfilm roll #351, line #8.

The wife brought with her no dowry; however she receives an annual income of 4000 Fr.¹⁰³

Nannie immediately filed suit for divorce. Any woman nowadays would have felt the same way. Living with him had become unpleasant. Gustav was abusive; he often drank too much; he had at least once struck her; and he mocked her because of the colour of her skin. But when Nannie discovered that a Swiss tribunal could bar her access to her own money, she realized she was in a foreign country with distinctive views about wives and their legal rights. Dowries were still common in Switzerland, where the husband was given a large amount of freedom over his wife's property. Evidently she put up a strong argument for access to her own money. Her unfamiliarity with Swiss law meant she had never thought of it as her dowry.

In her suit for divorce, the tribunal asked Nannie to care for Gustav's illegitimate child (a little girl who had been living with them) up to its sixth year, for which Gustav was required to pay compensation. Gustave demanded that a portion of his wife's income be turned over to him. Nannie testified that her husband frequently took the opportunity to make fun of her skin color, often doing it in public. Perhaps it was inevitable that Gassman chose to embarrass and hurt his wife. He had ordered his mother to evict her. He declared she had denied him conjugal union.

Nancy responded intelligently and, we imagine, calmly to his allegations.

I needed my income at the beginning in part to buy furniture, never for mere luxury items. I put everything into the household budget, and even paid my mother-in-law's bills. I did not make any great demands and did not consider myself a grande dame, nor did I look down upon my husband. It is also untrue that I denied my husband the right to sleep with me, except in cases when he was drunk. For this he often thanked me the next morning . . . It is also untrue that I threatened to make him disappear from the earth by consistent vexation or that I ever said anything of the sort. To the contrary: I always held in my anger. Nor did I ever call my husband a fool, nor did I ever throw a water bucket at him or even considered it. Perhaps I wanted some hot water one evening, which my husband misinterpreted. I have never in my life hit another person.

¹⁰² Session of 26 November 1889, Zurich District Court: The court has found in the matter (Pa. No. 289) of Frau Nanni Gasmann, née Stafford of Elizabeth, born in 1854, married in Zurich on 19 September 1887, Presbyterian, residing at English Quarter (*englisches Viertel*) 37 in Hottingen, represented by attorney Goll, v Gustav Arnold Gaßmann, music teacher, from and at Zurich, Zeltweg No. 2, born 1857, Protestant, represented by attorney Dr. Aebli. Translated by Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA), Jan. 20, 2005

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, Part 1.

It is furthermore incorrect that I angered my mother-in-law. What is more to the point is that no one in Zurich has gone through as much as I have with her. For example, she makes things very dirty . . . which I would not tolerate, particularly not in the kitchen. In addition, she had two dogs, which she washed with the wash water that was set aside to be used to wash clothing, and she then dried them off with kitchen towels . . .

Nannie's lawyer pointed out that when Nancy was granted separation rights, the tribunal had agreed that she could use her income for herself alone and for their son. In this suit for divorce, the tribunal agreed that such should be the case again. The divorce was granted in 1889.¹⁰⁴

In 1900 Nancy resided at 7 Bellerive Strasser in Zurich. We do not know if she owned it. We think it likely she maintained it as a *pension*, which, after the European fashion, provided private lodging and dining facilities for paying guests.¹⁰⁵ Howard University having solicited her for news, she sent information about herself to *Souvenir*. We note that Nancy rather carefully edited her personal information. Any hurt from her divorce was not mentioned; indeed, the divorce was not mentioned at all. At that time divorce was often viewed as disgraceful. Frequently society cast blame upon the wife for failing to subordinate her wishes to those of her husband. Nancy was perhaps lucky in having a tribunal which recognized the difficulties and embarrassment caused by her husband's drunkenness.

Shortly after the divorce, their son, Georg Arnold Gassman, was sent to England in 1900 to attend the Marling School in Gloucestershire. He was about twelve or thirteen years of age, a typical age to commence preparatory school. No particular quality is visible in Marling to attract Nancy's attention, other than it was a good new school, established in the late 1880s.¹⁰⁶ Its position in the Cotswolds, a particularly beautiful section of England, may have influenced Nancy. Possibly some friend suggested it.

One of Nancy's Zurich friends was an Englishman named John Henry Smith, who had established a small, highly specialized plant on the outskirts of the city. Dr. Smith was an

¹⁰⁴ The divorce was granted in the session of 26 November 1889.

¹⁰⁵ European *pensions* generally required their keepers to provide guest dossiers. Zurich's police records have not been examined. In her hospital capacity, however, Nancy may have housed pediatric patients accompanied by relatives. Swiss researchers provided no proof for the contention that Frau Doktor N. Stafford ran her home as a pension, although it seems quite possible.

¹⁰⁶ Information about Georg Gassmann's school taken from British Naturalization papers.

Englishman who in 1889, with his partner Jakob Heusi, had established himself in Zurich as a manufacturer of chemical and photographic specialities. Smith was excited by the Lumière *Cinematographe* and saw a glittering future for the movies. In his factory in Zurich-Wollishofen, near the city border, he began to construct a *cine* apparatus, which, like Lumières's model, could serve as both camera and projector. The construction was progressive and original. The mechanism was enclosed in a large barrel shutter, in which could be inserted wide blades for short exposure times, and small blades for longer exposure times, and for projection the blades could be set to provide an opening which reduced flicker. Smith obtained a Swiss patent for his device. Smith moved to Paris sometime around 1900. He died 20 March 1917.¹⁰⁷

We think Dr. Smith must have worked in Zurich with Frau Doktor N. Stafford. Perhaps he invited her to his laboratory-factory to view his work, and struck by her intelligence and comprehension, discussed some of his inventions with her. They shared a mutual interest in colloids and their industrial application. Nancy was interested in their medical or dietetic application. A colloid is a mixture in which exceedingly small particles of one substance are distributed evenly throughout another substance. Paints, milk, and fog are colloids. They are used as food additives such as thickeners and emulsifiers. Think toothpaste, and you have one major industrial use. Nancy's interest in colloid chemistry would have derived from her interest in food preparation and storage, especially in hospitals.

Smith's interest, however, lay in emulsions and fixatives for film. Had he not died in 1917, his career was leading inexorably toward film-manufacturing. Smith made his own film material, which for its quality (it was particularly light-sensitive, sharp and transparent) became noted in England. Smith was definitely interested in their photographic application. The patent was awarded to Smith and Stafford in 1908.¹⁰⁸ Their joint application for a patent shows they agreed both should share the credit and the profits, if any.

After his death, Smith's firm was taken over by his widow, but it went bankrupt in 1917.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ www.apug.org Utocolor Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Dr. John H. Smith, Paris, und Frau Dr. Nancy Stafford. Dürrheim; Vertr.: H.Neuendorf, Pat.-Anw., Berlin W. 5629.8.08. S. 27325. 89k. 223301.

¹⁰⁹ John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England* (vol. 2) ; Thomas Ganz, *Die Welt im Kasten* (Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1994). See also *Camera Inc.* (1907), v. 11, p. 391 mentions J.H.Smith & Co. of

Chapter 6

In 1906 Nancy and Cornelia learned Stafford Plantation had become property of a wealthy industrialist family from Pennsylvania. They were advised that its current owners could be sued for having acquired property which should rightfully have gone to the two sisters. The nuisance value of a lawsuit might possibly become a profitable issue.

The case was named *Williams v Lucy C. Carnegie*. The lawsuit began in 1906 with Cornelia in a plea to admit evidence from five persons who could swear the two girls were children born to Robert Stafford. The sisters sued Lucy C. Carnegie of Cumberland Island, challenging her title to island property.¹¹⁰

Two Brunswick lawyers became interested in the case. They had been introduced to its political potentialities by a New York lawyer named George Augustus Mott (1836-1906). As early as 1902 he had brought to their attention a case with potential political possibilities. Mott had been working on behalf of the Bernardey-Stafford children. He had never heard of Nancy and Cornelia. Mott had married Emma Engels, a member of the Engels family into which Ellen Stafford had married. He sympathized with Ellen's difficult social status and was fond of her children. For over a decade Mott had been following his personal obsession with Stafford's "white slaves."

Mott saw the pathos of a "white/black" living in a race-obsessed white world. Stafford's children were half-castes, neither black nor white, unacceptable to the prevailing culture in the United States.

Americans unfamiliar with American slavery were fascinated with the effects of miscegenation. The naive and unsophisticated thought mulattos came in two different colors: black or light brown. They were always surprised to learn that a white slave could look as white as any white person but was considered a black person because he or she had "one drop" of black blood from a distant black female ancestor. Such was the case when a southerner said: "That's

Zurich and his UTO process. Dr. J.H. Smith of Zurich introduced Uto color paper in 1904. It worked on the principle (which Dr. Smith named) of the "Bleach-Out" law.

¹¹⁰ A sister-in-law of Andrew Carnegie, the well-known steel magnate, Lucy C. Carnegie's title to holdings on Cumberland Island originated in 1886, the date of her husband's death. She inherited from him that portion of Cumberland devised to her by her deceased husband's will, a foreign will (made and probated in Pittsburgh, PA). It consisted of the plantation properties of Robert Stafford. Cornelia and Nancy claimed only these portions conveyed to Lucy by her husband's will.

not a white girl; she is a nigger, sir.” White slaves were white people because almost all traits of their remote black ancestry had disappeared. Northerners saw these *white slaves* as Whites. Southerners saw these *white slaves* as Blacks. Members of the Engels family saw Ellen Stafford Engels as white. Mott considered Ellen to be an example of the tragic mulatto – a female doomed to tragedy because of her racial components. Mott and hundreds like him simply could not understand how a “white” person could be enslaved, a mind-set which was, in its way, a fully racist concept. Ellen’s increasingly disastrous life seemingly proved Mott’s point.

The actual number of white slaves is unknowable because all shades from “one drop” to those showing some discernible degree of black admixture were classed together as *mulattos* without any distinction as to color. Since Mott was frequently quoted by the press, he found it convenient to emphasize Elizabeth Bernardey’s skin color, which was “light.”

In 1902 Mott, describing his clients as descendants of the “famous white slave,” announced that a lawsuit to reclaim the property would commence in New York City.

Andrew Carnegie will be made a party to a suit for property valued at \$2,000,000 which will be brought against the wife of his brother by heirs of Robert Stafford, the sea Island king, says the *World*. Papers in the action have just been prepared in this city. . . .¹¹¹

The Brunswick lawyers were named Crovatt and Whitfield, eminently respectable southerners. When Mott first visited them, possibly in 1899-1901, the two men had been partners for almost twenty years.¹¹²

Crovatt and Whitfield represented the New South. Perfectly at ease with northern and western industrialists who constituted the membership of Georgia’s genteel Jekyll Island Club, Crovatt & Whitfield was one of the two leading legal firms in Brunswick. Their firm had represented the Jekyll Island Club for over forty years.¹¹³ Mott needed a Georgia lawyer.

¹¹¹ Associated Press, in *The Daily Northwestern*, Oshkosh, Wisconsin (18 January 1902). Mott was licensed in New York only. Andrew Carnegie resided in New York and had no financial or legal connection with Georgia nor with his sister-in-law’s Dungeness estate.

¹¹² Alfred J. Crovatt (1857-1926) had moved in 1870 as a youngster with his parents from Charleston, South Carolina to Brunswick, Georgia. The elder Crovatt was a railroad contractor. His son was admitted to the bar in 1879 and by 1883 had been elected Brunswick’s mayor. A complete southerner, he was familiar with the intricacies of caste and race in the antebellum South. In 1883 he formed a partnership with Judge Bolling Whitfield (1850-1891), born in Milledgeville, Georgia, into a planting family. Like Crovatt, Whitfield became a prominent Democratic party leader. Crovatt was just completing his first term as mayor of Brunswick.

Mott's efforts on behalf of the Engels children had become a personal crusade. Although the Georgia planter had been dead for almost thirty years, in 1903 Mott advertised for information about Stafford himself. Mott wanted to contact any one who had known him personally.

The purpose of the Long Island attorney here is to establish the identity and prove the legal status of the grandchildren. This involves some nice legal points in view of their grandmother having been a slave. In endeavoring to prove the legitimacy of Stafford's daughters, Mr. Mott is delayed by the unexpected fact that he has been unable to find anyone who can personally remember Mr. Stafford . . .

ADVERTISEMENT

I would like to correspond with any person in New London or Groton, who knew Robert Stafford, formerly of Groton.¹¹⁴

Crovatt and Whitfield, both outsiders to coastal Georgia, were at first unaware of Stafford's second family. They became interested in Mott's case because of its possibilities for publicity. Although from its onset the suit was thought to be slightly ridiculous (concern for the rights of illegitimate black heirs did not customarily interest Crovatt and Whitfield), all three lawyers concerned were attracted by the opportunity to go after a prominent northern capitalist, Andrew Carnegie, who approached the nadir of his reputation in the early 1900s. By the 1890s Carnegie had become a favorite target for southern populists.

Neither Crovatt nor Whitfield were populist leaders, but they were both politicians. In the years following the Civil War, southerners tapped rich coal and iron ore reserves so effectively that by 1900, the South led the world in coal production. Initial financing of the steel and iron industries came from southern sources, but by 1900, foreign investors and northerners such as Andrew Carnegie largely controlled these industries. His reputation was tarnished by the Homestead Strike (1892).

Carnegie left mediation of the dispute in the hands of his associate and partner Henry Clay Frick, well-known in the steel world for his anti-union sentiments. Frick brought in

¹¹³ *Georgia and Florida Souvenir Sketches* (F. A. Battey & Company, Chicago, 1888) p.840; *Memoirs of Georgia, Containing Historical Accounts of the State's Civil, Military, Industrial and Professional Interests, and Sketches of Many of its People* (Atlanta: Southern Historical Assoc., 1895), Vol. II: 982-3. William Barton McCash and June Hall McCash, *The Jekyll Island Club: Southern Haven for America's Millionaires* (University of Georgia, 2003).

¹¹⁴ *The Morning Telegraph* (New London, Conn.) April 28, 1903.

strikebreakers to work the steel mills, and Pinkerton agents, nationally-known private detective service, to safeguard them. Extreme violence ensued. Carnegie sold his company in 1901 and retired from industry, a very wealthy man, his reputation permanently damaged by Homestead bloodshed.

In 1903 Mott renewed his campaign. He announced the opening of two law suits to be brought in Georgia. Mott's "recent visit to Brunswick" meant that he intended (first) to bring a suit for damages against the Estate of Hawkins; and (second) to bring a suit for ejectment against the Carnegies for possession of the land.¹¹⁵

It is at about this date that Crovatt & Whitfield may have taken the precaution of supporting legislation helpful to Mott's lawsuit. We think they found a state senator to sponsor the Act of 1905. This law granted *legal standing* to petitioners such as Stafford's descendants, without which their suit could not be brought forward in Georgia. We note Cornelia's actions closely followed the new law, even to beginning the day after its passage.¹¹⁶

Their general legal aim was unveiled. By vacating Lucy Carnegie's title, a lawsuit would threaten her life style. Rather than risk her investment, Lucy Carnegie would surely attempt to settle out-of-court. Their strategy was uncomfortably close to blackmail.

Unfortunately Mott died unexpectedly (19 March 1906). He did not leave enough to cover his debts. He had worked since 1902 for the Stafford-Bernardey grandchildren without suitable compensation, and in his will he declared that helping them had ruined him.

At about the time Mott lay dying, bitter and disappointed, defeated in his long personal crusade to defend the rights of Stafford's grandchildren, Crovatt & Whitfield began to look around for replacements. Mott's law suit would proceed without him. Their clients would be Nancy and Cornelia, Stafford's daughters.

¹¹⁵ Bullard, *Robert Stafford*, 304-305. Quoted from New London, Conn. Newspaper (*The Morning Telegraph*) 28 April 1903. Mott was not licensed to practice law in Georgia. The above press interview with Mott was given February 1903. It was clear from a 1902 news story Mott was announcing two suits, one in NY, another in GA.

¹¹⁶ While the Act of 1899 closed the door to new claims, the Act of 1905 gave legal standing to persons protesting Lucy Carnegie's claim to title, thereby permitting them to bring a suit to trial. If they proved their case, eviction may follow, even if the circumstances surrounding their claim have nothing to do with the persons currently holding the title of the land (*dehors*). The state senator who introduced the bill was Senator E. Lawton Walker. He was senator for the third district, 1905-1906 session for Appling, Wayne and Pierce counties (Georgia). Walker was a distant cousin of lawyer Crovatt. *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 July 1905, p. 7.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Brunswick, a thriving commercial fishing port in Georgia, was large enough to provide an efficient and gossipy Black social network.¹¹⁷ If the Black community wished to share its information with the white community, discussion of planter Stafford's affairs would have been easy. People in Brunswick still gossiped about him: the white, maliciously; the blacks, more respectfully. We think the partners found Cornelia almost immediately after they learned of Mott's death. Once reassured that Stafford was her father, they encouraged her participation. They undertook to guide their new clients through a lawsuit of considerable delicacy.

Cornelia found five people to testify that planter Stafford was her father. They were Primus Mitchell,¹¹⁸ a resident of High Point (this location known to be of Cumberland Island); Sarah Robinson of Fernandina, Florida,¹¹⁹ Susan Morgan of Brunswick, Georgia; Sarah E. Webb of New York City but temporarily of Zurich, and Sophia S. Boggs of Brooklyn, New York.¹²⁰ Webb and Boggs "will testify to the fact that Robert Stafford presented Cornelia and Nancy" to them and placed them to be maintained and educated in the same house, and

¹¹⁷ Although Stafford had been close-mouthed with his relatives, a few suspected the existence of another family. They knew enough to give inaccurate information to journalists.

"Robert Stafford for many years a cotton broker in Charleston South Carolina took up residence at Groton Connecticut in 1860 with his wife and children ... It has just been discovered that Mr. Stafford had 3 (yes 3) families, one in Charleston, one in Pennsylvania and one in Connecticut and he left property in the south which is now worth \$1,000,000." (*Freedom County Standard* [a Minnesota newspaper], 14 Sept. 1887)

A woman named Jennie Briggs (white), resident in Brunswick (Glynn County) Georgia, became very talkative about the Stafford family at this time (1906-1907). While Briggs's information about her Spalding progenitors (white) was wildly inaccurate, she may have been living on Cumberland Island in the 1850s. Briggs is said to have written Lucy Carnegie but if so, her correspondence is not in Georgia. She undoubtedly contacted the Brunswick lawyers. She was a relative of George Stockwell, who, as we noted, hated Robert Stafford.

¹¹⁸ Primus Mitchell (b. ca. 1830-d. ca. 1912). Probably brother of Judah Williams. Juda and Prime were sold in 1834 to Robert Stafford (*RS*, p. 70) Primus returned to Cumberland after Civil War as a free man, married Amanda, fathered 7 daughters, one son, and became a charismatic but unordained minister to blacks on Cumberland Island. Buried at High Point, Cumberland Island.

¹¹⁹ Sarah Robinson (b. May 1829- ?), said to be of Fernandina, FL, was probably the woman who appeared on both the 1900 and 1910 census Federal Censuses in Nassau County (FL). This Sarah Robinson declared herself to be black, widowed, and mother of four children. Her age was 80. In 1880 she was living in Fernandina in the household of her son-in-law, William King, who had married her daughter Hattie (his second marriage). A black woman named Sarah Abota with two children, one of them named Hattie, left Cumberland Island for Fernandina, on 19 March 1862, with about twenty-two other contraband, all claiming Robert Stafford as their previous master. Before Sarah married Robinson, we think she was Sarah Abota. Paul K. Graham, *The Genealogy Company* (26 Sept. 2005); Cooper and Graham, "*Census*", 1864. Abota may be daughter of "Mobita" who appeared on lists of slaves returned to Louisa Shaw of Cumberland Island, dated 17 February 1815.

¹²⁰ We could not identify Susan Morgan. For Boggs and Webb, see throughout this paper.

frequently visited them there. Cornelia appeared in person to swear to her identity. Her oath was dated 2 June 1906. The court was reminded that old age might carry off her deponents. By law, since both parents were deceased, Cornelia had to wait six months starting June 2 and was to advertise during that period of time.¹²¹

The suit was appealed rapidly to the highest court in Georgia, where it failed. Crovatt & Whitfield immediately appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. A subpoena was served 12 January 1907 by a United States Deputy Marshal from Savannah upon Lucy Carnegie at Dungeness.

Savannah, Ga., Jan. 14 . . . Deputy United States Marshal Wilson had returned from Dungeness . . . on Cumberland Island . . . An effort is being made by Cornelius [sic] Stafford Williams, of New York and Nancy Stafford Gassman, of Zurich, Switzerland to perpetuate the testimony of several aged witnesses . . . The plaintiffs claim that it is their intention to file suit for 7,740 acres of land . . . as it was the property of Robert Stafford, whom they claim was their father . . .¹²²

The subpoena came like a thunderclap to her superintendent, William E. Page. He had heard of earlier maneuvering, but he was very surprised to learn of actual claimants for the property.¹²³

In the last twenty years we have frequently seen news items in the papers to the effect that certain heirs of Stafford were moving to recover portions of his former property on this Island, and we have heard that representatives of the claimants have been sent to St. Marys to look up the records, but no communication of any sort whatever has before been made to Mrs. Carnegie in the matter.¹²⁴

¹²¹ We have found no legal advertisements regarding the law suit.

¹²² *The Washington Post* (Washington, DC) , Tuesday, 15 January 1907.

¹²³ As early as 1898 Page was told of a lawyer visiting St. Marys. A few days later in a letter to Atkinson, Page wrote: "I wonder if Mr. Wyly might have anything to do with the lawyer who has been announcing in St. Marys that he would find out who owned Stafford Place." (Page to Atkinson, Feb. 27, 1898, Coll. 69-501, folder WEP, 1897-1898.)

¹²⁴ William Enoch Page (1862-1922) was the manager of the Dungeness estate from 1891 to his death. (Page to Dunwody, 12 Jan.1907, CER. 69-501, Box 16, Folder 5-2-019.)

His immediate reaction was that they were pretending to be Elizabeth's descendants. Page hastily wrote relatives of Belton Copp in Connecticut, seeking further information about Bernardey children. The Copp family responded that all possible Bernardey claimants had died.

Robert Stafford's six children by Elizabeth Bunardi have all been dead for several years. These were the only children of Robert Stafford who were beneficiaries under his will, and are the only children that I previously had any information about. Miss Copp¹²⁵ recalls that in the last years of Stafford's life rumors of other families of children reached her family, but her father always discouraged belief in them ... From current report about here, there is little doubt that there were other families of children for whom Stafford made more or less provision while living. The present action must be brought by members of one of those families.¹²⁶

Among the Carnegie Estate papers is a seven-page draft of what appears to be Dunwody's argument on behalf of Lucy Carnegie. This unsigned (and undated) memorandum is entitled "Can the Claimants, who are illegitimate children of a mulatto woman, inherit in Georgia even though legitimized in another state?" Although great play is made in this document over their illegitimacy, its final paragraph was the conclusive one. Dunwody argued that in this case, the father had not chosen to leave his real property to these two women.

Counsel for Nancy and Cornelia was Walter G. Charlton, an intelligent and principled Savannah attorney. Crovatt & Whitfield were arguing that since their father had overlooked their claim to legitimacy (necessarily so, because outmoded racial laws had prevented their legitimization), the State of Georgia would protect their rights.¹²⁷ Dunwody's argument was that since Stafford had not exercised his right to devise property to Nancy and Cornelia, he had acted intentionally. The highest court in Georgia agreed with him. So did the Supreme Court of the United States.

¹²⁵ Catherine B. Copp, a daughter of Belton A. Copp.

¹²⁶ Wm. E. Page to Harry Dunwody, 28 March 1907, CER, 69-501, Box 16, Folder 5-2-019. Since Belton Copp died (1858) in Groton, Connecticut, in the same decade that saw Cornelia and Nancy's birth in Georgia, Copp was unaware of their existence. Page was unfamiliar with the details of Robert Stafford's life.

¹²⁷ Walter Glasco Charlton (1854-1917), youngest son of Judge Robert M. Charlton of Savannah, was himself an eminent jurist as well as a scholar. Too young to fight in the Civil War, he graduated from the University of Virginia in 1869. He was elected solicitor-general of Georgia in 1880. Charlton later became a judge of the Superior Court, Eastern Circuit of Georgia.

Inheritance laws permitted fathers to devise to their illegitimate children. The meaning of the word “inherit” is that someone has the right to inherit. A person does not inherit under a will but inherits under the laws of intestacy. If there was no mention of Cornelia and Nancy in Stafford’s will of record (and there wasn’t), his property passes to the relatives named in a state’s intestacy statute. Georgia state law prescribes who will receive the decedent’s property. Disputed claims, therefore, must be judged by the intent of the deceased. Stafford’s intent had been perfectly clear. He had not intended to devise his property in the South to Cornelia and Nancy.

Cornelia and Nancy had been led to believe they would obtain a financial settlement of some sort, based upon their relationship to Robert Stafford. We suppose their lawyer, Charlton, told them that the Supreme Court’s refusal to hear their petition was based ultimately upon the apparent wishes of their father. We imagine they were not particularly surprised; in fact, we are not convinced of Nancy’s full participation.¹²⁸

Chapter 7

In 1914 the Great War began. Cornelia, who returned to America shortly before the outbreak of war, had gone to Europe to visit her sister before the entrance of the United States in the war.

We know little of Cornelia’s life. Her story was very different. Cornelia appears to have entered American middle-class life and to have remained there. Although she could not have been unaware of America’s race-consciousness, Cornelia seems to have been happy enough. Her husband was a *caterer*. His profession put the couple into the ranks of upper-middle class of black America. Cornelia helped her husband in the catering business.

As a colored middle-class emerged in the larger cities of the United States, more mercantile and educational opportunities were opened to it. Racism, however, played an increasingly prominent role. Even though colored citizens flocked to Chicago, Detroit, New York, Birmingham, and Richmond, where jobs were available, insufficient housing followed. Thousands of blacks left an agricultural South, where “Jim Crow” prevailed. Accustomed to substandard housing in the South’s big cities, as well as unable to find living areas which it could afford in the North, the new class of freed blacks found housing in groups, where they clung

¹²⁸ No further information regarding the law suit has been found in the contemporary press, private correspondence, the Carnegie Estate papers, or in the Supreme Court dockets. The Supreme Court of Georgia decided that Stafford’s will must be interpreted in light of his intent, a decision for which there is ample precedent.

together. These living areas were soon called “ghettos.” Since there had always been a colored part of town in both the Northeast and Southeast, few found fault with segregated development. Although these districts sometimes received extra attention, slum conditions often crept in, to become the object of municipal indifference and racial fury.

In 1855 the entire black labor force in New York City was concentrated in just four occupations: laborers, waiters, laundresses, and domestic servants.¹²⁹ Even the menial occupations which had been followed by American blacks were invaded in large numbers by foreigners after 1840. These occupations included the work of porters, dock-hands, waiters, barbers, cooks and maids. In the Eastern states, these tasks were gradually entering the hands of immigrants, and the competition was great.¹³⁰

Despite these limitations many New York Negroes managed to acquire property and credit. In 1856 the journal *African Repository* stated that in New York City Negroes had \$600,000.00 deposited in savings fund institutions. The taxed real estate owned by Negroes in New York City in 1859 amounted to \$1,400,000.00. In 1861 Manhattan Negroes invested in business carried on by themselves an impressive total of \$836,100.00. A report at the National Convention of Colored Americans in 1856 stated that Negroes of New York and Pennsylvania had a capital of \$3,000,000.00 employed in business, exclusive of agriculture.¹³¹

Cornelia, as far as we can see, escaped the heaviest burdens imposed by society on persons of color. If she escaped the cruelty imposed by Jim Crow, her good luck resulted from her father’s having subsidised her life, but she seems to have been a good-natured and effective person. Their housing was excellent. She and her husband lived in Elizabeth, New Jersey, at 1019 East Grand St., where they formed a team of *caterer* and *confectioner*. Because so many educational opportunities were denied the colored world, catering businesses signaled talented respectability. Cornelia’s manners were pleasing, she was kind to the orphans and the less-well

¹²⁹ Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 1983) Introd.

¹³⁰ Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925: A Study in American Economic History* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927) 76.

¹³¹ Wesley, *Negro Labor*, 49-50.

off, and she seems to have travelled frequently to Zurich, usually to visit their old mentor, Sarah E. Webb.

Cornelia travelled fairly frequently to Europe. Her passport applications generally gave her occupation as *cook*, which suggests a degree of professionalism. Her friends included many distinguished and well-travelled persons of color.¹³²

Cornelia's father-in-law was himself a rising businessman. James Williams, Philip's father, was an importer. Cornelia's family by marriage lived in Brooklyn. James Williams, of Williams, Plumb & Co., was an importer and dealer in "*CHINA, GLASS AND EARTHEN WARE.*" Before entering into partnership with Plumb (who was white), James Williams had specialized for the previous twenty years, in "crockery." Proud of his race, James Williams advertised his mercantile success.

. . . A leading object in establishing the present firm, both by the parties themselves and their friends and advisers, having been to contribute to the SOCIAL ELEVATION OF THE COLORED PEOPLE, they feel warranted in making an appeal for patronage, as they now do, to all that class of merchants throughout the country who sympathise with the object now expressed, and who would gladly avail themselves of so direct a method and so favorable an opportunity to serve it . . .¹³³

Since his wife came from the West Indies, possibly James Williams served as a broker for Caribbean pottery whose commercial uses included a manufactured item called "chimneys." Its name derived from the British introduction of washing basins for home use. It was a term commonly used in the American West Indies.

¹³² Among her principal legatees were sisters Louisa Van Horn Miller and Florence Miller, daughters of Hon. Mahlon Van Horn (1840-1910). Dr. Van Horn was born Princeton, NJ, graduated A. B., 1868, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, attended Theological School, Princeton, N. J. , was principal of the Zion School, Charleston, S. C., for three years—a school of 900 pupils and 15 teachers – and became pastor of the Union Congregational Church, Newport, Rhode Island, which he built. He became the first African American to serve on the Newport School Committee and eventually the first to serve in the Rhode Island legislature. He served nearly twenty years on the school board and was a member of Rhode Island legislature for three consecutive terms. He served as United States consul at St. Thomas, Danish West Indies. Van Horn died in the West Indies in 1910 where, at the end of his life, he was serving as a missionary.

¹³³ From advertisement of James Williams, in William Cooper Nell (1816-1874), *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution: With Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons: To Which is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans* (Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855), 159.

Cornelia's husband, Philip Raymond Williams, apparently died in the late 1890s, so she had a relatively short married life.¹³⁴ Together they had two children. She and her husband owned property in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She had access to a commercial property called the People's Bank Building, 393 Canal St., Manhattan. It served as her contact address while she travelled abroad. Relatives of her husband's family, looking after Cornelia's children, used that address when their mother traveled to Europe.¹³⁵ An old-fashioned building of four stories, with commercial property on its street floor, it was still standing on Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1943. We think Cornelia used that bank as a forwarding address.¹³⁶ She resided in the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Cornelia died in 1917 at the age of 67 and is buried in the Webb family grave plot in Elizabeth, New Jersey.¹³⁷



Figure 5. Peoples Bank, at “Bank Corner,” where Canal Street and Lower Broadway intersect, New York City (1943).

¹³⁴ Cornelia called herself “widow” on an 1898 passport application.

¹³⁵ Cornelia (1910 passport) gave her address as 393 Canal St., New York City. This address seems to be at Canal Street's junction with the Bowery, near an intersection known as Bank Corner. The building at that address resembles an old-fashioned bank (see Figure 2). Chatham & Phenix Bank stood nearby. Gerard R. Wolfe, *New York: 15 Walking Tours/ An Architectural Guide to the Metropolis* (New York, McGraw Hill: 1994, 2003), 169.

¹³⁶ See Appendix A.

¹³⁷ Public library, Elizabeth, New Jersey, courtesy Virginia S.Wood.

Chapter 8

In 1906 Nancy left Switzerland to take up residence in Germany.¹³⁸ She may have been offered a responsible position in Baden-Baden, or she may have joined a friend. At the end of May in 1906 Nancy was taken off Zurich's Citizens Registry).¹³⁹ She was about 52 years old. She sold her house in Zurich (1906), and she moved to Kappelrodeck in Baden where her friend Fraulein Justine Rheiner lived. We think she may have been working in Baden-Baden between 1900-1906, but we have no information on that period. In 1907 she opened a medical practice in Duerrheim.

Duerrheim is a small town in the Black Forest, in southwestern Germany. When Nancy moved to that area, it was still part of the Grand Duchy of Baden, from which it was later separated in 1918 as part of the Treaty of Versailles. In 1906 the town had approximately 1100 inhabitants. Neighboring agricultural areas saw peasants still wearing distinctive costumes. In the long winter evenings their women plied their needles to make lace. It also had a military hospital.¹⁴⁰

We assume Nancy was ready to take on greater medical responsibility. By all visible standards (her age, personal health, medical background, language skills, and a lifelong commitment to curing), she must have felt prepared to establish a medical practice. Perhaps she became restless in her assistant's role at Zurich. Sometime in the 1890s Nancy had made a new friend named Justine Rheiner in Baden-Baden.¹⁴¹ Rheiner may have contracted to help Miss Webb who was visiting Europe more frequently. Justine, an unmarried Catholic, gave her occupation as lady's companion (*Hausdame*). We feel sure Justine encouraged Nancy in her hope of becoming a physician.

¹³⁸ Ulrich Helfenstein, reported (7/04/04) Nancy "left" Zurich Registry, gave date (1906), to T. Castle, email: "Nancy Stafford was then registered at different addresses in Zurich: Sonnenquai 16, Bellerivstrasse 7, and Seestrasse 417, and seems to have managed from time to time a Pension and an Eatery of until [sic] she moved by the end of May in 1906 to Duerrheim (the former Grosserzotume Baden)."

¹³⁹ Dr. G.A.Nogler, Archives Zurich;. Ulrich Helfenstein, Archivist, University of Zurich.

¹⁴⁰ Nancy's grandchildren remembered long rolls of beautiful lace which Nancy told them was given her when patients did not have money to pay her medical fee.

¹⁴¹ "Testator: Reiner, Justine, without occupation ... unmarried. Heir: Mrs. Dr. med. Nanny Stafford, physician in Bad Dürrheim, handwritten will, executed 1895 in Baden-Baden, left property in the hands of Mrs. Dr. Stafford." Will of Justine Rheiner, *Bad Dürrheim IV #1357, Bad Duerrheim Contracts nos.714-1164, Probate records nos. 993 to 1583; Record group G 566/1: Villingen-Schwenningen district court.*

Fraulein Rheiner was born, illegitimate, 16 June 1857 in Gundelwangen, Baden (Germany). Gustav Rheiner, her father, was a civil servant (a tax collector). He lived in Basel (Switzerland). Justine's parents solemnized their union when she was four years old. Nancy and Justine's friendship may have begun in Switzerland sometime before 1895.¹⁴²

Justine may have sought to engage Nancy more actively with the sick and helpless. Fraulein Rheiner was Catholic. We think she was connected with a Franciscan order called the Congregation of Gengenbach, formed in 1867 in Baden. Justine may have been a member of this order – a sister of the Congregation. In 1904 German Franciscan congregations turned their hands to administering and teaching in kindergardens, service schools (housekeeping and health care), hospitals, and community welfare. If Nancy was employed in training classes in hospital and orphanage administration, her friend Justine Rheiner almost surely served as friend, hostess and guide.

In the hierarchy of established European baths, Duerrheim ranked very low. It was the only brine bath resort in Baden.¹⁴³ Saline baths (*Soolbader*) and their financial possibilities for Duerrheim were unknown until the 1800s. On 21 March 1822, a newly discovered salt spring was given the name *Ludwigs Saline* by the King. The town fathers had rejoiced when salt was discovered at Duerrheim, and the *commune* hired engineers to sink new bore holes (wells). In 1822, after eight months of intensive drilling, two engineers found a large salt feature. These shafts reached 200 meters in depth below earth's surface to obtain saline ground water. The bore holes obtained 27% saturated salt water, which was considered very pure. Pumps carried salt water from the bore hole to the surface. In 1822 the community of Dürrheim received the right from the Ministry of the Interior to go by the name *Ludwigshall*, and the town's hopes for a wider clientele slowly expanded.¹⁴⁴

In 1906, through the sponsorship of Wurttemberg's Grand-Duchess Louise, daughter of Kaiser Wilhelm and founder of Germany's Red Cross, a new hospital opened in Duerrheim. Its opening was accompanied by construction of new guest facilities. The village and baths of Dürrheim reported the presence of a splendid new hotel, the *Kurhaus & Salinen-Hotel*

¹⁴² Sarah E. Webb moved to Zurich in 1895 or 1896, where she planned to live permanently. On her passport she gave her occupation as "lady."

¹⁴³ Gairdner, et al. *Malformations*, 386-7.

¹⁴⁴ Senn, K., E. Schneider, and F. J. Rothenbiller. *Bad Dürrheim: Weg und Ziel. Heimatbuch des Heilbades [Bad Dürrheim: Path and goal. A history of the therapeutic baths]*. (Karlsruhe: Verlag G. Braun, 1969), 182.

(Sanitarium and Saltworks Hotel), a “large building comfortably fitted up” with new pension accommodations for visitors who needed to stay for long periods of time.¹⁴⁵ Nancy’s move to the town not only indicates her desire to practice as an independent physician but also considerable shrewdness in her timing. She was prepared to offer inexpensive lodging for the crowds of patients who were expected; unlike other *pensions*, hers would accommodate sick children and their mothers.

In 1907 Nancy had purchased a private residence in Duerrheim, on Luisenstrasse #183, for her own use.¹⁴⁶ There she had opened an office. For the next decade she apparently enjoyed a pleasant working relationship with the town of Duerrheim; in fact, its *commune* (the *Markung*) may have helped her acquire the dwelling. Nancy’s personal success was the result, we believe, of her having convinced City Hall of her earnestness and her ability to work hard.¹⁴⁷ Two municipal institutions approved her petition: the Saltworks; and the Kurhaus Hotel.¹⁴⁸ Her petition to practice was approved by local businessmen in Duerrheim.¹⁴⁹

When the Great War ended, Nancy made a second purchase. She had come into some money, probably because of her sister’s death.¹⁵⁰ On 13 February 1919 Nancy entered into a

¹⁴⁵ Karl Baedeker, *The Rhine from Rotterdam to Constance* (Sixteenth Revised Edition by Karl Baedeker, Publisher, Leipsic, 1906) 409.

¹⁴⁶ Land register no. 244, Address: Luisenstraße 183, new No. 10, owner: Nanny Stafford, Dr., a dwelling house with a fireproof basement and attic, fireproof walls, the cost for rebuilding it would be 16,584 Mark, valued 16,500 Mark for insurance purposes. - New owner by purchase in 1930: Karolushaus Bad Dürrheim GmbH. *Fire insurance register of Dürrheim, 1922*, p. 215.

¹⁴⁷ Wuerrtemberg’s communes were famed for their robust independence. See Appendix C.

¹⁴⁸ “The application by Mrs. Dr. Stafford for permission for the construction of a new building. The community council [viz: the *commune*] agrees to this application after a letter from the Saltworks, dated 10 May, and a petition from the director of the Kurhaus Hotel, dated 20 April, were received, if the conditions of these two documents are observed.” *Beschlußbuch des Gemeinderats Dürrheim, 1901-1907*, p. 453, session of 17 May 1907, case number 5.

¹⁴⁹ “Mrs. Dr. Stafford, a physician who acquired her medical degree in America, informs the mayor’s office she settled here 1 May to practice medicine (*zur Ausübung ihrer ärztlichen Praxis*) with permission of the district office. 20.05.1905 Decisions: 1. To register her in the business chart; 2. To send her the certificate; 3. To record this case.” #849, *Medical Practice in Bad Dürrheim, 1894-1951. Villingen district office, 18.05.1905*

¹⁵⁰ We think Cornelia’s death meant a larger distribution for Nancy, the surviving beneficiary. Cornelia’s will was executed the day after Christmas 1914. She died in 1917. Cornelia left no money to her sister, although she did remember her nephew Georg Gassman with a respectable legacy of one hundred dollars. Perhaps it was his wedding present. He had married in 1914. Cornelia’s will did not conclude probate until 1919. See Appendix A.

purchase and sale agreement in Duerrheim with Justine Rheiner.¹⁵¹ Under Nancy's management, Villa Rheiner, with its new annex, Villa Homestead, would become, first, a *kur-pension*, and later (perhaps with additional assistance from the archbishopric of Freiburg) a *kur-sanitorium*.

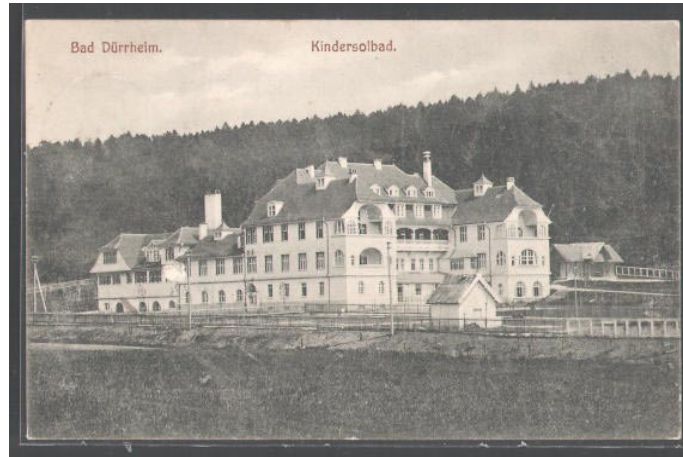


Figure 6. Duerrheim, postcard of the Kindersolbad (Children's Hospital), 1908.

Its property description said it stood upon the road to Gneigen, consisted of 3 *ares* of farm land, 3 *ares* of arable land, and had a two-story house with attic, on the farm portion.¹⁵² The house was distinguished by its vaulted cellar (*schienengewölbter Keller*). Perhaps it had been a farm structure. The property description has a rural flavor, suggesting a building into which plough horses or oxen with their carts and wagons might be driven directly into a high-ceilinged cellar. Dr. Stafford paid eighteen thousand marks in cash and took out a note for the balance of five thousand. Article 3 contained an interesting proviso.

The seller has the right to use rooms No. 1 and No. 2 as well as the mansard room overlooking the street at no cost for the rest of her life. She also retains the right of free entry to and exit from these rooms. In addition the right to use the toilet.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Fraulein Justine Rheiner was listed in Duerrheim as "proprietor, Villa Amalia." *Deutsches Reichs-Adressbuch, Sonderband 8: Baden, Elsass-Lothringen, Hohenzollern, Württemberg*, 1908. In Duerrheim she had two properties, separated by about 10 acres of open land. Bad Duerrheim Municipal Archives, 813, survey map, *Woerl's Reisehandbuch von Bad Duerrheim und Umgebung*, 1924, 1929. Rheiner may have inherited valuable open land.

¹⁵² A metric unit of land measure equal to 100 square meters or 1/100 hectare (119.6 square yards).

¹⁵³ Nancy paid 13,000 cash (marks), balance of 5,000 due at 4 3/4 % interest, debt secured by a mortgage. Seller retained use and dwelling rights. *Records Bad Duerrheim, Rec'd by the LRO, Bad Dürrheim*, on 30 August 1930,

Repairs and renovations were needed, and while they were made, the two women together moved to Kappelrodeck to wait out the period of contractors and carpenters. Both women returned to take up permanent residence in Duerrheim on the same day in 1921, on 28 April. Nancy's purchase lay within the Duerrheim *kur-park*, and because of the special nature of its location, we think Nancy's purchase stood within property owned by the Diocese of Freiberg. If so, perhaps her acquisition should be called a leasehold. The Catholic church was her landlord. Nancy would be a responsible tenant, protected by a long lease, committed to guide-lines set out by the church. It seems an unusual arrangement. Nancy was, after all, a foreigner. She was not a graduate of a German university, nor was she a Duerrheim resident of long-standing.¹⁵⁴

Although Fraulein Justine first met Nancy as *employer*, they became close friends. They had much in common. Both women were born illegitimate, which meant they were both aware of difficulties faced by bastards. Nancy had a difficult task, however, explaining to Justine the dimensions of American racial prejudice. At the time of the law suit, which Sarah Webb of course knew all about, the three women must have attempted to explain to one another why Stafford had not left his plantation to Nancy and Cornelia. In discussing the case, Nancy and Justine would have contrasted American and German laws regarding illegitimacy.

Nancy would have explained that Georgia law prohibited marriages between a white person and a person of African descent, or adoption of a Negro child by a white person, or of a white child by a Negro. In regard to Cornelia's law suit (1906-1907), Nancy might have well have had occasion to refer to the Georgia Code section 2424, especially in connection with the solemnization of marriage. "It is . . . impossible for a white person and a person of African descent to leave this State for the purpose of marriage." Justine no doubt expressed polite incredulity, but she must have been greatly astonished.

An advocate of natural cures, Nancy had become a strong supporter of hydrotherapy. Brine baths, always popular in Europe, were being touted as the cure that should be offered to an

10:30 a.m. LTB No. 436. Land Registry Office *Dürrheim* in the District Regional Court *Villingen*, *Land Title Book No. 68*. There are actually 2 sets of records, the first when Nancy bought the property in 1919, and the second when she sold it in 1930. Its address was 14 Luisa Strasse.

¹⁵⁴ Survey map of Bad Duerrheim, printed in Woerl's *Reishandbuch von Bad Duerrheim und Eumgebung*. 1929. Bad Duerrheim Municipal Archives, courtesy municipal archivist, Ms. Lydia Wende. The author has been informed that title to the land where Nancy's *kur-sanitorium* stood, is still property of the Archbishopric of Freiburg. Its relationship to Karolushaus is unclear to the authors.

ever-widening cross-section of society. Social welfare reforms began to include spa treatments as part of legitimate medical cures. Europeans with centuries of spa experience strongly supported hydrotherapy.

In Europe two different kinds of spas had developed. Some developed into resorts which appealed to the fashionable. Continental spas were so well attended through the centuries that until 1914 they attracted the patronage of an international elite. Facilities at European spas existed for gambling, horse-racing, and dancing, but German spas took their therapeutic mission very seriously. The practice of bathing in thermal waters went back to Roman times. Soldiers were often the key to development of thermal springs. Through the centuries Roman baths gradually changed to signal “places for relaxation and pleasure.” The public baths often became sexual centers. The gentry continued to visit the baths, although they preferred to go to baths from natural sources with warm mineral water.

Practical obstacles prevented the poor from attending the baths. They had no time for leisure, nor were the baths and mud usually free.

Two types of spas existed. There were *hot springs* for drinking and bathing, and *cold springs* for drinking cures only. Every spa resort had its own theatre, casino, and promenades besides the bathing buildings, many of them quite ostentatious. Baden-Baden in Germany became the place to see and be seen. But the more serious side of medical cures was never completely abandoned; in fact, it was embraced in Germany. In the early nineteenth-century, *balneology* (medicinal use of thermal water), *hydrotherapy* (immersion of the body in thermal water for therapeutic purposes), and *physiotherapy* (exercise in water) became major therapies.

Bathing was usually combined with many other treatments: hot and cold baths, herbal baths, mud packs, active physical exercises, massages, and special diets. “Spa” resorts are differentiated according to their location (for example, *seaside v mountain* areas) and according to the chemical composition of their mineral water (for example, *sulphurous, bicarbonated, or sulphated*). Each thermal feature has its own characteristics, and Duerrheim’s *commune*, like all others, was anxious to promote its own method of hydrotherapy.¹⁵⁵

We know quite a lot about bath treatments. A formidable publication came out in 1902, whose purpose was to educate physicians and clinical administrators. Its purpose was startlingly

¹⁵⁵ Internet, “A brief history of spa therapy,” A. van Tubergen, S. van der Linden, *Annales Rheumatism Dis* 2002; 61:273–275.

comprehensive: “A Practical Exposition of the Methods, Other than Drug-giving, Useful in the Prevention of Disease and in the Treatment of the Sick.” Eleven volumes of contributions from American, English, German, and French doctors, presented in imposing detail western Europe’s newest findings on how to cure everything through hydrotherapy.¹⁵⁶

Dr. Solis-Cohen’s support of the “thermic influence” of water shaped the general direction of the contributors, for whom there was no human malfunction that could not be treated by hydration. Under “The Technic and the Methods of Hydrotherapy” came “General Baths.” Seven types of baths were covered in eleven pages.¹⁵⁷ The next chapter gives readers eight types of “Partial Baths and Other Procedures.” Next came “The Wet Compress,” which gives thirteen pages to the function and placement of sixteen kinds of compresses. Chapter V, “Sweat Baths,” gives ten generously-illustrated pages to a lot of expensive equipment.¹⁵⁸ More than a nursing manual, less than a physician’s guide, Cohen’s *System, Physiologic* spoke to humanity’s need, when hurt, to curl up in a warm place and lick one’s wounds. We feel sure Dr. Stafford was familiar with the publication. It was written in English.

Nancy found much to admire in German social legislation. Among its goals was utilization of brine baths for the good of the workman. No longer were spa-baths to be limited to the leisure class. We have noted that Nancy was aware that the indigent sick often got short thrift in American hospitals.

We expect Nancy was impressed by German social consciousness. Duerrheim’s most significant resource was the town’s famous salt feature.¹⁵⁹ When Nancy left Switzerland to live in Wurttemberg, the village of Duerrheim had not yet adopted Bad (*bath*) as part of its name, but the village took its mission seriously.

¹⁵⁶ *A System of Physiologic Therapeutics*, Solomon Solis Cohen, ed. / vol. IX: Hydrotherapy, Thermotherapy, Heliotherapy, and Phototherapy. By Dr. Wilhelm Winternitz, assisted by Dr. Alois Strasser and Dr. B. Buxbaum/ and Balneology and Crounotherapy, by Dr. E. Heinrich Kisch. (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston’s Son & Co, 1012 Walnut Street, 1902). Cohen (1857-1948) was a distinguished physician on the staff of Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

¹⁵⁷ *General Considerations, Precautionary Measures, The High Bath, The Plunge Bath, the Half-bath, The Ziemassen Graduated Bath, and The Cold Full Bath.*

¹⁵⁸ *The Occipital Bath, The Elbow-bath, The Hand-bath, The Foot-bath, The Sitzbath, The Cold Rub, Ablutions, and Douches and Affusions, Sweat Baths, Steam Cabinet Bath, Hot-air Bath, Electric Light Bath, Sand Baths, and Baking Apparatus.* It concluded with a *Psychotherapy for Sweat Baths.*

¹⁵⁹ Thomas W. Maretski. “Cultural Variation in Biomedicine: The Kur in West Germany,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* New Series, Vol. 3, No.1.(March 1989), 23-35.

Although their value was indisputable, brine baths were not exactly comfortable to take. The term “brine baths” was applied to those baths prepared from mineral waters containing a certain proportion of sodium chloride (salt).¹⁶⁰ Once the salt concentrate had been extracted, it was used in diluted baths. No one ever said baths should be warm. Although Duerrheim’s *commune* had sought wider recognition as a health center, the town possessed few amenities to make the spa experience pleasant.

Homeopathic doctors believed that they could discover that, for each disease, Mother Nature possessed an appropriate medicinal spring. Nancy was committed to this philosophy. Individual treatments were prescribed, based upon composition and temperature of the waters. We assume Dr. Stafford intended to accommodate patients as lodgers.

Criticisms of Kur therapies were frequent and extreme. The idea of clinics as *resorts* throughout the twentieth century encountered scathing reviews of the therapies they employed. Many physicians referred to Kur therapy as vacation therapy (*Urlaub*). Nowadays all medical referrals to the Kur find their roles are laid down in complex detail by government agencies, but it was not always so.

Patients at all major *Kur* facilities now may take the waters at a large heated pool on the premises (with water often piped directly from a mineral spring) or at a central thermal bath in the community. Each spa also offers individual tubs for different types of hydrotherapy, mud packs, massage, physical therapy, and cubicles for rest between applications (*Anwendungen*). Patients are accommodated in single or double rooms. Automobile traffic is often restricted in the central parts of spa communities. There is even a word for new relationships formed at the spa: *Kurschatten* (*Kur* lover)!

The *kur* regime, however, is one which Nancy could believe in. We think Nancy was not only ready to practice as a physician but was ready to administer a small sanatorium. Nancy’s rigorous administration made Villa Homestead outstanding.

¹⁶⁰ Douglas Gairdner, et al. *The Conventional Roentgenogram in the Commonest Congenital Malformations of the Heart’s Great Vessels of Adults and Juveniles* (McGraw-Hill, Blakiston Division: 1902), 383.



Figure 7. Kursanatorium Karolushaus, Bad Dürrhein. The two buildings above became the clinic known as Karolushaus. Pension Rheiner is at left; Villa Homestead is at right (Undated photograph from Bad Duerrheim website).

We have not determined yet the role of Karolushaus in assisting her. It was a corporation of some sort, now defunct. In 1930 Karolushaus purchased Nancy Stafford's property. Its growth had been an offshoot of Germany's legislation for socialized medical care in the early twentieth century. Nancy received a payment of 32,000 marks in gold: 20,000 in cash, and balance due of 12,000, payable October 1931.

The buyers were Max Haas, pastor in Bad Dürrhein, and Sevrin Messmer, master butcher in Bad Dürrhein, who signed in their capacity as managers (*Geschäftsführer*) of the Karolus Bad Corporation.¹⁶¹ In the same year (1930) Dr. Stafford sold her residence (which had housed her medical office) to Karolushaus. The Reverend Father Haas and Herr Messmer signed the purchase agreement as its agents. The Homestead's chapel remained in place, although "it was not used." When Haas and Messmer signed the purchase agreement, they signed it on behalf of the corporation. The arrangement was a complicated one.

The Duerrheim municipality was responsible for administering the baths. It did this by means of a wholly-owned "municipal corporation", whose sole purpose was maintenance of *therapy* and of the *spa*. The municipal corporation had two managing directors, whose activities were supervised by a board on which serve town councilors, and a representative of the Ministry of Economic affairs for Baden-Wurtemberg. The board was chaired by Duerrheim's mayor.

¹⁶¹ Sales Agreement and Transfer, Land File page 97, Rec'd by the Land Registry Office, *Bad Dürrhein*, 30 August 1930, 10:30 a.m. Seller, Frau Dr. Nancy Stafford; Buyer (s) were two in number: (1) Max Haas, pastor in Bad Dürrhein; and (2) Sevrin Messmer, master butcher in Bad Dürrhein, operating as managers of Karolushaus (GmbH) in Bad Dürrhein.

The corporation was to convey its large and well-known open-air swimming pool to the city in 1991.

The city baths were run by two managers who reported to the “City of Duerrheim.” Nancy’s sale in 1931 show that she sold her private sanitorium to the city’s wholly-owned subsidiary. Its purchase shows she ran a good hospital which was profitable, otherwise the subsidiary wouldn’t have bought it from her. She earned the respect due her which she was not receiving in Switzerland.

Dr. Stafford had added a substantial annex to the property, a building which she named Villa Homestead. When she named it, Nancy may have been thinking of Lizzie Sargent, her classmate from Howard University.¹⁶² Villa Homestead under Dr. Stafford became a *kur-pension* with superior extra facilities. Duerrheim was the sort of place which Dr. Stafford admired. Its visitors were sick people, not all of them well-to-do. Duerrheimers even used a special word for its tourists: *kur-gaesten*. The city was proud of its saline waters and its improved reputation.

Bad Dür rheim is a spa for the diseased, not a luxury spa. All guests come here to be healed of a disease or to recover from one. All guests come upon requests of doctors. They go to hotels, pensions, children’s homes, or sanatoriums, and are either sick or need recovery.¹⁶³

Although it eventually had fifty-two single rooms and twenty-five double rooms, Villa Homestead seems to have started with thirty-two beds.

Nancy’s *kur-pension* was staffed by members of a Franciscan nursing order of nuns (*Gengenbacher Franziskanerinnen*). Their correct title was the Franciscan “Order of Divine Heart of Jesus” of Gengenbach. The chapel was for Catholic services. The *Gengenbachers* had been there since at least 1925.

¹⁶² Nancy’s choice of this name perhaps reflected familiarity with American practices. The family of Senator A.A. Sargent had perhaps told her about the Utopian language of investment schemes in which Villa Homestead figured prominently. State Engineer Office, *William Hammond Hall Papers*. AC 91-07-04, California State Archives (Internet). However, the name may be linked with their father’s trust.

¹⁶³ Bad Dür rheim Municipal Archives, Category B: Loose files #378: *Taxation of homes and (medical) institutions, 1913-1931*. Document dated 07.01.1925.



Figure 8. Postcard, Pension Rheiner and Villa Homestead, circa 1943, Bad Duerrheim, Germany.

Although we do not know how Nancy met them, nuns staffed her pension, and later, the sanitorium.¹⁶⁴ Justine may have persuaded them, or perhaps the archdiocese of Freiburg had persuaded them. This deeply spiritual community attached to the Franciscan order was designed to meet the needs of religiously inclined women, unwilling or perhaps unable to retire from the world. In all parts of the world today, in cities and in rural areas, there are still many such women’s communities, whose members follow Franciscan ideas of mercy and healing, exemplifying the Christian gospel through their actions and their lives.¹⁶⁵

The Archbishopric of Freiberg owned the Duerrheim *Kur-park*, granting leaseholds to private citizens whose purposes followed usage approved by the municipal council (the *Markung*).¹⁶⁶ Dr. Stafford purchased a leasehold in a conservative Catholic community, probably because the *Markung* approved of her.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ *Franziskanerinnen aus Gengenbach* was mentioned specifically in connection with the staffing of Karolushaus. Source: Bad Duerrheim Website, unsigned news article, dated 6 December 2005, attributed to Southwest Press, a local printer.

¹⁶⁵ Text aus der Broschüre, “Die Mutterhauskirche der Franziskanerinnen vom Göttlichen Herzen Jesu, Gengenbach” (“The Mother House of the Franciscan Church of the Divine Heart of Jesus, Gengenbach”); Memorandum, “One Hundred Years of the Gengenbacher Sisters.”

¹⁶⁶ Karolushaus went out of business in 2005. The Archdiocese of Freiburg currently (2008) owns the land on which Nancy’s property stood. See Appendix B.

¹⁶⁷ See Appendix B.

Karolushaus took over Nancy's *kur-pension* and at an unknown date (probably in 1924) enlarged the building. It maintained Dr. Stafford's fine reputation. An advertisement of 1925 described it.

Karolushaus, administered by [the] Catholic sisters, is a sanitorium-pension with accommodations for thirty patients taking the salt brine cure. Karolushaus is equipped with a chapel and indoor, private brine baths, provided by a direct line to the salt water pool. Open year round.¹⁶⁸

Nancy's credentials aroused professional controversy, probably from the Wurttemberg Physicians Association (*Verband der Arzte Deutschlands*). From the beginning of her residency in Duerrheim she had shown herself sympathetic to homeopathy, which had long been a favorite whipping boy of up-to-date doctors and surgeons. Nowadays homeopathy is thought as simply another medical discipline: not so in 1906. Considerable tension existed between Wurttemberg's medical fraternity and Dr. Stafford. It seems to have persisted throughout her residence in Wurttemberg.

Theoretically, in Germany Nancy could be licensed as a lay practitioner, an important therapeutic resource in west Germany. We have not yet found any evidence that she was so licensed.

In 1907 the Villingen district office warned Nancy to take her sign down.

On the sign at your apartment and in official petitions you bear the doctor's title. It is not close enough to the appended words "acquired in America." The use of the name "Frau Dr. Stafford" suggests this is a German medical degree. This is illegal. The misunderstanding is not corrected by the fact that your sign bears, in smaller script, the addition: "doctor's degree acquired in America." You are only allowed to bear the title *in Amerika promovierte Dr. med.* You may not separate the doctor's degree from said addition. The contested sign is to be removed soon.¹⁶⁹

In 1912 the Villingen district office again reminded the mayor of Duerrheim to execute its decree regarding Dr. Stafford's medical practice. A sharp response from the mayor's office came right back. Duerrheim ordered that its answer be registered and sent to the Villingen

¹⁶⁸ From an advertisement in a 1925 telephone directory, cited in *Branchen-Fernsprechbuch für die Oberpostdirektionsbezirke Karlsruhe Baden und Konstanz* (1925).

¹⁶⁹ Letter dated 4 June 1907. #849, *Medical Practice, Bad Dürrheim, 1894-1951. Villingen Records*. Transl. , FRW.

district office: “To report that it does not apply to Stafford (*Fehlanzeige*).”¹⁷⁰ This German word indicates Duerrheim’s vehement response. It is best translated as “Back off!”

In 1920 the Villingen district office sent another warning letter to the mayor’s office in Dürrheim. It was filed under “medical services by non-approved (*nicht approbierte*) persons.”

With reference to your note of 14 April 1920: we ask for a report if the seizure (*Beschlagnahme*) in the Stafford house has been cancelled. Is Mrs. Stafford permanently living in Bad Dürrheim now? Is she rendering medical services? Has anything odd (*Nachteiliges*) become known about her recently?¹⁷¹

This time the municipality explained it had not impounded Dr. Stafford’s sign. It did not intend to comply.

The confiscation in the Stafford house has not been waived, the apartment is occupied by mayor Schilling. Mrs. Stafford lives in Kappelrodeck, comes to Dürrheim once a week as she has a few rooms in her dwelling house and renders medical services. Nothing odd is known about her.¹⁷²

Villingen District’s watchfulness preceded World War One, and it lasted until Nancy’s departure in 1929. While its strictness may have been xenophobic, we believe its mistrust originated in the disapproval by Wurttemberg physicians of homeopathic medicine. They disparaged her medical training; consequently, district police continued to watch her. Since Duerrheim’s mayor, Schilling, boarded at her house, it seems Nancy had allies in the town council. Access by the poor to medical care has always been a political issue. Apparently Nancy continued her medical practice.¹⁷³ Numerous complaints, however, from the district headquarters show its growing irritation with Nancy’s intransigence. She refused to act as a police informer and sent word to Villengen she was not obliged to violate patients’ privacy. When she stopped practicing, it was because she wished to stop.

¹⁷⁰ *Medical practice, Bad Dürrheim, 1894-1951.*

¹⁷¹ Another translator gave: “Nothing unfavorable is known about her in either her professional or private life.”

¹⁷² Correspondence dated 10 December 1920. Undated answer.

¹⁷³ She practiced under her maiden name, Frau Doktor N. Stafford, at Luisenstrasse 183. She occasionally used the name “Mrs. Webb-Stafford.” *Villengen district office*, 20 February 1913. In 1929 she advertised mechanical massage. In her advertisement Nancy included a mention that her degree in medicine was an American one.

Not until 1921 did Duerrheim officially become a *Bad* (spa), a significant change in status for the town.¹⁷⁴ The town council, in supporting the spa industry, was positioning itself for the rise of state-funded medical care. Duerrheim's *commune* anticipated Germany's social health insurance which (they hoped) might underwrite medically-justified trips to their healing brine baths. We suspect Nancy was praised not only for her healing work but also for her role in publicising Duerrheim's therapeutic waters. She remained in Duerrheim for almost another twelve years.

As a result of Germany's health reforms of the mid-twentieth century, local hospitals and *kur-pensions* underwent a prolonged economic crisis. In 2004 more well-known healing centers in Duerrheim closed down, and in 2005 Dr. Stafford's venture closed its doors for the final time.
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The private sanitorium, called Karolushaus, closed in April 2005. It had been a private hospital and was honored by its ownership of a Catholic medal.¹⁷⁶

The townspeople of Duerrheim greatly admired Dr. Stafford. Dr. Maria Huber, Nancy's successor, and like her, a "family doctor", was also a follower of holistic techniques. A Duerrheim resident told us Nancy is still remembered there.

I have talked with older people (there are only two persons who remembered her, all others are dead). But all they could say to me was that Nannie Stafford was a good medicine doctor and the people liked her very much. It was said that she practised with *alternative* methods.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Nördl. Hildapromenade 2, 76133 Karlsruhe. (*Records in the Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe*), group 233: Ministry of State: Medical matters. Category: Individual places, Bad Dürrheim. #28595, Grant of spa title; and elevation to town status , 1921.

¹⁷⁵ Statutory sickness funds evolved from relief funds originating in the support systems of German medieval guilds. When Bismarck reformed the German health care system in 1883, compulsory insurance already existed in many municipalities. Statutory health insurance (SHI) coverage tripled between 1885-1910. After 1918, every municipality had to provide workers' health insurance through a municipal sickness fund.

¹⁷⁶ This was an unsigned item which appeared (n.d., 2007) on Bad Duerrheim's web site. Other than the American source, it is our only European reference for Nancy's medal. But see Appendix B.

¹⁷⁷ From a letter sent to Tracy Castle by Andrea Zimmerman, resident of Bad Duerheim, March 2008.

When Nancy closed her medical practice in Duerrheim in 1918,¹⁷⁸ she moved to Kappelrodeck.¹⁷⁹ With the improvement of transportation in the Black Forest, Nancy was able to travel more easily to Bad Duerrheim, so she retained her office there at Luisenstrasse #183. In the late 1920s she traveled more frequently to southern England, where her son practiced as a physician.

Nancy returned from England early in 1930 when Justine was dying. She died 7 June 1930. It was Nancy who arranged her funeral.¹⁸⁰ Ten weeks after that sad ceremony, Nancy severed her connections with the *kur-sanitorium* and sold her property.¹⁸¹

12 June 1930
Public Thanks.

Thank you cordially for the many manifestations of sincere sympathy for the death of Miss Justine Rheiner, who shared joy and sorrow with me in sisterly love for 33 years. I express my special thanks to Reverend Father [*Herren Pfarrer*] Vaas for administering the last sacraments and to those who paid their last respects to the deceased by donating garlands and holy masses and by accompanying her to the grave. Bad Dürrheim, 10 June 1930.
Frau Doktor of Medicine Stafford.¹⁸²

We note particularly the words “sisterly love.” Nancy Stafford may have been referring to the Congregation of *Gengenbacher Franziskanerinnen*.

Sometime in 1923 Nancy had received a medal from a grateful town, headed by the mayor and the *Markung* (commune). Nancy had written home about her award to her friends in the United States. Her singular achievement was mentioned in the American press. Dr. Stafford was publicly honored by a day of celebration and a medal.

She has to her credit the establishment of a sanitarium for women and girls, and for her good work among the people of the German

¹⁷⁸ “Attorney-at-law Welte as the representative of Mrs. Stafford reports that she gives up rendering medical services effective 15 October 1918.” Villingen district office to the Bad Dürrheim mayor’s office.

¹⁷⁹ “Dr. Stafford has registered as a resident on 7 June 1919.” *Police report, Kappelrodeck*.

¹⁸⁰ *Villinger Volksblatt* (newspaper), 12 June 1930.

¹⁸¹ Dr. Stafford completed her sale to Karolushaus in Bad Dürrheim on 30 August 1930. On that day the Land Registry Office registered her sale to Max Haas, pastor in Bad Dürrheim, and Sevrin Messmer, master butcher in Bad Dürrheim, operating as managers of Karolushaus GmbH in Bad Dürrheim.

¹⁸² *Villinger Volksblatt* (newspaper), 12 June 1930.

town in which she lived the Catholic Church there set aside a day for praise and thanksgiving to God . . . ¹⁸³

That award was Nancy's. It was Frau Doktor Nancy W. Stafford who had received the Catholic medal sometime between 1919-1923. Thus was fulfilled Nancy Stafford's dream of running a hospital. She had been an administrator of a *kur-sanitorium*. Its building was her legacy of healing. The award honored her.

Nancy retired to Cornwall in stages. Her son, Georg, joined her in Duerrheim for a long visit, reportedly in 1929-1930, perhaps to support her through her farewell moments in the spa city, perhaps to help in packing up her belongings, perhaps also to assist her in the sale. Selling involves cash transfers; and Nancy may have wanted to facilitate a transfer of funds to Georg by a personal conveyance of some sort.



Figure 9. George Gassman, M.D., in his forties; born Zurich (Switzerland) 28 October 1888; died England 29 December 1959; only son of Nancy Stafford Gassman, educated in London, became a physician, married a Welsh girl, and resided in Devon.

Chapter 9

What kind of a doctor was Nancy? She was an *allopath*.¹⁸⁴ An allopath was a doctor who opposed “heroic” medical intervention. In her youth many sectarian schools established medical

¹⁸³ Brown, Sara W., “Colored Women Physicians,” *The Southern Workman* 52 (December 1923): 580-93. A police report of 1932 enquired about “Nanni Stafford Dr. americ.”, and her practice for women and children. *Villingen district office: # 849, Medical practice in Bad Dürrenheim, 1894-1951.*

schools. Those were denominational schools which required observance of particular established religious beliefs. At Howard University's start, membership in an Evangelical Church was required for all persons connected with the university. When this resolution was rescinded in 1868, Howard University became non-denominational. All graduates of Howard University's Medical School were required to follow the philosophy and rules of the "Allopathic School of Medicine."¹⁸⁵ Although its board of trustees was entirely Protestant, Howard's Medical School clearly expected to train surgeons and hospital administrators on a non-sectarian basis. Dr. Nancy Stafford was a Christian allopathic doctor.

The medical profession thought homeopathic schools utterly useless. In spite of strong medical opposition, homeopathy was the most popular of all alternative medicine therapies from the 1850s to the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁶ To us, homeopathy seems to us a form of medical practice peculiarly attractive to Nancy. She and her sister had grown up in frontier-like surroundings, further isolated by wartime conditions. Doubtless good Dr. Bacon did his best, but the sea-island settlements greatly depended upon home care. Homeopaths advertised better cure rates, they did less to inhibit recovery, with their bleeding and calomel, and one could get cured more cheaply.¹⁸⁷ No household felt complete without a copy of Constantine Hering's *The Homeopathic or Domestic Physician* (volume 1, 1835; volume 2, 1838), a work that listed the most common symptoms of the most generally useful drugs and that was sold in conjunction with a "domestic kit" of vials of forty homeopathic remedies. Hering's *Domestic Physician* was the first homeopathic *materia medica* of any sort published in the United States. It went through fourteen American editions, and thirteen German ones, and was translated into five European languages.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Arthur Waye Haffner, ed. *Directory of deceased American physicians, 1904-1929: a genealogical guide to over 149,000 medical practitioners providing brief biological [sic] sketches drawn from the American Medical Association's Deceased Physician masterfile* (Chicago: American Medical Association, 1993). 2 vols.

¹⁸⁵ Dyson, *Founding the School of Medicine*, 33.

¹⁸⁶ James C. Whorton, *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America* (Oxford 2002), ch. 3 *passim*.

¹⁸⁷ Whorton, *op. cit.*, 64.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, 66.

We have been unsuccessful in finding where Nancy took her first year as student. Possibly she studied privately under a physician, perhaps when she nursed Mrs. Webb.¹⁸⁹

Sectarian schools of medicine flourished in the mid-nineteenth century during a period when restrictive licensing legislation had been abolished in most states. Homeopaths, hydropaths, and those practicing eclectic medicine are included in sectarian systems. Even though Nancy was trained to follow an allopathic philosophy, she had learned in Europe to include healing through bed rest, warmth, massage, and special diets.¹⁹⁰

Nancy must have been very good-looking.

She was very tall for a woman, nearly 6 feet in stockinged feet with quite large feet also. I found a shoe of hers once – white satin with a *diamante* buckle. She had skin the colour of honey and always held herself very upright. She gave the impression of being quite aloof. She always seemed to wear long black skirts which rustled at the top of high-topped black laced boots. She had beautiful fine bone structure on her face, but I don't ever remember her smiling, I suppose she did, I just don't remember her doing so. In Bad Duerrheim she had a great big box of lace, rolls and rolls of it, really beautiful it was, people who couldn't pay her bills used to pay her in lace, you see. She was the perfect lady in every sense.¹⁹¹

Anthropologists classify Dr. Stafford as *mulatto*, once an official term indicating a racial mix of black and white, and of limited legal usefulness in the southern American slave states. As a member of a mixed-race union and obviously linguistically talented (she spoke French well), Nancy was culturally a European. She had surely heard the French word *metissee*, a word denoting a mixture of white and “other-color.” *Black* became merely one color among many. When viewed by an extremely black African, Nancy would become a *white/European*.¹⁹² So it must have been for the customarily cautious German populace. She carried a Swiss passport. In Germany we think Nancy was seen as a slightly mysterious “white/black” person, gladly

¹⁸⁹ .” . . what is most likely is that she studied for a few years with a preceptor in a sort of apprenticeship.” Lisa Grimm, Reference Librarian (Drexel University) to author, pers. comm., 13, 15 March 2008.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas W. Maretski. *op. cit.*, 23-35.

¹⁹¹ Joan Gassman Price, daughter of Dr. George Gassman, grand-daughter of Dr. Stafford, to author, pers. comm., November 29, 2004.

¹⁹² Professor Duana Fullwiley, Harvard University, Dept. of Anthropology, June 2008, *Harvard Magazine*, 62-64.

accepted for her medical skills and her generosity. Most likely Bad Duerrheim's respectable pastors and burghers viewed Frau Doktor Stafford as "white/exotic." The reporter in Washington, D.C., who said Nancy was unusually handsome, discussed her total appearance. We deduce from the *Post* reporter's description that Nancy dressed well.

In religious matters, we think Nancy attended the Presbyterian church when there was one nearby, the Congregational church when she attended services with Sarah, and the Catholic Church when she attended Mass with Justine. Sarah E. Webb was slightly familiar with New England's Transcendalists.¹⁹³ In New Jersey George Webb and his family attended a Unitarian Universalist church.¹⁹⁴ Nancy called herself Presbyterian, however.¹⁹⁵

We have wondered if, at this period of her life, Nancy converted to Catholicism.¹⁹⁶ The Roman Catholic Church has existed in Wurttemberg only since the beginning of the nineteenth-century. In the old duchy of Wurttemberg it was the Evangelical church which was most closely connected with the state. The Catholic church lacked a presence in Duerrheim until the early nineteenth-century. Nancy's Protestantism was no handicap in Duerrheim.¹⁹⁷ We do not know her working relationships with the Catholic church in Wurttemberg. Perhaps the archdiocese underwrote construction of Villa Homestead and later helped to staff it. Although we are unable to link Nancy with the Catholic church, apparently she was respected as a doctor by Duerrheim's Catholics and Protestants alike.

What was her preferred name? When she was a medical student she was called *Nannie* and *Nanette*. Her classmates at Howard evidently knew her by these affectionate nicknames. *Nanette* has a French sound to it. Perhaps she liked being thought European. A number of

¹⁹³ Sarah E. Webb wrote Henry D. Thoreau in 1854, asking for a copy of a recent anti-slavery speech of his. He responded (15 Sept.), telling her it had gone to *The Liberator*. Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

¹⁹⁴ Funeral notice, George Webb, 4 January 1883. "Friends are invited to attend the funeral, at 2 PM on Thursday the 4th, leaving for El Mora [*sic*] on the 12:45 train, foot of Liberty St., New York." *New York Times*, 4 January 1883, p. 5. All-Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, on Elmora Ave., Elizabeth, NJ, a famously liberal church, was among the first to have a full-time woman minister.

¹⁹⁵ In 1889 Nancy stated she was Presbyterian. *Zurich District Court, divorce tribunal*.

¹⁹⁶ Leasehold is property held by a person by virtue of a lease agreement between him and the owner. It differs from freehold property to the extent that it is returnable after the expiration of the period. The authors wrote the present-day (2008) real estate company, Karolushaus Bad Duerrheim (GmbH) in Bad Duerrheim, which was posted as an existing company. Letter returned: "no such addressee."

¹⁹⁷ *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, editor, Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1912): 451-2.

French speakers resided on Cumberland Island, many of them being Bernardey slaves. She may have spoken good French before departing for Europe. After her divorce she returned to her maiden name. Professionally, she seems to have stuck generally to “Dr. N. Stafford.” In Germany she was known as “Nanni.” She signed her will “Nancy.”

Half-castes often were troubled by their identity. Nancy would have had little reason to bond emotionally with black slaves in Georgia, and since she came of age in New Jersey and at Howard University, Nancy may have viewed stigmatizing racial concepts as the problem of others – not hers. On the other hand, we know the sisters remembered their mother, Juda, and many other slaves on Cumberland Island. We suspect Primus Mitchell was their uncle. We are certain they deplored slavery and all its institutions.

We have wondered if Nancy’s career in the United States was assisted not only by her father but also by his friends. We think he may have turned to fellow Masons, especially at the time when Stafford was anxious to get his children away from Cumberland Island, but we are unable to reach a firm conclusion about their role. Although he was a member of the Free Masons, we have no information about their importance (if any) to him.¹⁹⁸

Southeast Georgia was full of Scotsmen. We have noted the impact of the Scottish Enlightenment upon Presbyterian communities in overseas colonies. Stafford was surely advised by his uncle to treat slave property humanely because it was the rational thing to do. Phineas Miller taught him that seeking freedom was a rational choice – that *to escape* was perfectly natural.

Seeking a rational life with his slaves, Stafford begat children. His philosophy was rational, it suited him, and he believed he was doing the right thing. His attitude was that of a pragmatic stoic. A contrarian by nature, we think; following his faith as he understood it, he was out of step with his times.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Robert Stafford was a member of St. Marys Lodge, Georgia (see Bullard, *Robert Stafford*, 57-58). Mahlon Van Horne was a Grand Master of the Newport, RI, Masons. John Davidson was a Master Mason of the New York Lodge. Perhaps Stafford made use of his Free Mason connections in getting his daughters north. General Hawley was allegedly a Mason. The author doubts Webb participation in Free Masonry.

¹⁹⁹ In his personal interpretation of the Common Sense school, Stafford was very American. Robert P. Forbes, “Slavery and the Evangelical Enlightenment,” *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, eds. John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay (University of Georgia, 1998): 68-106.

Nowhere is Stafford's philosophy more clearly visible than in his family relationships with slave women and their children. We consider his efforts to be *attempted kindness*. Modern interpretations may disagree – antebellum conventions might call him *immoral*; feminists find his sexual control *despicable*; and others may see him mercilessly *predatory*. We think Stafford tried to treat his servants as rational human beings. Stafford seems to have been a kind man. He funded his women, not so much as a reward for their behaviour but as a rational reaction to their personalities and their needs. In this Stafford revealed something of his origins. His was, we think, a liminal background.

The word *liminal* derives from the Latin *limen*, meaning “threshold.” The term appears in traditional cultural anthropology and among postcolonial theorists, where it is associated with cultural hybridity. *Liminal* groups are those which were neither obviously dominant nor subjugated, occupying a position of “in-between” in colonial hierarchies. We think Stafford, a white man, came from a poor family. His forebears, socially, had been “down there” with poor whites and free persons of colour. His ancestry may even have included Irish or Scottish convicts, deported long ago in one or another of the numerous British exclusionary acts. Liminal groups were unsettling in slaveholding cultures. They were viewed as threatening because of their ambiguous social position. In slave societies, the liminal status of free whites was heightened by their links with race and enslavement.²⁰⁰

Since educating slaves was illegal in Georgia, Stafford got his children out of Georgia. Because Stafford was influenced by the “Almighty Dollar,” he worked to obtain the money to help them. He assisted his illegitimate half-breed daughters in the best way he knew. Robert Stafford was not looking for love or gratitude: he was searching for the “right and rational” thing to do. He did what his religion and social background told him he must do.

Chapter 10

Nancy died in 1933 on May 2 at her home, “Summerhill,” a handsome Victorian villa, in Kingskerswell, Devon, England, aged about 80 years. Her Swiss husband, Gustav Gassman, whom she had divorced so long ago, died in Nice (France) in 1917.²⁰¹ His last known residence

²⁰⁰ Lambert, *ibid*, 81-82.

was Paris, eternal magnet for all artists. Perhaps Gustav Arnold fulfilled his artistic ambitions in France.

Nancy's funeral service was held in Devon. Her burial place, however, is unknown. A number of cemetery and church records have been examined. But strangely enough, neither stone nor document have appeared recording her grave site.²⁰² Absence of a record – whether stone monument or church register – means that the burial place of Sarah E. Webb is also unknown.²⁰³

Sophia (Sargent) Boggs died at age 88, in Brooklyn, on April 20, 1909.²⁰⁴

Her friend, Sarah, Nancy's long-time friend and mentor, died in Bad Duerrheim in 1910. As Sarah aged in Europe, Nancy and Justine moved her to Kappelrodeck, and finally to Bad Duerrheim. She had wanted to be buried with Nancy, and her ashes were brought to England. Even death would not separate her from her charge, over whom she had so long watched, following orders laid down by Robert Stafford.²⁰⁵ We do not know her burial place.

We think Nancy's medal may be in the historical museum of Bad Duerrheim. Its citizenry have never heard of her. The city archivist knows nothing of Nancy's record.

²⁰¹ Gustav Gassman may have owned property in the Rumlang district, Canton of Zurich, Switzerland. In 1926 his son Georg resigned his interest to the canton and applied for UK naturalization. He had enrolled in the Royal College of Surgeons. In February 1914 he married a Welsh woman named Hannah Harries and opened a practice in Devon.

²⁰² "Summerhill" was the name of Nancy's house in Kingskerswell, a hamlet near Newton Abbot (both in Devon). Kingskerswell is close to Kingsteignton where her son once owned a house. At the time of her death, Georg Gassmann was living in Newton Ferrers about 20 miles away, planning a larger house to hold his family and his mother. His legal records before 1945 were housed in Plymouth, which was flattened during World War 2. His widow destroyed the rest of his papers.

²⁰³ Sarah E. Webb had exacted a promise from Nancy Stafford that their ashes would be interred together.

²⁰⁴ Funeral private. Interment, Leicester, Massachusetts. *New York Times*, 2 May 1909, p. 11.

²⁰⁵ Nanette executed her will on 15 January 1931. Her address at that time, presumably temporary, was given as 80 Gayton Road, Harrow, Middlesex County, London. She gave as former address "Vil Rhiener," a variant spelling of "Villa Rheiner," Bad Duerrheim. She devised real and personal property "in England, Germany, or any other country" to her only son, Georg Arnold Gassman. She left little money (329 pounds).

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We wish to acknowledge the interest and help of Nannie Stafford's descendants, without whose curiosity to find their roots this article might never have been written. They are Joan Price, grand-daughter of Nannie Stafford, and Yvette Mathews, Rosemary Friendship and Vanessa Milton, great-grand-daughters, all currently living in the Southwest of England. Thank you, gracious ladies!

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We thank, with special appreciation, Paul Graham of *The Genealogy Company* for his careful identification of these two Stafford slaves and their relatives. Because surnames are rare, Africanisms frequent, and duplication common, slave identification is difficult. The United States slave census of 1850 does not name the slave property belonging to Robert Stafford.

Our "man in Zurich" was the late Ulrich Helfenstein who died on the job in 2006. Keith Bingham of Cheyney University was very helpful in looking up Nancy's schooling opportunities before she attended Howard University.

We thank Friedrich R. Wollmershauser of Oberdischingen, Germany, for his careful transcriptions and translations of relevant records from the archives of Bad Duerrheim and Villingen District.

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Appendix A Our Search for the Trust

Only one reference confirmed our basic premise that Robert Stafford (1794-1877) found a way to subsidize the lives of his daughters, Nancy Gassman and Cornelia Williams. Annoyingly, it merely reported that Nancy had a private income. We had nothing else to go on.²⁰⁶

Our search began to take off when we found a peculiarity regarding Cornelia's address in New York City. When she applied for a U.S. passport in 1910, she gave "393 Canal Street" as her address. We were puzzled by its location. Surely Cornelia did not reside in Manhattan's Lower East Side – a tenement-ridden, crowded, fire-prone area. All her neighbors appeared to be European immigrants, unlikely neighbors unless she was a landlord. Eventually we found that "393 Canal" was the address of the *Peoples Bank Block*.²⁰⁷

The Peoples Bank, originally a Brooklyn bank, established 1851, stood at the corner of a large city block in the Lower East Side in Manhattan. This bank prospered because the area absorbed an ever-increasing number of immigrants. Cornelia used the bank's address as her forwarding address, and so did some of her aforementioned friends.²⁰⁸

The trust established by Robert Stafford may have been given the name *Homestead*. "Homestead" was a welcome word known to almost all Americans, especially those who benefitted from the Homestead Act, signed by President Lincoln 20 May 1862, to open up western lands for settlement and statehood. Even though the question of slavery was being resolved by armed conflict, persons of color and whites alike hastened to go west for free land. Such a name might have seemed appropriate for a trust which funded a home for the sisters – waifs leaving their home in Georgia to settle at the home of strangers.

Stafford wanted to conceal his ownership of both trust and New York real estate. He must have created the new trust in New York in 1867, sometime between 1st January-12th July. His will of record (dated 13 July 1867) left his property in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New York to his Bernardey children. When he executed his new (and final) will, he doubtless felt sure that any property destined for Judah's children was safely out of the way before 13th July.

²⁰⁶ Divorce tribunal, session of 26 November 1889, Zurich District Court.

²⁰⁷ "Cornelia Williams ... a widow, age 59 .. [her] address in New York, 393 Canal Street ..." *Ellis Island Records* (1910)

²⁰⁸ One of her legatees was a friend named Mrs. Mary L. Hunter, described as "now residing in People's Bank Building, 393 Canal St., Borough of Manhattan, New York City, \$500." Mrs. Estelle Winston, sister of Mary L. Hunter, residing at same address, \$500. These sisters were listed on some censuses as white; on earlier ones, as mulatto. Cornelia S. Williams used 393 Canal St., Manhattan address herself.

The new trust was probably drawn up at the Brooklyn Trust Company. The Brooklyn Trust Company, a New York bank, was chartered in 1866. Until Stafford took the oath of allegiance, his property as well as his credit position were encumbered by the Union need to review all civilian claims which might appear in Federal courts. Stafford took the oath in May 1865, but his accounts would be sequestered until verification could be made of his allegiance and his debts. We doubt that he was cleared until the end of 1865 or early 1866.²⁰⁹

We have three reasons for believing Stafford chose the Brooklyn Trust Company: (1) in 1866 bank-administered trusts were still quite unusual; (2) the Brooklyn Trust Company obtained its charter in a year peculiarly advantageous for Stafford; (3) we note that Cornelia named the Brooklyn Trust Co. as her executor.²¹⁰

As soon as he could do so, Stafford would obtain some Manhattan real estate to place in a trust. A handpicked co-trustee would work with a bank officer of the Brooklyn Trust Company. Together they would execute State of New York bank rules regarding trusts; obey requests and orders placed by the co-trustee; and appoint a successor trustee when needed. Stafford may have consulted a friend named Davidson, a conspicuously successful realtor in New York.²¹¹

In 1866, finding a reliable bank to handle a trust account was no easy task. While by the 1890s New York's legislature had successfully enlarged a trust company's prerogatives, stating that "A trust company is correctly defined as a fiduciary company empowered to do a general banking financial business", such was not the case in 1866. At that date no American bank could be entrusted with typical fiduciary responsibilities, such as acting as *trustee*, *assignee*, *guardian*, *registrar*, or *transfer agent*.²¹²

The new bank had the power to administer trusts established by parents, guardians, and other protectors, for children, the aged, and other incapable persons. It was well-capitalized with a fund of

²⁰⁹ Bullard, *Robert Stafford*, p. 243, n. 56.

²¹⁰ *Will of Cornelia Williams*, dated 26 December 1914; Surrogate Court, Borough Manhattan, City of New York, Liber #1093, p. 128, recorded 24 September 1919.

²¹¹ In her will Cornelia acknowledged her close friendship with John Davidson, a well-known realtor. Born in Scotland in 1837, he came to America when ten years of age. He attended City College of New York, read law with well-known New York lawyer William R. Stafford (a Free Mason) and went on to make a fortune by developing New York suburbs in Westchester County. Davidson was a Free Mason. He resided in Elizabeth (New Jersey) where he kept a Sunday school for over thirty years. *America's Successful Men of Affairs: An Encyclopedia of Contemporaneous Biography* (New York, NY: New York Printing Co., 1895), 17. Cornelia remembered his son, William Newcomb Davidson, generously in her will. Davidson may have helped Stafford make his New York State real estate investments.

²¹² Edward Ten Broeck Perine, *The Story of the Trust Companies* (New York & London: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1916), 15.

\$125,000, to be invested in unencumbered real estate within New York State. Stafford was not among the incorporators of the Brooklyn Trust.²¹³

In 1866 the population of what is now the borough of Manhattan was less than nine hundred thousand, while Brooklyn was an independent city of about three hundred and fifty thousand. The Brooklyn Trust Company had a phenomenal growth in total resources. It stayed in business under this name until 1913. It survives today, having merged during the course of the twentieth century with JPMorgan Chase Bank NA.²¹⁴

Trust companies were amazingly successful. They filled a need in providing their specialized services: in this case, services which met exactly Stafford's special requirements. Before the Civil War, when it came to protecting family real estate and personal property for widows and children, trustees usually were people who were personally interested. It was thought best for them not to be too involved. For his Bernardey family, Stafford had turned to a New London bank where he personally had a large credit line. There the bank had helped him by creating a personal co-trusteeship, then by choosing a successor trustee who could be trusted.²¹⁵

In the 1850s, however, Stafford would have encountered difficulties in finding a bank to assume this task. Banks have responsibilities that differ from the aims of trusts. They are not designed to help waifs.

Brooklyn Trust was among the first to vest a banking institution with the fiduciary obligations of a personal trustee.²¹⁶ Deposits in the banks of private monies and of funds placed there by executors who were personally liable in case of loss, amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars in New York State. These funds were employed in discounting commercial paper. That is what banks like to do. Banks prefer to loan money, which is a profitable business. But loans involve risk-taking, which was considered unsuitable for trustees.²¹⁷

²¹³ *Charter, Brooklyn Trust Company, Brooklyn, N.Y.*, "An Act to Incorporate the Brooklyn Trust Company, passed April 14, 1866, State of New York, Chap. 571." New York Public Library.

²¹⁴ Perine, *op .cit*, 133.

²¹⁵ *Trust Companies and Their Functions*, published by Knickerbocker Trust Company (Washington, 1901)

²¹⁶ Six companies preceded the Brooklyn Trust Company in maximizing fiduciary duties. They were Pennsylvania Co. for Insurances on Lives and Granting Annuities; Farmers Fire Insurance & Loan Company; New York Life Insurance & Trust Company; Girard (in Philadelphia); Ohio Life Insurance & Trust; and Connecticut Loan & Trust Company. Edward Ten Broeck Perine, *The Story of the Trust Companies* (New York & London: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1916), chaps. I-IV.

²¹⁷ Perine, *ibid.*, 10.

We think the property known as the *Peoples Bank Block* was the real estate acquired either by Stafford himself or by the Brooklyn Trust Company on his behalf, to become property of the Homestead Trust. This block stood in that part of Manhattan called the Lower East Side at 393 Canal Street. A handsome building had been erected there by the Peoples Bank in 1851. This building would fit what we think was Stafford's definition of "valuable rental property": *a city lot in a growing business area with a building which could be profitably rented.*

We suppose Stafford's Homestead Trust was an *inter vivos trust*. These are trusts designed in such a way that trust property can be "poured" into the clients' account. Such trusts are fully funded during the lifetime of the trustor. Alternatively, they can be funded, and someone else's will can be "poured" into it. They do not get probated with the will.²¹⁸ Stafford's trust held (owned) either all or a fraction of the property known as the Peoples Bank Block. A bank building stood on land within the block.

We know nothing of the activities of the Peoples Bank of the City of New York between 1867-1917 except that it prospered and was considered an excellent bank. In 1918 (7 September) the Chatham & Phenix National Bank purchased the building of the Peoples Bank of the City of New York. The building stood at 393-395 Canal Street. Chatham & Phenix planned to continue its use but as a branch bank.²¹⁹ This sale, however, initiated a puzzling flurry of activity on the part of Peoples Bank. We think the activity of its chief officers in 1918 was triggered by Cornelia's death in 1917. Cornelia's will did not finish probate until 24 September 1918. Shortly before that date, bank president William Milne, and Scott Foster, chairman and former president of Peoples Bank, undertook to create a fictitious corporation.²²⁰

On 10 September 1918, a new corporation was chartered at New York's state capitol (Albany, New York), to be named the "395 Canal Street Corporation," domiciled in Manhattan. Its business was managing realty and managing hotels and breweries. Note the new address.²²¹

²¹⁸ Coreen Hallenbeck, archivist, genealogist, specialist New York State archives, personal correspondence, Sept-Oct., 2009.

²¹⁹ Peoples Bank, one of the oldest in the City, was established about 1851. According to the *New York Times*, it had deposits of about 3 million. Its dividends were paid annually at a rate of 10%. Its chief officers were Scott Foster, chairman, and William Milne, President. *New York Times*, 7 September 1918. Chatham Bank, originating in Savannah (GA), opened a branch in New York City before the Civil War. New York's Cotton Exchange came into being only in post-bellum days.

²²⁰ *New York Times*, 7 September 1918.

²²¹ Capitalized at \$20,000. Its officers: T.J. Whalen, H. D. Coughlin, and C. Rush, at 60 Broadway. *New York Times*, pub. date 11 Sept. 1918, conveyed "393-395 Canal St.", NY, Y, located Block 227, Lot 7. On 24 Sept. 1918, Scott Foster conveyed property to "395 Canal Street Corporation, at 60 Broadway." Foster conveyed the property not

Probate of Cornelia's will was concluded 24 September 1918. In the following year (29 October 1919), the "395 Canal Street Corporation" conveyed to the "Fifty-Seventh Street (New York City) Company", domiciled at 505 Fifth Avenue, New York City. About five months after Cornelia's estate completed probate, her sister (sole surviving beneficiary of Stafford's trust) made an expensive purchase in Germany.

After death of the grantor (or the grantor and grantor's spouse, in the case of a joint trust) dies, the person identified as successor trustee in the trust document generally assumes that role.²²² The successor trustee transfers ownership of the assets in the trust to the beneficiaries named in the trust document. When all of the property has been transferred to the beneficiaries, the trust terminates.

We think that the trustee for the Homestead Trust, upon completing the probate process in 1918, opened a new account at Chatham & Phenix Bank in the name of the trust. An *inter vivos* trust is not under the control and supervision of the Probate Court. Property held by such a trust is not part of a descendant's probated estate. Corporate trustees must provide accurate and detailed records of all transactions that take place in the trust, for however long the trust exists. We would dearly like to see the records of Chatham & Phenix Bank.

We think the Brooklyn Trust Company was the corporate trustee. The Homestead Trust probably was a joint trust. A bank officer would be the trust officer, and a family member would be the co-trustee. George Webb probably was a co-trustee. He died early January 1883. Scott Foster may have become successor trustee at that time. In 1884 Foster became president of the Brooklyn Trust. Sarah E. Webb may have succeeded her father as co-trustee. After her death in 1910, a new successor trustee would have to be found, who very probably was William Milne. Distributions were made (we imagine) from 1866-1933 to beneficiaries Nancy and Cornelia.²²³

At the time of Cornelia's death in 1917, the trust property was owned by the Brooklyn Trust Company. It contained an income-producing property: a bank building. Robert Stafford, canny investor that he was, picked a winner in selecting downtown Manhattan real estate. Upon Cornelia's death, we suppose the trust income reverted to Nancy.

only in his capacity as an individual but also as late president of the Peoples Bank of the City of New York. Vol. 3065, p. 275.

²²² It was probably a joint trust. Frances E. Milne, wife of William Milne, who was (we suppose) the trustee of the "Homestead Trust," signed along with her husband on 24 September 1918.

²²³ Scott Foster (1837-1922) was born in Newburgh, New York. He was president of Peoples Bank from 1884 to ca. 1902. Foster, a member of the New York Clearing House, an important group of city bankers, was its chairman for many years. He was active in an astonishingly large number of civic and cultural associations in New York City. Foster was Presbyterian. *Men and Women of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporaries* (L. R. Hamersly & Co., New York City, 1909)

A fictitious company was created in 1918. We do not know why this step was thought necessary. It was dissolved in 1920. Perhaps it was caused by the United States Sedition Act of 1918 (May 16), prompted by Nancy's Swiss passport and residence in Germany. The first World War affected bank accounts in the United States held by foreigners. Nancy's married name and address might have appeared suspicious.²²⁴

We think Chatham & Phenix Bank became the administrator of the Homestead Trust, established in 1867 by Robert Stafford. Upon Nancy's death in 1933, the balance of the trust income would be distributed among the surviving beneficiaries (determination of the beneficiaries must be made by viewing the original document, and this we are unable to find). We think the trust ended upon Nancy's death.

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²²⁴ New York Department of State, Division of Corporations, Albany, NY. The corporation was dissolved two years after it was established. A Certificate of Incorporation of the "395 Canal Street Corporation" was filed on 9 October 1918. Status was inactive. Dissolved 12/27/1920 Last known Service of Process Address: None

Appendix B

Karolushaus, Purchaser of Villa Homestead

In the mid-twentieth century, Karolushaus, a German corporation, clearly referred to a group of clinics. We do not know whether they represented a franchise, a syndicate, or a non-profit corporation. Their common denominator was that the clinics were state-approved and therefore were eligible for state-insurance. Well over a hundred clinics were listed, offering specialized care and cures for every kind of bodily ailment or bodily care — from geriatric to obstetrics, to orthopedic, to psychosomatic and mental diseases, and more. The clinics listed were all over Germany. The list contained only clinics connected with “Karolushaus.” Some of them were attached to hospitals. Each had a medical director.

Karolushaus in Bad Duerrheim, for some reason, remains in existence as a spa-hotel.

The hotel owned by Karolushaus, has closed. The company, becoming insolvent, announced bankruptcy more than a year ago [*viz: 2004*] The company went bankrupt running the hotel as a private spa . . . The property, known as the Duerrheim Spa, is located at the corner of Luisenstrasse and the Park. It consists of an extensive area fully accessible by road [*viz: the Perimeter Road*]. It contains the former sanatorium with 52 modernized single rooms, 25 double rooms, 3 beds, and administrative offices. The Duerrheim Spa directly connects the Luisenstrasse with the Spa Bath House. Messrs. Limberger and Hall, who invested in the new Sports Park in the southern part of Duerrheim, want to continue this area’s tourist tradition [meaning: *of visitors seeking therapeutic facilities*].²²⁵

In 2005-2006 the investors suggested a use for the property which turned out to be unsatisfactory to the city council. Bad Duerrheim’s local politicians preferred to benefit from health-seekers using the Spa Bath. The Karolushouse Spa – formerly administered by a limited partnership, Dr. Maria Huber, Duerrheim’s family doctor, and the *Gengenbach Franciscans* – had fallen victim to the economic reforms of Health Minister Horst Seehofer. In October 2004 the last twenty-one employees lost their jobs at the Karolushaus. In April 2005 came the announcement that the “cure house and sanatorium which had received a Catholic medal” would close for good.

Apparently it has reopened. In 2007 the newspaper item below is undoubtedly describing Dr. Nancy Stafford’s *kur-sanitorium* of 1919 modified by additions and renovations of the 1930s.

The guests of the new hotel will be able to use the Solarium and a Wellness Center. The building has a chapel, currently unused. All the new hotel rooms are provided with a shower, a toilet, a telephone, television, and a balcony.

²²⁵ Bad Duerrheim website, unsigned news article, dated 6 December 2005, attributed to Southwest Press. Probably a local Duerrheim printer. Translation by authors aided by automatic translation, 2008.

The city has placed a moratorium on further closings and reopened a commercial zone named Ayr to encourage new companies. “The former *Kur-pension* is an important addition to the Kur-Park.”²²⁶

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²²⁶ Wikipedia, 2008. Article written anonymously by someone who knew a great deal about Bad Duerheim.

Appendix C The City Commune

Dr. Stafford would have been unable to practice medicine without the approval of the City of Durrheim. To approve Dr. Stafford, however, the city needed approval from its council.

“Town councils” were governmental units whose European origins stretch back to the Middle Ages. A council was called the *Markung*. *Markung* (pl. *Markungen*), the jurisdictional unit of village or town government, ran many aspects of community life in an older Germany.

They were unlike American city halls. In Europe the city commune was a species of corporation organized by the town to protect their community’s most valuable holdings. In medieval days – and possibly in pre-Roman days – a community like Duerrheim claimed jurisdiction over a myriad of natural resources, such as designated agricultural lands, forested lands, outstanding fords and cattle crossings, and thermal springs. Designed in its earliest days as a protection against rapacious feudal lords, and in later middle ages as a protection against intrusions by the church, the *commune* proclaimed its rights by virtue of custom and common usage.

In Wurttemberg they were unusually powerful. They provided municipal services, they regulated town-sponsored civic activity, they levied a significant proportion of taxation, and they were major property owners. Most communes also owned and leased out buildings for the town *bath-house*, the local *smithy*, and the municipal *bake-houses*. Residence alone did not confer membership. To become a *burgher* (propertied town resident) required payment of an annual tax, and in many of the smaller towns, to be a burgher required a minimum wealth status.²²⁷

A derivative meaning is *Markungenessenschaft*, a corporate group of commoners having use-rights to a resource. It denotes the *sphere of influence* of the individual communes. In considering profitable sales, commune regulators (the town burghers) had to decide whether they had enough to sell or to keep for their town’s benefit.²²⁸

In the 1820s the *Markung*, aided by Baden’s rulers, had sponsored the village’s initial engineering efforts. In 1905, in a statesmanlike move, for 25,000 marks Duerrheim’s *Markung* acquired a new *Kur*-hotel close to the Saltworks. The “town council” had use-rights to Duerrheim’s salt feature.²²⁹

²²⁷ Small settlements, identifying with profitable local resources, often competed with foreign overlords to maintain local hegemony. Duerrheim maintained use-rights of its salt. The authors have been unsuccessful in determining the town’s medieval name.

²²⁸ Paul Warde, *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43-320.

²²⁹ Senn, K., E. Schneider, and F. J. Rothenbiller. *Bad Dürrheim: Weg und Ziel. Heimatbuch des Heilbades [Bad Dürrheim: Path and goal. A history of the therapeutic baths]*. (Karlsruhe: Verlag G. Braun, 1969), 182.

The good will of the *Markung* toward Nancy, a foreigner, came from Justine's recommendation. Justine appears to have been wealthy. Married women, if respectable and well-to-do, normally enjoyed the rights and responsibilities of burghers. It was through communal membership that women residents of a town could exercise control of their property rights. Each "town council" regulated sales made by its *Markung*. We suspect Fraulein Justine, although unmarried, either was a town burgher or had inherited from a town burgher.

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