

Mystery Solved!

The Origin of Christopher Chaney

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Introduction

Serendipitous solutions probably are more prevalent in genealogy than in any other human pursuit. At least, it often seems that way. Identifying the parents of Christopher Chaney is one problem that had eluded this researcher for more than twenty-five years. After resigning himself to the “fact” that all of the pertinent records had been searched, this researcher assumed that the identities of Christopher Chaney’s parents always would remain a mystery. It was, therefore, time to publish the story titled *Christopher Chaney, Texas Patriot*.¹ However, soon after the story appeared in print, the mystery was solved in a most unexpected way. The article explains just how the mystery was solved. Hopefully, the following story will inspire other researchers to continue their own research both diligently and systematically, until they too break through their brick wall.

The Francis S. Chaney Estate Controversy

Francis S. Chaney, born circa 1818 in Washington County, Virginia, was the eldest son of Christopher and Rebecca Chaney. He was raised there in rural Appalachia. It is presumed that he accompanied his parents on their long trek to Sabine County, Texas in 1836. On June 8, 1838, he proved to the Sabine County Board of Land Commissioners that he had arrived in the Republic of Texas during April 1836, subsequent to the Declaration of Independence.² As a single man, he was entitled to a second class grant for 640 acres of land. Two other Chaney men followed Christopher and his family to Sabine County. Asa N. Chaney and Loveless R. Chaney arrived in Texas together on December 7, 1839.³ As single men, they were entitled to 320 acres of land. However, no record has been found indicating that the two Chaney men ever completed the process of obtaining their land grants in Texas. It is certain that Asa Chaney returned to Alabama.

By 1845, Frank Chaney moved his family to that part of Montgomery County that was formed into Grimes County the following year. He married Keziah W. Davis there on July 10, 1849.⁴ Sometime during the Civil War or soon thereafter, Frank Chaney moved the seat of his ranching operations from Grimes County to Johnson County. In 1868, he located his homestead five miles south of Cleburne in the

¹ *STIRPES*, Texas State Genealogical Society Quarterly, Volume 41, Number 2, June 2001.

² Conditional Certificate No. 11, Second Class Headright Grants, File No. Nacogdoches-2-145. Archives and Records Division, Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.

³ Clerk’s Return, Sabine County Board of Land Commissioners, Conditional Certificates Nos. 305 and 306. Archives and Records Division, Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas.

⁴ Marriage Records, Grimes County, Texas, Marriage Record Book H, Page 37. Grimes County Courthouse, Anderson, Texas.

fork of Buffalo Creek and Noland's River. The property was known locally as the Kennard Ranch, but had been taken from the northeast corner of the Lawrence Perry Headright. Keziah Chaney died there on or about April 18, 1869. It is presumed that she was buried on that property, although a detailed search of aerial photographs and topographic maps of the area provide no evidence of any family cemetery in the immediate vicinity.

In August 1869, Frank married Mary Burk, the step-daughter of his neighbor Levi Boatright.⁵ Mary then was only eighteen years of age. Unfortunately, no official record of their marriage has survived. The genesis of their romance and courtship remains a mystery. However, from surviving records it is evident that Frank loved his young wife. Whether or not she returned his affection is uncertain. In fact, she left him and returned to her step-father's house for at least two extended periods. Perhaps she did not love her husband. After all, he was old enough to be her father, not in good health, and one of the richest men in the county. Under such circumstances, it is not difficult to conclude that the young Mary was just an opportunist and wanted only for her husband to die quickly so that she could inherit her share of his estate. Because she was not named in his will, she contested the probate in order to claim a portion of her estranged husband's estate. The details of that contest have survived. Chaney descendants should thank her for contesting the will, as the recorded testimony of the various witnesses provide much detail about Frank Chaney's estate as well as his personal life just before he died.

In any event, Frank died of pneumonia in Johnson County, Texas sometime during March 1870.⁶ His will was dated February 23, 1870 and the attached codicil was dated March 2, 1870. Both the will and the codicil were filed for probate on March 29, 1870.⁷ Frank and his wife Mary were separated and living apart when he wrote his will and the codicil. Thus, it is no surprise that she was not mentioned in either document. However, Mary returned to her husband's side on the morning of the very day that he died.

Soon after his death, Mary filed her claim with the County Court. But the existence of her claim would not have been discovered without a careful search of the old loose papers located in the courthouse attic. The testimony of one witness is most interesting. Only selected portions of her testimony are included here. A more detailed treatment of the dispute is included in a subsequent article titled *Francis S. Chaney, Pioneer Rancher*.

Witness for Defense

Clementine A. Weatherly third witness for the Defendant being sworn says: "I was acquainted with Frank S. Chaney in his lifetime. I had known him some 2 or 3 years. live about ¾ of a mile from his place where he died. I also knew his first wife. she died in the latter part of April last. He married again in a few months. his 2 wife was named Mary. They lived together something over a month before she left him. When she left she went to her Step father's. She returned again in some 2 or 3 weeks. Chaney went after her and

⁵ Probate Records, Johnson County, Texas, Probate Papers, Docket No. 212, File No. 2. Johnson County Courthouse, Cleburne, Texas.

⁶ 1870 Census, Mortality Schedules, Johnson County, Texas, Page 452. All census records from microfilm at National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

⁷ Probate Records, Johnson County, Texas, File No. 12, Will Book D, Page 237 and Probate Papers, Docket No. 212, File No. 2. Johnson County Courthouse, Cleburne, Texas.

carried her home. They separated or she left him again. This time she returned. Mr. Chaney sent his sister Mrs. Hill after her. She returned with Mrs. Hill. And she left again about 2 weeks before Mr. Chaney's death. He Chaney was at that time very low not expected to live. I was long intimate with Chaney's family. was there a good deal...

"...There was no one there at that time to wait on him. Witnesses sister prepared his food and carried it to him from her own home.

"On the day that F. Chaney died when we all thought he was dying I was standing by his bedside. I looked out at the window and saw Mary and her mother coming. & I said Uncle Frank Mary and her mother are coming to see you. He said alas too late..."

Cross Examination

"I am a second cousin to Mr. Chaney. I lived about $\frac{3}{4}$ from him at the time of his death. I was not present at the time Mrs. Humphreys proposed to send for Mrs. Hill but was told so by Chaney & others. Mrs. Hill had been in the neighborhood some 7 or 8 months at the time of Mr. Chaney's death. At the time Mrs. Humphreys proposed to send for Mrs. Hill Chaney told me he said nothing but that she came and nursed him tenderly. I never was about the home of Mrs. Humphrey. Since she moved up here it is understood that Mrs. Hill & Mrs. Humphreys had a disagreement. As to my own knowledge, I know nothing of it. I am twenty five years of age. I am the wife of William Weatherly. I had know Uncle Frank Chaney some 2 or 3 years. Mrs. Humphreys nearly as long & I never met Mrs. Hill until last July. Mary Chaney's father is dead. Her mother married Levy Boatright. I mean by her ward robe her wearing clothing. Uncle Frank told me that he kept his valuable papers & money in a table drawer and a trunk. I think the table drawer & trunk had keys & locks. The key of the trunk broken. I heard Uncle Frank tell my husband that he had I think \$180. Mr. Chaney requested me to come to town with his wife and assist her in selecting some winter dresses & a cloak & to say to the merchants that he would settle the bill."

Clementine Weatherly

Sworn to and subscribed before me this April 1st AD 1870.

*P. W. Wynne, clerk
CCJC Texas*

Who Was Clementine Weatherby?

Based upon her own statements that she made under oath, Clementine was born circa 1845. She and her husband were living in Johnson County in 1870.⁸ The 32-year-old W. W. Weatherby is listed in the schedules as born in Alabama. His wife Carrantine is listed as 28 years old and born in Alabama. Living in their household were three children: William 8, Henrietta 4, and Jno. 1. All three are listed as born in Texas. The discrepancy in her two reported ages may be a result of her simply shaving three years from her age when in open court room in front of her neighbors. The rather unconventional spelling of

⁸ 1870 Census, Population Schedules, Johnson County, Texas, Beat 1, Page 23.

Clementine's name on the census schedule cannot be explained easily. However, mistaking Weatherby for Weatherly seems a common and understandable error. With these errors, can we be certain that Carrantine Weatherby was the Clementine Weatherly? Obviously, more corroborating evidence is required. No other women named Clementine in their mid-twenties were found after a careful search of the 1870 census population schedules for all of Precinct 1, Johnson County, Texas.

Clementine testified that her sister prepared food for Uncle Frank during his last illness. Alabama S. Haggard in her testimony stated that she prepared food for Frank Chaney. She was the wife of Calvin Haggard. Living next door to William and Clementine were Calvin and Alabama Haggard. Calvin is listed as 25 years old and born in Alabama. His wife Alabama is listed as 30 years old and born in Alabama. Also living with them were N. Chany, Robert Chany, and Emma Chany. N. Chany was then 55 years old and born in Virginia. Robert was 15 and Emma 19 years old. Both were born in Alabama.

No doubt Clementine called him Uncle Frank because he was so much older than she. They were second cousins; thus they shared the same great grandparents. In order to determine the identity of her parents, grandparents, and great grandparents, the search moved to Alabama. The young couple were in Talladega County in 1860.⁹ W. W. Weatherly, just 22 years old, is listed as the head of the household. The census enumerator unfortunately did not take the effort to record the names for each person. Instead, he recorded only their initial or initials. The three persons named Weatherly that were living in the same household are identified only as C., an 18-year-old female, L. a 14-year-old male, and C., a fifteen-year-old female.

In 1850, we find both Alabama and Clementine living in the household of their parents.¹⁰

Nathaniel N.	Chaney	33	stone cutter	\$400	Virginia
Nancy A.	“	23			Tennessee
Alabama S.	“	10			Alabama
Clementine A.	“	8			Alabama
Margaret A.	“	6			Alabama
Nathaniel	Spitler	7			Alabama
Henrietta	Chaney	27			Tennessee
Jane	Chaney	25			Tennessee

Thus, we see that Nathaniel Chaney moved to Johnson County, Texas with his daughter Alabama and her husband Calvin Haggard. The identity of Robert and Emma Chaney remains unclear. Nathaniel, Henrietta, and Jane were children of Hezekiah and Alpha (Nuckolls) Chaney. Living nearby was Asa N. Chaney, who had come to Sabine County in 1839 with his brother Loveless.¹¹ Both Asa and Loveless were sons of Hezekiah and Alpha (Nuckolls) Chaney. That discovery in Alabama completes part of the puzzle. Clementine was the daughter of Nathaniel Chaney. Nathaniel was the son of Hezekiah Chaney, Jr. who married Alpha Nuckolls in Wythe County, Virginia in 1809. Thus, both Clementine Chaney and Frank S. Chaney, as second cousins, were great grand children of Hezekiah Chaney, Sr. of Wythe County,

⁹ 1860 Census, Talladega County, Alabama, Northern Division, Page 142.

¹⁰ 1850 Census, Talladega County, Alabama, Talladega District, Page 391.

¹¹ 1850 Census, Talladega County, Alabama, Talladega District, Page 396.

Virginia.

Hezekiah Chaney, Sr. in Wythe County, Virginia

The family of Hezekiah Chaney, Sr. in Wythe County is rather well documented. He settled along McCendley's Run in the Cripple Creek neighborhood as early as 1776.¹² Chaney's name by any spelling does not appear in any extant records of the area until 1781, when his name appears on the muster roll of James Newell's militia company. Hezekiah Chaney died testate in 1812.¹³ In his will, Hezekiah named his wife Jane, six daughters, and five sons. Frank S. Chaney was his great grandson and Christopher Chaney was his grandson. But, who were the parents of Christopher Chaney? Of course, it is possible that Christopher was the illegitimate son of one of Hezekiah's daughters. However, without more evidence, that possibility is discounted. Perhaps Christopher's father died prior to 1812 and, thus, was not mentioned in the will. That possibility also is discounted under the presumption that orphaned grandchildren likely would have been entitled to their father's inheritance.

The best possibility is that Christopher was the son of one of the five sons named in their father's will. The five sons were Abel, Hezekiah, Archibald, Hiram, and Hosea. Of course, Hezekiah, Jr. could not have been Christopher's father. Otherwise, Frank and Clementine would have been first cousins. Based solely upon the ages of his children, Christopher likely was born no later than circa 1797. He first paid his poll tax in 1816, placing his year of birth no later than 1795. The best estimate of Christopher's year of birth is 1794 or 1795. Thus his father would have been born circa 1775, perhaps later but not much later. Archibald, Hiram, and Hosea all appear to have been too young to be Christopher's father. In 1810, there were four males listed in the household of Hezekiah Chaney, Sr.¹⁴ Of course, Hezekiah, Sr. is the lone male over 45 years of age. The youngest son Hosea is listed as between 10 and 16 years of age. Archibald and Hiram are listed as between 16 and 26 years of age. Even at 26, the older of the two would have been just too young to be Christopher's father.

Abel Chaney in Wythe County, Virginia

It is presumed that Abel was the oldest of the five sons, because he was the first of the children mentioned in the will. In 1810, Abel's household consisted of just three persons.¹⁵ Abel was listed as between 26 and 45 years old. That places his year of birth sometime between circa 1765 and 1784. In 1798, Hezekiah Chaney, Sr. first paid the poll tax for two white males.¹⁶ Assuming that Abel is the second poll,

¹² Kegley, M. B., *Early Adventures on the Western Waters, Volume III, Part I, The New River in Pioneer Days, 1745-1805*. Kegley Books, Wytheville, Virginia, 1999, Page 396.

¹³ Probate Records, Wythe County, Virginia, Will Book 2, Page 88. Wythe County Courthouse, Wytheville, Virginia.

¹⁴ 1810 Census, Wythe County, Virginia, Page 276.

¹⁵ 1810 Census, Wythe County, Virginia, Page 276.

¹⁶ Personal Property Tax Records, Wythe County, Virginia, 1802-1830. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

then Abel was born circa 1776. Thus, he would have turned 21 years of age during the year 1797 and just old enough to have been assessed for his poll tax in 1798. It is presumed that Christopher is the young male then just sixteen years old. The third member of Abel's household was a slave. The name of Abel's first wife is unknown as she is mentioned in no extant records. Unfortunately, no record of their marriage has been located. Her maiden name may have been Cowden, as two of Abel's sisters married men named Cowden and Christopher named his youngest son Hiram Cowden Chaney.

The children of Abel and (?) Chaney were:

- i. Christiana, born circa 1793 in Wythe County, Virginia.
- ii. Christopher, born circa 1794 in Wythe County, Virginia.

It is presumed that Abel Chaney continued to live with his father through 1807, as Hezekiah, Senior paid the poll tax for two white males during that period. On January 12, 1807, Able Cheney recorded a survey for a 20-acre tract of hitherto vacant land between his own land and that of William Henly.¹⁷ The survey was made by virtue of part of a Land Office Treasury Warrant, but no record of that warrant has been located.

In 1809, Abel Chaney paid his own poll tax. He also was assessed for seven horses. On September 12, 1809, the Wythe County Grand Jury charged Able Chayne for stopping the road round his plantation.¹⁸ Precisely what Able was alleged to have done to "stop" the road was not recorded. The sheriff was ordered to summon Abel Chaney before the Court to answer the allegations. Apparently, Abel answered the Court in a satisfactory manner as the presentment was dismissed that November.

Again, in 1810, he was assessed for his poll tax and seven horses. On March 2, 1810, Abel R. Chaney purchased two tracts of land from Jonathan and Jane Henderson. Abel paid \$400 for the first tract consisting of 250 acres on the waters of Cripple Creek.¹⁹ He paid \$220 for the second tract of 140 acres also on the waters of Cripple Creek.²⁰ On August 2, 1810, Abel purchased a tract of land from his parents for \$1,000.²¹ The 357-acre tract was located on the waters of Cripple Creek on the side of Lick Mountain.

On October 15, 1810, the sheriff was ordered to arrest Rufus Morgan and hold him until the next meeting of the County Superior Court.²² Both Abel R. Chaney and his younger brother Hezekiah Chaney claimed

¹⁷ Land Entry Records, Wythe County, Virginia, Book 3, 1804-1845, Page 31. Wythe County Courthouse, Wytheville, Virginia.

¹⁸ Criminal Court Records, Wythe County, Virginia, Commonwealth vs. Chayne, No. 1809-038. Wythe County Courthouse, Wytheville, Virginia. (Hereinafter cited as Wythe Criminal Cases.)

¹⁹ Land Records, Wythe County, Virginia, Deed Book 5, Page 245. Wythe County Courthouse, Wytheville, Virginia. (Hereinafter cited as Wythe Deeds.)

²⁰ Wythe Deeds, Book 5, Page 247.

²¹ Wythe Deeds, Book 5, Page 290.

²² Superior Law Court Records, Wythe County, Virginia, Chaney vs. Morgan, No. 1812-037. Wythe County Courthouse, Wytheville, Virginia.

that on October 14, 1810, Rufus Morgan had committed trespass and then assaulted and beat them. They each claimed damages amounting to \$1,000. The case dragged through the court for awhile, until finally the case was dismissed at the defendant's cost on May 3, 1812.

In 1811, Able Chaney was taxed for only two tracts of land.²³ One tract of 250 acres was assessed at \$62.50. The other tract of 356 acres was assessed at \$178. Obviously, Abel either hid his third tract of 140 acres from the tax man or he had sold it to someone else before the taxes were due. If he did sell it, no deed was recorded. That same year, Abel paid personal property taxes for only two horses. On July 22, 1811 Abel Chaney purchased a fourth tract of land.²⁴ He paid Jacob Newman of Pulaski County, Kentucky \$22 pounds Virginia money for the tract located on Tate's Run.

In 1812, Abel Chaney paid taxes on the same two tracts of land as well as the 22-acre parcel of vacant land that he had surveyed in 1807. That third tract was valued at \$11. He also paid personal property taxes on just one horse. Again, in March of 1812, the Grand Jury again alleged that Abel Chaney, farmer, had stopped and turned the road leading from Wythe Courthouse to Grayson County on Davis' Branch.²⁵ A summons was duly issued ordering Andrew Porter, George Rosenburn, and Alexander Mahood to testify for the Commonwealth. Another summons was issued ordering David Fisher, George Davis, Henry Huffman, and Jacob Gose to testify for the defendant. After hearing the evidence, the Court dismissed the allegations.

In 1813 and again in 1814, Abel paid property taxes on the same three tracts of land, but he was taxed for only one stud horse. It is evident that he avoided paying property taxes on all of his property. On May 11, 1813, Abel Chaney sold 430 acres of land on Cripple Creek to Henry Hoffman for \$750.²⁶ He signed the deed as Abel R. Cheyne. On March 8, 1814, Abel R. Cheyne sold two adjacent tracts of land to Jacob Sprecker of Grayson County for \$5,000. One of the tracts contained 357 acres and the second 68 acres.

The Wythe County Court issued a summons on July 13, 1813 ordering the sheriff to summon James Mills, Hezekiah Cheyne, and William King, Jr. to testify on behalf of Abel R. Cheyne.²⁷ Unfortunately, the case file contains no papers other than the original summons. Thus, the nature of the case now is lost to history.

In March 1817, William Litz filed suit against Abel R. Cheyne to recover a debt in the form of a note in the amount of \$20 with six percent interest from May 20, 1814.²⁸ William Litz complained to the court that Abel Cheyne had since left the jurisdiction of Virginia and taken all of his property with him. However, William Litz claimed that both Henry Huffman and Jacob Spracher, both residents of Wythe

²³ Real Property Tax Records, Wythe County, Virginia, 1793-1815. Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁴ Wythe Deeds, Book 5, Page 376.

²⁵ Wythe Criminal Cases, Commonwealth vs. Abel Chaney, No. 1812-017.

²⁶ Wythe Deeds, Book 6, Page 395.

²⁷ Wythe Criminal Cases, Commonwealth vs. Abel R. Cheyne, No. 1813-032.

²⁸ Chancery Court Records, Wythe County, Virginia, Litz vs. Cheyne et al, No. 1817-035. Wythe County Courthouse, Wytheville, Virginia.

County, owed a considerable sum of money to Abel Chaney. One can only presume that the considerable sums consisted of the proceeds from the sale of Abel's real estate. Thus, William Liz wanted the court to order that his debt be settled out of the money owed to Abel Chaney. This the court did, in the amount of \$78.38 to cover the original, costs, and interest.

Just why and when he left his home in Wythe County is unclear. Based on the foregoing, it is presumed that Abel Chaney left Wythe County soon after selling his real estate in 1814. At the time, it further is presumed that he was alone in life. His wife had left him a widower. His only two known children had left home. His daughter Christiana had married Philip Trout and was then living in Russell County. His son Christopher probably was living in Russell County with his sister and brother-in-law.

Moving to Monroe County, Tennessee

Perhaps, Abel R. Cheyne moved to Tennessee seeking to start life afresh. In any event, he probably moved to Roane County, Tennessee although no record of him there has been located. In 1819, a portion of Roane County was set aside to form the new Monroe County. The 1820 Census of Monroe County has been lost. But, it seems likely that Abel had remarried and was living in Monroe County by 1820 or very soon thereafter.

On November 18, 1829, the local court found against Josiah Price and ordered him to pay \$125 to Able R. Cheyne and James P. Hanes.²⁹ At the same term, the court also found against William R. Sitter and ordered him to pay \$125 to Able R. Cheyne and James P. Hanes. Unfortunately, the specific nature of their disputes was not recorded. It was recorded only that the two defendants did not appear in court and thus forfeited. At the same time, the victorious A. R. Cheyne and J. P. Hanes filed an affidavit requesting that the suit by William G. White against them be continued until the next term of the court.

On May 11, 1831, the two defendants filed their affidavit together with affidavits from John Waugh, John L. White, and H. P. Gibson requesting a change of venue.³⁰ The court agreed and transferred the matter to the McMinn County Court.

In 1830, Abel R. Chaney's household consisted of eight persons.³¹

Males	Females
	Two, under 5
One, between 5 and 10	Two, between 5 and 10
	One, between 10 and 15
One, between 40 and 50	One, between 30 and 40

²⁹ Circuit Court Minutes, Monroe County, Tennessee, 1827-1839, Page 146. Monroe County Courthouse, Madisonville, Tennessee. (Hereinafter cited as Monroe Circuit Court.)

³⁰ Monroe Circuit Court, Page 229-230.

³¹ 1830 Census, Monroe County, Tennessee, Page 81.

Of course, it is presumed that Abel was the lone male between 40 and 50 years of age. One wonders why he reported to be so young. Probably born circa 1775, he would have been about 55 years old in 1830. Perhaps he simply was vain. Perhaps he wanted to minimize the large difference in age between him and his wife. Perhaps he was unsure of his age. Perhaps his wife was unsure of his age when she reported his age to the census enumerator. Based upon the available records, it simply is not possible to know for sure why his age was not recorded correctly. His wife is presumed to be the eldest female between 30 and 40 years of age. The six youngsters are presumed to their children Darthula, Elizabeth, Margaret, Keturia Sophronia, Ethelred Ichabod, and Martha Minerva. Abel's younger brother Hezekiah also was living in Monroe County in 1830.³² Abel owned no slaves.

On May 15, 1835, William G. White of Overton County, Tennessee gave his power of attorney to George Henderson and George Harris.³³ The two men were empowered to collect on a judgment against Abel R. Chaney and James P. Haynes. Unfortunately, the nature and amount of the judgment were not recorded. In 1836 Abel R. Cheyne paid the poll tax. He also was assessed for 160 acres of land valued at \$1,000.

In 1840, Abel R. Chaney's household had increased in size to ten people.³⁴

Males	Females
One, under 5	
One, between 5 and 10	One, between 5 and 10
	Two, between 10 and 15
	One, between 15 and 20
	Two, between 20 and 30
One, between 50 and 60	One, between 40 and 50

Abel is reported incorrectly as between 50 and 60 years of age. His wife was reported correctly as between 40 and 50 years of age. Their eight reported children are presumed to be Darthula, Elizabeth, Margaret, Keturia Sophronia, Martha Minerva, Robert, David, and an unknown daughter between 5 and 10. Their son Ethelred Ichabod, then about 15 years old, apparently was not living at home. Had he struck out on his own at such a tender age? Was he away at school?

A suit was filed over the proposed settlement of the estate of Samuel Blackburn in 1842.³⁵ Called to testify in the matter, Abel R. Cheyne, aged about 60, deposed in January 1846 that he and Samuel Blackburn had married sisters and that he had been married 29 years the 13th of April last. Unfortunately the names of the two sisters were not recorded. But, the record does place the date of his marriage as April 13, 1817. Based upon the date it is likely that his marriage took place in Tennessee; but it is uncertain just where.

³² 1830 Census, Monroe County, Tennessee, Page 110.

³³ Monroe Deeds, Book G, Page 68.

³⁴ 1840 Census, Monroe County, Tennessee, Page 202.

³⁵ Chancery Court Records, Monroe County, Tennessee, Case File No. 221. Monroe County Courthouse, Madisonville, Tennessee.

In 1850, A. R. Chaney was living in the Second District of Monroe County.³⁶ Abel is listed as a 65-year-old farmer. His reported age in the three Tennessee census records is consistent, but wrong. Just why his age was wrong so consistently is uncertain. The only satisfactory explanation is that he wanted to lessen the difference between his age and his wife's. In any event, he valued his real estate at \$1,300 and reported correctly that he was born in Virginia. His wife Easter is listed as 53 years old and born in Tennessee. Living with them were their children Darthula, Minerva, Jane, Robert, and David, all of whom were born in Tennessee. Also, living in their household was Eliza Jane Mason, aged 7 years.

Abel R. Cheyne died in Monroe County on or about September 13, 1854. His death was noticed in the local newspaper.³⁷

“J. A. Hare, Esq. of Madisonville, informs us that the health of that place is now good. The last case of cholera was Capt. A. R. Chaynie who died about the 13th.”

It is interesting that the newspaper notice used his military title. Apparently, Abel Chaney was a captain in the local militia. The heirs of his estate filed a suit concerning the disposition of his estate. It was necessary to file the suit because there was no will, the widow was entitled to her dower share in the real estate, and some of the heirs were minors. On December 2, 1856, began the process of overseeing the administration of the estate.³⁸ The court ordered that the land be surveyed, the dower portion laid off, and the remainder of the lands sold to pay the debts. A total of 80 acres was set aside and assigned to Esther Cheynie as her dower lands. The remainder of the 160-acre tract was sold at public auction to William Williams for \$700. The heirs were identified as Esther Cheynie widow, Robert Cheynie, Darthula wife of Rice C. Spears, Elizabeth wife of William Williams, Sophronia wife of James P. Minis, Margaret Minnis deceased, E. E. Cheynie, Arinista Minerva Cheynie, and Jane wife of James Roy.

The foregoing record makes it clear that only his second wife and their children benefited from Abel's estate. His first wife and their two children had long since passed away. Yet, both of his children by his first wife were survived by children who were living at the time his estate was settled. Surely they were entitled to a share of the estate. Of course, it is easy to understand how his second family felt that they were entitled to the entire estate. After all, the estate was not large especially after the widow's dower portion was deducted. The other heirs, so far away in Virginia and Texas, had little contact with their grandfather. It is doubtful that Abel had ever seen those grandchildren. Yet, one wonders why they did not benefit from their grandfather's estate.

The children of Abel and Esther (Thompson) Chaney were:

- i. Darthula, born circa 1818 in Tennessee.
- ii. Elizabeth, born circa 1822 in Tennessee.
- iii. Margaret R., born circa 1823 in Tennessee.

³⁶ 1850 Census, Monroe County, Tennessee, Page 89.

³⁷ *Loudon Free Press*, Volume II, Number 41, September 20, 1854. Loudon, Tennessee.

³⁸ Chancery Court Minutes, Monroe County, Tennessee, 1856-1865, Pages 32, 60, and 166. Monroe County Courthouse, Madisonville, Tennessee

- iv. Keturia Sophronia, born circa 1826 in Tennessee.
- v. Martha Minerva, born circa 1829 in Monroe County, Tennessee.
- vi. Ethelred Ichabod, born circa
- vii. Robert, born circa 1834 in Monroe County, Tennessee.
- viii. David H., born circa 1837 in Monroe County, Tennessee.
- ix. Jane, born circa 1839 in Monroe County, Tennessee.

The widow Esther Cheyne married Zachariah Givens on October 21, 1858.³⁹ It is presumed that Esther was buried with her second husband at the Tellico Baptist Church, but no record of either's death has been found.

Conclusion

The foregoing represents all of the public and private records that the author has found concerning the identity of Christopher Chaney's parents. The author is indebted to the staff of many public and private institutions for their patience, cooperation, and assistance. Special mention is due the helpful staff at the Johnson County Courthouse, Texas General Land Office, Wythe County Courthouse, Virginia State Library and Archives, Monroe County Courthouse, and Tennessee State Library and Archives. Thanks also go to Lynn McConkey, a Chaney descendant and local genealogist and historian specializing in Monroe County, who kindly shared her research work. Also, special thanks are due to Mary B. Kegley for her very extensive knowledge of the early families of Wythe County. The publication of additional material is anticipated as research continues.

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³⁹ Marriage Records, Monroe County, Tennessee,