

# THE STORY OF THE FAMILIES

By Joseph Vernelle Phillips

(Mr. Phillips is really a Gentry, the son of Arzetta Slane and Ralph Ogle Gentry, also known as Charles McKinney. He was born Joy Vernelle McKinney and he legally changed his name to Phillips from his stepfather Darrell Austin Phillips. Unfortunately, he died on December 24, 2005, before he was able to complete this family history.)



Joseph Vernelle Phillips

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the following people who have had a great impact on my life:

**John William Diederich**, my best friend and brilliant genealogist now of Lake Tahoe, Nevada, who launched me into genealogy 45 years ago. He took me by the hand and led me through cemeteries, church and court records, the National Archives and state and genealogical libraries to learn the tricks of the trade. And he has been a patient and ardent friend for almost 50 years. He is a retired Marine Corps colonel and publishing magnate and he was referred to me by my editors when he needed a translator for a French aircraft carrier his squadron was hosting—they told him I spoke 12 languages, the truth is only seven, the same story held by the Central Intelligence Agency when they recruited me as a young man.

**Vuthy Oum**, my foster grandson and son of my late foster son Ho, and the Buddhist saint of the Cambodian Killing Fields, now of Virginia Beach, Virginia, who takes care of me and nourished me through this book with encouragement, tenacity and love with no thought of possible riches like his brother Sovirak, sister Chanbopha and mother Dany who have now become millionaires. He also kept my ailing body moving as we traveled through 31 countries (of the 100 I've visited in my lifetime) in Asia, Europe, Africa and North America saying goodbye to some of my favorite places and hello to five more.

**Johnnie D'Alessandro** of Downey, California, who may be a cousin on my Elliott side, whose inspiration, faith and encouragement gave me strength to write this book. And gave the kick to nudge me off my wheelchair and get to work. She has now become a trusted confidant and helper. And her son Bruce Warner married my late Cambodian foster son Siri's daughter Vanarrin, parents of little Ashley, my foster great-granddaughter.

**Archie Earl Slane**, my late uncle and Marine Corps hero (weren't they all) of World War II, of Cheyenne, Wyoming, my ever role model and only father figure, and why I joined the Marine Corps. I learned to read

in his lap—he was always reading, reading, reading—while visiting us in Mesa Rica, N.M., while working with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the Great Depression. He was a champion boxer. His is a tale of the South Pacific. He was the father of my precious first cousins Patricia Louise Powell, Carol Leslie Slane, Sandra Kay Johnson, Michael Slane and the late Kathleen Marie Slane all for whom I have a special love. And he was the brother of my mother Arzetta Slane Phillips who always wanted to be royal but didn't live long enough to know she was. She was majestic just the same.

**Galen Glenn Gentry (April 14, 1935-Nov. 28, 2000)** of Cookeville, Tennessee, my faithful cousin, impeccable Gentry historian and constant helper, a truly great and most hospitable man who died too soon, leaving behind his beloved wife Amy Lee. Oh, how I wish he were here now. God rest his soul. He had our Aunt Kate Gentry lead me to cemeteries, to unknown relatives with wonderful notes, and documents and family Bibles and to Gentry, Tennessee, named after my grandfather Robert Oscar Gentry. And he had infinite patience as I asked question after question after question. He always found the answers.

**Benjamin F. Slane** of Hampshire County, West Virginia, my late cousin of the ancient days who, in bulldog fashion, inspired me to keep up the research and dispel the myths and legends that plague the history of our ancestors and get to the truth. A writer himself (he could keep you on edge with his tall tales, not factual but entertaining just the same), he toured me through original Slane country, including Slanesville, West Virginia, and he was a great hunter who proudly fed me my first venison.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

### **PART I: THE AMERICANS**

**Chapter 1: The Wyandotte (Huron) Indians**

**Chapter 2: Lorena Joy, Mysterious Grandmother, Our Wyandotte Connection?**

**Chapter 3: Nicholas Gentry—English Poor Boy, Indian Fighter and Planter**

**Chapter 4: Jesse and William Elliott: The Sooner Shootout North of the Red River**

**Chapter 5: The Boy James Taylor’s Gripping Odyssey from Virginia to Tennessee, Over Hill Over Dale, Over Creek, Over River, Sickness and Broken Wagon Wheels**

**Chapter 6: Daniel Slane and Anne Caudy: Our Slane Progenitor in America and his Second Wife Anne Caudy, daughter of James Caudy, Pioneer, Indian Fighter, and Ancestor of Buffalo Bill Cody**

**Chapter 7: A Love Affair: Hugh Slane and Mary Largent: From the Ferry Crossing of the Great Cacapeon to Rafting Down the Ohio**

**Chapter 8: The Saga of Andrew Slane: Cowboys, Roundups, Cattle Drives, Chuck Wagons and Indian Attacks**

**Chapter 9: Revolutionary Robert Gentry’s Battle at Guilford Courthouse: Two Hits and a Run**

**Chapter 10: Lt. Joseph H. (Hog Joe) Allison: Revolutionary Soldier, Ladies Man and Prolific Pig Raiser**

**Chapter 11: Archie Earl Slane, Boxer and Marine Corps Hero: A Tale of the South Pacific**

**Chapter 12: Daniel Elliott: A Black Slave and Teacher of His White Brothers**

**Chapter 13: Elijah W. Carr and the Tennessee Volunteers: Rebel with a Cause**

**Chapter 14: Union Soldiers Amos, Hiram and William Slane: Thine Eyes Have Seen the Glory**

**Chapter 15: Earl Elliott: A Cowboy’s Death at the Battle of the Marne, World War I**

**Chapter 16: Myrtle Hunt Slane: A Woman Worth Dying For**

**Chapter 17: The Clarks: The Elliott Royal Connection and Exploring the West**

**Chapter 18: The Benjamin Slane Line and the Peoria Indians**

**Chapter 19: The Clarks: The Royal Connection and Exploring the West**

### **PART II: OVERSEAS COMMONERS AND NOBLES, INCLUDING KNIGHTS, BARONS, BARONESSES, COUNTS AND COUNTESESSES**

**Chapter 1: Settle on which of several knights to use.**

**Chapter 2: Another knight**

**Chapter 3: One of the counts**

**Chapter 4: Another count**

**Chapter 5: Another count**

**Chapter 6: A countess whore to the king**

**Chapter 7: Another countess**

**Chapter 8: One of the barons**

**Chapter 9: The Baron of Ferriers**

**Chapter 10: The Baroness of Ferriers: A Royal Connection**

### **PART III: THE ROYALS**

**Chapter 1: The Saxon King Alfred the Great**

**Chapter 2: Charlemagne: Charles the Great, Emperor of the West and Holy Roman Emperor**

**Chapter 3: King William the Conqueror, a Norman and Latter Day Viking**

**Chapter 4: The French Capetians Who Kept France Together**

**Chapter 5: Broadwords, Scimitars and Saracens: Princess Joan of Acre Born in the Holy Land  
During the Siege of Acre in the Crusades**

**Chapter 6: Malcolm and Duncan: Kings of Scotland**

**Chapter 7: Pepin I, King of Italy and King of the Langobardians**

**Chapter 8: Ferdinand III and Other Kings of Spain, Castile, Leon, Navarre and Pamplona**

**Chapter 9: Edward I (Longshanks) King of England and his Beloved Queen Eleanor of Castile,  
The Infanta Leonor, Countess of Ponthieu**

**Chapter 10: Eystein the Noisy Glumar, Jarl (Duke) of the Uplanders, the Viking**

**Chapter 11: The King of Troy Who Killed His Greek Parents**

**Chapter 12: The Empress of Byzantium Who Murdered Her Husbands and Wound Up in a  
Nunnery**

**Chapter 13: The Tsars of Russia, a Little Terror and Holiness for All**

**Chapter 14: The Viking Gods Woden, Thor and Frigga: Our Grandfathers and Grandmother.  
Not Everybody Has Gods in the Family**

**Chapter 15: Edward II, King of England, and His Homosexual French Lover Who Was More Fashionably Dressed at His Coronation than the King: The Beheadings**

**Chapter 16:: Our Emirs and Caliphs of Cordoba, Spain, and Damascus, Syria, and Our Links to The Bible**

**Chapter 17: The Tartars of the Golden Horde: Our Mongolian Connection**

**PART IV: THE SAINTS**

**Chapter 1: St. Arnulf (Arnold), Bishop of Metz**

**Chapter 2: St. Bruno the Great of Cologne**

**Chapter 3: St. Louis, Crusader and King of France**

**Chapter 4: Doda (St. Begga) of Austrasia (France), Abbess of Ardenne**

**Chapter 5: St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland**

**Chapter 6: St. David, King David I of Scotland**

**Chapter 7: St. Edward the Confessor**

**Chapter 8: St. Olaf (Olav) of Norway**

**Chapter 9: St. Vladimir, Tsar of Russia**

**Chapter 10: St. Abraham, the Shepherd, and His One True God and Descendants like Sands in The Desert**

**Chapter 11: St. Adam and St. Eve**

**PART V: GENEALOGICAL APPENDIX**

## INTRODUCTION

This is the story of more than 200 families connected to the Slane, Elliott, Souther, Clark, Gentry, Taylor, Allison, Carr and many other related families whom I have researched over the past 50 years. It will be a story of the human side of these hardy, heroic, sometimes saintly, sometimes devilish folks, our grandparents, who have come down through history since Adam and Eve. We'll spin true yarns about some of these ancestors. It's a pity we can't tell the stories of them all.

This book will be illustrated with many photographs of places and people directly involved with our genealogy, including tombstones, farms, ranches, castles, fortresses, rivers, multiple great grandfathers and grandmothers, and maps charting their march through history.

We'll tell about Nicholas Gentry who sold himself into slavery to come to America and bought himself out by fighting Indians attacking the Jamestown colony while serving in the Virginia Militia at the Mattaponi Barracks. He then set up his own tobacco plantation.

We'll tell about William Jessie Elliott, a Sooner into Oklahoma, gunned down in an OK-Corral-type gunfight over gambling, his murderer in turn gunned down by his twin Jessie William Elliott, who was shot in the leg and, fearful of outlaw gang reprisal, high-tailed it back into Texas and eventually New Mexico where he built a 28,000-acre ranching empire. Beside his name in the family Bible, William Jessie wrote, "William Jessie Elliott is my name and to merry a purty girl is my ame. If this you see, remember me."

We'll tell about their half-brother Daniel, a black slave, and ancestor of many of the black Elliotts in North Carolina, who probably taught the twins to read and write and farm and how his half-brothers hated slavery, loved the Union and fled north during the Civil War leaving him behind for fear of his capture and the torture awaiting an escaped slave if he were caught. The twins went on over mountains and rivers. They made it to Illinois where they wept and mourned at Lincoln's funeral in Springfield, Illinois.

We'll tell about the lifelong love between Hugh Slane and Mary Largent who met at the ferry crossing of the Great Cacapeon River in Virginia, now West Virginia, which connected her father's farm to his father's farm, a love they carried on aboard a flatboat down the Ohio River and up hardship-paved and Indian-harassed Zane's Trace to the dream farm they cleared in Ohio.

We'll tell the story of 11-year-old James Taylor's breathtaking odyssey from Bedford, Virginia, across the Cumberland Gap into North Carolina and Tennessee, a tale of love, hardship and heroism. A story of broken wagon wheels, sweat-drenched trekking, lucky stops at cousins' homes along the way, "the motels" of the day, sickness and care given by relatives and neighbors, "the emergency rooms" of the day.

We'll tell the tale of beautiful countesses, our grandmothers who cheated on their husbands and shackled up with kings and other nobles. And we'll tell about other grandmothers and grandfathers whose whoring found their way into the history books. And the story of our Byzantine Empress who had her lovers kill her imperial husbands and the third imperial husband who stashed her away in a nunnery for life and thus spared himself from becoming her next victim.

We'll tell the story of our Wyandotte (Huron) ancestors, who not only killed but savagely tortured their enemies, skinning them alive, emasculating them, sacrificing them finally at dawn to the Sun god, then devouring them, and their refugee treks escaping their fellow blood-seeking Iroquois and finally ending up in Fairfield County, Ohio, where they massacred early settlers in Ohio and Kentucky and on the flatboats along the Ohio River. And one Slane ancestor who married a half Wyandotte beauty and passed the genes down to us.

We'll tell the story of our ancestor Princess Joan of Acre, daughter of King Edward I (Longshanks) of England and his beloved Queen Eleanor of Castile, born on the Crusades in the Holy Land in the great Acre fortress there besieged by mounted, screaming Saracens armed with scimitars and broadswords. And her brother, King Edward II, beheaded by his subjects after they lopped off the head of his pompous French homosexual lover who thought himself king and which history states was more fashionably dressed at his

lover's coronation than the king himself.

We'll tell the gripping stories of our other royal ancestors from Saxon England (including Alfred the Great), England (including William the Conqueror), Scotland, Ireland, France (including St. Louis), Spain (including San Fernando III, king of Castile and Leon who drove the Moors out of most of the Iberian Peninsula), Germany (including Charlemagne), Italy, Hungary (including St. Stephen), Russia (the tsars), the Byzantine Empire (emperors and empresses), Troy (but not Helen and Paris), and our Caliphs of Cordoba, Spain, and Damascus, Syria, who carry us back in time to Abraham, Noah and Adam and Eve.

We'll tell the stories of our murderous and savage Viking ancestors, the scourge of Europe and the forefathers of grandpa William the Conqueror, grandparents like Eystein the Noisy Glumar and Sigurd "Snake in Eye" Ragnarson, who brutally sliced their way through history and took no prisoners.

We'll tell the stories of the heroic and miraculous lives of some of our 51 saintly ancestors, not Mother Teresa but saints just the same—the Saxons St. Elgiva, St. Oswald and St. Edward the Martyr; the English St. Edward the Confessor and St. Edith; the French King St. Louis IX and the abbess St. Begga of Ardenne; the Germans St. Arnulf (Arnold) the bishop of Metz and St. Bruno the Great of Cologne; the Hungarians St. Stephen, St. Ladislav and St. Magnus; the Scots Queen St. Margaret, St. Audrey and King St. David; the Russian Tsars St. Vladimir, St. Alexander Nevsky and St. Mikhail of Vladimir; the Irish St. Lawrence O'Toole; the Spanish St. Elizabeth of Aragon, King St. Ferdinand III, St. Teresa; and good St. Wenceslas of Bohemia, just to begin. Nice to have some saints in the family praying for us now that they've entered the pearly gates.

And then there are our six popes—Clement VII, Paul III, (Felix V), Alexander VI, Leon X, and Calixtus.

Everywhere you step in history, you kick up the dust of our ancestors. They were wanderers, traveling the world by foot, sometimes barefoot, sometimes in moccasins, snowshoes, handmade shoes and boots, often riding in palanquins born by muscled slaves, on camel backs, horseback, on donkeys and mules, in sleighs, in ox-carts, in covered wagons, farm wagons or horse-drawn carriages down Indian trails, desert paths, over-used ruts, country roads, wooden-plank highways, treacherous mountain passes or open prairie. They often traveled in canoes, dhows, river flatboats, shallops, sloops, steamboats and sailing ships on creeks, rivers, lakes, bays and oceans.

Our ancestors have slept in huts, wigwams, tents, lean-tos, longhouses, log cabins, brick and frame houses, chateaus, palaces and castles or often under the stars in glades, meadows, forests and hills and even under the trees.

They have trapped furs, mainly beaver and muskrats, hunted buffalo, elk and deer and wild boar, bears, foxes, jackrabbits, opossums, raccoons, squirrels, and wild duck, geese, turkey, doves, pigeons, quail, grouse and pheasant.

They have raised cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, sheep, goats, hogs, chickens, ducks and geese. They have farmed tobacco, corn and potatoes, wheat, barley and rye, pumpkins and squash, melons, and beans and peas. Their orchards hung heavy with apples, pears, cherries, plums, pomegranates and dates, oranges and lemons, walnuts, pecans and hazelnuts and mulberries. They have plucked wild grapes, blueberries, blackberries, gooseberries, and raspberries. They drank their own saffron tea and home-made whiskey from their own stills.

They have pounded out kettles, ploughs, horseshoes, swords, and nails in their blacksmith shops, probably even the silver or bronze spurs that clanged round their boots and the armor their knights wore into battle. They have been boot makers, shoemakers, sandal makers, merchants, doctors, preachers, priests, bishops and popes, pirates, soldiers, sailors, gunsmiths, judges, sheriffs, knights, lords and kings. And peasant farmers and savages galore.

By their firesides, they've smoked peace pipes. And there they have spun yarn, woven cloth and sewn homemade duds and they've dressed in itchy sheep's wool, raw cotton, linen, leather and furs. They've

worn woolen, silk, cotton and linen stockings, loin clothes, knee breeches, buckskin, woolen and cotton pants and dresses and togas and fancy robes and capes. They've worn slouch hats, cocked hats, straw hats, felt hats, 10-gallon cowboy hats, sombreros, caps and all kinds of military hats. They have fought with bows and arrows, crossbows, pikes and axes, maces, clubs, harquebuses, muskets, long rifles and repeater rifles and six-shooters and shotguns, knives and swords, tomahawks and spears—even rocks.

So, remember while you walk through those history museums, you are treading near your ancestors. They are everywhere. So often, we forget them. But we belong to them and they to us, the good and the bad, the serene and the awful, the happy and the sad, the rich and the poor. Every tool, every horse, every piece of fruit, every shot of whiskey at the bar, every firearm, every nail, every stitch you're wearing should remind you of a grandfather and grandmother or two.

Our blood includes numerous nationalities and races: English, Saxon, Scot, Irish, Welsh, French, Flemish, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Icelandic, German, Bohemian, Hungarian, the Turkic Cumanians, Russian, Byzantine, Trojan, Viking, Visigoth, Lombard, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Hebrew and American Indian, as well as Mongolian from our Tartars of the Golden Horde. And our black cousins also contain most of these blood lines. It seems we are all brothers under the skin.

There doesn't seem to be an atheist among them. Most have been Christians—Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, United Brethren and Mormons—even a sprinkling of Quakers and an Armenian or two. And there must have been a Nestorian or two but we lack the evidence. Many have been Jews or Muslims or Buddhists. Others have worshipped the Nordic gods Woden, Thor or Frigga (all three our grandparents and after which Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were named) or the Greek gods Zeus, Aphrodite and Venus or the Huron Sun god or Great Spirit or nature.

Now, take a deep breath and let the adventure begin.



Entrance to Slanesville, West Virginia,  
In the Slane ancestral territory.