

(Transcribed from typed transcript.¹)

ANCESTRAL HISTORY OF MRS. ANNIE MAHAN GRIFFITH

By Mrs. Belle Mahan Pickel, Nov. 4, 1916

Mr. Gabriel Hodges' grandfather, of Culpepper, Virginia, and his grandmother of Richmond, Virginia, were married and emigrated to South Carolina prior to the Revolutionary War. They were the first white settlers of that vicinity, where they bought a tract of land, a portion of the English grant to Salvador the Jew which had been sold to Rapley, and extremely wealthy Englishman. This tract comprised one-fourth of the land of Abbeville County.

At this time, the lands were covered with virgin growth and game of all sorts could be readily caught anywhere, while the streams furnished an abundance of fish which enabled early settlers to make a living, while they cleared the land preparatory of homemaking.

Gabriel Hodges was a contemporary of Gilliams, Caldwells and Calhouns, all of whom being strong Whigs suffered much from the depredations of hostile Indians, who were much more numerous than the white, and who occupied almost his entire country. These four families were very prominent and influential citizens and were of the most prominent Whigs of the community, and were noted for their intrepidity and daring services during the Indian and Revolutionary wars. Many of them lost their lives in the service of their country.

During the Revolutionary War, John Hodges, father of Gabriel Hodges, who held the commission of Major in the Army of the Revolution, and his grandfather were actively engaged in the war against the Tories and the Indians.

The grandfather had received leave of absence to visit his home. This fact was ascertained by the Indians, who came upon him and his three daughters who were alone at this time, unexpectedly shot the furloughed soldier dead, in the presence of his wife and three daughters, and with the dead body the four women were carried into the house and tied the women preparatory to burning the home. Suddenly the Indian Chief, who was with his murderous gang, spied Dorothy, the youngest daughter and the most beautiful young woman of her day. He became enamored with her wonderful beauty, and bending over the helpless girl proposed that if she became his wife, her life should be saved. One can scarcely imagine her condition. In the hands of the murderers of her father and sisters, in the presence of his lifeless body, tied with sisters in the house which was to be soon consumed in flames, yelling, dancing, painted savages all around--this indeed was a hideous nightmare, and her only chance from this awful dream was to solemnly swear that she would ever love and obey, and be loyal to all the mandates of the savage Indian Chief, a natural enemy and the murderer of her father and sisters.

The exultations [*sic*] of the demoniac fiends over the grief and heart breaking exclamations of these poor defenseless and distressed women was beyond description. Finally, when Dorothy was forced to make a choice, she who had reigned as belle of her day, and who was as loveable [*sic*] as she was lovely, she, oh so reluctantly consented to be the wife of the Indian Chief, and was loosed from the cords that bound her limbs, to be bound more firmly soul and body by a solemn oath to the leader of these cruel assassins.

As she was being rescued and removed from the home, the torch was applied and her sisters perished alive in her presence, whilst the war dance and the song kept up the fiendish carnival.

Lovely Dorothy Hodges was perhaps the most unhappy and unwilling bride upon whom the genial sunlight of South Carolina has ever shown. Having seen father and sisters murdered and burned to death, under the parental roof, and she a captive the unwilling wife of an Indian Chief, whose manners must have been as repulsive to her fine nature as a vulture to a dove. Her hitherto happy heart was bursting with grief. The family broken by the murder of four of its members, the destruction of the homestead and she in the hands of the enemy of her people. All of this occurring in less time than it takes to write it. Under these circumstances she at once became despondent and often regretted that she did not perish with her sisters, and felt like murdering at the dispensations of a Divine Providence. But hope, which springs eternal in the human breast did not entirely desert her, in this her hour of darkness and gloom. She began to anticipate that something yet would happen to relieve her from this impending doom. Was it a prayer from some loved one in South Carolina, who knows that finally softened the Indian Chief's heart? Dorothy was completely fettered and being carried west with the retreating foe of the white man. As the whites gained supremacy she was removed farther and farther from the pale of civilization. Strange to say, her husband loved her with a devotion not characteristic of the Indian. The chief was proud of and rejoiced in the possession of the "pale face wife". His lover for her and his association with her had a wonderful refining influence over the red-man.

At the birth of their son, his affection seemed warmer than ever. If Dorothy had not now learned to love her husband, his child was loved as only mothers love. Away from the presence or association of a white person, it seemed that her whole soul concentrated in her babe.

Years passed by and the Indian was as kind as one of his nature could be and Dorothy had almost become reconciled to her fate. She was expected to cook, wash, scrub and do any rough work which her delicate hands had never done before.

The Indian Chief returning from the hunt one day informed Dorothy that she might visit her relatives in South Carolina if she would solemnly swear that she would return in a certain length of time. Oh gladsome hour. Of course, she took the oath. Had he not forced her once before, and had she not kept the oath to a letter? With a prayer in her heart and a song on her lips this journey began on

foot. Near the Border of the State the oath was taken. The Indian Chief parted with wife and child. As nothing had been heard of the fate of the girls, they were all mourned as dead. Imagine the consternation when Dorothy and child walked into the little village of Cokesbury. Tears, ah happy tears! Flowed down cheeks of all alike. Gabriel Hodges' father gave a grand feast to which all the relatives and neighbors were invited, and they assembled in joy to greet the long lost Dorothy.

Once more in the bosom of her family, she became the prey to a thousand conflicting emotions, until at last she yielded to the intercessions of her family, and when the time arrived for her return to the Indian Chief, she remained with those who loved her best. In the course of years she seemed to forget her troubles and as time had lent a peculiar charm to her beauty, and her wild romantic history combined with her attractive manners made for her many admirers. A wealthy citizen by the name of Rosamond fell desperately in love with her; they were married and my years of happiness lay in store for her.

The little Indian grew up to be exceedingly handsome. He possessed much of his mother's beauty and many of his father's characteristics. He was well educated and at the age of twenty-one, having missed his father, heeded the "call of the wild" and went in search of his father. This proves that "blood will tell". This story was related from Dorothy's own lips

Gabriel Hodges was married to Phoebe Douglas, daughter of Col. Archibald Douglas, whose father and mother were Lord and Lady Douglas of Scotland. They emigrated to this country at the same time Gabriel Hodges' grandfather, Gen. Hodges came.

Having lived all of his life within one mile and a half of his birth place he witnessed the great changes that had been effected during the last three quarters of a century. When he first went to homekeeping there was little cleared land. Deer and other animals ravaged their crops and gardens. When he completed his late dwelling it--with his brother's General Washington Hodges--were considered two of the finest homes above Columbia. Gabriel Hodges was a public spirited citizen, and in the war of 1812 was the first to respond. In all matters of public interest, he took an active part, and at one time was sent as Commissioner to the Seminole Indians, with whom he was exceedingly popular, and who were delighted because of his having smoked "The pipe of Peace" with them. He was a hard worker, strictly temperate and prudent in his monetary affairs. He was a most active member of the Board of Trustees of Cokesbury School, and contributed largely to its success in its palmiest days. He was the "Pater Familius" of Cokesbury. From the time his grandfather landed in America, the Hodges have been its history makers of South Carolina. Grandfather and father and brother holding positions as General and Major in the military service. The war of 1861 swept of his property away, but Gabriel Hodges adapted himself to the new situation as readily as could a much younger man. He never allowed his temper or spirits to be crossed by anything and was always the friend and neighbor to the last. To Gabriel and Phoebe Hodges were born eleven children, Laura, Saphonia,

Rebecca, Fannie, Newelle, Whiteman, Harriett, Gabriella, William, Joe and Martha Hodges. Whiteman died in infancy. William was chaplain confederate in the Mexican war and when the call for volunteers were made in the Confederate war their two sons were among the first to respond and held honored positions. His daughters all married, and he settled them around him in Cokesbury. Laura married Dr. Brantley Hart of Orangeburg, and to them were born five children, Irene, Julia, Emma, Annie, and Corrie Hart. Rebecca married Dr. Bowen and to them were born Henrietta, Ossie, Tabitha, Fleda and Mary Chase Bowen. After the death of his wife Laura, Dr. Hart married Henrietta Bowen and to them were born, Clara, Rosa, Claudia and Brantley Hart. Clara married Col. Oscar W. Babb, who was for five years assistant Adjutant General for the State of South Carolina, and afterwards Secretary to the Hon. Sam J. Nicholls, member of Congress for the fourth district of South Carolina. Harriet Hodges was married to Thomas Mahan and to them were born seven children, William, Fannie, McSwain, Heyward, Mary, Belle, and Annie Mahan. Annie married J. W. Griffith, RR who built the first railroad through the Cherokee strip South from Calwell, Kansas--at that time the Cherokee strip was nothing but a territory.

¹Source: Lucile Mahon Stevenson, July, 1991.