

MABRY FAMILIES IN AMERICA

Very little is known concerning the origin of the name Mabry. Many believe it to be English, although it may have originated in France. Wherever the name originated, we do know that most of the Mabrys and Mayburys who immigrated to the American Colonies came from England or Ireland. The same is true for those with the Mayberry spelling with the exception of one or two families whose immigrant ancestors came to America from Germany.

Variations in Spelling

The name is spelled variously in early American records, due in part to differences in pronunciation, but also because the legal documents were usually written by a clerk or other official rather than by the individual whose business was being conducted. Some of the spellings found in the earliest American records include Mawbury, Maybury, Mabrie, Mabery, Maberry, and Mayberry. It is common to find the name of the same individual spelled different ways in the records of several counties or states. There are even instances where a careless clerk spelled the name two (or more) different ways in the same document. In thirty years of research on the Mabry family I have found this relatively simple name spelled more than fifty ways in original documents!

Mabarry	Mabary	Mabberry	Mabbery	Maberay
Mabery	Mabiray	Mabire	Mabiroy	Mabore
Mabra	Mabray	Mabre	Mabree	Mabrery
Mabrie	Mabroy	Mabruy	Mabry	Maburay
Maburey	Maburry	Maebry	Maiberry	Marberry
Marburie	Marburry	Marbury	Mawbury	Maybary
Mayberrey	Mayberry	Maybery	Maybory	Maybray
Maybry	Mayburey	Mayburry	Maybury	Maysberry
Meabrey	Meaprey	Moubray	Mowbery	Mowbray
Maberry	Mabory	Mabrey	Maburery	Marbray
	Maybarry	Maybrey	Meaberry	

As if that were not enough there are at least four more ways of spelling the name which have been found in English records!

Moribray Mubrai Molbrai Moubrai

Confusion with the Marbury Family

It is important to say something about the Marbury family because its name looks and sounds so much like Mabry. Both families arrived in the American Colonies at a very early date, and in their independent migrations have been found in the records of some of the same counties in North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and perhaps elsewhere as well. The Marburys also had their name spelled in various ways adding to the tendency of some genealogists to confuse the two families. To confuse the situation even more the immigrant ancestor of "the Virginia Mabrys" and one of the early Marburys both had the given name Francis.

As a general rule when the name in an original document contains an 'r' in the first syllable, as in Marbury, Marberry, etc., the researcher can usually assume that the family is not related to the Mabrys. Marbury is almost always found with the 'r' while it is extremely rare to find it in a Mabry record.

Mabrys and Mayberrys

Not all of those who bear the name Mabry in any of its variant spellings are descended from a common American immigrant ancestor. I would suggest a simple "rule of thumb" which is very often helpful in guessing what family a particular Mabry might belong to. When the name is spelled Mayberry in recent generations, there is a good chance that the individual descends from one of three or four Irish immigrants who came to one of the New England Colonies during the eighteenth century. When the spelling is closer to Mabry (Mabrey, Maberry, etc.) the chances are quite good that the individual descends from "the Virginia Mabrys" whose immigrant ancestor was Francis Maybury who came to Henrico County, Virginia between 1672 and 1679. Ironically, during his lifetime, Francis Maybury's name was almost always spelled with the extra 'y', although it has seldom be used in later generations. Of course there are exceptions to both these rules of thumb. There are a good many descendants of the Virginia Mabrys who still use the spelling Mayberry. And there are a few using the Mabry spelling who descend from another immigrant who came to Virginia or South Carolina about a hundred years after Francis Maybury.

Family "Traditions"

Before discussing some of the individual Mabry immigrants, a word of caution is necessary concerning the reliability of "traditions" which seem to be passed down in most families, the

Mabrys being no exception. A number of persons have written to me over the years saying, "there is a tradition in our family that the Mabrys came from England". Others have written saying, "the Mabrys are Irish." There are other "traditions" that the family came from Germany or Canada. Adding to the problem is the fact that in recent times some of these family traditions have been passed back and forth between researchers who descend from different immigrant ancestors. For example, some descendants of Francis Maybury of Surry County, Virginia have unknowingly "adopted" the national origin of another Mabry immigrant to whom they are not related at all.

Others have passed on more specific "traditions", some even including the name of the immigrant ancestor and the date of his arrival. One of the tasks of the genealogist is to examine such "traditions" very carefully in order to determine which parts of the tradition, if any, are based on historical fact and which parts result from "enhancements" of the story as it was passed on from one generation to another. The following accounts of some of the Mabry and Mayberry immigrants to America will serve to illustrate the importance of taking such traditions seriously, but not too seriously.

The New England Mayberrys

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several persons with surname Mabry (Maybury, Mayberry, Mabery, etc.) came to America from Europe. While the number is not large it is possible to identify several immigrants who came to the Colonies prior to the Revolutionary War. A few of these persons were progenitors of Mabry families the descendants of which may still be found in the United States. Two or three others seem to have left no descendants.

Two other Mayberry families have traditions about immigrant ancestors who were "iron workers". One concerns a George Mayberry who brought his family from Ireland and "worked in iron" in New Jersey. George Mayberry and his wife, Rebecca Pennybacker, were the parents of John P., Rebecca, Catherine P., Israel, and Benjamin Mayberry. This family later lived in what is now West Virginia. Another somewhat similar tradition will be discussed in more detail later under the heading "Carolina Mabrys". In brief it tells of a William Mabry who came from England to South Carolina to work as an "iron manufacturer". Interestingly enough, both of "iron worker" traditions have proved to be substantially true.

Other "traditions" have been passed on from one generation of Mabrys to another which seem to have lost whatever factual basis they may have had in the beginning. One such story which persists in some branches of the family is that the Mabry family in America originated with a Charles Mabry who came to Virginia or North Carolina from Canada, usually Quebec. According

to most accounts he married a Miss Gibbs and was a Revolutionary Soldier, although some give the date of his birth as early as 1717. I have traced the origin of this "tradition" to a report which was hastily prepared by a mail order genealogy firm about forty years ago. The report combined the records of at least two Charles Mabrys both of whom were descendants of Francis Maybury who arrived in Virginia several generations earlier!

There are considerably more accurate traditions about Mayberry immigrants who came to the New England area during the eighteenth century. A William Mayberry came from Balleoney in County Antrim, Ireland to Marblehead, Massachusetts about 1730. By 1740 he was a resident of Windham, Maine. He was a blacksmith and had five children: John, Thomas, Sefair, Richard and Nancy. William Mayberry is believed by some to have had a brother, Richard, who was living at Salem, Massachusetts before 1740 and was married to Elizabeth Meek. They had children: Sarah, Jane, Elizabeth and Richard.²

A Thomas Mayberry who died in 1749 in Doglas (sic) township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, is also believed to have been an immigrant from Ireland. He is known to have had at least one son, William, who died in 1764 leaving his wife Ann and children, Thomas, Charles, Andrew, Elizabeth and Margaret.³

The Virginia Mabrys

My experience has shown that a large majority of those researching their Mabry family will eventually find themselves to be descended from "the Virginia Mabrys" whose common immigrant ancestor was Francis Maybury who came, probably from England, to Henrico County, Virginia, sometime between 1672 and 1679. He was married in 1685 to Elizabeth Gilliam West Bevin. Elizabeth was twice widowed before she married Francis Maybury and had at least three children by her previous marriages. Francis and Elizabeth Maybury had seven children of their own: Francis Jr., Anne, Mary, Charles, George, Judith and Hinchia.

The grandchildren and great grandchildren of Francis and Elizabeth Gilliam Maybury spread rapidly to the south and west, reaching as far west as Texas before 1850. Extensive research has been done on this family, especially on the descendants of Hinchia Mabry (as the name came to be spelled in the second generation). A considerable amount of research has also been done on the descendants of his brothers Francis and Charles. Somewhat less is known about the family of the fourth brother, George Mabry, although that effort continues among his descendants and the general outlines of that branch of the family are becoming more and more clear.

My efforts and those of more than a hundred others who have worked with me on the Mabry family have centered on this

Virginia family which is now into its fourth century on American soil. More detailed information on the Virginia Mabrys, descendants of Francis and Elizabeth Maybury, will be found in the following chapter.

"The Carolina Mabrys"

Finally, note should be made of a smaller group of "southern Mabrys" whom I have chosen to call "The Carolina Mabrys" because their immigrant ancestor, referred to earlier, was William Mabry who according to family tradition was an "iron manufacturer" in England. He was offered 1000 pounds in gold to come to America to take charge of the iron works at Cowpens, South Carolina. There he is said to have made bullets for the colonists. His son, Thomas Mabry, passed this story on to future generations along with his own account of the trip across the Atlantic from England.⁴

I believe that a number of the Mabrys in those counties along both sides of the western border of North and South Carolina are the descendants of this immigrant William Mabry. Because they followed the same general pattern of migration as did the descendants of "The Virginia Mabrys", their records are also found from Georgia to Texas. One branch of this family descends through William Mabry's son Thomas who lived at least for a time in or near Shelby, North Carolina. Ephraim Alexander Mabry, a son of Thomas, was born in Shelby in 1812. Ephraim's son Peter Asbury Mabry was born in 1850 also in Shelby, and was living in Texas by 1880.

I have long struggled to identify some of the Mabrys who appear in the records in and surrounding Spartanburg County, South Carolina, and immediately across the border in and around what is now Rutherford County, North Carolina. Undoubtedly, some of these are descendants of William Mabry, who came from England shortly before the Revolutionary War. Others may well be descendants of Francis Maybury and Elizabeth Gilliam.