

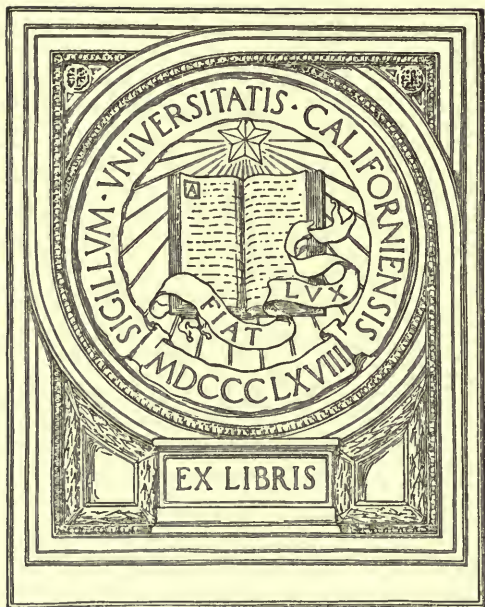
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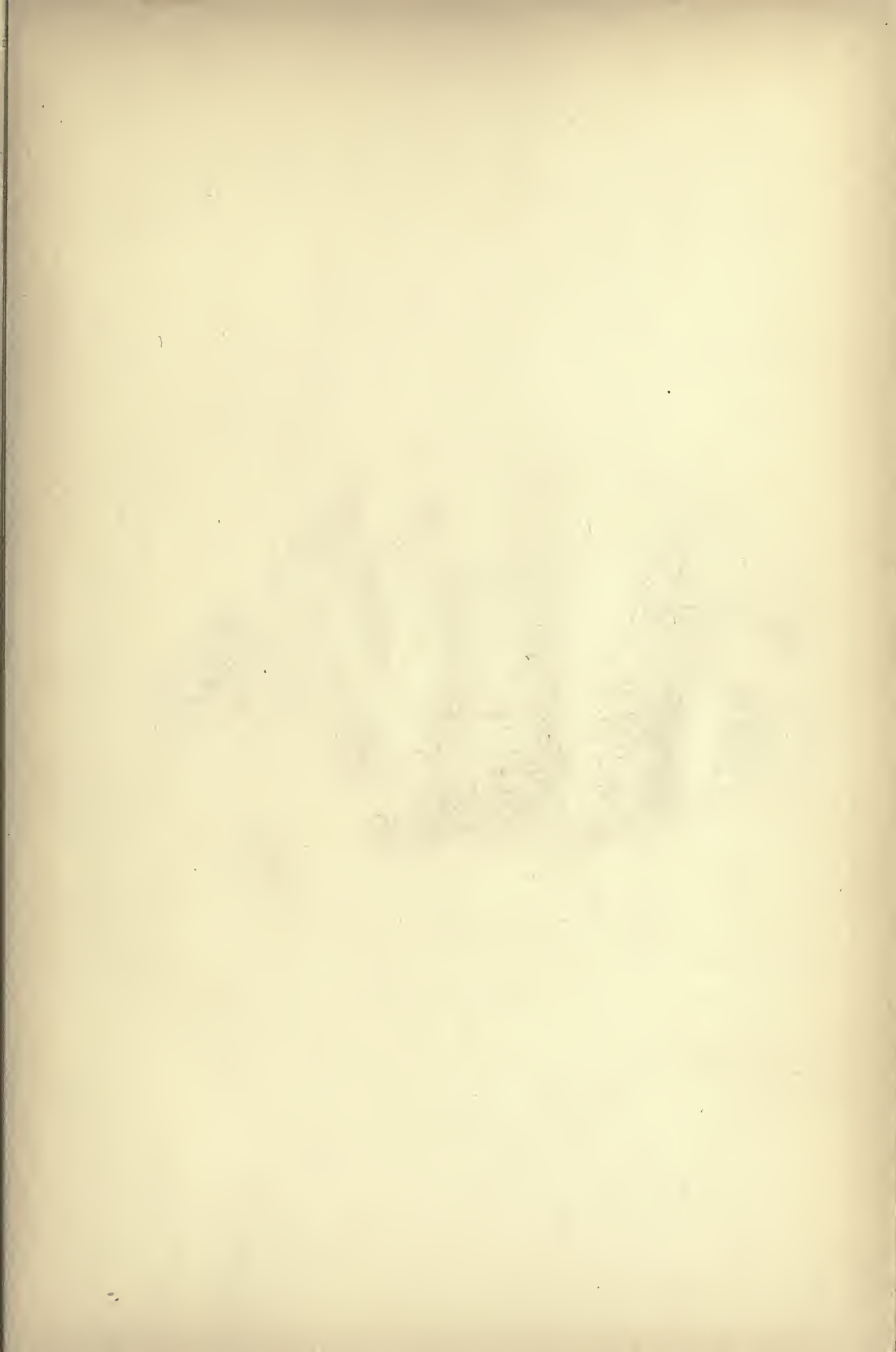
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JOHN CHAMBERS  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

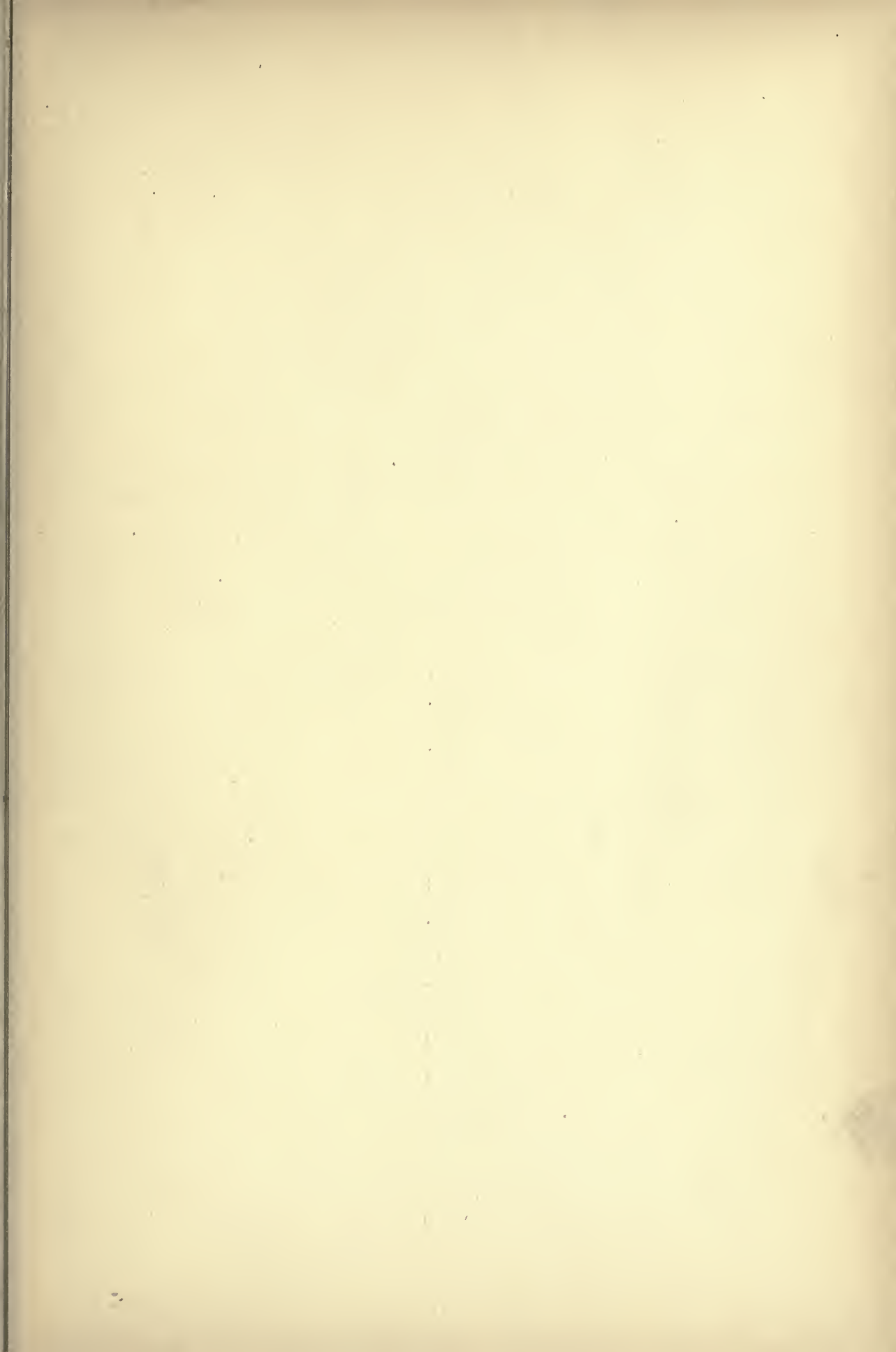




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AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
JOHN CHAMBERS





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AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
JOHN CHAMBERS

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

JOHN CHAMBERS  
FROM AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
BY JOHN CHAMBERS

PUBLISHED AT IOWA CITY IOWA IN 1906 BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

THE  
MUSEUM  
OF  
ARTS  
AND  
SCIENCE



JOHN CHAMBERS  
FROM AN OIL PORTRAIT



AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
JOHN CHAMBERS

UNIV. OF  
IOWA

EDITED BY  
JOHN CARL PARISH

PUBLISHED AT IOWA CITY IOWA IN 1908 BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

During the last year of his eventful life, John Chambers, second Governor of the Territory of Iowa, wrote out in response to the request of his youngest son, Henry Chambers, an autobiographical sketch. For over half a century this important manuscript has remained in the possession of the family of Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky, carefully preserved but never published.

As a result of correspondence with Mr. John Chambers<sup>1</sup> and a visit to Louisville, Kentucky, where he was entertained at the home of Mrs. Henry Chambers, Professor Benjamin F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of The State Historical Society of Iowa, secured the manuscript for publication by the Society. Acknowledgments are due, therefore, not only to Mrs. Henry Chambers and her family but also to Professor Shambaugh both for the discovery of the manuscript and for valuable advice and assistance in preparing its pages for the press.

Access was also had to other valuable material, among which was a shorter sketch of Governor Chambers, together with a record of the births, marriages,

<sup>1</sup>The grandson of Governor Chambers and the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky.

and deaths of his children. The sketch and entries are in the handwriting of Governor Chambers and are found in a small leather bound book entitled *Family Record*. At the close of his autobiography Governor Chambers in speaking of this record refers to it as his *Family Register*. It has seemed of sufficient value in a supplemental way to warrant its publication along with the autobiography.

The writing of the autobiography is explained in a letter written by Governor Chambers to his son Henry Chambers on December 5, 1851, in which he says: "For some days past I have spent an hour or two in preparing the sketch of family History which you request in your last letter, but as I soon tire of writing it progresses slowly—I am pleased however that you made the request as neither of your brothers seem to have ever felt or expressed any interest in the subject. It will at last be a mere outline without interest to any person out of the family, when I get through I will send it to you."

Several weeks passed before the arduous work was completed. Indeed, it was not until January 12, 1852, that he wrote: "I send you by the mail that takes this the 'sketch' you asked for some time ago." Before the end of the month he must have received something of an enthusiastic acknowledgment from his son; for on January 26, he wrote: "I am glad you are pleased with the little 'Biographical Sketch' I sent you." In the same letter he laments his inability to put the material

in satisfactory literary form, saying: "It has been one of the troubles of my whole life that I never could attain a style in writing, with which I was satisfied and I never wrote anything and laid it a side for a short time, [in] which I did not find much to correct in the style & language when I came to examine it again."

"While on the subject of the 'sketch' ", he continued, "let me add that your brothers have both been here since I sent it to you and having mentioned to each of them the fact that you had such a paper, Sprigg said he would get you to copy it for him and Frank very modestly requested that I would write a similar paper for him, which I assured him I would not do. They had both been very anxious for something of that kind, but unwilling to ask for it, for fear of giving me trouble."

The original manuscript covers thirty-three closely written pages about eight by ten inches in dimensions. It is in the characteristic handwriting of Governor Chambers and is quite legible. In editing the work the effort has been to make as close a reproduction as possible in the matter of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Letters and words have been supplied in editorial brackets and foot-notes added simply to make clear the context.

JOHN CARL PARISH

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA CITY



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HANNAH TAYLOR CHAMBERS, from an ivory miniature *opposite 16*



AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOHN CHAMBERS



## AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOHN CHAMBERS

Washington. Kentucky 2d December 1851

My dear Henry

In your letter of the 27th ulto. you say you "have often had occasion to regret your ignorance of our family history and near connections" and ask me at some leisure time to give you "an outline sketch of it, particularly my own life and its prominent events." And as that which is to be done ought always to be done promptly, especially with persons of my advanced age and unstable health, I proceed to comply with your request, promising that there is very little in our family history to distinguish it from the history of thousands of other families in this country.

I never saw either of my grand parents, or any relative of my beloved mother. My grandfather Chambers, with two or three of his brothers, were early settlers on the Juniata river in Pen[n]sylvania where my father and his three brothers, and one sister were born. the family were the (I think immediate) descendants of Irish parents, but I have understood that they were of Scotch origin, and from a conversation between my father and a very aged Scotchman when I was a boy, I learned that my more remote ancestors were of the Scotch clan Cameron, and bore the name of the clan, but refusing to join in the rebellion of 1645, they were compelled to emigrate, and took shelter in Ireland, changing their name to Chambers, which they were afterwards permit[t]ed by an act of the British Par-

liament to retain, from Ireland therefore came the first of the family of which I have any tradition. My grandfather married an Irish woman whose name was Sarah Lee, a woman of strong and cultivated mind and imperious temper—they had four sons, of whom my father (Rowland) was the oldest, and one daughter.<sup>2</sup> My uncle James was the next oldest to my father, then came Joseph, Benjamin and Betsey, the latter of whom I never saw. My father in early manhood was sent to New York and was employed as a clerk in an extensive mercantile established<sup>3</sup> belonging to a Mr. Joseph Forman, who had married Betty Lee, my grandmothers sister. From your grandfathers account of Mr. Forman, who was always called by a numerous connection “Uncle Josey”, he must have been one of the most excellent men of his day—his wife, a woman of vigorous intellect and violent temper, was just the reverse of her husband—they were the parents of I think five sons, the only one of whom, who made *much noise* in the world, was David who rose to the rank of general in the State line of the Jersey militia in the War of the Revolution, and was notorious for his active and energetic pursuit of the adherents of the British Crown, then called tories. they were numerous in the lower counties of New Jersey, and some of them became the victims of their ill judged attempts to subject their Whig neighbors to the depredations of marauding parties of the British Army, and their adherents—Genl. Forman, then commonly called by them “Black David” was charged with the illegal and murderous execu-

<sup>2</sup> An unpublished genealogy of the Chambers family, prepared by Mr. Harry Brent Mackoy, a great grandson of Governor John Chambers, names seven children of this marriage—four sons and three daughters. One of the daughters is presumed to have died in early childhood. The remaining six children are mentioned in the will of their father, James Chambers.

<sup>3</sup> The word “establishment” was evidently intended.

tion of some of them, without trial, and it lead to retaliation on the part of the British. these charges against Genl. Forman were unfounded, the utmost extent of his conduct went no further than to hunt diligently, and punish promptly, under the sentence of Courts Martial, such tories as had made themselves active partisans against their country, this I have ascertained from several of the old officers of that day & it was confirmed by your grandfather. Of "uncle Josey's" other sons I rem[em]ber only the names of Ezekiel and Joseph, they were all respectable, but not distinguished men—"Uncle Josey" was a brother of the great grandfather of the present generation of the Formans now residing in this county and including your brother-in-law Mr. J. S. Forman his brothers & sisters, that is to say, he was the uncle of old Mr. Thos. Forman who lived & died on the old Forman farm adjoining this old town. After the death of my grandfather and mother, my aunt Betsey [(]their only daughter) then a young girl, was placed under the care of her aunt Betty Forman, (who had no daughter) and was so har[s]hly & crueally treated by that wretched woman, as to render her insane, before even my father, who lived in the family discovered the cause of it. After her recovery she married a Mr. Irvin and became the mother of several children, one of whom, a man of gentlemanly manners and fine appearance, once called on me at Washington City—held some place in the quarter master's department I think, but I have no further knowledge of him. My uncles James and Joseph settled at an early day in the western part of Pen[n]sylvania, the former had but three children, two sons and a daughter. In the year 1840 I saw the youngest of the sons at C[h]illicothe, he was an extremely rough man, and told me he was the only survivor of his fathers family, had himself a large family and was poor—he lived in Ohio. My uncle Joseph removed to

Ohio and lived in Jefferson county, some miles from St[e]ubenville. he raised a very numerous family, and died a few years ago at a very advanced age—I have seen two of his sons, and have learned that a larger portion of the family are by no means respectable. Your grandfather remained in New York several years after the death of “Uncle Josey Forman” engaged in some business connected with the foreign commerce of that city and went several voiges to European ports, after which he married my mother whose name was Phebe Mulican,<sup>4</sup> an orphan girl raised on Long Island. I have heard her say that when she was married she had no living relatives that she knew of, except one brother who commanded a vessel trading between N. York and Liverpool which perished shortly afterwards at sea, with all who were on board of her— After the birth of your uncle William and Aunt Davis (in New York) my father formed a partnership with a Mr. John Martin, an Englishman, who owned a fine farm and extensive mills on the north branch of the Raratin river,<sup>5</sup> in Somerset County New Jersey, at a place called Bromley Bridge, but afterwards extensively known as the Burnt Mills—<sup>6</sup> They established an extensive retail store at that place and dealt largely and prosperously in the produce of the country, ’til the War of the Revolution commenced— Mr. Martin claimed large estates in England and perhaps was allied to the aristocracy of that Kingdom, and finding his position in the United States (Colonies) becoming dangerous, he sent to my father to collect all the money he could

<sup>4</sup>This name is spelled in the Mackoy genealogy, Phoebe Mullican.

<sup>5</sup>The Raritan River.

<sup>6</sup>Neither the name Bromley Bridge nor Burnt Mills appears on the map of New Jersey to-day, but the place may be approximately located by its position on the north branch of the Raritan River, in Somerset County, New Jersey, two miles from Pluckemin. See page 254.



and meet him in N. York without delay, he did so, and gave what money he had raised to Mr. Martin without well understanding the object he had in view. Mr. Martin then told him that he was hiding from the American authorities, and had a vessel in port ready to sail for England the moment he went on board. Your grandfather urged in vain the necessity of some adjustment of their business, but Mr. Martin was too much alarmed for any thing of that sort, but assured my father that on his arrival in England, he would immediately furnish him with full evidence of perfect right to all property in Jersey which in the meantime he was to consider as his own including the lands & mills. Mr. Martin left, and died soon after his return to England. My father settled up the business, paid all the debts and discontinued the store, but kept the mills in operation until a flash of lightning struck & consumed them at noon day, with a large amount of flour and grain. In the meantime Independence had been declared and the Revolution was in full progress. Your grandfather became an enthusiast in the cause, lavished all his means in support of it, took the command of a regiment of the Jersey Militia, and from exposure in his first tour of duty became a cripple from a rheumatic attack, which rendered him unable to mount his horse, and after being lifted to and from his saddle for some time, was compelled to retire from the service, and I think never resumed his command, but as soon as he was able, was again actively employed in obtaining supplies for the army, yielding up without compensation or account the products of his farm and expending his means without stint. I remember to have seen a note to him from Genl. Washington, written after the battle of Trenton, when encamped at Pluckemin,<sup>7</sup> two miles from the Burnt Mills, de-

<sup>7</sup> Pluckemin, Somerset County, New Jersey.

scribing the shoeless and naked condition of the army in the midst of a severe winter, and their *total* destitution of provisions, and appealing most earnestly to your grandfather to endeavor to send them *something* to eat—(I have often regretted the loss of that note.)

When your grandfather moved into New Jersey he took with him his youngest brother, (Benjamin) then a youth. At the commencement of the war he procured for him a Capt[ai]ns Commission in the regular army, in which he served until the close of the war retiring with the rank of Majr.(all the officers having been promoted one grade before their discharge)— he then settled in Maryland and married his cousin, a daughter of Mr. Ezekiel Forman, one of the sons of “uncle Josey”. he was for many years Clerk of the Superior Court of Cecil County, & known as General Ben. Chambers. He was the father of the present Judge of the Supreme Court of Maryland, Genl. Ezekiel Forman Chambers, who[m] I first met with in the winter 1828 as a Senator in Congress from his state, he was then a general of the state of Maryland. he had several brothers & sisters whom I have never met with, two of the former settled in Mississippi as cotton planters, one of whom died there, but the other was alive the last time I heard of him.

After the War of the revolution your grandfather found himself greatly reduced in his circumstances, but full of enthusiasm at the glorious result of the War, and being a man of very remarkable vigor of intellect, prompt and capable, he was in attendance upon all the public meetings preliminary to the formation of the government, and constantly associated with the officers of the late army, he soon fell into intemperate habits (as did a very large proportion of the Officers of the late army.) Business was abandoned or so neglected that everything went to ruin. And to cap the climax, the Heirs of Mr. Martin came over from Eng-

land and claimed the land we lived upon, and Mr. Martin not having performed *his* promise to convey it, before his death, it had to be given up, and thus the family were without a home and with very slender means of support, in this immergency, your uncle William returned from the Western Wilderness where he had spent two or three years, and gave so glowing an account of Kentucky, that it was determined that the family should emigrate, and all the stock and other property that remained was sold off, and two Jersey waggons procured with two stout horses for each, and thus equip[p]ed, with some beds & their furniture, the clothing of the family and necessary provisions, in the summer of the year 1794 we commenced our journey to "the land of promise." And after a most tedious and laborious journey across the mountains, we reached the Monongahela river, where we were detained several weeks before we could get boats to prosecute our journey, and there we found ourselves surrounded by the "Whiskey Insurrection"—a rebellion against the payment of duty on stills & distilled spirits. We were accompanied on our journey by the family of Mr. Robt. Davis who had married my oldest sister, (your Aunt Davis who[m] you remember) and of his brother Mr. Peter Davis, each of whom had a waggon and team, these two families preceeded us in the first boat that was finished & we soon followed and joined them at this place. Your uncle Jas. Chambers was left in New Jersey as a clerk in a country store, his health being delicate it was doubted whether he could bear the journey, which of course had to be performed on foot, by the male part of the family. Arrived in Kentucky, the family consisted of my father and mother, my two youngest sisters, your uncle Benjamin and myself. I was now fourteen years old and my education had been sadly neglected. I could hardly read or write intelligibaly, and had passed rapidly

and carelessly through the common rules of Arithmetic, and had my language corrupted and mixed up with a sort of "low dutch" (descendants of the Hollanders who first settled New York (New Amsterdam) and from thence spread over New Jersey, and with whose descendants I had been associated as playmates and school-fellows.[.]) A few days after we became settled here, My father in a fit of ill humour, which had now become very common with him, told me I must seek some employment and that he could not maintain me in idleness— two hours afterwards I was behind the counter of a new comer by the name of Moore who had just opened a small stock of goods. he paid my board, and when he had pretty nearly sold out his stock, I found employment on the same terms behind the counter of a Mr. Wiggins. the next spring your uncle Wm came and proposed to send me to Lexington to go to school at the "Transylvania Seminary", and in March 1795 I went there — in July a vacation occurred and there was some difficulty in the school which I thought rendered it doubtful whether it would be resumed, and as my brother had by frequent admonitions to diligence and some estimates of the expense of my education, convinced me that he could not afford to educate me there, I determined to return home, to which my father yielded with manifest displeasure, and was very stern and distant with me when I got home. I found he was cultivating a little field of corn, & the morning after my return I got up early and fed & watered his old horse and went to ploughing— Nothing was said, and after several days diligent labors I had put the little field in good order, and then, for the first time went down town, where I found a new store just opening under the firm of Brownson [?] and Irvin, and soon became their assistant behind the counter. In all these employments a part of the agreement was that they were to pay my boarding *at home*, so

that by early rising I could always make my mothers morning fires and bring water for the days consumption. I was now drawing towards the close of my fifteenth year and continued with these gentlemen until I was seventeen, and became very much attached to them, as they seemed to be to me

The next year, Mr. Robt. Davis having removed to Augusta and your Aunt Logan (who was married soon after we reached Kenty. under an engagement made in New Jersey) to Jefferson County and my sister Polly having died in the summer 1795, it was thought necessary that my father and mother should go to Augusta to be near one of her daughters, because my mother had then become subject to periodical fits of strong convulsion, which it may be well here to remark continued, during the residue of her long life to afflict her, without in the least impairing her general health or her mind.

In the year 1797, District Courts were established in Kenty., and the seat of one of the Courts fix[ed] at this place, and your uncle Francis Taylor, then a practising lawyer was elected Clerk of the Court— The jurisdiction of this Court was limited to important civil cases and to the trial of criminals & and consequent[ly] the fees of the Clerks office were very inconsiderable and but for the hope that additional jurisdiction would be extended to the Court, the office would hardly have been worth holding. Towards the close of 1797 Mr. Taylor applied to my employers to release me and let me go into his office, which with some reluctance they consented to. Mr. Taylor had a tolerable library for that period and urged the benefits I might derive from reading and especially in studying law, which the small amount of business in the office would enable me to do. He agreed to board me and cloth[e] me, I finding my own bed & furniture and he proposed that my father should bind

me to him until I was twenty one years old, which I agreed to, with the remark that an Indenture of that kind would do very little good, as if a sense of duty did not bind me, the indenture would not, and I never heard of the indenture afterwards—I applied myself with unremit[t]ing attention to the business of the office and at the end of six months thought myself the better clerk of the two, and indeed was able to do all the duties of the office with very little instruction from anybody. In the Spring of the year 1800 Mr. Taylor wished to remove to his farm on the river, and proposed to me to give me the fees of the office, if I would stay in town and take charge of it— he was not willing to resign because he still clung to the hope of its becoming more valuable. I accepted his proposition and kept an accurate account of the available fees for one year & found them fall something short of four hundred dollars, at which I had estimated them. In Novr. of that year, one month after I attained my twentieth year I obtained a Law License, for which I was certainly anything but well qualified, but I had read a great deal in three years, not only of law, but of almost every thing I could lay my hands on. And thus at twenty years old I found myself a lawyer, by *License*. The next Spring finding my mothers situation by no means comfortable notwithstanding that I had appropriated a considerable part of my little income to her use, I proposed to bring her and my father here and to live with them this I soon accomplished, and soon succeed[ed] in making her more comfortable than she had been for many years. This was a source of great gratification to me, for I loved & venerated my mother beyond all others of Gods creation, and the arduous & suffering struggle she had made to raise her children and keep them together when young, and impress correct principles upon their minds, entitled her to all, and much more than all, I was ever able

to do to make her happy. . . . . My  
 father . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . the autumn of 1821 when . . . . .  
 . . . . . he sunk to the grave in the 66th year  
 of his age, and thus ended a man endowed by nature with  
 an uncommonly clear & vigorous mind, educated, & pos-  
 sessed the highest qualifications for business . . . . .  
 . . . . . I had now begun to obtain some small business  
 as a lawyer, and occasionally a case which gave me an op-  
 portunity of exercising my speech-making faculties, and I  
 was enabled to keep a servant for my mother and to live  
 comfortably with strict economy, and thence forward was  
 made to feel that my efforts to *get along* were appreciated  
 favourably, and a good [d]eal of small business in the in-  
 ferior courts came into my hands. Ardent and devoted to  
 my clients, they soon became friends, all which improved  
 my prospects and increased my business. About the lat-  
 ter part of the preceeding year my brother James came to  
 Kentucky & brought with him his wife and one child. (now  
 Mrs. Phillips). In the Session of the Legislature of 1802-3  
 the district and quarter sessions courts were abolished and  
 in their stead Circuit Courts established, embracing the  
 jurisdiction of both. Here was a clerkship established  
 worth having, this took away a part of my means of living,  
 but I felt that I could live without it. Mr. Taylor who had  
 lost an office worth nothing to him, and Capt[ai]n Thos.  
 Marshall who had lost the quarter sessions court clerkship  
 worth a handsome annual income, were candidates for the  
 new office. I was urged by my friends to enter the lists,  
 and I believe if the office had been then, as now, elective by  
 popular vote, I would certainly have obtained it, but I hesi-

tated until advised by one of the three judges upon whom the appointment depended. He advised me to offer assuring me of his vote, and of his belief that another would vote for me, but he was mistaken, that one really prefer[r]ed Captn. Marshall, who finding that neither of the others would in any event vote for him, joined with the third judge to persuade his friend to vote for Mr. Taylor.— this I learned long afterwards. I consented however to enter the list of candidates and here seemed for a while to be the turning point of my fortunes. I was denounced immediately as a monster of ingratitude towards Mr. Taylor, who it was said had taken me into his office through charity, and now I had the presumption to oppose him for one of the most valueable offices in the state— to all this I only replied that I did not believe Mr. Taylor would deny that I had faithfully fulfilled all my obligations to him, and that I certainly never would have entered his office, with either an express or implied understanding, that through all time to come I must yield to him unresistingly every office for which he might choose to be a candidate and especially an office which I had served four year to quallify myself for. But there was more involved in the controversy than the office or the question of gratitude to my late employer. In the preceeding year his half sister, Margaret, the only child of his father by his second wife, came to Kentucky on a visit to her brother and his family— She was an accomplished and lovely girl and from my earliest acquaintance with her I became attached to her, and at the time this clerkship was depending we were engaged to be married, but the secret rested with ourselves. I consulted her about withdrawing from the contest as the evident effect of it was to estrange her brother and myself and insure his opposition to her fathers consent to our marriage. She met the question as only such a woman could. She said my



withdrawal and our subsequent marriage would give rise and plausibility to the imputation that she was sold to me as the price of my withdrawal from the contest, and altho she knew her brother, being an only son, had great influence with her father, she did not fear it. She had been raised in his bosom from her very infancy, without a mother, and she knew he had confidence in her judgment and prudence and would not sacrifice her happiness under any influence that could be brought to bear upon him. Mr. Taylor was elected Clerk and I soon after informed him of my engagement to his sister, and stated my object in doing so, to be to give him time to communicate with his father, as his sister & myself were both about to address him on the subject, the reply was very stern and to the effect that he would immediately send his sister home to her father. I told him such had been her wish, but that her health was then very delicate and I had earnestly advised her against encountering the journey of 500 miles on horseback, (then the only means of travel,) he answered that she could as well make the journey then as when she came to Kenty I reminded him that more than half the journey had then been made on the river and that her health was then good. he persisted however in saying that she should return immediately to her father, and upon my telling him that in that case I should accompany her, he answered abruptly that I should not do it— here I thought forbearance ought to stop and I told him so, and that I would in defiance of him or anybody else go with her, and that any attempt to obstruct me would be fatal to who ever made it— That if he would treat her kindly until her fathers pleasure was know[n], that it was her determination & mine for the present to submit to it. I heard no more of her being sent away, and in due time her father answered her & her brothers & my letters, regret[t]ing that she had placed her affections upon

a young man who[m] he did not know and could not judge of, and especially one whom her brother disapproved of. To Mr. Taylor he expressed his regret at what had taken place, but said he had raised that daughter without a mother and she had inspired him not only with the most unbounded affection, but with great confidence in her judgment and prudence, and to her he was willing under all circumstances to commit her fate in the matter of her marriage, and that his, Mr. Taylors opposition to her marriage he hoped would at once cease. to me he said that nothing but his unbounded confidence in his daughter could have induced him to consent to her marrying a young man, poor, and dependent upon his own exertions alone for even a living, which he commended my candour in stating to him without reserve. He concluded by saying he was not able or willing under existing circumstances, to make advances to his daughter. We were shortly afterwards married at Mr. Taylors,<sup>8</sup> and a melancholy scene it was, one young man at my request, and one young lady at hers, attended— the next day I took her home, for I had provided a home for her tho[ugh] a poor one. I took her the next year to visit her father and after giving birth to two still born children (both females), she died in rather less than four years after our marriage.<sup>9</sup> In her death I met the first shock of that kind, after I attained manhood. it was a severe one, and I felt as if I was alone in the world. In the year after our marriage her father expressed his wish to send her some servants, but I declined it, hinting gently at his former remark on the subject. But my old friend Mr. Vestner [?] then a merchant here called to see Majr. Taylor and advised him to send the servants, for which

<sup>8</sup> This marriage took place on June 16, 1803.

<sup>9</sup> The date of her death was March 4, 1807.

purpose he made arrangements, and the first knowledge of it I had, was the arrival of the servants—a woman and boy, a small girl and three children, at the death of their Mistress I (as she had wished) emancipated the woman, and then applied to Mr. Frank Taylor to receive the others for his father, as under the laws of Maryland they could not be sent into that state again, he refused and said he knew his father would not receive them, and it so turned out. he said there was no person so well entitled to them as I was.

On a subsequent visit to Maryland I found your dear and excellent mother, just in the full bloom of womanhood, admired by every one, and sought after by some gay dis[s]ipated and unpromising young men of “the first families” I at once saw her danger. her mother had died two or three years before and she was at the head of her fathers family. I advised her aunts and sisters to caution her against two young men particularly, as unworthy of her, but the answer was, they were young men of great promise and well connected and would be good matches for any girl in the County. My first wife had been dead but a few months and I felt the delicacy of proposing so soon to marry again. I pondered seriously upon it, and ask[ed] myself the question shall, I leave this young and lovely creature to be sacrificed to a reckless sot, or enter the lists and carry her off, to wait longer may be fatal to her future happiness. I hesitated no longer and in a few days she flew to my arms for affection and protection, and no wife ever more deserved or enjoyed both— here let me remark that both the young gentlemen, I had wished *her* to avoid, married lovely girls whose parents were rich (one of them a cousin of your mother) and ended their respective careers<sup>10</sup> before middle age in great poverty and perfectly besotted.

<sup>10</sup> The word “careers” was evidently intended.

Upon communicating to your grandfather Taylor my wish to unite myself again with his family, he expressed great pleasure at it, and on my return to Kenty. your uncle Taylor was kind enough to say that if he had had to choose a husband out of the whole circle of his acquaintance for his sister, the choice would certainly have fallen upon me. Your grandfather<sup>11</sup> died before my return to Maryland, suddenly, at McConnellstown in the mountains, when returning from the Bedford Springs w[h]ere he had been in the hope of finding relief from a severe attack of gravel, to which he had long been subject. I found his three orphan daughters residing with their sister Mrs. Jos. Sprigg,<sup>12</sup> who married your Uncle Sprigg on the same day that your grandfather married his half sister, Mrs. Hall,<sup>13</sup> afterwards the mother of the three orphans I have just mentioned. I married your mother and brought her immediately to Kentucky, and went on prosperously in the practise of my profession, until in an evil hour, I was induced to engage in the Hemp business, built a Rope walk and at the end of four or five years found myself twenty thousand dollars loser, and in debt beyond my means of immediate payment. I kept my business to myself and maintained my credit until I struggled pretty well through my indebtedness, living economically and wasting nothing, about this time (1812) the United States were compelled by circumstances to declare War against Great Brittain. the whole country was thrown into great excitement. Men of business were required for Legislators and

<sup>11</sup> This refers to Ignatius Taylor, the father-in-law of John Chambers.

<sup>12</sup> Evidently a daughter of Mr. Ignatius Taylor by his first wife, and a sister of Mr. Francis Taylor.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Barbara Bowie Hall was the third wife of Ignatius Taylor and the daughter of Mrs. Hannah Lee Bowie who later married a Joseph Sprigg. See page 275.



JOHN CHAMBERS  
FROM AN IVORY MINIATURE



HANNAH TAYLOR CHAMBERS  
FROM AN IVORY MINIATURE

Upon communicating to your grandfather Taylor my wish to unite myself again with his family, he expressed great pleasure at it, and on my return to Kenty. your uncle Taylor was kind enough to say that if he had had to choose a husband out of the whole circle of his acquaintance for his sister, the choice would certainly have fallen upon me. Your grandfather<sup>11</sup> died before my return to Maryland, suddenly, at McConnelltown in the mountains, when returning from the Bedford Springs w[h]ere he had been in the hope of finding relief from a severe attack of gravel, to which he had long been subject. I found his three orphan daughters residing with their sister Mrs. Jos. Sprigg,<sup>12</sup> who married your Uncle Sprigg on the same day that your grandfather married his half sister, Mrs. Hall,<sup>13</sup> afterwards the mother of the three orphans I have just mentioned. I married your mother and brought her immediately to Kentucky, and went on prosperously in the practise of my profession, until in an evil hour, I was induced to engage in the Hemp business, built a Rope walk and at the end of four or five years found myself twenty thousand dollars loser, and in debt beyond my means of immediate payment. I kept my business to myself and maintained my credit until I struggled pretty well through my indebtedness, living economically and wasting nothing about this time (1812) the United States were surprised by circumstances to declare War against Great Britain. the whole country was thrown into great excitement. Men of business were required for Legislators and

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I was made a candidate for the House of Rep's and elected through a very fierce and close contest, and was fortunate enough to please my constituents. The next year I declined being a candidate, intending to make a campaign that fall if possible. a good many voted for me notwithstanding, the present Judge Reid was a candidate and very popular, having made a bloodless campaign of thirty days the preceeding fall. he was of course elected, and I believe he yet thinks he achieved a triumph over me on that occasion. The winter of 1812 while I was a member of the Legislature was a time of deep and painful feeling in Kentucky. Genl. Hull<sup>14</sup> who had been intrusted with the command of about two thousand men to strengthen DeTroit had ingloriously surrendered that post. General Winchester<sup>15</sup> followed with a large but temporary force, enlisted for thirty & sixty days. Many of them were Kentuckians Genl. Harrison<sup>16</sup> then governor of Indiana, who had distinguished himself at the Battle of Tippecanoe in the preceeding year against an Indian force, was now invited to Kentucky and upon coming here, tho[ugh] not a citizen in fact, was appointed a Majr. General of Kentucky, and led out a portion of the force intended for Winchesters command who[m], (he being only a Brigadier General,) Harrison under his Kentucky commission took the command of in chief to the great gratification of the army, but feeling the awkwardness of his position as a states officer commanding a U. S. general who had been expressly designated to the command, he, after organizing the army as well as he could, prepared to retire and had made his farewell address to the troops, when an express<sup>17</sup> reached him, with a U.

<sup>17</sup> The word "express" is evidently intended.

<sup>14</sup> William Hull.

<sup>15</sup> James Winchester.

<sup>16</sup> William Henry Harrison.

S. Majr. Generals commission, and orders to assume the command in chief, which he did and immediately detached Genl. Winchester to advance rapidly to the rapids of the Maumee river and there secure his position, and wait the arrival of the main body of the army. but instead of obeying his orders, Winchester pushed on to the river Raisin<sup>18</sup> within striking distance of the British and Indian stronghold at Fort Malden, from thence he informed Genl. Harrison of what he had done, and urged his advance. Harrison at once saw ruin in the movement, it was midwinter, the ground covered with ice & snow, and it was impossible to save these in advance, and he immediately so informed Govr. Shelby<sup>19</sup> by express and urged him to stand ready to reinforce him. He then proceeded by forced marches, but before he could reach Winchester he met the few fugitives from the battle ground<sup>20</sup> who had escaped massacre and capture, and fell back to Maumee, where he erected Fort Meigs, and awaited the arrival of reinforcements. Govr. Shelby had communicated Harrisons letter to the Legislature and with closed doors they had prepared the necessary measures for the anticipated result of Winchesters disregard of orders. The news of the defeat came by express & arrived after night and was suffered to spread in a crowded theatre, where the wives and daughters of nearly two full companies and many office[r]s were collected. I never saw and hope never to see again such another scene of wild distress and agony. Many were helpless widows and orphans, who went there as they thought happy wives & children. Immediate measures were adopted to reinforce

<sup>18</sup> The River Raisin flows into the west end of Lake Erie between the Detroit River and the Maumee River.

<sup>19</sup> Isaac Shelby, Governor of Kentucky from 1792 to 1796 and from 1812 to 1816.

<sup>20</sup> This disaster on the River Raisin occurred January 22, 1813.

Harrison, but it was about midwinter and the weather unusually severe, and before the troops could be embodied, clothed & provisioned Spring came, and with the return of Spring came the British & Indians to the attack of Fort Meigs. During the seige, the Kentucky reinforcement approached, and an express sent out in the night from the fort, directed the advance to take boats, land just above the fort on the enemies side, destroy some batteries there, spike the guns and return immediately to their boats and descend to the Fort in full view. The landing was affected, the guns spiked and all precisely as ordered, but having driven off the enemy stationed there, the impetuous Kentuckians must have a race after the flying enemy, and their gallant Colo. Dudl[e]y<sup>21</sup> could not controul them. this gave the whole British and Indian force from below time to meet them, and a slaughter commenced. Many were kill[ed], more made prisoners and a few only reached the boats and landed safely at the fort. The British shortly after retreated and the fort remained safe, but they renewed the attack afterwards, when the fort was under the command of Genl. Green Clay,<sup>22</sup> Genl. Harrison being in the interior of Ohio preparing for the increase of his force and to advance upon the enemy. the seige again proved abortive and the enemy retreated to their stronghold, (Fort Malden.) I have given you this historical detail rather as a key to my own subsequent course than from any necessity for it, because it might all be found in the official correspondence of Genl. Harrison of that period. The excitement throughout Kentucky consequent upon the defeat of Winchester and Dudley was excessive, and revenge for the slaughter of our citizens

<sup>21</sup> William Dudley.

<sup>22</sup> Green Clay of Kentucky was the father of Cassius M. Clay and a cousin of Henry Clay.

was the order of the day. In the summer succeeding, Govr. Shelby offered to lead in person, a body of men to the support of Harrison sufficient to insure success. His offer was accepted and in August he marched with about 3500 men all on horseback. Just before he set out he wrote to me offering me a place in his staff, but I had previously promised to join Genl. Harrison as a volunteer aid de camp, as soon as he would inform me that the active operations of the campaign were about to commence. Here it is proper to remark that Genl. H. and myself were strangers and that his invitation to me, was given upon the recommendation of some of the officers of the army to whom I was known, and in August he requested Colo. Bodley who was returning from the lines to call on me, and urge my joining him immediately. I did so, and found him at Camp Seneca<sup>23</sup> on the Sandusky river about the first of September, and was announced the next morning in general orders as an aid of the commander in chief. Here was entirely a new Theatre for me. Ignorant as the horse I rode of everything like military life, I had to begin with the a, b, c, of my study, but determined to make myself useful if possible, I began to look about me for something to do, and from the deranged state of the Genls. military papers, I soon found employment for myself and two educated soldiers, (drunken lawyers who having ruined themselves by their intemperance took shelter from starvation by enlisting) with their labour under my direction I soon produced order out of confusion, to the generals very great gratification.

On the tenth of September Commodore Perry<sup>24</sup> encountered the British squadron on Lake Erie. We could hear

<sup>23</sup> This camp was located on the Sandusky River in the northern part of what is now Seneca County, Ohio.

<sup>24</sup> Oliver Hazard Perry.

the guns at Seneca, near ninety miles from the scene of battle, the next morning the Genl. gave orders for the advance of the army towards the Lake, and followed the first detachment accompanied by myself and two Indians about five miles from the camp and an equal distance from Lower Sandusky he received by express, Perry's celebrated note—"We have met the enemy and they are ours"—he then advanced at full speed and instantly ordered off all the force at Lower Sandusky towards the Lake and the next morning followed them with a regiment of Pen[n]sylvanians, and that evening we found ourselves encamped on the shore of the Lake with a few artillerymen and their guns, the next day the troops from Seneca began to arrive and the succeeding day Govr. Shelby came in with his great reinforcement. In a day or two Commodore Perry landed his prisoners and in the next three days the army embarked for Cannada in the ships of the squadron & eighty old transport boats. We landed at "Put-in Bay" on the Isleland and concentrated the army there, from thence in two days reached the Cannada shore. The Kentuckians horses being left on the American side. The remainder of the campaign is history and I must refer you to it. My own part in it remains to be told, it was much more distinguished by cheerful, and perhaps energetic discharge of all the duties assigned to me, than by any personal achievement. Yet I was specially noticed, with a few others, in the generals official account<sup>25</sup> of the battle of the Thames,<sup>26</sup> as having given Genl. Proctor<sup>27</sup> a severe chase after he fled from the battle ground, from which Harrison said he only escaped

<sup>25</sup> See report of General Harrison to John Armstrong, Secretary of War, October 9, 1813.

<sup>26</sup> In this battle, fought on October 5, 1813, the American army under General Harrison completely routed the combined forces of the British and Indians.

<sup>27</sup> Henry A. Procter was at that time in command of the British forces.

“by the fleetness of his horses.” It was an act of great rashness, rather deserving censure than praise, for nine of us to pursue a British Genl. with his life guard of forty dragoons, and some Indians until night stop[p]ed us, but like many thousands of other acts of rashness in battle, it became fame, as far at least as the circle of our personal acquaintance extended.

At the close of the campaign, I received a letter of thanks from the commanding General, with permission to return to my family, his thanks to his aids by name were also expressed in his official letter to the Secretary of War. I pushed for home without delay and found my family uniting in the general rejoicing through out the land in the glorious result of the campaign. Thus ended my very brief military carier, and I have often thought of it since as one of the follies of my younger days.

I had left a wife and three children at home, badly provided for if I had have died or been killed, to engage in a business of which I was wholly ignorant and in which the chances were more than equal that my ignorance would expose me to ridicule if not to censure. The next year I was urged to be a candidate for the Legislature but declined it. The succeeding year I was elected very contrary to both my inclination and interest, (Your uncle James Chambers was elected at the same time to the Senate, having frequently served before in the House of Representatives) from thenceforward my rapidly increasing family deter[r]ed me from engaging in popolitical life again until 1828, when a very exciting election in which the member of congress from this district resigned his place and was the Whig candidate for Govr. (Metcalf)<sup>28</sup> brought me out by the

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Metcalfe was a member of Congress from Kentucky from 1819 to 1828, was Governor of that State from 1829 to 1833, and was in the United States Senate from 1848 to 1849.

nomination of a convention to supply the vacancy. I was elected and at the end of the term again retired. In 1831 and 1832 I was again a member of the State Legislature. In the last of those years I was offered a seat on the bench of the Court of Appeals on the recommendation of both the political parties of the day, but declined it, and in the winter 1834-5 was appointed to that Court and would probably have taken my seat in it, but a severe attack of dyspepsia deter[r]ed me and I resigned in April, and soon after became a candidate for Congress, partly in the hope that the exercise and excitement of the canvass would restore my health, and it did do so effectually. I was again elected and again in 1837. In March 1839 I retired. Here I should have remarked that the death of your excellent mother took place in Novr. 1832 but for which I should probably never have again taken any office which would separate us for any considerable time, but your sister Hannah and her husband having come to live in the family, I felt that my children would be as safe with her affectionate care of them, as if I remained with them & I again launched into politics as I have stated, but when I retired in 1839 I had determined to continue in private life and to continue my practice as a lawyer, then considerably diminished by my frequent and long absences in Congress. But the candidacy of Genl. Harrison in the next year again forced me into the political arena. The infamous slanders propogated against his moral and military char[ac]ter, render[ed] it a duty incumbent upon those who knew personally the falsehood of many of those slanders, to stand forth in his vindication. I was one of those, and from the great convention here in April of that year until the election I devoted myself to the work, as the general & many others were pleased to say, with considerable efficiency. This with his previous friendly feeling towards me, rendered me a marked personal

favorite with him, which in the honesty of his heart, he frequently stated before and after his administration commenced, to my no small annoyance, for it brought upon me innumerable applications for the exertion of my supposed influence, to obtain offices for friends and even strangers, which to avoid becoming an annoyance to him I had determined not to attempt for *any person*, and I carried it out. I went with him to Washington and with the understanding that I was not to be recognized as such, performed the duties of his private Secretary which place was to be filled by his son-in-law, Wm. Taylor, as soon as he was able [to] join him with his family. The General (now President) avowed to his cabinet his wish to induce me to remain at Washington, and he charged them to designate some office for me which would induce me to do so. The Office of Treasurer was designated as the least laborious & best paid of any other. I declined it, and he became evidently anxious & uneasy on the subject, and when I determined to return home, he told me it would have a most singular appearance if I did not take office under his administration that, it was universally expected and if I refused it, it would render my friends who were also his, unfriendly towards him. I told him I could easily obviate that by causing it to be published as upon my authority, that my private affairs had induced me to decline office, but this did not seem to satisfy him, and I at last told him I would accept the office of Govr. of Iowa, which he had proposed and I had previously refused, but I told him it was probable that I should retain that office but a short time. I was appointed the same day, but urged by some of the cabinet not to accept, but to agree to remain which it was urged was essential to the Presidents happiness, as his heart seemed to be set upon having me near him, but I had upon very mature reflection come to the conclusion that the



personal friend & confidant of a President was by no means so enviable a position as was generally supposed, and that the very reputation of occupying it was the certain means of creating unceasing & inveterate vituperation & slander. In one short month the kind old man was called to his final account.<sup>29</sup> I closed his eyes, saw him laid in his vault, remained with his daughter-in-law and grand children one week, made private memorandums of his business for his son and set out for Iowa. You know the rest. I served under his appointment four years, was reappointed by President Tylor and removed by James K. Polk, about six or seven months after he came into the administration to make room for a political partisan. this probably saved my life for the time being, for my health had so entirely failed that that I could not have sustained myself under a further prosecution of the laborious duties of office. I should too have considered myself in some measure degraded by holding office subject to removal by Mr. Polk. I knew the man personally— he was a third rate statesman, a sprightly county court lawyer and an unscrupulous partisan.— Peace be to his ashes.

Thus ended my political & professional life, for both my age and health forbid the idea of a further prosecution of the latter.

In this sketch of our family and of my own life, I have in order to render the chain unbroken as far as I could, passed over some other family relations which must now be supplied. My grandfather Chambers had one, and perhaps more sisters, but I have been only able to trace the descendants of the one who married a Mr. Alexander and settled in Virginia. I have met with a number of her descendants, of whom the late Judge McClurg was one, on his mothers

<sup>29</sup> President Harrison's death occurred on April 4, 1841.

side. Jas. Alexander Paxton, was another— an obscure family in Fleming County by the name of Alexander were the immediate descendants of that great aunt, the father of the family being her son and having the family name of Rowland. his likeness to my father was most striking. My grandmother and Aunt Betty Forman had two or more brothers. one of whom settled in Virginia and one in Maryland Genl. Henry Lee of Virginia, commonly called "horse Harry" from having command[ed] the Virginia Light-horse in the Revolution, was a descendant of the one who settled in that state.<sup>30</sup> The general was a man of talents, a gallant and distinguished officer, but a very reckless and dishonest man in all his business transactions obtaining money by a total disregard of honesty & spending it in wanton waste. Of the one who settled in Maryland, the descendants as far as I have been able to trace them, were very respectable. One of them I think served as a Govr. of the state, and a descendant of his, was some years ago a very promising young lawyer in Fredericktown.

Here I must remark that I have never taken any pains to trace my relationship to remote relatives without I found them both poor and respectable. The rich want no distant relations, and the worthless don't deserve any. The descendants of my grandfathers brothers are exceedingly numerous in Pen[n]sylvania, and I have found them in every state in which I have traveled.

I have said very little of my brothers. You know the families of the oldest & youngest of them Wm. and James. Your uncle Benjn. was an unsettled and wandering man in

<sup>30</sup> The statement that Light-Horse Harry Lee was a descendant of a brother of the grandmother of Governor John Chambers is a mistake, as will be easily seen by consulting the genealogy of the Lee family of Virginia. The second wife of Governor Chambers was, however, a direct descendant of the Lees of Virginia, her maternal grandmother, Hannah Lee Bowie, being a daughter of Philip Lee, grandson of Richard Lee, the emigrant.

early life. He married at about 24 or 25 years old in Jefferson County, a girl very favorably spoken of by those who know her. I never saw her. She lived but a year or two, and left no offspring. He then wandered for several years and wound up his travels by a marrying again—a coarse but good woman—the mother of his three sons, whose history you know, he became intemperate and lived at my expense principally until he and his wife died in the same day, when their children were sent to me, and gave me much trouble and expense—the only survivor of them, is I believe in California—

. . . . .  
 . . . . . the next one (the doct.)  
 you know died two years ago childless. the youngest, James died leaving some children in Illinois. Your Aunt Logan now the only survivor of my brothers & sisters, you know. Here husband was an educated man, but entirely inefficient to any useful purpose. For many years I had to furnish them a home and the principal means of subsistence.

It is now proper that I should give you some idea of your mothers family—the most singularly connected & *mixed up* family I have ever known, owing to the fact that your grandfather Taylor married three widows each of whom had children before he married them, so that the brothers & sisters of the half blood had brothers & sisters also of the half blood who were in no way related to other brothers & sisters—for instance, your Uncle Taylor & Aunt Sprigg had a half brother and sister, (their mothers children) named Paren [?], who were in no way related to either of my wives. My first wife had two half brothers named Jourdan [?] who were in no way related to your Uncle Taylor & Aunt Sprigg or to your mother. Your mother had a half brother, Thos. B. Hall and several sisters of the Hall family who were not related to your Uncle Taylor & Aunt

Sprigg or to my first wife. And the connection was still further complicated by the marriage of your grandmother Taylors half brother, Joseph Sprigg, to your grandfather Taylors oldest daughter, by which she became the aunt of her sisters, and he the brother-in-law of his nieces. And it extended still further. Joseph Sprigg father of your uncle Jo. Sprigg married a widow Bowie who at that time had two daughters, your grandmother and her sister Mrs. Belt,<sup>31</sup> by their mother he had a numerous family, towit your uncles Jo. Sprigg,— Osborn Sprigg,— Thos. Sprigg,— Corbin Sprigg, Wm. Sprigg (long known in the West as a Judge, first of the Supreme Court of Ohio, then of the territorial court of Louisiana & then of Illinois,) and two daughters, Mrs. Charles Carrol of Bellview, and Miss Hannah Sprigg who died unmarried, these were your grandmother Taylors half brothers & sisters. After the death of their mother their father married again, and by this marriage had one son (yet alive, Hon. Saml. Sprigg of Prince Georges County Maryland—ex-governor of that state—<sup>32</sup> he of course was not related to your mother, and was my attendant as grooms-man when I married her—by the way he was the devisee of a rich uncle, his fathers brother, and married a lady of large fortune and has lived most *magnificently* upon it until (I understand that) it has *evaporated*.

This outline embraces I think as much of our family history and perhaps more than you will feel any interest in. There have been many incidents in my own life, that I have past over as being of no importance, but which in their effects & consequences were very interesting to me at the time of their occurrence—for instance it was quite an interesting event to me when in my 18th year I was made

<sup>31</sup> A genealogy of the Lee family in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Vol. XXVI, p. 62, gives this name as "Bell".

<sup>32</sup> Samuel Sprigg was Governor of Maryland from 1819 to 1822.

Clerk of the board of Trustees of this old town,<sup>33</sup> and again when I advanced to the dignity of a town Trustee, Justice of the Peace, Attorney for the Commonwealth &c. &c. In all these little offices I contrived by diligence to make myself useful and was generally considered as influenced by considerations of public good in accepting them.

In two volumes of "Harpers Family Library" entitled the life of Perry, you will see a number of extracts of a letter from me to the present Commodore "Mathew C. Perry"<sup>34</sup> relative [to] my knowledge of and intercourse with the "Hero of Lake Erie"—his decd. brother, it was the result of one of my army associations which I enjoyed exceedingly. I am refer[r]ed to by name as the writer of the letter by Capt[ai]n Mackenzie,<sup>35</sup> better known by the name of Slidell—now dead—a man of fine talants and great firmness of character. It was him who hung Spenc[e]r, the son of the Secretary of War,<sup>36</sup> for mutiny at sea.

In my long life (for remember I was seventy one years old on the sixth day of October last) I have had many rivals, who sometimes became enemies for the time being, it has been my rule never to exult over those who were less fortunate in our professional and political contests, and so far as I know, there is not now nor has there been for the last ten or twelve years, a single one of my old competitors who do not meet me with great cordiality, except per-

<sup>33</sup> Washington, Mason County, Kentucky.

<sup>34</sup> It was Mathew Calbraith Perry who in 1854 negotiated a treaty which opened the Empire of Japan to western influences.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Slidell Mackenzie was the son of John Slidell. The name Mackenzie, being that of his mother, was added to his own at the request of a maternal uncle. In 1842, while in command of the brig "Somers", he hung three men for mutiny, one of whom was the son of John C. Spencer, at that time Secretary of War. He was tried by court martial at his own request and acquitted.

<sup>36</sup> John Canfield Spencer was Secretary of War from 1841 to 1843.

haps two middle aged lawyers, who[m] I can only treat with passing civility, because I know them for knaves, and they are too well aware of it, to attempt to approach me familiarly.

Old men who have spent much of their time in public life or the pursuit of popularity and office, are generally considered when they retire from such pursuits from the necessity indicated by age and some times by disease, as disposed to condemn their own pursuits & censure those who are pursuing the course they have abandoned. Such is not exactly my course. I would not however with my experience pursue the same course if I had my life to live over. It leads to the neglect of some of the duties which a man owes to his family, of much more importance to him & them and perhaps to the Country than any services which he can render to the Republic, without indeed he happens to be one of those rare individuals of whom an age produces only a few—a very few examples. It leads too in many instances to habits of neglect in matters of business and not unfrequently to dissipation—of these I have known many painful instances: but truly I am unable at present to call to recollection an instance in which a clever man of ordinary or even a little more than ordinary capacity, beloved by his acquaintances, and to use the appropriate term popular, has either benefit[t]ed himself or his family in a life devoted to *the public service*, and it almost makes me shudder to look back upon the numerous instances that have come under my observation, in which such men and others much more distinguished, have left, or have yet to leave ruined families—ruined in fortune, ruined in their morals, degraded in their habits and course of life—the only reward of a life devoted to the public service by their fathers. There are two evils of very extensive prevalence in this our land. One is the effect of imputed talents in particular

individuals of numerous families, from which every ass of a whole generation claims distinction. The other is the arrogance of poor stupid wretches who found their claims for notice, if not for distinction, upon the wealth of some ancestor or relation, or perhaps worse, upon the accidental possession of it in their own persons. I have yet to see wealth pass by de[s]cent beyond the third generation, but I have seen & see every day the second generation who have squandered the labours of their predecessors or are squandering it, in miserable low degrading dissipation, or more disgraceful gambings with the most degraded of the black-leg tribe, with whom they would not lock arms in the street & yet shut themselves up with them night after night & day after day, permit[t]ing their pockets to be picked by them. I pray God to guard my descendents against evil habits, but especially against drunken[n]ess & gambling.

I had intended to copy this and curtail it, there being a good[d]deal more of it than necessary but I find writing more laborious than usual and must send it to you just as it is, knowing that it will not be exhibited to anybody, except your brothers and sisters to whom you would of course not object to showing it if they should wish to see it.

I will at some other time send you a copy of my "Family Register", (which is in a bound book.)

Your affectionate Father

Mr. HENRY CHAMBERS  
 Louisville  
 Kentucky





FAMILY RECORD OF JOHN CHAMBERS



## FAMILY RECORD OF JOHN CHAMBERS

[The sketch and entries here printed were written by Governor Chambers and cover ten pages of a small leather-bound book on the back of which appear the words *Family Record*. Six additional pages are given up to entries concerning the family of Henry Chambers and concerning the parents of the wife of Henry Chambers. These entries are of course of a much later date and by a different person. In the back of the book several pages have been removed and this explanation written in: "Some accounts cut out here". The remaining pages are blank. The record kept by Governor Chambers in this book is here printed with the autobiography since it contains much that it not found in the larger sketch.]

[1]<sup>37</sup>

John Chambers son of Rowland and Phebe, was born on the 6th day of October in the year seventeen hundred and eighty at Bromley Bridge in the County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, and in the summer of 1794 left that county together with his father & mother and their entire family for Kentucky (detained some time in the Monongahala<sup>38</sup> Country waiting the arrival of his father who had taken the city of New York in his way) and arrived at Limestone (Maysville) after a very tedious and laborious passage down the Ohio river, late in the month of October 1794 & settled immediately in Washington in the County of Mason.

<sup>37</sup> The figures in brackets indicate the paging of the original manuscript.

<sup>38</sup> Monongahela.

In the winter and spring of 1794-95 assisted occasionally in a retail store belong[ing] to a Mr. Wiggins

[2]

and a very short time in one belonging to one Lewis Moore. In [the] Spring [of] 1795 was sent to Transylvania Seminary at Lexington, remained at school there until June or July, when some difficulties between the president of the institution (Harry Toulman) and the Trustees lessened the reputation of the institution which combined with pecuniary difficulties, precluded all hope of regular Education. And a clerkship in the retail store of Messrs. Brawnson [?] and Irvin in Washington was resorted to for employment and subsistence. In December 1797 entered the office of Francis Taylor Esqr. Clerk of the Washington District Court, and a practising attorney, with an agreement that the time not occupied in the duties of the Clerks Office might be employed in reading law. continued to reside in

[3]

his family until the spring [of] 1800 when he [Taylor]<sup>39</sup> removed to his farm on the Ohio, and very liberally gave up the emoluments of the office (to the deputy) as a compensation for attending to its duties—(and it afforded a decent competence. In the November 1800 obtained a license and immediately commenced the practice of the law in the inferior courts. \*See page 12.<sup>40</sup>

[12]

\*See page 3

<sup>39</sup> The name Taylor is written in at some later date in pencil.

<sup>40</sup> It is evident that Chambers wished to insert here the material that appears on pages 12, 13, and 14 of the original manuscript. That order has therefore been followed in editing the manuscript.

In 1812. was elected to the House of Representatives of Kentucky.

---

1813. Served as a volunteer Aid de Camp to Genl. Harrison and was in the Battle of the Thames in upper Canada—see Genl. Harrison[’s] letter to Secy. of War and his letter of thanks to J. C.

---

1815. Again elected to the House of Rep’s of Kenty.

---

Served [second]<sup>41</sup> year in the office of District Atto. for the Commonwealth

1828 Elected to the House of Rep’s of the United States for one Session to fill a vacancy. declined a re-election.

---

1831 & 1832

1830 & 1831—Served as a member of the House of Representatives of Kentucky.<sup>42</sup>

---

1835 Appointed a Judge of the Court of Appeals of Kentucky. resigned without taking a seat in the court & was elected a member of the 24th Congress.

1837 Re-elected to Congress and served

[13]

to the close of the 25th Congress (3d March 1839) declined a re-election

---

<sup>41</sup> This word was written in the original manuscript and then crossed out.

<sup>42</sup> This entry appeared in the manuscript on page 13 after the entry for 1837, but was preceded by a symbol which also appears after the entry for 1828, indicating that the writer wished it to be read in that connection. The editor has therefore placed the entry in its proper chronological position.

4th March 1841 and from thence to 4th Apl. same year acted as the private Secretary of President Wm. Henry Harrison (without appointment & not so called) having in the mean time towit, on the 25th March 1841 been appointed by the President, Governor of the Territory of Iowa, upon the duties of which office he entered on the 13th May of the same year.

---

Appt. a Commissioner in conjunction with T. H. Crawford Esq. Comsr of Indian Affairs & J. D. Doty Govr. of Wisconsin to treat with Sac & Fox Indians, in Oct. 1841. Negotiation failed.

---

Septr. 1842. Appointed sole commissioner for the above purpose. Succeeded fully on 11th Octr. 1842.

---

July 1843 Appt. Commisisoner to treat with the Winnebago Indians. Negotiation failed.

[14]

1844 Reappointed Governor of Iowa—by President Tyler. Octr. 20th 1845—Removed from office by President Polk, to make room for a political partisan.

Let it be remembered that this removal from office was made without the imputation of improper conduct or of neglect of duty, or other cause assigned.

Augt 1849 Appointed Comr. jointly with Govr Ramsey<sup>43</sup> to treat with the Sioux Indians in Minnesota. Succeed[ed] only in part.

<sup>43</sup> Alex. Ramsey was Governor of the Territory of Minnesota from 1849 to 1853, and Governor of the State of Minnesota from 1860 to 1863.

[3] continued

1803 June 16th married Margaret Taylor, daughter of Majr. Ignatius Taylor (then) of the County of Washington State of Maryland.

1804—12th May. A still born female child

1807. 22d Feby. another still born daughter.

1807—4th March. Margaret the wife of John Chambers departed this life, having then nearly completed her 26th year. She was born 22d May 1781

[4]

1807 October 29th Married (near Hagerstown in Maryland) Hannah Taylor daughter of the above named Majr. Taylor and sister of the half blood to the decd. wife.

Hannah Taylor, the second wife of John Chambers was born on the 9th January 1791.

Of this last mentioned marriage came the following children.

Margaret Taylor Chambers— Born 2d December 1808 at 11 O'clock & 30 minutes P. M.—who on the 12th of September 1826 married to Hugh Innis Brent of Paris in the County of Bourbon, Kncky. H. I. Brent died 2d September 1845

Joseph Sprigg Chambers—Born 30th October 1810. One clock P. M. Married Martha Ann Phillips

Hannah Chambers—born 16th July 1812 1 O'clock A. M.— married to Doctr. John Wm. Henry September—1831. died 8th July 1847 15 minutes of seven O'clock A. M. [leaving an infant about a week old called John Chambers who died in the succeeding winter.]<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup>This entry was written in the manuscript but crossed out.

[5]

James Chambers—born 4th March 1814 half past 7 O'clock P. M.—a healthy and beautiful child. He died on the 29th of April 1814—11 O'clock P. M. having suffered much for several days.

---

Matilda Chambers—born 17th March 1815. 9 O'clock A. M. Married to Charles Scott Brent 10th February 1835—(C. S. B. is brother of Hugh I. Brent & resides also in Bourbon Cty. Kentucky)

---

Francis Taylor Chambers—Born 29th July 1817—Married Frances Marshall July 1838—on the 31 Jany. 1840. She gave birth to a male child, (named John Marshall) and died on the 12th day of the Feby. 1840—He afterwards married Eliza Durret who left one child a daughter named Elizabeth and in 1848 married Elizabeth Febiger.

---

Jane Chambers—Born 18th August 1819— $\frac{1}{2}$  past 3 P. M.—Married to John Samuel Forman 8th March 1838. [Died on the 18th day of August 1853 at 11 o'clock & 20 minutes A. M. in Washington Ky. Buried in the Forman cemetery]<sup>45</sup>

---

Mary Chambers—Born 18 August 1821 about 6 o'clock P. M. died 2d Sept. [18]49 12 o'clock Merid[i]an buried in the same grave with her sister Laura.

[6]

Laura Chambers—Born 19th September 1823 at 30 min-

<sup>45</sup> This entry, made subsequent to the death of Governor Chambers, is in the handwriting of another party.



utes after 11 o'clock A. M. Married to Doctr. John A. Lyle of Paris Ky. 1848

Died 2d Septr. 1849 buried at Paris in the same grave with her sister Mary.

John James Chambers—Born 20th November 1825 at 30 minutes after 6 o'clock P.M.—Died at Paris, Kentucky at ½ past 12 o'clock, Merid[i]an 30th September 1844. Buried at Washington. Thus ended one of the most amiable noble boys of his race—

Henry Chambers—Born 24th January 1828 at 30 minutes after 4 o'clock A. M.

[7]

Lucretia Chambers—Born 14th March 1830 at 5 o'clock P. M. died 5 March 1836.

Hannah the 2d wife of John Chambers died on the 11th November 1832 at five o'clock in the morning.

John Chambers, by whose hand all the foregoing memoranda (save that of Jane Chambers' death) were written, died on the 21st day of September 1852 at 15 minutes after three o'clock P. M. at the residence of his son-in-law—Charles S. Brent in Paris Ky. He was buried in the old grave yard in Washington Ky. He was at his death near the completion of the 72d year of his age. (H. C.)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup>These are the initials of Henry Chambers by whom this final paragraph was inserted.



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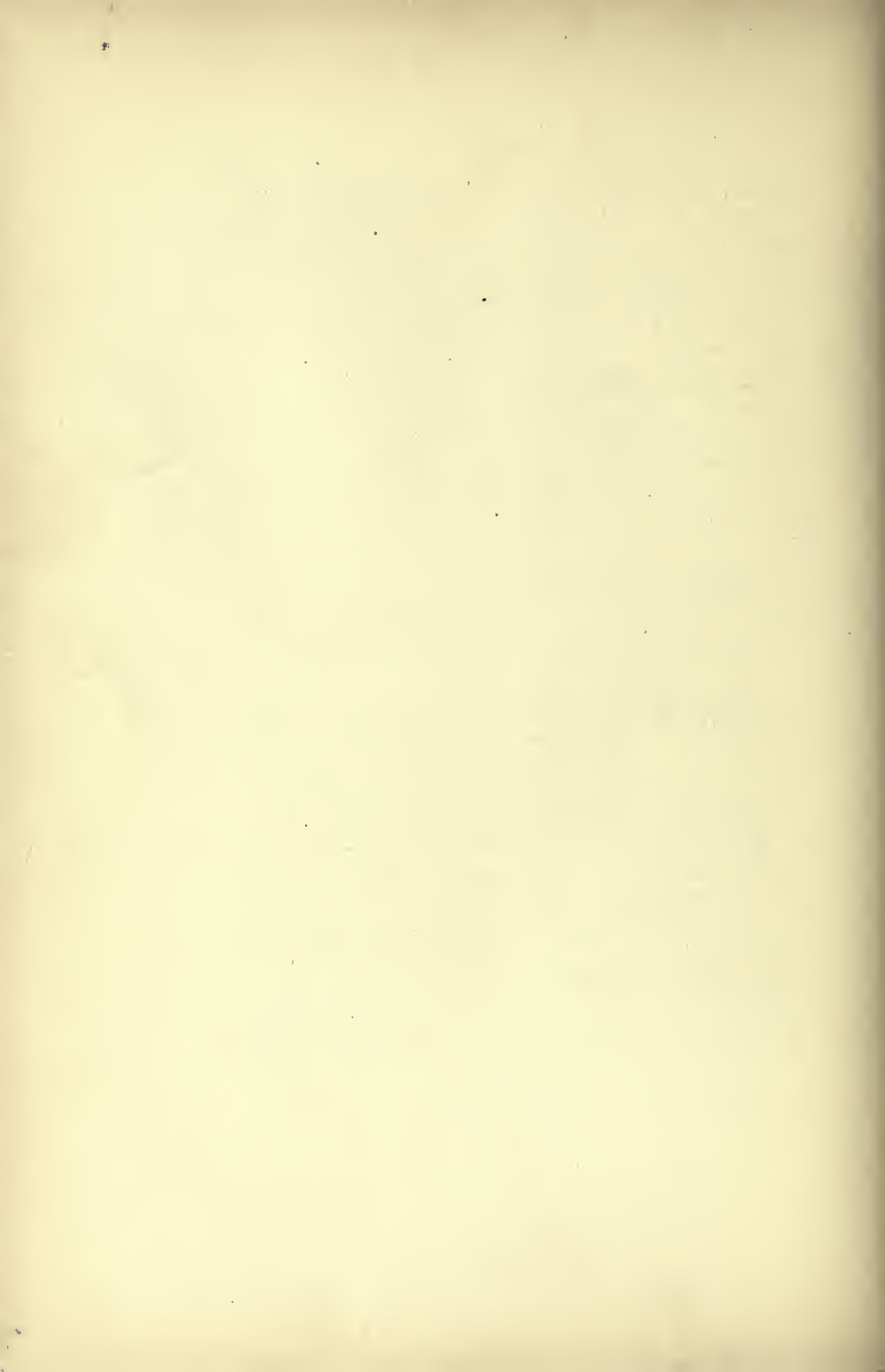
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