

## THE NANNEY-YANCEY CONNECTION

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**SOURCE: The following is a copy of a paper written by Wade Nanney. It was obtained by the compiler through Stan Nanney of Atlanta, Georgia. At present the relationship of Wade Nanney to Stan is unknown to the compiler of this work as well as his address.**

[\[More information concerning origins of the Yancey Family\]](#)

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NANNEY CLAN

While most people in this country do well if they know the names of a couple of their great-grandparents, we of the Nanney name have an unusual distinction: it is a name known among genealogists as one of the oldest traceable family lines in Britain. This is due to the unique name, and to the fact that we clearly identify as one of the families of the ancient Celtic Royalty, as I will show presently.

I have heard allusions that the lineage can be traced as far back as the King Arthur/Camelot episodes in the late 400's A.D., but I have seen nothing concerning the notion on paper. However, some years ago I did discover that the Catholic Priest who is generally considered to be the first British historian was a Welshman who went by the name of Nennius. The name is clearly a variation of ours, as indicated in British Family Names, with the Latin "us" tacked on. He produced a work in Latin in 796 A.D. about the history of the Bretons (The Brythonic). It included accounts of the twelve final battles of Arthur, which the later writers took and romanticized. The English have always poo-pooed Nennius' writings (He was a Welshman, after all!) and tried to make them out to be a bunch of bull and poppycock, but those with real and unbiased knowledge say that the Welsh and Germans preserved more of the true ancient history of Europe than any others.

While we Nanneys definitely have many of the characteristics of the Welsh, I have noted that we are not basically a music-making outfit, though we do love music. However, the main element of the Welsh are evidently the most musical bunch on earth, loads of the most successful singers and players in the English-speaking world -- and especially among the Nashville stars -- have Welsh names. Why are we different? It may be that we are of a different line from the key faction of the Welsh. The . . . dictionaries claim that our name linguistically is Frisian (Frieslander), not Welsh. The Frisian Islands are located in the North Sea out from Holland and Denmark. Many Frisians migrated into Britian, especially around the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion, so our clan could possibly be of that origin anciently.

In 1066 the Norman French crossed the English Channel and conquered Britain. Their influence dominated for a short time in Wales, but as it faded there emerged a small kingdom in north central Wales called Powys. It was this kingdom that our family ruled. The rulers of such kingdoms were indeed kings, but were known as "princes" and "lords". One of the rulers sometime during the 1100's was named Bleddyn (pronounced Blethin). One of his sons - probably a younger one without inheritance - was referred to as "Cadwgan ap Bledyn, Prince of Powys". Cadwgan struck out into the wild mountains near the coast northwest of Powys and founded his own estate near the present-day town of Dolgellau. He named the estate Nannau. The structure he built was often called the "stateliest house in all north Wales".

(Cadwgan is pronounced "kah-DOO-gan" and the "au" on the end of names apparently varies according to different accents - maybe something like a long, drawled "O" or "I").

In 1536 the English finally, after trying for over a thousand years, succeeded in taking us over. They had

nightmares trying to keep their tax books straight because the Welsh had no family names. We would identify ourselves as being the son of so-and-so, who was the son of so-and-so, who was . . . etc. In other words, I would identify myself as Wade ap Reginald ap Permitter ap Amous ap Thomas ap Shadrach. So in the 1600's the English required us to have family names. We took the name of the estate. Somehow, the -au ending and the -ey became interchangeable, so we now bear the name "Nanney".

The estate which Cadwgan founded still exists, with the name Nannau persisting on it. It contains Nannau Hall, a beautiful stone manor house which is considered one of the historic houses of Wales. The present house, whose construction began in 1788, is the fifth one which has existed on the site since the 1100's. It replaced the one built by Colonel Hugh Nanney in 1697. (The third one was destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's Army.)

But Nannau Hall has fallen on hard times lately. Until recently it was owned by relatives of the name Vaughn, but the economic and tax situation being what it is in present-day Britain, they had to let it go. Don Nanney, a lawyer in California, tried to buy it with the intention of turning it over to Wales as a National Park, but somehow it wasn't permissible to sell to an American. Thus, it went to a development corporation, which converted it into condominiums and a restaurant.

The Nanney name shifted to this side of the Atlantic when Robert Nanney, age 22, sailed from London on the ship Increase and landed in Boston in April, 1635. He was in a group of four apprentices sponsored by a goldsmith in London. He married a daughter of the famous preacher, John Wheelwright. Wheelwright was the brother-in-law of the noted religious teacher, Anne Hutchinson. They were the key element of the early, formative Baptist movement in Massachusetts - and got run out by the Puritans for their efforts. Robert Nanney became a wealthy shipping merchant, allied with a Hutchinson in London who may have been his uncle, and his holdings included an estate in Barbados.

I don't know yet if we are descended from Robert, or from other Nanneys (perhaps his brothers) who came to Virginia about 1642. The historians among us will soon have the pieces of the puzzle complete. But the vaguest period from the Middle Ages till now is the colonial era in America. However, the family had become established in eastern Virginia in the 1700's. Shadrack Nanney came from Brunswick County, Virginia, in 1798 and settled at what is now Union Mills, North Carolina. He became the progenitor of the family in this area.

Wade Nanney

July, 1986 "

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**The following is copied from the compilation of Tempe Hill Carraway of Asheville North Carolina. It was written about 1930. Mrs. Carraway had hired a Welsh genealogist by the name of O. E Ruck of Wales to research the Nanney Family. His report is often known as the Ruck Report. The compilation by Carraway which includes the Ruck report is titled NANNEY or YANCEY HISTORY.**

#### NANNEY OR YANCEY HISTORY

##### NANNEY OF NANNAU

From Cadwgan, second son of the founder of the tribe, descendant of Nanney of Yorke.

Founder was Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, Prince of Powers from whom the third Royal tribe of Wales was descended. Howel Selyf or Sele, possessor of Nannau in the time of Owain Glydwer, was ninth from Bleddyn ap Cynfyn. His grandfather Ynyr Tychan Jr., son of Ynyr ap Meurig in the Thirty third regiment of Edward 1st presented

a petition to the Prince of Wales, stating that the king had made him William Rhaglor of the Comen of Tlybont for his services in taking Modic ap Llywelyn, who in the last war had made himself Prince of Wales. Petition not granted as Ynwr could show no Charter to the Office.

When Dwyn (Dwnn) visited Nannau, in 1588, he was head of the family and signed the pedigree.

His grandson, head of the family was Hugh Nanney, Esq. Sherrif of the county in 1627 and 1638. Died 1647. Grandson of Col. Hugh Nanney, M. P. Col. of Militia of his County and Vice admiral of North Wales in the last year of William III. (Mon. in Llanfachreth Ch.) was last of the line of Nanney. Married Catherine, daughter of William Vaughn Esq. celebrated antiquary of Hangwrt. Catherine's oldest son Hugh Vaughn succeeded to the Nanney estates but died unmarried. His next brother, Robert Howel Vaughn of Nanney and Hongwrt was in 1792 Baronet and his son Sir Robert Vaughan, Bart M. P. of Nannau, succeeded him. Was 44 years in parliament.

Also father of Griffith ap Howell Vaughn Esq. of Rhug and Hongwrt and Col. Edward William Vaughn who inherited the Rhung estates and assumed by license the additional surname of Salesbury and died in 1807. Sir Robert William Vaughn Esq. 3rd Baronet of Nannau (d.s.p.) [ d.s.p - means died with out children] died in 1859 and the title became extinct and the estates were divided.

Nannau was left to Hon. Thomas Pryce Lloud for life and then to John Vaughn Esq. Hongwrt was given to his wife's three sisters for life, and the great collection of Hongwrt manuscripts to a kinsman, W. L. Wyne Esq. of Peniarth, Rhug Estates to H. C. H. Wynn. second son of Lord Newborough.

Maesypany in the parish of Talyllyn now reduced to a farmstead, was for many ages the seat of a family of note. Llwyn Hughes Esq. Sherriff of the county of Merioneth, 1582. Lewyn Dwnn paid ten shillings to the deputy Herald for making out the pedigree. They traced their lineage from Einion Sais, said to have been a descendant of Carodec Fraichfras, and bore arms ascribed to that Knight. Heiress of the Hughes family married Lewis Nanney Esq. grandson by a younger son of Hugh Nanney Esq. of Nannau Sherriff of Merioneth 1634. She married the second time John Lloyd of Ceiswyn, Sheriff of Merioneth 1652 and 1667.

The Maespandy Estates passed into that of Wynn of Maesyneuadd Talsernau, through the marriage of William Wynn Esq. to Lowry, eldest sister of John Nanney Esq. The oldest son William Wynn Esq. Sheriff of Merioneth 1758, assumed the surname of Nanney. He died 1795, and the grandson John Nanney in 1838 became owner of Maesyneuadd and Maesypany. The last of the he died in 1868.

Nanneys of Nannau bore Arms, or a lion rampant as for Nanney on the first and fourth quarters, and second and third quarterly, ermine on a saltire, gu.a crescent or, for Wynn.

Mrs. Nanney of Bronwylfa, St Asalph, Flintshire.

Lucy Victoria, widow of John Nanney Esq. J.P. son of the late Rev. John Nanney M.A. of Maesyneuadd, County of Merioneth (who adopted the surname of Nanney in the room of his own, Wynn) by Anne Fleming, daughter of John Fisher Esq. of Chetwynd Lodge, Shropshire; third daughter of the late Rev. Edmund Williams, Esq. M.A. J.P. of Pentre-Mawr in the county of Denbigh. She married Mr. Nanney, who died 1868, Dec 27 1859. Residence , Bronwylfa, St Alpha.

(O. E. Ruck)

Sir William Berkeley who lived in Cariganshire, Wales, and was a descendant of a Welsh Family was evidently in touch with the Nanney brothers of Merionethshire, the adjacent county, and they came with him to Virginia. Sir William Berkley was a conection of the Nanneys through his ancestor Bleddyn Cynfyn of the third Royal Tribe of Wales.

One line of the Nanneys descended from Caradoc Fraichfras, a Knight of the Mystical Round Table.

"Vron Goch, just north of Bala, Merioneth, was the home of the Nanney brothers, who emigrated America in or about 1640. I send you a little map in which Vron Goch is marked, in the valley of the River Dee, which arises in Bala Lake. At Vron Goch were many Nanney clans.

(O. E. Ruck).

My theory is that the Nanney brothers of Vron Goch, four or five, emigrated to America about 1640 and did not leave their new address. Gradually becoming known, perhaps at first as Yanney or Nancey, and finally Yancey, for people were not particular as to spelling names in those days. The attributes of pure Welsh blood are dark vivacious, quickwitted and benevolent, full of family pride and affection.

In Celtic Life, three things you see  
Three elements you find;  
Religion, Love, and Politics,  
And all the rest is wind.

(From: Welsh Families and Antiquities)

#### NANNEY ARMS

On a gold shield, a lion in blue facing to the left, rampant, no motto or crest, showing evidence of great age. Being used by a Welsh chief in battle for the identification of himself and his followers. Mottoes were taken arbitrarily by families and the lack of one means nothing.

A member of the Shepard family, Miss Annie Shepart, living in Buckingham Co., Virginia, age 98, inherited from her mother, whose maiden name was Yancey, the Nanney arms.

**Also included as part of the Nanney/Yancey History, among other things, were the following:**

[The Robert Shepard Letter](#)

[The Yancey notes by Green/Slaughter](#)

[Hugh Nanney Portrait](#)