

## Free Black Families in Augusta County before the Civil War

Note: All blacks listed here came to this colony as slaves from Africa. Some were indentured and earned their freedom quickly. Others were enslaved and granted their freedom when their masters died. Some, a mixture of black and Native American, won their freedom in the courts due to an obscure law banning the enslavement of Native Americans and their descendants. That law was soon abolished as time went on. Free blacks often avoided census takers and tax collectors, making it hard to piece together their families. Black cemeteries disappeared along with the memories of those buried there decades ago.

### The Veney (Viney) Family

The Veney family is believed to descend from the union of white servant named Elizabeth Venners and a slave in Northumberland County, Virginia. Her son, William Venners, sued for his freedom in 1732 based on the law that children of a white woman were legally free. He married a Native American woman named Bess who had once belonged to Job Hammond of Richmond County, Virginia. The children and grandchildren of William and Bess then sued for their freedom on the basis that William was the son of a free white woman and that Bess was an "Ingen woman."

All this information is found in a deposition in Richmond County, Virginia when Rachel Venie, granddaughter of William Venners, sued for the family's freedom in 1789. The court granted their emancipation on September 7, 1791. As free blacks, however, they were limited in opportunities to better themselves. They were forced to work as laborers and denied land ownership and education. They spread throughout the state looking for work.

The children of William Venners and Bess were Richard and Sarah. Sarah, former slave of Thomas Smith, gave birth to Edward, Hannah, Rachael, Judy, and Molly Veney. Edward, born about 1760 paid taxes in Culpeper County in 1802 and was classified as a free black man. By 1810, he was living in Madison County with eight other children in his household. His son, Tobias, was taxed as over sixteen in 1812. Tobias was described as "a black man about five feet 4 or 5 inches high, about 29 years of age certified to be born free." His birth date is given as February 13, 1787 in Culpeper County.

Tobias and his brother Andrew lived for a time in Rockingham County where they were apprenticed to various tradesmen. Then Tobias and his wife Polly Goin moved on to Augusta County in 1816 where he registered as a free Negro with brother Andrew Vind, born March 10, 1782 in Culpeper County, cousin Sally Veny born 1787 in Madison County, Charlotte Veny born 1809 in Madison County (daughter of Sally), and Hannah Vena born 1800 in Culpeper County (probably wife of Andrew). The Veneyes were unable to read or write so their name can be spelled Viny, Veheney, Vene, Venus, and Veny. Albert Napoleon Bonaparte was a common name passed down in the family.

The Veneyes of Augusta County stem from Tobias, Andrew, and Sally. Some lived in the Oak Grove settlement outside Waynesboro while others live around Springhill. They intermarried with other free black families.

Sources: United States Census Records. Free Negro Registers of Staunton and Augusta County, Personal Property Tax of Augusta County, Virginia Death and Burial Index for Augusta County, and Paul Heinegg's *Free African Americans in Virginia*, [http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/Tann\\_Viers.htm](http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/Tann_Viers.htm).

## A Genealogy of the Veney Family

Elizabeth Venners had child by a unknown slave

1. William Venners m. Bess, descended from a Native American

A. Richard Veney b. 1725

B. Sarah Veney b. 1730, slave of Thomas Smith, freed

1. Edward Veney b. 1760, resided Madison and Culpeper Counties

a. Mary Veney b. 1780

b. Andrew Veney b. March 10, 1782 Culpeper Co.-Before 1850 Augusta Co.

c. Tobias Veney b. February 13, 1787 Culpeper Co.-1855 Augusta Co.

d. Pleasant Veney b. 1795

e. Sally Veney

f. Daniel Veney

2. Hannah Veney b. 1763-1813 Richmond County, VA

a. Charles Veney

b. George Veney

c. Ben Veney

3. Rachel Veney b. 1765, resided Montgomery Co. VA

a. Hannah Veney b. 1784

b. Santy Veney b. 1798

c. Jimmy Veney b. 1799

d. Abigail Veney b. 1802

e. Joe Veney b. 1803

f. Solomon Veney b. 1806

g. Marcus Veney b. 1790

h. Jupiter Veney b. 1794

4. Judy Veney b, 1766

5. Molly Veney b. 1768

a. Sally Veney, resided Augusta Co. VA

1. Charlotte Veney

Andrew Veney

Born March 10, 1782 Culpeper County, Virginia

Died before 1850 Augusta County, Virginia

Father: Edward Veney

Married: Mary

Possible Children and Grandchildren:

1. Sallie Veney

Born 1817 Augusta Co. VA, resided in 1870 in Rockingham Co. VA

A. John Ed Veney b. 1837

B. Robert T. Veney b. 1847 m. Mattie

1. Sadie Veney b. 1890

2. Henry Veney b. August 10, 1890 (5)

3. William Veney b. 1899

4. Albert Napoleon Venery b. May 10, 1900

C. Martha Venery b. 1852

D. Sarah F. Veney b. 1857

2. Albert Napoleon Veney m. Hannah Margaret Jackson

Born 1825

Died Aug 9, 1885 Augusta Co. VA

A. Signora Veney born. 1855 Augusta Co. VA

B. Robert M. Veney born 1857 Augusta Co. VA

C. Benjamin Veney born. July 14, 1859-Jun 14, 1926

D. Malinda Veney born. 1861 Augusta Co. VA

E. Andrew J. Veney born June 6, 1862 Augusta Co. VA-September 8, 1938

m. Lena Augustus

1. David Veney b. 1893 m. Leonia Caul July 27, 1912

a. William Veney b. 1914

b. Maddie Veney b. 1915

c. Andrew Veney b. 1919

2. Margaret Veney born 1895

3. Edna Veney born 1898

4. Albert Veney b. 1902

5. Isabella Veney b. 1909

6. John Veney b. 1911

7. Edna Veney born 1898

F. Harriet Venery born 1867 Augusta Co. VA

G. Sarah J. Veney born 1869 Augusta Co. VA

Tobias Veney

Born February 13, 1787 Culpeper County, Virginia

Died March 1855 Augusta County, Virginia

Father: Edward (Ned) Veney

Married: Mary "Polly" Goins

Married: Sally

Possible Children or Grandchildren:

1. George Washington Veney m. Elizabeth

Born 1812 Virginia

A. John Veney b. Jun 1, 1836

B. Mary J. Veney b. 1837

C. Jerome Bonaparte Veney born Albemarle Co. VA 1823 m. Columbia

1. Silas Veney born 1850

2. William Veney born 1851

3. Bennett Veney born 1856

4. Eli Veney born 1857

5. Charles Veney born Dec 21, 1855-July 24, 1910 m. Belle

6. Solomon Veney born 1853

7. John Veney born born 1859 m. Gussie

a. Sarah Veney born 1901

b. Grace Veney born 1908

8. Elizabeth Veney born 1862

D. Sarah Veney b. 1840

E. Benjamin Veney b. 1842

F. Celia Veney b. 1846

G. George W. Veney Jr. b. 1849

H. Jeremiah Veney b. 1850

I. Lydia Veney b. 1854

J. Arbellus Veney b. 1859

K. Rebecca Veney b. 1859

2. Sarah Veney "Sally" b. 1827

3. Samuel Veney b. Mar 15, 1839-Jan 22, 1913 Augusta Co. VA m. Martha Douglas

4. Henry Veney b. 1843

5. Dianna Veney b. 1844

6. Victoria Veney b. 1845

7. Alexander Veney b. 1849