

**The Chaffin Name Origin**  
**Abner Chaffin - 1<sup>st</sup> Generation**  
by Olive Chaffin Peterson

Many people have asked me where the name Chaffin originated, what does it mean, or how many spellings have I found. I don't know all the answers, I can quote from sources on the subject, state facts, and refer to W.L. Chaffin's book CHAYFIN'S OF AMERICA published in 1912.

Mr. Chaffin says in his book, "There is a curious legend concerning the origin of the name Chaffin, that the name may be derived from a place called 'Le Chaffin' in the Sologne in France." "It was renamed Chaffin." Mr. Howard M. Chapin of Providence, R.I., who has given the name considerable study, says, "The original family were from Saxony, some of them moving to France during the reign of the Plantagenets, and there taking the name Chopin." "Other sources claim the Chaffins came from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and some have traced the family to Holland," says Mr. Chaffin, "One popular theory is that the name is Welsh emigrating to England & possibly Ireland."

When I visited England in 1962 I took special note of how the name was spelled in the London telephone directory, and I found only four names spelled "Chaffin." I was asked to look into the meaning of a town in southern Germany, named Aschaffenburg, which I did. But none of my German acquaintances were able to shed any light on the subject. The town, of course, was centuries old, but how, or if, it has connection to the Chaffin name, I do not know.

Mr. Chaffin states in his book that there have been Chaffin firms in counties Dorset, Somerset, and Wilts in southwestern England, who are mentioned in BURK'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HERALDRY. Mr. Chaffin has a coat of arms from England for the name. It is pleasing to the eye. I have not pursued the history of this coat of arms, as yet, nor do I know whether it would apply to our family name, since it is not yet proven whether we originate from England, Scotland, or elsewhere.

The name has been subject to considerable variation and we find it spelled Cheffyn in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307). The most common variation seems to be Chafny. The name has been changed, misspelled, mispronounced many, many ways. I think the most accepted spelling is Chaffin or Chafin. Other known spellings are: Chaffen, Chafen, Chaffins, Chaffind, Chaffing, Chaffings, Chaffein, Chaffon, Chiffin, Chaffan, Chafflin, Cheffen, Chaffinch, Chaffant, Chaffent, Chalfin, Chaiphen, Chaiphing, Chalphings, Chaiphins, Chafyn, Cheffyn, and it is believed that Chaffee, Chaffy, Claffen, Chapin and Chopin may be from the original, name also.

On the first U.S. census in 1790 we find 39 heads of Chaffin families with an average of per family. We find spellings varying from Chafen, Chaffen, Chaffing, Chafin, to Chaffin. Of course the name is found much earlier in colonial America. W.L. Chaffin's descendents of Robert Chaff in go back to 1719 when he married in Mass. Chaffin's are found in Washington Co. Penn. back to 1727. It is believed that the family in Virginia started about the same time, possibly with John who settled Middlesex County. There could be connection between the Southern and New England and many are working to prove this.

There has been a family tradition that the Southern line came from Birmingham, England, during an uprising ,two brothers with one settling in Mass, and one in Va, Proof of connection has not been established. There is also a tradition that John and Robert Chaffin came from Scotland in 1730 and at least one (if not both) settled in Va. The coincidence is that the two brothers from England were named John and Robert also John settled in Va, and Robert settled in Mass, as far as is known.

As far as Encel & Leonard Chaffin, Carl Albert and I, who have compiled this manuscript, know - we come from the Virginia family and our earliest ancestor is known to be ABNER CHAFFIN b. about 176S. He probably came from Va. to N,C., thence to Term. It is possible that some of his family went to Ga, also. Of course, as we have seen from the histories of the Tennessee families, they eventually migrated to Mo,, We Va., Ky., Ga., N.C., S.C., Fla., Ala., Miss., La., Ill, and later to Calif., Tex., Kans., Colo., and Mont., and are probably in every state in the Union now,

ABNER settled in Jackson Co. Tenn., but we find Chaffins in other counties of Term. Later when ABNER' S children migrated to Greene Co • Mo • we find Chaffins in other counties in Mo. also. There is room for more research in these areas to prove relationship.

The Southern Chaffins were members of the Christian Church primarily. Many have been and are Church of Christ ministers. Apparently, Chaffins have always exercised independency in religious thinking. In the earliest day they seem to be land owners arid farmers, mostly, but some have been businessmen also. We do know that the Virginia family was extensive and prominent, And W,L. Chaffin's book bears out the same fact about the New England line of the family. We find patriots from all three lines New England, the Southern, and Penn. We have record of Chaff ins in the Rev. War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, as well as the wars of this century. We have record of ABNER in War of 1812 (see

Part III), also his son William (see Part I), and his grandson William C. in the Civil War, Union Army (see Part III), as well as many cousins from other Southern States in the Confederate Army.

The Chaffins certainly did participate in the pioneer epoch and migration to the West, Following the wars, of course, some took up their veteran land grants, others homesteaded government land in the West, others sought the adventures of the "gold rush" days. Today, we find descendents in every state in the Union.

Many have become interested, if not curious, about their family origin, and we find many genealogists actively engaged in trying to connect this vast family together. This is actually what prompted the compiling of our manuscript.