

A Man on the Move: William Dubocq (1769-1834)

This is the story of the *French Connection* in our family. When Guillaume Dubocq immigrated to Philadelphia with his wife and two young daughters in 1804, they were fleeing the massacres of white Europeans in the French colony of Saint Domingue during the slave rebellion that ended with the independence of the black nation we now call Haiti. But, that wasn't the end of the story ... really it was only the beginning of his travels as he and his family moved about building considerable wealth in a variety of businesses.

The last decade of the 18th century was a difficult time in France ... especially for the nobility ... and a difficult time in Saint Domingue for anyone whose skin was white. Obviously the discord of the French Revolution and Haitian Slave Rebellion made record-keeping a very secondary endeavor. So we know only bits and pieces about the early lives of Guillaume Dubocq and his wife Marie-Anne Françoise Trochon de Lorière.

Guillaume Dubocq was born in Libourne about 1770 to Jean Dubocq and Marie Labatte. This town is near Bordeaux in southwest France. We learned about his parents and his hometown from the 1799 record of his marriage. There he also gives his age as 28, implying a birth year of 1771 ... but in an 1834 document he gave his age as 65, implying he was born in 1769. We know nothing about his earlier ancestors, though it is possible that a 25 August 1723 marriage of François Dubosq and Phillipe Michelet recorded in Libourne may be the wedding of his grandparents ... since the family name was variously spelled Dubosq, Dubosq, Dubocq, and Duboc. At some point he went to France's most prosperous colony at the time ... Saint Domingue in the Caribbean ... and he did well there. By the 1790s he was a well-to-do merchant in Port-au-Prince.

Marie-Anne Françoise Trochon was born in Haiti in 1773. Her father was René Trochon, son of Charles Trochon, *Sieur de Lorière*, a lawyer, merchant, and slave ship owner of Nantes, France. The Trochon family has been traced back to the 14th century where they were officials in the court of Normandy. Later they were attorneys in the city of Angers, but gained their greatest wealth as merchants and as ship owners in Nantes, a major port on the Loire River. During the first half of the 18th century, ships owned by Charles Trochon engaged in the slave trade between Nantes, the west African coast, and the French colonies of the Caribbean, including Saint Domingue. Charles had two sons who reached adulthood. The elder, also named Charles, pursued the family interests in Nantes and René, the younger, went with his family in 1770 to Saint Domingue as a royal official. Marie was orphaned at age 9 and married at age 17 in Saint Domingue. She later bore a son. Shortly after the baby's birth her husband and her son were apparently killed as a result of the insurrection. On 15 July 1799 she married Guillaume Dubocq in Port-au-Prince. We see below their actual signatures on the civil marriage register of Port-au-Prince.

Voilà l'acte public en l'ayr p'sent de cette des
témoins admt prononcés au nom de la loi sur l'union
Dubocq et Marie anne françoise Trochon de Lorière
unis en mariage, dont acte que nous avons signé avec les
parties contractantes les parents témoins et amis présents.
No 1 Trochon de Lorière Dubocq
Louis rogier de Lorière Baquette Laferrière Delagrèze
Briquet

William and Marie-Anne had two daughters born in Saint Domingue before they were forced to flee for their lives in early 1804. In the early 1800s, there was in the United States great admiration for all things French. This was particularly the case in the largest and wealthiest U.S. city ... Philadelphia. So that's where Guillaume Dubocq and his family headed. Shortly after their arrival, William Dubocq on April 26, 1804 declared his allegiance to the United States at the U.S. Circuit Court in Philadelphia and became a U.S. citizen. [Note that he was quick to translate his given name to the language of his adopted country, this won't be the only time it happened.] At that time, it was much easier for immigrants to gain U.S. citizenship than it is today.

He established himself as an importer and dealer in expensive French china, which he sold to many wealthy and influential Philadelphians from his home and business near the corner of Pine and Second Streets. Among his neighbors were many other French exile merchants and importers, including Anthony Chardon who dealt in wallpapers and even provided Jefferson the wallpaper for his home in Monticello. Chardon was born in Haiti in 1759 and came to Philadelphia in 1788. There he married, had children, and made a fortune. We will see that ultimately one (and perhaps two) members of the extended Chardon family became sons-in-law of Dubocq.

Soon, the Dubocq's added another daughter and a son to their family. These four oldest children are well-documented due to the 1807 James Peale painting *Madame Dubocq and Her Four Children* which is now on display at the *Speed Art Museum* in Louisville, Kentucky.

The children shown with their mother are (left to right): Marie-Antoinette Uranie born in Haiti in 1800; the baby Alphonse born in Philadelphia in 1805 sitting on his mother's lap; Marie-Felicite Aglaé born in Haiti in 1801 (whose granddaughter donated the painting to the museum in 1932); and Marie-Lucille Delphine born in Philadelphia in 1804.

James Peale (1749-1831) was the younger brother of famed American artist Charles Willson Peale. He apprenticed with his brother and from about 1790 specialized in miniatures ... though he still occasionally did a large portrait as evidenced here. [Note that in 1809 he did a miniature of the Dubocq's oldest daughter.] The fact that Peale did this painting makes it obvious that the Dubocq's had arrived in Philadelphia society ... and were quite wealthy.

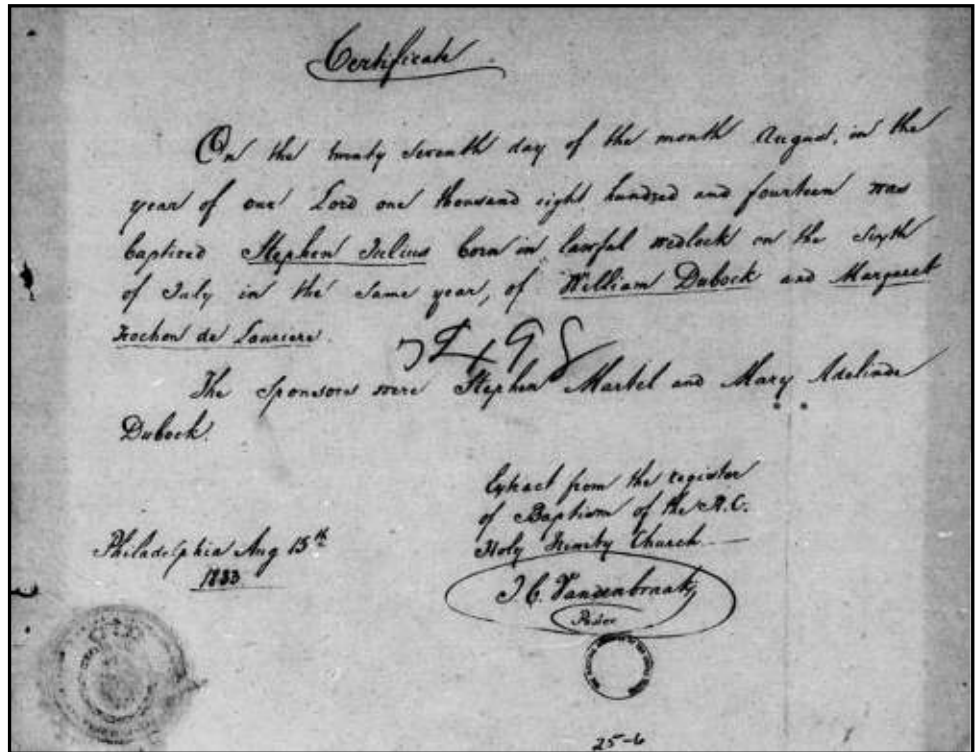
We will briefly discuss the marriages and families of each of these three daughters later. The son Alphonse died in Philadelphia at age 5. He was buried in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Church on October 21, 1810. There are



two other children of the Dubocq-Trochon marriage, both born in Philadelphia, that we know of: a daughter Marie-Jeanne Virginie Dubocq born in 1807, and our ancestor Stephen Julius Dubocq (who we know as Julio) born in 1814.

The little we know about Virginie is from notations in a Croxall-family Bible in New Albany, Indiana. She married a man named Stephen Dominick and she died in 1839 at age 32 in New York.

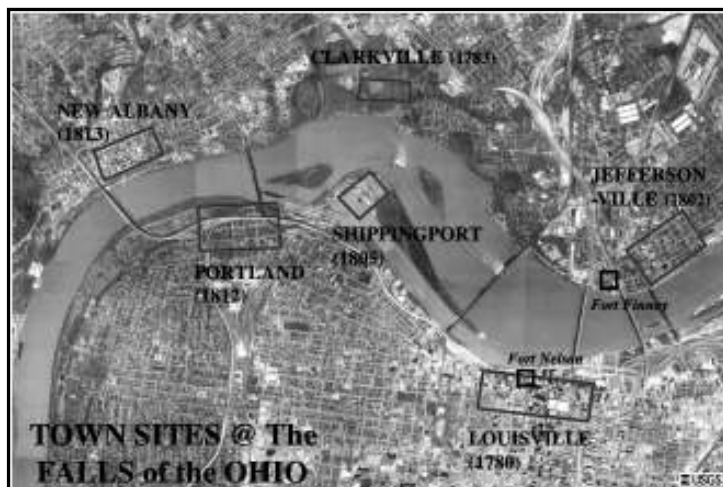
Julio was born in Philadelphia on 06 July 1814 and was baptized at Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church there on August 27. Shown here is a copy of a certified transcript of his baptismal record procured for his 1834 application for a *Letter of Domicile* he submitted to Puerto Rican authorities to allow him to permanently live and own property there, and (after five years) to apply for Spanish citizenship.



of *Domicile* he submitted to Puerto Rican authorities to allow him to permanently live and own property there, and (after five years) to apply for Spanish citizenship.

Sometime around 1818, the family moved to Louisville, Kentucky. This city located at the Falls of the Ohio River had, in the early 1800s, a substantial population of French exiles. The middle daughter, Aglaé, married in Louisville in 1819, and two other daughters, Uranie and Delphine, were married there on the same day ... May 30, 1820. In 1820, Delphine's husband owned a tavern and an adjacent house lot in nearby Shippingport. William Dubocq was an advocate of building a canal on the Kentucky side of the river to bypass the Falls, and allow shipping to pass unhindered from Pittsburgh to the Mississippi. We know he purchased land in Shippingport that same year, probably in anticipation of the canal's construction.

We're not sure whether he had any real role in getting the construction of the *Louisville and Portland Canal* underway. Perhaps, the land was only a speculative investment. But, the canal was eventually built where he hoped, making Shippingport an island, though the canal didn't open until 1830 ... by which time most of the Dubocq family were gone from the area.



In August 1820, when the U.S. Census was taken, Dubocq and his son-in-law lived in adjacent homes in Shippingport and both were engaged in "commerce." Unfortunately, censuses before 1850 only named the heads of

Erigne Shiredon	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Wm Dubocq	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1

households, and the rest of the family were only identified by sex and age categories. Therefore, we don't know the makeup of these two households ... though the number of persons would seem to indicate that Dubocq, his children, three sons-in-law, grandchildren (probably only one at that point) plus some others lived in these two households. Shown above are the original entries in the 1820 census register for the Shiredon and Dubocq households, showing 16 persons, including two who were not American citizens and one person in each household "engaging in commerce" ... presumably the two heads of households.

Sometime in the mid-1820s (when canal construction was getting underway) the Dubocq's moved on. Had they sold the land to the canal company for a big profit? Were there other reasons for their departure? Maybe so, for he appears to have been deeply involved with John A. Tarascon, the founder and biggest speculator of Shippingport. The Tarascon brothers, John and Louis, came to Philadelphia in 1798, established a mercantile and ship-building business in Pittsburgh, bought land at the bottom of the Falls of the Ohio, and in 1806 led a group of French families who established the town Shippingport there. The town thrived, as did the Tarascon's. But, eventually they overextended themselves in numerous ways, including spending \$150,000 to build the largest flour mill in the nation. With the national financial crisis of 1819, things went downhill. By 1824, the Tarascon's had to sell their mill and were destitute. John Tarascon took his own life in 1825. How do we know that William Dubocq was involved in the Tarascon business dealings? A later report to Congress lists the bad loans held by the *Bank of the United States*, among them is a loan of \$2550 which went into default in 1824 and was co-signed by Dubocq ... the drawer of that loan? John A. Tarascon. We'll probably never know all their reasons for leaving the Louisville area, but perhaps the fall of the Tarascon empire was one of them.

But, whatever the reason for leaving, the next stop appears to have been a relatively brief one in Alabama, which had in 1819 achieved statehood and was growing rapidly. Dubocq has been identified as an early Alabama planter of Domingan origin. That goes back a few years to his participation in the formation of the *Vine and Olive Colony*. 1815 and 1816 saw the arrival of a new group of French exiles in Philadelphia ... these were high officials of the recently defeated Napoleonic regime. In Philadelphia they met the numerous French merchants, like Dubocq, who were exiled by the Haitian Slave Rebellion years before. They came up with a grand plan to establish a grape and olive growing development in the U.S. They hired a consultant who recommended an area in the eastern part of what was then the Mississippi Territory ... now Marengo County, Alabama. Below is the historical marker on State Road 80 near the site of the *Colony* and here's its full story.



On March 3, 1817, Congress passed and President James Madison signed "An Act to set apart and dispose of certain public lands, for the encouragement of the cultivation of the vine and olive." It granted the *Tombechee Association*, made up of 347 French exiles, 92,000 acres of land near the present site of Demopolis, on very favorable terms. It gave them a 14-year grace period before they had to plant a "reasonable" proportion of the land in grapes and olives and before they had to pay for the land at \$2.00 per acre – far below the going rate. [This was the only time Congress set aside the

normal process for sale of public lands. Congress in 1831 altered the terms, in effect putting an end to the *Colony*.]

With these generous terms, Congress hoped to promote needed agricultural diversity and to dissuade land speculation ... but that didn't work. Among the group, 60 recent arrivals led by Gen. Charles Lalliband, immediately sold their shares for \$1 per acre to a group of Philadelphia merchants, including Dubocq, who were also association members. The first settlers of the *Vine and Olive Colony* went to Alabama in 1817 and the contract between the *Secretary of the Treasury* and the *Tombechee Association* was formally signed in 1819. But, crop failures ensued, surveyors made errors, there were issues regarding "American squatters" (that were finally resolved by the Alabama Supreme Court) and ... bottom line ... the colony was never a success. We are told that, "A few additional settlers traveled independently to the grant during the early 1820s, but their numbers were never great." It is likely the Dubocqs went there to have a look and, finding that the *Vine and Olive Colony* was a failure, sold out to Anglos who were establishing large cotton plantations. By 1830 most of the Colony's French settlers had moved on to Mobile or New Orleans or back to Philadelphia or France. One fact we do know is that at least one Dubocq grandchild (a daughter to Aglaé and her husband James Croxall) was born during the family's stay in Alabama. From that time on, it seems the Dubocq family went in differing directions.

Delphine married Antoine (Anthony) Chardon in 1820 [A report that this marriage took place in 1812 is absurd, she was way too young and Chardon didn't come to the U.S. until 1818.] We are not sure how this Anthony (who was born in France, not Philadelphia) was related to the prominent wallpaper importer. Again the early censuses make it difficult to determine the makeup of households ... and the Chardon household in Philadelphia was large (over 20 people in 1820). We believe Anthony and Delphine lived in New York beginning in the 1830s, based upon the fact that "Mrs. Chardon" and her daughter of New York traveled with her father from Ponce to Philadelphia in 1834 ... see manifest of the brigantine *Bunker Hill* below. They seem to be living with their daughter and son-in-law at the time of the 1840 census. The next definitive information we have about them is when in 1845, Anthony was a witness for his son-in-law's (Claudius C. Becket, who was a French-born banker ... Claude Christophe Béchet)) application for U.S. citizenship in New York. According to the 1850 census, Anthony, Delphine, their daughter Aglaé, her husband Becket, their four children, and their five domestic servants (all born in Ireland) lived in a fashionable Manhattan home. Prior to the American Civil War, the Chardon and Becket families returned to France and lived the remainder of their lives there. Delphine died in Paris in 1890

Printed and sold by Clark and Bazar, 69 Dock Street, Philadelphia

Report or Manifest of all the Passengers taken on board the *Brig Bunker Hill*
 whereof *Frederick Stone* is Master, from *Ponce, Porto Rico* - barthen
 1444 1/2 Tons and owned by *William Sheffield & Henry C. Fisher*
 of *New Haven* and bound to

NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPATION	To what Country belonging	Country of which it is their intention to become Inhabitants	Number and Names of Passengers who have died on the Voyage
<i>Mrs. Gordon</i>	30	Female	<i>Sever</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>N. York</i>	
<i>Mrs. Gordon</i>	14	d.		<i>d. d.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
<i>M. Dubocq</i>	65	Male	<i>Abolition</i>	<i>d. d.</i>	<i>Philad.</i>	
<i>L. De Page</i>	35	d.	<i>Physician</i>	<i>d. d.</i>	<i>N. York</i>	

Aglaé married James Croxall, a Baltimore native, in 1819 in Louisville. By 1820 they had a son. She gave birth to at least eleven children, of which only five lived to adulthood. One of these children, Delphine, we recall was born in Alabama in 1826. Shortly thereafter, though, the Croxall family moved back to New Albany, Indiana across the Ohio River from Louisville. Their daughter Delphine married a wholesale grocer, who was later mayor of that city. This was the family that kept the Peale painting, and ultimately Delphine's daughter Aglaé Kent Bixby donated it to the

Speed Museum. [You'll note the recurrence of given names in the family; especially Aglaé, Delphine, Alphonse, Antoine and Jules using the French forms of the names.]

Uranie sat for a Peale miniature (seen here) in 1809. [When she was identified as the subject of this little painting by an art dealer, her name was mistakenly given as Irénee.] She married Eugene Sheridan in 1820. We know he was a tavern owner in Shippingport, and in the 1820 census his name was spelled "Shiredon" ... which leads me to believe he also may have been a part of the extended Chardon family, who simply anglicized his name. Later records give the spelling of his name as Sheridan. By the 1840 census, this childless couple were living in the city of New Orleans and included twelve slaves in their household. Therefore, it is likely they were operating a business with the assistance of those slaves, since the need for that much domestic help in an urban environment is unlikely. According to Louisiana death records, Uranie died in August 1846 at the age of 46. Her full name *Marie Antoinette Uranie Dubocq Sheridan* was given in this death record.



So from the short diversion in Alabama, the three married Dubocq daughters each seem to have gone their own way in the United States. At this time Marie, probably with her youngest daughter Virginie, returned to Philadelphia. There she lived the remainder of her life. From information given to the *Speed Museum* at the time the Peale painting was donated, Marie Trochon Dubocq died in Philadelphia in 1847.

William and his son Julius (now a teenager) moved on also ... back to the Caribbean, this time the Virgin Islands. In the 19th century Saint Thomas was a part of the Danish West Indies and was a major trans-shipment hub for the entire western hemisphere. Most of Saint Thomas' sugar plantations were owned by Danes. But, the bulk of the business owners in the capital and port city – Charlotte Amalie – were from throughout Europe and America. English, French, and Spanish were spoken as widely on Saint Thomas as Danish.

From about 1829 to 1831 Dubocq lived and did business on Saint Thomas. The first inkling of this came from Puerto Rican sources which described them as *American-Saint Thomian*. But, proof of this base of operations was found in the cargo manifest of the brigantine *Rebecca Huddell* which arrived in Philadelphia from Saint Thomas on 27 September 1830. Included in its cargo were 307 bags of cocoa powder; one box of unspecified "merchandise" and 14 barrels of brandy all shipped by *Wm. Dubocq*.

William Dubocq's next and final stop was Ponce, Puerto Rico, where he apparently arrived with his son a lot of ready money. At that time, Ponce was the commercial center of Puerto Rico. In 1831, Alexander Harang, an 1818 immigrant from Louisiana, subleased half of Pámpanos and leased half of Los Meros to Guillermo Dubocq, who was described as "a French exile from Saint Dominique who had sought asylum in the United States and later moved to Saint Thomas." During the previous five years, Harang had invested 40,000 pesos in improving these two properties. Los Meros was a large-scale cattle-raising and cotton growing farm, and Pámpanos was a sugar plantation with a steam-driven mill and over 60 slaves. William spent the last years of his life developing these properties. We know, from an 1834 ship's manifest, that he traveled to Philadelphia with his daughter and granddaughter. That manifest gave his age as 65 years, and his occupation as "planter" and also indicates that he was a U.S. citizen and maintained a residence in Philadelphia. We had believed Guillermo Dubocq died in Ponce in 1836, but Ponce records do not exist that far back. But, recently became aware of notations in a Croxall-family Bible in Indiana that

tell us he died in Philadelphia on 30 May 1834 while visiting his children and grand-children in the U.S. So, it's likely the ship's manifest shown above is a record of his final voyage.

William and Marie's young son, Stephen Julius Dubocq – who we know as Julio (shown here in his later years) inherited all the family's properties and businesses. Shortly after his father's death, in 1836 he purchased full control of Los Meros, and purchased the sugar plantation La Unión in partnership with Esteban Domenech. Over the next decades, he bought and sold properties and operated shipping and other businesses in Ponce, in keeping with the ups-and-downs of the sugar industry. From 1849 he was a principal in Dubocq, Gamon & Company, a Ponce firm shipping sugar and other products to the U.S. According to one source, when the sugar market collapsed in 1852, he went to France. But, he was apparently back in Puerto Rico in 1866 when one of his younger daughters was married. Julio died in 1868.



Julio married Modesta Roux (1818-1893), the daughter of a Yabucoa plantation owner. They had at least eight children. The oldest, Antonio, returned to the United States, became a naturalized citizen in 1860, was employed as a bookkeeper, and lived and raised a family in Brooklyn, NY. A daughter, Eufemia, married Pelayo Riera y Arenas, and they are the progenitors of our Puerto Rican Riera ancestors. Another daughter, Josepha married the brother of Pelayo Riera. Julio and Modesta's daughter Julia married José Gallart y Forgas, who represented Puerto Rico in the Spanish Cortes. His descendants provided important information for our family history research.

So, that's the story of a much-traveled man and his family. Guillaume-William-Vilhelm-Guillermo Dubocq. He survived revolutions; operated businesses, farms, and plantations; always seeming to know what was needed to survive and prosper. It's unfortunate he's the only one in his family of whom we don't have a picture!