

The DuVal Family News

for the descendants of Daniel DuVal

Volume V, No. 1

Winter 2003

In Search of Samuel DuVal's Mount Comfort: Nothing to Be Found but Documents

By Joseph Stephen Hays

From the time I bought my first copy of *DuVals of Kentucky from Virginia* by Margaret Buchanan, I have dreamed of finding the home site of my "grandpa" Samuel DuVal. I purchased my copy of Buchanan's book at a rare-book store just one block from my apartment at college. I never doubted that given enough time for travel and proper research, I could discern the location of the house and plantation that Samuel dubbed Mount Comfort and verify all previous assertions. But would there now be modern homes or commercial buildings where once stood a venerable home attesting to the skill of an early colonial builder and architect? That was over 20 years ago, but last summer I finally found the time—and the house!

Well, not exactly, but that is what it felt like when I was able to identify not only the original house site but also a line drawing of the house as it originally appeared, with a description of its construction. Deana Snow (S) accompanied me to the Virginia State Archives, where, after much diligence on the microfilm machines, she found the page from the Mutual Assurance Society's papers regarding the Mount Comfort estate. Richmond had the rare distinction of having a very early form of house insurance, which was administered by the Mutual Assurance Society. Using these papers preserved by the state archives, I was able to find the drawings and description of the plantation buildings. In fact, nine structures in all were identified as making up the Mount Comfort plantation in 1802.

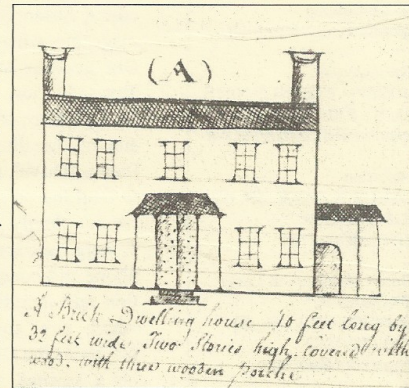
Samuel, no doubt influenced by the trade of his father, Daniel DuVal, had the advantage of learning the trades of architect and builder. Samuel was certainly the architect, builder and contractor overseeing all parts of Mount Comfort's construction, as this was his vocation during the early part of his life. From historic records we first find him in 1742, at age 28, as an unsuccessful bidder on a contract for window construction at St. Peter's Parish (New Kent and James City counties). In 1746, he was commissioned to build a new glebe house for Petsworth Parish in Gloucester County. (A glebe house belongs or yields revenue to a parish church.) In 1755, Samuel DuVal signed a contract to build a brick addition to the Upper church in Blisland Parish (New Kent and James City counties). These were public contracts, but there were probably many more private contracts that we do not know of.

Samuel purchased the Mount Comfort property of 300 acres in 1745 from Samuel Tscheffely, but he did not move there until 1749. The Mount Comfort plantation house was most likely built shortly thereafter, in 1750, as he was well established in the community by 1752, when he was appointed trustee for the town of Richmond and a member of the vestry at St. John's Church.

The Mount Comfort plantation house was built of brick, as substantiated by the Mutual Assurance Society drawings. Although constructed very early, it was by no means the first brick building in Richmond, as has been claimed by some. Indeed, the area where the house was situated was not considered part of Richmond until 1912. The two-story house had a wooden shake (shingle) roof, as did all of the other buildings. It was 40 ft. across the front and 32 ft. deep, suggesting that there were

four rooms, 15 ft. by 15 ft., on each level. A double front door would have opened into a hallway that separated two rooms on either side and held a stairway that led to the upper floor. There were eight dependencies: kitchen, stable and carriage house, barn, dairy house, two more stables, corn crib and a one-room house that was most likely servant/slave quarters. All of the outbuildings were wooden structures.

The earliest "assurance" I could find was issued to Thomas Wilson in 1802, the year he purchased the portion of the plantation containing the house from the DuVal family. When the "policy" was written, the house was valued at \$4,000, which would indicate a very substantial and well-appointed house. The sum total of all the other buildings was \$1,600. A couple of years later the property was sold to the Randolph family. Eventually it became the residence of Peter V. Daniel, a son-in-law of Edmund Randolph; he changed the name of the plantation to Spring Farm.



THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

"A Brick Dwelling House": a drawing of Mount Comfort from the records of the Mutual Assurance Society, ca. 1802.

(story continues on page 5)

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Calling All DFA Members

By Judy Hamby

HAPPY NEW YEAR! We will celebrate the fifth anniversary of the reorganized DuVal Family Association in June 2003. And



while I am happy to report good news, I must also report bad news! There are over 230 cousins listed as members; however, only 137 of you paid your dues for 2002! It's sad. You might ask, "What do I get for the 'big bucks' I pay?" (Or don't pay, as the case may be.) OK—I'll tell you.

We have a top-notch team. In addition to a very professional quarterly newsletter, we have a genealogist as well as a registrar/treasurer working for this organization. Our newsletter editor, Susan Blair, recently retired from *Time* magazine, where she worked for over 30 years. Our genealogist, Joseph Hays, has traveled to Texas, Florida, Louisiana and Virginia seeking DuVal information. Last summer he found the site of the illusive Mount Comfort, home of Samuel DuVal, in Richmond. One of our goals is to send Joseph to Europe to do in-depth research on our family. Our registrar/treasurer, Patricia Koenig, has spent countless hours on the telephone and computer, collecting DuVal information and inputting it into the DuVal database, which now contains over 9,000 names. She maintains the DFA checking account, and has set up a savings account that generates a small amount of interest. Joseph and Pat are in the process of compiling a new DuVal Family book that will incorporate material from the two previous DuVal books, published in 1931 and 1937, and material about our current generations. The book should be ready for publication in 2005.

Your board members are not reimbursed for their expenses. We each pay for our own travel, room and board. Your secretary, Regina Thompson, keeps an ever-changing membership directory up to date. Regina and DFA member Deana Snow were responsible for putting together an outstanding DFA cookbook, which is a piece of history itself. Katherine Lewis spends days organizing the Richmond portion of our biennial meetings. The board also includes Tom Dunscombe and Roger Baskette, whose fathers were officers in the original DuVal Family Association. Roger, a retired attorney, is a mem-

ber of Sons of the American Revolution. Tom is a senior vice president with UBS/PaineWebber, where his focus is investment-management consulting for institutional and private clients. Both men assist with the business matters of the Association. Sarah McKelley King is an Honorary President General (past president) of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution; in addition to using her skills and knowledge to help us recruit new members, she serves as an unofficial "guidance counselor." Henry Davis, a Virginia attorney, serves as the Association's legal counsel, and was responsible for incorporating the Association.

We have invested over \$500 to create a lending library that contains a collection of books regarding the DuVals and Huguenots in general (see page 3). They are available for you to borrow for just the cost of return postage. We have placed a granite monument on the grounds of Ware Parish Church in Gloucester, Va., to honor the arrival of Daniel DuVal in 1701. We hope to place a marker at the site of the DuVal Pottery Factory in Richmond, and we will once again conduct an essay contest for our junior members.

Your money is managed carefully. All expenses are kept to a minimum. While our outstanding newsletter costs approximately \$200 an issue, these expenses include only printing and postage; they do NOT include the hours of work it takes our editor to edit, design and compile the newsletter.

And finally, think about the wonderful legacy this association is going to leave for our children and grandchildren. We are trying to create a sense of family for them. We are trying to make them proud of their heritage. Our Lord God knows we need more family ties and family pride in our lives today. The only way we can accomplish this goal is with your help. We need your encouragement, your ideas, your participation, your prayers and YOUR DUES!

A membership renewal form is enclosed. Write a check and mail your dues to Patricia DuVal Koenig, 5144 South Taft Way, Littleton, CO 80127. We ask you to please do it now!

Until we meet again,

Judy Hamby
President

Cousins Clue Chart

When DFA members are mentioned in the *DuVal Family News*, their line of descent from the sons of Daniel DuVal, French Huguenot, is indicated after their names as follows: W=William; D=Daniel; B=Benjamin; S=Samuel

Love in Bloom: A Family Story of the Early 1800s

Margaret Baskette Buchanan, whose book *DuVals of Kentucky from Virginia* was published in the 1930s, was a writer all her adult life. In the 1880s, when she was about 18, using the pen name *Maggie May*, she wrote a series of stories that were published in the *Nashville [Tenn.] Banner*, with the headline "Many Years Ago." She described the tales as "a few life sketches from the history of one of Tennessee's bravest pioneer families ... related by a loved grandmother." The grandmother was Margaret Gwin DuVal, daughter of Mary McAdams and James Gwin, whose brief courtship is described in the excerpt that follows.

A soft day, with a bright May sunshine flooding valley and hillside, birds and flowers in a golden haze. A simple cottage in the Arcadia of North Carolina—a cottage almost rude in its simplicity, its sole attempt at adornment consisting of a rustic porch with a mass of morning-glory vines clustering wildly across its sides. The faint breeze stirred the thick leaves and gently rocked the blooms not yet closed by the amorous kisses of the sun, which shone through



COURTESY OF ROGER BASKETTE

Margaret Buchanan, a descendant of Samuel DuVal, began writing when she was a girl. This portrait was made in the 1930s.

the twining branches and cast flickering shadows across the porch.

"What a beautiful day, mother," said a young girl who came to the door, and, plucking one or two morning-glories, placed them in the mass of clustering curls on her white neck.

"Yes, Mary. But, child, child, you are wasting time there in the doorway. Come back to your spinning. Every girl should have her full amount of clothes and linen 'gainst the time of her marrying, you know."

Such was the custom in the olden times, when no girl, whether she be rich or poor, was considered marriageable until she had possessed a full complement of domestic linen, and woolen, too, by herself. No hands were too delicate—though the blood coursing

through them be ever so blue—for the use of the spinning wheel. Such occupations in those primitive days were considered THE accomplishments; and each fair belle was ambitious about the extent and completeness of her household, as well as personal, wardrobe.

Mary McAdams turned from the door, and soon the whirr-rr of her spinning wheel joined in that of her mother's. For a while there was no word spoken between the two, and both were busy with their work. Presently the gate clicked, and a quick, firm step sounded on the walk outside. Mary looked up expectantly, and when a young man stepped across the porch and into the room, the quick crimson spread over neck and brow.

"Good morning, Mrs. McAdams, Miss Mary," he said cheerily, as he bent over Mrs. McAdams' outstretched hand, giving Mary only a smile and a bow.

"Good-day, Jimmie," said the lady tersely, as she paused to give him a searching look. Then she resumed her work, while "Jimmie," seated by her
(story continues on next page)

ALL ABOUT US: THE DFA LIBRARY

Many DFA members are aware of the books of DuVal genealogy that were published in the 1930s: *The DuVal Family of Virginia, 1701* by Bessie Berry Grabowski and *DuVals of Kentucky from Virginia* by Margaret Buchanan. A few lucky cousins have their own copies of those rare volumes, handed down from grandparents or parents, or discovered in rare-book shops.

DFA president Judy Hamby has collected other books about the DuVal family, Huguenots in general and early Virginia history. Some are from Judy's personal library, others belong to the Association, but they are all available for DFA members to borrow for further digging into our ancestry. The books are:

Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia 1607-1624/25, Virginia Meyer and John Dorman, eds.; 3rd edition, 1987
Huguenot Emigration to America, Charles W. Baird
Huguenot Emigration to Virginia, R. A. Brock
Burke's American Families with British Ancestry/ The Lineage of 1,600 Families of British Origin Now Resident of the United States of America, Burke's Peerage, reprinted from 16th edition, 1939

John C. DuVal, First Man of Letters, J. Frank Dobie
Early Times in Texas, or The Adventures of Jack Dobell, John C. DuVal
Richmond During the Revolution, 1775-83, Harold E. Greer Jr. & Harry M. Ward
The First Seventeen Years, Virginia 1607-1625, Charles E. Hatch Jr.
Richmond in By-Gone Days, Samuel Mordecai
Huguenots in Britain and Their French Background, 1550-1800, Irene Scouloudi, ed.
Civilizers: The DuVals of Texas from Virginia Through Kentucky and Florida, Roy L. Swift

The Association will pay postage to send a book to a borrower; the borrower is asked to pay return postage. (The postage rate for books is lower than that for first class mail.) Judy suggests a lending period of a month from the time the borrower receives a book.

If you would like to take advantage of this special collection to further your research into our family history, please contact Judy Hamby by e-mail (dhambly@twave.net) or telephone (828-754-7363).

Happy digging!



Sunshine Corner

By Molly Dunscombe O'Leary

BORN

Logan Ryan Tilley, on Jan. 12, 2003, to Shanda and Erick Tilley of Denison, Texas. Logan's grandmother is Susan Reedus (D) of Denison, and his great-aunt is DFA secretary Gina Thompson.

GRADUATED

Airman Kyle E. Thompson (D), son of Gina and Robert Thompson, from the Louis F. Garland Fire Academy at Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas; on Oct. 9, 2002. Kyle, a fire fighter for the U.S. Air Force, is stationed at Aviano Air Force Base in Italy.

Please send your notices for Sunshine Corner to molly_d_oleary@hotmail.com

Love (continued)

side, twirled his hat diffidently, evidently considering what method to approach the object of his visit. Mrs. McAdams waited, a subdued amusement in her Scotch-Irish face.

"And so you're going to Tennessee, eh, Jimmie?"

"To-morrow, at twelve."

"A long way, and a rough country."

"Yes, but my calling admits of no shrinking."

"A Methodist preacher. Humph!"

"A servant of God, Mrs. McAdams," returned the young man, softly.

"Hard life! Saddle-bags, a Bible, a shirt and a horse. Lucky thing you have no wife going with you—she'd see a time of it, I'm thinking."

The old lady nodded her grey head decisively.

"Yes, it will be a rough road at first, but god will protect me. And I shall succeed out there," he continued, enthusiastically. "It is a new country just opening. Now is the time for me to do most good as a minister, and also as a surveyor. The settlers are buying up land and clearing off farms, and a surveyor can earn a good living there now. But, [Mrs.] McAdams, I do not intend going there alone. I expect to carry my wife with me."

"Yes?"

"I know there are difficulties and hardships, but 'perfect love casteth out fear,' and your daughter is no coward."

Here Mary's head bent lower, and her wheel went faster and louder than ever, as if to drown the sound of their voices, while they continued talking. After a

close conversation, during which the girl never paused once in her work, Mrs. McAdams finally arose, and crossing over, laid her hand gently on her daughter's shoulder. Mary stopped spinning.

"She's a good daughter, Jimmie, is my Mary, and I am loathe to part with her. I never thought I could consent to my lass marrying a Methodist circuit-rider, but you have destroyed my prejudice. It's far away in Tennessee—away out in the backwoods, among the bears and Indians. It's sudden, too—only a day. I love my child; she is the apple of mine eye, yet I will not stand in her way. Be good to her, Jimmie. God bless you both."

She stooped, and pressing her lips to the girl's brow, slowly left the room, the two young people little guessing with what an effort did she maintain her calm dignity.

"Yes, she said you could go with me to Tennessee, and—" here he bent to get a look into the drooping face, "what does Mary say about it?"

"I—I—Mr. Gwin, I don't care if I do," and here the girl lays her hand trustfully in his, and they make a solemn vow to continue through life together.

Such was the simple courtship of these two brave young hearts. No infatuated glances, no tenderly whispered nothings, no sentimental meetings. James Gwin had only made usual visits to Mrs. McAdams' cottage, and no word of love had passed between the young minister and the shy girl until this beautiful May day. They simply loved each other, and as simply experienced a mutual trust.

A clasp of the hand, a warm kiss, and he departed on his round of

farewells, while she continued her useful work. Maybe the sunshine took a brighter glow, and the wheel a merrier whir; at all events, two hearts beat calm and happy.

The next day, in the presence of a few neighbors, James Gwin and Mary McAdams were united in holy matrimony by a brother minister. After a simple repast the two young people mount their horses, their few belongings and a servant girl upon a third. With a warm blessing from their old grey-headed mother, they start upon their journey to the wilds of Tennessee. As they reach the bend of the road, the bride turns and sees the usually erect form of Mrs. McAdams swaying in the May sunshine, while her hands grasp the door-post, and she strains her eyes for one last glimpse of her child. Such is the picture presented to Mary's tearful gaze, when it rests for the last time upon the scenes of her childhood.

The two pass from sight, and with a low wail the old woman turns from the sympathizing friend.

"Good-by my child, my bairn. I'll never see my little lass again."

"What, traveling from North Carolina to Tennessee on horseback!" exclaims the modern time reader. Yes, and traveled safely. The road was long and rough, and the ride was wearisome; but, trusting in God's care and loving each other, Mr. and Mrs. Gwin arrive safely in the fair land of Tennessee.

HELP WANTED!

POSITIONS AVAILABLE on Reunion and Membership committees of the DuVal Family Association. **NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED!** To help with the June 2003 Reunion, notify Katherine Lewis (katwlewis@aol.com or 804-360-1087). To join a new Membership committee, contact Judy Hamby (828-754-7363 or dhamby@twave.net). Other kinds of help needed are biographical information and family stories for the updated DuVal genealogy book (send to Joseph Hays, allenhurst@premiermet.net), and stories and ideas for the newsletter (send to Sue Blair, sblair44@aol.com). **BENEFITS** include meeting new cousins, good times and profuse thanks.

2003 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Please renew your DFA membership for 2003. If you sent in dues after receiving the last newsletter in October, your payment was applied to 2003. If you want to verify that, please contact Pat Koenig at pkoenig@pabko.com or 393-973-2094.

You can also use this form to update your address, telephone or e-mail information.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE () _____ E-MAIL _____

One-year membership rates:

Descendant (Active member) & (if applicable) Spouse (Associate member): \$10

Family membership (active member, associate member & children under 18): \$25

Please make your check payable to DuVal Family Association and mail form and payment to:
Patricia DuVal Koenig, 5144 S. Taft Way, Littleton, CO 80127

Do you have DuVal relatives who are not yet DFA members? If so, please help us increase membership by writing their names and addresses below. (Use the back of the form if you need more space.)

NAME _____

STREET _____

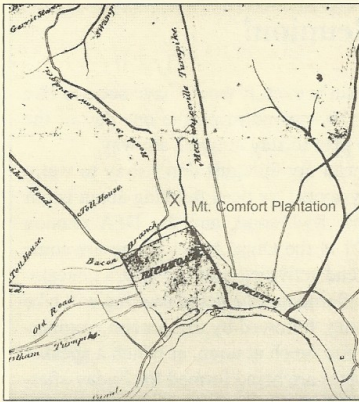
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE () _____ E-MAIL _____

Thank you! We hope to see you in Richmond in June!

RENEW YOUR DFA MEMBERSHIP TODAY SO THAT YOU CAN

Attend the 2003 DFA Reunion
Meet new cousins
Attend the 2003 DFA Reunion
Find "old" cousins
Attend the 2003 DFA Reunion
Keep receiving the DuVal Family News



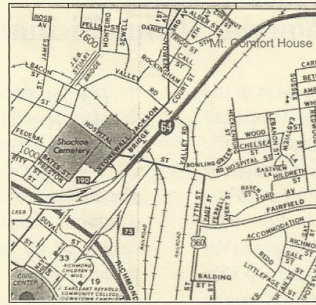
A map drawn in 1819 shows the location of Mount Comfort in relation to the city of Richmond at that time.

Search (continued from page 1)

As the name implies, Mount Comfort was on a hill overlooking the town, to the southwest, and separated from it by a valley through which ran Cannon's Branch of Shockoe Creek. Today the site of the estate is approximately 1.5 miles northeast of downtown Richmond, between Route I-64 (Shockoe Creek) to the east and Holy Cross Cemetery (Cannon's Branch) to the west. The plantation house was situated where Chestnut Street crosses Fifth Avenue. In 1912, the establishment of the town of Highland Park incorporated the focal point of the estate. An early suburb of Richmond, homes in this town displayed the new and modern Arts and Crafts style, as well as the then recent Prairie and Four Square styles. The neighborhood is now in a sad state of neglect and disrepair, but that did not deter Deana and me from walking all of its streets and back alleys in hopes of finding some remnant of the old estate. We found nothing, and now feel that by the time Highland Park was established, anything that might have remained of the original buildings had been obliterated.

After Samuel's death in 1784; his oldest son, William, bought most of the property of the other heirs and continued to develop and sell the land. When the DuVal family sold the remaining 56-acre tract that made up Mount Comfort in 1802, there was made mention in the deed of conveyance several

THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA



The site of Mount Comfort marked on a modern map shows how Richmond has grown to incorporate the location.

items of interest I here offer the reader, with the reminder that William, a lawyer, drew up this deed:

"Reserving to the said William DuVal the old family burying ground with one half acre of land around it including the same which is accordingly excepted out of the conveyance and also excepting and reserving to the said Wm DuVal his heirs and assigns the free use and benefit of the mill canal with the liberty of cleaning, scouring and repairing the same for conveying the water therein to the Mill without the let or hindrance of him the said Thomas Wilson ... excepted out of this conveyance, the same being a part of the tract of parcel of

land called and known by the name of Mount Comfort ..."

This excerpt is offered as proof of a family graveyard upon the property. Although others have speculated that Samuel DuVal was interred in St. John's churchyard in Richmond, it is more likely that his final resting place would have been in the burying ground on his plantation. (Churchyards were usually reserved for town folk, who had no land on which to be buried.) We found no trace of a graveyard on the site, unless it was incorporated within Holy Cross Cemetery, which is on the Mount Comfort tract adjacent to the location of the house.

It has been difficult to pin down the exact nature and location of the mill and canal mentioned in the deed.

With this newfound information, it might be possible to find a more exact likeness of the house at Mount Comfort. The status of the subsequent owners leads me to believe that if the house survived long enough, there might even be a photograph of it. At any rate, there could be in the possession of the descendants of later owners a painting, ink wash or some other rendering of the house. There is still work to be done in searching for the descendants of subsequent owners in hopes of obtaining such a likeness.

Samuel DuVal of Mount Comfort

Samuel DuVal, whose signature is shown above, was prominent in the civic life of 18th century Virginia. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were among his acquaintances. Below are some important dates in his life.

- 1714:** Born, youngest son of Daniel DuVal, French Huguenot
- 1745 (ca.):** Married Lucy Claiborne, member of a family of political prominence in Virginia; they had eight children
- 1752:** Appointed one of 10 trustees for the town of Richmond; the trustees were empowered to lay out streets, set building regulations and settle boundary disputes
- 1752:** Elected to the vestry of St. John's Church (Episcopal)
- 1773-76:** Member, House of Burgesses
- 1774-75:** Member of first and second Virginia Conventions
- 1780:** Appointed one of nine directors responsible for improving and enlarging the city of Richmond, when the state capital moved there from Williamsburg; Thomas Jefferson was among the other directors
- 1784:** Died at Mount Comfort

Information taken from *The DuVal Family of Virginia, 1701* by Bessie Berry Grabowski (1931)

Think Warm Thoughts: Think Richmond Reunion!

The chilling months of winter are upon us here in the Northeast, and even those who live in usually more temperate climates are feeling the icy blast. This morning National Public Radio reported that Nashville, Tenn., had been particularly hard-hit by a snowstorm that left more than eight inches of the white stuff behind. Road conditions were said to be very bad, and I thought immediately of DFA vice president Roger DuVal Baskette and his wife, Thetis, whose home sits at the top of a fairly steep hill in Nashville. The view from their front step is lovely, but hills can be treacherous in cold weather—particularly if municipal authorities aren't accustomed to dealing with severe winters. Having enjoyed the lunch Thetis served to the DFA board last June, I think it's a pretty solid bet that the Baskettes' cupboards were well stocked with comfort food!

I, for one, love snow. It was something you had to come to terms with in the Chicago area, and over the years I've lived in New York City, I've come to think of it as a seriously snow-deprived metropolis. I also have a second home on Eastern Long Island, where we sometimes get more snow than the city does as a storm moves up the Atlantic coast. At other times, it works the opposite way: the proximity of water all around (many bays, in addition to the ocean) keeps the air temperature high enough that snow inland is just rain "out East." I was terribly disappointed that the heavy snow that fell in the city on Christmas Day was just another downpour in East Hampton; it didn't get cold enough to snow until 9 p.m., and

by then the storm was nearly over. It would have seemed like an extra-special treat to be snowed in on the one day of the year that a lot of people plan to stay at home anyway.

That doesn't mean my thoughts don't stray to warm places. One of the sunny spots I've been thinking about is our common ancestral home, Richmond, and the DFA reunion scheduled for June 19-21 at the Omni Hotel. There are some tentative plans for weekend activities, starting with a genealogy session on Thursday afternoon. The board meeting will take place early Friday morning, followed by the general membership meeting at 10 a.m. and lunch at noon, at which a speaker will be featured. Other plans are being formed for Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, and your ideas are eagerly sought to help round out the schedule. Katherine Lewis is planning the program; you can contact her at katwlewis@aol.com or 804-360-1087. One possibility is the placing of a plaque at the site of the pottery owned by Benjamin DuVal Jr. in the late 18th and early 19th century.

You can make your hotel reservation by calling 1-800-THE-OMNI (843-6664). Be sure to identify yourself as a member of the DuVal Family Association so that you can get the very special room rate of \$96 a night—whether it's a single, double, triple or quad (rate offer expires June 1). At that bargain price, you can bring the youngest DuVal descendants!

I feel warmer already. Don't you?

Sue Blair

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TO: