

# Colonial *and* Revolutionary Families *of* Pennsylvania

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Genealogical and Personal Memoirs

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## CRISPIN FAMILY.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM CRISPIN, companion-in-arms and brother-in-law of Admiral Sir William Penn, and named by his nephew, William Penn, the great founder of Pennsylvania, as one of his first Commissioners of his new Province of Pennsylvania, was the ancestor of the Crispin family in America; but little is known of his ancestry further than that he belonged to an ancient and honorable family in Great Britain; and the part he took in affairs abroad during the time of England's Commonwealth, and in the events which led to the Restoration of King Charles II., also make him a person of some mark among the characters of that period.

An account of the Crispin family, written in 1792 by William Crispin, of Philadelphia (Commissary-General in the American army during the Revolution), a great-grandson of Captain William Crispin, says that the latter was one of Cromwell's train band, and afterwards captain of his guard, but that, finding that Cromwell deviated from his promises, he left him and went to sea with Admiral Penn. As this account has been found unreliable in several points which were not within the personal knowledge of the writer, we may presume it to be faulty in this particular also, for we have evidence that William Crispin had been following the sea for many years before he became an officer in the Commonwealth's navy. The same account states that he was descended from one of the two lords de Crispin who came to England with William the Conqueror; but though this is possible, as the name is uncommon, and evidently of Norman origin, the line of descent has never been traced, for even the names of William Crispin's parents were unknown to his great-grandson, and remain so to later generations. There were several families of the name among the landed gentry of some of the lower counties of England in his day, and he may have belonged to one of them, for he lived in a time when a great many masters of merchant-ships were men of good birth but small fortune, seeking a life of adventure combined with profit, which was always to be found at sea, but could not be had on land except in time of war.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, London, 1832, Part I., pp. 26-30, appears the following:

### "TENANTS IN CHIEF OF DOMESDAY BOOK."

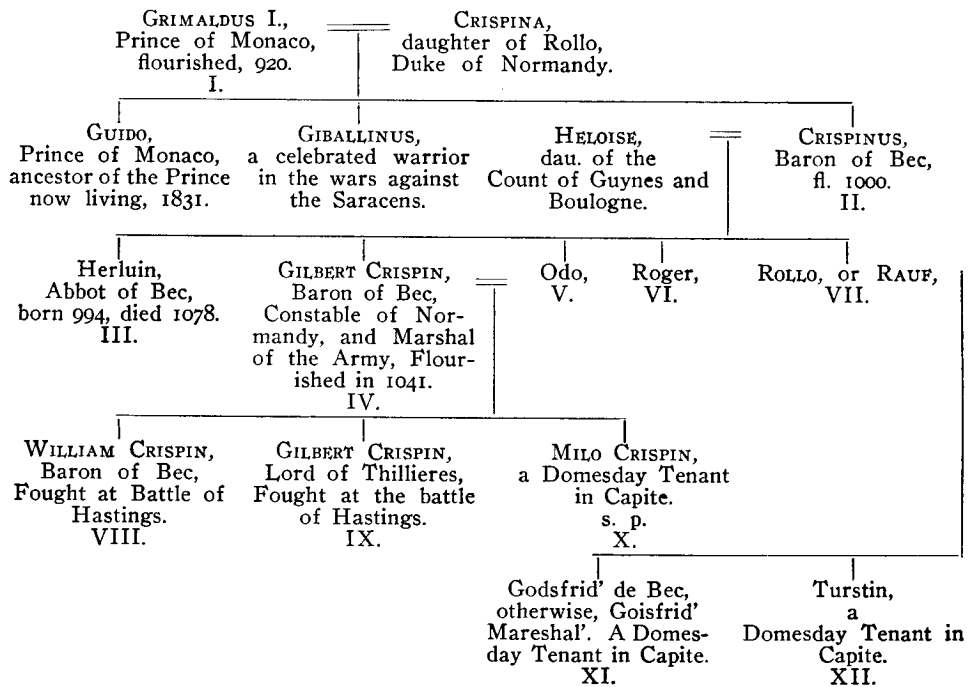
"Amongst the Domesday tenants in capite, will be found the following: "Goisfridus de Bech, Goisfridus Marescal, Milo Crispin, Turstinus Filius Rolf; and I shall be enabled, through the aid of the documents and pedigree of a foreign family, to communicate some particulars regarding them which are unknown to the English antiquary.

"The document affording the greater part of the ensuing information, is a genealogy of the Italian family of Grimaldi, sovereign princes of a small principality named Monaco, situated at the confines of France and Genoa. The manuscript was compiled in 1430 by Nicholas Grimaldi, Seigneur of Seminare in Naples, a nobleman very well skilled in historical matters. In 1647 the then reigning Prince of Monaco published it in a small folio, having employed his secretary, Venasques, for twenty years in collecting further proofs, and in making additions to it.

"The family pedigree is set out in too many English as well as foreign histories to require minute notice here. It appears by Anderson's Royal Genealogies, that the sixth in descent from Pharamond, King of the Franks, was named Grimoald or Grimbald; which Skynner, the etymologist, derives from *Grim*, anger; and *Bald*, power. He was Duke of Brabant, and slain in 658. His son, the King of Mentz, died without issue, when the name was used by the Duke's great-nephew, a brother of the renowned Charles Martel. The second of the name was Duke of Brabant and slain in 714, and from his time the surname was hereditary. The fourth in descent from this last named Duke, was the first Prince of Monaco, and one

of the principal Commanders of the army of the Emperor Otho I., in his wars with Louis IV., of France; by the strength of his own arm he freed the Emperor from being made captive, in return for which, and other services, Otho granted to him, in 920, the castle and territories of Monaco, to hold in sovereignty; and from this ancestor has this principality descended in lineal succession, unto the present day; for, though revolutionized in 1792, and sold by the French republic to a citizen of Paris, yet it was, by the definite treaty of peace of 1814, restored to the Grimaldi family. The descent was in 1715 continued by a female of the family, who became sovereign Princess, and transmitted the title, and name and arms, to her children, by her husband James Leoner Goyon De Matignon, but foreign jurists have considered the principality as a male fief, and that it belongs to the nearest male heirs, who are, perhaps, the Marquisses Grimaldi, of Genoa."

The following genealogical table of the persons noticed in this communication, will assist in clearly comprehending the detail:



"II. Crispinus, surnamed Ansgothus, on account of his maternal descent from the Goths, settled in Normandy, his mother's country, where he became possessed of the Barony of Bec, in the district of Caux. He married Heloise, the daughter of Rodulph, Count of Guynes and Boulogne, by Rosella, daughter to the Count St. Paul. Of this marriage there was issue, Herluin, Gilbert, Odo, Roger, and Ralph or Rollo.

"III. Herluin was the canonized founder of the very celebrated Abbey of Bec in Normandy, lying within the district of the Barony of Bec. He died in 1078, aged 84 years. Grants of land, and possessions to this Abbey, from our Norman sovereigns, and their Norman followers, are frequently met with, especially from the Crispin family.

"IV. Gilbert Crispin, Baron of Bec, Governor and Lord of the Castle of Thillieres, Constable of Normandy, and Marshal of the Army of the Duke of Normandy in 1041, relinquished the surname of Grimaldi, and assumed that of Crispin from his father, which later he transmitted to his posterity. He had issue, three sons, William Crispin, Baron of Bec; Gilbert Crispin, Lord of Thillieres; and Milo Crispin; all warriors at the battle of Hastings. Dugdale, in his *Baronage*, deduces the descent of the Clare family from a Gilbert Crispin, Earl of Brion in Normandy; whose son, Richard Fitz-Gilbert, accompanied the Conqueror. This Gilbert Crispin is stated to have been the son of Geoffrey (Godfrey), the natural son of Richard, Duke of Normandy.

"V. & VI. Odo and Roger. No particulars are known to me of these brothers, excepting that in a charter of Herluin, after describing himself as 'Herluinus filius Ansgoti,' he adds, 'adstantibus et laudantibus fratribus meis Odone et Rogero.'

"VII. Rollo or Rauf; he was the father of Goisfrid de Bec, otherwise Goisfrid the Marshal, and of Turstin; called in Domesday Book 'filius Rolf.'

"VIII. William Crispin, Baron of Bec, was a celebrated hero in the battle of Mortimer, in the year 1059. He married a daughter of Simon, Earl of Montfort, and was a witness to William the Conqueror's foundation charter of the Abbey of Saint Stephen of Caen, in Normandy. He acquired great glory for his valour in the battle of Hastings, and it is concluded survived that victory, as his name is in one of the copies of the Battle Abbey Roll; but it is difficult to account for his not appearing amongst the great tenants of the Conqueror in Domesday Book, as his younger brother, Milo, had very numerous possessions granted to him. He had issue, William Crispin, Baron of Bec, from whom was a long succession of Barons of the same title, residing in Normandy, and having great hereditary offices in that Duchy, under the Dukes. Some of his descendants also appear in our English records as holding lands in England under the Plantagenet Dynasty.

"Dugdale, in his Baronage, whilst writing of Milo Crispin, adds, 'of this family I presume was William Crispin, one of the Conqueror's chief commanders in the war against Henry, King of France.' Some further particulars of his life are given by Dugdale, which I refer to rather than transcribe, on account of space; but it is evident that, as neither Dugdale nor any other historian mentions William Crispin's parentage, it was unknown; this concluding paragraph in the Baronage greatly corroborates the foreign genealogy.

"All that I shall say further of him is, that he (William Crispin), gave to the Abbey of Bec, in Normandy, the Church of Droecourt, with the lands and tithes thereto belonging, as also (to) the Lordship of Tilla in the diocese of Lisieux.'

"It is evident that the Abbey of Bec was thus endowed, because it was founded by William Crispin's uncle, Herluin; and it appears by the pedigree that the Lordship of Tilla (Thillieres) in Normandy, was amongst the possessions of Gilbert Crispin, his father.

"IX. Gilbert Crispin, the second son of Gilbert Crispin, Baron of Bec, was Seigneur of the Norman fief of Thillieres, and one of the warriors at the battle of Hastings, but not a Tenant in Capite of the Conqueror, or (as far as these researches have extended) a grantee of lands as subtenant, but he is mentioned in the 'Chronicle of Normandy' as 'Le Seigneur de Tilleres,' together with his brother 'Guillaume Crespin,' amongst the companions of William the Conqueror, in 1066.

"The circumstances of thus describing Gilbert Crispin by his Lordship of Tilleres, affords evidence of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of identifying many of the Norman tenants, and their families at this period, since, as in the case of the Seigneur de Tilleres, probably no document, excepting a private pedigree or charter, exists to show the family which held such estate at the time of the Conquest. Indeed, nothing can be more fatal to correct genealogy than the foreign practice of naming individuals solely by fief or seigneuries, which were constantly changing owners; and the preceding proprietors of which, frequently continued the use of the title of the Lordship, after it had been transferred to some new purchaser, so that various persons existed at the same period, using the same designation. No industry can, under such circumstances, prevent the biography of one party being occasionally confused with that of another.

"Of the Battle Abbey Roll, a minute investigation respecting this family proves Camden's assertion that 'whosoever considereth it well shall find it forged;' for only one out of the five Knights of this house who accompanied the Conqueror, is therein named, although three of them were Tenants in Chief in Domesday; and the individual who was planted by the Monks in the Roll, was one who does *not* appear to have been a Chief Tenant of the Conqueror, and therefore probably had a less share of danger or honour on the eventful day of the battle of Hastings, than either of his brothers or cousins, who had lands granted to them by the King.

"X. Of Milo Crispin, a great Captain, favoured warrior, and Tenant in Capite of the Norman, I have no material particulars in addition to the biography in Dugdale's Baronage (title Crispin), and in Dr. Lipscomb's History of Buckinghamshire; excepting the important fact of his descent, already set forth, and to a knowledge of which neither of these historians could have any reasonable means of attaining. The circumstance of Milo being son to the Baron of Bec, who was the brother of the founder of the renowned Abbey of that name, readily accounts for the large grants which are mentioned by Dugdale and Dr. Lipscomb to have been made by him and his widow to that religious house.

"Milo's possessions are enumerated in Domesday, and comprised the honour of Wallingford and 88 Lordships. He died without issue in 1106, forty years after the battle of Hastings. There are other instances in Dugdale, showing great longevity in these Norman warriors.

"XI. Goisfrid' de Bec, otherwise Goisfrid the Marshall. This warrior fought at Hastings, and is named in Domesday under both titles, appearing consequently as two distinct Tenants in Capite. There were no means by which the editors of the printed volumes of that survey could have known the fact of such two names applying to one person: and, as Dugdale was ignorant that the Crespin family were the same as the baronial family of Bec, he makes no mention of Goisfrid, under his account of the Crispins. (There was a Flemish family of the name of Bec, eminent at the time of the Conquest, holding Evesby and other manors; they were not related to the Barons of Bec, of Bec in Normandy). The varied appellation given to Goisfrid in Domesday, has many similar examples, and is easily account-

ed for; that survey was made by inquisitions held in the various counties where the lands were situated, and since Goisfrid de Bec was the Conqueror's Marshal, there would be nothing extraordinary in his being designated as Goisfrid the Marescal in Hampshire, whilst in Herefordshire he was called Goisfrid de Bec.

"Goisfrid was brother of Turstin de Bec, and son of Rollo or Ralf, the brother of Gilbert, Baron of Bec, Constable of Normandy, and Marshal of the Army of the Dukes of Normandy in 1041; an office which seems to have been hereditary (see the Clare pedigree in Dugdale's Baronage), like many or all of the Norman offices of honour. Goisfrid de Bec, I therefore presume, succeeded his uncle as Marshal, and was the person designated as Goisfrid the Marshal, in Domesday; and I am further led to the conclusion that he possessed this high post, since his brother Turstin was Standard-bearer to the Conqueror at Hastings, and they were relations of the Invader.

"Turstinus Filius Rolf, is thus mentioned in Domesday as a Tenant in Capite, a descent which is in accordance with the ancient Grimaldi pedigree, where he is called son of Rollo or Ralf; and the agreement which is found here, and in many other instances, between the English records, especially Domesday, and this ancient pedigree, compiled 400 years ago—a time when Domesday was unknown to foreigners, and a reference to, or knowledge of our records was impossible,—is positive proof of the correctness of the pedigree in such instances, and presumptive evidence of its general accuracy.

"Turstin was (as well as his first cousin William Crispin) Baron of Bec. It was customary on the Continent for many members of the same family to take the same feudal title at one time; in the same way that in England we have often several joint tenants of the same manor, who are all Lords or Ladies of that manor. He fought at the battle of Hastings, and held the high office of Standard-bearer, in which capacity he is depicted in the Bayeux tapestry, near the Conqueror. In Dr. Meyrick's History of Ancient Armour, is an account of Turstin, translated from Wace's Metrical History of Normandy, in the Royal Library, stating that the hereditary Standard-bearer of Normandy having declined to carry the Conqueror's gonfanon, William

"Then called a Knight  
Who had great prowess,  
Toustainz fitz Rou the Fair was his name,  
In the fields near Bec was his house.  
To him he delivered the gonfanon,  
And he knew how most suitably  
To carry it willingly, well and handsomely,  
Bowling most profoundly.'

"Thurstan who came in with the Conqueror, is stated in Dugdale's usage of bearing arms, to have been father of Ralph Basset, from whom the ennobled family of Basset was descended, but the account of this family given in the Baronage, is at variance with such a statement, and the foreign pedigree is silent on this head.

"I shall conclude with a few lines respecting the arms of this family. It must be well known to your readers that Mr. Henniker, in a letter addressed to the Society of Antiquaries in 1788, endeavored to prove the use of arms coeval with the Conquest, by means of some Norman tiles with armorial blazonings. He was unable to assign an owner to the tile No. 13, containing a shield Lozengy, 3, 2, and 1. It is to me a probable presumption that it belonged to a member of this family, who was one of the Conqueror's Chieftains. The same appropriation may, I think, be made of the unascertained shield in Westminster Abbey, of the reign of Henry III.; viz., Argent and Gules; for the terms Lozengy and Mascally, or mascally voided, are often used in ancient rolls as synonymous.

"The length to which this memoir has extended, compels me to defer to another number a notice of some of this family who have been connected with English history, or driven by foreign revolutions to preserve their name and lineage upon the hospitable soil of Britain.  
S. G."