

## *A Noted Friend of our Family*

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Here is one of my favorites from our family that took place in our ancestry. A London merchant, originally a fishmonger, Sir Thomas Abney was sheriff of London and Middlesex 1693-4 and one of the original directors of the Bank of England, and Lord Mayor of London 1700-01. Sir Thomas is my fourth cousin, eight times removed. He is the 25th cousin, 13 times removed to my son-in-law, Steven O. Westmoreland.

The Bank of England was founded July 27, 1694 to act as the Government's banker and debt-manager. Since then its role has developed and evolved, centered on the management of the nation's currency and its position at the centre of the UK's financial system.

The history of the Bank is naturally one of interest, but also of continuing relevance to the Bank today. Events and circumstances over the past three hundred or so years have shaped and influenced the role and responsibilities of the Bank. They have molded the culture and traditions, as well as the expertise, of the Bank, which are relevant to its reputation and effectiveness as a central bank in the early years of the 21st century. At the same time, much of the history of the Bank runs parallel to the economic and financial history, and often the political history, of the United Kingdom more generally.

If you want to get closer to the Bank's history and are visiting London, the Bank's Museum provides a unique insight into the history of the Bank and its business, alongside a great deal of material about the Bank today. The Bank of England finally was nationalized to become an official arm of the British Government on February 14, 1946.

Source: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/Links/setframe.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946>

Sir Thomas Abney was a nonconformist dissenter, as regards to the church. He assisted in the establishment of the Protestant Succession to the throne of England. He was on the list of the Commissioners of the Lieutenancy for the City of London, 1694. He was president of St. Thomas' Hospital. He was elected Lord Mayor of London, serving as early as 1690 and certainly in 1700 and 1701. He served on the City Council as senior alderman the rest of his life, which concluded about 1722.

The family castle was outside of London, a fully operating enterprise, complete with a system of serfs to work the lands and to bring in the agricultural produce. Their castle home was called the Abney House, situated in Stoke Newington. What was apart from the ordinary was that the church in which Thomas' family worshiped was one in which the serfs also worshipped, thus crossing social class patterns. It was a nonconformist church; not a Church of England. It's theological characteristics were those we identify with the Protestant Reformation that swept across Europe, beginning in the 1500's.

Sir Thomas Abney Knight was one of the Justices of the said Court of Common Pleas.

Sources:<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/euroleader/wedderburn/sirjohnwedderbook4.htm>

There was a minister/musician who wrote much of the hymnody sung in that church. He played the organ for them on many occasions, as well as in other churches. He was frail in health and had no family, so the family of Thomas Abney took the musician in to live in the family castle for the last 36 years of his life. That musician was Isaac Watts; composer of many hymns still sung today in Reformation tradition churches around the world, such as Presbyterian. Watts (July 17, 1674 - November 1748) is considered the father of English hymnody. His hymns included:

*I Sing the Mighty Power of God*  
*O God, Our Help in Ages Past*  
*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*  
*Joy to the World*  
*From all that dwell below the skies*  
*Let the Creator's praise arise*  
*Let the Redeemer's name be sung*  
*Through every land, by every tongue*

There were many more hymns, of course, and it should be noted that Watts was the author or other published materials, such as poetry and even a book on logic that went through 20 printings and served the higher education community as a textbook: "Logic, or The Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth With a Variety of Rules to Guard Against Error in the Affairs of Religion and Human Life, as Well as in the Sciences." It's hard to imagine a longer title!

Sir Thomas and Lady Abney took Rev. Watts home after an exhausting time of preaching in their London Church, Independent Mark Lane Church. They took him home for a week's rest and he spent his last 36 years living there in their care and Christian fellowship.

You can read more about Isaac Watts at this source:

<http://logosresourcepages.org/IronPen/ironpen64.htm>

Thomas died at Theobalds, Herts. 6th Feb. 1722.

Source: [http://www.curiousfox.com/history/derbyshire\\_7.html](http://www.curiousfox.com/history/derbyshire_7.html)

Though I do not have their names, I have read that Sir Thomas gave issue to eleven children and that he outlived all of them.

(Source: <http://www.geocities.com/heartland/park/2300/afr203.html>)

Truly, Thomas Abney contributed to his nation characteristics of governance, commerce expertise as well as supporting Christian heritage and faithfulness. It is with great honor, blessing and pleasing acknowledgement that we find an ancestor of such great reputation as Sir Thomas Abney.



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