PHILIP DICKINSON DAFFIN

"A Lover of Trees"

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Abstract

Deep in the heart of everyman, the question arises; "when I'm dead and gone will people still know who I am fifty or even a hundred years from now". Strangely enough, however, very few people lead such a life that creates an impression on history so that their deeds and accomplishments can easily be recognized. Philip Dickinson Daffin was a rare exception.

As one rides around the city of Savannah, one can easily notice the work of Philip Daffin. Born and raised on the gulf coast of Florida; served faithfully in the Civil War; and lived the rest of his life in Savannah, very little bad can be found in this man's history. He was a good family-minded man, an excellent businessman, and a great all-around citizen. He was also a great lover of trees and through his works and deeds, Savannah was given the "Forest City". This is his story.

Robert P. Bennett
PHILIP DICKINSON DAFFIN

"A Lover of Trees"

Many people dream of living to a ripe old age. Others dream of making history. Still, others dream of leading a good life for the benefit of those around you. Philip Dickinson Daffin accomplished all three of these dreams. He died at a ripe old age of 88. He made his mark and left behind the beautiful system of parks and squares that makes the city of Savannah seem like "home" to everyone. The nickname of "Forest City" is applied to Savannah due to all the trees which grow in and around the downtown area. As the Atlanta Constitution stated, "Savannah's system of parks and boulevards stands today as a monument, a living, ever-existing monument, to the life work of one man. He is Philip Dickinson Daffin." As one begins to study further into the past of this special man, one notices that not only was he a family-minded individual, but he was also an excellent businessman, a good citizen, and a lover of trees.

It all began on one hot summer's day in 1841 when Mary Jane Findley Daffin gave birth to a healthy baby boy on August 10th. The name Philip Dickinson was given to the child. His father, William Richardson Daffin, was a descendant of John Dickinson who helped draw up and design the Declaration of Independence. Philip was born at a little community called St. Josephs, Florida, near what is now the town of Port St. Joe on the Gulf Coast of the state. His parents had moved to Florida from Maryland and were married on November 25, 1840. His mother, who had been married before and whose maiden name was Mary Jane Ely, was born in Plymouth, North Carolina on September 20, 1816. Her father was Dr. Horace Ely from Philadelphia. Philip's father was the builder of St. Joseph's Railway.
The old Daffin plantation house that he left in Maryland has been restored and is standing today. Little did they know then, but little Philip was the first of eight children to be born in the Daffin household. Below is a list of the other seven children and their birthdates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horace Ely Daffin</td>
<td>January 30, 1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannie Gray Daffin</td>
<td>October 18, 1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Maria Daffin</td>
<td>November 17, 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jane Daffin</td>
<td>August 18, 1849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Richardson Daffin, Jr.</td>
<td>September 16, 1851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Dale Daffin</td>
<td>September 16, 1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest Lynwood Daffin</td>
<td>March 10, 1856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On November 20, 1856, Philip's father died and left him to take care of his mother and his brothers and sisters. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Philip was one of the first to volunteer for the rebel cause, leaving Horace home to tend to the family. Philip served all four years in the war. For a while, he served as a cook, but rumor has it that his cooking was so awful that some of the troops threatened to desert. He fought in the Florida campaign which culminated with the Battle of Olustee in Alabama. In this battle, 3,500 Confederates defeated a Union force of 12,000 and forced them to retreat to Jacksonville. He was with Abell's light battery when Sherman came marching through Georgia. He also served as a courier under General Lafayette McLaw, and was with the troops of this command when Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

He did not return home after the war, but instead went out to sea. This little excursion, however, only lasted about six months and he decided to settle down in Savannah about 1866. When he moved to Savannah he was already married to a girl named Columbia Hayden. She was of English ancestry and her parents were Nehemiah and Mary Beth Hayden. It is assumed that she and Philip were married in Florida because she was born (1845) and reared near Apalachicola.
Her father had been a sea captain and died somewhere at sea. Columbia, who
Philip called "Cummie," was a tall, stern-faced woman. She took nicely to be a
mother and a housewife. Rightaway, Philip became involved in the cotton business.
He and his wife resided at what was then 85 Congress Street. On June 24, 1869,
Cummie gave birth to a baby boy. They named him William Stevens Daffin. Five
years later, on June 11, 1874, Cummie gave birth to a little girl. She was named
Florence Dickinson Daffin. By this time however, Philip had bought a nice lot
and house on Jones Street between Abercorn and Drayton. He purchased the lot
for $6,000 on July 19, 1872. Philip and his wife would remain in this house till
their deaths.

For about three years, Philip's younger brother, William, lived in Savannah
(64 s. Broad) and worked as a clerk at the cotton firm with Philip. What happened
to him after then is not known.

Philip's son William (Willie) grew up to be quite a "gay blade". He attended
and graduated from a business school in New York. He then married a young girl
up north by the name of Charlotte Mann from Pennsylvania. Afterwards, he came
back to Savannah and lived with his parents. In 1887, Willie was part of the
First Volunteer Regiment. He was also pretty good with a gun. Willie and Char-
lette never had any children, thus the Daffin name in Savannah ended with his
generation. Willie was a leader in congregational activities at St. John's
Episcopal Church where he was a vestryman. In 1890, he became a co-partner
in his dad's business. Willie, however, never turned out to be much of a
businessman even after all that schooling. His father never turned the business
completely over to Willie because of this.

Florence (Flossie), on the other hand, turned out much different. Flossie
attended and graduated from Wesleyan College for Women with a degree in music.
She was very talented and could play almost any instrument beautifully. She was also a fine artist and her work was excellent. She became very involved and worked at the St. John's Episcopal Church. She was a member of the Chancel Society and Rector's aid. On February 13, 1901, Flossie married George Eppinger Cope, a local Savannah native. On July 5, 1911, Flossie gave birth to a baby boy. They named him George Daffin Cope.

Philip was known to travel back home to Florida a few times. Once, regretfully, on November 30, 1882 when his mother died back in Marianna. (Marianna was another community in the general area of Port St. Joe.) Back in Savannah, however, Philip spent much of his time with his grandson. He really loved George, and George always responded by calling him "Pum-ya." On November 2, 1916, Philip's wife, Cummie, died at age 61. The funeral was at the house the next day and she was buried at Laurel Grove Cemetery. Her death certificate stated that she died of Urintina (an infection of the urine). On December 19, 1929, at the ripe old age of 88, Philip D. Daffin died at home. The cause for death was probably a severe ear infection due to severe cold weather. Not much is known about his brothers or sisters at the time of his death. His sister Fannie was married and living in El Paso, Texas. His brother Robert was still living in Marianna, Florida. One article stated he was survived by many nieces and nephews. His funeral was held the next day and the list of pallbearers read like a who's who of Savannah. Among them was Judge Samuel B. Adams, Mayor Gordon Saussy, and Lafayette McLaw whom he served under during the war. (Lafayette McLaw also was a witness to his will). When he died, he left half of his estate to Flossie and the other half to Charlotte (his daughter-in-law). He also made mention that if anything should happen to them that his grandson, George, would receive the inheritance. A very nice granite monument was placed at his grave with the name "Daffin" inscribed on both sides.
The monument stands next to the Spanish-American War monument in the middle of Laurel Grove Cemetery. Philip Daffin might have died, but his family continued. George Daffin Cope married Enid Graham while going to school in Athens. They in turn had several children. On November 6, 1938, Charlotte Daffin died. Seven months later, on June 7, 1939, Willie also died. A year after Willie's death, Flossie also died. (June 5, 1940) Thus, we have the history of the Philip Daffin's family.

Another interesting side to Philip Daffin's life was his business. When he moved to Savannah in 1866 he became involved in the cotton business. At first, he shared an office on Bay Street with the firm of John (or William) Wood and Co. Later, in October of 1868, he and Thomas Randall and H.B. Dresser formed a co-partnership when John Wood died. The purpose of the new company was to buy and sell cotton on commission. The name of the new company was Randall, Daffin & Co. of 90 Bay Street. For many years, Philip represented the company's interests by attending markets and conventions up North when the need arrived. In July of 1877, Randall, Daffin & Co. was dissolved and business continued as Daffin & Dresser Co. In May of 1881, Philip and Dresser leased some land from the estate of the late W.B. Hodgson on River Street for the purpose of erecting a cotton pickery. (Many other Southern cities had one.) On October 21, 1882, Philip and Dresser invented and patented the "cotton cleaner". This machine involved many levers and knobs which sifted, beat, and sorted the good cotton from dust, dirt, and other unwanted trash. The machine could take a poor grade of cotton and turn it almost pure. Many people came to witness this new device and by December of that year one of their cotton cleaners had been put up in New Orleans. A year and a half later (April, 1884) the company announced total failure.
Liabilities were approximately $20,000 and about half of this fell upon Savannah merchants. The reason for failure was believed due to the failures of Northern and Eastern mill men in 1876 and the years that followed. Business did continue on however. Dresser turned out to be a poor businessman and Philip ran the business almost solely for the next few years. In September of 1890, Philip made his son, Willie, a partner in the business. The new name became Daffin & Son Co.. Eventually Philip gained experience in all phases of the cotton industry. Cotton became his whole life. In 1904, he retired from the business but his interest always remained in cotton, even right up to his death. When he retired he turned the company over to his son-in-law, George E. Cope, to run along with his son, Willie. The new name of the company became Cope & Daffin Co.. For 38 years, Philip Daffin was very active in the cotton business. (63 years if you include up to his death) He came to Savannah with very little. He retired as an independent, somewhat wealthy man, all due to his keen sense of business and his hard working attitude.

Another side of Philip Daffin was his concern and his active part as a citizen of Savannah. One newspaper in South Carolina printed, "What this state needs is more citizens like Philip Daffin." His name appeared on the voting registration list and he was known to serve jury duty. (Twice on grand jury) In September of 1876 he was officially appointed to the Committee of Enrollment for the purpose of reviewing the voting lists and voting rights. Later, he was reported as an auctioneer (July, 1881) in the bidding of the first sale of the new season cotton in front of the Cotton Exchange.

On December 4th of that same year, he was appointed to a delegation to represent the Savannah Cotton Exchange at the first meeting of the National Cotton Planter Convention in Atlanta. While in Atlanta (Dec. 8, 1881) he met with members of the Farmers Association, the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, and the
National Cotton Exchange. In July of 1884, he became accepted to the Georgia Historical Society. On October 8, 1886, he signed a petition which showed that the city should apply to the Georgia General Assembly for a charter for the Savannah Street Railway. Even as late as 1892 one of his dreams was to see all the street railways under one management. In August of 1888, the Home Building Company of Savannah was organized and he was elected Secretary and Treasurer. In January of 1890, he was elected to be one of the directors for the newly charter Savannah Plumbing Company. On March 4, 1891, he was elected to the Confederate Veteran's Association. In January of 1893, he became part of a petition which came before the county charging that the last election was fraud and irregular. The outcome produced the opening of the registration lists for public inspection. For several years he was president of the Sylvania Railroad which was later taken over by the Central of Georgia. He was president of the Cotton Exchange for many years during the last part of the 19th century. He was a permanent honorary member of the Cotton Exchange and at the time of his death he was the only surviving charter member. These things within themselves easily show what an involved and concerned citizen Philip Daffin was, but his work on the Park and Tree Commission way overshadowed all these.

Long before the creation of the Park and Tree Commission, Philip was involved in many park and tree planting projects. In 1896, he was appointed to the newly formed Park and Tree Commission and in 1898 he was elected chairman—a position he held until his death in 1929. One of the first notable achievements of the park commission after Philip took over was the improvement of Colonial Park. A state of wildness and desolation existed there. Vaults in many cases had been broken into and coffins were exposed. Within a year, all
this was changed and the whole park was transformed into a spot of beauty.

After the restoration of Colonial Park, the next major project was the building of the mall on Copley Avenue. The live oaks which extend from East Broad to West Broad streets today were part of this project. Soon afterwards, Emmet Park and a section of Bay Street were changed from ash heaps and dumping grounds into beautiful parkways. All the squares around town were dug out, fertilized, and trees were planted. Green grass was grown year round in all the squares. Philip's steady leadership also led to the planting of the palmetto trees on the Coastal Highway and the trees on Victory Drive.

Small appropriations always beset the commission, but loyalty of employees and the personal interest of Philip and other commissioners always carried the projects to completion. Of course, Forsyth Park received much attention from the commission. One article stated that one of the biggest problems was the picking of the flowers by the public. All in all, even with all the problems battling the commission—limited funds, all volunteer work, pressures from special groups, etc.—the commission under Philip was very successful.

When the commission first took charge there were only 65 acres of park. By 1921, there were over 175 acres (not including the cemeteries). Most all the credit was given to the hard-working spirit of Philip Daffin. Socially speaking, he far outstepped his concern as the average citizen.

Philip Daffin's personality went hand in hand with his hard working spirit. Known all over town as "P.D.", he became a familiar figure at the Cotton Exchange and along Bay Street. For more than three score years with his snow-white beard, his cane and his gay neckties, he made a striking figure that was known to thousands of Savannahians. His fresh outlook on life and his gay and youthful spirit were characteristics that remained with him
98 to the end. He always talked with sort of a "barking" sense and he enjoyed his daily "toddy". He also enjoyed watching pretty girls as they rode by on the trollies. Rumor has it that he caught his fatal cold looking out the window at the pretty girls on an extremely cold morning. His most prized possessions were two volumes of the series Farmers Letters by John Dickinson. These were passed down by his father. Only about a half dozen issues were printed and John gave them all to such noted individuals as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. Philip seemed to never stop. His zeal for the beautification of Savannah was one of the guiding principles in his life. No sooner had the commission finished one project when another was quickly undertaken. He loved trees and flowers. He would protest vigorously when he heard about any trees being cut down. One of his biggest struggles was with the trolley cars and fire engines. They refused to go around any of the squares. He fought any attempted inroads through the parks and squares and acathingly denounced sabatage of trees and shrubs. He was even known to wrap his cane around anyone he caught abusing trees or shrubs. One can sum up his personality by saying that Philip Daffin was a lover of trees and cared greatly for the beauty of nature.

When Philip Daffin died he did not take with him the memory of his good works and deeds. Even while he was still alive a station on the Sylvania Central Railroad was named for him. Also his name was chosen over Jefferson davis and Colonel Grayson (who the stadium was named for) to be used for the new large recreation park on the southeastern side of the city(Daffin Park).

In 1921, the Atlanta Constitution printed a very complimentary article in which the paper stated," Savannah's system of parks and boulevards stand today as a monument to the life work of one man—Philip Dickinson Daffin."
On the day of his funeral all city flags were flown at half mast. Also, on that day, the Savannah Morning News printed an editorial to him which stated that all the Savannah trees are a living monument to his nature.

A residential area on the southside of town was named Daffin Heights and a road through this area was named Daffin Drive. There is even a living monument that exists in Savannah today. Porter Cope, the son of George Daffin and Enid Cope named one of his sons Phillip Daffin Cope after the child's great, great grandfather.

"Great"—that seems to be the perfect word to describe the spirit, energy, and drive that existed in Philip Dickinson Daffin. He was a rare individual indeed. Not only family-minded, but a successful businessman, and an excellent all around citizen. Philip D. Daffin was truly a lover of trees.

**EPILLOGUE**

I would like to thank Mrs. George D. Cope and her son Porter for all the help and insight. Without them this pile of facts could never have come alive. I would also like to thank my wife, Kim Bennett for all her help and support. I could never have finished without her. Most of all; I would like to thank God for all the blessings that we have received during these difficult times.

Robert P. Bennett
NOTES

1. "Glowing Tribute Paid Mr. Daffin", Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2 (Microfilm)

2. Mary Jane Daffin's family Bible; written in by Philip Daffin; Interview with Porter Cope, 3-1-82, 115 E. 49th St.

3. Interview with Porter Cope

4. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2


6. Mary Jane Daffin's family Bible, (Interview with Porter Cope)

7. I.B.I.D.

8. I.B.I.D.


10. Interview with Porter Cope; Pictures of old house are available.

11. Mary Jane Daffin's family Bible

12. I.B.I.D.

13. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2

14. Interview with Mrs. George Daffin Cope; 3-1-82; 115 E. 49th St.


16. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2


18. Interview with Porter Cope

19. I.B.I.D. also; Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2

20. I.B.I.D.
20. Savannah Morning News, 3 Nov. 1916 (Page and column not known)  
Article was given by Porter Cope.

21. I.B.I.D.

22. Interview with Porter Cope

23. Interview with Mrs. George Daffin Cope

24. Inter., with Porter Cope. (Picture)


26. Tombstone; William Stevens Daffin; Laurel Grove Cemetery  
also; Interview with Porter Cope.

27. Interview with Porter and Mrs G.D. Cope.

28. Deed No. 4N284, Library of Superior Court, Chatham County Courthouse.

29. Interview

30. William R. Daffin's name appears in the Savannah City Directory  
of 1871 and 1874. It does not appear in the directories after 1877.

31. Interview

32. I.B.I.D. also; Savannah City Directories 1892 and on.

33. Savannah Morning News, 5 May 1887, p.8, col.2  also;

Savannah Morning News, 19 Oct. 1887, p.4, col.2

34. Interview

35. Savannah Morning News, 8 June 1939, p.14, col.5


37. When Philip died the business was turned over to George E. Cope  
his son-in-law. George was listed in the City Directory of 1904 as president  
of Cope & Daffin Co.

38. Savannah Morning News, 15 June 1889, p.2 col.5 also; Interview
39. Savannah Morning News, 6 June 1940, (Page and column not known; article was given by Porter Cope.

40. I.B.I.D.

41. Book N; Folio No. 596; Clerk of Ordinary; Chatham County Courthouse.

42. Interview

43. I.B.I.D.

44. I.B.I.D.

45. Savannah Morning News, 3 Nov. 1916, (Article was given by Porter Cope.

46. I.B.I.D.

47. Death Certificate; Chatham County Health Department (No number was on certificate).

48. "Abandon Hope For P.D. Daffin", Savannah Morning News, (Article was given by Porter Cope. Also; Death Certificate No. 1788; Chatham County Health Department.

49. Savannah Morning News, 20 Dec. 1929, p.18, col.2

50. I.B.I.D.

51. I.B.I.D.

52. Folio No. 818; Library of Probate Court; Chatham County Courthouse.

53. I.B.I.D.

54. Laurel Grove Cemetery (No plot number)

55. Savannah Morning News (Date not certain; Given by Porter Cope)

56. Tombstone; Charlette Mann Daffin; Laurel Grove Cemetery.
NOTES (cont.)

57. I.B.I.D. (William Stevens Daffin)

58. Savannah Morning News, 6 June 1940, Article given by Porter Coxe.

59. Savannah Morning News, 20 Dec. 1929, p.7, col.2. In this article the name John Wood is given, in another article; Savannah Morning News, 8 Oct. 1868 p.3, col.2; the name William Wood is used. The latter is probably correct.

60. Savannah Morning News, 8 Oct. 1868, p.3, col.2

61. Savannah Morning News, 31 July 1871, p.3, col.1 Also;

Savannah Morning News, 15 Nov. 1873, p.3, col.1

62. Savannah Morning News, 20 May 1881, p.4, col.3

63. Savannah Morning News, 21 Oct. 1882, p.4, col.2

64. Savannah Morning News, 7 Dec. 1882, p.4, col.3

65. Savannah Morning News, 9 April 1884, p.4, col.2

66. Interview


69. I.B.I.D. also; Savannah City Directory-1904

70. Savannah City Directory - 1904

71. Savannah Morning News, 29 Dec. 1929, p.6, col.3

72. Savannah Morning News, 4 Aug. 1876, p.3, col.2

73. Savannah Morning News, 1 Sept. 1876, p.3, col.1

74. Savannah Morning News, 26 July 1881, p.4, col.1

75. Savannah Morning News, 4 Dec. 1881, p.3, col.1; Also; Savannah Morning News, 8 Dec. 1881, p.4, col.3
76. Savannah Morning News, 8 July 1884, p.4, col.2
77. Savannah Morning News, 8 Dec. 1886, p.2, col.5
78. Morning News, 1 July 1892, p.5, col.1
79. Savannah Morning News, 4 Aug. 1888, p.8, col.2
80. Savannah Morning News, 16 Jan. 1890, p.8, col.6
81. Morning News, 4 March 1891, p.8, col.4
82. Morning News, 1 Jan. 1893, p.8, col.2
84. Interview
85. Savannah Morning News, 20 Dec. 1929, p.18, col.2
86. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2
88. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2
89. I.B.I.D.
90. I.B.I.D.
91. I.B.I.D.
92. Savannah Morning News, 29 Dec. 1929, p.6, col.3
93. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2
94. I.B.I.D.
95. I.B.I.D.
96. Interview
97. Savannah Morning News, 20 Dec. 1929, p.18, col.2
98. I.B.I.D.
99. Interview
100. Interview


102. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2

103. Savannah Morning News, 29 Dec. 1929, p.6, col.3

104. Interview

105. Savannah Morning News, 20 Dec. 1929, p.18, col.2

106. Interview


108. I.B.I.D. Also; Interview

109. Savannah Morning News, 4 July 1921, p.8, col.2

110. Savannah Morning News, 20 Dec. 1929, p.18, col.2

111. I.B.I.D. p.6, col.2

112. Interview

113. Interview
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      Chatham County, Georgia Courthouse
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