

THE BASSET FAMILY: MARRIAGE CONNECTIONS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL NETWORKS
IN MEDIEVAL STAFFORDSHIRE AND BEYOND

A THESIS IN
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By

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THE BASSET FAMILY: MARRIAGE CONNECTIONS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL NETWORKS
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University of Missouri- Kansas City, 2015

ABSTRACT

The political turmoil of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries in England had far reaching consequences for nearly everyone. Noble families especially had the added pressure of ensuring wise political alliances while maintaining and acquiring land and wealth. Although this pressure would have been felt throughout England, the political and economic success of the county of Staffordshire, home to the Basset family, hinged on its political structure, as well as its geographical placement. Although it was not as subject to Welsh invasions as neighboring Shropshire, such invasions had indirect destabilizing effects on the county. Powerful baronial families of the time sought to gain land and favor through strategic alliances. Marriage frequently played a role in helping connect families, even across borders, and this was the case for people of all social levels. As the leadership of England fluctuated, revolts and rebellions called powerful families to dedicate their allegiances either to the king or to the rebellion. Either way, during the central and late Middle Ages, the West Midlands was an area of unrest. Between geography, weather, invaders from abroad, and internal political debate, the unrest in Staffordshire would create an environment where location,

alliances, and family networks could make or break a family's successes or failures. Frequently women were used as political connectors, marrying into affluent families and creating powerful networking bonds that ensured a family's success by maintaining control of land and wealth. I argue that based on the tenuous political world of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, family networking used women as important players in the creation of power blocs. By probing a variety of legal records and using the Basset family in Staffordshire as my model, I aim to recover multiple generations of the Bassets' family networking, and the ways in which women served as conduits of power to connect influential families.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined this thesis, "The Basset Family: Marriage Connections and Socio-Political Networks in Medieval Staffordshire and Beyond," presented by Rachael Hazell, candidate for the Master of Arts degree and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Linda Mitchell, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Department of History

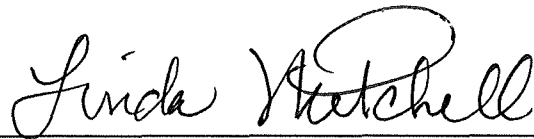
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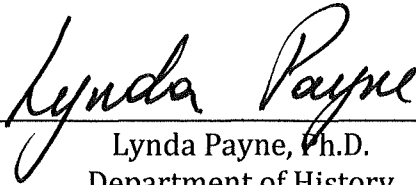
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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Brief Note on the Geography of the West Midlands	10
2. THE BASSET FAMILY.....	10
The Rise of the Basset Family (1066-1135)	12
Geva and Matilda Ridel	16
The Basset Family and Their Networks (1120-1219)	26
The Bassets in Rebellion and Reconciliation (1219-1327).....	28
The End of the Bassets as Persons of Influence (1327-1390)	38
Matilda Basset of Eton.....	39
3. CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF THE BASSETS ON THE POLITICS AND CULTURE OF THE WEST MIDLANDS	45
APPENDIX A	49
APPENDIX B	50
WORKS CITED	50
PRIMARY SOURCES.....	51
SECONDARY SOURCES.....	52
VITA	56

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In August of 2013, I met with my advisor, Dr. Mitchell, to discuss thesis topics. She made me a cup of coffee, and we sat to discuss my research interests. Although I had fantastical and impossible ideas, Dr. Mitchell kept me grounded. She told me to read more primary sources and allow the questions that I gathered from my reading to guide my sense of direction. I did not leave her office that day with a research topic, but instead all I had was a flash drive full of medieval primary sources and a pit of anxiety forming in my stomach. I had no idea how I was going to gather a thesis from reading old *inquisitions ad quod damnum*, I could barely understand the English translations, but as I began reading, I found one source, just a few lines long, that caught my interest. This project began with a simple inquisition, a woman granting land to a small priory, and it has turned into my biggest research project yet.

I would like to thank the entire Department of History at UMKC. I came here from Springfield, Missouri, a little nervous to be in graduate school so far from my home. Without the funding I received, I would never have considered graduate school, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to teach, grade, and experience the classroom setting. The history department has become my second family, and I am honored to be a part of such brilliant group of faculty, staff, and colleagues.

It was the strong faculty that sparked my interest in UMKC, but it was my colleagues that ultimately brought me here. It was in April of 2012 when I learned that the history department had granted me a teaching assistantship. Struggling with my decision to attend UMKC, I e-mailed Amy Brost who, little did I know, I would never

have survived graduate school without. I asked her if it would be possible to e-mail with a fellow graduate student so that I could better understand a student perspective. Within hours, I received a lengthy e-mail from Chainy Folsom, a seasoned graduate student with an impeccable wit. Chainy served as my friend, my mentor, my punching bag, and someone with whom I could share a meal of beans, straight from the can. He advised me on my deadlines, and when I was feeling particularly hopeless, he would always find a way to comfort me: “Cheer up, Girlie Genius. You belong here.”

Knowing the difficulties of being an outsider coming into a new department, Melissa Morris also kept me on track. She introduced me to new people, taught me how to think like a graduate student, and without her, I would never have made it through my first year as a teaching assistant. Marc Reyes supported me without even knowing it. We rarely talked about research or our work, but instead got to know each other on an individual level. And of course, Topher “The Toph” Wilson has become one of my lifelong friends. In the last two years, we have shared countless rounds of beer and chili-cheese dogs, while venting long into the night about the struggles of graduate school. Although my colleagues are very different, they have all given the love, support, and motivation that made graduate school possible.

I owe many thanks to my committee. Dr. Massimiliano Vitiello is an inspiring historian and brilliant researcher. More than this, he greets me daily with a smile and takes interest, not only in research, but the lives of other students and faculty. It is his attitude toward this profession that has inspired me to approach my research with excitement and curiosity. Dr. Lynda Payne has always found time to share a quick conversation with me, despite her incredibly busy schedule. Having had the privilege to

be one of her students, she has taught me to how to connect trends through generations. From Brewsters to Milkmaids, Dr. Payne has provided me a solid foundation on which to understand late medieval women. Most importantly, I could not have attempted this project had it not been for my advisor, my mentor, and my graduate school “mama.” Although I frequently lacked confidence, Dr. Mitchell’s faith in my abilities never seemed to bend. She has worked with me through every step of the process, pushed me far harder than I thought possible, provided hours of instruction, feedback, and critique. She has fed me, caffeinated me, celebrated my successes, and taught me how to move past my failures, and it is because of this that I feel intense pride in my work. I know that she will forever be a part of my life, no matter where my work takes me. There are not enough words to express my gratitude for all that she has done for me.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends that have supported me along the way. My grandparents have provided me with support and encouragement. They have taught to consider the possibilities for my future and how to make my passion for history into lifelong profession that I am proud of. And last, but not least, I owe all my academic success to my parents. Although mother and father live out of town, they have had to endure countless stressful and tearful phone conversations. They have done so with confidence, love, and encouragement, always finding new ways to show me their support. My mother sent frequent “care packages,” and as my thesis deadline approached, the packages got larger and heavier. My father would drive hours to do basic housework that I was too busy to accomplish, such the simple installation of light bulbs on my front porch. They have kept me safe, sane, and comfortable throughout this process, and more than that, they supported and encouraged my

decision to attend graduate school, all the while fostering my voracious love of learning.

This master's thesis is dedicated to them.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Heard before the court on the 16th of May in 1337, Matilda Basset of Eton made a request to transfer a large tract of land. She asked that her land holdings be granted to the Priory of Trentham, a small Augustinian priory located in the county of Staffordshire in the West Midlands of England. This request necessitated an *inquisition ad quod damnum*, but it was unlike other *inquisitions ad quod damnum*, as Matilda was listed alone as giving four estates, forty acres of land, four acres of meadow, and eighty acres of moor.¹ This was a considerable amount of land to give to this small priory, especially for a woman listed alone. The transaction raises several questions about Matilda's life, land, and motivations. Perhaps she was a religious woman, dedicated to the floundering little priory. Or perhaps she had no viable family heir for the property, and the priory was geographically situated in a way that made the transfer of land convenient.

Matilda's land transfer opens a series of questions, but an investigation of this seemingly simple record unpacks a far more complicated series of issues. Women like Matilda Basset and their legal decisions cannot be understood in a vacuum. Her ability to acquire, hold, and transfer her land was a product of the political, economic, and

¹The local escheator had to inquire whether the land transfer would result in damage or harm to the King. Thus *inquisitions ad quod damnum* refer to inquisition records that request license from the Crown to alienate land, frequently to religious houses.

social world of the Middle Ages, and to understand these records, it is important to note the larger medieval world as well as the local political events and family dynamics that influenced her decision to alienate her land to this small priory. To read this record as an isolated legal document from the Middle Ages, without context or understanding leads to an inherently anachronistic reading. On a broad level, this thesis thus probes a variety of legal records to recover, not only Matilda Basset, but multiple generations of the Bassets' family networking, and the ways in which women served as conduits of power to connect influential families.

Although Matilda Basset of Eton makes an excellent launching point for an investigation into this well known, yet little researched family, she was not extraordinary. The Bassets were like any noble family who participated in the political, economic, and legal world of England in the central Middle Ages. In fact, many other Basset women emerge with agency throughout the family's period of influence. Although this research will examine women's influence over land, investigate how they might have come to hold property, and shed light on the power and motivations of acquiring and alienating land, I will demonstrate how woman could maneuver through a lopsided legal system that privileged men to acquire as well as dispose of land—medieval England's principal source of wealth. In doing this, I aim to shed light on the nature of medieval noble family networks and the roles that women had in bridging political and social gaps between affluent families.

Because many late medieval legal records have not yet been calendared, translated, transcribed, or digitized, my study is limited to legal records that have been

translated. I have examined patent rolls, liberate rolls, final concords, inquisitions, plea rolls, and charters. Much of my research came from the *Staffordshire Historical Collections* due to their ease of access. These sources were indexed by the William Salt Archeological Society, which was founded by a group of local Staffordshire researchers in 1879 who sought to translate, transcribe, catalog and publish a wide variety of legal records, both local and national, relating to Staffordshire. In 1936, the organization changed its name to the Staffordshire Record Society, as it is known today.

These sources have been catalogued by source type and date with each volume representing a different selection of sources from the early twelfth century to the sixteenth century and beyond. Most are short legal documents, introduced with an abstract detailing the type of source and its use, but they are not necessarily chronological. Because they were subject to translation and transcription, there are some inherent limitations to them. The local researchers that were responsible for their compilation, transcription, and translations were considered amateurs, thus inaccuracies and translation errors are inherent. Nevertheless, these sources are representative of the history of Staffordshire and the residents' legal actions in the central courts and chanceries in the central and late Middle Ages.

I use these documents in addition to genealogies, family deeds, parish registers, and other public records to explicate the familial relations, land ownership, and monastic connections of the Bassets to understand how they used family networks to maneuver the turbulent medieval world between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Although this date range is wide, encompassing over four hundred years, it is necessary

to frame the rise and fall of the Bassets with the changing political and economic climates of England during that time.

During the central Middle Ages, women's positions were far from fixed. Even from the eleventh century to the fourteenth, aristocratic women had vastly fluid and shifting roles. Although legal systems marked women in one of three states—unmarried, married, or widowed—women's experiences were not as static. They appear in legal documentation in growing numbers by the thirteenth century, typically interacting because of property or marital status, and frequently alongside their husbands. An unmarried woman received little if any legal independence until her father died, and married women frequently fell under the control of their husbands, only listed in legal documentation alongside their husbands if their own inheritance or marriage portion were involved in a transaction. Widowhood, on the other hand, conferred at least a degree of independence. Widows were more likely to interact with the legal systems, especially in regards to inheritance, property, dower, will making, and even patronage. They had far more control over land and movables, especially with respect to dower, which they acquired as a result of their husbands' death.²

As an important baronial family that emerged following the Norman Conquest in 1066 and rose to power through strategic alliances, political dealings, and profitable

² *Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England*, 2: Bracton Online, English, Harvard Law School, <http://bracton.law.harvard.edu/Unframed/English/v2/179.htm#FN12>; Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450–1500* (London: Phoenix, 1995), 168–186.

marriage, the Bassets serve as an important case study for examining the ways in which multiple generations of family networks can encapsulate the issues raised by more general studies. Although the history of the county of Staffordshire is well documented, scholars have done little research specifically on the Bassets, who were heavily involved in legal and land disputes throughout the West Midlands and Welsh Marches. Because of this, they are featured in many primary source collections. Unfortunately, many details of the family's history remain obscure, in part because of the repetitive use of first names throughout the family lineage as well as the inconsistent dating of land records and other official documents.³ This circumstance becomes even more problematic when examining the Basset women. Because most historical genealogical knowledge is based on legal documents, where women in the Middle Ages fell under

³ See Exhibit 1; This genealogy is built from a variety of sources. I used G.E.C. *The Complete Peerage*, legal records, and county histories such as *A History of the County of Staffordshire*, *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architecture and Archaeological Society*, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*. Where these sources were deficient or needed verification, I consulted the LDS Genealogical Survey.

Although my genealogical research is not exact, it does provide approximations of dates and relations. Because of the overlap of dates between Ralphs, legal records can be confusing, but by providing dates and possible relations, involvement in legal records can be better deduced.

Unfortunately, because this spans nearly 400 years of Bassets, to attempt to verify and analyze each relation in the family network would be a far larger project than this one.

their husbands' or fathers' control, the women of the Basset family go largely unacknowledged in both primary and secondary literature. This leaves historians with the job of reconstructing the gaps in the sources with educated speculation.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the Basset women played key roles in the success of the Basset family. It is important to note that like all elite medieval women, they were also treated as "pawns in the interests of powerful and ambitious men."⁴ Nonetheless, the Bassets created political ties with other medieval families through marriage, creating deliberate and powerful community networks.

In the process of developing my study of the Basset family in general, I will revisit questions raised by broader studies, particularly of women's roles in medieval England. I compare my findings to those summarized in monographs that have examined medieval law, the legal states of women in England, the power of property and patronage, and the role of elites in the disorder of the changing political landscape. My project differs from many more general scholarly works by spotlighting one specific family. My use of these illuminating public records will extrapolate large ideas from historical themes to further indicate that Basset women like Matilda were agents in their own world, yet who also had to maneuver a system that utilized them to unite families and create domestic power blocs.

Despite their large presence in legal documentation, few historians have worked to reconstruct the Basset family chronologically. Likely in part because of the difficulty

⁴ Peter Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England, 1000-1500* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1998), 25.

in differentiating generations of men with the same name, there has been little far-ranging research done on the Basset family men. Although Basset men are featured in many monographs, they are typically discussed minimally and as evidence for larger case studies.⁵ Historians have also largely ignored the Basset women as important players in this family's history. Judith Green published a short article examining Geva Ridel who, although not a Basset woman, married her children into the Basset family. Green's article "Women and Inheritance in Norman England: The Case of Geva Ridel," is one of the few discussions that attempts to break apart and examine the early Basset family. Although her article is well researched, she admits that due to the few sources that exist, speculation is necessary because "we simply do not know."⁶ She thus

⁵ Historians of central and late medieval English aristocracy frequently feature the Bassets. Among a few: Ralph Turner's *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Joel Rosenthal's *Nobles and the Noble Life 1295–1500* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976); J. S. Bothwell's *Falling From Grace: Reversal of Fortune and the English Nobility, 1075–1455* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); R. F. Treharne's *Simon de Montfort and Baronial Reform: Thirteenth-Century Essays*, Ed. B. Fryde (London: Hambledon Press History Series, 2003); Janet Meisel's *Barons of the Welsh Frontier: The Corbet, Pantulf, and Fitz Warin Families, 1066–1271* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1980); Seymour Phillips' *Edward II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁶ Green, 3.

presents the varying possible reconstructions for Geva's life to accommodate the lack of sources. She nonetheless clearly indicates the ways in which one woman's unusual experience could indicate the fluid nature of inheritance in the early twelfth century.

Because so few scholars have examined the Basset family, it is important to utilize secondary literature based on more general studies. Historians who have examined women, family, and their legal roles provide a foundation for much of my research. Linda Mitchell's *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225–1350* provides a base of both women's legal roles as well as their family lives through a series of case studies using a broad array of sources.⁷ Michael Sheehan's collected series of essays in *Marriage, Family, and Law in Medieval Europe: Collected Studies* provide another, but very different and often disjointed, set of research on late medieval women and family.⁸ His essays do not necessarily focus on particular women's case studies to clarify medieval trends, but instead he discusses trends, using many examples to support his evidence. Because I am narrowing my study to one particular family in one particular county over a large period of time, my study will follow more in line with the case studies presented by Linda Mitchell's monograph.

⁷ Linda E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225–1350* (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

⁸ James K. Farge collected and compiled Sheehan's essays posthumously, which is likely why this collection seems disjointed in nature; Michael Sheehan, *Marriage, Family, and Law in Medieval Europe: Collected Studies*, ed. James K. Farge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages is another collection of essays compiled by Isabel Davis, Miriam Müller, and Sarah Rees Jones that explores women's roles in marriage and inheritance, but few essays focus on England, and many of the essays are fourteenth century and later.⁹ Facing the same issue, *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe* by Theresa Earenfight, focuses on an array of localities, making it difficult to parse out issues specific to England between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries.¹⁰ To understand this changing political, economic, and social world of England in the late Middle Ages, it is necessary to examine the classic, and broad studies that focus on geography, political events, kingships, and even English feudalism.¹¹

This study draws on methods and conceptual frameworks associated with social history to build a study of family history that includes women's voices as well as men's. Investigating a variety of records, such as many forms of litigation and chronicles, opens

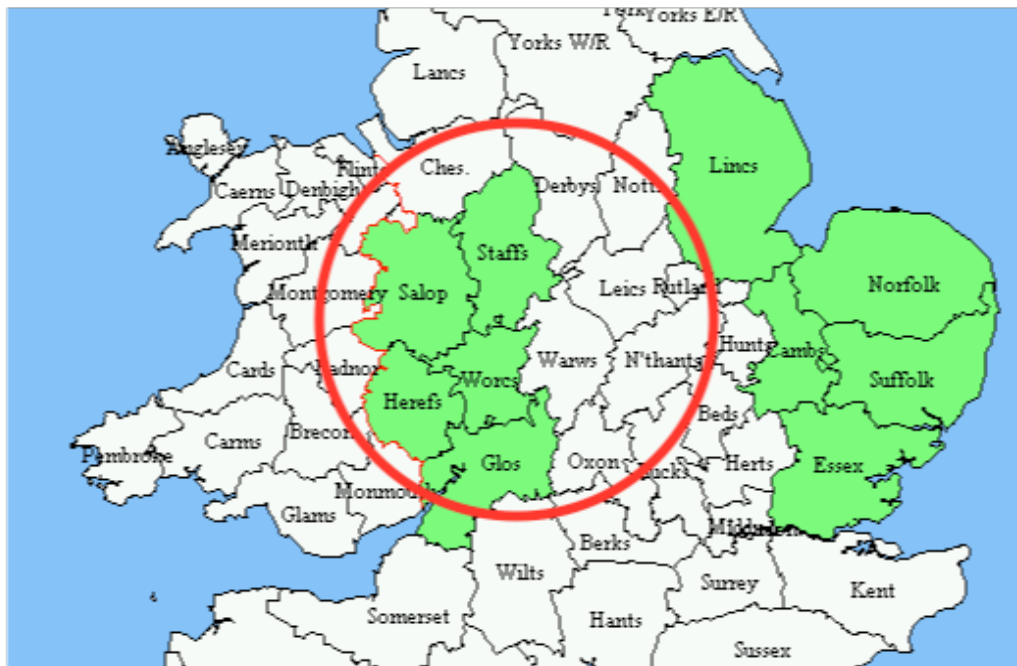
⁹ Isabel Davis, Miriam Müller, and Sarah Rees Jones, eds., *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

¹⁰ Theresa Earenfight, *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

¹¹ Classic work of twentieth-century historians includes that R. F. Treharne's *Simon de Montfort and Baronial Reform: Thirteenth-Century Essays*; F. M. Stenton's examination of English feudalism in the central middle ages in *The First Century of English Feudalism, 1066–1166*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961); and Ralph Turner's look at administrative service of the post conquest nobility in *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Nobility in Angevin*.

a window into the social history of Staffordshire women. This approach not only clarifies the number of Basset land grants involving women, but also indicates whether women were acting as a wives alongside their husbands or transferring land independently. This leads to a better understanding of the marital networks and their role in the larger political sphere. All of this facilitates an understanding of the relative wealth and power wielded by the Bassets within the county's patriarchal super-structure. In this regard, cultural constructions of gender in that society were actually more fluid than fixed and subject to significant variation in everyday lives at the local level. I argue that based on the tenuous political world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, family networking used women as important players in the creation of power blocs.

A Brief Note on the Geography of the West Midlands



Located in the West Midlands, Staffordshire sits to the east of Shropshire and to the west of Derbyshire and Leicestershire.¹² Its proximity to the Welsh borders, also known as the Welsh Marches, to the west made the West Midlands a contested area and a political hotbed throughout the Middle Ages. Welsh invaders frequently entered England, especially from Shropshire in the hilly northwest, to recover land. The precipitous terrain provided invaders with easy routes of retreat, and kept the English from fully conquering Wales until the 1280s, but because of their own disunity, the Welsh princes were unable to take any significant part of England. These territorial issues along the Marches meant that the Normans had to contend with the native English, as well as protect themselves against the Welsh invaders, thus creating motive for William the Conqueror to establish three of his best lieutenants along the March in 1066 to maintain peace.¹³ Because of its position, Staffordshire lands were frequently traveled by Welsh invaders, as well as figuring in English revolts. Exacerbating the political tensions, this area housed many powerful baronial families that were frequently at odds, either with other families vying for land holdings or against the king and the existing hegemonic structure.

¹² Map provided by The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, The Department of Geography, "Private Law and Medieval Village Society," *University of Cambridge* (2015) accessed online <http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/privatelaw/map.png>.

¹³ Meisel, 104.

CHAPTER 2

The Basset Family

The Rise of the Basset Family (1066–1135)

Although there may have been no theoretical social construction of an economic aristocracy in medieval England at the time, it was nonetheless a hierarchical culture.¹⁴ Social class and wealth played major roles in the lives of individuals as well as their families. J. S. Bothwell refers to the status of the nobility in medieval England as a rotating “wheel of fortune,” in which noblemen in particular could be marked by success in one generation and failure in the next.¹⁵ This ebb and flow of success or failure could be linked to several important considerations for a medieval noble family. The importance of material and landed wealth, public demonstrations of that wealth through acts such as patronage, advantageous political alignments, and advantageous marriages and family networks were pivotal in creating a lasting and successful noble family.

The Basset family rose to power in the early twelfth century with Thurstane Basset (b. 1050), a relatively humble Norman landowner who held five hides of land in Drayton, according to William I’s *Domesday Book*.¹⁶ His son was the first Ralph Basset,

¹⁴ Rosenthal, 17.

¹⁵ Bothwell, 2.

¹⁶ *The Battle of Abbey Roll with some Account of Norman Lineages*. Vol 1 (London: William Clowes and Sons, Limited, 1889), 106.

who served King Henry I, and was rewarded with grants of such proportions that he was said to have been “made superior to Earls and other illustrious subjects.”¹⁷ Henry I noted the need for a larger power base, especially among the nobility. He thus used land alienations of the royal demesne, as well as other property confiscated from the estates of rebellious individuals, to award land to raise and honor his personal favorites. In doing this, he built a substantial power base of nobility, and became known for raising men “from the dust.”¹⁸ Orderic Vitalis complained that Henry “ennobled others of base stock who had served him well, raised them, so to say, from the dust, and heaping all kinds of favour on them, stationed them above earls and famous castellians.”¹⁹ This sentiment was echoed in chronicles, and frequently misunderstood by other historians to mean a transformation from peasantry to aristocracy.

Henry’s penchant for raising men within the social order remains subject to question. Although distinct administrative and governmental changes took place, most of the men involved, such as Ralph Basset and Geoffrey de Clinton, were already

¹⁷ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, 3 vols., Trans. Thomas Forester (London, 1852–1910) in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architecture and Archaeological Society* 4, no 1 (1878): 25.

¹⁸ Ralph V. Turner explores this concept in *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Nobility in Angevin*; Bothwell, 91; Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. M. Chibnall, VI (Oxford, 1978), 16.

¹⁹ Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Vol 6, 16 quoted in Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England*.

considered elites.²⁰ Nevertheless, this developing administration provided opportunities for elite families to rise to more prestigious positions. Henry used families such as the Bassets to “counterbalance” the existing aristocratic power in England.²¹ Although to say the Bassets were “raised from the dust,” would be misrepresentation, the post-conquest world of England set the tone for the Bassets to emerge as a prominent and wealthy landed family. They never acquired the highest positions, but found themselves at a comfortable level of influence that they wished to maintain. Although the Basset family’s wealth was not solely the result of royal favor, royal patronage made it possible for the family to gain status and wealth through royal and ecclesiastical patronage, tax pardons, custody of minors, and favorable marriages, which would lead to favorable family networks.²² As the family gained status and rose from the lower ranks of the Norman baronage, they participated in a series of family

²⁰ Ralph Turner argues that these changes toward a more sophisticated governmental administration were largely marked by a change from oral to written record, which included literacy and numeracy. This is subject to debate as J. R. Lander points out that even in the seventeenth century, individual’s mathematical abilities were quite abysmal: J. R. Lander, “Review of *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England*,” *The American Historical Review* 95 no. 5 (December 1990), 1514.

²¹ Bothwell, 91.

²² *Basset Charters*, ed. W. T. Reedy, Pipe Roll Society, n.s. l. (1995), viii.

networking connections, especially through marriage, that gained far more land and wealth for them, representing their growing power base.²³

During Henry I's reign (1100–1135), as the Bassets grew in influence, they also made a pivotal family connection with another prominent landowning family, the Ridel, who, like the Bassets, were mentioned only briefly in the Domesday survey: Geoffrey Ridel came to Norfolk from Apulia in Southern Norman Italy between 1061 and 1084.²⁴ In the early twelfth century, as the Ridel emerged as an influential family, another Geoffrey Ridel I (d. 1120) became a royal justice for King Henry I. His landholdings were sparsely recorded, but by 1106 he had likely received the lands of Robert de Buci centered in Northamptonshire.²⁵ These landholdings were substantial and would later find their way into the Bassets' hands through marriage connections.

Geva and Matilda Ridel

²³ Although the West Midlands were subject to invasions and political disputes, the land provided resources such as animals and timber that collectively fostered the value of the land. The quantity of land was also important. The more land one had, even if it was not necessarily desirable or rich in resources still fostered value. Most inquisition records concerning land alienations frequently outline the land and resources on that land to indicate its worth.

²⁴ A. Farley, ed., *Domesday Book*, 2 vols. (1783), cited by Judith A. Green in "Geoffrey Ridel," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

²⁵ Judith A. Green in "Geoffrey Ridel," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

In the early 1100s, the royal justice Geoffrey Ridel married an heiress named Geva, who brought a considerable amount of land to her marriage. Geva's own history has been the subject of scholarly debate for some time. Like her husband, her early life is largely undocumented and must be contextually reconstructed from the little evidence that exists. Geva appears in two charters, in which she is identified as the daughter of Earl Hugh [d'Avranches] of Chester, and she is also identified as having received the manor of Drayton, Staffordshire as her marriage portion from him.²⁶ Geva was, in fact, one of Earl Hugh's illegitimate daughters; because he was known for favorable treatment of his illegitimate children, it is indeed possible that he granted Drayton to Geva as her *maritagium*.²⁷ Even though the evidence is sparse, it is clear that Geva was somehow connected to Earl Hugh of Chester, and came to hold much of the Drayton land that would eventually become the Bassets' source of power.

²⁶ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, new edn, 6 vols in 8 (London, 1817-30), IV, p. 105-6 and W. Dugdale, *The Baronage of England*, 2 vols (London, 1675-6), I, p. 34.

²⁷ Earl Hugh is named as having two illegitimate sons: Robert, who became a monk and eventually an abbot at Bury St Edmunds; and Otuel who became a tutor to King Henry I's children. Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, Vol VI (1856), 304; Judith Green, "Women and Inheritance," 3; Earl Hugh of Chester was noted for his generosity on several occasions and was said to have contributed sixty ships to the invasion of England and made the First Earl of Chester shortly thereafter (<http://thepeerage.com/p21588.htm#c215871.2>).

Judith Green, in her article about Geva Ridel, presents a number of speculative histories of Geva's origins—including the theory of her being the illegitimate daughter of Earl Hugh d'Avranches of Chester—in order to explain why she held property not only belonging originally to the earldom, but also an estate, the manor of Weldon, Northamptonshire, held originally by Robert de Boucy, a vassal of Earl Hugh.²⁸ Weldon would eventually, like Drayton, come into the hands of the Bassets. Green first speculates that Geva was the daughter and heiress of Robert de Boucy. This speculation is problematic because of the other evidence of her being the daughter of Earl Hugh—legitimate or not. It is unclear who Robert de Boucy was to her, or how she came to pass on his lands, but by the time of Geoffrey Ridel's death, the barony of Weldon was held by Geva in her own right.

Green also speculates that the Boucy lands could have come to Geva from a first marriage, either her own or (even more speculatively) her mother's marriage.²⁹ She suggests that Geva's mother might have been the mistress of Earl Hugh at one time, and the wife of Robert de Boucy at another time. In fact, Dugdale refers to Robert de Boucy's wife as Giofu (the Old English form of Geva) d'Avranches (the family name of

²⁸ BL Sloane Roll xxxi.5r; xxxi.6r in Green, 3. There are few historians that address this. Amateur genealogists occasionally identify Geva Ridel as Geva Buci, but they do not document this with primary source research, and frequently cite Green's own article; Northamptonshire is another Midlands county, separated from Staffordshire by Leicestershire.

²⁹ Green, "Women and Inheritance in Norman England," 4–5.

the first and second earls of Chester), but Green believes this to be a mistake.³⁰ If this is the case, it is unclear as to how Geva would have acquired both Drayton lands from Earl Hugh as well as the de Boucy lands at Weldon.

More interesting is the hypothesis that Geva was not related to Robert de Boucy at all, but that Earl Hugh, or King Henry, granted her the escheated barony of Weldon, because Robert de Boucy had no recorded heirs.³¹ Green's final hypothesis is that the Boucy lands were actually held by Geoffrey Ridel and that they passed from him to their daughter, Matilda, into the Basset family as her *maritagium*. If this is the case, then it is not clear why Geva is listed as holding Weldon in her own right after Geoffrey's death, but before Matilda's marriage. Green's research, although speculative, remains the most solid foundation on which to reconstruct Geva Ridel, her family, and the origins of her land. No matter what the origins of her land, this woman, who was likely of illegitimate birth, came to marry well, gain land, and acted as a conduit for the property and wealth that would eventually belong to the Bassets, giving them power and political sway in the country.

Geoffrey and Geva Ridel had two surviving children: a son, Robert, and a daughter—probably born first—Matilda. Geoffrey Ridel—along with Richard d'Avranches, second earl of Chester, and Prince William—died in the disaster of the

³⁰ O. von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names in Domesday Book* (Uppsala, 1937), 259; Green, "Women and Inheritance," 7.

³¹ B. L. Sloane Roll xxxi.5, mem. 1r; Sloane Roll xxi.6, mem. 1r; "Staffordshire Cartulary," 188, followed by Reedy, *Basset Charters*, p. x.

White Ship in 1120. Sometime soon after Geoffrey's death, King Henry I granted both the marriage of Matilda and wardship of the young Robert Ridel's lands (he was still a minor in wardship) to Richard Basset Lord Justiciary of all England, who was "of an ancient and noble family, being the son of Ralph Basset, Lord Justiciar of England; grandson of Thurstane, who came over with William the Conqueror."³² The marriage and grant of the wardship has survived in a royal charter, which is summarized in the Basset charters and translated from the Latin original in Stenton's *The First Century of English Feudalism*:³³

Henry king of the English greets the bishop of Lincoln and earl David and the earl of Leicester and earl Rannulf [le Meschin, third earl] of Chester and all the barons and lords of whom Geoffrey Ridel held lands . . . Know that I have given to Richard Basset the daughter of Geoffrey Ridel to wife, and the custody of Geoffrey Ridel's land until Robert Ridel can be a knight and marry the granddaughter of Ralf Basset, namely the daughter of one of his daughters . . . If Robert shall die without heir by his wife, I grant to Richard Basset and the heir

³² "Pedigree of the Ridels," in *History & Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, ed. by William Hutchinson, F. A. S, Vol III, (Durham, 1825), iv.

³³ This royal notification is dated between January 1121 and June 1123; B. L. Sloane Roll xxxi.4, m. 5r, no 47; hand 1; Translated fully in F. M. Stenton, *The First Century of English Feudalism, 1066–1166*, 259–260. See also, Green, "Women and Inheritance in Norman England," 3.

whom he shall have by the daughter of the aforesaid Geoffrey Ridel the whole land of Geoffrey Ridel, of whomsoever he held it.³⁴

This charter thus established a firm alliance between the Ridels and the Bassets. If Robert Ridel died prior to his marriage, then Matilda would be the heir of the entire estate; if he survived, Matilda and her husband were to be awarded other lands, presumably of similar value to the wardship. By these terms, according to Charlotte Newman, “Richard Basset not only received the income from his wife’s dowry and provided for his niece, but also received Robert’s income while he was a minor and became Robert’s potential heir.”³⁵ Judith Green isolates and examines this particular charter, stating that it is remarkable in many ways. Not only is there a “careful provision for the custody of heirs to a royal official, not their mother, who does not figure here,” but it is also a valuable insight to the influence of royal decisions, especially the relationship between royal officials, such as Geoffrey Ridel and Ralph Basset.³⁶

The charter’s witness list comprised many other prominent and rising noble families of the time including Rannulf, third earl of Chester, Nigel de Albini, Simon dean of Lincoln, William son of Rannulf of Chester, Thomas de St. John, Geoffrey de Clinton,

³⁴ Stenton, 34; Although Stenton translates this source, he does not discuss Geva or Matilda at all. He uses this land grant to demonstrate the significance of knighthood for children to claim family land.

³⁵ Charlotte A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: The Second Generation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 82.

³⁶ Green, “Women and Inheritance in Norman England,” 2.

Pain fitz John, William de Albini, Humfrey de Bohun, Robert Musard, Robert Basset, Osmund Basset, Turstin Basset, Ralf fitz Norman, Hugh Maubanc, and Geva herself.³⁷

Three Basset men appear on the witness list; this indicates that not only was the grant a family networking decision, but an obvious transition and connection from the waning Ridels to the rising Bassets. It is important to note that witness lists frequently included connections and circles of activity of the family. Both William and Nigel de Albini (d'Aubigny) were included as witnesses, indicating a level of activity between the Ridels, Bassets, and d'Aubignys. These two d'Aubigny brothers were the sons of the Norman aristocrat and known royalist Roger d'Aubigny, and over a century later, in the early thirteenth century, these families would network through the marriage of Geva's great-great-grandson, Ralph Basset IV, and Margaret de Somery, the coheiress of another d'Aubigny in the lineage, who would at that time be earls of Arundel.³⁸ This indicates that family networks were not immediate connections through marriage, but often led to later marriages.

In addition to the Ridel lands and Drayton, the de Boucy estate of Weldon, Northamptonshire formed Matilda's *maritagium*—the lands she brought to her marriage to Richard Basset—which, in later documents, were referred to as “de feodo

³⁷ Stenton, 34.

³⁸ G. E. Cockayne, *The Complete Peerage: Or a History of the House of Lords and all its Members from the Earliest Times*, vol. 2 (London: The Saint Catherine Press, 1926), 1; This will be hereby referred to as GEC.

Matildis Ridel,” and “de feodo Ridel.”³⁹ Thus the lands of Weldon—the de Boucy lands—that Geva mysteriously acquired became one of the first major grants of the alliance between the Ridels and the Bassets. Indeed, Matilda Ridel’s husband, Richard Basset, became known as Richard Basset of Weldon, the first baron Basset, as a result of Matilda’s transfer of property to the Basset family.⁴⁰ The wardship, inheritance, and *maritagium* granted by the king and attested by Geva all formed important components of this strategic marriage power play, and by encouraging the marriage of her two children into the same illustrious family, and the king granting land to both of them with her approval, Geva guaranteed her children’s future success beyond the simple inheritance. Even though Richard Basset—and by extension Matilda—were supposed to hold her father’s lands only in wardship, until her younger brother came of age and produced progeny, the lands—as well as Geva’s inheritance—would end up connected to the Bassets either way because of the stipulation that Robert marry one of Richard Basset’s nieces. Because Robert Ridel never produced progeny, all the lands of the Geva-Geoffrey Ridel marriage ended up instead in the hands of Matilda’s husband

³⁹ C. F. Slade, *The Leicestershire Survey c. A. D. 1130* (Leicestershire, 1956), 92.

⁴⁰ This is the first reference by King Henry I, naming Richard Basset a baron. *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066–1154*, vol. II: *Regesta Henrici Primi, 1100–1135*, ed. C. Johnson and H. A. Cronne (Oxford, 1956), no 1761 in *The Basset Charters*, xii; “Pedigree of the Ridels,” in *History & Antiquities of the County Palatine of Burliam*, ed by William Hutchinson, F. A. S, Vol III, (Durham, 1825), iv.; Judith Green, *The Government of England Under Henry I*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 232.

Richard Basset. Therefore Geva and Matilda essentially created the Basset family's source of landed power in the West Midlands. Without Drayton and Weldon, they would not be so obviously "raised from the dust."

Geva, even as an illegitimate female, was still able to bypass and influence the existing hegemonic structure by alienating and influencing land transfers.⁴¹ Moreover, Geva also participated in the enacting of public patronage, which was an important part of exerting influence beyond family connections, by founding the priory of Canwell in 1142. She granted the monks lands as well as a house in Drayton Basset.⁴² This served to connect, in yet another way, the Ridel and Basset names. Nonetheless, it was her

⁴¹ Although illegitimate children in aristocratic families frequently had fewer birthrights, such as rights to inheritance or land, they were often treated the same as one's legitimate children. They offered an extended family and extended connections, and in some cases such as Geva's, marriage and birth were both vitally important, as she associated herself with Earl Hugh of Chester as well as her husband. Despite this, even though there was less influence in church law, its influences also still pervaded the central and late middle ages. For instance illegitimate men could not be ordained, and in many cases subsequent marriages of the parents of illegitimate children did not legitimate them, and thus they did not have the same inheritance rights.

⁴² Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vol. iv, 104; Dugdale states that Geva's heirs were Geoffrey and Ralph Basset and concurred in Geva's donations. Dugdale appears to have the genealogy incorrect, as Geva had no child named Geoffrey, and her husband had been deceased for 22 years prior to this charter.

daughter Matilda's marriage network that would be the first of many influential connections for the Bassets, and they would use that strategy to continue to rise in power and influence.

Matilda's husband Richard was the first generation of Bassets to mark their emergence as an influential family, and his wife's connection to the Ridel family formed an important part of their success. Orderic Vitalis stated that Richard Basset was the son of a "new man," who continued to support the King and even built a tower at Montrieuil to indicate his own worth.⁴³ The couple's marriage was successful, at least with respect to progeny: they had at least five children, including three sons, Geoffrey, William, and Ralph. Despite Richard's obvious pride in his noble status, one of his three sons did not take the surname Basset. In fact, Geoffrey, the eldest, retained the matronymic surname of Ridel, while his brother, Ralph and William maintained the Basset name.⁴⁴ Although this strategy was not unheard of, it nonetheless indicates the continuing importance, at least for a time, of the Ridel name as well as the importance of the inheritance Matilda brought to the Basset family. This strategy failed, however, and Geoffrey Ridel II's son would return to the name Basset, marking the decline of the Ridel family.

⁴³ Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 6:16 in Charlotte Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I*, 73.

⁴⁴ *Facsimiles of Royal & Other Charters in the British Museum*, eds., George F. Warner and Henry J. Ellis (London, 1903), no 42.

Like Geva, Matilda and Richard also participated in religious patronage, founding “the Priory of Launde in Leicestershire, and endowed it with the villages of Lodington and Firsby with their churches in this country, and the churches of Weldon, Weston, Welham, Pitesla, Esseby, Patingham, Widerley, and Walshull, which foundation and endowment were confirmed by King Henry I.”⁴⁵ Through these public displays of wealth, piety, and power, as well as aligning with other affluent families, the Ridels could build their influence. The marriage alliance between Matilda and Richard, along with Henry I’s penchant for raising middle-class men such as Geoffrey Ridel and Ralph Basset “from the dust,” allowed these two families to cash in on the changing cultural and political post-Conquest world. Because so much native English land had been confiscated by William the Conqueror, as well the disinheritance thereby of the existing aristocracy, the Bassets and the Ridels had the opportunity and the means to insert themselves in the noble landed class by pledging their military allegiance to the king.⁴⁶

The Basset Family and Their Networks (1120-1219)

⁴⁵ “Basset Family,” ed. Rev. J. H. Hill in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architecture and Archaeological Society* 4 no, 1 (1878): 26.

⁴⁶ Hugh M. Thomas, “The Significance and Fate of the Native English Landholders of 1086,” *The English Historical Review* 118, no. 476 (April 2003), 303.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3490123>.

Although the history of the Basset family had its lulls during the mid twelfth century, Matilda and Richard's son, Ralph Basset I continued the upward trajectory of the family.⁴⁷ In 1151, Ralph I continued the powerful tradition of ecclesiastical patronage by granting "to God and the Church of St. Giles, of Canwell, and the monks there, the Church of Ragsdale, with all appurtenances, and the Church of Dunton, and four virgates of land in his demesne in Dunton, and one virgate there, which was given to them by Osbert, the Chaplain, and two mills and the land of Stickerslea."⁴⁸ He also gave land to the female monastic institution of the "Black Ladies" in the Priory of Brewood.⁴⁹ His influential patronage and noble status served him well and by 1163, he had been appointed the High Sheriff of Leicestershire and Warwickshire. A year later, his younger brother William joined him by serving under him.⁵⁰ In 1165, Ralph Basset I died, leaving his wife Alice as a widow. She was recorded as having held her own land in Ragsdale and Welles, and after Ralph's death, she held the land under her husband's brother, Geoffrey Ridel II.⁵¹

Despite this activity, the Basset family maintained a quiet presence during the reign of King Stephen, and their presence in early thirteenth-century litigation was also

⁴⁷ See Appendix A for the list of Ralph Bassets.

⁴⁸ "The Basset Family," 27.

⁴⁹ M.W. Greenslade, ed., *A History of the County of Staffordshire*, vol 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 220.

⁵⁰ "The Basset Family," 27

⁵¹ *Liber Niger Scaccarli*, f. 89, pg 210 in "The Basset Family," 27.

relatively low; nonetheless, the Bassets were still active in the political world. For instance, Thomas and Alan Basset were two surety barons of Magna Carta in 1215. Although Thomas Basset has often been overshadowed by his father, the more well known Thomas Basset I (d. 1182), he is nonetheless often found on witness lists elsewhere indicating his presence in public and legal activities. For instance, in 1200, prior to signing Magna Carta, he appears on a witness list alongside William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, in a charter of King John that patronizes the Church of B. Mary and St Ceede in Lichfield.⁵² His brother Alan was also active in the political world. He accompanied the king to Ireland in 1210, and was one of the signatories of Magna Carta in its reissue of the charter in 1216 after John's death. He was even rewarded for his political savvy by being employed in the *Curia Regis* and sent on political missions in France in 1219.⁵³

The Bassets in Rebellion and Reconciliation (1225-1327)

⁵² "The Great Register of Lichfield Cathedral," *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*.

Ed. William Salt Archeological Society (Kendal: Titus Wilson & Son, 1924), 210.

Originally printed in *Monasticon Anglicanum*, Ed. Sir William Dugdale. Vol III (London: 1817-1830), 233.

⁵³ Dugdale, W. *The Baronage of England*, vol 1. (London, 1675-1676), 383 in "Basset, Alan," *ODNB, 1885-1900*, vol 3, online edn, Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/1/101001635/>.

In 1229, Gilbert Basset (d. 1242), the son of Alan Basset, was granted a Norman escheated piece of land from the manor of Upavon in Wiltshire. This land had previously been held by Peter de Maulay who, after granting the land by charter in fee, stated that he had only surrendered custody of the land due to threats made by Hubert de Burgh, who controlled the Crown during the minority of King Henry III. The king, having reached his majority, seized Upavon from Basset and restored it to de Maulay.⁵⁴ Henry III later confessed that this was against Basset's lawful right.⁵⁵ Thus Gilbert Basset, upset that the king had seized his estates at Upavon, started a rebellion, and was quickly followed by his overlord Richard Marshal, Earl of Pembroke. In his attempt to quell these early murmurings of rebellion and to set an example, in 1233, Henry III ordered the property of Gilbert Basset and Richard Siward, followers of an earlier rebellion against the king, to be destroyed. Their houses were pulled down, their woods were laid waste, their ponds were filled, and their meadows ploughed.⁵⁶ Eventually, after Richard Marshal's death in 1234, Gilbert's lands were restored and he

⁵⁴ Nicholas Vincent, *Peter Des Roches: An Alien in English Politics, 1205-1238* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 335.

⁵⁵ C60/32, m. 8; Cl. Roll. 1231-4; CRR, xv, no. 131 in Vincent, *Peter Des Roches*, 335.

⁵⁶ *The Chronicle of Thomas Wyke* in Henry William Blaauw *The Baron's War: Including the Battles of Lewes and Evesham*. 2nd ed. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1871), 124.

was gifted with resources to rebuild his lands.⁵⁷ Gilbert's affiliations with the Marshal family were more than strictly political: shortly after Earl Gilbert Marshal's death in 1240, Gilbert Basset married Marshal's niece, Isabella Ferrers.⁵⁸ In doing this he connected himself with not only the influential Marshal family, but the Ferrers, earls of Derby, and another important ally in Staffordshire. Despite the restoration of Gilbert Basset's lands, the hostility of the Bassets to King Henry's court remained. Thus local conflicts could have larger implications for baronial families like the Bassets.

By 1257, several Staffordshire tenants were called to assist King Henry III in his ongoing conflict against the native princes of Wales. Many Staffordshire barons were displeased with Henry's methods of government, and this dissatisfaction was perhaps exacerbated by the floods and famine that struck much of Staffordshire in 1254. Between the great fire of Burton, the floods, a particularly fierce hailstorm followed by whirlwinds, which leveled trees and buildings in the valley of Trent, the people of Staffordshire sought protection against the effects of these natural disasters, as well as the political tensions and land disputes that came out of the border wars occurring in Wales and along the March. These conflicts came to a head twice, during the first

⁵⁷ A. D. Carpenter, *The Reign of King Henry III* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 36–40; Nicholas Vincent, "Basset, Gilbert (d. 12421) *knight and rebel*," Oxford University Press, 2004–2015: *Oxford Dictionary National Biography Online*. <http://odnb2.ifaactory.com/view/previous/1639/2004-09>. See the *Curia Regis rolls* vol. XV for a more detailed discussion on the Upavon case.

⁵⁸ GEC, Vol 11, 20.

“Barons’ War” of 1258-1260, and again more broadly with the second Barons’ War, which was led by Simon de Montfort against the king in 1263–1264. Simon de Montfort’s rebellion began as a simple confrontation with Henry over Montfort’s misdeeds in his governance of Gascony.⁵⁹ This already tetchy political world, combined with the baronial discomfort with the king’s power, led Montfort to a full-scale rebellion against the king.

In Staffordshire, there were few supporters of the king. James Audley and Roger de Somery were two of the three most prominent tenants that favored Henry III, while many more, such as Robert de Ferrers, Hugh le Despenser, Ralph Basset of Drayton IV, Henry de Verdun, and many more were staunchly against the King.⁶⁰ Thirty years after Gilbert Basset’s land had been destroyed, on March 31, 1264, the bells of St. Paul in London were rung as a signal of assembly. Shortly thereafter rebellion broke out, destroying the property and goods of the king and all who opposed the rebellion.⁶¹

⁵⁹ J. S. Bothwell, 25–28; Bothwell uses Matthew Paris’ account of the relationship between the King and Montfort, and although he admits that Paris’ accounts were occasionally wrong, he indicates that they nonetheless indicate the overarching conflicts caused by nobles crossing kings.

⁶⁰ Henry was said to have held a grudge against Robert de Ferrers, who had married his niece, thus should have bound him to the royalists; *Victoria History of the County of England: A History of Staffordshire*, vol. I, 226, *The Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/stream/victoriastafford00pageoft#page/226/mode/2up>).

⁶¹ Henry William Blauw, *The Baron’s War*, 124.

After the battle of Lewes on May 14, 1264, the king was forced to cede some of his powers to de Montfort. Earl Simon, acting in the name of Henry III, granted the title of “*custos pacis*” (Keeper of the Peace) to Ralph Basset of Drayton V (d. 1265), Richard Trussel of Kibblestone, William de Bermingham, and Roger de Somery.⁶² This was especially interesting, as the same Ralph Basset that held *custos pacis* died fighting with Hugh Despenser against Henry III at Evesham on August 4, 1265, while Roger de Somery was one of the king’s few supporters in Staffordshire. This indicates that many feudal ties with the king could be either severed or strengthened by political and family connections during this time.⁶³

Despite early attempts to quell their political dissent, the Basset family expanded in land, wealth, and influence in Staffordshire in the thirteenth century, maintaining a strong legal and political presence. For instance, in May 1265, while King Henry was imprisoned by Earl Simon, Ralph Basset IV (d. 1265) of Drayton was positioned as a Keeper of the Peace in Shropshire and Staffordshire. He was selected for this position because the town of Shrewsbury had “borne themselves toward the king otherwise than they should, and amongst other things done against him.”⁶⁴ By May 6, 1265 a few

⁶²*Victoria History of the County of England: A History of Staffordshire*, vol. I, 228, *The Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/stream/victoriastafford00pageuoft#page/228/mode/2up>).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Shrewsbury is located in Shropshire, not far east of the Welsh marches. The castle of Shrewsbury that was put under the protection of Ralph Basset of Drayton was the same

months prior to the Battle of Evesham, where Ralph Basset IV would lose his life, Simon de Montfort and the barons called upon him to maintain the castle of Shrewsbury:

Mandate to Ralph Basset, constable of the castle of Shrewsbury, to maintain the said castle with men, as the disturbance in the realm is not yet settled in those parts, and the king will cause the cost thereof to be repaid to him: and as Hamo Lestrangle and his fautors[sic] wish to attract certain rebels of those parts to him against the king, he is to bring all of those parts back to unity and concord, and take into the king's hands the lands and goods of contrariants.⁶⁵

The castle of Shrewsbury had long since been subject to political turmoil, both due to its geographical location in Shropshire, near the Welsh Border, as well as its earlier besiegement by King Stephen. Ralph IV died months later at Evesham, leaving behind the widow Margaret de Somery and two children.

Ralph Basset IV (d. 1265) had married Margaret de Somery before 1242. She was the daughter of an aristocratic landowner and Baron of Dudley, Roger de Somery, a staunch supporter of the king, and her mother Nicole D'Aubigny was the eventual coheiress to her father, William, Earl of Arundel.⁶⁶ Despite her husband's political

castle that had been besieged by King Stephen in the mid twelfth century; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Henry III, 434. The implication is that the castle of Shrewsbury was actually a royalist stronghold—Earl Simon was in charge of the chancery at the time the letter was written.

⁶⁵ During this time, King Henry was a prisoner of Earl Simon, who was in charge of the Great Seal. Because of this, enemies “against the king,” thus refer to royalists who were attempting to free King Henry; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Henry III, vol. 5, 422.

⁶⁶ *Writ of diem clausit extremum*, 17 Edward I (*Fine Roll*, m. 4) in GEC, vol 3, 551.

leanings, Margaret took her father's own political ideology, even prior to her husband's death. Although her husband died fighting alongside Simon de Montfort and his lands and wealth were forfeit to the king, Margaret's own lands, such as the manor of Pattingham, were granted to her for her support of the crown.⁶⁷ As luck would have it, those same lands would survive as Basset property, and were also conveniently situated next to the land of the Wrottesleys, another aristocratic, royalist, and landed family of the time. In fact, Margaret's own granddaughter, Joan Basset, would marry into the Wrottesley family in 1313, combining these properties and expanding land and wealth through geographical convenience and strategic marriage.⁶⁸

Margaret's marriage to Ralph Basset IV played an important role in aligning the two families. As a marriage conduit who had one foot on either side of the Barons' Wars, Margaret would have known the benefits of having married into land and political power. Especially as a widow, Margaret had more power and control of her husband's and father's lands, as well as that which was granted as dower by the king for her own support. Margaret and Ralph had three children, two sons and one daughter.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ "History of the Family of Wrottesley, or Wrottesley, co. Stafford," ed. Honorable Geoffrey Wrottesley, *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, n.s. vol vi part 2 (Exeter: Wm. Pollard & Co. LTD, 1903), 62.

⁶⁸ "History of the Family of Wrottesley, of Wrottesley, co. Stafford," 62.

⁶⁹ Roger and Ralph Basset are both listed as Margaret and Ralph's sons. Both sons are listed as having been born the same year and the same, indicating that they may have been twins. Roger Basset is sparsely mentioned again. It is likely that Roger either died

Although her sons, Ralph V and Roger, are listed as having been born in the 1240s, her daughter Matilda Basset is noted to have been born shortly before her father's death at Evesham.⁷⁰

After Ralph IV (d. 1265) died and Margaret received her land, her son, Ralph Basset V took up arms and attended King Edward I at Worcester in 1277 against Llewellyn, the Prince of Wales. Five years later, he fought against the Welsh; the following year, he went to Shrewsbury to consider judgment for the Welsh Prince held captive. He fought for the king in Gascony, Flanders, Scotland, and at Portsmouth, and was eventually summoned to Parliament as a Baron by Writ.⁷¹ This indicates that even though his father was a rebel, fighting and dying alongside Simon de Montfort, Ralph Basset V took on the political positions of his mother and maternal lineage. Eventually Ralph Basset V would go on to marry Helewise de Grey, the daughter of John de Grey (d. 1265), and in doing so, would connect with another important and wealthy family. Margaret continued to connect to noble families and remarried Ralph de Cromwell in 1268. Remarriage was relatively common at this time. Frequently women were not given a choice, as subsequent marriages were arranged by overlords or even the king.

in childhood or is the result of a clerical error, either on the part of a medieval clerk or a modern scholar.

⁷⁰ Her exact date of birth and death is unknown. An estimation was acquired through the LDS genealogical survey, "Pedigree Resource File," *FamilySearch* (<http://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.2.1/SR6P-MV1> : accessed 2014-03-13).

⁷¹ "The Basset Family," 28.

Despite this, some aristocratic women had more influence and personal sway. Although being a widow had its benefits, marriage brought about new connections, land, wealth, and frequently a greater degree of comfort as one aged. Nonetheless, Margaret was widowed again in 1289, and shortly before Margaret took the veil in 1293, she enfeoffed her son Ralph Basset V with the lands of Drayton Basset, Colston Basset, and Pattingham in March of 1292.⁷²

Although Margaret connected the Somerys and Bassets, her marriage to Ralph de Cromwell II of Cromwell, Nottinghamshire, and West Hallam, Derbyshire in 1270 indicates her interest in maintaining her influential and noble status. The Cromwells were another emerging noble family.⁷³ In fact, Margaret de Somery had a child with Ralph Cromwell, Ralph Cromwell III. He was not only politically active, but, like his half-brother, Ralph Basset V, served King Edward I in Wales in 1277, and was summoned for military service in 1276 and 1282, and attended the king at Shrewsbury in 1283.⁷⁴ His first wife was Joan de Grey, from the prestigious De Grey family.⁷⁵ By the late

⁷² "The Basset Family," 28 and GEC, vol 2, 2.

⁷³ GEC, vol 2, 2; This refers to Ralph de Cromwell II, son of Ralph Cromwell I.

⁷⁴ *Scutage Roll*, no. 9, m. 2 in GEC, vol 3, 551.

⁷⁵ Margaret's son Ralph Basset V married Helewise de Grey and her second son, Ralph Cromwell III married Joan de Grey. Although she transferred much of her wealth to Ralph Basset V, because her sons married into the same family, similar to the earlier Ridels, intermarrying families created not only opportunities to expand wealth, but opportunities to ensure multiple children would have access to that wealth.

fourteenth century, the Cromwells were well known aristocratic landowners, acquiring the estate of Tattershall Castle in 1375.⁷⁶ Their success continued into the sixteenth century. This second marriage of Margaret de Somery to Ralph de Cromwell further highlights the ways in which family networks, especially families like the Somerys, whose influence was waning, could marry into families, like the Cromwells, whose influence was growing.

Similar to Geva Ridel, Margaret de Somery was not a Basset by birth, but nonetheless, acted as a conduit for land into the Basset lineage. More than a mere means of land transfer, Margaret de Somery also acted as a political go-between, who bridged her rebel husband and her royalist father. This raises interesting questions about family networks and women, not only as channels of wealth and land, but also as the means of abating political disputes. Little is known of Margaret de Somery, but her marriage anchored two important families together despite their own political dissent, indicating the manner in which politics of the thirteenth century could split noble families on a local level.⁷⁷

The Bassets' participation in the rebellion did not stop them from expanding their wealth and land. By the late thirteenth century, the Bassets had become active participants in litigation in royal courts against other prominent noble families. The internal political strife, as well as the ubiquitous Welsh threat, persisted as consistent

⁷⁶ GEC, vol 3, 552.

⁷⁷ "Inquisitions ad quod Damnum," *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, ed the William Salt Archeological Society (London: Harrison and Sons, 1913), 63.

issues. In 1275, King Edward I cautioned the Sheriff of Shropshire and Staffordshire that, because of the Welsh Prince's refusal to pay homage to him, he was considering an invasion of North Wales. Because Edward was allied with the Powys lordship, when Llewelyn of Gwynedd invaded Powys, Edward took action, and by 1282, the Welsh had broken into revolt. Among those called to drive the Welsh out were Roger de Somery, Geoffrey de Geneville, Richard Basset of Weldon, Nicholas Baron of Stafford, and John Fitz Philip. With Edward's sound preparations and strategy, the Welsh prince, Llewellyn was surprised and killed; Welsh independence fell shortly thereafter in 1283.⁷⁸

Although Ralph Basset IV died at Evesham and Margaret remarried Cromwell, she was still at the core of even more litigation between the Somerys and the Bassets.⁷⁹ In 1291, two years after Ralph Cromwell died, Margaret's father Roger Somery also died, leaving a twelve-year-old son, John. Roger's *inquisition post mortem* lists a Ralph Basset, likely Margaret's own son with Ralph Basset IV, as having held his manor at Pattingham by the service of one knight's fee.⁸⁰ By the time he came of age, Roger de Somery's son, John, continued to interact with the Bassets through legal means, even after Margaret's

⁷⁸ *Victoria History of the County of England: A History of Staffordshire*, vol. I, 230, *The Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/stream/victoriastafford00pageuoft#page/230/mode/2up>).

⁷⁹ GEC, vol 12, 2.

⁸⁰ "Inquisitions Post Mortem," *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, ed. William Salt Archeological Society (1911), 202.

death. In 1313, an *inquisition ad quod damnum* was made requesting that the king may grant to John de Somery the mediety of the manor of Walshale, which was held to Ralph Basset V. In 1317, John acknowledged that the manor of Walshale was a gift to him, and in return received a monetary gift from Ralph Basset V.⁸¹ Even when John de Somery died in 1322, Ralph Basset is still listed as holding one knight's fee in Pattingham.⁸² This connection with the Bassets and the Somerys lasted nearly a century, and indicates the ways in which family connections were not always severed by political differences, death, or new marriages. These family networks were far more complex, and despite family political and legal issues, expanding landed wealth was vital to maintaining power and influence.

The End of the Bassets as Persons of Influence (1327-1390)

Ascending the throne in 1307, Edward II's reign (1307-1327) generated even more political and military conflict. In 1308, King Edward II married Isabella of France, who was the twelve-year-old daughter of King Philip IV. This strategic marriage was designed to bolster relations and ease tensions between England and France that were traceable to the English monarch's claims in Normandy and the King of France's extraction of feudal homage by the King of England as lord of Gascony. Edward II's close political ties to the wealthy and unpopular Despenser family—both father and

⁸¹ "Calendar of Final Concords or Pedes Finium," in *Collections for a History of Staffordshire* (1911), 90.

⁸² "Inquisitions Post Mortem," *Collections for a History of Staffordshire* (1911), 353.

son—who served as the King’s advisers, weakened his standing with powerful baronial factions in parliament. Several noble families in Staffordshire fought against the king, such as James and John, the sons of William de Stafford, William de Charlton, Nicholas de Longford, Richard de Stretton, John de Swynerton, and both the elder and younger Hugh de Audley. Despite this, both John de Somery and a younger Ralph Basset of Drayton V both maintained their loyalties to the king and were rewarded for their services by land grants and manors.⁸³ They continued to patronize religious houses, and in a 1335 *inquisition ad quod damnum*, Ralph Basset VI, transferred land as well, but under the circumstances that “he may give and assign to three Chaplains celebrating divine service daily in the Church of St. John the Baptist of Drayton, for the soul of the same Ralph and the souls of his ancestors and heirs, and of all the faithful deceased, three acres of land in Drayton Basset.”⁸⁴

Matilda Basset of Eton

Despite her son’s Ralph VI’s influential patronage as well as his military and political accolades, Margaret de Somery likely influenced her son’s political strategy, and with a young daughter, she would have known the importance of powerful network connections that a strategic marriage could provide. Although nothing is mentioned in

⁸³ This would have likely been the son of the same Ralph Basset that died fighting against the king. *Victoria History of the County of England: A History of Staffordshire*, vol. I, 228, *The Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/stream/victoriastafford00pageuoft#page/234/mode/2up>).

⁸⁴ *Collections for a History of Staffordshire* (1913), 47–48.

regards to her daughter Matilda during Margaret's life, Matilda appears in a legal document in her old age: in a 1337 *inquisition ad quod damnum*, Matilda Basset is listed granting a large tract of land to a small priory in Staffordshire:

Writ of *Ad quod damnum* to inquire if it be of the damage or prejudice of the King or of others, if the King grants to Matilda Basset of Eton, that she may give and assign to the Prior and Convent of Trentham four messuages, forty acres of land, four acres of meadow and eighty acres of moor.⁸⁵

This record indicates that Matilda did not only hold land, but that she acted alone in its legal transfer, most likely as a widow. This particular record raises questions as to how Matilda would have received her land, as well as her motivations for patronizing this particular priory.

The origins of Matilda's land are unclear; because she had a brother, it is unlikely that the land Matilda transferred in 1337 formed any part of his inheritance from her natal family. More than likely, this land either comprised part of her *maritagium*, or was a jointure granted to her and her late husband, John de Grey. Like her mother,

⁸⁵ Matilda and Maud are variations of the same name. Matilda is the Latin version of Maud and would be used in official documents.; "Inquisitions ad quod Damnum," *Collections for a History of Staffordshire* (1913), 63; It is difficult to trace if anything had been recorded as surnames were not regulated. It is likely that she did participate in transactions, but because the name Matilda/Maud is so common, it would be impossible to identify her as the same Matilda Basset of Eton.

Matilda connected two powerful landowning families.⁸⁶ The de Greys of Wilton were another powerful landowning baronial family in Staffordshire. John de Grey was the son of Reginald de Grey, the first lord Grey of Wilton. Reginald had been justice of Chester, received a grant of the castle of Ruthin and had previously been married to Maud de Longchamp, the heiress of Henry de Longchamp, and likely received land and monetary benefits from her upon her death in 1302.⁸⁷ His son was John de Grey, 2nd baron of Wilton, who received much of his father's wealth upon his death in 1308. Like the Bassets, the de Greys frequently vacillated between staunch loyalty to the Crown and rebellion. They were also known political and military actors by the early fourteenth century.⁸⁸

It is clear that John de Grey, Matilda's husband, had inherited land from his father Reginald upon his death in 1308. According to *The Complete Peerage*, Reginald held land in several areas, one of which was Water Eaton, likely received through his wife's family:

He held the Manors of Brogborough, Thurleigh and Wrest, Bedfordshire; Great Brickhill, Snellson and Water Eaton or Waterhall, Buckinghamshire; Hemingford, Toseland and Yelling, Huntingdonshire; Kempleigh, Gloucestershire; Purleigh, Essex; Rushton, Cheshire; Ruthin, Denbighshire; Shirland; and Wilton, Herefordshire.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ It is unusual to note that Maud "Matilda" Basset used her natal name, despite her marriage into the illustrious de Grey family.

⁸⁷ *Fine Rolls*, 8 Edward II, m.8 in GEC, vol 6, 173.

⁸⁸ *Scottish Roll*, 7 Edward II, m. 3 in GEC, vol 6, 174.

⁸⁹ GEC, vol 6, 171.

Upon Reginald's death, a barony by writ was issued concerning John De Grey.⁹⁰ It stated that John de Grey, Lord Grey of Wilton, "aged 40 and more at his father's death. On 5 May 1308 he had livery of his father's lands, his homage being respited, the escheator South of Trent being ordered to take his fealty." Not only did he have his father's lands, but also "founded a collegiate church at Ruthin."⁹¹ It also stated that a Matilda appears as his second wife: "he *m.*, 2ndly, Maud, who is said to have been the da. of Ralph Basset, of Drayton, co. Stafford, by Margaret, da. of Sir Roger de Somery, of Dudley, co. Worcester."⁹² This further indicates that John de Grey, grandson of Sir John Grey of Wilton was married to a Matilda Basset, and although it is difficult to be definitive with such little evidence concerning this particular woman, it is very likely the same Matilda Basset of Eton responsible for the land transfer to the Priory of Trentham. John's first wife, whom he married sometime around 1280, was Anne Ferrers, daughter of William de Ferrers and Alice le Despenser. Clearly John de Grey

⁹⁰ A Barony By Writ is a writ of summons to the House of Lords for an individual heir of a barony holder; Frederic William Maitland and Herbert Albert Laurens Fisher, *The Constitutional History of England: A Course of Lectures* (Cambridge University Press, 1913).

⁹¹ GEC, vol 6, 174.

⁹² Ibid.

knew the importance of family networks, as the Ferrers were yet another prominent Staffordshire family.⁹³

It is difficult to determine what happened to Anne Ferrers, but in 1289, John de Grey married Matilda Bassett. The transfer to Trentham Priory probably occurred late in Matilda's life and there is little clear evidence of her activities in widowhood or during her marriage. In addition, the charter granting the land to the priory is no longer extant, so it is impossible to know why she chose to patronize that priory. Despite this, there are many motivations for patronage. As important as land was, bequeathing land, especially to a religious house was also a signifier of wealth and power. Public demonstrations of that power were another important facet of noble life. Giving land to a religious house not only provided the donor a chance for public recognition, but also created the prospect for a favorable afterlife. More immediately and especially important for widows, patronage often translated as a means by which to pay for funerals or could serve as payment for a space in which to retire in their old age. Because property translated into power, and church patronage represented a way to demonstrate that, religious patronage takes on a complex meaning and indicates the ways in which an affluent family might exert dominance over the religious world, while publically showcasing their wealth to other families as well.

Because of the importance of land, trespassing and poaching were consistent problems throughout the Middle Ages, but the political turmoil of the fourteenth century exacerbated this, often leading to unlawful clearing of forests. Litigation

⁹³ Ibid.

indicates that the Bassets were active in attempts to quell these problems on their land, especially in the mid-fourteenth century in the wake of the Plague. For instance, in 1354, one of the last Ralph Bassets of Drayton, Ralph VIII, sued John le Cook, Nicholas le Blount, Thomas Hone, John Sadeler and four others for breaking into his park at Drayton, and chasing and killing his wild animals.⁹⁴ A year later, a commission of *Oyer et Terminer* was issued by Ralph Basset VIII “son of Ralph Basset of Drayton” against several men listed as knights who carried off his goods at Tamworth.⁹⁵ Again in 1357, presumably the same Ralph Basset sued Ralph del Bache and Simon del Bache for killing three hinds on his land at Drayton.⁹⁶ Because acquiring and bequeathing land was imperative to maintain noble status, unlawful clearance and poaching destroyed valuable resources. Gaining the most politically, economically, and geographically advantageous land as possible frequently depended on strategic marriages, family connections, and new land holdings as well as land transfers.

The primary line of the Bassets of Staffordshire seem to disappear from legal documentation by the close of the fourteenth century. Given the calamities of war and plague that marked the century, it is not surprising: failures of the male line were

⁹⁴ “Assizes of Lichfield,” in *Collections for a History of Staffordshire: Extracts from the Plea Rolls of The Reign of Edward III*, vol 12 (London, 1891), 126.

⁹⁵ “Pleas of Assize Taken at Stafford,” *Collections for a History of Staffordshire: Extracts from the Plea Rolls of The Reign of Edward III*, vol 12 (London, 1891), 148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

common to many families.⁹⁷ The Basset family was highly dependent on land, power, and networking connections to maintain its influence, and even though their prominence waned, they still attempted to use their wealth strategically. Even the will of the last Basset Drayton, of yet another Ralph Basset, who died in 1390, indicates that he left his property “to the augmentation of the community by five monks. . . and to make a wall toward the water and a new belfry.”⁹⁸ Although formulaic, this language indicates a significant level of devotion to the local Drayton Basset church, and an awareness of the importance of the salvation of his family lineage. Although they sometimes made politically poor choices, the Basset family networked well, and had over three hundred years of successes. The political turmoil of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries in England had far reaching affects for everyone. Other noble families like the Bassets had to ensure their political alliances, make fruitful decisions, while maintaining and acquiring land and wealth as well.

Conclusion: The Impact of the Bassets on the Politics and Culture of the West

Midlands

The medieval world felt the impact of the changing political, economic, and shifting natural climate of the central and late Middle Ages. Like so many aristocratic

⁹⁷ Although the noble aristocratic Basset family waned in prominence during the fourteenth century, there were Bassets all over England by this time.

⁹⁸ Dugdale, *Baronage of Eng I* (1675), 381 quoted in M.W. Greenslade, ed., *A History of the County of Staffordshire* vol 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 215.

noble families, the Basset family grew in prominence during this time of change. They emerged from the eleventh century and rose to power using strategic alliances, political affiliations, and marriage networks, connecting families and forming landed blocs of power. Although women such as Geva, Margaret, and Matilda serve as examples of women's roles in family networks, many more Basset women, such as Matilda Ridel, Isabella Ferrers, and Joan Wrottesley were also active in marriage networks, even as the family waned in influence. This is not to say all women married out of sheer political strategy, and it should be noted that although marriages were frequently strategic, it is impossible to understand the human dynamic and personal motivations of these relationships. It is anachronistic to identify these by modern standards of marriage arrangement, but it is important to note that these marriages were a convention of medieval noble life. Aristocratic families were more likely to maintain their circles of activity with other aristocratic families, and by doing this, they arranged marriages within their existing networks.

Although the Bassets rose "from the dust," Geva and her daughter Matilda Ridel were the initial conduits for which the Basset family gained their land, power, and influence. Despite the speculation inherent in discussions of Geva's life, it is clear that she received favorable treatment as a purported illegitimate daughter, and continued to make wise decisions, especially in her widowhood, that allowed her to provide well her own children by marrying them into the same family. Due to the death of her son, her daughter Matilda came to hold a great deal of land, and by acting as a conduit for so

much wealth, began the long tradition of strategic marriage alliances, formed to bolster the Basset family.

This networking strategy would continue throughout the family's rise, Margaret de Somery, like Matilda and Geva, was initially an outsider from another landed family. She acted as a political conduit, connecting royalists and rebels. After her husband's death, she remarried into the rising Cromwell family, to maintain her affluent and influential marriage connections. She lived long enough to be widowed twice before retiring to the convent. Even her own granddaughter, Joan Basset, would marry into the neighboring Wrottesley family to preserve geographical, land, and family connections. As the family waned in influence, Matilda Basset of Eton, a Basset by blood, connected herself with the de Grey family, and although she kept her natal name, she marked the fading decline of the Bassets. She attempted to use patronage to maintain Basset influence, but it failed to do so, and by the fifteenth century, although many Bassets lived across the country, the Bassets of Drayton and Weldon that had been so politically and economically influential vanished.

These women of the Basset family are indicative of the larger trend of family networking among elite families in the Middle Ages. Women continued to serve as important players in marriage networks between landed families connecting and amplifying existing power structures within individual and generational family units. These Basset women made deliberate choices to enhance the status of wealth and family and continued to strategize ways in which to maintain family status, even when widowed. Even though the Basset men frequently made these marriage strategies

difficult with poor political decisions, ultimately, the real energy for family preservation, especially after the reign of Henry I in 1135, lay with the women in the family. They were the real conduits of land, power, and influence. Despite that the men of the family were more notably responsible for these connections, arranging marriages in strategic ways, it was the women that created the foundation of these connections and their influence that created these powerful ties. Although their personal influence will never be known, they were nonetheless full partners in family strategies of maintenance, expansion, assimilation, and alliance forming that marked the rise and decline of this noble family.

APPENDIX A

Due to the consecutive and repetitive nature of the name Ralph Basset, I will be referring to the series of Ralph Bassets as follows:

The first Ralph Basset (1076–1120) was the son of Thurstane Basset.

Ralph Basset I (b. 1131–unknown) was the son of Richard Basset and Matilda Ridel.

Ralph Basset II (b. 1160–1211) was the son of Ralph Basset I and Alice.

Ralph Basset III (b. 1189–1254), son of Ralph Basset II and Isabelle.

Ralph Basset IV (b. 1215–1265), son of Ralph Basset III and unknown mother.

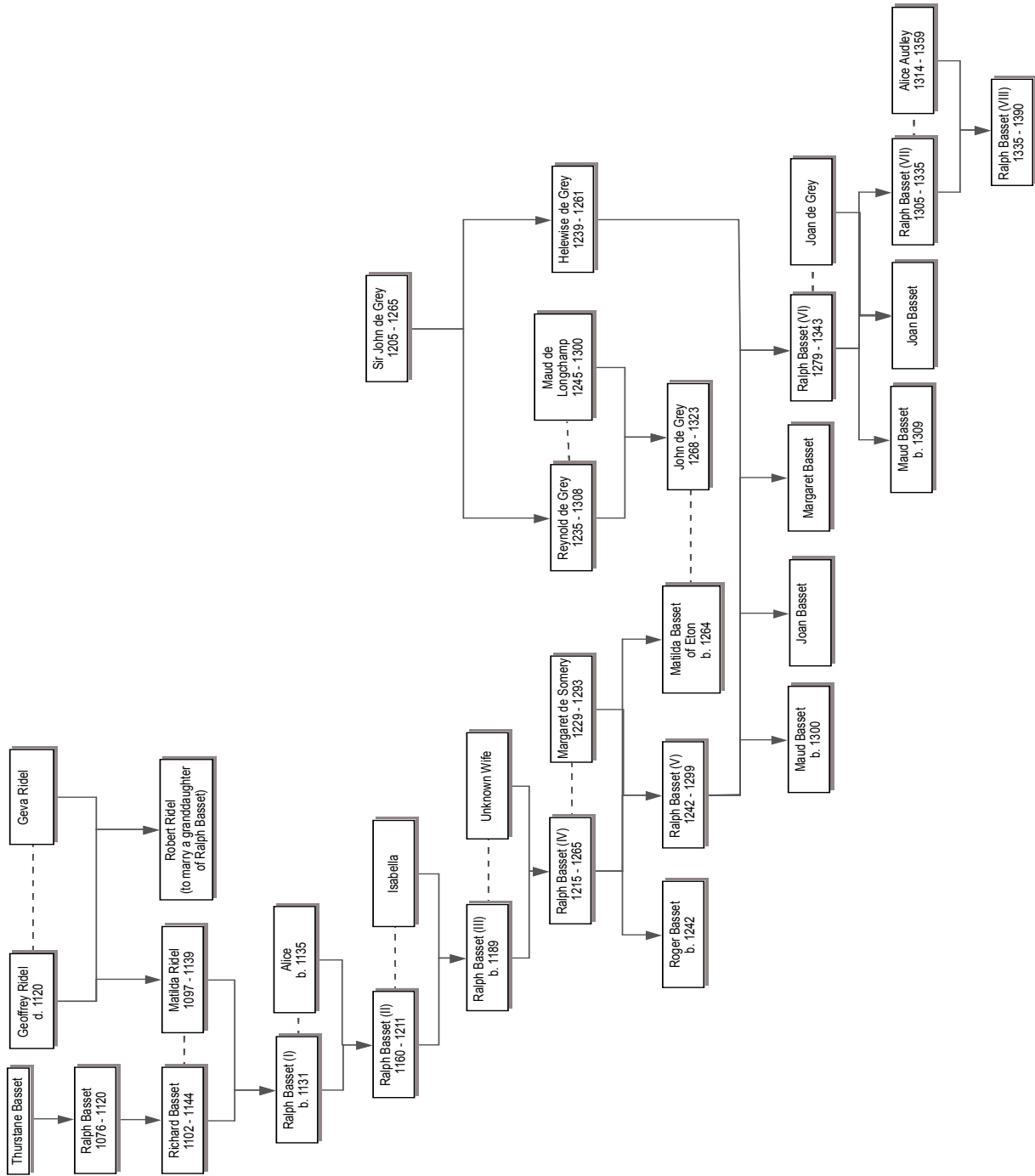
Ralph Basset V (1242–1299), son of Ralph Basset IV and Margaret de Somery.

Ralph Basset VI (1279–1343), son of Ralph Basset V and possibly de Grey mother.

Ralph Basset VII (est 1305–1335) son of Ralph Basset VI and Joan de Grey.

Ralph Basset VIII (est 1335–1390) son of Ralph Basset VII and Alice Audley.

APPENDIX B



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VITA

Rachael Hazell received her undergraduate degree in history and writing at Drury University in Springfield, Missouri where she was received numerous academic scholarships and was awarded the Most Outstanding Graduate in Medieval Studies. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2011, and took a job as a lead preschool teacher where she was responsible for creating and implementing lesson plans, teaching social skills, and communicating with parents about the development of their children. The experience of helping young students to grasp new concepts inspired Rachael to return to school and continue her education in history.

Rachael began graduate work at University of Missouri- Kansas City in the fall of 2012 when she received two years of funding as a graduate teaching assistant. Excited to be back in the classroom and under the tutelage of Dr. Linda Mitchell, Rachael continued to thrive, receiving numerous graderships in addition to her teaching assistantship. She participated in several local conferences and served as a Member of the History Graduate Students Association as well as a President-interim of the Medieval Studies Society at UMKC.

In 2014, Rachael continued to work as a grader for two classes as well as a research assistant to her advisor and mentor, Dr. Mitchell. In addition to her academic work, Rachael began full time employment with a federal agency as a records analyst allowing her to apply the skills she acquired as a graduate student in a professional setting. Rachael will graduate from UMKC in May 2015 with a Master of Arts degree.

She will continue to work as a government professional and is still considering furthering her graduate work on a doctoral level in the future.