

# Enquirer Traces His Family Tree Back 500 Years and Finds

## Ollie North's Amazing Roots

By STEVE PLAMANN and NOEL BOTHAM

Superpatriot Oliver North's roots stretch back nearly 500 years to a band of English farmers and landowners who became certain they were plagued by a jinx that killed their children.

An in-depth ENQUIRER search into Ollie's roots traced the North family to before Columbus discovered America in 1492, when they tried to scratch out a living on the countryside near York in northern England.

But Ollie's male ancestors soon gained fortunes the old-fashioned way — they married into them.

Thanks to wives with vast land holdings, the Norths became an important family in 16th-century England.

Spanning the centuries, Ollie's family tree includes a number of intriguing figures. Here are capsule histories of their remarkable lives:

### JOHN NORTH (Late 1400s)

A farmer, John married a woman who was in line to inherit a large tract of land from her father. Unfortunately, John died before his father-in-law did, and he never enjoyed the benefits

of his wife's fortune. The couple's son John, however, did.

### JOHN NORTH (1492-mid-1500s)

When he was 28, John's widowed mother gave him total control over the land she'd just inherited from her father. Overnight he became a major landowner, with a large enough fortune to hire a host of servants and peasants to work for him.

John and his wife had several children, the oldest of whom was also named John. He was the first North to have a university education. John had two sons — both of whom he named John. The two Johns — "the elder" and "the younger" — grew up to

be influential justices of the peace.



**STRONG-WILLED** Ollie North comes from a long line of fascinating individuals.

## **JOHN THE ELDER**

**(?-1618)**

He was considered lucky when he married one of the most beautiful women in the county, but he and his wife Mary soon became the earliest recorded victims of what Ollie's ancestors came to fear as the North jinx.

Not a single one of their children survived the couple.

While it was common for young children to die in the 1600s, in the years that followed, the Norths were especially hard-hit by such tragedies.

What's more, of John the Younger's seven grandchildren, three died in infancy.

## **WILLIAM NORTH**

**(?-1712)**

A grandson of John the Younger, William became a judge.

He liked to sentence local drunks to be locked to posts in public — and encouraged citizens to pelt them with refuse.

He and his wife Elizabeth were again victimized by the North jinx — two of their three children died when just a few years old.

## **BENJAMIN NORTH**

**(1695-1768)**

William's surviving son Benjamin was the second North to marry wealth — his



**GAMBLER J.T. North** became rich by importing bird droppings.

wife Mary was an heiress of a Yorkshire millionaire. Her fortune strengthened the power of the North family — but Mary North's tragic story is remembered to this day:

## **MARY NORTH**

**(1700-1783)**

Mary was yet another victim of the North jinx — six of her seven children died before age 10.

"The loss of her six 'little angels' caused Mary deep unhappiness and she died a heartbroken woman," said

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# Great-Grandfather Made His Mark With Conservative Political Cartoons



**HAUNTED:** Mary North lost six of her seven children in Fenay Hall, and is said to haunt the mansion. "She died a heartbroken woman," says genealogist Rushworth.

# Ancestors Believed a Cruel Jinx

## Was Killing Their Children



**STINGING** political cartoons (above) made conservative Arthur North's name known throughout England. Arthur is pictured below.

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Philip Rushworth, the expert genealogist who traced Ollie's roots for *The ENQUIRER*.

"Since her death, subsequent generations believed her ghost haunted her home, Fenay Hall, endlessly walking the corridors in search of her vanished children.

"Mary's daughter-in-law, Sarah North, was terrified of being anywhere in the house alone, even in daylight. And a history book about the area relates that a couple who bought the house at the beginning of the 19th century complained of the frightening woman who haunted the building.

"The couple persuaded two schoolteachers to sleep over one night — and they left the next morning shaking with fright. Locals believe Mary North's ghost can still be seen today in Fenay Hall."

Tragically, Sarah North was also a victim of the North jinx — four of her five children died in infancy.

**ARTHUR NORTH**  
(1848-1919)

Mary North's great-great-



grandson was an outspoken political conservative. But unlike his famous great-grandson Ollie, conservative Arthur preached his message through his stinging cartoons.

In newspapers and Conservative Party pamphlets, Arthur mocked the liberals mercilessly, much to the delight of his devoted readers.

He also designed stage sets, and Arthur used his theater connections to promote an unknown girl singer he spotted in a local production.

She went on to great fame as Lottie Collins, who introduced the song "Ta-ra-boom-de-ay."

Sudden tragedy brought



end to Arthur's career. In 1899 he was leaving a bank when the door swung back, hit him in the head and knocked him down.

A devastating brain hemorrhage resulted — and Arthur was an invalid for the last 20 years of his life.

### COL. J.T. NORTH (1842-1896)

Arthur's cousin had a bizarre brainstorm while traveling in Peru that made him one of England's wealthiest men.

J.T. noticed vast amounts of bird droppings in South America. He knew that farmers back home in England would pay a pretty penny for the stuff as fertilizer. So he went into the bird dropping import business, and earned a fortune.

Like Ollie, J.T. proudly wore his military title — although there's no evidence that the colorful businessman ever served in the armed forces.

"The Colonel" was a shrewd gambler. One newspaper estimated he won more than \$110,000 at the track in his lifetime.

J.T. also took a stab at running for Parliament in 1895. Outspoken and at times coarse, he sometimes offended audiences with his speeches.

J.T. kept two burly prizefighters near him during his campaign, just in case trouble broke out. He lost the election.

### OLIVER NORTH (1886-1967)

Ollie North's grandfather was a poor, hardworking door-to-door yarn salesman when he decided to leave England and seek his fortune in America.

He landed in Philadelphia in 1906 — and in 1914 became the third North to marry into wealth.

With the financial help of his bride Mabel's parents, he started his own textile factory in Philadelphia, and in 1941 he bought a small wool-



TRACING Ollie North's family tree is Enquirer reporter Noel Botham (left) and genealogist Philip Rushworth.

## Gambling Distant Cousin Made Millions — Off Bird Droppings

combing plant in Philmont, N.Y.

### OLIVER CLAY NORTH (1915-1984)

Aside from Ollie, through all the generations of the North family, his dad is the only other bona fide war hero.

Born in Philadelphia, Oliver Clay was stationed in the U.S. as a supply officer during most of World War 2.

But in 1944, as Hitler made his last desperate attempt to beat back invading Allied forces, Oliver Clay was shipped off to Europe, where he supervised the movement of supplies while under heavy enemy fire.

In a citation praising his heroism, the Army declared, "North was often forced to

travel into areas made hazardous by enemy mortars and snipers, but his determination to see that supplies were delivered on time and in sufficient quantities was his only consideration."

North was awarded the Silver Star and Bronze Star for heroism — the very same awards his son would one day win in Vietnam.

Returning to the U.S., Oliver Clay took over the textile firm owned by his father. The rise of synthetic fabrics forced him out of business in the late 1950s and he became a teacher.

Working hard to support his family, little did Ollie's dad know his namesake would one day play a unique role in the history of the nation he bravely defended.



HEROIC DAD Oliver Clay North, left, who died in 1984, won the Silver Star and Bronze Star during World War 2, the same medals his son would win in Vietnam.