

The History of Gens Vitellia

Origins of the Vitellii

Of the origin of the Vitellii different and widely varying accounts are given, some saying that the family was ancient and noble, others that it was new and obscure, if not of mean extraction. I should believe that these came respectively from the flatterers and detractors of the emperor, were it not for a difference of opinion about the standing of the family at a considerably earlier date. We have a book of Quintus Elogius addressed to Quintus Vitellius, Quaestor of the Deified Augustus, in which it is written that the Vitellii were sprung from Faunus, king of the Aborigines, and Vitellia, who was worshipped as a goddess in many places; and that they ruled in all Latium. That the surviving members of the family moved from the Sabine district to Rome and were enrolled among the patricians. That traces of this stock endured long afterwards in the Vitellian Road, running from the Janiculum all the way to the sea, as well as in a colony of the same name, which in ancient days the family had asked the privilege of defending against the Aequicoli with troops raised from their own line. That when afterwards a force was sent into Apulia at the time of the Samnite war, some of the Vitellii settled at Nuceria, and that after a long time their descendants returned to the city and resumed their place in the senatorial order.

On the other hand several have written that the founder of the family was a freedman, while Cassius Severus and others as well say further that he was a cobbler, and that his son, after making a considerable fortune from the sale of confiscated estates and the profession of informer, married a common strumpet, daughter of one Antiochus who kept a bakery, and became the father of a Roman knight. But this difference of opinion may be left unsettled.

In any event Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, whether of ancient stock or of parents and forefathers in whom he could take no pride, unquestionably a Roman knight and a steward of Augustus' property, left four sons of high rank with the same name and differing only in their forenames: Aulus, Quintus, Publius and Lucius. Aulus, who was given to luxury and especially notorious for the magnificence of his feasts, died a consul, appointed to the office with Domitius, father of the emperor Nero. Quintus lost his rank at the time when it was resolved, under the suggestion of Tiberius, to depose and get rid of undesirable senators. Publius, a member of Germanicus' staff, arraigned Gnaeus Piso, the enemy and murderer of his commander, and secured his condemnation. Arrested among the accomplices of Sejanus, after holding the praetorship, and handed over to his own brother to be kept in confinement, he opened his veins with a penknife, but allowed himself to be bandaged and restored, not so much from unwillingness to die, as because of the entreaties of his friends; and he met a natural death while still in confinement. Lucius attained the consulate and then was made governor of Syria, where with supreme diplomacy having not only induced Artabanus, king of the Parthians, to hold a conference with him, but even to do obeisance to the standards of the legion. Later he held, with the emperor Claudius, two more regular consulships and the censorship. He also bore the charge of the empire while Claudius was away on his expedition to Britain. He was an honest and active man, but of very ill repute because of his passion for a freedwoman, which went so far that he used her spittle mixed with honey to rub on his throat and jaws as a medicine, not secretly nor seldom, but openly and every day. He had also a wonderful gift for flattery and was the first to begin to worship Gaius Caesar as a god; for on his return from Syria he did not presume to approach the

emperor except with veiled head, turning himself about and then prostrating himself. To neglect no means of gaining the favor of Claudius, who was a slave to his wives and freedmen, he begged of Messalina as the highest possible favor that she would allow him to take off her shoes; and when he had taken off her right slipper, he constantly carried it about between his toga and his tunic, and sometimes kissed it. Narcissus also and Pallas he honored by cherishing their golden the facing Latin, however, has the facing Latin, however, has images among his household gods. It was he who made the famous remark, "May you often do it," when he was congratulating Claudius at the celebration of the Secular games.

He died of a paralytic stroke on the second day after he was seized, leaving two sons, begotten of Sextillia, a most worthy woman and of no mean family, and having lived to see them consuls both in the same year, and for the whole year, since the younger succeeded the elder for six months. On his decease the senate honored him with a public funeral and with a statue on the rostra with this inscription: "Of unwavering loyalty to his emperor."

The emperor Aulus Vitellius, son of Lucius, was born on the eighth day before the Kalends of October, or according to some, on the seventh day before the Ides of September, in the Consulship of Drusus Caesar and Norbanus Flaccus. His parents were so aghast at his horoscope as announced by the astrologers, that his father tried his utmost, while he lived, to prevent the assignment of any province to his son; and when he was sent to the legions and hailed as emperor, his mother immediately mourned over him as lost. He spent his boyhood and early youth at Capreae among the wantons of Tiberius, being branded for all time with the nickname Spintria and suspected of having been the cause of his father's first advancement at the expense of his own chastity.

Stained by every sort of baseness as he advanced in years, he held a prominent place at court, winning the intimacy of Gaius by his devotion to driving and of Claudius by his passion for dice. But he was still dearer to Nero, not only because of these same qualities, but because of a special service besides; for when he was presiding at the contests of the Neronia and Nero wished to compete among the lyre-players, but did not venture to do so although there was a general demand for him and accordingly left the theatre, Vitellius called him back, alleging that he came as an envoy from the insistent people, and thus gave Nero a chance to yield to their entreaties.

Having in this way through the favor of three emperors been honored not only with political positions but with distinguished priesthoods as well, he afterwards governed Africa as proconsul and served as curator of public works, but with varying purpose and reputation. In his province he showed exceptional integrity for two successive years, for he served as deputy to his brother, who succeeded him; but in his city offices he was said to have stolen some of the offerings and ornaments from the temples and changed others, substituting tin and brass for gold and silver.

He had to wife Petronia, daughter of an ex-consul, and by her a son Petronianus, who was blind in one eye. Since this son was named as his mother's heir on condition of being freed from his father's authority, he manumitted him, but shortly afterwards killed him, according to the general belief, charging him besides with attempted parricide, and alleging that his guilty conscience had led him to drink the poison which he had mixed for his intended crime. Soon afterwards he

married Galeria Fundana, daughter of an ex-praetor, and from her too he had a son and a daughter, but the former stammered so, that he was all but dumb and tongue-tied.

Galba surprised everyone by sending him to Lower Germany. Some think that it was due to Titus Vinius, who had great influence at the time, and whose friendship Vitellius had long since won through their common support of the Blues. But since Galba openly declared that no men were less to be feared than those who thought of nothing but eating, and that Vitellius' bottomless gullet might be filled from the resources of the province, it is clear to anyone that he was chosen rather through contempt than favor. It is notorious that when he was about to start, he lacked means for his travelling expenses, and that his need of funds was such, that after consigning his wife and children, whom he left in Rome, to a hired garret, he let his house for the rest of the year; and that he took a valuable pearl from his mother's ear and pawned it, to defray the expenses of his journey. He had to resort to false accusation to get rid of the throng of creditors that lay in wait for him and tried to detain him, including the people of Sinuessa and of Formiae, whose public revenues he had embezzled; for he brought an action for damages against a freedman who was somewhat persistent in demanding what was due to him, alleging that he had been kicked by him, and would not let him off until he had squeezed him to the tune of fifty thousand sesterces.

On his arrival the army, which was disaffected towards the emperor and inclined to mutiny, received him gladly with open arms, as if he had come to them as a gift from the gods; since he was the son of a man who had thrice been consul, in the prime of life, and of an easy-going and lavish disposition. This earlier good opinion Vitellius had also strengthened by recent acts, for throughout the march he kissed even the common soldiers whom he met, and at the posthouses and inns he was unusually affable to the mule drivers and travellers, asking each of them in the morning whether they had breakfasted and even showing by belching that he had done so.

As soon as he had entered the camp, he granted every request that anyone made and even of his own accord freed those in disgrace from their penalties, defendants of suits from their mourning, and the convicted from punishment. Therefore hardly a month had passed, when the soldiers, regardless of the hour, for it was already evening, hastily took him from his bedroom, just as he was, in his common house-clothes, and hailed him as emperor. Then he was carried about the most populous villages, holding a drawn sword of the Deified Julius, which someone had taken from a shrine of Mars and handed him during the first congratulations. He did not return to headquarters until the dining-room caught fire from the stove and was ablaze; and then, when all were shocked and troubled at what seemed a bad omen, he said: "Be of good cheer; to us light is given"; and this was his only address to the soldiers. When he presently received the support of the army of the upper province too, which had previously transferred its allegiance for Galba to the senate, he eagerly accepted the surname of Germanicus, which was unanimously offered him, put off accepting the title of Augustus, and forever refused that of Caesar.

Then hearing of the murder of Galba, he settled affairs in Germany and made two divisions of his forces, one to send on against Otho, and the other to lead in person. The former was greeted with a lucky omen at the start, for an eagle suddenly flew towards them from the right and after hovering about the standards, slowly preceded their line of march. But, on the contrary, when he himself began his advance, the equestrian statues which were being set up everywhere in his

honor on a sudden all collapsed with broken legs, and the laurel crown which he had put on with due ceremony fell into a running stream. Later, as he was sitting in judgment on the tribunal at Vienna, a cock perched on his shoulder and then on his head. And the outcome corresponded with these omens; for he was not by his own efforts able to retain the power, which his lieutenants secured for him.

He heard of the victory at Betriacum and of the death of Otho while he was still in Gaul, and without delay by a single edict he disbanded all the praetorian cohorts, as having set a pernicious example, and bade them hand over their arms to their tribunes. Furthermore, he gave orders that one hundred and twenty of them should be hunted up and punished, having found petitions which they had written to Otho, asking for a reward for services rendered in connection with Galba's murder. These acts were altogether admirable and noble, and such as to give hope that he would be a great prince, had it not been that the rest of his conduct was more in harmony with his natural disposition and his former habits of life than with imperial dignity. For when he had begun his march, he rode through the middle of the cities like a triumphing general, and on the rivers he sailed in most exquisite craft wreathed with various kinds of garlands, amid lavish entertainments, with no discipline among his household or the soldiers, making a jest of the pillage and wantonness of all his followers. For not content with the banquets which were furnished them everywhere at public expense, they set free whatever slaves they pleased, promptly paying those who remonstrated with blows and stripes, often with wounds, and sometimes with death. When he came to the plains where the battle was fought and some shuddered with horror at the mouldering corpses, he had the audacity to encourage them by the abominable saying, that the odor of a dead enemy was sweet and that of a fellow-citizen sweeter still. But nevertheless, the better to bear the awful stench, he openly drained a great draught of unmingled wine and distributed some among the troops. With equal bad taste and arrogance, gazing upon the stone inscribed to the memory of Otho, he declared that he deserved such a Mausoleum, and sent the dagger with which his rival had killed himself to the Colony of Agrippina, to be dedicated to Mars. He also held an all-night festival on the heights of the Apennines.

Finally he entered the city to the sound of the trumpet, wearing a general's mantle and a sword at his side, amid standards and banners, with his staff in military cloaks and his troops with drawn swords.

Then showing greater and greater disregard for the laws of gods and men, he assumed the office of high priest on the day of Allia, held elections for ten years to come, and made himself consul for life. And to leave no doubt in anyone's mind what model he chose for the government of the State, he made funerary offerings to Nero in the middle of the Campus Martius, attended by a great throng of the official priests; and when at the accompanying banquet a flute-player was received with applause, he openly urged him "to render something from the Master's Book as well"; and when he began the songs of Nero, Vitellius was the first to applaud him and even jumped for joy.

Beginning in this way, he regulated the greater part of his rule wholly according to the advice and whims of the commonest of actors and chariot-drivers, and in particular of his freedman Asiaticus. This fellow had immoral relations with Vitellius in his youth, but later grew weary of

him and ran away. When Vitellius came upon him selling posca at Puteoli, he put him in irons, but at once freed him again and made him his favorite. His vexation was renewed by the man's excessive insolence and thievishness, and he sold him to an itinerant keeper of gladiators. When, however, he was once reserved for the end of a gladiatorial show, Vitellius suddenly spirited him away, and finally on getting his province set him free. On the first day of his reign he presented him with the golden ring at a banquet, although in the morning, when there was a general demand that Asiaticus be given that honor, he had deprecated in the strongest terms such a blot on the equestrian order.

But his besetting sins were luxury and cruelty. He divided his feasts into three, sometimes into four a day, breakfast, luncheon, dinner, and a drinking bout; and he was readily able to do justice to all of them through his habit of taking emetics. Moreover, he had himself invited to each of these meals by different men on the same day, and the materials for any one of them never cost less than four hundred thousand sesterces. Most notorious of all was the dinner given by his brother to celebrate the emperor's arrival in Rome, at which two thousand of the choicest fishes and seven thousand birds are said to have been served. He himself eclipsed even this at the dedication of a platter, which on account of its enormous size he called the "Shield of Minerva, Defender of the City." In this he mingled the livers of pike, the brains of pheasants and peacocks, the tongues of flamingoes and the milt of lampreys, brought by his captains and triremes from the whole empire, from Parthia to the Spanish strait. Being besides a man of an appetite that was not only boundless, but also regardless of time or decency, he could never refrain, even when he sacrificing or making a journey, from snatching bits of meat and cakes amid the altars, almost from the very fire, and devouring them on the spot; and in the cookshops along the road, viands smoking hot or even those left over from the day before and partly consumed.

He delighted in inflicting death and torture on anyone whatsoever and for any cause whatever, putting to death several men of rank, fellow students and comrades of his, whom he had solicited to come to court by every kind of deception, all but offering them a share in the rule. This he did in various treacherous ways, even giving poison to one of them with his own hand in a glass of cold water, for which the man had called when ill of a fever. Besides he spared hardly one of the money-lenders, contractors, and tax-gatherers who had ever demanded of him the payment of a debt at Rome or of a toll on a journey. When one of these had been handed over for execution just as he was paying his morning call and at once recalled, as all were praising the emperor's mercy, Vitellius gave orders to have him killed in his presence, saying that he wished to feast his eyes. In another case he had two sons who attempted to intercede for their father put to death with him. A Roman knight also, who cried as he was being taken off to execution, "You are my heir," he compelled to show his will; and reading the one of the man's freedmen was put down as joint-heir with himself, he ordered the death both of the knight and the freedman. He even killed some of the common people, merely because they had openly spoken ill of the Blue faction, handing that they had ventured to do this from contempt of himself and the anticipation of a change of rulers. But he was especially hostile to writers of lampoons and to astrologers, and whenever any one of them was accused, he put him to death without trial, particularly incensed because after a proclamation of his in which he ordered the astrologers to leave the city and Italy before the Kalends of October, a placard was at once posted, reading: "By proclamation of the Chaldeans, God bless the State! Before the same day and date let Vitellius Germanicus have ceased to live." Moreover, when his mother died, he was suspected of having forbidden her

being given food when she was ill, because a woman of the Chatti, in whom he believed as he would in an oracle, prophesied that he would rule securely and for a long time, but only if he should survive his parent. Others say that through weariness of present evils and fear of those which threatened, she asked poison of her son, and obtained it with no great difficulty.

In the eighth month of his reign the armies of the Moesian provinces and Pannonia revolted from him, and also in the provinces beyond the seas those of Judaea and Syria, the former swearing allegiance to Vespasian in his absence and the latter in his presence. Therefore, to retain the devotion and favor of the rest of the people, there was nothing that he did not lavish publicly and privately, without any limit whatever. He also held a levy in the city, promising those who volunteered not only their discharge upon his victory but also the rewards and privileges given to veterans after their regular term of service. Later, when his enemies were pressing him hard by land and sea, he opposed to them in one quarter his brother with a fleet manned by raw recruits and a band of gladiators, and in another the forces and leaders who had fought at Betriacum. And after he was everywhere either worsted or betrayed, he made a bargain with Flavius Sabinus, the brother of Vespasian, that he should have his own life and a hundred million sesterces.

Thereupon he immediately declared from the steps of the Palace before his assembled soldiers, that he withdrew from the rule which had been given him against his will; but when all cried out against this, he postponed the matter, and after a night had passed, went at daybreak to the rostra in mourning garb and with many tears made the same declaration, but from a written document. When the people and soldiers again interrupted him and besought him not to lose heart, vying with one another in promising him all their efforts in his behalf, he again took courage and by a sudden onslaught drove Sabinus and the rest of the Flavians, who no longer feared an attack, into the Capitol. Then he set fire to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and destroyed them, viewing the battle and the fire from the house of Tiberius, where he was feasting. Not long afterwards he repented of his action and throwing the blame upon others, called an assembly and took oath, compelling the rest to do the same, that there was nothing for which he would strive more earnestly than for the public peace. Then he took a dagger from his side and offered it first to the consul, and when he refused it, to the magistrates, and then to the senators, one by one. When no one would take it, he went off as if he would place it in the temple of Concord; but when some cried out that he himself was Concord, he returned and declared that he would not only retain the steel but would also adopt the surname Concordia. He also persuaded the senate to send envoys with the Vestal virgins, to sue for peace or at least to gain time for conference.

The following day, as he was waiting for a reply, word was brought by a scout that the enemy was drawing near. Then he was at once hurried into a sedan with only two companions, a baker and a cook, and secretly went to his father's house on the Aventine, intending to flee from there to Campania. Presently, on a slight and dubious rumor that peace had been granted, he allowed himself to be taken back to the Palace. Finding everything abandoned there, and that even those who were with him were making off, he put on a girdle filled with gold pieces and took refuge in the lodge of the door-keeper, tying a dog before the door and putting a couch and a mattress against it.

The foremost of the army had now forced their way in, and since no one opposed them, were ransacking everything in the usual way. They dragged Vitellius from his hiding-place and when they asked him his name (for they did not know him) and if he knew where Vitellius was, he attempted to escape them by a lie. Being soon recognized, he did not cease to beg that he be

confined for a time, even in the prison, alleging that he had something to say of importance to the safety of Vespasian. But they bound his arms behind his back, put a noose about his neck, and dragged him with rent garments and half-naked to the Forum. All along the Sacred Way he was greeted with mockery and abuse, his head held back by the hair, as is common with criminals, and even the point of a sword placed under his chin, so that he could not look down but must let his face be seen. Some pelted him with dung and ordure, others called him incendiary and glutton, and some of the mob even taunted him with his bodily defects. He was in fact abnormally tall, with a face usually flushed from hard drinking, a huge belly, and one thigh crippled from being struck once upon a time by a four-horse chariot, when he was in attendance on Gaius as he was driving. At last on the Stairs of Wailing he was tortured for a long time and then dispatched and dragged off with a hook to the Tiber.

He met his death, along with his brother and his son, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, fulfilling the prediction of those who had declared from an omen which befell him at Vienna, as we have stated, that he was destined to fall into the power of some man of Gaul. For he was slain by Antonius Primus, a leader of the opposing faction, who was born at Tolosa and in his youth bore the surname Becco, which means a rooster's beak.

During his brief administration Vitellius showed indications of a desire to govern wisely, but he was completely under the control of Valens and Caecina, who for their own ends encouraged him in a course of vicious excesses which threw his better qualities into the background.

Chronological Timeline of the Vitellii

After 16 January 27 BC to Before 19 August 14 AD - Quintus Vitellius, Quaestor of Augustus

After 16 January 27 BC to Before 19 August 14 AD - Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, unquestionably a Roman knight and a steward of Augustus' property

5 BC – Lucius Vitellius, father of Emperor Aulus Vitellius Germanicus, born.

14 AD - Publius Vitellius, son of Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, appointed a Legatus of Roman General Germanicus Caesar.

15 AD – Roman General Germanicus Caesar appoints Publius Vitellius Commander of Legio II Augusta and Legio XIV Gemina.

7 September 15 AD - Birth of the Emperor Aulus Vitellius Germanicus.

31 AD - Tiberius recommended to the Senate to admit Publius Vitellius, Quintus Veranius and Quintus Servaeus to the Pontifical Order

31 AD - Quintus Vitellius, son of Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, lost his rank at the time when it was resolved, under the suggestion of Tiberius, to depose and get rid of undesirable senators.

31 AD - Publius Vitellius, son of Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, In the aftermath of the Sejanus conspiracy, came under discussion. He was accused by the informers of offering the keys of the military treasury, of which he was prefect, to the conspirators. Vitellius, anxious to be rid of hope and fear, asked for a pen knife on the grounds that he wished to write, incised an artery and made an end of his life.

32 AD - Aulus Vitellius, son of Publius Vitellius of Nuceria, elected Consul with Domitius, father of the emperor Nero

Early to Mid 30s AD – Aulus Vitellius first wed a certain Petroniana, the daughter of a Consul.

34 AD – Lucius Vitellius appointed Consul with Quintus Fabius Paullus Persicus

35 AD – Lucius Vitellius appointed Governor of Syria

Spring 36 AD – Lucius Vitellius supports Tiridates. The emperor Tiberius sent a Parthian prince named Tiridates, who had been living as an exile in the Roman empire, to Parthia to replace king Artabanus II. was to support him, and seems to have done so brilliantly.

36 AD – When Artabanus had tried to reconquer Armenia, Vitellius had ordered his legions to prepare for battle (late 35?). This was too much for the Parthian king, who backed off and accepted the new pro-Roman king of Armenia.

36 AD – Lucius Vitellius escorted Tiridates across the Euphrates, where he was welcomed by several Parthian noblemen.

36 AD – In Judaea, a Samaritan claimed to be Moses reincarnate and gathered an armed following. The prefect of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, intervened immediately, dispersed the crowd, and had the ringleaders executed. The Samaritans considered his violence excessive and appealed to the Syrian governor. Lucius Vitellius heard their complaints, sent Pilate back to Italy and appointed Marcellus. Pilate's co-ruler in Judaea, the high priest Joseph Caiaphas, was replaced by his brother-in-law Jonathan.

37 AD – Arethas, the king of the Arabian principality Petra, attacked the Jewish king of Galilee, Herod Antipas. Lucius Vitellius mobilized two legions and went to Galilee; then, he went to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkoth (September 12) and to replace the high priest Jonathan with his brother Theophilus. At that moment, a letter arrived with the news that Tiberius had died and was succeeded by Caligula. Lucius Vitellius administered the oath of allegiance, and recalled his troops, because he was not allowed to fight a war until the new emperor had sent him instructions.

38 AD – Lucius Vitellius held a conference with king Artabanus, who did obeisance to the standards of the Syrian legions. Although Rome's own candidate had not become king, Armenia had become a satellite-state and the Parthian king acknowledged Rome's superiority. It was one of the greatest triumphs of Rome's eastern policy.

39 AD – Lucius Vitellius was back at Rome, where he was highly regarded. When Caligula insisted that he was a god, Vitellius was the first one to give him divine honors. In 41, Caligula was murdered and succeeded by Claudius, the son of Vitellius' patron Antonia.

40 AD – Aulus Vitellius occupied the office of Quaestor at the age of 25.

43 AD – It is possible that Vitellius played a role during Claudius' coup, because he was rewarded with a second consulship, which he occupied with the emperor himself.

43 AD – When Claudius left Rome to conquer Britain, Vitellius was in charge of the Roman government.

45 AD – Aulus Vitellius occupied the office of Praetor at the age of 30.

47 AD – Lucius Vitellius was again consul - an extraordinary honor.

47/48 AD – Lucius Vitellius became, with Claudius, Censor.

48 AD – Lucius and Aulus Vitellius, sons of Lucius Vitellius and Sextillia, were both Consul.

October 48 AD – Claudius was forced to execute his wife Messalina. Lucius Vitellius remained uninvolved. Later, he invented arguments why the old rule that an uncle and his niece should not marry, did not apply to Claudius and Agrippina.

51 AD – The new empress returned the favor: when Lucius Vitellius was involved in a lawsuit against the senator Junius Lupus, who had accused him of high treason, she made sure that Claudius exiled the accuser.

After 51 AD – Lucius Vitellius died unexpectedly from a paralytic stroke and received a statue on the speaker's platform on the Roman Forum, with the inscription 'Of unwavering loyalty to the emperor'.

54 AD – At the end of the reign of Claudius, Aulus Vitellius was made priest. He may have succeeded his father in the priestly college, because he died at about the same time. This was, for some time, his last career move, and it may be that he was not among the favorites of Claudius' successor Nero.

M-50s AD – Aulus Vitellius remarried to Galeria Fundana, the daughter of a senator.

57 AD – Aulus Vitellius held at least two priesthoods, the first as a member of the Arval Brethren, in whose rituals he participated, and the second, as one of the quindecimviri sacris faciundis, a sacred college famous for its feasts.

60/61 AD – Aulus Vitellius was Proconsul of Tunesia (Africa)

61/62 – Lucius Vitellius, younger brother of Aulus Vitellius, succeeds Aulus as Proconsul of Tunesia (Africa).

61/62 – Aulus Vitellius, stayed in Tunesia as Deputy for his brother, Lucius Vitellius.

62 AD – On his return to Rome, Aulus Vitellius was one of the accusers of Antistius Sossianus, who had written satirical poems on Nero.

63 AD – Aulus Vitellius was Curator of the Public Works, a senatorial post concerned with the maintenance and repair of public buildings in Rome.

65 AD – Aulus Vitellius really endeared himself to Nero.

Summer of 68 AD – Emperor Galba appointed Aulus Vitellius as Roman commandant of Rhine and successor to Fonteius Capito, assassinated Governor of Germania Inferior.

November AD 68 – When Aulus Vitellius reached his troops, they were already considering rebellion against the loathed emperor Galba. In particular the German armies were still angry at Galba for refusing them a reward for their part in suppressing Julius Vindex.

1 January 69 AD – Germania Superior Legions at Mainz revolt against Emperor Galba.

2 January 69 AD – Germania Inferior Legions (V Alaudae, I Germanica, XV Primigenia, XVI Gallica) stoned Galba's portraits and proclaimed Aulus Vitellius as Emperor. Fabius Valens, Legatus of I Germanica, entered the city of Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium (Cologne) at the head of the cavalry component of his legion and of its auxiliaries and greeted Aulus Vitellius as emperor.

3 January 69 AD – Germania Superior Legions proclaimed Aulus Vitellius as Emperor

15 January 69 AD – Praetorians, organized by Otho, declared Aulus Vitellius emperor and publicly killed Galba.

Late January 69 AD – Aulus Vitellius sent two armies to Italy. The first one was commanded by Aulus Caecina Alienus. It consisted of XXI Rapax, large parts of IIII Macedonica and XXII Primigenia, and auxiliaries: some 30,000 men, who had to secure the road from the Upper Rhine to Avenches in Switzerland, across the Col du Grand Saint Bernard and down to Aosta and the plains of the Upper Po. He arrived in Italy in March, which was a brilliant exploit, more impressive than, for example, the famous crossing of the Alps by Hannibal. After all, the Carthaginian general had crossed a lower pass in the late autumn, whereas Caecina crossed a high pass during the winter. Vitellius' second army was commanded by the man who had persuaded him to become emperor, Fabius Valens. He took the Fifth legion Alaudae with him, plus auxiliaries and large parts of XV Primigenia, I Germanica, and XVI Gallica. This army took the road from Cologne to Trier, Metz, Langres, and Toul, where the Vitellians received good news: at Rome, Galba had panicked after he had heard the news of Vitellius' insurrection, had lost the support of the imperial guard, and was murdered near the Lacus Curtius on the Forum. He had been succeeded by Marcus Salvius Otho, who inherited the war against Vitellius.

The army of Fabius Valens continued to Langres, Dyon, and Lyons, where they united with the First legion Italica and eight Batavian auxiliary units and must have received the news that the three Spanish provinces had gone over to the Vitellian side. This was not surprising, because Galba was from Spain and had been murdered by Vitellius' enemy Otho. Some of the Batavians, Rome's best soldiers, were sent to Caenina. As it turned out, Valens arrived first. Piacenza fell to the united Vitellian forces, Cremona was captured, and they built a large camp just east of the town.

14 April 69 AD – The First Battle of Cremona. The two armies joined battle at Bedriacum. Vitellius' Fifth legion Alaudae, I Italica and XXI Rapax defeated Otho's XIII Gemina, I Adiutrix, and the imperial guard; and later, the Batavians defeated the gladiators. Vitellius, who was in Lyons, was hailed 'imperator' by his soldiers, the title given to victorious commanders.

16 April 69 AD – The Vitellian victory was not complete, yet. After all, Otho could still rely on VII Galbiana, XI Claudia, and XIV Gemina, and the loyalty of the cities of Italy. However, the defeated emperor committed suicide.

19 April 69 AD – The Senate recognized Aulus Vitellius as sole ruler of the Roman empire. Vitellius was at Dyon when he learned of the victory of his colonels Valens and Caenina, Otho's suicide and the recognition by the Senate. He sailed to Lyons, the capital of Roman Gaul.

30 April AD – Aulus Vitellius accepted the so-called tribunician power, the most important sign of imperial power. He had waited until he had received permission from the Senate, an act that must have done something to make him popular with this high college. At the same time, he appointed his son, also called Vitellius, as his successor and gave him the surname he had accepted four months earlier, Germanicus.

24 May 69 AD – Aulus Vitellius now crossed the Alps, visited Turin, and sent the eight Batavian auxiliary units back home. He also appointed Valens and Caecina as consuls. Some forty days after the battle of Cremona, Vitellius reached the battlefield.

Late June 69 AD – Aulus Vitellius learned that the legions in the east had recognized him as emperor.

17 July 69 AD – Aulus Vitellius arrived at Rome. He greeted his mother, who remarked that she had "given birth to a Vitellius, not to a Germanicus". Sextillia received the title Augusta, and died a few days later.

18 July 69 AD – Aulus Vitellius accepted the titles of Augustus and Father of the Fatherland, and assumed the high priesthood, Pontifex Maximus. From now on, he was Aulus Vitellius Germanicus, three times emperor, Augustus, high priest, with tribunicial powers, Father of the Fatherland.

24 October 69 AD – Second Battle of Cremona. The battle began at about 11 o'clock. The description given by the historian Tacitus is chaotic, and we are unable to reconstruct the battle as it developed. But it is clear that the Vitellian army, which consisted of I Italica and XXI Rapax, was the first to attack, and caught the Vespasian army by surprise. However, after five hours of fighting, it was pushed back to Cremona. Now Primus told his men that the battle was over -perhaps he really believed it- and ordered them to follow the 'fleeing' enemy. At sunset, the soldiers reached the Vitellian camp, and were surprised to find the two legions prepared to continue the fight. Even worse, they discovered that the Vitellian main force had almost arrived, after a march of 45 kilometers in one day.

17 December 69 AD – Aulus Vitellius made a limp attempt to hold the Appenine passes against Primus and Fuscus' advance. However, the army he sent forth simply went over to the enemy without a fight at Narnia on.

18 December 69 AD – Flavius Sabinus and his supporters were dragged before Vitellius and put to death.

20 December 69 AD – Antonius Primus captured Rome. Aulus Vitellius was carried to his wife's house on the Aventine, from where he intended to flee to Campania. But at this crucial point he strangely appeared to change his mind, and returned to the palace. With hostile troops

about to storm the place everyone had wisely deserted the building. So, all alone, Vitellius tied a money-belt around his waist and disguised himself in dirty clothes and hid in the door-keepers lodge, piling up furniture against the door to prevent anyone entering. But a pile of furniture was a hardly a match for soldiers of the Danubian legions. The door was broken down a Vitellius was dragged out of the palace and through the streets of Rome. Half naked, Aulus Vitellius, Roman commandant of Rhine & 7th emperor, was hauled to the forum, tortured, murdered and thrown into the river Tiber.

After 20 December 69 AD - Lucius and Germanicus, the brother and son of Vitellius, were slain near Terracina; the former was marching to his brother's relief.

After 71 AD - Lucius Vitellius Tancinus, son of Mantaius, a citizen of Spain, from Caurium (Cauriensis). *Caurium* was a town on the *Tagus* river in Lusitania, in the southern half of the territory of the *Vettones*, now known as Coria in the southern Sierra de Gata region of western Spain, close to the Portuguese border. Also, a cavalry trooper of Ala Vettonum Civium Romanorum (The Vettonian Wing, Citizens of Rome) attached to Legio II Adiutrix Pia Fidelis, buried at Bath, England. This unit was a five-hundred strong regiment of auxiliary cavalry recruited from among the *Vettones* tribe who lived on the plain between the rivers Tagus and Durus in central *Hispania*. Their chief town was *Salmantica* now known as Salamanca in the southern Castilla y Leon district of central Spain, called *Salmatis* by Polyaeus. Reference: http://www.roman-britain.org/places/aquae_sulis.htm#rib157

Vitellii Resurgens et Nova Roma

10 April 2002 AD - Marcus Vitellius Ligus becomes civis of America Austrorientalis Provincia and a Member of the Plebian Order

19 August 2002 AD - Marcus Vitellius Ligus appointed Praefectus Fabrum for America Austrorientalis Provincia by Propraetor Lucius Sicinius Drusus.

15 February 2003 AD - Atius Vitellius Arminus becomes civis of Mediatlantica Provincia and a Member of the Plebian Order

16 May 2003 AD - Marcus Vitellius Ligus appointed Praefectus Fabrum for America Austrorientalis Provincia by Propraetor Gaius Popillius Laenas

21 June 2004 AD - Marcus Vitellius Ligus appointed Praefectus Praefectus Regio of the Florida Regio for America Austrorientalis Provincia by Propraetor Gaius Popillius Laenas

25 January 2005 AD - Lucius Vitellius Triarius becomes civis of America Austrorientalis Provincia and a Member of the Plebian Order

19 March 2005 AD - Sextus Vitellius Scaurus becomes civis of America Austrorientalis Provincia and a Member of the Plebian Order

