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8/29/2001
wrote & told her
we want both
copies & sent
copies from disk
on Fords

August 11, 2001

Dear Cousins and Friends,

Some of you know me quite well - others do not know me at all. Some of you are first cousins or the children of first cousins. With others, our relationship begins with our Civil War ancestors- but with most of you, we connect through our Revolutionary War era ancestors! Since the degrees of our kinship are so complicated and remote, one cousin wisely advises, "Let's just say we are kissing cousins"! What we share is our interest in our Ford ancestors.

I'm writing to tell you that I hope to have Vol. I of my book, *THE FORDS OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY* in the hands of the publisher, Anundsen Publishing Company of Decorah, Iowa, by the end of the year. I want to tell all of you something about the book- how it came to be, what has been involved in putting it together, what it contains- and what it dosen't- and what my plans are for Vol. II.

I grew up knowing very little about the Fords preceding my grandfather, Elchanah Gardner Ford, M.D. of Troy, Alabama (1841-1922). My father, Julian Clifford Ford, M.D. of Luverne, Alabama (1876-1960), discouraged my poking around in the past lest I rattle a skeleton or two- or uncover a long buried scandal. Of course, this warning only stimulated my curiosity, though I did no exploring for many years, being involved with other things. In 1982, while on a business trip to Lakeland, Florida, on impulse I stopped at the fine, though small, Polk County Genealogical and Historical Library- located in a ramshackle old house in Bartow. I had a few names to offer to the librarian- nothing more- and intuitively, she decided that the families must have come from South Carolina. Soon she had located my great-great grandfather Elkanah Sawyer in Edgefield County and a Gardner Ford in Fairfield County. (This Gardner was not who he initially appeared to be and soon became a problem.) With these scant bits of information from Bartow my genealogical career was launched. I wrote close cousins for any information they might have and soon departed on the first of many trips to South Carolina.

At first- in the 1980s- I was completely overwhelmed in the SC Archives by the volume of Ford material (mostly scattered and disorganized) and my inability to sort out the different Fords. (Little did I know what lay ahead- their descendants were to turn into a great horde!) In the beginning I was still under the impression that Gardner Ford, Sr. of Fairfield County was my ancestor, but none of the data fit properly. Later, Ruth Stevenson and her sister, Sarah Bolick, (both deceased) who managed the old Winnsboro Historical Museum (now the Fairfield Genealogy Room) provided immeasurable ongoing help with my research. It turned out that Ruth and Sarah were kin. Our mutual ancestor was Nathaniel Ford, Sr. (brother of Gardner Ford, Sr.). They were descendants of Nathaniel's son John, and I, a descendant of Nathaniel's son Gardner (II). (To the bewilderment and bedevilment of beginning Ford researchers, there was yet a third Gardner- Gardner L. Ford, son of Gardner, Sr.- and the name Gardner has been carried down in my family.)

Over the ensuing years I've made many additional trips to South Carolina and have spent endless hours in the SC archives poring over a variety of books and microfilm and copying and later transcribing old documents. I've also collected material in old courthouses- in Crenshaw, Pike, Barbour, and Coosa County, Alabama and in Carroll and Yalobusha County, Mississippi. I've worked in the Alabama and Georgia State Archives and in the genealogy section of public libraries- Macon, Georgia, Fort Myers, Tampa and Orlando, Florida, and Troy and Eufaula Alabama as well as the South Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina. I've attended Ford family reunions and have tramped through many old cemeteries photographing gravestones.

I haven't used any LDS material. I ran into some problems in local LDS libraries that turned me off. Since I've done thorough on site searches in the counties and states of interest, I doubt that the Mormons have much- if anything- of significance that I don't have on our Fords.

What I collected from various repositories has included Revolutionary and Civil War records, land grants, deeds, wills, estate settlements, lawsuits, census records, any marriage/ occasionally divorce/ death records available, newspaper articles- in short, anything in public record I could lay my hands on. The Fords fortunately left abundant records. Especially fascinating are the numerous lawsuits in which they were embroiled.

Not only have I worked with archival material but also with personal information contributed by numerous Ford descendants. I've received family charts, wonderful family histories, personal sketches and memoirs, pictures, old letters, and other family documents. All of you have been generous with your contributions.

Since I started my genealogy before the advent of the Internet, most of my personal contacts with cousins were made through referrals from other Ford researchers via the US Mail or telephone. I discovered that each of us Ford descendants had bits and pieces of Ford information but no one could provide a coherent or comprehensive picture of the Fords of Fairfield County. Most of us were storing our research in file cases (later computers) where it was doing nobody any good. Often the fate of such collections is the trash can after one departs this life. Children may have no interest in preserving musty old papers. It would be a crying shame if this wealth of Ford material were lost!

In 1994 I retired and began working on my Ford collection in earnest. I purchased and learned to use my first computer. In 1997 I met Leo Loviza- then residing in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Leo was a descendant of Gardner Ford, Sr. (through Dorrell Ford) and an excellent researcher. After we shared information for a while, I proposed that we pull all of the scattered Ford data together and write a book. Leo agreed, and we worked together closely for the next four years. Leo later moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, and was able to do important courthouse research in Franklin County, Mississippi (on Hezekiah Ford, Sr., brother of Nathaniel, Sr. and Gardner, Sr.), and Choctaw County, Alabama (on the descendants of James and Keziah Ford- husband and wife who were son and daughter respectively of Nathaniel Sr. and Gardner, Sr.). Leo had also done work in Salt Lake City as well as the Dallas Public Library. He was an expert in teasing out necessary data from the most unlikely and troublesome sources. My interest has been in the text of old documents. Together we were a great team.

To my great disappointment, Leo became seriously ill in summer of 2000 and died in January, 2001. This was a terrible loss for his family, for me, for all of the Ford cousins, and for our big project.

Immediately I had to make a decision about what to do next, since Leo had not provided

me with his final summation on the Gardner Ford, Sr. lines. **THE BOOK**, in January, 2001, already contained 11 chapters on the descendants of Nathaniel Ford, Sr. plus one chapter on Elizabeth Ford Burge and was approaching 300 pages in length. I decided to split the project in half and publish what I've completed to date. As soon as Vol. I is in the hands of the publisher, I'll start Vol. II, which will contain Leo's research on the Gardner Ford lines, chapters on Keziah Ford Peay's descendants, and a chapter on the elusive Hezekiah Ford, Sr. Leo's son Michael Loviza has kindly agreed to lend me his father's notes (35 pounds of data). All of the Gardner Ford, Sr. descendants have also agreed to help me, since this is not my area of expertise. I am committed to publishing Leo's work.

Also, I've become fascinated with Austin Ford Peay, son of Keziah Ford Peay (sister of Nathaniel, Sr., Gardner, Sr., and Hezekiah, Sr.) and want to do him justice in Vol. 2. This gentleman, according to legend, was given a suit of clothes by his father, Nicholas Peay, and told to go out and make his own living. (Early 1800s) Austin returned the clothes and through his own efforts became a SC state senator and one of the wealthiest men in South Carolina! The Fairfield County indirect index to deeds lists over 100 purchases of land that he made! I plan to abstract all of them. All of the Peay wills and estate settlements are fascinating, as are his Quaker in-laws and his son Nicholas Adamson Peay.

More problematic, and requiring more research, is Hezekiah Ford, Sr., who went to Franklin County, Mississippi, in 1804. The Franklin County courthouse burned, so we are dealing with scraps of information. Only a few weeks ago I accidentally discovered his one son in Louisiana- which opens a new domain to explore. Maybe I'll get lucky!

If I had attempted to add all of the Gardner Ford, Sr., Hezekiah Ford, Sr., and Keziah Ford Peay material to what I have completed, publication would have been delayed for another year or more, and the book would have been 500-600 pages long- too expensive to print and unlikely to sell. This way the project becomes manageable for me and affordable for all since two volumes will be spread out over a year or two.

Volume I contains not only family charts but also all of the other information I've mentioned above. I reproduce wills and estate settlements as well as letters and most personal family histories in full. I've abstracted deeds. Everything is presented in chronological order so that by following public record we can trace our ancestors through time. If you will read each of these documents carefully, you will get a good sense of what our ancestors were like. I've relied heavily on the L.M. Ford *FORD FAMILY HISTORY* (written in 1904) for guidance with the earliest family groups but have backed up everything he says with census records or other legal documents. (L.M. is about 95% accurate.) I've written or reproduced as much Civil War material as I could find. (What happened to the South Carolina Fords in the path of Sherman's troops was very ugly.)

It was impossible to provide complete family charts of all descendants of Nathaniel Ford, Sr. down to the present. When living descendants came forward and contributed charts there was no problem. However, when there was no one to help, I stopped with the 1880 census (or earlier). In the unfortunate census gap between 1880 and 1900 children married (daughters assuming new names), composition of households changed, and families moved. Without guidance I could not proceed with those families. The beauty of **THE BOOK** is that any of these lost relatives can connect to the family in 1880 and can go back to old Nathaniel with clear documentation.

The chapter titles are:

I- Overview

II- Nathaniel Ford, Sr.

III- John Ford

IV- Gardner Ford (II)

V- James Ford and Keziah Ford (first cousins)

VI- Nathaniel Ford, Jr. and Keziah Ford Guntharp

VII- John Long Ford, Sr. and William Boyd Ford

VIII- John Long Ford, Jr., Riley McMaster Ford, Moultrie Judson Ford, and Alice Ford Hollis

IX- Aaron Ford and Robert Ford

X- Wyatt Nathaniel Ford, Bartlett Hilliard Ford, and William Riley Eugene Ford

XI- Hezekiah Ford II and Keziah Ford Burge Ford (first cousins)

XII- Annie Ford Ford, Mary Ford Armstrong, Sarah Ford Nettles/Crumpton/DeLashnitt, Elsie Ford Yongue, and Martha Ford Coleman (Annie Ford married her first cousin Gardner L. Ford)

XIII- Elizabeth Ford Burge

The last chapter is at this time in the hands of Burge researcher/cousin Tony Cox, of Coweta, Oklahoma, for proof reading and correction. Tony has provided immeasurable help with this difficult chapter. As soon as Chapter 13 is finalized, I will index the book and mail it to the publisher. I hope the indexing program on my computer behaves as advertized!

As you will see, I have not attempted to dip into "The Black Hole of Virginia" to try to identify the parents of the five Fords of Fairfield County. My efforts to date have been futile, and discussion of my work and correspondence with Virginia Fords is beyond the scope of this book.

What I need now is an indication of how many books I should plan to order. If you would send me an e-mail or card or note saying yes or no and how many, it would be most helpful. I hope that if the older cousins have several children that you would consider giving each child a copy as a gift. The more copies we are able to order, the lower the price will be. This is a straw poll to enable me to negotiate with the publisher. I hope that the price per book will be around \$30, more or less, plus mailing costs. (This is about the same cost as a good hardback from Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble.) An order form will be sent later.

I would also appreciate your sharing this information with other interested relatives, friends, and libraries. I would like to have a wide distribution of this material for the benefit of other Ford researchers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Cordially,

Sidney