

THE FAMILY OF JAMES MARTIN OF WATEREE

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The James Martin family who arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, from Larne, Ireland, in the winter of 1767-68, has been the subject of much genealogical study. James, age 39, his wife Jane, age 40, and their five children—William, age 12; John, age 11; Jane, age 10; Andrew, age 8; and James, age 6—were listed as arrivals in the Colonial Council minutes of January 12, 1768. (See Janie Revill. *A Compilation of the Original Lists of Protestant Immigrants to South Carolina 1763-1773*, Page 100.) What follows is a presentation of some of the evidentiary basis for identifying members and various descendants of this family, and, with reference to the most recent research, correction of some errors which have been a part of this family's informal history.

The husband of this immigrant family has come to be referred to as James Martin of Wateree, because he so designates himself in his will, signed September, 1781, and "proved" in Camden, South Carolina, in 1786. The Wateree River flows near the plantation he lived on at the time of his will. This plantation has not been located exactly, but it lay in the southeastern part of Fairfield County, near or perhaps just over the border of what became Kershaw County. His exact death date is unknown, but he must have died as early as April of 1785, because a witness to this will's codicil challenged its validity in that month.

Almost no information has been discovered about either Jane the wife of James Martin of Wateree or Jane his daughter. Both were alive in 1781, as they are mentioned in his will. The language of that will implies that the daughter Jane was married by 1781, but no definite information is available. An often repeated but unfounded family tradition suggests that the daughter Jane married a Benjamin Still, but this tradition was based upon a misconstruing of the will of Jane's eldest brother William. Jane's brother William (1755-1828), who relocated from Fairfield County to Edgefield District, and his wife Sarah Rotton (1759-1844), were childless, but they adopted a nephew, Andrew Martin's youngest son, John F. Martin (1805-1847), who became their primary heir. For that reason, and because William made bequests to so many specific nephews and nieces, it is convenient to refer to him as "Uncle William."

Uncle William's will, written in 1827, is complex, repetitive, and ambiguous, but it is crucial to the history of this family.

[A rigorous analysis of the wills, estate papers, deeds and other legal documents as they establish the history of the first several generations of the family of James Martin of Wateree is available from Nancy Martin Adams, 2004 Highpoint Drive, Opelika, AL 36801-2006. The charge to defray copying and mailing expense is \$8.00]

Uncle William made bequests to the children of his siblings John, Andrew, and James. Because he did not mention his sister Jane but did make a bequest to William Still son of Benjamin Still, the tradition arose that Benjamin Still was the husband of Uncle William's sister Jane (b. 1757), and that the William Still named as an heir was her son.

Recently, documents have come to light which connect the family of James Martin of Wateree to the William Martin (1786-1842) of Decatur County, Georgia, and his sister Jane Martin (1783-1866) who married the Primitive Baptist minister Benjamin Still and moved to Walton County, Georgia. From these documents it is evident that Uncle William referred in his will to the eldest son of this Jane Martin Still, a son who was probably named after Uncle William, as his full name was William Martin Still. The key document which establishes this connection is the receipt for Uncle William's bequest to "William Martin son of John Martin

Snr.” This bequest was collected by the son of William Martin of Decatur County Georgia, who had died in 1842. His letter of administration and the receipt he gave to the administrator of Uncle William’s will were never recorded nor placed in the estate file in the Edgefield Courthouse because Uncle William’s administrator died very soon after paying this bequest. These documents were discovered in the genealogical collection of Willie Bell Aycock, a descendant of James Martin of Wateree.

Summing up, then, with respect to Jane Martin (b. 1757), the daughter of James Martin of Wateree, Uncle William’s will provides no information about her or any husband of hers, or whether she was still alive in 1827. There is only the strong implication Uncle William’s sister Jane had no children who survived until 1827, for Uncle William’s evident fondness for his nephews and nieces suggests that he would have included Jane’s children in his list of legatees. His failure to mention Jane herself is not definitive, because he mentioned his other siblings only to identify their children. Of course, John and Andrew died long before 1827, but Uncle William made no bequest to his brother James, who lived until 1834.

Uncle William’s list of Andrew Martin’s children generally matches the list of heirs on Andrew’s 1814 estate settlement papers in Fairfield County, South Carolina. There is no doubt that the brothers Andrew (1756-1814) and Uncle William are the sons of James Martin of Wateree. Uncle William made a specific bequest of a slave to “John Martin, the son of James Martin.” That John Martin sold his rights to that slave. The deed by which that John Martin conveyed his rights to a William S. Martin establishes that the James Martin (1761-1834) who served in the Revolutionary war and moved to Greene County, AL, in 1820, was that John Martin’s father. Therefore, that James Martin is the brother of Uncle William and the youngest child of James Martin of Wateree.

The identity of Uncle Williams’ brother John Martin (b. 1756) has a more complex history. As early as 1950, descendants of a John Martin who died in Abbeville District, South Carolina, in 1822, were citing him as the son of James Martin of Wateree. For many decades, that claim had been accepted, even though no supporting documentation was provided. However, on all the available documents related to John Martin of Abbeville, and in all the family relationships through his two marriages, not a single family name appears of the many family names which are repeatedly and intricately connected with the family of James Martin of Wateree. The family of James Martin of Wateree has for generations been associated, in Fairfield County, with the Roseboroughs, Kennedys, Youngs, Turners, Campbells, Lotts, Johnstons, and Sloans. In both Edgefield District and in Alabama, there are continuing associations with Rottens, Cockcrofts, Stills, Youngbloods, Lovelesses, Stroms, Beans, Raborns, and Hooks.

In addition, once it was established that William Martin of Decatur Co., Georgia, and his sister Jane (Mrs. Benjamin Still) were children of Uncle William’s brother John, it was no longer possible for John Martin of Abbeville (d. 1822) to be Uncle William’s brother. John Martin of Abbeville, whose children by two wives are well documented, had no daughter Jane, and his son William was much older than William of Decatur Co. Georgia. Also John Martin of Abbeville’s son William lived to 1855; Uncle William’s nephew died in Georgia in 1842.

In 1807, a John Martin died intestate in Edgefield, South Carolina. Unfortunately the documents related to his estate were mixed together in the same file [Box 42 Package 1717] with those of a different John Martin who died in May, 1806. Adding to the confusion is the fact that for both estates the administrator was named Sarah Martin. Research by William G. Martin of West Virginia has identified the John Martin who died in 1806 as the father of Lewis Martin, an

ancestor of William G. Martin. That Martin family lived in the northwest part of Edgefield, while the Martins who belong to the family of James Martin of Wateree lived at the far eastern end of the county, in an area later included in the formation of Saluda County.

The administration bond for the John Martin who died in 1807 was co-signed by Benjamin Still and his brother David Still. Others involved in the settlement of this estate were John Cockcroft, Benjamin Loveless, and William Rotton. Each of those families intermarried with the family of James Martin of Wateree. In particular, John Cockcroft married Benjamin Still's sister Mary, and their daughter Sarah married John F. Martin, the nephew Uncle William adopted. Both the father and brother of Uncle William's wife Sarah were named William Rotton. Benjamin Still had bought land from Uncle William and Sarah Martin just four years earlier, in 1803. A witness on that deed was Ogden Cockcroft, father of John Cockcroft.

Uncle William provided for the son (William Martin Still) of this Benjamin Still in his will. Unfortunately, this John Martin's 1807 estate papers do not include a settlement list naming his heirs or children. Nevertheless, it is evident that the John Martin who died in Edgefield in 1807 is the son (b. 1756) of James Martin of Wateree, father in law of Benjamin Still, the brother of Uncle William, and the father of the William Martin and Jane Martin Still who moved from Edgefield to Georgia.

Reference to one other person in Uncle William's will requires discussion here. This passage in Uncle William's will:

to be Divided between William—Martin son of James Martin Senr and James Martin son of Andrew Moses Martin son of Andrew and Jane Rosebrogh

and its close repetition:

the above named William Martin son of James Martin Senr James Martin son of Andrew Martin Moses Martin son of Andrew Martin Jane Roseborough

have led to the inference that Jane Roseborough was the mother of Andrew Martin's son Moses, that she was Andrew Martin's wife or widow. But there was only one Moses Martin in the family at that time, so there was no need to specifically identify him by naming his mother. In no other case did Uncle William identify a legatee by reference to a mother, even in the case of William Still, who was identified by his father, an in-law, even though his mother, Jane Martin Still, was Uncle William's niece. There is no mention of a widow in the estate papers of Andrew Martin in 1814, which indicates that Jane Roseborough was not Andrew's remarried widow. Were there some improper relationship between Andrew and Jane Roseborough, with Moses as the result, Uncle William would certainly not call attention to that in his will. The unfortunate state of the matter is that, to date, there is no factual information whatever about the wife of Andrew Martin beyond the indication from his estate papers that she had predeceased him.

While the identity of Jane Roseborough in Uncle William's will can not yet be proven to a legal certainty, a number of facts point in what may be the right direction. A Roseborough Bible and headstones in the Roseborough Cemetery in Fairfield County reveal that there was a Jane Martin who became the second wife of James F. Roseborough, the eldest son of Alexander and Jane Fears Roseborough. The Roseboroughs were neighbors of the Andrew Martin family, near Ridgeway, in Fairfield County. Research in the census records of South Carolina and various Roseborough genealogies yields only one of several people named Jane Roseborough

who could be this wife of James F. Roseborough. She was born in 1799, married the widower James F. Roseborough probably between 1815 and 1825, bore him four children between 1826 and 1832, survived his death in 1847, and lived with her children thereafter, appearing on the censuses through 1870.

There is yet no conclusive evidence that this Jane Martin Roseborough is a member of the family of James Martin of Wateree, but if Uncle William named her as a legatee, rather than as a mother of Moses Martin, that would be strong evidence. There was a payment from the accounts of the administrator of Uncle William's will to a Jane Roseborough in 1852. The amount paid might be construed to approximate one and a half share, with interest, but there is no specific notation that identifies this payment as proceeds from Uncle William's estate. Jane Roseborough, with a James Martin and an Edward Sloan, co-signed the note used to pay for one of the slaves bought at the sale of Uncle William's slaves in January, 1845. Co-signing a note was unusual for a woman, unless she was mature, did not have a husband, was well known to the grantee of the note, and was a principal in the transaction. Therefore, Jane Roseborough, although living several counties away, and still married to James F. Roseborough, must have known of the slave sale, may even have attended, was trusted by Uncle William's administrator to co-sign a promissory note, very likely was the purchaser in fact of the slave, maybe even knew of this specific slave.

It is known that the William S. Martin, mentioned earlier, who purchased the rights to one of Uncle William's slaves for a very high price, also attended this slave sale, bought several slaves, and was paid a half share of the legacy from Uncle William's will, though he was not mentioned in that will. William S. Martin, whose middle name was Seaborn, was close enough an associate of Uncle William's brother James in Greene County, Alabama, to be a relative, although his parents have not yet been definitely identified. There does not seem to be any way he could be due even a half share of the cash from Uncle William's will unless he were a relative. William S. Martin apparently traveled from Greene Co., Alabama, to Edgefield with Andrew Martin's son Moses Martin, then a resident of Greene County. Accompanying them was the administrator of the estate of James Martin's son William A. Martin, a named legatee in Uncle William's will. All three attended the slave sale in January, 1845, and each was paid the legacy due as per Uncle William's will. William Seaborn Martin's half share reveals that he was not a primary heir, but must have been one of two children of a primary heir. Documents account for the payment of the cash legacies from Uncle William's will to every named heir except two: Andrew's daughter Sinah, who apparently died before 1845 and left no issue, and Andrew's son William.

IF Jane Roseborough was in fact paid one and a half share of the cash legacy from Uncle William's will, that could comprise her share as a named heir plus a half share from her father, the other half of her father's share being that half share paid to William Seaborn Martin. The conclusion would be that Jane Martin Roseborough and William Seaborn Martin were sister and brother, children of Andrew Martin's son William, who was alive when Uncle William wrote his will in 1827, but who had died before the cash payments were made in 1845. The delay in paying Jane Roseborough's share to her attorney until 1852, 7 years after the other heirs were paid and 5 years after the death of Uncle William's administrator, may have been due to a dispute over her claim to both a share of her own and part of her father's share. Of all the heirs to the proceeds of the slave sale named by Uncle William's will, she would be the only one who could claim more than one share, and the will specified that each of the named legatees should receive "an equal part" of the proceeds of the slave sale.

Finally, why would Uncle William have singled out this one grand niece for a legacy, especially since he was also making the same bequest to her father, Andrew's son William? The only other legatee who was not a nephew or niece was William Martin Still, a grand nephew and probable namesake of Uncle William. If Jane Roseborough is a legatee, she must have been special somehow to Uncle William. Perhaps a clue lies in the information that William Seaborn Martin was reported to have come to Greene County, Alabama, from Edgefield, South Carolina. Why is that a noteworthy clue?

Andrew Martin always lived in Fairfield County. His brother James Martin, with whom William Seaborn was so closely associated in Greene County, was also a Fairfield resident until he moved to Alabama in 1820. William Seaborn Martin married into families from Fairfield, including that of James Martin's Revolutionary War companion, David Campbell. All those facts suggest that William Seaborn, if he was the grandson of Andrew Martin, would have been "from Fairfield," not Edgefield.

However, Uncle William had adopted and brought to Edgefield Andrew's son John, the youngest brother of Andrew's son William. Uncle William's brother John Martin had also moved to Edgefield. It is quite possible that, like his Uncles William and John, Andrew's son William relocated to Edgefield, near Uncle William, perhaps with Uncle William's urging, and perhaps to be near his little brother John.

If Andrew's son William did migrate to Edgefield, then it would be no surprise if Uncle William and his wife Sarah were frequently visited by and developed a fondness for their grand nephew and grand niece-- the young William Seaborn Martin and especially his sister Jane (later Jane Roseborough). That could explain William Seaborn Martin's and Jane Roseborough's special interest in certain of Uncle William's slaves. And that could explain Uncle William's bequest to Jane in his will. (She was definitely Mrs. James Roseborough by 1827, the date of the will, because she had her first child with James F. Roseborough in 1826.)

Sources of information seem to have dried up which could identify the wife of Andrew Martin and prove the specific relationship of Jane Martin Roseborough and William Seaborn Martin to the family of James Martin of Wateree. I would very much welcome any information that illuminates this family or provides evidence of relationships and identities. I have a great deal of information about James Martin(1761-1834) and his family in Greene County, Alabama, as well as William Seaborn Martin. I am most acquainted with the families of my direct ancestor, John F(ears) Martin, son of Andrew Martin and the adopted son of Uncle William Martin.

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