

---

## Frontier Research Strategies—Weaving a Web to Snare a Birth Family: John Watts (ca. 1749–ca. 1822)

---

By Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FNGS, FASG

*On the frontiers of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Trans-Appalachia, direct evidence to prove parentage and origin is more the exception than the rule. Proof usually requires an argument assembled from indirect evidence drawn from a web of associations that links identities across generations.*

**F**or settlers, colonial upcountry South Carolina was a promising wildwood. For researchers, it is an information desert where family roots wither. Before 1769, deeds, probates, marriages, and lawsuits were to be recorded at Charleston. Compliance was impractical, and most life milestones went unrecorded. The creation of a district court system in 1769 made little change in local habits. In upcountry districts, few local records predate the state's 1785 reorganization. Few settlers left wills. More than a century elapsed before South Carolina mandated recording of marriages or permitted divorces. Thus, families formed and dissolved outside the bounds of record keeping.

Deprived of expected resources, researchers may try to “make do” with what exists. Assumptions drawn from censuses are mortared with random references to a name, even though a name does not make a person. Rev. John Watts, Esq., a pioneer of several frontiers across the Deep South, illustrates for all researchers the typically poor results, as well as the potential for success.

Most Watts researchers assume the reverend was John Watts in the 1790 census of South Carolina's Fairfield County. From randomly published record abstracts, they place him next in Georgia's Montgomery and Telfair counties in the 1790s and early 1800s. They find him, his sons, and sons-in-law on the

---

© Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FNGS, FASG; 141 Settlers Way; Hendersonville, TN 37075-6724; [eshown@comcast.net](mailto:eshown@comcast.net). Ms. Mills is a past president of the American Society of Genealogists and the Board for Certification of Genealogists, a former longtime editor of the *NGS Quarterly*, and the author of many works on evidence analysis and problem resolution. Because the volume of data used in this project is too great to present within a single paper, the underlying research reports are posted for study at the author's website, *HistoricPathways.com*, under the “Research” tab. All records found for John are abstracted, transcribed, and/or imaged in “Rev. John Watts, Esq. (ca.1749–ca.1822); Spouses 1: (Smith?); 2: Judith “Judy” (Rawl?): Research Notes,” 15 June 2016 (123 pages). Eight other reports provide abstracts, transcripts, and images of research on John's network of family, associates, and neighbors. All websites referenced here were editorially reviewed on 5 August 2016.

1818 state census of newly formed Lawrence County, Mississippi, and the 1820 census of its offshoot Covington County. Its tax rolls list him that year, and then he disappears into the ashes of courthouse fires. Tax rolls for 1823–25, preserved at the state level, introduce a likely widow, Judith Watts, the only known candidate for John's wife. She apparently died soon after, as she was dropped from the next extant roll, 1827.<sup>1</sup>

For a half century the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) has accepted John as a patriot. The society identifies him as "John A. Watts" (ca. 1751–post-1820), husband of "Judith X" and a private in Walton's Company of North Carolina militia who died in Covington. Most of the thirty approved applications claim Anson County, North Carolina, as his birthplace.<sup>2</sup> Online trees agree, asserting he married Judith Rawls and was son of William Watts of Maryland who died in Anson in 1772, leaving a wife, Agnes (née Smith), and an estate administered by John.<sup>3</sup>

Their evidence is meager. DAR applications cite a published roster of North Carolina's Revolutionary soldiers listing "John Watts."<sup>4</sup> Applicants offer no evidence that John Watts of Mississippi is that man. "Documents" attached to online trees have him signing petitions in Anson in 1769 and distant Wake County, North Carolina, in 1782.<sup>5</sup> They, too, do not link the man of either record to Rev. John Watts. They offer only abstracts or printed copies of the

1. For this overview, see Wynema McGrew, *Watts is My Line: John and Judith (?) Watts, Settlers of the Mississippi Territory*, vol. 1 (Hattiesburg, Miss.: privately printed, 2010), 21–23.

2. For the members, see National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, "Genealogical Research System," database, *DAR: Daughters of the American Revolution* ([http://services.dar.org/Public/DAR\\_Research/search\\_adb/?action=full&p\\_id=A122826](http://services.dar.org/Public/DAR_Research/search_adb/?action=full&p_id=A122826)), John A Watts. Of seventy-two known records created by or about John Watts during his life, including nine signature specimens, none gives him a middle name or initial.

3. Their only source seems to be May Wilson McBee, *Anson County, North Carolina: Abstracts of Early Records* (1950; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1978), 84, which reports: "Agnes Watts, wife and relict of William Watts, decd., relinq. admrn," after which the court appointed a John Watts. For the originals, see Anson Co., N.C., Minute Docket, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1771–1777, pp. 91 and 162; reference CR.005.301.1 – CR.005.301.4, State Archives of North Carolina (SANC), Raleigh. No other records survive for this probate. The minutes state no relationship for the administrator and no maiden name for Agnes. No Preslars or Longs, the associations of this Anson County family, have been connected to Rev. John Watts.

4. North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution, *Roster of Soldiers from North Carolina in the American Revolution* (1932; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1977), 174.

5. For Anson, see William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vol. 8, 1769 to 1771 (Raleigh: Josephus Daniels, 1890), 75–80. For Wake, see, for example, RVick3434, "Vick Family Tree," member contribution, *Ancestry* ([http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/12098848/person/12930147529?ssrc=&ml\\_rpos=23](http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/12098848/person/12930147529?ssrc=&ml_rpos=23)). This tree, one of the most "sourced" of several hundred for John Watts, asserts his presence in Wake County in 1782 by linking to an *Ancestry*-created abstract in its database "U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660–1820," which cites, third-hand, a document from SANC. No evidence links him to the subject of this paper.

petitions. The originals appear unexamined for signatures or marks to compare with those of Rev. John Watts, Esq.<sup>6</sup>

All those assertions are false—except that Rev. John Watts was a pioneer in South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi who apparently left a widow Judith.<sup>7</sup> No known record names his sixteen children’s mother (or mothers).<sup>8</sup>

Amid a seeming dearth of records, how do genealogists assemble an identity, birth family, and origin for a life garbled by ungrounded speculation? They must amass all discoverable records to identify the subjects and their families. Then they repeat that process for all known associates, neighbors, and same-surnamed contemporaries in their locales. They must sift that mass of data, building a case from patterns and links, and then repeat the process for at least one generation before and after, to ensure that the patterns hold.

#### MISSISSIPPI

Covington, where John and Judith died, is a notoriously burned county. Little survives beyond federal census and land records and state copies of random tax rolls. Those records pinpoint the Watts’s settlement and a three-year bracket for John’s death. They demonstrate that he spent his last days within a horseback ride of most of his sprawling family. But they offer few clues to his birthplace, his date of birth, his parentage, the identity of the mother or mothers of his children, and his role (if any) in the American Revolution.

#### GEORGIA

Georgia’s trove of original documents provides an immense amount of neglected information that helps reconstruct John’s life there.<sup>9</sup> He and his

---

6. The original Anson document, for example, shows that signer John Watts used a mark  $\Theta$ , while Rev. John Watts, Esq., was a literate man who left numerous signatures as a county justice. For the original 1769 petition from Anson County, see File “Oct.–Nov., 1769 Lower House Committees, Committee of Propositions and Grievances,” MARS Id 66.8.4.4; box “General Assembly Session Records, Colonial (Upper and Lower Houses), Oct.–Nov., 1769; Dec., 1770–Jan., 1771 (Lower House Papers–Dec. Bills)”;

7. For research disambiguating Rev. John Watts, Esq., from the John Watts of Anson and the John Watts of Bertie/Martin who actually performed the military service, see Mills, “Watts: Initial Survey of Published Eighteenth-Century Bertie, Hertford, and Martin Counties, North Carolina,” research report, 15 January 2015; “Watts: Initial Survey of Published Resources for Colonial and Revolutionary Anson County, NC, and its Parent and Daughter Counties—Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and Montgomery,” research report, 15 January 2015; and “Rev. John Watts, Esq. (ca.1749–ca.1822),” June 2016; *HistoricPathways*.

8. McGrew, in *Watts is My Line*, documents well the offspring of John’s older children. For the proof argument and DNA evidence identifying a previously unknown daughter and the evidence supporting a tradition that he had sixteen children, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Testing the FAN Principle Against DNA: Zilphy (Watts) Price Cooksey Cooksey of Georgia and Mississippi,” *NGS Quarterly* 102 (June 2014): 129–52.

9. See Mills, “Rev. John Watts, Esq. (ca. 1749–ca. 1822).” Also at *Historic Pathways*, under “Research,” see “Cooksey” for other reports placing John Watts into his associates’ context.

eldest son, Thomas, first appeared on 6 February 1792 in Washington County, requesting headright land—not military bounty land.<sup>10</sup> Although that county lost its records to fire, state-level land-grant warrants and surveys survive. They reveal a second John Watts, who must be disambiguated from Rev. John.<sup>11</sup>

Twenty-two months after John first appeared in Georgia, his portion of Washington County was cut away to form Montgomery. The Georgia legislature appointed John to the committee to select the site of Montgomery's courthouse.<sup>12</sup> By August 1794 he was a justice of the new county's inferior court, signing land warrants for fellow migrants into the state.<sup>13</sup> He filled that post until at least October 1798.<sup>14</sup> After Montgomery split to form Tattnall County, John again was appointed to the 1806 site-selection committee for the new courthouse.<sup>15</sup> He then served on Tattnall juries until April 1809.<sup>16</sup> Under Georgia law, male citizens reached the maximum age for jury duty at sixty.<sup>17</sup> The timing of John's last service suggests a 1749 birth. When he subsequently followed his sons Thomas and Reuben to newly opened Telfair County, he purchased land there, but no jury list would include him.<sup>18</sup>

Twenty-four years elapsed between John's arrival in Georgia and his departure for Mississippi. Most of his children had come of age in the interim. At least eight married in Georgia, but only the last two were recorded. Deeds, tax rolls, court records, land-lottery registers, and Indian depredation claims survive for

10. *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1914217>) > Georgia, Headright and Bounty Land Records, 1783–1909 > Warsdon, James–Watts, William > images 489–90, for image of warrant to John Watts, 6 February 1792. *Ibid.* > images 523–24, Thomas Watts.

11. The other John Watts arrived in Washington County just after its 1784 creation. Like Rev. John, he was appointed a justice. He was also the county's surveyor, first state representative, and lieutenant colonel of its militia. He died there in 1803, leaving two known heirs: apparent widow Tabitha and apparent son Joshua. For a disambiguation of the two John Wattses—both of whom grew up in what is now Kershaw Co., S.C., as sons of two different men who also bore the same name (Thomas)—see Mills, “Revolutionary War Capt. John Watts of Camden District, South Carolina,” research report, 2 November 2014, *Historic Pathways*.

12. Robert Watkins and George Watkins, *A Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia . . . to the Year 1798, Inclusive . . .* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1800), 529. That same legislature also appointed the *other* John Watts of Washington County to the site-selection committee for Washington's new courthouse. See *ibid.*, 525.

13. Eight instances have been found to date; for example, *FamilySearch* > Georgia, Headright and Bounty Land Records, 1783–1909 > Stanford, David–Stevenson, William > image 52, warrant to “Sands Stanley,” 4 August 1794.

14. *Ibid.* > Guntry, John–Haley, William > image 150, warrant to “Simon Hadley,” 1 October 1798.

15. Augustin Smith Clayton, *A Compilation of the Laws of the State of Georgia* (Augusta: Adams and Duyckinck, 1812), 300.

16. Tattnall Co., Ga., Superior Court Minutes, 1804–23, April 1809 court term; Probate Judge's Office, Reidsville, Ga.

17. Watkins and Watkins, *A Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia*, 627.

18. Telfair Co., Ga., Deed Book A:176–78; Recorder of Deeds, McRae, Ga. Also, Telfair Co., Superior Court Minutes, 1810–1837, chronologically arranged; Clerk of Court, McRae.

Montgomery, Tattnall, and Telfair—all documenting John’s and his children’s activities.<sup>19</sup> Still, no direct evidence in John’s forty-one Georgia documents identifies a wife, parents, or siblings. Nor do they document his origin or prior residence.

#### SOUTH CAROLINA

Despite the colonial backcountry’s reputation for scarce records, a trove exists. Locally, researchers can find scattered pre-1785 deed and probate records that settlers recorded after the creation of county-level offices. The most extensive backcountry resources are at Charleston. Petitions to the provincial council for land and survey warrants are published—plus subsequent returns, grants, and memorials. So are thousands of deeds and probates for folk willing to make the trip to Charleston to legalize their affairs. Pre-1785 surveys, abstracts of other grant-related records, petitions, criminal court records, and more were used for this project.<sup>20</sup>

Records of John’s associates in Georgia yield clues to his South Carolina existence. Common accounts assert that he came from a hodgepodge of locales—essentially wherever “John Watts” might be found in a published record. He appears in only one place with his Georgia associates, however, before they settled together in Montgomery and Tattnall.<sup>21</sup> That site is Fairfield County, South Carolina, known before 1785 as Camden District. It previously lay in Craven County, which dissolved in 1769.

Fairfield’s first census, taken in 1790–91, lists John, his first son-in-law Moses Hornsby, and Thomas Watts, whose residence next to John suggests a kinship:

Page 150:

Moses Hornsbie	1 male	16+	0 males	–16	1 female
----------------	--------	-----	---------	-----	----------

Page 152, adjacent entries:

John Watts	2 males	16+	1 male	–16	7 females
Thomas Watts	1 male	16+	0 males	–16	1 female <sup>22</sup>

19. For abstracts, transcriptions, analyses, and some images of known Georgia records for John, as well as some for his sons and sons-in-law, see Mills, “Rev. John Watts, Esq. (ca. 1749–ca. 1822).”

20. This paper identifies some of these records. All are explored in the research reports posted at *Historic Pathways*. For guides, see Janis Walker Gilmore, *South Carolina*, NGS Special Publication 102 (Arlington, Va.: NGS, 2011). Also, GeLee Corley Hendrix, *South Carolina*, NGS Special Publication 66 (Arlington, Va.: NGS, 1992).

21. John’s Georgia associates in Fairfield include the Mobleys (*var.* Mobberlys), their Byrd in-laws, and Willis Cason. For the connections between John Watts and these individuals, see Mills, “Rev. John Watts, Esq. (ca. 1749–ca. 1822).”

22. 1790 U.S. census, Fairfield Co., S.C., p. 150, Moses Hornsbie, and p. 152, John and Thomas Watts; microfilm publication M637, roll 62, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The Fairfield return’s first page says the census was completed in fall 1791. For Hornsby’s relationship to John, see Mills, “Testing the FAN Principle Against DNA,” 138. Also, McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 37–154.

Identifying the adjacent Thomas seems easy, as John's eldest son, born about 1770–71, has a compatible age and carried that name.<sup>23</sup> Years of research, however, establishes that Thomas-of-John began a family after moving to Georgia.<sup>24</sup> Some descendants dismissed the discrepancy between known data for Thomas-of-John and the apparently married Thomas next door in 1790, or they assumed that Thomas could have had an earlier childless marriage. To the contrary, Fairfield's surviving records prove a different identity for this 1790 neighbor. They also provide a key connector for identifying John's birth family there in Fairfield and adjacent Kershaw.

#### *Identifying John's Neighborhood*

This 1790 census provides the basis for placing John into a Fairfield neighborhood and recreating his existence there. Table 1 presents the cluster of household heads surrounding John on that 1790 census page. Most owned land. From the 1760s through the 1790s they received grants in Eastern Fairfield on the west side of Wateree River, between Wateree Creek on the north and Dutchman's Creek on the south.<sup>25</sup> When Watts's son-in-law Hornsby received a warrant for new land in 1791, his three adjacent landowners on Hornsby's Branch of Wateree Creek (where he lived on land inherited from his father) were John Watts's neighbors *John King*, *Charles Lewis*, and *John Sanders*.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Identifying Neighborhood Networks*

Studying John Watts's neighbors reveals a community of interconnected families. *Charles Pickett*, for example, was a justice of the peace who served not only John Watts, but also other Wattses who can be linked to John geographically and socially through Pickett. Charles's brother *Micajah Pickett* was the brother-in-law of *Obadiah Henson*, whose mother was a *Sanders*.<sup>27</sup> *Edward Pigg* had

23. Thomas-of-John reportedly was seventy-nine in 1850 and born in S.C. If correct, he was born between 2 June 1770 and 1 June 1771. See 1850 U.S. census, Smith Co., Tex., population schedule, p. 56, dwelling 196, family 197, Bartlett S. Watts household; NARA microfilm M432, roll 915.

24. McGrew, *Watts Is My Line*, 155–397, especially 155–72.

25. For record abstracts, analyses, and plat images, see Mills, "Watts: Initial Survey of Published South Carolina Resources for Old Craven County, Camden District, and the Counties Cut from Them," research report, 17 October 2014; and "Watts: Legal Records of Fairfield and Kershaw Counties, South Carolina (Previously Camden District and Craven County), Pre-1830," research report, 27 October 2014; *Historic Pathways*.

26. Camden Dist., S.C., Commissioner of Locations, Plat Book D:184, Moses Hornsby; Kershaw Co. Clerk of Court, Camden, S.C. For Moses's inheritance of land, originally patented by a noted Tory, Moses Kirkland, see chain of title in Fairfield Co., S.C., Deed Book 1:330; Register of Mesne Conveyances, Winnsboro, S.C.

27. For the Fairfield kinship network created by the Pickett-Henson-Sanders clan, see the well-documented "Notes for Micajah Pickett and Kinsanna Hinson," *Janet and Robert Wolfe Genealogy* ([www-personal.umich.edu/~bobwolfe/gen/mn/m331x332.htm](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bobwolfe/gen/mn/m331x332.htm)).

Table 1  
John Watts's 1790 Census Neighbors

Jesse Ginn	<b>Thomas Watts</b>	John King
Thomas Knighton	Edward Pigg [Rev.] <sup>a</sup>	Moses Knighton
Wm. Lewis	Charles Pigg [Rev.]	Charles Pickett [J.P.]
Musker Boland	James Morris	Richard Roberts
Wm. Tidwell	Fanny Blake [née Hornsby] <sup>b</sup>	John Splon
George Coon	Sarah Garrett	Charles Lewis
James King	Robert Tidwell Junr.	John Hollis
John Goin	Jesse Goin	Wilson Gibson
James Lucas	Robert Shirley	Elisabeth Lewis
James Burke	Micajah Pickett	John Sanders
Robert Tidwell	M <sup>w</sup> . Hill	Presly Tidwell
<b>John Watts</b>	Obadiah Henson	
[adjoins Thomas Watts]	[adjoins John King]	

Source: 1790 U.S. census, Fairfield Dist., S.C., p. 150, Moses Hornsby, and p.152, John and Thomas Watts; microfilm publication M637, roll 62, National Archives and Records Administration.

a. Edward Pigg and Charles Filkes Pigg were Baptist ministers. See Leah Townsend, *South Carolina Baptists, 1670–1805* (1935; reprint, Baltimore: Clearfield, 2003), 80, 99, 100n, 102, 114, 146, 158, and 212.

b. Fanny is identified as widow of William Blake in the April 1791 account of his estate sale, attended by several of the above neighbors, . See Fairfield Co., Estate Records, vol. 1 (1787–1792): 108–9; Probate Court, Winnsboro. For Phanuel “Fanny” (Hornsby) Blake as sister of John Watts’s son-in-law Moses Hornsby, see Rex McLaurin, “Genealogy Report: Descendants of Leonard Hornsby,” *Genealogy.com* ([genealogy.com/fm/m/c/l/Rex-Mclaurin/GENE1-0004.html](http://genealogy.com/fm/m/c/l/Rex-Mclaurin/GENE1-0004.html)), which identifies sources and abstracts some records.

bought the neighborhood mill and assumed the ministry of the Baptist church at the death of *Fanny (Hornsby) Blake*’s late husband, William. Via the 1789 deed for Rev. Pigg’s land, his 1790 next-door neighbor John Watts can be placed on or adjacent to Mill Branch of Wateree Creek. Pigg’s neighbors, named in his deeds, include another of John’s 1790 census neighbors, *John Hollis*.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Placing John in This Network*

Indexes to Fairfield County’s land, probate, and trial records offer only one entry for John Watts: a 1786 deed of sale. No index entry indicates whether John acquired the land by purchase, inheritance, or grant. However, the mostly unpublished county records, when read page by page, reveal much more.

John Watts was an integral part of this neighborhood before Fairfield’s creation in 1785. As table 2 shows, before departing for Georgia John created a string of mostly mundane records. Their greatest value, aside from fleshing out

28. Fairfield Co., Deed Book F:22–23 and 35–36.

Table 2				
John Watts Associates in Fairfield District, South Carolina, 1784–1790				
DATE	EVENT	JOHN'S ROLE	HIS ASSOCIATES	THEIR ROLES
2 November 1784	Inventory/ appraisal, estate of Widow Barber	Appraiser	Samuel Armstrong T [?] Johnson	Appraisers <sup>a</sup>
5 November 1784	Estate sale, Widow Barber	Purchaser	Charles Lewis James Hollis	Purchasers <sup>b</sup>
18 December 1784	Inventory/ appraisal, Philip Henson's est.	Appraiser	John King Thomas Gowin	Appraisers <sup>c</sup>
20 December 1784	Estate sale, Philip Henson	Appraiser	Obadiah Hinson James Hollis Nathan Sanders Henry Sanders Charles Pickett John Lewis	Purchasers <sup>d</sup>
28–29 December 1784	Purchase of land 100 acres at forks of Wateree Creek (indexed under the name William Watts only)	Co-purchaser	William Watts William Mills Ambrose Mills Micajah Picket John Lee Charles Lewis Isaac Knighton	Partner <sup>e</sup> Seller Patentee Transmitter Adj. owner Witness Witness
Summer 1785	Estate sale, Samuel Ratcliff	Purchaser	John King Charles Pickett Peter Tidwell Moses Knighton	Purchasers <sup>f</sup>
[?–] January 1786	Survey, local copy	Neighbor	James Ogilvie John King	Warrantee <sup>g</sup> Adj. owner
	Survey, state copy	Neighbor	Thomas Watts James Ogilvie James Barber Bartlett Hinson John King	Patentee <sup>h</sup> Warrantee Neighbor Neighbor Neighbor
	(not the same tract as that of 1784 above)			
29 January 1786	Sale of 100 acres at forks of Wateree Creek	Seller	Nathan Sanders William Mills Ambrose Mills Micajah Picket John Lee Henry Sanders William Tidwell	Purchaser <sup>i</sup> Prior seller Patentee Transmitter Neighbor Witness Witness
[?–] November 1788	Report of estray	Appraiser	Moses Knighton John King	Appraiser <sup>j</sup> J.P.

*Note:* See appendix for documentation.

his life, is that they weave around him a web of men who tie John to his birth family.

Table 2 supports three hypotheses:

- By 1784 John Watts (about age thirty-five) was established in his community; neighbors respected his judgment enough to call upon him to appraise their family estates.
- His purchasing land with *William Watts* implies kinship.
- The purchase's circumstances were unusual. John's neighbor Micajah Pickett had gone to Rutherford County, North Carolina. There, Micajah purchased from William Mills a tract that had been patented to William's father, Ambrose Mills, in 1768. Straddling the Forks of Wateree Creek, it made a prime mill site. Upon returning home Pickett reconveyed the land to John and William Watts, charging them only what he had paid and bypassing any chance to profit from his investment. Pickett apparently bought the land on behalf of John and William while in Rutherford on personal business.<sup>29</sup> The circumstances also suggest that the land's prior owners, Ambrose Mills and his son William, could be John's kin or in-laws.

A second research strategy—studying all pension applications filed by Revolutionary War veterans from Fairfield—yielded an earlier presence for John Watts in this neighborhood. On 5 December 1783 fourteen Fairfield men signed an affidavit in favor of “William Coggin Lieut. [who] has Removed to the State of Georgia and has Desired *his former neighbors* to signifie his Character.” Attesting that Coggin had lived “in our state this fifteen years” and had “behavd him self in A very honest quiet way of Living,” the signers included John Watts, several of his 1790 neighbors, and others who expanded John's circle of associates and potential kin:<sup>30</sup>

<i>Signers (in order)</i>	<i>Brief identity from other sources</i>
Ralph Jones	Baptist minister with meetinghouses on Wateree Creek (location of <i>John Watts</i> , <i>William Watts</i> , and <i>Thomas Watts Jr.</i> ) and 25-Mile Creek (eight to ten miles to the south) <sup>31</sup>
Moses Knighton	1790 neighbor; associate of <i>John Watts</i> in 1785 and 1788; in 1791, he obtained land adjacent to <i>Thomas Watts Jr.</i> <sup>32</sup>

29. Pickett's activities in Fairfield and Rutherford (counties in separate states) are well detailed in “Notes for Micajah Pickett and Kinsanna Hinson,” *Janet and Robert Wolfe Genealogy*.

30. “Former neighbors,” certification of character, 5 December 1783; in Pension Application of William Coggin (Lt. Sumter's Brigade, S.C., Rev. War), S2838; accessed via “Revolutionary War Pensions,” database with images, *Fold3* (fold3.com/image/12739959).

31. Leah Townsend, *South Carolina Baptists, 1670–1805* (Florence, S.C.: Florence Printing, 1935), 144–45 and 147.

32. Fairfield Co., Plat Book D:167, Moses Knighton, 117 acres.

- Charles Pickett 1790 next-door neighbor of Moses Knighton; associate of *John Watts* in 1784 and 1785; a community justice, he executed documents for *John Watts*, *William Watts*, and *Thomas Watts "Sr."*<sup>33</sup>
- Thos. Starke Capt. His brother Reuben, in 1796, bought from *Thomas Watts Sr.* the Kershaw Co. Wateree River land that had been *Thomas Sr.*'s plantation for three decades<sup>34</sup>
- William Miller, Lieut.
- John Hollis, Lieut. 1790 near-neighbor of fellow signers Charles Pickett, Moses Knighton, and *John Watts*
- Moses Smith Brother-in-law of signer John King—*John Watts*'s adjacent landowner and most frequent associate<sup>35</sup>
- John Watts**
- Thom. Roaden Father of Jeremiah Roaden, who married Mary Hornsby, sister of *John Watts*'s son-in-law *Moses Hornsby*<sup>36</sup>
- John King 1790 census neighbor; most frequent associate of *John Watts*, 1784–91; adjacent landowner on 1786 plat for the James Ogilvie land patented 1787 to *Thomas Watts Jr.*<sup>37</sup>

33. See, for example, Fairfield Co., Deed Book A:508–10 (*John Watts*) and K:105–6 (*John Watts*, witness for Ambrose Mills's in-law Thomas Stone, selling land in *Amherst Co., Va.*). Also, Lancaster Co., S.C. (subsequently Kershaw), Deed Book C&E:248–49 (*Thomas Watts Sr.* of Kershaw selling his 1763 Wateree grant); Register of Mesne Conveyances, Lancaster. The justice of the peace in these cases was Charles Pickett of Fairfield. Also, Fairfield Co., Plat Book E:384 (for Charles Pickett as adjoining owner to land *Thomas Watts Jr.* bought from James Ogilvie next door to *John Watts*).

34. Lancaster Co., Deed Book C&E:182 (*Watts* to *Starke*). For *Thomas Starke*'s identity as *Reuben*'s brother, see *FamilySearch* ([familysearch.org/search/collection/1911928](http://familysearch.org/search/collection/1911928)) > South Carolina Probate Records, Files and Loose Papers, 1732–1964 > Fairfield > County Court, Estate Records > 1803–1812, images 44–46, *Reuben*'s will, Fairfield Co., "Estate Record Book C, Vol. 5," pp. 85–87, *Reuben Starke* will, 22 October 1804.

35. Fairfield Co., Deed Book I:437, *Smith* to *King*, "her brother," and *Smith* to *Smith*.

36. Rex McLaurin, "Genealogy Report: Descendants of Leonard Hornsby" ([genealogy.com/ftm/m/c/l/Rex-Mclaurin/GENE1-0220.html](http://genealogy.com/ftm/m/c/l/Rex-Mclaurin/GENE1-0220.html)), citing "The actual old 1756 (printed date) *Hornsby/Stroud* bible . . . archived at Winthrop University - Dacus Library (rare books section), Rock Hill, York Co., SC; Winthrop University Manuscripts acc. 1015, box 1, folder 1."

37. Fairfield Co., Plat Book B:441. For an abstract of the corresponding state entry, see "On-Line Records Index," *South Carolina Department of Archives and History* ([www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/search.aspx](http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/search.aspx)), entry for "*Watts*, *Thomas*, Plat for 630 acres on Wateree Creek, Camden District, surveyed by W. Cato for James Ogilvie," 14 July 1787, citing series S213190, vol. 20, p. 28, item 1.

John Yarbrough	1792, bought land one farm from <i>Thomas Watts Jr.</i> , land originally patented to <i>Ambrose Mills</i> ; 1794, witnessed sale of Pigg's land adjacent to <i>John Watts's</i> 1790 residence <sup>38</sup>
Moses Hollis	1790 census neighbor; 1789 adjoining owner to land purchased by Pigg, who was enumerated consecutively with <i>John Watts</i> on 1790 census <sup>39</sup>
Jesse Stevenson	
James Rutland	1785, obtained land next to fellow signer <i>Ralph Jones</i> <sup>40</sup>

Minister *Ralph Jones*, who apparently spearheaded this 1783 affidavit, links *John Watts* to a fourth *Watts* male—a slightly younger patriot soldier named *George Watts*. In February 1779 *George* had witnessed *Frederick Freeman's* purchase of two tracts on 25-Mile Creek of the *Wateree River*. *Ralph Jones* was the adjacent landowner. In 1792, when *Ralph* still owned his 25-Mile Creek land, *George* purchased one of those *Freeman* tracts for his eldest son, *James Watts*.<sup>41</sup> The 1833 pension application for *George*, an aged veteran, says he was born on 25 December 1756, in *Bedford County, Virginia*<sup>42</sup>—thereby suggesting a point of origin for *John* and other *Fairfield Watts*s.

#### POTENTIAL KIN

A thorough search of all known records for the Carolina region that began as *Craven County* yields two distinct sets of *Watts*s.<sup>43</sup>

---

38. *Fairfield Co.*, Deed Book H:92–94, Bass to Yarbrough. The intervening neighbor, *Francis Layton* of *Layton's Creek*, appears two houses from *John Watts's* son-in-law on the 1790 census (p. 150). In 1766 *Layton* was also adjacent to the old homeplace of *Ambrose Mills*, whose supplemental grant at the Forks of the *Wateree* was bought by *John* and *William Watts*. For *Layton's* proximity to *Mills*, see *Brent H. Holcomb, Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journals*, vol. 6, 1766–1770 (Columbia, S.C.: SCMAR, 1999), 10 (*Ambrose's* petition citing *Layton*). Also, “On-Line Records Index,” *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, entry for “*Lewis, Surls, Memorial for 400 acres on Wateree River*,” 10 August 1772, citing series S111001, vol. 12, p. 5, item 3.

39. *Fairfield Co.*, Deed Book F:22–23.

40. *Fairfield Co.*, Plat Book B:255, 528 acres on *Wateree Creek*, surveyed 16 April 1785.

41. *Fairfield Co.*, Deed Book I:415–22.

42. *George Watts*, affidavit, 4 November 1833, *DeKalb Co., Ga.*; in Pension Application of *George Watts* (Sgt., *Sumter's Brigade, SC, Rev. War*), File R11214, widow *Barbara*; accessed via “*Revolutionary War Pensions*,” Fold 3. See especially [fold3.com/image/28052942](http://fold3.com/image/28052942) and [fold3.com/image/28052948](http://fold3.com/image/28052948).

43. For documents created by each, see *Mills*, “*Watts: Initial Survey of Published South Carolina Resources for Old Craven County, Camden District*,” and “*Watts: Legal Records of Fairfield and Kershaw Counties*.”

*Lynches Creek Wattses*

In 1757 Thomas Watts, husband of Tabitha, settled at Lynches Creek, on modern Kershaw County's eastern boundary. He died about 1792, leaving sons John, Julius, Benjamin, and Isaiah Watts. The latter two sold the last of Thomas's Lynches Creek land in 1824. Thomas's son John was a Revolutionary War captain who in 1792 assigned his inheritance to the other heirs, saying he lived in Washington County, Georgia. He was that county's militia colonel, justice, land surveyor, and, in 1785–1803, state representative.<sup>44</sup> No known connection exists between these Wattses and the Wateree and Fairfield Wattses. The two lines also carry different Y-DNA.<sup>45</sup>

*Wattses on the Waters of the Wateree and Little Rivers*

In October 1763 three Wattses had adjacent tracts surveyed on Dry Creek of the Wateree River.<sup>46</sup> Now in Kershaw County, the land lies near the western boundary of Kershaw County and modern Fairfield County. These men were Thomas Watts, William Watts, and Edward Watts “Jun’r.”:

- **Thomas Watts**, later “**Thomas Watts Sr.**” (born mid-1720s; died after February 1796). No document explicitly names Thomas Sr.’s wife or children. Under South Carolina’s headright law, the 550 acres granted to him would represent himself, a wife, and eight children or slaves.<sup>47</sup> If he owned no slaves (as records imply), then eight children by 1763 suggests he married in the mid-1740s. In 1796 Fairfield storekeeper Jonathan Belton (a John Watts associate) sued Thomas Sr. for debt.<sup>48</sup> To pay it, Thomas sold half his grant in a deed proved before *Charles Pickett*, the Fairfield justice and John Watts’s near-neighbor

---

44. Mills, “Revolutionary War Capt. John Watts of Camden District, South Carolina.”

45. Y-line descendants of Rev. John Watts, Esq., are in haplogroup I-M223, while descendants of Col. John Watts, Esq., are in E-L117. See Barbara Van Camp and Neal Watts, group administrators, “Watts/Watt/Watson Families Reconstruction Project,” database, *FamilyTreeDNA* ([familytreedna.com/public/wattsfamilies/default.aspx?section=yresults](http://familytreedna.com/public/wattsfamilies/default.aspx?section=yresults)).

46. “On-Line Records Index,” *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, image of series S213184, vol. 7, p. 500, item 2, “Watts, Thomas, Plat for 550 acres in Craven County,” 14 October 1763. Also, *ibid.*, entry for “Watts, William, Unrecorded Plat for Land Not Granted, 100 acres,” 13 October 1763, citing series S213197, box 4, item 1126. Also, *ibid.*, image of series S213184, vol. 8, p. 442, item 1, “Watts, Edward, Plat for 250 acres on Wateree River,” 15 October 1763. This land lies in present Kershaw County.

47. For the headright law, see “South Carolina Archives Series Description: Colonial Land Grants, 1731–1775,” article, *South Carolina Department of Archives and History* ([www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/Terms/Series/SeriesDescriptions/s213015.html](http://www.archivesindex.sc.gov/onlinearchives/Terms/Series/SeriesDescriptions/s213015.html)).

48. Brent Howard Holcomb, *Kershaw County, South Carolina, Minutes of the County Court, 1791–1799* (n.p.: privately printed, 1986), 87; citing p. 216 (Belton vs. Watts Sr.). The Belton family’s locus is shown on the Fairfield map in Robert Mills, *Mills’s Atlas of the State of South Carolina* (1825; reprint, Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1980). The atlas places it midway between John Hollis (on the west), Wateree Creek (on the north), Wateree River (on the east), and Dutchman’s Creek (on the south); it sprawled along Taylor (a.k.a. Layton) Creek.

and associate. The purchaser was brother to the man who had just bought the land of Moses Hornsby, John Watts's son-in-law. The purchaser of the other half of Thomas Sr.'s land was brother to Thomas Starke, cosigner of the 1783 character affidavit with John Watts.<sup>49</sup>

- **William Watts [Sr.]** (married after 1762; died possibly after 23 July 1803)<sup>50</sup> did not complete the title to his 1763 grant, and no evidence suggests he lived there. In September 1762 he had petitioned for a grant on Jackson's Creek of Little River, in today's west-central Fairfield.<sup>51</sup> The site lay just below and contiguous to the Forks of Little River survey made four months earlier for *Ambrose Mills*.<sup>52</sup> In 1784 John Watts and a younger William Watts purchased Ambrose's Forks of Wateree Creek grant. A short stream on William Sr.'s land, later known as Watts's Branch of Jackson Creek, flowed into Mills's Little River land. No known record identifies William's wife or children. His request for only one hundred acres in 1762 suggests he was unmarried.

OBSERVATION:

This Ambrose Mills, who left Bedford County, Virginia, about 1756 (the year George Watts said he was born there), was the famed Loyalist colonel captured at King's Mountain and hanged.<sup>53</sup> Ambrose's sister *Sarah Mills* reportedly married, before 1749, *Thomas Watts*.<sup>54</sup> Published works, however, offer no evidence that her offspring have been traced or her husband identified.

- **Edward Watts "Jun'r."** (died before 12 October 1809),<sup>55</sup> like William, did not stay on his 1763 survey. In 1765 he moved across the Wateree into Fairfield and patented two tracts on Little River. One lay just below the "Mobley Meeting

---

49. Fairfield Co., Deed Book I:330, Hornsby to Peay. Also, Lancaster Co., Deed Book C&E:182, 248–49, Watts to Starke.

50. Fairfield Co., Deed Book R: 202–3.

51. "On-Line Records Index," *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, image of series S213184, vol. 8, p. 47, item 2, "Watts, William, Plat for 100 Acres on Little River," 4 October 1762.

52. *Ibid.*, image of series S213184, vol. 8, p. 359, item 2, "Mills, Ambrose, Plat for 100 Acres in Craven County," 7 May 1762 (on Bowers' Mill Creek of Little River).

53. For a relatively well-done biography of Col. Ambrose Mills, whose first wife, Mourning Stone (of Albemarle Co., Va.), and all but one of their children had been killed by Native Americans shortly after he moved to S.C., see Alexander Chesney, *The Journal of Alexander Chesney: A South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After*, introduction by Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Ohio State University Bulletin* 26 (30 October 1921): 71–74. Siebert's bibliography cites "Papers of Colonel Thomas Fletchall (Public Record Office, London, A.O. 12 and 13)." Fletchall was Ambrose Mills's brother-in-law, having married a sister of Ambrose's second wife, Ann Brown.

54. Mrs. P. W. Hiden, "Nicholas Mills of Hanover County," *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 15 (1933): 38–64, particularly 63–64, abstracting (a) the 1755 will of William Mills of Albemarle Co., naming son Ambrose, daughter "Sarah Watts," and other children; and (b) the 1749 sale of Albemarle land by Thomas Watts and "wife Sarah."

55. Fairfield Co., Deed Book T: 293–95.

House” area (a noted Tory stronghold), where Mobberlys from Bedford County, Virginia, had settled. The other lay just northwest of (and contiguous to) the Forks of Little River land surveyed for Ambrose Mills of Bedford.<sup>56</sup> Edward Jr.’s frequent associates and neighbors were Mobberlys, Kirklands, and Woodwards, who also migrated from Bedford County. In 1809–11, Edward Jr.’s widow, Melinder, called “Millie,” divided his estate among sons John and Thomas, and daughters Sarah, Millie Jr., Elizabeth, and Susanne.<sup>57</sup>

## OBSERVATION:

The explicit identification of Edward as Edward “Jun’r.” in his first South Carolina record (his petition for the land grant adjacent to Thomas and William) implies an Edward Senior either in the area (none has been found) or in the family cluster. Edward Jr.’s relocation among a larger group from Bedford County suggests that he, Thomas, and William—like George—came from Bedford.

Five younger Wattses emerged in the 1780s:

- **John Watts** (born ca. 1749; died ca. 1822), the subject of this paper, appears in Fairfield from the onset of county records at the close of the Revolution—beginning with a 1783 record implying he was then well established in his community. In 1784, together with William Watts, he bought Ambrose Mills’s 1768 Forks of Wateree Creek grant. In 1786 John was an adjacent landowner on a survey for a James Ogilvie, a tract that Ogilvie sold by 1787 to “Thomas Watts Jr.” John and Thomas [Jr.] appear in adjacent census entries in 1790. Their neighbors were landowners between Wateree Creek of the Wateree River (on the north) and Dutchman’s Creek of the Wateree River (on the south). That site lay just west of Peay’s Ferry, which connected their community to the east-of-Wateree-River land cluster taken out in 1763 by Thomas, William, and Edward Jr.<sup>58</sup>

56. Brent H. Holcomb, in *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journals*, vol. 5, 1757–1765 (Columbia: SCMAR, 1998), 253, dates Edward’s first petition for Little River land to 1765. A second occurred in 1772. See Holcomb, *South Carolina’s Royal Grants*, vol. 4, *Grant Books 25 through 31, 1772–1775* (Columbia, S.C.: SCMAR, 2009), 197, citing Grant Book 28:412. Edward did not pay for surveys until 1773. See “On-Line Records Index,” *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, image of series S213184, vol. 21, p. 351, “Watts, Edward, Plat for 76 acres in Craven Co.,” 12 April 1773, on Mill Creek between Little River and Broad River. Also, *ibid.*, image of vol. 21, p. 350, “Watts, Edward, Plat for 224 acres in Craven Co.,” South Fork of Little River, adj. Winn, 14 April 1773. For a sampling of the many grants locating the Mobberlys, see *ibid.*, entries for “Mobberley, Edward, plat for 50 acres in Craven Co.,” adj. Winn, 23 March 1769, citing series 213019, vol. 20, p. 519; and “Mobberly, Samuel, plat for 34 acres near Little River,” adj. Edward Watts Jr., 27 November 1790, citing series S213190, vol. 25, p. 247, item 3.

57. For the first of a string of deeds settling Edward’s estate, see Fairfield Co., Deed Book T:293–95, October 1809.

58. *Mills’s Atlas*, Fairfield map, shows the historic site of Peay’s Ferry immediately southwest of the land where Ambrose Mills located his home plantation in 1766. For John’s major activities, see table 2.

## OBSERVATION:

John Watts's land purchase with William Watts, followed by Thomas Jr.'s purchase of land adjacent to John, implies kinship among the three.

- **George Watts** (born on 25 December 1756 in Bedford County, Virginia, according to his pension application) settled on 25-Mile Creek of the Wateree River, Fairfield side. This was about ten miles across the Wateree from Thomas Sr. of Kershaw and eight to ten miles below John, William, and Thomas Jr. of Fairfield. George's adjacent landowner, Rev. Ralph Jones, had instigated the 1783 character affidavit that John Watts signed on behalf of William Coggin. George was most closely associated with Dukes, Perrys, and Daughertys, who also straddled the Fairfield-Kershaw line. In the mid-1770s (with a wife unknown), George fathered sons James and Thomas, to whom he gave land as they became adults, and a probable daughter Elizabeth. By 1780 he had possibly married Ruth (Perry) Watts, who bore a daughter Sarah. About 1780–82 George married Barbara Crumpton (a.k.a. Compton). George's pension file names their surviving children as Sallie, Mary, Eleanor "Nellie," Nancy, Margaret, and Edward. George, enumerated in Fairfield County in 1800 and in Fairfield and Pendleton districts in 1810, drafted a deed in Richland District in 1818 for his Pendleton-based son Thomas. George, enumerated in Richland in 1820, moved to DeKalb County, Georgia, by 1830.<sup>59</sup>

## OBSERVATION:

George Watts's association with Ralph Jones links him to Jones's associate John Watts. Like Edward Watts, George named children Thomas, Edward, Sarah, and Elizabeth. Like Ambrose Mills—whose sister Sarah married one Thomas Watts—George came from Bedford County, Virginia.

- **William Watts II** (born by 1763) first appears on record in 1784 buying Ambrose Mills's Forks of Wateree Creek land with John Watts, via a lease-and-release with each paying half. The lease was made to William, and the next-day release to John. Fifteen months later John alone sold the land.<sup>60</sup> In January 1792 William had land surveyed on Mottley's Branch of Wateree Creek adjoining John Goins.<sup>61</sup> In 1790 Goins had been enumerated four houses from John Watts. In 1794, after the neighborhood justice John Turner asked Thomas Watts Jr. and one John Jarvis to appraise a stray horse, William bought the animal by paying its toll.<sup>62</sup> The 1800 census places Jarvis adjacent to George

---

59. For abstracts, transcriptions, analyses, and some images of George's documents, see Mills, "George Watts (1756–1834); Wives: (—?—) & Barbara Compton/Crumpton: Research Notes," 4 July 2016; *Historic Pathways*.

60. Fairfield Co., Deed Book C:59 (1784) and A:508–10 (1786).

61. Camden Dist., Commissioner of Locations, "Plat Book D, 1791–1795," p. 40. Also, Fairfield Co., Deed Book I:51, Goins to Watts.

62. Fairfield Co., Record of Estrays, 1787–99, chronologically arranged; series L20026, record group 20, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia; FHL microfilm 194,199, item 1.

Watts.<sup>63</sup> Turner had been, with John Watts, a purchaser at the Samuel Ratcliff sale in 1785.<sup>64</sup>

In February 1799, after a Kershaw debt judgment against him, William Watts II sold one of his Wateree Creek tracts.<sup>65</sup> The new neighborhood justice, Nicholas Peay, had in 1795 purchased the land of John Watts's son-in-law Moses Hornsby, and in 1796 Peay had witnessed his brother's purchase of Thomas Watts Sr.'s land.<sup>66</sup> In February 1800, when William sold the last of his Fairfield land, he said he resided in Kershaw County.<sup>67</sup> That placed him on the east bank of Wateree River, where Thomas Sr. had been the only Watts landowner since the 1760s. The purchaser of William II's Fairfield land, James Barber, was the son of the widow whose estate John Watts had appraised in 1784.<sup>68</sup> William II remained in Kershaw through the censuses of 1800 (heading a household with two men aged 26–45 and young children) and 1810 (when he reportedly was over 45).<sup>69</sup> In February 1809 he and Thomas Watts ("Jr." was no longer used) were two of five Kershaw men appointed to inquire into the alleged lunacy of Joseph English.<sup>70</sup> In 1820 the names William, Thomas, and George Watts appear in Richland County, just south of George's old 25-Mile Creek location. The census, arranged by first letter of surname, clusters them in a lengthy "W" section.<sup>71</sup> By 1830 only William and his family remained in Richland, where no land or court records of the era have survived.<sup>72</sup>

- **Thomas Watts "Jr."** (born by 1765) first appears on record in 1787, when he patented 630 acres on Wateree Creek surveyed the year before for James Ogilvie. It lay *next door to John Watts*.<sup>73</sup> That July, Thomas again bought from Ogilvie land adjoining his own and that of Nicholas Peay—who in 1795 purchased the plantation of *Moses Hornsby* and wife *Caty Watts* and whom

---

63. 1800 U.S. census, Fairfield Co., S.C., p. 35; NARA microfilm M32, roll 47.

64. Kershaw Co., Estate Records Book A-1, p. 295.

65. Holcomb, *Kershaw County . . . Minutes of the County Court*, 135, citing p. 339. Also, Fairfield Co., Deed Book N:194–95.

66. Fairfield Co., Deed Book I:330, Hornsby to Peay. Also, Lancaster Co., Deed Book C&E:248–49.

67. Fairfield Co., Deed Book N:77–78, Watts to Barber.

68. Camden Dist., Estate Records Book A-1, pp. 243–44, Agnes Barber; Court of Ordinary, Camden.

69. 1800 U.S. census, Kershaw Co., S.C., p. 399; NARA microfilm M32, roll 49. Also, 1810 U.S. census, Kershaw Co., S.C., p. 160; NARA microfilm M252, roll 62.

70. Mrs. J. B. Christopher, "Camden District Equity Journal," *South Carolina Magazine of Ancestral Research* 15 (Spring 1987): 105, citing an unidentified book, p. 165.

71. 1820 U.S. census, Richland Dist., S.C., p. 24; NARA microfilm M33, roll 121.

72. 1830 U.S. census, Richland Dist., S.C., pp. 408 and 315; NARA microfilm M19, roll 171.

73. "On-Line Records Index," *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, entry for "Watts, Thomas, Plat for 630 acres on Wateree Creek," 27 June 1787. The original survey for Ogilvie is sketched in Fairfield Co., Plat Book B:441.

*William Watts II* used as his justice in 1799.<sup>74</sup> In 1791 Thomas and two of John's associates and census neighbors, James Barber and Charles Lewis, were each adjacent owners of land surveyed for Moses Knighton.<sup>75</sup> A fourth adjacent owner, Francis Layton (together with John Watts's neighbor Micajah Pickett) had been an adjacent landowner on the survey of Ambrose Mills's home place on Wateree Creek in 1766.<sup>76</sup> In December 1791, a third tract was surveyed for Thomas on Dry Fork of Wateree Creek.<sup>77</sup> William Watts (apparently William II) sold that land in 1799 without explaining his right to sell property titled in Thomas's name.<sup>78</sup>

By 1795 Thomas, like John's family, had left Fairfield. In Kershaw's August term, he was a juror. He again served in February 1796, when a Fairfield merchant sued Thomas Watts Sr. for debt. Distinguishing the two Thomases, the court minutes label the juror "Thomas Watts, Jun'r." In 1797 he again served as a juror and performed road service.<sup>79</sup> He does not appear as a household head in 1800 or 1810, but he could be the second male aged 26–45 in William II's 1800 household. In 1809 the court ordered him, with William II and three other Kershaw men, to investigate the lunacy of Joseph English.<sup>80</sup> He then dropped from Kershaw records. The 1820 census (as noted above) places Thomas, William, and George Watts in adjacent Richland County.<sup>81</sup> Thomas of Richland died there in December 1820, when he left a will bequeathing six thousand dollars to one Joseph Watts, whose relationship is unstated. It cites unnamed "brothers and sisters" as residual heirs.<sup>82</sup>

- **Edward Watts III** (born by 1765) obtained land in 1787 from Edward Watts Jr. and still held it in 1819.<sup>83</sup> Although his name and location suggest he was

---

74. "On-Line Records Index," *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, entry for "Watts, Thomas, Plat for 276 acres on Wateree Creek, surveyed for James Ogilvie," 14 July 1787. The original survey to Ogilvie, made 24 January 1786, is also sketched in Fairfield Co., Plat Book B:441. Also, Fairfield Co., Deed Books I:330 (Hornsby to Peay) and N:194–95 (Watts to Gibson).

75. Fairfield Co., Plat Book D:167, Moses Knighton. "On-Line Records Index," *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, image of "Mills, Ambrose, Plat for 600 acres in Craven County," 28 September 1766, series S213184, vol. 8, p. 359, item 2.

76. Holcomb, *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journals*, 6:10.

77. Fairfield Co., Plat Book E:23, Thomas Watts, survey of 215 acres on Dry Fork.

78. Fairfield Co., Deed Book N:194–95.

79. Holcomb, *Kershaw County . . . Minutes of the County Court*, 73, 87, and 109–19; citing pp. 195, 218, and 266–67.

80. Christopher, "Camden District Equity Journal," 105.

81. 1820 U.S. census, Richland Dist., S.C., p. 24 (penned, top left corner).

82. Richland Dist., S.C., Will Book F:150–53 (Thomas Watts); Probate Judge's Office, Columbia. While probate records survive for this period of Richland's history, its land and court records do not.

83. Fairfield Co., Deed Books T:295–96; U:173–75; and AA:269 (Edward III selling the land he had gotten from Edward Jr. in 1787, with survey). The surviving portion of the 1792 Fairfield tax list includes Edward Jr. and the second Edward (herein called Edward III). See Tony Draine and Edd Bannister, *Fairfield County, SC, Tax Returns, 1792* (Columbia, S.C.: Draban, ca. 1991).

Edward Jr.'s son, he witnessed the disposition of Edward Jr.'s property by the estate's heirs. Those estate settlements do not name him among the heirs.<sup>84</sup>

#### HYPOTHESIS

When historical records yield no direct evidence of identity or kinship, thoroughly studying associates and others in the region with that surname can weave a web around the subject—trapping him with kith and kin. In this case, John Watts seems part of a family cluster for whom the preceding records suggest an outline:

1. (**Edward Watts Sr.?**) died after October 1763, leaving at least three sons, who took out adjacent tracts on South Carolina's Wateree River in 1763:

- + 2 i. THOMAS WATTS SR. See prior sketch.
- 3 ii. EDWARD WATTS JR. See prior sketch.
- 4 iii. WILLIAM WATTS. See prior sketch.

2. **Thomas Watts Sr.**, born by 1728; married before 1749, when he and his proposed wife Sarah Mills (daughter of William and Mary; sister of Ambrose) sold land in Albemarle County, Virginia. They apparently had at least six children:

- 5 i. JOHN WATTS, born 1749; married by 1769; see prior sketch.
- 6 ii. MARY WATTS, born by 1754, said to be wife of Francis Kirkland.<sup>85</sup> By 1774 Kirkland owned Edward Watts's 1763 survey adjacent to Thomas Watts Sr.<sup>86</sup> Kirkland subsequently appeared in Fairfield in 1787, when he acquired land adjacent to Thomas Watts, son of Edward, on waters of Little River. In 1790 he was three houses from John Watts's associate and George Watts's near-neighbor Rev. Ralph Jones.<sup>87</sup> Mary and Francis Kirkland named their first-born son Ambrose.<sup>88</sup>
- 7 iii. GEORGE WATTS, born on 25 December 1756, in Bedford County, Virginia. See prior sketch.
- 8 iv. WILLIAM WATTS II, born by 1763. See prior sketch.
- 9 v. THOMAS WATTS JR., born by 1765. See prior sketch.
- 10 vi. EDWARD WATTS III, born by 1765. See prior sketch.

---

84. See, for example, Fairfield Co., Deed Book T:295–96.

85. Many online trees allege that Kirkland's wife Mary was née Watts, but none offer evidence.

86. For Kirkland's ownership of Edward Watts's 1763 grant on southwest bounds of Thomas Watts, see Katie-Prince Ward Esker, *South Carolina Memorials*, vol. 2: 1731–1766 (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977), 67.

87. Fairfield Co., Plat Book B:186 (Francis Kirkland, 1785, adj. to Thomas Watts on Little River). Also, 1790 U.S. census, Fairfield Co., S.C., p. 166 (for Francis Kirkland and Ralph Jones).

88. Fairfield Co., Will Book 2:16–18, will of Francis Kirkland and its probate.

The probate file of Thomas Watts who died in adjacent Richland County in 1820 may support this proposed family unit—assembled by tracking every identifiable Watts in the area successively known as Craven, then Camden, then Fairfield and Kershaw. A one-paragraph account of the estate settlement itemizes those residual heirs whom the will cited only as “my brothers and sisters.” It also includes three sisters previously unconnected to John Watts of Fairfield:

The Sum of \$11003.24 to be distributed amongst the eight general Legatees, viz, Wm. Watts, Geo. Watts, Jno. Watts, Edward Watts, Elizabeth Duggans, Mary Kirkland, Mrs. S. Smith & Mrs. A. Addison.<sup>89</sup>

However, the commonness of the core names—William, George, John, Edward, Elizabeth, and Mary—and the number of contemporary Watts families in the state with those names do not allow an assumption that the cluster named in the Richland settlement is the one assembled for John Watts of Fairfield.

Stating no relationship, the Richland file also shows that Thomas’s principal heir, Joseph Watts, lived in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana. There, a second probate was opened for “Thomas Watts of S. Carolina.” That file confirms the family unit assembled from associations in Fairfield and Kershaw. After one thousand hours of research on Rev. John Watts, the state of Louisiana—where he never lived—yielded the only record stating a kinship for him.<sup>90</sup>

On 29 November 1821 in Covington County, Mississippi, John sold his interest in the estate of “my brother Thomas” to “my nephew William Duggins.” John’s daughter and son-in-law Caty and Moses Hornsby attested this document, executed before John’s son Thomas Watts, Justice of the Quorum. The Hornsbys said they had known John and the late Thomas for about forty years, that they knew the parents of both men (i.e., Caty’s grandparents) until their deaths, and they knew that John and Thomas were always considered brothers. The Hornsbys, however, did not name those grandparents—thereby leaving the most critical questions of this research project unsolved. Who were the parents of Rev. John Watts and where was he born?

If this reassembly of the Fairfield Wattses is correct, two theories remain to be proved:

---

89. *FamilySearch* > South Carolina Probate Records, Files and Loose Papers, 1732–1964 > Richland > Probate Court, Estate Papers > 1799–1955 > Box 033, Packages 801–825 > image 21, Charles Ellis (executor of Thomas Watts), estate account, 6 October 1832. Also, Fairfield Will Book B:113 and 123, shows Elizabeth as widow of Richard Duggans.

90. Ouachita Parish, La., Succession file A1082 and Succession vol. C: 31–38; Clerk of Court, Monroe. Joseph is identified in this file as Thomas’s natural son with an enslaved woman. The Louisiana probate was necessary to dispose of the property that Thomas, shortly before his death, had placed in the custody of his son Joseph when he settled Joseph in Louisiana.

- The parents of John and Thomas should be Thomas Watts Sr. and his wife Sarah Mills, who migrated to South Carolina before 1763 with Sarah's brother Ambrose Mills, and with Thomas Sr.'s brothers Edward Jr. and William Watts, and a potential father Edward Sr.
- These individuals should also appear in the records of Virginia's Bedford County, its parent county Lunenburg, and its adjacent county Albemarle (later split to form Amherst). They do. All of them.

#### VIRGINIA ROOTS

Thomas Watts, husband of Sarah Mills, appears in Lunenburg in December 1746—having previously assigned his wolf-head bounty to John Speed of that county's Howard's District.<sup>91</sup> Between June 1747 and June 1748 Thomas and his father-in-law William Mills, and Ambrose Mills's new in-laws Marvel and Thomas Stone, had land surveyed on Pedlar River of adjacent Albemarle County—with adjoining neighbor Edward Watts.<sup>92</sup> Thomas Watts received his patent in April 1748.<sup>93</sup> He, however, did not occupy the land. In September 1747 he was named in Howard's District with John Speed, Field Jefferson, and others who held goods of (or moneys due to) William Clark, an absconded debtor.<sup>94</sup> Thomas, taxed on one poll in Lunenburg in 1748, was in 1749 charged to John Earl's household.<sup>95</sup> In August 1749 Thomas and Sarah sold their four hundred acres on the north side of Pedlar River.<sup>96</sup> Lunenburg's 1749 and 1750 tax rolls still place him in Howard's District (later Field Jefferson's district), near Field Farrar, who would migrate to the area that became Fairfield.

---

91. Lunenburg Co., Va., Order Book 1:97; County Clerk, Lunenburg, Va. Also coupled with him in this court minute from Howard's Dist. was John Taylor Duke, who would be Edward Watts's S.C. neighbor between Little and Broad Rivers. For Duke, see Brent H. Holcomb, *South Carolina's Royal Grants*, vol. 5, *Grant Books 32 through 37, 1735–1776* (Columbia, S.C.: SCMAR, 2010), 214; citing Grant Book 36:367 (1775 plat surveyed for John Swint on Beaver Creek of the Broad, adj. John Taylor Duke and Eleanor Mobley).

92. Albemarle Co., Va., Order Book 1744–1748, p. 364, Report of Surveyor Fry; County Clerk, Charlottesville. Also, Albemarle Co., Surveyor's Plat Book, Part 1, pp. 64, 68, 127, and 133; Albemarle microfilm roll 114a, Library of Virginia (LVA), Richmond.

93. "Online catalog," *Library of Virginia* ([lva.virginia.gov](http://lva.virginia.gov)) Search the LVA Catalog > Indexes & Images > Virginia Land Office Patents and Grants > Watts, Thomas > image of Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 26:276–77, Thomas Watts, 5 April 1748. Three generations later and three states later, the Covington County, Miss., census would enumerate a younger Marvel Stone and Thomas Watts as neighbors—just one of many associational ties that crossed generational bounds and solidified migration patterns. See 1820 U.S. census, Covington Co., Miss., p. 3, Thomas Watts, and p. 4, Marvel Stone; NARA microfilm M33, roll 58.

94. Lunenburg Co., Order Book 1:266.

95. Landon C. Bell, *Sunlight on the Southside: List of Tithes, Lunenburg County, Virginia; 1748–1783* (1931; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1974), 73 and 114. Many online trees allege, without evidence, that John Earl married Mary Elizabeth Watts; see, for example, Shirley Murphy, "Murphy-MacDaniel Family Tree," *Ancestry* ([trees.ancestry.com/tree/11032083/person/6159613367](http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/11032083/person/6159613367)), "John Earl" page.

96. Albemarle Co., Wills and Deeds 1:96–97; County Clerk, Charlottesville.

Meanwhile, Ambrose Mills first appeared in 1749, when he and Thomas Watts sold wolf-head bounties in the same justice court. Tax rolls of 1750 and 1751 place Ambrose in the district of the Mobberlys, who led the migration from Bedford to Fairfield.<sup>97</sup> Between 1752 and late 1756, Thomas and Ambrose appeared in Lunenburg-Bedford court records as creditors, debtors, jurors, road surveyors, and bondsmen for others.<sup>98</sup>

The Edward Wattses appeared first in Lunenburg on the 1752 tithable roll. In the same district were Ambrose Mills, the Mobberlys, and two other families (Meador and Gibson) who moved to Fairfield.<sup>99</sup> Edward's entry is informative:

Edward Wats,  
Edward Wats Junr., Wm. Wats, Geo. Wats, John Wats            5 tithables

Five free tithables at that time in Virginia meant five males over age sixteen.<sup>100</sup> Typically, the arrangement groups sons or employees under the household head.

Like Thomas Watts, members of this Watts household are found in Lunenburg-Bedford and adjacent Albemarle-Amherst. More significantly, the Edward Wattses are coupled with Thomas Watts's in-laws (the Millses) in multiple records. For example, in August 1755, "Ambros Mills & Edward Watts" were jointly ordered to appear in court "to answer the complaint of Robert Ewings, Gent."<sup>101</sup> Again, in December 1759, about the time he would have married, Edward Watts Jr. owned land next to William Mills, Thomas Watts's father-in-law. The land lay in adjacent Albemarle (later Amherst).<sup>102</sup>

Surviving Lunenburg-Bedford and Albemarle-Amherst deeds and court minutes profile the Wattses of the 1748–52 tax rolls, paralleling the family reconstruction in South Carolina and extending the sibling set for the Carolina pioneers:

97. Lunenburg Co., Order Book 2:246–48. Also, Bell, *Sunlight on the Southside*, 101 (Ambrose Mills, 1749), 110 (Thomas Watts, 1749), 140 (Thomas Watts, 1750), 152 (Ambrose Mills, 1750), and 203 (Ambrose Mills, 1752).

98. Lunenburg Co., Order Books 2½-A:103 and 273; 3:170 and 273; and 4:280. Also, Bedford Co., Va., Order Book 1:49, 63, 67, 88, 90, 101, 108, 116, 141, 170–71, and 183; County Clerk, Bedford, Va.

99. Bell, *Sunlight on the Southside*, 206. The intermarried Meador and Mobberly families settled together on Fairfield's upper Little River, where the land of Edward Watts Jr. bridged them to the first survey of Ambrose Mills. For extensive treatment of these families, see Kenneth Shelton, *All That Dare Oppose Them: The Whig Victory at Mobley's Meeting House, June 1780* (n.p.: privately printed, 2005). Also, many Fairfield deeds (for example, H:43–44) report adjacent lands held by the two families on Little River and its tributary Beaver Creek.

100. William Waller Hening, *Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*, vol. 1 (New York: Bartow, 1823), 454–55.

101. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:108. Surviving records provide no further details.

102. Albemarle Co., Deed Book 2:205–6. Also, for William Mills's 1755 will (probated 1766), naming daughter Sarah Watts, see Amherst Co., Va., Will Book 1:73–76; Circuit Court Clerk, Amherst, Va.

1. **Edward Watts Sr.**, the family head who first appeared as an Albemarle landowner in 1748, relocated a short distance across the Fluvanna (James River) into Lunenburg by 1752. Two years later he purchased land on Elk Creek, a branch of Otter River.<sup>103</sup> (There on the Otter, Thomas Watts would be appointed a road surveyor in 1755 and 1756.)<sup>104</sup> In September 1754, when Edward Sr. was threatened with imprisonment for debt, Edward Jr. and William Watts posted his bond and agreed to serve time in his stead if the debt were not paid.<sup>105</sup> Thus, both young men were over twenty-one. Two months later Edward Sr. served on a grand jury with Edward Mobberly, a fellow resident of Otter River who would soon leave for Fairfield's Little River.<sup>106</sup> In February 1755 "Edward Watts Sr." and "Edward Watts Jr." were jointly sued for debt.<sup>107</sup> In March 1755 Edward Sr. did his last jury service.<sup>108</sup> That August he and Ambrose Mills were summoned *together* to appear at the next court term "to answer the complaint of Robert Ewings, Gent." The complaint went unstated, and the minutes carry no further proceedings.<sup>109</sup> In January 1757, apparently to clear debts, Edward Sr. sold two hundred acres.<sup>110</sup> In September 1757 amid another debt suit, he deeded his remaining land to Edward Jr. Witnessing that deed were George Watts and J. Woodward (of a family that would be future Little River neighbors).<sup>111</sup> At that point—during Bedford's out-migration to Little River and the Wateree—Edward Sr. dropped from known Southside Virginia records.
  
2. **Thomas Watts** (born ca. mid-1720s) married about 1748, Sarah Mills. Apparently Edward's eldest son, Thomas, last appeared in Virginia in 1756. In 1755 he, James Callaway, and Alexander Boyles had been appointed surveyors to plan a new road from "Robert Davis' ford on Nevils Land below his plantation to the Peaks of Otter River."<sup>112</sup> Again that November, he was appointed surveyor "of the road whereof Francis Stone was late Surveyor [to] keep the same in repair."<sup>113</sup> The last mandate presented a problem for Thomas, amid a widespread financial crisis that had even Field Jefferson's son Thomas absconding, leaving debts behind.<sup>114</sup>

In January 1756, two suits for debt were brought against Thomas; apparently he did not answer and levies were issued.<sup>115</sup> Again in May and August, when charged

---

103. Lunenburg Co., Deeds 3:443–44; County Clerk, Lunenburg.

104. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:126 and 161.

105. *Ibid.*, 21.

106. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:37. Also, Bedford Co., Deed Book B-2:94 (sale of Bedford land by Edward Mobberly of Craven Co., S.C.); County Clerk, Bedford.

107. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:61. Also, Lunenburg Co., Order Book 3:273.

108. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:72 and 74.

109. *Ibid.*, 108.

110. Bedford Co., Deed Book A-1: 124–26.

111. *Ibid.*, 144–45. Also, Bedford Co., Order Book 1:213 and 217.

112. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:67.

113. *Ibid.*, 126.

114. Lunenburg Co., Order Book 4:196–97.

115. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:138 and 141.

with not fulfilling road obligations, he failed to appear.<sup>116</sup> In November 1756 the court paid two men for four wolf-head bounties bought from Thomas Watts and Ambrose Mills.<sup>117</sup> Apparently the brothers-in-law had sold their bounties to help fund their South Carolina venture. If they followed custom, they did not relocate their families until after acquiring land and building rudimentary housing. In this interim the future Revolutionary War soldier, George Watts of Fairfield—Rev. John Watts's brother—was born in Bedford on Christmas Day 1756. In April 1757 the Lunenburg County court brought one last debt suit against Thomas. He was not present, the suit was dismissed, and he dropped from Virginia records.<sup>118</sup>

3. **Edward Watts Jr.** (born ca. 1730)<sup>119</sup> first appeared as an adult in July 1754, when he served as one of several bondsmen for a new county sheriff.<sup>120</sup> He did jury duty in 1755 and 1759, despite pending debt suits against him and his father.<sup>121</sup> With George and John Watts of the Edward Watts household, Edward Jr. saw militia service in the French and Indian War. In 1758 Virginia's House of Burgesses paid the three for their service.<sup>122</sup> In March 1759 Edward Jr. sold the land he had received from his father in 1757 and moved into adjacent Albemarle. There, by November, he owned a tract on Pedlar River adjacent to William Mills (father-in-law of Thomas Watts).<sup>123</sup> In May 1760 Edward Jr. and George Watts were paid for court appearances.<sup>124</sup> In January 1761 Edward Jr. bought from Isaac Woodward the land Isaac had received in 1755 from his parents, Richard and Elizabeth Woodward—part of a tract the Woodwards split with George Watts in 1757.<sup>125</sup> Edward Jr. was still in Bedford in May 1761, when he and George served together on a jury.<sup>126</sup> In September 1762 and January 1763 "Edward Watts Jr." sold his land in two parcels.<sup>127</sup> He then dropped from Bedford-Albemarle records. On 4 October 1763 his petition (as Edward Watts "Junr.") for land on Carolina's Wateree River was approved. The land would be

---

116. *Ibid.*, 161 and 170–71.

117. *Ibid.*, 183–84.

118. Lunenburg Co., Order Book 4:280.

119. Based upon his household position in the 1752 tax levy.

120. Lunenburg Co., Deeds 3:443–44.

121. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:61, 72, 74, 113, 185, 201, and 235.

122. Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck, *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1988), 201–2 and 208–9.

123. Bedford Co., Deed Book 1:44–45. Also, Albemarle Co., Deed Book 2:205–6 (Thomas Smith deed).

124. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:123, unidentified case.

125. *Ibid.*, 319–20. Richard and Elizabeth Woodward had earlier conveyed similarly sized parts of their 800-acre tract to two sons as they came to adulthood. See Deed Book 1:36 (to Isaac, June 1755), 1:126 (to John, Sept. 1755). One inference that might be drawn is that George married a Woodward daughter. Woodward purchased his block of eight hundred acres from Nicholas Davis while the land lay in Albemarle Co. See Albemarle Co., Wills and Deeds 1:278–79.

126. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:159.

127. Bedford Co., Deeds 2:125–26 and 446–48.

surveyed adjacent to Thomas Watts (no. 2 above) and William Watts (no. 4 below).<sup>128</sup>

4. **William Watts** (born ca. 1732)<sup>129</sup> made just two appearances in Bedford County records: as surety for his father's bond in 1754 and as a juror in March 1755.<sup>130</sup> He does not appear with George, Edward Jr., and John on Bedford's militia payrolls for service in the French and Indian War. His disappearance from Bedford coincides with outmigration to the Carolina area that became Fairfield.
5. **George Watts** (born ca. 1734),<sup>131</sup> of all Edward Sr.'s proposed sons, played the most active role in Bedford. Between 1755 and 1765 he served on juries, testified in sundry cases (including one with Edward Jr.), received payment for service in the French and Indian War, served as lieutenant of the Bedford County militia, and was road surveyor in the Callaway community where Thomas had served in 1755.<sup>132</sup> He likely married Frances Woodward, daughter of Richard and Elizabeth, from whom he (like the Woodward sons) received one hundred acres in 1757. Edward Sr. and Jr. witnessed the Woodward's conveyance of land to George.<sup>133</sup> The only document George witnessed for others was a Woodward deed in early 1763.<sup>134</sup> In summer 1765, when George left Bedford for Anson County, North Carolina, he and his wife Frances sold their land to William Callaway, as Richard Woodward had done two years before.<sup>135</sup> In 1772 George died in Anson's offshoot county, Lincoln, leaving a widow Frances.<sup>136</sup> Six years later, Richard Woodward wrote his will naming a daughter "Frances Taylor."<sup>137</sup>
6. **John Watts** (born ca. 1736),<sup>138</sup> the last-named tithable in Edward Watts Sr.'s 1752 household, should not be confused with an older John Watts in a different part of Lunenburg/Bedford. The older John is clustered with a Jacob Watts and an older William Watts from 1749 until May 1755, when he took an insolvent

---

128. Holcomb, *Petitions for Land from the South Carolina Council Journals*, vol. 5: 105. Also, "On-Line Records Index," *South Carolina Department of Archives and History*, image of "Watts, Edward, Plat for 250 acres on Wateree River," 15 October 1763.

129. Based on his household position on the 1752 levy and his 1754 service as surety for his father.

130. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:72–74, 126, and 161.

131. Based on his household position on the 1752 levy.

132. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:74, 108, 113, 130, and 148. Also, Bockstruck, *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers*, 201–2, 208–9, and 233.

133. Bedford Co., Deed Book 1:144–45.

134. Bedford Co., Deed Book 2:204–5.

135. *Ibid.*, 629. George's proposed father, Edward Sr., had also sold half his land to Callaway in 1757.

136. Brent H. Holcomb, *Deed Abstracts of Tryon, Lincoln, and Rutherford Counties, North Carolina, 1769–1786; Tryon County Wills and Estates* (Easley, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1977), 125; citing "lists of probates from the Secretary of State's papers. N.C. Archives S.S. 884."

137. Bedford Co., Will Book 1:505–6.

138. Based on his household position on the 1752 levy.

debtor's oath and was discharged from jail after serving 22 days.<sup>139</sup> Jacob and the elder John left the county. The younger John, the youngest tithable in Edward Sr.'s 1752 household, first appears on a 1758 list of Bedford militiamen paid for service in the French and Indian War.<sup>140</sup> In August 1760 he served on a jury with George Watts.<sup>141</sup> Thereafter he drops from Bedford records. George Watts's removal to Anson County in 1765 suggests that his proposed brother John might be the John Watts who signed the 1769 Anson petition with his mark "Ø."

## CONCLUSION

Researchers hope that straightforward, easily interpreted direct evidence will answer their questions. On the frontiers of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Trans-Appalachia, direct evidence to prove kinship and origin is more the exception than the rule. Proof usually requires an argument assembled from *indirect* evidence.

Five genealogical concepts helped build indirect evidence into a case identifying the parents and origin of Rev. John Watts, Esq.:

1. *The FAN Principle*: researching all identifiable family and friends, associates, and neighbors to generate a body of evidence—including all same-surnamed individuals in the region until and unless a kinship is disproved. This process explored thirty counties in six states before the first piece of direct evidence emerged stating any kinship for John.
2. *Data mining*: combing all relevant record sets for *characteristics* like Revolutionary War service, residence on the same watercourses, and adherence to the same religious faiths, to identify otherwise unknown associates.
3. *Spider-web entrapment*: weaving a geographic and associational web around the person of interest, to spotlight probable kin.
4. *Geographic linkage*: identifying migration patterns as pointers to prior origin.
5. *Multigenerational testing*: assembling proof arguments for multiple branches across generations to test proposed links and associations across time and place.

All five methodologies are essential to reconstruct frontier families when credible direct evidence does not exist. In this case, all five establish, beyond reasonable doubt, that John Watts of the Wateree River in South Carolina, who

---

139. Bell, *Sunlight on the Southside*, 199–202. Also, Lunenburg Co., Order Books 2:251; 2½-A:433; 2½-B:509; and 3:348. This older John, Jacob, and William, who preceded Edward Sr. to Lunenburg, may be his brothers. The 1746 will of Thomas Watts of Orange Co., Va. (soon-to-be Culpeper Co.) names sons John, William, Jacob, and Edward. All were of a proper time-frame to be the four Lunenburg men. For the will, see Culpeper Co., Va., Will Book A:10; Circuit Court, Culpeper, Va.; LVA Culpeper Co. microfilm 31.

140. Bockstruck, *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers*, 201–2 and 208–9.

141. Bedford Co., Order Book 1:133.

bought Ambrose Mills's land there in 1784, was the son of Thomas Watts (wife Sarah Mills) who took out Wateree land in 1763 next to William Watts and Edward Watts Jr. The assembled evidence further attests that Thomas was the son of Edward Watts Sr., who first appeared in Lunenburg County, Virginia, in 1752, where he and his sons were close associates and a next-door neighbor of Thomas Watts's father-in-law and brother-in-law William and Ambrose Mills.

#### APPENDIX: DOCUMENTATION FOR TABLE 2

- a. Camden Dist., S.C., Estate Records Book A-1:285–86; Kershaw Co. Office of Probate Judge, Camden.
- b. *Ibid.*
- c. *Ibid.*, 223.
- d. *Ibid.*
- e. Fairfield Co., S.C., Deed Books C:59 and H:9–11; Register of Mesne Conveyances, Winnsboro, N.C.
- f. Camden Dist., Estate Records Book A-1:295.
- g. Fairfield Co., Plat Book B:441, James Ogilvie, 630 acres; imaged at Ken Shelton, *Genealogy Web Page* ([ken-shelton.com/Fairfield/Plats/plat\\_B.htm](http://ken-shelton.com/Fairfield/Plats/plat_B.htm)).
- h. *Ibid.* Thomas Watts, plat for 630 acres, Wateree Creek, 27 June 1787, surveyed for James Ogilvie, Series S213190, vol. 20, p. 28, item 1; South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia.
- i. Fairfield Co., Deed Book A:508–10.
- j. Fairfield Co., Record of Estrays, 1788–1799, p. 6; Court of Common Pleas, Winnsboro.

---

#### Widow or Ex-wife?

[Mrs. Mollie Moody (Joliet, Ill.) to "The Commissioner of Pension," letter, 19 November 1912; in Mary Moody, widow's pension application no. 1,147,424; service of George W. Moody (Pvt., Co. E, 11th Ill. Inf. Co. G, 36 Ill. Inf., and Co. 73, 3 Bn., Veteran Reserve Corps, Civil War), pension no. S.C. 35,164, Case Files of Approved Pension Applications . . . , 1861–1934; Civil War and Later Pension Files; Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives, Washington, D.C.]

"I would like your advice in regards to a pension. Geo W Moody of Co. G. 36 Ill. Vols has just passed away Nov 12th at Marion Ind. And the certificate returned To Pension Office[,] I was married to him Aug 14th 1866 at Morris Ills And lived together until 1897 When I was compelled through His habits to obtain a Divorce. He was a drinker And cared more for other Woman [sic] than for His home[,] I have [been] umarried Unmarried [sic] all these Years. Please inform me If I am Entitled to a pension[,] I am a lone and live With my daughter and Have no means to live on[,] Please tell me what the Pension laws are[,] Thanking you for your Trouble[.]"

—Contributed by the editors