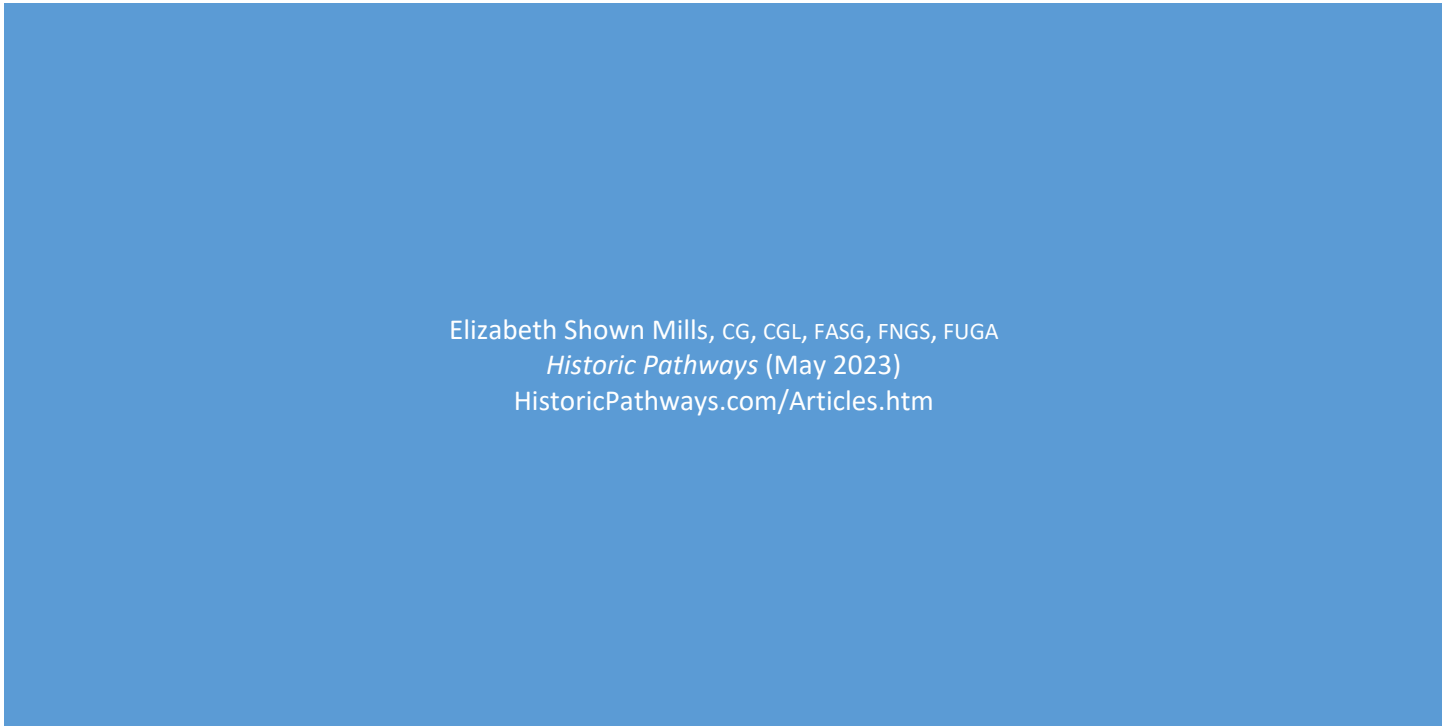


William Mills (c1695–1755)
of Goochland and Albemarle Counties, Virginia:
Correcting His Identity and Identifying His Y Signature



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Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG*

Colonial settlers who bore common names pose a significant challenge when researchers set out to identify them and their origin. The William Mills who applied for a grant on Albemarle County's Pedlar River before 1744, while the region was still part of Goochland County, well makes that point. He illustrates how thorough use of all surviving records for a time and place provides the essential details that separate individuals of common name. He also demonstrates how the targeted tracking of offspring can yield genetic evidence to separate non-related same-name families.

EXAMINING THE CLAIMS

As with many Virginia ancestors of his era, descendants offer a buffet of undocumented claims for William's identity, origin, and kin. Two commonly reported facts *are* easily documented and provide a foundation for evaluating all other claims. First, this William was the father of the Loyalist colonel Ambrose Mills, who was captured at the Battle of King's Mountain in October 1780 and summarily hung. Second, this William's 1755 will naming his wife Mary and his children was proved in 1766 in Amherst,¹ a county created from Albemarle in 1761. These two facts have been stirred into a stew of assumptions, irrelevant "hints" suggested by online document providers, and assertions designed to cast the family's Loyalist service in a more-acceptable light.

Identity claims:

Despite the fact that multiple given names were highly uncommon on the Virginia frontier, thousands of online trees identify William as William *Henry* Mills. Many

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The research for this project has combed all identifiable surviving records for sixty-one counties in ten states through which William and his first two generations of offspring spread. As a foundation for this summary article on the progenitor, thirty-five underlying research reports have been archived at the author's website *Historic Pathways*. Several will be specifically cited for their assembly of all known, pertinent records on a particular person or locale.

¹ Amherst Co., Va., Will Book 1:73–76.

call him *Colonel* William Henry Mills, assigning to him the identity of a Irish-born surgeon and South Carolina Revolutionary War officer who served the Loyalist cause and died post-war in England.² No evidence is provided for the alleged middle name by those who assign it, and no evidence has been found. All legal documents created by and about the Pedlar River William, from land patents to deeds to court orders to his will and its probate, call him only “William Mills.”³ The assertion that he was the Loyalist colonel is thoughtless on its face, given that William’s will was probated a decade before the Revolution erupted. Both errors are the type easily avoided by systematically gathering all documents each man created to robustly reconstruct his life—the Reasonably Exhaustive Research Principle that stands as the first criteria of the Genealogical Proof Standard.⁴

Origin claims:

In 1845, a grandson of William’s grandson and namesake, the Loyalist major William Mills of Rutherford County, North Carolina, set out to exonerate the family’s Loyalist reputation. In a lengthy newspaper article, J. M. Edney asserted that Maj. William’s Loyalist service stemmed from the fact that he was underage and had no choice but to do the bidding of his father Ambrose. (Edney also contradicted himself by reporting Maj. William’s birth in 1746—making him a mature man of thirty when the Revolution commenced, rather than an obedient minor.) As for Maj. William’s father, according to Edney, Col. Ambrose’s own Loyalist service stemmed from the fact that he was born in England and thus, was an “honest but erring” man loyal to his birth.⁵

Edney’s version of the family origin and the father-son service at Kings Mountain was supplied to the nineteenth-century historian-archivist Lyman C. Draper who

² For known records created by and about this genealogical doppelgänger, see E. S. Mills, “Col. William Henry Mills, Esq. (c1727–1786); Spouses: 1-Unknown; 2-Elizabeth Montgomery: Research Notes”; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsWilliamHenryColElizabethMontgomery.pdf>).

³ For abstracts, transcriptions, and/or images of all known records created by or about William Mills of the Pedlar, see E. S. Mills, “William Mills (c1695–c1755) of Goochland and Albemarle Counties, Virginia; Spouse Mary [–?–]: Research Notes”; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsWilliamMaryofGoochAlbemarle.pdf>).

⁴ Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, 2d ed. (Nashville: Ancestry Imprint, Turner Publishing Co., 2019), 1–2.

⁵ J. M. Edney, “Our Ancestors—Revolutionary Incidents, &c,” *Ashville (N.C.) Messenger*, 28 Nov. 1845, p. 2 col. 6 and p. 3 col. 1. A more likely explanation for Ambrose’s allegiance was penned in 1823 by a family friend, John Bryan, who asserted that Ambrose joined the British cause because, after his wife and children were massacred by Native Americans, the British had supported his request to pursue and punish the perpetrators. A transcript of Bryan’s reminiscences is published by Douglas Ransom as “The Notorious Hallows of Surry County,” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal* 5 (Feb. 1979): 2–3.

actively sought Revolutionary-related records and lore.⁶ Draper’s condensation of Edney’s account was then summarized in 1921 within the “Additional Notes” published as an introduction to the journal of the Loyalist Alexander Chesney.⁷ Embroidering upon this base, a trio of Edney’s cousins in 1923 declared (without evidence) that the family came to Virginia by way of Maryland; that Ambrose was born in Derbyshire, England, as a descendant of the “Derby family”; and that the Millses were “Cavaliers belonging to the Court party in the time of King Charles I.” With the circular reasoning common in that era, they concluded: “The fact that the Mills family were of Cavalier origin is proof of their position in England.”⁸ This version became the Gospel, etched now (and again without evidence) in Ambrose’s *Find A Grave* memorial.⁹

Parentage claims:

Contrary to the alleged Derbyshire roots, the most-common parentage claim for William of the Pedlar assigns him to a Scottish immigrant family. While William migrated to the Pedlar from the older, more-eastern and English-rooted county of Goochland, a separate Mills family migrated from Pennsylvania down the western side of the Blue Ridge and settled in Virginia’s Augusta County. There, in 1757, one Gilbert Mills died leaving a will naming “son William.” After Lyman Chalkley’s abstract of that will was published in 1912,¹⁰ genealogists assumed that William of Albemarle must be the William named by the Augusta father, despite the physical mountain range and cultural chasm that separated them. On this basis, 83 percent of the 4,978 *Ancestry* trees that (at this writing) profile William I of Albemarle also assert that he was Gilbert’s son. On the basis of “name’s the same,” hundreds of those have also accepted *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch* automated hints suggesting he was christened 24 August 1699 as son of Gilbert Mills of “Angus shire,” Scotland.¹¹

⁶ Lyman C. Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes* (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thompson, 1881), 481–82.

⁷ E. Alfred Jones, ed., “The Journal of Alexander Chesney, a South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After,” *Ohio State University Bulletin* 26 (Oct. 30, 1921): 72–74.

⁸ Mrs. J. R. Baird, T. C. Catchings, and Mrs. M. C. Torrey, *The Clendinen, Myers, and Mills Families; And Various Related Families in the South* (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell Publishers, 1923), 156, 159.

⁹ *Find A Grave* (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59106974/ambrose-mills>), “Colonel Ambrose Mills” memorial created 23 Sept. 2010 by Diane Boren.

¹⁰ Lyman Chalkley, *Chalkley’s Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish in Virginia: Extracted from the Original Court Records, 1745–1800*, 3 vols. (Rosslyn, Va.: Commonwealth Printing Co., 1912), 3:46.

¹¹ None of these claims cite valid evidence. The *Ancestry* source, whenever cited, is invariably “U. S. and International Marriage Records, 1560–1900,” a database created from undocumented pedigree charts and family group sheets contributed across the years to the Genealogical Society of Utah.

Augusta County’s William-of-Gilbert was a quite different man from his Albemarle contemporary. Gilbert’s son William, prior to Gilbert’s death, gave power of attorney to his kinsman and “trusted and loving friend,” the entrepreneur John Mills of Augusta and Bedford Counties,¹² then left for North Carolina in company with John’s brothers Blaney and Hugh Mills.¹³ Across the late 1750s and early 1760s, the Augusta trio—William, Blaney, and Hugh—appear in the records of Anson County and its offshoot Mecklenburg, as settlers on Clark’s Creek. There, William-of-Augusta’s probate was opened in January 1767. The settlement of his land claims and the guardianships of his minors identify one son John and three daughters—Sarah, Ann, and Jeanne—a totally different family than that of William of the Pedlar.¹⁴ In the meanwhile, Blaney and Hugh Mills returned to Augusta and lived out their lives near their brother John in the part of Augusta that became Botetourt. The hundreds of documents created by this Augusta > Botetourt set of Millses contain not one interaction with the William Mills family of Goochland > Albemarle > Amherst.¹⁵

Spousal claims:

Descendants of William of Albemarle have also more-or-less agreed on a fictive

¹² Augusta Co., Va., Deed Book 1:482 (9 Oct. 1752).

¹³ The relationship between John, Hugh, and Blaney is proved by Hugh’s will, naming Blaney and John as his brothers. See Botetourt Co., Va., Will Book A:225–36 (probated May 1785).

¹⁴ For key N.C. documents proving identities and kinships, see the following:

- William Mills (x) as witness to Blaney’s land purchases from John Clark, 29–30 Oct. 1755; Anson Co. Deed Book 1 (typescript copy): 209–10.
- Hugh Mills land grant on Clark’s Creek in “North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Anson > 1779–2438 > image 350 of 1224.
- Hugh Mills’s sale of his Clark’s Creek land on 13 Dec. 1771, after his return to Augusta > Botetourt; recorded, Lincoln Co., N.C., Deed Book 1:709.
- William Welsh to “loving cousins Sarah Mills & Ann Mills & Jeanne Mills,” 13 July 1765, their respective shares of 640 acres on Clark’s Creek surveyed for William Mills; Mecklenburg Co. Deed Book 2:159–60.
- Sheriff’s levy on goods & chattels of John Mills, 16 Mar. 1784, including 606 acres on waters of Clark’s Creek, “his deceased father’s William Mills’ improvements,” Lincoln Co., Deed Book 2:706–7.

¹⁵ For abstracts, transcriptions, and/or images of documents created by this William and the Augusta > Botetourt trio (John, Blaney, and Hugh), see the following research reports at *Historic Pathways*:

- “Augusta County & the Virginia Frontier, Mills & Watts: Initial Survey of Published Literature” (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsAugustaVirginiaFrontier.pdf>).
- “Mills & Associates: Rutherford County, NC, Its Parent Counties (Anson, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and Tryon) and its Offshoots (Buncombe, Burke, Henderson, and Polk Counties)” (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsRutherfordTryonLincolnSurvey.pdf>).
- “Mills & Associates: Botetourt County, Virginia: Initial Survey” (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/BotetourtVA.pdf>).

identity for his wife, whom all known documents identify only as “Mary.” Most often, claims assert that she was *Mary Walton*, variously *Mary Lavender* or *Mary “Marty” Lavender Walton*. From there, with the aid of *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch* automated hints, she often morphs into the Mary Walton who was christened 21 September 1701 in Middlesex, England, as the daughter of one Edward and Mary Walton.¹⁶ Again, no evidence is cited for Mary’s identity; and no evidence is provided that Edward Walton of Middlesex—or his daughter Mary—migrated to the colonies. The alleged Walton kinship appears to rest in the equally undocumented claim in some 2,740 online trees that her granddaughter Mary “Polly” Mills (wife of James Stepp), was “more fully” named *Mary Walton Mills* and, of course, “named for her grandmother.” As documented by the family reconstruction that follows, Waltons and Lavenders were part of the family cluster, but not as the birth identity of William’s wife Mary.

WILLIAM & MARY MILLS: THE EVIDENCE

William Mills I made his first appearance in Goochland County records in 1730, when an undated court order dismissed his suit for debt against Robert Wade of Goochland and Hanover. That dismissal occurred because neither party appeared when the case was called.¹⁷ No prior reference to the case (or to William) has been found in Henrico County, from which Goochland was created in 1728, or in adjacent Hanover County whose records of the era are largely destroyed. The first patent issued to William on 11 April 1732, granting him 400 acres on Goochland’s Lickinghole Creek adjacent to Henry Chiles (also of Hanover), Samuel Coleman, Edward Scott, and Richard Kerby,¹⁸ speaks against the alleged English or Scottish births and backdates William I’s presence in the region to 1729 or earlier.

William’s grant was founded on a regular Treasury warrant—a purchase system the Virginia assembly designed in 1705 for those “not having right to any land for

¹⁶ The citations are invariably not to the original image, but to the database entry in “England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975,” *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NPH5-V8R>). For the original, see *FamilySearch* digital film 8041375 > image 510.

¹⁷ Goochland Co., Order Book 2:78. Wade, a neighbor of William Mills on Lickinghole Creek, made his first appearance in Goochland at the March 1728/9 term of court when he was sued by Samuel Cabell. In March and August 1734, after selling his Lickinghole land, he was cited as a resident of Hanover Co. See Goochland Co., Order Book 1:91; and Deeds & Wills 2:1, 62. Wade, like Mills, has not been found in the pre-Goochland records of Henrico.

¹⁸ Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 14:407; Library of Virginia, Richmond. Chiles’s residence in Hanover is stated in the 31 Oct. 1732 deed by which he sold his adjacent land to Mills; see Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 1:366.

importation.”¹⁹ Although surviving records are incomplete, the tens of thousands that remain contain no earlier grant for any individual claiming an importation right under the name William Mills (or Miles or other variants) within this William’s life span. No such documents naming males whose surnames are typically confused with Mills (Hills, Miller, Wills, etc.) are appropriate to this William.²⁰

Colonial land laws and practices dictated a lengthy process for grants. Settlers chose the land and appeared before the county’s official surveyor to enter that tract in his register. They were then to pay the surveyor, within six months, to lay off the metes and bounds of the appropriate number of acres. The surveyor periodically journeyed to Williamsburg, to file with the colony’s secretary the plats he had created. After some delay to allow for possible challenges to William’s claim, the patent would then be issued.²¹ Those delays, coupled with the time William would have spent in Goochland assessing its lands before choosing a productive site, suggest that he likely chose and applied for his Goochland land no later than 1729 in order to receive a patent in April 1732.

William did not surface in Goochland as an impecunious laborer. Within months of his initial patent for 400 acres, he purchased another 300 acres of already patented land along the Lickinghole near Wild Boar Creek.²² Four years later, he invested in still another 400-acre Treasury grant on the western frontier of the sixty-mile-long Willis River.²³ Across that decade, he subdivided his two Lickinghole tracts and sold parts of them; each time, his wife Mary participated in the sale, thereby documenting her role as his wife by March 1733/4.²⁴ On

¹⁹ William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large ... of Virginia*, vol. 3 (Richmond: Samuel Pleasants, 1809), 305, Act of Oct. 1705.

²⁰ Image copies of the original grants are searchable online via “Virginia Land Patents and Grants,” Library of Virginia, *Virginia Memory* (<https://lva-virginia.libguides.com/land-grants>). Abstracts have been published in the classic series begun by Nell Marion Nugent and continued by the Virginia Historical Society, *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants*, 8 vols. (various publishers, 1934–2005).

²¹ For the Treasury grant process, see Frederick Bittle Kegley, *Kegley’s Virginia Frontier* (1938; reprinted Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co.), 54–58. For importation grants, see Richard Slatten, “Interpreting Headrights in Colonial-Virginia Patents: Uses and Abuses,” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 75 (Sept. 1987): 169–79.

²² Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 1:366. The seller, Henry Chiles, had purchased the already-patented land in Feb 1729/30, about the same time that William Mills entered the adjacent tract; see Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 1: 158, 165–66.

²³ Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 17:164. Wife Mary would relinquish her dower interest in this land when the last of it was sold in 1743; Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 4:270–71.

²⁴ Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 1:487 (12 Mar. 1733/4); 2:168 (17 Feb. 1735/6), 231 (15 June 1736).

occasion he witnessed a neighbor's deed or was cited therein as an adjacent landowner, further attesting the continuity of his residence along the Lickinghole.²⁵

Each Goochland document William created from 1730 through 1744 is critical to separating him from a contemporary Goochland man of the same name. That other William Mills settled before 1739 on Goochland's Pidy Rock Creek (toward the eastern end of the Willis); applied for a patent in which he identified himself as a native of Aberdeen, Scotland; and received the patent in 1746.²⁶ William of Pidy Rock also served as a proccessioner for St. James Southam Church on nearby Tar Wallet Creek (later within Cumberland County) from 1741 through 1763, and then disappeared leaving a creditor who sued in 1765 for title to his land and his enslaved people as well.²⁷

In 1743–44, as the Virginia Assembly debated the creation of Albemarle County, William of the Lickinghole sold the last of his plantation there, as well as his Willis River tract. Again, his wife Mary relinquished her dower rights to both.²⁸ Applying for new Treasury land on Albemarle's Pedlar River, near the base of the Blue Ridge,²⁹ he moved his family there amid other migrants from Goochland: Burkes, Cabells, Davises, and Tuleys. Subsequent acquisitions followed. As sons came to adulthood, lands were claimed in their names, surrounding him on the Pedlar and its Buck Branch.³⁰ Surviving court minutes, deeds, jury lists, land surveys, and road

²⁵ Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 3:121–22 (16 May 1738), 466 (14 Sept. 1741).

²⁶ Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 25:230.

²⁷ For a disambiguation of these two William Millses of Goochland, see Mills, "William Mills (c1695–c1755) ... Research Notes," particularly pp. 15–20. For the 1765 debt suit against the Scottish-born William that stands as his last known record in the colony, see James Lyle vs. William Mills, Cumberland Co. Chancery Causes 1765-001; imaged, "Chancery Record Index," *Virginia Memory* (www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery). For his activities in St. James Southam Parish, while the Pedlar River William was in Albemarle, see Ann K. Blomquist, *The Vestry Book of Southam Parish, Cumberland County, Virginia, 1745–1792* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2006), 29, 54, 69, 79, 86, 117, 141, 153, 180; and William Lindsay Hopkins, *St. James Northam Parish Vestry Book, 1744–1850, Goochland County, Virginia* (Richmond: P.p., 1987), 4; citing Vestry Book 13.

²⁸ Goochland Co., Deeds & Wills 4:270–71 (14 Nov. 1743), 356–57 (15 May 1744).

²⁹ Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 28:539.

³⁰ In addition to William's original Pedlar tract of 400 acres, see Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 32:696 (William Mills, 350 acres, branches of Buck Creek of Pedlar); 34:40 (Thomas Mills, 355 acres, branches of Pedlar); and 36:942 (William Mills [Jr.], 330 acres, branches of Buck Branch of Pedlar). The nineteenth-century Albemarle historian Alexander Brown asserted that Ambrose Mills (William's eldest son) also entered land on the Pedlar in 1745, but did not cite the record; see Brown, "Historical and Genealogical Notes," *William and Mary College Quarterly* 8 (April 1900): 208–9. The patent to William Jr.'s land, a tract that William Sr. referred to as "unsettled" in his will, was not issued until 1765 when the widowed Mary and her newly adult son Jesse prepared to probate

orders cite William periodically³¹ until September 1755, when he called in five neighbors to witness his last will and testament. He began that will by stating he was “weak in Body.”³² After signing his will, he dropped from all further Albemarle records—suggesting the will was created on his deathbed. His estate was held together until 1766, after his youngest son came of age.

Two particulars in William’s will provide additional clues to work with as origins and kinsmen are sought for William and Mary: first, the language he used in his bequest to his eldest son Ambrose; second, his choice of a male to guide his wife’s executorship of his estate.

Ambrose as biological son (or not) of Mary:

After bequeathing all his personal estate to Mary, “as long as she lives,” William began his bequests to each child, apparently in their order of birth. His one provision for his eldest son states: “I give and bequeath to my son Ambrose Mills a proportionable part of all my estate excepting my Lands, [at] the death of *his mother (my wife)*.” The dual relationships stated for Mary raise questions that parallel the apparent child-spacing of William’s children. If Ambrose and all his siblings were children of Mary, then there would be no need for William, after referring to Ambrose’s inheritance from “his mother,” to clarify the statement by saying he meant “my wife.” As will be seen in the data provided below for William’s children, there is reason to suspect that he may have had two sets of children, with Mary being a stepmother rearing the children of the first marriage.

Thomas Joplin as co-executor (or not) with Mary:

William’s decision to appoint his wife Mary as executrix, even though she was not literate, was not common among males in his place and time. Those who did make this choice commonly named a male to serve with her, to advise her on financial and legal matters. Grown sons of the testator, if any, were typically appointed to that role. In this case, one grown son had died (Thomas), one had left the Pedlar for North Carolina (William Jr.), one was preparing to leave (Ambrose), and the fourth son (Jesse) was a child. Alternatively, men in William’s circumstance who had brothers or other family in the region appointed their kinsmen or they appointed male relatives of their wife. Although families of the

William Sr.’s will. William Jr. had left the Pedlar for N.C. years before his father’s death, as seen in his profile later in this paper.

³¹ Albemarle Co., Court Orders 1744–1748: 239 (12 Mar. 1746/7), 251 (13 Mar. 1746/7), 345–47 (10 Mar. 1747/8), 361 (12 May 1748), 374–75 (Mar.–Jun 1748 land surveys); *ibid.*, part 2, pp. vi (12 Nov. 1746) and x (10 Dec. 1747). Also Albemarle Plat Book 1:127, 133 (12–14 Apr. 1750); and Albemarle Wills & Deeds, Book 1:475–76 (deed of sale 13 Aug. 1752).

³² Amherst Co., Will Book 1:73–76, for 1755 will and 1766 administratrix’s bond.

surnames alleged for William’s wife Mary—Walton and Lavender—existed then in Albemarle, no male from either family was tapped to assist Mary in the administration of the goods William left to support her and their children.

Instead, William chose a man named Thomas Joplin with whom he had not even one interaction of record across the quarter-century that both men lived in Goochland and Albemarle Counties. Joplin’s first-known lands had centered on Tuckahoe Creek along the southern bounds of present Richmond,³³ while William Mills settled on Lickinghole, some thirty miles to the northwest. When Joplin left Goochland, he chose land on the Rockfish River in eastern Albemarle³⁴—some sixty miles from William’s land on Albemarle’s westernmost river, the Pedlar. In Henrico County, before Goochland had been created, Joplin had wed Hannah Freeman, daughter of George Freeman;³⁵ extensive study of that family yields no interaction with William or Mary Mills or with any of their identified neighbors and associates. The one sole link that has been found between William Mills and Thomas Joplin was the marriage of a Joplin daughter to Mills’s Pedlar River neighbor Robert Davis, another migrant from Goochland.³⁶ Davis, one of the neighbors William called in to witness his will, was also a man William had sued several years before.³⁷

The utter lack of Joplin’s presence in the lives of the Millses (or vice-versa) suggests no reason why William placed into Joplin’s trust the future financial welfare of his widow and children. Possibly, that reason lies in Joplin’s civic status. If so, it also suggests a lack of male kin for either William or Mary and a resulting desperation for trustworthy help. The contemporary diaries of the Albemarle-Amherst planter-attorney William Cabell occasionally mention Thomas Joplin and his activities on behalf of the parish. At Joplin’s death in 1789, Cabell sat down with his diary to note: “Thomas Jopling the elder departed this life in a very advanced age. He was an honest Man and his death much lamented by all his

³³ Goochland Co. Deeds & Wills 3:102 (1729 land sale, Parish to Jopling). Also Joplin’s assignment to a crew order to “make a road over Tuckahoe Creek”; Goochland Co., Court Order Book 4: Feb. 1738/9 term.

³⁴ Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 31:5–6, Thomas Joplin, 300 acres on South fork of Rockfish and 400 acres on South side of Rockfish.

³⁵ Henrico Co., Wills & Deeds 1725–1737: 518 (George Freeman will, 3 Oct. 1735, mentioning “son in law Thomas Joplin and his wife my daughter Hannah Joplin”).

³⁶ Amherst Co. Will Book 2:33 (Jopling’s bond as administrator for the estate of Robert Davis, husband of Jopling’s daughter Jane).

³⁷ Albemarle Co., Court Orders 1744–48: 239.

Acquaintances.”³⁸ Perhaps William Mills looked upon Joplin as a parish leader of integrity who could be trusted to “do right” for his widow and children.

Whether Joplin informally accepted his role as advisor to the widowed Mary, during the years that William’s estate was held together unprobated, is undiscernible from surviving records. In 1765, William and Mary’s youngest child, Jesse, came of age and took a wife; with that marriage, Jesse became the brother-in-law of Amherst County’s William *Walton*.³⁹ About that same time, William Mills’s heirs paid the forty shillings required for title to the 330 “unsettled” acres that he had bequeathed to his absent son William Jr.⁴⁰ Three weeks after that patent was issued in Williamsburg (10 July 1766), the will of William Sr. was presented for probate in Amherst. Joplin declined to serve; the administration was bonded to Mary alone, with her son Jesse and son-in-law William *Lavender* as her sureties.⁴¹ William Mills’s daughter Elizabeth and her new (second) husband John Ripley soon contested Mary’s handling of the estate; the surviving records of that suit do not refer to Mary as Elizabeth’s mother. After a year on the Amherst docket, the parties settled out of court in November 1768⁴² and the Ripleys left Amherst for South Carolina where Elizabeth’s brother Ambrose and sister Sarah had migrated in the wake of William I’s death.⁴³

Seven years after this lawsuit was settled, Mary died. On 1 July 1776, the Amherst court summoned “the Heir at Law of William Mills Deceased ... to appear here at the Next Court to declare whether he will take upon himself the administration of the Estate of Mary Mills, Deceased.” In August the court repeated its summons, enjoining “Ambrose Mills Son and Heir at Law of William Mills deceased.” In neither instance did the court state Ambrose’s relationship to Mary, whose estate needed an administrator, or identify Ambrose as an heir of Mary.⁴⁴ Ambrose, then a resident of Tryon County, North Carolina, did not appear; he was, in fact,

³⁸ Diary of William Cabell Sr., photostat 148, folder: “Receipt Book, 1751–1755, and Diary 15 July 1783–31 Dec. 1795, folder 2 of 3”; manuscript 23338, Cabell Family: Diaries, 1751–1825; Library of Virginia.

³⁹ Amherst Co. Marriage Bonds and Consents, 1763–1783, chronological sequence, Jesse Mills and Lucy Tilman, 6 August 1765 bond; loose papers, Amherst Co. microfilm 104, Library of Virginia. For the 1 December 1758 Goochland marriage of William Walton to Lucy’s sister Elizabeth Tilman, see W. Mac. Jones, ed., *The Douglas Register: Being a Detailed Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths Together with Other Interesting Notes, as Kept by the Rev. William Douglas, from 1750 to 1797* (Richmond, Va.: J. W. Ferguson, 1928), 13.

⁴⁰ Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 36:942.

⁴¹ Amherst Co., Will Book 1:73 (will), 75 (administrator’s bond), 104 (inventory).

⁴² Amherst Co., Court Order Book 2:212, 244, 294, 328, 391, 434.

⁴³ For these migrations, see each sibling’s profile in the next section of this paper.

⁴⁴ Amherst Co., Court Order Book 1773–1782: 154, 157.

at that time in the Rowan County jail to which he had been consigned as a suspected Loyalist.⁴⁵ No further court orders were issued in Mary's estate. Apparently, whatever she owned was then assumed by the two children who remained in Amherst: Jesse and Mildred, the wife of William Lavender.

WILLIAM & MARY MILLS: THE OFFSPRING

Eight children have been identified for William¹ Mills. Whether Mary was the mother of the first five is debatable.

1. **AMBROSE² MILLS** (William¹), b. by 1721.⁴⁶ About 1745, in Albemarle or Lunenburg Co., he wed **MOURNING STONE**, speculatively the daughter of Lunenburg's Thomas Stone.⁴⁷ The 1750 and 1752 tax rolls of Lunenburg, which lay across James River from Albemarle, identify Ambrose as an overseer for the absentee planter, John Payne of Goochland.⁴⁸ In October 1754, after their portion of Lunenburg split off into the new county of Bedford, Ambrose appeared in Bedford's court as surety for the well-to-do John Partree Burks who was being sued for debt by the surveyor George *Walton*.⁴⁹ Within months of William I's will, Ambrose and Thomas Watts, husband of Ambrose's oldest sister Sarah, moved their young families to the Wateree River of South Carolina.⁵⁰ There, Mourning and all their children except the eldest son, were killed in a Native American attack on their

⁴⁵ William L. Saunders, ed., *Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 vols. (Raleigh: P.M. Hale, State Printer, 1886–90), 10:730, 760.

⁴⁶ Age extrapolated from fact that he was sued as an adult in Nov. 1743 (born by Nov. 1722). Commonly, the debt would have been a year or more past due—backdating his birth before Nov. 1721. His known activities (more than a hundred identified events in Virginia and the Carolinas) are chronicled as transcriptions, abstracts, and/or images in E. S. Mills, "Ambrose Mills, Col. (c1721–1780): Spouses 1. Mourning Stone; 2. Anne Brown: Research Notes"; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsAmbroseResearchNotes.pdf>).

⁴⁷ Alexander Brown, "Historical and Genealogical Notes," *William & Mary College Quarterly* 8 (1900): 208–9, responding to a query from a subscriber with garbled information. Brown in that era was the unofficial but widely acknowledged historian of early Albemarle and its offshoots, Amherst and Nelson.

⁴⁸ Landon C. Bell, *Sunlight on the Southside: List of Tithes, Lunenburg County, Virginia; 1748–1783* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1974), 145 and 205.

⁴⁹ Bedford Co., Va. Order Book 1:30.

⁵⁰ Ambrose's last mention in records of the James River counties occurred in Nov. 1756 when Thomas Prather requested bounty on a wolf's head, under assignment from Ambrose who would have sold his claim at a discount before leaving; see TLC Genealogy, *Bedford County, Virginia, Order Book 1, 1754–1761* (Miami Beach, FL: TLC Genealogy, 2000), 116. Ambrose also sold his surveyed but not patented land, 898 acres in Bedford Co.; the deed is not recorded but on 27 Apr. 1761 William Callaway sold the tract by a deed that cited (without a date) his acquisition of the land from Ambrose. See Ann Chilton, *Bedford Co., Va., Deed Book A-1, 1754–1762* (Signal Mountain, Tenn.: Mountain Press, 1987), 8.

frontier home.⁵¹ About 1764, Ambrose wed **ANNE BROWN**, sister-in-law of the future Loyalist colonel Thomas Fletchall of Fair Forest in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and alleged daughter of the Loyalist colonel Thomas Brown.⁵² Across the next decade, Ambrose would accumulate 1,000 surveyed acres at strategic sites in what is now Fairfield County.⁵³

Between 1768 and 1770, Ambrose and his now-married first-born William⁵⁴ made a fateful decision to leave Fairfield and join Ambrose's brother William Jr. in North Carolina.⁵⁵ Settling on Green River at the mouth of Walnut Creek in Tryon County (later Rutherford), Ambrose again expanded his landholdings rapidly and became embroiled in frontier politics. He was elected to Tryon's first "Committee of Safety" on the eve of the Revolution but was soon accused of disloyalty to the Revolutionary cause when he joined an expedition against the Cherokee to forestall an expected attack. After several months of imprisonment in the Anson County jail, he was released on humanitarian grounds.⁵⁶ As the conflict heated along the border between the two Carolinas in 1779 and 1780—perhaps under the influence of his wife's kin—Ambrose accepted a colonel's commission in the Loyalist forces. As such, he was captured at the Battle of King's Mountain. On 14 October 1780, with five subordinate officers and three soldiers, he was hung by Whig forces at Bickerstaff's Farm in Rutherford.⁵⁷

Col. Ambrose² Mills left seven children by his two wives. By Mourning Stone, his only surviving child was

⁵¹ Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 481, drawig from the account by Ambrose's great-grandson Edney, states that young William survived but did not address other children of Mourning, which she surely had by the time the Indian hostilities erupted in the region. The 1823 recollections of John Bryan state, "the indians had killed his [Ambrose's] wife and *some of his children*"; see Ransom, "The Notorious Hallows of Surry County."

⁵² Alexander Brown opined in "Historical and Genealogical Notes," that Anne was the daughter of "Col. Brown, of Chester, S.C.," but offered no evidence. For Fletchall and Thomas Brown, see Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 481; Edney, "Our Ancestors—Revolutionary Incidents, &c."; and Jones, "The Journal of Alexander Chesney."

⁵³ Colonial Plat Books (Copy Series), 8:359, 477; and 18:432; series S213184, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), Columbia. Also series S213197, box 3, item 859.

⁵⁴ William married Eleanor Morris on 12 Oct. 1765 according to the previously cited biography penned by his grandson, Edney. The marriage likely occurred in S.C., where William and his father then resided and where marriages were not recorded.

⁵⁵ The move appears to date between 16 Jan. 1768, when Ambrose had his last Wateree acreage surveyed, and 1 Dec. 1770, when he purchased his first 640 acres in Tryon Co. (later Lincoln and Rutherford). See SCDAH series S213184, vol. 8:432. Also Lincoln Co., N.C., Deed Book 1:680 (Reynolds to Mills).

⁵⁶ William L. Saunders et al., eds., *State Records of North Carolina*, 26 vols. (Raleigh: P.M. Hale, 1886–1907), 10:730, 760, 827; and 22:186. Jones, ed., "The Journal of Alexander Chesney," 118. Kathy Gunter Sullivan, *Tryon County Documents, 1769–1779: A North Carolina County* (Forest City, N.C.: Genealogical Society of Old Tryon Co., 2000), 192–93.

⁵⁷ Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 340.

- i. **William³ Mills** (Ambrose², William¹), Loyalist major, b. 1746, Albemarle or Lunenburg Co., Va.; m. **Eleanor Morris**, 12 Oct. 1765; d. 10 Nov. 1834, Edneyville, Henderson Co., N.C.⁵⁸ His offspring are numerous, but proved descendants in the Y-line have not tested their Y-DNA.

By Anne Brown (later wife of John Carrick⁵⁹), Ambrose left three sons and three daughters:

- ii. **Thomas³ Mills** (Ambrose², William¹), b. c1765, Craven Co., S.C. Although he was only in mid-teens when the Battle of Kings Mountain occurred, Thomas was accused of being an enemy captain by the post-war courts created to confiscate Loyalist property. After years of legal feints and thwarts aided by well-placed friends, Thomas, his brother Maj. William, and his mother Anne (as Col. Ambrose's widow) avoided the confiscations.⁶⁰ In 1786 Thomas applied successfully for a state grant on Green River,⁶¹ but absented himself from other county records and perhaps from the county itself. In 1800, three years after the settlement of his father's estate (a settlement that had been delayed until the youngest child came of age), he sold that Green River land to his brother Ambrose Jr. and dropped from county records entirely.⁶² His identity past that point has not been established. Various Mills lines in Tennessee and Georgia claim descent from him but none have mounted a credible proof argument. Claimants also have not Y-tested or else their Y-line differs from that of testers with proved Y-lines from the Pedlar River William.
- iii. **John³ Mills** (Ambrose², William¹), b. c1769.⁶³ In the mid-1790s, John married **Miriam Wadlington**, daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Wadlington, and

⁵⁸ Edney, "Our Ancestors—Revolutionary Incidents, &c." Also Draper, *Kings Mountain and Its Heroes*, 482. For abstracts, transcriptions, and/or images of many documents created by Ambrose's eldest son, see E. S. Mills, "William Mills, Maj. (1746–1834); Spouse, Eleanor Morris: Research Notes"; *Historic Pathways* (<https://historicpathways.com/download/MillsWilliamofAmbroseResearchNotes.pdf>).

⁵⁹ Rutherford Co., N.C., Will Book B:76 ff (settlement, William Mills vs. John Carrick and others, Ambrose Mills estate, 1797). Also Buncombe Co., N.C., Deed Book A:39–41, 426–27 (disposition of property by heirs of Ann Carrick, 2 Oct. 1805 and 12 Aug. 1806).

⁶⁰ Rutherford Co., Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1779–1786: 48, 67, 103, 105, 107, 115–16. Also, A. B. Pruitt, *Abstracts of Sales of Confiscated Loyalist Land and Property in North Carolina* (N.p.: P.p., 1989), 113–27; citing "Morgan District Superior Court Miscellaneous Records, DSCR 205.428.2, 582F."

⁶¹ David McCorkle and North Carolina Historical Records Online, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), Thomas Mills, Book 96:381; citing Rutherford Co. file 1653, NC microfilm reel S.108.160.25N, frame 217, State Archives. Also "North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Rutherford > 1522–1817 > image 630 of 1539.

⁶² Rutherford Co., Deed Book 22–23 (recopied): 307–8.

⁶³ Age extrapolated from (a) the fact that he came to adulthood before the July–Oct. 1790 court terms when a financial guardian was appointed for Ambrose and Ann's minor children and (b) the birth months and years stated for John's younger siblings in those court orders. See Rutherford Co., Superior Court Minutes, County Court, 1789–1793, unpaginated, July and Oct. 1790 sessions.

moved with her family to Christian Co., Kentucky.⁶⁴ Y-line descendants have not yet been identified.

- iv. **Mary “Polly”³ Mills** (Ambrose², William¹), b. c1770,⁶⁵ married the Patriot soldier **Russell Twitty** by Rutherford bond dated 3 Nov. 1790.⁶⁶ Her male offspring would not carry a Mills Y.
- v. **Mildred “Milly”³ Mills** (Ambrose², William¹), b. March 1775;⁶⁷ married **Merrimon Featherstone** by Rutherford bond dated 5 Nov. 1799.⁶⁸ Milly was still living on 4 June 1846 when her son Ambrose M. Featherstone made his will, naming her as his heir.⁶⁹ Her male offspring would not carry a Mills Y.
- vi. **Ambrose³ Mills Jr.** (Ambrose², William¹), b. Feb. 1777;⁷⁰ married (1) **Honora [—?—]** who died 28 May 1822;⁷¹ and (2) **Anna “Nancy” Foster Jones**, 1 Feb. 1825.⁷² Called “Esq.” in 1822 and 1825, Ambrose Jr. made his will in Oct. 1845 and died in 1848.⁷³ His one son who lived to adulthood left only one son, also named Ambrose, whose *great-grandson provided one of the DNA samples by which the Y-signature of Col. Ambrose’s father could be identified*. See chart 1.
- vii. **Anna “Nancy”³ Mills** (Ambrose², William¹), b. June 1780;⁷⁴ married **John Bird**

⁶⁴ Christian Co., Ky., Deed Book A:184–87 (John and Mariam Mills to other Wadlington heirs, 29 Dec. 1804). Also Buncombe County, N.C., Deed Book A:426–27 (John Mills of Christian Co., Ky., and Ambrose Mills of Rutherford Co., legatees of Anne Carrick, to Joseph King, 12 Aug. 1806).

⁶⁵ Birth year extrapolated from her placement as first-named of four minors of Ambrose, over aged 14 in July 1790, who were ordered to court to select a guardian; see Rutherford Co., Superior Court Minutes 1789–1793, unpaginated, chronological order.

⁶⁶ Rutherford Co., Marriage Bonds, alphabetically arranged; *FamilySearch* digital film 7740376 > image 766. Also application of Russell Twitty (Pvt., Capt. Twitty’s Co., Col. Graham’s Regt., N.C.) S17161; imaged, “US Revolutionary War (United States),” *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/19736108> and 23 subsequent images).

⁶⁷ Birth month and year given in guardianship proceedings, Rutherford Co., Superior Court Minutes 1789–1793, unpaginated, chronological order, 15 Oct. 1790.

⁶⁸ Rutherford Co., Marriage Bonds, alphabetically arranged; *FamilySearch* digital film 7740373 > images 23–24.

⁶⁹ Henderson Co., N.C., Wills, 1838–1882: 17–18.

⁷⁰ Birth month and year given in guardianship proceedings, Rutherford Co., Superior Court Minutes 1789–1793, unpaginated, chronological order, 15 Oct. 1790.

⁷¹ *Raleigh Register* (Raleigh, N.C.), 28 June 1822, p. 3 col. 5, for Rutherford death “after a long, protracted illness ... in the 35th year of her age, Mrs. Honora Mills, wife of Ambrose Mills, Esq.”

⁷² The original marriage bond for “Ambroes” Mills and “Miss Nancy Jones” states that it was issued 1 Feb. 1825; see *FamilySearch* digital film 7740375 > image 179. However, the marriage announcement was published in the *Raleigh Register*, 22 Feb. 1824, p. 3 col. 2, stating that the marriage occurred in the home of George Jones on 1 Feb. 1825. It is likely that the clerk who issued the bond, early in 1825, absent-mindedly wrote the year as 1824.

⁷³ Rutherford Co., Will Book E:182–86.

⁷⁴ Birth month and year from guardianship proceedings, Rutherford Co., Superior Court Minutes 1789–1793, unpaginated, 15 Oct. 1790.

by Rutherford bond dated 9 Nov. 1797.⁷⁵ She died after the 1820 census on which she is enumerated as a female living next door to her cousin Marvel Mills (son of Maj. William).⁷⁶ Her male offspring would not carry a Mills Y.

2. **THOMAS² MILLS** (William¹), b. c1723–24; married before 1752; d. before 6 Sept. 1755, leaving children **Ambrose** and **Elizabeth** who are named in the will of Thomas's father. Thomas's birth period is extrapolated from the fact that he allegedly was of legal age to acquire land from the province by 1744–45⁷⁷ and supported by the fact that in Nov. 1746 the county court paid him a wolf's head bounty in his own right rather than making the payment to his parent.⁷⁸ Thomas's land grant on Pedlar River, patented posthumously in 1756 after procedural delays, is mentioned in 1770 as adjacent to land being sold by his brother "William Mills of North Carolina."⁷⁹ Thomas's widow seems to be the otherwise unidentified "**ELEONAR MILLS**" who has been found on record only twice. The fact that both occasions place her in the bosom of the Cabell family suggests that she may have been a Cabell. In 1769, she cowitnessed a deed from William Cabell Senr. to William Cabell Junr. for "natural Love & affection." Cosigning with her was William *Walton*, the new brother-in-law of Thomas Mills's brother Jesse. In 1774, Eleanor Mills was cited again in a court order to take her testimony in a suit by Charles Burrows against Joseph Cabell for assault and battery.⁸⁰ Thomas's (and Eleanor's?) son Ambrose has not been found as an adult and apparently died before 1777 when his sister Elizabeth, as wife of John Turner of Charleston, S.C., sold the whole of their father's land grant.⁸¹
3. **SARAH "SALLY"² MILLS** (William¹), b. c1726; m. before 1749, **THOMAS WATTS**.⁸² In the

⁷⁵ Rutherford Co., Marriage Bonds, alphabetically arranged; *FamilySearch* digital film 7740371 > image 277. Also Buncombe Co., Deed Book A:39–41 (1805 land sale by heirs of Anne Carrick).

⁷⁶ 1820 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 383, line 7, for "Bird, Nancy" (1 white female 45+, 1 white female 10–15, 2 white females 0–10).

⁷⁷ C. H. C. Seaman, ed., *The Lee Marmon Manuscript* (Sweet Briar, Va.: Amherst Co. Historical Museum & Nelson Co. Historical Soc., 1989), 47; imaged at *Internet Archive* (<http://www.archive.org/details/leemarmomanuscr00seam>). For Thomas Mills's land claim of 1745, Marman at p. 45 states: "The Nelson historian Alexander Brown, relying on diverse and some now unavailable sources, has listed additional settlers who lived in the area of Old Amherst by 1745."

⁷⁸ Albemarle Co., Court Orders 1744–48, part 2, p. vi.

⁷⁹ Amherst Co., Deed Book E:91.

⁸⁰ Amherst Co., Deed Book B:431. Also Amherst Co., Court Order Book 1773–1802, unpaginated, July 1774.

⁸¹ Amherst Co., Deed Book E:91.

⁸² Sarah, the second-named living child in her father's will, is cited there as "Sarah Watts." As wife of Thomas Watts, on 9 Aug. 1749, she joined him in the sale of his grant on Pedlar River; Albemarle Co., Deed Book B 1:96. Countless online allegations that Sarah married one "Thomas Caleb Watts" and died in Amherst in 1766 are based on a mish-mash of two Thomas Wattses and one Caleb Watts in Amherst. The alleged year of her death is a conflation with the year that her father's will was probated. For a separation of the various Thomas Wattses in Amherst, see E. S.

wake of her father's death, Sarah and Thomas moved with her brother Ambrose and Thomas's brothers Edward Jr. and William Watts to Craven Co., S.C. (later Camden District and then Fairfield, Lancaster, and Kershaw Counties). Sarah died on their Wateree lands c1795–1800.⁸³

4. **WILLIAM "ENGLISH BILLY"² MILLS JR.** (William¹), b. c1728, had already removed to N.C. prior to his father's death. His eldest son Jesse Mills, b. c1751, would cite his birthplace in a Revolutionary War pension application as "Deep River, Chatham County"⁸⁴ (then Orange Co.). In 1769, in nearby Tryon County (the portion that became Lincoln, then Rutherford) Billy executed a deed of gift to his son Jesse, conveying personal goods and animals of the sort that young men use to start a household.⁸⁵ On 5 June 1770, Billy made his only known return to Virginia. Identifying himself as "William Mills of North Carolina" (county unstated), he sold for 25£ the 330 acres of Pedlar River land he had inherited from his father. The three witnesses to that document did not include Mary Mills or her son Jesse or son-in-law William Lavender—the only kinsmen Billy had left in the Albemarle-Amherst region.⁸⁶

Three years later, for 60£, Billy purchased 300 acres on Tryon's Panther Creek⁸⁷ but, as a result of Native unrest, sold the land at a loss within months.⁸⁸ From there, he moved to the Green River–Walnut Creek area settled by his brother Ambrose. A January 1779 land entry for one William Hall describes Hall's land as one mile from Ambrose Mills, bordering "land claimed by Ambrose Mills where Wm. Mills Sr. now lives."⁸⁹ In the fall of 1780, days before the Battle of King's

Mills, "Watts & (Some) Dillard's of Albemarle & Amherst Counties, VA"; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/WattsDillardAmherstCoSurvey.pdf>). For all records found to date for Sarah and Thomas, see E.S. Mills, "Thomas Watts (b. c1725; d. c1796–1800); Spouse Sarah Mills: Research Notes"; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/WattsThomasSarahResearchNotes1.pdf>). For the proof argument rooting this Watts-Mills family in Albemarle, see E. S. Mills, "Frontier Research Strategies—Weaving a Web to Snare a Birth Family: John Watts (ca. 1749–ca. 1822)," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 104 (Sept. 2016): 165–90.

⁸³ Sarah's death is approximated from testimony of her granddaughter Catherine "Caty" (Watts) Hornsby (b. c1769) and Caty's husband Moses Hornsby, created Nov. 1821 in Covington Co., Miss., saying that they had known Caty's Watts grandparents (plural) in S.C., for about 40 years. That affidavit is filed in the Louisiana succession (probate) file for Sarah and Thomas's son Thomas Watts Jr., Ouachita Parish Succession file A1082 and Succession vol. C:31–38, for "Thomas Watts of S. Carolina," particularly C:37.

⁸⁴ Affidavit of applicant, 25 Oct. 1832, Jesse Mills Pension Application (Pvt., Miller's Regt., N.C. Line), W7448, widow Sarah (née Garrett); imaged in "Revolutionary War Pensions," *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/25852181> and 50 subsequent images), particularly image 25852214.

⁸⁵ Lincoln Co., Deed Book 1:45.

⁸⁶ Amherst Co., Deed Book C:118.

⁸⁷ Lincoln Co., Deed Book 2:155–56.

⁸⁸ Rutherford Co., Deed Book J-L (recopied): 245–46.

⁸⁹ The "William Jr." of 1779 Rutherford, was Ambrose's son who is known to history as "Maj.

Mountain, “English Billy” was one of several Loyalists taken prisoner in Rutherford by Whig troops. He was ordered hung by Lt. Jesse Walton,⁹⁰ whose Amherst brother Maj. William Walton was the brother-in-law of English Billy’s younger brother Jesse. Thereafter, Billy’s widow and children—at least through the close of the war—were taken into the home of Col. Ambrose’s son Maj. William. An affidavit in the Revolutionary War pension application of Billy’s son Jesse—made by Maj. William’s son Col. John—reports that Jesse’s mother (unnamed) lived with John’s parents (Maj. William and wife) when Jesse returned from war.⁹¹

Billy’s death during the Revolution went unremarked within local court records. Given his landless state, no probate was opened whereby heirs would be named. Exhaustive study of the records of Tryon, Lincoln, Rutherford, and their offshoots identify four children for Billy and his wife (who remains unidentified in known records):

- i. **Jesse³ Mills** (William², William¹), b. c1751,⁹² is the only child proved for William “Billy” Mills by *direct* evidence. In March 1769, shortly before William donated to “my son Jesse” goods of the type young men needed to establish a household, land was surveyed for Jesse on the Pacolet, not far from his father.⁹³ Due to Native hostilities, neither would remain there. If Jesse married at the time he first set up housekeeping, the marriage was short-lived and apparently childless. In 1785, after service for the Patriot cause, Jesse wed **Sarah Garrett**,⁹⁴ likely the daughter of the widow Mary Garrett who was enumerated next door to him on the 1790 census.⁹⁵ In Oct.

William.” For the Hall record, see A. B. Pruitt, *Abstracts of Land Entrys, Tryon and Lincoln Co., NC, 1778–1780* (N.P.: P.p., 1987), 42; citing p. 103.

⁹⁰ This otherwise unknown incident was reported in the affidavit of applicant William Walton [Jr.] (Private, Capt. John Loving’s Co., Stevens’ Regt., Va.), no. S17184; imaged, “Revolutionary War Pensions,” *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/20447289> and 33 subsequent images), particularly 20447300, 20447303, 20447306, 20447308.

⁹¹ Affidavit of John Mills of Rutherford Co., 18 May 1833, in Jesse Mills Pension Application, images 25852227 and 25852229. A militia colonel and justice of the peace at the time of his affidavit, this John was about ten years old when his Uncle Billy’s widow and children were taken in by his parents.

⁹² Birth year estimated from the fact that he first applied for land and was set up with his own household goods in 1769. Possibly he was already of legal age but, by custom, he could have been as young as, say, sixteen.

⁹³ Lincoln Co., Deed Book 1:45 (William Mills to Jesse Mills, 18 July 1769). Also “North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Tryon > 1-557 > image 531, Jesse Mills.

⁹⁴ Jesse Mills Pension Application, particularly image 25852206.

⁹⁵ 1790 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., “12th Company,” p. 145 lines 1–11: Robt. Young, Rev. Robt. Caruth, *R^d Yielding* (Jesse’s proposed brother-in-law), James Jeffery, Henry Russell, Jno. Young, *Mary Garrett, Jesse Mills*, Sam. McBriers [McBryer], Jno. Fisher, *William Mills* [Maj. William, son of Ambrose]. McBryer, in 1787, had purchased from Maj. William, 100 acres below the mouth of Walnut Creek; that placement suggests that Jesse Mills was at the time of this 1790 census living

1790 Jesse submitted to the Rutherford court a claim for £1.18.8 due him for 100 miles travel (round trip) and three days appearance as a witness in a court case—suggesting that Jesse’s residence was fifty miles from the Rutherfordton courthouse. While attending that term of court, Jesse also did service as a juror,⁹⁶ indicating that he was at that time a landowner,⁹⁷ although documentation for his first acquisition of land on Green River has not been located. In May 1795, he applied for a second grant on Flat Branch of Green River, said to be adjacent to his homestead and “not fare from his new Cabbin.” When the land was surveyed on 7 Oct. 1797, his chain-bearer was Richard Yielding, the new husband of Milly Mills (no. iii, below).⁹⁸ There, Jesse would remain, expanding his farm to some 600 acres before his death. In each case, he bought raw and unimproved government land.⁹⁹ Unlike the descendants of his uncle Ambrose, he farmed without enslaved labor.¹⁰⁰

On 25 Oct. 1832, Jesse applied successfully for a pension citing his service as a Patriot soldier. Questioned about his birth, he stated “the year I cannot exactly tell. I have no record of my age and none was kept to my knowledge.” After his death on 11 Oct. 1842, his widow Sarah applied for a pension, stating that she had married him on 8 Dec. 1785. She also presented partially illegible pages from her family Bible record, identifying six children born between 1787 and 1800: **Nancy, Mary, William, [illegible], Sary, and Jesse**.¹⁰¹ The 1810 and later censuses suggest Jesse and Sarah were the parents of two other sons born 1800–5. One, likely, was the **Noah Mills** who resided next to Jesse Jr. on the 1830 census, one house from Jesse Sr. and Sarah.¹⁰² The second, suggested by reconstruction of all Millises in Rutherford during its first century, was likely the “**Ambrose Mills, Jr.**” who made his first appearance on the 1830 census two houses from Jesse’s land neighbor

on the land his father had inhabited at his death. He would move soon thereafter. For the Mills to McBryer sale, see Rutherford Co., Deed Book E-I (recopied): 213–14.

⁹⁶ Rutherford Co., Superior Court Minutes, 1789–1793, unnumbered pages, Oct. 1790 term.

⁹⁷ Both grand and petit jurors in N.C. in this era were required to be freeholders—owners of land held in fee simple; see Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, vol. 25, *Laws 1789–1790* (Goldsboro, N.C.: Nash Brothers, 1906), 422, chapter III, sect. II.

⁹⁸ McCorkle, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), Jesse Mills, Book 96:395; citing Rutherford Co. Grant No. 1554, NC microfilm reel S.108.160.25N, frame 2242, State Archives. Also, “North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Rutherford > 1522–1817 > images 741, 743.

⁹⁹ McCorkle, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), Jesse Mills, Rutherford Co. files 1676, 2230, 2444, 2889, and 3638.

¹⁰⁰ 1790 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., “12th Company,” p. 145 line 8. 1800 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 128 line 17. 1810 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 414 line 7. 1820 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p.354 line 12. 1830 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 531 line 9.

¹⁰¹ Jesse Mills Pension Application, particularly images 25852219, 25752226, 26852229, 25852206, 25852198 and 15852202.

¹⁰² 1830 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 531 line 9.

Benjamin Coward.¹⁰³ No male-line descendants of Jesse have yet taken a Y-test.

- ii. **Mary “Polly” Walton³ Mills** (William², William¹), born *circa* mid-to-late 1750s, wife of **James Stepp**, is identified by tradition as a sister of Jesse Mills. Numerous interactions between Stepp and the Mills family suggest the tradition is sound. Stepp’s first mention of record occurred 4 Dec. 1778, when one John Auston claimed 150 acres on Bright’s Creek of Green River, including “a cabbin where Jas Step lived.” The next day, one Aaron Reily attempted to enter a tract on Green River, “including Jas Step’s improvement,” but Stepp caveated the claim; Reily abandoned his claim the following Nov. and Stepp entered the land in his own name.¹⁰⁴ Stepp thereafter appears in various public records of Rutherford and later Buncombe Counties that place him in the Mills neighborhood from 1778 through at least 1800.¹⁰⁵ The 1790 census attributes to James Stepp’s household two males over sixteen, four males under sixteen, and four females—suggesting eight children, a marriage about 1773–74, and a birth for Polly in the 1750s.¹⁰⁶
- iii. **Milly Mills** (William², William¹), born before 1767, married Richard Yielding by Rutherford bond dated 5 Nov. 1788; the absence of parental consent suggests that Milly was of age.¹⁰⁷ Across the next two decades Yielding would appear in a number of documents created by Milly’s proposed brother Jesse Mills—as in 1797, when Yielding served as chain carrier for the survey of Jesse’s land adjacent to his home on Flat Branch of Green River.¹⁰⁸ Some genealogists assign Milly to the family of Maj. William; however, she and her children appear in no original records or family accounts created by Maj.

¹⁰³ 1830 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 540 line 25. Also 1850 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., Polk Dist., p. 231 dwell./fam. 10. For this Ambrose’s 1873 will, which places his farm on Potter’s Creek, south side of Green River, see “North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665–1998,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Polk > Record of Wills, 1855–1909 > image 32 of 631.

¹⁰⁴ Pruitt, *Abstracts of Land Entrys, Tryon and Lincoln Co., NC, 1778–1780*, 33, citing p. 82; and 35, citing p. 404. Also “North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Anson > 1779–2438 > images 135–39, James Step entry, 3 Nov. 1779. In 1793, Maj. William Mills would buy from Auston that land, which was again said to include “a cabin where James Step lived”; see Rutherford Co., Deed Book J–L (recopied), K:213.

¹⁰⁵ In 1784, for example, James Step was appointed to a jury to lay off a neighborhood road ending at Mills Gap on Green River; see Rutherford Co., Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1779–1786: 201. For other records created by Stepp in Rutherford Co., see the previously cited “Mills & Associates: Rutherford County, NC.”

¹⁰⁶ 1790 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., 13th Company, p. 147 col. 2 line 7.

¹⁰⁷ “North Carolina, U.S., Marriage Records, 1741–2011,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/15495439:60548>), original bond of Richard Yielding (s) and surety William Henry (mark).

¹⁰⁸ “North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Rutherford > 1522–1817 > image 743.

William’s offspring.¹⁰⁹

- iv. **John³ “Little” Mills** (William², William¹),¹¹⁰ born c1766–70,¹¹¹ is the most obscure Mills male of his generation in Rutherford. As with Mary and Milly, no *direct* evidence identifies a parent for him. His relationships are established through indirect evidence provided by land records, location, and associations. He is distinguished from multiple cousins named John Mills by his ownership of specific lands and by the fact that (like other offspring of William and unlike the offspring of Ambrose) he held no slaves. The 1800 census suggests for John a marriage about 1795, with two sons born by 1800; the 1810 census contrarily assigns him three females born 1794–1800 and two sons born 1800–10.¹¹² He is omitted from the 1820 return but enumerated again in 1830 adjacent to sons Lavender and Calvin and in 1840 adjacent to Lavender.¹¹³ No known record hints at the identities of the three females in his 1810 household. No known record names his wife. However, the name given to his eldest son, Lavender, suggests that John’s wife may have been a cousin: John’s aunt Milly (Mills) Lavender Walton of Amherst (no. 5, below) had brought her family to adjacent Burke County about 1794, including the youngest daughter Milly Jr. who has not been otherwise identified as an adult.¹¹⁴

This John Mills spent his life on Rotton/Rotten Creek (a linguistic corruption of Roton’s Creek) of Green River—a waterway that lay directly across Green

¹⁰⁹ Particularly, the 1845 account of Edney, son of Maj. William’s daughter Phalby, did not include Milly among his mother’s sisters; see “Our Ancestors—Revolutionary Incidents, &c.”

¹¹⁰ The nickname comes from one of his land plats on which the surveyor called him “John Mills (Little)” to distinguish him from his same-name cousins. See McCorkle, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), for John Mills, Book 137:282–83; citing Grant 3464, State Archives.

¹¹¹ John’s birth period is extrapolated from (1) the 1810 census that places his birth at 1766–84 and (2) the 1830 and 1840 censuses that place his birth between 1760 and 1770.

¹¹² 1800 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., Morgan Dist., p. 128 line 12, “John Mills I”. The unexplained script initial added after his surname on this census echoes the mark with which he signed his 1804 land sale, rendered by the county clerk in block print as †. This was an antiquated form of the capital letter J, also seen in the 1769 document by which William “Billy” Mills conveyed to his son Jesse cattle branded with †M.

Also see 1810 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 414 (penned at right) line 5, which enumerates him as “John Mills W.” By custom in this place and time, when multiple men of the same name resided in the county, tax assessors and census takers often added identifiers after their names—most commonly the name or initial of their father or the abbreviated name of the waterway on which they lived.

¹¹³ 1830 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 527 lines 13–15. 1840 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 323 line 20, “John Mills Sr.” enumerated adjacent to [son] “Lav. Mills.”

¹¹⁴ The last known record for Milly is an Amherst court order of 20 Mar. 1793, in settlement of her father’s estate. All of Milly (Mills) Lavender Walton’s children were of age or married except Mildred (“Milly Jr.”) who was still a minor in 1794. See Amherst Co., Court Order Book 1790–1794: 509.

from the Silver Creek lands of his first cousin, Ambrose Jr. The first Mills land on Rotton had been entered in 1784 by Maj. William Mills,¹¹⁵ who became the family head after the hanging of Col. Ambrose and English Billy. In that patriarchal role, the married Maj. William had taken in the family of his deceased uncle Billy.¹¹⁶ With a large and growing family of his own, Maj. William apparently settled Billy's family on that Rotton Creek land but did not complete the patent process until Dec. 1808—a long-delayed action possibly triggered by the death of Billy's widow and the need to distribute property among her offspring. The 1808 survey cites one boundary as lying adjacent to "the 50 acres tract John Milles got from Fish[er]."¹¹⁷ That adjacent acreage was land "Little" John had purchased in 1806 at the head of Rotton's Creek and would convey in 1825 to his own son Lavender Mills.¹¹⁸ (Also germane: two years after Maj. William entered that first tract at the head of Rotton's Creek, he paid for the survey of a second tract there that he would convey in 1793 to Richard Yielding, the new husband of John's proposed sister Milly.¹¹⁹)

"Little" John's own first purchase of land occurred in October 1797: 100 acres on Green River "near Potter's line" that he bought from Maj. William's land partner David Miller.¹²⁰ John's tenure there was short. In 1804, he sold the tract over his mark # (an antiquated form of the letter J, which William "Billy" Mills had also used in 1769 to brand the cattle he gave his first son Jesse).¹²¹ In 1806, "Little" John acquired his fifty acres adjacent to the 1784 tract.¹²² In 1808, he enlarged his holdings, purchasing 44 acres from his cousin "John Mills Esq." (aka Col. John Mills, son of Maj. William).¹²³

¹¹⁵ Rutherford Co., "Rutherford Land Entries, 1783–1788, unpaginated; imaged, *FamilySearch* digital film 7517759 > image 157.

¹¹⁶ As stated in the previously cited affidavit of Maj. William's son John (Col. John) for the pension application of English Billy's son Jesse.

¹¹⁷ "North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Anson > 2580–2829 > image 755–57. For John's purchase of the land from Fisher, representing Tench Coxe, see Rutherford Co., Deed Book 22–23:156.

¹¹⁸ Rutherford Co., Deed Book 35:40.

¹¹⁹ "North Carolina, U.S., Land Grant Files, 1693–1960," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com>) > Rutherford > 1–303 > image 1366. Also McCorkle, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), William Mills, Book 65:318; citing Rutherford Co. file 293, NC microfilm reel S.108.160.15N, frame 664, State Archives. For the 1793 Mills-Yielding conveyance, see Rutherford Co., Deed Book J-L (recopied): 382.

¹²⁰ Rutherford Co., Deed Book 7–9 (recopied): 29–30.

¹²¹ Lincoln Co., Deed Book 1:45.

¹²² Rutherford Co., Deed Book 22–23 (transcribed): 156 (Peter Fisher, agent for Tench Coxe et al., to John Mills). For the 25,690-acre grant to Tench Coxe et al., from which John's 50 acres were carved (a tract bounding John's proposed brother-in-law Richard Yielding), see McCorkle, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), Tench Coxe, Book 90:57–59; citing Rutherford Co. Grant No. 1028 (entry 1144), State Archives.

¹²³ Rutherford Co., Deed Book 24–26 (recopied): 265.

By the mid-to-late 1820s, “Little” John’s two sons were grown and in need of land on which to support their adulthood. In Feb. 1825, John conveyed the fifty-acre tract on Rotton to his son **Lavender Mills**,¹²⁴ who had wed shortly before the 1820 census.¹²⁵ In 1829, John conveyed his second tract to his son **Calvin Garrett Mills**, noting that it lay adjacent to the land he had given Lavender. Calvin’s deed, however, carried a critical condition: “Said John Mills keeps the said land During his life & at his Death the said Calvin Garret or his heirs takes possession.”¹²⁶ In between those two donations, in Oct. 1826, John also filed for a new tract of raw land on the Rotton. Its survey, which was not made until 1836, placed it adjacent to the 1808 grant Maj. William had claimed since 1784, along the line described as North 30° West 178 poles. That survey is also the document that distinguishes John by the nickname “Little.”¹²⁷

The tract that John conditionally gave to Calvin provides indirect evidence to narrow John’s time of death. Unlike Lavender, Calvin did not remain in Rutherford. By 1840 he was a resident of Cherokee Co., Ga.¹²⁸ Prior to his move, without benefit of a recorded deed, he conveyed his interest in the parental land to his father’s cousin Ambrose Mills Jr. (aka Ambrose Mills, Esq.). On 13 July 1842, Ambrose gave Lavender title to the land, copying the caveat that John was to remain there until his death; the deed was filed the following day.¹²⁹ When the 1850 enumerator visited Lavender’s neighborhood, he did not enumerate John; and that year’s census enumerates John nowhere else.¹³⁰ It seems likely that John’s death triggered the 1842 titling of the land to Lavender. *Lavender Mills’s fourth-great-grandson, George Grant Mills, provided one of the DNA samples by which the Y-signature of English Billy’s father can be identified.*

As for whether William “Billy” Mills had other children: the four identified for him would make an unusually small family in his society, especially since his son Jesse was born about 1751 and a wife survived Billy in 1780. However, a page-by-page reading of all known records surviving for Rutherford Co., its antecedents, and its offshoot counties has yielded no other Millses in that

¹²⁴ Rutherford Co., Deed Book 35:40. also E. S. Mills, “Proof Argument: Parentage of Lavender Mills (c1800–c1859), Rutherford County, North Carolina”; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsLavenderProofArgumentForParentage.pdf>).

¹²⁵ 1820 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., p. 392 line 34.

¹²⁶ Rutherford Co., Deed Book 37–38 (transcribed copy): 116. For direct evidence that Calvin was the son of John, see *Reminiscent History of the Ozark Region* (Chicago: Goodspeed, 1894), 719–20, autobiography of Calvin’s son “Hon. Thomas G. Mills,” naming his grandfather John.

¹²⁷ McCorkle, *NC Land Grant Images and Data* (<http://www.nclandgrants.com>), John Mills, Book 137:282–83; citing Grant 3464 State Archives.

¹²⁸ 1840 U.S. census, Cherokee Co., Ga., p. 174 line 5.

¹²⁹ Rutherford Co., Deed Book 44:326.

¹³⁰ 1850 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., Polk District, p. 243 dwelling/family 198.

locale who might be Billy's offspring.

5. **ELIZABETH² MILLS** (William¹), b. c1730; m. (1) **THOMAS LEARWOOD**; (2) **JOHN RIPLEY**. Her first marriage occurred, likely in Albemarle Co., before her father's Sept. 1755 will that names her as "Elizabeth Learwood." In 1757, Elizabeth and Thomas, as residents of Prince Edward Co., sold his 154-acre grant at the headwaters of Reedy Creek in Bedford Co.¹³¹ In Mar. 1760, a grant was issued to Thomas for another 230 acres in Bedford on west side of Elk Creek.¹³² It is likely he was already dead; three months later, the tithe list taken by Joel Watkins in Prince Edward taxed the widowed Elizabeth "Learewood" for her "Negro London," adjacent to her new brother-in-law Lewis Witt, his father Benjamin, and his young-adult brothers John and Absalom.¹³³ The following year, while still in Prince Edward, Elizabeth bore a son¹³⁴ who fought in the Revolution under the name **John Mills alias Ripley**—the alias being a name he said he used in childhood because it was his stepfather's name.¹³⁵ Elizabeth's marriage to Ripley occurred before Sept. 1767, when the two of them sued her father's widow Mary Mills. After several extensions to allow Mary time to answer their complaints, the case was settled out of court in Nov. 1768.¹³⁶ Elizabeth and John then moved with her children to Old Ninety-Six District, S.C. (modern Laurens) where Elizabeth's son "John Mills alias Ripley" enlisted in 1776 at age fourteen. The sons Elizabeth bore would not carry Mills Y-DNA, although that one son did carry forth her surname.

At this point, there appears to be a gap in William Mills's children, suggesting a new wife; if not, Mary's reproductive pattern seems to have changed. While five children were born to William in the 1720–30 timeframe and their birth periods are reasonably well established, the next fifteen years produced only three children of record. Illness or other frontier conditions could also have caused the deaths of children born in that period.

6. **ANNE² MILLS** (William¹), b. c1738; was named as an unmarried daughter in her father's 1755 will. Before 1760, she married **Lewis Witt**, formerly of Albemarle,

¹³¹ Bedford Co., Deed Book 1:139–41.

¹³² Virginia Land Office, Patent Book 33:799.

¹³³ "Prince Edward County (Va.) Tithables, 1750–1787," 10 June 1760, random sheets, by year; barcode 1204962, Local Government Records Collection; Library of Virginia.

¹³⁴ Typically in this place and time, widows with young children to rear and no male relatives nearby to provide protection and support, would "move back home" to live amid family. The fact that Elizabeth, as a widow with children and one whose late husband had just sold their only land in the county, chose to stay in Prince Edward rather than move back to Amherst to live with William's widow Mary also suggests that she may not have been Mary's daughter.

¹³⁵ John Mills alias Ripley (Pvt., Capt. Rogers? Co., Genl. Hampton's Regt., S.C.), no. S9025, opened 2 Apr. 1834, Athens, Oh.; imaged in "Revolutionary War Pensions," *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/25853045> and 19 subsequent numbers), specifically, 25853060.

¹³⁶ Amherst Co., Court Order Book, 2 June 1766–1769: 212, 244, 294, 328, 364, 391, 434.

whose family had removed to nearby Prince Edward Co. There, on 10 June 1760, Lewis, his father Benjamin, and his young adult brothers John and Absalom are clustered with Anne’s widowed sister Elizabeth “Learewood” (the owner of a taxable slave), on the Joel Watkins list of tithes.¹³⁷ By Feb. 1773, Lewis had moved his family to Bedford where he contracted that month to buy land on Otter River but died before payment; his estate inventory, appraised 23 May 1774, did not include the tract and the transaction would embroil Anne for some years thereafter.¹³⁸ Still a widow, Anne made her will on 9 Dec. 1811. The recorded copy, made when the will was probated on 28 Oct. 1816, names seven living children: **Mills, Jesse, John, Rowland, Robert, “Agnes,”** and **Milly**—along with a deceased, married daughter **Betsy Calvert**.¹³⁹ The recorded copy of the estate settlement of 1826 cites 186 acres on Bedford’s Otter River; it identifies Anne’s daughter “Agnes” as “*Agatha* Lavender” and her daughter Milly as “Milly Whitton.”¹⁴⁰ Anne’s sons would not carry a Mills Y.

7. **MILDRED “MILLY”³ MILLS** (William¹), b. c1740; d. 1822, Maury Co., Tenn. Still single at the time of her father’s 1755 will, Milly married twice in Amherst: (1) **William Lavender** c1759;¹⁴¹ and (2) by bond dated 16 Apr. 1792, the widowed Patriot Capt. **William Walton Sr.**,¹⁴² whose brother Capt. Jesse Walton had ordered the hanging of Milly’s brother Billy during the Revolution. After Milly’s marriage to **Walton**, they joined her son William Lavender and that son’s wife Sarah in selling land her first husband had inherited from his father Charles Lavender Sr.¹⁴³ Milly and Walton then moved to N.C.’s Burke Co. (adjoining Rutherford where her brothers William and Ambrose had settled). There, Walton died 29 January 1806.¹⁴⁴ By 1808 Milly was living in Maury Co., Tenn., where she appeared at the estate sale of *John McDonald*, being the only other woman there aside from McDonald’s widow **Elizabeth**,¹⁴⁵ a situation that suggests Milly was a close family member. In 1810, Milly’s son George Lavender of Nelson Co., Va. (cut from

¹³⁷ “Prince Edward County (Va.) Tithables, 1750–1787,” op. cit.

¹³⁸ Bedford Co., Will Book 1:211. Petition of Ann Witt, admx. of Lewis Witt, through attorney Innes & Camp, admitted to court 28 June 1784, Witt vs. John Cooper, Bedford Chancery Records, 1785–011; imaged, “Chancery Records Index,” *VirginiaMemory* (www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery).

¹³⁹ Bedford Co., Will Book 4:276–77.

¹⁴⁰ Bedford Co., Will Book 4:287.

¹⁴¹ Mildred’s first marriage year is approximated from the fact that her son William Lavender attested on 17 May 1830 that he was 70 years of age—i.e., born c1760. See William Lavender (Private Capt. Allen’s Co., Col. Taylor’s Regt., Va. Line, RW), Widow Sarah, no. W20189; imaged, “Revolutionary War Pensions,” *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/25255701> and 33 subsequent images), particularly 25255780.

¹⁴² Amherst Co., “Marriage Register 1763–1852,” p. 73.

¹⁴³ Amherst Co., Deed Book G:254.

¹⁴⁴ “North Carolina, Historical Records Survey, Cemetery Inscription Card Index,” *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSGW-J3BD-D>), “Walton, William, Sr.” b. no date, d. Jan. 29, 1806, buried First Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Morganton.”

¹⁴⁵ Maury Co., Tenn., Will Book A: 4–5.

Amherst), petitioned the legislature for permission to bring back into Virginia a slave from his father's estate held by his mother "in Tennessee."¹⁴⁶ Milly has not been found on the 1820 census, but a small probate was opened for her in Maury Co. in 1822.¹⁴⁷ Milly's sons by Lavender would not carry the Mills Y.

8. **JESSE³ MILLS** (William¹), b. c1743, VA; married **Lucy Tilman**, about Aug. 1765 in Amherst.¹⁴⁸ In Aug. 1766, he and his mother Mary presented his father's will for probate, with his brother-in-law William Lavender (husband of Milly) as their surety.¹⁴⁹ The following year, Jesse and his wife's brother-in-law William *Walton* cosigned a performance bond for the new county sheriff,¹⁵⁰ suggesting that Jesse was socially and politically ambitious. However, his finances and community status soon plummeted. He sold the parental land on the Pedlar and bought land on Tye River near the Waltons and Lavenders but mortgaged it repeatedly, along with the enslaved people he expected to inherit from his mother and another woman his wife Lucy had brought into the marriage.¹⁵¹ Jesse avoided service during the Revolution, signing petitions as a religious dissenter and "freeholder" who protested taxation to pay the expenses of the war.¹⁵² By the close of the war he was landless and apparently excused from poll-tax assessments as well, although he remained in the county.¹⁵³ He lived at least until 29 July 1811, when he and Lucy were parties to a case filed in the district chancery court at Augusta Co. by heirs of Lucy's grandfather Daniel Hix.¹⁵⁴ Although Jesse and Lucy had at least one son (**Jesse Jr.**) and likely three others (**William, John, and Robert**),¹⁵⁵ no Y-line descendants have been identified for testing.

¹⁴⁶ "Legislative Petitions Digital Collection," *Virginia Memory* (<https://lva-virginia.libguides.com/petitions>), George Lavender petition, 13 Dec. 1810; citing Legislative Petitions of the General Assembly, 1776–1856, accession number 36121, box 177, folder 10.

¹⁴⁷ Maury Co., Tenn., Will Book C:478, 483.

¹⁴⁸ Amherst Co., Marriage Bonds and Consents, 1763–1783, chronological sequence. Lucy's parents gave permission for her to marry Jesse on 20 July; he dilatorily posted bond and obtained a license on 6 August.

¹⁴⁹ Amherst Co., Will Book 1:73–75

¹⁵⁰ Amherst Co., Deed Book B:261–62.

¹⁵¹ Amherst Co., Deed Book B:264; C:178, 254, 316, 397; E:539.

¹⁵² "Virginia Legislative Papers: Petition of Dissenters of Albemarle, Amherst and Buckingham, Oct. 22d, 1776," *Virginia Magazine of History & Biography* 18 (1910): 140–43, citing "originals in the Virginia State Archives." Also Jean Pickett Hall, "Legislative Petitions from Virginia Counties with Significant Record Losses: 1. Buckingham County," *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy* 28 (May 1990): 91, 93.

¹⁵³ Amherst Co., Personal Property Tax Records, 1782–1823 (personal tax reels 18–19 and land tax reels 17–18); he was last taxed (personal tax) in 1784.

¹⁵⁴ Augusta County Chancery Causes, no. 1817-084, Daniel Tilman vs. Elizabeth Christian, filed 19 July 1811; imaged "Chancery Record Index," *Virginia Memory* (<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/chancery>), esp. images 1–5.

¹⁵⁵ For the evidence identifying Jesse Jr. and suggesting the other children of Jesse Sr. and Lucy—as well as all known records created by or about the two Jesses—see E. S. Mills, "Jesse Mills Sr. (c1743–aft.1810) of Albemarle & Amherst Counties, Virginia; Spouse Lucy Tilman: Research Notes"; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsJesseSrLucyTilman.pdf>).

WILLIAM MILLS' Y-SIGNATURE

Numerous males of the Mills surname currently propose their descent from William Mills I of Albemarle's Pedlar River. The only males known to have reliably documented that ancestry are descendants of the two sons who died in North Carolina, Col. Ambrose and English Billy. Targeted research has located one Y-line descendant of each son willing to test his Y-DNA; their 111-marker tests reveal only one mutation between them. The testing lab's time predictor assigns them a 95.31 percent chance of being related within four generations and a 99.78 percent chance of being related within eight generations.¹⁵⁶ As shown on chart 1, Testers 987326 and 986049 are seventh-cousins, once removed. Their most-recent common ancestor, William Mills I of the Pedlar, is eight generations removed from 987326 and nine generations from 986049. Because they descend from two different sons of William I, the shared Y-signature can be assigned to William I himself.

The haplogroup R-M269, shared by the testers, is the most-common European Y-haplogroup. A 2010 study projected 110 million R-M269 males in Europe, most heavily concentrated in the British Isles and the Western coast of Europe. Formerly labeled R1b1b2, this haplogroup's distribution is heaviest in Wales (92% of males), Ireland (82%), Scotland (70%), Spain (Basque 86%, Andalusia 66%) France and Northern Portugal (60% each), Eastern England (Leicestershire 53%, Cornwall 50%), The Netherlands (52%), France (43–48%), and Germany (42 and 51%).¹⁵⁷

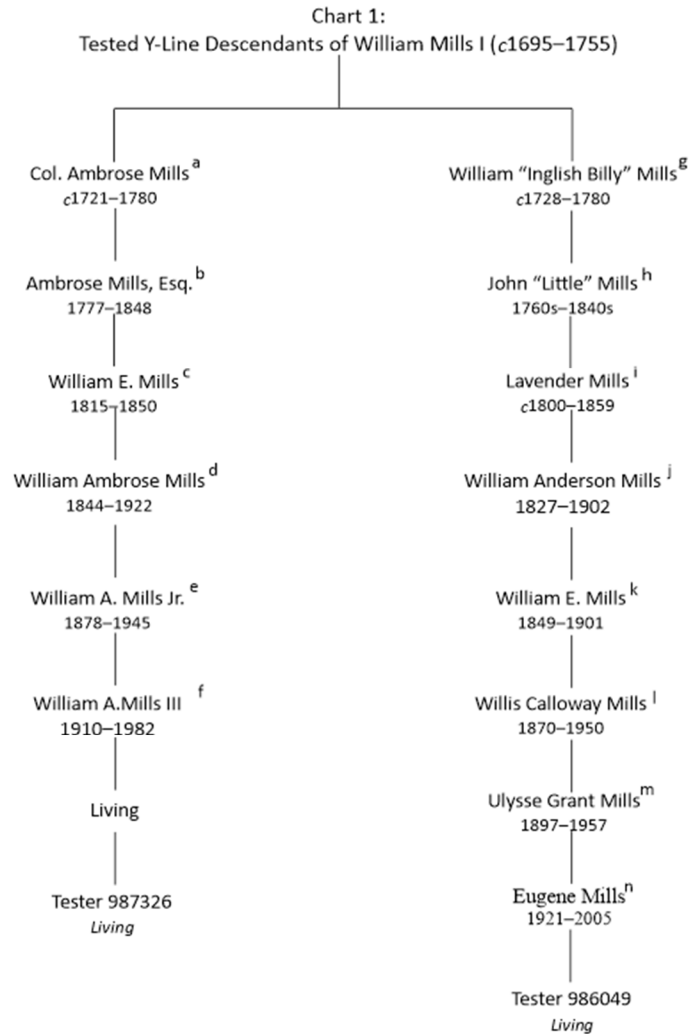
Of greater value to the question of William's parentage and origin is the fact that his Y-haplogroup does not correlate to his surname. Among other Y-matches who tested at 37, 67, and 111 markers, testers 987326 and 986049 have no matches surnamed *Mills*. At the 25-marker level, they have only one Mills match.

¹⁵⁶ "Y-DNA Tip Report," *FamilyTreeDNA* (<https://www.familytreedna.com/my/tip-report>).

¹⁵⁷ These statistics are primarily drawn from Fulvio Cruciani, Beniamino Trombetta et al., "Strong intra- and inter-continental differentiation revealed by Y-chromosome SNPs M269, U106 and U152," *Forensic Science International: Genetics* 5 (2011); archived ([https://www.fsigenetics.com/article/S1872-4973\(10\)00117-1/pdf](https://www.fsigenetics.com/article/S1872-4973(10)00117-1/pdf)). Also, P. Balaesque, GR Bowden et al., "A predominantly neolithic origin for European paternal lineages," *PLoS Biology* 8 (Jan. 2010); archived, *National Library of Medicine* (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2799514/>). For Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, see "Biology: Haplogroup R-M269," *HandWiki Biology Portal* (https://handwiki.org/wiki/Biology:Haplogroup_R-M269).

Also see Gérard Lucotte, "The Major Y-Chromosome Haplogroup R1b-M269 in West-Europe, Subdivided by the Three SNPs S21/U106, S145/L21 and S28/U152, Shows a Clear Pattern of Geographic Differentiation," *Advances in Anthropology* 5 (2015); archived, *Scientific Research: Open access* (https://www.scirp.org/html/3-1590437_53754.htm#f5). Also see Iñigo Olalde, Selina Brace, et al., "The Beaker Phenomenon and the Genomic Transformation of Northwest Europe," *Nature* 555 (Mar. 8, 2018); archived at *National Library of Medicine* (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5973796/>).

William Mills (c1695–1755) of Goochland and Albemarle: Identity & Y-Signature



NOTE: For documentation of each generational link, see Appendix.

The testers 26 percent chance of sharing with that match a common ancestor within the last eight generations (49 percent within twelve generations and 80 percent within twenty generations) suggests that this sole instance of a shared surname is a coincidence. Of the 131 different surnames carried by their matches at the 67-marker level, the most suggestive are the twenty-eight bearing the surname *Mabry* (*Mabery*, *Maybery*, *Mayberry*, *Mayberry*) who self-declare ancestry from Belfast or the Irish counties of Derry and Kerry; six others of this surname cite “England” generically. The other shared surnames are far less frequent: ten bear the surname *Bell*, six are surnamed *Baldwin*, five each are surnamed *Wilson* and *Scott*, and four each are surnamed *Cornwall* (*var. Curnow*), *Gibson*, and *Jackson*. Research continues with these surnames.

The Y-results of both tester 987326 and 986049—identifying the 110 shared markers that comprise William I’s Y-signature—are registered for analysis and comparisons in the FamilyTreeDNA databases for *Maybury* and *Mills*.¹⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

William Mills I of Goochland and Albemarle has no known kinship to any other Mills line in North America or elsewhere. Surviving land patents imply that he was born in the colony, rather than having immigrated (or having been transported) from the British Isles. The widely published online databases with images for UK christenings, marriages, and burials present no William Mills of the right time frame with appropriately named children, who did not remain in the UK while the William of this study resided in Virginia.¹⁵⁹ The fact that William Mills I of Goochland and Albemarle does not carry a Y-signature associated with the surname Mills possibly stems from a paternity event generations before him. Or he, himself, may have been born to a relationship between an unmarried Mills female and a father of a different surname. The prevalence of the surname *Mabry* in particular, among his Y-matches, suggests that future research should include contemporaries of that surname and its variants.

APPENDIX: Notes to Chart 1

Line 1: Tester 987326:

- a. **Col. Ambrose Mills (c1721–1780) as son of William Mills 1:** Amherst Co., Va., Will Book 1:73–76 (1755 will of William I naming son Ambrose). Amherst Co., Court Order Book 1773–1782: 154, 157 (court summons to Ambrose Mills, “son and heir at law of William Mills,” to administer estate of Mary Mills).
- b. **Ambrose Mills, Esq. (1777–1848) as son of Col. Ambrose and Anne (Brown) Mills:** Rutherford Co., N.C., Will Book B:76 (1797 probate settlement, heirs of [Col.] Ambrose Mills, decd.).
- c. **William E. Mills (1815–1850), as son of Ambrose Mills, Esq.:** Rutherford Co., Will Book E:182–86 (Will of Ambrose Mills, Esq., Oct. 1845, codicil 28 Oct. 1848).
- d. **William Ambrose Mills (1844–1922) as son of William E. Mills:** “North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909–1976,” *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1121/images/S123_135-3000), William Ambrose Mills, b. 13 Mar. 1844,

¹⁵⁸ *FamilyTreeDNA* (<https://www.familytreedna.com/public/Maybury> and <https://www.familytreedna.com/public/mills>)

¹⁵⁹ As a starting point for this research, see the *FamilySearch* databases, “England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975” (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1473014>), “England Deaths and Burials, 1538–1991” (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1473016>), and “England Marriages, 1538–1973” (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1473015>).

- d. 27 July 1922, Polk Co., certificate 1922:329, citing parents William E. Mills and Ann Eliza Bryan.
- e. **William Ambrose Mills Jr. (1878–1945) as son of William Ambrose Mills:** “North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909–1976,” *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1121/images/S123_1286-1854), William Ambrose Mills, b. 8 Feb. 1878; d. 14 Apr. 1945, Polk Co., certificate 1945:7818, citing parents “Wm. Ambrose and Ella Mills.”
- f. **William Ambrose Mills III (1910–1982) as son of William Ambrose Mills:** “North Carolina, U.S., Birth Indexes, 1800–2000,” *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8783/images/NCVR_B_C080_68001-0108), “Mills, Wil-liam Ambrose Jr.,” b. 28 June 1910, Polk. Co., to Wm. Ambrose Mills and Teanna Ferree; citing Registration Book 7:280. Also gravestone image, *Find A Grave* (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64267000/william-ambrose-mills>), memorial created by granddaughter Beth Elliott, 16 Jan. 2011.

TESTER 987326, as son of [Living] and grandson of William Ambrose III: For privacy, the personal data for these two living descendants are not published here.

Line 2: Tester 986049:

- g. **William “English Billy” Mills (c1728–1780) as son of William Mills I and brother of Col. Ambrose Mills:** Amherst Co., Will Book 1:73–76 (1755 will of William I leaving 330 acres to son William). Amherst Co., Deed Book C: 118 (sale of 330 acres by “William Mills of N.C.”). Affidavit of John Mills in Jesse Mills Pension Application (Pvt., Miller’s Regt., N.C. Line), W7448, widow Sarah (née Garrett); imaged, “Revolutionary War Pensions,” *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/25852181> and 50 subsequent images), particularly, images 25852227 and 25852229.
- h. **John “Little” Mills (1760s–c1842) as son of William “English Billy” Mills:** See discussion in text. Also see the fuller proof argument laid out in E. S. Mills, “Mills & Associates: Rutherford County, NC, Its Parent Counties (Anson, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and Tryon) and Its Offshoots (Buncombe, Burke, Henderson, and Polk Counties): Expanded Survey,” pp. 5–6, 48–50; archived at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsRutherfordTryonLincolnSurvey.pdf>).
- i. **Lavender Mills (c1800–c1859) as son of John “Little” Mills:** See discussion in text. Also see E.S. Mills, “Proof Argument: Parentage of Lavender Mills (c1800–c1859), Rutherford County, North Carolina,” 6 Sept. 2022; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsLavenderProofArgumentForParentage.pdf>)
- j. **William Anderson Mills (1827–1902) as son of Lavender Mills:** E.S. Mills, “William Anderson Mills (1827–1902) of Polk County, North Carolina, as Son of Lavender Mills (c1800–c1859): Proof Argument”; *Historic Pathways* (<https://www.historicpathways.com/download/MillsWilliamAassonofLavenderProofArgument.pdf>).
- k. **William E. Mills (1849–1901) as son of William Anderson Mills:** “North Carolina, U.S., Marriage Records, 1741–2011,” *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/60548/images/42091_342596-01004), marr. license and return for

William E. Mills 52, son of deceased *Anderson Mills* and Mary Weaver, Polk Co., 5 May 1901, to marry (second wife) Celia Gibbs. Also 1850 U.S. census, Rutherford Co., N.C., Polk Dist., p. 244 dwell./fam. 201, W. A. [William Anderson] Mills 23, Mary 23, children Hosa 5, A. L. 3, *William* 1 [William E.], and Sarah Weaver 80.

- i. **Willis Calloway Mills (1870–1950) as son of William E. Mills:** “North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909–1976,” *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1121/images/S123_362-1507), Willis Callaway Mills, b. 26 Aug. 1870, d. 30 Dec. 1951, Forsyth Co., certificate 1951:27958, citing parents as “Wm. Mills” and Mary Cowart by informant Grant Mills. Also 1880 U.S. census, Polk Co., N.C., stamped p. 496, enumeration district 153, p. 11 dwell./fam. 94, William E. Mills 31, Mary 28, James 12, *Willis* C. 9, Laura, 7, adjacent to Willis’s grandmother Mary Mills 55 (widow of William E.).
- m. **Ulysses Grant Mills (1897–1957) as son of Willis Calloway Mills:** “North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909–1976,” *Ancestry* (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1121/images/S123_433-2467), Ulysses Grant Mills b. 10 Feb. 1897, d. 17 May 1957, son of Willis Mills and Tempie Burgess, spouse of Emma Shehan.
- n. **Eugene Mills (1921–2005) as son of Ulysses Grant Mills:** “U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936–2007,” *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/23552374:60901>), b. 4 Feb. 1921, Polk Co., N.C., registered Aug. 1938, son of Grant Mills and Emma Shehan.

TESTER 986049, George Grant Mills as living son of Eugene Mills: For privacy, his personal data is not published here.
