

James Cook and his brothers

This document is a draft that summarizes my current understanding of the life of James Cook who I believe was my 5th great – grandfather, father of John Cook (second husband of Lucy Hill) and grandfather of my known 3rd great grandfather Theophilus Cook. I continue to update this draft as I learn more about James and his brothers. I have attempted to track James and his brothers through a variety of records, principally land grant and deed records in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. There are gaps in the records and assumption regarding relationships based on the existing records that we have found that are probably correct but have not been formally proven.

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James Cook was one of the three sons of Abraham Cook, Jr. who had two land grants on the north side of the Roanoke River and died in 1748 in Lunenburg County, Virginia. The three sons and three daughters of Abraham and Sarah Cook named in his will were born in Hanover County prior to their move in 1741 to a part of Brunswick County that became Lunenburg County in 1746. James was apparently not in good standing with his father at the time of his death and was left only one shilling in his father's will. He vehemently contested the will when it was exhibited for proof and recording in the Lunenburg County Court in the July session, 1748. The court fined him and temporarily placed him in custody of the sheriff for his outburst. Most of the property was left to the widow, Sarah, who was Executrix of the estate and to the other sons Benjamin and Charles.

In the 1749, 1750, and 1751 Lunenburg County tax lists James and Charles were not listed by name but were included as tithes under the name of Benjamin Cook. By 1752 they were no longer listed with Benjamin but were not listed by their own names either. By that time both were apparently married. James is listed in 1752 road orders by the County Court as surveyor for a road but apparently did not take that responsibility seriously and was replaced a few months later. Based on the fact that in a Georgia land grant in 1773 the oldest of the children of James (presumably his son Isaac) was 19, James must have been married before 1753. And since his son John Cook was old enough to have a land grant of his own in Georgia by 1778 James must have had at least two children before his marriage in 1757 to Lucy Davis. The identity of his first wife is unknown and it is probable that she died quite young by 1757 in Lunenburg County, Virginia. In May or June, 1757, James married Lucy Davis a daughter of John and Esther Davis, very early settlers in the part of Brunswick County that became Lunenburg. The Davises were neighbors of the Cooks. William Davis, oldest son of John and Esther, lived on land situated between the two parts of Abraham's land that were on Butcher's Creek and Sandy Creek and much of John Davis's land adjoined them across the Roanoke River. Lucy and James received a part of the John Davis estate on the south side of the Roanoke River in 1757 from the John Davis estate and sold that 250 acre tract on December 5, 1760. In the meantime they had moved a few miles south in Granville County, North Carolina. James was the grandfather of Theophilus and Robert Cook but Lucy

Davis was not their grandmother since the mother of Isaac and John Cook was the unidentified first wife of James.

There are deeds in both Lunenburg County, Virginia and adjacent Granville County, North Carolina for all three of the sons of Abraham as well as for two of the sons-in-law. The deeds for James in Granville County involved his brothers and also his wife Lucy. James and Lucy bought land there in 1758 and lived on 150 acres on Island Creek in Granville County, a part of which they bought from Charles and Susannah Cook. On 5 December 1764 they sold that land and then left the area. Benjamin Cook also left the area after selling all of his land a few months later in April, 1765, but Charles Cook remained in Lunenburg and Charlotte Counties until about 1779 when he moved to Mecklenburg/Anson County, North Carolina. When James and Lucy left Granville they moved to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina where there are several deeds for them from 1766 through 1772 on 12 Mile Creek.

Benjamin Cook, oldest son of Abraham Cook and older brother of James and Charles, had married Mary Crenshaw in Lunenburg County, Virginia and initially lived on the Abraham Cook land for a few years. But by 1761 they were living in Granville County, NC as were the Charles Cook and James Cook families. Benjamin and Mary were also closely associated with the Micajah Crenshaw and Robert Duke families there. Micajah was one of Mary's brothers and Robert Duke's wife was Priscilla Crenshaw, sister of Mary. After Benjamin sold his land in Granville County in 1765 those three families moved to the northern part of South Carolina where Benjamin had a land grant on Dry Creek, a branch of Fishing Creek, in what is now Chester County, South Carolina. He later had a land grant on Camp Creek in 1767 in what is now Lancaster County. He was in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina during a part of 1769 since for one of the surveys for James Cook in 1769 Benjamin Cook was a chain bearer and he was also a witness for two deeds by James and Lucy that same year. There are no further records involving Benjamin in Mecklenburg County until several years later when he had land grants of his own entered in 1779.

At that time the back country in South Carolina was far from the government and courts in Charleston and was plagued by organized groups of bandits and there was a high crime rate. Benjamin Cook became a member of the South Carolina Regulators, a vigilante group that banded together to protect their property and that of their neighbors since state law enforcement was lacking. They captured and punished (e.g., 40 lashes, tar and feathers, etc.) individuals who were involved in criminal activities. For this they were sometimes charged with assault and battery – but were usually not convicted since the courts were far away. They were successful and ultimately convinced the governor and council to establish local courts and law enforcement. In 1771 the governor granted a blanket pardon to all of the Regulators - including Benjamin Cook

Benjamin's land on Camp Creek in South Carolina was listed at that time as part of Saint Mark's Parish, Craven County. He sold the 200 acres of land on Camp Creek in South Carolina in 1773 and moved to a 500 acre grant in the township that later became the city of Camden. There is a newspaper notice listing him as a member of the grand jury for the April 1775 session of the Camden District General Sessions Court. He sold the land in Camden in December 1778 and moved to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina near his brother James. The deed records for the sales of his land in the Camden District are now in the Lancaster County records.

James Cook had a land grant in Wrightsborough Township, St. Paul's Parish, Georgia in 1773. The details of the grant stated that he was from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina and had a wife, three sons, two daughters and a granddaughter ranging in age from 3 (the granddaughter) to 19 (Isaac). The sons were Isaac and John who married Lucy Hill successively and another son James, Jr. Isaac and John both remained in Georgia but James and Lucy and the rest of the family moved back to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina during the Revolutionary War where they owned 200 acres on Waxhaw Creek from 1776 through 1782.

While they were back in Mecklenburg County James and Lucy's daughter Lucy Cook in 1781 married Edward Curry who later had a Revolutionary War pension claim documenting that James was his father-in-law. Edward and Lucy lived on Cane Creek adjacent to his father, John Curry, and about five miles from the James Cook residence according to statements in his pension claim. Edward and Lucy Curry later lived near Camden, South Carolina in 1785 and he shows up in one record in Winton/Barnwell County, South Carolina in 1788. In his pension application he stated that he lived in South Carolina and Georgia and moved to Kentucky in about 1800. Ultimately they ended up in Union County, Kentucky where Lucy Cook Curry died in 1831 and Edward in 1836. There are no confirmed records for them between 1788 in Winton County, South Carolina and 1804 when their daughter Lucy was married in Livingston, Kentucky.

Also when James and Lucy were back in Mecklenburg County after three years in Georgia their son James Cook, Jr. was a chain bearer for one of the surveys for Benjamin Cook on 12 Mile Creek in 1782. Benjamin also had a survey on Cane Creek in 1783 and on that survey one of the chain bearers was Edward Curry. There was a younger Abraham Cook there also on 12 mile Creek who apparently was a son of Benjamin Cook and Mary. That Abraham Cook and James Cook, Jr. married sisters who were daughters of George Walker who also lived on Waxhaw Creek and later moved to Winton County, South Carolina. Both James, Jr. and Abraham appear in Winton County records in 1787 and 1788 and James, Jr. was listed adjacent to his father-in-law George Walker in the 1790 census when they were living near Blackwell, South Carolina. Winton County was abolished in 1791 and reincarnated as Barnwell County in 1800 so there is a nine year gap in the records.

James Cook, Jr. and Abraham Cook later had land grants in Burke County, Georgia, and were there in the 1798 tax list. Abraham died there in 1802 according to a newspaper notice of his estate sale. Due to record losses for that county those are the only records for them in Burke County. James Cook, Jr. and his family later moved to Washington County, Georgia. By the time of the 1820 census his widow appeared to be listed living with their son, James Cook, III, who was born in South Carolina about 1790. A Y-DNA test by a direct male line descendant of James, III proved that he was a descendant of Abraham Cook.

James Cook, Sr. and Lucy sold their land in Mecklenburg in 1782 and moved south into South Carolina. Some of their neighbors on Waxhaw Creek, including George Walker, the father-in-law of James Cook, Jr. moved to Winton County, South Carolina (which later became Barnwell County) where there are records beginning with a land grant in 1785.

Benjamin Cook sold his land in Mecklenburg in 1784 at which time he was listed as a resident of "Craven County," South Carolina. Some people still referred to the area of South Carolina directly south of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina as Craven County even though the

county of that name no longer existed. South Carolina had not yet formed new counties and the area was officially called Camden District at that time.

There were land grants for both James Cook and Benjamin Cook on Bluff Head Branch in the Camden District of South Carolina on July 13, 1784. No further records have been found in South Carolina that can be definitively ascribed to this particular James and Benjamin Cook. While there are deed records for a Benjamin Cook and wife Mary in Edgefield County, South Carolina in 1787 and 1788, that Benjamin was living in 96 District by 1776 so he was a different person.

Benjamin and Mary Cook moved to Elbert County, Georgia sometime before 1793 when he received a Georgia land grant there. Benjamin died in Elbert County in 1805. Elbert County records are somewhat difficult to sort out because there was another Benjamin Cook there at the same time whose wife was Effie (Jones). The two Benjamin Cooks were cousins.

Sometime around 1800 James and Lucy Cook moved to Washington County, Georgia. There are some records and newspaper items regarding them in Washington County. A newspaper item in 1815 was an announcement by James that Lucy had "left his bed and board" and he would no longer be responsible for any debts that she incurred and she was no longer his wife. This was rather strange since he was about 85, Lucy was about 75, and they had been married for 58 years.

Another newspaper item in 1818 announced the appointment of a James Cook, Jr. and Henry Hurst as administrators of the estate of James Cook. Henry Hurst published a notice of the sale of the estate of James Cook to be held on March 9, 1819. It is not certain which of the James Cooks this referred to since both James Cook, Sr. and James Cook, Jr. died around that same time. Henry Hurst had been a neighbor of the Cooks in Mecklenburg, North Carolina, and of James, Jr. and Abraham Cook in Burke County, Georgia. Since most of the Washington County records for that time period were destroyed during the Civil War, the only pertinent records are the U.S. census for 1820 and the newspaper items. James Cook, III, grandson of James and Lucy, remained in Washington County for several years and the above references to James Cook, Jr. was probably to the grandson. A James Cook, presumably James Cook, III, appears in the 1820 census. There was an older female in his household who may have been Lucy but is more likely to have been Parshiana Walker Cook, the widow of James Cook, II.

James Cook, Sr. may have been the father of an illegitimate son born in the mid 1780s allegedly in what later became Chesterfield County, South Carolina, a few miles south of North Carolina, to a woman named Sabrey (who later married Ambrose Boatwright). Presumably the actual given name of "Sabrey" was Sabra, a relatively common name in those days.

There are some interesting pieces of information that have been put together by people researching Boatwright families. Ambrose Boatwright was not part of the main Virginia and Carolina Boatwright families and his ancestry is unknown. He was in Lunenburg County, Virginia in 1764 when he was a witness to a will there. He was in the area that later became Lancaster County, South Carolina in the 1780s where he was a member of a Loyalist company and he later showed up in Barnwell County, South Carolina with a wife named Sabrey. They had several children in the 1790s but Sabrey had three sons prior to her

marriage to Ambrose. Sabrey had a son, John, born in what is now Chesterfield County, SC in 1786 and her son George, was born sometime in the mid 1780s in South Carolina, probably also in the same general area. Ambrose may or may not have formally adopted Sabrey's existing three sons – but they henceforth used Boatwright as their surname. Ambrose died in 1801 in Barnwell County, South Carolina and Sabrey was appointed administrator of his estate in May 1801. Later Sabrey and some of her children moved to Washington County, Georgia, where she was living next to the family of her son, George E. Boatwright in 1820. One of the Boatwright researchers found land records for George Boatwright indicating that he had one or more land transactions involving James Cook in Washington County. George E. Boatwright's first deed in Washington County was in 1812. And in the 1820 census Sabrey (listed as Savrey) was listed adjacent to her son George but as Savrey Cook. They have concluded that she had married James Cook after he divorced Lucy in 1815. The other information is from Y-DNA tests of a person who was a descendant of George E. Boatwright. He did not match with other Boatwrights but matched with known descendants of Abraham Cook – including two matches with known descendants of Charles Cook, brother of James, at 37 markers and one at 67 markers plus two matches at 67 markers with known descendants of Benjamin Cook and an exact 67 marker match with a known descendant of James Cook. For his descendants to have a Y-DNA match with descendants of James, Charles and Benjamin Cook his biological father was most likely to have been James Cook considering the later interactions between James Cook and both George "Boatwright" and his mother "Sabrey."

Charles Cook also moved to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina during part of the time that his brothers James and Benjamin were there, first entering land in Mecklenburg in 1779 on Little Richardson Creek about 10-12 miles east of the other Cook families. The wife of Charles Cook, son of Abraham, was Susannah Blackston, daughter of John and Sarah Blackston who had lived on Reedy Creek in Lunenburg County, Virginia for many years. John Blackston was listed as the Sexton of the Reedy Creek church over a long period in minutes of the Cumberland Vestry. In a February, 1764 deed in Lunenburg County, Virginia John Blackston gave 150 acres of his land to his daughter Susannah Cook, son-in-law Charles Cook and grandson John Cook, son of Charles and Susannah. John Cook was apparently a minor at that time so the deed was to Charles and Susannah with the condition that it would revert to John after their deaths. They lived on that property until September 1775 when the property was traded for 400 acres in adjacent Charlotte County. John Cook died quite young there in 1777. Charles sold 100 acres in two transactions in 1779. In 1782 he sold the other 300 acres and they had moved to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina by that time. The initial North Carolina land grant for Charles was on Little Richardson Creek in what was then Mecklenburg County, entered in 1779. Subsequent grants and land purchases by Charles Cook were on the east side of Richardson Creek in Anson County. Much later that area became Union County, North Carolina. Charles lived there the rest of his life and died in 1818.

Note: I believe the above account accurately documents what we know about the James, Benjamin, and Charles Cook who were the three sons of Abraham Cook, Jr. and some of their family members. There are other claims about some of these people that are demonstratively not true but which have been repeated in many places on-line. Those errors seem to have resulted either from faulty research or simply by repeating mistakes made by others in the past. There were numerous contemporaneous people with the same names as these and a common error seems to result from simply assuming those with the same name are the same people. Examples of erroneous assertions that seem to be common

include statements that the James Cook of Effingham County Georgia was the son of Abraham and that the wife of James Cook was Lucy Knight rather than Lucy Davis. Those assertions are clearly not correct. Also some descendants of Edward Curry and Lucy Cook assert that the land grants in Liberty County, Georgia in 1807 and 1809 were for him. But it is clear that the Currys were in Kentucky well before that time and it is obvious from later deeds that the Georgia land grants were for a different Edward Currie, Sr. and Edward Currie, Jr. and that the wife of Edward, Sr. was named Margaret, not Lucy.

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