

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE BATTLE FAMILY TO 1820

A FEW TRADITIONAL SKETCHES RELATIVE TO ORIGIN OF THE BATTLE FAMILY TOGETHER WITH THEIR IMMIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA

by

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The first account I have of them was that their former residence was in Yorkshire, England, from whence one of them by the name of William², with his wife and two children, a son by the name of William and a daughter by the name of Alsey, together with sundry of their neighbors, being disgusted by the passage of some ecclesiastical edicts fled to Ireland as an asylum where they remained two years, but the same offensive edicts found their way into this island also. Being thus driven from post to pillow, as it were, and being dissenters from the established religion of the day, there was no alternative left but yield or flee the country. They chose the latter and accordingly embarked for America, and landed at Norfolk, or perhaps came up Nansamon River as high as Suffolk, before they landed, but in what date I am not informed. Yet it is evident they settled on the branch of the Nansamon River, especially the one called the South Branch, the country at that time being one continued forest, excepted the Indian villages cleared by them. As to the name of the English government the * * * * * accordingly entered land according to the English laws in that * * * * * cause and manner of these emigrants, I am not informed, but I recollect that * * * made and provided.³

Besides Battle and his family there were others by the name of Hunter, Sumner, Baker, etc. These were connected by marriage, etc., and it is presumable that the greater part of the settlers in that part of the country emigrated at the same time, but of this we have no certainty, more than that a considerable number emigrated with them. It has been said that the most of these people were in good circumstances as it respects property and especially before they left the land of their nativity.

Battle obtained the King's Patent (as their grant for land was then called) for one thousand acres on which he settled his family and spent his days, but while he yet lived, his son married Wm. Hunter's daughter whose name was Sarah, after which he formed a separate settlement but on the same tract of land and finally became heir to the whole of the real estate of his father. His children were William, John, Elisha, Sarah, and Mary. I do not recollect who William married but I presume a daughter of Dr. John Brown by whom he had an only son named William after himself who died without issue.

John (who is my Grandfather) married Sarah, daughter of the said Dr. John Brown, by whom he had five children and died, i. e., Sarah who married a man by

¹See Foreword and Table 4.

²This traditional name *William* is incorrect. It should be *John*.

³The asterisks indicate illegible words.

the name of Richard Yates and had several children. The names I have forgotten, except her oldest son Jesse.

Mary who married James Norfleet by whom she had several children, but I now recollect only the name of Sally, whose first husband was Elias Hilliard and second Col. William Horn.

And Martha who married Isaac Dortch and moved to the State of Tennessee, and after the death of Mr. Norfleet the widow married Samuel Lawrence.

William who married a woman by the name of Martha Drake by whom he had several children, that is, Sarah who I think married a man by the name of Rutland and lived on Roan Oak River.

John, who married a wife by the name of Moore and moved from Wine Creek, where his father lived and died, to Anson County, North Carolina, to a place called Little Branch Creek, a branch of the Great Pedee River where he has since died.

The last I know of Jesse (brother of the above), he was living on the south side of the river in the neighborhood of his nativity.

The next was Elizabeth, who married Randolph Rutland of Hancock County, in the State of Georgia and the vicinity of Powelton, who died in a few days after she reached her home in Georgia.

The next I believe was Josiah and the last account from him says he was engaged in the mercantile business in Winton, on the Chowan River. I am of the opinion that he had a brother by the name of James, but of this I am not certain.

Priscilla who married Benjamin Forsett, a son of the Frenchman, near Suffolk upper Parish of Nansamon County, Virginia, and by him had two children, both daughters, the oldest (Sally) who married a man by the name of Robert Bowling formerly of the city of Baltimore, but who spent the latter part of his life in the city of Richmond in Virginia. They also had five children married, Benjamin, Moses, Sally, Betsey and perhaps John, the youngest Elizabeth, in Windsor, Bertie County, North Carolina, whither her father had moved in the time of the Revolutionary war, to a man by the name of Benjamine Moore, by whom she had two daughters Susan and Priscilla. Moore was killed by the accidental discharge of his gun. Elizabeth then married a man by the name of Wilson Liscomb and moved into the country.

The last and youngest was my father by the name of Jesse. His father dying while he was an infant, his grandfather took him and his youngest sister Priscilla from Hertford County, North Carolina, where they were born and where their father had lived after his marriage and settlement, to his own home in Virginia, Nansamon County, and where they were raised. And when Aunt Priscilla married Mr. Forsett, he (my grandfather) divided his thousand acre tract of land giving her as he supposed half, and seven negroes, reserving for himself the other half, which was well improved, for my father after he and his lady was done with it, he accordingly secured to him by will bearing date the 20th of March 1747/8 a copy of which is now before me, in which he made his wife sole executrix with the full enjoyment of the whole of his estate except some negroes given to his children and grandchildren, and the lands and tenements entailed to my father, and I presume he departed this life on or about the 58th year of his age, and perhaps his birth was in or about the year 1684, and his wife about the same age, but she survived him as well as I recollect, about 22 years, and departed this life in the 85th year of her age, which I think was about the year 1769 or 1770, for I recollect her well and the circumstances attending her death, etc. I was born in the same house the 26th of October 1761,

but perhaps I was not more than 7 or 8 years old at her decease; if so their deaths would of course have been a little earlier.

His third son was Elisha of whom many great and good things have and may in truth be said; he in early life married Elizabeth Sumner of Nansamon County, Virginia; for his character I refer you to the History of the Hepsibah Association pages 135, 136, & 137.

My father, Jesse Battle, was the youngest of the John Battle children and as I have already said, was raised by his grandfather or rather by his grandmother, for his grandfather died before he was grown to a man, but at the age of 18 years he was married to Susan Forsett of the same place and age nearly, both were born the same year, which was 1734¹. They had thirteen children but raised only eight of them to be grown, the records of their birth, since my father's death, was lost or mislaid so that I have not been able to obtain them. The names are as follows, i. e., John, the eldest, died in his childhood in Virginia, Benjamin the 2nd, myself William the 3rd, Sarah, Priscilla, Bathsheba, Jesse, Lewis, Susan, and Mary, these were born in Virginia, and in the year 1777, my parents with their family moved to Edgecombe County, N. C., on Swift Creek where Lazarus, Isaac, and Reuben Taylor, were born. John, Bathsheba, and Jesse died while young and in Virginia, Priscilla in North Carolina at about 12 or 14 years of age and Lewis in Georgia at about the same age. On the 20th of February in the year 1787, my parents again started and myself and family with them for Green, now Hancock County in Georgia, where we arrived on the 26th of the next month after a tedious and distressing journey of 33 days. Prior to leaving N. C. my father and myself had joined the Baptist Church in Halifax County at the place called Daniel's Meeting House and at the time of our journey under the care of Elder Silas Mercer. My sister Sarah was married to Mr. Jacob Cain and brother Benjamin to a Miss Wyatt and they still remained in N. C. after our removal for two years, when they also moved to Georgia. After their removal to Georgia, Benjamin joined the Baptist Church on Williams Creek in Warren County, but a church was constituted in the winter of 1786 at Powelton and he removed on that side of the Ogeechee and being quite convenient his wife also joined the Powelton [Baptist] Church. He also removed his membership to Powelton, where he continued during life. They never had but one child, a son by the name of Jesse, a handsome young man and a man of good natural parts, but who has been disposed to be a little wild, but I hope has at length seen the vanities of youthful follies and will become a steady man. He lives at the late residence of his father on the S. W. Side of the Ogeechee at a place called Battle's Bridge. He married while young a Miss Cato still younger, they have at this time several promising children, their names are Benjamin Franklin, Bethesda, Jesse, Elizabeth, and Lucinda. Myself (William) is the next and the 12th of my father's children now living. My name at first was William but 15 or 20² past my father and myself in conversation respecting our ancestry told me he named me after his uncle William Sumner, upon which I replied he ought to have given me the whole of his name which he acknowledged and requested me then to take it, in consequence of which I have to this day written my name Wm. S. Battle. After I had passed the 22nd year of my age a few months, I married on the 24th day of May, 1783, Sally Whitehead, youngest daughter of Lazarus Whitehead Senr., have had twelve children born, the

¹Family Bible in possession of J. W. Nisbet, Macon, Ga., gives this date as 1738.

²[years]

first a daughter named Elizabeth. She was born in Edgecombe County, N. C., on Fishing Creek the 24th September, 1784, and departed this life the 12th of December, 1803. Had been a member of the Baptist Church at Powelton to which I and her mother belonged about 9 or 10 months, and from the time she obtained a good hope through Grace, her conversation might with propriety be said to be in "Heaven" for she appeared to lose sight of such objects, and desired to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord, which she judged to be far better; death appeared very desirable to her and while in health she pointed out the place of her interment with the utmost composure, and would frequently view the place with apparent delight, and while suffering her last illness which was long and severe, her uncle William Rabun would visit and converse with her respecting her dissolution, when the thought would appear to animate her considerably and she would some times reply "she hoped it was the Lord's time and that she should soon be called away to see her dear Redeemer for he was to her the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." At length on the evening of the 12th of December about half after 5 o'clock after a very animated admonition (as we thought it to be) her voice was so injured by affliction that we could understand but little of what she endeavored to communicate and after she had embraced us and appeared to wish to embrace not only her brother and sisters, but all present, she bid us all fare-well, placed herself on the bed, drew her hands into the bed and placed them on her breast, cried in a low but audible voice "Lord Jesus, meet me and receive my soul," and expired without a struggle or a groan. No poet or mortal man can describe the exercise of mind on the solemn occasion, to believe without a doubt that a convoy of angels attended her bed and then by them she was escorted to the Glory World and into the immediate presence of her much loved Savior, there to live eternal ages beyond the reach of trouble and distress. It would seem to make any parent cheerfully resign the beloved idol, but to lose forever in this world the sweet company and converse of such a child is truly trying to Nature.

And now my dear connection¹ (for you alone I write), what think you of Jesus? What but the religion of Jesus could sustain a little delicate female and her thus calm and composed in full view of the King of Terrors. Some of you may cry, enthusiasm! but I believe if you, like her, had been quickened to feel and illuminated to see your ruined and helpless state by nature and sin, and the Truth, Justice, and Holiness of God barring you from Heaven and driving you into despair, and after that to have a discovery of the dear Redeemer as being unto you, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and complete Redemption, you certainly would think differently.

Our next was Joseph John, who in early life married Rhoda, the only daughter of Mr. William Whitehead of Laurens County, in the fork of Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers on a creek called Little Rockey. They have five children, i. e., Eliza, William, Arthur, Emily Green, and Amanda. He is himself I hope a Christian but has not joined any church that I know of. His wife joined the church at Powelton several days before they moved to the New Purchase.

Our next and third is Jesse Brown, named in honor of the Brown family of Chowan River, N. C., of which my grandmother was a member. He married Martha Rabun, eldest daughter of William Rabun, Esq., late Governor of Georgia. They had three children, William, Mary is dead, the youngest is Sarah. They are Baptists and members of the church of Powelton.

¹This connection is supposed to have been Dr. Jeremiah Battle of Raleigh, N. C.

Our next is Sally, now Sally Carter, the wife of Christopher Carter Esq., of Clark County. She joined the church at Powelton, at about the age of 16 or 17 years, her husband is also a Baptist. They are now members of the church at Mars Hill on Barber's Creek, one of the Western Branches of the Oconee River. They have four children, i. e., Jesse, Serena, Mary, and William.

The next is John William; he married on the 23rd of last month Elizabeth Atkinson of Green County, and is about to settle in the fork of Little River in said county.

The next is Mary, now the wife of Herman Mercer of Green County. She and her husband are both members of the church formerly called Whatley's Mill (now Bethesda) under the pastoral care of Elder J. Mercer.

The next is Serena, now the wife of William Stroud, Esq., of Clark County. She is also a member of the church at Mars Hill.

The next is Lazarus Whitehead, just now arrived at the age of manhood and lives with me.

The next was Bennett D., he died at ten months old.

The next is Susan Forsett about sixteen years of age, is yet with us.

The youngest that is now living is by the name of Selina Countess. The youngest we had was Betsy Mercer. She was taken from us by death in her seventh year.

The next of my father's children was Sarah, who, as I have said, was married to Jacob Cain and moved to Ogeechee. He afterwards settled near the head of the North fork of the Ogeechee in what was then called Wilkes County. When my sister died she left two children, a son by the name of James Battle and a daughter by the name of Susan, who died in her infancy. James is still living in the new purchase.

The next that is living is Susan, the wife of John Ragan, Esq., of Pearl River, State of Mississippi. They have had several children, the eldest by the name of Simeon is dead. The next is Serena, now the wife of Mr. Nathaniel Robertson of Pearl River. The next Elam Sharon, the next is Jesse, married to Sallie Buchanan of Pearl River. The next is John, Rebecca, Lazarus, etc.

The next and last of my sisters who is living is Mary, now widow of William Rabun, Esq., late Governor of the State of Georgia. He was married in Halifax County, N. C., came to Georgia with Matthew Rabun, his father, about the year 1785 or 1786. Joined the church at Powelton while a youth, has for a number of years been clerk of said church, and frequently clerk of the Georgia Association, also recording secretary of the Powelton Missionary Society and for the most part of his life has been regularly promoted entirely through the perseverance of the people without his seeking, from the Captain of a Company to the Chief Magistracy of the State. He had resolved after the meeting of the Legislature, which is the first Wednesday in November annually, to deliver the trust confided to his charge, and live a retired life the balance of his days, but an all wise providence directed otherwise. He died of a short and to all appearance light illness of only one week, on the 24th of October, 1819, much lamented by Church and State.

The next is Lazarus, who was born July 4th, 1777 or 1778; married for his first wife a Miss Cook from the Congaree, S. C. They had several children, but all died young, except Martha, now the wife of Dr. John G. Gilbert, late from Tar River. His second wife is the widow of the late Maj. J. S. Fannin of Morgan County and town of Madison, where he¹ now lives. By that lady he had one child,

¹[Lazarus]

Ann (who died early), and a son named Oliver Lazarus (named for his grandfather, Oliver Porter, and his father). He and his wife are both members of the church in Madison. He has represented Baldwin County in the State Legislature, acted as aid to the Governor, etc. Isaac, my next brother, married Martha Rabun, sister to the late Governor. They had four children, i. e., Uriah, William Rabun, Eliza, and Sarah. They lived in Hancock County and in the vicinity of Powelton, and they are both members of the Baptist Church at Powelton. Reuben Taylor, the youngest of the family, married Bethia Alexander of Shoulderbone, Hancock County. They have for several years past lived in Powelton but now live on the Ogeechee in the same neighborhood and county. They have three children Amanda Malvina Fitzallen, Harriet Andrews, and Mary Lucinda. They are both members of the Baptist Church at Powelton and himself acting as one of the Deacons and Treasurer of the Missionary Society there.

I have thus far given the genealogy of William Battle the younger. No doubt the narrative is very imperfect.

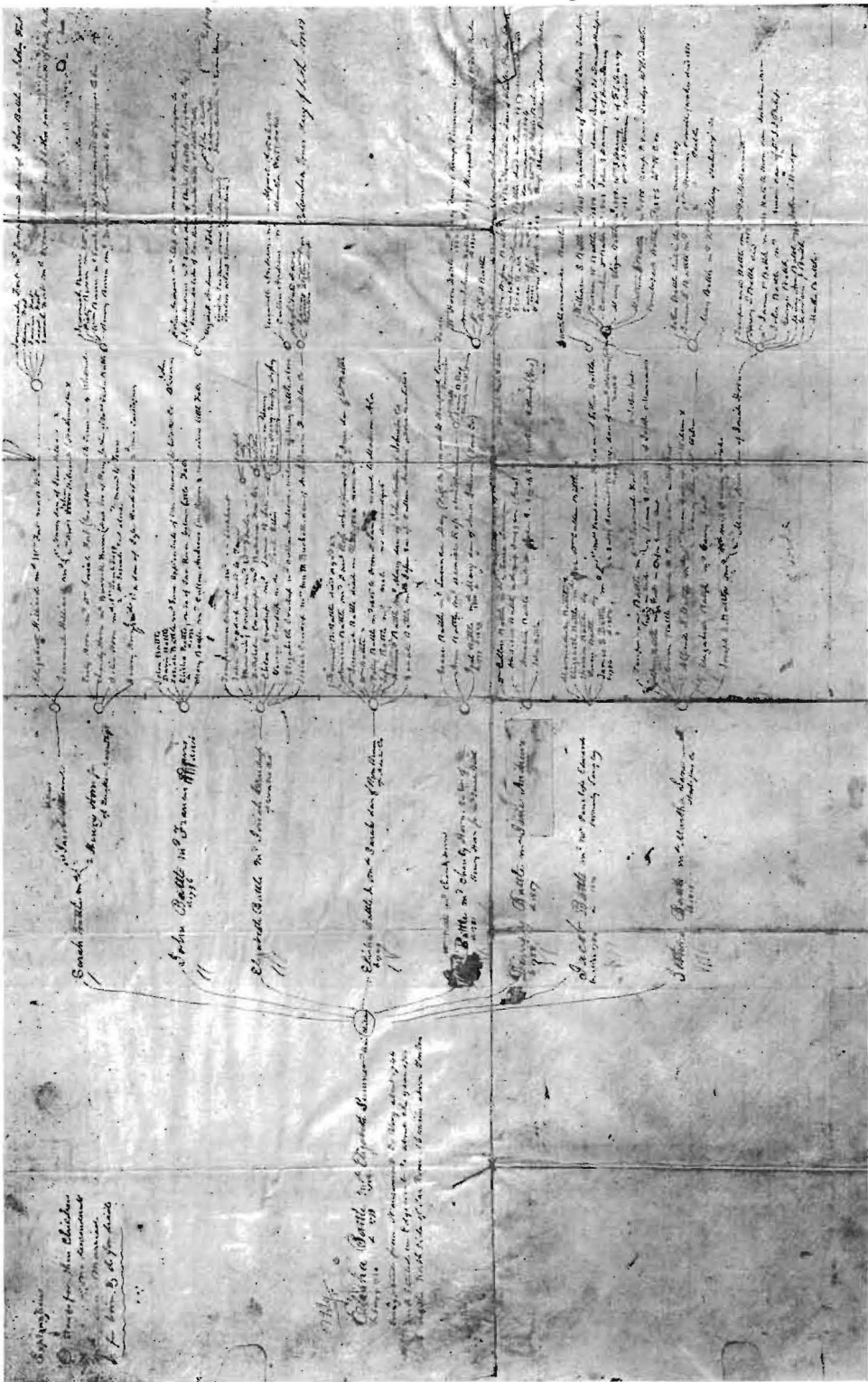


Table of descendants of Elisha Battle I by Governor Henry T. Clark (about 1867).