

# Connecting William Bowdoin:

The Problem of the Ancestry of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) of Autauga County, Alabama, Addressed through Records and DNA, and a General Overview of the Family of William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740)

Joseph T. Richardson <[joseph.t.richardson@gmail.com](mailto:joseph.t.richardson@gmail.com)>

<https://www.jtrichardson.com/bowdoin>

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## Introduction

**William Bowdoin**, my fourth great-grandfather, was born in 1802 in North Carolina. He came to Alabama as a young man, in the formative years of that state, arriving by 1824. By 1830, he had settled in the Coosa Valley, near Wetumpka, in what was then Autauga County, now Elmore County.

Beyond these basic facts and William's distinctive spelling of the surname *Bowdoin*, we have few clues in the way of traditional genealogy by which to connect William Bowdoin to his parentage or ancestry. The development of DNA genealogy technology offers new possibilities today for discovering his ancestral trail. But on the other hand, technology also has complicated the search for William's ancestry, in that online family trees have led to a proliferation of undocumented or poorly sourced research, unsupported assumptions and conflation of different individuals, and other errors that have come to be passed around as fact, trampling over the genealogical footprints until the trail is difficult to find.

In this paper, I have attempted, through historical methods, to clear the trail of this debris, to reestablish the facts, separated from the accumulated accretions of error and myth, and to lay the groundwork for discovering the true ancestry of William Bowdoin (b. 1802). As the first of two parts to this presentation of my research, this paper is concerned with establishing a firm factual basis for the family of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) in Alabama, and beyond that, for the family of **William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740)**, the North Carolina ancestor of several other Bowdoin families in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina, to whom DNA evidence points strongly as also being the ancestor of my William (b. 1802). By the end of this paper, I come to the preliminary conclusion that **Josiah Bowdoin (b. 1780)**, the fourth son of William (b. 1740), is the most likely candidate for being the father of William (b. 1802) and of his sister Eliza (b. 1817). In the second part of this research, I will take up this hypothesis and examine it experimentally through DNA genealogy and algorithmic analysis.

## William Bowdoin (b. 1802)

**William Bowdoin** was born about 1802 in North Carolina. He came to Alabama when both he and the state were new: he a young man of no more than twenty-two years, and the state no more than five years old. Alabama entered the Union on 14 Dec 1819. Did William come to Alabama by himself? Knowing so little about his origins, it is difficult to say for sure; the idea of a man so young traveling and settling entirely alone would be surprising. William arrived in Alabama no later than 1824, when he married his wife, **Emily Elizabeth Cooper**, on 27 Sep 1824 in Montgomery County.<sup>1</sup> By 1830, he had settled in Autauga County, Alabama, near Wetumpka, in what is today Elmore County.<sup>2</sup>

Early records offer little direction about where William came from, other than the evidence that he was born in North Carolina. His records from the census, 1850, 1860, and 1870, all consistently show his birth in North Carolina about 1802–1803.<sup>3</sup>

But the spelling of the surname *Bowdoin* does offer a major clue. William Bowdoin was literate, and where he signed his own name, he used the spelling *Bowdoin* consistently, as well as that spelling appearing in deeds and other contemporary records. This spelling has continued to be used by his children and descendants, and it connects the family to a possible French origin, with the name originally *Baudouin* rather than the English *Bowden*. It also connects them to a specific set of possible ancestors whose descendants have used that spelling. Another early Alabama family, also spelling their name *Bowdoin*, settled in Coffee County, Alabama, by the 1840s. A descendant of this family, U. Bowdoin Marsh, published a pioneering genealogical study, *A Research of the Bowdoin Family in the United States*, in 1982.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKZ3-ZBNX> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Elmore County was created in 1866, four years before William’s death, from land formerly part of Autauga, Coosa, Montgomery, and Tallapoosa counties.

<sup>3</sup> “William Bowden” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama, Wetumpka Beat, page 76 (38B stamped, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHPP-112> (Image 185 of 995); Ancestry.com, “1850 United States Federal Census,” has better image quality, <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8054/images/4187291-00185> (Image 13 of 15); “William Bowdoin” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama, Pine Flat Beat, page 7 (7 stamped), on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHD4-DQ9> (Image 11 of 659); on Ancestry.com, “1860 United States Federal Census,” [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7667/images/4211174\\_00007](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7667/images/4211174_00007) (Image 8 of 22); original data from NARA microfilm publication M653 Roll 1; “William Bowdoin” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama, Beat No. 10, page 24 (142B stamped), Family Search “United States Census, 1870,” <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHK4-G3S> (Image 287 of 302); on Ancestry.com, “1870 United States Federal Census,” [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7163/images/4257569\\_00288](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7163/images/4257569_00288) (Image 24 of 32).

<sup>4</sup> U. Bowdoin Marsh, *A Research of the Bowdoin Family in the United States* (Tallahassee, Fla.: Self-published, 1982). Available on FamilySearch.org at <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/547811-a-research-of-the-bowdoin-family-in-the-united-states> (accessed 23 Aug 2024).

William Bowdoin was by trade a carpenter, the occupation he gave for himself on the 1850 census. An early Autauga County deed, dated 1 Jun 1831, shows William Bowdoin mortgaging thirty head of cattle, one set of carpenter's tools, and one set of blacksmith's tools, to Henry Zeigler for a sum of one hundred seventy-five dollars.<sup>5</sup>

There appears no definite indication, in either government land patents or county deeds, that William Bowdoin owned land at this early date. A deed dated 24 Apr 1852 shows William purchasing 160 acres in present-day Elmore County, in Sections 7 and 8, Township 19 North, Range 17 East, near Deatsville, from the same Henry Zeigler.<sup>6</sup> The land was less than a mile from the Mount Zion Cemetery, where the family of William's son Reddin Read Bowdoin would one day be buried. A 27 Jan 1857 deed shows William Bowdoin mortgaging this same land to Joseph Sanford, with the marginal notation that "This mortgage has been satisfied in full by William Bowdoin, Oct. 12 1863."<sup>7</sup>

William Bowdoin and Elizabeth, his wife, had the following known children:

1. **William A. Bowdoin**, born 23 Apr 1828 in Autauga County, Alabama; died 28 Jul 1886 in Deatsville, Elmore County, Alabama. He married **Catherine Elizabeth Hull** on 3 Jan 1856 in Coosa County, Alabama.<sup>8</sup> He enlisted in the Confederate Army on 16 Mar 1862 at Robinson Springs, Autauga County, serving as second sergeant in Captain Bolling Hall Jr.'s Company, which became Company E, Second Battalion, Hilliard's Legion, Alabama Volunteers, and later the 59<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Alabama Infantry. On 24 Jun 1863, he was appointed ordnance sergeant of the battalion.<sup>9</sup> He survived the war.

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<sup>5</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, Deed Book C, page 371. Scanned and made available online by the Old Autauga Historical Society at [https://www.ingprobate.com/Autauga\\_Probate/](https://www.ingprobate.com/Autauga_Probate/).

<sup>6</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, Deeds and Mortgages Book 11, page 484, Henry Zeigler to William Bowden, on FamilySearch, "Autauga, Deeds, 1851–1854," Image Group 008586717, Image 295 of 456, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C375-DYSM> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, Deeds and Mortgages Book 13, page 183, William Bowden to Joseph Sandford, on FamilySearch, "Autauga, Deeds, 1857–1859," Image Group 008586718, Image 146 of 381, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C375-DJ35> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Tombstone, Deatsville Cemetery, photo at "William A. Bowdoin," Find a Grave Memorial #69349042, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/69349042/william-a-bowdoin>; Coosa County, Alabama, Marriage Book B, 371, William A. Bowden to Elizabeth C. Hull, on FamilySearch, "Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950," Image Group 007316940, Image 226 of 232, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-99HV-QL3> (accessed 13 Sep 2024).

<sup>9</sup> "W. A. Bowdoin," Co. E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Hilliard's Legion, Alabama Volunteers, in Fold3, "U.S., Civil War Service Records (CMSR), Confederate, Alabama, 1861–1865," <https://www.fold3.com/image/20958221/>, N.C.S., 59<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry, <https://www.fold3.com/image/13806601/> (accessed 9 Oct 2024), originally from National Archives and Records Administration, Publication M311, Record Group 109. There has been considerable confusion about the soldier Sergeant W. A. Bowdoin, with descendants of the Coffee County Bowdoins claiming he was William A. Bowdoin (b. 1807) of Coffee County, son of William Bowdoin (b. 1786) (see page 47). For the following reasons, it is clear that he was William A. Bowdoin of Autauga County. (1) W. A. Bowdoin enlisted at Robinson Springs in modern-day Elmore County, about seven miles from Deatsville where William Bowdoin lived, but nearly 80 miles from Elba in Coffee County. Captain Bolling Hall had a plantation near Coosada in Elmore County. (2) The muster roll

2. **Joseph Arthur Bowdoin**, born 2 May 1830 in Autauga County; died 14 Feb 1904 in Klamath Falls, Klamath County, Oregon. He went west as a pioneer before the Civil War and mined gold before becoming a dentist and later a newspaper publisher. He was recorded in a January 1864 register for the Civil War draft in Plumas County, California, with the note that he was “a rabid rebel who refuses to answer.”<sup>10</sup> He married **Rebecca Shortridge** about 1865 in California.<sup>11</sup> 
3. **Reddin Read Bowdoin**, born 31 May 1831 in Autauga County; died 14 Mar 1877 in Elmore County. He married **Ann Elizabeth Caroline Green** on 31 Dec 1852 in Autauga County.<sup>12</sup> He enlisted 26 Aug 1862 in the Confederate Army, serving as a private in Company E, 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Alabama Partisan Rangers.<sup>13</sup> During his service, he wrote several letters home, at least three or four of which survive to us today. He survived the war. 
4. **Isaac Butcher Bowdoin**, born about 1834 in Autauga County; died 20 Jun 1901 in Clanton, Chilton County, Alabama.<sup>14</sup> He enlisted 4 Sep 1861 at Montgomery in the “Autauga Guards” under Captain T. L. Faulkner, which eventually became Company K, 24<sup>th</sup> Alabama

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for Captain Hall’s company records Sgt. W. A. Bowdoin as being 34 years old (born 1828), the same as William A. Bowdoin of Autauga. William A. Bowdoin of Coffee was much older, age 54, probably too old to have served. See Ancestry.com, “Alabama, U.S., Civil War Muster Rolls, 1861–1865,” “Muster Roll of Captain Bolling Hall, Company E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Hilliard’s Legion,” [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1736/images/31296\\_195988-00010](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1736/images/31296_195988-00010) (accessed 9 Oct 2024).


<sup>10</sup> “J. A. Bowdoin” in Ancestry.com, “U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863–1865,” [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1666/images/32178\\_620305173\\_0000-00180](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1666/images/32178_620305173_0000-00180) (accessed 9 Oct 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Obituary, *The Klamath Republic*, 18 Feb 1904; quoted on “Joseph Arthur Bowdoin,” Find a Grave Memorial #28464669, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/28464669/joseph-arthur-bowdoin>.

<sup>12</sup> Reddin Bowdoin’s name is spelled several different ways in records, including *Reding* in his printed obituary, but from records where he signed his own name, it appears *Reddin* was his preferred spelling. “Bro. Reding R. Bowdoin,” obituary in *New Orleans Christian Advocate*, 28 Jun 1877, page 2, column 5; Autauga County, Alabama, Marriage Book 2, 140, Reddin R. Bowden to A. E. C. Green, 31 Dec 1852, on FamilySearch, “Autauga County, Alabama, Marriage records,” Image Group 007066660, Image 285 of 757, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-997J-8QYK>, “Alabama Marriages, 1816–1957”, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FQVS-SPD>. The marriage record image shows that “Mary Ann Elizabeth Green” is a clerical and transcription error and “Mary” was not part of her name. The Greens did tend to be excessive with names, with “Mary” is a name she never used.

<sup>13</sup> “R. R. Bowdoin,” Co. E, 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Alabama Partisan Rangers, in Fold3, “U.S., Civil War Service Records (CMSR), Confederate, Alabama, 1861–1865,” <https://www.fold3.com/image/13377725/> (accessed 9 Oct 2024), originally from National Archives and Records Administration, Publication M311, Record Group 109.

<sup>14</sup> Isaac’s tombstone at Clanton City Cemetery, placed years after his death, gives a birthdate of 1835 and a death date of 1900. See photo at “Isaac Butcher Bowdoin,” Find a Grave Memorial #97580846, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/97580846/isaac\\_butcher\\_bowdoin](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/97580846/isaac_butcher_bowdoin). Consistent census records during his lifetime give a birthdate of about 1834. The death date of 20 June 1901 comes from the Confederate pension application of Isaac’s widow. See FamilySearch, “Alabama, Confederate Pension Applications, ca. 1880s–1930s,” Image Group 008494113, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C3S7-JKQL> (Image 756 of 1953) (accessed 5 Sep 2024).

Infantry, C.S.A.<sup>15</sup> He survived the war. He married (1) **Milda Ann Ellis** about 1863, and (2) **Mrs. Mary A. Brinkman**, 20 Sep 1882 in Chilton County.<sup>16</sup> 

5. **Elizabeth E. Bowdoin**, born about 1833 in Autauga County; died 29 Jun 1874 in Deatsville, Autauga County.<sup>17</sup> She never married.
6. **John A. W. Bowdoin**, born about 1838 in Autauga County. He enlisted 4 Sep 1861 at Montgomery in the “Autauga Guards” under Captain T. L. Faulkner, with his brother Isaac, and later re-enlisted 20 Sep 1862 at Montgomery in Company E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Georgia Sharp Shooters. He died of disease 28 Mar 1863 in a Confederate hospital at Chattanooga, Tennessee.<sup>18</sup>
7. **Epsy E. Bowdoin**, born 12 Jul 1840 in Autauga County; died 4 Jan 1926 in Deatsville, Elmore County.<sup>19</sup> She married **Washington Marion Pattillo** on 29 Mar 1882 in Autauga County.

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<sup>15</sup> “Isaac B. Bowdoin” in Ancestry.com, “Alabama, Texas and Virginia, U.S., Confederate Pensions, 1884–1958,” [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1677/images/32719\\_237100-00725](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1677/images/32719_237100-00725) (Image 718 ff.); “Isaac B. Bowden,” Co. K, 24 Alabama Infantry, in Fold3, “U.S., Civil War Service Records (CMSR), Confederate, Alabama, 1861–1865,” <https://www.fold3.com/image/9979938/> (accessed 14 Sep 2024), originally from National Archives and Records Administration, Publication M311, Record Group 109.

<sup>16</sup> The 1929 Alabama death certificate of Isaac Braxton Bowdoin, Isaac Butcher’s son, gives the maiden name of Isaac Butcher’s first wife. FamilySearch, “Alabama Deaths, 1908–1974,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDNX-TR7>. See “Milda Ann Ellis” on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/G3R3-QSJ> (accessed 14 Sep 2024). The maiden name of his second wife, Mrs. Mary A. Brinkman, is not known. FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XT4Z-JN1>.

<sup>17</sup> A tombstone in Deatsville Cemetery for Elizabeth E. Bowdoin gives the dates 1853–1874. This birthdate is incorrect (should be 1833), but the death date is consistent with a death notice for Elizabeth in conference records of the Autauga Circuit, Methodist Episcopal Church, South. “Autauga Circuit Conferences, 1859–1874,” page 79, on FamilySearch, “Autauga County, Alabama, Religious Records,” Image Group 008182846, Image 230 of 769, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLS-L7K1-V> (accessed 11 Oct 2024); see “Elizabeth E. Bowdoin,” Find a Grave Memorial #185613096, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/185613096/elizabeth\\_e\\_bowdoin](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/185613096/elizabeth_e_bowdoin).

<sup>18</sup> Ancestry.com, “Alabama, U.S., Civil War Muster Rolls, 1861–1865,” “Roll of the Autauga Guards,” misfiled with 8<sup>th</sup> Alabama (Livingston’s) Cavalry Regiment (in which T. L. Faulker was later lieutenant colonel), [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1736/images/31296\\_195926-00001](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1736/images/31296_195926-00001), [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1736/images/31296\\_195926-00027](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1736/images/31296_195926-00027) (accessed 14 Sep 2024). John appeared on the initial muster roll of the Autauga Guards dated 16 Sep 1861 but does not have a compiled service record with that unit. Evidently his one-year term of enlistment expired in September 1862, and he then re-enlisted in the Georgia battalion. There is only one card, noting his death at hospital, in his record with the Georgia battalion. This company later became Company K, 58<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry. “John A. W. Bowden,” Company E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Georgia Sharp Shooters, in Fold3, “U.S., Civil War Service Records (CMSR), Confederate, Georgia, 1861–1865,” <https://www.fold3.com/image/48364646/> (accessed 28 Oct 2024), originally from NARA Publication M266, Record Group 209. His name appears on a memorial plaque in the Chattanooga Confederate Cemetery. “John A. W. Bowden,” Find a Grave Memorial #216656383, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/216656383/john-a\\_w-bowden](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/216656383/john-a_w-bowden) (accessed 28 Oct 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Tombstone, Deatsville Cemetery, photo at “Epsy E. Pattillo,” Find a Grave Memorial #16945275, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16945275/epsey-e-pattillo>; Autauga County, Alabama, Marriage Book 7, page 465, Washington M. Pattillo to Miss Epsy E. Bowden, on FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKZS-VBW1>.

8. **Mary A. Bowdoin**, born about 1843 in Autauga County; died between 1880 and 1900 in Elmore County. We have found no record that she ever married.

William's wife Emily passed away on 30 March 1846 in Autauga County, at the age of thirty-six. Her obituary appeared in the *South-Western Christian Advocate*, a regional Methodist Episcopal newspaper based in Nashville, on 15 May 1846:<sup>20</sup>

Died at her residence in Autauga co., Ala., on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 1846, Emily Elizabeth Bowdoin, wife of William Bowdoin. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cooper. Sister Bowdoin was born in Orangeburg District, South Carolina, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1809; afterwards removed to Montgomery co., Ala., where in 1823 she embraced religion and joined the M. E. Church, from which time until her death she was a consistent member of the church, and we believe, a faithful servant of God. In her death she gave demonstrations that it was not a vain thing to serve God. Conscious of her approaching dissolution, she admonished her husband, children, and friends, to make religion their chief concern in life. She also earnestly exhorted her friends who visited her in her last hours to prepare to meet God. She died in great peace; her own language was, not a veil between her and heaven. She doubtless this day rests in the home of the faithful. She has left a bereaved husband, who is a pious class-leader in the M.E. Church, also a large family of children, some of which are already in the church. We pray that God may keep them from the snares and allurements of earth, and bring them all into his fold in due time. Amen.

April 13, 1846.

J.T.R.

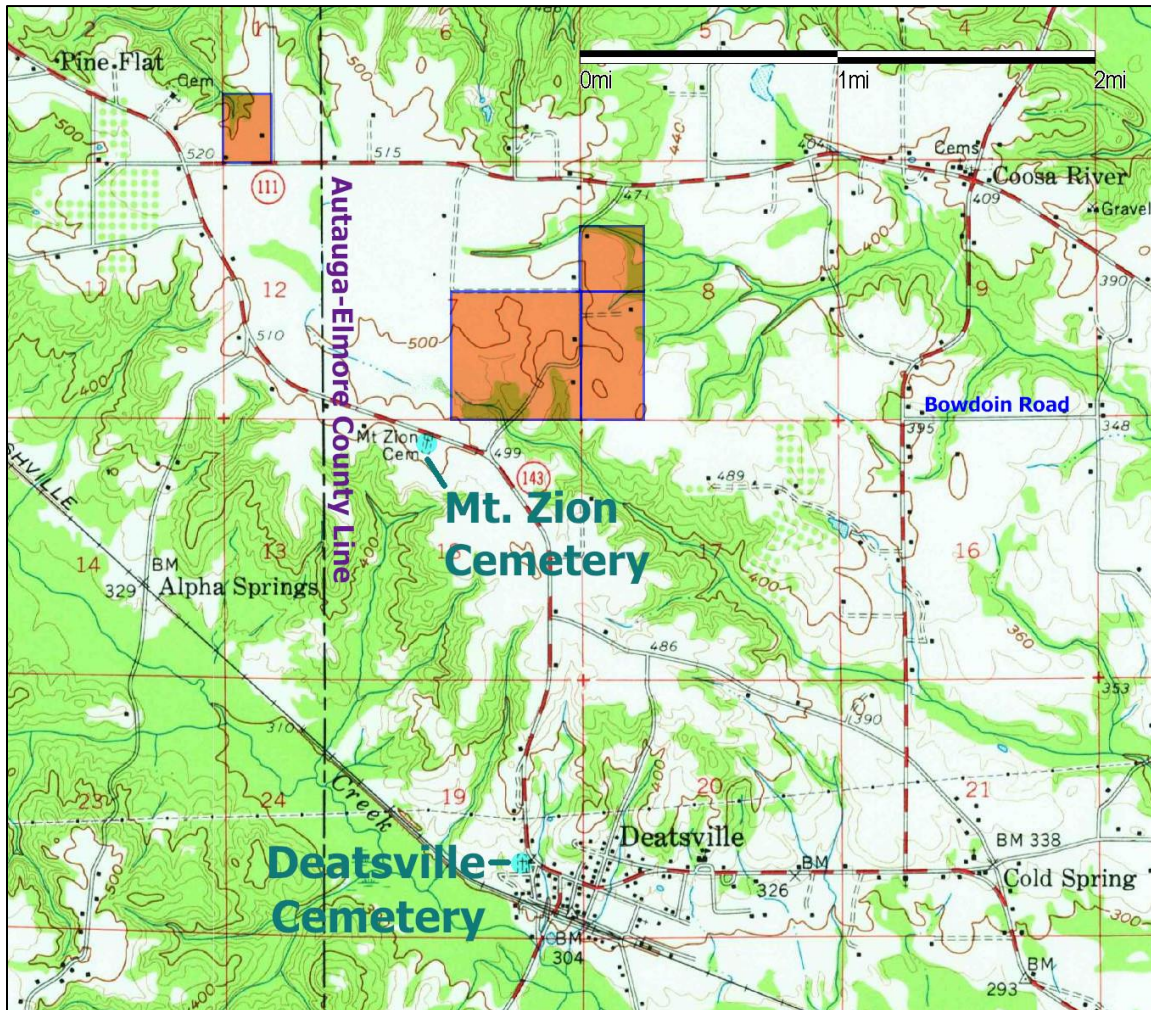
On 10 April 1870, William Bowdoin sold a 65-acre parcel of land on the Autauga County side of the county line to his unmarried daughters, Elizabeth E. and Epsey E. Bowdoin.<sup>21</sup> Later that same year, on 1 August 1870, William was recorded for the 1870 census, he also living in Autauga County, in the same Deatsville or Pine Flat community. According to his tombstone, William died before that year was up, at the age of about sixty-eight. He was buried in the Deatsville Cemetery.<sup>22</sup>

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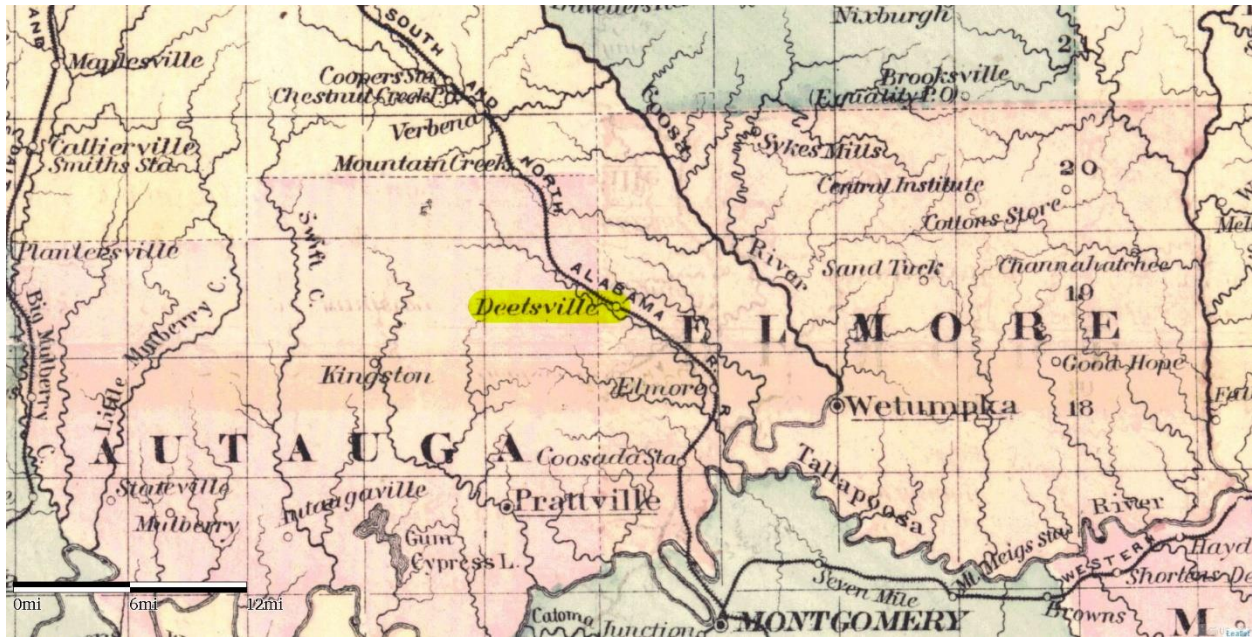
<sup>20</sup> *South-Western Christian Advocate*, 15 May 1846 (Nashville), at Tennessee State Library and Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, Deeds and mortgages book 19, Page 116–117, on FamilySearch, "Autauga, Deeds, 1870–1872," Image Group, 008586720, Image 89 of 361, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C375-6QQQ-S> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>22</sup> Tombstone, Deatsville Cemetery. "Rev. William B. Bowdoin," Find a Grave Memorial #16945270, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16945270/william\\_b\\_bowdoin](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16945270/william_b_bowdoin).



**Figure 1.** The neighborhood of William Bowdoin and his descendants, along the Autauga-Elmore County line. The areas shaded in orange mark land William Bowdoin is known to have owned at one time. William Bowdoin, several of his children, and his sister Eliza and her family are buried at Deatsville Cemetery. William's son Reddin Read Bowdoin and several of his children and grandchildren are buried at Mt. Zion Cemetery.



**Figure 2:** Autauga and Elmore counties in 1878, cropped from *Gray's New Map of Alabama* (1878). Deatsville (misspelled *Deatsville*) is highlighted. The town of Deatsville was founded in 1841, when W. S. Deats settled and built a sawmill there. It boomed in 1871 after the South and North Alabama Railroad came through town. (Source: *Alabama Maps; Encyclopedia of Alabama*)

## “Reverend Billy”

A persistent family legend regarding William Bowdoin is that he was a Methodist Episcopal minister. Some descendant, placing a modern replacement tombstone for him sometime in the past sixty or so years, even gave the inscription identifying him as “William B. Bowdoin, ‘Rev. Billy’, 1802–1870.” For years, descendants have wondered about the truth or myth of this legend, since there appears to be no contemporary evidence he was a reverend. The origin of the legend is difficult to trace, but it has certainly proliferated from the tombstone. The original tombstone bore only the name “William Bowdoin” and the dates of his birth and death.

William Bowdoin was identified on the 1850 census with the occupation of carpenter and on the 1860 census with the occupation of farmer. On the 1870 census, at age sixty-eight, he appeared as “without occupation.” The stated census occupation of being a farmer or carpenter does not preclude a man from also being a minister, of course. But neither is there any contemporary record identifying him as a minister or associating him with any church. The 1846 obituary of William’s wife Emily identifies identified as a class leader in the church, not a clergyman (see page 6).

It has only been very recently (October 2024) that we discovered the truth: William Bowdoin *did* hold an office in the church, similar to the role of a lay preacher. In the last decade or so of his life, he served as an **exhorter**, not an ordained minister but a lay member of the local Methodist



Episcopal church who was authorized to hold meetings for prayer and exhortation. As defined by a dictionary of Methodist terminology:

**Exhorter.**—A lay member who, by recommendation of his class or leaders and stewards' meeting, is given license signed by his pastor, which authorizes him to hold meetings for prayer and exhortation, under direction of the pastor, the said license being annually renewed by the fourth Quarterly Conference, after passage of his character, the renewal being signed by the president thereof.<sup>23</sup>

This definition is consistent with what we found in the records of the Quarterly Conference of the Autauga Circuit:

The Third Quarterly Conference for Autauga Circuit, Wetumpka District, Montgomery Conference, convened at Wesley Chapel on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Aug. 1860. [Among those present: "Wm. Bowden, Ex."]

4<sup>th</sup> Question. *Are there any applications for the renewal of license?* **Wm. Bowden made application for the renewal of his license as exhorter which was granted.**<sup>24</sup>

William Bowdoin's license as exhorter was again renewed by the Third Quarterly Conference on 16 Jul 1870.<sup>25</sup> This is the last reference to him in the conference record book. He was recorded by the 1870 census on 1 Aug 1870, and then evidently died before the end of the year, if his tombstone death date is correct. The lack of mention of his death in the conference records is a curious omission, given the deaths of many other church members and especially leaders that the minutes note with sorrow.<sup>26</sup> William's son, R. R. Bowdoin, began attending the Quarterly Conference as a steward in April 1872.<sup>27</sup>

Though the office of *exhorter* is a predecessor of what became the office of *lay speaker* in today's Methodist Church, contemporary books of church discipline are careful to emphasize the distinction between the office of *exhorter* and that of *preacher*:

*Ques.* 2. What are the duties of an exhorter?

*Ans.* To hold meetings for prayer and exhortation whenever opportunity is afforded, subject to the direction of the preacher in charge.

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph F. Anderson, *Methodist Dictionary: A brief work on Methodist Terminology, Prepared in the interest of Ministers, Minister, and Friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1909), 45, on Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=ft8RAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA45> (accessed 12 Oct 2024).

<sup>24</sup> "Autauga Circuit Conferences, 1859–1874," pages 47–48, on FamilySearch, "Autauga County, Alabama, Religious Records," Image Group 008182846, Image 213, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLS-L7K1-L> (accessed 12 Oct 2014)

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 53–54, Image 216, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLS-L72Q-M>.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the "Tribute of Respect" to Brother Martin R. Burt on the same page as last referenced.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, page 69, Image 225, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLS-L724-9>.

*Ques.* 3. What further directions are given concerning exhorters?

*Ans.* 1. Let every exhorter diligently exercise the functions of his office, without assuming those of a preacher.<sup>28</sup>

In the century and a half since William Bowdoin, when many of William's descendants have moved towards less clerical forms of Christianity, I suppose that the memory of his licensed office as an exhorter may have evolved into the legend of "Reverend Billy."

Another possibility is that the legend of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) being a minister originates in a case of conflation or mistaken identity, with some descendant confusing William Bowdoin of Autauga County with a Rev. W. A. Bowdoin of the Coffee County Bowdoins who was a Methodist minister. In *The History of Methodism in Alabama and West North Florida* by Marion Elias Lazenby (1960), W. A. Bowden was named as the minister of the Pea River Mission at the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of the Alabama District, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1846. The Pea River Mission was in Southeast Alabama, encompassing Coffee County and surrounding counties.<sup>29</sup> There were only two men named "W. A. Bowden" listed on the 1850 census in Alabama: William A. Bowdoin (b. 1828), the son of William Bowdoin (b. 1802), in Autauga County; and William A. Bowdoin (b. ca. 1807), the son of William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1768), in Coffee County, who was the earliest of the Bowdoins to settle in Coffee County. Both men stated their occupations as farmers to the census. At such an early date, and there being no other W. A. Bowden in the area, it would seem that William A. Bowdoin of Coffee was the minister. I have no other record of that William A. Bowdoin being a Methodist minister either; but at least in this case, there is this one statement of positive evidence in a church source.

In all the couple dozen primary sources in which his name appears, William never used a middle initial "B.", so I consider this unsupported.

## Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817)

There is one other major clue regarding William Bowdoin: Eliza, his sister. By about 1830, **Eliza Bowdoin**, then about thirteen years old, had come to Alabama to live with William. Eliza was born 15 December 1817 in Georgia.<sup>30</sup> The exact date and the circumstances under which she

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<sup>28</sup> Methodist Episcopal Church, South. *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1886), pp. 107–108 (paragraphs 84–85), at HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x030809350> (accessed 12 Oct 2024).

<sup>29</sup> Marion Elias Lazenby, *The History of Methodism in Alabama and West North Florida* (Alabama and West Florida Conferences, Methodist Church, 1960), 315, 134, on the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/historyofmethodi01laze/page/314/mode/2up> (accessed 28 Sep 2024).


<sup>30</sup> Tombstone, Deatsville Cemetery. "Eliza Hackman," Find a Grave Memorial #106133288, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/106133288/eliza-hackman>. The birthdate from her tombstone is consistent with her census appearances of 1850, 1860, 1880, and 1900, which all state she was born in Georgia. The 1870 census, the first time she appeared in the household of Charles Cooper, her young son-in-law, gave her birthplace as Alabama.

came to live in Alabama are not known, but she appeared in William’s household in the 1830 census entry as a white female between the ages of 10 and 15, when William himself and his wife Emily were both aged only 20 to 30.

When Eliza married **J. Henry Hackman** on 28 January 1838 in Autauga County, William Bowdoin appeared on her behalf to attest to her age of majority.<sup>31</sup> This record has led to considerable confusion, with FamilySearch mistakenly transcribing William’s role in the record as his being her “father”—as in many marriage records, a father would have provided a similar statement giving consent for his underage daughter to marry. But this record does not indicate that William Bowdoin was Eliza Bowdoin’s father, nor did he give legal consent for her marriage. Eliza was then twenty years old, of a legal age to marry, and did not require her parent’s consent under Alabama law.<sup>32</sup> William appeared as her only local relative, attesting to the fact that she was of legal age. The record reads:

January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1838. W. Baker, This is to certify that Miss Eliza Bowdoin is of age and I have no objection to Mr. J. H. Hackman obtaining license. Wm. Bowdoin.

Eliza Bowdoin and J. Henry Hackman had these known children:

1. **Martha Catherine Hackman**, born 10 Dec 1838 in Autauga County, Alabama, died 29 Nov 1926 in Bronte, Coke County, Texas. Married **John Wesley Rogers** about 1854 in Autauga County.<sup>33</sup> 
2. **William J. H. Hackman**, born about 1842 in Autauga County, Alabama, died after 1850.<sup>34</sup>

Mr. Hackman was evidently a German immigrant. According to the 1926 Texas death certificate of his daughter, Martha Catherine (Hackman) Rogers, her father, Henry Hackman, was born in Germany. Several records of the family spell the surname *Hackmon*, suggesting it might at times have been pronounced like the German *Hackmann* (“HAKH-mahn”), with a German vowel [a] as in English *father*.

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<sup>31</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, marriage license record 1, Page 90, on FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKZS-V295>, Image Group 007316807, Image 536 of 700, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9HV-3S24> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>32</sup> “Marriage,” in John Gaston Aikin, *A Digest of the Laws of the State of Alabama* (Philadelphia: A. Towar, 1833), 305. “If the male intending to marry be under the age of twenty-one years, or the female under the age of eighteen years, the consent of the parent or guardian of such infant shall be personally given before the said register, or due proof made to him by the oath of at least one credible witness.” On HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044051087450> (accessed 24 Oct 2024).


<sup>33</sup> FamilySearch, “Texas Deaths, 1890–1976,” Martha Catharine Rogers, 29 Nov 1926, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K37G-K1P>; “Martha Catherine Hackman Rogers,” Find a Grave Memorial #62507689, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62507689/martha-catherine-rogers> (accessed 14 Sep 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Martha Catherine (Hackman) Rogers named her oldest son *William Joseph Henry Rogers*, suggesting that perhaps her brother was *William Joseph Henry Hackman*, and her father *Joseph Henry Hackman*.

Mr. Hackman died after less than ten years of marriage, sometime around 1846. On 24 May 1846 in Autauga County, Eliza (Bowdoin) Hackman married (2) **Fred (or Frank) S. Selinda**—the name is spelled both ways in the same marriage record.<sup>35</sup> Mr. Selinda is an elusive figure whom I cannot identify in records either prior to the marriage or after. In searching for the name, I find Anglicizations of various European names—for example, Italian *Solanda*, or Polish *Ślanda* or *Szlanda*. So it is possible that Mr. Selinda was also an immigrant, perhaps with few ties to the community. By 1850 he was gone, and with the exception of Henry Hackman’s final estate settlement, the only known record in which she appeared as *Eliza Selinda*, Eliza reverted to the use of the name *Hackman* for the rest of her life.<sup>36</sup>

With Eliza becoming a widow at close to the same time as the death of William Bowdoin’s wife Emily in 1846, Eliza and her children came to live with William, and she remained in his household until her own children married. William Bowdoin was also the administrator of Henry Hackman’s estate.<sup>37</sup>

It is notable that in the Hackman final estate settlement, Eliza gave an account of payments for the oldest two Hackman children’s board and schooling—but not for her youngest daughter:

3. **Sarah Ann Elizabeth (Sallie Ann) Hackman**, born 22 Jun 1847 in Autauga County, Alabama, died 27 April 1933 in Deatsville, Autauga County. Married **Charles Clemmons Rice (Clem) Cooper** on 4 October 1866 in Autauga County.<sup>38</sup> 

Because she was born in late June 1847, more than a year after Eliza’s marriage to Mr. Selinda, and because the Hackman estate record does not name her among the Hackman children, it appears likely that Sallie Ann was the daughter of Mr. Selinda, not of Mr. Hackman. But she used

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<sup>35</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, Marriage book 1, page 384, Frank S. Solinda to Eliza Hackmon, 21 May 1846, on FamilySearch, Image Group 007316807, Image 662 of 700, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99HV-3SNJ> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>36</sup> Autauga County, Alabama, loose estate case files, H. J. Hackman, 1850s, Box 7, Folder 415, on FamilySearch, “Alabama Estate Files, 1830–1976”, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VNTV-WB6>, Image Group 004988765, Image 1019 of 1577, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/61903/3:1:33S7-9RG2-97PL> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>37</sup> The administrator’s bond, with James C. Zeigler and Daniel Hogan as bondsmen, is dated 13 Nov 1846. Autauga County, Alabama, Probate Court, Bonds, vol. F (1842–1869), 63, in Ancestry.com, “Alabama, U.S. Wills and Probate Record, 1753–1999,” Autauga, Bonds, Vol. F, 1842–1869, Image 58, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8799/images/005176119\\_00304](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8799/images/005176119_00304) (accessed 28 Aug 2024); on FamilySearch, “Autauga, Bonds, 1842–1869,” Image Group 005176119, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9B3P-S75> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>38</sup> “Aged Deatsville Woman Passes to Reward,” *Wetumpka Herald*, 4 May 1933, Newspapers.com, clipping at <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-wetumpka-herald-obituary-for-sallie/69416464/>; “Sally Ann Hackman Cooper,” Find a Grave Memorial #83823276, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/83823276/sally-ann-cooper>; Autauga County, Alabama, marriage book 5, page 28, C. C. R. Cooper to Sarah E. L. Hackman, 4 Oct 1866, on FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950”, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:29NN-J2L> (accessed 14 Sep 2024). Clem Cooper was a nephew of William Bowdoin’s wife, Emily Cooper.

the name *Hackman* in all records from the 1850 census forward to her marriage record, and descendants today claim Mr. Hackman as their ancestor.

With Martha Catherine Hackman marrying and moving to Texas by 1860, and William J. H. Hackman evidently dying young, Sallie Ann Hackman was Eliza's last child left at home. Following Sallie Ann's marriage to Mr. Cooper, Eliza went to live with her and remained in the Cooper household for the rest of her life. She died in Deatsville, Elmore County, on 28 Dec 1901, at the age of eighty-four, and was buried in the Deatsville Cemetery.

Some researchers have claimed that William and Eliza Bowdoin were not brother and sister—resulting mostly from conflicting claims of their parentage (see “Common claims about the parentage of William and Eliza” below).<sup>39</sup> But there can be no doubt that they were indeed siblings. From William Bowdoin's appearance in Eliza's marriage record to Mr. Hackman—where again, the record does *not* indicate that the attesting William Bowdoin was her father, and William (b. 1802) was the only other Bowdoin in the county—to his administration of Mr. Hackman's estate, to their shared household in the 1850 and 1860 censuses—the two are inextricably linked in numerous records.

Even supposing the most far-fetched scenario, it is most unlikely that William was Eliza's father. The idea that a young man of fifteen years in 1817 could have fathered a child, received custody of the infant, and carried her on his hip on a pioneer journey to a new state, is, to say the last, historically implausible. In Civil War letters written home by Reddin Read Bowdoin, William's son, he referred to “Aunty” as a beloved member of the family.

The remarkably close and tender relationship of William and Eliza has fueled my curiosity about William's origins over the years. How did a brother and sister come to live together, apparently apart from any other family? Why was a young girl living with her older brother? Eliza demonstrates, at least, that William's parents, and probably William himself, were living in Georgia when Eliza was born, in the decade before William came to Alabama, taking us as least one step further beyond Autauga County.

The presence of Eliza Bowdoin becomes a defining parameter in the search for William Bowdoin's parents, by which many hypotheses can be excluded. Any valid proposal for their parents must account for both a son who was born in North Carolina in 1802 and a daughter who was born in Georgia in 1817.

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<sup>39</sup> For example, I have seen it claimed that William (b. 1802) was the son of Travis “Francis” Bowdon, while Eliza was the daughter of William Bowdon (b. 1773).

## Records of the William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza (Bowdoin) Hackman (b. 1817) families

The following are census records in which William Bowdoin or Eliza Bowdoin appeared. I have attempted to identify each household member.

### 1830 Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama<sup>40</sup>

- W. Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[Emily]*
  - 1 white female, age 10 to 15 (born 1815 to 1820) *[Eliza]*
  - 3 white males, age under 5 (born after 1825) *[William A.; Joseph; other perhaps died young]*

### 1840 Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama<sup>41</sup>

- William Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 50 to 60 (born 1780 to 1790) *[probably Pleasant Bowden; see below]*
  - 1 white male, age 30 to 40 (born 1800 to 1810) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 30 to 40 (born 1800 to 1810) *[Emily]*
  - 2 white males, age 15 to 20 (born 1820 to 1825) *[William A., Joseph]*
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10 (born 1830 to 1835) *[Reddin]*
  - 1 white female, age 5 to 10 (born 1830 to 1835) *[Elizabeth]*
  - 3 white males, age under 5 (born after 1835) *[John, Isaac; other perhaps died young]*

### 1850 Census, Autauga County, Alabama

Wetumpka Beat. Page 76 (38B stamped). 31 Oct 1850.

Dwelling #568, Household #583.<sup>42</sup>

- William Bowden, age 47 (born about 1803 in N.C.), occupation carpenter.
- William A., age 22 (born about 1828 in Ala.), occupation farmer.
- Redden R., age 19 (born about 1831 in Ala.), occupation farmer.
- Isaac D., age 16 (born about 1834 in Ala.), occupation farmer.
- Elizabeth E., age 17 (born about 1833 in Ala.).

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<sup>40</sup> "W. Bowden" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama, Capt. Taylor's District, page 240 (120B stamped), on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830" <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHP9-VSN> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>41</sup> "William Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama, page 18A stamped, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHT8-3P6> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>42</sup> See footnote 3.

- John A. W., age 12 (born about 1838 in Ala.).
- Epsey E., age 9 (born about 1841 in Ala.).
- Mary A., age 6 (born about 1844 in Ala.).
- Eliza Hackman, age 34 (born about 1836 in Ga.)
- Martha C., age 11 (born about 1839 in Ala.).
- William J. H., age 8 (born about 1842 in Ala.)
- Sarah A. E., age 3 (born about 1847 in Ala.)

1860 Census, Autauga County, Alabama

Pine Flat Beat. Page 7 (7 stamped). 7 Jun 1860.

Dwelling #46, Household #47.<sup>43</sup>

- William Bowdoin, age 58 (born in N.C.), occupation farmer.
- Elizabeth E., age 26 (born in Ala.).
- Epsey E., age 20 (born in Ala.).
- Mary A., age 17 (born in Ala.).
- John A., age 23 (born in Ala.).
- Eliza Hackman, age 43 (born in Ga.).
- Sallie, age 13 (born in Ala.).
- Jonathan Hull, age 14 (born in Ala.).

1866 State Census, Autauga County, Alabama<sup>44</sup>

- William Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 60 to 70 (born 1796 to 1806) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 40 to 50 (born 1816 to 1826) *[Eliza]*
  - 1 white female, age 30 to 40 (born 1826 to 1836) *[Elizabeth]*
  - 1 white female, age 20 to 30 (born 1836 to 1846) *[Epsey]*
  - 2 white females, age 10 to 20 (born 1846 to 1856) *[Mary, Sallie]*
  - 1 soldier from household died of disease *[John]*

1870 Census, Autauga County, Alabama<sup>45</sup>

Beat No. 10. Kingston P.O. Page 24 (142B stamped). 1 Aug 1870.

Dwelling #194, Household #194.

- Bowdoin, William, age 68 (born in N.C.), "without occupation"
- Bowdoin, Elizabeth, age 37 (born in Ala.), keeping house

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<sup>43</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>44</sup> "Wm. Bowdoin" on 1866 Alabama State Census, on FamilySearch, Autauga County, Alabama, Schedule No. 1, Beat No. 8, "Alabama State Census, 1866," Image Group 004808462, Item 12, Image 10 of 88, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V6PL-8F9> (accessed 14 Sep 2014).

<sup>45</sup> See footnote 3.

- Bowdoin, Epsey, age 28 (born in Ala.), “without occupation”
- Bowdoin, Mary, age 26 (born in Ala.), “without occupation”
- Hull, Girchey, age 7 (born in Ala.), at home

1870 Census, Elmore County, Alabama

Township 19 & 20, Wetumpka P.O. Page 1 (114A stamped). 1 Aug 1870.

Dwelling #1, Household #1.<sup>46</sup>

- Cooper, Charles, age 21 (born in Ala.), occupation farmer.
- Sarah E., age 21 (born in Ala.).
- Elisa, age 2 (born in Ala.).
- Lula, age 1 (born in Ala.).
- Hackman, Elisa, age 52 (born in Ala. [sic]).

1880 Census, Elmore County, Alabama

Beat No. 9. 7 & 8 Jun 1880.

Supervisor’s District 4, Enumeration District 75, Page 14 (167B stamped).

Dwelling #120, Household #129.<sup>47</sup>

- Cooper, C. C. R, age 28 (born in Ala.), occupation farmer. Father born in S.C., mother born in Ga.
- Cooper, Sarah E., wife, age 27 (born in Ala.), keeping house.
- Cooper, Ida, daughter, age 12 (born in Ala.), at home.
- Cooper, Lula, daughter, age 10 (born in Ala.), at home.
- Cooper, William, son, age 7 (born in Ala.).
- Hackman, Eliza, mother-in-law, age 58 (born in Ga.). Both parents born in Ga.

1900 Census, Elmore County, Alabama

Precinct 9. Cold Springs.

Supervisor’s District 2, Enumeration District 69, Sheet No. 9A (82A stamped).

Dwelling #162, Household #163.<sup>48</sup>

- Cooper, Sallie, head, age 52, widow (born Jun 1847 in Alabama). 4 children born, 1 living. Occupation farmer. Father born in Germany; mother born in Georgia.
- Cooper, Nettie, daughter, age 19 (born July 1880 in Alabama). Both parents born in Alabama.

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<sup>46</sup> “Elisa Hackman” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Autauga County, Alabama, in household of Charles Cooper, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1870,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHKQ-1QQ> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>47</sup> “Eliza Hackman” on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, in household of C. C. R. Cooper, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1880,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4JF-1Z7> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

<sup>48</sup> “Eliza Hackman” on 1900 U.S. Federal Census, in household of Sallie Cooper, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1900,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M98N-JCN> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).



- Hackman, Eliza, mother, age 82, widow (born Dec 1817 in Georgia). Both parents born in North Carolina. 2 children born, 2 living.

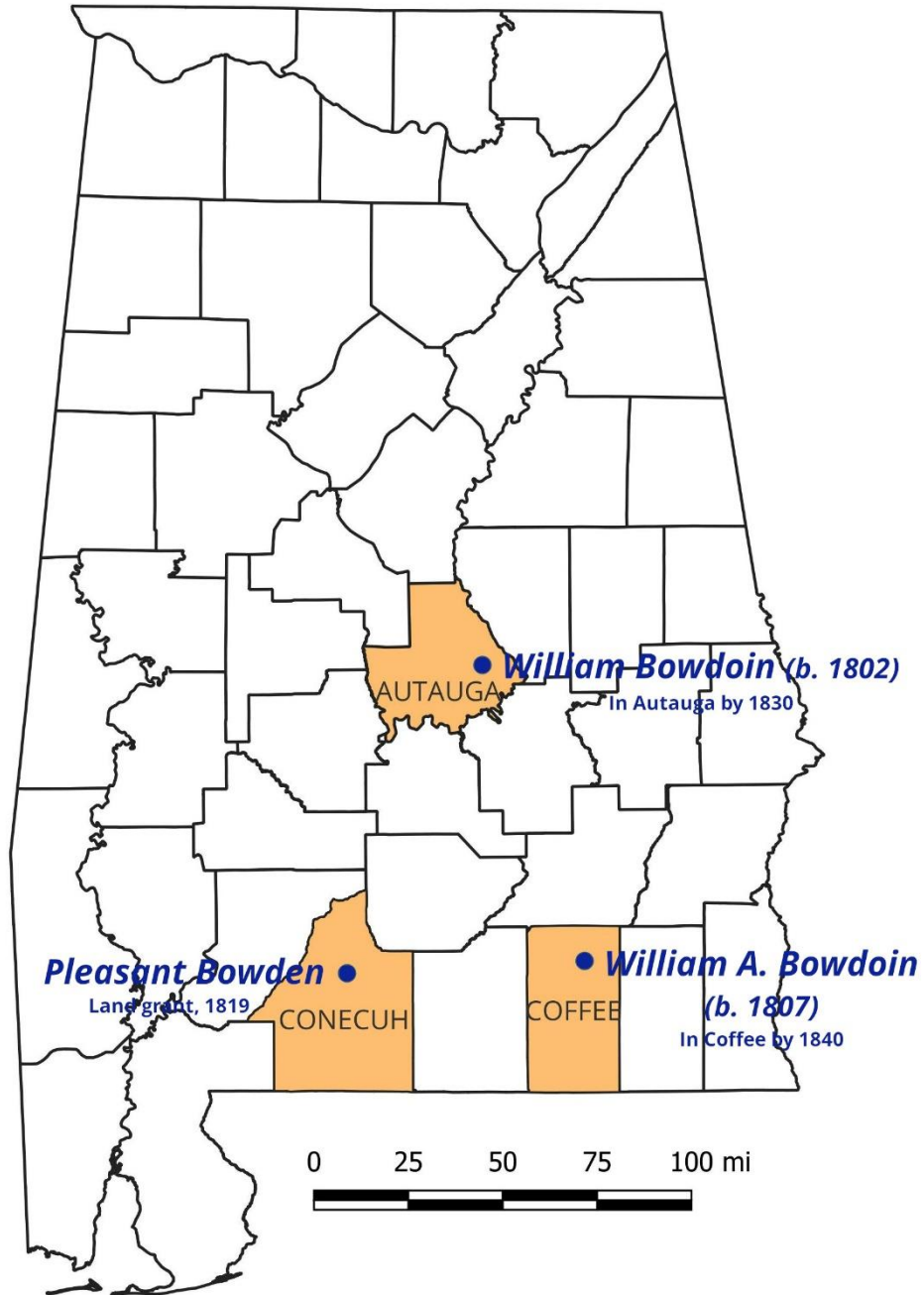


Figure 3. Alabama counties in 1842, showing early settlement of Bowdoin families.

## Common claims about the parentage of William and Eliza

To the best of my knowledge and research, I know of no definitive source that proves William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817) were the children of any known individuals. But at least two different claims about their parentage have become prevalent in online family trees. One is that they were the children of **William Bowdon** (b. ca. 1773) and **Nancy Wiggins** of Coffee County, Tennessee. The other is that they were the children of **Travis “Francis” Bowdon** (b. ca. 1750). Below I will examine both claims.

Even though these claims appear in a multiplicity of trees, the fact that both these claims appear without any definitive documentation—I have never found any, connected to any tree—indicates to me a strong likelihood that they originated not in bona fide research or reasoning, but in a misplaced trust in Ancestry’s “hint” algorithm for “potential parents”. This algorithm compounds errors, offering erroneous connections to unsuspecting novices and encouraging them to accept them and incorporate them into their trees without even the opportunity to first examine the evidence. Its suggestions are based only on the similarity of names and dates between one user’s tree and another’s, not on any intelligent consideration of records or the obvious contradictions between them. As you will see below, both these claims present obvious contradictions to our known facts.

I have been researching my genealogy since the 1990s, and even as a young researcher, I watched with growing dismay as “in the trenches” research was replaced by reliance on “little green leaves.” The availability of records offered by Ancestry and other online providers is a great boon to genealogists, but its misleading proffer of easy answers without hard research has become the bane of good research practices and documentation. I can state with some certainty that neither of these claims about the parentage of William Bowdoin was known around the year 2000 or even probably 2010. Neither appears in the now-archived International Genealogical Index or in any other published genealogical publication. Yet in the time since, they have become a “consensus” that well-meaning researchers have pronounced to me as established fact, without the ability to show any documentation in support of them. Essentially, they have become “true” because “all” the trees say they are true. Such conclusions are not sufficient. Without documentation, genealogy becomes mythology.

### William Bowdon (b. ca. 1773) of Coffee County, Tennessee

According to most online trees, **William Bowdon** was born about 1773 in Granville County, North Carolina. This precise birth date is probably predicated on the assumption that he is the grandson William named in the 1773 will of **William Bowdon** (b. 1720) of Granville County. The 1800 census recorded that this William was then between 16 and 25 years of age (born between 1775 and 1784), making that claim perhaps a stretch; but because of other connections discussed below,

it may be solid after all.<sup>49</sup> William married **Nancy Wiggins** on 23 Dec 1797 in Granville County. The marriage, at least, is documented, and it seems likely enough that this Nancy was the same Nancy Bowdon, age 74 (born about 1776 in North Carolina), who was living on the 1850 census in Coffee County, Tennessee, in the household of **G. E. (Gulielmus) Bowdon**, documented as William's son by his will. William died in Coffee County in 1842, having signed his will 21 May 1842.<sup>50</sup>

Most of the same trees identify this William Bowdon as the son of **Travis "Francis" Bowdon**, the same man to whom the second of these claims refers. This is probably correct. Travis Bowdon died in Kershaw District, South Carolina, about 1803–1805, and the presence of Travis and his children in the same county is well established by deeds. In an 18 Dec 1816 Kershaw District deed, William Bowdon, son of Travis, relinquished "all my rites and claims of the lands belonging to my father Travis Bowdon" to his brother **Robert Bowdon**.<sup>51</sup> It is soon after this that we find the first records of William Bowdon in Tennessee.<sup>52</sup> In a 13 Jan 1819 deed in Bedford County, Tennessee (one of the parent counties of Coffee County, created 1836), William Bowden purchased 195 acres of land for a sum of fifteen hundred dollars cash. William's son, G. E. (Gulielmus) Bowdon, was born in Tennessee about 1820.<sup>53</sup>

There are several reasons to think the William Bowdon who settled in Coffee County, Tennessee, is the same one who was the son of Travis Bowdon in Kershaw District, South Carolina, and the grandson of William Bowdon (b. ca. 1720) in Granville County, North Carolina. William Bowdon, in his 1773 will, made a bequest of land "to Travis Bowdon's son William Bowdown." This same will was witnessed by **Frederick Wiggins**, the father of the grandson William's future bride, Nancy

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<sup>49</sup> Granville County, North Carolina, Will Book 1, page 51–52, will of William Bowdon, 8 Jul 1773, on FamilySearch, Image Group 007653486, Image 73–74 of 574, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C956-FS7C-Z>; "William Bowden" on 1800 U.S. Federal Census, Kershaw District, South Carolina, page 161, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1800," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH5R-889> (accessed 15 Sep 2024). The 1830 census showed him to be 50 and 60 years old, i.e., born between 1770 and 1780. "Wm. Bowden" 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Bedford County, Tennessee, page 72, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH5S-2Q8>.

<sup>50</sup> Coffee County, Tennessee, Will Book 1 (1836–1859), 145, will of William Bowden, on FamilySearch, "Coffee County, Tennessee, Wills, 1836–1859," Image Group 004776229, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-2Y7K-Q9> (accessed 6 Sep 2024).

<sup>51</sup> Kershaw County, South Carolina, Deed Book H, page 99, William Bowdon to Robert Bowdon, 18 Dec 1816, on FamilySearch, Deeds, 1813–1822, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PY-46TQ> (accessed 4 Sep 2024).

<sup>52</sup> U. Bowdoin Marsh does not identify this William Bowdon as the son of Travis Bowdon of Kershaw District, South Carolina, and indeed does not seem to have been aware of this William who went to Coffee County, Tennessee, at all. He identified William, the son of Travis of Kershaw, with the William Bowden who died in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, about 1827—and also identified that William as his own ancestor. On both counts, he was probably incorrect, as I will show below. See Marsh, 29–30.

<sup>53</sup> FamilySearch, Bedford County, Tennessee, Deed books and index, 1808–1966: Deeds, v. J–N, Jul 1818–Oct 1821, Film #476353, Image Group #008150798, Images 324–325, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSKX-S3RV-2> (accessed 29 Aug 2024); "G. E. Bowdon" on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDC-Q7W>.

Wiggins, as well as **Thomas Wiggins**, Frederick's father. Though the grandson William was then only an infant, the connection between the Bowdon and Wiggins families had already been forged. Second, the older children of William Bowdon of Coffee County were born in South Carolina, where Travis Bowdon had been and where this William should have been prior to Tennessee. **Sarah (Bowdon) Barton**, claimed in online trees as the daughter of William Bowdon, and a resident of Coffee County in 1850 and 1860, is documented on those censuses as having been born in South Carolina about 1802.<sup>54</sup> On the entry for G. E. Bowdon on the 1850 census of Coffee County, a William Davidson, age twenty-five, born in Tennessee, was living in the household. Perhaps not coincidentally, a John Davidson was a witness to William Bowdon's 1819 deed in Kershaw County, South Carolina, and a Ransom Davidson was a witness to the will of William's son **Frederick Wiggins Bowdon** in 1848.<sup>55</sup> G. E. Bowdon also named a daughter with the full name **Nancy Wiggins Bowden** (1847–1935), as documented by her Texas death certificate.<sup>56</sup>

There are also several clear reasons to conclude this William Bowdon was *not* the father of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817) of Autauga County, Alabama. First, this William Bowdon had another son named William Bowdon, who was listed alongside him on the 1840 census in Coffee County, aged 20 to 30 (born between 1810 and 1820).<sup>57</sup> Second, since this William had a daughter born in South Carolina about 1802, it is unlikely, even if not for the other William, that he would have had a son born in *North* Carolina in 1802. Third, this William is documented in South Carolina as late as December 1816, and in Tennessee by January 1819. Though there is no reason why he could not have had a brief interlude in Georgia to have a daughter born December 1817, there is also no evidence that he did. None of William's children of record were born in Georgia. Eliza was not named in William's will or any estate record.

When Eliza Bowdoin married Henry Hackman on 28 Jan 1838 in Autauga County, Alabama, some researchers have insisted that it was her father, not her brother, who testified that he had no objection to the marriage. But if this William Bowdon (b. 1773) were her father, then there is no

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<sup>54</sup> "Sarah S. Bowden," on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LZRL-WKB> (accessed 29 Aug 2024); "S. S. Barton" on "United States Census, 1850," FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDH-JCT>; "Sarah Barton" on "United States Census, 1860," FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8TT-CRY>.

<sup>55</sup> "G. E. Bowdon" on 1850 U.S. Census, *ibid.*; will of F. W. Bowdon, in FamilySearch, "Tennessee Probate Court Files, 1795–1955," Coffee County Probate Court case files, 1836–1972, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939L-8R95-Q6> (Image 256 of 3177) (accessed 29 Aug 2024).

<sup>56</sup> "Nancy Wiggins Bowden" on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/MZJR-1LJ> (accessed 29 Aug 2024); "Nancy Wiggins Hunt" in "Texas Deaths, 1890–1976," FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K3HM-8Q8>.

<sup>57</sup> "William Bowden" on "United States Census, 1840," FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHTK-MQB> (accessed 29 Aug 2024). It is tantalizing, at least, and perhaps might explain some of the interest in this theory, that this William Bowden "Jr." lived "next door" to two men named *Redding* in 1840, *William Redding* and *John Redding*, with a *Joseph Redding* four entries down. Our William Bowdoin (b. 1802) named a son *Reding* or *Reddin*. But I have seen more than a few cases of *Redding* families living alongside *Bowden* families that proved to be mere coincidence.

reason to place him, or for that matter his daughter, in Autauga County in 1838. This William Bowdon consistently appeared on the tax list in Coffee County, Tennessee, every year from 1836 to 1840, until his death in 1842. Our William Bowdoin (b. 1802) was already in Alabama by 1824 and appeared on the census in Autauga County in both 1830 and 1840. No record indicates any connection between either William or Eliza and anyone in Coffee County, Tennessee.

Finally, we do have DNA matches to descendants of this family, several of them. But we have several *hundred* DNA matches to descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), brother of Travis, as discussed later in this paper.

## Travis “Francis” Bowdon (b. ca. 1750)

As discussed above, **Travis “Francis” Bowdon** was the son of the elder **William Bowdon** (b. ca. 1720, d. 1773). Travis was born perhaps around 1750 in Virginia and is named as a son in William’s 1773 will. Travis came with his father to Granville County, North Carolina, around 1762, and received his own land grant in Granville County on 24 Sep 1779. He appeared on a 1786 tax list in Henderson District, Granville County, and likely would have been found there on the lost 1790 Granville County census. Travis Bowdon most likely had no middle name but had the name “Francis” incorrectly attached to him because of incorrect transcriptions of the name “Travis” as “Francis”.<sup>58</sup>

Travis Bowdon moved to Kershaw District, South Carolina, between 1790 and 1800, and died there about 1803–1805. At least two insurmountable problems for our consideration of him as the father of William (b. 1802) should immediately be apparent. First, Travis already had a son named William—the one discussed in the section above—and would not have had another one born in 1802. Even if he had, he was living in South Carolina in 1802 when our William was born, not North Carolina where William was born. Second, Travis died some twelve to fourteen years before Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817) was born.

Neither of the “consensus” claims for the parentage of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817) stands up to basic scrutiny. With these dismissed, we are still no closer to solving the problem, but at least we can know that these are not the answers. We are back to where we started, with no records to trace William Bowdoin beyond Alabama and few if any leads. Where can we go from here? Until the development of DNA genealogy, we faced a brick wall. With this new tool in hand, is it possible to move forward?

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<sup>58</sup> I refer to this phenomenon of attaching additional names due to errors or conflation as “name creep.” <https://jtrichardson.com/name-creep>.

## New directions from DNA

Y-DNA and autosomal DNA are two different major types of DNA genealogy that offer different perspectives and focuses. Below, I will highlight what can be gleaned from both types in the search for the ancestors of William Bowdoin (b. 1802).

### Y-DNA

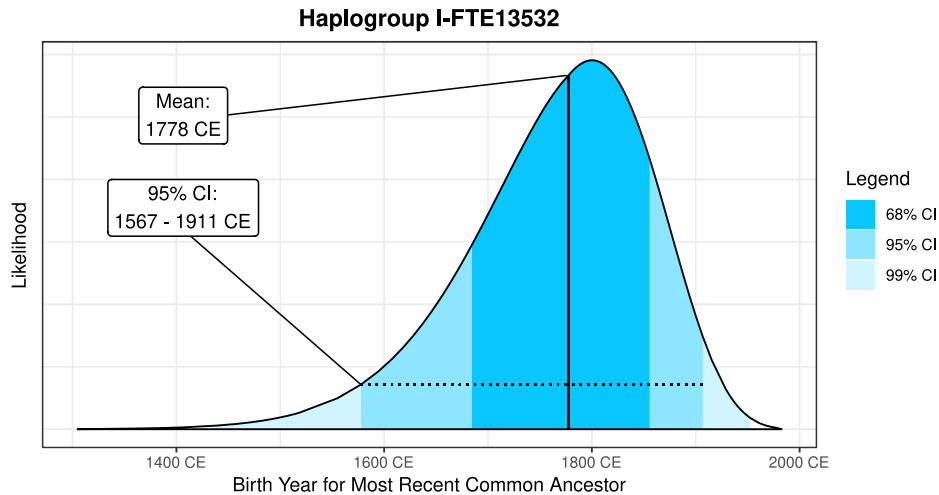
The most crucial new direction to come from DNA genealogy comes from Y-DNA, the DNA of the male Y chromosome. Y-DNA has the unique ability to trace a paternal line through many generations with little or no degradation. But to test it, one needs a direct, patrilineal-line descendant, a man named Bowdoin who was the son of a Bowdoin.

My heartfelt thanks go to two men who tested their Y-DNA: “W.B.,” a man from my line, a descendant of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and his son Reddin Read Bowdoin, and “D.B.,” a descendant of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) through his son James Bowdoin (b. 1764), ancestor of the Bowdoins of Coffee County, Alabama.

Tester	Genetic Distance	Paternal line
W.B.	3	William Bowdoin (b. 1802 N.C., d. 1870 Autauga, Ala.) > Reddin Read Bowdoin (b. 1831, d. 1877 Autauga-Elmore, Ala.) > William Berry Bowdoin (b. 1855, d. 1915 Autauga-Elmore, Ala.)
D.B.	Haplogroup I-FTE13532	William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740 Va., d. 1821 Conecuh, Ala.) > James Bowdoin (b. ca. 1764 Granville, N.C., d. aft. 1830 Monroe, Ga.) > William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1786 Granville, N.C., d. ca. 1865 Monroe, Ga.) > Turner Bowdoin (b. ca. 1812 Putnam, Ga., d. ca. 1878 Smith, Texas)

Figure 4. Bowdoin Y-DNA matches and their paternal lines.

The Y-DNA test brings a major breakthrough, proving scientifically that these two men share the same paternal line. Two separate Y-DNA tests both indicate that W.B. and D.B. share a genealogically recent common ancestor. The Y-111 test, a test based on STR (Short Tandem Repeat) markers, a type of genetic variation that occurs at a probabilistically predictable rate, shows that W.B. and D.B. have three STR differences out of 111 tested markers, called their Genetic Distance (GD). Based on the divergent STRs’ mutation rates, the test estimates that their



Statistic*	Years Before Present	Calendar Date
99% CI	599 - 68	1425 - 1956 CE
95% CI	457 - 113	1567 - 1911 CE
68% CI	339 - 168	1685 - 1856 CE
Mean	246	1778 CE

\* CI is the Confidence Interval for a given time range and Mean is the expected date.

**Figure 5.** Time to most recent common ancestor (TMRCA) estimate between “W.B.” and “D.B.” based on Y-111 test. (Family Tree DNA)

common paternal ancestor was born about 1755. Independently, the Big Y-700 test places both men in the Y-DNA haplogroup **I-FTE13532**, and estimates that their common ancestor was born about 1778 (see Figure 5).<sup>59</sup> The Big Y, based on both SNPs (Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms), a

<sup>59</sup> The haplogroup I-FTE13532 is a descendant of the broad, ancient haplogroup **I-M253** (I1) and a series of successors. I-M253 is one of the oldest and largest haplogroups in Europe, with most descendants concentrated in northern Europe. It is especially associated with Scandinavia and Norse ancestry, and also had many descendants among the Germanic tribes. Maciamo Hay, “Haplogroup I1 (Y-DNA),” Eupedia.com, [https://www.eupedia.com/europe/Haplogroup\\_I1\\_Y-DNA.shtml](https://www.eupedia.com/europe/Haplogroup_I1_Y-DNA.shtml) (accessed 29 Aug 2024); “I-FTB80215,” Family Tree DNA Discover™ Haplogroup Report, <https://discover.familytreedna.com/y-dna/I-FTE13532/story> (accessed 20 Nov 2024).

rarer and more permanent type of mutation than STR, and as many as 700 additional STRs, is the most advanced and predictive Y-DNA test available today.

So who is the common ancestor? Since the Y-DNA of both men matches, and both are named Bowdoin, we can be sure, first of all, that William Bowdoin's father was indeed a Bowdoin; he was not illegitimate, as must always be a consideration in cases of unknown parentage. The newest time-to-most-recent-ancestor (TMRCA) estimate from the Big Y—which was released in November 2024, just as this paper was coming to press—gives a date of 1778 as the most likely year for the birth date of the common ancestor between W.B. and D.B. A date this late suggests that the common ancestor could well have been one of D.B.'s more recent common ancestors, **James Bowdoin (b. ca. 1764)** or even **William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1786)**—in which case one of these men would likely have been the father of William (b. 1802). For several reasons, both these possibilities are unlikely. First of all, both men have other documented sons named William Bowdoin. William (b.1786)'s son was William A. Bowdoin (b. ca. 1807), the early settler of Coffee County, Alabama, and possible Methodist minister mentioned earlier. He likely was too young to have had a son born in 1802, and did not marry his wife until 1806. And James's son was William (b. 1786). James and his wife Priscilla were both too old to have been the parents of Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817), and had no more children born after about 1803. James's next oldest son after William (b. 1786), John (b. 1790), was doubtless also too young to have been the father of William (b. 1802).

If neither James (b. 1764) nor William (b. 1786) was the common ancestor, the late TMRCA date makes it nearly certain that the common ancestor was the next one in line, James's father, **William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740)**. The TMRCA estimate is based on a statistical confidence interval, meaning that the peak, the average date of 1778, is the most likely date, and that coming down the bell curve from the peak in either direction, the likelihood decreases, but at the same time, the confidence interval widens, meaning that we have increasing confidence that the actual date occurs somewhere in that interval. I draw the analogy of a plane crash investigation, when investigators are searching for a downed plane's wreckage. They draw a map with concentric circles, with the plane's last known location, where they consider the wreckage most likely to be, at the very center. With each surrounding circle, there is greater confidence that the plane must be somewhere within that area but decreasing likelihood of finding it in that location.

Based on the Y-DNA, it is conceivable, but much less likely, that the common ancestor between W.B. and D.B. was the father of William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740), William Bowdon (b. ca. 1720). Of this William's descendants, I have already shown that William (b. 1802) was not the son of either Travis Bowdon (b. ca. 1750) or his son William (b. ca. 1773). The elder William (b. 1720) had only one other son, John Bowdon (b. ca. 1739), who himself had only one surviving son, John Jr. (b.



ca. 1787)—who was too young to be the father of William (b. 1802).<sup>60</sup> The opportunities for William’s parentage rapidly diminish.<sup>61</sup>

The other factor that, combined with the Y-DNA, points strongly to William Bowdoin (b. 1740) as the ancestor of William (b. 1802) is the very high number of autosomal DNA matches between descendants of William (b. 1802) and descendants of William (b. 1740), which I will explore in the next section.

## Autosomal DNA

Autosomal DNA is the DNA that makes up all the rest of the human chromosomes, other than the X and Y sex chromosomes. A person receives autosomal DNA from *all* of their ancestors, both paternal and maternal sides, with a child receiving about half of his or her autosomal DNA from each of his or her parents, about a quarter from each grandparent, 12.5% from each great-grandparent, and so on. So the amount of DNA received from each ancestor divides by about half with each successive generation.

My grandfather, Robert P. Richardson, was the great-great-grandson of William Bowdoin (b. 1802)—four generations separated from him. In theory, he should have on average about 6.25% of William’s DNA, and about 3.125% each of William’s parents’. This relationship should be comparable to that of a second cousin (2C) to William Bowdoin (b. 1802)—for whom the genetic distance would also be four degrees of separation (two generations “up” to a common ancestor, and two generations “down” to a second cousin). According to estimates compiled by the DNA Detectives Facebook group, second cousins would share between 75 and 360 centimorgans (cM) of DNA, an average 224 cM. This is consistent with the findings of the Shared cM Project Version 4.0 by Blaine Bettinger of *The Genetic Genealogist*, whose compilations of matching samples “in the wild” place a second cousin at between 41 and 592 cM shared, an average 229 cM.<sup>62</sup> All of this is to say that my grandfather, “R.P.R.,” is likely to have a significant

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<sup>60</sup> Warren County, N.C., original wills, will of John Bowdon (1823), on FamilySearch, “Warren County, N.C., Wills and estate papers, 1663–1978,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9GC-F6TF> (accessed 19 Nov 2024); FamilySearch, “North Carolina Estate Files, 1663-1979,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-LJ3>, John Bowden Sr. (1826); “John Bowdon” (b. 1787) on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Warren County, North Carolina, FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4B2-G34> (accessed 19 Nov 2024).

<sup>61</sup> Additional Y-DNA testing of more Bowden-Bowdon-Bowdoin descendants would be helpful in researching this family. As the administrator of the Bowden DNA project at Family Tree DNA, I invite any direct-male-line descendant to test. Bowden Surname DNA Project, <https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/bowden/>.


<sup>62</sup> Leah Larkin, “The Limits of Predicting Relationships Using DNA,” *The DNA Geek*, 19 Dec 2016 (updated 14 Oct 2022), <https://thednageek.com/the-limits-of-predicting-relationships-using-dna/> (accessed 30 Aug 2024); Blaine T. Bettinger, “Shared CM Project Version 4.0,” *The Genetic Genealogist*, 27 Mar 2020, <https://thegeneticgenealogist.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Shared-cM-Project-Version-4.pdf> (accessed 30 Aug 2024).

amount of Bowdoin DNA, more than any other person in our family who is known to have had their DNA tested.

And in fact, he does. I have catalogued over 120 autosomal DNA matches between my grandfather and other descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Emily Elizabeth Cooper on AncestryDNA. The largest identified match between R.P.R. and a descendant from a different child of William Bowdoin (as opposed to his closer relatives, descendants of Reddin Read Bowdoin and Ann Elizabeth Caroline Green) registers at 77 cM on Ancestry.

Beyond that, I have catalogued over 500 matches between R.P.R. and descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) of Randolph County, North Carolina—an overwhelming number—with as many as eight matches in the 50 to 75 cM range. Even beyond this, I have catalogued a dozen matches to descendants of other lines from William Bowdon (b. 1720), the father of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), including four matches from Travis Bowdon.

And these matches are not limited to Robert, my grandfather. Most (about 80 percent) of R.P.R.'s matching cousins from William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Reddin Bowdoin his son, have shared matches to many of the same descendants of William (b. 1740), forming a tight cluster that I have observed and catalogued with the use of Ancestry's "Pro Tools." With this many matches, shared between so many descendants of William (b. 1802), and completely dominated by matches with descendants of William (b. 1740), I can declare with complete, unflinching confidence that **William Bowdoin (b. 1802) was a descendant of William Bowdoin (b. 1740).**

The  icon, used in family group listings throughout the remainder of the paper, denotes that my grandfather, R.P.R., has one or more DNA matches to descendants of this family.

And with that realization, we turn our attention to what is known of the Bowdoin family of Granville County, North Carolina: first to William Bowdon (b. 1720) and then to his son, William Bowdoin (b. 1740).

## William Bowdon (b. ca. 1720)

Let me begin by admitting that the parenthetical titles I have applied to both William Bowdoin, “b. 1720” and “b. 1740”—are complete fibs. These are the dates commonly attached to these men on the Internet, but I have little confidence that especially the elder William Bowdon was actually born “*circa* 1720.” He probably was somewhat older than this, I would guess born between 1710 and 1720—but even this is just a guess, not based on any record at all.

But my presumption is that the elder **William Bowdon** came from Virginia.<sup>63</sup> A North Carolina land grant in the name of William Bowden, for 700 acres in Granville County, North Carolina, “on both sides of Haw Tree Creek,” was surveyed 21 November 1761 and issued 1 March 1762.<sup>64</sup> William first appears in Granville County deeds in November 1760.<sup>65</sup>

William Bowdon probably married his wife, **Elizabeth** or “**Betty**,” in Virginia. Internet trees universally hold her to be **Elizabeth Travis**. So far as I have found, there is no definite documentation of this as her maiden name. Bowdoin Marsh suggested that *Travis* was a family name, but did not presume specifically that Elizabeth was a Travis, instead placing the probable Travis connection a generation earlier, with the mother of William Bowdon.<sup>66</sup> In the time since, the “Internet” presumption has settled on Betty. It is a fact that the name *Travis* as a given name recurs in the Bowdoin family from this generation forward, so it is possible, but not proven, that Betty was a Travis.

William Bowdon the elder (b. ca. 1720) made his will in Granville County on 8 July 1773 and died soon after, the will being probated in the August Court.<sup>67</sup> The will, very helpfully, states explicitly that William had only three sons. These three sons and one daughter are named in the will:

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<sup>63</sup> The claim, found frequently in online trees, that William Bowdon was born in the “Delmarva Peninsula” of Virginia or Maryland is based in turn on the claim that he was the son of John Bowdoin of Northampton County, Virginia, the son of John Bowdoin (1674–1717) and grandson of Peter (Pierre) Bowdoin (1640–1706), the French Huguenot immigrant and ancestor of the famous Bowdoin of Massachusetts and Maine. These claims were expounded by Bowdoin Marsh (see Marsh, [21–34](#)). Both claims are unproven.

<sup>64</sup> Granville warrant dated 12 Oct 1761 (MARS 12.12.26.29); Granville deed no. 66, Box SSLG 33E (MARS 12.33.33.20); file no. 80, but no loose documents in shuck at time of filming; North Carolina Land Patent Book 11, page 322, grant no. 66, entry 1 Mar 1762; all available on *North Carolina Land Grants and Image Data*, NCLandGrants.com, <https://nclandgrants.com/> (accessed 30 Aug 2024).

<sup>65</sup> Granville County, North Carolina, Deed Book D, 196–197, John Hawkins to William Bowdon Senr., 8 Nov 1760, on FamilySearch, “Granville County, North Carolina, Deeds, 1760–1762,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9C5-D94Q> (Image 158 of 370).

<sup>66</sup> Marsh, [32](#), [38](#).

<sup>67</sup> Granville County, North Carolina, Will Book 1, page 51–52, will of William Bowdon, 8 Jul 1773, on FamilySearch, Image Group 007653486, Image 73–74 of 574, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C956-FS7C-Z> (accessed 15 Sep 2024).

1. **John Bowdon.**  Said to be b. ca. 1739; went to Warren County, N.C.
2. **William Bowdon.**  i.e. William Bowdoin, b. ca. 1740 (see next section).
3. **Travis Bowdon.**  i.e. Travis “Francis” Bowdon, b. ca. 1750 (as above).
4. **Sarah (Bowdon) Nichols.**  Married William Nichols; d. 1800 in Wake, N.C.<sup>68</sup>

In addition, the will leaves land to a grandson, “Travis Bowdon’s son William Bowdown,” as discussed in a previous section. These children were all born roughly between 1740 and 1750.

Next, I will narrow my focus to the son of William Bowdoin the elder, William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740). In the sections that follow, I will continue to use the current, “b. 1720” and “b. 1740” parentheticals to refer to both father and son, mainly as a convenient shorthand, to distinguish between all the many Williams I am writing about. After the first few times, I will dispense with the tedious “*circa*.”

## William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740)

**William Bowdoin** the younger was born probably fairly close to *circa* 1740. With this date, we are on somewhat firmer footing than with William’s father. Having children born about 1764, William the son could not have been born much later than 1745; and living until 1821, he probably was not born much earlier than 1740. He likely was born in Virginia and came to Granville County, North Carolina, with his parents, around 1760.

William probably married soon after coming to Granville County. There is no surviving record of his marriage. U. Bowdoin Marsh, writing in 1982, did not know of a maiden name for William’s wife, but stated that she was named Mary, born about 1748 and married about 1766. In the time since, the “Internet orthodoxy” has established that the wife of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) was “**Martha Elizabeth Macon.**” This is almost certainly a case of “name creep,” the conflation of two different names into one person. In the archived records of the International Genealogical Index, I find entries both for William’s wife as “Elizabeth Macon” and as “Martha,” no maiden name. Clearly, at some point in the Internet age, some genealogist—rather than rightly concluding that these records were inconsistent—supposed that since both records referred to the same person, she must have been named “Martha Elizabeth Macon.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Wake County, North Carolina, Original Wills, Sarah Nichols, 1800, on Ancestry.com, “North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665–1998,”

[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007640328\\_01191](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007640328_01191) (accessed 5 Sep 2024)

<sup>69</sup> What remains of the International Genealogical Index can be searched on FamilySearch at <https://www.familysearch.org/search/genealogies>. Unfortunately, this archive does not preserve the submission dates of the family trees it contains. For my article on “name creep,” see <https://jtrichardson.com/name-creep>.

But Bowdoin Marsh had some reason for stating that William's wife was named Mary, so I dug into the deeds of Granville County, and indeed, discovered the 1786 deed where William Bowdoin's wife was clearly named as **Mary M. Bowdon**.<sup>70</sup> This plausibly could have

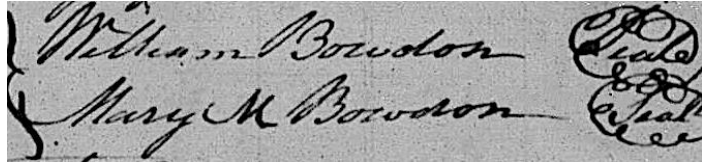


Figure 6. Copied signatures from 1786 Granville County, North Carolina deed, where William Bowdoin's wife is shown as Mary M. Bowdon.

been **Mary Macon**, but I find no definite proof of it. A published genealogy of the Macon family, *Gideon Macon of Virginia and Some of His Descendants: Allied Families* by Alethea Jane Macon (1956; revised by Jarvis Wood, 1979), knew of both **John Macon** who married **Elizabeth Bowdoin** and **Gideon "Thomas" Macon** who married **Mary Bowdoin**, both daughters of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), but did not know of a Macon married to these girls' father. The 1761 will of **Gideon "Hunt" Macon** in Granville County—to whom many online trees attach William's wife—names a daughter Mary, but Alethea Jane Macon has this Mary marrying James Johnson and moving to Warren County, which is apparently well established.<sup>71</sup> In the end, I do not know on what basis it was claimed in the first place that William Bowdoin's wife was a Macon, so I do not know where to look to support it or reject it. This is a connection that needs to be proved and not assumed.

Many family trees give the middle name "Macon" to several of William's children, e.g., Josiah *Macon* Bowdoin, Pleasant *Macon* Bowdoin; but these middle names are not supported by primary sources and may have been presumed after the fact once it was supposed their mother was a Macon. The appearance of these names should not be taken as support for Mary being a Macon.

William Bowdoin furnished supplies to the Continental Army during the American Revolution, and is accepted as a patriot by the Daughters of the American Revolution.<sup>72</sup> A legend is passed down about William's middle daughter, Martha, who is told to have turned loose the horses of a

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<sup>70</sup> Granville County, North Carolina, Deed Book O, 494, William Bowdon to John Moss, 26 Dec 1786, on FamilySearch, "Granville County, North Carolina, Deeds, 1779–1790," Image Group 007416755, Image 399 of 524, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89C5-ZS5F>, also Image Group 007513648, Image 510 or 668, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G98Y-696S> (accessed 15 Sep 2024).

<sup>71</sup> Alethea Jane Macon, *Gideon Macon of Virginia and Some of His Descendants: Allied Families*, revised and edited in 1979 by Jarvis Wood (Jacksonville, Fla.: A. J. Wood Jr., 1981; originally published 1956), 13–18, 33, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/115203> (accessed 17 Sep 2024). The original 1956 edition of Alethea Jane Macon's book, which contains only oblique mentions of possible Bowden connections to the Macon family, is also available on FamilySearch: Alethea Jane Macon, *Gideon Macon of Virginia and Some of His Descendants: Allied Families* (Macon, Georgia: J. W. Burk, 1956), <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/174411> (accessed 17 Sep 2024). For the will of Gideon "Hunt" Macon, see Granville County, North Carolina, Wills, 1746–1771, Will of Gideon Macon, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89GW-YNJ6> (Image 458 of 624) (accessed 2 Sep 2024).

<sup>72</sup> North Carolina Treasury and Comptroller, Revolutionary War Army Accounts, Hillsborough District, vol. C, 138, at State Archives of North Carolina, S.115.45. William Bowdoin is DAR Ancestor #A012655.

band of British soldiers who stopped at her father's house and demanded food and water, thus foiling their immediate military objectives.<sup>73</sup>

Around 1788, William Bowdoin moved from Granville County to Randolph County, North Carolina. He appears to be the same William Bowdon who attended the Hillsborough Convention, the first of two North Carolina conventions to debate ratification of the new U.S. Constitution, as a delegate from Randolph County, in July and August 1788.<sup>74</sup> This was not, as Bowdoin Marsh wrote and as has been repeated, a convention “to establish a seat of government of North Carolina and to draw up the state constitution.” North Carolina already had a state capital at New Bern, and North Carolina's first state constitution, which stood until 1835, had been adopted in December 1776.<sup>75</sup>

I have found no evidence at all to suggest that William Bowdoin (b. 1740) was a minister or a reverend. Like my own William (b. 1802), this title has attached itself to William Bowdoin in many online trees without evidence or substantiation. In this case, I believe I have found the probable origin of the rumor. An 1895 biographical sketch of **Joshua W. Bowdoin** (b. 1832), great-grandson of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), stated that “the great-grandfather of the subject of this sketch was a Presbyterian minister and settled in Virginia.” Never mind that it named that great-grandfather

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<sup>73</sup> The story is told—each time incorrectly identifying Martha as *Mary* Bowden—in several biographical sketches of the Odell family, which Martha married into. See “John Milton Odell” in Samuel A. Ashe, *Biographical History of North Carolina, from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. 2 (Greensboro, N.C.: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1905), 315–319, at 316; <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/reader/viewer/173450/448>; “James Alexander Odell” in R.D.W. Conner, *North Carolina: Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth*, vol. 3 (Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1928), 35–36, at 35, on HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31822019601111>.

<sup>74</sup> If Mary Bowdoin, wife of William Bowdoin, were indeed the daughter of Gideon “Hunt” Macon, she would be the sister of Nathaniel Macon, who served in the North Carolina Senate in 1781, 1782, and 1784 (one-year terms) and would later serve in the U.S. House of Representatives (1791–1815) and U.S. Senate (1815–1827). Macon was an ardent opponent of the U.S. Constitution of 1787 and of a strong federal government throughout his career. This raises an interesting possibility concerning William Bowdoin's involvement in politics at the Hillsborough Convention: could he have been influenced to participate by his Macon connections? In any case, even if his wife were not a Macon, William's daughter Elizabeth had married John Macon, a first cousin of Nathaniel, in 1786, and his daughter Mary would marry John's brother Gideon about 1788–1789. Nathaniel Macon did not attend either the Hillsborough Convention or the later Fayetteville Convention, which ratified the Constitution. For more on Nathaniel Macon, see “Nathaniel Macon” on Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel\\_Macon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Macon).

<sup>75</sup> The name of William Bowdon appears in the official records of the convention. Walter Clark, ed., *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, vol. 22 (Goldsboro, N.C.: Nash Brothers, 1907; reprint Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot, 1994), available at FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.org/library/books/reader/viewer/1/275455>; at the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/staterecordsofno221nort>; transcribed at *Documenting the American South*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.php/document/csr22-0001>. The convention records are on pp. 1–35, with Bowdon's name appearing three times, in the opening list of delegates (3) and roll call (4), and in a petition to move the state capital and future conventions to Fayetteville (35). Bowdon is not on record as having voted either “yay” or “nay” for the Constitution. For an overview of the convention (which lists William Bowdon as a delegate from Randolph County), see “Hillsborough Convention,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough\\_Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough_Convention). Of the state constitution and capital, see “Constitution of North Carolina,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution\\_of\\_North\\_Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_North_Carolina); “New Bern, North Carolina,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Bern,\\_North\\_Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Bern,_North_Carolina) (accessed 30 Aug 2024). New Bern was the first permanent capital of North Carolina, from 1770 until 1792.

“John Bowdoin” and is otherwise the stuff of embellished family legend. I suspect that some well-meaning genealogist seized on this legend, labeled William Bowdoin a “Rev.” without bothering to cite the source (some of the same trees identify him as “Rev. John William Bowdoin”), and it has trailed him ever since.<sup>76</sup>

William Bowdoin and his wife had eight known children, five sons of whom survived him, as named in a lengthy estate lawsuit (discussed below). All were probably born in Granville County:

1. **James Bowdoin**, born about 1764 in Granville County, North Carolina; died after 1840 in Monroe County, Georgia. Married 29 Oct 1785 in Granville County (bond date) to **Priscilla Williams**.<sup>77</sup> 
2. **Elizabeth (Betsy) Bowdoin**, born perhaps about 1766 in Granville County, North Carolina; died about 1804 in Randolph County, North Carolina. Married **John Macon** 3 Jan 1786 in Granville County (bond date). 
3. **Martha (Patsy) Bowdoin**, born 13 Nov 1768 in Granville County, North Carolina; died 1800 in Randolph County. Married **Isaac Odell**, probably about 1790. 
4. **John Bowdoin**, born around 1770 in Granville County, North Carolina; died about 1850 in Richmond County, North Carolina. Married probably around 1802 in Richmond County, but no record found of wife’s name. 
5. **Travis Bowdoin**, born probably about 1772 in Granville County, North Carolina; died after 1860, probably in Graves County, Kentucky. Married around 1790 in Randolph County, to a woman named **Betsy**. 
6. **Mary (Molly) Bowdoin**, born perhaps about 1773 in Granville County, North Carolina; died around 1810 in Randolph County, North Carolina. Married **Gideon “Thomas” Macon** about 1788 in Granville County, North Carolina. 
7. **Josiah Bowdoin**, born about 1780 in Granville County, North Carolina; died about 1857 in Meriwether County, Georgia. Married (1) about 1800–1801 in Randolph County, North Carolina, wife unknown; (2) **Nancy Freeman**, 12 Nov 1826 in Henry County, Georgia; (3) **Nancy Spencer**, 5 Apr 1831 in Jasper County, Georgia. 
8. **Pleasant Bowdoin**, born about 1785 in Granville County, North Carolina; died about 1851 in Montgomery County, Alabama. Married (1) probably around 1810 in North Carolina, wife unknown; (2) 20 Mar 1844 in Montgomery County, Alabama, **Mrs. Charlotte (Butler) Williams**. 

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<sup>76</sup> “Joshua W. Bowdoin” in *Memoirs of Georgia*, vol. 1 (Atlanta: Southern Historical Association, 1895), 288, at HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89072986672>. For what it is worth, my Elmore County Bowdoins were Methodists, as were the Coffee County Bowdoins.

<sup>77</sup> I disagree with Bowdoin Marsh’s identifications of the sons of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) James and Josiah. He identified both sons as younger men (born about 1804 and 1805, respectively), who were living in North Carolina as late as the 1880s. The James who I connect to William (b. 1740), James (b. 1764), was Marsh’s ancestor, whom he connected to a different William Bowden. See Marsh, [35–38](#), [45–49](#), and my section below, “Identification of William Bowdoin’s sons James and Josiah.”

The name of William Bowdon appeared on the 1790 and 1800 censuses in Randolph County:

1790 Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>78</sup>

William Bowdown

- 1 male, 16 and over (born before 1774)     *[William Bowdoin]*
- 3 males, under 16 (born after 1774)     *[Josiah, Pleasant, other uncertain<sup>79</sup>]*
- 2 females     *[wife of William; other unknown<sup>80</sup>]*
- 5 slaves

1800 Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>81</sup>

William Bowdon

- 2 males, 45 and over (born before 1755)     *[William; second unknown]*
- 1 female, 45 and over     *[wife of William]*
- 2 males, 16 to 25 (born 1775–1784)     *[Josiah; unknown]*
- 1 female, 16 to 25     *[unknown]*
- 1 male, 10 to 15 (born 1785 to 1790)     *[Pleasant]*
- 9 slaves

All Bowdoins are curiously missing from the 1810 Randolph County census. But William appeared on the 1815 tax list in Randolph County.<sup>82</sup>

1815 Tax List, Randolph County, North Carolina

Capt. Laurence's District [in southeastern part of county]

- William Bowdown  
224 acres on Deep River. Valued at \$600. 6 black polls.

Around the year 1818 or 1819, William Bowdoin moved to Georgia, where at least two of his sons had already gone. While in Georgia, around 1819, he married (2) **Mary** (maiden name unknown). About 1820, he continued his move to Conecuh County, Alabama, where his son Pleasant had

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<sup>78</sup> "William Bowdown" on 1790 U.S. Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, page 289, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1790," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKB-1VD> (Image 170 of 601).

<sup>79</sup> James and Travis were both listed on the 1790 census in Randolph County as heads of household. John was probably not married in 1790, but should have been over 16 years old, if my estimates from later censuses are correct (see John's section in later text). Conceivably, John's age on the 1830 census could have been exaggerated slightly, and this could be him in 1790, if he were actually born about 1774 instead of about 1770.

<sup>80</sup> I originally supposed this second female was Molly, but Gideon Macon was listed on the 1790 census in Randolph as a head of household, with one male over 16 and 2 females; so it appears Molly was already married. See "Gideon Macon" on 1790 U.S. Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, page 291, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKB-12F>, and Molly's section below.

<sup>81</sup> "William Bowdon" on 1800 U.S. Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, page 299, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1800," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRD-9KW>.

<sup>82</sup> Winford Calvin Hinshaw, *1815 Tax List of Randolph County, N.C.* (Raleigh, N.C.: William Perry Johnson, 1957), 5, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/320106/11> (accessed 2 Sep 2024).



settled. Near the beginning of 1821, his health declined rapidly, and he passed away there in Conecuh County, Alabama, on 31 January 1821.

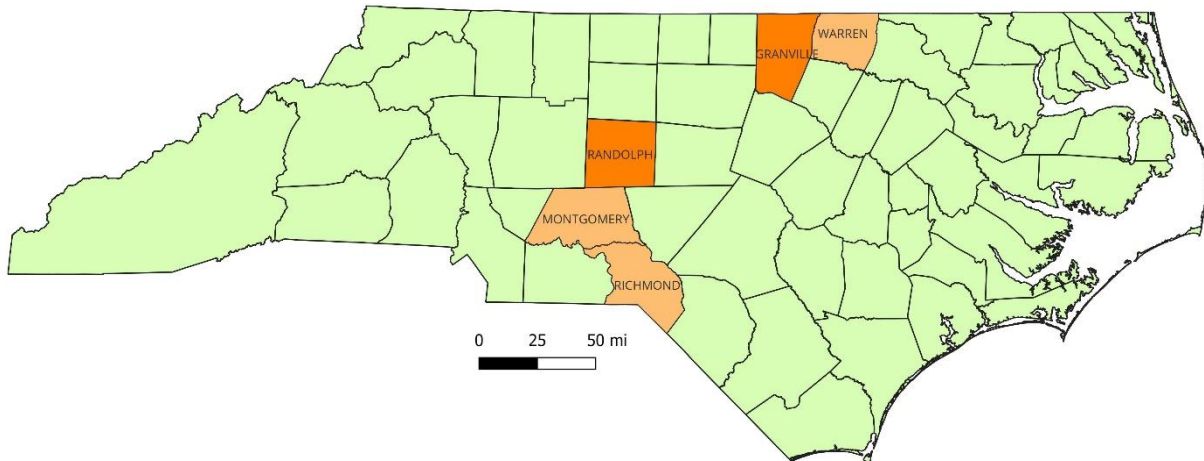
These facts are stated in a contentious estate lawsuit filed in Randolph County, North Carolina, by several of William Bowdoin's grandchildren, all children of his deceased daughters, against his surviving sons and other non-complaining relatives. The suit, begun in 1833 and not settled until 1839, alleged that William had given each of his sons a valuable tract of land as well as negro slaves, but had given little of value to his daughters and their husbands. It further alleged that his son John Bowdoin in particular had gone to Alabama at the time of his father's death and taken possession of his remaining property for his own benefit. John, for his part, appeared to point a finger at his brother Pleasant for taking advantage of his father's property left in his care in Alabama, and insisted that he took little for himself or his other brothers. For reasons that are not explained, the judge found for the plaintiffs and required John Bowdoin to pay damages.<sup>83</sup>

The estate suit presents a vivid outline of the family of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) that we would not otherwise have, especially given that he left no will. There is a great deal of detail given on the daughters' families, but unfortunately little on the sons' families. Still, it provides several important facts, naming the sons and alluding to their comings and goings from Randolph County, North Carolina.

In the pages that follow, I will summarize what I know of the descendants of William Bowdoin, focusing, for reasons that I hope will be forgiven, on his sons. I will begin to conjecture where William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817) might fit in. Though I began this research with a narrow focus on finding William and Eliza's parents, my genealogical curiosity and fervor have gotten the better of me, and the scope of what follows is wider than originally intended.

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<sup>83</sup> See my transcription and edition of the lawsuit, "William Bowdoin Estate Suit, 1821–1839," available at <https://jtrichardson.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/WilliamBowdoinEstate.pdf>; transcribed from document images at FamilySearch and Ancestry; on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," Randolph County, Estate records, 1781–1928. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99CD-196M-B>; on Ancestry.com, "North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665–1998," [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007672824\\_00711](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007672824_00711). The case was also (I discovered weeks after I transcribed it) transcribed and printed in the *Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Genealogical Society* in 1982 (vol. 6, no. 1, 3–12), and again partially in 2017 (vol. 41, no. 2, 32–35).



**Figure 7.** North Carolina counties in 1800, showing counties of interest for the family of William Bowdoin (b. 1740).

## Descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1740)

Because of the overwhelming number of autosomal DNA matches between my grandfather R.P.R. and descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), versus any other Bowdoin or Bowden family, it is my premise that **one of the sons** (or possibly grandsons) **of William (b. 1740) was the father of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817)**. Based on this premise, I will examine each of the children of William and their families below. With an eye to the possibility of William (b. 1802) and Eliza (b. 1817) belonging to each family, I will keep in mind these questions:

- 1) Did the man already have another, documented son named William?
- 2) Was he married and having other children around the same times William and Eliza were born?
- 3) Are available census records consistent with his having a son born in 1802 and a daughter born in 1817?
- 4) Was he living in North Carolina in 1802, and in Georgia in 1817?

To recapitulate, we know, primarily from the estate lawsuit, that William Bowdoin (b. 1740) had these children:

1. **James Bowdoin**, born about 1764; died after 1840 in Monroe County, Georgia.
2. **Elizabeth (Betsy) Bowdoin**, born about 1766; died about 1804 in Randolph County, North Carolina. Married **John Macon**.
3. **Martha (Patsy) Bowdoin**, born 1768; died 1800 in Randolph County. Married **Isaac Odell**.
4. **John Bowdoin**, born around 1770; died about 1850 in Richmond County, North Carolina.
5. **Travis Bowdoin**, born about 1772; died after 1860, probably in Graves County, Kentucky.

6. **Mary (Molly) Bowdoin**, born about 1773; died around 1810 in Randolph County, North Carolina. Married **Gideon “Thomas” Macon**.
7. **Josiah Bowdoin**, born about 1780; died about 1857 in Meriwether County, Georgia.
8. **Pleasant Bowdoin**, born about 1785; died about 1851 in Montgomery County, Alabama.

Let me begin by noting the fact that William Bowdoin (b. 1740) did not have a known son named William, a curious omission given that William was his own name and also his father’s name. Did he perhaps have a son named William who died young? Or to suppose, for the sake of completeness, a far-fetched notion: Is it possible that William (b. 1802) could be the son of William (b. 1740)? Technically and chronologically, this could indeed be possible, though for several reasons, we can safely dismiss it. First, the estate lawsuit of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) did not name or even mention a surviving son named William Bowdoin. Second, though William (actually born perhaps as late as 1746) was probably in his fifties when William (b. 1802) was born, his wife was also over forty-five years of age in 1802, as listed on the 1800 census, and was unlikely to have borne any more children. Third, there is Eliza. Even if William could have fathered William in 1802, his wife was certainly dead by 1817, and far past her childbearing years even if she were not. We do not know the age of William’s second wife, whom he married about 1819–1820, but his son John referred to her in his lawsuit deposition as “an old lady,” and there is no mention of her bearing William any children—which, given the contentious issues of the inheritance, would certainly have been raised if it had occurred.

## Identification of William Bowdoin’s sons James and Josiah

I identify James Bowdoin and Josiah Bowdoin, sons of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), as James Bowdoin born about 1764, and Josiah Bowdoin, born about 1780. In this, I depart from the conclusions of U. Bowdoin Marsh. This James Bowdoin (b. 1764) was the ancestor of Marsh and his Bowdoin family in Coffee County, Alabama. Marsh did not connect this James to William Bowdoin (b. 1740), but attached him as the son of a different William Bowden, the William Bowden who died in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, in 1827—whom he identified as the son of Travis Bowdon (b. 1750), with which I also disagree, finding, as above, that William Bowdon (b. 1773) who married Nancy Wiggins was the son of Travis. Marsh also identified Josiah Bowdoin (b. 1780) as the son of this other William (d. 1827). Instead of James (b. 1764) and Josiah (b. 1780) being the sons of William (b. 1740), he identified two younger men, a James Bowdoin born 1804 and a Josiah Bowdoin born 1805, both of whom remained in North Carolina, as the sons of William Bowdoin (b. 1740).<sup>84</sup>

In addition to being guided in this research first and foremost by my grandfather’s DNA matches—which contain numerous matches to descendants of both this James (b. 1764) and

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<sup>84</sup> See Marsh, [39](#), for brief mention of this other William (d. 1827) whom he claims as an ancestor, and [45](#) ff., for his treatment of James Bowdoin and his descendants.

Josiah (b. 1780), as well as John (b. 1770), Travis (b. 1772), Pleasant (b. 1785) and the three sisters—there are evident reasons why Marsh’s identifications of these younger men as the sons of William (b. 1740) do not work. Besides the issues of the thirty-year age gap this creates in William’s children, the lack of mention of orphaned children or their guardianship in William’s estate records, and problems regarding the timeline from William (b. 1720) down to James and Josiah—John, the son of William (b. 1740), in his deposition for the estate lawsuit, plainly stated that **“Pleasant was the youngest son.”**

I do not know who the younger James Bowdoin in Caswell County or Josiah Bowdoin in Randolph County were or where they came from, but I can state with certainty that they were *not* the children of William Bowdoin (b. 1740). This Josiah (b. 1805) in North Carolina spelled his name *Bowdoin*, lived until 1885, and left a will and many other documents. I have not found DNA matches to descendants of either of these men.

## James Bowdoin (b. ca. 1764)

**James Bowdoin** was born between about 1756 and 1764 in Granville County, North Carolina. He married his wife, **Priscilla Williams**, on 29 Oct 1785 in Granville County, implying he was born no later than *circa* 1764, but he could have been slightly older;<sup>85</sup> in fact, his later census records, 1830 and 1840, both suggest he was born between 1750 and 1760. Supposing his father William was born *circa* 1740, a birthdate for James in the early 1760s is probable, but none of these dates is fixed and an earlier birthdate is feasible. James died probably between 1840 and 1850 in Monroe County, Georgia, in his eighties.

Bowdoin Marsh claimed that James Bowdoin went to South Carolina at an early date—earlier, even, than Travis Bowdon, who Marsh claimed was James’s grandfather—and there served in the Revolutionary War. He cited the record of a James *Bowdain* who served in the First South Carolina Regiment under Col. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, enlisting 9 Feb 1779. Following this service, according to Marsh, James then returned to Granville County, was married, moved to Randolph County, and then finally back to South Carolina.<sup>86</sup> But I am skeptical that this South Carolina soldier is the same man as James *Bowdoin*. Pinckney’s regiment was raised in Charleston, where there is no reason for James Bowdoin to have been as such a young teenager.

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<sup>85</sup> Granville County, North Carolina, marriage bonds, box 23, on FamilySearch, “North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979” Image Group 004704215, Item 1, Image 258 or 316, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-RY9P-J9> (accessed 15 Sep 2024). James’s father William Bowdon was bondsman.

<sup>86</sup> Marsh, [45–49](#).

That James Bowdoin was a Revolutionary veteran is not in question. He received land as a veteran and “fortunate drawer” in the 1832 Georgia land lottery.<sup>87</sup> But I find it more likely that he served closer to home. A North Carolina Revolutionary pay voucher in the Hillsborough District Auditor’s Office, issued 10 Jun 1783 to James Bowden, probably belongs to him, being closer to the right area, and right age, he would have served.<sup>88</sup>

So James Bowdoin married his wife, Priscilla Williams, in Granville County in October 1785, probably not having such a long round-trip journey. He moved to Randolph County, North Carolina, with his father, around 1788, and appeared there on the 1790 census:

1790 Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>89</sup>

- James Bowdown
  - 1 male, 16 and over (born before 1774) [James]
  - 2 males, under 16 (born after 1774) [William, John]
  - 1 female [Priscilla]

Soon after this, he moved to South Carolina. His two oldest children, William (b. ca. 1786) and John (b. ca. 1790), were certainly born in North Carolina, but children after that, James (b. ca. 1793), and Sarah (b. ca. 1794), stated inconsistently on later censuses whether they were born in North Carolina or South Carolina. Travis (b. ca. 1795) did not live to give information to the 1850 census or later. Willis (b. ca. 1799) is the oldest child known definitely to have been born in South Carolina. A 17 Nov 1798 Randolph County deed, in which James Bowdoin “of Edgefield County, South Carolina,” sold land in Randolph County to his father, is the first known record of James in South Carolina.<sup>90</sup> He next appeared on the 1800 census in Edgefield District:

1800 Federal Census, Edgefield District, South Carolina<sup>91</sup>

- James Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 25 to 45 (born 1755 to 1775) [James Sr.]
  - 1 white female, age 25 to 45 (born 1755 to 1775) [Priscilla]
  - 2 white males, age 10 to 15 (born 1785 to 1790) [William, John]

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<sup>87</sup> Alex M. Hitz, *Authentic List of All Land Lottery Grants Made to Veterans of the Revolutionary War by the State of Georgia* (Atlanta: Georgia Secretary of State, n.d.), 11, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/515338/11>; Ancestry.com, “Georgia Cherokee Land Lottery, 1832,” James Bowdon, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/7288:4242> (accessed 3 Sep 2024).

<sup>88</sup> Ancestry.com, “North Carolina Revolutionary Pay Vouchers, 1779–1782,” <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/7403:61947> (accessed 3 Sep 2024).

<sup>89</sup> “James Bowdown” on 1790 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1790,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKB-1KD>.

<sup>90</sup> Randolph County Deed Book 8, page 32, deed 71, James Bowdown to William Bowdown, 17 Nov 1798, on FamilySearch, “Randolph, Record of deeds, 1779–1963,” Image Group 007517674, Image 437 of 701, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-998Q-QQ71>; abstracted in “Randolph County Deed Book Eight, Part Two,” *Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Genealogical Society*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 31.

<sup>91</sup> “James Bowden” on 1800 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1800,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRH-GPB>.

- 1 white female, age 10 to 15 (born 1785 to 1790)     *[unknown]*
- 4 white males under 10 (born after 1790)             *[James Jr., Travis, Willis, Daniel]*
- 1 white female under 10 (born after 1790)           *[Sarah]*

James’s last two known children, Daniel and Joshua, were born in South Carolina in about 1800 and 1803. He does not appear on the census in 1810 in South Carolina, so he was probably by then in Georgia, where the 1810 census is lost. His oldest son, William, was married in Baldwin County, Georgia, in 1806, and James was certainly in Jasper County, Georgia, no later than 1811, when he witnessed a deed for Nathan Williams, perhaps some relation of his wife Priscilla.<sup>92</sup>

James appeared on the 1820 census in Jasper County, Georgia, with an empty nest:

1820 Federal Census, Jasper County, Georgia<sup>93</sup>

- James Bowden
  - 1 male, over 45 (born before 1775)                     *[James]*
  - 1 female, over 45   *[Priscilla]*

By 1830, James and Priscilla had moved to neighboring Monroe County:

1830 Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia<sup>94</sup>

- James Bowden
  - 1 male, age 70 to 80 (born 1750 to 1760)             *[James]*
  - 1 female, age 60 to 70 (born 1760 to 1770)         *[Priscilla]*
  - 1 female slave, age 10 to 24
  - 1 male slave, age under 10
  - 1 female slave, age under 10

As a Revolutionary veteran, James Bowdoin was eligible to draw in the 1832 Cherokee land lottery and made a “fortunate draw”. This is the last known record of him by name. On the 1840 census of Monroe County, an elderly couple, both a man and woman aged between 80 and 90, were living in the household of William Bowdoin (b. 1786), James’s oldest son. This was likely James and Priscilla.<sup>95</sup> Both James and Priscilla died between 1840 and 1850.

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<sup>92</sup> Jasper County, Georgia, Deed Record Book B, Nathan Williams to Charles Cargile, 126–127, on FamilySearch, Jasper County, Georgia, Deeds, 1810–1811, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSKV-T9XL-N> (Image 319 of 396).

<sup>93</sup> “James Bowden” on 1820 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1820,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLX-2XR>.

<sup>94</sup> “James Bowden” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGB-X9H>.

<sup>95</sup> “W. Bowden” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBN-V5Y>.

James Bowdoin and Priscilla Williams had these known children:<sup>96</sup>

1. **William Bowdoin**, born about 1786 in North Carolina; died about 1865 in Monroe County, Georgia. Married **Martha Smith**, 4 Dec 1806 in Baldwin County, Georgia. 
2. **John Bowdoin**, born about 1790 in North Carolina; died after 1850 in Monroe County, Georgia. Married **Sarah** (maiden name unknown).<sup>97</sup>
3. **James Bowdoin**, born about 1793 in North Carolina or South Carolina; died around 1865 in Coosa County, Alabama. Married **Elizabeth Clark**, 11 May 1819 in Putnam County, Georgia.<sup>98</sup> 
4. **Sarah Bowdoin**, born about 1794 in North Carolina or South Carolina; died after 1880 in Montgomery County, Alabama. Married **Thomas Samuel Dickey** about 1811 in Georgia. Settled in Pike County, Alabama, by 1840.<sup>99</sup> 
5. **Travis Bowdoin**, born about 1795 in North Carolina or South Carolina; died about 1837 in Putnam County, Georgia. Married **Sarah Clark**, 4 Sep 1817 in Putnam County, Georgia.<sup>100</sup> 

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<sup>96</sup> Marsh also named a daughter, Nancy Bowdoin, who married David Andrews, of whom I can find no verification. She appears in no known records; I find no DNA matches to her descendants; no one with online trees claims descent from her or has any information on her other than the little Marsh gave. See Marsh, [49](#).

<sup>97</sup> "John Bowden" on U.S. 1850 Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZYH-DPHI>; Marsh, [50](#).

<sup>98</sup> Putnam County, Georgia, Marriage book A, 144, James Bowden to Betsey Clark, 11 May 1819, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXVH-DD3>; "James Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZYH-3WT>; "James Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Coosa County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHD6-3FD>.

<sup>99</sup> "Samuel Dickey" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGG-SPZ>; "Samuel Dickey" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Pike County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHB4-FQW>; "Samuel Dickey" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Pike County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MH57-PCZ>; "Thomas Dickey" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Pike County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHD6-MR7>; FamilySearch, "Alabama Estate Files, 1830–1976," Pike County, Alabama, Thomas S. Dickey, 1866, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VNTJ-1SN>; "Sarah Dickey" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHK5-1F3>; "Sarah Dickey" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4V4-4QH>.

<sup>100</sup> Putnam County, Georgia, Marriage book A, 46, Travis Bowdin to Sarah Clark, 4 Sep 1817, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXVH-D7P>; "Travis Bowdin" on 1820 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1820," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLX-PYD>; "Travis Bowden" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGG-SGW>; Marsh, [50–52](#).

6. **Willis Bowdoin**, born 7 Jan 1799 in Edgefield District, South Carolina; died 12 May 1871 in Monroe County, Georgia. Married **Sarah Slaughter**, 7 Jan 1819 in Putnam County, Georgia.<sup>101</sup> 
7. **Daniel Wesley Bowdoin**, born about 1800 in Edgefield District, South Carolina; died about 1868 in Putnam County, Georgia; married **Mary Ann Daniel**, 25 Nov 1822 in Putnam County, Georgia.<sup>102</sup> 
8. **Joshua Bowdoin**, born 5 Nov 1803 in Edgefield District, South Carolina; died 2 Nov 1880 in Gordon County, Georgia. Married (1) **Bersheba Fail**, 11 Jan 1821 Putnam County, Georgia (2) **Mrs. Martha Jane (Barnett) Lane**, 8 Jan 1854 in Putnam County, Georgia.<sup>103</sup> 

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<sup>101</sup> For birth and death dates, Marsh cites tombstones extant as of 1980 at a cemetery “off McCommon Road near Juliette, Georgia in Monroe County,” Marsh, [54](#); Putnam County, Georgia, Marriage book A, 112, Travis Bowdin to Sarah Slaughter, 7 Jan 1819, on FamilySearch, “Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXVH-GQF>; “Willis Bowdin” on 1820 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1820,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLX-554>; “Willis Bowden” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGG-SPH>; “Willis Bowdoin” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMN-NKS>; “Willis Bowdoin” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1870,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3F-TG3>.

<sup>102</sup> Putnam County, Georgia, original license, Daniel W. Bowdoin to Mary A. Daniel, 19 Nov 1822, on FamilySearch, “Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q28S-3XC5>; “Daniel W. Bowden” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGG-SK4>; “Daniel Bowden” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRV-B7P>; “D. W. Bowden” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZYC-FCY>; “D. W. Bowdoin” on .1860 U.S. Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMZ-Q8X>; Marsh, [56–59](#).

<sup>103</sup> For birth and death dates, Marsh cites tombstones extant as of Oct 1981 at the “Joshua Bowdoin farm cemetery near Adairsville, Ga., near the Gordon-Bartow county line,” Marsh, [59](#). These original tombstones have been replaced with a double marker, which apparently confused the original death date of Joshua’s wife (8 Jul 1852) with Joshua’s, now giving his death date as 8 Jul 1880 (originally 2 Nov 1880, according to Marsh). See “Joshua Bowdoin,” Find a Grave Memorial #45266910, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/45266910/joshua-bowdoin> (accessed 15 Nov 2024); Putnam County, Georgia, original license, Joshua Bowden to Barshaba Fail, 9 Feb 1821, on FamilySearch, “Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q28S-3NKG>; “Joshua Bowden” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGB-623>; “Joshua Bowden” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Cass County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBZ-MJ5>; “Joshua Bowdon” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Gordon County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZYP-DMZ>; Putnam County, Georgia, Marriage book F, page 79, Joshua Bowdin to Martha J. Lane, 7 Jan 1854, on FamilySearch, “Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXVH-X14>; “Joshua Bowdoin” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, on



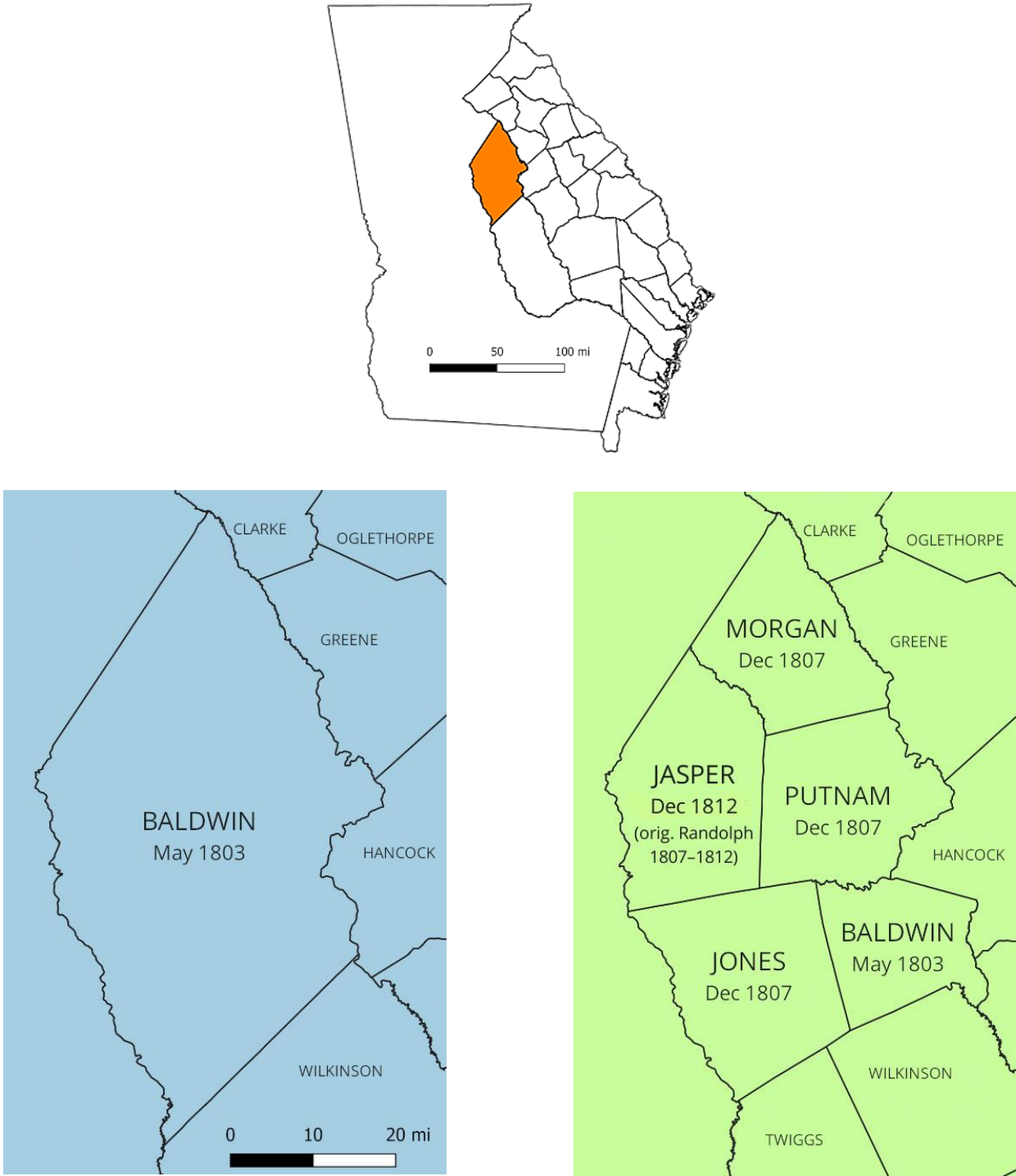
Could our William and Eliza fit here? Probably not. James Bowdoin clearly already had a son named William and is not likely to have had another son by that name born in 1802. Even supposing the unlikely event that he did—James was living in South Carolina, not North Carolina, by 1802, and it is clear that his wife was finished having children by 1803. James and Priscilla did not have a daughter born 1817 living in their household on the 1820 census, when they were “empty nesters”.

Conceivably, though, James could have been the *grandfather* of our William and Eliza. Of James’s children, only his oldest son, William, was old enough to have his own children by 1802. So perhaps his family warrants a deeper look, considering that our closest Bowdoin Y-DNA match, D.B.—the only clear Bowdoin match—comes from this line.

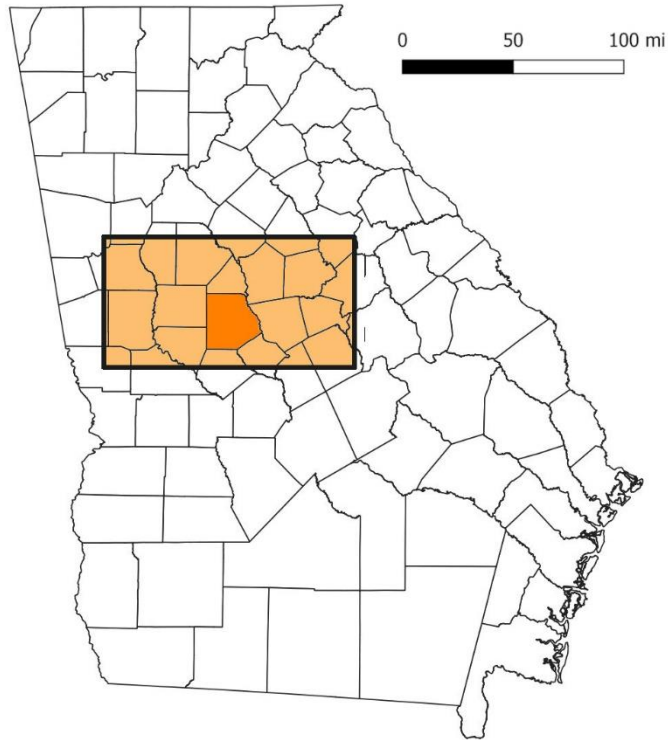
Other descendants of James Bowdoin, James’s son James (b. 1793) and his children, settled in Coosa County and eventually Elmore County in Alabama, within twenty miles of Deatsville where William Bowdoin (b. 1802) lived. A daughter, Sarah (Bowdoin) Dickey, raised her family in Pike County, Alabama, around fifty miles from Deatsville, and later died in Montgomery County, Alabama (just north over the county line from where she had lived).

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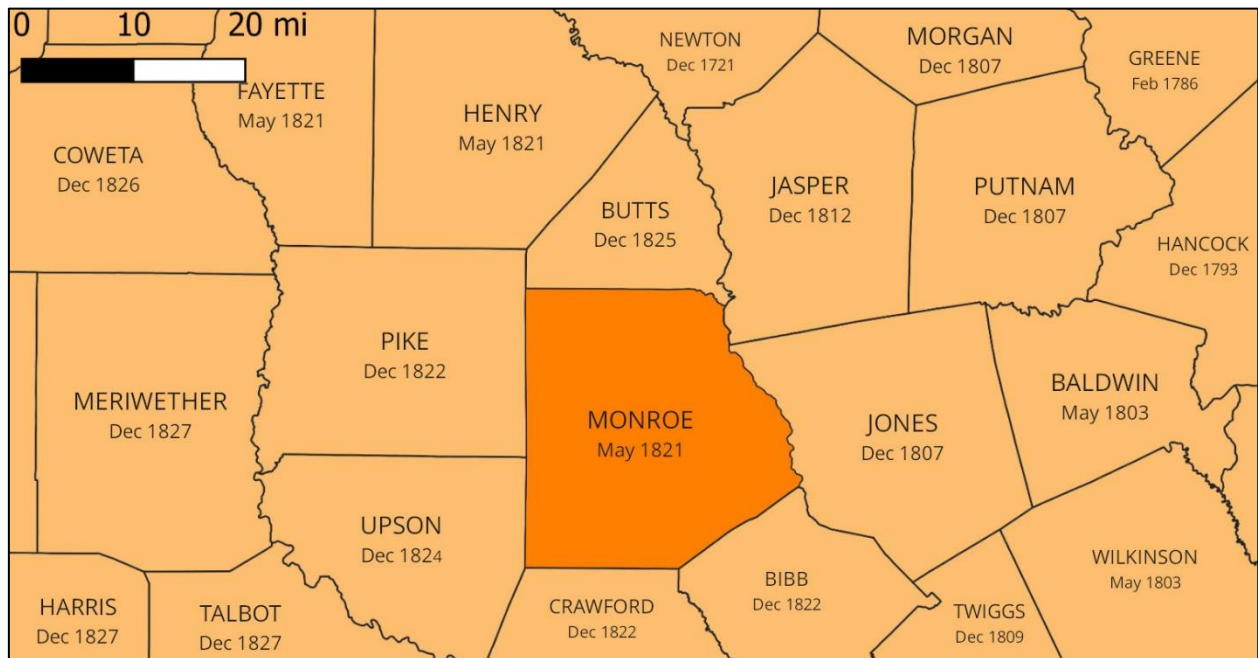
FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZM6-9GJ>; “Joshua Bowdon” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Gordon County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1870,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC33-5SL>; “Joshua Bowdoin” on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Gordon County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1880”, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8G9-JGD>.



**Figure 8:** (Left) Baldwin County, Georgia, where William Bowdoin (b. 1786) was married in 1806. (Right) Counties created from the original Baldwin, with dates of creation. (Inset) Location of original Baldwin County (1803–1807) within Georgia. The Bowdoin family would be in Putnam and Jasper until about 1830.



**Figure 10.** Georgia counties in 1840, showing area of interest within the state of Georgia.



**Figure 10.** Georgia counties in 1840, with dates of creation. The James Bowdoin family resided in Monroe County into the 1850s.

## William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1786)

**William Bowdoin** was born about 1786 in Granville County, North Carolina, considering the marriage date of his parents of 29 Oct 1785. He went to Georgia with his parents between about 1804 and 1806.<sup>104</sup>

William married his wife, **Martha Smith**, on 4 Dec 1806 in Baldwin County, Georgia, one of the earliest records of this Bowdoin family in Georgia. Baldwin County, in 1806, encompassed what is today Baldwin, Putnam, Jones, Jasper, and Morgan counties (see Figure 8).

The 1810 census of Georgia was lost. On the 1820 census, William Bowdoin appeared in Putnam County:

### 1820 Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia<sup>105</sup>

- William Bowdin
  - 1 white male, age 26 to 44 (born 1776 to 1894) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 26 to 44 (born 1776 to 1894) *[Martha]*
  - 1 white male, age 10 to 16 (born 1804 to 1810) *[William A.]*
  - 1 white female, age 10 to 16 (born 1804 to 1810) *[Martha W.]*
  - 3 white males, age under 10 (born after 1810) *[Turner, Simeon Travis; 1 unknown]*
  - 1 white female, age under 10 (born after 1810) *[unknown]*
  - 1 male slave, age 14 to 26

By 1830, William was in Monroe County, Georgia:

### 1830 Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia<sup>106</sup>

- William Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 40 to 50 (born 1780 to 1790) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 30 to 40 (born 1790 to 1800) *[Martha]*
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[William A.]*
  - 1 white female, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[Nancy, wife of W. A.?)*
  - 1 white male, age 15 to 20 (born 1810 to 1815) *[Turner]*
  - 1 white male, age 10 to 15 (born 1815 to 1820) *[John W.]*
  - 1 white female, age 10 to 15 (born 1815 to 1820) *[Martha W.]*
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10 (born 1825 to 1830) *[Alfred B.]*

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<sup>104</sup> Like my own William Bowdoin (b. 1802), the middle initial "B." has inexplicably attached itself to this William (b. 1786) in many online trees, but appears in no records.

<sup>105</sup> "William Bowdin" on 1820 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1820," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLX-5TC>.

<sup>106</sup> "William Bowden" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830", <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGB-6PB>.

- 2 white females, age under 5 (born after 1825) *[Mary Jane; unknown]*
- 1 male slave, age 36 to 55
- 1 female slave, age 36 to 55
- 1 female slave, age 24 to 36
- 1 male slave, age 10 to 24
- 1 female slave, age 10 to 24

On the 1840 census, it would appear that William's parents, James and Priscilla, were living in his household in their old age:

1840 Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia<sup>107</sup>

- W. Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 80 to 90 (born 1750 to 1760) *[probably James]*
  - 1 white female, age 80 to 90 (born 1750 to 1760) *[probably Priscilla]*
  - 1 white male, age 50 to 60 (born 1780 to 1790) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 40 to 50 (born 1790 to 1800) *[Martha]*
  - 1 white male, age 15 to 20 (born 1820 to 1825) *[John W.]*
  - 1 white female, age 15 to 20 (born 1820 to 1825) *[unknown, possibly Mary, wife of John]*
  - 1 white female, age 10 to 15 (born 1825 to 1830) *[Mary Jane]*
  - 1 female slave, age 24 to 36
  - 2 male slaves, age under 10

It appears possible from these census records that there may have been at least two children who died young.

1850 Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia<sup>108</sup>

Division No. 60. Page 3 (42A stamped).

Dwelling #618, Family #618

- William Bowden, age 66 (born 1784 in North Carolina)
  - Martha Bowden, age 60 (born 1790 in Georgia)
  - Joshua Bowden, age 15 (born 1835 in Georgia)
  - Robert Champion, age 13 (born 1837 in Georgia)
  - William Champion, age 10 (born 1840 in Georgia)

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<sup>107</sup> "W. Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBN-V5Y>.

<sup>108</sup> "William Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY4-1K3>.

- 11 slaves on slave schedule.<sup>109</sup>

The three children living in the home in 1850 were probably all Champions, even though the oldest is mistakenly listed as a Bowden. Martha W. (Bowdoin) Champion, James's daughter, had died in 1848, leaving three children, Joshua L. B. Champion, Robert J. Champion, and William A. Champion.<sup>110</sup> Two Champion children would remain until 1860:

1860 Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia<sup>111</sup>

Colaparchee District No. 473 G.M., page 90.

Dwelling #651, Family #633

- William Bowden, age 78 (born 1782 in North Carolina)
  - Martha Bowden, age 70 (born 1790 in Georgia)
  - Joshua Champion, age 22 (born 1838 in Georgia)
  - Wm. Champion, age 18 (born 1842 in Georgia)
  - 13 slaves on slave schedule.<sup>112</sup>

William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1786) became the primary ancestor of the Bowdoin families who went to Coffee County, Alabama. He and Martha had seven known children who survived them:

1. **William A. Bowdoin**, born about 1807 in Baldwin County (probably present-day Putnam County), Georgia; died after August 1866 in Coffee County, Alabama. Married **Nancy** (maiden name unknown) about 1830 in Georgia. He was the first Bowdoin to go to Coffee County, by the 1840s. He may have been the "Rev. W. A. Bowden" who ministered in the Pea River Mission in the 1840s (see "Reverend Billy" above).<sup>113</sup> 🧬

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<sup>109</sup> "William Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule, on FamilySearch, "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MVHY-VBT>.

<sup>110</sup> These three Champion children are named as heirs of William Bowdoin in the 1866 deed named below; see footnote 121.

<sup>111</sup> "William Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMN-NHF>.

<sup>112</sup> "Wm. Bowdoin" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule, on FamilySearch, "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WKV8-FJW2>.

<sup>113</sup> Coffee County, Alabama, was created 29 Dec 1841, from land formerly in Dale County. Marsh claims, based on the stated birthplaces of children on the 1850 census, that William A. Bowdoin was in Alabama by 1839, but I cannot find him on the 1840 census in either Georgia or Alabama. A William Bowden does appear on the 1840 census in Barbour County, Alabama, just over the state line from Stewart County, Georgia, but the ages and composition of the family are wrong to be William A. Bowdoin. See "William Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Barbour County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHT8-74T>; Marsh, 69–70; "William A. Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Coffee County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHPY-FH4>; "Wm. A. Bowdoin" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Coffee County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHDD-743>. William A. Bowdoin appeared for the 1866 deed mentioned below, but both he and his wife appear to have died before 1870.

2. **Turner Bowdoin**, born about 1812 in Putnam County, Georgia; went to Coffee County, Alabama, by the mid-1850s, and later went to Texas. Died about 1878 in Smith County, Texas. Married **Rebecca Maddox**, about 1830 in Georgia.<sup>114</sup> 🧬
3. **Martha W. Bowdoin**, born about 1814 in Putnam County, Georgia; married **Jason L. B. Champion**, 19 Nov 1835, Monroe County, Georgia; died 31 May 1848 in Monroe County, leaving three sons.<sup>115</sup>
4. **Simeon Travis Bowdoin**, born 15 Mar 1816 in Putnam County, Georgia; died 24 May 1883 in Kerr County, Texas. Married (1) **Mary A. Bowdoin**, a cousin, 8 Jun 1837, Monroe County, Georgia, (2) Nancy Bryan; 23 Jan 1848, Stewart County, Georgia.<sup>116</sup> 🧬
5. **John W. Bowdoin**, born about 1820 in Putnam County, Georgia; died after 1880 in Stewart County, Georgia. Married **Mary Gunn**, 24 Sep 1835, Stewart County.<sup>117</sup> 🧬



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<sup>114</sup> Marsh, [73–74](#); "Turner Bowden" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGB-6P2>; "Turner Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBZ-5DJ>; "Turner Bowdoin" on U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY8-QCL>; "Turner Bowdoin" on U.S. Federal Census, Coffee County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHDD-HKP>; "Turner Bowdoin" on U.S. Federal Census, Coffee County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHV1-7J3>. See "Daniel T. Bowdoin" in *Memorial Record of Alabama*, vol. 1 (Madison, Wis.: Brant & Fuller, 1893), 655–656, on HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc1.cu01632540>, for a biographical sketch of a son of Turner.

<sup>115</sup> Marsh, [68–69](#). Tombstone, Mount Tabor-Champion Cemetery; Find a Grave Memorial #47432283, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47432283/martha-champion>; Monroe County, Georgia, marriage book A, page 95, Jason L. B. Champion and Martha W. Bowden, 19 Nov 1835, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJ8-XS4>. (accessed 16 Sep 2024); "J. L. B. Champion" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBN-V5T>.

<sup>116</sup> Marsh, [97–98](#). Marsh states Mary A. Bowdoin was "a cousin," but nobody seems to know who her parents were. Based on above-average DNA matches between her descendants and descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1802), I consider it possible she was a daughter of Josiah Bowdoin. Monroe County, Georgia, marriage book A, page 117, Simeon T. Bowdoin to Mary A. Bowdoin, 8 Jun 1837, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJ8-FC9>; "Simeon Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBN-V51>; Stewart County, Georgia, marriage records, Simeon T. Bowden to Nancy Bryan, 23 Jan 1848, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q289-C3LX>; "Simeon Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY8-1SW>; "Simeon T. Bowdoin" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Coffee County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHD8-PNP>; "Simeon Bowdoin" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3N-D37>; "S. T. Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Travis County, Texas, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MFXJ-J2N>.

<sup>117</sup> Marsh, [101–102](#); Stewart County, Georgia, marriage book A1, John W. *Baldwin* to Mary Gunn, page 40A, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXVN-D2P>;

6. **Alfred Benjamin Bowdoin**, born 1822 in Putnam County, Georgia; died 1888 in Monroe County, Georgia. Married (1) **Mary Catherine Bowdoin**, a first cousin, daughter of **Travis Bowdoin** and **Sarah Clark**, on 12 Oct 1841, in Monroe County, Georgia; (2) **Mrs. Sarah (Wooten) Perkins**, 29 Mar 1863, Monroe County, Georgia.<sup>118</sup> Alfred's brother Turner also had a son named **Alfred Benjamin Bowdoin** (b. 1842). 
7. **Mary Jane Bowdoin**, born about 1826 in Putnam County, Georgia; died after 1870, probably in Monroe County, Georgia. Married **Thomas McCommon**, 11 Jul 1844, Monroe County, Georgia.<sup>119</sup> 

William Bowdoin died in about 1865 in Monroe County, Georgia, and his wife, Martha, apparently died close to the same time.<sup>120</sup> In 1866, William's surviving heirs jointly sold land in Monroe County to their brother Simeon Travis Bowdoin, and the resulting 24 Aug 1866 deed offers us a list of the surviving children:<sup>121</sup>

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"John Bowdoin" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY8-JJP>; "John W. Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, with mother-in-law, Jane Gunn, in household, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMT-642>; "John Bowden" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC35-TVB>; "J. W. Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Stewart County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8GB-9WC>.

<sup>118</sup> Marsh, [102–105](#); Monroe County, Georgia, marriage book A, page 187, Alfred Bowden to Catharine Bowden, 12 Oct 1841, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJ8-N1F>; "Alford Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY4-1VY>; "A. B. Bowdoin" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMN-VDZ>; Monroe County, Georgia, marriage book B (typescript copy of original), page 125, Alfred Bowdoin to Sarah Perkins, 29 Mar 1863, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJ8-X26>; "Alfred Bowdoin" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3N-ZZ5>; "Alfred Bowdoin" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8GN-NPR>.

<sup>119</sup> Marsh, [69](#); Monroe County, Georgia, marriage book A, page 234, Thomas McCommon to Mary Jane Bowden, 11 Jul 1844, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJ8-6HJ>; "Mary McCommon" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY4-T4C>; "Mary McCommon" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMN-HMX>; "Mary J. McCommon" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3F-FWT>.

<sup>120</sup> Marsh, [67–68](#).

<sup>121</sup> Monroe County, Georgia, Deed Book O, 794, Alfred Bowdoin et. al. to Simeon T. Bowdoin, on FamilySearch, "Monroe County, Georgia, Deeds, 1822–1901," Image Group #008188800, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSLZ-5CV1> (Image 451 of 456) (accessed 10 Sep 2024).



- Alfred Bowdoin
- William A. Bowdoin
- Turner Bowdoin
- John W. Bowdoin
- Mary Jane (Bowdoin) McCommon (Thomas McCommon acting in her right)
- Simeon T. Bowdoin
- Heirs of Martha W. (Bowdoin) Champion:
  - Joshua L. B. Champion
  - Robert J. Champion
  - William A. Champion

Of William’s children, William A. Bowdoin, Turner Bowdoin, Simeon Travis Bowdoin, and John W. Bowdoin all moved to Stewart County, Georgia, by the early 1840s. William A. Bowdoin soon moved on to Coffee County, Alabama, with Turner and Simeon following by 1855.<sup>122</sup>

#### *Martha Rebecca (Bowden) Maddox*

Notably absent from the above list of heirs is the name of **Martha Rebecca (Bowden) Maddox**, whose many descendants connect her as the daughter of William Bowdoin (b. 1786) and Martha Smith in their family trees. In addition to this absence from the list of legal heirs, William already had a daughter named Martha, born about 1814. He would not have named another daughter Martha the very next year, especially not while the first was thriving. I am persuaded by this evidence that **Martha Rebecca (Bowdoin) Maddox was not the daughter of William Bowdoin (b. 1786) and Martha Smith.**

Who, then, was she? **Martha Rebecca Bowdoin** (or *Bowden*, as her tombstone reads) was born 6 Dec 1815 in Georgia, probably in Putnam or Jasper county.<sup>123</sup> She married **Matthew M. Maddox** on 24 Dec 1835 in Monroe County, Georgia, and had a large family of at least fifteen children.<sup>124</sup> Matthew and Martha Maddox were in Stewart County, Georgia, as late as 1850, but came to Coffee County, Alabama, by 1860. It is possible that Matthew M. Maddox, the son of **Samuel B. Maddox**, had some relation to Rebecca Maddox, the wife of Turner Bowdoin.

It is probably because of her marriage in Monroe County and later migration to Coffee County, because of her surname, and because of other clear family relationships—proximity in the

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<sup>122</sup> Marsh, [67–68](#), [73–74](#), [97–98](#), [101](#).

<sup>123</sup> This date is from her tombstone, which reads, “Martha B. Bowden, wife of Matthew M. Maddox. Died Sept. 27, 1895, Aged 79 yrs. 9 mos., 21 das. My wife for sixty years.”—though Find a Grave, and many online trees following from it, give the birth date as 6 Dec 1817. Tombstone at Rosin Ridge Cemetery, Elba, Coffee County, Alabama; photo at “Martha Rebecca Bowden Maddox,” Find a Grave Memorial #11912808, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11912808/martha-rebecca-maddox> (accessed 24 Oct 2024).

<sup>124</sup> Monroe County, Georgia, Marriage Book A, 90, Matthew M. Maddox to Martha R. Bowden, 24 Dec 1835, on FamilySearch, “Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950,” <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJ8-XMN> (accessed 24 Oct 2024).

census, witnessing deeds and other records for each other—that descendants have assumed that Martha R. was connected to William. She very clearly was a cousin, and DNA matches between her descendants and other descendants of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) confirm it. I will return to this problem later on when examine the DNA.

## Elizabeth (Betsy) Bowdoin Macon (b. ca. 1766)

**Elizabeth (Betsy) Bowdoin** was the oldest daughter of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), born about 1766 in Granville County, North Carolina. She married **John Macon** in Granville County on 3 Jan 1786 (bond date), and soon afterward moved with her father William Bowdoin to Randolph County.<sup>125</sup> **John Macon** was born around 1760 in Granville County, the son of **John Macon** (b. ca. 1719), nephew of **Gideon “Hunt” Macon** (b. ca. 1715), and brother of **Gideon “Thomas” Macon** (b. ca. 1758) who married Elizabeth’s sister Molly. He served in the Revolutionary War.<sup>126</sup>

I have not been able to identify John Macon on the 1790 census. He appeared in Randolph County in 1800:

1800 Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>127</sup>

John Macon

- 1 male, age 26 to 45 (born 1755 to 1774) *[John]*
- 1 female, age 26 to 45 (born 1755 to 1774) *[Betsy]*
- 2 males, 10 to 16 (born 1784 to 1790) *[William, Nathaniel?]*
- 4 males, age under 10 (born after 1790) *[Henry, James, Pleasant, Gideon]*
- 1 female, age under 10 (born after 1790) *[unknown]*


Elizabeth (Bowdoin) Macon died in about 1804. John and Betsy had these children:

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<sup>125</sup> Granville County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, box 7, John Macon to Elisabeth Bowdon, 3 Jan 1786, on FamilySearch, “North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9Y-53PN>.

<sup>126</sup> Macon and Wood, [18](#). If Althea Jane Macon’s account of the Macon family is correct, then Senator Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, namesake of Macon County, Alabama, as well as Macon, Georgia, was the first cousin of John Macon, husband of Elizabeth Bowdoin, and of Gideon “Thomas” Macon, husband of Mary Bowdoin. She placed John Macon, husband of Elizabeth Bowdoin, as the son of John Macon (b. 1719), the son of John Macon (b. 1695), the son of Col. Gideon Macon. Senator Nathaniel Macon was the son of Gideon “Hunt” Macon, son of John Macon (b. 1695). Both the Macon brothers who married Bowdoin sisters and Senator Macon were second cousins to Martha Dandridge, wife of George Washington. See Macon and Wood, [8](#), [18](#), [30](#).

<sup>127</sup> “John Macon” on 1800 U.S. Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, page 330, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1800,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRD-MXT>.

1. **William Macon**, born 20 Nov 1786 in Granville County, North Carolina; died 31 Mar 1857 in Hardeman County, Tennessee. Married **Martha Kirby** in North Carolina, 11 Apr 1811. Moved to West Tennessee in 1833.<sup>128</sup> 
2. **Nancy Macon**, born about 1787 in Granville County, North Carolina; died after 1850 in Cocke County, Tennessee. Married **John Lane**, 13 Jul 1816 in Randolph County, Carolina. Went to East Tennessee around 1832.<sup>129</sup>
3. **Nathaniel Macon**, born perhaps about 1789 in North Carolina; I know little of him for certain. His data gets conflated with that of **Nathaniel West Dandridge Macon** (b. ca. 1800?), a cousin (son of John Macon, son of Gideon “Hunt” Macon), who went to Madison and Haywood counties in West Tennessee.<sup>130</sup> This Nathaniel, son of Betsy Bowdoin, is probably the Nathaniel Macon on the 1810 and 1830 censuses in Montgomery County, North Carolina.<sup>131</sup> The William Bowdoin (b. 1740) estate case reported that in 1844, Nathaniel Macon’s part of the estate settlement remained unclaimed; that Nathaniel Macon “left the state before said suit was brought to a close, and [his] residence is now unknown if alive.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Tombstone, Macon-Jordan Cemetery, Hardeman County, Tennessee, photo at “William Bowdoin Macon,” Find a Grave Memorial #110184803, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/110184803/>; “William Macon” on U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHYD-RBV>; “William Macon” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDN-88D>; William Macon obituary, *Fayetteville (N.C.) Semi-Weekly Observer*, 23 Mar 1857, on Newspapers.com, clipping at <https://www.newspapers.com/article/fayetteville-semi-weekly-observer-willia/155515186/>. He is called “William Bowdoin Macon” online, but I find no evidence of his having had a middle name or initial.



<sup>129</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, John Lane to Nancy Macons, 13 Jul 1816, on FamilySearch, “North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-TXCD>; “John Lain” on 1840 U.S. Census, Cocke County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHT1-W6N>;

“Nancy Lane” on 1850 U.S. Census, Cocke County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDH-F4V>.

<sup>130</sup> For evidence that Nathaniel W. D. Macon was the son of this other John Macon, see Maury County, Tennessee, Chancery Court Cases, Nathaniel West Dandridge Macon vs. David Craighead et. al., 1824, on FamilySearch, “Maury County, Tennessee, Chancery Court,” Image Group 007642655, Image 1202 ff., <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99P9-YPPT>; “Elizabeth Williams Macon,” Find a Grave Memorial #178138079, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/178138079/elizabeth\\_macon](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/178138079/elizabeth_macon) (mother of N. W. D. Macon) (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

<sup>131</sup> “Nat Macon” on 1810 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1810,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH2J-VZY>; “Nathl. Macon” on U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, North Carolina, East of Pee Dee & Yadkin River, page 48, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHP7-J62>. The 1820 Montgomery County census was lost.

<sup>132</sup> I.e., he probably left North Carolina between the initiation of the suit in 1833 and its settlement in 1839. See pp. 44–45 in my edition of the lawsuit (footnote 83) or this particular document on FamilySearch, at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99CD-196H-W> (Images 18–19) or Ancestry

4. **Henry Macon**, born 3 Oct 1790 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 3 Aug 1863 in Coosa (present-day Elmore) County, Alabama. Married (1) **Elizabeth Ozier**, about 1816, North Carolina; (2) **Mrs. Permelia (McDaniel) Morris**, 15 Oct 1841, DeKalb County, Georgia. Served in the War of 1812 in Captain Craven's Company, North Carolina Volunteers, and received a bounty land warrant in Alabama, issued 10 Nov 1851. He probably came to Alabama about 1846.<sup>133</sup> 
5. **James Macon**, born about 1796 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 30 Jan 1808 in Randolph County, North Carolina, under suspicious circumstances. Read more below.<sup>134</sup>
6. **Pleasant Macon**, born 19 Sep 1798 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died December 1861 in Loachapoka, Macon County (today in Lee County), Alabama. Married (1) **Nancy Stephens**, 23 Jan 1821, Putnam County, Georgia; (2), **Mrs. Linea (English) Spinks**, 22 Jul 1852 in Chambers County, Alabama. Came to Alabama in the mid-1830s.<sup>135</sup> 
7. **Gideon Macon**, born about 1801 in Randolph County, Georgia; died after 1860 in Pike County, Arkansas. Married **Athia McKenzie** on 31 Jul 1827 in Upson County, Georgia. He


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[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007672824\\_00728](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007672824_00728) (Images 728–729) (accessed 18 Sep 2024). I do not know what to make of the notation on the back of the document, “Receipt filed, given by Nathaniel Macon in 1839.” Evidently, he had not received the money in 1844, so what receipt was filed in 1839?<sup>133</sup> “Henry Elijah Macon” in Susan Rudd, “Johnson/Mullins Family Tree,” Ancestry.com Public Member Trees, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/152306867/person/352105302519/facts> (accessed 18 Sep 2024); “Henry Macon” on U.S. 1830 Federal Census, Harris County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHPL-NYQ>; “H. Macon” on U.S. 1840 Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBZ-NBY>; DeKalb County, Georgia, marriage book 1840–1848, page 7, Henry Macon to Permely Morris, 15 Dec 1841, on “Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXV8-MXP>; “Henry Macon” in 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Coosa County, Alabama “United States Census, 1850,” <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-679S-M4S> (image is barely legible and not indexed); Ancestry has better image quality: Ancestry.com, “1850 United States Federal Census,” <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8054/images/4187294-00110>; “Henry Elijah Macon,” Find a Grave Memorial #124837892, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/124837892/>; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Accession No. MW-0600-326, Document No. 13457, Military Warrant, Alabama, 80 acres, SE ¼ of NW ¼ and SW ¼ of NE ¼, Section 3, Township 22 North, 17 East of St. Stephens Meridian, online at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/> (accessed 18 Sep 2024). He is ubiquitously called “Henry Elijah Macon” online, but I find no evidence of his having had a middle name or initial.

<sup>134</sup> “James Macon,” Find a Grave Memorial #158389409, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/158389409/>, managed by Rusty Macon Weber ([rwnlk@aol.com](mailto:rwnlk@aol.com)) (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

<sup>135</sup> Edward F. Hull, *Early Records of Putnam County, Georgia, 1807–1860: Old Cemeteries, Wills, and Marriages* (Ashland, Ala.: n.p., n.d.), Putnam County Marriages p. 56 (Image 124 of 175), <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/501213/124> (accessed 14 Sep 2024); “Pleasant Macon” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHB4-7BZ>; “Pleasant Macon” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MH53-H1C>; FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKMY-Y5PB>; “Pleasant Macon,” Find a Grave Memorial #126665523, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/126665523/pleasant\\_macon](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/126665523/pleasant_macon); “Pleasant Macon” in Rusty Macon Weber, “Macon Family Tree,” Ancestry.com Public Member Trees, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/53845350/person/13577123944/facts> (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

served at least one term in the Arkansas House of Representatives, from Pike County, elected in 1858.<sup>136</sup>

8. **John Macon**, born about 1804 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died about 1870 in Montgomery County, North Carolina. Married **Elizabeth Jenkins** about 1830.<sup>137</sup> 

John Macon, Elizabeth's widower, married (2) **Susannah Needham** about 1805 in Randolph County. In January 1808, a great tragedy came to the home. On 17 Jan 1808, Susannah Macon struck her stepson, James, in the head with an iron pan handle, fracturing his skull. The injury was covered up, but the wound became infected and James later died. On 4 Feb 1808, Mary Bowdoin, the child's grandmother, made a criminal complaint against Susannah, accusing her of causing his death. James's body was exhumed and a coroner's inquest was held, calling for testimony from Susannah, from Travis Bowdoin, who was a close neighbor, and from James's brother Henry. Susannah Macon was indicted for murder and put on trial. The outcome is not clear from the abstract of the case I have available, but I am looking into obtaining the full case file.<sup>138</sup>

When John died in June 1808—his death no doubt hastened by these traumatic events—his father-in-law, William Bowdoin (b. 1740), and brother, Gideon "Thomas" Macon, served as administrators of his estate. William Bowdoin was also appointed guardian of John Macon's

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<sup>136</sup> Upson County, Georgia, marriage book A, page 16, Gideon Macon to Althiah McKenzie, 31 Jul 1827, on FamilySearch, "Georgia, County Marriages, 1785–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KXJR-VDL>; "Gideon Macon" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Pike County, Arkansas, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M67D-WTX>; "Gideon Macon" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Pike County, Arkansas, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8WS-GDL>; "Gideon Macon" in Rusty Macon Weber, "Macon Family Tree," Ancestry.com Public Member Trees, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/53845350/person/13577124230/facts> (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

<sup>137</sup> "John Macon" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHYZ-51Z>; "John Macon" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BD-NT1>; "John Macon" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD6H-3NH>; North Carolina Estate Files, Montgomery County, North Carolina, John Macon, 1870, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKBP-T86N>, Ancestry.com, "North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665–1998," [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007639874\\_00461](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007639874_00461); "John Macon" in Rusty Macon Weber, "Macon Family Tree," Ancestry.com Public Member Trees, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/53845350/person/13577123943/facts> (accessed 18 Sep 2024). For confirmation that wife's maiden name was Jenkins, see death certificate of daughter Elizabeth, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Deaths, 1906–1930," Elisabeth Saunders, 5 Mar 1918, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F368-43X>.


<sup>138</sup> "Gleanings from Randolph Criminal Actions, Part IX: 1808–1809," *The Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Genealogical Society* (Asheboro, N.C.), vol. XXV, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 44–46.

young children. John Macon's land is described in the estate file as 230 acres, "on Fork Creek near the junction with Deep River, by Travis Bowdown."<sup>139</sup>

In May 1811, both Pleasant Macon, age twelve, and Gideon Macon, age ten, were bound to William Bowdoin, their grandfather. Apprentice bonds dated 7 May 1811 note both children as orphans.<sup>140</sup>

## Martha (Patsy) Bowdoin Odell (b. 1768)

**Martha (Patsy) Bowdoin** is the only child of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) who has a surviving tombstone. She was born 13 Nov 1768 in Granville County, North Carolina, and died in November 1800 in Randolph County, North Carolina. She married her husband, **Isaac Odell**, probably about 1790 in Randolph County. He was born 20 Jul 1765 in Randolph County and died 18 Nov 1845 in Randolph County. Both Martha and Isaac are buried in the Odell-Trogdon Cemetery near Millboro, Randolph County.<sup>141</sup> They had three children:

1. **Mary (Polly) Odell**. Born 3 Feb 1792 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 14 Jul 1880 in Paris, Edgar County, Illinois. Married **William Hodgkin**, 18 Aug 1819 in Randolph County, North Carolina (bond date). Moved to Indiana, following her sister Elizabeth, in the 1820s, and later to Illinois in the 1830s.<sup>142</sup> 

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<sup>139</sup> North Carolina Estate Files, Randolph County, John Macon (1808), on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KLYF-8FR>.



<sup>140</sup> "Randolph County Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions – May Term 1811," *The Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Genealogical Society* (Asheboro, N.C.), vol. 5, no. 3 (Summer 1981), 41: "Ordered that Pleasant Macon of the age of twelve years be bound to William Bowdown. Indenture executed. Ordered that Gideon Macon of the age of ten years be bound to William Bowdown. Indenture executed"; "Randolph County Apprentice Bonds," *Genealogical Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Fall 1998), 49, 52.

<sup>141</sup> "Isaac Odle" in 1790 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1790," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKB-125>; "Isaac Odle" on 1800 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1800,"

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRD-SY7>. Martha was still living as of the 1800 census. Tombstones, Odell-Trogdon Cemetery, photos on "Martha Bowdoin Odell," Find a Grave Memorial #119181718, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/119181718/>, and "Isaac Odell," Find a Grave Memorial #38044471, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/38044471/> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>142</sup> Randolph County Marriage Bonds (LDS typescript, 1944), page 123, William Hodgkin to Mary Odle, 18 Aug 1819, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979,"

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2R1-C6XG>; likely would still have been in Randolph County in 1820, which census is lost, but "William Hodgkin" in Burke County, North Carolina, in 1820 fits agewise, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1820," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLX-796>; "William Hodgins" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Rush County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHPC-DX7>; "William Hodgkin" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YBQ-9ZRN>; "Mary Hodgkin" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Edgar County, Illinois, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M85G-PG4>; Ancestry has much better image quality: "1850 United States Federal Census," <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/16171724:8054>

2. **Elizabeth Odell**, born 31 Jul 1795 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 10 Nov 1873 in Dallas County, Iowa. Married **Reuben Farlow**, 20 Oct 1809, Randolph County, North Carolina (bond date). The Farlows moved to the Indiana Territory by 1812, where Reuben served in the War of 1812. Elizabeth lived in Indiana for some fifty years, moving to Iowa with her children near the end of her life.<sup>143</sup> 
3. **James Odell**, born 10 Jul 1798 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 12 Dec 1886 in Randolph County, North Carolina. Married **Anna Trogdon**, 4 Oct 1819 in Randolph County (bond date).<sup>144</sup> 

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“Mary Hodgin” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Edgar County, Illinois, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MXH3-MN2>; “Mary Hodgin” on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Edgar County, Illinois, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1880,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MXJ6-FFV>; tombstone, Little Grove Cemetery, Edgar County, Illinois, photos at “Mary Odell Hodgin,” Find a Grave Memorial #132216731, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/132216731/mary-hodgin> (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

<sup>143</sup> Elizabeth (Odell) Farlow was not named in the William Bowdoin estate lawsuit, either as a complainant or a defendant. Instead, an additional daughter, “Martha (Patsy) Odell,” was named, of whom I can find no other record. I suspect the lawyers drafting the complaint made a mistake about the name of the second daughter of Patsy and named another “Martha (Patsy) Odell” instead of Elizabeth (Odell) Farlow. The same document reversed the names of Martha Bowdoin and Elizabeth Bowdoin, stating that Martha married John Macon and Elizabeth married Isaac Odell. For evidence of Elizabeth’s connection, see Reuben Farlow’s War of 1812 pension application file, at Fold3, “U.S., War of 1812 Pension Files, 1812–1815,” Reuben Farlow, Private, Captain William Holman’s Company, Indiana Militia, W.O. 3147, W.C. 2732, <https://www.fold3.com/image/311781570/>, originally from NARA Record Group 15, “War of 1812 Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files,” Catalog ID 564415. The pension file contains a transcript (page 25) of the original, 28 Oct 1809 Randolph County marriage bond, which is apparently no longer extant, witnessed by Samuel Trogdon; the Trogdons being longtime neighbors and associates of the Odells in Randolph County. Alexander Martin Chapter DAR, compilers, *North Carolina Bible Records, Church Records, and Genealogies* (High Point, N.C.: n.p., 1956), on FamilySearch, Image Group 007641174, 182 (book page), 605 (number handwritten on film), Image 622 of 1059, Item 3, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L9GF-27KH> (accessed 19 Sep 2024). “Reuben Farlow” on 1810 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1810,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLM-LYR>; “Reuben Farlow” on 1820 U.S. Federal Census, Delaware County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1820,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHG4-7CS>; “Reuben Farlow” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Rush County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHPC-D65>; “Reuben Farlow” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Hamilton County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHB6-2XS>; “Elizabeth Farlow” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Tipton County, Ohio, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHVH-K5T>; “Elizabeth Farlow” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Madison County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4N6-JY1>; tombstone, Panther Creek Cemetery, Dallas County, Iowa, photo on “Elizabeth Odell Farlow,” Find a Grave Memorial #14350174, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/14350174/elizabeth\\_farlow](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/14350174/elizabeth_farlow) (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>144</sup> Randolph County Marriage Bonds (LDS typescript, 1944), page 205, James Odell to Anna Trogdon, 4 Oct 1819, on FamilySearch, “North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2R1-6TFR>; “James Odle” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,”

Isaac Odell married (2) **Catherine (Caty) Allred**, about 1802 in Randolph County, and had six more children.<sup>145</sup>

## John Bowdon (b. ca. 1770)

**John Bowdoin**, the second son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), was born about 1770 in Granville County, North Carolina.<sup>146</sup> He moved with his parents to Randolph County about 1788, and in 1802, moved to Richmond County, North Carolina. He married, probably in Richmond County, around 1802–1804. The name of his wife is unknown. In John’s will and other records, he used the spelling *Bowdon* of his surname, and this spelling was continued by his children.

John appeared on the census in Richmond County in 1810, 1830, and 1840. (The 1820 Montgomery County census was lost.)

1810 Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina<sup>147</sup>

- John Bowdown
  - 1 white male, age 26 to 44 (born 1766 to 1784) *[John]*
  - 1 white female, age 26 to 44 (born 1766 to 1784) *[Wife of John]*
  - 3 white males under 10 (born after 1800) *[William; Thomas; other probably did not survive]*
  - 1 white female under 10 (born after 1800) *[Nancy]*

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<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHPV-CLM>; “James Odell” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHB3-1JB>; “Jas. Odle” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BN-HM5>; “James Odell” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD64-133>; “James Odell” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1870,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8Y-TCF>; “James Odell” on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1880,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCXV-WPE>; tombstone, Grays Chapel Cemetery, Randolph County, North Carolina, photo at “James Odell,” Find a Grave Memorial #111337689, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111337689/>. There is no evidence that he was “James Alexander Odell,” the name of his son.

<sup>145</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, Isaac Odle to Caty Alred, no date, on FamilySearch, “North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-5HJZ>; “Isaac Odle” on 1810 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1810,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLM-GX9>.

<sup>146</sup> See footnote 79 concerning John’s birthdate.

<sup>147</sup> “John Bowdown” on 1810 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1810,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLM-PHR>;



1830 Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina  
Steele's Township. Page 185.<sup>148</sup>

- John Bowdoin
  - 1 white male, age 50 to 60 (born 1760 to 1770) *[John]*
  - 1 white female, age 40 to 50 (born 1780 to 1790) *[Wife of John]*
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[Thomas]*
  - 1 white male, age 15 to 20 (born 1810 to 1815) *[James]*
  - 1 white male, age 10 to 15 (born 1815 to 1820) *[Reddick]*
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10 (born 1820 to 1825) *[Nathan]*
  - 1 white female, age 5 to 10 (born 1820 to 1825) *[Martha Jane]*
  - 2 male slaves, age 55 to 100
  - 1 male slave, age 36 to 55
  - 1 female slave, age 36 to 55
  - 1 male slave, age 24 to 36
  - 1 female slave, age 24 to 36
  - 1 male slave, age 10 to 24
  - 3 female slaves, age 10 to 24
  - 3 male slaves, age under 10
  - 3 female slave, age under 10

Montgomery County, North Carolina  
East of Pee Dee and Yadkin River. Page 48<sup>149</sup>

- William Bowdoin
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 15 to 20 (born 1815 to 1820) *[wife of William]*
  - 1 female slave, age 24 to 36
  - 1 male slave, age 10 to 24
  - 1 male slave, age under 10

1840 Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina  
Steele's Township. Page 230.<sup>150</sup>

- John Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 60 to 70 (born 1770 to 1780) *[John]*

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<sup>148</sup> "John Bowdoin" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHPD-58Q>.

<sup>149</sup> "William Bowdoin" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHP7-J65>.

<sup>150</sup> "John Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," , <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBQ-3NQ>.

- 1 white female, age 50 to 60 (born 1780 to 1790) *[Wife of John]*
- 2 white males, age 15 to 20 (born 1820 to 1825) *[Reddick, Nathan]*
- 1 white female, age 15 to 20 *[Martha Jane]*
- 2 male slaves, age 36 to 55
- 2 female slaves, age 36 to 55
- 1 male slave, age 24 to 36
- 1 female slave, age 24 to 36
- 3 male slaves, age 10 to 24
- 2 female slaves, age 10 to 24
- 4 male slaves, age under 10
- 5 female slaves, age under 10

Steele's Township. Page 232.<sup>151</sup>

- James Bowdon
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1810 to 1820) *[James]*
  - 1 white female, age 20 to 30 (born 1810 to 1820) *[wife of James]*
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10 (born 1830 to 1835)
  - 3 white males, age under 5 (born after 1835)
  - 1 male slave, age 36 to 55
  - 1 female slave, 24 to 36
  - 4 male slaves, ages under 10

Montgomery County, North Carolina

East Side of the Pee Dee River. Page 240.<sup>152</sup>

- William Bowdoin
  - 1 white male, age 30 to 40 (born 1800 to 1810) *[William]*
  - 1 white female, age 20 to 30 (born 1810 to 1820) *[wife of William]*
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1810 to 1820)
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10 (born 1830 to 1835)
  - 1 white female, age 5 to 10 (born 1830 to 1835)
  - 1 white male, age under 5 (born 1835 to 1840)
  - 3 white females, age under 5 (born 1835 to 1840)
  - 1 male slave, age 10 to 24
  - 1 male slave, age 24 to 36

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<sup>151</sup> "James Bowdon" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBQ-3V3>.

<sup>152</sup> "William Bowdoin" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHYZ-5KX>.

John lived for the rest of his life in Richmond County. He made his will on 3 Apr 1849 and died sometime before the 1850 census. His wife is not named in the will and evidently predeceased him. The will left property to sons William, Thomas, James, Reddick, and Nathan T., and daughters Nancy (Bowdon) Pankey and Martha (Bowdon) Jordan.<sup>153</sup>

Nathan T. Bowdon and Reddick Bowdon were executors of the estate. A lawsuit between the children over the inheritance ensued, reminiscent of the case over John's father William. Several facts I gleaned from the estate case file:<sup>154</sup>

- Martha Jane (Bowdon) Jordan was the wife of William B. Jordan and resided in Richmond County.
- Nancy (Bowdon) Pankey was the wife of James Pankey and resided in Tennessee.
- William Bowdon, John's son, had died prior to 1854. His brother, Nathan T. Bowdon, was administrator of his estate.
- Thomas Bowdon resided in Tennessee.
- James Bowdon resided in Mississippi.

All combined, this is what we know about the children of John Bowdon:




1. **Nancy Bowdon**, born about 1805 in Richmond County; died 7 Feb 1878 in Bolivar, Hardeman County, Tennessee. Married **James Pankey** about 1822.<sup>155</sup> 

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<sup>153</sup> North Carolina, original wills, will of John Bowdon, on FamilySearch, "Richmond, North Carolina, Wills, 1663–1978," Image Group 007640059, Item 2, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9G4-S9MD-J> (accessed 12 Sep 2014).

<sup>154</sup> North Carolina Estate Files, Richmond County, John Bowdon (1850), in FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," Image Group 007384193, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89C6-R9SH-6> (Image 621 of 1,948) (accessed 11 Sep 2024).

<sup>155</sup> "Nancy Bowden," FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/sources/LZPG-6ZC>; "James Pankey" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHP9-9SD>; "James Pankey" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHYD-RBF>; "Nancy Pankey" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDF-P9X>; "Nancy Pankey" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8TD-HSL>; "Nancy Pankey" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MDDS-GDM>); "Respectfully Transcribed to the Family of Mrs. Nancy Pankey," obituary tribute in *Bolivar Bulletin*, 14 Feb 1878, Newspapers.com, clipped at <https://www.newspapers.com/article/bolivar-bulletin-nancy-bowden-pankey-t/155313467/> (accessed 14 Sep 2024).

2. **William Bowdon**, born about 1807 in Richmond County; died about 1853 in Montgomery County. Married **Martha Stacy** about 1830.<sup>156</sup> 
3. **Thomas Bowdon**, born about 1810 in Richmond County; died after 1860; last living in Hardeman County, Tennessee. Married **Elizabeth Z. McKinnie**, 8 Mar 1843, Hardeman County.<sup>157</sup> 
4. **James Bowdon**, born 30 Jul 1811 in Richmond County; died 22 Jul 1873 in Benton County, Mississippi. Married (1) **Jane Green** about 1833 in Montgomery County; (2) **Mary A. Wells**, 9 Oct 1855, Tippah County, Mississippi.<sup>158</sup>
5. **Reddick Bowdon**, born about 1819 in Richmond County; died 30 Mar 1894 in Richmond County. Married Elizabeth Jones about 1842 in Richmond County.<sup>159</sup> 



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<sup>156</sup> "William Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BD-79C>; North Carolina Estate Files, Montgomery County, William Bowdon, 1853, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKBP-TCKY>; wife named as Martha Stacy in death certificate of son W. M. Bowdon, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Deaths, 1906–1930," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F3XY-PB4>.

<sup>157</sup> Hardeman County, Tennessee, original marriage bonds, Thomas Bowden to Elizabeth Z. McKinnie, 6 Mar 1843, on FamilySearch, "Tennessee, County Marriages, 1790–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QK41-MM9H>; "Thomas Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDN-96P>; "Thos. Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8TD-S67>.

<sup>158</sup> "James Bowdon" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Tippah County, Mississippi, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4LJ-GZZ>; Ancestry.com, "Mississippi, U.S., Compiled Marriages, 1826–1900," James Bowdon to Mary Wells, 9 Oct 1855, Tippah County, Mississippi, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/46560:4585>; "James Bowdon" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Tippah County, Mississippi, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M6GX-DT2>; "J. F. Bowdon" on U.S. 1870 Federal Census, Tippah County, Mississippi, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," , FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MFST-RCK>; Tombstone, Canaan Cemetery, Benton County, Mississippi, photo at "James Bowdon," Find a Grave Memorial #34043077, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34043077/james-bowden> (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

<sup>159</sup> "Rodrick Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BJ-9KM>; "Reddick Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MDDY-34Q>; "Redick Bowden" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8B-6D4>; "Reddick Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCXV-2P3>; FamilySearch, "North Carolina, Historical Records Survey, Cemetery Inscription Card Index," R. Bowden, died 30 March 1894, buried Bowdon Cemetery, Richmond County, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPT4-9VK4> (accessed 18 Sep 2024).

6. **Rev. Nathan Travis Bowdon**, born 22 Sep 1821 in Richmond County; died 29 Aug 1890 in Richmond County. Married **Martha C. Smith** about 1846 in Richmond County. He was a Presbyterian minister and educator, serving as principal of several area schools and as a county school commissioner.<sup>160</sup> 
7. **Martha Jane Bowdon**, born about 1824 in Richmond County; died January 1885 in Hardeman County, Tennessee. Married **William B. Jordan** about 1847 in Richmond County.<sup>161</sup> 

John Bowdon had a will which named all his children. In addition to having another son named William, he appears not to have been married by 1802. He never went to Georgia and did not have a daughter named Eliza. So John is not the father of our William (b. 1802) and Eliza (b. 1817).

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<sup>160</sup> "Nathan Bowdon" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BN-4FW>; "N. T. Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MDDY-3LB>; "Nathan Bowden" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8B-6DT>; "Nathan T. Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCXV-R7B>; "North Carolina, Historical Records Survey, Cemetery Inscription Card Index," Rev. N. T. Bowdon, born 22 Sep 1821, died 29 Aug 1890, buried Bowdon Cemetery, Richmond County, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSTQ-5S7T-8> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>161</sup> "Martha Jordan" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BD-WGB>; "Martha J. Jordan" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8TD-SDN>; "M. J. Jordan" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MDD3-MMT>; "Martha J. Jordan" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Hardeman County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD78-GPH>; Death notice in *Bolivar Bulletin* (Bolivar, Tennessee), 22 Jan 1885, clipping at Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/bolivar-bulletin-martha-j-jordan/155624110/> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

## Travis Bowdoin (b. ca. 1772)

**Travis Bowdoin** is the most elusive of William Bowdoin's children. Though he remained in Randolph County, North Carolina, longer than the rest of his siblings, he is more difficult to trace after he left, owing to there being so many Travis Bowdons. I have identified Travis Bowdoin, son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), with the **Travis "Westward" Bowden** of many online trees.

Travis Bowdoin was born about 1772 in Granville County. He moved with his parents to Randolph County about 1788 and married around 1790, a woman named **Elizabeth (Betsy)** (maiden name unknown).<sup>162</sup> Travis appeared on the 1790 census in Randolph County, likely a newlywed:

1790 Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>163</sup>

- Travers Bowden
  - 1 white male, age over 16 (born before 1774) [Travis]
  - 1 white female [Betsy]

And on the 1800 census in Randolph County, listed alongside his father:

1800 Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>164</sup>

- Travis Bowdon
  - 1 white male, age 26 to 44 (born 1756 to 1774) [Travis]
  - 1 white female, age 26 to 44 (born 1756 to 1774) [Betsy]
  - 1 white male, age under 10 [John]
  - 2 white females, age under 10 [Mariah; Mary]

He received a North Carolina land grant for 30 acres in Randolph County, entered 25 Jun 1798 and issued 20 Aug 1802, "on the waters of Fork Creek."<sup>165</sup>

Travis Bowdoin was summoned as a witness in the coroner's inquest in the death of James Macon, son of his sister Elizabeth (see Elizabeth's section above), along with his daughter Mariah. This is the first direct evidence I have found to Mariah being Travis's daughter.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> "Gleanings from Randolph Criminal Actions, Part VII: 1803–1805," *The Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Genealogical Society* (Asheboro, N.C.), vol. XXV, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 27: "Bill of complaint (17 Aug 1802) of Betsey Bowdon, wife of Travis Bowdon, in which she accused John Jurden ... of insulting and abusing her, 16 Aug."

<sup>163</sup> "Travers Bowden" on 1790 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1790," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKB-12Q>.

<sup>164</sup> "Travis Bowdon" on 1800 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1800," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRD-9V1>.

<sup>165</sup> Warrant dated 25 Jun 1798 (entry no. 504); grant no. 1807, dated 20 Aug 1802, in patent book 115, page 114; file no. 1849; North Carolina Land Patent Book 11, page 322; MARS 12.14.103.1822; all available on *North Carolina Land Grants and Image Data*, NCLandGrants.com, <https://nclandgrants.com/> (accessed 30 Aug 2024).

<sup>166</sup> "Gleanings from Randolph Criminal Actions, Part VII: 1803–1805," *The Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Genealogical Society* (Asheboro, N.C.), vol. XXV, no. 3 (Fall 2001), 44–45: "Travis Bowdown, his daughter

The Bowdoins were somehow omitted from the 1810 census in Randolph County, and the 1820 census of Randolph County has been lost. But Travis appeared on the 1815 Randolph County tax list, alongside his father and brother Josiah:

1815 Tax List, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>167</sup>

Capt. Laurence's District [in southeastern part of county]

- Travis Bowdown  
160 acres on Fork Creek. Valued at \$250. 1 white poll and 1 black poll.

Travis again appeared on the 1820 tax list in Randolph County, after both his father and brother had left:<sup>168</sup>

1820 Tax List, Randolph County, North Carolina

Capt. Lathem's District [same district as Laurence's in 1815]

- Travis Bowdown  
160 acres on Fork Creek. Valued at \$300. 1 black poll.

Also appearing on the 1820 tax list in the same district was John Bowdown, whom I believe was Travis's son:

- John Bowdown  
1 white poll.

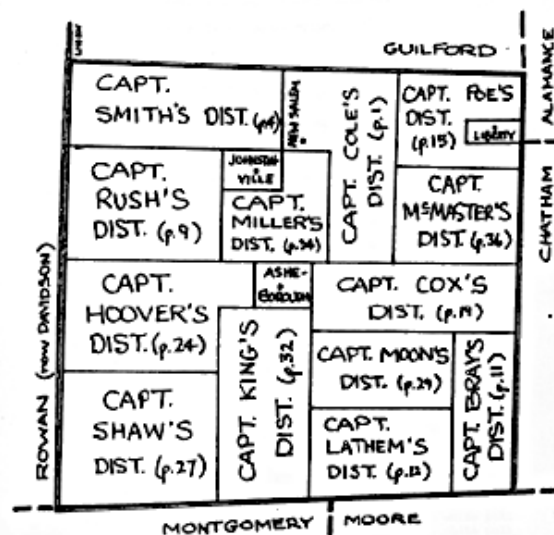


Figure 11. Randolph County tax districts in 1820. (Grigg and Hager)

Travis Bowdoin left Randolph County during the 1820s. From there, he went first to Tennessee. On the 1830 census in Maury County, Tennessee, there appears a Travis Bowden, living alongside a John Bowden:

1830 Federal Census, Maury County, Tennessee<sup>169</sup>

- Travis Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 50 to 60 (born 1770 to 1780) [Travis]

Mariah Bowdown, and Nancy Macon, were all summoned by the coroner to the house of William Bowdown to give evidence concerning the death of James Macon."

<sup>167</sup> Winford Calvin Hinshaw, *1815 Tax List of Randolph County, N.C.* (Raleigh, N.C.: William Perry Johnson, 1957), 5, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/320106/11> (accessed 5 Sep 2024).

<sup>168</sup> Barbara Newsom Grigg and Carolyn N. Hager, *1820 Tax List, Randolph County, North Carolina* (n.p.: Randolph County Historical Society, n.d.), 13, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/718378/19>.

<sup>169</sup> "Travis Bowden" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Maury County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHG2-GZ5>.

- 1 white female, age 50 to 60 (born 1770 to 1780) *[Betsy]*
- 1 white male, age 15–20 *[W. A.]*
- 2 white females, age under 5 to 10 *[Dorcia; unknown]*
- 1 white female, age under 5 *[unknown]*
- 2 female slaves, age 36 to 55
- 2 male slaves, age 10 to 24
- 1 female slave, age 10 to 24
- 1 male slaves, age under 10
- 2 female slaves, age under 10
  
- John Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 30 to 40 (born 1790 to 1800) *[John]*
  - 1 white female, age 20 to 30 (born 1800 to 1810) *[Elizabeth]*
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10
  - 2 white females, age 5 to 10
  - 2 white males, age under 5
  - 1 white female, age under 5
  - 1 male slave, age 24 to 36
  - 1 female slave, age 24 to 36
  - 1 male slave, age 10 to 24
  - 2 female slaves, age 10 to 24
  - 2 male slaves, age under 10
  - 2 female slaves, age under 10

These appear to be the same people who left Randolph County. The “black polls” on the Randolph tax lists and especially the Tennessee tax lists that follow represent slave ownership, and these 1830 census entries showing significant slaveholding support that these are the same men who left North Carolina.

Tracing backwards, I turned to the tax lists of Maury County, Tennessee. On the earliest extant tax list, 1825–1826, Travis and John were present:

1825–1826 Tax List, Maury County, Tennessee<sup>170</sup>

Cook Justice [District]

- Brandoin [sic], Travis 2 black polls.
- Bowdoin, John 1 white poll. 2 black polls.

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<sup>170</sup> Maury County, Tennessee, Tax books, Tax list 1825–1826, on FamilySearch, Image Group 007903581, Image 326, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSH9-6DX4> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).



And also on the 1830 tax list:<sup>171</sup>

District No. 28. Sqr. Cooke. Capt. Puckett.<sup>172</sup>

- Bowden, John 1 white poll. 3 black polls.
- Bowden, Traverse. 4 black polls.

The 1831 tax list is the final one they appeared on:

1831 Tax List, Maury County, Tennessee<sup>173</sup>

District No. 35. J. O. Cook, Esqr. Capt. Bullock.

- Bowdoin, Travis 2 black polls.
- Bowdin, John

The name of Travis Bowdon does not readily appear in indices of the 1840 census. But by 1850, Travis—it appears to be the same Travis—had appeared in Graves County, Kentucky, living in the household of a presumed son:

1850 Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky

District No. 1. 5 Sep 1850. Page 929 (465 stamped).<sup>174</sup>

Dwelling #588, Family #588

- W. A. Bowden, age 39. Baptist minister. Born in N.C. (ca. 1811). \$2000 real estate.
  - Sarah, age 29. Born in Tenn. (ca. 1821).
  - Nancy, age 11. Born in Ky. (ca. 1839).
  - Travis Bowden, age 77. Born in N.C. (ca. 1773).
  - Holland Webb, age 26. Boot & shoe maker. Born in Tenn. (ca. 1824).

The 1850 slave schedule has additional information, including W. A. Bowden's full first name and the family's significant slaveholdings.

1850 Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky – Slave schedule

District No. 1. 5 Sep 1850. Page 137.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Beginning in 1830, and continuing after the departure of Travis and John, the names of several other, apparently unrelated Bowdens appear on the Maury County tax lists. District 7 in 1830 contains a "Frances" Bowdoin, with 3 black polls, a possible miscopying of "Travis"; but John and "Traverse" appeared later in District 28. Appearing in District 34 in 1830 were James, John, and William Bowden.

<sup>172</sup> Maury County, Tennessee, Tax books, Tax list 1825–1826, on FamilySearch, Image Group 007903581, Image 469, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSH9-6DBW> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>173</sup> Maury County, Tennessee, Tax books, Tax list 1825–1826, on FamilySearch, Image Group 007903581, Image 541, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSH9-6DCF> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>174</sup> "Travis Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M653-VV3>.

<sup>175</sup> "Westwood A. Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MVZ9-Y5W>.

- Westwood A. Bowden
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 70.
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 65.
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 22.
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 20.
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 15.
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 3.
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 2.
- Travis Bowden
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 44.
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 39.
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 16.
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 14.
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 10.

Travis Bowden was still living with his son in Graves County, at an advanced age, in 1860:

1860 Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky

No district stated. 8 Aug 1850. Page 197.<sup>176</sup>

Dwelling #1409, Family #1409

- W. A. Bowden, age 49. Farmer. Born in N.C. (ca. 1811). \$5640 real estate, \$7000 personal estate.
  - Sallie A., age 39. Housework. Born in Tenn. (ca. 1821).
  - J. P. Norwood (male), age 26. Farmer. Born in Tenn. (ca. 1824). \$3000 personal estate.
  - N. A. E. Norwood (female), age 20. Housework. Born in Tenn. (ca. 1830).
  - L. A. S. Norwood (female), age 1. Born in Ky. (ca. 1859).
  - Travis Bowden, age 89. Farmer. Born in N.C. (ca. 1771).

On the slave schedule, W. A. Bowden had assumed all of the slave property by 1860:

1860 Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky – Slave schedule

16 Jun 1860. Page 5 (43A stamped).<sup>177</sup>

- W. A. Bowden
  - 1 female slave, mulatto, age 50.
  - 1 male slave, mulatto, age 49.

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<sup>176</sup> "Travis Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZBQ-1DB>.

<sup>177</sup> "W. A. Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WKK5-TPT2>.

- 1 male slave, mulatto, age 35.
- 1 female slave, mulatto, age 34.
- 1 male slave, mulatto, age 19.
- 1 female slave, mulatto, age 11.
- 1 female slave, mulatto, age 9.
- 1 male slave, mulatto, age 7.
- 1 female slave, mulatto, age 5.
- 1 male slave, mulatto, age 4.
- 1 male slave, mulatto, age 2.
- J. P. Norwood
  - 1 male slave, black, age 40.
  - 1 male slave, black, age 38.
  - 1 female slave, black, age 22.

Can we be sure that this Travis Bowden and his family are the same Travis who were in Maury County, Tennessee, from 1825 to 1831? Graves County, Kentucky, unfortunately suffered near-complete loss of early marriage, deed, probate, and other court records, prior to 1888, due to repeated “courthouse disasters.”<sup>178</sup> What became of the **John Bowdoin** who was with Travis in Tennessee? According to the research of David Schade on the FamilySearch Tree, John died about 1838 in Graves County, leaving a widow, Elizabeth, and a house full of children. John had married **Elizabeth Nall** on 15 Jan 1820 in Wake County, North Carolina. Randolph County deeds reveal the Nall family were neighbors of the Bowdoins in Randolph County.<sup>179</sup> Following John’s death, Elizabeth remarried to **John Bernard Brown** about 1841 in Graves County.<sup>180</sup> In confirmation of this, I find the widow Elizabeth Bowdoin on the 1840 census in Graves County:

1840 Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky<sup>181</sup>

- Elizabeth Bowdoin
  - 1 white female, age 30 to 40 (born 1800 to 1810)                      *[Elizabeth]*
  - 1 white male, age 15 to 20
  - 1 white female, age 15 to 20

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<sup>178</sup> “Graves County, Kentucky Genealogy” on FamilySearch Wiki, [https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Graves\\_County,\\_Kentucky\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Graves_County,_Kentucky_Genealogy) (accessed 6 Sep 2024).

<sup>179</sup> E.g. Randolph County deed book 8, page 86, William Searcy to Elizabeth Alston, 20 Mar 1786 (re-recorded from deed book 3), on FamilySearch, “Randolph, Record of deeds, 1779–1963,” Image Group 007517674, Image 464, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-998Q-Q3R1>; abstracted in *Genealogical Journal*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 27.

<sup>180</sup> “John Bowden” on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KCP6-TMP>; “Elizabeth Nall” on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KHKX-FNK> (accessed 6 Sep 2024).

<sup>181</sup> “Elizabeth Bowdoin” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHR1-BCB>.

- 1 white male, age 10 to 15
- 1 white female, age 10 to 15
- 1 white male, age 5 to 10
- 1 white female, age 5 to 10
- 1 white female, age under 5
- 1 male slave, 24 to 36
- 1 male slave, 10 to 24
- 1 female slave, 10 to 24
- 2 male slaves, age under 10

Later in the same census, I find a “Wm. A. Bowdoin,” who is almost certainly *Westwood A. Bowdoin*, with Travis Bowdoin and Betsy living in his household:

1840 Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky<sup>182</sup>

- Wm. A. Bowdoin
  - 1 white male, age 60 to 70 (born 1770 to 1780) [Travis]
  - 1 white female, age 60 to 70 (born 1770 to 1780) [Betsy]
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1810 to 1820) [W.A.]
  - 1 white female, age 15 to 20 [Sarah]
  - 3 white females, age under 5
  - 1 male slave, age 24 to 36
  - 2 female slaves, age 24 to 36
  - 1 male slave, age 10 to 24
  - 1 female slave, age 10 to 24
  - 2 male slaves, age under 10
  - 4 female slaves, age under 10

So Travis, missing from the 1840 census, has been found. It would appear Betsy died between 1840 and 1850, and Travis himself, after a very long life, died between 1860 and 1870.

How can we connect this Travis and his family, in Tennessee and Kentucky, back to Travis, son of William (b. 1740), in Randolph County, North Carolina? In addition to the apparent match in ages—Travis in Randolph, 1800, being born between 1756 and 1774; Travis in Maury, 1830, being born between 1770 and 1780; and Travis in Graves, 1850, being born about 1773—the Travis in Graves was confirmedly born in North Carolina, as was *Westwood A. Bowdoin*, presumably his son. The John Bowdoin who appeared with Travis in Randolph on the 1815 and 1820 tax lists,

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<sup>182</sup> “Wm. A. Bowdoin” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHR1-BFQ>.

also appeared with Travis in Maury in 1825 and 1831. Circumstantially, these facts all fit with the men in all three places being the same Travis.

Most fortunately, Travis's son, **Westwood Armstead Bowdoin**, lived a long and productive life and became a well-known and widely beloved Primitive Baptist preacher.<sup>183</sup> He died on 7 Apr 1892 in Miller County, Missouri, and warranted a detailed and flowery Victorian obituary in a Mayfield, Graves County, Kentucky, newspaper. Below I will excerpt some genealogical information (emphases mine):

It becomes our painful duty, having been requested by the family, to chronicle the death of our dear father and brother in the ministry, Elder W. A. Bowden. **Bro. Bowden was born in Randolph county, N.C., Jan. 26, 1811.** Was of English and Welsh descent. **He moved from North Carolina to Maury county, Tennessee, in 1820, and from thence to Graves county, Ky., in 1831,** and from Kentucky to Miller county, Missouri, in 1884, where he lived (near Ulman's Ridge) until released from suffering on April 7th, 1892, being then eighty-one years, two months and eleven days of age ... Was married to Sarah Webb, of Weakly county, Tenn., Dec. 25, 1838, professed a hope in Christ in 1835, near Boydsville [Graves County], Kentucky, and joined the Regular Primitive Baptist church at Mount Zion, Graves county, Kentucky, in July, 1835. Was licensed to preach on old Christmas day in 1836 ... Brother Bowden leaves a devoted wife, one daughter and (I think) six grand children, as well as a numerous host of brethren, sisters and friends to mourn our loss.<sup>184</sup>

This obituary most graciously connects our dots from Graves County, Kentucky, all the way back to Randolph County, North Carolina, confirming what we only conjectured. If I could wish for anything more, it would be only that it also named W. A.'s parents or even grandparents.

One curious fact I note is that this obituary attributes W. A.'s ancestry to the English and Welsh, rather than—perhaps having lost track, in his eighty-one years, of the *Bowdoin* spelling of the surname<sup>185</sup>—to the French Huguenots, as is claimed as a badge of honor by many descendants today, especially Protestants.

On the 1799 tax list of Randolph County, North Carolina, there was a **William Armestead** who was in charge of the tax district where the Bowdoins lived. This may have been Westwood

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<sup>183</sup> The full name is widely reported in trees online, e.g. "Westwood Armstead Bowden," FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LQRX-C4H>; "Westwood Armstead Bowden," Find a Grave Memorial #198779586, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/198779586/westwood\\_armstead\\_bowden](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/198779586/westwood_armstead_bowden) (accessed 6 Sep 2024).

<sup>184</sup> "Obituary of Elder W. A. Bowden," *Mayfield Weekly Monitor*, 3 Aug 1892, clipped on Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/mayfield-weekly-monitor-elder-westwood-a/154768820/> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>185</sup> Notably, the name was clearly spelled *Bowdoin* in W. A.'s 1840 census entry, as well as in several tax list entries, though the tax lists were often inconsistent even between adjacent names.

Armstead Bowdoin's namesake.<sup>186</sup> In fact, the name *Westwood* "has been a favorite name" in the Armstead family (also spelled *Armistead*).<sup>187</sup> Could Betsy, Travis's wife, have been a member of the Armistead family?

## Other Travis Bowdens and Travis "Westward" Bowden

Now that a trail has been clearly marked from Graves County, Kentucky, back to Randolph County, North Carolina, can we definitively identify the Travis Bowden of Kentucky with Travis, the son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740)? One question along this research has given me pause, the possible confusion and conflation of different men named *Travis Bowden*.

I can name the following Travises:

1. **Travis "Francis" Bowdon**, son of William Bowdon (b. 1720) and Betty. Born about 1750 in Granville County, North Carolina; died about 1803–1805 in Kershaw District, South Carolina.
2. **Travis Bowdoin**, son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) and Mary; grandson of William Bowdon (b. 1720) and Betty. Born about 1772 in Granville County, North Carolina; died between 1860 and 1870 in Graves County, Kentucky.
3. **Travis Bowdoin**, son of James Bowdoin (b. 1764) and Priscilla Williams; grandson of William Bowdoin (b. 1740) and Mary. Born about 1795 in North Carolina or South Carolina; died about 1835 in Putnam County, Georgia. Married **Sarah Clark**, 4 Sep 1817 in Putnam County, Georgia.
4. **Travis Bowdon**, son of William Bowdon (b. 1773) and Nancy Wiggins; grandson of #1. Born about 1810 in Kershaw County, South Carolina; died 1850 in Monroe County, Mississippi. Married **Elizabeth Bobo**, 16 Mar 1830 in Bedford County, Tennessee.<sup>188</sup>
5. **Simeon Travis Bowdoin**, son of William Bowdoin (b. 1786) and Martha Smith; grandson of James Bowdoin (b. 1764) and Priscilla Williams. Born 15 Mar 1816 in Putnam County, Georgia; died 24 May 1883 in Kerr County, Texas. Married (1) **Mary A. Bowdoin** (a cousin), 8 Jan 1837 in Monroe County, Georgia, (2) **Nancy Bryan**, 23 Jan 1848 in Stewart County, Georgia.

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<sup>186</sup> "Randolph County Tax Lists: 1799," *The Genealogical Journal of the Randolph County Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1977): 41, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/reader/220370/44>.

<sup>187</sup> "Armistead" in T. H. Ball, *A Glance into the Great South-East: Clarke County, Alabama, and Its Surroundings, 1540–1877* (Grove Hill, Ala.: n.p., 1882), 475, on the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/ball-t.-h.-a-glance-into-the-great-south-east-or-clarke-county-alabama-1882/page/475> (accessed 21 Sep 2024).

<sup>188</sup> "Travis Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Coffee County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHTK-M7J>; Monroe County, Mississippi, Probate Estate Files, Travis Bowden, 1850, on FamilySearch, "Monroe, Probate Estate Case Files, 1821–1916," Image Group 005842297, Image 304, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99QX-4RSW>; Coffee County, Tennessee, County Court, Minutes, Oct Term 1857, 178, on FamilySearch, "Coffee, Minutes, County Court," <https://www.familysearch.org/search/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-99P9-2YKF>; "Travis Bowden" on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/L8W1-SKZ> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

6. **Nathan Travis Bowdon**, son of John Bowdoin (b. 1770), grandson of William Bowdoin (b. 1740). Born 22 Sep 1821 in Richmond County, North Carolina; died 29 Aug 1890 in Richmond County, North Carolina. Married **Martha C. Smith** about 1846.
7. **Travis Watts Bowdoin**, son of #3, grandson of James Bowdoin (b. 1764) and Priscilla Williams. Born 12 May 1834 in Monroe County, Georgia; died 23 Sep 1902 in Bowie County, Texas. Married (1) **Harriet Smith**, about 1855 in Monroe County, Georgia; (2) **Julia Ann Price**, 1 Apr 1870 in Monroe County, Arkansas.<sup>189</sup>

At least up to four generations past William (b. 1720), I do not know of any others. Despite Bowdoin Marsh's suggestion that the name "Travis" might have gone back a generation further than William (b.1720), I can find no evidence of other instances of the name Travis, apart from those among the descendants of William (b. 1720) and Betty. John, the son of William (b. 1720), appears to have had no son named Travis.<sup>190</sup>

Of the Travises named, it is well documented that the first (#1), the elder Travis, son of William (b. 1720), died in South Carolina. Travis (#3), the son of James (b. 1764), remained in Georgia; and Travis (#4), the son of William (b. 1773), died in Mississippi. All the rest were too young, did not go by "Travis" as their primary name, and had well documented lives elsewhere. That leaves only Travis (#2), our subject, the son of William (b. 1740), as the likely one to have gone to Graves County, Kentucky.<sup>191</sup>

Finally, there is **Travis "Westward" Bowden**, an individual fabled in the trees of Ancestry, whose facts are so thoroughly confused and conflated as to make his identification with any one person impossible. In searching for the name in Ancestry's public trees, I find 366 trees algorithmically grouped under the same heading, with few if any attached sources, containing:

- **Travis Westward Bowden**, born 1771 in North Carolina; died 1862 in Graves County, Kentucky; married Nancy Wiggins, 1797. Son of Travis Francis Bowdoin and Mary Penelope Macon.
- **William Travis Bowden**, born 1773 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 1827 in Oglethorpe County, Georgia; married Nancy Wiggins, 1797. Son of Travis Francis Bowden and Mary Penelope Macon.

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<sup>189</sup> "Travis Watts Bowdoin" on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LVJH-9T4> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>190</sup> "John Bowdon" on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LHNV-LCC> (accessed 19 Sep 2024).

<sup>191</sup> There are other Bowden families coming out of North Carolina, including an apparently unrelated William Bowden (b. ca. 1742, d. 1834) who also went to Maury County, Tennessee (probably the William Bowden of footnote 171). I have not attempted to research these other families, but at least conducted a search for any other men named "Travis Bowden" who were born between 1720 and 1820. It is my presumption, following Marsh, that, barring the rare coincidence, "Travis" is a family name occurring primarily in this branch of the Bowdoin family.

- **William Westward Bowden**, born 1766 in North Carolina; died 1842 in Oglethorpe County, Georgia; married Nancy Wiggins, 1797. Son of Travis Francis Bowden and Mary Penelope Macon.
- and various permutations of the same.

This superperson is apparently a conflation of at least three real individuals:

1. **Travis Bowdoin**, son of William Bowdoin (b. ca. 1740). Born ca. 1773 in Granville County, North Carolina; died ca. 1862 in Graves County, Kentucky. Married Betsy (maiden name unknown).
2. **William Bowdon**, son of Travis Bowdon (b. ca. 1750). Born ca. 1773 in Granville County, North Carolina; died 1842 in Coffee County, Tennessee. Married Nancy Wiggins (the only man to have done so), 23 Dec 1797 in Granville County, North Carolina.
3. **William Bowden**, born about 1776 in North Carolina; died 1827 in Oglethorpe County, Georgia.<sup>192</sup> Married Anny Finch, 4 Jun 1813, Oglethorpe County.<sup>193</sup>

This is a firsthand example of the destructive work of Ancestry’s algorithms. Because these three men had similar birthdates and birthplaces, the Ancestry algorithm has “suggested” that they were the same person, also further conflating William Bowdoin (b. 1740) with Travis Bowdon (b. 1750) and even further, conflating their wives. Travis Bowdon did have a wife named Penelope, but there is no evidence of her being named either Mary or Macon.<sup>194</sup>

So, who was Travis “Westward” Bowden? Where does “Westward” even come from? When I first discovered Travis Bowdoin in Graves County, Kentucky, and his son, *Westwood* A. Bowden, I had

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<sup>192</sup> This is the man whom Bowdoin Marsh incorrectly identified as the father of James Bowdoin (b. 1764); see “Identification of William Bowdoin’s sons James and Josiah” above. Few genuine facts about him are discernable, owing to rampant conflations. According to the 1820 census of Oglethorpe County, he was born between 1776 and 1794, adding his age to his similarities with the other two men. Marsh’s identification of this William, rather than William (b. 1740), as the father of James (b. 1764), no doubt further confused the Ancestry algorithm, with people posting trees variously linking James to this William and to the correct one.

<sup>193</sup> This, at least, is what is claimed for the man on the FamilySearch Tree; see “William Bowden,” <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KFTD-31D> (accessed 24 Oct 2024). This marriage record is documented and likely belongs to him. Ancestry.com, “Georgia, U.S., Marriage Records From Select Counties, 1828–1978,” Oglethorpe County, Marriages (White), Vol. 1, 1794–1832, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/478401:4766> (accessed 24 Oct 2024).

<sup>194</sup> Penelope Bowdon was the widow and administrator of Travis Bowdon. See Kershaw District, South Carolina, Deed Book H, 148, Penelope Bowdon to Robert Bowdon, 16 Nov 1816, in FamilySearch, “Kershaw, Deeds, 1813–1822,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PY-4XY9> (accessed 24 Oct 2024). Bowdoin Marsh believed Penelope was Travis’s second wife (see Marsh, [38](#), [46](#)), stating that she was “too young on the 1800 S.C. census” to be the mother of Travis’s children; but both the 1800 census (assuming a mangled “Fleavers Bowden” is meant to be “Travis”; see FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1800,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH5R-8DC>) and 1810 census (assuming “Benny Bowden” is meant to be “Penny”; see FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1810,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH23-JTG>) have only a category for a “female over 45 years old”; so I am unsure how Marsh can presume she was too young.



a sinking feeling that I had stumbled into the web of Ancestry’s “Westward” chaos. Now that I feel I have safely disentangled both myself and William’s Travis, I can approach this question.

In my view, the names “Westwood” and “Westward” are suspiciously similar—perhaps one being a misunderstanding of the other. In fact, *Westwood* A. Bowden was recorded on the 1870 census as *Westward* Bowden.<sup>195</sup> In googling the name “Westward Bowden,” the main occurrences come from descendants of **Mary (Bowden) Luther** (b. ca. 1792), wife of **George Luther**, who settled in Dickson County, Tennessee:

My **Westward Bowden** came to Burns, Dickson County, Tennessee, in 1823 on oxcarts. His daughter was Mary “Polly” Bowden, married to George Grancer (Grandsire) Luther. They were born 1792 and 1790 in Randolph County, N.C. I found another **Westward Bowden** (b. 1805 in N.C.) in **Cuba, Graves, Kentucky**, who is bound to be a son or nephew of Westward Sr. (b. 1766 in N.C.).<sup>196</sup>

George [Luther] ... married Mary Bowden, daughter of **Westward Bowden**, in Randolph County, North Carolina. ... Jacob, George’s son ... moved his family to **Cuba, Graves County, Kentucky**, in 1853.<sup>197</sup>

George Luther was born in October 1790 in Frederick County, Maryland. He was married in 1812 in Randolph County, North Carolina, to Mary “Polly” Bowden, daughter of **Travis “Westward” Bowden**.<sup>198</sup>

This last quotation comes from a published personal genealogy by Joseph Neal Luther, a professor emeritus of architecture and amateur archaeologist and historian, whose research is creditable. Later, in a Bowden section of his book, he identified his Travis “Westward” Bowden as the son of William Bowden (b. ca. 1745) of Randolph County, North Carolina, a member of the Hillsborough Convention.<sup>199</sup>

These several facts seem to cinch that Travis Bowdoin, son of William Bowdoin, is one and the same with this Travis “Westward” Bowden:

Descendants of “Westward” Bowden place his origin in Randolph County, North Carolina, whence the Luther family also came.

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<sup>195</sup> “Westward Bowden” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, Cuba Precinct, page 13 (24A stamped), on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1870,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MXW3-PHL>.

<sup>196</sup> Michael David Brown, “Re: Bowdens from Middle Tennessee,” Bowden Surname Forum, Genealogy.com, 11 Sep 2000, <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/bowden/795/> (accessed 6 Sep 2024).

<sup>197</sup> Arthur J. Luther Jr., “A Luther Family History,” notarized and dated 19 Dec 1974; attached to Alfred L. Moody Family Bible Record, Tennessee State Library and Archives Family Bible Collection, <https://tsla.tnsosfiles.com/general/BibleRecords/TSLA/J/Johnson/AlfredJohnson11.pdf> (accessed 6 Sep 2024).

<sup>198</sup> Joseph Neal Luther, *The Family Chronicles: A Genealogy*, vol. 1 (Lincoln, Nebraska: self-published, 1993), 16, on FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/290438/23>.

<sup>199</sup> Luther, 70.




These descendants understand “Westward” to be the same name as that of Elder *Westwood* A. Bowden (e.g., in the quotation, *another* “Westward” Bowden, referring to W. A.).

The Luther family also went to Cuba, Graves County, Kentucky, the same neighborhood where Travis Bowdoin died and Westwood A. Bowden lived.

Dickson County, Tennessee, where George and Mary Luther settled, is a close neighbor to Maury County, where Travis Bowdoin first settled.

## Conclusion

Travis Bowdoin, son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), was born about 1772 in Granville County, North Carolina. He married his wife Elizabeth (Betsy) about 1791 in Randolph County, North Carolina, and died after 1860, probably about 1862, in Graves County, Kentucky. Travis and Betsy had these known children:


1. **Mary Bowdoin**, born about 1792 in Randolph County; died about 1862 in Dickson County, Tennessee. Married **George Luther** about 1812, Randolph County, North Carolina.<sup>200</sup> 
2. **Mariah Bowdoin**, born about 1793 in Randolph County; died between 1860 and 1870 in Randolph County. Married **George Brown** about 1815, Randolph County, North Carolina.<sup>201</sup> 
3. **John Bowdoin**, born about 1798 in Randolph County; died about 1838 in Graves County, Kentucky. Married **Elizabeth Nall**, 15 Jan 1820, Wake County, North Carolina. His widow remarried to **John Bernard Brown** following his death, and John’s children can be found scattered around Graves County on the 1850 census.<sup>202</sup> 

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<sup>200</sup> “George Luther” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Dickson County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH5S-TF5>; “George Luther” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Dickson County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHTK-9NJ>; “Mary Luther” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Dickson County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCDD-95K>; “Mary Luther” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Dickson County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8TC-C2Q>.

<sup>201</sup> “Maria Brown” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4BF-V6D>; “Marah Brown” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD64-FCC>; “Mariah Bowden” on FamilySearch Tree, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/sources/MF9V-K4Y> (accessed 20 Sep 2024). Yes, evidently it is true that Travis Bowdoin named two daughters born close together *Mary* and *Mariah*, and they both married men named George. As you might imagine, this is a recipe for conflation. I have seen many trees stating that Mariah “Polly” Bowden married George “Luther” Brown, conflating the two sisters and their husbands.

<sup>202</sup> Thanks especially to the research of David Schade on FamilySearch for helping to untangle the families of John Bowdoin and Dorcia (Bowdoin) Shelby-Emerson. See “William Alexander Shelby,” <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LQRX-WZW>, “John Bowdoin,”

4. **Dorcia (Dolly) Bowdoin**, born about 1807 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died after 1880 in Graves County, Kentucky. Married (1) **Reese Shelby**, before 1830; (2) **James Harvey Emerson**, 18 Jul 1852, Graves County, Kentucky. She and her husband Mr. Shelby had no natural children, but adopted a son of her deceased brother John, **William Alexander Bowdoin**. His name change to **William Alexander Shelby** was enacted in 1841 by an act of the Kentucky General Assembly.<sup>203</sup>
5. **Westwood Armstead Bowdoin**, born 26 Jan 1811 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 7 Apr 1892 in Miller County, Missouri. Married **Sarah A. Webb**, 25 Dec 1838, Weakley County, Tennessee.<sup>204</sup> 

According to the 1800 and 1830 censuses, there are probably other children of Travis not yet identified: a daughter born between 1790 and 1800; a daughter born between 1820 and 1825; and a daughter born between 1825 and 1830. There may even have been others, especially daughters, who were born after 1800 and married before 1830 and never appeared on any census with Travis.

Could William Bowdoin (b. 1802) fit here? Though William could conceivably fit as Travis's son—with Travis's absence from the 1810 census, we cannot see if he had a son in the right age range or not—the 1840 census at least suggests that Westwood A. Bowden may have been originally,

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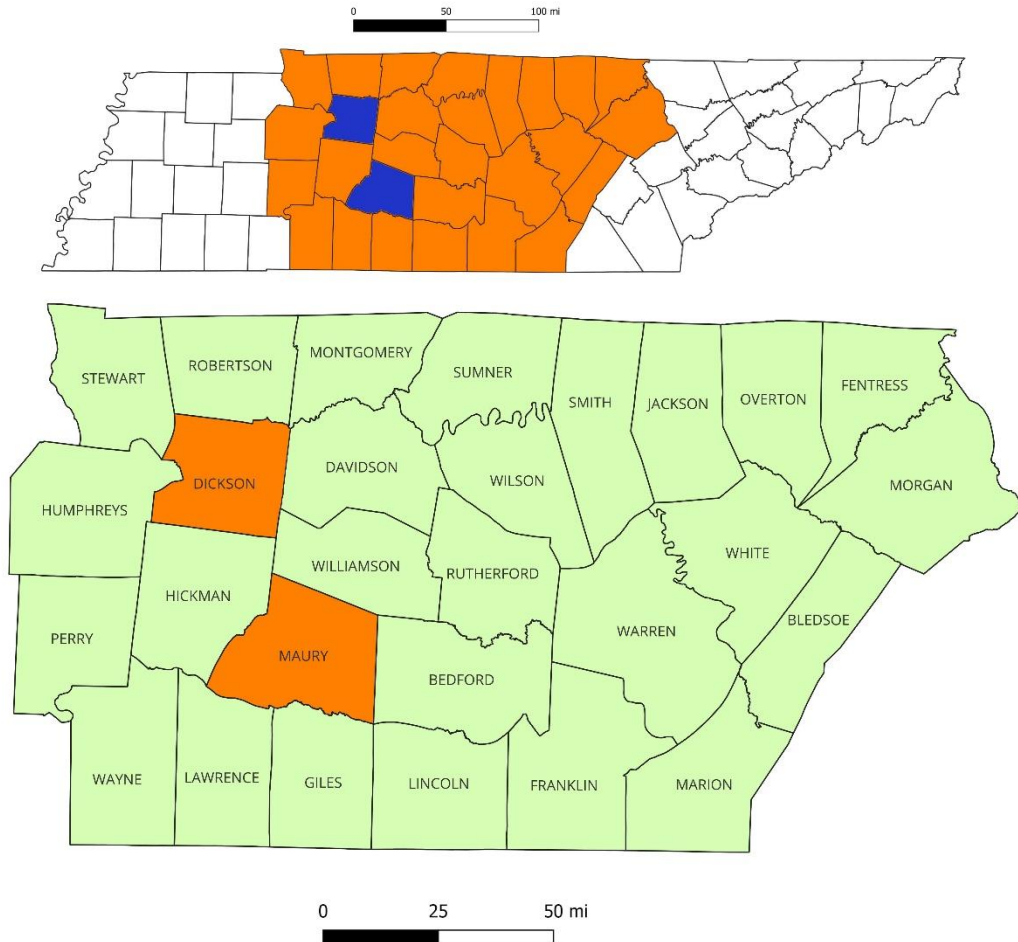
<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KCP6-TMP>, and “Dorcia Bowdoin,” <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LQRX-WL1>, all on FamilySearch Tree (accessed 20 Sep 2024). Wake County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, John Bowdoin to Elizabeth Nall, on FamilySearch, “North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9J-NRYH>; “Elizabeth Brown” (widow of John Bowdoin) on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M653-P1Q>; “Dolly Wade” (daughter of John Bowdoin, with two younger Bowden siblings living in household) on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M65Q-6L1>; tombstone, Wade Family Cemetery, photo at Find a Grave, “Dolly M. (Bowden) Wade,” Find a Grave Memorial #36096642, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/36096642/>; “J. G. Bowden” (son of John Bowdoin, with two younger Bowden siblings living in household) on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M653-P1Z> (accessed 20 Sep 2024).

<sup>203</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1840/1841* (Frankfort, Ky.: A. G. Hodges, 1841), 189, on HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/iau.31858018299283>; “Rice Shelby” on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1840,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHR1-BXK>.

“Dolly Shelby” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M653-VJ4>; FamilySearch, “Kentucky Marriages, 1785–1979,” James H. Emerson to Dolly Shelby, 1852, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F44W-3ZF>; “Dolly Emerson” on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1860,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZBQ-XHJ>; “Dorica Emerson” on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1870,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MXW3-V4F>; “Dollie Emerson” on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1880,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCC2-MQH>.

<sup>204</sup> In addition to above citations, see “Westwood Bowden” on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Graves County, Kentucky, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1880,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCC2-73L>.

or additionally, named *William*, listing him as “Wm. A. Bowdoin”. But more importantly, Travis was still in North Carolina as late as 1820, and there is no evidence that he ever went to Georgia at all. Eliza, born 1817 in Georgia, could not be his daughter. Travis, though an intriguing figure worthy of the name “westward,” was not the father of our Bowdoins.



**Figure 12.** (Top) Middle Tennessee within the State of Tennessee in 1825.  
(Bottom) Middle Tennessee counties in 1825, showing proximity of Maury County and Dickson County.

## Mary (Molly) Bowdoin Macon (b. ca. 1773)

**Mary (Molly) Bowdoin** was the youngest daughter of William Bowdoin (b. 1740). She was born perhaps around 1773 in Granville County, North Carolina, and moved with her parents about 1788 to Randolph County.

Olive Pearce, a neighbor in Randolph County, said in her deposition in the William Bowdoin estate lawsuit that “Molly was married before she came to this section of country, but came here shortly afterward.”<sup>205</sup> Considering this has led me to revise both my estimates of Molly’s birthdate and of her marriage, and I now suppose Molly married shortly before moving to Randolph County, probably about 1788.<sup>206</sup>

Molly married **Gideon Macon**, called **Gideon “Thomas” Macon**. “Thomas” does not appear as a middle name for Gideon Macon in any contemporary record, and this appears to me like another case of “name creep,” but the name has appeared in print and has been attached to him since at least the early 1980s.<sup>207</sup> It does serve at least to distinguish him from his uncle, **Gideon “Hunt” Macon** (b. ca. 1715), whose reputed middle name also does not appear in primary sources. Gideon “Thomas” Macon was born about 1758, the son of **John Macon** (b. ca. 1719) and brother of **John Macon** (b. 1760), who married Molly’s sister Betsy. He was a veteran of the Revolution.

Gideon Macon appeared on the 1790 census in Randolph County:

1790 Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>208</sup>

- Gideon Macon
  - 1 male, 16 and over (born before 1774) [*Gideon Macon*]
  - 2 females [*Molly; Betsy*]

I could not find him in the 1800 census. But he was there in Randolph County in 1810:

1810 Census, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>209</sup>

- Gideon Macon
  - 1 male, 45 and over (born before 1765) [*Gideon Macon*]
  - 1 male, age 10 to 16 (born before 1794) [*William*]
  - 2 females, age 10 to 16 (born 1794 to 1800) [*Polly, Nancy*]
  - 2 males, age under 10 (born after 1800) [*both unknown*]

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<sup>205</sup> See p. 17 in my edition of the estate lawsuit (footnote 83).

<sup>206</sup> The entry in the Granville County marriage index, for “John Macon to Mary Bowden, 4 Jul 1786,” entered on various sites as a marriage record, is a mistranscription. John Macon married *Elizabeth* Bowden on 4 Jan 1786.







<sup>207</sup> See Macon and Wood, [33–34](#).

<sup>208</sup> “Gideon Macon” on 1790 U.S. Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, page 291, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHKB-12F> (accessed 20 Sep 2024).

<sup>209</sup> “Gideon Macon” on 1810 U.S. Census, Randolph County, North Carolina, page 175, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLM-GDK> (accessed 20 Sep 2024).

- 3 females, age under 10 (born after 1800) *[Martha, Sarah, Hannah]*

Gideon Macon and Molly Bowdoin had these known children:<sup>210</sup>

1. **Elizabeth (Betsy) Macon**, born about 1789. Married **Charles Johnston**, 24 Sep 1807, Randolph County (bond date).<sup>211</sup> 
2. **Gideon Alston Macon**, born about 1790; died 3 Oct 1831, Clarke County, Alabama. Married **Nancy Pugh**, 20 Oct 1820, Clarke County.<sup>212</sup> 
3. **Thomas Macon**, born 27 Oct 1793, died 4 Aug 1880. Married **Rosanna Moffitt**, 31 Jul 1822, Randolph County (bond date).<sup>213</sup> 
4. **William Macon**, born 17 Nov 1795 in Randolph County; died 21 May 1871 in Randolph County. Married **Nancy Craven**, about 1820 in Randolph County.<sup>214</sup> 
5. **Mary (Polly) Macon**, born about 1797, died about 1827. Married **William Johnson**, 24 Sep 1807, Randolph County.<sup>215</sup> 
6. **Nancy Macon**, born 30 Mar 1800 in Randolph County; died 16 Mar 1853 in Randolph County. Married **Rev. John Hendricks**, 3 Jul 1817, Randolph County.<sup>216</sup> 

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<sup>210</sup> Alethea Jane Macon named an additional daughter, **Jennie Macon**, married to a **Whitney**. There is no mention of this child in Gideon Macon's 1829 estate file or in any other record that I have found.

<sup>211</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, Charles Johnson to Elizabeth Macon, 24 Sep 1807, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q28T-6FZN>.


<sup>212</sup> Clarke County, Alabama, marriage book A, 116, on FamilySearch, "Clarke County, Alabama, Marriage Records, 1814–1959," Image Group 007316914, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9HV-3HTW> (accessed 22 Sep 2024); "Gideon Alston Macon" on Rusty Macon Weber, "Macon Family Tree," <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/53845350/person/13577126077/facts> (accessed 22 Sep 2024).

<sup>213</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, Thomas Macon to Rosanna Moffitt, 31 Jul 1822, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-R94C>; FamilySearch, "North Carolina, Historical Records Survey, Cemetery Inscription Card Index," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPR4-3Q1J>, Tomas Macon, died 4 August 1880, Holly Spring Friends Meeting Cemetery.

<sup>214</sup> Original tombstone, Shiloh Baptist Church Cemetery, photo at "William Macon," Find a Grave Memorial #59692982, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59692982/william\\_macon](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/59692982/william_macon).

<sup>215</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, William Johnston to Mary Macon, 1 Feb 1816, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-2GMZ>; North Carolina estate files, Randolph County, William Johnson (1827), on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89C6-RR5B>.

<sup>216</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, John Hendricks to Nancy Macon, 28 Jun 1817, FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-Z7MH>); tombstone, Franklinville Methodist Church Cemetery, photo at "Nancy Macon Hendricks," Find a Grave Memorial #33202438, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/33202438/nancy\\_hendricks](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/33202438/nancy_hendricks).

7. **Martha (Patsy) Macon**, born 13 Oct 1803 in Randolph County; died 29 Jul 1882 in Randolph County. Married **Isaac Lawrence**, 12 Oct 1826 in Randolph County (bond date).<sup>217</sup> 
8. **Sarah Macon**, born 1805 in Randolph County; died 27 June 1897 in Randolph County. Married **Rev. Jacob H. Craven**, 10 Jun 1830 in Randolph County.<sup>218</sup>
9. **Hannah Macon**, born 1808 in Randolph County; died 1 Jan 1873 in Randolph County, North Carolina. Married **Benjamin Sanders Caviness**, 18 Jul 1849 in Randolph County.<sup>219</sup>

It appears that Molly had passed away by 1810. Gideon Macon married (2) **Rebecca Hinshaw**, 24 Dec 1812 in Randolph County.<sup>220</sup> They had seven more children.

As of the 1820 tax list, Gideon Macon had 300 acres on Fork Creek, valued at \$500.<sup>221</sup>

Gideon Macon died in Randolph County in February 1829.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, Isaac Lawrence to Martha Macon, 12 Oct 1820, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-K27B>; tombstone, Pleasant Methodist Church Cemetery, photo at "Martha Macon Lawrence," Find a Grave Memorial #92099643, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92099643/martha\\_lawrence](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92099643/martha_lawrence).

<sup>218</sup> Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, Jacob Craven to Sarah Macon, 10 Jun 1830, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-KKVS>; tombstone, Holly Springs Friends Meeting Cemetery, photo at Find a Grave Memorial #148253215, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/148253215/sarah\\_craven](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/148253215/sarah_craven) (accessed 22 Sep 2024).

<sup>219</sup> Tombstone, Rains-Caviness Cemetery, photo at Find a Memorial #132028896, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/132028896/hannah\\_caviness](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/132028896/hannah_caviness); Randolph County, North Carolina, original marriage bonds, Benjamin S. Caviness to Hannah Macon, 18 Jul 1849, on FamilySearch, FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q21Y-L6F1> (accessed 22 Sep 2024).

<sup>220</sup> Randolph County Marriage Bonds (LDS typescript, 1944), page 185, Gedion Macon to Rebeckah Hinshaw, 24 Dec 1812, on FamilySearch, "North Carolina, County Marriages, 1762–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2R1-8KYB> (accessed 20 Sep 2024).

<sup>221</sup> Barbara Newsom Grigg and Carolyn N. Hager, *1820 Tax List, Randolph County, North Carolina* (n.p.: Randolph County Historical Society, n.d.), 14, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/idviewer/718378/20> (accessed 22 Sep 2024).

<sup>222</sup> North Carolina Estate Files, Randolph County, Gideon Macon (1829), on FamilySearch, "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663–1979," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KLYF-8FL>; tombstone, Holly Spring Friend Meeting Cemetery, photo at "Gideon Thomas Macon," Find a Grave Memorial 68851384, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/68851384/gideon-thomas-macon>.

## Josiah Bowdoin (b. ca. 1780)

I will tip my hand: Josiah Bowdoin, the fourth son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740), is the son of William who appears to be the most promising candidate to be the father of William (b. 1802) and Eliza (b. 1817). I do not find any of the obvious impediments or contradictions with Josiah that I have found with the other sons and grandsons of William (b. 1740). Though often called Josiah *Macon* Bowdoin in trees, there is no primary source support for his having the middle name *Macon*.

Josiah Bowdoin was born about 1780 in Granville County, North Carolina. He came with his parents to Randolph County as a young boy about 1788. In both 1790 and 1800, he was still unmarried and living with his parents.

Josiah married his first wife, whose name is not known, in about 1800 in Randolph County. We know that Josiah was married and having children as early as 1802 because Josiah's son Enoch Bowdon was also born about 1802. It might appear on its face to conflict with William that Enoch is also said to have been born in 1802; but we do not know if either birthdate is precise or accurate or what the dates are based on.

- Enoch Bowdon's obituary gave his death date as 28 Jun 1886 and his age as "eighty-four years and eight months". That appears to be a precise claim to the month of October 1802, if not the date of 28 Oct 1802.<sup>223</sup> William Bowdoin does not have an obituary that we have found, and no contemporary claim about his birthdate.
- William Bowdoin's tombstone gives the birthdate of 1802, but we do not know when this tombstone was placed or if it was anywhere near contemporary.<sup>224</sup> Enoch Bowdon does not have a tombstone.
- William's appearances on the census give his birth year as about 1803 (1850), 1802 (1860), and 1802 (1870). Enoch's appearances on the census give his birth year as about 1801 (1850), 1801 (1860), 1801 (1870), and 1807 (1880).

It appears, at least anecdotally based on these census records, that Enoch and William were not born the same year and Enoch was perhaps older, born 1801 rather than 1802. In any case, we do not have a primary source—say, a family bible, or even an obituary, making a "hard" claim for the birthdate of William—that would present a definite conflict to them both being Josiah's sons.

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<sup>223</sup> "Obituary," *Portland Commercial*, 8 Jul 1886, added by Max Haines ([maxxs45@outlook.com](mailto:maxxs45@outlook.com), Find a Grave Contributor #47691623), shared at "Enoch Bowdon," Find a Grave Memorial #84878844, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84878844/enoch-bowdon> (accessed 10 Oct 2024).

<sup>224</sup> A nearby tombstone for William's daughter Elizabeth that would appear to be of the same vintage bears an egregiously wrong birthdate, off by some twenty years (see footnote 17). This is not evidence of William's tombstone being in error, but it at least indicates that the accuracy of dates was not a primary concern.



Josiah Bowdoin received a North Carolina land grant for 50 acres in Montgomery County, “on the waters of Cedar Creek,” entered 31 May 1803 and issued 12 Dec 1805.<sup>225</sup> According to the lawsuit of his father William’s Bowdoin estate, William his father also gave Josiah a tract of land worth \$750 in Montgomery County.<sup>226</sup>

I cannot find Josiah on the 1810 census either in Randolph County (where all the Bowdoins are strangely missing) or in Montgomery County. Josiah appeared on the 1815 tax list in Randolph County:

1815 Tax List, Randolph County, North Carolina<sup>227</sup>

Capt. Laurence’s District

- Josiah Bowdown  
410 acres on Little River. Valued at \$250. 1 white poll.

In a 6 Dec 1816 Randolph County deed, Josiah Bowdoin sold to his brother Travis all 410 acres of his Randolph County land, for a sum of three hundred dollars.<sup>228</sup> And he moved from North Carolina to Georgia—just in time to have a daughter born in December 1817.

He appeared on the 1820 census in Putnam County, Georgia:

1820 Federal Census, Putnam County, Georgia<sup>229</sup>

- Josiah Bowdin
  - 1 white male, age 26 to 44 (born 1776 to 1894) *[Josiah]*
  - 1 white female, age 26 to 44 (born 1776 to 1894) *[wife of Josiah]*
  - 3 white males, age 10 to 16 (born 1804 to 1810)
  - 3 white males, age under 10 (born after 1810) *[John C.; 2 unknowns]*
  - 3 white females, age under 10 (born after 1810)

If Josiah were the father of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817), then Eliza could indeed fit into this household as one of the daughters born after 1810. The fact that Josiah did have three sons on this census born between 1804 and 1810 at least proves that he did have a first marriage in North Carolina before coming to Georgia. William Bowdoin is not living in this household in 1820, but he very well could have already left, as had Enoch Bowdon.

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<sup>225</sup> Warrant dated 31 May 1803, entry no. 6008; surveyed 28 Sep 1804; patent issued 12 Dec 1805, in patent book 119, page 280, grant no. 2053; file no. 1706 (MARS 12.14.89.1706); all available on *North Carolina Land Grants and Image Data*, NCLandGrants.com, <https://nclandgrants.com/> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>226</sup> “Answer of John Bowdoin,” page 11 in my edition of the case.

<sup>227</sup> Winford Calvin Hinshaw, *1815 Tax List of Randolph County, N.C.* (Raleigh, N.C.: William Perry Johnson, 1957), 5, <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/iddviewer/320106/11> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>228</sup> Randolph County deed book 16, 206–207, Josiah Bowdon to Travis Bowdon, 6 Dec 1816, on FamilySearch, “Randolph, Deeds, 1802–1821,” Image Group 007537291, Image 842, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-L98N-4H1P> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>229</sup> “Josiah Bowdin” on 1820 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1820,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHLX-RG9> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

Josiah's first wife died probably about 1826. On 12 Nov 1826, in Henry County, Georgia, he married (2) **Nancy Freeman**. He married (3) **Nancy Spencer**, 5 Apr 1831, in Jasper County, Georgia.

I cannot find Josiah on the 1830 census. But by the 1840 census, he had moved to Jasper County:

1840 Federal Census, Jasper County, Georgia<sup>230</sup>

District 365. Page 53.

- Josiah Bowdoin
  - 1 white male, age 40 to 50 (born 1790 to 1800) *[Josiah]*
  - 1 white female, age 40 to 50 (born 1790 to 1800) *[Nancy Spencer]*
  - 1 white male, age 20 to 30 (born 1810 to 1820)
  - 2 white males, 10 to 15 (born 1825 to 1830) *[James]*

Finally, between 1840 and 1850, Josiah moved to Meriwether County. There he appeared on the 1850 census, in the household of a son, James:

1850 Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia

- James Bowden, age 23 (born about 1827 in Georgia)
  - Sarah, age 23 (born about 1827 in Georgia)
  - Thomas, age 6 (born about 1844 in Georgia)
  - Malachia, age 4 (male, born about 1846 in Georgia)
  - Mary A., age 2 (born about 1848 in Georgia)
  - Martha J., age 6/12 (born about Mar 1850 in Georgia)
  - Ebenezer Smith, age 20 (born about 1830 in Georgia)
  - **Josiah Bowden**, age 70 (born about 1780 in North Carolina)

Josiah's tombstone at Bethesda Cemetery in Meriwether County bears the inscription:

Josiah Bowden  
77 years old.  
Member of Congregational  
M[ethodist] Church.


If he was seventy years old in 1850, this implies that he died about 1857.



We have identified these children of Josiah Bowdoin for certain. Each is identified through DNA matches as well as public family trees:

1. **Enoch Bowdon**, born about October 1802 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 28 Jun 1886 in Bearcreek Township, Jay County, Indiana. Married (1) **Delilah Hughes**, 24 Sep

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<sup>230</sup> "Josiah Bowdoin" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBN-CWM> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

1824, Grainger County, Tennessee; (2) **Mrs. Elizabeth Ann (Stephens) Loomis**, 2 Nov 1867, Jay County, Indiana; (3) **Mrs. Deborah (Lawrence) Hathaway**, 21 Jun 1876, Adams County, Indiana. He served for fourteen years as an associate judge on the Jay County Circuit Court and was the father of fourteen children.<sup>231</sup> 


2. **John Culpepper Bowden**, born 5 May 1813 in Randolph County, North Carolina; died 13 Aug 1895 in Meriwether County, Georgia. Married **Mary Ann Murphy**.<sup>232</sup> 
3. **Catherine Bowden**, born about 1824 in Georgia, probably Putnam County; died after 1880 in Meriwether County, Georgia. Married (1) **Wiley Waddell**, about 1840, (2) **William Murphy**, about 1848.<sup>233</sup> 

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<sup>231</sup> Grainger County, Tennessee, original marriage bonds, Enoch Bowdon to Delilah Hughs, 24 Sep 1824, on FamilySearch, "Tennessee, County Marriages, 1790–1950," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XZW4-CPP>; "Enoch Bowdon" on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Grainger County, Tennessee, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1830," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHP9-XBL>; "Enoch Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Jay County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBV-22K>; "Enoch Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Jay County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHJK-GBT>; "Enoch Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Jay County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4FG-BXK>; Jay County, Indiana, marriage book C, page 173, Enoch Bowden to Elizabeth A. Loomis, 2 Nov 1867, on FamilySearch, "Indiana Marriages, 1811–2019," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V6RP-PKW>; "Enoch Bowdon" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Jay County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MXFM-42N>; Adams County, Indiana, marriage book D, page 52, Enoch Bowdon to Deborah Hathaway, 21 Jun 1876, "Indiana Marriages, 1811–2019," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XXJF-VT5>; "Enoch Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Jay County, Indiana, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MH9Z-GPS>; "Enock Bowden" in FamilySearch, "Indiana Death Index, 1882–1920," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VZ7W-33T>, from Ancestry.com, "Indiana Deaths, 1882–1920," citing death index transcript by Indiana Works Progress Administration, book CSS-2, page 113, at Portland, Indiana, County Health Office; "Enoch Bowdon," Find a Grave Memorial #84878844, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84878844/enoch-bowdon> (accessed 9 Oct 2024); "Obituary," *ibid*. In addition to strong DNA evidence connecting Enoch Bowdon to Josiah Bowdoin, Enoch named a son Josiah, and John Culpepper Bowden, another son of Josiah, named a son Enoch Reid Bowden. It appears generally well accepted that Enoch was Josiah's son.

<sup>232</sup> "John C. Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHBN-NY6>; "John C. Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY4-TQH>; "John C. Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMX-YJB>; "John Bowdin" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3F-G3X>; "John C. Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8GF-ZK7>; "John Culpepper Bowden," Find a Grave Memorial #38051805, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/38051805/john-culpepper-bowden> (accessed 9 Oct 2024).

<sup>233</sup> "Catharine Murphy" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY4-RZV>; "Cathrine Murphy" on 1860 U.S. Federal

4. **James Bowden**, born about 1826 in Georgia, probably Putnam County; died after 1880 in Meriwether County, Georgia. Married **Sarah Murphy**.<sup>234</sup> 

There are many more children who are unknown than are known. I can identify these as unknown from the census:

- Three sons, born between 1804 and 1810
- Two sons, born between 1810 and 1820
- Three daughters, born between 1810 and 1820

And there could well be even more who had left the household by 1820, as Enoch, with or without William, definitely had, or who were born after 1820 and already gone by 1840, as Catherine had.

I see no obvious impediment to the possibility of Josiah being the father of William and Eliza. He had no documented son named William (though several of his children are undocumented). He had other children born in the same time frame as William (Enoch, also said to be born around 1802). He was in the right places at the right times, in North Carolina in 1802 and in Georgia in 1817. He did have a daughter of an appropriate age to be Eliza on the 1820 census. Could he be our ancestor?

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Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMX-YVK>; "Katie Murphy" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3F-Q71>; "Catherine Murphy" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8GF-7HD> (accessed 9 Oct 2024).

<sup>234</sup> "James Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZY4-T3P>; "Jas. Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZMF-Q5T>; "James Bowdin" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MC3N-QQ3>; "James Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Meriwether County, Georgia, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8GF-4SF> (accessed 9 Oct 2024).

## Pleasant Bowden (b. ca. 1785)

**Pleasant Bowden** was the youngest son and youngest child of William Bowdoin (b. 1740). He was born about 1785 in Granville County, North Carolina, shortly before the family's move to Randolph County in about 1788. He seems, out of all his brothers, to have preferred the spelling *Bowden*, with both he and his descendants appearing in most records by that spelling. He is often called Pleasant *Macon* Bowden in family trees, but I have found no primary source support for this. In all extant sources, he is shown only as Pleasant Bowden, no middle name or initial.

Pleasant Bowden received a North Carolina land grant in 1813 for 50 acres in Montgomery County.<sup>235</sup> "P. Bowdown" on the 1810 census of Montgomery County is probably him:

1810 Federal Census, Montgomery County, North Carolina

- P. Bowdown
  - 1 white male, age 26 to 45 (born 1765 to 1784) *[Pleasant]*
  - 1 white female, age 26 to 45 (born 1765 to 1784) *[wife of Pleasant]*
  - 1 white male, age 10 to 16 (born 1794 to 1800)
  - 2 white males, age under 10 (born 1800 to 1810)
  - 1 white female, age under 10 (born 100 to 1810)

If this is indeed Pleasant, as it appears to be, then it challenges my assumptions about when he would have been married. Are these children his? Surely, the ten-to-sixteen-year-old could not be; Pleasant himself would only have been about nine years old in 1794 and fifteen in 1800, if the age he gave on the 1850 census is anywhere near accurate. William Macon, aged between 16 and 26, is listed adjacent, who could be William, the son of John and Elizabeth (Bowdoin) Macon.<sup>236</sup> Could some or all of these children in Pleasant's household belong to Betsy also, both Betsy and John having recently died, leaving young children?

Pleasant evidently left North Carolina to move to Georgia by around 1816, probably settling briefly near his brothers in Jasper or Putnam county.<sup>237</sup> By 1819, Pleasant had removed to Alabama, becoming a pioneer in Conecuh County. He purchased 80 acres of land at the Cahaba Land Office on 20 May 1819, later receiving an additional land patent for 80 acres, entered 2 Jul 1822 and issued 1 Oct 1823.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Warrant issued 8 Jan 1811, entry no. 6844; patent issued 24 Nov 1813, Montgomery County grant no. 2273, in North Carolina patent book 128, page 109; grant file no. 1940 (MARS 12.14.89.1940); all available on *North Carolina Land Grants and Image Data*, NCLandGrants.com, <https://nclandgrants.com/>.

<sup>236</sup> "William Macon" on 1810 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, North Carolina, on FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XH2J-VM2> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>237</sup> His oldest documented child, Lemuel, was born in Georgia around 1816. One census shows 1813.

<sup>238</sup> Ancestry.com, "Alabama, U.S., Marriages, Deaths, Wills, Court, and Other Records, 1784–1920," <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/153930:1898>, entry #1587, SW ¼, Section 21, Township 6,

Pleasant Bowden appeared on the 1820 Alabama state census in Conecuh County:

1820 Alabama State Census, Conecuh County, Alabama<sup>239</sup>

- Pleasant Bowden
  - 1 white male, age over 21 years (born before 1799) *[Pleasant]*
  - 1 white female, age over 21 years (born before 1799) *[wife of Pleasant]*
  - 3 white males under 21 years (born after 1799) *[Samuel,  
others unknown]*
  
  - 2 white females under 21 years (born after 1799) *[both unknown]*
  - 8 slaves

By 1830, he had moved north to Dallas County. I have found no record that he owned land there.

1830 Federal Census, Dallas County, Alabama<sup>240</sup>

- Pleasant Bowden
  - 1 white male, age 30 to 40 (born 1790 to 1800) *[Pleasant]*
  - 1 white female, age 40 to 50 (born 1780 to 1790) *[wife of Pleasant]*
  - 1 white male, age 15 to 20 (born 1810 to 1815) *[unknown]*
  - 1 white female, age 15 to 20 (born 1810 to 1815) *[unknown]*
  - 1 white male, age 10 to 15 (born 1815 to 1820) *[Samuel]*
  - 1 white male, age 5 to 10 (born 1820 to 1825) *[unknown]*
  - 1 white female, age 5 to 10 (born 1820 to 1825) *[Ellender]*
  - 2 white females, age under 5 (born 1825 to 1830) *[Alvaney; unknown]*

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Range 11, entry #1588, NW 1/4 , Section 21, Township 6, Range 11, entry #1589, deposit; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Accession No. AL0130\_\_270, Document No. 555, State Volume Patent, Alabama, 80 acres, W ½ of NW ¼, Section 27, Township 6 North, Range 11 East, of St. Stephens Meridian, online at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/> (accessed 22 Sep 2024).

<sup>239</sup> Ancestry.com, “Alabama, U.S., State Census, 1820–1866,” <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/767467:1576>; “Conecuh County Census, 1820,” in *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Fall 1944), 346–368, at 354, on Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/alabama-historical-quarterly-v06n03/page/n27/mode/2up> (accessed 12 Sep 2024).

<sup>240</sup> “Pleasant Bowden” on 1830 U.S. Federal Census, Dallas County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1830,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHPL-3MC> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

Pleasant’s wife evidently died between 1830 and 1840. At that point, it appears he broke up his household and sent the young children off to live with relatives. Pleasant does not appear as a head of household on the 1840 census. But there was an older man, aged between 50 and 60, living in the household of my William Bowdoin (b. 1802) in Autauga County in 1840 (see “Records of the William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza (Bowdoin) Hackman (b. 1817) families” above), and I believe this was Pleasant. At least two separate runs of notices, notifying Pleasant Bowden of a letter remaining for him at the Wetumpka post office, appeared in the *State Guard*, a Wetumpka newspaper, in July–August 1848 and January 1849.<sup>241</sup>

LETTERS remaining in the Post Office at Wetumpka, Ala., on the 1st January, 1849.	
Archer Jas A	Ledbetter Jas W
Adams Amanda Miss	Lyons Early
Ambrister S Mrs 2	Lewis Louisa A
Allen E P	Lewis Mary A Miss
Alison Robert	Mauirk Wm A
Barfield Miles	McKenzie J Capt
Backman Solomon 2	Myers Wm J
Bradshaw Jessee 3	May Joseph
Brown S J	Massengale A M
Brassel Allen	Marshall Emma
Burch Joseph R	Mason Berry
Borren Thompison	Nelson Wm F
Billups & Leonard	Nickles & Hutchison
Burton James	Oglesby Thomas B
<b>Bowden Pleasant</b>	Patton J J
Barkley Wm C	Ross James F
Bozeman Nathaniel	Ross L B
Bradley Thomas 3	Ridgway Thomas P 2
Clanton Wm H	Rodgers Joseph

Figure 13. .List of letters, 12 Jan 1849, *Daily State Guard* (Wetumpka).

We already know that Pleasant was in that part of Alabama during the 1840s, since in 1844, he married a woman in Montgomery County. On 20 Mar 1844, he married (2) **Mrs. Charlotte (Butler) Williams**. She was the widow of **Jonas Williams**, who died about 1839.<sup>242</sup> Pleasant appeared on the 1850 census in Montgomery County:

1850 Federal Census, Montgomery County, Alabama<sup>243</sup>

First District, page 199 (100A stamped).

Dwelling #501, Household #513.

- Pleasant Bowden, age 65 (born about 1785 in S.C. [sic])
  - Charlott, age 50 (born about 1800 in S.C.)
  - Frances, age 20 (born about 1830 in Ala.)
  - Mary, age 15 (born about 1835 in Ala.)

Though from the census, the young women, Frances and Mary, appear to be named Bowden (i.e., they were not listed under a different surname), it is unclear whether they were Charlotte’s

<sup>241</sup> “List of Letters,” *State Guard*, 18 Jul 1848, 25 Jul 1848, 1 Aug 1848, 15 Aug 1848, 22 Aug 1848, and *Daily State Guard*, 11 Jan 1849, 12 Jan 1849, 15 Jan 1849, etc., through 23 Jan 1849; on Newspapers.com (accessed 12 Sep 2024).

<sup>242</sup> FamilySearch, “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” Montgomery County, Pleasant Bowden to Charlott Williams, 20 Mar 1844, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKZ3-89KB>; “Alabama County Marriages, 1809–1950,” Montgomery County, Jonas Williams and Charlotte Butler, 24 Oct 1822, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QKZ3-ZB5S> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>243</sup> “Pleasant Bowden” on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Montgomery County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, “United States Census, 1850,” <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MH5Z-YBB> (Image Group 004193232 Item 1 of 3, Image 65 of 256); Ancestry has better image quality: Ancestry.com, “1850 United States Federal Census,” <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/15671530:8054> (Image 60 of 91) (accessed 23 Sep 2024).


daughters by Mr. Williams or Pleasant's by his first marriage. I have found no other record of them by either the name *Williams* or *Bowden*.

Pleasant Bowden died in Montgomery County between 1850 and 1855. Charlotte appeared as a widow on the 1855 state census:

1855 Alabama State Census, Montgomery County, Alabama<sup>244</sup>

- Mrs. C. Bowden
  - 1 white female over 21 (born before 1834)
  - 1 white female under 21 (born after 1834)

The children of Pleasant Bowden are not well documented. According to the 1830 census, there were then at least seven children, and possibly more born between 1830 and 1840, but I can identify only three of them, all from DNA matches with descendants, and a fourth possible child who was living with her older sister on the 1850 census:

1. **Lemuel Bowden**, born about March 1816 in Georgia; died December 1888 in Monroe County, Alabama. Married (1) **Sarah Caroline Rhodes**, about 1839, Monroe County, Alabama; (2) **Caroline M. Daniel**, 2 Sep 1858, Monroe County, Alabama;<sup>245</sup> (3) **Sarah Dean**, 22 Sep 1859 in Monroe County, Alabama.<sup>246</sup> 



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<sup>244</sup> "Mrs. C. Bowden" on 1855 Alabama State Census, on FamilySearch, "Alabama State Census, 1855," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V6P1-Z5B> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>245</sup> Evidently the marriage to Caroline M. Daniel either did not take place, or she lived only a very short time. Only abstracts of the marriage record are available online.

<sup>246</sup> "Lemuel Bowden" on 1840 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1840," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHB4-D28>; "Samuel Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MH5Z-Q2G>; FamilySearch, "Alabama Marriages, 1816–1957, Monroe County, Lemuel Bowden to Sarah Dean, 22 Dec 1859," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V5Z7-BLW>; Ancestry.com, "Alabama, Select Marriage Indexes, 1816–1942," Monroe County, Lemuel Bowden to Caroline M. Daniel, 2 Sep 1858, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/125563:60000>; "Lemuel Bowden" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHDX-X9M>; "Lemuel Bowden" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHKG-JVK>; "Lemuel Bowden" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Monroe County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4VS-LKR>; tombstone, Lambert Cemetery, photo at "Lemuel Bowden," Find a Grave Memorial #104893350, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/104893350/lemuel-bowden> (accessed 23 Sep 2024). For maiden name of first wife, see Alabama death records of Lemuel's children, FamilySearch, "Alabama Deaths, 1908–1974," Callie J. Lambert, 1925, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDJL-87H>, W. S. Bowden, 1929, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDNX-SXZ>.



2. **Ellender Bowden**, born 23 Oct 1822 in Alabama; died 14 Sep 1890 in Belleville, Conecuh County, Alabama. Married **Basil Bell** about 1841 in Alabama, probably Conecuh County.<sup>247</sup> 
3. **Alvaney** (or **Alvina**) **Bowden**, born about 1825 in Alabama; died about 1886 in Monroe County, Alabama. Married **Arthur Smith**, 16 Sep 1844, Monroe County, Alabama.<sup>248</sup> 
4. **Sarah Bowden**, born about 1839 in Alabama. Was living with sister Alvaney's family on 1850 census. Nothing else known.<sup>249</sup>

From the census, I can count these possible missing children. It is possible that some of these died young:

- Two sons, born between about 1815 and 1820.
- Two daughters, born between about 1815 and 1820.
- A son, born between 1820 and 1825.
- A daughter, born between 1825 and 1830.

Many early Alabama marriage records, including for Conecuh County (prior to 1866), have been lost. Especially for the older daughters, if they had been married in Conecuh County, there may be no surviving record identifying them as Bowdens. It may be left to DNA research to seek and find the lost.

Could Pleasant Bowden be the father of our William Bowdoin and Eliza Bowdoin? Though it is conceivable that he could have been the father of Eliza—he did have underage daughters in 1820

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<sup>247</sup> "Obituary: Mrs. Ellenor Bell," *Evergreen Star* (Evergreen, Alabama), 16 Oct 1890, clipped on Newspapers.com, <https://www.newspapers.com/article/evergreen-star-elenor-bowden-bell/155140585/> (accessed 23 Sep 2024); "Ellender Bell" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHPY-YJT> (Image Group 004187293, Image 735 of 775); Ancestry has better image quality: Ancestry.com, "1850 United States Federal Census," <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8054/images/4187293-00735> (Image 80 of 118); "Ellen Bell" on 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1860," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHD6-W59>; "Eleanor Bell" on 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1870," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHKM-QPY>; "Ellen Bell" on 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1880," <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4JZ-6JZ>; tombstone, Brushy Creek Methodist Church Cemetery, Conecuh County, Alabama, photo at "Ellender Bell," Find a Grave Memorial #48993051, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48993051/> (accessed 23 Sep 2024).

<sup>248</sup> FamilySearch, "Alabama Marriages, 1816–1957," Monroe County, Alabama, Arthur Smith to Alvaney Bowden, 16 Sep 1844, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V5ZW-W37>; "Azana Smith" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, on FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHPY-LFX> (Image Group 004187293, Image 742 of 775); Ancestry has better image quality: Ancestry.com, "1850 United States Federal Census," <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8054/images/4187293-00742> (Image 87 of 118)

<sup>249</sup> "Sarah Bowden" on 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Conecuh County, Alabama, on Family Search, "United States Census, 1850," <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHPY-LFV>; in same household as sister Alvaney, see note above.

who are unidentified—it appears he was likely too young to be the father of William, being only about seventeen years old in 1802, if the 1850 census is accurate.

But how do we know the 1850 census is accurate? The 1810 census, if “P. Bowdown” is him, suggests he could have been older, born before the 1785 implied by the 1850 census; but the 1830 census suggests he could have been even younger, born between 1790 and 1800. In 1840, if he is the man in the household of William Bowdoin (b. 1802), his age, between 50 and 60, would be consistent with his stated age in 1850.

The 1810 census suggests that Pleasant was married by 1810; but I still find it unlikely that he was married by 1802. Nonetheless, we must keep the possibility of Pleasant being William’s father on the table. Pleasant at least had no other documented son named William. And it appears Pleasant did have a close relationship with William, if indeed he is the older man in William’s household in 1840. Is it possible that William, whoever his father was, came to Alabama with Pleasant Bowden?

## Preliminary conclusions

Coming to the end of the first phase of analysis, we see several prospects for the possible parents of William (b. 1802) and Eliza (b. 1817). Of the five sons of William (b. 1740), Josiah (b. 1780) appears the likeliest possibility, since he had no other documented son named William, was in the right places and the right times to have a son born 1802 in North Carolina and a daughter born 1817 in Georgia, and had a daughter born in the right timeframe listed on the 1820 census. Pleasant (b. 1785) appears as a secondary possibility, also meeting these criteria—having no documented son named William, being in North Carolina in 1802 and Georgia in 1817, and having a daughter in 1820 the right age—but being possibly too young to have been married and fathering children in 1802. Travis (b. 1772) meets one criterion—having no son definitely documented by the name William. He is unknown on a second criterion, and fails on the third. Though he did have unknown children born in the 1815–1820 timeframe, he was demonstrably still in North Carolina at that time.

We have ruled out the other sons of William (b. 1740)—James and John—from possibly being the father of William and Eliza, based first on the fact that both had documented sons named William. In addition, James was in South Carolina, not North Carolina, in 1802, though he was in Georgia in 1817. John was in North Carolina in 1802, but remained there his whole life, never going to Georgia. James and his wife Priscilla apparently had no more children born after 1803. John’s children are all named in his will, and do not include a William other than his known son or an Eliza.

James is the only son old enough to have potentially been a grandfather to William. But his oldest son, William (b. 1786), also had a documented son named William, and was also living in South Carolina rather than North Carolina in 1802. He did have an unknown daughter on the census

who potentially could have been Eliza, but an 1866 deed at the end of his life, naming his heirs, excludes the possibility of either William or Eliza being his children. John (b. 1790), the second son of James, does not appear old enough to have been William's father.

## Spelling of the surname

There are several additional, more subjective criteria I would like to consider. What about the spelling of the surname? Where researchers in the past have preferred to make the spelling *Bowdoin* standard throughout the family, it has been clear to me that this spelling was not at all consistent, and underwent evolution over the years and variation in the separate branches of the family:

- The elder William Bowdon (b.1720) of Granville County generally spelled his name **Bowdon**, as did his son Travis's branch of the family.
- William Bowdoin (b. 1740) of Randolph County used **Bowdon** in the earliest records, in the 1770s and 1780s. Over time, he began to use the spelling **Bowdown**, which appears to be a transitional spelling on the way to **Bowdoin**.<sup>250</sup>
- By the 1820s forward, in Georgia and Alabama, James Bowdoin (b. 1764) and his descendants generally have used the spelling **Bowdoin**.
- Though John Bowdon (b. 1770) used the spelling **Bowdown** in the early decades of the 1800s, he eventually settled on **Bowdon**, which spelling his descendants adopted.
- Travis Bowdoin (b. 1772) appeared in records in North Carolina with the spelling **Bowdown**. He later appeared in many records in Tennessee and Kentucky with the spelling **Bowdoin**, but his descendants appear to have reverted to **Bowden**.
- Though several of the sons of Josiah Bowdoin (b. 1780) adopted the spellings **Bowdon** or **Bowden**, and spelled Josiah's own name *Bowden* on his tombstone, Josiah himself used the spelling **Bowdown** in North Carolina and eventually **Bowdoin** in Georgia.
- Pleasant Bowden (b. 1785) adopted the spelling **Bowden** very early and used this spelling throughout his life. His documented children each followed suit.

This consideration would appear to subtract from any likelihood that Pleasant Bowden was William Bowdoin's father, since Pleasant himself moved away from the **Bowdoin** spelling. The family of James Bowdoin appears to have adopted the spelling **Bowdoin** firmly and carried it to Alabama—as did William Bowdoin (b. 1802) himself. Records of Josiah Bowdoin give a mixed message, with Josiah himself preferring the **Bowdoin** spelling but his children rejecting it.

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<sup>250</sup> Somewhat obstinately, I have chosen to spell William's name *Bowdoin* despite the fact that there is no record of him using this spelling himself. I am accustomed to pronouncing the name *Bowdoin* as "Bowden," but struggle to do the same for *Bowdown*. I tend to treat this spelling as temporary and anomalous.

## Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation is difficult to document and can change from one generation to the next or even within a person's own lifetime. But my William Bowdoin (b. 1802) was a devoted Methodist, a tradition that continued to his own children. So I would like to examine what I can of the religious affiliation of other branches of the Bowdoin family.

- I simply have no data about the religion of William Bowdoin (b. 1740).
- James Bowdoin's descendants in Alabama, like mine, appear to have been strongly Methodist. William A. Bowdoin (b. 1807) may have been a Methodist minister.<sup>251</sup>
- John Bowdon's children had mixed affiliations, with one son, N. T., becoming a Presbyterian minister, one daughter, Nancy Pankey, apparently being Methodist, and another son, James, buried in a Baptist church cemetery.<sup>252</sup>
- Travis Bowdoin's son W. A. become a well-known Primitive Baptist minister.
- Josiah Bowdoin's tombstone notes that he was a member of the Congregational Methodist Church, which began in his neighborhood, in Monroe County, Georgia, in 1852, shortly before he died.<sup>253</sup> The family of Enoch Bowdon in Indiana also followed a strong tradition of Methodism.<sup>254</sup>
- Of Pleasant Bowden's daughter Ellender, it is said in her obituary that "she joined the Methodist church early in life."

At least anecdotally, it appears most of the Bowdoins followed the Methodist tradition, especially those who came to Alabama and Georgia. This does not particularly distinguish any of those branches, James's, Josiah's, or Pleasant's, as being more likely than the others to be the branch of William (b. 1802), but it does at least add credence to the belief that he belonged to this larger family.

## Moving forward

At this point in the analysis, from a purely documentary perspective, we have one strong candidate to have been the father of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817): Josiah Bowdoin (b. 1780), son of William Bowdoin (b. 1740). Of all the sons and grandsons of

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<sup>251</sup> Cf. the several biographical sketches of descendants cited earlier in this text.

<sup>252</sup> For Nancy Pankey, cf. items in the *Bolivar Bulletin*, e.g., "Sheriff's Sale," 4 May 1876, showing James Pankey purchasing "the old Methodist church lot", he "of said Church").

<sup>253</sup> See "Congregational Methodist Church" on Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational\\_Methodist\\_Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_Methodist_Church); "The Congregational Methodist Church" in the *New International Encyclopedia* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1905), on WikiSource, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_New\\_International\\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia/Congregational\\_Methodist\\_Church,\\_The](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_New_International_Encyclop%C3%A6dia/Congregational_Methodist_Church,_The) (accessed 24 Sep 2024).

<sup>254</sup> See the obituaries of Enoch Bowdon on Find a Grave: "Enoch Bowdon," Find a Grave Memorial #84878844, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84878844/>; Enoch's son John, "John Bowden," Find a Grave Memorial #44667230, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/44667230/> (accessed 10 Oct 2024).

William Bowdoin (b. 1740), Josiah stands out, not so much for any immediate indication connecting him to William or Eliza, but for the *lack* of contradictions which the other sons present. Evidence shows that Josiah was in North Carolina and married in 1802 and in Georgia in 1817, that he had no other documented son named William, and that he had a daughter the appropriate age to be Eliza on the 1820 census. Pleasant Bowden, the youngest son of William (b. 1740), is a possible secondary candidate, having been in North Carolina in 1802 and in Georgia in 1817, but probably being too young to be William's father.

I declared earlier that based on DNA evidence, it is all but certain that William Bowdoin (b. 1802) is a descendant of William Bowdoin (b. 1740). This was the underlying premise of this paper and of my focused examination of William (b. 1740)'s family and descendants. I still need to prove this conclusion, and moving forward, I intend to do that. But the DNA can bear much more and even richer fruit than this. It has the capability to answer conclusively many questions we have been asking, including, but not limited to, who the parents of William Bowdoin (b. 1802) and Eliza Bowdoin (b. 1817) were. In the next part, I will examine this fruit, harvested through the application of algorithmic analysis of the DNA evidence.

**Table 1. Prospective fathers of William (b. 1802) and Eliza (b. 1817) compared.**

	No documented son named William	Old enough to have children in 1802	Married in 1802 and 1817 (to a wife of childbearing age)	In North Carolina in 1802	In Georgia in 1817	Unknown children on census (1810 or 1820) consistent with William and Eliza	Spelling	Religion
William (b. 1740)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	Bowdown	? <sup>255</sup>
James (b. 1764)	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	Bowdoin	Methodist
William (b. 1786)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	Bowdoin	Methodist
John (b. 1770)	✗	✓	?	✓	✗	✓	Bowdon	?
Travis (b. 1772)	? <sup>256</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✗	⊘ <sup>257</sup>	Bowdoin	Baptist <sup>258</sup>
Josiah (b. 1780)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Bowdoin	Methodist
Pleasant (b. 1785)	✓	✗	✗ <sup>259</sup>	✓	✓	✓	Bowden	Methodist

<sup>255</sup> There is no known data for William (b. 1740)'s religious affiliation.

<sup>256</sup> Travis's son Westwood possibly had the name William also, but this is unconfirmed.

<sup>257</sup> Travis was absent from both the 1810 and 1820 censuses.

<sup>258</sup> Travis's son, Westwood Armstead Bowden, was a Primitive Baptist minister, and Travis himself—probably through conflation with his son—was rumored to be.

<sup>259</sup> It is unclear if Pleasant was married in 1802 or not, but it seems unlikely.