

THE SOLOMON AUSTIN STORY

The Early Years Revisited

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June 1997

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SOLOMON AUSTIN AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Solomon Austin was a Loyalist but, like his early years, his Loyalist activities were fraught with ambiguities. In order to help put Solomon's activities in perspective, it is useful to review the social and political conditions in the period before and during the American Revolution.⁴⁸

Before 1776, the Loyalists were divided into two groups. There was a minority of extremists who advocated unquestionable loyalty and obedience to British principles and actions. The majority of the Loyalists, however, were moderates who disapproved of Britain's unwise colonial policies and advocated opposition and changes to these policies by legislative and legal means. These moderates took up arms only after the Declaration of Independence was signed and the aggressive policies and actions of the Continental Congress forced them to recognize that their first duty was to preserve the empire.

As a whole, in all the colonies, loyalty to the Crown drew its strength from the official class, the professionals, the landed gentry and their tenants, the wealthy commercial class, natural conservatives (Tories) and opportunists. North of Maryland, loyalty to the Crown had a strong religious as well as a political basis. Almost without exception, the Anglican ministers were ardent Loyalists and they infused this loyalty into their congregations. This helped produce a cohesiveness that enabled the British to raise cadres of militia that were stable and willing to follow their British leaders.

Maryland and Virginia had large, influential Loyalists minorities. North Carolina was about equally divided. The Loyalists in South Carolina and Georgia were in the majority. Some Loyalists joined the regular British army. Others formed militia that supported and assisted the British. Others organized guerrilla bands that allied themselves with the Indians and inaugurated a reign of terror on the frontier from New York to Georgia.

In the southern colonies, Anglicanism was predominant but the colonists did not adhere to the religious lines as closely as in the north. The Whig leaders of Virginia and the Carolinas were generally members of the established Church but by definition favored an independ-

⁴⁸ The following references were used in preparing this part of the analysis:

Lumpkin, Henry. 1981, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Pancake, John S. 1986. *This Destructive War." The British Campaign in the Carolinas*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

ent America. Many of the wealthy Anglican planters of the tide-water sections supported the Crown and fought for the mother country, but the Crown derived its main support from the non-Anglican Germans and Scots of the upper country. The Scotch-Irish in the south were mostly sympathetic to the American cause.

Since religion was not a major issue in the south, the feelings about taxation, distribution of land and appointment of local officials were more intense and all the more bitter. In the Carolinas, the frontier settlers felt snubbed, both socially and politically, by the piedmont and tide-water aristocracy. They were denied adequate representation in the courts and in the colonial assembly. It goes without saying that these disfranchised settlers were not eager to go to war to defend principles in which they had no material interest. The failure of the British officers to recognize that social and political conditions in the south were different from those in the north, as well as the tendency for the British to look upon all dissenters as rebels, was partly responsible for the British loss of the southern campaign.

When Solomon Austin first appeared in the official records, Orange County, North Carolina then considered frontier country had been a hotbed of discontent for more than ten years. High handed, unscrupulous and morally dishonest officers of the law had caused the private citizens to band together to try to regulate⁴⁹ these dishonest officers of the Crown. This positive defiance by the citizens was construed as an attack on the established government, which acted accordingly. Repeated confrontations between the government officials and the Regulators escalated until 1771 when the movement moved from riots to widespread insurrection. It is debatable whether the War of the Regulators in 1771 was the first step of the Revolution, but what is important is that the battle brought to a head the social and political turbulence of the Carolina frontier. Equally important, it demonstrated the value of the militia.

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This caldron of mixed emotions is where Solomon Austin took up residence after he left Maryland. It is not known exactly when Solomon arrived in Orange County but it was certainly by the mid-1770's. Solomon Austin was disturbed by the unfair and heavy handed British government but when hostilities broke out he could not support the rebellion against the Crown and he apparently joined a local Loyalist militia regiment.

Solomon Austin's contribution to the Loyalist cause began early in the war. In January of 1776, British General Henry Clinton arrived off Cape Fear, North Carolina with a British expeditionary force. His plan was to land at Wilmington, North Carolina and push inward to join with a strong Loyalist force and establish an imposing British presence in the Carolinas.

The frontier Loyalists units mobilized and moved towards the coast to join Clinton's forces. Solomon Austin was apparently a member of one of these units. The Patriots rallied and met the Loyalist militia at the famous Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on 27 February 1776. The Loyalists were defeated and Solomon Austin was taken prisoner. In his own

⁴⁹ This was a form of vigilantism whereby a group of volunteers band together to suppress and punish crime in a community where law enforcement is lax or non-existent. In the push to settle the American West, such groups were known as Vigilantes. In Carolina they were known as Regulators and their targets were the unscrupulous government officials.

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words, Solomon Austin described his experience at Moore's Creek Bridge when he applied to receive land in Canada in 1795. His justification statement reads as follows:⁵⁰

*The Petition of Solomon Austin
Recommended by the Lieut. Governor from allowance 600 acres granted
June 27, 1795*

*To his Excellency John Graves Simcoe, Esq., Lieut.-Governor and Colonel,
Commanding His Majesty's forces in the Province of Upper Canada, in Council*

*The Petition of Solomon Austin
Humbly Sheweth*

That your Petitioner was one of those who took up arms in defense of His Majesty's Government in the Province of North Carolina during the Rebellion in America from which place he is just arrived with his Family consisting of wife and seven children in order to settle in this Province. Proof of his Service could have been brought had it been required...but none of the people now come in are witness of the truth of his statement that he was taken prisoner at Moore's Creek Bridge and ill treated.

Your Petitioner in consequence of his known attachment to the British Constitution has ever since been obnoxious to the present government of Carolina, Therefore, humbly prays that Your Excellency would be pleased to grant him such Land for himself and family in this Province as Your Excellency shall seem meet and Your Petitioner as in Duty bound shall ever pray.

Newark 16 July 1795

s/Solomon Austin

On the face of the petition was written the following statement: "*This man was in action with the Governor [Simcoe] and obtained his verbal permission to go to Patterson's Creek.*" As an indication of the Governor's feelings towards Solomon, Briggs (page 78) stated that when Solomon arrived in Upper Canada, "*...he met with a very flattering reception, the Governor offering him a home in his own house until he [Solomon] should make a selection of land...*"

The Solomon Austin family tradition, as promulgated by Charlton, does not corroborate the above statement made by Solomon himself but does discuss his other Loyalist military activities in detail. This segment of the family history is extracted below.

"... General Simcoe was commander of the British Regulars and of the Loyalist Irregulars, or Militia of the North Carolina district. In one of the engagements, in which Solomon Austin participated as a member of the Loyalist Corps of troop, the color bearer was shot and

50 Upper Canada Land Records, 1792-1808, Microfilm Roll C-1609, Bundle A 1/14 (Cabinet 1, Reel 1, Toronto Archives)

the colors fell to the ground Solomon bravely took them from the hand of the dead standard bearer, and bore them through the remainder of the engagement. An account of his gallant action was given to General Simcoe, who sent for him [Solomon] and warmly complimented him upon his bravery, telling him he would be glad to remember him, if an opportunity ever came to do him a service..."

An earlier version of this story was published in Page's 1877 Historical Atlas of Norfolk County, Ontario. This reads in part.

"...A t one of the minor engagements of the Revolutionary War called the Battle of the Horseshoe, in which the 'Queen's Rangers, 'commanded by Col. Simcoe, took an active part, the standard bearer was killed, and the flag fell to the ground, but was quickly picked up by Solomon Austin, a private in the company, and borne by him through the remainder of the engagement. "

The Queen's Rangers was one of the best provincial units that fought for the Crown. Colonel John Simcoe, the commander, was an effective and respected leader and, in 1780-1781, when Lord Cornwallis' British forces began their campaign in Virginia and the Carolinas, the Queen's Rangers played an important role. They were particularly effective in the James River valley in 1781 prior to the Battle of Yorktown.

The Battle of the Horseshoe was a minor engagement fought on 6 June 1781 in Colleton County, South Carolina.⁵¹ Colleton County is just west of Charleston and the "Horseshoe" undoubtedly refers to a characteristic bend in the Savannah River. From there Simcoe apparently was ordered north to Virginia because he and the Rangers distinguished themselves in the James River area near Richmond prior in October 1781 to the Battle of Yorktown. Although Solomon Austin was absent from Orange County, North Carolina during the period of the Horseshoe and the Virginia campaign, the rosters do not show him as a member of the Queen's Rangers. The family tradition states he served as a private during this period, but David Avery believes he may have been a higher ranked scout for Simcoe. This could explain Simcoe's warm welcome and his permitting Solomon and his family to temporarily use of the Governor's residence. It seems doubtful Simcoe would have been this generous with the other veterans who settled in the Long Point area of Upper Canada.

Major Stewart Bull, a direct descendant of Solomon Austin, is military historian of the Regimental Council of the Queen's York Rangers (1st American) and he adds the following extract pertaining to Solomon Austin's Loyalist military experience.⁵²

"...according to family tradition, Solomon Austin had a narrow escape from death later in the war. In another battle he and six other Rangers were taken prisoner and faced summary execution. Just before the time fixed for the execution, Austin and another prisoner were permitted to go to a nearby spring for a drink. On arrival at the spring one of the two guards detailed to accompany the prisoners lay down to take the first drink himself handing

51 Peckham, H. H. 1974. *The Toll of Independence: Engagements and Battle Casualties of the American Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, page 87

52 Bull, Major Stewart, 1995. The Loyalist who Saved the Colours! *The Loyalist Gazette*, Vol. XXXIII, Fall 1995, Published by The United Empire Loyalist' Association of Canada, Toronto, pp. 19-22.

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his gun to his companion. The latter, who was acquainted with Austin, passed the gun to him and gave him the wink to make his escape, which he did. Austin never saw his saviour again or learned what had happened to him..."

Before leaving this subject it brings up an intriguing rhetorical question. If Solomon Austin's brave act of saving the colors was so impressive to Simcoe, why didn't Solomon use that as justification for getting land in Canada?

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As has been reiterated above, Solomon Austin's Loyalist military service is based on family tradition and in that context should be verifiable by the official records. The problem is the records of Loyalist units are not complete. There were 73 known Loyalist units serving with the British during the Revolution. There were about 25,000 Loyalists who wore the King's uniform as trained regulars. These regulars were augmented by Loyalist militia called up for regional campaigns or battles. Many records of the regular troops are extant but, unfortunately, many of the militia rosters and records have not been preserved.

David Avery, a descendant of Solomon Austin, has done an extensive review of British records identifying the rosters of Loyalist units trying to find conclusive evidence of Solomon's service. Below is a summary of Avery's findings that refer to an individual named Solomon Austin who served as a Loyalist.

27 Dec 1779 - 9 Oct 1780 Solomon Austin recorded as a private, age 28, in the Loyal New Englanders Regiment, garrisoned on Long Island, New York.

25 Dec 1781 - 24 Jan 1782 Solomon Austin, drummer, Loyal New Englanders.

15 Jun 1782 - Loyal New Englanders mustered into the King's American Dragoons, with Solomon Austin, private.

25 Oct 1782 - 24 Dec 1782 King's American Dragoons at Ireland Heights [location unidentified], with Solomon Austin, private.

25 Dec 1782 - 1 Feb 1783 King's American Dragoons affiliated with the Queen's Rangers, Sol Austin, private.

25 Apr 1783 - 24 Jun 1783 King's American Dragoons at Springfield [location unidentified], Solomon Austin, private.

These data are intriguing. Recall that in the discussions of Solomon Austin and the Orange County, North Carolina tax lists it was shown that Solomon was absent from Orange County during much or all of the time period defined above. Theoretically, this could help substantiate that he was the same Private Solomon Austin whose military service is outlined above. There are several mitigating factors, however, that preclude accepting this as a firm

conclusion. According to the age given, the Private Solomon Austin would have been born in 1752. Unless he lied about his age to enlist, the Solomon we have been following [born 1744] would have been too old to be the Solomon Austin in the Loyal New Englanders.

This leads to the next question. What was the Solomon we have been following doing in a New England regiment? Since the Loyalist members of Provincial units were usually recruits from the nearby countryside, it is difficult to accept the possibility that Solomon Austin went from North Carolina to someplace in New York or New England to enlist.

The bottom line is that there were apparently two Solomon Austins who served the Crown. The one described above who was in the official records as a regular during most of the war. The other is the Solomon Austin we are following who evidently served the Crown as an irregular whose service was not officially recorded or preserved.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR VOUCHERS

North Carolina had difficulty financing its government even in normal times and the Revolutionary War increased the problems.⁵³ This forced the state to depend on credit to finance its war effort. One form of credit was the issuance of IOU's known as vouchers, which were issued to pay for goods and materials required for the war effort or as payment for military service. For material goods and supplies the system worked like this.

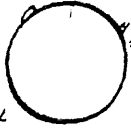
Civilian agents were authorized by the state to procure supplies for the war effort. When a citizen supplied sundry goods -- either willingly or unwillingly -- the agent issued him a certificate for the value of the goods with a promise to pay when the certificate was submitted after the war. The idea behind the voucher system was that the state would never have to pay actual cash when the vouchers were redeemed. Instead it was expected the holders would cash them in by applying the value to pay taxes or other moneys owed to the state.

In 1780, the state was divided into eight Fiscal Districts each presided over by a Board of Auditors who handled the vouchers issued and redeemed within their district. About 50,000 of the original vouchers have survived and are in the North Carolina Archives filed alphabetically by name of the payee. When a voucher was paid it was canceled by punching a hole about the size of a penny through it. It goes without saying that these records are related to financial matters and do not contain a wealth of genealogical information. Sometimes, however, they provide the provenance for entry into patriotic societies and also may be useful in sorting people and locating areas where they lived.

The records have been searched for information on all the Austins residing in the areas of interest in this narrative and we find that Solomon Austin redeemed three vouchers, William Austin redeemed one voucher and Philip did not have any vouchers. Solomon's three vouchers were redeemed in the years 1783, 1784 and 1785 and are of interest.

The 1783 voucher issued to Solomon Austin is shown on page 36. For clarity the contents are extracted on the same page. It is important to note the date of the voucher is the date when Solomon submitted his claim and does not reflect the date the goods were delivered.

53 Leafy, Helen F. and Maurice R. Stirewalt. 1990. *North Carolina Research*, Raleigh: North Carolina Genealogical Society, pp. 353-357.

No. 4105) State of North Carolina August 20. 1783
 Hillsborough Auditors Office
 This is to Certify that Solomon Austin
 Exhibited his Claim  allowed Six pounds
 Sixteen Shillings Specie Alex Mebane
 £6.16 - J. Watts Secy John Nichols

"No. 4105 State of North Carolina August 20, 1783 Hillsborough Auditors Office

This is to Certify that Solomon Austin Exhibited his Claim and was allowed Six pounds Sixteen Shillings Specie
 £6.16 J. Watts Secy. Alex Mebane John Nicols"

No 10
 Solomon Austin
 Princpl £6 - 15
 Int £2 - 0

Dugal J.
 M. Forsan
 Test No 899
 £6 16

6/28/83
 Dugal J.
 M. Forsan
 Secy
 £6:16

War of the American Revolution Voucher for supplies contributed by Solomon Austin. Voucher redeemed at the Hillsborough Auditors Office, 20 August 1783. [Note the cancellation hole]

The information on the face of the voucher is terse and without basic genealogical information. All it shows is that it was redeemed at the Hillsborough District by a Solomon Austin. From this sparse information there is no way of telling which Solomon Austin was the recipient. With ancillary information we will try to narrow this down.

The auditors of the Hillsborough Fiscal District was responsible for vouchers issued in six mid-state counties in Caswell, Chatham, Granville, Orange, Randolph and Wake. Since Solomon Austin redeemed three vouchers in the Hillsborough Fiscal District this suggests he was a resident of one of the six counties in that district.

It has been shown conclusively that the Solomon Austin we are following was a resident of Orange County during the voucher period even though he was not enumerated in the extant parts of the 1787 and 1790 censuses for these six counties. This tends to support the conclusion there was only one Solomon Austin in the Hillsborough District and he was most likely the one we have been following in this narrative.

The format for Solomon's 1784 voucher was the same format as the 1783 voucher and is extracted below.

Voucher No. 6632	State of North Carolina	18 May 1784
Hillsborough Auditors Office		
This is to Certify that Solomon Austin Exhibited his Claim and was allowed Fifteen pounds Ten Shillings Specie.		
s/John Nichols		
s/Alex Mebane		
£15 10	s/[signature unreadable], Secy.	

The opposite side of the voucher read:

£15 10 Principal
£ 2 15 9 Interest

Solomon Austin's third voucher was redeemed in 1785 and it reads essentially the same as the other two except there was an interesting variation in the final disposition. The information on this voucher is extracted below.

Voucher No. 183	State of North Carolina	10 Jan 1785
Hillsborough District Auditors Office		
This is to Certify that Solomon Austin Exhibited his Claim to us and was allowed the Sum of Nine pounds and Twelve Shillings Specie.		
s/Samuel Smith		
s/John Young		
£9 12	S Smith, Jr. Secy.	

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The opposite side of the voucher reads:

Sol Austin			
£	9	12	
£	2	9	10 Interest
£	12	1	10
		10	6
£	12	11	4
Presented the 30th day of September 1791 on Loan to the United States and Since Rejected.			
s/W. Skinner Commissioner			

There are two things that should be noted about this 1785 voucher. First, there is no hole punched through this voucher indicating it was not canceled in the normal manner. Second, apparently the voucher was redeemed by Solomon but when the State submitted it to the Federal government it was rejected. Because Solomon was a Loyalist it is logical to conclude his political beliefs may have had something to do with the rejection. However, this is not obvious from the facts at hand.

In addition to the vouchers, the North Carolina Archives is custodian for a wide variety of other official records pertaining to the financial accounts of the Revolutionary War. These records are filed in the State Treasurer and Comptroller Records. Included are indices of financial transactions. The following two index entries reflect sums paid to a Solomon Austin. It is not clear whether they represent an individual payment or cumulative amounts paid over a period of time. It is also not clear from the index whether there was one Solomon or two.

Index entry # 1 reads: Solomon Austin⁵⁴ £ 8 10 2
Index entry # 2 reads: Solomon Austin⁵⁵ £34 17

The first index entry refers to the following record.

A List of Certificates to be paid to the Comptroller for the Taxes of 1787, including those due for the years 1784, 1785 & 1786."			
page 90, folio 2	Solomon Austin	£6 10	£2
"Received of John Crump, Entry Taker for Montgomery [County]			

The second index entry refers to the following payment to a Solomon Austin who lived in the Hillsborough Audit District.

54 Index of Revolutionary Army Accounts, Vol. VII, page 90, folio 2, Voucher No. 899

55 Account of the United States with North Carolina, War of the Revolution, Book C, page 143, No. 5102, Voucher 4.

"To sundries furnished and cash paid the Militia of North Carolina, Virginia and South Carolina as allowed by the Auditors of the Hillsborough District, Report 88, dated January 1787"

page 143 Solomon Austin Voucher No. 4 £34 17

The Solomon Austin recorded in the first index entry shown above can be disposed of quickly, Montgomery County was in the Salisbury Fiscal District and the Solomon Austin we have been following would not have owed taxes in Montgomery County. Therefore, this was not the Solomon Austin we have been following.

The Solomon Austin recorded in the second index entry was in the Hillsborough Fiscal District, It has been shown above that the records reflect there was only one Solomon Austin in the Hillsborough District and he was most likely the one we have been following in this narrative.

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VI

SOLOMON AUSTIN'S SIBLINGS

Official records do not provide any direct information about Solomon Austin's immediate ancestors or family. The only information indicating Solomon had siblings comes from the following extract of family tradition from the Charlton article.

"At the close of the American Revolution, one of Solomon's brothers emigrated to St. John, New Brunswick, one of them went to the state of New York, one, the most adventure-some of all, but himself [Solomon] went to Texas, and it supposed that the city of Austin in that state, derives its name from him or some of his descendants..."

This part of the family tradition is also suspect. It begs the question -- where were all these brothers before and during the War? Although incomplete, the official records of Maryland for that time period give a fairly comprehensive view of the citizenry of the time. The records of North Carolina are less complete but still adequate enough to account for that large a family of Austins. Neither set of records give conclusive information that can support the alignment of Solomon Austin's siblings or parents.

The above Charlton extract has all the aspects of what professional genealogist refer to as the "three brothers syndrome" and it is surprising how often some variation of this syndrome appears in family histories. Essentially it refers to two or three brothers who come to America and one goes north and one goes south and one either stays home or goes west. The end result is that problems invariably arise when genealogists try to collect all these siblings into a cohesive family unit.

In the above extract of Solomon's family tradition the most obvious error concerns the brother who went to Texas and possibly founded Austin, Texas. Moses and Stephen F. Austin, who were responsible for the early Austin presence in Texas, have been well documented and have no relation to the Solomon Austin clan. The brothers who supposedly went to New York and New Brunswick could be family members but this needs further research.

David Avery has worked on this part of the problem and has found no evidence of the brother who supposedly went to New Brunswick.

There is ancillary evidence from primary sources that supports the fact that Solomon Austin had at least one sibling, however, the interpretation of the remains illusive. The first

piece of evidence is provided by the following petitions by a John Austin for land in Upper Canada after the Revolution.⁵⁶

"To his Excellency John Graves Simcoe, Esq., Lieut.-Governor and Colonel, Commanding His Majesty's forces in the Province of Upper Canada, in Council

*The Petition of John Austin
Humbly Sheweth*

That your Petitioner's father joined Lord Cornwallis at Hillsborough in North Carolina and died in the Service of his Majesty at Wilmington with other his Friends and Relations, in order to settle, therefore humbly prays that your Excellency would be pleased to grant him land in the Township of Ancaster and your Petitioner as in Duty bound shall ever Pray.

Newark, 17 July 1794

s/John Austin

*Granted 200 acres 1 July 1795 Entered page 246
Received in Council 3 July 1795"*

The next item of interest concerning Solomon's brother occurred three years later and this was also a petition by a John Austin.⁵⁷

"To His Honour Peter Russell, Esq., President of the Government of Upper Canada, in Council

*The Petition of John Austin of York
Humbly Sheweth*

That your Petitioner came into the Province three years ago from North Carolina with his uncle Solomon Austin, Wm. Wachter and others. That your Petitioner's father was killed in defense of His Majesty's government in an early period of the American War and his father died in his Majesty's service. That your Petitioner has never received any land and being desirous to settle on what may be granted to him Prays your Honour would be pleased to grant such part of the vacant land and Your Petitioner as in Duty bound shall ever pray.

*his
s/ John + Austin
mark*

York, 9 June 1797

56 Upper Canada Land Records, 1792-1808, Microfilm Roll C-1609, Bundle A 1/12 (Cabinet 1, Reel 1, Toronto Archives).

57 Upper Canada Land Records, 1792-1808, Microfilm Roll C-1609, Bundle A 3/55 (Cabinet 1, Reel 1, Toronto Archives).

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This is to certify that John Austin has taken the Oath and Subscribed the Declaration presented by Law and the ordinances of the Province to entitle him to become an inhabitant thereof and a freeholder of lands therein.

Given under my hand at York in the District of the Province of Upper Canada this seventh day of June 1797

s~ Wm. Wittworth, J. P.

[On the cover sheet there was the following]

*John Austin
12 June 1797
Read 12 June 1797
Recommend for 200 acres
19 June 1797 Confirmed"*

These two petitions raise some interesting points. Based on the justification statements, one can conclude with a high degree of confidence both petitions were submitted by the same John Austin. With regards to the first land allocation, it is questionable as to how long John Austin remained at the Ancaster grant or whether he ever took possession at all. It is almost certain he is the same John Austin who applied for the grant in York near Toronto. If we combine the two justification statements we get a mixed picture of a sibling of Solomon who joined the British forces at Hillsborough, North Carolina and was killed at Wilmington, North Carolina early in the war.

If Solomon's brother joined the British army at Hillsborough there is a good chance he lived near Hillsborough. Since all the Orange County, North Carolina Austins who appear in the records have been accounted for, this means the brother was either living in the household of some other individual and was not named on the tax roll or was possibly living in an adjacent county and made the trip to Hillsborough to enlist.

We know that Solomon's deceased brother had a son named John and this brings us back to the John Austin who appeared on the 1792 tax list for Orange County (see discussion on page 26). Since Solomon's brother was supposedly killed early in the war, this could not have been John the brother on the 1792 tax list, but could conceivably have been John the nephew. The argument against this is the lack of a valid explanation of how John got possession of 250 acres of land. On balance all this tells us is that Solomon Austin had a brother who enlisted in the British army in North Carolina and had a son named John.

VII

ALTERNATE ALIGNMENTS

WARNING

WARNING

WARNING

This chapter contains information that could be detrimental to professional genealogy. Much of the material is based on pure speculation and is offered FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY. It is hoped this material will trigger research and thought that leads to a final solution of the Solomon Austin problem. It would be unethical for this speculative material to be submitted to the genealogical community as fact. No conscientious genealogist wants this to happen.

We have come to the point where all available records have been searched and attempts have been made to align Solomon Austin with the Austin families along the Western Shore of Chesapeake Bay to fulfill the family tradition. The results have been inconclusive. Regardless of how many avenues are explored, Solomon Austin's early life cannot be isolated. We find him inextricably integrated with the other Austins of Maryland and North Carolina in a manner that invariably casts doubt on the validity of the Solomon Austin family traditions. Since the Western Shore appears barren a logical next step is to look elsewhere for answers.

Although there were Austins scattered throughout the state of Maryland the most promising source of information on Solomon Austin appears to be on the Eastern Shore. Two documented facts enforce this conclusion -- the naming of a Solomon Austin as a creditor in a probate in Kent County, Maryland and the Absolom Austin administrative bond issued in North Carolina.

On 13 April 1774 and on 14 Jul 1774 estate papers for a David Scott were filed in Kent County, Maryland. Peter Massey and Christopher Hall were the appraisers. The Administrator was John Moffett. Two of the creditors mentioned in the papers were John Voorhees and Solomon Austin. 5~. He is the only living Solomon Austin that has been identified in the official records of either the Eastern or Western Shores of Chesapeake Bay in the latter half of the 18th century. This revelation does not preclude him from being, the same Solomon Austin whose life was documented in the family tradition. This Solomon would have been about 30

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years old in 1774 and he could have crossed the Bay from Baltimore County to Kent County and then emigrated to North Carolina. The timing is right, however, this is a nebulous view.

The possibility of Solomon Austin being from the Eastern Shore is enhanced by the Absolom Austin factor. Absolom Austin (born ca. 1726) was a resident of the Eastern Shore. He married three times and each marriage was recorded in the parish register of St. Luke's Church in Queen Anne's County, Maryland. Absolom and his family were enumerated in the Maryland 1776 and 1783 censuses. Although each of his marriages is recorded in the church register, apparently none of his children were christened. Biologically, Absolom could have been Solomon Austin's father and this could explain the Administration Bond issue discussed above.

The ages recorded in the 1776 census allows us to generate a tentative descendancy chart that answers many of the questions germane to Solomon's and other Austin activities. This chart is presented on page 45 and for discussion purposes is referred to as the Steiner chart..

Solomon is shown to be Absolom's firstborn by his first wife. An obvious discrepancy is that Solomon's traditional date of birth in 1744 would have been before the recorded date of the parents marriage. Human nature being what it is, this was not an unusual occurrence.

We see that Philip Austin would be a half-brother of Solomon and this could explain the close association in North Carolina. Another half-brother may have been a John Austin who was a Loyalist and was killed at Wilmington, North Carolina early in the War. The remaining children also fit the census data and their life and times will be discussed in other narratives in this series.

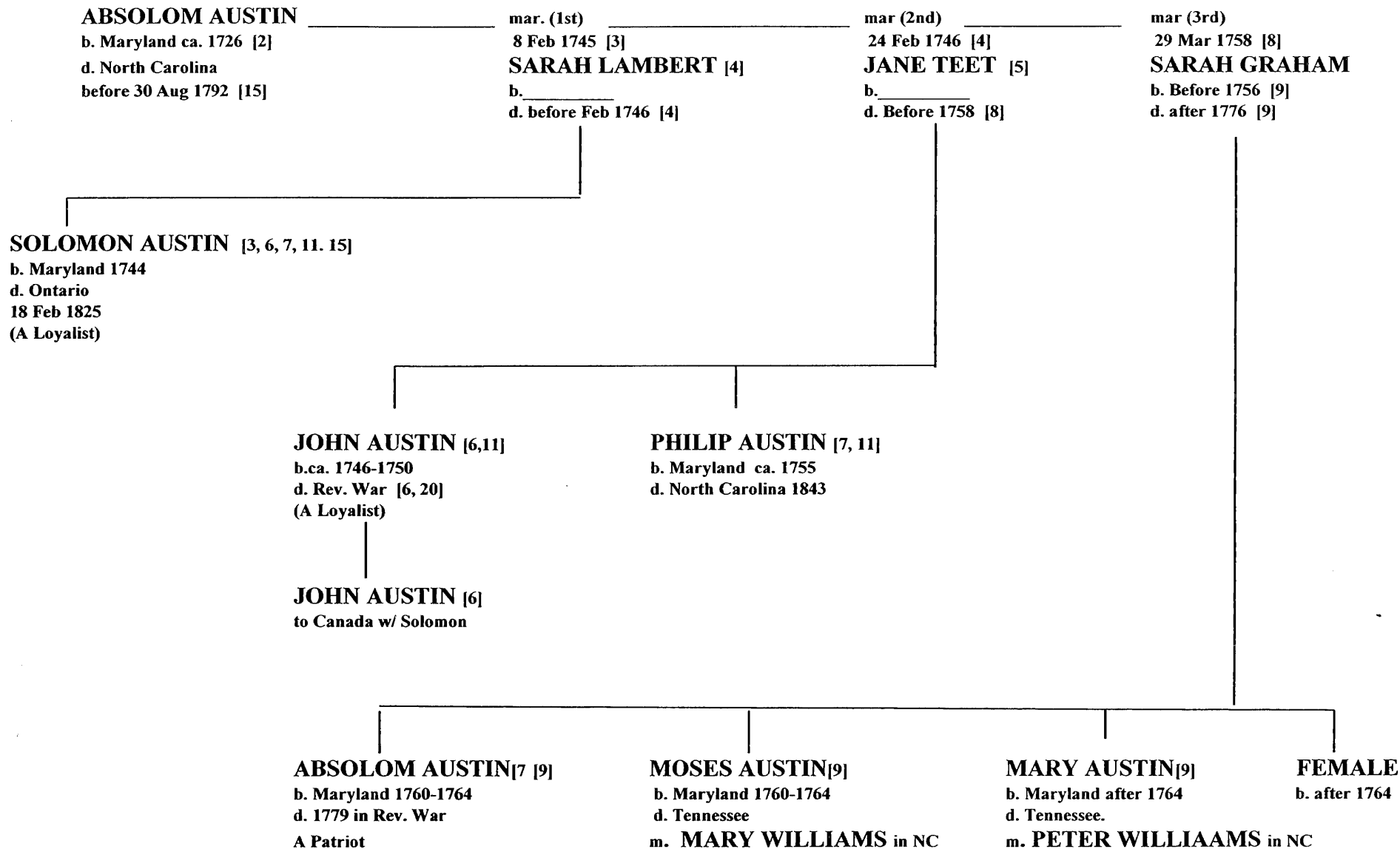
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Sally Austin Day, a professional genealogist who is descended from William and Ruth (Kelly) Austin, has also proposed an alternate alignment that takes us significantly forward in fitting the pieces together. The beauty of Sally's proposal is that it answers so many of the Solomon Austin questions. The disquieting factor is that, in so doing, it negates the Solomon family tradition almost entirely.

The Day alignment is charted on page 46 and is referred to in the text as the Day chart. It should be noted that, after due consideration of all the factors involved, the author supports Sally Day' s proposed alignment. Unfortunately, the one thing missing is absolute proof and for the Solomon Austin descendants finding this proof should be the major challenge.

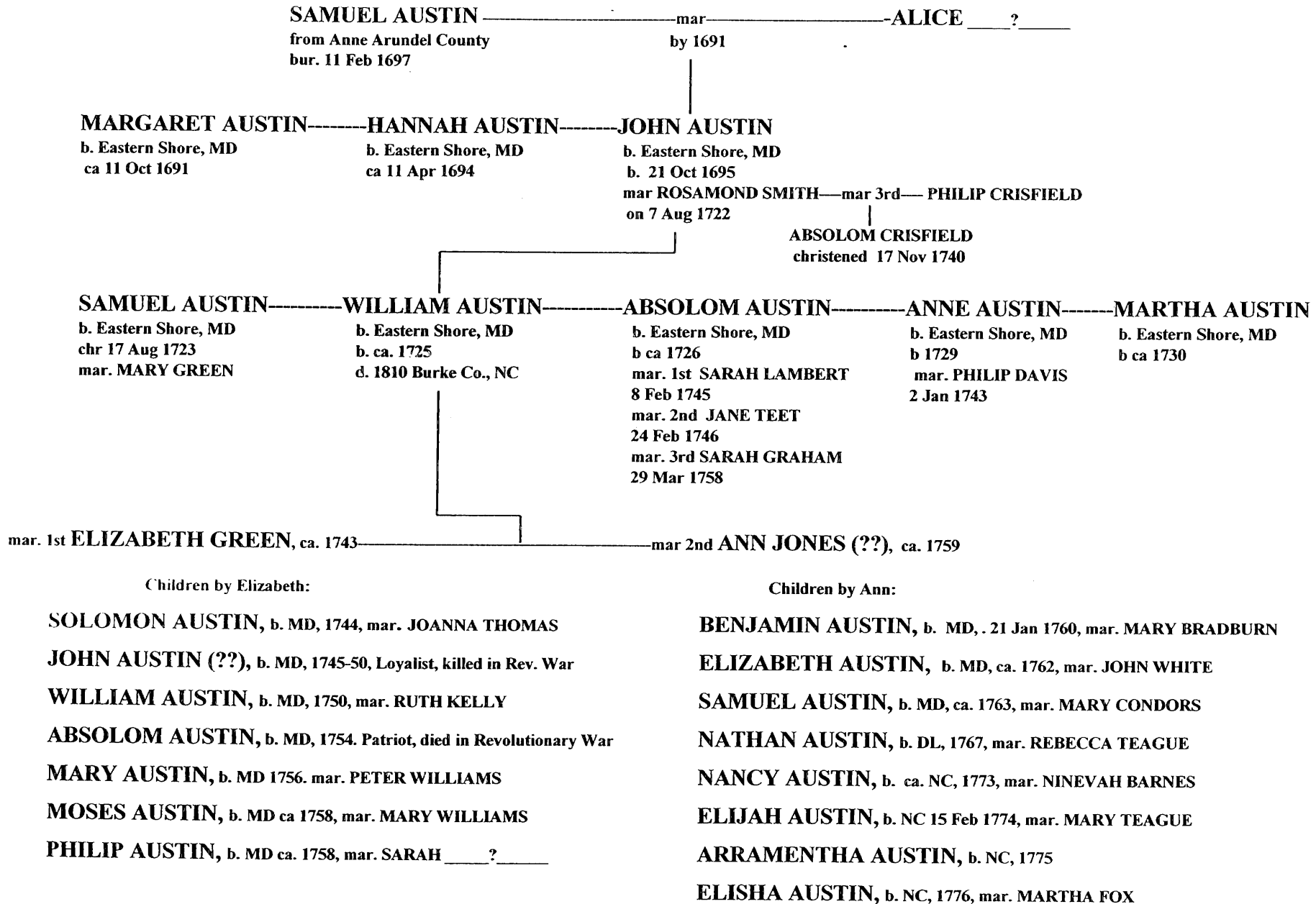
The charted descent on the Day chart down through Samuel Austin (b. 1723), Anne Austin (b. 1729) and Martha Austin (b. ca. 1730) is from proven data and has a 100% confidence level. Including William (b. ca. 1723) and Absolom Austin (b. ca. 1726) in the alignment is, at the present time, speculation based on a number of isolated factors that help build a preponderance of evidence. Their presence on the Day chart fits many of the pieces together and answers a number of key questions.

We know William Austin was from Maryland and that many of his children were born in the state. His son Nathan (by Ann) was born in Delaware in 1767. We know William was in Orange County, North Carolina by 1770 when he purchased land. The timing is right for William and family to have been moving from the Maryland.. Nathan could have been born in Delaware while the family was enroute to the coast to catch a ship to North Carolina.



A SPECULATIVE ALIGNMENT OF THE ABSLOM AUSTIN FAMILY

WARNING -- NOT PROVED -- FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY



**A SPECULATIVE ALIGNMENT OF MARYLAND AND NORTH CAROLINA AUSTINS
 WARNING -- NOT PROVED. FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY**

Another factor that should be noted is, in order for everyone to fit, William (b. ca. 1723) would have had at least 15 children. Large families were not unusual for this family. Solomon's son Philip had 17 children. William's son Nathan had 15 children. So, after due consideration, William's large family should not be a stumbling block to accepting the Day proposal.

As it pertains to the Day alignment, an element of proof is implied in the following extract from a historical document provided by Sally Austin Day. The original document has been handed down through her family. The name of the author is unknown but it is attributed to a great-granddaughter of William and Ruth Austin. The original document was handwritten on foolscap and for genealogical purposes is considered an authentic historic paper. The document is old and some of the writing is hard to interpret. Questionable words and passages are enclosed in brackets. Also gross errors are corrected and enclosed in brackets:

"William Austin the first of the Austin family in America came from Ireland somewhere in the sixteenth Century. As a [word missing] when he arrived in America he was sold by the Captain for money to pay for his passage to be a weaver as an apprentice at which Trade he workedfor seven years.

Some Time afterward he married & had some children Two of which had taken the Oath of allegiance [allegiance] and when the Revolution came up they did not want to break their oath and so they removed to Canada and have never been heard from since. Another son, my Great-GreatGrandfather went through the Revolution and married Elizabeth Green.

Great-GreatGrandmother was Elizabeth (Green) her husband's name was William. The Austin family. Great Grandfather was Wm. Austin his wife was Ruth Kelly. Her 2nd husband was David Passmore.

Wm. and Ruth's children were John, William, Samuel D., Philip W., Charles and Nancy. Mary F. Passmore. . . "

Here again we are faced with a family tradition and all this implies. If the progenitor came to America in the 16th century there is some missing generations. The two descendants who swore allegiance to the Crown and went to Canada could have been Solomon and John, the first two sons of William and Elizabeth (Green) Austin.

Another interesting feature is the given, names of William and Ruth's children. John, William, Samuel and Philip are almost an exact repetition of the given names from generation to generation. Charles is a new given name and it is interesting to note that Philip names his second son Charles. All very interesting but not conclusive.

When trying to solve a case, detectives search far and wide for the remotest clues that will further their investigation. Genealogists do the same thing when trying to substantiate family data.

Elijah Austin, son of William Austin, named one of his sons Absolom Crisfield Austin. Nothing about this is unusual except the name. "Absolom Crisfield" is not a household name. To the best of our knowledge there was no prominent public or historic figure whose presence

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would entice anyone to give that name to a child. What circumstances would imprint a name like this to Elijah's mind? To try to find an answer we look at the record.

We have presented the Sally Day descendancy chart (page 45) as a plausible solution to some of the Maryland and North Carolina Austin problems. The chart shows John Austin married a Rosamond Smith who was the widow of William Smith of Queen Anne's County. John died in 1734 and Rosamond married the third time to Philip Crisfield of Kent County, Maryland. They had a son named Absolom Crisfield, christened 17 Nov 1740.⁵⁹

From the chart we see that Rosamond would have been the grandmother of William Austin's children and we can assume she maintained a close relationship with the Austins even though she remarried. There is no proof of the closeness but evidently Elijah Austin was imprinted with name of his uncle by marriage because he named one of his sons Absolom Crisfield Austin who was born 15 February 1774 in Orange County, North Carolina.

There is one additional interesting observation concerning the breaking of family tradition. Prophetically, twenty years ago in a personal communication to the Norfolk Historical Society, Marian Wiley, a genealogist in Montana, who has contributed significantly to the Solomon Austin genealogy, wrote, *"I'm virtually certain our Solomon Austin will prove to be a great-grandson of the William Austin who bought the 400 plantable acres in Queen Anne's County in 1672."* We concur with the break from family tradition but stop short of accepting her William Austin as the progenitor. The jury is still out on just how all the Austins in Queen Anne's and Kent Counties relate to each other. The Day alignment is the most plausible model developed thus far.

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These are nebulous threads with which we try to weave a line of descent. Years of exhaustive research by descendants and independent genealogists alike have found no data that fully supports the Solomon Austin family traditions. In many ways the opposite has happened. By breaking with tradition and looking elsewhere in Maryland we have shown alternate alignments that fit many pieces of the puzzle together. At this point, these alignments have not been proved but the gut feeling is that they contain the nucleus of a final solution and should be fully explored.

59 Register of Shrewbury Parish Church, Kent County, MD

VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We began this search more than thirty years ago with high hopes and two major objectives. The first objective was the most altruistic inasmuch as the goal was to gain further knowledge and pass it on to other researchers as well as to Solomon Austin's descendants. The second objective was more personal and was motivated by the need to find the relationship between Solomon Austin, Senior and the other Austins in Orange County, North Carolina. In this context, it was important to learn if there was a blood relation between Solomon Austin and Philip Austin, which would make Solomon in the ancestral line of the author of this narrative.

To help achieve these objectives we used the two-pronged approach of trying to merge family history and tradition with extant official records to develop an accurate and acceptable story of the early life and times of Solomon Austin, Sr.

Between 1877 and 1900, oral histories of Solomon Austin and his descendants were compiled into written versions that are both interesting to read and informative in content. As they concern family pride and research compatibility, it was hoped every thought, word and deed documented in these family histories could be proven meticulously true. As the research for this narrative began it became immediately apparent that over the years the family histories had accumulated layers of myth and mystery that obscured the lines between fact and fiction.

It was purported in the family tradition that Solomon was born in Baltimore County, Maryland in 1744 to parents yet to be identified. We can expect with almost 100% certainty that Solomon Austin would have known when and where he was born and he relayed this to close family members who, in turn, contributed to the oral family histories. It is difficult not to accept this as irrefutable fact. Unfortunately, the extant public records do not confirm or support the early life of Solomon Austin as presented in the family history. On balance this is not unexpected because very few family histories survive a detailed comparison with fact. But it does lead to the first major conclusion.

CONCLUSION: Despite the integrity of the authors who assimilated and published the oral histories and despite the tantalizing elements their works contain, the traditional family histories can not be accepted as the basis for accurately defining and describing Solomon Austin's early years. There is too much difference between fact and fiction. Therefore, alternatives involving different parents, different locations and different family structures must be examined.

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One of the most important facts to come from this research is that the official records indicate there was only one Austin family that flourished in Baltimore County during the time period when Solomon was supposed to have been born. A Henry Austin appears to have been the patriarch of these Baltimore County Austins and some of his activities support parts of the Solomon Austin family tradition, others do not. The situation was complicated because the surname was alternately recorded in the public records as Austin and/or Oyston.

According to tradition, Solomon's father and a brother came from England to Maryland where the father acquired land in what is now Baltimore County. The Austin lands defined in the family tradition were very specific as to acreage and location. There may have been early family documents that confirmed these traditions as fact but, if so, apparently they have not survived. This leaves the medium of oral history as the probable source of information on the Austin land. How else would Solomon's early family members have known the exact acreage and location of the land unless they were relayed orally by Solomon himself?

Be that as it may, the official Maryland records show that Henry Austin/Oyston bought and patented the same amount of land at the same location on the Patapsco Neck that the Solomon Austin family tradition claims Solomon's father owned. The facts substantiate the acquisition and location of the land but not the personnel involved. Standing alone this would seem to indicate that Henry Austin was Solomon's father. But the family traditions stress other mitigating circumstances that makes this suspect.

Family tradition claims Solomon's father died intestate and, as the oldest son, Solomon inherited his fathers land by the right of primogeniture. The official records of Maryland do not substantiate this. When Henry Austin/Oyston died in 1782 he had a will and left his land to his son John Oyston. John, in turn, passed his land down to his family. Nowhere does there appear a Solomon Austin. The Maryland court records do not reflect that any legal efforts were made in court by the Solomon Austin family to reclaim rights to the land in question.

There were several members of the Henry Austin/Oyston family that could have been siblings of Solomon. Henry was born just after the turn of the century (ca. 1701). Apparently his first born son was Lawrence born in 1737. This was seven years before Solomon was born. These facts as they concern individuals cannot be fully reconciled with the Solomon Austin family tradition. All this leads to the second major conclusion.

CONCLUSION: The official records show there was only one family of Austins/Oystons that flourished in Baltimore County during the period when Solomon was supposed to have been born. Therefore, if the family tradition is true as to place and time of his birth, Solomon Austin would have to have been a member of this family of Austins/Oystons.

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These two conclusions puts the descendants of Solomon Austin into a quandary from which there appears to be only three possible choices.. First, there are those who will take the position that the Solomon Austin family tradition is infallible. These disciples may be satisfied with this choice but they must accept the fact that the odds are formidable against ever substantiating the family tradition with public records. Their most hopeful recourse is to maintain the status quo and cling to the hope that at some future date some old letter, document or similar primary source will surface with all the answers to the puzzle of Solomon Austin's early years.

Second, there are those who will accept that the family tradition is fallible. These pragmatists may blend valid official records with the parts of the family tradition that permits a nebulous but quasi-acceptable picture of Solomon Austin's early life. They do not know now, and may never know, all the details that will portray the true picture.

There is a third possibility that impinges on both of the above choices. Solomon Austin may have been from another part of Maryland and from another family entirely. There is enough evidence to make this a serious topic for consideration. Within this context, fragmentary pieces of evidence permit us to diagram plausible family alignments of Eastern Shore Austins where Solomon Austin fits. These alignments answer many of the questions raised by the official records of both Maryland and North Carolina. These alignments are intriguing but they have been presented in this narrative with a caveat because they are based on speculation. However, because research on Solomon Austin through normal channels is more or less at an impasse these speculations have been included as part of this narrative with the hope that they will provoke further thought and additional research that will lead to a final solution of the Solomon Austin problem.

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In the overall scheme of things this research has been both a success and a failure. We have shown conclusively that significant parts of the traditional Solomon Austin family history cannot be substantiated with the public records. This is not to say the traditions are not true but many parts are suspect. We have presented a summary of Solomon Austin's early life that meshes as near as possible with the extant official records. We have tried to present these data in a cogent and well documented form that can be useful to other researchers and acceptable to descendants of Solomon Austin. As it applies to the basic objective stated at the beginning of this summary, this research is considered successful.

Within the context of the second objective, this research has been a failure. The close relationship between Solomon Austin and Philip Austin is well documented in the North Carolina records. Intuitively, we feel there is a blood relationship. The ultimate goal was to determine this relationship. From the beginning the author believed that the best hope to find the ancestors of Philip Austin was through the Solomon Austin genealogy. This has not been achieved. There are tentative answers but they are speculative and cannot in good conscience be submitted into the mainstream of genealogy as fact.

How will this conclusion affect the personal research of the author? It makes us face reality. As much as we want to take our ancestors back to the beginning of time we know this is not always possible. At some point we reach the brick wall where there is no apparent opening. We have come to that point with Solomon and Philip. Each was an individual whose ancestors are lost in the mists of time. Did they come together only briefly in North Carolina or was there a family relationship. Chances are that we will never know. As difficult as this is to accept, at this point this seems to be the only choice.

From our view, the thirty years of research that went into trying to find answers to the Solomon Austin problem have not been in vain. In not finding the answers to Solomon Austin's early years, we have found knowledge of other Austins that can serve as a starting point for others to pursue.

It has been fun! And now let the new genealogical games begin.

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