

THE ORIGINS OF THE MCADAMS FAMILY OF Walker County, Texas

By
Marilyn McAdams Sibley

John McAdams, Sr., and his family, including his son, John, Jr., appeared in the Sabine District in 1834 in the census of Texas. From that time, the family can be traced in official and private documents. John Jr., served in the army of the Republic of Texas during the Texas Revolution; both he, his father, and other members of the family received land grants based on their residence and service to Texas. Both John, Jr., and his father settled in Walker County (then Montgomery County) in 1840. The father died there in 1850. The son put down roots, reared a large family, and gave his name to a community. He died September 11, 1892, and was buried in the McAdams cemetery.

While the history of the family in Texas has been well documented, the earlier history has posed problems. In the mid-1930s, Opal McAdams Samuel made the first serious effort to trace the origins of the family. She collected memoirs of the surviving children of John McAdams, Jr., and her work is invaluable in establishing the early history of the family.

The most significant item she collected in this regard is a letter from Margaret McAdams Thompson Barron, the daughter of John McAdams, Jr. The letter, dated December 31, 1935, says:

"I am sure that my father's father, John McAdams came from Ireland My grandfather came to America when he was four years old."¹

By this letter and other documents, Opal McAdams Samuel established that the family resided in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, before moving to Texas and had previously lived in Tennessee, where John, Jr., was born in Maury County on July 8, 1815.

There the matter rested until about 1970 when another line of the family advanced the theory that the Walker County family was descended from a John McAdams of Abbeville, South Carolina, through a son, also named John. According to this theory, the son first married Vashti Seawright in South Carolina and after her death, he married Martha Rogers and moved westward, eventually settling in Walker county, Texas.²

Although the DAR accepted this theory, it does not stand up to close examination. There was indeed a John McAdams who arrived in Abbeville, South Carolina, from

¹ Because of the importance of this letter, a copy is attached to the end of this paper.

² Ina Mae Ogletree McAdams, The McAdams Family of Walker County, Texas (1971), pp. 1 - 4. Texas Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Roster, Revolutionary Ancestors, III, pp. 1349-50.

Ireland in 1767; he did indeed have a son named John; and that son married Vashti Seawright. But that son John lived, married, died, and was buried within a few miles of his birthplace. He, his wife Vashti, and their children appear in the census records of South Carolina, as well as in local records.³ Extensive work by a number of researchers has established their identity.⁴ Vashti Seawright McAdams died June 24, 1864, and was buried in the Barker's Creek Cemetery in Anderson County, South Carolina, just across the county line from Abbeville County. Her husband John McAdams died December 16, 1872, and is buried in the same cemetery.⁵ Several of their children, including two sons who died in the Civil War, are also buried in this cemetery.

More recent research into the origins of the McAdams family of Walker County confirms the statement of Margaret McAdams Thompson Barron that her grandfather, John, Sr., was born in Ireland but came to America as a young child.

The children of John McAdams, Sr., give this confirmation in the U. S. Census Reports of 1870 and 1880. The census of 1870 asked each citizen whether his/her parents were of foreign birth or native birth. John McAdams Jr., of Walker County, indicated that his father was of foreign birth.⁶ His sister, Elizabeth McAdams Gillespie, a resident of Wilson County, Texas, also indicated that her father was of foreign birth, as did their sister Nancy McAdams Smith Kimbro, a resident of Madison County.⁷

The 1880 census specifically asked for the place of birth of each citizen's parents. John McAdams, Jr., of Walker County, replied that his father was born in Ireland.⁸ His sister, Martha McAdams Ragsdale, a resident of Cherokee County, also said her father was born in Ireland.⁹

³ U.S. Census, Anderson Co., S.C., 1850, p. 247; 1860, p. 204. 7500 Marriages from Ninety-Six and Abbeville District, S.C., 1774-1890, p. 122. Abbeville County Family History, p. 149. Anna D. Callahan, A History of the Callahan and Carwile Families (1976).

⁴ Joe F. McAdams, Sons of Adam, pp. 150-166; Bert McClain Johnson, "The McAdams Family of Abbeville, S. C." Anna D. Callahan, A History of the Callahan and Carwile Families. South Carolina Genealogical Society, Lineage Chart. # 78 .

⁵ Book of the Dead, Anderson county., South Carolina, p. 250.

⁶ U. S. Census, Walker Co., Texas, 1870, p. 331, line 30.

⁷ U. S. Census, Wilson Co., Texas, 1870, (Kockernot) p. 483, household 382; Madison Co., Texas, 1870, p. 8, Div. 51, family 54.

⁸ U. S. Census, Walker Co., Texas, 1880, Vol 32, E.D. 153, p. 4, line 35.

⁹ U. S. Census, Cherokee Co., Texas, 1880, Prec. 3, E.D. 14, p. 49, residence 456.

These statements in the census records, together with Margaret McAdams Thompson Barron's letter of 1935, establish that John McAdams, Sr., was born in Ireland. The year of his birth, derived for lack of a better source from the Texas census of 1834, was 1779. His odyssey from Ireland to Texas can be traced by his children's places of birth from the Carolinas, to the Cumberland area between Kentucky and Tennessee, and then to Alabama. Documents indicate that his father arrived in America in the year of the son's birth, immediately joined a pioneer expedition, and spent the rest of his life in the Cumberland region.

All of the documents thus far uncovered are cited. Hopefully, others will appear as computers, microfilm, and researchers make more early records available. Hopefully, too, new evidence will fill in the gaps and answer more questions about the pioneer members of the family.

For purposes of clarity in tracing three generations of men of the same name, the men are referred to as follows:

John McAdams [I] - the first of this line in America.

John McAdams [II] - John McAdams, Sr., of Texas

John McAdams [III] - John McAdams, Jr., of Walker County.

John McAdams [I]

The name of John McAdams [I] first appeared in the records of Tennessee when that state was still the western wilderness of North Carolina and while the American Revolution was still in progress. On May 1, 1780, at Nashborough (later Nashville) on the Cumberland River, he and 255 other men signed the Cumberland Compact, a document that established a form of law in an area several hundred miles from the nearest white settlement.¹⁰

The Cumberland Compact looms large in the early history of Tennessee. It has been compared to the Mayflower Compact and similar documents written by pioneers who found themselves beyond the jurisdiction of an established legal system. There was much uncertainty as to whom the land belonged. Not until the Revolution ended in 1783 did the settlers know whether their sovereign state was Britain or the United States. At the local level there were other problems of land ownership. Richard Henderson, organizer of the settlement, based his claim on a private Indian treaty, but North Carolina as both colony and state held title to all of present day Tennessee and repudiated Henderson's treaty. In reality, the Indians held possession of the lands surrounding the

¹⁰ The original is in the Tennessee State Archives in Nashville. It has been reprinted many times; for example, in Three Pioneer Tennessee Documents (1964); Pioneers of Davidson County; and A. W. Putnam, A History of Middle Tennessee.

isolated settlement and posed a constant threat. Allegedly, the British agitated the Indians against the frontiersmen both during and after the Revolution, and until 1800 the annals of Tennessee recount one Indian depredation after another.¹¹

Richard Henderson, a prominent Virginia lawyer and land speculator, planned the settlement on the Cumberland shortly after negotiating his Indian treaty in 1775. The American Revolution interrupted his plans, but during a lull in hostilities in 1779, he took action. He enlisted the help of James Robertson, a noted frontiersman, who chose a bluff overlooking the Cumberland River as the site of the settlement that grew into Nashville. In late 1779, two parties--one by land and one by river--set out for the proposed settlement. James Robertson led the land party. Made up of men and boys, this party went by way of the Cumberland Gap and drove livestock and carried supplies. John Donelson headed the river party which included women and children. Indians harassed his boats and killed some of his party along the way. Donelson, patriarch of a large clan and later father-in-law of Andrew Jackson, kept notes of the hazardous journey in his diary which has become a classic in the literature of the Tennessee frontier.¹²

After both parties arrived at the settlement, Richard Henderson wrote the Cumberland Compact and asked all the men by their signatures to agree to its terms. He himself signed first. Other prominent signers were James Robertson and John Donelson.

John McAdams [I] signed his name directly above that of Sampson Williams, a noted Indian fighter, from whom he later bought land in Overton County.¹³

Although virtually nothing is known of John McAdams [I] as an individual, his name tells a great deal about his background. He was of Scotch Irish descent, which prepared him for a role on the American frontier. The distinctive Scotch Irish breed developed as a result of the English monarch's problems with his Presbyterian subjects in Scotland and his Roman Catholic subjects in Ireland. In hopes of solving both problems by playing off one group against the other, King James I transplanted a number of Scotsmen to northern Ireland in the early 1600's. As expected, the two groups fought one another, and as was probably not anticipated, the fight has continued into the twentieth century.

The transplanted Presbyterians battled indiscriminately with both the Anglican English and the Irish Catholics. Even so, the Scottish colony thrived and multiplied for several generations. The very success of the colony inspired the English to pass onerous religious and economic laws to suppress Irish competition with the English textile industry. As a result, great numbers of the group, now called Scotch Irish, left for America in the 1700's. Generally, they were late comers and found the best lands along the seaboard already occupied. Thus, they moved to the frontier where their generations

¹¹ See J. G. M. Ramsay, Annals of Tennessee (1853).

¹² The diary is printed; among other places, in Three Pioneer Tennessee Documents.

¹³ A. W. Putnam, History of Middle Tennessee, p. 101.

of warfare in Scotland and Ireland made them Indian fighters par excellence. They became the cutting edge of the frontier, and, having no fond memories of a homeland, they became the very prototype of the American.¹⁴

John McAdams [I] was one of this hardy race, was probably born in Ireland about 1755 and arrived in America only shortly before he joined Henderson's expedition to the Cumberland. The American Revolution, then in progress, had brought a virtual halt to immigration, and he left his family at home. These circumstances suggest that strong motivation prompted him to leave home.

Whatever his reasons for immigrating, John McAdams [I] spent the remainder of his life--more than forty years--along the Cumberland River. The river played a vital role in the development of the country. Using a present day map, the Cumberland begins in eastern Kentucky, dips into middle Tennessee, and then turns back into Kentucky to join the Ohio River which in turn flows into the Mississippi. Until railroads and roads were built, the river network was a major highway. A distinctive culture developed in its basin, a culture that overlapped the states of Kentucky and Tennessee. Indeed, until 1820 the boundary between those two states was in dispute.¹⁵

John McAdams [I] first settled at Nashville. Later he obtained land downstream on the river in present Stewart County adjoining the Kentucky border. Eventually, he settled upstream in Overton County, again on the Kentucky line.

When he signed the Cumberland Compact in 1780, some three hundred people lived in the Cumberland settlement, but many of them soon left it. The Indians were hostile; the Revolution spilled over the mountains, and the usual hazards of frontier outposts plagued the early settlers. As the Revolution drew to an end, however, the survivors acted to put the Cumberland Compact into operation and organize their area as Davidson County, North Carolina.

The first minutes of the Cumberland Association show that John McAdams [I] was among the survivors. Under date of January 7, 1783, the clerk recorded:

"In a trial between Julius Sanders and John McAdams, concerning a quantity of Indian corn alleged by said Sanders to be due to him from said McAdams. James Franklin, the witness betwixt the parties, being called, sworn and heard, the committee found for the plaintiff, one bushel and a half of Indian corn and cost of suit."¹⁶

Another entry under date of February 11, 1783, shows that John McAdams [I] not only survived but had accumulated some livestock. His brand was recorded by the

¹⁴ See James G. Leyburn, The Scotch-Irish (1962)

¹⁵ See Harriet Arnow, Seedtime on the Cumberland.

¹⁶ "Records of the Cumberland Association," American Historical magazine, VII p. 130 .

Association, second only to that of James Robertson: "John McAdams records his stock mark, thus: A crop off the right ear and whole [sic] through it, and a swallow fork in the left."¹⁷

On March 4, 1783, John McAdams [I] was a witness for Solomon White when White sued John Rains and Mark Noble for trespass.¹⁸

Upon the organization of Davidson County, the court minutes of October 6, 1783, record that John McAdams [I] was nominated constable at Nashborough.¹⁹

On April 1784 he appears in the minutes in a less favorable light. He was charged with drunkenness, and Daniel Williams and Cornelius Ruddle stood as security for his good behavior. In July he paid 15 shillings fine for the misbehavior. Despite this infraction, he was called to serve as juror in the July term of the Davidson County court.²⁰

By late 1785, he was with a survey crew laying off military grants in the part of Davidson that later became Stewart County.²¹ Colonel Robert Hays, surveyor for North Carolina, directed this activity, and the state proposed to pay its Revolutionary soldiers and other creditors with the land. Often a soldier who received a land warrant, assigned (that is, sold or otherwise transferred) it to another person (an assignee) without ever locating the acreage. Sometimes these warrants passed through the hands of several assignees before the land was actually located. The state recorded the grant under the name of the last assignee thus making it difficult now to find the original grantee.²²

But this is only a minor complexity in the tangled web of Tennessee land distribution. In 1790, after much squabbling and a binge of distributing land grants, North Carolina gave her remaining western lands to the Federal government. The state, however, reserved lands to satisfy her Revolutionary obligations. In 1796, the state of Tennessee was created, subject to the prior claims of both North Carolina and the Federal government. As all of these claims were poorly defined, a three-way controversy

¹⁷ "Records of the Cumberland Association," American Historical magazine. VII, p. 254 .

¹⁸ Tennessee Cousins - Davidson County, p. 671 .

¹⁹ J. G. M. Ramsay. Annals of Tennessee. p. 495 .

²⁰ Davidson Co. Minutes, Books 1 & 2A. 1783-1791, pp. 13, 31, 35, 37. (Microfilm at Clayton Library, Houston) .

²¹ Stewart Co. Deed Records, Bk. 3, p. 259 .

²² George Stephenson, "North Carolina Revolutionary War Records," (pamphlet, 1980) , p. 3.

developed at the governmental level. This was further complicated by Indian claims, squatters' rights, land speculations, and a full measure of fraud. Not until 1806 did the three governments arrive at an agreement that gave stability to land titles.²³

Against this background, John McAdams [1] appeared in the deed records of Stewart County. A deed describes a 228-acre tract "located December 23, 1785, and surveyed by John Rice, assignee of John McAdams, and others by Robert Hayes, February 20, 1786. John McAdams and John Harry chain carriers."²⁴ This deed contains ambiguities in wording, and does not specify the service for which McAdams received the land he assigned to Rice. The number of acres, however, is the amount assigned by North Carolina to privates with thirty months service.²⁵

More is known of two other men who appear in this deed--John Rice and Robert Hays--than of John McAdams [I]. Rice was killed by Indians in 1791 and his will contested at length in Davidson County.²⁶ Hays, like Andrew Jackson, married a daughter of John Donelson. Hays served as an officer from North Carolina during the Revolution before becoming surveyor. He made a fortune in Tennessee lands and lost most of it before his death.²⁷

Seven years after assigning this 228-acre tract to John Rice, John McAdams [I] received a second land grant from North Carolina, and again Robert Hays appeared on it. The second grant, also for 228 acres, was dated May 20, 1793, issued in Davidson County, and given to John McAdams, assignee of Robert Hays, through North Carolina warrant #2290. (the warrant number is significant for through it McAdams can be traced to Overton County).²⁸

John McAdams [1] located and received title to this tract in Stewart County near the tract he had earlier assigned to John Rice. The Stewart County deed says: "Grant to John McAdams, assignee of Robert Hayes, a private in the Continental lines of said state, of 228 acres of land in county of Davidson on Bazells Saline to join John Harris lower line." This land was transferred by Richard Dobbs on behalf of the state of North Carolina and is confirmed by James Glasgow, Secretary of State, Robert Hayes, DS, John Harry, and John Montgomery.²⁹

²³ See T. P. Abernathy, From Frontier to Plantation, pp. 182-188, for a fuller explanation; and A. V. Goodpasture, "Education and the Public Lands of Tennessee," American Historical Magazine, IV, 218-219.

²⁴ Stewart County Deed Records, Book 3, p. 259 .

²⁵ George Stephenson, "North Carolina Revolutionary War Records," p. 3.

²⁶ J. G. M. Ramsay, Annals of Tennessee, p. 597 .

²⁷ Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly, 1796-1861, I, 349-351.

²⁸ Land Records, Tennessee State Archives, North Carolina Grants, Book 2, p. 93.

²⁹ Stewart County Deed Records, Book 3, p. 341 .

Again, the wording of the deed raises questions. The words "a private in the Continental lines" are placed after the name of Robert Hays, implying that he was the private. But Hays was an officer and as such received far larger acreage. The words give a new meaning to the deed when they are placed after the name of John McAdams.

Although the deeds do not explain precisely why McAdams received the grants, the alternatives are limited. North Carolina set aside land to pay her soldiers of the Revolution, including those who guarded the frontier, and still more land to pay the expenses of surveying the land that was distributed. From the dates of the grants to John McAdams [I] and from the other names associated with his, it is probable that he received one grant for his service in guarding the frontier and the other for helping to survey the grants. Goodspeed's History of Tennessee lists John McAdams among those who received a military grant in Stewart County, and probably refers only to the land for which he received a title.³⁰

This squares with family tradition that the patriarch of the Walker County, Texas, clan served in the Revolution. "My great-grandfather fought in the Revolutionary war," Margaret McAdams Thompson Barron wrote in 1935.³¹ For years she preserved the Revolutionary sword of her ancestor, a sword that Opal McAdams Samuel now preserves.

Aside from establishing his service, North Carolina warrant #2290 makes it possible to trace John McAdams [I] from Davidson County, to Stewart and then to Overton. In 1817, he sold the tract he received in Stewart by warrant #2290. He sold the land to Alexander Walker, through an attorney William Nevins, and the deed, recorded in both Stewart and Overton counties, identifies him as "John McAdams of Overton County."³²

This identification by place was necessary, for by that time another man of the same name but some twenty years younger resided in Stewart County.³³

The first John probably never resided in Stewart County, for the county minutes show him delinquent in taxes on the 228-acre tract in 1811 and again in 1812.³⁴

³⁰ History of Tennessee, Montgomery . . . Stewart Counties (Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1886), p. 896; and McClain, History of Stewart County, Tennessee, p. 5 .

³¹ See her letter attached to the end of this paper.

³² Stewart County Deed Records, Book 0 (or 6), p. 111; Book 3 (or 5), p. 456; and Overton County Deed Records, Book D, p. 300 (or 337). These deeds have been recopied so there are two sets with slightly different numbering--another quirk in Tennessee land records.

³³ Stewart County Deed Records, Book 3 (or 5), p. 456 .

³⁴ Stewart County Court Minutes, 1811-1812, p. 117; 1813-1815, p. 17 .

Moreover, by the early 1800s he had appeared in Overton County. He settled on Obed's River in the part of Overton that became Clay County in 1870 and acquired land that lay directly on the state line between Tennessee and Kentucky.³⁵ John Sevier, first governor of Tennessee, owned land nearby and both properties later bordered on or were partially covered by Dale Hollow Lake.

John McAdams [I] was influenced by the Great Revival, the religious movement that swept over the Cumberland area in the early 1800s. Local tradition says that a church was organized in his log cabin about 1805 and continued to meet there until the congregation erected a church building some fifteen years later. That church, the Rock Springs Church of Christ, still exists and reportedly is one of the oldest of that denomination.³⁶

John McAdams [I] appears in the census of 1820 in Overton County.³⁷ That census gives scant information but the image emerges from this entry of an older man with a young family. The census lists him as over 45 years of age. In fact, he was over 60 for he had been in the Cumberland forty years and had been an adult when he arrived. His wife is listed as between the ages of 26 and 45, and presumably she was a second or even third wife. In the household were four children younger than ten--two boys and two girls. Another boy was between 10 and 16; and another girl, between 10 and 26. Making an estimate from these ages, this couple probably married around 1800.

John McAdams [I] first appeared in the deed records of Overton in 1808 when he sold 150 acres on Kettle Creek and Obed's River to David Weatherford.³⁸ As there is no record of his acquiring this land, he possibly acquired it before Overton was carved from Jackson County, but there is no way to check because the early Jackson records were burned.

In 1809, he purchased 300 acres from his old acquaintance of Cumberland Compact days, Sampson Williams.³⁹ Williams, then a resident of Jackson County, had acquired many acres in Overton and appears frequently in the deed records.

In 1818, in addition to recording the sale of the 228 acres in Stewart County, John McAdams sold 50 acres on the state line to Reuben Chandler.⁴⁰

In 1824, John McAdams [I] appeared for the last time in the deed records of Overton County, when he sold 180 acres of land to William Stephens.⁴¹ He probably died within a few years. No McAdams appeared on the Overton County census of 1830.

³⁵ Overton County Deed Records, Book F, p. 213 .

³⁶ Edyth R. Whitley, Overton County, Tennessee, Genealogical Records (1979), pg. 7 .

³⁷ U. S. Census, 1820, Tennessee, Overton County, p. 4 .

³⁸ Overton County Deed Records, Book C, p. 175 or 194 .

³⁹ Ibid., Book B, p. 228 or 269 .

⁴⁰ Ibid., Book F, p. 213 ; Book D, p. 300 or 337 .

⁴¹ Overton county Deed Records, Book E, p. 468 or 391.

John McAdams [II] , (1779 - 1850)

Until John McAdams [II] arrived in Texas, he is much harder to trace than the man assumed to be his father. The older man can be tracked and identified in primary sources in the archives of Tennessee and North Carolina and in the records of Davidson, Stewart, and Overton counties, Tennessee. By contrast, the younger man left few if any tracks in the records where the researcher expects to find him. He can be identified in the Stewart County records from 1818 to 1820, but his name appears only a few times in the records of Maury County, where his son John [III] was born in 1815, or in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where the family resided for more than ten years. And, although a strong family tradition says John [II] was a Methodist preacher, he does not appear in the early Methodist documents of Tennessee, Alabama, or Texas that have surfaced thus far.

Before his arrival in Texas he must be tracked by what his children and one granddaughter said about him, and by the birthplaces of his children. Thus, what is known of his early life is obtained indirectly or by assumption.

The first assumption is that John McAdams [I] is his father. This assumption is based on the following:

1. Name. Mrs. Barron said her great-grandfather was named John McAdam, as were her father and grandfather and that this was "a real family name." All other family lore confirms this tradition. Although this name is not rare in early records, it is uncommon enough that each man of that name in the pertinent frame of time and place can be reasonably identified. In a book, Sons of Adam (1986), Joe F. McAdams groups the early McAdamses by family. He cannot tie the two John McAdamses of Stewart and Overton counties in the Tennessee census of 1820 to any family group but leaves them as "free agents."⁴² The process of elimination thus narrows the choices and points to these two men.
2. Age. John [I] was over 60 in 1820; and John [II] was 41, placing them in the proper age frame of father and son.
3. Place. Both men ranged over the Cumberland area between Kentucky and Tennessee and their paths crossed in Stewart County, Tennessee, before 1820. Both are connected with property in the same vicinity of that county, and the deed records and census records show they knew or were neighbor to some of the same men. A deeper probing into Stewart County records possibly would give a more positive answer in regard to their relationship.
4. The father and son were not close. Mrs. Barron knew her great-grandfather's name, that he fought in the Revolution, and left his Revolutionary sword. But she thought an "Uncle Hiram" and her great-grandfather were "the only two . . . who came over to America." She had heard her father tell many times about this Uncle

⁴² Joe F. McAdams, Sons of Adam, pp. 119-120 .

Hiram entertaining Lafayette with a banquet. If John [I] left his infant son in Ireland in 1779 and had another young family by the early 1800s when the son moved west, that son grew up with virtually no contact with his father.

Information about the early life of John McAdams [II] must be pieced together. According to Mrs. Barron's memoir and his childrens' statements to the census takers in 1870 and 1880, he was born in Ireland. His statement on the Texas census of 1834, indicates the year of his birth as 1779.⁴³ Mrs. Barron says he arrived in the United States when he was four years old, which means that he came in 1783 at the close of the American Revolution.

Judging by the age of his eldest child, he married Martha Rodgers about 1802. She said in the 1850 census that she was born in South Carolina about 1785.⁴⁴ Their first child James was born in North Carolina about 1804, according to his statement on his certificate of character when he came to Texas.⁴⁵

Their second child, Elizabeth, was born July 8, 1806. She said in the censuses of 1850 and 1860 that she was born in South Carolina, but in 1870 said Kentucky, and her children put Kentucky on her tombstone.⁴⁶ The third child, Mary or Polly, was born about 1808. She has not been located in the 1850 census and was dead before 1860, but two of her sons said that she was born in Kentucky.⁴⁷

From this data, it appears that John McAdams [II] arrived in America about 1783 and spent his early years in the Carolinas, that he married there, and with his wife and two children started the move westward about 1807, probably traveling through western North Carolina and crossing the mountains through Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. He probably joined his father who had settled on the line between Kentucky and Tennessee, and, as that line was not definitely fixed until 1820, some of his children could well be uncertain as to which state was their birthplace.

John and Martha's fourth child Joseph was born about 1811, but no record suggests

⁴³ Marion Day Mullins, The First Census of Texas, 1829-1836, p. 36 .

⁴⁴ Other statements about her birthplace vary from Ireland to Kentucky. The 1850 census is the only source that mentions South Carolina, but I accept that because she was alive and presumably gave that information.

⁴⁵ Gifford White, Character Certificates in the General Land office of Texas (1985), Item #2842, p. 218 .

⁴⁶ U. S. Census, 1850, Texas, Walker Co., p. 257, Res. 96; 1860, Bexar Co., p. 220, sw 1719; 1870, Wilson Co., p. 483, #382. She is buried in Rancho Cemetery, Gonzales County.

⁴⁷ U. S. Census, 1880, Texas, Madison Co., Pre. #1, Res. #20; Memorial and Genealogical Record of Southwest Texas (1894), "William Archibald Williams," p. 380 .

the place of his birth. The fifth child, Nancy was born March 26, 1813, and said in 1850 and 1860 that she was born in Tennessee.⁴⁸

The sixth child, John [III], consistently gave his birthplace and date of birth as Maury County, Tennessee, on July 8, 1815.⁴⁹ He is the only child who gave a county of birth, and this is the first time that the family can be located with any certainty as to time and place.

The Seventh child, Martha (or Patsy), was born December 19, 1816, and consistently reported on the census records from 1850 until her death that she was born in Kentucky.⁵⁰ The next, William, died young leaving no record of his birthplace, and the last three, Jane Evalina, George, and Drucilla, were born in Alabama. Evalina was born October 2 in either 1820 or 1822. The earlier date is probably correct, and it is important in tracing the family for it establishes the date of their arrival in Alabama.⁵¹

John McAdams [II] left only a few imprints on the records of Maury County, the first place that he can be pinpointed.

In 1809, he was overseer of a road beginning at Duck River in the western part of the county. In 1811, he was assigned to work on a road in Maury County running from Cathey's Creek to Natchez Trace.⁵²

By 1812, he was a resident of the Congressional Reservation, the vast western part of Tennessee that included a part of Maury County. This area--roughly between the Tennessee River and the Mississippi--had been set aside for the Federal government in 1806 when it and the states of Tennessee and North Carolina reached an agreement on their long-standing land dispute. North Carolina retained an interest in the land to satisfy her outstanding Revolutionary warrants, and much to the irritation of Tennesseans, began pushing those claims about 1812. Because of North Carolina's claims and because the Indians' claim to the area had not been extinguished, the Federal government did not open the Congressional Reservation for settlement until 1818. In the interim, squatters moved into the Reservation, hoping to establish a prior right when the area was finally opened. Many of them made improvements based on that hope. In 1812, harassed by Indians, and with North Carolina pressing the old claims, the settlers saw their hopes of land titles

⁴⁸ U. S. Census, 1850, Cherokee Co., p. 495, #759; 1860, p. 915. Jackson Smith/McAdams Family Bible.

⁴⁹ Republic of Texas, Pension Claim, John McAdams, Nov. 10, 1874, Texas State Archives; and Jackson Smith/McAdams Family Bible.

⁵⁰ Jackson Smith/McAdams Family Bible; and United States Census, Texas, Cherokee County, 1850, Residence #109; 1880, Prec. 3, E.D. 14, p. 49, Residence 456 .

⁵¹ Jackson Smith/McAdams Family Bible. The bible gives one year in one place and the other in a second place.

⁵² Maury County, Court Minutes, Book 2, p. 89 .

disappear. They petitioned the Tennessee legislature for relief, stating their problems and their desperation. John McAdams [II] was among those who signed the petition.⁵³

Two children were added to the family during this period--Nancy, born in 1813, and John [III], born July 8, 1815, in Maury County.

In 1816, John McAdams [II] paid taxes in Maury County,⁵⁴ and in that same year the family probably moved to northern Stewart County, where Tennessee and Kentucky still argued over jurisdiction. Martha (Patsy) was born December 19, 1816, and always gave Kentucky as her birthplace. Judging from these dates, the family resided in the part of the Congressional Reservation that included part of Maury County from about 1808 until 1816.

In Stewart County the focus becomes more clear. The family settled on Saline Creek on land adjoining or very near that given the first John by the State of North Carolina in 1793. By means not evident in the deed records, John McAdams [II] acquired title to 180 acres of land. The father sold his 228-acre tract in the summer of 1817 and that deed was witnessed by John Stancill, a near neighbor of the younger McAdams.⁵⁵

On July 15, 1818, John McAdams [II] was ordered to serve as county juror, and the following November 3, he was drawn to serve on the grand jury.⁵⁶

In 1820 the family appeared on the Stewart County census. Because the age and sex of all family members are known, they can be easily identified, even though this census gives very little information. Below is a chart showing the family profile described by the census and the John McAdams [II] family at that time:

⁵³ "Petition of Persons Living in the Congressional Reservation . . . 1812," original in Tennessee State Archives, printed in Historic Maury (publication of Maury County Historical Society), Vol. I, p. 18 .

⁵⁴ Early Tennessee Tax Lists, p. 219 .

⁵⁵ Stewart Co. Deed Records, Bk. 0 (or 6), p. 111; Overton Co. Deed Records, Bk. D, p. 300 (or 337) .

⁵⁶ Stewart County Court Minutes, 1815-1819, pp. 319; 338-339 .

<u>Stewart Co., Tennessee</u> U. S. Census, 1820, p. 113	<u>John McAdams [II] family in 1820</u>
3 males under 10 yrs.	Joseph - 9 yrs. old John Jr. - 5 yrs. old William - 1 yr. old
1 male 10 to 16 yrs.	James - 16 yrs. old
1 male 26 - 45	John Sr. 41 yrs. old
2 females under 10	Martha (Patsy) - 4 yrs. old Nancy - 6 yrs. old
2 females 10 to 16	Mary (Polly) - 12 yrs. old Elizabeth - 14 yrs. old
1 female 26 to 45	Martha - 35 yrs. old

One member of this family, presumably the father, was described by the census as engaged in manufacturing.

A severe economic depression, the notorious Panic of 1819, dealt a hard blow to western Americans, and John McAdams [II] was no doubt among them. New lands opened up in Alabama about this time and he joined the movement there.

Before leaving, he sold 52 acres on Saline Creek to a near neighbor, Jesse Jolly, in a deed dated December 14, 1819. On November 3, 1821, a year after his removal to Alabama (if we accept Evalina's birth year as 1820) he sold 128 acres on Saline Creek to another Stewart County neighbor, John Oliver, for \$400.⁵⁷

As there is no record of his acquiring this 180 acres, there is a big gap in his story. By this time the state of Tennessee had adopted a limited system of preemption (that is, honoring squatter rights), so perhaps this was empty land which he simply occupied. Since he sold to close neighbors in both instances, they obviously accepted his claim to the land even without a prior title.

John McAdams [II] was past forty years of age when he moved to Alabama, and obviously he had neither put down roots nor accumulated property. Tradition says he was a Methodist preacher, but, as noted earlier, he does not appear in early denominational records - at least, in those made available.

He resided in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, for twelve to fourteen years, living on "Section 20, KF, W.T. 22" near Gilgal Baptist Church. But again he failed to acquire title to land. He appears in the deed records only once and that on August 3, 1826, in connection with an agreement with his oldest son, James.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Stewart County Deed Records, Bk. 0 (or 6), p. 230; Bk. 7, p. 9 .

⁵⁸ Tuscaloosa Co. Deed Records, Bk. E , pp. 205-206 .

Again, the family is best traced through the children--this time through their marriages. Elizabeth married George Gillespie, possibly before the move to Alabama, for no record of the marriage has been located. According to family tradition, her young brother William was killed on her wedding day when a horse kicked him. This was the first loss of a son. Eventually, four of the five sons in the family died young. Only two lived long enough to marry, and in so far as has been determined, only John [III] perpetuated the name.

Elizabeth and George Gillespie had a son by 1822 and before 1830, when they resided in Greene County, Alabama, they had two other sons and a daughter.⁵⁹

Mary (Polly) married John Williams in Tuscaloosa County on May 17, 1824.⁶⁰

James married Elizabeth Levendall on January 29, 1828, and by 1830 they had three children and three slaves.⁶¹

Nancy married Joseph Smith in Greene County on November 24, 1832.⁶²

In the early 1830s, the clan moved to Texas, where Mexico was giving away lands. According to his certificate of character, Joseph Smith was the first to come to Texas. He arrived in 1830, two years before he married Nancy. John McAdams [II] and his son James (again according to the certificates of character) first came in 1832. By 1834, the three families had settled in the Sabine District.⁶³

⁵⁹ U. S. Census, Alabama, Greene, Co., p. 379 Southern District .

⁶⁰ Tuscaloosa Marriage Book 4-26-1823 to 2-6-1845, compiled by Kathleen Jones and Pauline Gandrud

⁶¹ Tuscaloosa Marriage Book 1, p. 131

⁶² Greene County Marriage Book B, p. 43 .

⁶³ Gifford White, Character Certificates in the General Land Office of Texas (1985), Items #1393 & 1394, p. 128; and Item #1908, p. 171. Marion Day Mullins, The First Census of Texas, 1829-1836, p. 36 .

Extract from a letter written by Mrs. Margaret McAdams Barron, daughter of
John McAdams, Jr., December 31, 1935

(copy of original written to Mrs. Opal McAdams Samuel)

"I am sure that my father's father, John McAdams, came from Ireland but are of Scotch descent, and that my grandmother, Martha Rogers McAdams, came from Ireland. They met over here and married. They lived in Tenn. for some time before going on to Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The whole family moved from there to Panola County, Texas. There were eleven children in all, my father being the middle child. My father's father was named John and his father was John also. John was a real family name.

My great grand-father fought in the Revolutionary War and Pat Allphin has his old sword. I left it with him when I moved here. An Uncle Hiram had the sword and gave it to my grandfather when he left home. My grandfather and this Uncle Hiram are the only two that I ever heard of who came over to America. I have heard my father tell about this Uncle Hiram entertaining Lafayette with a banquet in that long ago. My grandfather came to America when he was four years old.

Aunt Elisabeth (Betsy) McAdams married George Gillaspie of Ala. The family later moved to Texas and settled in Gonzales County. They had one daughter and two sons, James and John.

Nancy McAdams married Joe Smith and had one son, Joe. She was left a widow and when Joe was yet small she married Lemuel Kimbrough. They had one son, Mark. Some of their descendants are in Walker County.

Uncle Joseph was killed in a feud in Panola County Texas. He had never married.

Uncle James died of pneumonia and was buried in Panola County, by the side of Uncle Joe. He left a family but we lost trace of them.

My father, John McAdams, Jr. was twice married. He had a large family of sons and daughters. Most of his descendants live in Walker and Grimes Counties.

Aunt "Patsy", Martha Ragsdale married William Ragsdale. They had several children. I know of them. Her descendants are in East Texas.

Aunt "Polly", Mary McAdams Price was married twice. She was the mother of one daughter and four sons. She lived in Madison County and some of her descendants still live there.

Aunt Evelina married Jack Smith. They reared a large family in Jacksonville, Texas. Jacksonville was named for Jack Smith. Aunt Evelina visited us often.

Aunt Drucilla married Hugh Stephenson. They had two children. Their descendants are in Walker and Grimes counties."

W. Williams
John McAdams
Sampson Williams
Thomas Thompson
W. Williams
James Williams
John Dabbon
W. Williams
James Williams
John Dabbon

Signature of John McAdams on the Cumberland Compact, 1 May
 1780. He signed between the names of Daniel and Sampson
 Williams. He later purchased land in Overton Co. from
 Sampson Williams. (See below).

Original, Simpson Williams,
 Book 3,
 Page 269, Deed - 300 acres.
 cc.
 "

This indenture, made
 this twelfth day of October
 in the year of Our Lord
 One thousand eight hundred
 and nine, between
 John McAdams, of Jackson County and
 State of Tennessee, of the one part, and Sampson
 Williams of the County of Overton and State
 of Tennessee, of the other part, Witnesseth that

Overton Co., TN, Deed Records, Original Bk B, p. 269, showing
 purchase of 300 acres by John McAdams from Sampson Williams

Also listed
 in a list
 of 100 plots by the
 State
 John Harry
 John Adams
 228
 1785
 1817
 228
 225
 Original of a statutory warrant from the Secretary of State
 No 1691 dated the 23^d of December 1785. It is conveyed
 for John Adams assignee of Robert Hays, two
 hundred and twenty five acres of land lying on
 Biggins Creek to give John Harry, lower line
 beginning at a red oak running west one hundred
 and sixty two poles to an oak thence south
 two hundred and twenty five poles to a stake
 thence east one hundred and sixty two poles
 to a stake thence north two hundred and
 twenty five poles to the beginning. Surveyed
 26th of December 1785 Robert Hays & S.
 Hardisty surveyors

Land survey in N.C. Secretary of State office, Raleigh, shows
 228 acres surveyed for John McAdams, assignee of Robert Hays,
 dated 26 December 1785, and located in present Stewart Co., TN.
 McAdams, on 17 Feb. 1817 when he was resident of Overton Co.,
 TN, sold this tract to Alexander Walker of Stewart Co.

To
John McAdams
228 acres
John McAdams

This Indenture made this twentieth day of February in the
year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventeen between
Alexander Walker of the State of Tennessee Stewart County of the
County of Overton and John McAdams of the same State Overton
County Tennessee that for and in consideration of the sum of
four hundred Dollars to me in hand paid to the said McAdams
by the said Walker the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged
the said McAdams have this day bargained and sold unto the
said Walker a certain tract lying and being in the said Stewart
County on a creek known by the name of Saline Creek beg-
inning and joining John Murray lower line and Oak trees and
100 poles to an ash then south 225 poles to a stake then
100 poles to a stake then north 225 poles to the beginning
containing two hundred and twenty eight acres to have and
to hold unto the said Walker the foregoing tract or parcel of
together with all and singular its rights and privileges un-
der him the said Walker his heirs Executors and administrators
unto their heirs heirs and behoof and the said McAdams
for my self my heirs Executors and administrators do hereby

Stewart Co., TN, Deed Records, Bk E (or 5), p. 456, showing sale of 228 acres on Saline Creek by John McAdams of Overton Co. to Alexander Walker of Stewart Co. A similar deed is filed in Overton Co.