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## TWO ROBERTSON FAMILIES IN VIRGINIA

**576. James Robertson**, born Bef. 1750; died Unknown.

### Notes for James Robertson

Not much is known about James at this time. What I do know comes from the family history as documented by Fred Robertson (1899-1985) and published in December 1956. Fred records that son Stephen (my ancestor) was born about 1775 in Fincastle County, Virginia and that he came through the Cumberland Gap in December 1779 with the party of Alexander Robertson. Fred goes ahead to name some others in the Alexander Robertson party as James, James Jr., John, Matthew and Wm Robertson. Additionally Joseph Robertson, a son of Stephen, had the following statement included in his biography (see his narrative in the next generation), "The paternal grandfather was during the Revolutionary War obliged to leave his Virginia home and with his wife and eleven children seek shelter from the enemy in a fort." Evidently the James we are looking for had eleven children. Also, they sought refuge in a fort, but it does not indicate whether the sanctuary fort was in Virginia or Kentucky, although one would assume Virginia from the way it was written. Both regions were beset by major Indian problems, who were especially agitated by the British during the Revolution.

We can start with Alexander Robertson and see where it leads. Fincastle County, Virginia was dissolved on January 1, 1777 and one of the counties created from the old Fincastle was Kentucky County, Virginia containing all of present day Kentucky. When Fort Boonesborough was founded in 1775 it was in Fincastle County, then in Kentucky County in 1777 until 1780 when Kentucky County was split into Fayette, Lincoln and Jefferson Counties. Fort Boonesborough would have been in Lincoln County at that time. Fred Robertson had identified Alexander's party as being in Fort Boonesborough (the second major fort in the area after the earlier founded Fort Harrod). Robertsons have not been identified as early inhabitants of Fort Boonesborough. However there were many other fortifications, often called stations, that were formed in this area within a short time of Fort Boonesborough's founding. One, among the many formed, was Kennedy's Station in the Paint Creek area southwest of Fort Boonesborough (south of present day Manse, Garrard County, Kentucky). I focus on this area because of a book "Our Kentucky Kinfolks & Some Related Families" compiled by Lewis M. and Marilyn H. Owens of Lexington, Kentucky, copyright 1977. Portions of what they wrote include, "Later in life, Mathew Robertson under oath stated, 'he arrived at Paint Lick Creek eight days before Christmas in 1779'. In the spring of 1780, Mathew Robertson volunteered as a Private soldier in the Revolutionary War in Captain John Kennedy's Company and Benjamin Logan's Regiment. He assisted in building Kennedy's Station, located in what is now Eastern Garrard County, Kentucky. Mathew was with the group to assist in the Battle of Blue Licks. In the fall of that year, 1782, he served under the same leadership in a tour under General George Rogers Clark into present Ohio against the Indians. However, his primary duty as a soldier was that of an Indian Spy, keeping account of the Indian activity in the area, and when the Indians did take property or prisoners, following and recovering the same. After the tour under General George Rogers Clark, Mathew Robertson took his post again at Kennedy's Station and remained there in the service until after 1783 when peace was realized. In 1784, Mathew left Kennedy's Station with his father and went farming and clearing land. In 1785 he along with Alexander Robertson, James Robertson, James Robertson, Jr., John Robertson, William Robertson, and others signed a petition to create Mercer and Madison counties out of Lincoln, which was done in 1786". The article contains much more information, but I quoted only that which seemed to support Fred's narrative by identifying the same individual's names as Fred. The oath the Owens refer to is from Mathew's application (S31338) on April 29, 1833 in Russell County, Kentucky Circuit Court for a pension as a Revolutionary War soldier, for which he received \$80.00 annually until his death. This pension application also identifies his birth as January 12, 1762 in Amherst

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County, Virginia. The reason Mathew was not among the Robertsons in the Mercer County tax lists (see Stephen's narrative) was that he chose newly formed Madison County for his residence. The Owenses track him through the formation of counties in the area and have him in Madison through May 1799, Green County in 1800, Adair County from 1802 through 1825, then Russell County starting in 1826.

From the papers in the Revolutionary War pension claim S15620 it appears that James Robertson was born in Albemarle County, Virginia, date not stated. In 1779 he moved to Kennedy's Station in what was later Garrard County, Kentucky, where he lived four years. He enlisted in the spring of 1780 and served until the fall of 1782 at various times, as Indian Spy and private, about two years in all, under Captains John Kennedy, George Adams, John Woods, Lieutenant Joseph Kennedy, and Colonel Benjamin Logan in the Virginia Troops; was in two expeditions against the Shawnee Indians on the Miami River and across the Ohio River, under General George Rogers Clark, and was in engagements with them. He was allowed pension on his application executed February 18, 1834 while a resident of Breckinridge County, Kentucky aged seventy-five years, placing his birth in 1759. It is not stated whether he was ever married. Now James Robertson was granted pension number S15620 on March 14, 1834 on this application and was given retroactive allowance to June 7, 1832, the time Congress passed the Pension Act. He was granted retroactive pay of \$60.00 and \$10.00 semi-annually under Payroll Number 26550. On September 6, 1834 he filed an appeal for an increase because of his dissatisfaction with the allowance as he thought he was entitled from the length of his service to a greater sum and whereas others who were engaged in the same service had obtained much greater pensions. He named his brother, Mathew Robertson of Russell County, Kentucky, who together with others had been thus favored. It seems there may be some substance to this part of Fred's narrative, but nothing yet connects these Robertsons to our Stephen.

Several Kentucky histories have written about Alexander Robertson, mostly in connection with biographies of his son, Judge George Robertson ("*Historical Sketches of Kentucky*" by Lewis Collins, 1850, published by Lewis Collins, Maysville, Ky and J. A. and U. P. James, Cincinnati; "*History of Lexington, Kentucky*" by George Washington Ranck, 1872, published by Robert Clarke & Co., Cincinnati; "*Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*" by H. Levin, editor, 1897, published by Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago to name a few). Because of information supplied by son George those histories are uniform in identifying Alexander's final destination in 1779 as Gordon's Station, about 4 miles north of Fort Harrod (modern Harrodsburg), on December 24, during "the hard winter." Gordon's Station would have been approximately 40 miles northwest of Kennedy's Station. It was very common to travel in large groups for safety reasons. Could Alexander have been in the same group as the above James and Matthew - coming through the Cumberland Gap, moving north into Kentucky, arriving at Kennedy's Station about December 16 or 17, then moving on with a smaller group to reach Gordon's Station by December 24? Seems possible and plausible.

Alexander's parentage also seems fairly clear - the above histories point to Alexander being born November 22, 1748 near Staunton in Augusta County, Virginia to one James Robertson. His father died in 1754 and his will, dated September 11, 1754 in Augusta County and proved in court November 20 1754 in Augusta County (Augusta County Will Book 2, page 72) states his wife was "with child" (daughter Sarah?) and names sons George and Alexander and unnamed daughters as heirs when they come of age. When executors Mathew Robertson and John Poage refused to execute, widow Elizabeth (Crawford) served as executrix. "*Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*" goes ahead to state Alexander was "the son of James Robertson, who, with his father of the same name, emigrated to America from the neighborhood of Colerain, in the north of Ireland, about 1737. They were members of a colony that settled on Burden's (Borden) grant, in the then trans-Alleghany wilderness of Virginia." "*A Genealogy of the Buford Family in America*" book by Marcus Bainbridge Buford, San Francisco, 1901, pages 92-93, describes the advent of the Burden grant as a "grant of land made by Governor Gooch to one Burden, an agent of Lord Fairfax" in a area of uncharted Virginia settled by pioneers John Salling, John Lewis, and John Mackey near the

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forks of the James River. Governor Gooch "authorized Burden to locate five hundred thousand acres of land in the vast territory then known as Frederick and Augusta Counties, on the condition that he should, within ten years, settle one hundred families thereon, in which case he should be entitled to one thousand acres adjoining each home, with the right to enter as much more at one shilling per acre. In order to comply with the terms of the agreement Burden visited England, and in 1737 brought from the north of Ireland, from Scotland, and from the border counties of England, upwards of one hundred settlers" with James Sr. among them. Nothing is mentioned of other sons or other family members such as brothers, uncles or the like immigrating with them.

Little is known of James Sr. A will has not been found and we know little of his family except for James Jr. and a few siblings based on Judge George Robertson's autobiography. It is likely James Jr. was of majority age since he was mentioned in several publications as accompanying his father in 1737 (e.g. "Annals of Augusta County, Virginia" by Jos. A. Wadell; Wm. Ellis Jones, Book and Job Printer; Richmond, 1886), and not just biographies of one of his descendents. James Jr. married Elizabeth Crawford in Augusta County in 1739. James Jr. purchased, for £30 current money Virginia, 274 acres on Lewis Creek in Beverley Manor from John and Margaret Lewis on February 18, 1743 - said property deeded to John Lewis by William Beverley on February 21, 1738. The Burden tract bordered the Beverley Manor tract of land (2,071 acres conveyed to Col. Lewis Beverley by deed dated February 22, 1738), with the east border of Burden being the west border of Beverley Manor. James Jr.'s land adjoined the lands of Rev. John Craig, James Trimble, and Daniel Deniston and was acknowledged in Orange County Deed Book 1, page 65 with Margaret Lewis releasing her dower April 15, 1746. This tract lay between Staunton and Rev. Craig's residence, which was about five miles from town. These Robertsons, because of their long standing location in Augusta County, are usually the family units that Stephen descendants attempt to link to. But based on the assumed age of James Jr. then James Sr. would likely have been approximately 40 when he immigrated, making it very doubtful he was alive in 1775 let alone the father of Stephen. James Jr. died in 1754, ruling him out as the father of Stephen, and no records have been found to indicate James Jr. had a son James. If we are to believe Joseph's biography, then Stephen's father must have been old enough to be married by 1760, or earlier, to have 11 children by the time of the Revolutionary War.

According to the Draper Manuscript Collection, Lyman C. Draper, The Preston and Virginia Papers, there was a James Robertson in Augusta County who served in the Virginia militia as first a Lieutenant, then Captain, then promoted to a Major, and served on the frontier including Dunmore's War and then into the Revolutionary War. A letter in the Preston Papers from this James to Colonel William Preston on June 9, 1778, [as shown and transcribed here](#), speaks of waiting impatiently for the Henry County militia to assist with sightings of three different Indian parties in the vicinity. He was going to move his family to Peter Dyerly's tomorrow and requested one or two soldiers be sent there to guard them. This description however does not make it sound like a fort, and a different letter of the previous day from Andrew Lewis speaks of this as a residence along with other residences in the area. That, and the fact that another document in the Preston papers from August 31, 1780 identifies Colonels William Preston, William Christian, and James Robertson as justices of Montgomery and Botetourt Counties, says he is a long shot to be our James, assuming James, father of Stephen, accompanied his 4 year old son to Kentucky. According to "Virginia's Colonial Soldiers" by Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck; Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.; Baltimore, 1988, a warrant registered in Montgomery County April 1780 granted 2,000 acres to Col. James Robertson, a subaltern (a grade of lieutenant) in a company of enlisted men on the frontier of Augusta until the fall of 1764. These bounty land grants were often granted in Kentucky County, and indeed this one was the Virginia Grant shown in "The Kentucky Land Grants" by Willard Rouse Jillson; Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.; Baltimore, 1871, Part 1, page 112 for James Robertson of 2,200 acres (Book 7, page 294) in Jefferson County and surveyed January 21, 1783 on a creek between Floyds Fork and Bullskin Creek and as issued by Patrick Henry, Governor of Virginia (also Virginia Land Office Grants W, 1786, page 369). Could this be why Alexander went to Kentucky?

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This James is likely the one born in 1738, married Margaret Poage, died in Montgomery County in 1836 and thought to be a son of Mathew Robertson, a possible brother to James Jr. If true, this would make Col. James and Alexander cousins. Would Col. James possibly allow some of his children (including a possible 4 year old Stephen) to accompany "cousin" Alexander and live in Kentucky under the threat of Indian depredations? According to a letter written by James to Colonel William Preston, [as shown and transcribed here](#), he states he had not made it all the way to Kentucky and he does not mention any family in that region. The question of Stephen as a son of this James may be a moot point anyway based on a researcher asserting this James only had sons Robert and Alexander. There is yet another James in Augusta, son of William Robertson, and co-executor of his father's will in 1812. This William is also thought to possibly be another brother to James Jr. This James is thought to be the one who married Mary Russell in 1789 in Augusta County, so not the father of Stephen.

Some researchers have linked associations with this Augusta Robertson family that I do not believe will stand up under scrutiny. Some have tried to link this family to James Robertson and Ann McKenzie and similarly have used published genealogies to say that James Robertson, founder of Nashville, was descended from James and Ann and then to say these two Robertson branches are linked and thus James Sr. and James of Nashville are cousins. They may be cousins but not because of James and Ann McKenzie Robertson. John Brayton and Tom Robertson have done an admirable job of debunking this James and Ann McKenzie Robertson ancestry and identifying the grandparents of James of Nashville as Israel and Sarah Robertson, and great grandparents as Nathaniel and Sarah Robertson (see Tom's analysis on the Robertson Archives web site). Others have confused the James Sr. and James Jr. of Albemarle and Augusta Counties. I would like to turn to the Albemarle families next.

The narratives in the first paragraph concerning James and Matthew who were born in Amherst and Albemarle Counties shows the presence of another Robertson family in that area. The will of James Robertson Sr. in the Parish of St. Anne, County of Albemarle on October 24, 1751, [as transcribed here](#), has often been confused with and attributed to James Sr. of Augusta. The Rebeckah in the will was Rebeckah Royston who married James Robertson, residents of Rockfish River in Albemarle, according to page 60 of the R-S surnames section of "Marriages of Some Virginia Residents 1607-1800" by Dorothy Ford Wulfeck; Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.; 1986. There is no indication that James Sr. of Augusta ever moved to Albemarle or would have filed a will in that county. The Indenture whereby James Jr. sells his interest in the land and home plantation to his mother Rebeckah, [as transcribed here](#), further demonstrates this to be false, coming six years after the death of the Augusta James Jr. This from "Albemarle County in Virginia" by Rev. Edgar Woods; The Michie Company, Printers; Charlottesville, 1901, page 129 also lends credence to the two James Robertsons being distinct - "Presbyterians were settled in the county while it was yet a part of Goochland. The colony of Scotch Irish who came over the Blue Ridge in 1734 under the auspices of Michael Woods brought with them the faith of their fathers. Among these were the families of Wallace, Kinkead, Stockton, McCord, and Jameson. Further to the south along the base of the Ridge were the Morrisons, McCues, Montgomerys, Reids, and Robertsons. These last were the founders of Rockfish Church located in the forks of Rockfish River. About 1746 James McCann, who had patented the land in 1745, conveyed to John Reid, James Robertson, and Samuel Bell one acre and thirty five poles, for the Rockfish Church, and for a school for the inhabitants of that vicinity." And page 363 identifies a James Robertson as a member of "Albemarle Company of Militia, lately in actual service for the defence and protection of the frontier against the Indians, September, 1758." He was allowed 13 shillings pay on Captain James Nevil's muster roll to September 8, 1758 ("Virginia's Colonial Soldiers" by Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck; Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.; Baltimore, 1988, page 202). In addition to James, it appears there was at least one other Robertson in the area at the same time according to Rev. Woods Albemarle book, page 7, "Reference has been made to the entry of bodies of land extending over a wide area ... William Robertson in 1739, more than six thousand on Naked and Buck Mountain

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Creeks..." While the two James Sr.'s are different people, they were only 20 or so miles apart as the crow flies, and could have known each other or even been related. James of Albemarle, and Rockfish Meeting House, purchased 395 acres for £12 current money Virginia on July 24, 1740 along the southeastern border of Beverley Manor ("The Tinkling Spring, Headwater of Freedom: A Study of the Church and Her People, 1732-1952", by Howard McKnight Wilson; Fishersville, VA; 1954). Rebeckah died in 1784 and her will of August 14, 1784 in Amherst County is [transcribed here](#). Thus this one family has both Albemarle and Amherst County ties, as do the Mathew and James of Kentucky, although this does not necessarily mean they moved from one county to the other. Rather, they were in that part of Albemarle County that became Amherst County when it was formed in 1761, and the property probably ended up in Nelson County when it was formed in 1807 from Amherst County. Why did James Jr. sell his interest to Rebeckah in 1760? Could he have been preparing to move further west? Perhaps to Augusta, then Fincastle, before moving to Kentucky? It is possible he was leading the way. According to Amherst County Deed Book C, page 216, William Robertson, Amherst County, sells to Jno. Puckett, Amherst County, for £50, 100 acres on the south side and joining Rockfish, part of tract patented to Jno. Chiswell and surveyed for Jno. Small 1 April 1754, adjoining Saml. Bell on south side of river and Jos. Barnett. Shortly thereafter, and according to Amherst County Deed Book C, page 239, Matt. Robertson, Augusta County, sells to Jas. Henderson, Amherst County, for £40.10, 240 acres on branch of Rockfish, adjoining Ro. Ware, Jno. Henderson, and Edwd. Stephenson. Thus Matthew is already in Augusta County when he sells his Amherst property. Could James have led the way, followed later by brothers William and Matthew? We know that a James was definitely of age to be part of the Albemarle Company of Militia in September 1758. Could it be James Jr.? If so, James Jr. would have been of an age where he could possibly have had 11 children at the time Stephen was supposed to have taken shelter in a fort during the Revolutionary War. Land Office Grants No. 35, 1795-1796, page 197 contains a grant issued to Stephen Robertson May 10, 1796 for 51 acres on the waters of Stovals Creek, Amherst County. Could this Stephen be a descendent of the James Sr. who settled in Albemarle County? If so, it would at least establish the precedent of Stephen as a given name in that family line, whereas none have been found in the Augusta family. This family bears further investigation.