

The Matt Martin House, Bedford County, TN: History and Architectural Description



Matt Martin House, Original Front (North Elevation), February 2024.

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation and
Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area



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Introduction

In October 2023, Sharon Bell contacted the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation about the National Register-listed Matt Martin House in Bedford County, which is owned by her mother, Elsie Isom Bell.¹ Sharon asked if the Center could visit the house and prepare a historic resource study. The house and surrounding Fox Run Farm have also been part of the Tennessee Century Farms Program, which is administered by the Center, since 2003.

In February 2024, Center assistant director Antoinette van Zelm, field work coordinator Savannah Grandey Knies, and graduate research assistant Amelia Blakely visited the house and met with the Bells. Sharon gave us a tour of the house and filled us in on the history of the family and the building, which is structurally sound and well-maintained. She also shared with us her mother's Daughters of the American Revolution lineage document to illustrate her connection to Revolutionary War veteran Matt Martin.

Sharon Bell's overall goal for this study was to honor the legacy of the house and the Martin family. She also had some specific questions related to the location of the detached kitchen, the use of the upstairs rooms, and whether or not the house had been used as a hospital during the Civil War. While in-depth research did not provide definitive answers to these questions, our research did unearth significant findings about the family's Revolutionary War service (by both men and women), ownership of enslaved people², and contributions to civic and religious organizations in Bedford County and across the state. The report also brings to light new material on Edmund Cooper's ownership of the property between 1854 and 1890 and looks at his significance, including his role as Andrew Johnson's secretary during both the Civil War and Johnson's presidency. The history of the site also reflects the tremendous influence of the New Deal and World War II for Middle Tennesseans like the Isom family, the changing rural-urban dynamic in the region during the mid-20th century, and the flexibility needed for ongoing cultivation of the land into the 21st century.

Early History of the Martin Family to 1850: The American Revolution and Relocation to Bedford County, Tennessee

Brothers Matt (1763-1846) and Barclay Martin (1756-1815), who arrived in Bedford County in 1808, came from a large family with origins in colonial Virginia. Their father, Abram Martin (1716-1771 or 1773), served under Col. George Washington in the Seven Years War, including the disastrous 1755 campaign under Gen. Edward Braddock. Matt and Barclay's mother, Elizabeth "Betty" Marshall Martin (1727-1797), was a member of the Marshall family of Virginia and was related to later Supreme Court Chief Justice

¹ The house was added to the National Register in 1972. "Martin House," Wartrace, Bedford County, Tennessee, National Register of Historic Places Form, National Park Service, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail/6de219c3-f7ed-4612-929f-3d405d7e5ca0> (accessed Sept. 25, 2025).

² When possible, the names, ages, and sexes of the enslaved people in the households of Martin family members are provided in order to recognize their work and humanity.

John Marshall. Abram and Elizabeth were married in October 1744 and had eight sons and a daughter.³

For his work as a surveyor under the colonial government, Abram received land in the Ninety-Six District in west-central South Carolina, close to the Georgia border. Sometime after November 1769, Abram and Betty moved their family and enslaved people from Charlotte County, Virginia, to Ninety-Six. The family opened a store, and the community eventually became known as Martintown, with the road to Augusta, Georgia, designated as the Martintown Road.⁴

Before moving to South Carolina, Abram Martin recorded a will in November 1769 that reveals his status as a large landowner and a slaveowner. In the will, he stated that his Virginia lands were to be sold upon his death and the proceeds divided among his children. He gave to his “beloved Wife Betty,” for her lifetime, his South Carolina lands, as many of his enslaved people as she needed, and as much of his personal estate as she deemed necessary. Upon her death, the South Carolina land was to be sold and the proceeds divided among their children, while the enslaved people and his personal estate were to be divided among the children as well (with daughter Letitia Martin Wade’s portion reduced by 125 pounds due to her possession of two enslaved people owned by Abram).⁵ Not long after moving his family and enslaved people to South Carolina, Abram Martin died, apparently killed by Native Americans while surveying in Georgia in the early 1770s.⁶

³ Secondary sources variously describe Elizabeth as an aunt or a cousin of the Chief Justice. Abram Martin’s death date varies in the sources, but the family’s research indicates that he died on September 6, 1771. George Norbury Mackenzie and Nelson Osgood Rhoads, eds., *Colonial Families of the USA, 1607-1775* (1912; repr., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1966, 1995), 271-272, Ancestry.com (Mackenzie and Rhoads erroneously state that Abram Martin also served in the Revolutionary War and that he died in 1780); “Abram (Capt) Martin,” Find-a-Grave, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/88680420/abram_capt-martin (accessed Oct. 10, 2024); Matt Martin Pension File, S2726, 1833, Revolutionary War Pension Files, Fold3; “Martin, Barclay (1756-1815),” *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly, Vol. 1 (1796-1861)* (Nashville: Tennessee State Library and Archives and Tennessee Historical Commission, 1975), 499-500; “George N. Tillman,” Tennessee Society, Sons of the American Revolution Application, June 27, 1901, Ancestry.com; Sharon Bell correspondence with the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Nov. 27, 2024, CHP Files, Murfreesboro, TN.

⁴ The Martins’ land later became part of Edgefield County, S.C. “Abram (Capt) Martin,” Find-a-Grave; Matt Martin Pension File; “Ninety Six District, South Carolina,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Counties/ninety_six_district_sc.html (accessed Oct. 16, 2024); “Edgefield County, South Carolina,” https://www.carolana.com/SC/Counties/edgefield_county_sc.html (accessed Oct. 16, 2024).

⁵ That Abram gave Betty land, enslaved people, and personal possessions *during her lifetime*, rather than as an outright gift that she could do with as she pleased, was a standard practice according to the dowry laws of the period. However, he appears to have exceeded the dowry laws by giving her the use of more than the required one-third of his property. The will does not indicate the number of enslaved people owned by Abram. Martin, Abram, of Cornwell Parish, Will Transcript (Nov. 26, 1769), South Carolina Department of Archives and History, FamilySearch.org.

⁶ Marian Bland, “An Entire Family of Patriots,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, June 27, 2022, <https://www.edgefieldadvertiser.com/2022/06/an-entire-family-of-patriots/> (accessed July 3, 2024).

During the Revolutionary War, Abram and Betty Martin's sons followed in their father's footsteps as soldiers.⁷ Matt Martin's service, which took place in 1780-1782, is particularly well documented through his Revolutionary War pension file and demonstrates how the Martin brothers' service was a family affair. Matt's testimony for his pension also shows how his military service was both recurrent and irregular during a period in which the young United States had no standing army.⁸

Bureau. S. F. 2726

| DATES OF ENLISTMENT OR APPOINTMENT. | LENGTH OF SERVICE. | RANK. | OFFICERS UNDER WHOM SERVICE WAS RENDERED. | | STATE. |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|---|-----------------|--------|
| | | | CAPTAIN. | COLONEL. | |
| Feb'y. 1780 | 3 mos. | ✓ | Lt. Barkley Martin | Leroy Hammond | S. C. |
| Sept. or Oct. 1780 | 3 mos. | | Capt. Frederick Stallion | Elijah Clarke | Ga. |
| Feb'y. 1781 | 2 mos. | | Bird Wall | Nathaniel Cooke | Va. |
| Sept. 1781 | 20 days | | Richard Jones | Leroy Hammond | S. C. |
| Sept. 1781 | 20 days | | Thomas Key | Major Tutt | " " |
| Nov. after above | 1 mo. | | Lt. Henry Wake | | " " |
| ✓ 1782 | 3 mos. | | Lt. Barkley Martin | Leroy Hammond | " " |
| Fall 1782 | 6 weeks | | Capt. Drury Pace Robert Maxwell | General Pickens | " " |

Battles engaged in, *Blackstocks, Longlane Creek & Guilford.*

Residence of soldier at enlistment, *Martinstown, Ninety-Six Dist., S. C.*

Date of application for pension, *Feb'y. 7, 1833. His claim was allowed.*

Residence at date of application, *Bedford Co., Tenn.*

Age at date of application, *69 Dec. 26, 1763, in Charlotte Co., Va.*

Remarks: *He died Oct. 16, 1846. (See report)*

In Feb'y. 1780 he enlisted as a substitute for his brother George.

This undated, c.1917 summary of Matt Martin's Revolutionary War service is found in his pension file at the National Archives and is accessible via Fold3.

In about February 1780, sixteen-year-old Matt joined the Continental forces as a substitute for his older brother George Martin "without compensation (he being a brother)." Matt joined a militia company at a camp on Cupboard Creek near Augusta, Georgia. His brother Barclay served as his lieutenant, and the regiment was

⁷ Bland, "An Entire Family of Patriots" states that all eight of the sons served in the war, and the family has compiled research indicating that seven or eight of the sons fought in the war. An Alabama Department of Archives and History index card with information based on the family Bible indicates that four of the sons (William, John, Barclay, and Matt) were Revolutionary War soldiers. "Martin, Abram Martin," Genealogical Index Card (copied from the original family Bible by his granddaughter Gussie Cheney, Montgomery, AL, May 1, 1923), Card Index of Personal and Corporate Names and of Subjects, ca. 1920-1969, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Ancestry.com; Sharon Bell correspondence with the Center for Historic Preservation, Dec. 12, 2024, CHP Files.

⁸ The following description of Matt Martin's service is based on his testimony before the Bedford County Court on February 7, 1833, as part of his application for a pension under the Revolutionary Claim Act of June 1832. He was 69 years old at the time and had no documented evidence of his service, as none had ever been provided to him. Matt Martin Pension File.

commanded by Col. Leroy Hammond of South Carolina. The small force left camp for Augusta, where the men kept an eye on what the British and local Loyalists were doing.⁹ After the fall of Charleston, South Carolina, to the British in May 1780, the company disbanded.

Matt entered the service again in Rutherford County, North Carolina, in the Fall of 1780, joining a Georgia regiment commanded by Col. Elijah Clarke and Col. William Candler¹⁰: “The regiment was composed principally of refugees from Georgia & South Carolina who had refused to take the benefit of British protection,” Matt testified. He volunteered with three of his brothers, who had all previously served under Col. Clarke at the first siege of Augusta, and his brother Edmund served as 1st lieutenant of Matt’s company. The brothers’ mounted unit helped destroy Sumners Mills on the Broad River and was later attacked at a camp near the Blackstock farm by British forces under Gen. Banastre Tarleton. Of the November 20, 1780, battle, Matt Martin recalled, “the enemy were beaten off the Ground,” though Gen. Thomas Sumter was seriously wounded. Significantly, the battle marked the first time that Sumter had defeated Tarleton.¹¹ Martin and his comrades were later separated from Gen. Sumter and went into North Carolina to recruit.

Matt Martin’s unit subsequently went into South Carolina, where they “beat about from place to place endeavoring to suppress the tories & to strengthen the cause of the Whigs, on the borders of ninety six [sic]....” Ninety-Six was occupied by the British at the time. Matt next recalled participating in a severe engagement against local Tories and the British at Long Cane Creek, in which Col. Elijah Clarke was wounded and twenty men killed. Martin’s unit then retreated to North Carolina and dispersed, “being without provisions & almost naked.” He and his brothers traveled to Halifax County, Virginia, where they had friends and relatives. Matt’s second term of service thus lasted about three months.

In about February 1781, Matt Martin volunteered with a Virginia militia unit while in Halifax County. The men destroyed boats and other craft on the Dan River and then joined Gen. Nathanael Greene and headed south to North Carolina, where they were reinforced by additional troops. Martin fought at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, in which the Americans were defeated by the British under Gen. Charles Lord Cornwallis, but not before inflicting serious damage on Cornwallis’s forces. Martin recalled pursuing

⁹ Either at this point or at another time while at camp near Augusta, Barclay and several other soldiers contracted smallpox and were nursed back to health. Bobby Gilmer Ross, *Roster of South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1994), 206.

¹⁰ Martin refers to Candler as Chandler. “Col. William ‘Billy’ Candler, Sr.,” Find-a-Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62193613/william-candler> (accessed Oct. 16, 2024).

¹¹ See “Blackstock’s Plantation,” American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/blackstocks-plantation> (accessed Oct. 16, 2024).

Cornwallis's army to Ramsay's Mills on the Deep River before his militia unit was dismissed, having served about two months.¹²

Matt Martin returned to Halifax County, Virginia, and soon replaced his brother-in-law Charles Edwards as a substitute without pay in a company under Capt. Richard Jones. The men marched some prisoners from Pittsylvania County, Virginia, to Winchester, Virginia, during the time that the Virginia legislature fled Charlottesville. Matt's company was then dismissed, having served about 20 days, and he returned to Ninety-Six.

Martin re-entered the service in South Carolina around the month of September 1781, again as a substitute. His mounted unit, which served about 20 days, joined Gen. Andrew Pickens in "scouring the swamps of Edisto" for Loyalists. He next volunteered in another mounted unit under Pickens: "We marched against the Cherokee Indians at a town called Chota. Surprised the Indians, killed thirty & took as many prisoners, destroyed their town & returned with prisoners to Major Tutt's in 96 district...." Martin was then discharged again, after about two months of service.

In 1782, Matt joined another militia unit in Ninety-Six, serving for about three months, again under his brother Lieut. Barclay Martin.¹³ That fall, he took part in another campaign against the Cherokee "on the frontiers of Georgia" under Gen. Pickens. The Americans marched to Vann's Settlement and to the Pine Log, where a council was held with the Cherokee. "The Indians could not be brought to battle," Martin testified, "flying at our approach." He was detached to go on an expedition to recover enslaved people "which the Tories had taken"; traveling up the Coosa River, the militia found seven individuals on the cusp of freedom. Matt Martin marched back home to Ninety-Six and was dismissed, having served about six weeks. In his later pension testimony, Martin noted that he could not always remember precise dates of entering and leaving military service, but he believed that he had served for a total of about fifteen months.¹⁴

While the Martin men were fighting, their mother Betty and two of her daughters-in-law did their part to support the Patriot cause in South Carolina, where the Martin house was "frequently exposed to the depredations of the Tories." On February 21, 1780, Barclay Martin had married Rachel Clay (1763-1845) in Charlotte County, Virginia. Rachel was the daughter of Dr. Henry Clay III (a cousin to Henry Clay, the famous American statesman) and Rachel "Polly" Povall.¹⁵ The newlyweds apparently soon left

¹² See "Battle of Guilford Courthouse," American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/guilford-court-house> (accessed Oct. 16, 2024).

¹³ Barclay was later promoted to captain and then colonel. "Martin, Barclay (1756-1815)," *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly, Vol. 1 (1796-1861)*, 500; "Col. Barclay Martin," Find-a-Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/61697510/barclay-martin> (accessed Nov. 5, 2024).

¹⁴ The War Department determined that Matt Martin had served 14 months and 24 days.

¹⁵ "Barclay Martin," FamilySearch.org, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/MKDK-F3D/barclay-martin-1756-1815> (accessed June 27, 2024); "Sarah Clay," FamilySearch.org, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LYWS-49T/sarah-clay-1765-1842> (accessed June 27, 2024); "The Clay Family," Bedinger Family History and Genealogy, <http://www.bedinger.org/the-clay-family.html> (accessed June 27, 2024).

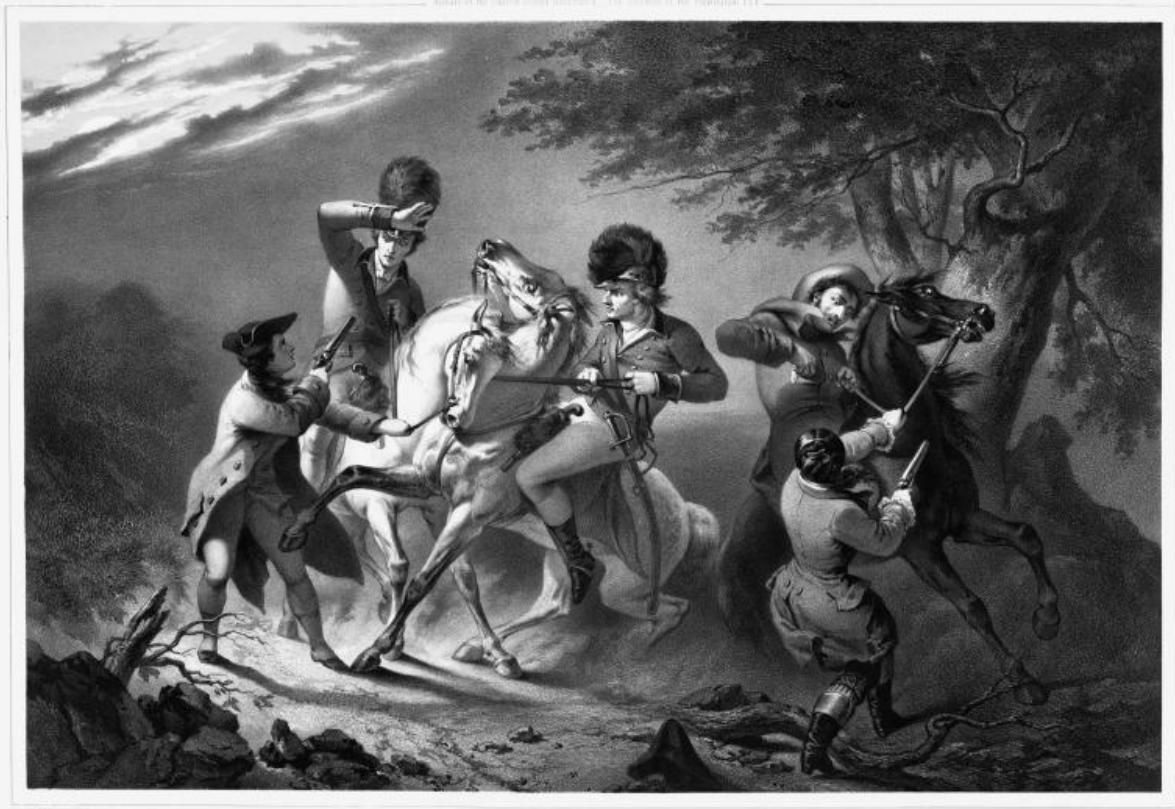
for South Carolina, as Barclay was serving in a South Carolina regiment shortly after his wedding.¹⁶

In addition to Rachel, Grace Waring Martin and her children lived with Betty in Ninety-Six. Grace was the widow of Barclay and Matt's brother Capt. William M. Martin, who had died in the siege of Augusta. In May 1781, according to their descendants, Betty, Grace, and Rachel became active participants in the war when they learned that a British courier would be passing on the road near their house. Grace and Rachel put on some of their husbands' clothing, armed themselves, and waited in the woods. They jumped out as the courier and his two guards came along the road, surprising them, and successfully demanded the courier's dispatches. A "trustworthy messenger," which some accounts identify as Rachel's sister Sarah "Sally" Clay Martin (who was not yet married to Matt Martin at the time, which makes this assertion questionable), then took the dispatches to General Greene by horseback. The British officers tracked back to the Martin house and asked for shelter, not knowing that the "rebel lads" who had accosted them were actually young women living there.¹⁷

This story of female heroism became widely known when it was featured in the first anecdotal history of American women during the Revolutionary War, aptly titled *Women of the American Revolution*. Published in 1850 by prolific writer Elizabeth Ellet, the book of biographies was critically acclaimed and popular with readers. Ellet's chapter on "Elizabeth, Grace, and Rachel Martin" focused on Betty and her stalwart defense of her

¹⁶ Matt recalled beginning his military service in about February 1780, with Barclay as his lieutenant. Matt Martin Pension File; Elizabeth Ellet, *The Women of the American Revolution, Vol. 1*, 4th ed., 3 vols. (N.Y.: Baker and Scribner: 1848-1850; repr. ed., N.Y.: Haskell House Publishers, LTD., 1969), 277.

¹⁷ Ellet, *Women of the American Revolution, Vol. 1*, 274-280. There are numerous additional accounts of the event, many of which are based on Ellet's work (although some do not cite her). As noted in the text, some of the post-Ellet renditions claim that Sally, as Matt's wife, was the messenger. While she was not yet married to Matt, she could have been living with her sister Rachel in Ninety-Six in 1781. However, if Ellet had known of Sally's involvement from her sources among the Martin family, she no doubt would have included her. On the other hand, a century after Ellet's publication, the family erected a granite marker along the Martintown Road in Edgefield County, S.C., in 1953 that included Sally as one of the people who captured the dispatches. Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston, S.C.: 1851; repr., Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Co., 1972), 312; Mary Rogers Clay, "The Genealogy of the Clays," in *The Clay Family*, Filson Club Publications No. 14 (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton and Co., 1899), 96-99; Mackenzie and Rhoades, eds., *Colonial Families of the U.S.A., 1607-1775*, 272; Gladys Buckner, "The Martintown Road," *The Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine*, Vol. 108, No. 1 (January 1974), 25, 56; Kristen L. Rouse, "Martin, Grace Waring, and Martin, Rachel Clay," in Lisa Tendrich Frank, ed., *An Encyclopedia of American Women at War: From the Home Front to the Battlefields* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 374-375; "The Daring Exploits of Elizabeth, Grace, and Rachel Martin," Women in War, American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/daring-exploits-elizabeth-grace-and-rachel-martin> (accessed Nov. 12, 2024); "Abram (Capt) Martin," Find-a-Grave; Marian Bland, "An Entire Family of Patriots."



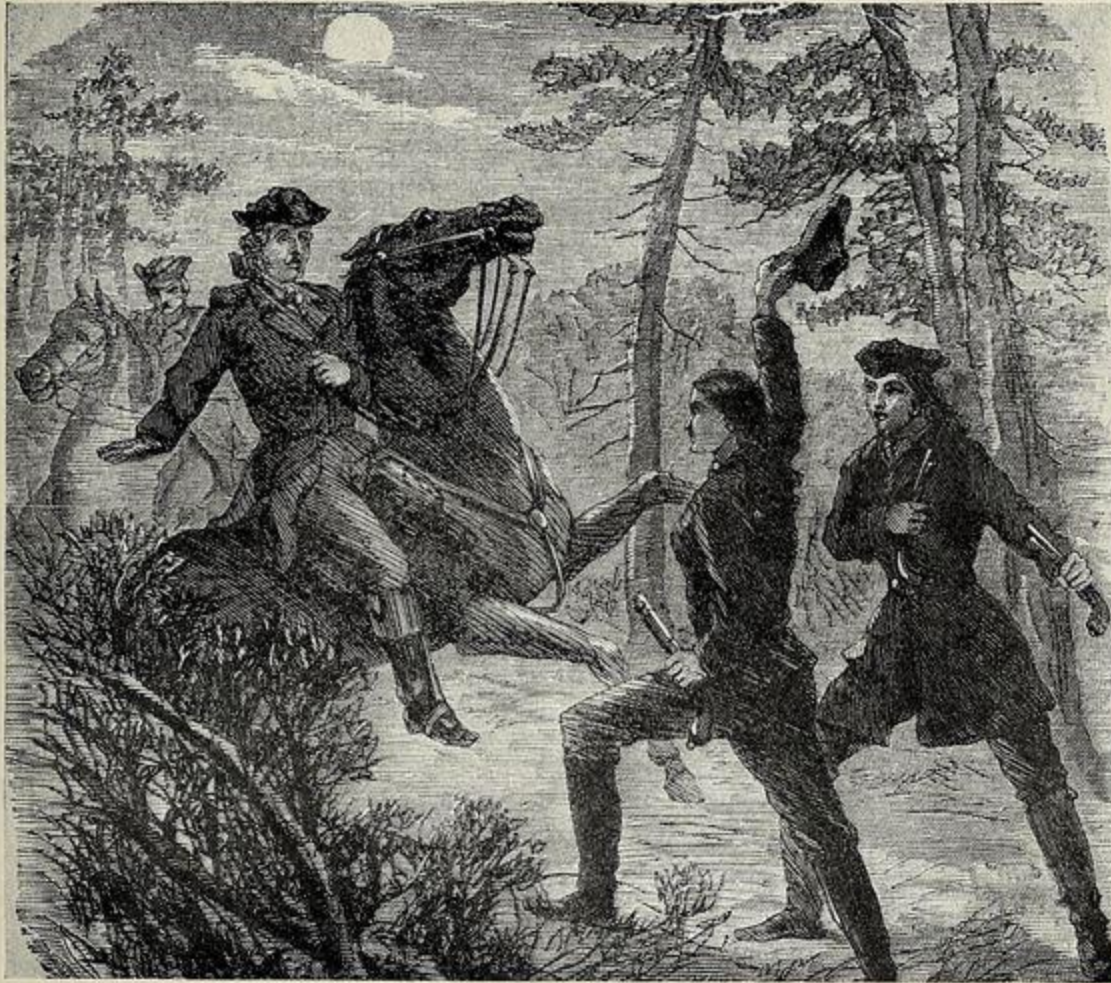
Claude Regnier, "Elisabeth Grace and Rachel Martin," Lithograph (1853). *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*.

family and the Revolutionary cause: She is quoted as telling her sons, "Were I a man I would go with you" to fight the British.¹⁸ Grace and Rachel received additional acclaim when their exploits were depicted by artist Felix Octavius Carr Darley and then turned into a lithograph by Claude Regnier in 1853, no doubt as a result of the account in Ellet's book.¹⁹ The bravery of Grace and Rachel Martin has been recounted numerous times over the years. A rendition in *The Pioneer Mothers of America* (Vol. II, 1912) not only included alleged banter between Grace and Rachel as they challenged each other to confront the British soldiers, but also portrayed the incident in yet another sketch.²⁰

¹⁸ Ellet, *Women of the American Revolution, Vol. 1*, 277; Carol Mattingly, "Elizabeth Fries Lummis Ellet (1818-1877)," *Legacy: A Journal of American Woman Writers* 18, no. 1 (January 2001): 101-07.

¹⁹ The name of the artwork, which refers to all three women (though the artist apparently thought "Elisabeth Grace" was one person) even though the painting only depicts the two young women, suggests it is based on Ellet's biographical sketch. Claude Regnier, "Elisabeth Grace and Rachel Martin," Lithograph (1853), Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/965e7df4-d4d5-d510-e040-e00a180671b7> (accessed Nov. 12, 2024).

²⁰ Henry Clinton Green and Mary Wolcott Green, *The Pioneer Mothers of America: A Record of the More Notable Women of the Early Days of the Country, and Particularly of the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods, Vol. II* (N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 336-343, <https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/pioneermothersof21912gree> (accessed Jan. 16, 2025).



Grace and Rachel Martin Arresting Two English Officers.

From an old print.

Sketch found in The Pioneer Mothers of America, Vol. II.

While the family received acclaim for its actions in the southern colonies during the Revolution, several Martins eventually made a name for themselves in early Tennessee, which became a state twenty years after the Revolution in 1796. In his 1830s pension testimony, Matt Martin explained his post-war residential history, which was summarized by the justices on the county court: "He lived since the Revolutionary War at Martintown in South Carolina now Edgefield District until 1806 when he removed to Bourbon County State of Kentucky from whence he removed in September 1808 to Bedford County Tennessee where he has resided ever since & where he now resides."²¹

²¹ While still living in South Carolina after the war, Matt Martin served as a captain in a militia company, according to one of his descendants. Matt Martin Pension File.

Even as Matt returned to Ninety-Six immediately after the war, he retained ties with people he knew in Charlotte County, Virginia. That is where he married Sarah “Sally” Clay (1765-1842) on March 8, 1787. Between 1788 and 1812, the couple had nine girls and three boys: Mary Clay “Polly” Martin, Rachel Povall Martin, Rebecca Clay Martin, Lucy G. Martin, Letitia “Letty” Martin, Henrietta B. Martin William R. Martin, Sally Martin, Barclay Martin, Elizabeth Marshall Martin, Martha Bedford Martin, and Matthew Martin, Jr.; Letty and Henrietta are known to have died as infants. Interestingly, also in 1787, Sally and Rachel’s parents moved to Bourbon County, Kentucky, to which Barclay, Rachel, Matt, and Sally would move about twenty years later. Also of note, Thomas Bedford, for whom Bedford County, Tennessee, would be named, was a native of Charlotte County, Virginia, and Matt and Sally’s daughter Rebecca would marry Thomas Bedford Mosely in Kentucky in 1806.²²

In 1790, the Martin kin lived close to each other in Ninety-Six. The 1790 census lists 15 people in Barclay’s household, including 2 white males age 16 or older, 2 white females, 1 white male under age 16, and 10 enslaved people. Brothers John and Edmund Martin lived close by, as did a William Martin, possibly a nephew.²³ Matt and Sally Martin lived near Matt’s brother Marshall Martin, and their household consisted of 2 white males age 16 or older, 1 white male under age 16, 2 white females, and 5 enslaved people. By 1800, Barclay and Rachel were living with 15 enslaved people, and no other white people.²⁴

In 1797, Betty Martin passed away. Barclay and his brother John served as executors of their mother’s estate. Both Barclay and Matt received a portion of Betty’s livestock (cattle, hogs, and horses), household goods, the worth of an enslaved man named Dick, and other property not previously specified in the will. Betty bequeathed another enslaved man, Jacob, to one of her granddaughters.²⁵

In June 1809, Matt Martin purchased 640 acres of land in the 2nd District of Bedford County from none other than Andrew Jackson, major general of the Tennessee militia,

²² “Matthew Martin, Sr.,” FamilySearch.org, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/L29W-L67/matthew-martin-sr-1763-1846> (accessed June 27, 2024); “The Clay Family;” Hugh Lawson Davidson, “Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876,” *Centennial Celebration, 4th of July 1876 at Shelbyville, Bedford County, Tenn.* (W.I. Crandall, Printer, 1877), 12, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/rc01001316/> (accessed Nov. 11, 2024).

²³ Family history states that Rachel and Barclay did not have children. A son named John Henderson Martin is listed on both Rachel and Barclay’s Find-a-Grave entries and on the Travis Taylor Family Tree on Ancestry, but no documentary evidence is provided. “Barkley [sic] Martin,” 1790 U.S. Census, Edgefield, S.C., Ancestry.com; Conversation with Sharon Bell, Feb. 6, 2024, Matt Martin House, Bedford Co., TN; “Col. Barclay Martin,” Find-a-Grave.com; “Rachel Martin,” Find-a-Grave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/54261893/rachel-martin> (accessed Nov. 5, 2024); “Rachel Clay,” Travis Taylor Family Tree, https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/175617749/person/412321222843/facts?_phsrc=ZTi2362&_phstart=successSource (accessed Nov. 5, 2024).

²⁴ Matt and Sally Martin have not yet been located on the 1800 census. “Barkley [sic] Martin,” 1800 U.S. Census, Edgefield, S.C., Ancestry.com; “Matt Martin,” 1790 U.S. Census, Edgefield, S.C., Ancestry.com.

²⁵ Betty made her will on March 20, 1797, and it was recorded in July of that year. Martin, Betty, of Edgefield County, Will (typescript), S.C. Department of Archives and History, FamilySearch.org.

planter, and land speculator. Martin paid Jackson \$1,000 for the land, which was located on the middle fork of the Duck River.²⁶

Based on a description provided by Matt Martin a few decades later, he and Sally may have originally lived in a log building on their new land. Matt told Hugh Lawson Davidson, a student boarding at the house in about 1830, that “he cut away the cane on the very large and valuable estate...and built a log cabin, a stick chimney daubed with clay.” Matt also related how he “improvised a door, a bedstead, a table and two chairs, but having no plank or puncheons to lay a floor, they had, for a time, only a dirt floor.” Sally did not corroborate the story of the dirt floor but assured Davidson, “if it was a dirt floor I kept it clean.” The fact that the Martins had multiple children at this time raises questions about Matt’s recollection of a log building furnished for just two people(!). Unsurprisingly for the period, he did not mention the enslaved people who likely did most of the hard labor of clearing the land.²⁷ Regardless, the brick home constructed, likely by enslaved men, for Matt, Sally, Barclay, and Rachel was ready in time for the wedding of Matt and Sally’s daughter Rachel to John Tillman in 1810.²⁸

²⁶ Deed between Andrew Jackson and Matt Martin, June 15, 1809, Bedford County Deed Book, 328-329, Bedford County Register of Deeds, Shelbyville, TN; Harold D. Moser, “Andrew Jackson,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press for the Tennessee Historical Society, 1996), 469.

²⁷ Judge Hugh Lawson Davidson (1814-1889) boarded with the Martins as a student, probably in about 1830 or so. A small-scale slaveholder who was elected as attorney general for Bedford County’s 5th District in 1841 and served as president of the county Agricultural Society in 1857, he referred to the Martin family several times in his 1876 historical address and drew on information provided by Matt and Sally’s daughter Rachel Martin Tillman. Davidson, “Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876,” 12, 14, 20-21; “Hugh Lawson Davidson,” 1840 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; “H.L. Davidson,” 1870 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; “Legislative Elections,” Nashville *Republican Banner*, Oct. 21, 1841, 2, Newspapers.com; “Judge Hugh Lawson Davidson,” Find-a-Grave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70676156/hugh-lawson-davidson> (accessed Nov. 8, 2024).

²⁸ “Rachel Povall Martin Tillman,” Find-a-Grave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/17057061/rachel-povall-tillman> (accessed Oct. 8, 2024).



The gravestone of Rachel P. Martin Tillman and her husband refers specifically to their wedding at the Matt Martin House. Find-a-Grave.com.

The Martin brothers became prominent members of Bedford County, which had been created in 1807 from land previously part of Rutherford County. Significantly, Barclay was one of four men who met on April 1, 1809, to form New Hope Baptist Church, which he then formally joined on July 1. On September 2, 1809, he was appointed as a deacon, and his wife Rachel and sister-in-law Sally joined the same day, as did a woman Barclay enslaved named Belinda. While Matt Martin does not appear on any of the church's surviving membership rolls, he later served as a trustee (appointed 1823 and still serving in 1843, although then referred to as a commissioner). Amy and Milley (or Milly), two women enslaved by Matt Martin, were also among the first members of New Hope Baptist, which was part of the Elk River Association. Two of Matt and Sally Martin's sons-in-law, John Tillman and Thomas B. Moseley (husband of

Rebekah/Rebecca Martin Moseley), also helped carry out the business of the church, with Tillman serving as clerk for several years.²⁹

The Martin brothers participated in civic life as well. Barclay served on a local committee that chose Shelbyville as the county seat in 1810. In 1812, the county's Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions appointed Matt as a returning justice (someone who took names and returned them to the court) with the responsibility for gathering the names of the county's free, taxable inhabitants in his district. That 1812 tax list included both Matt and Barclay and listed them as belonging to James Waker's Captain's Company, one of the county militia districts used not only for militia purposes but for grouping men into units for voting, taxation, and census enumeration. From 1813 to 1815, Barclay represented Bedford and Rutherford counties as a senator in the Tennessee General Assembly before dying at age 59 on November 16, 1815.³⁰

Rachel and Sally's father, Dr. Henry Clay, died in January 1820. In a will he had written in 1809, he left Sally and Rachel different types of property, probably because he had previously given them different forms of property or other "advancements" on his estate. To Sally and her sister Tabitha Bedford, Dr. Clay left 800 acres of land on Millers Creek in Montgomery County, Kentucky (southeast of Bourbon County and contiguous to it), for them to divide as they saw fit and for them and their heirs to hold in "fee simple," the fullest measure of property ownership in land. To Rachel and each of several of her siblings, Clay bequeathed five shillings in cash, as well as what he had previously given to them by deed of gift or other advancement.³¹

Rachel outlived Barclay by thirty years and owned significant property in both land and enslaved people as a widow, during a period in which the population of Bedford County grew rapidly.³² Census records suggest she lived close to Matt and Sally during her widowhood, except during most of the 1830s. On the 1820 Bedford County census, she was listed four lines under Matt. She and a white male between the ages of 16 and 25 (perhaps a relative or an overseer) lived with 36 enslaved people, 23 of whom were boys and men and 18 of whom were under age 14. Based on the sexes and ages of the

²⁹ Thomas B. Moseley broke off ties with the church in 1825. Minutes, April 1, 1809, July 1, 1809, Sept. 2, 1809, Feb. 7, 1823, July 1, 1825, May 1, 1830, and May 6, 1843, New Hope Baptist Church Records, Bedford County, 1809-1912, Microfilm 1480, Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA), Nashville, TN.

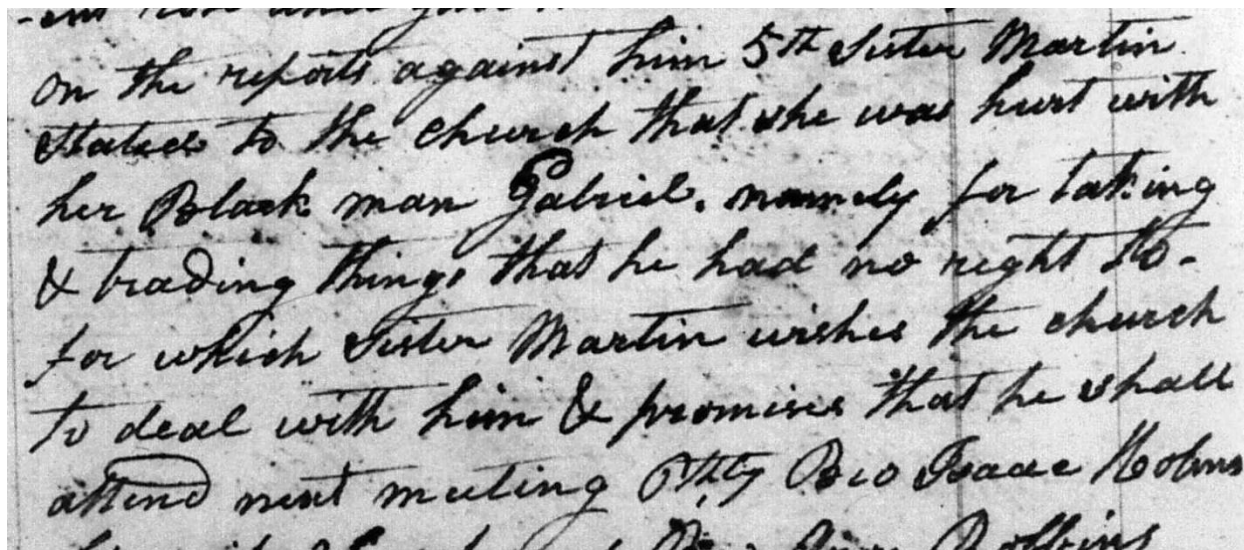
³⁰ "Barclay Martin," FamilySearch.org; "Martin, Barclay (1756-1815)," *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly, Vol. I (1796-1861)*, 500; "Martin, Barkley [sic]" and "Martin, Matt," Bedford County, Tennessee, Tax List—1812 (transcription), 24, Tennessee, U.S. Early Tax List Records, 1783-1895, Ancestry.com.

³¹ The will was proved in the February 1820 session of the Bourbon County Court. Will of Henry Clay, Bourbon Co. Will Records, 1816-1821, Vol. F, 332-333, Kentucky Probate Records, 1727-1990, via "Sarah Clay," FamilySearch.org. On fee simple, see https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/fee_simple (accessed Nov. 5, 2024).

³² Bedford had 8,242 inhabitants in 1810 and 30,396 in 1830. In 1836, Coffee County was formed from land in the eastern part of Bedford, and in 1837, Marshall County was created from land on the western side. Hugh Lawson Davidson, "Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876," 11.

enslaved people, they probably made up several family groups, but there were also a large number of children and several likely unattached adults, especially men. Twelve of the people on Rachel's property worked in agriculture.³³

Several of the enslaved people owned by Rachel joined New Hope Baptist Church. Belinda and Tom became members when Barclay was still alive. Gabriel, Silvy, Tabietha (probably Tabitha), Martin, Fanny, and Hanner (likely Hannah) all joined the church as well. In April 1825, Fanny and two other enslaved people in the community were excluded from the church "for neglecting meetings and other disorderly conduct."³⁴

A photograph of a handwritten church record entry on aged paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "On the reports against him 5th Sister Martin. Obstacles to the church that she was hurt with her black man Gabriel, namely for taking & trading things that he had no right to. for which Sister Martin wishes the church to deal with him & promise that he shall attend next meeting. Wm. B. Peace Moderator." The entry is dated March 1, 1823.

On March 1, 1823, the 5th item discussed at New Hope Baptist Church was Rachel Martin's request that the church intervene in a dispute she was having with Gabriel, an enslaved man in her household who was also a member of the church. *New Hope Baptist Church Records*, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

In March 1823, Gabriel and Rachel had a dispute, which Rachel brought to the church to resolve. That she took such a step is significant, given that she had male relatives who could help her with such conflicts. Rachel accused Gabriel of "taking & trading things he had no right to." She asked the church to deal with him accordingly and promised that he would attend the next meeting. However, by April, she had relented, asking the church to put the matter off until the following month. Gabriel appears to have made amends and convinced Rachel that he should not be punished by the church, for in May, "from his giving Sister Martin satisfaction by concessions to her, the church retain[ed] him in fellowship." This incident and its resolution suggest both that

³³ The ages and sexes of the enslaved people in 1820 were as follows: 11 males under age 14, 3 males between 14 and 25, 6 males between 26 and 44, 3 males age 45 or older, 7 females under age 14, 2 females between 14 and 25, 2 females between 16 and 44, and 2 females age 45 or older. "Rachel Martin," 1820 U.S. Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com.

³⁴ Apr. 2, 1825, Minutes, and "Names of Black Members," Dec. 5, 1830, *New Hope Baptist Church Records*, TSLA. The list of names includes individuals who joined both before and after 1830.

Gabriel exercised a degree of agency within the confines of slavery and that Rachel commanded meaningful influence within the church.³⁵

By 1830, Rachel owned double the number of enslaved people she had in 1820, with an eye-opening 72 enslaved men, women, and children. Forty of them were boys and men, and 31 were under age 10.³⁶ Based on the 1830 census listing, Rachel did not live near other Martin family members. The 1836 tax list for Bedford County backs this up, as it places Rachel in District 4 (the Matt Martin House was located in District 1). That year, Rachel paid taxes on 656¾ acres of land, valued at \$6,500, and 9 enslaved people, valued at \$5,600.³⁷ In 1837, Rachel continued to live in District 4, paying taxes on 454 acres of land, valued at \$4,500, and 10 enslaved people, valued at \$5,800. By 1838, when she was in her mid-70s, Rachel had moved back to District 1 and was living close to her Martin relatives, according to the tax list. She no longer owned land and paid taxes on 4 enslaved people, who were valued at \$2,200; the next year, she was taxed for 15 enslaved people, valued at \$5,900. Based on the 1840 census, Rachel may have been living back at the Matt Martin House property or right next to it. Her household in 1840 included 12 enslaved people, 7 women and girls and 5 men and boys, and 5 of them worked in the fields.³⁸

Sometime during the decade of the 1830s, Rachel had apparently sold numerous enslaved people to John Tillman, the husband of her niece Rachel Martin Tillman. In 1840, John in turn sold 41 individuals to Matt Martin and his children for \$2000, an exceedingly low price that reflects the family-related aspect of the transaction. The enslaved people's names were Towett, John, Bill, Chole (probably Chloe), Winney, China, Wade, Peter, Kittey, Little China, John, (China's child), Alexander, Sylvia, Dinah, Matilda, Caty, Maria, Miriam, Franky, Little Anna and Child, Ambrose, Sam, Keziah, Nancy, Belinda, Emily, Sandy, Nancy's Child, little Sylvia, Cupid, Mafer, Burton, Charity, Martha, Jerry, Big Anna and her three younger children Adeline, Mary, Wade, and Edmund. At the same time, John also transferred to Matt several enslaved people who

³⁵ Minutes, Mar. 1, 1823, Apr. 4, 1823, and May 3, 1823, New Hope Baptist Church Records, TSLA.

³⁶ The ages and sexes of the enslaved people listed for Rachel Martin in 1830 were as follows: 14 males under 10, 13 between 10 and 23, 5 between 24 and 35, 5 between 36 and 54, and 3 between 55 and 99; 17 females under 10, 5 between 10 and 23, 5 between 24 and 35, 3 between 36 and 54, and 2 between 55 and 99.

³⁷ Slaveowners in Tennessee were taxed on their enslaved people who were between the ages of 12 and 50, which would account for a lower number of enslaved people on a tax list than on a census record for an individual owner. The tax rate in the 1830s was 18 and ¾ cents per 100 acres of land and 25 cents per enslaved person. "Rachel Martin," 1836 Tax List, District 4, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; Kevin Cason, "Taxation in Tennessee: 1796-1899," Tennessee State Library and Archives, https://sos-prod.tnsosgovfiles.com/s3fs-public/document/taxation.pdf?VersionId=VfZiooGztXHT_ckS6QgUjP8QI_l.z.Af, 1, 4-6 (accessed Nov. 11, 2024).

³⁸ The ages and sexes of the enslaved people listed for Rachel Martin in 1840 were as follows: 1 male under 10, 3 males between 10 and 23, 1 male between 24 and 35, 2 females under 10, 2 females between 10 and 23, 1 female between 24 and 35, and 2 females between 36 and 54. "Rachel Martin," 1838 Tax List, District 1, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Rachel Martin," 1839 Tax List, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Rachel Marten," 1840 U.S. Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com.

had formerly belonged to Rachel's husband, Barclay Martin. Their names were Israel, Simon, Harry, Sandy, Gabriel, Jesse, Hillard, and "an old woman named Rose." Matt then sold Jesse, Nancy, Sylvia, Miriam, and Burton to his daughter Lucy G. Martin Bradford for \$1.00, with the caveat that the individuals could not be sold to pay her husband's debts.³⁹ Rachel Martin passed away in 1845.⁴⁰

By the time Matt and Sally Martin had settled in Bedford County in 1808, Sally had given birth to at least 10 of their 12 children. In 1808, Sally had her eleventh child, a girl named Martha Bedford Martin (with the middle name perhaps suggesting that Martha was born in the new county). In 1812, at age 47, Sally had her final child, a son named Matthew Martin, Jr.⁴¹ In 1820, there were 33 people living on the Martins' farm, 9 of whom worked in agriculture, according to the census. Twenty-six of these people were enslaved (14 men and boys and 12 women and girls). At this time, Matt continued to own property in Edgefield County, South Carolina, where 8 enslaved people worked.⁴²

Several of the enslaved people at the Martin farm joined New Hope Baptist Church. Dick, Franky, Peter, Ambrose, Paul, Captain, a girl named Franky, Anna, Lucy, and Mirom [likely Miriam] all became members.⁴³

During the 1820s, Matt and Sally's nineteen-year-old son Barclay (1802-1890), likely named after his uncle, was ordained at New Hope Baptist Church and became the minister there. In October 1822, the church called for a presbytery to ordain Barclay due to "his public Gift," which suggests that he was an excellent preacher. He underwent an examination in November 1822 and passed. In November 1824, the church learned that members of another Christian denomination had publicly questioned "the correctness of a Sermon delivered by him at new hope meeting house on the 1st Lords day in July last on the doctrine of communion." New Hope Baptist resolved to invite those who had made this charge to put it in writing for the church so that it could pursue an inquiry. It is unclear from the records how this matter played out.⁴⁴

³⁹ John Tillman to Matt Martin, Deed, March 1840, Deed Book HH, 246, Register of Deeds Office, Bedford County, TN; Matt Martin to Lucy G. Bradford, Gift of Slaves, March 1840, Deed Book JJ, 247-248, Register of Deeds Office, Bedford County, TN.

⁴⁰ "Rachel Clay," FamilySearch.org, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LHMM-WX3/rachel-clay-1763-1845> (accessed Nov. 27, 2024).

⁴¹ Within the historical record, the younger Matt Martin is referred to as "Matthias," "Mathias," and "Mattie," as well as Matt Martin, Jr. "Sarah Clay," FamilySearch.org; "Gen. Mathias 'Mattie' Martin," Find-a-Grave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8212339/mathias-martin> (accessed Nov. 27, 2024).

⁴² The ages and sexes of the enslaved people listed for Matt Martin in 1820 in Bedford County were as follows: 3 males under age 14, 2 males between 14 and 25, 5 males between 26 and 44, and 4 males 45 or older, as well as 7 females under 14, 2 between 14 and 25, and 3 between 26 and 44. "Matt Martin," 1820 U.S. Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Matt Martin," 1820 U.S. Census, Edgefield Co., S.C., Ancestry.com.

⁴³ "Church List," Nov. 2, 1811, "Names of Black Members," Dec. 5, 1830, and Nov. 5, 1842, Minutes, New Hope Baptist Church Records, TSLA. Both lists include members added after the date the lists were started.

⁴⁴ In December 1823, Barclay had been granted a letter of dismissal from the church, but he is later still referred to as a member. It is unclear if he was still the minister in 1824 when the charges against him

Unlike his sister-in-law Rachel, Matt did not increase his Bedford County slaveholdings substantially by 1830. Twenty-seven enslaved people lived on the farm in 1830, including 15 girls and women and 12 boys and men. One elderly enslaved man was at least 100 years old.⁴⁵ There are several possibilities for why Matt Martin's Bedford County slaveholdings remained basically constant between 1820 and 1830. Matt could have provided enslaved people to his children when they married or moved away, or he might have sent some of the enslaved people from Tennessee to his property in Edgefield County, S.C., where the number of people he enslaved increased from 8 in 1820 to 27 in 1830.⁴⁶

A description of Matt and Sally in about the year 1830 provides insight into their home life at this time. When Hugh Lawson Davidson boarded with them as a student before embarking on his legal career, he listened avidly while Matt recalled "the life and trials of a Revolutionary soldier." According to Davidson, Matt and Sally—"the venerable pair who had lived with each other, as husband and wife, a half century"—sat in the Martin House, "each occupying the appropriate corner by a window, indulging in smoking the pipe—a luxury common to both." As Matt regaled Davidson with stories of his Revolutionary War experiences and the couple's early life, Sally was "a patient listener."⁴⁷ This recollection portraying the everyday lives of Matt and Sally Martin within their home is invaluable and likely refers to one of the front rooms of the house.⁴⁸

When he applied for his Revolutionary War pension in 1833, Matt Martin asked Presbyterian minister George Newton, a former neighbor who had established Beth Salem Academy in the county and had taught at least two of Matt and Sally's sons, to testify for him. Matt also called on neighbors Andrew Erwin, Jr., and William Norville as witnesses. They testified that "he is reputed and believed in the neighborhood where he

were made. Minutes, Oct. 1, 1822, Nov. 1, 1822, Nov. 20, 1822, Dec. 6, 1823, and Nov. 6, 1824, New Hope Baptist Church Minutes, TSLA.

⁴⁵ The ages and sexes of the enslaved people listed for Matt Martin in 1830 in Bedford County were as follows: 2 males under age 10, 3 between 10 and 23, 1 between 24 and 35, 5 between 36 and 54, and 1 elderly man who was 100 or older. There were also 5 girls under age 10, 5 between 10 and 23, 2 between 24 and 35, and 3 between 36 and 54. "Matt Martin," 1830 U.S. Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com.

⁴⁶ "Matt Martin," 1830 U.S. Census, Edgefield Co., SC, Ancestry.com.

⁴⁷ Hugh Lawson Davidson, "Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876," 14.

⁴⁸ Determining the use of interior rooms in the Matt Martin House, or any historic house, is a difficult challenge, especially without primary documentation. Like today, use of particular spaces often evolved as residents' needs and lives changed. Tours of similar Federal-style homes in Tennessee, such as Travelers Rest in Nashville, Cragfont in Sumner County, and the Bowen-Campbell House in Goodlettsville may reveal some parallels that could be applied to the Matt Martin House. See also Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1988); Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870* (N.Y.: H.N. Abrams, 1990); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (N.Y.: Knopf, 1992); Amy G. Richter, ed., *At Home in Nineteenth-Century America: A Documentary History* (N.Y.: New York Univ. Press, 2015); J. Frazier Smith, Jr., *White Pillars: The Architecture of the South* (N.Y.: Bramhall House, 1941); and Rosemary Troy Krill with Pauline K. Eversmann, *Early American Decorative Arts, 1620-1860: A Handbook for Interpreters* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001). Thanks to Tonya Staggs, director of Historic Castalian Springs (which includes Cragfont), for these suggestions.

resides to have been a soldier of the revolution & that we concur in that opinion.” The justices of the county court also concurred and testified to the credibility of Martin’s witnesses.⁴⁹

Matt Martin did not leave the fate of his pension application at that, however. Three days after he testified, he penned a letter to Lewis Cass, the U.S. Secretary of War, and dropped the names of several prominent acquaintances among Tennessee’s political luminaries: “I would beg leave to refer you to the President[,] Honbl. Felix Grundy and James K. Polk as to my character for integrity, etc.” By demonstrating that he was known by President Andrew Jackson, Senator Felix Grundy, and Representative James K. Polk, Martin hoped to improve his prospects for receiving a pension.⁵⁰ He succeeded. The War Department issued a certificate of pension to Matt Martin on May 3, 1833. He was to receive \$49.33 per year, going back to March 4, 1831. He received annual payments until he passed away on October 16, 1846. Martin’s obituary claimed that he did not need the funds for his personal support and so gave them away to “objects of charity, and benevolent institutions,” but his dedicated effort to secure the pension suggests that he may have used at least some of it for his ongoing expenses.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The justices were Samuel Phillips, William Mc[illegible], and James Brittain. Matt Martin Pension File; Davidson, “Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876,” 18, 22.

⁵⁰ Matt Martin Pension File. For Congressional biographies of Grundy and Polk, see “Grundy, Felix,” <https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/G000509>, and “Polk, James Knox,” <https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/P000409> (both accessed Oct. 17, 2024).

⁵¹ Matt Martin Pension File; “Another Soldier of the Revolution Gone,” Nashville *Republican Banner*, 16 Nov. 1846, p. 3, Newspapers.com.

Shelbyville Tenn February 1833

Sir

If it be not inconsistent with the rules of the Pension office, I would be glad that communication should be made directly to myself directed to the Post office at Bush Grove Bedford County Tennessee; Also I would be glad to refer you to the President Genl. Felix Grundy and James K Polk as to my character for integrity &c.

Respectfully
Matt Martin

Matt Martin's February 1833 letter to U.S. Secretary of War Lewis Cass cited President Andrew Jackson, Senator Felix Grundy, and Representative James K. Polk as references for his character as he pursued a Revolutionary War pension. National Archives via Fold3.

In 1836, 1837, and 1838, Matt consistently paid taxes on about 810 acres of land and 8 enslaved people.⁵² By 1838, the value of the land had increased slightly from \$8,102 to \$8,446, but the value accorded to the enslaved people held steady at \$4,600. The 1839 tax list appears to include two entries for Matt, who was taxed on two separate parcels of land—one 582 acres and one 172 acres. He continued to be assessed for 8 enslaved people, but their value had decreased to \$4,076.⁵³

The 1830s tax records suggest that Sally owned her own land and enslaved people separately from her husband. For women to have a "separate estate" during this time gave them some control over property, especially the ability to do with that property

⁵² Because he was older than 50, Martin was exempt from the poll tax. Cason, "Taxation in Tennessee: 1796-1899," 1.

⁵³ "Matt Martin," 1836 Tax List, District 1, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Matt Martin, Sr.," 1837, 1838, and 1839 Tax Lists, District 1, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com. The 1839 tax list is barely legible and does not provide the number of the district.

whatever they wished as far as selling it or leaving it to their descendants. In 1837 and 1838, Sally was taxed on 114 acres valued at \$1,140 and 2 enslaved people valued at \$1,400. By 1839, the value of the 114 acres had increased to \$1,145.⁵⁴

By 1840, Matt and Sally's household consisted of 17 people, which included the two of them, a white boy between 10 and 14 years old (possibly one of their grandchildren), and 14 enslaved people: 8 men and boys and 6 women and girls, half of whom were over age 36. The census listed Matt as a 77-year-old Revolutionary War veteran. Sally died at age 76 on January 2, 1842, and was buried in the cemetery on the farm, which included the remains of other family members and of enslaved people who had lived and worked on the property.⁵⁵

As Matt continued to manage the farm, he encountered resistance from at least one of the enslaved men on the property. In December 1843, he placed a runaway slave notice for a man named Simon, who was about 25 years old. Matt described Simon as "of sour surly countenance" and gave a detailed account of his clothing, which suggested that both his shirt and shoes had been made on the plantation. Significantly, Matt also alluded to Simon's discontent and his open discussion with other enslaved people about escaping to freedom: "He will make every effort to get to a free State, and thence to Canada, as he has been overheard in conversation to speak of so doing." Matt Martin offered \$25 if Simon were to be captured in Tennessee, \$50 if found outside of the state.⁵⁶

Also during the 1840s and 1850s, Matt and Sally's son Barclay Martin became politically active as a Democrat. A lawyer who practiced in Columbia, he represented Maury County in both the Tennessee House (1839-41, 1847-49, 1851-53) and the Senate (1841-43), and he also served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives (1845-47). Married four times, Barclay had two daughters and two sons. He was a long-time member of the board of trustees of the Columbia Athenaeum, a school for young women. Though ordained by New Hope Baptist Church, he was buried in Zion Presbyterian Church Cemetery.⁵⁷

Matt Martin died on October 16, 1846, and was buried in the family cemetery. A newspaper notice of his death read, "ANOTHER SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION GONE" and described his service in the war. The inscription on his tombstone also

⁵⁴ "Sarah H. Martin," 1837 Tax List, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Sarah Martin," 1838 Tax List, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Sarah Martin," 1839 Tax List, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com. It is not clear what the "H" in Sarah's name in the 1837 Tax List refers to. All of the Sarah Martin entries are close to Matt Martin's on the tax lists, so the probability that they refer to Sally is high.

⁵⁵ "Matt Marten [sic]," 1840 U.S. Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Sarah Clay," FamilySearch.org; Conversation with Sharon Bell, Feb. 6, 2024, Matt Martin House, Bedford Co., TN. The ages and sexes of the enslaved people listed for Matt Martin in 1840 in Bedford County were as follows: 3 males between 10 and 14, 2 males between 36 and 54, and 3 males between 55 and 99, in addition to 1 female between 10 and 23, 3 females between 24 and 35, 1 female between 36 and 54, and 1 female between 55 and 99.

⁵⁶ "\$50 Reward," *Nashville Republican Banner*, 1 Dec. 1843, p. 2.

⁵⁷ "Martin, Barclay (1802-1890)," *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly, Vol. I (1796-1861)*, 500-501.

highlighted his role as a Revolutionary War soldier and described him as “a humane Master, a kind neighbor and unwavering friend.” It continued, “Tender and affectionate Father and devoted Husband.... Kind to his children, a friend made evidence in his last days, the Consoling reflections that their loss was his infinite gain.”⁵⁸

Fittingly, when Matt and Sally’s daughter Rachel P. Tillman died in 1881, her obituary emphasized the family’s Revolutionary War ties and was titled, “A Daughter of the Revolution.” Tillman was variously described as “heroic,” “gentle,” “venerable,” and “venerated.” According to the obituary, Tillman’s parents’ roles as “active participants” in the Revolution influenced her life, as did her own identity as an early settler of Bedford County: “Nurtured by those who experienced the severest vicissitudes of the contest for American liberty, she was a true type of the highest order of the American woman and matron. Coming to a new state in its infancy, she became a pioneer, and did her full share in the great work demanded in that day.”⁵⁹

Although Matt and Sally Martin had 12 children, with 10 living to adulthood, none of them chose to continue living at the Matt Martin House for an extended period after the death of their parents. In 1850, Matt Martin, Jr., was listed on the U.S. Census under “Matt Martin,” living at the Martin Farm with his five children. Listed as a farmer, he was also a lawyer. His real estate was valued at \$75,000.⁶⁰ The 1850 agricultural census, recorded four years after the elder Matt Martin died at age 82, provides a snapshot of the diversified farming operation carried out by enslaved men and women on his 800 improved acres, which he had apparently left to his youngest son. While the 1840 census had listed 14 enslaved people living with Matt and Sally, the 1850 slave schedule stated that Matt, Jr., owned 37 enslaved people (20 boys and men and 17 girls and women), ranging in age from 1 to 80.⁶¹

In addition to the land worked by the slaves, the plantation in 1850 also included 1,200 unimproved acres and was valued at \$50,000. The livestock, valued at \$6,000, consisted of 12 horses, 15 asses and mules, 35 milk cows, 20 working oxen, 80 other cattle, 30 sheep (which produced 50 pounds of wool), and 600 swine. For the year ending June 1, 1850, the enslaved workers produced 200 bushels of wheat, 800 bushels of rye, 15,000 bushels of Indian corn, 1,000 bushels of oats, 70 bushels of peas and beans, and 50 bushels of Irish potatoes. Enslaved women churned milk to create

⁵⁸ “Another Soldier of the Revolution Gone,” Nashville *Republican Banner*, 16 Nov. 1846, p. 3; “Capt Matthew ‘Matt’ Martin Sr.,” Find-a-Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/61697543/matthew-martin> (accessed Oct. 18, 2024).

⁵⁹ “A Daughter of the Revolution. Death of Mrs. Rachel P. Tillman, at Shelbyville, Yesterday,” in “Rachel Povall Martin,” FamilySearch.org, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/L5V7-XNJ/rachel-povall-martin-1789-1881> (accessed Nov. 12, 2024).

⁶⁰ Matt Martin,” 1850 U.S. Census, Population Schedule of Free Inhabitants, Bedford Co. TN, Ancestry.com; “Gen. Mathias ‘Mattie’ Martin,” Find-a-Grave.com.

⁶¹ “Matt Martin,” 1850 Agricultural Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; “Matt Martin,” 1850 Slave Schedule, U.S. Census, Bedford Co., Ancestry.com.

1,000 pounds of butter and 500 pounds of cheese. Household manufactures were valued at \$300 and animals slaughtered at \$500.⁶²

The Martin children's depiction of the plantation as they looked for prospective buyers provides additional insight into the livestock operation built by Matt Martin and the quality of the land he owned. Sale notices published in local newspapers described the property as a "Valuable Stock Farm." In one advertisement, the Martin family described the property as being abundant in grasslands; forests with Yellow Poplar, Black and White Walnut, Sugar Tree, Beech, Lynn, Box Elder, Elm, Pawpaw, and grape vine trees; rich soil; 30 springs of water; and three "comfortable dwellings" on the property.⁶³

In 1851, the Martin family sold the plantation to William G. Loughry. After contractually agreeing to pay off the remainder of his purchase in three years, Loughry lived at the Martin property until early April 1854, when he fled the "country" (probably a reference to the region, not the U.S.) for two years. According to court documents, someone from the Martin family (possibly Matt Martin, Jr.) became concerned about Loughry's condition and drafted an article of recession that "annulled and rescinded" the property's contract of sale on March 31st, 1854. A prominent lawyer, banker, state and U.S. legislator, and political appointee from Shelbyville, Edmund Cooper, then purchased the property as an investment.⁶⁴

⁶² "Matt Martin," 1850 Agricultural Census, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com.

⁶³ Matt Martin, "Valuable Stock Farm of 1800 Acres For Sale," *Republican Banner*, 28 March 1850, 1, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁴ Four years after the agreement between Loughry and the Martins, Loughry's creditors were complainants in a Tennessee State Supreme Court Case arguing that Loughry owed them money from the purchase. Edmund Cooper, the then-current owner of the Matt Martin property, represented these creditors. "Cooper, Edmund," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <https://bioguide.congress.gov/search/bio/C000747> (accessed August 21, 2024); John W. Head, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Tennessee During the Years of 1858-1859* (J. O. Griffith & Co., Printers—Union and American Office, 1860), Vol. II, 43 – 45, <https://books.google.com/books?id=uS9FAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA44&lpg=PA44&dq=matt+martin+place+bedford+county+tn&source=bl&ots=SeZLjGWn0M&sig=ACfU3U3WvPZTi5zfcgbTzm9h8S2zsABaw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiPsc25tsmEAxVfLtAFHS5xAF04KBD0AXoECACQAw#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed Aug. 29, 2024).

| NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS. | Number of Free | DESCRIPTION. | | | | Number of Free | Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic. |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------|-----|-------|----------------|----------------|---|
| | | Age | Sex | Color | Number of Free | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Matt Martin | 1 | 20 | M | B | | | 1 |
| | 1 | 21 | M | B | | | 2 |
| | 1 | 22 | M | B | | | 3 |
| | 1 | 23 | M | B | | | 4 |
| | 1 | 24 | M | B | | | 5 |
| | 1 | 25 | M | B | | | 6 |
| | 1 | 26 | M | B | | | 7 |
| | 1 | 27 | M | B | | | 8 |
| | 1 | 28 | M | B | | | 9 |
| | 1 | 29 | M | B | | | 10 |
| | 1 | 30 | M | B | | | 11 |
| | 1 | 31 | M | B | | | 12 |
| | 1 | 32 | M | B | | | 13 |
| | 1 | 33 | M | B | | | 14 |
| | 1 | 34 | M | B | | | 15 |
| | 1 | 35 | M | B | | | 16 |
| | 1 | 36 | M | B | | | 17 |
| | 1 | 37 | M | B | | | 18 |
| | 1 | 38 | M | B | | | 19 |
| | 1 | 39 | M | B | | | 20 |
| | 1 | 40 | M | B | | | 21 |
| | 1 | 41 | M | B | | | 22 |
| | 1 | 42 | M | B | | | 23 |
| | 1 | 43 | M | B | | | 24 |
| | 1 | 44 | M | B | | | 25 |
| | 1 | 45 | M | B | | | 26 |
| | 1 | 46 | M | B | | | 27 |
| | 1 | 47 | M | B | | | 28 |
| | 1 | 48 | M | B | | | 29 |
| | 1 | 49 | M | B | | | 30 |
| | 1 | 50 | M | B | | | 31 |
| | 1 | 51 | M | B | | | 32 |
| | 1 | 52 | M | B | | | 33 |
| | 1 | 53 | M | B | | | 34 |
| | 1 | 54 | M | B | | | 35 |
| | 1 | 55 | M | B | | | 36 |
| | 1 | 56 | M | B | | | 37 |

The 1850 Slave Schedule listing people owned by Matt Martin, Jr., according to age and sex. Ancestry.com.

Edmund Cooper’s Ownership of the Matt Martin House and Farm

Edmund Cooper was born to Mathew Delamare (M.D.) Cooper and Mary Agnes Frierson in Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee, on September 11, 1821. M.D. was a planter, merchant, New Orleans commission agent, and active Mason who had 13 children and 3 successive wives (all related) by the time he died in 1878 at 86. When he died, M.D. owned Mulberry Hill in Maury County.⁶⁵

M.D. Cooper’s father was a Revolutionary War captain named Robert Cooper from the Chester District in South Carolina. When Robert died in 1798, his wife, Jane Hamilton, took her children to Hayesboro, Davidson County, Tennessee. M.D. attended Harpeth Academy and then Cumberland College (later the University of Nashville), where he

⁶⁵ Scope and Content, Cooper Family Papers, 1716-1968, Finding Aid, 2-11, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN, http://tsla.tnsosfiles.com.s3.amazonaws.com/history/manuscripts/findingaids/COOPER_FAMILY_PAPER_S_1716-1968.pdf (accessed August 29, 2024); Matthew Delamere Cooper, Grave Marker, Zion Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Maury County, TN, digital image, Find-A-Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8711317/matthew-delamere-cooper> (accessed August 29, 2024).

was a language and classics student. All of M.D.'s six sons were also well-educated: Edmund, M.D.'s second-oldest son, graduated from Harvard University in 1841.⁶⁶

Before purchasing the Matt Martin property, Edmund Cooper lived with his first wife, Mary E. Stephens Cooper, and three children (Horace S., Sally A., and Edmund, Jr.) in Shelbyville, where he practiced law, according to the 1850 census. At this time, Edmund's real estate was valued at \$300 and he enslaved six people ranging in age from 1 to 29. Mary Cooper, whose father was an Episcopal minister, played a prominent role in getting an Episcopal church built in Shelbyville.⁶⁷

After he bought the Matt Martin House and farm on May 19th, 1854, Cooper divulged to his father his reasons for making the purchase: "I purchased Col. Matt Martin's farm, believing that it would be a safer, if not a more profitable investment, than banking," Cooper wrote to his father in July 1854. With optimism, Cooper explained that the property was a hopeful and "cheap" investment. For \$30 per acre, Cooper purchased 1420 acres, the most valuable part north of the Garrison Fork of the Duck River. The remaining acreage included the "finest oat land" and hills with the "finest kind" of timber. Cooper intended to sell between 100 and 500 acres of the tract for a profit while keeping the rest of the property for himself. He planned to sell the remainder after it increased in value.⁶⁸

Cooper was a self-proclaimed "gentleman" and explained to his father that he was not a farmer and needed help cultivating his new plantation. Knowing that his father enslaved farm workers but did not have enough land for them to work on, Cooper requested that his father send a few enslaved people to cultivate the land, including "a woman or two." If his father chose not to do this, Edmund asked him to invest in the plantation so Edmund could purchase enslaved people to work the farm. Six months later, in January 1855, Cooper wrote to his father, admitting that he was embarrassed by how much debt he had accumulated from purchasing the Martin property and from his own debtors not paying their liabilities. Yet, he was able to "weather the storm," in part by selling 400 acres of the Martin property for a profit of \$4,000.⁶⁹

While Cooper managed his assets, including the Martin Farm, and practiced law, he also formed the Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee and became its president in the fall of

⁶⁶ Scope and Content, Cooper Family Papers, 5-10; Sally R. Moulder, "Honorable Edmund Cooper," *Bedford County Historical Quarterly*, 8, no. 1 (1982): 11.

⁶⁷ Moulder, "Honorable Edmund Cooper," 11; "Edmund Cooper," 1850 U.S. Census, Population Schedule for Free Inhabitants, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; "Edmund Cooper," 1850 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Bedford Co., TN, Ancestry.com; Davidson, "Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876," 23.

⁶⁸ Head, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Tennessee*, 43 – 45; Matt Martin to Edmund Cooper, Deed-A, May 19, 1854 (Deed Index Entry), in Helen Marsh Crawford, *The Burned Deed Index of Bedford County, TN 1852 – 1861* (Southern Historical Press, Greenville, South Carolina, 1999), Bedford County Deeds Office, Bedford County, TN; Edmund Cooper to M.D. Cooper, July 1854, 1-2, Cooper Family Papers.

⁶⁹ Edmund Cooper to M.D. Cooper, July 1854, 4, Cooper Family Papers; Edmund Cooper to M.D. Cooper, 16 January 1855, 1-2, Cooper Family Papers.

1855. "I shall conduct the Bank prudently and cautiously, and in my hands it shall win credit and character," wrote Cooper to his father in January 1855. Cooper maintained his position as the Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee's president for decades.⁷⁰

| LIST OF STOCKHOLDERS, SHELBYVILLE BANK OF TENNESSEE. | | | |
|--|---------------|--------|-------------|
| Names. | Residence. | No S's | Am't paid. |
| Edmund Cooper, | Shelbyville, | 1719 | \$20,939 00 |
| Coldwell, Cummings, & Co | " | 950 | 17,000 00 |
| William S. Jett, | " | 500 | 10,000 00 |
| J. H. McGrew, | " | 500 | 3,000 00 |
| William Little, | " | 500 | 10,000 00 |
| Thomas M. Coldwell | " | 50 | 2,500 00 |
| John W. Cowan | " | 10 | 1,000 00 |
| John F. Neil, | " | 20 | 200 00 |
| Euclid Waterhouse, | Cleveland, T. | 900 | 17,000 00 |
| W. W. Gill, | Bedford co. | 100 | 1,000 00 |
| Charles A. Warren, | " | 50 | 500 00 |
| R. S. Dwiggin, | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| Jo. H. Thompson, | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| Jo. Thompson, | Shelbyville, | 1 | 10 00 |
| Thomas C. Whiteside, | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| R. P. Shapar, | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| Thomas H. Coldwell, | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| Jno Sperry, | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| J. W. Wallace, dec'd. | " | 1 | 10 00 |
| Total, | | 5000 | \$83,210 00 |

The Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee holds no stock notes—the capital paid in money.

State of Tennessee, County of Bedford.

This day Edmund Cooper, President, and Wm. T. Jett, Cashier, of the Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee, came before the undersigned and made oath, that the annexed statement of the Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee, list of stockholders, residence, number of shares, and amount paid in, and comparative statement, are correct and true.

EDMUND COOPER, Pres.
WM. T. JETT, Cash.

WM. GALBREATH, J. P.
July 1, 1857.

SHELBYVILLE BANK.—We are pleased to learn that the stock of the Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee has been taken sufficient in quantity to secure the charter. And from the character of the parties engaged in it, we are satisfied that it will be well conducted, and prove advantageous to the community. At a meeting of the stockholders, the following gentlemen were elected Directors. Ed. Cooper, T. H. Coldwell, J. F. Cummings, Jo. H. Thompson, J. W. Wallace, G. W. Buchanan, W. W. Gill, R. S. Dwiggin and T. C. Whiteside. The Directors then elected Ed. Cooper, President, and adjourned without filling the other offices.—*Expositor.*

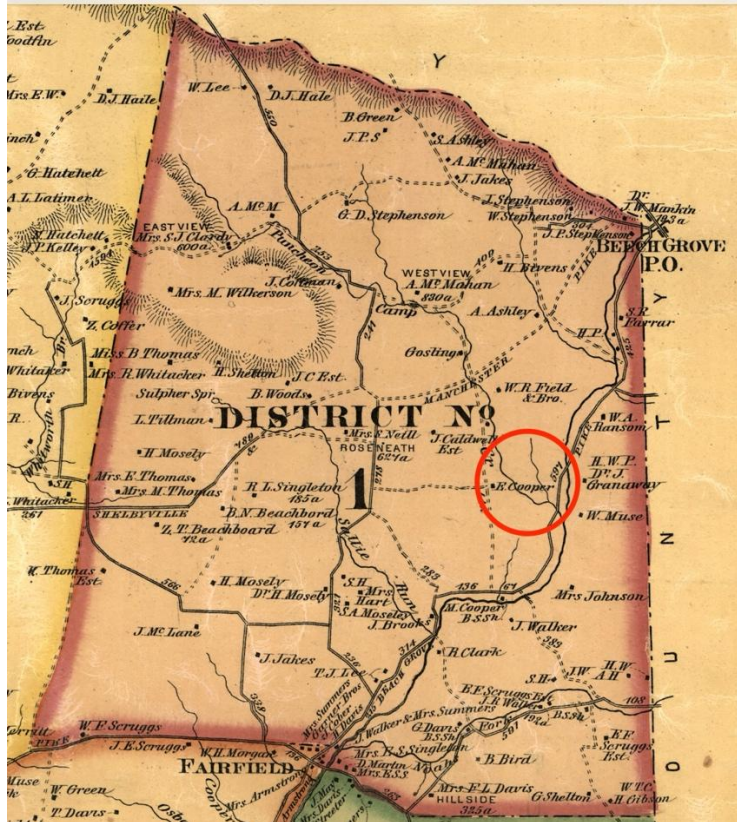
Newspaper articles reporting the chartering of the Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee and a list of bank stockholders.⁷¹

Cooper increased his wealth and power in Bedford County by the end of the 1850s, thanks to his multiple business ventures and his political career. It is unlikely that Cooper ever lived, worked, or directly managed the Martin Farm. Research in both Cooper's private letters and government records indicates that his ownership of the Martin property was exclusively an investment. Evidence connecting Cooper to the land is limited, so it is likely that he employed someone else to run the farming operations as a manager or rented the property to a tenant who oversaw the property and the enslaved workers. He did, however, take a keen interest in agricultural affairs, serving as one of the first directors of the Bedford County's Agricultural Society, founded in 1857.⁷²

⁷⁰ Edmund Cooper to M.D. Cooper, 16 January 1855, 4, Cooper Family Papers; "Bedford County Tennessee: Manufactories of Shelbyville," *History of Tennessee* (Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1886), American History and Genealogy Project, <https://tnbedford.genealogyvillage.com/manufactories-of-shelbyville.html> (accessed August 19, 2024).

⁷¹ "List of Stockholders, Shelbyville Bank of Tennessee," *Nashville Union and American*, 14 July 1857, Nashville, TN, Newspapers.com; "Shelbyville Bank," *Republican Banner*, 14 October 1855, Nashville, TN, Newspapers.com.

⁷² Davidson, "Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876," 20.



D.G. Beers and Co. *Map of Bedford County's Civil District 1 from 1878, marking the Matt Martin property (circled in red) under the name "E. Cooper."*⁷³

Although owning land was the most widely practiced way of farming, tenancy could be helpful for people seeking to become landowners. For those who didn't inherit land or have other resources to purchase it, an ideal tenancy situation could provide an education in farming and a profit the tenant could allocate towards buying their own acreage. Some tenants ran large farms and enslaved people to work on these plantations. Edmund Cooper's ownership of Matt Martin's plantation may have been a situation where a tenant lived and ran the farm while Cooper profited through the rent paid by the tenant.⁷⁴

In his letters written during the Civil War, Cooper never mentioned skirmishes near the Martin property, another indication that he did not live on the property. Despite the lack of evidence revealing Cooper's awareness of what was occurring at or near the Martin Farm during the war, his private and public correspondence does provide insight into his wartime activities and his opinions of the conflict. For example, when Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas seceded in January 1861, local leaders (including Matt Martin's grandson Lewis Tillman) in Bedford County published a

⁷³ D.G. Beers and Co., *Map of Bedford County, Tenn.* (Philadelphia: D.G. Beers & Co, 1878), <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006626023/> (accessed August 29, 2024).

⁷⁴ Donald Winters, "The Agricultural Ladder in Southern Agriculture, Tennessee, 1850 – 1870," *Agricultural History* 61, no. 3 (1987), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3743604> (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

public letter in the *Republican Banner* to Cooper requesting his public opinion on the unprecedented events. Two days later, in a public response, Cooper wrote in the *Banner*: “What a melancholy spectacle does the condition of this great country present! Members of the same political family, children of confederated parents, who stood side by side in the struggle of the Revolution—now so intent on crimination and recrimination—now so passionately absorbed in the contemplation of one point of difference—so eager in contention about it—that we have lost sight of all that is excellent in each other's character, and have become incapable of doing justice to each other's feelings, principles and conduct.”

In his public letter, Cooper made it clear that, above all else, he was loyal to the Constitution and the Union. He argued that secession was not a practical solution for the “fanaticism” and “hostility” from Northern people. “It furnishes no relief, it only aggravates. It destroys—tares [sic] down and annihilates—without relieving or furnishing any substitute,” Cooper wrote. In his opinion, which was shared by Unionist slaveholders throughout Tennessee, the slave states had more power if they remained in the Union and advocated for the federal government and the Constitution to protect the institution of slavery.⁷⁵

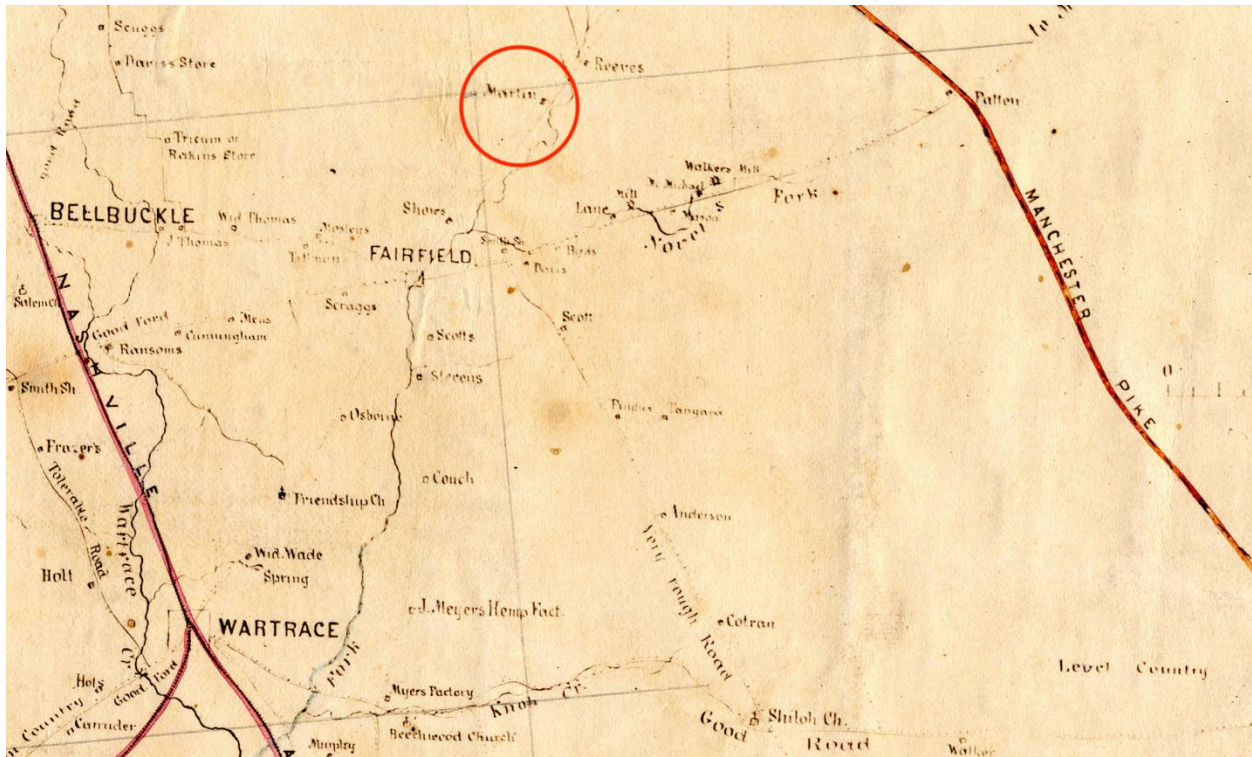
Cooper's Unionist position differed from his family's. While Edmund served as the secretary to Andrew Johnson, Tennessee's Military Governor, during the war, his brothers, Duncan and Favel, enlisted in the Confederate Army. In one letter from Edmund to Johnson written in May 1862, Edmund expressed his contempt for secessionists in his suggestion that a few Shelbyville residents who sympathized with the confederacy were “‘all gass’ [sic] and ‘no deeds’” and needed to be sent down to “‘Dixie’” to fight in the war. “They are all cowards—would not fight if they can help it—yet are always talking,” Cooper wrote.⁷⁶

A year later, in the summer of 1863, while Cooper remained in Shelbyville and tended to his first wife, Mary Stevens, who was dying of a respiratory illness, Confederate encampments were set up near the Matt Martin property. According to an official report by Confederate General Bushrod R. Johnson, during the Battle of Hoover's Gap in late June, a Confederate infantry regiment concealed itself from an advancing Union unit in the forested hills south of the Martin property. One of those units was the 23rd Tennessee Infantry Regiment—a unit made up of men from the Fairfield area of Bedford County, including Matt Martin, Jr., who would ascend to the rank of colonel. The Hoover's Gap battle was part of a more extensive Union campaign that cleared Middle Tennessee of the Confederate Army of Tennessee.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ “Correspondence: Letter from Hon. Edmund Cooper,” *Republican Banner*, Nashville, Tennessee, 24 January 1861, 2, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁶ LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson Digital Edition* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2020), 409, <https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/AWJN-01-05-02-0340> (accessed Sept. 16, 2024).

⁷⁷ Edmund Cooper to M.D. Cooper, 25 May 1863, Cooper Family Papers; Col. Robert N. Scott, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1,



An 1863 Union Civil War map of Bedford County. Notice that the Matt Martin property (circled in red) is still identified as the Martin Farm despite Cooper's ownership, another indication that he did not live there.⁷⁸

In stark contrast to the family lore and secondary sources claiming the house on the Martin property was used to treat wounded soldiers, official Civil War records show no such evidence. Instead, they indicate that the property was a geographic marker and a familiar piece of land that local Confederate soldiers could intuitively navigate. Whatever occurred around the Martin property during the Civil War did not disrupt or damage the property to the extent that would have motivated Cooper to discuss it in his personal correspondence or to sell it.⁷⁹

Vol. 23, Pt. 1 – Reports, (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1889), 601 – 609, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924077699720&seq=623&q1=%22Matt+Martin+Farm%22>, (accessed August 19, 2024); “Battle Detail: Hoover’s Gap” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battles-detail.htm?battleCode=tn017> (accessed August 29, 2024); “Matt Martin,” Compiled Service Record, 23rd Tennessee Infantry, Compiled Confederate Military Service Records, Fold3.

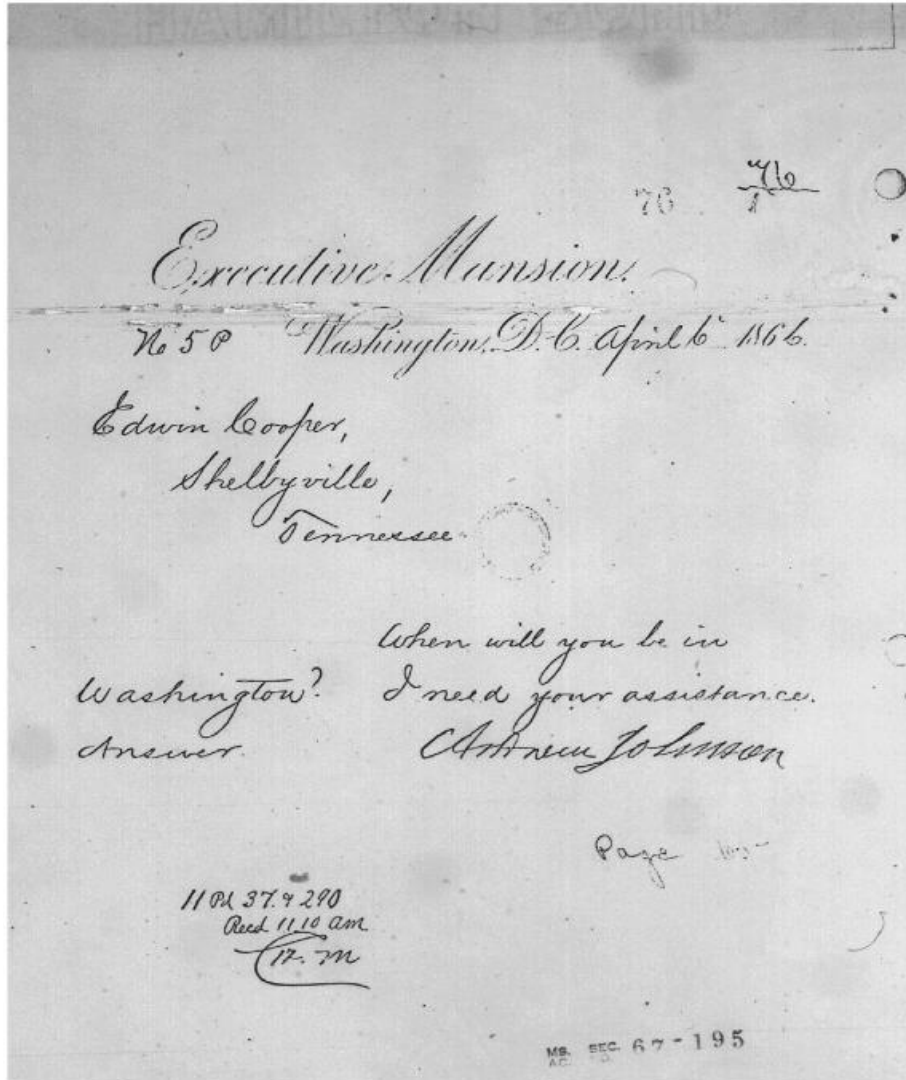
⁷⁸ “Civil War map of the environs of Shelbyville, Wartrace and Normandy, Tennessee,” 1863, by the United States Army, Tennessee Virtual Archive, Map Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, digital image, <https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll23/id/108/rec/1> (accessed August 19, 2024).

⁷⁹ Family lore is from conversation with Sharon Bell, Feb. 6, 2024, Matt Martin House, Bedford Co., TN. Also, Monte Arnold, “Matt Martin Story,” *Bedford County Historical Quarterly* 35, no 2 (2009): 72, claims that the Martin House was one of three that housed wounded soldiers and mentions blood stains on the

Once the Civil War ended, Cooper's power and reputation as a respected "country-loving patriot" continued to grow. He was elected to the 39th U.S. Congress in 1866 and served until 1867. Cooper, a Conservative Unionist who supported President Andrew Johnson's approach to Reconstruction, lost reelection to James Mullins, a Radical Republican closely allied with Tennessee Governor William G. Brownlow. Then, Cooper was appointed as President Johnson's private secretary and subsequently Secretary of the Treasury. He held this position until March 20, 1869, and then returned to Shelbyville.⁸⁰

floorboards. "Martin House," Wartrace, Bedford County, Tennessee, National Register of Historic Places Form, National Park Service, Section 7, also states that the house provided shelter for soldiers from both sides. Corroborating evidence was not found in Scott, *The War of the Rebellion* Series 1, Vol. 23, Pt. 1--Reports.

⁸⁰ Moulder, "Honorable Edmund Cooper," *Bedford County Historical Quarterly*, 12; "Cooper, Edmund," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress; Ben H. Severance, *Tennessee's Radical Army: The State Guard and Its Role in Reconstruction, 1867-1869* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2005), 92, 95, 116, 129.



A letter sent in 1866 from President Andrew Johnson to Edmund Cooper requesting Cooper's service in Washington, D.C.⁸¹

After the Civil War, Shelbyville, and more broadly, Bedford County and Middle Tennessee, experienced societal and economic changes with the abolition of slavery. Before the war, more than forty percent of white farm households in Middle Tennessee had enslaved people. The enslaved population had accounted for more than thirty percent of the total populace in the region. Locally in Bedford County, more than a quarter of the county's population had been enslaved, according to the 1850 census. Slavery had grown in prominence even as the Civil War, and the possible destruction of the institution, loomed.⁸²

⁸¹ Andrew Johnson to Edmund Cooper, 6 April 1866, Cooper Family Papers, Box 8, Folder 1.

⁸² Robert Tracy McKenzie, "Freedmen and the Soil in the Upper South: The Reorganization of TN Agriculture, 1865-1880," *Journal of Southern History* 59, no. 1 (1993): 67,

Once the war ended, residents in Bedford County faced a new reality. Formerly enslaved people were free and aspired to own their labor, time, and property, while their former enslavers had to make do without enslaved labor. Some planters could no longer afford farms that required a large labor force because the workers required payment. This transition reduced the size of farms, while the number of farms grew as landless people, white and black, bought their own smaller farms or became tenants or sharecroppers.⁸³

In a decade when many large landholders lost some of their wealth, Edmund Cooper fared well. The 1870 U.S. census enumerated Cooper in Shelbyville with a personal estate worth \$160,000 and real estate worth \$650,000. Cooper was listed with his second wife, Lucy Bonner, and his children, as well as African Americans Lucy and Graham Boles, who worked for the Cooper family as a cook and laborer, respectively, and Julia Jacobs, who was Lucy Boles's daughter and helped her mother in the kitchen. Cooper's ability to prosper financially during this period of upheaval is most likely because he had invested his wealth in land and in the Bank of Shelbyville, rather than in enslaved people. Since Cooper typically did not personally farm his investment properties like the Matt Martin property, he probably continued to rent that farm out to tenant farmers or sharecroppers after he returned to Bedford County in 1869.⁸⁴

Once settled back in Shelbyville, personal letters show that Edmund Cooper managed his diversified assets, continued his law practice, and worked to provide his children with a robust education and career opportunities. Although Cooper was no longer at his peak of activity and no longer held public office, he continued to have a reputation as a highly regarded Shelbyville and Bedford County resident. One primary source that shows evidence of his reputation is Bedford County's Centennial Celebration program from July 4, 1876. Cooper recited the Declaration of Independence and addressed the crowd as the second speaker at the celebration. In his speech, Cooper first alluded to the struggles ahead of the nation and the responsibility of citizens to enact reforms and ensure the nation's future. In addition to encouraging the audience to love the United States and what it provided, Cooper also acknowledged the issues he and his audience faced: a decline in commerce, industry, and agricultural prices.⁸⁵

The last speaker at the Centennial Celebration was Judge H. L. Davidson, who provided a historical overview of the county. As noted earlier, the judge shared his memories of Matt Martin's family in his address. He also identified the farm as currently

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2210348> (accessed Nov. 26, 2024); 1850 Agricultural Census, Tennessee, Table 1, 573, [1850 – AgCensus \(cornell.edu\)](https://www.cornell.edu/agcensus/) (accessed August 29, 2024).

⁸³ McKenzie, "Freedmen and the Soil in the Upper South," 69-73.

⁸⁴ "Edmund Cooper," 1870 U.S. Census, Population Schedule for Free Inhabitants, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com; Gregory M. Dempster, Justin P. Isaacs, and Thomas Nelson, "Structural Change in the U.S. Economy: 1850-1900," *Virginia Economic Journal* 18 (2011): 64, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=eoh&AN=1432928&site=eds-live&scope=site&authtype=sso&custid=s4672406> (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

⁸⁵ Edmund Cooper to W.F. Cooper, November 27, 1882, Cooper Family Papers, 1; Address of Hon. Edmund Cooper, *Centennial Celebration, 4th of July 1876 at Shelbyville, Bedford County, Tenn.*, 5-6.

being the property of Edmund Cooper. After decades of economic growth and a disruptive civil war, the children and grandchildren of Matt Martin listened to the judge that day reflect on their local world and how their progenitors played a significant role in building it.⁸⁶

Although the Martin property is strongly connected to prominent local historical figures like Matt Martin and Edmund Cooper, there is a 36-year period between 1854 and 1890, where everyday activity at the property is largely unknown. Cooper's absence from the Martin property due to his role as an investor and a lack of evidence revealing who was managing the property makes it difficult to discover who actually lived and worked there between 1854 and 1890. One possible lead is a man named L.P. Fields. According to family oral history, he is believed to be "Old Man Fields," an overseer who worked for the Martin family. It is possible that Fields and Cooper worked in a partnership during Cooper's ownership.

L.P. Fields was a farmer who lived in Civil District 1 in Bedford County, according to census records dating back to 1850. The Fields family lived close to the Martin property and attended the same church as the Martins, New Hope Baptist Church. In addition to being a farmer, L.P. Fields also enslaved people and was a businessman. According to the 1860 slave census, L.P. Fields enslaved up to 20 people, ranging from infancy to age 50.⁸⁷

Research indicates that L.P. Fields lived and worked closely with the Cooper, Martin, Moseley, and Tillman families.⁸⁸ According to a local county history published in 1887, Fields owned a cotton gin and conducted business in Wartrace between 1860 and 1870. Circuit court minutes from Bedford County between 1858 and 1859 show that Edmund Cooper and L.P. Fields also partnered in business and traded under the name L.P. Fields and Company. The commodities that Cooper and Fields traded are unknown. The possibilities range from enslaved people to farm products like oats, corn, and livestock. According to archived newspaper reports, Fields was a successful livestock farmer, especially after the Civil War. He primarily sold cattle and sheep.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Davidson, "Historical Address of Judge H.L. Davidson, Delivered in Shelbyville on the 4th of July, 1876," 14.

⁸⁷ "L.P. Fields," 1850 U.S. Census, Population Schedule for Free Inhabitants, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com; "L.P. Fields," Grave Marker, New Hope Baptist Church Cemetery, Bedford County, TN, digital image, Find-A-Grave.com, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/259824619/l-p-fields> (accessed Nov. 26, 2024); "L.P. Fields," 1860 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com.

⁸⁸ Matt and Sally Martin's daughters Rachel, Rebecca, and Elizabeth married into the Tillman and Moseley families. Fields was also closely associated with the Singleton family of the Fairfield community in Bedford County. See MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, "The Chapman-Singleton House, New Hope Baptist Church Cemetery, Union Ridge Cemetery, and Hord Chapel A.M.E. Church, Bedford County, TN," 2024, https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Chapman_Singleton_HSR_2-2024_Reduced_and_Updated.pdf (accessed Nov. 27, 2024).

⁸⁹ "History of Tennessee Illustrated," (The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1887), <https://homepages.rootsweb.com/~khopkins/GdspdBedford.html> (accessed August 28, 2024); "Index, Bedford County, Tennessee, Circuit Court Minutes, 1858- 1859," http://www.gscassociates.com/indices/CCC_1858_index.html (accessed August 28, 2024); "Heavy

Fields's length and scope of land ownership are unclear. According to a tax document in 1862, Fields owned 141 acres in Civil District 4 in Bedford County. In the same year, another tax document lists Fields in the neighboring district of Civil District 1 with Cooper as co-owners of more than a thousand acres worth more than \$36,000. This large swath of land could be the Martin property, and this tax document could indicate that Fields was the manager or agent of the property. After the Civil War, on the 1870 census, Fields was enumerated as a farmer with a real estate value of \$50,000 in Civil District 1. On the agricultural census in the same year, he was listed as the agent, manager, or owner of 1800 acres, the largest landholding in the district. Regardless of the details regarding L.P.'s property, he apparently did not pass any of it down to his children. On the 1880 agricultural census, the first record to indicate the land tenure of any of his children, L.P. Fields's son, L.P. Jr., was listed as renting out 900 acres of land as a tenant.⁹⁰

The relationship between the Fields family and Cooper is further substantiated by property deeds from when Cooper sold the Martin property in 1890, the year following L.P. Fields, Sr.'s death. (That Cooper sold the land shortly after Fields died could be another indication that Fields was managing the farm, and Cooper did not want to start over with someone new.) Starting on January 1, 1890, Cooper began selling parcels of land to gain a profit, like he told his father he would in 1854 when he purchased the Martin farm. Deed research indicates that Cooper owned the land surrounding the Martin property. He first sold 180 acres to A. F. Eullis, a neighbor. A second entry made that same day transferred 273 acres to L.P. Fields, believed to be L.P. Fields, Jr., because L.P. Fields, Sr., had died. Soon after L.P. Fields, Jr., purchased this tract of land from Cooper, he died; in his will, he had instructed his wife to pay Cooper for the land.⁹¹

In the fall of 1890, Cooper continued selling tracts of land, including the Martin property, to Russell A. Lee, who was married to Mary Rachel Walker (a descendant of Matt and Sally Martin through their daughter Rebecca Martin Moseley). Cooper sold 120 acres to Russell and 72 acres to his father, Thomas Lee, creating adjacent tracts. Cooper excluded one acre of land called "The Graveyard" in the deed with Thomas Lee. It is unknown if Cooper later sold this acre to Russell, Thomas, or anyone else.⁹² Edmund

Cattle," *The Tennessean*, Nashville, TN, 11 April 1869, 4, Newspapers.com; "Wartrace," *Nashville Banner*, Nashville, Tennessee, 17 June 1882, 1, Newspapers.com.

⁹⁰ 1862 United States Direct Tax Commission, 1-10, Ancestry.com; "L.P. Fields," 1870 U.S. Census – Agricultural Schedule, 5, Ancestry.com; "L.P. Fields Jr.," 1880 U.S. Census - Agricultural Schedule, 22, Ancestry.com.

⁹¹ "Edmund Cooper TO DEED: A.F. Eullis," Bedford County Deeds Office, Deed Book YYY, 372 – 373; "Edmund Cooper TO DEED L. P. Fields," Bedford County Deeds Office, Deed Book YYY, 373 – 374.

⁹² "Edmund Cooper TO DEED Russell Aubrey Lee," Bedford County Deeds Office, Deed Book YYY, 497-498; "Edmund Cooper TO DEED Thomas J. Lee," Bedford County Deeds Office, Deed Book YYY, 498-499.

Cooper died 21 years later at 90 years old on July 21, 1911, in Shelbyville on Martin Street. According to newspaper reports, he suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed.⁹³

Martin Family Descendants at the Martin House in the 20th Century

Russell Lee and Mary Rachel Walker (Matt and Sally Martin's great-great-granddaughter) married in 1895 in Bedford County.⁹⁴ Before she married at 21, Walker lived with her siblings and parents, William Baker Walker, Sr., and Martha "Patsy" Lane Walker, in Civil District 3 in Coffee County, slightly southeast of the Martin Farm.⁹⁵ It is unknown if Lee knew Mary Walker and her ancestral connection to the Martin Farm before he purchased the property five years before their marriage.

Born in Cannon County to Thomas J. Lee and Sarah Emmaline Brandon Lee in 1869, Russell A. Lee was raised in a middling farm family with his siblings and an uncle. According to the 1870 U.S. census, Thomas Lee and his brother-in-law John M. Brandon, who lived in the Lee household, owned real estate worth \$600 and \$1,200, respectively.⁹⁶ In 1870, Thomas Lee primarily cultivated corn and winter wheat and raised hogs on 30 acres in Cannon County. By 1880, Lee and his family, including Russell, lived in Bedford County, Civil District 1, where Thomas sharecropped 200 acres with a total value of \$6,050. In 1880, he estimated that he produced \$950 worth of commodities during the previous year. In addition to farming crops, Lee raised and sold cattle in Bedford County.⁹⁷

Lee's choice to sell his Cannon County farm by 1880 and relocate to a property he did not own in Bedford County implies that he aspired to increase his personal wealth, and eventually his landholdings, through commercial agriculture. Indeed, ten years later, Thomas and his son Russell purchased hundreds of acres of land, including the Martin Farm, from Edmund Cooper on credit in 1890.⁹⁸ Once settled and married, Russell Aubrey and Mary Walker Lee's two daughters were born: Ethel in 1895 and Sara Clay in 1898.⁹⁹ On the 125 acres that Russell Lee owned and lived on with his family, he raised corn, wheat, oats, and hay and raised livestock, including hogs, sheep, cattle, mules, and horses, as part of what became known as Fox Run Farm.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ "Obituary: Edmund Cooper Passes," *The Tennessean*, Nashville, TN, 23 July 1911, 1, Newspapers.com.

⁹⁴ Marriage Record for R. A. Lee and Mary Walker, June 18, 1895, Coffee County Marriage Records, 1780 – 2002, Ancestry.com.

⁹⁵ "Mary R. Walker," 1880 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Coffee County, TN, Ancestry.com.

⁹⁶ "Thomas J. Lee," 1870 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Cannon County, TN, Ancestry.com.

⁹⁷ "Lee, Thomas," 1880 U.S. Census, Population and Agriculture Schedule, Cannon County, TN, Ancestry.com; "Lee, Thomas," 1880 U.S. Census, Population and Agriculture Schedule, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com.

⁹⁸ "Edmund Cooper TO DEED Russell Aubrey Lee"; "Edmund Cooper TO DEED Thomas J. Lee."

⁹⁹ "Ethel (Lee) Troxler," Ancestry Profile, Ancestry.com; "Sara Clay Lee Isom," Ancestry Profile, Ancestry.com.

¹⁰⁰ Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application (2003), MTSU Center for Historic Preservation Tennessee Century Farm Files, Albert Gore Research Center, MTSU, 3; Sharon Bell correspondence with the Center for Historic Preservation, Dec. 16, 2024, CHP Files.

Within ten years, Russell and Thomas had paid off their mortgage debt and were listed as mortgage-free owners of farms on the 1900 U.S. Census.¹⁰¹ According to an article written from Shelbyville and published in a Nashville newspaper, farming in Bedford County was abundant and the “best agricultural county in the State.” The area where the Lees relocated was called “Rich Valley.”¹⁰² Five years later, the same newspaper, the *Nashville American*, reported that land for sale in Bedford County was scarce and expensive. “There are several parties from north of the Ohio River now in this county looking at farm lands with a view to purchasing homes. As yet they have bought none, nor is it thought they will buy. They seem to have been misled as to prices in Bedford County,” the newspaper reported.¹⁰³

The expensive property prices in Bedford County were possibly due to the success of local farmers and the capital they extracted from the local environment through raising livestock and cultivating grains. Bedford County’s farm property was worth more than five million dollars in 1900.¹⁰⁴ Ten years later, the number of farms had grown by more than ten percent in Bedford County, and the total worth of the county’s farm property had more than doubled to greater than 13 million dollars. The average farm was valued at \$4,137. Between eighty to ninety percent of Bedford County’s land was used for agriculture, signifying the centrality of the farm economy to the local area.¹⁰⁵

Starting in the 1920s, the national farm economy underwent a depression due to agricultural overproduction, declining prices, and large debts held by farmers. Between 1920 and 1932, a period that included the start of the Great Depression, one in four farms were sold to pay off obligations, and many farmers and their families migrated to urban areas for off-farm work.¹⁰⁶ Locally in Bedford County, farmers experienced a less lucrative market than they had found at the start of the century. Between 1920 and 1925, farms decreased by more than one thousand.¹⁰⁷ Agricultural experts called for farmers to adapt to the changing farm economy by diversifying crops and raising livestock to increase their income.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ “Thomas Lee,” and “R. Aubrey Lee,” 1900 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com.

¹⁰² “FINE FARMING LANDS: Bedford County Claims to Have an Abundance of Them,” *The Nashville American*, 13 Feb. 1900, 6, ProQuest.

¹⁰³ “NOT FOR A SONG: Can Farming Lands in Bedford County Be Purchased,” *The Nashville American*, 15 Sept. 1905, 10, ProQuest.

¹⁰⁴ Valuation includes land and improvements and excludes buildings, which were valued at more than \$1.4 million. 1900 Agriculture Census, Vol. 5, Table 19, 297, https://agcensus.library.cornell.edu/census_year/1900-census/ (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

¹⁰⁵ 1910 Agriculture Census, Vol. 5, Chapters 1 and 7, 27 and 566; Vol. 7, 582, https://agcensus.library.cornell.edu/census_year/1910-census/ (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

¹⁰⁶ “Poverty in the 1920s,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/calvin-coolidge-papers/articles-and-essays/introduction-to-prosperity-and-thrift/poverty-in-the-1920s/> (accessed Oct. 30, 2024).

¹⁰⁷ 1925 Agriculture Census, Vol. 1, Table 1, 700, https://agcensus.library.cornell.edu/census_year/1925-census/ (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

¹⁰⁸ “Bedford County Farm Bureau Has Intensive 1922 Program: Campaign to Be Made for Representation from Every Farm Family in County,” *Nashville American*, 13 Mar. 1922, 8, ProQuest.



The barn that Russell Lee built on the Fox Run Farm in 1926.¹⁰⁹

Despite national economic constraints, Bedford County's farm economy remained among the richest in the state. Investments in agricultural-manufacturing technology and cooperative practices, like the Bedford County Cooperative Creamery Association, allowed farmers to enter the dairy-product market at scale in the 1920s. "This business is equipped with the very latest and most up-to-date machinery to be had for the manufacture of butter, and the plant is constantly kept in a scrupulously clean and sanitary condition," The *Nashville Tennessean* reported. Within five years of operation, the creamery paid farmers \$750,000 for the cream produced by their cattle.¹¹⁰ Although the census schedules that recorded individual farm data after 1880 no longer exist, the continuation of Fox Run Farm indicates that Russell Lee maintained a profitable farm despite the economic downturn.

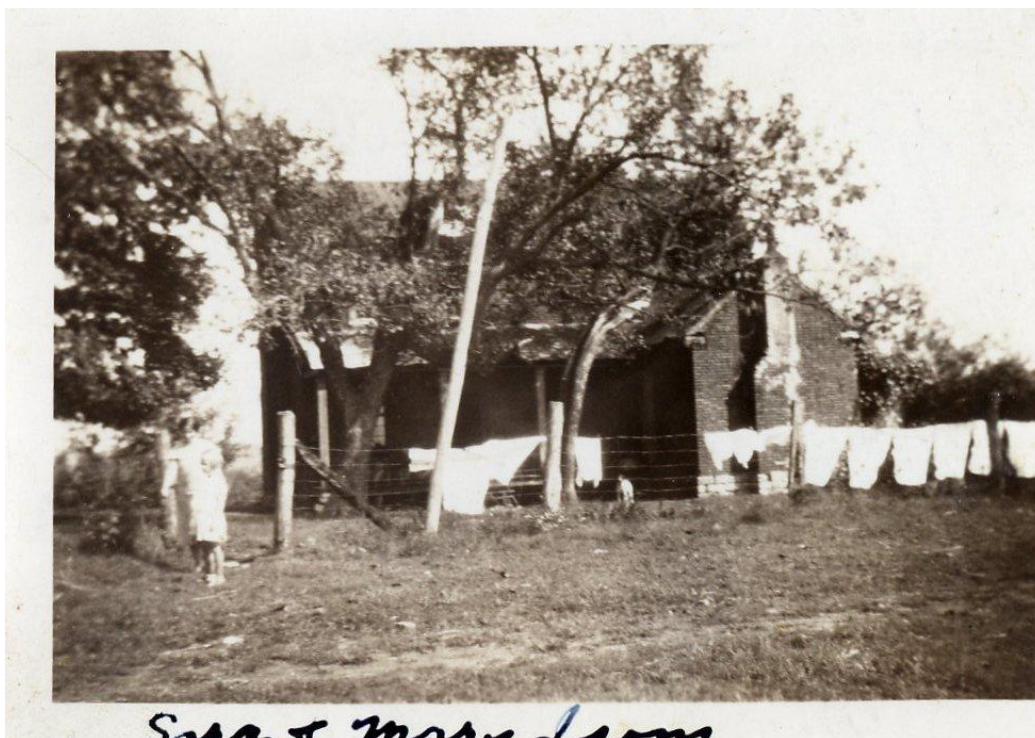
At the same time, the challenging economics of farming and increasing urbanization created a pull to off-farm employment and city living that attracted Sara Lee and her new husband. After a "pretty" and "quiet" wedding at the family's other farm in Fairfield on February 27, 1926, Sara Lee and William Walker Isom moved to Houston, Texas,

¹⁰⁹ Photo provided by Elsie Bell, included in the Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application.

¹¹⁰ "CREAMERY ASSOC. IS BIG SUCCESS: Enterprise Ranks High Among Bedford's Industries," *Nashville Tennessean*, Nashville, TN, 25 Apr. 1926, 29, Newspapers.com.

where Isom was “a prosperous young businessman.”¹¹¹ William and Sara had two children in Houston: Elsie in 1928 and Mary in 1929. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, the family lived in a rented home valued at \$35, and William worked as a mechanic in the automobile industry.¹¹²

According to newspaper accounts, Sara and her husband occasionally returned to Bedford County before moving back in about 1930.¹¹³ The Isom family’s eldest, Elsie, recalled in a conversation with CHP staff that when her family returned to the Martin farm, the family slept in a World War I tent outside of the house because of bed bugs.¹¹⁴ When Sara and her husband moved into the family home and took over the management of Fox Run Farm, Russell Aubrey Lee moved next to his other daughter, Ethel (Lee) Troxler, in Beech Grove. Lee remained the owner of Fox Run until February 1959, when he died and willed the property to Sara.¹¹⁵



*Sara and Mary Isom in the early 1930s are pictured standing in front of the Matt Martin House.
Photo provided by Elsie and Sharon Bell.*

During William and Sara Isom’s tenure on the property, they witnessed or facilitated significant improvements to Fox Run Farm, including the construction of Highway 64,

¹¹¹ “Isom-Lee,” *Nashville Banner*, 28 Feb. 1926, 4, Newspapers.com; Conversation with Sharon Bell, Dec. 4, 2024, notes in CHP Files, MTSU.

¹¹² “Isom, William W,” 1930 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Harris County, TX, Ancestry.com.

¹¹³ “Howse Reunion,” *The Home Journal*, Murfreesboro, TN, 5 Sept. 1930, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁴ Conversation with Elsie Bell, Feb. 6, 2024, Matt Martin House, Bedford County, TN.

¹¹⁵ “Lee, Russell A,” 1940 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com; “Troxler, Ethel,” 1940 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Bedford County, TN, Ancestry.com; Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 2.

electricity through the Rural Electrification Program in 1936, and the purchase of the farm's first tractor in the early 1940s. Plumbing was installed in the 1960s.¹¹⁶



*Pictured is the view of Highway 64 from the front porch of the Matt Martin House.*¹¹⁷

The first upgrade occurred in 1930 when Highway 64 was constructed through the property on land Russell Lee donated. Before the construction of Highway 64, rural residents like the Isom family relied on rough dirt roads to travel throughout the county. The transcontinental highway was the shortest “all-weather” route between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and connected communities like Pulaski, Lewisburg, Shelbyville, and Wartrace to each other and beyond.¹¹⁸

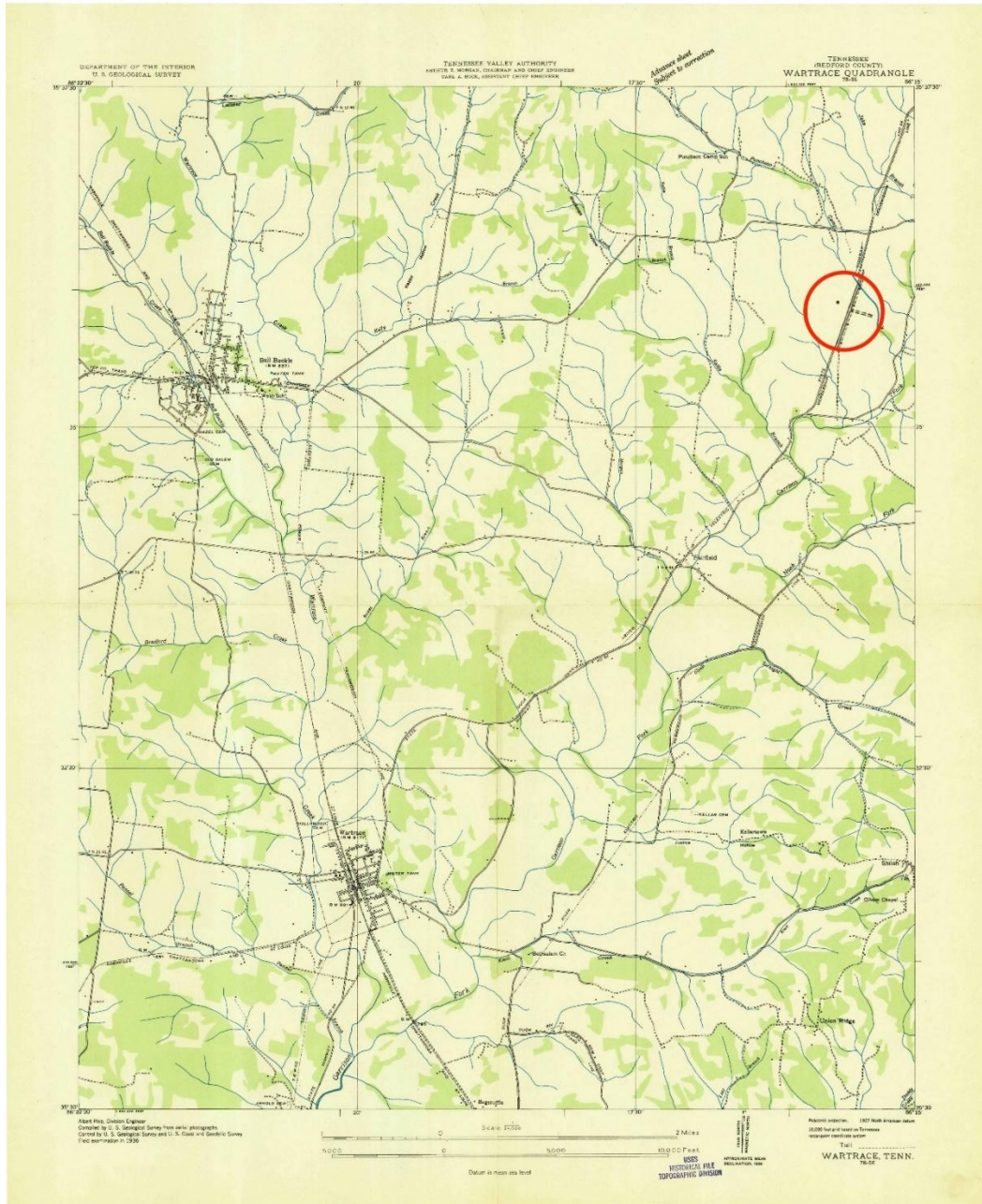
A Tennessee Valley Authority map from 1936, pictured on the following page, shows Highway 64's route through the northeastern corner of Bedford County, where the Martin property is located. Dashed lines denote local roads and are labeled as “trails,” indicating that many were undeveloped and most likely challenging to use during

¹¹⁶ Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 2.

¹¹⁷ Photo provided by Elsie Bell included in Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application.

¹¹⁸ “Chattanooga’s Transcontinental Highway Named for Pawnee Bill,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, Chattanooga, TN, 3 Dec. 1933, 11, Newspapers.com; “WARTRACE-TO-FAIRFIELD HIGHWAY WORK STARTED,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, Chattanooga, TN, 17 Jan. 1930, 13, Newspapers.com; Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 2.

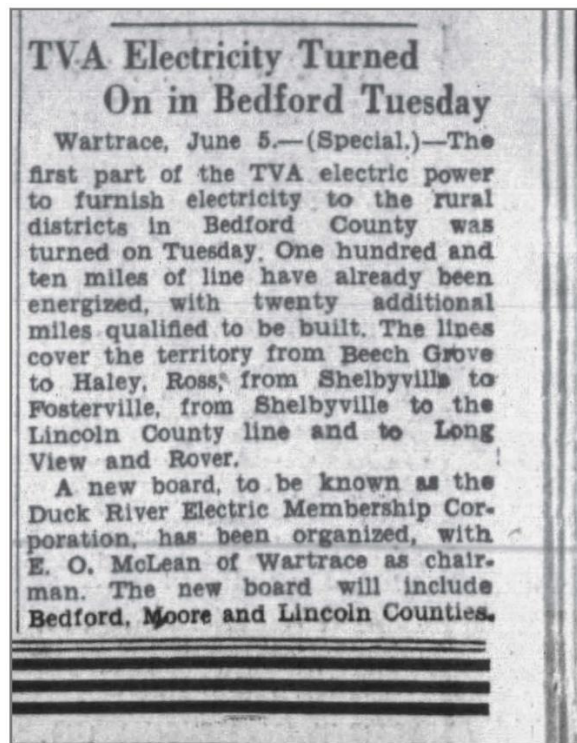
inclement weather like rain or snow. The Martin property is circled in red and slightly magnified. Recently installed electric lines tracing Highway 64 are also shown on this map, demonstrating the consecutive improvements this part of Bedford County received through the New Deal in the 1930s.¹¹⁹



Another major improvement that Bedford County gained in the 1930s was electric power. Electricity transformed the quality of life for rural residents like the Isom family. After installing a refrigerator and an electric water pump, the family no longer had to

¹¹⁹ U.S. Geological Survey, 1936 USGS Survey Map of Wartrace, TN, and surroundings, <https://store.usgs.gov/product/910731> (free download accessed Nov. 4, 2024).

keep dairy products cool in a distant spring or go outside to bring water inside. Kerosene lamps no longer lit dinners; instead, a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling illuminated homes.¹²⁰



A Chattanooga newspaper article about the electrification of Bedford County, where the Isom family lived, in June 1936.¹²¹

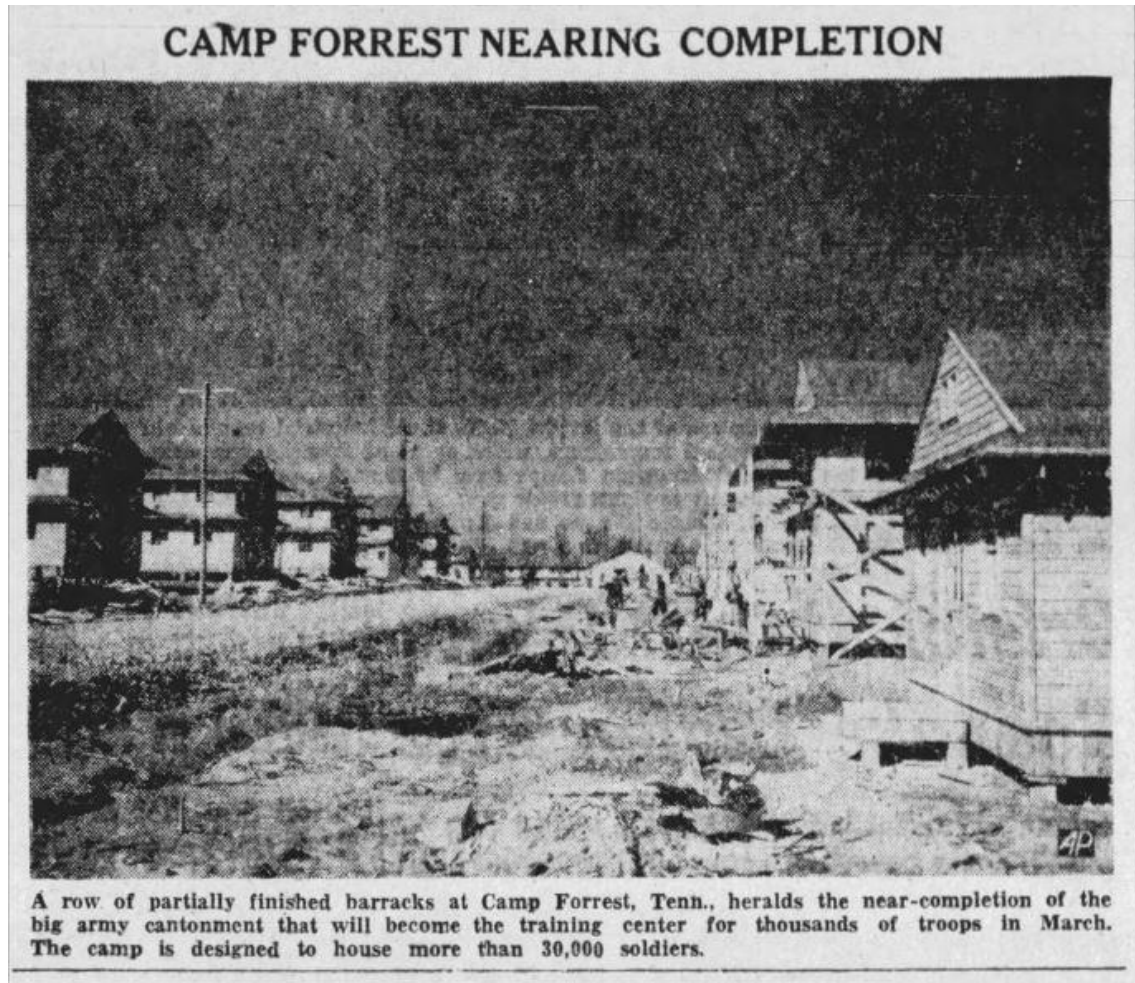
The advent of electricity in rural America led to the industrialization of farming. Farmers faced market pressures to adopt “progressive farming” or get off the farm. Progressive farming doctrine argued that the more capital a farmer invested in technology and new scientific methods, the greater the profits they would reap. Farmers were encouraged to take out long-term loans to transition their farming practices from using mainly human and animal labor to tapping into electric power. Agricultural experts and reformers pushed farmers to become more “businesslike” in managing their farms and adopt factory-planning methods, such as large-scale production, specialized machines, standardization of processes and products, and efficiency. Advocates of progressive farming also emphasized managerial expertise.¹²²

¹²⁰ Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 2.

¹²¹ “TVA Electricity Turned On in Bedford Tuesday,” *The Chattanooga News*, 5 Jun. 1936, Chattanooga, TN, Newspapers.com.

¹²² Sarah Rovang, “Envisioning the Future of Modern Farming: The Electrified Farm at the 1939 New York World’s Fair,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 74, no. 2 (2015): 205, 2010, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jsah.2015.74.2.201> (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

In Tennessee, many farmers lacked the wealth to adopt progressive and expensive farming technology.¹²³ According to Fox Run Farm's Tennessee Century Farm application, however, the Isom family installed milking machines in the barn after electrification. In about 1941, William Isom saved money from working on the construction of Camp Forrest in Tullahoma to buy a John Deere tractor.¹²⁴ Isom's purchase and the installation of milking machines indicate that the family willingly adopted new farming practices when they could.



*A photo of Camp Forrest under construction in the spring of 1941 as it prepared for troops to arrive published in the Bristol Herald Courier.*¹²⁵

The construction of Camp Forrest and Tennessee's mobilization efforts before the United States entered World War II is a significant chapter in the history of the Isom family and the Martin House. While Sara remained on the farm to work and raise the couple's children (which included Thomas and Linda Lou, in addition to Elsie and Mary),

¹²³ Donald Winters, "Agriculture," *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Oct. 8, 2017, <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/agriculture/> (accessed on Oct. 31, 2024).

¹²⁴ Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 3.

¹²⁵ "CAMP FORREST NEARING COMPLETION," *Bristol Herald Courier*, Bristol, TN, 22 Feb. 1941, Newspapers.com.

William traveled to Tullahoma to help build Camp Forrest, a massive World War II training camp established by Tennessee Governor Prentice Cooper.¹²⁶ The development of Camp Forrest was part of Governor Cooper's motivation to invest in state and national defense after meeting German Chancellor Adolf Hitler in 1938 on a Rotary International tour of Europe. When Cooper returned, he believed the United States could not avoid war with Germany and established the Tennessee Defense Council in 1940. He also persuaded the state legislature to appropriate more than three million dollars to construct new armories throughout the state.¹²⁷

Construction of the military base began in October 1940 and ended in May 1941, seven months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The base encompassed 85,000 acres and included 408 barracks, 158 mess halls, 14 officer mess halls, 19 guard houses, 35 warehouses, 70 administrative buildings, 38 officer quarters, a bakery, a water and sewage system, a hospital, concrete pads for camping, and several miles of roads.¹²⁸

Camp Forrest's facilities housed troops for basic training and those participating in the Tennessee Maneuvers. An estimated 250,000 troops went through Camp Forrest while in the service. Starting in 1942, prisoners of war were held at the camp, and between May 1942 and May 1943 civilians designated as "Enemy Aliens" were housed there. By 1945, many of the facilities would be solely for thousands of prisoners of war, most of whom were German. After the war, facilities at Camp Forrest were deconstructed and sold as surplus. The Camp Forrest location now houses the Arnold Engineering Development Center, Arnold Air Force Station, and the Tennessee National Guard Volunteer Training Site.¹²⁹



*An aerial view of the barracks at Camp Forrest in 1941.*¹³⁰

¹²⁶ The Isoms actually had five children altogether, but one, a baby boy, died in infancy within a year of his birth. "Sara Clay Lee Isom," Ancestry Profile, Ancestry.com.

¹²⁷ Benjamin C. Nance, "An Archaeological Survey of World War II Military Sites in Tennessee," Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Archaeology, Report 13, 2007, 6, 8.

¹²⁸ Camp Forrest was originally Camp Peay, a National Guard training center built in 1926. See Nance, "An Archaeological Survey of World War II Military Sites in Tennessee," 39.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ "Aerial view of Camp Forrest," 1941, Library Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Tennessee Virtual Archive, <https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll18/id/2806/rec/1> (accessed Oct. 31, 2024).

The United States military prepared for war with realistic training maneuvers alongside state preparations. Large-scale maneuvers were held throughout the United States in the California-Arizona desert, Louisiana, and Middle Tennessee.¹³¹

Between June 1941 and March 1944, about 850,000 troops participated in the maneuvers in Tennessee in eleven counties, including Bedford. In the war games that gave locals a glimpse into warfare, troops used armor, artillery, tanks, jeeps, trucks, pontoon bridges, planes, and all other equipment the military would need. To conduct the maneuvers, the Army gained permission from landowners to cross, maneuver on, or camp on private property, including from William and Sara Isom. According to *The Sumner County News*, ninety-six percent of the requested landowners permitted the military to use their land.¹³²

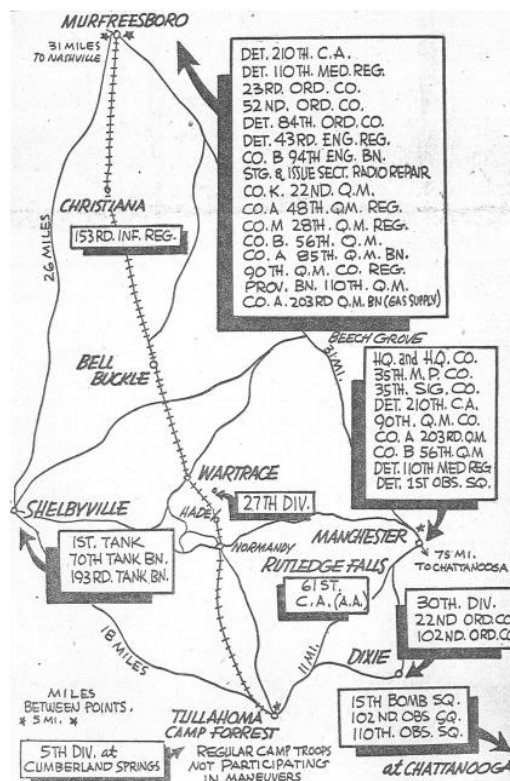


Figure 1. Map of 1941 Maneuver area (*The Nashville Tennessean*, June 1, 1941).

*Map of a Maneuver area from the Nashville Tennessean published in 1941.*¹³³

The development spurred by the construction of Camp Forrest is an example of the World War II economic boom that ushered in a decade of technological advancement and agricultural prosperity for those who could keep up. With the increasing adoption of scientific agriculture, expanding farms, and the commercialization and consolidation of agriculture, the business of farming displaced the rural lifestyle that had sustained

¹³¹ Nance, "An Archaeological Survey of World War II Military Sites in Tennessee," 6, 8.

¹³² Ibid, 8, 11; Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 3.

¹³³ Nance, "An Archaeological Survey of World War II Military Sites in Tennessee," 10.

families in Bedford County for generations.¹³⁴ Data from the 1940, 1954, and 1982 U.S. agricultural censuses provides a glimpse into that transition in Bedford County. There were 682 fewer farms in 1954 than in 1940, while corn, oats, and wheat production increased dramatically.¹³⁵ Nearly thirty years later, in the early 1980s, the pattern continued: Farms gradually disappeared while crop production grew. There were almost a thousand fewer farms compared to the data from 1954, and wheat and corn production continued to increase.¹³⁶ The Isoms adapted to the changing market, continued cultivating grains, and raised livestock on the farm while caring for their family.

By the end of the 1940s, the older Isom children grew to adulthood and left the farm, following in the footsteps of their mother, who had also once left the farm for off-farm work when she moved to Texas after marrying William. The oldest Isom child, Elsie, married Herman Ray Bell when she was 22 in December 1949.¹³⁷ The newly married couple moved to Shelbyville, where they found employment at the “Hosiery Mill,” possibly the Woolsey Knitting Mills. Herman worked as a machinist, and Elsie worked as a seamer.¹³⁸ Elsie’s sister, Mary, followed her sister off the farm and moved to Shelbyville to work as a bookkeeper for a construction company.¹³⁹ Thomas, the Isoms’ third child, enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1956 and kept his home address at the Martin House, implying that when he was off duty, he stayed with his parents. During the winter of 1964, Thomas died in a car accident when his automobile lost control and flipped near Shelbyville.¹⁴⁰ Linda Lou, the youngest Isom child, married Joe Kennedy Shearon in 1959 when they were both 18 years old.¹⁴¹ About eighteen years later, Linda died at age 37 in the Sumner County Memorial Hospital in Gallatin, Tennessee.¹⁴²

While they navigated the joys and tragedies of life, Sara and William Isom continued the family tradition of farming at Fox Run Farm, until Sara died in 1982 when she was 83. With the passing of Sara, the 125 acres that her father, Russell Aubrey Lee, had owned initially were divided into three different tracts. Elsie received 18.4 acres of land on the west side of Highway 64, including the Matt Martin House. Mary received 55.1 acres,

¹³⁴ Donald Winters, “Agriculture,” *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, Oct. 8, 2017, <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/agriculture/> (accessed Oct. 31, 2024).

¹³⁵ 1940 Agriculture Census, Vol. 1, Tennessee, Table 1 and 6, 168, 212, https://agcensus.library.cornell.edu/census_parts/1940-tennessee/ (accessed Nov. 26, 2024); 1954 Agriculture Census, Vol. 1, Chapter B, Table 1 and 9, 62, 134, 142, https://agcensus.library.cornell.edu/census_year/1954-census/ (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

¹³⁶ 1982 Agriculture Census, Table 1 and 24, 120, 386-388, https://agcensus.library.cornell.edu/census_year/1982-census/ (accessed Nov. 26, 2024).

¹³⁷ Herman Ray Bell was 37 when he and Elsie married. Bedford County, Tennessee, Marriage Record 248 (1949), Herman Ray Bell and Elsie Love Isom, Ancestry.com.

¹³⁸ “Bell, Herman R and Elsie,” 1950 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Shelbyville, Bedford County, TN, 6, Ancestry.com.

¹³⁹ “Mary, Isom,” 1950 U.S. Population Schedule, Shelbyville, Bedford County, TN, 1, Ancestry.com.

¹⁴⁰ “Isom, Thomas Lee,” Application for Headstone or Marker for Military Veterans, Bedford County, TN, 1964, Ancestry.com; “DRIVER DIES IN UPSET,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 24 Jan. 1964, 8, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴¹ Bedford County, Tennessee, Marriage Record 251 (1959), Joe Kennedy Shearon and Linda Lou Isom, Ancestry.com.

¹⁴² “Mrs. Linda Fann,” *Tennessean*, Nashville, TN, 1 Jan. 1978, Newspapers.com.

which she sold to Elsie and Herman Ray Bell. The final tract of land of 51.4 acres was allocated to the children of Linda Lou. Elsie continued farming the land she inherited and the tract of land willed to Linda's children. Unlike her predecessors, though, who were highly engaged in producing various agricultural products, Elsie Bell's agricultural production was limited to two commodities: beef cattle and hay.¹⁴³

Over forty years since Elsie, now 96 years old, assumed ownership of Fox Run Farm and the Matt Martin House, it remains in her possession. Her daughter, Sharon Bell, has a house nearby. She takes care of Elsie and helps maintain the property. In the future, there are plans to pass the historic house and the surrounding land to another family member of a younger generation, maintaining the tradition of the Matt Martin House being owned by the descendants of one of its original occupants.

Matt Martin House and Property: Ownership Timeline

Matt Martin: 1809 – 1846¹⁴⁴

Mathias Martin (also named Matt Martin, Jr.): 1846 – 1851

William G. Loughry: 1851 – 1854¹⁴⁵

Edmund Cooper: 1854 – 1890

Russell Aubrey Lee: 1890 – 1959

Sara Clay Lee Isom: 1959 – 1982

Elsie Lane Isom Bell: 1982 – Present

¹⁴³ Fox Run Farm Tennessee Century Farm Application, 4.

¹⁴⁴ Matt Martin died in 1846 and his son Matt Martin, Jr., assumed ownership of the property.

¹⁴⁵ According to court records, William G. Loughry bought the property from the Martins under a contract that required Loughry to pay off the property before March 31st, 1854. According to court proceedings, Loughry became "desperate in his circumstances, and absconded and left the country." Loughry returned in early April of 1856. Head, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Tennessee*, 43 – 45.

Architectural Description

The c.1809 Matt Martin House is among Bedford County's earliest extant buildings and sits on the west side of Highway 64 E (once known as the Wartrace and Beech Grove Road), between the historic communities of Fairfield and Beech Grove. The building's length is perpendicular to Highway 64 because the original front of the house faced north, evidenced by two front doors on the north elevation that have been partially bricked and turned into windows. When the Martin brothers had the house built, the tract was 1100 acres, and 19th-century maps indicate the house was originally accessed from a road that ran south from the Bell Buckle and Beech Grove Pike, approaching the house from the north.



North elevation/original front of Matt Martin House, February 2024.



Cropped image of 1878 Beers & Co. map of Bedford County showing road systems around the Matt Martin House when Edmund Cooper owned it.

The National Register-listed (1972) Matt Martin House was constructed in at least two phases. The original c.1809 portion is a two-and-a-half story, Federal-style home built with a Flemish bond brick pattern. According to the National Register documentation, the bricks were made on site and the house's walls are 18 inches thick. It is likely that enslaved Black people made the bricks and built the home. The roof framework is held together by hewn-and-pegged joints. The Flemish brick bond, 18-inch-thick walls, and hewn-and-pegged joints visible in the attic speak to the early 19th-century age of the home.

The brick portion of the building is covered by a gable roof, and there is an exterior chimney on each gable end. Beneath the eaves are wood fascia, carved crafter tails, and frieze board. A coursed rubble foundation supports the building. A one-story frame addition for a kitchen was added along the south elevation (rear) of the home. The addition may have been added in two phases and now extends beyond the west elevation of the original brick portion of the home.

North elevation/original front of home

Typical of Federal-style buildings, the house's original front/north elevation is symmetrical. On the second story there are four 8-over-8 wood sash windows. On the first story there are two former doorways located near the center. The doors have been partially bricked in to create windows. This set of former doorways is flanked by a pair of 6-over-6 wood sash windows. The fenestration is divided into two identical bays, reflecting the symmetry of the home's floorplan of four rectangular rooms stacked two-over-two. All the windows have flat, brick lintels above them and brick sills below them.



North elevation, February 2024.

East elevation

The home's east elevation is a gable end with an exterior chimney. On either side of the chimney beneath the gable are two wood sash attic windows, each with four panes. This elevation now functions as the front of the home and has a single-story shed roof porch attached to the gable end wall (south of the chimney) and the east-facing wall of the spinning room. The porch roof covers an 8-over-8 wood sash window with a brick sill that lights the spinning room and a door that leads into the southeast room of the home.



East elevation, February 2024.

South elevation

A one-story, frame kitchen and dining section is attached and parallel to the length of the south elevation of the c.1809 home. This frame portion of the building extends from the west wall of the brick spinning room past the home's west gable end. It is possible the extension of the frame addition past the gable wall of the original home was a later extension of the kitchen and dining space.¹⁴⁶

The kitchen addition is covered with a shed roof and has a continuous foundation made of cement. The south elevation of the kitchen addition can be divided into two bays: the west bay that extends beyond the gable end of the original brick home contains two 8-over-8 wood sash windows; and the east bay has an entrance near its center, flanked by one 8-over-8 wood sash window on the west and a smaller 8-over-8 wood sash window and similarly scaled 6-over-6 wood sash window to the east.

The south elevation of the spinning room is its gable end, featuring wood cornice returns. At the center of the gable-end wall, there is one adjacent pair of 6-over-6 wood sash windows. Beneath the pair of windows is a brick sill similar to those located

¹⁴⁶ The house is believed to have had a detached kitchen originally, which would have been typical for the time period. The National Register nomination states that this detached kitchen was torn down at some point. Sharon Bell has speculated that a foundation located about 200 yards from the house was the site of the detached kitchen. "Martin House," Wartrace, Bedford County, Tennessee, National Register of Historic Places Form, National Park Service, Section 7; Conversation with Sharon Bell, Feb. 6, 2024, Matt Martin House, Bedford Co., TN.

elsewhere on the house. Directly beneath the sill is the property's National Register of Historic Places plaque.



South elevation and surrounding yard, February 2024.



Plaque located on south elevation of spinning room, February 2024.

West elevation

The home's west elevation is a gable end with an exterior chimney. On either side of the chimney beneath the gable are two wood sash attic windows, each with four panes. To the south side of the west elevation, the frame kitchen addition and its shed roof extend westward beyond the original brick portion of the home. On the west elevation of the kitchen addition, there is an 8-over-8 wood sash window in the middle of the wall. South of the window is a door leading into the addition.



West elevation, 2024.

Interior

According to the National Register documentation, the interior of the home retains its original arrangement of rooms and circulation pattern, ash floors, and cherry trim, chair rail, principal doors, and fireplace mantels.

The double front doors and symmetry of the home's north elevation reflect the arrangement of rooms within: two rooms on the first floor beneath two similarly sized rooms on the second floor. The west first-floor room has an enclosed staircase in its southeast corner that provides access to the western half of the second floor. Access to the kitchen addition is through the south wall of the west room.

The east first-floor room has an enclosed staircase in its northwest corner that provides access to the eastern half of the second floor. The spinning room is accessed through a doorway in the southeast corner of the eastern first-floor room.

A 1937 article in *The Nashville Banner Magazine* stated, "The second story was built for the young people, and has a wall eighteen inches thick dividing the boys from the girls quarters." The use of the upstairs rooms for the children is certainly possible, given that in 1809 Matt and Sally Martin had seven children 18 years old or younger. However, this included just two boys and five girls, suggesting the split according to sex may not have happened at that time.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Mrs. C.M. Dean, "Tennessee's First Brick House: Old Bedford County Home Stood When Revolution's Guns Were Still Ringing," *The Nashville Banner Magazine*, June 27, 1937, p. 4.

The frame kitchen addition includes, from east to west, a bathroom, kitchen and dining area, and a sitting area.



Enclosed stairway in west room leading to west side of second story, February 2024.



Enclosed stairway in east room leading to east side of second story, February 2024.



Wood mantel and brick fire surround, February 2024.



Spinning room, February 2024.



West room on second floor, February 2024.



Hewn-and-pegged joint system visible in attic, February 2024.

Architectural Significance

The 1972 National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Matt Martin house identifies the building as “important as an example of the simple federal house as built in Middle Tennessee very early.”¹⁴⁸ The Federal style is a post-colonial, neoclassical architecture style that became popular during the United States’ early federal period (1780s) and remained in use until about the 1830s, when the Greek Revival style, with rooms arranged around a central hall, began to supplant it. Despite reaching peak popularity in the decades after declaring independence from Great Britain, the Federal style is “thoroughly British” and began as “the signature style of America’s wealthy mercantile class.”¹⁴⁹

Federal style is sometimes used interchangeably with Adam style, named after Scottish brothers and architects Robert and James Adam. The popularity of the Adam style in Europe coincided with the advent of professional archaeology, particularly major excavations at the Roman cities of Herculaneum (1783) and Pompeii (1793). Robert Adam’s study of examples from ancient antiquity led him to develop a distinctive architecture style that, compared with the preceding Georgian style (which shares with Adam similar features of classicism and symmetry), was generally simpler with lighter and more delicate stylistic features. Adam style as applied to buildings in the early days of the United States is often called Federal style. Federal style homes’ most easily identifiable features are the buildings’ simple box form; symmetrical arrangement of windows and doors; and the use of cornices, pilasters, and window lintels.¹⁵⁰

Elaborate, high-style examples of Federal-style buildings are located throughout New England and the Atlantic coast, with one of the most popular examples being the White House in Washington, D.C. Buildings constructed on the fringes of the United States’ territory, in areas only recently claimed by white settlers, such as the Matt Martin House (c.1809) built in Bedford County (established 1807), were often restrained, or vernacular, examples of more elaborate precedents found back East.

In the South, Federal-style homes tended to be built of brick more often than wood (whereas in the North, the opposite was true), and chimneys were most often on the exterior and placed on the gable ends of the home (whereas northern examples more often have central chimneys or interior chimneys at gable ends).¹⁵¹ Constructed of brick in the Flemish bond pattern and having two exterior, gable-end chimneys, the Matt Martin House aligns with these regional patterns. The Martin House’s Federal-style influence is seen in its simple, rectangular form; the symmetry of its primary façade; its

¹⁴⁸ “Martin House,” Wartrace, Bedford County, Tennessee, National Register of Historic Places Form, National Park Service, Section 8.

¹⁴⁹ Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry and Holt Company, 1994), 90-91.

¹⁵⁰ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American House Styles* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 2011), 153; Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 123-124.

¹⁵¹ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 154.

frieze board and carved drafter tails; and the flat lintels above windows and the sills below them.



Wood fascia board with carved rafter tails, February 2024.



Flat lintels above window, February 2024.

Although the Matt Martin House is considered vernacular when compared to more elaborate, Federal-style houses of the eastern U.S., the home stood out as a distinctive, stylish landmark during Bedford County's early years, when most homes were smaller and constructed of logs. The architecture conveyed the Martin family's economic success and its leading role in the area's early white settlement period. Built on land that had only recently come under the control of the United States after the 1805 Third Treaty of Tellico, homes like these also suggested the permanence of white emigrants' presence, their intentions to further develop the surrounding area, and the spread of European-American culture and tastes west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Like the Matt Martin House, many extant houses of a similar style in Middle Tennessee belonged to prominent figures associated with the white settlement of their respective areas during Tennessee's early statehood period. As noted in Dr. Jane Townes's PhD dissertation about the pre-Civil War built environment of Bedford County, the c.1787 National Register-listed Bowen Campbell House in Goodlettsville, Sumner County, Tennessee, shares many characteristics with the Matt Martin House. Enslaved laborers likely built that home for native Virginian and Revolutionary War Captain William Bowen

and his family, known as one of the first white families to inhabit the area after the John Donelson and James Robertson parties settled Nashville.¹⁵²

Features shared by the Bowen Campbell and Matt Martin houses include the overall simple box shape; side gable roof and end chimneys (although, notably, the Bowen Campbell House has one exterior and one interior chimney, instead of two exterior chimneys like the Martin House); the Flemish bond brick courses of the exterior walls (also allegedly made on site); the double entrances on the primary façades opening into two separate rooms; flat window and door lintels; the location, scale, and style of the attic windows; and the coursed rubble limestone foundations.



Image of Bowen Campbell House taken from Google street view (2024).

¹⁵² Amanda Jane Townes, “Material Culture as a Primary Source for Understanding Bedford County, Tennessee in the Civil War Era,” PhD diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2011, 303-304; “Bowen-Campbell House,” Goodlettsville, Sumner County, Tennessee, National Register of Historic Places Form, National Park Service, Section 8.

Cragfont, a c.1798 home built of limestone in Sumner County, is a significant example of the Federal style as expressed in Middle Tennessee. Built for Revolutionary War veteran and Maryland native James Winchester, Cragfont would have been a prominent landmark in an area still considered by white emigrants as the frontier at the time of the home's construction.



Cragfont in Castalian Springs, Sumner County, April 2013.

Finally, the brick Gordon House on the Natchez Trace, constructed in 1818 near the Duck River, has a similar Federal style to the Matt Martin House, including two front doors. One door led to a large hall, while the other opened on a smaller parlor. Other similarities shared by the Martin and Gordon houses include the overall symmetry of the façades; the one-room depth of the original floorplans; exterior end chimneys; and coursed rubble limestone foundations. The Gordon House served as a home, trading post, and “stand,” or place for travelers to stay. The Gordons ran a ferry across the river. In 1818, before the house's construction, John Gordon had written to his wife, Dolly Gordon, to indicate his wishes regarding the placement of windows at the front of the house but then told her, “the rest I leave with yourself.” He died of pneumonia in 1819,

but Dolly, her children, and several enslaved people lived at the house until 1859. The house has been owned by the National Park Service since 1973.¹⁵³



The Gordon House, Natchez Trace Parkway, November 2024.

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¹⁵³ National Park Service, “The Gordon House: A Home on the Natchez Trace,” Natchez Trace Parkway brochure (undated but available at the house in November 2024).

Townes, Amanda Jane. "Material Culture as a Primary Source for Understanding Bedford County, Tennessee, in the Civil War Era." PhD diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2011.

APPENDIX A

SITE VISIT REPORT

Historic or Common Name: Martin Farm

Address: Lee Road
Bell Buckle, TN
Bedford County

Date of visit: 21 January 2004

Owner: Kenny and Nancy Phillips
3100 Hwy. 82
E. Bell Buckle, TN 37020
(931) 394-2318 C (931) 205-2318

Report:

This weatherboarded frame structure is located on Lee Road, off TN Hwy.82, in northeast Bedford County. The house is situated on a 148-acre tract just outside of Bell Buckle. The Martin family first settled here in the early 1800s, and the house itself dates from the 1830s. Revolutionary War veteran Matt Martin built the house as a wedding present for his daughter Sally and her husband, War of 1812 soldier James Neill.

The one-story house has an unusual floor plan, but it had been heavily altered since it was originally built, probably in the late nineteenth century. The roof has borne the brunt of the changes, but it appears that some walls may have been moved or porches filled in. The upstairs wall arrangements have also been changed. A major remodeling effort was underway on the day of this visit, with dormers added to the roof and other changes.

Some interesting remnants of the past remained in inaccessible places, such as the hewn limestone basement that contains historic graffiti. Another curiosity was the fact that the spaces between the studs of the exterior walls of the house were stacked approximately two feet tall with unmortared bricks. Perhaps this was an attempt at vermin control.

This proved to be an interesting house to inspect, since it was being remodeled at the time. This allowed access to places that are ordinarily covered up, and provided valuable insights into historic building practices. On the other hand, the loss of historic integrity because of changes to both the fabric and structure cannot be ignored. This building is ineligible for the National Register because of this loss of integrity.

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