The Englishes

A FAMILY PORTRAIT

THE FIRST AND SECOND GENERATIONS

Every family has a history. Some of it we carry in our flesh and bones, but most of it goes lost and forgotten over time. The best reason for bothering to compile this history of the Englishes of upper Talladega County, Alabama, and their related families is to learn from them: to understand how their story continues to be resolved in us, their descendants, and discover whatever it was in them as people that emerges in our own being. We are only here and who we are because of how they loved and how they lived their brief time on this planet.

My great grandfather, James S.C. English (1844 to 1931), was, in his day, the family historian, and much of what he learned about his forebears came from his grandfather, Alexander Lewis (1780 to 1879). Known as Jim, he wrote of his ancestors in 1927: "I am glad to know they were good people. Grandfather said don't go too far back, you may learn something not agreeable. He could give the names of some families far back who had a bad name, got rich—big folks stealing Negroes and horses." By all accounts, the Englishes lived carefully; valued hard work, education and family trust; and had a moral sense grounded in their Protestant faith.

The life of a family is influenced by the evolving events, customs and attitudes of their place and time. To better appreciate the Englishes and the challenges they faced, one must have at least a sense of the world in which they lived. The Civil War was a catastrophic turning point for the family. Like most wars, it was waged by the wealthy, but fought by common men who had the least to gain from victory. And from the first shot fired, Confederate victory was never a possible outcome. The letters James S.C. English wrote from camps and battlefields as a soldier of the Confederacy tell that inglorious story.

Our English ancestors had been slave owners before the Civil War. Black men and women were integrated within the life of the family over a period of sixty years, and a large part of whatever the Englishes accomplished must be attributed to the support rendered by people of color whose existence they controlled—men and women who worked their fields, built their homes and cared for their children. The lives of these enslaved people were inseparable from the life of our family. Slavery in the antebellum South has been described as a "peculiar institution"—meaning an established practice woven within the fabric of that society—and clarified over time for what it truly was: an "evil institution." There is, of course, no justification for it, but I don't believe my ancestors' participation to have been a willful act of evil.

Any written history of a family is incomplete, arriving at conclusions based on whiffs of evidence and raising questions that will never be answered once and for all. What is true and what is not? The compiler can, at best, only be faithful to the overall truth, grateful for the clues left behind in public records, family lore, an old Bible, saved letters and faded photographs.

—Don Roberts

OUR ENGLISH FAMILY'S STORY begins in County Antrim in the Irish province of Ulster[1] with Samuel Alexander English.[2] Born in 1755 and known as Alexander, he sailed from Belfast to Charleston, South Carolina, in 1791, one of hundreds of thousands of Presbyterians who fled Ulster for America in the 18th century. In Ulster, these Scottish Presbyterians had been labeled as "Protestant dissenters" by the dominant Anglican Church and barred from full participation in the government, to such an extent that Presbyterian marriages were not legally recognized. America promised them a new life of unlimited opportunity. Alexander was in his mid-thirties and most likely unmarried when he arrived.[3]

Nothing of Alexander's earlier life is known for certain except that he had at least one brother and one sister, as well as relatives in Randalstown on the western bank of the river Maine about 17 miles from Belfast. He has been described as "occupying the trade of clothes and dyer," and this one-street market town was primarily engaged in the spinning of cotton and the production of calico and linen fabrics. There is a strong possibility that he was the son of Samuel English, a Presbyterian tenant farmer on the vast estate of Lord Charles O'Neill in County Antrim's Drummaul civil parish.[4] In 1761, the O'Neills controlled 120,000 acres, primarily worked by tenants like Samuel English. The farm he managed was known as Druminevey (sometimes spelled *Druminowy* or *Drumanaway*). The given names Samuel, Alexander, James and Hugh were common to succeeding generations of Samuel's family there.

The surname *English* derives from *Englisc,* the word originally used in the Anglo-Saxon world to distinguish the Angles from the Saxons. The Angles and Saxons were Germanic tribes that migrated to Britain from as early as the fifth century until the Norman Conquest in 1066. The Angle tribe originated in what is today northern Germany and southern Denmark. It's possible that our English ancestors were originally named Gallogly; *gal* is translated as "foreigner," and *gallogly* referred to mercenaries imported to Ulster from Scotland as early as the 17th century to defend its English settlers from the Irish resistance. Many Ulster families with that name later changed it to *English*.

Following a six-week ocean voyage, Alexander arrived at Charleston fifteen years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. President George Washington had been in office for two years, and Philadelphia was the country's temporary capital. With the arrival of every ship, the young nation was growing. Its first federal census in 1790, one year before Alexander's arrival, revealed that New York City had overtaken Philadelphia as the largest population center. Vermont had recently become the fourteenth state.

1. The Ulster Protestant community dates from the colonization of Ulster by loyal English-speaking Protestants in the early 1600s. Since 1921, Ulster has been known as Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom. County Antrim lies on the eastern coast, facing Scotland, only twelve miles across the Irish Sea.

2. His full name appears on only one known document, a list of the founding members of Marble Springs Presbyterian Church in Talladega County. In all other documents, he was simply Alexander English.

3. James S.C. English, a grandson of Alexander and Mary English, wrote of them: "I remember Grandmother English; do not remember Grandfather E. Grandmother's maiden name was Mary Crawford. Have no dates of her death. Grandfather English married in Belfast, Ireland, came to America between the years 1790 and 1800. Grandfather Lewis told me his [Grandfather English's] father was Lord English of Belfast. They [the English and Lewis families] lived close together in South Carolina." It appears more likely, however, that Mary Crawford was born in South Carolina, and there is no record of a Lord English in Belfast. (A lord, or *laird,* was simply a landholder and member of the gentry, not a nobleman. Protestants in Ulster rarely rose to that status.)

4. For centuries, the O'Neills had been the dominant family in County Antrim, having built a castle originally called Eden-duff-carrick there in 1345. In 1722, Shane MacBrien O'Neill changed the name to Shane's Castle; it was destroyed by fire in 1816 and stands in ruin to this day.

The First Generation: Alexander and Mary English

Alexander journeyed about 200 miles from Charleston to Chester County in South Carolina's upcountry. The county had been settled by Ulstermen who began arriving after the Indian wars of the 1760s. Many migrated there from Chester, Pennsylvania. In 1790, a courthouse was established at the center of the county, and the town that grew around it was called Chesterville (later shortened to Chester). It's unlikely that Alexander chose such a remote destination by chance. He would have been at least acquainted with, if not related to, someone already living there. Although census records for 1790 list a number of Englishes in the upcountry, none was noted in Chester County until May 11, 1792, when James English, a "clothier," purchased a 19-year-old Negro named Sank. He and Alexander could well have been kinsmen and may have traveled there together.[5]

Samuel Alexander English (1755 to 1837)
Mary Crawford (1777 to June 1849)

In South Carolina, Alexander apparently married Mary Crawford. They most likely met in Chester County, where several Crawford families were members of the Fishing Creek Presbyterian Church. She was two decades younger than he and, like a majority of women at that time, illiterate. On Aug. 3, 1793, Alexander purchased 270 acres on Rocky Creek for 105 pounds.[6]

In 1800, the young country's government moved from Philadelphia to what was then known as Washington City, described as "a space chopped out of nowhere." It was a ten-hour stagecoach ride through nothing but forest from Baltimore, the nearest city. By one account: "Passengers got out at an open space, asked how far they were from Washington City, and were told they were in it." The United States' second census was conducted that year. It revealed a national population of 5.3 million (893,000 of whom were slaves), with Virginia the most populous state.

The 1800 census of Chester County, South Carolina, population 8,185, lists Alexander and James as the only heads of families named English. (This is the last known record of James English.) By then, Alexander and Mary were the parents of three young children, and he owned one slave. On April 20, 1803, he was "admitted and encoded a citizen of the United States."[7] The family's years in Chester passed peacefully, isolated as they were from the events shaping the young nation. With the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the country's western border would continue to push beyond the Carolinas as new immigrants arrived. Kentucky and Tennessee became its first western states in 1792 and 1796. Then, with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, America gained a vast frontier beyond the Mississippi River. In 1812, in response to British restrictions on trade, the United States declared war on England. During the Revolutionary War of 1775–83, more battles had been fought in the Carolinas than in any of the other colonies, with Chester County seeing its share. But the War of 1812 was waged along the state's coast without pressing the county's men into service.

5. It would seem likely that James and Alexander were related. Some years later, another Samuel English, born in County Antrim in 1781, settled with his wife and children in Chester; he died in 1831 and was buried at Old Purity Presbyterian Church Cemetery there. We can say for certain that Alexander wasn't the only member of his family to emigrate to America. Two of his brother's sons are known to have farmed near Montgomery, Alabama, in the 1840s.

6. The previous owners, Laird and Jane Burns, were moving to the Tennessee territory. Many of the immigrants from Ulster settled on the eastern side of the county, in the Fishing Creek and Rocky Creek areas. Rocky Creek is a tributary of the Catawba River, which forms the county's eastern border.

7. The Naturalization Act of 1790 applied only to "free white person(s) of good character." It required two years of residence in the United States and one year in the state of residence. Because women couldn't vote and very few held property, women generally didn't bother to apply for citizenship, the exception being widows and spinsters. The law changed in 1795, requiring five years residence. The original document declaring Alexander's citizenship remains in the possession of a family member.

This was the war that once and for all halted England's influence over America's westward expansion.

The event that would ultimately have the greatest impact on Southern farmers had occurred shortly after Alexander's arrival: In 1793, a patent for a cotton gin (short for *engine*) was issued to Eli Whitney. By simplifying the arduous task of separating cotton fibers and seeds, the cultivation of cotton in large quantity became practical. This fairly simple machine, the design of which may have originated on a farm in the South Carolina upcountry, could do the work of fifty men, motivating farmers to greatly increase the acreage they devoted to growing cotton. Increasing cotton production could only be accomplished by moving westward into the new frontier with its unlimited supply of land. There, farms could become plantations, and farmers could become planters. But expanded agricultural production would require more than land and seed: It would take manpower to plant, chop and pick the cotton, making an ambitious farmer ever more dependent on enslaved labor.

The enslavement of African men and women is said to have originated in 1562 when the British began capturing and transporting them to its colonies in the Caribbean. In late August 1619, the English privateer ship *White Lion* landed at Point Comfort near Hampton, Virginia. The twenty or thirty Africans who disembarked and were traded in exchange for supplies marked the beginning of slavery in America. Several days later, a second ship arrived in Virginia with more enslaved Africans. Thousands of British families grew rich from the sale of slaves and slave-produced sugar before Parliament abolished the slave trade in 1833. In America, the northern states had for the most part prohibited slavery by 1805, and some slaveholders in the upper South freed their slaves. But by then, the ownership of slaves had firmly taken root throughout the agricultural Deep South. Southerners would argue that it was necessary in order to sustain the explosive growth of cotton cultivation. Congress banned the importation of slaves in 1808, but smuggling became common thereafter. Even more insidious was the increasing practice of transporting slaves across state lines and "down the river" for auction in faraway markets, breaking up families and further dehumanizing the enslaved man, woman and child.

According to the federal census of 1810, Alexander's was the only family named English remaining in Chester County. (The census taker inserted "Esq." (for *esquire*) following his name, a show of respect rarely accorded in that particular census.) The household included six children and four slaves. In time, there would be eight children (four sons and four daughters).[8]

Their Children
John C. English (before 1800 to before 1849)
Jane Walker (1800 to 1858)
James Crawford English (1801 to 1863)
Alexander C. (Alex) English (1806 to 1851)
William C. English (before 1810 to 1836)
Sarah (Sallie) English (before 1810 to before 1835)
Elizabeth W. (Lizzie) Best (1814 to after 1880)
Mary C. English Best (about 1820 to 1848)

8. Alexander's grandson, James S.C. English wrote: "All of my grandfather's children had C for middle name. I do not know what this was for; only Uncle James, his was Crawford. Father's [Alexander C.], I do not know what C was for. Very likely was Calhoun, as John C. Calhoun, was related to the Crawfords." In fact, the middle initial C appears in the names of all four sons, but only one of the daughters. John C. Calhoun (1782–1850) served as Vice President under John Quincey Adams and Andrew Jackson; he is vilified today as an ardent supporter of slavery and states rights. The Crawford connection to the Calhoun family was apparently through Martha Caldwell, the mother of John C. (for Caldwell) Calhoun.

FROM SOUTH CAROLINA TO ALLURING ALABAMA

The years 1816 and 1817 in North America were uncommonly cold, owing to the eruption of a volcano in the faraway Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). The resulting crop failures led to unparalleled migration into the warmer southwestern frontier.[9] Once the western half of the Mississippi Territory became the 20th state in 1817, what remained became known as the Alabama Territory. It was bounded by the states of Mississippi and Tennessee, the Florida Territory and, to the east, Georgia and the Muscogee Creek Nation. Lying between the Alabama Territory and Georgia, the vast Creek Nation had been home to various native American tribes for centuries. Because there were already numerous settlements in northern Alabama's Tennessee Valley, the federal government concentrated on attracting pioneer families to the less populated southern and western areas of the territory. As a result, the population of the Alabama Territory increased sufficiently enough that President James Monroe signed the enabling act for its statehood, and Alabama was admitted to the Union as the 22nd state on Dec. 14, 1819. By then "Alabama Fever" had spread through Georgia,Tennessee and the Carolinas, and the state's first land rush was underway. One South Carolinian described the phenomenon in an 1817 letter:

> *The Alabama Fever rages here with great violence and has carried off vast numbers of our citizens. I am apprehensive [that] if it continues to spread as it has done, it will almost depopulate the country. Some of our oldest and most wealthy men are offering their possessions for sale and are desirous of removing to the new country. There is no question that this fever is contagious … for as soon as one neighbor visits another who has just returned from Alabama, he immediately discovers the same symptoms which are exhibited by the one who has seen alluring Alabama.*

Maps from the 1820s show Alabama's earliest incorporated towns: Decatur, Huntsville, Tuscumbia, Athens and Florence in the Tennessee Valley; Tuscaloosa, Elyton and Wilsonville in the central part of the state; Montgomery, Centreville, Demopolis, Selma and Cahawba (Cahaba) further south; and Mobile, the southernmost and by far the oldest of all. Most of these towns had originated in the late 1700s as pioneer settlements or trading posts situated on a navigable waterway or post road.

The Englishes journeyed to Alabama about 1820.[10] Alexander was then 64 years old. The decision to leave Chester County probably stemmed from the shortage of good farmland there. Decades of cultivation without crop rotation or fertilization had taken their toll on the soil, reducing the output and quality of crops. For Alexander, a man with four sons who were coming of age and destined to become farmers, the availability of large tracts of public land at affordable prices would have been hard to resist. On the Alabama frontier, his large family would be more likely to remain intact and prosper together.

Setting forth, they traveled with numerous other families in a wagon train guided by a hired wagon master who knew the way. Many members of Mary's extended family are known to have traveled with them.[11] They probably passed

9. At that time, the "old Southwest" consisted of western Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana.

10. No Englishes were listed in the 1820 Chester County census, and there are no corresponding census records for Alabama. The first federal census taken in Alabama occurred in 1820, but only the records for Baldwin, Conecuh, Franklin, Limestone, Shelby and St. Clair counties survive. The youngest of the English children, Mary, was born about that time. Her older siblings ranged in age from six to twenty-one.

11. According to James S.C. English, they were accompanied by Mary's brothers—Samuel, James and William Crawford—who settled in Tuscumbia, Alabama, and southwest Tennessee. Also Mary's sister, who had married a McCoy. Her given name is unknown.

through Athens, then a little college town in north Georgia, before ferrying across the Chattahoochee River in northeast Alabama and traversing the friendly Cherokee Indian territory. Whatever passable dirt roads they used would have eventually given way to Indian horse trails as they neared their Alabama destination. The wagons would have been loaded with the food essential to surviving a long, difficult journey, as well as farming implements, livestock and weapons. More valuable than whatever niceties they carried were the Black men, women and children who accompanied them.

The Englishes' initial destination was most likely Huntsville in Madison County, which was the state's first incorporated town and temporary capital city. A federal land office had opened there in 1811. The long journey ultimately led them to Jefferson County, a hundred miles farther south, where they would have staked their claim to the choicest land they could find—land that promised accessibility and safety, with a reasonably flat terrain, good soil and a source of water.

As the Federal government acquired its western lands, it faced two enormous challenges: attracting settlers whose presence would secure the nation's control of the territory and, then, distributing the public lands among them. There was no shortage of people of modest means willing to brave the frontier, but before the land could be sold, it would have to be surveyed and divided into 40-acre parcels, and that would take years and years. The solution was *preemption,* which allowed the first settlers, as squatters, to stake a claim to unsurveyed public land. After establishing a residence and improving the property, they would be allowed to purchase it once the surveying was completed, thus "preempting" its being auctioned. A series of temporary preemption laws passed by Congress in the 1830s protected the first settlers' homes and farms from speculators and claim jumpers.[12]

Purchasing land was a priority for settlers on the Alabama frontier, and grants were recorded in Alexander English's name in the recently established county named in honor of Thomas Jefferson. He made additional purchases at the land office in Tuscaloosa, probably as investments. One of the Tuscaloosa parcels was jointly purchased with Samuel Caldwell[13] and resold in 1825 at a profit.

A beautiful area of virgin forests, Jefferson County had begun attracting settlers in 1815, five years before the Englishes arrived. Most of the pioneer families came from Tennessee and South Carolina. The Creeks, Choctaws and Cherokees had used the area as a hunting and ceremonial ground, but never established villages there. The most prominent feature of the landscape was Jones's Valley, ranging from four to twelve miles wide. Running from northeast to southwest, it bisects the county. The wide stream flowing through it was labeled Valley Creek on an early map, but became Village Creek once the area was more populated. (Alexander English's farm was located near the creek, north of present-day Birmingham-Southern College.) One of the early residents recalled the settler's life there:

> *The county was subject to great inconvenience in getting supplies such as they could not raise themselves. The land was productive and required little labor to produce the necessaries of life. The woods on both sides of the valley were the hunters' paradise, abounding in deer and turkeys, with some panther and bear and numerous rattlesnakes. We wore long buckskin leggings, reaching from the ankle up to the hips, fastened with brass buttons on each side of the legs all the way up. The winters were not as cold then as now. Cattle and horses were raised in the woods, and afforded all the butter, milk and beef that we needed. What little cotton was made was*

12. The Preemption Act of 1841, devised by Henry Clay, formalized the process: It gave squatters the right to purchase 160 acres of surveyed public land, which they had lived on and cultivated for at least 12 months beforehand, at a minimum price of $1.25 per acre. Revenues from sales were distributed among the states to finance internal improvements.

13. Samuel Caldwell was most likely another relative of Mary Crawford English (and possibly John C. Calhoun).

hauled to the falls of Black Warrior, as Tuscaloosa was then called, and exchanged for salt, sugar, coffee and calico, which was then twenty-five cents per yard.

I think the people enjoyed themselves then much better than they do now. They would meet at public places every Saturday and play 'Fives'—a game much more manly and interesting than the present game of baseball. When they got too drunk to play ball, they would fight on the real Marquis of Queensbury style, and each man would select a second, strip to the waist, and go into a lot or ring and fight it out. It was very seldom that any weapons were used, as it was considered dishonorable and cowardly to carry a weapon.

The country between Jones Valley and the Warrior River, and on the south side to the Cahaba River, was full of game. On the north side there were but few settlers. The south side was almost entirely uninhabited. The Warrior and Cahaba Rivers were then beautiful streams, clear as crystal, in which you could see a fish in ten feet of water. The fisherman in his canoe, dug out of a poplar tree, with his gig in his hand and his rifle lying beside him, ready for a deer if he should venture in sight, with the muscadine vines hanging in festoons from the tops of tall trees that overhung the water with their clusters of black, delicious fruit, and the most beautiful red-horse fish sporting beneath his canoe, with their silver sides and red fins and tails, in the most desirable and healthful climate in the United States, the thirty-third degree of north latitude, almost entirely free of cyclones and northers...

Where mountains meet plains at the southern edge of the Appalachians, the county's mineral-rich soil limited agriculture to mostly small farms, making the ownership of slaves impractical. In time the area became known as "hill billy" country. The term *hillbilly* can be traced to Scotland, where it described Scottish Presbyterians who'd fled to the hills to avoid persecution. In the 1700s, immigrants from Scotland and Ulster brought that term to America to denote people who dwelt in rural, mountainous areas.

In the county's first two years, Carrollsville (present-day Powderly), a village on the road linking Tuscaloosa and Huntsville, served as its seat. (Huntsville was then the temporary state capital.) Soon, the U.S. Congress allocated 2,560 acres three miles north of Carrollsville to the Connecticut Asylum for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb for the development of a similar facility to serve the young state. William Ely, an attorney representing the asylum, traveled from Hartford to Jefferson County in 1820. Describing the site, then called Frog Level, as "broken, poor, and barren," he advised the Connecticut Asylum board to sell the property. The land fetched a respectable sum, ranging from $15 to $100 per acre, and Ely donated several acres for a courthouse and jail. That was enough to warrant renaming the town in his honor.

Elyton had originated as a trading post where a post road crossed the Huntsville road. The town grew up around a limestone spring that formed a deep pool fifteen feet across. In 1821, Elyton's population numbered around 300, and two small plantations were taking shape on the edge of town.[14] The countryside around Elyton was less suitable for cultivating cotton than Indian corn and sweet potatoes, as well as milk cows and swine. In time, three Pony Express and stagecoach lines—the Huntsville, Georgia, and Montevallo Roads—would intersect there, facilitating connections between the state's northern and southern counties, as well as its eastern and western regions. Wagons passing through transported mail, cotton, corn and goods destined for shipment on steamboats on Alabama

14. In 1822, Stephen Hall acquired 17 acres at Elyton on which he built a two-storied frame house. William S. Mudd, a young lawyer, acquired the property and forty adjacent acres at public auction in 1842 and named his plantation The Grove. He expanded the original home to create the colonnaded mansion of eight rooms that survived the Civil War and still stands. It was renamed Arlington in the early twentieth century. In 1824, Samuel Earle established his forty-acre Earle-Greene plantation and constructed a large mansion in the Greek Revival style with elaborate Corinthian columns. It was razed in the early 1940s to make way for a housing project.

waterways. Even so, Elyton was scarcely known beyond the fifty-mile radius of its trading territory.

The Englishes were Presbyterians, and in the early 1820s, there were but two Presbyterian churches in Alabama, one in Huntsville and another in Tuscaloosa. (The first Presbyterian church in Jefferson County would be organized in 1829, and the Elyton Presbytery was formed in 1832.) By then, the English children were beginning to come of age. The weddings of the two eldest—23-year-old Jane and 25-year-old John—were civil ceremonies, certified by a justice of the peace.[15] Jane married James Alexander Walker on April 17, 1823, officiated by James Rutledge, and John's marriage to Rebecca Jane Nabors followed on Dec. 23, 1824.

By 1830, the county's population had reached 6,855.[16] At age seventy-five, Alexander English had lived half his life in an Ulster town engaged, like most people there, in the production of cloth, and the latter half as a farmer on the American frontier.[17] The journey that began in Belfast ended in the young state of Alabama. Looking to the sky one clear, still night in November 1833, he would have witnessed the spectacular Leonid meteor shower, when more than 30,000 meteors an hour bombarded Earth's atmosphere. It was a terrifying phenomenon remembered as "the night the stars fell."[18]

Aware as Alexander must have been that his years were numbered, he could take pride in having fathered eight children who would reach adulthood and seeing that they learned to read and write. There was no question that his sons would become farmers and his daughters would marry farmers. By 1830, there were already six grandchildren. That year's federal census for Jefferson County lists Alexander as the owner of eleven slaves, only four of them males over the age of ten.[19] The census indicates that the John C. English and James A. Walker families lived close to each other, although at a distance from Alexander, Mary and the remaining children. The family most likely cultivated a modest crop of cotton in addition to corn and other food crops, which would have been transported sixty miles to the market at Tuscaloosa.[20]

Early in the decade, the family experienced its first great sorrow with the death of Sallie English. Most of her brothers and sisters would honor her by giving her name to one of their daughters. Naming newborns after a respected relative was one of the familial traditions the colonists had brought from their homelands. Another was *primogeniture law*. In England and her North American colonies, the eldest son typically inherited the entire estate of his parents, leaving the other children to make it on their own. Although America's independence would eventually result in the law's repeal, the eldest son continued to occupy an elevated position in most families. So it appears to have been with John English when, in 1833, Alexander deeded "a gift to my son John's oldest son James and to his second son Alexander and to his third son Francis [Franklin]." The three grandsons, each no older than eight years, received a child of one of Alexander's slaves. He went on to instruct that "if certain slave has any more children, they are to be divided among the rest of John's children." No such gift went to either of Jane English Walker's sons. John was clearly the favored child, the blessed son.

15. John English served as a justice of the peace from 1824 to 1826, officiating at numerous weddings.

16. About 5,100 were white, and 1,700 Black.

17. Alexander was defiantly old. The average life expectancy of a male child born in 1755 was only 34 years.

18. The *Florence Gazette* described "thousands of luminous bodies shooting across the firmament in every direction. There was little wind and not a trace of clouds, and the meteors succeeded each other in quick succession."

19. According to the federal census of 1830, Alexander's slaves included one male, aged 24 to 35 years; three males, 10 to 23; three males under 10; two females, 24 to under 36; and two females under 10.

20. Fast-growing Tuscaloosa on the Black Warrior River became the state capital in 1826, and a school that would eventually become the University of Alabama was founded there five years later.

The second oldest son, James Crawford English, was the family's outlier, the first of the second generation to light out on his own. He relocated to Tuscumbia, 115 miles northwest of Elyton, where his mother's brother and sister had settled. Tuscumbia was then the center for agriculture in northern Alabama. There on Dec. 7, 1834, he married Sarah "Sally" Whitford.

Alex, his next younger brother, also cast his eyes beyond Jefferson County. Unmarried and apparently growing restless, he staked a claim to 120 acres in Pickens County, ninety miles west of Elyton in 1835. While land there was plentiful and cheap, the combination of sandy plains and wetlands made it less than ideal for farming.

The English family of ten had remained intact until the death of Sallie and the departure of James. Just when it appeared that the children might scatter, the federal government signed a treaty with the Muskogee Creek Indians that created a new frontier in eastern Alabama—and gave the family a new outlook.

THE MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

Early maps of the United States showed what was labeled as "Creek Nation" separating Alabama and Georgia. These five million acres had been inhabited by Native Americans for more than two thousand years and to a loose confederation of Muskogee Creek tribes for centuries.[21] Although sometimes described as "savages," they were, in fact, civilized, peace-loving farmers and hunters with a highly developed culture and tribal organization.

In 1830, William Linn Lewis, an adventurous, 22-year-old schoolteacher, journeyed from Chester County, South Carolina, to Alabama. Two years later, after teaching on the state's western frontier, he arrived in the western area of the Creek Nation known as Talladega. White men—primarily trappers and traders with names like McGillivray, MacIntosh and Weatherford—had lived there among the Creek Indians for half a century.[22] In his memoirs, Lewis wrote about the Indians:

> *The countryside, when the Indians possessed it was divided into towns similar to our beats. Then each town had a town house in which they held meetings to deliberate and discuss matters of public interest. The town house was made of a circular form, 30 or 40 feet in diameter. Suitable poles were procured for the purpose. These poles were let into a circular ditch 18 inches deep and, about four feet from the ground, were cut into until they could bend the tops to the center, all being bent until their tops lapped and formed the coverings. An entrance was left to enter on the ground. There was no fireplace.*
>
> *Each town had a chief, and the office was hereditary. Many of their customs differed from those of the whites; they did not lay wood side by side in making a fire, but end to end, and as the ends were consumed, they moved them together until the entire log or stick was entirely consumed. They would let their ponies run on the grass until the first of June to fatten and then would plow and plant their corn patches. They planted a smooth, hard-grained corn, known in my early days as hominy corn, very prolific, three or four stalks in a hill, and it would yield two or three ears on each stalk and be in roasting ear by the 20th of July. When matured, ready for housing, they would shuck it and put it in their cribs, which were raised on posts five or six feet long, the sills, or first timber, laid on top of the posts. Their little cribs were four or five feet by six*

21. Because the Muscogee tribesmen resided along the area's numerous streams, white settlers called them Creek Indians.

22. They often married into the Creek aristocracy, and their sons, men like William MacIntosh and Jim Fife, would became important Creek chieftains, owing to their mothers' status in that matrilineal society.

feet in length, the corners neatly finished off and the crib well covered. They would lay a row of ears carefully all around and another on top of that, and so on, until all was put in with the regularity of brick-work. This corn was beaten in mortars with a pestle until reduced to coarse grits, then boiled in water, not thick but thin like gruel. If they had fresh beef or game, it was cut into small pieces nearly an inch square and boiled with the corn, making a broth. This they called sofka. *They would pour it out into a round bowl or tray, 15 inches in diameter and five inches deep, and eat with a bowl that would hold more than a gill [4 fl. oz.] and had a handle 15 inches long. The first one would take this spoon by the end of the handle and raise it up with the spoon lengthwise, directly in front of him, turn his head back and drop the contents of the spoon into his mouth opened wide enough to receive it. Then with a peculiar sling, he would throw the handle of the spoon round to the next person, who would go through the same motions as the first, and so on to the last one, and continue so on until finished, all using the one spoon. They would kindly invite any stranger present to partake with them.*

They trained their children to swim from infancy, and all—men, women and children—became expert in the art of swimming. I have seen children five or six years old swim across Cheaha Creek where it was thirty feet wide.

They were expert with bow and arrow. You might split a stick at the end so you could put a dime in the split, and stick the end in the ground so that the dime would be three feet above the ground. A crowd of ten or twelve small Indians would commence shooting at the dime, and probably the dime would be knocked out before more than six shot at it. And he that was fortunate enough to knock it out claimed the dime as his and would run and pick it up and pocket it. The crowd would scatter across the creek and proceed wading up the creek, shouting and hollering, and would shoot their arrows at every fish they saw, and after proceeding three or four miles would come out with a string of fish two and a half or three feet long, of various sizes from six to twelve inches in length.

They were very skillful in the use of the blowgun, which was made of canes of an inch in diameter, having the joints bored out very smooth so as to afford no resistance to the arrow which was made of hard, rich lightwood shaved very small and sharp pointed at the smaller end, and at the larger end wrapped with a tuft of feathers or wool, or something light and elastic for about three inches, which would prevent the passage of air and still afford but little resistance to the passage of the arrow. After inserting the arrow within the cane, they would blow it out in the direction of the object aimed at. I have seen them shoot jaybirds and other small birds about the yard on the shade trees. They would get directly under the bird and shoot upward, and with great precision. It was said they could kill squirrels out of high trees.

I witnessed the breaking of a young horse to ride by leading him into the creek where it was belly deep, to the side of a rock, which the Indian would get on and from it jump on the horse's back and ride up and down the creek. I thought it an ingenious mode as the depth of water prevented much plunging of the horse.

The Indians, although very nimble and quick in his motions, could walk or run more safely than the whites and were expert and skillful in the use of weapons, such as the bow and arrow, the tomahawk and even the firearms, yet in wrestling, they were easily thrown down. I found that out by engaging in a playful scuffle with some of the stoutest and most muscular of the men, and could throw them down as easily as whites or blacks of 15 years of age who had been trained some in the practice.

All Indians are of a deep copper color with long, black, coarse hair, eyes similar in color—not blue, gray or black, as among the whites—of a dark brown. When mixed by intermarrying with whites, some of the

quarteroons and octoroons have the same dark copper complexion which characterized the full-blooded Indians, whilst other members of the same family would be as fair and clear in their complexions as any of the whites—but having eyes that would indicate Indian blood, of which they would boast and appear to be proud, especially the females—but like young ladies of the whites, not always mean what they say.

Their language was intermixed with grunts and groans and signs made with the hands—no words to express north or south, east or west. They would point in the direction to indicate the course. They would use the object before the verb, and to give emphasis would use the affix cha. *For example:* eche geargis—*"tobacco we want it." Or* eche geargischa—*"I want it very much." For such things as were introduced by the whites, such as whiskey. they would call by the name that the whites did. It was amusing to hear them try to curse like the whites.*

They were much puzzled to know why, when you turned the sights of the compass in any direction, the needle would always point north and south, and not turn with the compass. To state to them that the diurnal motion of the earth produced the succession of day and night, and that the sun stood still, they would exclaim Logus soolga dacha—*"a prodigious big lie."*

They traveled on the road in single file, one behind the other, men first or foremost, the squaws behind the men, and the children in the rear. They had no baby carriages, but the mother would tie up her papoose or pickaninny in a basket, with the corners tied together and swing it over her head and carry it as a soldier his knapsack. They were very taciturn in their manners and scarcely had anything to say to each other as they traveled on the road or trail.

The green-corn dance was a kind of thanksgiving festival that was observed when their corn got into roasting-ear state. The squaws danced around in a circular path with a slow shuffling of the feet. On their legs above the ankle, they confined rattles, which made a continual jingle in motion. The men were more violent in their movements, leaping and dancing with many maneuvers. They used a drink called "black drink," made of herbs or the bark of shrubs, which produced violent vomiting and had a tendency to cleanse their stomach and system. And the men sacrificed themselves, on their arms, legs and bodies so as to bleed profusely. They danced continuously three or four days.

The federal government had tolerated an uneasy coexistence with the mostly peaceful Indians until the 1803 Louisiana Purchase cleared the way for the United States to double in size. This enormous area beyond the Mississippi River not only provided land for settlement but also what amounted to a dumping ground for "undesirables." When the federal government could no longer contain its unbridled lust for the Creek Indian land, they coerced the tribal chiefs into signing the 1832 Treaty of Cusseta that ceded the remainder of the Creek territory east of the Mississippi River to the United States. As Andrew Jackson, then serving his first term as President, explained it to the tribal representatives:

Where ['my red children'] now are, they and my white children are too near each other to live in harmony and peace.… Beyond the great River Mississippi, your Father has provided a country large enough for all of you, and he advises you to remove to it. There your white brothers will not trouble you; they will have no claim to the land, and you can live upon it, you and all your children, as long as the grass grows or the water runs, in peace and plenty. It will be yours forever.

Officially, the treaty only "advised" the Indians to leave their Alabama lands, and its specifics appeared equally benevolent, stipulating that the ninety leading chiefs were each allowed to select one section of their Alabama land (one square mile, containing 640 acres), and every head of a Creek family would receive an additional half-section. The

Indians could then retain their land or sell it, making the purchaser a fee-simple title with the contract of sale approved and certified by the local U.S. agent. In effect, more than two million acres would be surveyed and reserved for those tribesmen who wished to stay. Provisions halted white settlers from entering the area until after the Indians had selected their lands, and in the event that settlers were already farming on a chosen piece of land, they were to be removed as soon as their current crops were gathered. But there were no means for actually enforcing these latter clauses of the treaty. As a result, more settlers poured in, and the wholesale robbery of the Indian land continued. The Creek chiefs and family heads petitioned the governor of Alabama to protect them from the greed of the land grabbers, but he dismissed their plea with the excuse that he was powerless to help defend their interests. According to the treaty, the Indian was not obligated to migrate westward unless he so desired, but, in fact, the federal government's ultimate intention was to deport the entire Indian population.

On Dec. 18, 1832, the Alabama legislature carved nine counties from its majority portion of the former Muskogee Creek Nation—Coosa, Benton (later Calhoun), Talladega, Tallapoosa, Russell, Randolph, Chambers, Macon and Barbour—opening millions of acres to the second wave of "Alabama fever." Lewis remembered what followed:

> *During the year 1833, the lands of the Creek Nation were surveyed and reservations allotted to each [Indian] family, as was stipulated in the treaty made with the government of the United States. Each chief was allowed a section of good land, and each wife that he had was allowed 320 acres, or a half section. Some of the chiefs had as many as three wives. Each head of a family, whether man or widow, was allowed a half section, and when it could be done, the reservations would include their dwelling, and if not, the reservation was to be located as near to where the Indian lived as good land could be found. Locating agents were appointed by the President of the United States, and it was their duty to locate the reservations, register the Indians' names and describe the land by the number of the section, township and range. Each Indian had the right to cultivate or sell his land. The remaining land not taken by reservation belonged to the general government, to be sold at public sale or to be entered after being offered and not sold.*
>
> *In the year of 1834-35, most of the Indians sold their reservations to the whites, who had settled in the Creek Nation, or to speculators, of whom there were numerous companies. The Indians, having sold their lands and obtained the money for them, had quite a jolly time until their money was all spent. They generally had a poor idea of the purchasing value of money and consequently paid exorbitant prices for anything they bought. It was a rich harvest for merchants and other traders. The first thing after selling their land was to buy a fine pacing horse, and he was soon broken down by hard riding and rough usage, and then sold at a great sacrifice. The Indians had a jolly time until they expended the money for which they had sold their lands, and there was but little money among them. … In the latter part of 1835, the emigration agents collected them into camps at suitable places and furnished them rations until they were ready in the spring of 1836 to migrate to lands set apart for them west of the Mississippi.*

In 1909, Judge J. Wellington Vandiver (1850–1934), a Talladega historian, wrote:

> *The Indian was no longer war-like. His power had been broken eighteen years before the birth of the county. [Andrew] Jackson had whipped the tribes into submission, and the liquor and civilization of the pale-face had made useful citizens of them—useful to the whites. … From 1814—the year their power as warriors was irretrievably broken by Jackson—down to 1835, the Indians had made feeble, desultory attempts to till the soil, to adopt the dress and customs of the white man and, in many instances, sent their children to white schools. … We divested the Indian in Alabama of the princely domain his forefathers inhabited… This enrichment of the guileless savage with salable land made him an easy mark for the unscrupulous trader of that time. From every*

point of the compass low-browed con men, bunco speculators, land sharks, avaricious liars, greedy perjurers, swindlers of every variety, kind and character came like vultures to feed upon the carcass of the conquered red men. Corruption, collusion and fraud ruled the hour. The simple Indian was as a child in the hand of the glib, unscrupulous land-hunting shark, and often the domain of a kingdom was purchased for a bauble.

Alabama's twenty-two thousand Muscogee Creek Indians (along with their estimated 900 Negro slaves) were forcefully escorted from their homeland. They would be remembered only by the names they had given the rivers, creeks and villages they left behind.

EASTWARD FROM JEFFERSON COUNTY TO TALLADEGA COUNTY

Reversing the usual direction of American migration, on Jan. 19, 1835, eighty-year-old Alexander English purchased land in upper Talladega County, about sixty air miles east of Elyton. He would buy a second parcel in 1836, for a total of 802 acres. Richer farmland might have provided incentive enough for the family to pull up stakes from the land they had farmed for fifteen years. Or Alexander's eldest son and son-in-law may have initiated the move in hopes of securing a more promising future for their growing young families. It's also possible that they were aware of the many settlers from Chester County who were relocating to upper Talladega County. What William Linn Lewis had reported in letters to his family and friends back home had undoubtedly encouraged many of them to follow him there.[23] The prospect of settling in the former Indian territory was promising enough that 28-year-old Alex English sold or abandoned his land in Pickens County. So, with the exception of James, the family—Alexander, Mary, three sons, three daughters, one son-in-law, one daughter-in-law, ten grandchildren and numerous Negro slaves—began the move.

Access to the former Creek Nation was limited. As there was no useful road leading eastward from Elyton, the family would have traveled south through Shelby County before ferrying the Coosa River near present-day Childersburg to enter southwest Talladega County, then continued north on the McIntosh Trace wagon road. Relocating three households over 80 miles of rough country roads was a daunting undertaking, and it appears that the Englishes made the move in stages over the better part of a year.

Alexander had purchased two contiguous parcels of land in Township 17 from speculators rather than from the U.S. government:

- The south part of the south half, Section 28 (162 acres), from William Easley[24] for $2,000.
- Section 27 (640 acres or one square mile), from Alvis Q. Nicks, David C. and Ann Connor, and James and Margaret Hall for $5,500.

This was enough land to establish a *plantation*. By definition, antebellum plantations were self-sufficient settlements of at least 500 acres that relied on a large enslaved workforce to produce only one or two cash crops. They were presided over by *planters*, with hired *overseers* conducting the day-to-day work of managing the slaves. This way of life had originated in colonial Virginia and the Carolinas, where a small minority of the early planters managed, over time, to build elegant mansions on their vast estates. Planters in the Deep

23. Among the settlers from Chester was the entire family of William Linn Lewis's uncle Alexander Lewis. Margaret Rose Lewis, one of Alexander's daughters and a cousin of William Linn Lewis, would marry into the English family.

24. Easley was one of the county's original settlers, notable for being its first elected tax collector, first census taker, a road builder and county sheriff.

South have been similarly characterized as men of wealth who lived extravagantly in lavishly furnished, monumental, columned homes, but this was rarely the case. Their wealth lay primarily in the property they owned—namely, land and enslaved workers—not in hard, expendable cash. As agriculturalists dependent on good weather and fair market prices, their livlihood was as economically tenuous as their farmer neighbors'. Those settlers who arrived in Talladega County in the mid 1830s with the means and determination to establish a plantation focused first on cultivating their land, then on improving their residences. As a result, most of their homes remained relatively modest. They would live there as planters for only 25 years before the Civil War and Emancipation brought the antebellum era to an abrupt end.

But Alexander English was a *farmer*, not a planter, and it appears that he intended the 802 acres to eventually be divided among his children as separate farms. Alexander paid $7,500 for the land, an astronomical price most likely due to its provenance. Alvis Q. Nicks[25] was the attorney for the Creek Nation appointed by President Andrew Jackson to locate the head of each Creek family on his promised land. In May 1834, Nicks had bought the square-mile "reservation" of Chief Isfarne Yoholo and evidently sold it to Alexander English six months later. This was the property on which Andrew Jackson and his Tennessee Militia had camped before the Battle of Talladega on Nov. 9, 1813, and Yoholo went on to serve the United States as a private in Walker's Regiment during Jackson's first campaign against the Florida Seminoles in 1818. The Creek chief spoke English and had adapted many of the white man's ways; his ownership of five slaves indicates that he farmed his land. But the terms of Nicks's original purchase came with a stipulation: It allowed "the aforesaid Indian to live upon the same, and to cultivate his fields, as he has heretofore done, as long as he may wish to do the same." This may explain the additional $500 that Alexander English later paid Nicks: to persuade Yoholo to release all rights to the land. By the time the Englishes arrived, Yoholo and his kin had been expelled to the western territory.

In 1836, Texas won its independence from Mexico as the Republic of Texas, a new nation separate from the United States. James C. English had remained in north Alabama, untempted to follow his parents, brothers and sisters to Talladega County, but the lure of land in east Texas, practically free for the asking, proved irresistible. He, his wife Sarah and two infant daughters joined the mighty wave of settlers headed west. Such a brave move echoed his father's migration from South Carolina to Alabama sixteen years earlier.

UPPER TALLADEGA COUNTY: THE LAY OF THE LAND

Maps of the Alabama Territory from as early as 1818 show "Talladega" as one of the few settlements within the Creek Nation, its name derived from *Talatigi*, a prominent Creek village. Translated from the Muskogee language as "town on the edge," Talatigi marked the western border of the Creek lands.

Jabez L.M. Curry[26] was thirteen years old in 1838 when his family sold their plantation near Augusta, Georgia, and

25. Nicks has been described as a scoundrel who showed no scruples in using his government-appointed position to acquire great wealth, "much of which he spent on drink and carousing." He went on to represent Talladega County in the State Legislature and was a candidate for governor in 1853. One of the partners in his land-grabbing schemes was David Connor, a county commissioner who built Talladega's first hotel on the southwest corner of the town square.

26. By any measure of greatness, Curry led an extraordinary life. A Harvard-educated lawyer, he went on to become a representative in the Alabama Legislature, a U.S. Congressman, a Confederate Congressman, a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army, president of Howard College (present-day Samford University), a professor at the University of Richmond (Virginia), an ordained Baptist minister and U.S. Ambassador to Spain. As a young lawyer in Talladega County, he represented the English family.

moved to upper Talladega County. Years later, he described what they found there:

> *The almost unparalleled beauty of the country, its fertility and healthfulness, the attractive hunting and fishing, the proximity to white settlements began to attract adventurous emigrants as early as 1832. During the pioneer period, say, for ten years, the migration was brisk and continuous. … It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the loveliness of the Eden. The numerous streams originating in, or fed from, cold springs, were so clear and pure that liquid crystal would be an imperfect simile. In spring and summer the valleys and hillsides were covered with luxuriant grapes. Strawberries and wild fruit abounded; deer, squirrels, partridges, wild turkeys, wolves and other game were plentiful. Sometimes droves of wild pigeons, thousands and thousands in number, would pass for days, and where they roosted would break off great branches from the trees.*
>
> *The frontier community was a democracy, and furnished valuable discipline. Rich and poor met on equal terms of equality. Ancestry counted for little. Pretensions and sham were despised. The dude was unknown. Character, worth, was the stamp which gave currency. Unbounded hospitality was a necessity and a privilege. Neighbors slept in one another's beds, ate at one another's tables. … Those who lived near together assisted in clearing ground, rolling logs, building houses, cradling wheat, shucking corn. Generous succor was constantly given, knowing it would be returned in good measure.*

Lying east of the Coosa River, Talladega County is blessed with numerous creeks and springs. The outstanding geographical feature of the upper county is Choccolocco Creek, a tributary of the Coosa that snakes its way across the hilly, woodland valley. While spring-fed creeks were plentiful throughout the county, Choccolocco was more than a creek: In 1540, the Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto observed it flowing into the Coosa River and identified it as a river. It abounded in fish and fresh-water oysters. The Creek Indians gave the stream its name: *Chahkolago,* which meant "big shoals," perhaps a reference to its being wide and comparatively shallow.

Whatever paths and roads the first settlers traveled had their beginnings long before the Indians arrived. Deer, bears, wolves and buffalo were the original pathfinders. When migrating and hunting, they instinctively followed the course that afforded the least resistance. Their trails led over the most level terrain to the shallow place where a stream could be forded, to the lowest passage through a mountain range, to the places where food and water were bountiful, as well as those areas where danger was minimal. When the Muskogee Creek Indians arrived, they established their villages along these animal trails, close to springs and streams. Then came the first white traders and adventurers on horseback, decades ahead of the settlers who arrived with wagons and livestock. Each group's arrival altered the native landscape until the well-traveled trails had become roads as much as twelve feet wide and cleared of stumps and other obstructions. These early roads created over time by the passage of animals, people and vehicles were known as *traces.*

In upper Talladega County, the first settlers found three well-defined roads: McIntosh Trace, Jackson Trace and one known only as Taletecab. These appear on the earliest maps. McIntosh Trace, the oldest, was a segment of the ancient Indian foot trail that led from Mississippi to the Atlantic coast of South Carolina. In the early 1800s, William McIntosh, the half-breed chief of the Lower Creek Indians, had the trail widened as a wagon road linking the primary Creek villages. McIntosh Trace, as it became known, diagonally traversed the county from southwest to northeast.

As the gateway for settlers to the county, it originated at Kymulga Ferry on the eastern bank of the Coosa River near present-day Childersburg and continued to its terminus on the Chattahoochee River in present-day Carroll County, Georgia—a distance of about a hundred miles.

The site for Talladega County's seat of government was selected two years after was established. It was inevitable that

it would be located somewhere along McIntosh Trace. After some debate, the spot chosen was near the site of Talatigi village, where Andrew Jackson claimed victory in the Battle of Talladega twenty years earlier. In addition to its historical legacy, this area had a large spring that could provide enough water to meet the new town's immediate needs. As buildings went up around a town square, merchants, speculators and settlers rushed to stake their claims to property along McIntosh Trace for miles in both directions. (Today, State Hwy. 21 follows most of the McIntosh Trace route through Talladega County.)

Jackson Trace, with a much shorter history, had served an entirely different purpose. In the War of 1812, which lasted three years, General Andrew Jackson led the Tennessee Militia deep into the Creek Nation to do battle with the hostile tribes that were terrorizing white settlements there. In 1813, at Ten Islands on the upper Coosa River, Jackson's troops built Fort Strother, a stockade that would serve as the general's headquarters. From there, they cut a road southward, crossing Choccolocco Creek, to Talatigi. Near the Indian settlement, 120 friendly Creek Indians and 17 white settlers were under siege, having taken shelter in a stockade and facing as many as 700 hostile Creeks. These militant tribesmen, known as Red Sticks, were no match for Jackson and his army, said to number two thousand. The Battle of Talladega in 1813 marked the beginning of Jackson's campaign southward to the Tallapoosa River, where the Battle of Horseshoe Bend brought the Creek War to an end. The military route his men cut through the woodland from Fort Strother to Horseshoe Bend came to be known as Jackson Trace. (Running north to south, segments of it are still designated as Jackson Trace Road today.)

East of Jackson Trace, another north-south road ran between McIntosh Trace and Choccolocco Creek. The Indians who created it called it Taletecab, but surveyors mapping the new county in the 1830s identified it as "Public Road." As shown on a map from 1836, its original destination appears to have been Fife,[27] a community on the north side of the creek where Chief Jim Fife operated a trading post. That same map shows "Kelly's Springs P.O." as the road's southern terminus at McIntosh Trace, indicating that the population of the upper county was already well enough established in 1836 to warrant mail delivery.[28] A post office had been established at Kelly's Springs in August 1833, with letters transported by Pony Post. After 1835, a stage coach stopped there once and eventually three times each week.The road was eventually named Curry Station Road, a reference to the Curry family's general store and post office at Kelly's Springs. It was the fortunate farmer who happened to purchase land along Curry Station Road. The Englishes were among them.

Settlers continued to arrive—some to farm, others to practice their trade or profession—and as a way of life developed, the new county's elected leaders made a priority of building roads that linked farms and communities with the outlying mills, churches and general stores. Eastaboga Road was one of these early constructed roads. It's located midway between Jackson Trace and Curry Station Road, also running from McIntosh Trace to Choccolocco Creek. In his history of the county, Judge Vandiver described its locale as the site of the original Creek village "in the beautiful valley fringing the road to Turner's Mill, near the McClellan place and between there and Jemison's Mill place, from four to six miles northwest of Talladega."

27. Chief Jim Fife, the son of a white trader and Creek chief's daughter, had been an ally of Andrew Jackson and a heroic figure of the Creek Wars. Fife's trading post on Choccolocco Creek was known as the Old Brick Store. The community bearing Fife's name continued to appear on maps until the late 1870s.

28. Within a few years, maps showed the still unnamed public road extending westward above Choccolocco Creek, merging with Jackson Trace and continuing about twenty miles northward to Ten Islands on the Coosa River. It was only north of Ten Islands that the Coosa was navigable for large steamboats, which traveled from the Greensport Landing there to Rome, Georgia. The launch of the first steamboat in 1845 was a festive event that drew crowds from Talladega and the surrounding countryside. Consequently, the public road was called Greensport Road for a number of years.

Silently overlooking the rolling hills and forests of the upper county is Mount Cheaha, one of the final southern segments of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The settlers would not have realized that, rising to 2,407 feet above sea level, Mount Cheaha is the highest natural point in the state. To them, it was a nameless distant mountain of no particular use.

THE 1830s: A FRESH BEGINNING

Most of the settlers came from Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas. They typically built their original home from the logs of trees felled on their property, also constructing various outbuildings and housing for any Negro slaves. Just as urgent as setting up a household was the need to begin clearing the land for farming. But the English family had purchased the established property of a chieftain who employed slave labor for farming. This would have given them a head start in establishing a working farm. Alexander is said to have purchased an additional four slaves after arriving in Talladega County.

There are no records indicating that John English or Jane English's husband James Walker purchased properties in their own names. It appears likely that they built homes somewhere on the land that Alexander had purchased.

The youngest of the English boys, 25-year-old William, chose to homestead a 120-acre site that straddled the public road just north of his father's properties. Homesteading required William to live on the land for two years before it would be registered in his name. In 1835, the U.S. government's failed attempts to forcefully relocate the Seminole Indians from its Florida Territory resulted in the Second Seminole War. On March 1836, a company was raised in Talladega County, and William English enlisted as a private, one of the 750 men from Alabama under the command of Col. William Chisholm. They were among the first militia brigades to reach central Florida. It was the English family's first brush with war, and in November, Alex wrote to his brother James with news that William was dead—more than likely a victim of disease than of battle. The deed for his 120 acres was issued in August 1837, and Alexander English inherited his son's property. (It would later be divided and sold to his son-in-law James Walker and neighbor Robert Jemison.)

That left the unmarried children—30-year-old Alex and his two younger sisters, Lizzie (21) and Mary (15)—living with Alexander and Mary at what would become the family's home place. From Russell County, James English wrote to his brother Alex in December 1836: "You mentioned in your letter that you had intended to come to see us but on account of the health of Father & Mother you did not know whether it would be in your power to leave home or not. I have been in hopes their health had got better…" Alex had evidently assumed responsibility for his elderly parents and for building the farm.

The former Indian territory had opened to settlers without churches or schools. Most of the settlers in the upper county were Presbyterians of Scottish descent, and in March 1837, the Marble Springs Presbyterian Church was established by the Rev. Robert Holman. Its simple meeting house was built near Choccolocco Creek, about four miles northwest of the English family farm, and four members of the founding congregation of nine were Englishes: Samuel Alexander English (the only record of his full name), his wife Mary and their daughters Elizabeth (Lizzie) English and Jane English Walker. (Margaret Lewis, another charter member, would later marry Alexander and Mary's son Alex.) In time, Marble Springs grew to have the largest membership of the county's Presbyterian churches.

Samuel Alexander English's time in Talladega County would be brief. He was 82 years old when he died later in 1837. His place of burial is unknown. As an immigrant, he had arrived empty-handed in this foreign land before

marrying and establishing a family. At the time of his death, six of his and Mary's eight children were living; half of them were married.

The Englishes were no doubt acquainted with some of the settlers from South Carolina, particularly Alexander and Amaritta Lewis. Said to have been neighbors in Chester County, the two families arrived at about the same time and purchased land in the upper county. Alexander Lewis, a Quaker by birth, was then sixty years old. He was a farmer of modest ambition, having never bothered to acquire enough land or slaves to make a living from farming. It was most likely the encouragement of his school teacher nephew, William Linn Lewis, that brought the Lewises and their five children to upper Talladega County. The English and Lewis families were formally united in Nov. 1838 when Alex English married one of the Lewis daughters, Margaret Rose.

Another family, the Bests—five brothers and a sister—had also migrated from Chester County. Nancy Bell Best and her husband Robert Walker McElhenny became charter members of the Marble Springs Church, where they got to know the English family. Nancy's two youngest brothers would marry into the English family: Thomas Lee Best to Lizzie English in Dec. 1838; Isaac Newton Best to Mary C. English three years later.[29] With Mary's marriage, all six of Alexander and Mary English's surviving children were wed and engaged in establishing families of their own.

LIFE IN ANTEBELLUM TALLADEGA COUNTY

The dominant landowners in the upper county were Robert Jemison and Jabez Curry, Sr. The two families established adjoining plantations immediately south of the English family's property on what was known as the Public Road, instantly becoming the valley's wealthiest, most prominent citizens. In the years that followed, Jemison continued to acquire land in the surrounding countryside. In 1834, he was permitted to "raise a head of water nine feet on Che-ha-ha Creek,"[30] that is a dam, in order to construct a grist mill for making flour and a saw mill for lumber. They were most likely the first mills in the county that were legally sanctioned. Jemison called his enormous plantation Sunnyside, and the surrounding community would be variously known as Sunnyside and Kelly's Springs. Curry opened a general store on his plantation. It was designated as a post office, and the Public Road would eventually be named Curry Station Road.

Judge Vandiver, the son of a doctor, was only a boy in the final years of what he remembered as the county's "golden age." His memoir romanced the plantation life and culture: "The 'big house' of the plantation, with its Corinthian pillars and the white pigeons fluttering down through the sunshine, stood in the midst of a flower yard, back of this were the Negro cabins filled with fat, well-fed darkeys, while fields of cotton and corn stretched away to the green hills. The old homes were filled with happy guests, who danced and made merry from house to house each weekend. It was a land of mint juleps, pretty women and fast horses, picnics and barbecues, camp meetings and turkey-suppers [where] hospitality was free and abundant."

From the county's beginning, a large Negro population furnished the labor essential to building homes, cultivating the soil and harvesting the crops. Vandiver may have referred to the plantation enslaved as "fat, well-fed darkeys,"

29. The connection between the English and Best families ran even further: Another of the Best brothers, Joshua, married Mary Celine Lewis, the sister of Margaret Rose Lewis English. In 1850, Joshua and Celine would move from Talladega County to DeSoto Parish in northeastern Louisiana.

30. The stream that flowed across the Jemison and English properties came to be known as Cheaha Creek, and the nearby mountain was eventually named Mount Cheaha. It is the highest point in the state. The area where the Englishes lived is sometimes referred to as the Cheaha Valley. The Muscogee word *Che-ha-ha,* is said to mean "little potato."

but in retrospect confessed the inhumanity of their circumstances:

> *The servants took pride in the courtesies and standing of the families and entertained a mighty contempt for 'poor white-trash' who did not own slaves. The law in reference to slaves seems cruel to us as we look back through the softening shadows of time. If a slave went upon the plantation of any other than his master, he was liable to receive by law, ten lashes on his bare back, unless the slave carried a written permit to so visit from his owner. He could not own, or carry, any gun or weapon. Nothing could be bought from a slave without the master's written permission. He could not keep a dog or a horse or a mule. It was a fine of not less than $250 for any person to teach a slave to spell, read or write. Fifty lashes on the bare back was the penalty for one slave writing a pass for another. Only in criminal cases could a Negro be a witness, and the penalty for false testimony by a slave was to 'Have one ear nailed to a pillory and there stand for the space of one hour, and then the said ear to be cut off, and thereafter the other nailed in like manner and cut off at the expiration of another hour, and moreover to receive thirty lashes on his or her bare back, well laid on, at the public whipping post, or such other punishment as the court shall think proper, not extending to life or limb.*

The English family appears to have established three households on their property: the primary residence for Alexander, Mary and their unmarried children; one for their son John and his family; and another for their daughter Jane Walker, her husband and family. With so much construction underway throughout the county, the demand for building materials became urgent. Most of the settlers began with a simple log house of one or two rooms. In time, sawmills producing planed lumber from the old-growth forests were constructed on the numerous creeks and slave laborers were enlisted to shape the clay-rich soil into bricks.

There is no trace of the English home place today, but plantation homes of that era remain within miles of its location and suggest how their farmhouse would have been constructed. There is evidence that construction or expansion of the home was underway between 1850 and 1856, when the family purchased large quantities of sheeting planks for interior walls, weatherboards, shingles and bricks. Only one description of the house survives, from a letter written in 1893: "your little house under the hill."

THE 1840s: A DECADE OF BUILDING

As a new decade began, it was clear that Talladega, of all the counties carved from the new territory, was the one destined for greatness. It had attracted educated, prosperous, progressive settlers whose aspirations could hardly be contained, as evidenced by the town they were building. Close to the site of the 1814 Battle of Talladega, dirt streets sixty feet wide were laid out around a central square in which a three-storied brick courthouse was completed in 1838. A special tax levied on activities related to gambling, such as racetracks, racehorses, billiard tables and card playing, financed its construction. Numerous Indian trails had long made their way to an effusive spring in a grove of oak trees near the square. Known simply as "the big spring," it formed a small lake. This spring was so dominant and beneficial a feature of the landscape that the town could easily have been named Big Spring, but the county officers chose to call it Talladega. Businesses and hotels would eventually fill the surrounding commercial blocks, with those beyond reserved for homes, churches and schools.

The most pressing need was roads and bridges to connect the developing new town with the rest of the state. Because a larger share of the population had settled in the southwestern corner of the county, where a ferry across the Coosa River operated as its gateway, the first public roads and bridges were built southward from the town. The less traveled roads of the upper county received less attention. Owners of land fronting a road were responsible for its upkeep, and in 1847, Isaac N. Best was appointed road apportioner for the Kelly's Springs community. His duties included

maintaining a record of who lived on each road, collecting an annual use tax from them and seeing that they maintained their portion of the road. When settlers had begun arriving in the mid 1830s, there wasn't a single bridge across any of the sixteen streams that flowed across the county, many of which were too deep for fording. In March 1844, the county appropriated fifty dollars to build a bridge across Choccolocco Creek at the upper end of Curry Station Road. All the county roads, as well as the streets of Talladega, would remain unpaved until the early 1900s—and some not until mid century.

The design of the Marble Springs Church was typical of early 19th-century Presbyterian churches in the rural South. Presbyterians of that era thought of the church as its members, not its building. The simple, unadorned building that housed the congregation was a meeting-house that could serve as more than a place of worship. Soon after its founding, the church opened the Marble Springs Academy to provide schooling for the Bowie, Montgomery, Best, McClellan, Jemison, Curry, Carter, Groce, English, McElhenny, Kirksey, Cunningham and Jackson children. William Linn Lewis was its first teacher, and in early 1839, the Marble Springs Academy became the first rural school in the county granted authorization by the state legislature. In 1844, Marble Springs Presbyterian Church joined with Talladega's First Presbyterian Church in employing a minister to serve both. Two year's later an autumn revival dramatically increased the church's membership. Among the new members were James A. Walker and Mary Walker (the husband and daughter of Jane English). Several years later, Thomas Best (the husband of Elizabeth English) and Alex English joined, and by the end of the decade, the congregation numbered 84, representing 37 families and including seven Negro servants. Its membership was the largest of the several Presbyterian churches in Talladega County, and its Sunday school was flourishing.

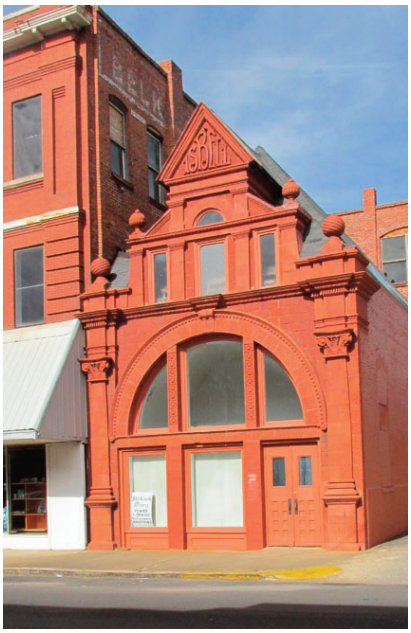
The earliest school in the town was for girls and young boys; a school for older boys opened later. Throughout the United States at that time, co-education was unheard of except in the primary grades. Talladega County's college-educated doctors, lawyers and ministers envisioned the town as a center of higher education serving the eastern portion of the state, and in 1847, the Presbyterians resolved to establish a school where young women could obtain collegiate training.[31] It was a bold move, motivated in part by the need for educated women to teach in the local schools. The trustees raised $20,000 for the construction of the Presbyterian Collegiate Female Institute, later known as the Alabama Synodical College for Women, a three-storied brick building completed in 1849. Soon after, a group of Masons laid the cornerstone for the East Alabama Masonic Female Institute, a stately, columned four-storied building of Greek Revival architecture. Dominating South Street, it offered primary, intermediate and high school classes for the children of indigent parents. By 1850, four boarding schools and two academies served the town of just over 1,300 citizens. On a hill south of the town, the Coosa River Valley Baptist Academy (also known as the Talladega Baptist Male High School) was erected in 1852.[32]

31. There were then two colleges in the state: the Catholic-run Spring Hill College in Mobile and a public "seminary of learning" at Tuscaloosa. Both were limited to male students.

32. The Presbyterian Synodical College continued into the 20th century before closing; the building was then demolished. The Masonic Female Institute struggled financially until 1858 when it became the Alabama Institute for the Deaf. The Baptist Academy's handsome, two-storied brick building would become Talladega College in 1867, serving emancipated Negro men. Both schools and their original buildings continue to this day.

MUNFORD

Vintage Photographs: *Above Right*, from 1935, one of the covered bridges that spanned Choccolocco Creek. *Right,* the Sunnyside Plantation home of the Jemison family, the Englishes' nearest neighbors, (undated). *Below Right,* the home of Jabez Curry, one of the state's most accomplished citizens, (undated). Both houses still stand; the bridge is long gone.



Founded in 1848, Isbell Bank, known today as the First Bank of Alabama, is the oldest operating bank in the state. Its elegant headquarters was constructed just off the town square in 1869.

TALLADEGA

Talladega's wide streets, laid out in 1835, frame the town square, shown above in a photograph from 1875. At its center stands the state's oldest functioning courthouse, in continuous use since 1836. Having survived tornado and fire, the brick structure has been modified over time, but the original Corinthian columns remain in place.

The Second Generation: The Children of Alexander and Mary English

Alexander and Mary English's children were born and reared to live off the land as farmers and farmer's wives. It was the life they knew. Talladega County's soil and climate proved ideal for growing cotton and corn, the main commodity crops. Each year's harvest would be transported overland by wagon to the market at "the bustling little town of Wetumpka,"[33] a center of agricultural trade on the Coosa River just north of Montgomery. (Six mules were required to pull a wagon loaded with six of seven bales.) From there, bales of cotton traveled by steamboat to Mobile. But no matter how fertile the land or how much sweat was poured into working it, the success of each harvest was always at the mercy of the weather. In 1839, the southern states endured a record-setting drought; not a drop of rain fell in Talladega County from the first day of August until late January 1840.

Alexander English, a man of property, had failed to draft a will, and when settlement of the estate began in December 1840, his son-in-law James Walker was appointed executor. Although Walker was undoubtedly the best educated member of the family, he was also a schemer and used the position to his advantage, sewing discontent in the family. As Alexander's widow, Mary Crawford English was entitled by law to "one-fifth part all the personal estate of said decedent," which was determined to be 160 acres, along with a portion of the "household and chattels." *Chattels* referred to the enslaved Negroes he owned, and three or four of them were to be retained by Mary. At the time of his death, Alexander owned sixteen slaves—three adult men, two adult women, six boys and five girls—valued at $7,175.[34] Mary chose Joshua, Nelly and their two children, Ben and Eliza. Once all the surviving children reached adulthood in 1841, the remainder of the estate would be equally divided among them. This constituted the preliminary settlement. Upon Mary's death, her inherited property would be divided among them as the final settlement.

In order to fairly apportion Alexander's belongings, everything was sold at auction in early March 1841 and the proceeds divided among his heirs. For the most part, the auction appears to have been a formality. Most of the items were purchased by family members, primarily by Mary and her son Alex. Items subject to sale included livestock: one bay mare mule, one "mouse-colored" mare mule, one horse mule, one bay horse, one dun (brownish dark gray) mare, one gray pony, 19 head of cattle, 18 sheep, 62 hogs and 12 fattening hogs. Alexander also left a good supply of tools and farming implements, as well as large stores of corn (825 bushels), cotton (16 thousand pounds). The inventory of household goods included such items as three dutch ovens and various other pots and pans, a "smoothing iron," delftware, five chairs, two tables, two cupboards, one pair of firedogs (andirons), one secretary, an eight-day brass clock, a looking glass, two beds and bedroom furniture, two bedsteads, various other furniture, several side saddles, two spinning wheels, a loom, one carding machine, two churns and a bookcase with numerous books. Among the books were a "medical companion," a two-volume history of Scotland and classical works by the Roman poet Ovid and Roman historian Josephus. The secretary and clock were appraised as the most valuable of the home's

33. Prior to the Civil War, Wetumpka was upper Talladega County's nearest center of trade, even though the Coosa River that flowed between them was not navigable the full distance. In 1850, the Central Plank Road Company was granted the right to construct a timber toll road between Montgomery and Guntersville, that were to pass through Wetumpka, Sylacauga and Talladega. Sixty miles of it were completed to Winterboro, ten miles south of Talladega, when construction ceased. Plank roads proved impractical for several reasons: The toll of three cents per mile for a loaded wagon pulled by two horses (in addition to bridge crossing tolls) was considered exorbitant by most farmers, and maintaining the wooden surface proved more expensive than expected. A railroad would be the ideal conveyance for long-distance travel and commercial transportation, and construction of a railway from Selma to Talladega got underway in 1847.

34. The men were Ned, Joshua and Lewis; the women, Penny and Nelly; the boys, Sam, Big Thomas, Spencer, Ben, Frank and Little Thomas; the girls, Tilda, Jenny, Grace, Ann and Eliza.

furnishings. Mary paid twenty-five dollars to keep the secretary, while the prized clock was one of the few items sold to someone outside the family—to their wealthy neighbor Robert Jemison—for forty-two dollars.[35] Jemison also purchased eighty acres of land, while family members purchased an additional 360 acres: 120 acres by Thomas L. Best (husband of Lizzie English), 80 acres by James Walker (husband of Jane English) and 160 acres by Mary C. English (prior to her marriage to Isaac N. Best the following October). What remained was presumably left in the hands of Alex English. In effect, the heirs purchased what they wanted from the estate, then divided the total proceeds equally among themselves.

Without a patriarch to unify the family, division and conflict were inevitable. The two eldest English sons, John and particularly James, apparently resented the domineering presence and questionable integrity of James Walker, their sister's husband and executor of the estate. James had separated from the family before they left Jefferson County, and in 1845, John and his family relocated to Monroe County, Mississippi. This left only 35-year-old Alex to uphold the family name in Talladega County.

By 1849, Alabama produced 23% of the cotton grown in the United States, and in 1850, Talladega County's white population had increased to 11,600, with 7,000 Negro slaves. The various Jemison families owned a total of 202 slaves; the Curry families, 201. By contrast, Alex C. English, a farmer, owned nine.

John C. English (before 1800 to before 1850)
Rebecca Jane Nabors (1806 to Aug. 22, 1884)
Their Children
James M. English (1826 to 1863)
Alexander C. English (1828 to 1867)
Mary L. Johnson (1829 to after 1910)
William Franklin (Frank) English (1832 to 1921)
John C. English II (1834 to Oct. 4, 1862)
Lewis B. English (1836 to 1864)
Robert H. English (1837 to 1885)
Sarah Ann (Sallie) Flynt (1841 to 1902)

John met and married Jane Nabors in Jefferson County. Little is known of her, except that the Nabors family had migrated from Tennessee before Alabama was granted statehood. After John, Jane and their six children relocated to Talladega County, another two children were born. As there are no records of John's purchasing land there, it seems likely that they farmed on a distant portion of Alexander's land. He and Jane had honored his parents by naming two of their children after them, and in 1833, Alexander transferred the ownership of a Negro slave to each of John's three oldest sons. As the eldest of the English children, John would have been groomed to someday head the family and perhaps inherit a major portion of his father's estate. But Alexander died without having made a will, and whatever provisions he intended for John were lost. According to state law, John would eventually receive one sixth of the final disbursement of Alexander's estate (the property that would be divided among the English children following their mother's death). But whatever authority John expected would be usurped by the three more enterprising men his sisters married.

35. This clock was most likely the work of Joseph Ives, a master clockmaker in Bristol, Connecticut. Ives had patented the brass movement in the early 1830s (until then, clock gears were wooden), and eight-day brass movements were his specialty. Eight-day clocks were less common and more expensive than thirty-hour clocks, which required winding almost daily. About 1850, the family acquired a tall, rectangular mantel clock. Cased in rosewood veneers, it was manufactured by the Seth Thomas Company.

In the division of his father's estate, John selected two of the slaves, Ned and Ann. Census records from 40 note that John then owned five slaves. In October 1845, apparently dissatisfied with his unpromising situation, John severed ties with the family by selling his remaining share of the final disbursement to his brother Alex and his three brothers-in-law for a meager $200 before moving his family to Monroe County, Mississippi, near the state's northeast border with Alabama. There, following the removal of the native Americans, Aberdeen, the county seat, was emerging as a vital cotton port on the Upper Tombigbee River. Records indicate that John purchased forty acres two miles northwest of Cotton Gin Port. It would seem to have been a wise move, as daring as his father relocating the family to Alabama and eventually to Talladega County—except John's modest forty acres could never serve the prospects of six sons who were already coming of age. Then, within only a few years, 50-year-old John died.

Afterward: At the time of John's death, his eldest son, James, had married and was farming nearby, and his elder daughter, Mary, had married a carpenter and was living 25 miles down the river in Columbus. This left twenty-year-old Alexander and his four younger brothers to support their widowed mother and young sister, and carry on with the farming. Out of the blue, in February 1855, John's eldest son reconnected with his Talladega kinsmen, writing to Alex English:

Dear Uncle Alex,

I have nothing of attention to write to you but to let you know that we are all a-living and well. I am a-living two miles south of Cotton Port, Mississippi. Mary L. lives in Columbus Lowndes. Mother and all they lives 2 miles northwest of Cotton Port. I have 3 children. Eldest Mary Jane, second Sarah Melinda, three John Lewis. Mary L. Johnson [has] 2: Burton Henry & Mary. They times here hard. Pork, is about 6 dollars per hundred, corn 75 per bushel, cotton 7½ cents and dull at that. We have no river this season so far. We have had the dry year sooner ever I seen, and it seems it is likely to continue. Uncle Alex, I want you to write to me as soon as [you] get this. Give my best respect to all of my connections. I remain your very

James M. English.

N.C. You must excuse my bad writing for I am a bad scholar, but I reckon you know it. I want you to write to me about all they connections individually and collectively.

He had written unaware of his Uncle Alex's death several years earlier. But by happenstance, the children of John and Alex English would be reunited in the Confederate camps of the Civil War. All six of John's sons enlisted in Mississippi's 43rd Infantry Regiment. Only three of them survived the war.

Jane English (May 22, 1800, to May 12, 1858)
James Alexander Walker (May 24, 1800, to Aug. 25, 1853)
Their Children
Edward Alexander Walker (Jan. 13, 1825, to April 4, 1900, Anniston)
Mary L. Gannaway (1827 to 1865, Oxford)
William Frederick Walker (Jan. 6, 1829, to 1897, Talladega)
Elizabeth Jane McCain (May 24, 1831, to Sept. 1, 1914, Johnson, Tex.)
Juliet Frances Wilson (1834 to 1917, Corinth, Miss.)
Henrietta Christiane Hughes (1836 to unknown)
Amanda Emily Hamilton (1840 to unknown)
Texas Curry Stone (1844 to before 1898, Cherokee, Ala.)

Jane was the first of the English children to marry. She was two days older than James A. Walker, and nothing more is known of her. Walker had been orphaned as a small child in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and an uncle saw that he received a proper education. He followed his two older sisters from Greenville to Jefferson County in the early 1820s, where he met and married Jane. By 1833, both of his sisters had married and died, which drew him closer to Jane's family. Evidence suggests that the English brothers were wary and even resentful of his presence in the family. Walker was different. They were farmers, practically from birth, while he had been brought up and educated in a town. It appears that he was driven to become not a farmer, but a plantation owner.

After moving to Talladega County with the Englishes, Walker was appointed constable in 1837. His familiarity with the county's governance may have resulted in his being chosen over John English as executor of his father-in-law's estate. Walker's handling of finances, however, was already suspect. In an 1836 letter to his brother Alex, James English had written: "I wish you would ask Mr. J.A. Walker to pay the balance he owes me and mail it the first opportunity you have."

The 1840 Census for Talladega County notes that Walker owned nine slaves. (He and Jane chose two, Sam and Penny, from her father's estate.) After Alexander's death, Walker purchased 120 acres of the farm, presumably the land where his family had been living, and would purchase another 120 acres nearby in the years that followed. In the 1850 Census, the Walker household included two sons and six daughters from six to 25 years of age, and Walker owned 360 acres and as many as 15 slaves. From Texas in March 1851, James English wrote to Alex regarding the settlement of their father's estate:

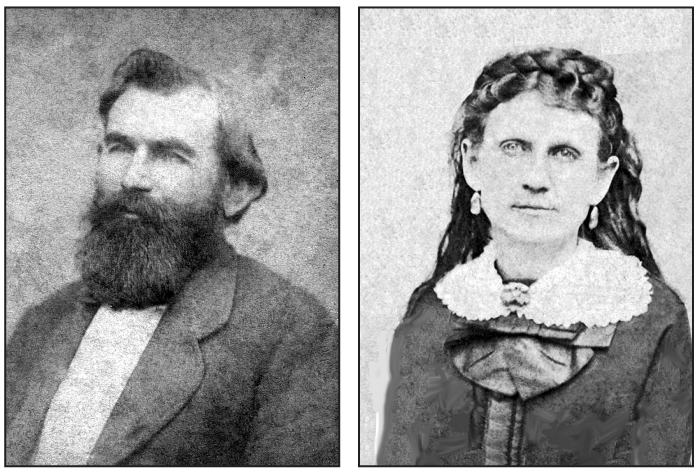
> *I received your letter of January 25th on the 8th Inst. I had written to you since the letter you mention having received, thinking that you had written to me and it had been lost by the way. I received forty dollars in this letter, which you write is the interest on the three hundred dollars you sent me before, and the old tale of a power of attorney that J.A. Walker wants. I think the best power of attorney would be his notes. If he has paid them up, he need not be afraid of having them to pay again. There is one thing I want you to write to me as soon as you receive this letter: that is who holds J.A. Walker's notes and who is his security for the money he owes the estate. You wrote he is settling up according to law. How is he settling up according to law unless the money that is due the estate is paid over to the county court or some person appointed to receive it according to law? Whenever that is done, I will attend to receiving it and not before, as I have no confidence in anything that J.A. Walker would say about money being ready. I speak from experience. I had a claim against him once before and it was paid in dribbles until I never knew myself anything the better of it.*

Walker would, however, never see his ambitions realized; he died in 1853. Jane's death followed five years later, and they were buried with other Englishes in the Sunnyside Plantation cemetery on Cheaha Creek.[36] Jane was survived by two sons and six daughters ranging in age from 14 to 33. Her estate was comprised of 180 acres and eight slaves, four of whom were adults.

36. It appears that the two infant children of Alex and Margaret English—Mary English (d. 1840) and William A. English (d. 1842)—were the first to be interred there, followed by Alex himself in 1851. It appears likely that the Englishes originally owned this land and later sold it to their neighbor Robert Jemison. Jemison built a gated cemetery surrounded by a sandstone wall as the burial place for members of his and the Curry families. The English, Walker, Vann and McCain families are buried outside its west wall. Some of the markers are unidentifiable, and there are gaps between the surviving markers possibly indicating unmarked graves. The remaining markers relevant to the English family include: Jane English Walker, James A. Walker, their son William F. Walker and his wife Rosene. (The stone for infant Mary English is broken and displaced from its original location.) Other markers lie scattered in the encroaching woods; one appears to be that of a member of the Best family. Sunnyside Cemetery is located on present-day Cedar Springs Road just off Curry Station Road within sight of Jemison's plantation house.

Afterward: Following Jane's death, the three youngest daughters went to live with their brother Edward and his wife on their farm in nearby Calhoun County. During the Civil War, Edward served the Confederacy as a private at the Talladega Camp of Instruction. His sister Mary had married Stephen Sanders Gannaway, who died in the war. The Walker's younger son, William, served in the Alabama 16th Infantry Regiment. In the mid 1850s, he had married Rosene Conrad, a French-born woman who worked as a seamstress and housekeeper for the Jemison family. She was said to be "adept with a needle." With two young sons and six slaves, they were farming near the Englishes in 1860, probably on land inherited from his father. In his later years, William Walker operated a lumber mill.

James C. English ((Feb. 2, 1801, to July 6, 1863)
Sarah "Sally" Whitford (1813 to 1901)
Their Children
Elizabeth W. Hart (1835 to 1883)
Ohio Beaty (1837 to 1899)
Sarah W. English (1844 to 1844)
Virginia Bowen Bean (1844 to 1918)
Hibernia J. Parham (1848 to 1887)



James Crawford English and His Wife Sarah, c. 1850s

James C. English was the maverick of Alexander's and Mary's four sons, but he was apparently held in esteem by his brothers, who both named his eldest son James. In the early 1830s, his independent streak led him to Tuscumbia, Franklin County, near the Tennessee River in Alabama's northwest corner. William Crawford, one of his mother's brothers, lived there, and it's likely that James farmed at first with the Crawford family.[37] Tuscumbia is one of the oldest towns in the state, and after a federal road was built through the area in 1820, it became the agricultural center of North Alabama. The first railway chartered or constructed west of the Appalachian Mountains was completed there in 1832, a 50-mile line to Decatur on the Tennessee River, and the town would eventually become a railroad hub. There, James met Sarah Whitford, an orphan from Ohio. Known to some as Sally, she lived with the family of her older sister, Elizabeth Whitford Bean. James and Sally married in 1834.

They farmed in the countryside south of Tuscumbia in Franklin County, and from there James kept in touch with the English family by letters, two of which survive. Interestingly, in both, he expressed his animosity toward his brother-in-law James Walker. Upon receiving news of the death of his brother William, he wrote to Alex on Dec. 18, 1830:

Dear Brother,
I received your letter on the fourteenth of Nov. bringing the sorrowful news of the death of Brother Wm. You did

37. Franklin and John Crawford were the sons of William Crawford, his mother's brother. The Tuscumbia Courtland and Decatur Railroad was under construction at that time. Although he doesn't name "the relations in Tuscumbia," he may have been referring to his mother's sister and her family, who had also migrated to Alabama.

I would have written to you sooner but I was waiting for to receive Sister Mary's letter that you mentioned in your letter that she would write in two or three weeks. I had written to her so long that I thought it must have come to hand in a few days after you wrote to me. But her letter has not come to hand yet. I am going to town tomorrow to put these lines in the office, yet for me if it comes to hand before I mail this letter, I will inform you in a line at the last before I seal it. You mentioned in your letter that you had intended to come to see us but on account of the health of Father & Mother you did not know whether it would be in your power to leave home or not. I have been in hopes their health had got better and that you were coming up on account that I have not received no letter.

I wish you would ask Mr. J.A. Walker to pay the balance he owes me and mail it at Elyton the first opportunity you have. Crops here has been very good this year. Corn is dull sale as yet. There's but few moving in on account that the great part of the land was reserved and bought by speculators with the promise of letting the Indians remain on the land so that they are not selling much of it as yet. I am in hopes that corn will be better sale in the spring. I have four or five hundred bushels to sell. It was the only crop I was able to make this year. Cotton has been selling in Tuscumbia at 14 cents per #. Pork is selling at from 6½ to 7 cents per #. Franklin Crawford is engineering on the railroad in the Western District from Lagrange to Memphis on the Mississippi. He gets $1825 per year. John Crawford is with him. What wages he gets I do not know at this time. The relations at Tuscumbia was well the last time I was there. Myself and family is well. We have had no sickness in our family this year. Give our respects to Father & Mother and all the rest. Sarah sends her respects to you. Nothing more at present, but remains your brother.

Respectfully etc.
Jas. C. English

P.S. Write to me soon.

Since coming to town today I rec'vd Sister Mary's letter. I will come after Andey[38] *sometime this winter if nothing happens to prevent me that I don't know of at this time. J.C.E.*

About 1838, he, Sarah and their two young daughters joined the stream of settlers headed for northeast Texas. U.S. citizens had begun migrating to Spain's Texas territory as early as 1780, before it became part of Mexico. Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, not as a western territory of the United States but as the Republic of Texas, a sovereign nation with Sam Houston as its president. About half the size of the present-day state of Texas, its abundant arable land was practically free for the asking. The heads of immigrant families arriving after Oct. 1, 1837, were granted 640 acres, to which they would receive clear title after three years. The promise of free land ideally suited to cotton farming presented an opportunity that James could hardly pass up. Texas may have been their "promised land," but the convoys of early settlers first had to get there, trudging ten or fifteen miles a day. The family settled near Clarksville, Red River County, which borders Oklahoma and is close to both Arkansas and Louisiana. By the time Texas became the 28th state in 1845, Clarksville was a leading commercial and educational center. By all accounts, James English prospered there.

James may have returned to Talladega County once, in March 1841 when his father's Negro slaves were divided among the survivors. He took ownership of three of them: the children Frank, Jenny and Grace.[39] Then, in 1849, following

38. Andey was most likely a slave.
39. Frank and Jenny apparently remained on the farm in the possession of Alex English.

his mother's death, he was to receive his monetary share of the final disbursement: $624.57. From Texas in 1851, the last of James's letters to Alex detailed its transfer by mail from Alabama to Texas:

March 10, 1851

Mr. Alexr. C. English
Talladega County
Talladega Springs
Alabama

By the way of Shreveport, Vicksburg & Tuskaloosa.

Dear Brother,
I received your letter of January 25th on the 8th Inst. I had written to you since the letter you mention having received, thinking that you had written to me and it had been lost by the way. I received forty dollars in this letter, which you write is the interest on the three hundred dollars you sent me before, and the old tale of a power of attorney that J.A. Walker wants. I think the best power of attorney would be his notes. If he has paid them up, he need not be afraid of having them to pay again. There is one thing I want you to write to me as soon as you receive this letter: that is who holds J.A. Walker's notes and who is his security for the money he owes the estate. You wrote he is settling up according to law. How is he settling up according to law unless the money that is due the estate is paid over to the county court or some person appointed to receive it according to law? Whenever that is done, I will attend to receiving it and not before, as I have no confidence in anything that J.A. Walker would say about money being ready. I speak from experience. I had a claim against him once before and it was paid in dribbles until I never knew myself anything the better of it. You speak of the risk of sending so much money by mail. It is bound to come if it ever was to start, unless the mail was robbed, and there is so many penitentiaries now that there is not often the mail is robbed in the Southern states. There is more danger in a man traveling with money than the mail. J.C. Brown told me he received $8.00 at one time by mail last year from Mississippi that was due him then. You mentioned that I had better get Brown to come. He has his family to attend to as well as I have mine and could not leave home no better than I can.

There is one thing certain that I would not send any person nor think of coming unless the money was deposited so that there would be no disappointment about it. The expense and fatigue of such a journey is no small matter. I will direct this letter by a different route and you can judge by the time it is coming whether it is the best or not. There was no mail from Arkansas for a month before I received your last letter on account of high waters. We are all well at this time. Sarah sends her respects to you and Margaret. Give my respects to all and the same yourself.

Nothing more. I remain your brother TB,
J.C. English

Clarksville, March 11th / 51
Since I came to town this morning I have advised with the judge of the court. He advises me to send you a power of attorney that you can draw any money that is coming to me there and receipt for the same.

I wish you to draw the money and forward it in the same way that you sent me the first money that you sent me, by cutting the bills in two and sending one half from one post office and the other half from another office. Send

it in two lots, half first, the balance in ten days after. Any small bills under fifty dollars, send whole.

J.C. English

It's doubtful that Alex received the letter from James; he died two weeks after it was posted. Whether or not James received the remainder of his inheritance is unknown.[40] By 1860, he owned nineteen slaves, who resided in seven houses on the farm. He died at age 61 on July 6, 1863, and was buried in nearby Annona.

Afterward: In the census of 1880, Sarah is listed as living in both Jackson, Arkansas, with the family of their daughter Hibernia Parham as well as on a farm in Denton County, Texas, adjoining the farm of another daughter Virginia "Jennie" English Bean. Virginia had married Orlando Whitford (Lander) Bean of Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1865. A saddle and harness maker, he was her first cousin, the son of Sarah's sister. In 1900, Sarah lived with the Bean family in Fort Worth, Texas, where she died a year later.

Alexander C. (Alex) English (Aug. 13, 1806 to March 29, 1851)
Margaret Rose Lewis (Oct. 27, 1813 to Sept. 25, 1890)

Their Children

Mary English (1839 to April 20, 1840)
William Alexander English (1841 to 1842)
Harriet Emmareta (Emma) English (1843 to 1901)
James Samuel Crawford (Jim) English (1844 to 1931)
Margaret Sarah (Sallie) Weatherly (1846 to 1902)
Laura Jane Williams (1848 to 1933)
Thomas Parker (Tommy) English (1850 to 1871)

Alexander's and Mary's third son was named after his father and known as Alex. Alexander had been determined to keep the family together, but after about 1845, Alex was the only brother who remained at home to look after his elderly mother and younger sisters.

In June 1837, he had received a letter from another James English, one of his Irish cousins in Montgomery.[41]

Dear Alxr.,
I received your long expected, kind and very welcome letter of the fifteenth May which gave us unspeakable pleasure to hear that you had got better of your sickness and that Old Father and Mother and the rest were all well.

I assure you it is a great happiness to us to have the pleasure of corresponding with our own kindred and people in this lonely wilderness. Blessed be God, both him and I enjoy the best of health which is the greatest blessing we could possess on earth—

40. It's unlikely that this letter with its detailed instructions on how to deliver funds to him in Texas arrived before Alex's death.

41. James and William English were sons of Alexander English's brother in Northern Ireland. The English brothers had evidently arrived in the 1830s and met their uncle and cousins before settling in Montgomery. Sometime after this letter was written, they purchased farmland south of Montgomery. William died before 1845 and James in October 1848, aged 42. Montgomery became the state capital in 1846, and both were buried in Oakwood Cemetery there. Their memorials were erected by a "Thomas English and his sisters." In addition, there is a marker for "William H. English, Pvt. Ala. Res., Confederate States Army"—presumably the son of one of the brothers. W.H. English was a member of the Loachapolka Rifles of the 6th Alabama Infantry Regiment. Records indicate that a William T. English (1830–43) is also buried there.

We had a letter from Ireland a few weeks ago which informed us of Mother's death, which was very discouraging to us and only for this cause, I would have written to you sooner, as I have not been in the spirit of writing well since we received the mournful news. However, Man must know that all our lives and the length of our days is in a mighty hand who by his sovereign power rules all things according to his good will and pleasures.

I do not hear any complaints of sickness about town although a considerable number is leaving and going to the country. The ladies of fashion must all go to the springs, they say, for health. But I believe it is more for fashion. The weather is very hot and dry. The thermometer stands sometimes as high as 98 in the shade. I never felt such heat before. We have had no rain for nearly a month. There is some appearance of rain this afternoon. The crops are in much want of it. The cotton is likely to be eat up with lice about this neighborhood. Mr. Walker is gone from home at present. He is down the country after some cattle. Wm. is anxious to have a dissolution of partnership. I wish it was dissolved and the stock divided. Wm. has been on the lookout as much as he could for a place that would suit us. There are plenty of places to be sold and money is not plenty. So that land is getting cheaper. We have the offer of a half section within four miles of town of first-rate land at 10 dollars per acre. I suppose we cannot do better than take it—although we are determined to go up and see you before any money is paid. I do not know whether Wm. and I can both go together or he go first, and after he returns I must go—

I live first rate and does little or no work, has a horse to ride when I want exercise. Such idling will not do always. Folks must do something for their bread. I hope before long will have a place we can call our own and then we will have plenty of employment, which is much better than going idle, as old Nick has generally a ready job for all idlers. There are too many idlers about Montgomery. I think the old gentleman has a very extensive school. I do not like the society. If the land was only half as good in your neighborhood and a market for produce half as convenient, I would prefer living there very much. While I was in Ireland I was in the habit of going [to] the public worship on Sunday very regularly, but here I cannot get myself right fixed in that way. I tried the Methodists, but their ways of doing, I really cannot endure. I like the Presbyterians rather better, but still there are some things I do not like. The psalms is one thing I do not like, and seats which they have at the back of the door for strangers is another thing I disliked very much at first and had almost took the huff and quit, but I just recollected our loss, which settled that question. That is, we must not go to the uppermost room at feasts nor the highest seats in the synagogue. Therefore I must make myself resolved to sit at the back of the door until we can fund a seat for ourselves.

Bro. Wm. joins me in desiring to be remembered to your Mrs., to Old Father and Mother and Cousin Mary. Then last not least, please remember us also to Mr. and Mrs. Walker and all the little ones, to Cousin John and all his little ones, and any of our friends you may happen to meet with. I remain, Dear Cousin, with sincere affection yours 'til death,

Jas. English

Alex English married Margaret Rose Lewis, the daughter of Alexander and Amaritta Lewis, on Nov. 22, 1938. He was 32 years old; she was eight years younger. The English and Lewis families had apparently known each other in Chester County, South Carolina. After marrying, Alex and Margaret established a home of their own on the English family's farm. Their first two children died in infancy and were the earliest of the Englishes known to have been buried in the nearby Sunnyside Cemetery.

By 1850, Alex was the last of Alexander's sons in Alabama. He was devoted to farming the land that had brought his family to the upper county and determined to fulfill his father's expectations for it. There are no records of his having owned a slave before receiving the man Lewis and the boy Silas from his father's estate. Margaret, however, was from a family that apparently had serious qualms about slaveholding. (Her father owned only one slave—a 50-year-old man—in 1860.) Alex established a congenial relationship with Robert Jemison, whose vast Sunnyside Plantation

adjoined the English family's land. The farmer and the planter worked together to survey and adjust the borders of their properties by selling odd pieces of land to each other.

Robert McCoy, most likely the son of Mary Crawford English's sister in Tuscumbia, was a Presbyterian preacher. He visited the Englishes in Talladega County in 1837 and occasionally corresponded with his cousin Alex in the years that followed. In August 1846, McCoy wrote from Wilmington, Illinois, where he was pastoring a church:

> *I am truly afraid my wife can never endure this climate; and what is more, there are no Carolinians here, and as these Yankees and York Staters are continually abusing and slandering the South, we will never feel at home among them. We are merely making an experiment and keeping ourselves as loose as possible so that we can easily pull up stakes and go down the river again if necessary. I have only promised to preach to this congregation till next spring, when it is most probable that we will return to the sunny South. If so, I do not intend to stop this side of the beautiful, rich rolling prairies of the San Antonio and Guadalajara [Guadalupe] rivers in western Texas. [The area he refers to would be considered central Texas today.] That region is universally represented as being the healthiest and best watered and most beautiful of all Texas and as having the most delightful climate in the United States. George Crawford intends to go there as soon as he can, and all the family, I suppose, will follow him. If I go there, I would be exceedingly glad to see all of you, and as many more of the Chester Irish from Talladega as you could draw after you. How pleasing would it be, after so long a separation for Aunt Mary and Mother to meet and spend their last days together! And who knows but they might yet recover their just rights in Texas?*
>
> *Tell me if you feel permanently settled, and, if not, what you would think of meeting me on the Guadalupe or San Antonio and how many Carolinians you could take along with you. Have you yet made a profession? I hope you are a good Presbyterian. Sound Presbyterianism is all I want, and I firmly believe that all separations and secessions from the simple Presbyterian Church have been unnecessary and sinful schisms.*

No doubt, Alex felt "permanently settled" in upper Talladega County. But, perhaps affected by his cousin's concern for his spiritual well-being, he joined Marble Springs Presbyterian Church during a revival service.

There is reason to believe that Mary Crawford English was living with Alex and his family in the years leading up to her death in June 1849, at age 73. Records of her finances were filed with the county's probate court, but purchases attributed to her were few after 1847, consisting for the most part of fabric, lace and ribbons; clothing that could only be purchased, such as gloves, stockings and shoes; as well as bottles of brandy and Madeira wine. Upon her death, Alexander's estate could finally be settled. An inventory of her property lists three head of cattle, numerous unnamed books, a side saddle, several pieces of furniture, including the aforementioned secretary, and her most valuable asset: one Negro girl named Ann. Her possessions were auctioned on Jan. 25, 1850, and purchased primarily by family members: James A. Walker, the secretary; Thomas L. Best, the Negro girl Ann, for $600; Isaac N. Best, the cupboard and a spotted steer; and Alex English, the books and andirons. To ensure that the land that remained in Mary's name—160 acres—was shared equally by the heirs, it would be auctioned and the proceeds divided among her survivors. James Walker was the auctioneer, and his elder son, 25-year-old Edward Alexander Walker, made the high bid of $4,139.50.

Alex's enterprising brothers-in-law had purchased large tracts of land just to the east of the English farm, and as the decade began, a large portion of the three-mile swath of forest and meadow between Curry Station Rd. and what would become the town of Munford was owned by the related English, Walker and Best families. All were reasonably prosperous cotton farmers at a time, and their prospects never looked brighter.

In 1850, Margaret's elderly parents, Alexander and Amaritta Lewis, were living on their small farm near the town. Her 23-year-old brother, Sam Lewis, had come to live with Alex, Margaret and their five young children, assisting Alex with his crops. The agricultural census that year states that the farm comprised 160 acres, of which 80 were farmed. (These 160 acres correspond to his inheritance from his father's estate.) The cash value of his property was $1,600. The livestock consisted of four horses, one mule, five milch cows, ten other cattle, 15 sheep and 30 pigs, altogether worth an estimated $425. The farm produced as cash crops: 800 bushels of corn, eleven bales of cotton (each weighing more than 400 pounds) and 200 bushels of sweet potatoes. Such a harvest could not be accomplished without enslaved workers, and he then owned nine slaves: three males, ages 22, 23 and 26; one mulatto female, age 23; one female, age 16; and four children, from six months to eight years of age. (The four black children were roughly the same ages of his and Margaret's own five.) He had also begun either enlarging their home or building a new one.

But Alex's stewardship of the farm was cut short. Stricken with typhoid, most likely contracted from consuming tainted water, he died on Saturday, March 29, 1851. A light shower fell that evening. He was 46 years old. An obituary published in one of the county newspapers and pasted in the family Bible describes the good man he was:

> *It is with feelings of regret and joy that we now record the death of this truly benevolent and faithful Christian; with regret, because society has lost one of its most brilliant ornaments, his wife a fond and devoted husband; his children a kind and indulgent parent, and the church a devoted and attentive member; with joy, because he has left the gratifying assurance, of his acceptance with God. It was the fortune of the writer to be with him frequently during his protracted illness, and he at all times gave the brightest evidence of a preparation, for an upper and better world … A short time before his death, he had his entire family, (white and black,) summoned to his bed side, and bid them all farewell; exhorting his servants to be kind to his wife and little children – and committing his companion and little ones into the hands of the "Widow's God and father of the fatherless."*[42]

He was buried at the Sunnyside Cemetery alongside his and Margaret's two firstborn children. Chiseled upon the marble slab that covers his grave is the epitaph describing him as "An upright citizen, a kind relative, a devoted christian. He was useful in life and triumphant in death."

Elizabeth W. (Lizzie) English (1814 to after 1880)
Thomas Lee (Tom) Best (1810 to about 1880)
Their Children
Sarah (Sallie) A.E. Montgomery (1840 to 1916)
Mary W. (Mollie) Best (Feb. 1844 to 1927)
Elizabeth Best (about 1846 to 1928)
Martha (Mattie) B. Rempson (Sept. 1848 to 1940)
Margaret Adeline Best (about 1850 to unknown)
Frances Chilton (Fannie) Lane (Jan. 1852 to 1943)
William Thomas Best (May 6, 1854 to April 4, 1922)

Back in Chester County, South Carolina, the Englishes would have been acquainted with Benedict M. Best (1755–1814) of the Fishing Creek farming community there. A young patriot of the Revolutionary War, Best fathered

42. Alex's obituary was written by Dr. Benton W. Groce, a physician who lived nearby on Eastaboga Road. Groce had graduated from the Augusta Medical College in Georgia in 1842 before moving to upper Talladega County. A man of strong convictions, he practiced medicine there for forty-eight years.

ten children before his death in 1814. Following their mother's death, the Best children migrated to Alabama and Louisiana. Five of them were among the first wave of settlers to upper Talladega County: Joshua Davidge Best and his wife Celine;[43] William Benedict Best; Nancy Bell Best with her husband Robert Walker McElhenny (sometimes spelled McElhainey); Thomas Lee Best; and Isaac Newton Best. The Bests renewed their acquaintance with the Englishes at the Marble Springs Church, where the McElhennys were charter members and Robert was appointed elder and clerk of session. Tom Best (like William English) served as a Talladega Ranger in the Second Seminole War in Florida and returned in 1837 to purchase land near the English family's farm. In a church wedding on Dec. 29, 1838, he married Elizabeth W. English. She was known in the family as Lizzie. Their home was on Tom's original property, closer to Talladega and adjoining William Linn Lewis's farm. Nine years later, during a revival, Tom joined the Marble Springs church.

Tom's younger brother Isaac was living with Tom and Lizzie in 1840. That year's census credited Thomas with ten slaves, possibly in shared ownership with Isaac. In 1841, he and Lizzie received ownership of two of the slaves from her father's estate: Big Tom and Little Tom. The Best bothers were apparently quite close and of singular ambition: to acquire the farmland and enslaved workers that would elevate them from farmers to planters. Isaac's marriage to Mary English in 1841 would seem inevitable, binding the two families' relationships. Their children would be double first cousins, nearly as close as brothers and sisters genetically.

In the late 1840s, Tom began purchasing land east of the English family farm—a wise move because a railroad linking Rome, Georgia, and Selma, Alabama, was to be constructed nearby. He supplemented his farming income as a slave trader and owned 23 slaves in 1850. He appears to have been highly regarded by the Englishes and had replaced James A. Walker as executor to oversee the final disbursement of Alexander's complicated estate. Following the death of his brother-in-law Alex, Tom assisted Margaret Rose English in getting her crops to market and managing various legal issues. By 1860, Tom and Lizzie were the parents of six daughters and one son, ages six to twenty—as well as the guardians of Mary and Isaac Best's three orphaned children. That year's census valued Tom's assets at $43,675, with 25 slaves occupying five houses on his property.

But Tom's ambitions were crushed by the Civil War. Afterward, he resumed farming with hired hands. Hundreds of the county's young men had perished in the war, severely reducing the Best daughters' marriage prospects. Three of the six would marry. The only son, William Thomas Best, had been eight years old when his older cousins enlisted and was thus spared the fate of most of them.

In 1870, Tom (61) and Lizzie (55) moved with four of their daughters and niece Mary E. Best to one of his properties near the English family farm. A majority of their neighbors were former slaves, most likely tenant farmers. Ten years later, they shared their home with daughter Mollie and niece Mary, both in their early thirties and unmarried. Lizzie and Thomas died after 1880. She had outlived all of her brothers and sisters, and was the only one of them to experience life in the post-antebellum South.

Afterward: In 1910, three of the Best sisters—Mollie Best (65), Sarah A. Montgomery (68) and Mattie Rempson (62)—lived at 178 North Street East in Talladega, the home of their widowed sister Fannie Best Lane (58). Their brother William (54) and his family lived nearby on Chilton Street; apparently having had no interest in farming, he worked as a clerk in a dry goods store.

43. Mary Celine Best (1809 to 1906) was a daughter of Alexander and Amaritta Lewis. About 1850, she and Joshua rejoined the westward migration, which took them to Louisiana. Even so, their family ties remained strong.

Mary C. English (about 1820 to 1848)
Isaac Newton Best (1814 to 1853)
Their Children
Thomas Alexander Best (July 24, 1841, to after 1920)
William Benedict (Will) Best (April 1843 to 1863)
Mary E. Best (1848 to after 1880)

Mary, the youngest of the English children, married Isaac Newton Best, the brother of her sister's husband, on Oct. 12, 1841, in a ceremony officiated by the Rev. Robert McAlpine. The *Patriot,* a local newspaper, announced their marriage, noting that "none but the brave deserve the fair." Mary had been a girl of seventeen when her father died. After becoming engaged to Isaac in 1840, one year before she reached the age of majority, she had petitioned the court for the property and cattle that would constitute her considerable dowry. Once the estate began to be divided among his children, she inherited two slaves, Spencer and Tilda, and with the permission of the other heirs also purchased "a Negro girl named Rose aged about 16 years at her appraised value, to wit the sum of five hundred and fifty dollars."

Marrying into the English family greatly advanced the Best brothers in their quest to establish a plantation in the upper county, but then Mary died in 1848, perhaps in childbirth, leaving Isaac with their three young children.

Afterward: Two years after Mary's death, Isaac married Mary Jane Bell, with whom he fathered another three children before his own death in 1853.[44] At that time, he owned 160 acres adjoining Tom Best's property and 14 slaves. Tom and Lizzie Best then became the legal guardians of Isaac's three children with Mary and their property. Each inherited a slave child: Twelve-year-old Thomas received Josh, age 7; ten-year-old William received Willis, 8; and five-year-old Mary received Livia, 3. They were also entitled to their mother's monetary share of her father's estate once they reached adulthood.

On Aug. 13, 1861, 18-year-old Thomas Alexander Best, the elder son of Mary and Isaac, enlisted in Andrew W. Bowie's Mountain Rangers, which eventually became the Confederate 8th Cavalry Regiment, Co. A. The officers of this elite regiment represented leading upper Talladega County families—Bowie, Curry, Stockdale and McElderry—and each recruit was required to supply his own horse, bridle and saddle. Enlistment papers described young Thomas Best as five foot seven, weighing 143 pounds. He would be promoted to corporal, wounded in the arm at a skirmish near Decatur, Ala., in October 1864 and complete his service with the surrender at Gainesville, Georgia in 1865. His brother William Benedict Best enlisted in 1862, only to die within a year.

In 1866, young Thomas Best married Idora A. Kirksey,[45] and they lived in Calhoun County near the former plantation of her grandfather Isaac Kirksey. In 1870, they and their one-year-old son Benedict resided on the Isaac Best property near the Englishes with two black domestic servants. By 1880, the family had moved to nearby Oxford, where Idora and their son died that year. Tom remarried in 1881. In 1888, Idora's younger brother, Walter Rainey, wrote in a letter to his brother-in-law Jim English, "When you write, find out something about brother Tom and family and let me hear from them. Wretched family I expect." The youngest of Isaac and Mary's three children, Mary E. Best, continued to live with her aunt and uncle well into adulthood. She is not known to have married, and nothing is known of her after 1880.

44. Isaac's children with Mary Jane were Jabez E. Best, Sallie A. Best and Isaac N. Best. She went on to marry Abner Adams about 1855.

45. His cousin James S.C. English would marry Idora's younger sister, Maude Hunter Kirksey, in 1878.

ALEX ENGLISH'S LEGACY

The death of Alex English left Margaret with five children, ages one to eight, eleven Negro slaves and barren fields awaiting the spring planting. She could count on comfort and support from her elderly parents, Alexander and Amaritta Lewis; her brother, Sam Lewis; her sister, Elizabeth Ada Adams; and Alex's sister and brother-in-law, Lizzie and Tom Best. Alex, gravely ill, had his will drafted five days before his death, clearly stating his wishes for his "beloved wife" and their children, "all of tender years," as well as for the land he loved.

I, Alexander C. English, of the county and state aforesaid, although sick & weak in body, yet being of sound and disposing mind & memory, do make, ordain & establish this as my last will and testament, as follows—

1. I direct my executor hereinafter named, as soon as may be after my death, to pay off & discharge all my just debts. For this purpose, my last crop of cotton and the debts that are due me, will probably be sufficient. If not, such property as can be best spared, without disturbing the following arrangement of my affairs, may be sold for that purpose; or any other measures may be adopted which my said executor may deem prudent or desirable.

2. As my children are all of tender years, and will for some time to come need the care and attention of their mother; and as the estate which I shall leave them will probably be not more than sufficient comfortably to maintain my family and educate my children, it is my will and desire, and I so direct, that all my property, real & personal, be kept together for the purposes above mentioned, under the care & superintendence of my executor, who is hereby authorized & empowered, if necessary, to employ an agent or overseer to assist in its management. And as I repose full and implicit confidence in the judgment & integrity of my said executor, it will not be necessary & shall not be required of him to make annual returns of receipts & expenditures to the probate court.

3. If the interests or conveniences of my family shall at any time require it, my executor is hereby authorized and empowered to sell or exchange any article of my estate; and if there shall, at any time, be a surplus of funds in hand, he is in like manner empowered to invest it in any property for the benefit of my family as he or they may deem prudent or desirable. But it is to be understood that in such transactions, my executor is not to be held liable for any failure, defect or loss of said property so purchased or exchanged, but only for fraudulent acts in relation thereto.

4. When either of my children shall be of lawful age,[46] *or marries; or when my wife shall marry again, if she thinks proper to do so; or whenever it shall appear to be for the interest of my wife and children that such a course should be adopted, it is my will and desire, and I so direct, that a division of my estate shall be made according to the next succeeding clause of this will—and to this end, if it be necessary, authorize a sale to be made, by my executor, of all or any part of my estate.*

5. In making the said division, I give, devise and bequeath to my beloved wife Margaret and to each of my children who may then be living, equal shares of my estate.

6. I hereby acknowledge a debt of about two hundred & fifty dollars which I owe to Thomas Best, hereinafter named as my executor, for the purchase of a negro man named Jacob, which sum, with any interest that may be

46. The *age of majority* was then 21 years, meaning the age at which a minor child was by law considered an adult. It could only be circumvented by marriage at a younger age.

due on it, I authorize him to retain out of any monies of my estate that may come to his hands.

7. Some time ago I negotiated and sold to W. Robert Jemison, Sr., two small pieces of land for which I have received full payment & satisfaction; but have never made him a title—I therefore authorize and empower my executor to make & deliver to the said Robert Jemison a good & sufficient legal conveyance for said lands.

8. I hereby nominate and appoint my friend Thomas L. Best sole executor of this my last will and testament; and if my said executor shall hereafter desire to remove from this state, or for any other cause, shall desire to resign the trust hereby conferred on him, it is my wish and desire that he may do so, and in that event I hereby nominate and appoint my friend James A. Walker as his successor in the said trust.

(Signed) Alexander C. English
24 March 1851
(Witnesses) Alexander Bowie, A. Cunningham, Benton W. Groce[47]

The inventory of Alex English's estate was appraised at nearly $11,000. In addition to his acreage, it included eleven slaves: Frank, Silas, Ben, Jen and her child Kitty, Amy and her child Leroy, Allen, Isabella, and the boys Jerry and Jacob. (Jacob had only recently been purchased.) Livestock listed were a gray horse, two sorrel horses, a mare and colt, a mule, one yoke of steers, one lot of cattle, one lot of hogs and 19 head of sheep. In addition to farming tools, Alex owned a wagon, a carriage and a rifle. His thirteen bales of cotton were valued at $520.00.

Alex had chosen Tom Best as his trusted executor, and in that role Best became the head of what remained of the English family in Talladega County. The will aimed to simplify the executor's responsibilities by declaring "it will not be necessary & shall not be required of him to make annual returns of receipts & expenditures to the probate court." The court apparently saw things differently and, for the next six years, required Margaret to account for every penny she earned and spent, down to the occasional ten cents it took to mail a letter. Tom Best was responsible for certifying her financial records and seeing that they were recorded at the courthouse. This scrutiny of her income and expenditures was the probate court's way of ensuring that her children's share of the estate would not be squandered before they were old enough to claim it.

Alex desired the farm to remain intact, but allowed that it might be necessary for the executor to hire an overseer to help Margaret. It would not have been unusual for a widow to turn over the planting, harvesting and marketing of crops to an experienced man, one who could also supervise the laborers. That would, in fact, be expected of a 37-year-old woman rearing five children, living in a home that was apparently under construction and facing the immediate and pressing need to sow that year's summer crops. Margaret was also responsible for clothing, feeding and caring for each of her wider family of Negro men, women and children, They were, in fact, the estate's most valuable asset—in terms that far transcended dollars—and it was only through their loyalty that she had any hope of carrying on without relying on an overseer. Indeed, she chose to go it alone.

Margaret's expenditures, which were regularly filed at the courthouse, provide an exacting account of the family's life

47. Alex's will was written by Alexander Bowie (1789–1867), a college-educated lawyer who moved to Talladega County from South Carolina, where he had served as an officer in the War of 1812 and a member of the state legislature. In Alabama, he became a trustee of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and the presiding judge of the state's Northern Chancery Division. He was described in one account as "a fine conversationist [sic], a graceful writer, and a scholarly, Christian gentleman" and in another as "the scholarly and cultured chancellor."

throughout the 1850s and into the 1860s. Among her earliest expenses were a medical bill of $72.50 to Dr. J.C. Knox[48] for Alex's care and $15.00 for his coffin. As a widow, Margaret required a new wardrobe, and her purchases of black silk, black cambric, black silk lace, black ribbon and a "large black veil" were also recorded.

Alex believed his estate would be adequate "to maintain my family and educate my children." Public schools were rare in antebellum Alabama, and all the schools in Talladega County were privately operated academies. In 1853, the Alabama state legislature passed a law establishing a system of public schools, but it would take years to put it into effect. In the meantime, there were no prescribed courses of studies, no defined school year, no academic standards and no continuity of advancement from one grade level to another. Whether or not a child was schooled depended entirely on the value his/her parents placed on education. Daughters were less likely to attend school, and in farming communities, attending school was often deemed impractical. Alex and Margaret, however, were both literate and committed to their children's schooling. That meant searching for and hiring competent teachers or tutors.

In 1851, the year Alex died, the family's expenditures included $51.60 for tuition for their two school-age children, Emma and Jim. In August 1852, M.L. McElhenny billed the family $18 for tuition for "five months for the scholars." By 1854, the next-oldest child, Sallie, had begun her studies, and S.S. Gannaway was paid three months tuition for the three children at "$1.25 per month per scholar." Teaching was a sideline for many of those who taught; Gannaway was, in fact, a 40-year-old farmer who was apparently well enough educated to teach during his slack winter months. The family regularly purchased educational books: a Webster's dictionary, "catechisms" for religious studies, history books, primers and spelling books.

When Emma turned thirteen, Margaret apparently realized that she would benefit from a more elevated course of study with students her own age. So she was enrolled for the spring-summer term at the Presbyterian Female Collegiate Institute in Talladega, where she boarded with the A.W. Bowie family. The school's headmaster was Frederick R. Lord, a 35-year-old New Hampshire-born teacher who had relocated with his wife and children from New York. (That year, Lord was elected Second Vice President of the Alabama Education Association.) Emma's $22 tuition included instruction in vocal music. She returned for the fall-winter term as well as the 1857 spring-summer term, when additional fees for instruction in astronomy, piano and vocal music increased her tuition to $37. Beginning Feb. 27, 1857, Emma also studied with Helen C. Finley for 19 weeks. Items in her bill included $19.00 for music instruction, $4.75 for "use of instrument" and $3.25 for two schoolbooks, one of which was *Pictorial England*.

Margaret's first cousin William Linn Lewis[49] was not only one of the earliest settlers in upper Talladega County but also its first schoolteacher. In the 1856-57 school year, he tutored 13-year-old Jim English, charging $16.80.

As another school year began in September 1858, Margaret purchased a geography book and atlas, a rhetorical reader, a spelling book and *Kirkham's Grammar*. (First published in 1829, *Kirkham's Grammar* had been the standard textbook for decades. It was the book young Abraham Lincoln had studied.) By then the youngest of the children, Thomas, had reached school age, and in 1859, Samuel Hall was paid $72.00 from Margaret's educational fund for tutoring

48. Forty-year-old James C. Knox, a son-in-law of Alexander Bowie, was considered "the foremost surgeon in northeast Alabama." Laura reached school age in 1856, when Lealis Law, a 30-year-old, Massachusetts-born schoolteacher, received $86.00 in tuition for the ten-month school year for Emma, Jim, Sallie and Laura. *Sargent's Fourth Reader* and *Land Modern History* were among the books Margaret purchased that year.

49. "Uncle Billy," as he was fondly known in Talladega, was a born teacher. In 1866, when schooling resumed after the Civil War, he ran a neighborhood school at his home. Five years later, a system of public education was finally established, and he became the county's first superintendent of education.

four of the children. That same year, Elizabeth Darton boarded with the Englishes and taught 16-year-old Emma for five months and Jim (15), Sallie (13), Laura (11) and Tom (9) the entire ten-month school year. Her total charge was $72.50, of which $48.00 was deducted to cover six months' board. In Dec. 1860, S.C. Pitts received $28.00 in tuition for Sallie, Laura and Thomas, while Emma attended school in Talladega, boarding with the Samuel Watson family. Her tuition was $47.00 with $9.00 for board. [2]

On May 22, 1861, Jim completed his education with a two-month session of studies at the new Walnut Grove Seminary founded by Frederick R. Lord, former headmaster at the Presbyterian Female Collegiate Institute. Tuition for the session was $20, plus $2.00 for books: *Davies Modern Arithmetic* and *Davies Algebra*. By then the Army of Alabama had been organized and transferred into the Provisional Army of the Confederate States. Throughout the South, schools began to close as their primarily male teachers volunteered or were conscripted for military service. On April 26, 1863, Margaret paid $28.00 tuition for Sallie, Laura and Tom. It was the last listing for education among the family's expenses.

The family's sole source of income was the cotton they grew. In the years before Alex's death, Margaret's younger brother, Samuel Lewis, had helped with the crop. Living with the family, he received one-fifth of the proceeds from each year's crop. That arrangement apparently ended when he married in December 1850, only a few months before Alex's death. Margaret then relied entirely on the family's Negro slaves to continue the planting, chopping and picking.[50] Tom Best, the estate's executor, assumed responsibility for transporting the crop in wagons drawn by mules or oxen over the more than seventy miles to Wetumpka, the nearest cotton market. The journey to and from Wetumpka was known to last eight days. For his help in carting the English's cotton crop to market, Best received an eleventh of the family's income.

The price paid for cotton could vary from one day to the next, depending on supply and demand. At the time of Alex's death, thirteen bales from the previous year's crop had been stored on the farm, most likely waiting to be sold when the supply was low and the demand high in order to get the best price. In 1852, the price per pound was 8½ cents; a year later, it rose to 10¾ cents. In 1863, during the war, cotton sold for 20 cents per pound. Below are the records of the English family farm's annual income from its mostly cotton crops.

1850-51	29 bales	$1,052
1852	12 bales, 5,500 lb.	$467
1853	22 bales, 9,821 lb.	$909
1854	14 bales, 8,360 lb.	$564
1856	22 bales, 11,748 lb.	$1,086
1857	15 bales, 6,888 lb.	$875
1858	16 bales	$883
	also: corn, fodder and wheat	$113
1859	9 bales, 4,753 lb.	$463
1860	9,070 lb.	$1,009
1861	8,869 lb.	$812
1863	16 bales, 7,636 lb.	$1,537
1867	996 lb.	$115

50. It should be noted that small slaveholders usually worked alongside their field workers. As Margaret's sons grew older, they would have been expected to help.

The wagons that delivered the bags of cotton to market never returned empty. A stop at Wetumpka's Persse, Taylor & Co. ("Dealers in Every Description of Staple and Fancy Dry Goods") yielded the bagging material (222 yd.) and rope (142 ft.) that would be used for the next year's crop, as well as large quantities of food supplies.

Most of the family's food was grown on the farm, with a vegetable garden set aside for the slaves' personal use. But there were meats and staples, such as rice, ground cocoa, coffee, sugar and molasses, that had to be purchased—and purchased in enormous quantities. It was not unusual for Margaret to buy 25½ pounds of cheese, 200 pounds of sugar, 11 pounds of loaf sugar (refined sugar shaped into loaves), 111 pounds of brown sugar, two sacks of salt, 40 gallons of molasses, 161 pounds of coffee, a half barrel (21 gallons) of potatoes, a barrel (42 gallons) of white fish, 53 pounds of bacon and 1,578 pounds of pork.

The family's and slaves' clothing was for the most part sewn on the farm. A large portion of every month's purchases went to a variety of fabrics—silk, cambric, calico, domestic, tweeds, cotton velvet, flannel, gingham, striped alpaca, bobbinet (tule netting) and linen—as well as notions: braid, fringe, ribbon, lace, pins, edging, thread, buttons, pearl buttons and indigo dye. Some items of clothing could not be produced on the farm. These are listed in the family's accounts as hats, boy's caps, "two monkey jackets," a cashmere robe, one pair of Neapolitan gloves, "bleu jeans," a cashmere shawl, ladies kid gloves, ladies hose, slippers, mitts, "a soft fan hat," bonnets and, of course, footwear. Margaret was known to purchase seven pairs of shoes at a time. In 1854, she purchased 16 pairs.

The English family's local purchases came from the general store and post office operated by the Curry family at Kelly's Spring.[51] Goods were sold on credit, each notated in a ledger and paid for (with interest added) after the family's crops were sold. Over the years, Margaret's household purchases there included the practical as well as an occasional indulgence: sets of cups, saucers and plates, a serving plate, sets of flatware, patent medicines, castor oil, one dozen marbles, a sifter, a coffee mill, one quart of brandy, bottles of snuff, cologne, candy, sheep shears, a palm fan and shell combs.

There were also outside expenses. Each year, a blacksmith came to shoe the farm horses and repair their bridles, sharpen the plows, mend cooking pots and repair the wagon wheels and carriage tires. On Jan. 13, 1859, General Davis was paid $1.50 for repairing the family's clock. And each year, the family was charged a ten-dollar "subscription for ministerial services," paid to the Marble Springs Presbyterian Church.

There is no doubt that Margaret English proved herself capable of running the farm and safeguarding her children's financial interests and general welfare. On Sept. 27, 1857, Jabez L.M. Curry[52] reviewed the management of the estate, found its accounts to be in order and recommended that Margaret be appointed as its administratrix, thus releasing

51. Curry came from a wealthy plantation family in Georgia and had purchased nearly 1,000 acres at Kelly's Spring in 1837. (It adjoined the Jemison family's plantation just south of the English family farm.) The plantation home Curry built was called Willow Glen, and hundreds of pioneer land buyers are said to have received food and lodging at the Curry home. A Baptist meeting house was erected in a nearby grove.

52. J.L.M. Curry would go on to become a state representative, a U.S. Congressman, a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army, the president of Howard College (present-day Samford University), a professor at the University of Richmond (Virginia), a Baptist minister and the U.S. Ambassador to Spain. His greatest legacy, however, was in education. It was said that after the Civil War "he did more than any one other man to encourage the expansion and improvement of the public school system and the establishment of training schools for teachers throughout the South. He was also largely responsible for convincing Southern legislators of the states' responsibility for public education." For a century he was one of the two Alabamians whose statues represented Alabama in the U.S. Capitol building; it was replaced by a statue of Helen Keller in 2008.

Tom Best from his executorial duties. Curry, then a 32-year-old, Harvard-educated attorney, was the son-in-law of Alexander Bowie, who had written the original will. Curry would have been well-acquainted with the Englishes; the family made most of their purchases and mailed and received their letters at his father's store at Kelly's Springs, about four miles down Curry Station Road. Upon his recommendation, the Talladega County Probate Court appointed Margaret as administratrix of her husband's estate on Oct. 20, 1857.

In August 1859, Thomas Best informed the Probate Court of Talladega County that Margaret as administratrix had paid off the family's debts and proven herself capable of profitably operating the farm without his assistance. This apparently released her from having to report the family's income and expenses to the court each year. In the eight years since Alex's death, none of the land had been sold; in fact, Margaret had purchased an additional 80 acres in 1859. Best's report stated that over the previous two years, none of the slaves had died and two Negro babies were born. One month later, Margaret's brother, Samuel L. Lewis, agreed to serve as guardian of the five English children in the event of her death before they all reached adulthood, further ensuring that the estate would be faithfully divided among them.

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