



At the Root of it All

Ancestry Contributed by CMSI Members



James McConnell Montgomery

From Information and Stories Submitted by Judith Montgomery Becker

If you think about Atlanta, Georgia today you might envision a modern city with all of the amenities of a "happenin'" town. After all, it is "Hot'lanta." But in the 1820s, there was no Peachtree Street, no Buckhead, and no Falcons. There were, however, braves. The Creek Indian Nation ruled the area where Atlanta is now situated, and there was war between the Creeks and the incoming settlers. A family of Montgomerys lived and prospered in that era of upheaval and wilderness settlement.

James Montgomery was an immigrant whose ancestry is not firmly decided. There are quite a few members of CMSI who claim him as their earliest ancestor of record. Some say that he was of direct Scottish origin; others claim that his family came from Ulster through Pennsylvania and Virginia. Ultimately we start firmly recognizing his records and life in the Lancaster district of South Carolina, which is near the Waxhaw area of that state, near the border with Georgia. We know that he first married Elizabeth McConnell in ca. 1767, with whom he had 3 children. After the death of Elizabeth, James married Susannah Strange in ca. 1778. James and family migrated to Hancock County, Georgia. James died in Jackson County, Georgia on January 1, 1808.

This family and its descendants were some of the very first pioneers in Georgia, and their stories would fill many pages. In this story we are going to concentrate on James McConnell Montgomery. He was the second son of James and Elizabeth McConnell, born May 19, 1770 in Lancaster District, South Carolina. He died October 6, 1842 in, what is now, Dekalb County, Georgia. (The pronunciation of this county is specific to Atlanta—DeeKab.) James' other two full brothers were Hugh Lawson Montgomery, born Jan. 8, 1769 in South Carolina; and John Montgomery, born ca. 1768. He was taken prisoner of war by the British at the Battle of Hanging Rock, South Carolina (now Lancaster), and died a prisoner in Charleston, South Carolina.

As a young man, James McConnell traveled with his father, a second Lieutenant in the Revolutionary War, into battle in Burke County, Georgia, most likely in one of the small skirmishes involved in retaking the city of Augusta, Georgia from the British. According to *"The History of James McConnell Montgomery and His Family at Standing Peachtree in Georgia,"* 'He was said to have born "his musket like a veteran".' In 1813, during the War of 1812, James enlisted in the militia as a private at the age of 43. He served with General Floyd along the Tallapoosa River in Alabama. He was promoted to wagonmaster and was commended by the general. James' service to his country was not over, by any means.

During the conflict with the Creek Indians, Montgomery was posted to a remote area in the Georgia wilderness. The spot was located on a promontory overlooking the confluence of the Chattahoochee River and Peachtree Creek. The Creek name for the village was Pakana Huili (or Standing Peachtree). Some have suggested that the name refers to a "pitch" tree, or pine. There were certainly plenty of those, and still are. The army coveted the spot for its strategic value, but James appreciated the natural beauty of the area more.

James was placed in charge of building boats for the Army. The plan was to float supplies down the Chattahoochee from Fort Mitchell (Columbus, Georgia) to the site of the new fort. Young boys of only 22, barely trained as soldiers, were in charge of protecting the craftsmen under Montgomery. The commander of the forces was just a kid himself. Lt. George Gilmer had never participated in the command of such an isolated outpost, but he knew how to read the manual, and he remembered to bring lead to make bullets. Gilmer eventually distinguished himself in his service, and was later elected as governor. Eventually the fort, which was located just across today's Marietta Street from the Montgomery family cemetery, was finished.

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After the war with the Creek Indians was over, Montgomery returned to his home in Jackson County, remembering the beauty of the river and lushness of the surroundings. In 1821 the territory was opened up to settlers, and in 1822 Standing Peachtree became part of DeKalb County, which extended from Stone Mountain to the Chattahoochee River. James had married Nancy Farlow in 1797, and after returning to his Jackson County property, he put it up for sale and packed up Nancy and family. They headed off for Standing Peachtree with nine of their children, two of the children's spouses, and at least one grandchild. Also accompanying them were James's brother Hugh and his wife Margaret Barkley, their children, and James and Hugh's half sister and brother, Sally and William. (William is Judy Becker's ancestor.) James's daughter Lucinda and her husband Dempsey Connolly soon followed.

The family compound, along with its small trading post, was the only settlement for miles around, and overnight visitors were probably frequent. According to Judge Samuel B. Hoyt, who would write a sketch of the family in 1886, "They never charged a preacher anything for their entertainment, and the poor and needy were never turned down from their door. There were few houses better known in Georgia than theirs."

James held numerous positions in DeKalb County, including sheriff, tax collector, 1820 census taker, and trustee in the local Presbyterian church. He was appointed guardian to several orphans, and was commissioner to superintend the election of the first Justices of Inferior Court for the newly-created Fayette County, the jurisdiction in which Standing Peachtree was first located. James also served as a road commissioner, state senator, mail carrier, justice of the peace, and postmaster at Standing Peachtree. All of this he did along with homesteading, running a saw mill, a grist mill, and operating the ferry across the river.

For more than ten years, the Montgomery family lived across the Chattahoochee from what was ruled by the United States Supreme Court as a separate nation—that of the Cherokee Indians. The ferry from Standing Peachtree was the gateway to the Cherokee Nation. James Montgomery's dealings with the Indians were said to be friendly and fair, and he was one of the most interesting personalities in the history of the settlement of early Georgia. He was well educated, hospitable, and community-minded. He conducted himself with integrity and honesty, trying to balance his own beliefs with what he felt to be the best interests of both the Cherokees and the white settlers.

The children of James McConnell Montgomery and Nancy Farlow:

1. Adecia F., bn Jackson Co., GA., Apr. 4, 1799, d. May 31, 1870, m. Samuel Pruitt Jr.(1), Elijah Wyatt (2).
2. Lucinda McConnell , bn Oct. 28 1800, m. D. J. Connolly, 1821.
3. Amelia S., bn. Apr. 19, 1802, m. Joseph D. Shumate, 1819.
4. Sophronia P., bn Oct. 24, 1803, m. John Franklin.
5. Ulysses McConnell, bn Dec. 13, 1805, m. Elizabeth Humber, 1926.
6. Telemachus F., bn Jan. 14, 1808, m. Emily Felder (1) and Mary Turner (2).
7. Rhadamanthus J., bn. Nov. 29, 1811, m. Harriet Bogle, 1835.
8. James Floyd, bn. Sept. 10, 1813, m. Elizabeth Young, 1837.
9. Newman G., bn. Aug. 8, 1815, died in infancy.
10. William F., bn. Dec. 16, 1816, d. Nov. 2, 1833.
11. Joseph T., bn. May 23, 1819, m Julia Cameron, 1842.
12. Rhoda Narcissa, bn. Mar. 22, 1922, m. Alfred B. Brown (1) and Henry Dean (2).
13. Hugh B. Thorpe, bn. Apr. 17, 1824, m. Mary Broughton, 1849.



Rhoda Narcissa Montgomery,
daughter of James and Nancy
Montgomery.

Treasurer's Report

Submitted by Robert Montgomery,
CMSI Treasurer
1/1/05—6/30/05

*INCOME	
DUES	\$ 2,210.00
TARTAN SHOP	\$ 2,611.00
LIFE MEMBERS	\$ 550.00
DONATION	\$ 1,885.00
05 AGM	\$ 2,614.00
TOTAL	\$ 9,870.00
*EXPENSES	
GAMES	\$ 2,551.00
CLAN	\$ 615.00
TARTAN	\$ 1,124.00
NEWSLETTER	\$ 2,509.00
ODOM LIBRARY	\$ 100.00
TOTAL	\$ 9558.00
*TARTAN SHOP	
INCOME	\$ 2611.00
EXPENSES	\$ 1124.00
BALANCE	\$ 1487.00
*NET	
INCOME	\$ 9,870.00
EXPENSES	\$ 9,558.00
BALANCE	\$ 312.00
*NET WORTH	
TARTAN INV.	\$ 5,000.00
*CDs	\$22,000.00
*CASH	\$ 6,000.00
*TOTAL	\$33,000.00

*ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST DOLLAR

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Nancy Farlow Montgomery died on July 27, 1842. James, her husband of 45 years, died barely three months later on October 6, 1842. Funerals of both Nancy and James were held on the same day, and preached by two different ministers. They are buried in what is the oldest cemetery in Atlanta, the Montgomery Family cemetery, near the site of the old home-place in what is now Fulton County. Also buried there are four of their sons, Ulysses, James, Rhadamanthus, and William, as well as Nancy E. Dean, daughter of Narcissa and Henry Dean.

Between the graves of James and his wife is a stone obelisk inscribed: "Their children rise up and call them blessed; and erect this stone to their memory. . . They were lovely in their lives and in their death they were not divided."

An even more fitting epitaph for James and Nancy Montgomery, that first generation of Atlanta Pioneers, might be what Judge Hoyt wrote about them in 1841: "Take them all in all, they were a noble family. Loving and devoted to each other, they were at the same time, generous, kind, religious, brainy and energetic."

More stories about the descendants of James Montgomery of South Carolina and his wives Elizabeth McConnell and Susannah Strange will appear in future "At the Root of it All" articles.

Some sources for this article were:

E. Katherine Anderson, *The History of James McConnell Montgomery and His Family at Standing Peachtree in Georgia*, "The Atlanta Historical Bulletin" March, 1938, pp. 16-41.

Vivian Price, *The History of DeKalb County Georgia*, Wolfe Publishing Company, Fernandina Beach, Fl. 1997.

Ancestry.com, Database: American South, Notable Families

Ancestry.com, Southern Genealogies # 1, 1600s-1800s, Historical Southern Families, Vol. XIII, James Montgomery of Waxhaw Settlement South Carolina, with related families, Page 101.