

RICHARD M. ABBOTT and FAMILY
 Son of Richard Abbott of Halifax County, Virginia

Research Report by Joan Horsley
 Based on research as of May 2013
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 See notes at the end of the report

In 1850, Richard M. Abbott was living with his widowed mother and his unmarried siblings in Pittsylvania County, VA, where his father, Richard Abbott, died abt. Dec 1848. Richard M. Abbott married abt. 1852, based on the age of their first child. His wife's given name is proved to be Letitia "Lettie" J. (variously spelled), but no proof of her maiden name has been found. Passed-down family information to me from Mary Joe Abbott Wise says Lettie's maiden name is thought to be Downs, but the original source for that information is not known. Lettie appears to be the "Laticia J. Downs," daughter of William and Eleanor Downs, in Fauquier Co, VA in the 1850 census. (See separate notes below for Richard M.'s wife Letitia for more details.)

No marriage record for Richard and Lettie exists in Halifax Co. (where Richard was born), Pittsylvania Co., the City of Danville (in Pittsylvania Co. close to where his family was living), or in adjacent Henry Co. (where their first child was born in 1853). No marriage for them has been found in the adjacent NC counties of Caswell, Person, and Rockingham. or in online resources for Fauquier, adjacent Loudoun Co, VA, and adjacent Washington and Frederick Co, MD. They married at a time when the way marriages were registered in Virginia was changing (the confusion is particularly evident in Henry Co. records), and theirs may simply have been lost in the transition. However, the search continues. [Joan was still searching when she died.]

By 1853, Richard and Lettie were living in Henry Co, VA, adjacent to the west side of Pittsylvania Co, VA at the NC border. Their first child, Ellen or Ella Abbott, "daughter of Richard M. Abbott and Leticia Abbott," was born 12 Sep 1853 in Henry County, VA, according to her birth record. (One transcribed abstract online names her Ellen; the other names her Ella. Both names derive from the name Eleanor, which is also the name of Lettie's apparent mother in the 1850 census.) This Ellen/Ella Abbott died before the 1860 census, and in 1861, Richard and Lettie named another daughter Ella V. Abbott.

[Source: "Virginia, Births and Christenings, 1853-1917," index, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/X5DX-CJB>), citing GS Film No. 31989, Reference ID: p 5 #20 and index, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/X5XS-CMJ>), citing source film no. 2046942, item 2 p 413]

Abt. 1856, Richard and Lettie moved their family to Rockingham Co, NC, adjacent to the south of Henry and Pittsylvania County, VA. Richard's brother Joseph M. Abbott and family moved from Pittsylvania to Rockingham about the same time. Richard's post office at Oregon Hill is abt. 10 miles northeast of Joseph's P.O. at Wentworth.

1860 - Rockingham Co, NC - Northern Division - PO: Oregon Hill
 Abbott, Richard M - 30 - Farmer - Real Est: 0; Pers Est: \$1000 - VA
 Leticia J - 26 - VA
 Laticia[sic] - 5 - VA [Leticia J. Abbott]
 Susan - 3 - NC [Sue Kate Abbott]

George - 10 mos. - NC [George W. Abbott]

 1870 - Oregonville, Rockingham Co, NC - PO: Ruffin
 Abbot [sic], Richard M - 40 - Agt of Farms - VA
 Letitia J - 37 - VA
 Letitia J - 15 - VA [m. F. B Gentry 22 Dec 1870]
 Sue Kate - 13 - NC
 George W - 10 - NC
 Ella V - 9 - NC

 1870 - Richard and Lettie's daughter Letitia, recorded as "Lettia J. Abbott," married "F. B. Gentry" 22 Dec 1870 in Rockingham Co, NC. Her parents are transcribed as Richard and Lettia Abbott, and his parents are transcribed as I. E. Gentry [Gentry] and wife Elizabeth. (His name is also indexed as just "B. Gentry.")

[Source: "North Carolina, Marriages, 1759-1979," index, FamilySearch
 (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/F8CK-GMZ>), citing reference FHL microfilm 518423]

 Abt. 1871, Richard and his family moved to a nearby area back in Pittsylvania Co, VA, where their daughter Cora Mae Abbott was born in Aug 1872 (per 1900 census).

 6 Jan 1873 - A letter of this date from Richard M. Abbott to his brother John J. Abbott in St. Clair Co, AL is said to include this information:

"that his mother [Catharine Abbott, then widowed] is living with him at that time and [he] gives the names of his children except the youngest [b. 1874]. He describes the loss of his property through the war and the difficulty of making a living on a rented farm. He describes a nervous trouble that is considerable bother to him..."

[Source: Ernestine Abbott Almon (d. 1967), citing letters in her possession. Information to me 2004 from Mary Joe Abbott Wise]

 7 Dec 1874 - Richard and Lettie's last child, Pet L. Abbott, was born this date in Pittsylvania Co. An old Abbott family letter mistakenly gave her name as "Mrs. Pet Luther Lawless." In fact, "Pett L. Abbott" married John T. Luther [sp. Louthier], per their 1892 marriage record. (The name "Pet" or "Pett" is unusual but found elsewhere in the 1880 and 1900 censuses.) The online abstract of her birth record mistranscribed her name as "Ret."

Birth Record (online transcribed abstract)

Name: Ret [sic. Pet] Abbott
 Gender: Female
 Birth Date: 7 Dec 1874
 Birthplace: Tunstall Township, Pittsylvania, Virginia
 Father: R. M. Abbott
 Mother's Name: J. A. Abbott [sic; L. J. Abbott]

[Source: "Virginia, Births and Christenings, 1853-1917," index, FamilySearch
 (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/X5FJ-YYV>), citing Film No. 2046956, Ref. No. p 341]

1875 - Family information passed down from Ernestine Abbott Almon says Richard's mother, Catharine Abbott, died in December 1875. No place is given. However, since Catharine was living with Richard in 1873, presumably she died while still living with him in Pittsylvania Co, VA, where she had continued to live after her husband's Richard Abbott's death in 1848. No death record exists, and extensive research has not found her burial place.

1876 - Richard and Lettie's daughter "Susan K. Abbott" married "Pawhaten H. Brightwell" on 19 Jan 1876 in Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA (today one of Virginia's "Independent Cities"). She is listed as age 18, born 1858 in Pittsylvania Co, VA [sic; b. Rockingham Co, NC], daughter of R. M. and L. J. Abbott. He is listed as age 27, born 1849, in Prince Edward Co, VA, son of Robert H. and M. A. Brightwell.

[Source: "Virginia, Marriages, 1785-1940," index, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/XRWM-9YY>), citing reference 715, FHL microfilm 888893]

1880 - Tunstall Dist., Pittsylvania Co, VA
 Abbott, R. M. - 49 - Huckster [ie, seller of goods, peddler]
 Latisha J. - 47 - wife
 Geo. W. - 20 - son - Overseeing
 Ella V. - 17 - daughter - Selling dry goods
 Cora N. - 10 - daughter
 Pett L. - 7 - daughter
 Gentry, L. J. - 25 - daughter - widow [Letitia J. Abbott, widow of F. B. Gentry]
 C. H. - 6 - grandson - VA-VA-VA
 R. B. - 1 - grandson - VA-VA-VA

Hairgrove, Eviline - white - 37 - widow - Servant, cooking

Note:

Tunstall District, where Richard and family were living by 1874, was a southwestern part of Pittsylvania west and northwest of Danville. (Danville had its own districts this census.) All family members were listed in error as born in Virginia, but George and Ella were born in Rockingham Co, NC.

1883 - Richard M. Abbott died in Pittsylvania Co, VA.

Grave Marker

Richard M. Abbott

Birth: Apr. 8, 1830

Death: May 22, 1883

Buried: Leemont Cemetery, Danville, VA

[Source: Grave marker photo. Find A Grave Memorial# 94190521 Created by: Ed Townsend; record added: Jul 25, 2012]

Note:

In 1880, Richard was living just west or northwest of Danville, and by 1889 his family was living in Danville. Although Richard was buried in the Danville City Cemetery, it is not clear whether he actually died in Danville or just outside.

1889 - Richard and Lettie's daughter "Cora May Abbott" married "William E. Ponton" on 5 Feb 1889 in Pelham, Caswell Co, NC (just over the state line from Pittsylvania Co, VA and adjacent

to the east of Rockingham Co, NC). She is listed as age 18, daughter of R. M. and L. J. Abbott. He is listed as age 30, son of P. E. and Perline Ponton.

[Source: "North Carolina, Marriages, 1759-1979," index, FamilySearch
(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/F83D-QW1>), citing FHL microfilm 540253]

Note:

The original marriage license for Cora and William has been obtained. It lists both of their places of residence as Danville, VA, where Cora's mother is also listed as living then. (Her father and both his parents were deceased.)

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1892 - Richard & Lettie's youngest daughter, "Pett L. Abbott" married "John T. Louther" [Luther] on 7 Sep 1892, also in Pelham, Caswell Co, NC. She is listed as age 18 and he as age 22. (No parents' names are included in the abstract online.)

[Source: "North Carolina, Marriages, 1759-1979," index, FamilySearch
(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/F8F7-DPP>), citing reference p311,507, FHL microfilm 358272]

Note:

Later censuses name Pett with the middle name of "Lawless," and their daughter Louise is recorded on her marriage record as Louise Lawless Luther. (Passed-down family information gave Pett's name in error as "Mrs. Pett Luther Lawless" rather than her correct name of Pett Lawless Abbott Luther, as her combined records show.)

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1894 - Richard & Lettie's son "George Washington Abbott" married "Mollie Frances Morgan" on 12 Mar 1894 in Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA. She is listed in the marriage record as age 20, born in Rockingham Co, NC, daughter of J. J. & Martha A. Morgan. George is listed as age 34, also born in Rockingham, son of R. M. & L. J. Abbott.

[Source: "Virginia, Marriages, 1785-1940," index, FamilySearch
(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/XRCZ-MC8>), citing reference mr 2 p 24, FHL microfilm 888940].

Note:

The 1873 letter referenced above from Richard to his brother John J. is said to name his son George Watkins Abbott (rather than Washington). An early George Watkins was an Abbott family neighbor and an influential member of the Halifax community where Richard grew up, although that George Watkins was deceased long before Richard was born.

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By 1900, Richard and Lettie's daughter Leticia J. Gentry appears to be deceased, and their daughters Sue Kate and Cora were widows. Lettie is living with her daughter Cora, and daughter Sue Kate is next door along with her unmarried sister Ella.

1900 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA (Ward 1)

Ponton, CORA - 27 - b. Aug 1872 - 4 children, 3 living - VA-VA-VA [Cora Abbott]

Willie H - 10 - b. Feb 1890 - son

Peter R - 8 - b. Sep 1891 - son

Frank T - 5 - b. Jan 1895 - son

ABBOTT, LETTIE - 67 - mother - b. Aug 1832 - widow - 9 children, 6 living - VA-VA-VA

Ponton, Peter C - 46 - b. Oct 1853 - brother-in-law - single - Butcher - VA-VA-VA

Next to them are Richard and Lettie's daughters Sue (Sue Kate) and Ella:

1900 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA (Ward 1)

Brightwell, SUE - 43 - b. Apr 1857 - widow - 2 children, 2 living - Dressmaker

Frank P - 11 - b. Jan 1889 son - working in knitting mill

Annie B - 5 - b. Sep 1894 - daughter

Abbott, ELLA - 38 - b. Oct 1861 - sister

Note:

They were living next to the family of George Chandler (age 51, a "pedlar") and wife of 31 years named "Feoby" (Phoebe), who died by 1905, when George married Sue Kate (see below).

Living in the same district of Danville are Richard & Lettie's daughter Pet L. Abbott Luther and family:

1900 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA (Ward 1)

Luther, John - 29 - marr. 8 yrs - Grocer - NC-NC-NC

Bettie[sic, Pet] L - 35 - wife - 4 births, 1 child living - VA-VA-VA

Louise - 6 - daughter - b. Jul 1893 - at school - VA-NC-VA

Living in a different district of Danville are Richard & Lettie's son George W. Abbott and his wife:

1900 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA (Ward 4)

ABBOTT, G W - 40 - b. Sep 1859 - marr. 6 yrs. - working in leaf tobacco factory - NC-VA-VA

Mollie - 23 - VA-NC-VA

Note:

In 1900, Danville became one of Virginia's "Independent Cities" that operates as a separate governmental from the county in which it is located. However, the censuses through 1940 (last available) still listed the incorporated city of Danville as part of Pittsylvania County.

1900 - Richard and Lettie's widowed daughter "Cora M. Ponton" married "Chillie Langron Weiford" on 26 May 1900 in Pelham, Caswell Co, NC (just south of Danville, VA). She is listed as age 27, daughter of R. M. & L. J. Abbott. He is listed as age 28, son of P. F. & R. J. Weiford.

[Source: North Carolina, Marriages, 1759-1979," index, FamilySearch

(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/F8J5-BQN>), citing reference 9, FHL microfilm 540258].

Note:

When Cora's son William H. Ponton married in 1911, his marriage record names his mother as "C. M. Weiford," which was Cora May's legal name then.

1901 - Leticia "Lettie" Abbott and her son George W. Abbott died several weeks apart in Danville: George died 8 Jun 1901 at only 41 years old. Lettie died 18 Jul 1901, two weeks before turning 69. Both were buried in Leemont Cemetery in Danville, as was Richard M. Abbott.

Grave Marker:

George W Abbott

Birth: Sep. 3, 1854[sic, 1859]

Death: Jun. 8, 1901

Inscription: In Loving Remembrance of My Husband

Burial: Leemont Cemetery, Danville, VA

[Source: Find A Grave Website. Memorial# 94190597. Grave marker photo included. Created by: Ed Townsend; record added: Jul 25, 2012]

Note:

George's widow "Mrs. Mollie Abbott" was still living in Danville in the 1910 census. They had no children. Mollie Frances Abbott remarried in Danville on 18 Sep 1910 to John William McBride, also widowed.

Grave Marker

Letitia J Abbott

Birth: Aug. 5, 1832

Death: Jul. 18, 1901

Burial: Leemont Cemetery, Danville, VA

[Source: Find A Grave Website. Memorial# 94190567 Grave marker photo included. Created by: Ed Townsend; record added: Jul 25, 2012]

1905 - Sue Kate (Abbott) Brightwell, widow of P. H. Brightwell, married George W. Chandler, also widowed

Marriage Date/Place: 05 Mar 1905, Danville, Virginia

Groom: Geo. Washington Chandler - Age 56 - Born 1849, Halifax Co, VA - son of Mat & Emily Chandler

Bride: Kate Brightwell - Age 48 - Born 1857 [no other info given]

[Source: "Virginia, Marriages, 1785-1940," index, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/XR7Y-VFY>) citing film no. 888898; ref. no. P-5613]

Note:

The Chandler families of Halifax County were close neighbors and associates of Sue Kate's great-grandfather Joseph Abbott from at least 1762 when he arrived with his family in Halifax. The Chandlers also were related to Sue Kate's grandmother Catharine Fulkerson Abbott (wife of Richard Abbott) and to Paulina Lax who married John J. Abbott, brother of Kate's father Richard M. Abbott.

In 1910, Richard and Lettie's two remaining daughters, Cora and Sue Kate, are still living in Danville:

1910 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA

Weifford, W E [sic] - 38 - 1st marriage, m. 10 yrs - City Plumber, city waterworks

 CORA - 39 - wife - 2nd marr., m. 10 yrs, 5 child., 4 living - VA-NC-VA [Cora Abbott

Ponton]

 Langhorn - 9 - son

Ponton, Hazell - 20 - stepson - Plumber, plumbing shop

 Peter R. - 18 - stepson - no occupation

 Frank T - 15 - stepson - office boy

Strater, Wesley - 17 - Black - Servant

Note:

Cora's husband is named Chillis L. Weiford in 1900 and 1930 and Chillie Weiford in 1940. For some reason, he and their son Langhorn are listed as Bernks (indexed as Bunks Weiford) in 1920. Where the name "W. E." came from in this census is a mystery.

1910 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA - Ward 1, Dist. 15

Chandler, G W - 61 - 2nd marriage, marr. 5 yrs - laborer, odd jobs - VA-NC-NC

KATE - 53 - 2nd marr., m. 5 yrs. - 2 children, 2 living [Sue Kate Abbott Brightwell]

Brightwell, P F - 21 - stepson - 1st marr. 0 yrs - pressman, printing office - VA-VA-NC

Annie - 15 - stepdaughter - single - sewing, pants factory - VA-VA-NC

Brightwell, Katheryn - 18 - stepdtr [wife of P.F.] - 1st marr, 0 yrs - no children - GA-IL-IL

Note:

An arrow is drawn from "Katheryn" to "P. F." Brightwell (Frank P. Brightwell in 1900) apparently meaning that Katherine is Frank's recently-married wife.

For later information on the families of Cora May Abbott and Susan Kate Abbott, see Notes for them.

1914

Richard and Lettie's daughter Ella V. Abbott was unmarried in 1900 at age 38. She is missing by her maiden name in the 1910 census, but no marriage record was found for her. However, she seems to be the "Miss Ella V. Abbott" buried near Richard and Lettie in Leemont Cemetery 11 Apr 1914 (per the cemetery interment book), even though the birth year transcribed from her marker does not match her actual age.

According to the 1870, 1880, and 1900 censuses, Ella was born in Oct 1861, yet the transcription of the marker says born Oct 1881. (No Ella V. Abbott has been found who does match the transcribed dates). The photo of the marker shows it to be badly eroded, perhaps the cause of the problem. The same person photographed the grave markers for Ella's parents Richard M. and Lettie and for her brother George in this same cemetery at the same time, so the graves probably are in the same vicinity.

Ella V Abbott

Birth: Oct. 27, 1881 [should be 1861]

Death: Apr. 6, 1914 [interment book says d. Apr. 10, buried Apr 11]

Burial: Leemont Cemetery, Danville, VA

[Source: Find A Grave Website. Memorial# 94190651 Grave marker photo included. Created by: Ed Townsend; record added: Jul 25, 2012]

NOTES for LETITIA J. DOWNS

Family information to me from Mary Joe Abbott Wise gives the name of Richard M. Abbott's wife as Letica Downs, but Mary Joe did not give her source. Censuses with Richard and their family show her name was Letitia J. (or Leticia J.), called Lettie, born Aug 1832 in Virginia. A marriage record for Richard and Letitia/Lettie is needed to fully prove her maiden name, but no marriage record has been found in extensive searching over multiple VA counties as well as adjacent counties in NC and MD. They married at a time when the way marriages were registered was changing, and theirs may have been lost in the transition.

In 1850, shortly before they married abt. 1852, the only Letitia/Lettie in the census in Virginia or the neighboring parts of NC (by any spelling, with any middle initial, anywhere near this age) is a "Laticia J. Downs," daughter of William and Eleanor Downs, in Fauquier Co, VA. Fauquier is almost at the northern border of Virginia, while Pittsylvania Co., where the Abbotts were living, is

on the southern border. Usually in this time period, it would be highly unlikely for two people living so far apart to meet each other. As a shoe maker, William Downs could have had business contacts or sales in Pittsylvania, since Danville was a primary commercial center in southern Virginia, but even then, a meeting between Richard and Letitia seems improbable without some other connection.

However, it appears Leticia may have had a relative, Roland T. Downs, living in Pittsylvania County in 1850, as was Richard M. Abbott. Roland T. Downs, age 35, is the only Downs/Downes family in Pittsylvania this census, and he appears to be a shoe maker like William in Fauquier. (Skilled craftsmen often ran in families groups.) Roland's occupation is listed merely as "S," but that seems to refer to the previous occupation listed, which is "Shoe maker."

Thus, the presence of shoe maker Roland T. Downs in Pittsylvania County in 1850 makes it much more likely that Richard M. Abbott's wife Leticia J. Downs is the one in Fauquier County in 1850 whose father, William Downs, was also a shoe maker. (The surname Downs/Downes was not very common in Virginia at the time.) Since William's daughter Letitia J. Downs is the only Letitia/Lettie Downs of any spelling or middle initial found anywhere in VA or NC in the 1850 census, he and wife Eleanor seem to be Richard's wife Letitia's parents, but the search for more proof continues. [Joan was still searching when she died.]

Interestingly, though, Richard and Lettie's first child has a birth record, and her name is transcribed in the online abstract as both Ellen and Ella. "Ellen" was a standard nickname for Eleanor, and "Ella" was derived from the same name.

1850 - Fauquier Co, VA - Turners Dist.
Downs, William - 65 - shoemaker - b. VA
Eleanor - 53 - VA
Laticia J - 19 - VA
Sarah - 14 - VA
Nancy H - 11 - VA

1850 - Danville, Pittsylvania Co, VA
Downs, Roland L - 35 - VA - Occupation: "S" (listing above his is "Shoe maker")
Mary L - 23 - VA
James - 5 - VA
William - 2 - VA

Letitia J. Downs' parents seem to be the ones in this online marriage bond abstract:

Marriage of "William Down" & "Ellender Avaher"[sic] = 10 Dec 1820, Loudoun County, VA
[Source: "Virginia, Marriages, 1785-1940," index, FamilySearch
(<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/XR87-G5Q>)]

Note:

The name "Ellender" was used interchangeably with "Eleanor." Loudoun Co. is adjacent to Fauquier Co. The surname "Avaher" is almost certainly a transcription error in this FamilySearch abstract (a frequent problem).

However, there is a Lewis Ambler in the Loudoun Co. 1820 census with a daughter Eleanor's age. He is the only likely father for her found in that census, but more proof is needed.

William's wife Eleanor Downs died bet. 1850-1860. In the 1860 census, William Downs is living in Loudoun Co. with his apparent son Hamilton Downs and family. Like William, Hamilton was also a skilled craftsman, in his case a miller. William and Eleanor's other two daughters in 1850 either died or married by 1860 and could not be located in that census.

1860 - Loudoun Co, VA - Southern District - PO: Hamilton

Downs, Hamilton - 36 - Miller - VA

Sarah E - 31 VA

Elizabeth Ann - 6

John H - 5

Ellen A - 3

Ida - 1

Nixson, Samuel - 19 - Laborer - VA

DOWNS, WILLIAM - 73 - VA [died before 1870]

Researched and written by Joan Horsley

Based on research as of May 2013

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This is a fairly complete report that Joan Horsley was working on when she died. Except where I have commented above, there were no notes included in the text that indicated any facts or other lines of inquiry she wanted to pursue. Any correspondence that would have been directed to my late wife should be sent to JHGenResearch-Abbott@yahoo.com

If you use any information from this report, please include the documentation as given here and cite this paper as:

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