

RICHARD ABBOTT and FAMILY
Son of Joseph Abbott of Halifax County, Virginia

Research Report by Joan Horsley
Based on Research as of December 2013
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Contact: JHGenResearch-Abbott@yahoo.com

RICHARD ABBOTT

Son of Joseph Abbott and wife Frances
Born: Abt. 1770, Halifax County, VA
Married: 1 Sep 1818, Halifax County, VA to Catharine "Caty" Fulkerson
Died: Abt. Dec 1848, Pittsylvania County, VA

CATHARINE "CATY" FULKERSON

Daughter of John Fulkerson and Sarah "Sally" Roberts
Born: Abt. 1789, Halifax County, VA
Died: Dec 1875, Pittsylvania County, VA

CHILDREN of RICHARD ABBOTT and CATHARINE FULKERSON

John J. Abbott (m. Paulina S. Lax/Lacks), Joseph M. Abbott (m. Martha J. Fitzgerald), Sarah F. Abbott (never married), William Abbott (m. Mandeline F. Davis), Richard M. Abbott (m. Letitia J. Downs), Cassandra Abbott (m. Moore W. Dollahite)

RICHARD ABBOTT was born in Halifax County, Virginia in late 1769 or early 1770, as proved by the yearly Halifax personal property tax lists where he is first listed by name at age 21 in June 1791. Richard was a son of Joseph Abbott Sr. (c1710-1788) and wife Frances, proved by Joseph's 1787 will [HWB2:298] and supported by Halifax personal property tax lists and by numerous documents for Richard and his siblings. Joseph Abbott moved his family from King and Queen County, VA to Halifax County abt. 1762 and settled on land where Richard was born, part of which Richard later inherited. This land was located at the upper part of Difficult Creek in north-central Halifax County just east of today's Crystal Hill, VA, as we discuss later in more detail.

The pervasive online information that Richard Abbott and his siblings were born in "Maresville" is mistaken. No town of that name ever existed in Halifax County. Also, there was no town of that name in Stafford County, where Joseph Abbott's family never lived but where other online files erroneously place their birthplace. These are only a few of the numerous errors currently found in the repetitive undocumented and unsourced Abbott family files online. The purpose of this current research is to discover and document the true facts about Richard Abbott, his parents, and siblings as revealed by the original records written during their lifetimes and to correct and expand what has been passed down and around in error.

Richard Abbott was Joseph Abbott's first son with wife Frances, apparently Joseph's third wife, whom he married in Halifax County abt. 1765 at about 55 years of age. Richard Abbott was around 18 years old when his father died abt. Apr 1788. Richard was then the eldest

male in the household, and the records indicate he acted as head-of-house for his family, even though he was still legally a minor. (His next older brother, William Abbott, was a half-brother 14 years older than Richard and already married with his own family established.) At the time of Richard's father Joseph Abbott's death, the family members still living at home consisted of Richard's widowed mother, two to five older sisters, and six younger siblings, the youngest being about age 11 or younger. Perhaps Richard's sense of responsibility for the family and particularly for his mother was part of the reason Richard did not marry until he was 48 years old, five years before his mother died at around 80 years old.

Because of the unusually large age spread of Joseph's 16 proved children and Richard's late marriage age, some earlier researchers of this Abbott line who did not have access to original records made guesses to insert a generation or two between Richard and his father Joseph, and some knew nothing of Richard at all. For example, in the 1950s, Ernestine Abbott Almon misunderstood what she thought was an early "census" and concluded it was a "near-fact" that the father of John James Abbott, born 1821, was named Joseph. Ernestine called him "Joseph Abbott III" trying to fill in assumed generations based on a common misconception that the average marriage age was 21. To the contrary, wills prove that John J. Abbott's father was Richard Abbott, born c1770, a proved son of Joseph Abbott (Sr.), who we now have evidence was born abt. 1710. (Ernestine Almon's mistakes are certainly understandable given the information she both had and lacked. Despite her errors, we owe Mrs. Almon a large debt of gratitude for keeping interest in the family heritage alive and for preserving later family information not publicly available. I believe Mrs. Almon would be gratified to know she inspired research to make the necessary proved corrections.)

Richard's father Joseph Abbott wrote his will 30 Mar 1787. [HWB2:298] Joseph was then abt. 77 years old and had 16 surviving children, apparently by three wives. Joseph devised to his son Richard "my house and plantation whereon I now live containing 150 acres to him and his heirs forever." Richard also was among Joseph's "youngest boys" beginning with Richard's older half-brother William (then age 31) to whom Joseph jointly bequeathed the residue of his estate. However, Joseph first ensured the well-being of his wife, Frances, and his younger children by loaning Frances lifetime use of all his personal estate and 350 of his 500 acres (excepting only the adjacent 150 acres devised to his son William Abbott, where William and his family already lived).

Six months after writing his will, Joseph Abbott signed his consent 10 Oct 1787 for his daughter Mary Abbott to marry Hatcher Owen, a neighbor whose family had been friends of the Abbotts for years. Hatcher's marriage bond of that date names Mary's brother Richard Abbott as his security or "bondsman." [Halifax Marriage Bonds Register No. 1 and Ministers Returns. LVA Reel 82] Under most circumstances this would be odd, because Richard was not yet of legal age. However, there was no chance that Richard would become responsible for payment, since the bond fee was required of the bondsman only when the marriage did not take place and the groom defaulted on the payment himself. The fact that Richard Abbott was not yet 21 years old probably did not enter their minds. As the eldest son in the household of an elderly father, Richard likely already had assumed many adult responsibilities by that time.

Joseph Abbott died between a court case on 27 Mar 1788 [HPB12:355] and 8 May 1788, when only his estate is listed in the tax records. [Halifax Personal Property Taxes 1782-1800. LVA Reel 147] His will was proved in Halifax Court 27 Oct 1788. The previous year, in April 1787, Richard Abbott was enumerated in his father's household as a "white tithe" age 16-21 (the first year

since these taxes began in 1782 that the number of such males under 21 was included). From Joseph's death until Richard's adulthood, Richard is enumerated as age 16-21 in the yearly tax lists for his deceased father's estate. Richard Abbott first appears in his own name at age 21 on the tax list dated 25 Jun 1791.

In 1793 and 1795, his taxes are listed as "Richard Abbott & Mother," combining his and his mother Frances' taxable personal property. In other years, the amount of property for which Richard is taxed shows it includes his mother's as well. Also, the "white tithes" listed for Richard include some of his younger brothers but apparently only after they turned 21 rather than the usual 16. Richard's widowed mother, Frances Abbott, does not appear separately in her own name until 1797. For most years thereafter, Frances' younger sons are included in her tax lists, but occasionally they are in Richard's instead. Since all of them lived together in the same house, it was rather a moot point who was listed as the responsible taxpayer. However, these lists clearly demonstrate that Richard was considered the head-of-house.

Richard and his brothers William Abbott, Leonard Abbott, and Moody Abbott inherited adjacent tracts of their father's land and continued to live there as they married and raised their families. Also living there with his mother, Frances, were his three siblings Elizabeth Abbott, Martha "Patsy" Abbott, and John Abbott, who never married and who lived there together all their lives. Richard's next-to-youngest brother, Moses Abbott, moved to Richmond, VA abt. 1804, as we discuss shortly. His youngest brother, Fleming Abbott, either died in Halifax bet. 1804-1805 or possibly also moved to Richmond but died there within the next 10 years. Richard's older half-brother Joseph Abbott Jr. (b. c1750) and his family lived a short distance south on Winns Creek, just east of Richard's sister Mary Abbott Owen and family on Terrible Creek, thus all in the near vicinity. Apparently Richard's sister Frances Abbott also lived in the same area as her family after her marriage to John Robertson in 1795, but their family moved to southwestern Halifax at least by 1806. The only sibling who did not remain involved with the family was Richard's eldest half-brother, Benjamin Abbott, over 40 years older than Richard. The year after Richard was born, Benjamin moved his family from Difficult Creek to the Banister River abt. 10-12 miles west of the rest of the Abbots. Otherwise, records show that Richard's siblings and their families who lived at Difficult Creek and the nearby vicinity remained closely involved, and even those who later moved to southern Halifax stayed connected and in touch with the others.

In Nov 1798, Richard Abbott, then abt. age 28, added to his inherited land where he lived with his mother and unmarried siblings. The month before, on 6 Oct 1798, Richard's older brother William Abbott purchased 328 acres adjacent to "Abbott" land from Henry E. Coleman, and Richard Abbott and his brother Leonard Abbott witnessed William's deed. [HDB18:107] The next month, William sold 150 acres of this tract to Richard, and the deed was witnessed by their brothers John, Leonard, and Moses.

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Date: 27 Nov 1798

From: William ABBOTT of Halifax

To: RICHARD ABBOTT of same

For: £90

Description: 150 acres by the late surveys, south side of the upper Difficult Creek

Bounds: Difficult Creek, Ephraim Hill, said [William] ABBOTT

Signed: William Abbott

Witnesses: John ABBOTT, Moses ABBOTT, Leonard ABBOTT

Recorded: 22 Apr 1799

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 18, p. 128-129. LVA Reel 8. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Note:

Earlier deeds and patents refer to the Coleman land as being on the Double Branch (sometimes called Middle Branch) of upper Difficult Creek. Joseph Abbott's original Halifax land in the 1760s also was bounded by Ephraim Hill. [HDB7:3]

In June 1811, Richard purchased another 178 acres of Henry E. Coleman's land in the same location and then sold a portion of the tract the next month:

Date: 24 Jun 1811

From: Henry E. Coleman

To: RICHARD ABBOTT

For: \$178

Description: 178 acres by late survey, south side of Difficult Creek

Bounds: Barksdale's & Moore's line, Mrs. Mores field [widow Cloe (Irby) Moore], Difficult Creek

Signed: Henry E. Coleman

Witnesses: None

Recorded: 24 Jun 1811

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 23, p. 92. LVA Reel 10. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Date: 22 Jul 1811

From: RICHARD ABBOTT

To: David Allen

For: £16 17[?] shillings

Description: 56 acres

Bounds: Difficult Creek, Cloe Moore, Chandler, said [Richard] ABBOTT

Signed: Richard Abbott

Witnesses: None

Recorded: 22 Jul 1811

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 23, p. 130-131. LVA Reel 10. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

In 1816, Richard's brother William Abbott sold him 6 acres along their common boundary:

Date: 28 Oct 1816

From: William ABBOTT

To: RICHARD ABBOTT

For: \$18

Description: 6 acres

Bounds: Richard Abbott on the NE, William Abbott on the SW, "and touching on no other men's lines"

Signed: William Abbott

Witnesses: None

Release of Dower: None

Recorded: 28 Oct 1816

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 26, p. 235. LVA Reel 12. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Note:

William and Richard each inherited adjacent parcels of their deceased father Joseph Abbott's land, then each of the brothers purchased additional land around them. This deed is shifting part of their common boundary line adding 6 acres to Richard's land. (The Grantee Index mistakenly lists this land to Richard as 60 acres, although the Grantor Index correctly lists William selling only 6 acres.)

In 1827, Richard's brother Moody Abbott sold Richard a little over 53 acres of his land adjacent to Richard. Moody inherited 100 acres of their father Joseph Abbott's land, and this is probably part of that tract, as Moody then also owned a large tract in the immediate vicinity of his inherited land. (The 654-acre tract that Moody bought in 1819 was adjacent to the land of then-deceased John Fulkerson, father of Richard's wife Catharine Fulkerson. Moody sold 352.5 acres of this tract in 1823. *[HDB28:174, 32:35]*)

Date: 15 Sep 1827

From: Moody ABBOTT and wife Martha [Martha W. Lindsey]

To: RICHARD ABBOTT

For: \$53.81

Description: 53-1/4 acres "by survey" on waters of Difficult Creek

Bounds: Nathaniel Barksdale, RICHARD ABBOTT

Signed: Moody Abbott, Martha Abbott

Witnesses: None

Release of Dower by Martha Abbott, wife of Moody Abbott, certified 31 Oct 1827. Witnessed by Benjamin Anderton and William H. Anderton

Recorded: 31 Oct 1827

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 35, p. 77-79. LVA Reel 16. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

This last purchase brought Richard's total land holdings at Difficult Creek to 481.25 acres, which he held until 1840. His brothers William and Moody also added to their inherited lands, all of which were adjacent at some point to each other. By the 1820s, the combined Abbott lands grew to over 1200 acres from Joseph Abbott's original 500 acres (although poor economic conditions drastically reduced their lands over the next 30 years). Using the information in their deeds and the early deeds relating to their father's land, we have a clear picture of where they lived.

The Abbott land where Joseph Abbott first settled in 1762 that he and later his heirs expanded was on the south side of the Double Branch of Difficult Creek in north-central Halifax County just east of today's town of Crystal Hill, VA. Joseph's land was along and south of the east-west Bonds Ferry Road, later called Clarks Ferry Road, roughly today's Newbill School Road/Route 621. A tract or so west of Joseph was the north-south "Old Courthouse Road," later called Coles Ferry Road, roughly today's Anderson Road/Route

626, which went between Crystal Hill and today's courthouse town of Halifax, VA 7 miles to the south. There is still today an Abbott Hill Road (Route 609) encircling the general area of the old Abbott family lands. Abbott Hill Road curves southwest from today's Newbill School Road/Route 621 (the old Bonds Ferry Road) to meet Clays Mill Road/Route 610, which curves back northwest to meet Anderson Road/Route 626 (the old Courthouse Road) just below Crystal Hill.

From 1767 to 1776, Halifax Court was held just south of today's Crystal Hill. Prior to that, from the formation of Halifax in 1752 to the formation of Pittsylvania County in 1767, Halifax Court was at Peytonsburg (now in Pittsylvania), accessed across northern Halifax by Bonds Ferry Road from the Staunton River, the eastern boundary of Halifax County at Charlotte County. By various names, the road continued northeast from the Staunton River through Charlotte Court House, VA to Petersburg, VA, where it connected to the major roads east to Williamsburg, the old capital, and north to Richmond, today's state capital. Officially after 1776 (but in practice some rather-nebulous time later), Halifax Court was and still is in the town of Halifax (variously named), seven miles south of Crystal Hill down today's Anderson Road/Route 626. Thus, throughout the 100 years that Richard Abbott and his siblings lived on and around their father Joseph Abbott's original land, they were centrally located for travel, commerce, and civic and community life.

One of Joseph Abbott's original Halifax neighbors from the 1760s was Fulker Fulkerson and his family. Fulker was living almost next to the Abbotts at least by 1763, when his son John Fulkerson was still a young boy. [HPB4:119] Fulker and son John shared the land, which John inherited after his father's death abt. 1800 and which John expanded with several tracts of his own. When Joseph Abbott died in 1788, Fulker Fulkerson was one of the three neighbors who made the inventory and appraisal of Joseph's estate, and John Fulkerson was one of the two securities for the executor's bond of Joseph's son William Abbott, Richard's older brother. John Fulkerson wrote his will 31 Mar 1803, and one of the three witnesses was Richard Abbott's youngest brother, Fleming Abbott. [HWB6:545] John Fulkerson died within the next three months, and fifteen years later, John's daughter Catharine Fulkerson became Richard Abbott's wife. In the meantime, Catharine was helping her widowed mother and younger siblings, as Richard was helping his widowed mother and siblings nearby

In the 1803 tax lists, Richard Abbott is again listed as being responsible for his mother's personal property taxes as well as for his own and for two of his younger brothers, Moody and Fleming, still living in the household at the time. Later that year on 25 Nov 1803, Richard Abbott witnessed the will of Jesse Pleasants. [Carrington, *History of Halifax*, Ch. 10] One of the executors of Pleasants' estate was Thomas Dobson, a Baptist minister who had officiated at the marriage of Richard's brother Leonard Abbott and Susanna Ferguson the previous year. One of Richard's co-witnesses to the will was William Owen, father of Hatcher Owen, Richard's brother-in-law and husband of Richard's sister Mary Abbott, for whose marriage Richard served as bondsman. When William Owen died in 1806, Richard's younger brother John Abbott witnessed the will and was named a co-executor with William's sons Hatcher Owen and Thomas Owen. [HWB7:263]

In 1805, Richard Abbott, abt. age 35, was head of the household then consisting of his widowed mother Frances Abbott, his younger brothers John (b. c1773) and Moody (b. c1775), and his sisters Elizabeth (b. c1768) and Martha/Patsy (b. c1772). All of his siblings

were adults by this time, and together they were working and living on the land that Richard and Moody inherited from his father but which still technically belonged to their mother. Whether they also were working Richard's separately-purchased 150 acres or whether he was leasing out that tract for income is not known. Between Frances and the siblings, they owned 6 horses and 4 slaves over age 16. Richard's married brothers Leonard Abbott and William Abbott had their own adjacent households, and both were likewise prospering with taxable personal property in slaves and horses.

The same year, Richard Abbott made a deed of trust using his personal 150 acres of land to secure a bonded debt to James Bruce. Several decades later, as the Halifax economy significantly deteriorated, Richard also used deeds of trust to leverage his merchant debts against his assets. In that time period, deeds of trust became a necessity for a majority of Halifax residents as debts accumulated to the same or interconnected merchants. In this case in 1805, it seems Richard was using the deed of trust as a way to buy time, in which he was successful, as he eventually paid off his debt plus interest without any loss of land.

The debt to James Bruce undoubtedly was a store or merchant debt. The Bruce, Sydnor, and Chappell families were among a relatively small group of Halifax merchants who were gaining control of, or interconnected with, most of the mercantile stores and other sources of vital resources in the county (as we discuss more later). James Bruce was foremost among these merchants, and it is said he was one of the wealthiest men in America when he died in 1837. As the deed of trust states (below), Richard's bond for the debt was secured by his brothers Moody, John, and Leonard, against whom civil suit could be brought if Richard defaulted.

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Date: 28 Jan 1805 - Deed of Trust

From: RICHARD ABBOTT

To: Beverly Sydnor, Trustee, to secure debt to James Bruce

For: \$1.00

Description: 150 acres on Difficult Creek that Richard Abbott purchased from WILLIAM ABBOTT, to the only proper use and behoof of the said Beverly Sydnor, his heirs and assigns

Bounds: Difficult Creek [other bounds were William Abbott & Ephraim Hill, per purchase deed 27 Nov 1798 (HDB18:128)]

Purpose: To secure debt of £65 8s 11d that Richard Abbott owes to James Bruce by Delivery Bond, with [Richard's brothers] MOODY ABBOTT, JOHN ABBOTT, and LEONARD ABBOTT his securities, bearing interest from 4 Jan 1805.

Conditions: Debt to be paid in full plus interest and expenses of this indenture by "first day of May next ensuing" [1 May 1805] or land is subject to sale at public auction.

Signed: Rich'd Abbott, Beverly Sydnor

Witnesses: Charles Bruce, John Chappell jr, Berryman Green jr

Recorded: 24 Jun 1805

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 20, p. 458-459. LVA Reel 9. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

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Richard Abbott did, indeed, pay this debt in full plus interest and costs, and a deed formally releasing the land back to Richard was made 10 Apr 1817 (below). No deeds of trust were recorded in the interim.

Date: 10 Apr 1817 - Deed of Release

From: Beverly Sydnor, Trustee, and James Bruce

To: RICHARD ABBOTT

For: Payment of full debt to James Bruce

Description: all right and title to 150 acres that Richard Abbott used to secure debt to James Bruce by deed of trust dated 28 Jan 1805 with Beverly Sydnor, Trustee. Whereas Abbott has fully paid the debt owed to Bruce, James Bruce acknowledges this by becoming a party to this deed of release.

Signed: Beverly Sydnor, James Bruce

Witnesses: William Lugh[?], William B. Banks. Thomas Davenport, Ch B. Williams - all "as to B. Sydnor"

Recorded: 22 May 1820

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 28, p. 435-436. LVA Reel 13. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Despite this deed of trust, personal property tax lists as well as the additional land purchases (listed above) show Richard Abbott continued to prosper. Like most of the Abbotts, Richard's personal property assets began above the average and increased over time to well over average. When Richard Abbott is first listed by name at age 21 in 1791, he is taxed for one horse. He purchased his first slave, who was over age 16, in 1804, and the next year Richard purchased a second horse. In 1810, Richard purchased a second slave, this one age 12-16. By 1812, he was taxed for two slaves over 16 and two horses. During this time, Richard was still living with his widowed mother and unmarried siblings, and his personal properties were in addition to the 5 slaves over age 12 and 3 horses that Frances held in her name. The date of the tax lists for Richard and his mother are on or close to the same day as his brothers living with and around them.

As the Abbotts were prospering in Halifax, Richard's next-to-youngest brother, Moses Abbott, was prospering in Richmond, VA, where he moved after leaving Halifax abt. 1804. Moses apparently was employed by a merchant who probably also provided housing. Over the next eleven years Moses accumulated appreciable financial assets and was on his way up in his chosen field when he was struck by sudden illness and died at abt. 39 years old. Records indicate Moses was en route home to Halifax for Christmas holidays with his family when he wrote his will 24 Dec 1815 in adjacent Charlotte County, and Moses died soon after. [*Henrico WB5:71*] Moses Abbott never married. His will left the whole of his estate in specified ways to "my dear mother" (Frances Abbott), "my three brothers Moody, John and Richard" (his only surviving full brothers, as William Abbott, though still living, was a half-brother 20 years older than Moses) and "my two unmarried sisters Elizabeth and Patsy [Martha]." (See report on Moses Abbott for more details.)

Moses Abbott named his brother John Abbott as executor of his estate. When John completed the estate accounts in 1819, one of the three Halifax residents the Court appointed to review and approve the settlement was James Fulkerson, brother of Catharine Fulkerson and by then Richard Abbott's brother-in-law. [*Henrico WB5:390*]

Moses Abbott's death in late 1815 or early 1816 was the fifth untimely adult death in Richard Abbott's immediate family in the previous five years. (A sixth was Benjamin's son James

Abbott who lived some distance west of the others and apparently was not close to the rest of the family.) The other four close family members lived and died in Halifax and left minor children. One of these was Richard's older half-brother Joseph Abbott Jr., born c1750, who had lived near Richard until late 1810, when Joseph Jr. moved his family to southeastern Halifax and died there within the next year. Their brother John Abbott applied for and was granted administration of Joseph's estate, and brothers Richard Abbott and William Abbott secured John's administrative bond. [HPB29:223] In addition, two more of Richard's siblings probably died between 1804-1810, and in 1818, a nephew who lived next to Richard, eldest son of his brother William Abbott, died at age 27. Between 1812-1815, the Abbotts, like other Americans, also had to endure the difficulties and uncertainties, including loved ones' voluntary and drafted military service, during the War of 1812, also known as the Second War of Independence.

It was high time for some family joy and celebration, and Richard was able to provide it. By a bond dated 1 Sep 1818, Richard Abbott, then 48 years old, married Catharine "Caty" Fulkerson, almost 20 years Richard's junior. Caty's brother John Fulkerson was Richard's bondsman, and both signed the bond by signature. [Original bond, Halifax Courthouse]

On the same day, Catharine Fulkerson wrote her own consent to marry Richard, as she was well over age 21 at the time. The Halifax Marriage Bond Register No. 1 [LVA Reel 82] compiled by the County Clerk's staff in 1936 incorrectly lists John Fulkerson (who was Catharine's brother) and Salley Fulkerson (Catharine's mother) as the ones giving consent. However, the complete statement proves they were only the witnesses to Catharine's own consent, which reads:

This is to certify that I have given my
Voluntary Consent to Marry Richard Abbott
Catharine Fulkerson, given under under[sic]
my hand this 1st day of September 1818

Witness

John Fulkerson

Salley (I) Fulkerson (her mark)

[Transcribed by J. Horsley from the original document at Halifax Courthouse, Halifax, VA. Certified by Robert W. Conner, Clerk of Circuit Court Halifax County. Original format and spelling preserved]

Richard and Caty had been near neighbors since Caty was born abt. 1789, and Richard had known her family from his earliest memory, being born and raised almost next door. Caty's parents, John Fulkerson and Sarah "Sally" Roberts, married in Halifax abt. 1781. Caty was the fourth of their eight children who survived to adulthood, all but one of whom eventually married. Catharine's father John Fulkerson died in 1803 at abt. 47 years old, leaving his widow, Sally Fulkerson, with seven children still at home, all then minors. Richard's mother was abt. 46 with nine minor children at home when she was widowed, and undoubtedly Frances Abbott was a support for her neighbor as Sally went through the same life adjustments. Personal property tax lists show Caty's brother John Fulkerson (Richard's bondsman) was born abt. 1796, and her only other brother, James Fulkerson, was born abt.

1793. Thus it was some time after their father's death before they could be of much help running the family farm. (See more about their family in the report on Catharine Fulkerson.)

Today we may think it odd that Richard and Catharine were as old as they were when they each married for the first time--he abt. 48 and she abt. 29 years old. However, just in their own families, for example, her brothers were in their mid-30s when they married; one of Caty's sisters was 31 at her marriage; and Richard had a sister who married at 26 and a brother who married at 50-51; so marrying at later ages was not so unusual as it might seem. Marrying later in life was especially true when people grew up in an economically struggling farm community with responsibilities toward widowed mothers and younger siblings

The 1820 census is the earliest surviving U.S. census for Halifax County. At least four Abbott households and numerous other Halifax families are missing, including Richard's mother's household. However, Richard and Caty Abbott's family is one of the four Abbott households included.

1820 - Halifax Co, VA - Meadsville District.

RICHARD ABBOTT - Males: 1(45+); Females: 1(<10), 1(26-44) - 5 Slaves

Richard was born abt. 1770, thus age 50 in 1820. Caty was born abt. 1789, thus age 31 in 1820, as "Catey Fulkerson" is first named in a Halifax court order in 1810. A road order 24 Apr 1810 ordered that the "male labouring tythes" of "Catey Fulkerson" be added to work on the road whereof Richard's brother William Abbott was surveyor. [HPB28:114] This birth date for Caty of abt. 1789 fits with the sequence of her siblings' ages as shown by tax lists, censuses, marriage dates, and other available records. This birth date also fits with Caty's last child being born abt. 1835, when she would be age 45-46 and ending her childbearing years. As we shall see, the 1850 and 1860 censuses incorrectly give her age as born in 1800, but that is proved in error by the 1810 road order alone, as well as by her writing her own consent to marry, the pre-1850 censuses, and the other evidence for her age.

In the 1820 census for Richard Abbott's household, the female under age 10 is probably a daughter born to Richard and Caty in later 1819 or early 1820 rather than an orphan or relative, but she did not survive to 1830. In the 1820 tax lists, Richard also was taxed for 5 slaves, all above age 16.

{There were two major districts for Halifax this census: Marseilles District that covered most of southern Halifax, and Meadsville District for northern Halifax, where Richard's family is listed. (His brother Moody, who lived almost next to Richard, is incorrectly listed in Marseilles District instead.) Meadsville--also spelled Meadville, Meadeville, and Meadesville--was a town on the south side of Banister River abt. 12 miles west of where Richard and the other Abbott families lived near Crystal Hill. The town of "Meadsville" was created in 1798 just south of where Benjamin Abbott's family had lived since 1773, but like many promising towns created in Halifax in the early 1800s, it is no longer a formal town, although a Meadville community still exists. Joan had marked this text for either further review/rewrite or to enter in her FTM file.}

Richard and Catharine Fulkerson Abbott's eldest son, John James Abbott, was born at their home on Difficult Creek near today's Crystal Hill, VA on 3 Feb 1821. *[Date from grave marker]* He shares the names of Caty's father, John Fulkerson, and of her two brothers, John and James Fulkerson, as well as Richard's brother John Abbott. Richard's mother and Caty's mother were both still alive and living close at hand when their grandson John J. Abbott was born.

By a Halifax County deed dated later the same year on 12 Sep 1821, we have proof of the parents of Richard Abbott's wife, Catherine Fulkerson. This deed also proves the name of Caty's husband (the only man of his name in Halifax during his lifetime). This proof is especially important because some grandchildren of John J. Abbott in the early and mid-1900s published information distributed among family and now widely circulated on the internet that names Catharine's husband and John J.'s father as "Joseph Abbott III" rather than Richard Abbott, as we discussed above. The mistake came from misassumptions drawn from piecemeal bits of family information but without obtaining the marriage record that in itself proves Richard Abbott was the husband of John J.'s mother, Catharine. The 1821 deed (extracted below) is also important because it is the only document found that names all the surviving children of Caty's parents John Fulkerson and Sally Roberts.

John Fulkerson's will dated 31 Mar 1803 (proved 27 Jun 1803) devised his land to "my two sons, James and John." He bequeathed his personal property after his wife's death to "all my surviving children" but did not include the names of his six daughters. *[HWB6:545]* John Fulkerson's will further stipulates that "my loving wife Salley Fulkerson" shall have use of all his estate, real and personal, for her lifetime, and that the estate shall not be divided among his heirs until after Sally's death. In 1821, John's children and his daughters' husbands (who are included because married women could not own property in their names alone) signed a deed whereby they mutually agreed to allow Sally full use of John's personal property for her lifetime, and they further agreed that at Sally's death, they would divide the remaining personal property equally among them, all in accordance with their father's will.

Thus, from this Halifax deed of agreement dated 12 Sep 1821 (recorded 29 Sep 1821), we have proof of John Fulkerson's children and his daughters' husbands as well:

"...the children of the said John Fulkerson dec'd to wit, Betsy who has intermarried with Hardaway Chandler, Mary who has intermarried with Thomas Pentecost, Milly who has intermarried with John W. Nance, James Foulkerson^[sic], CATY who has intermarried with RICHARD ABBOTT, Debby who has intermarried with Orrel Chandler [also spelled Orril Chandler], John Fulkerson and Jenny Fulkerson [named in her mother's will as Jane Fulkerson]..."

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 28, p. 572. Halifax Courthouse. Excerpt transcribed by J. Horsley. Caps and comments in brackets added.]

All those named signed the deed except for Thomas and Mary Fulkerson Pentecost, who moved from Halifax abt. 1805 to Wilson County, TN, where Thomas Pentecost died eight years before this deed. All the other males signed the deed by signature, but Caty, signing as "Catharine Abbott," was the only daughter of John Fulkerson who signed by signature rather than mark.

Richard Abbott's mother, Frances Abbott, wrote her will on 18 Nov 1820 and died in late 1822 or early 1823. [HWB13:30] She was around 80 years old and had out-lived 4 of her 10 children and 5 of her 6 known stepchildren. Frances' will, proved in Halifax Court 22 Sep 1823, left her personal estate (consisting mostly of household furniture and kitchen utensils, as it excluded slaves and other property on loan from Joseph's estate) to her two unmarried daughters, Elizabeth and Patsy. Elizabeth Abbott, then abt. 55, and Martha/Patsy Abbott, abt. age 51, along with their unmarried brother John Abbott, then age 50, had lived all their lives with their mother, Frances, and the three siblings continued to share a home on Abbott family land next to Richard for the rest of their lives. Frances Abbott's will appointed her son John and a local merchant (likely her principal creditor) to be her executors. However, they stepped aside, and administration of Frances' estate was granted to Elizabeth Abbott, the elder of the two legatee daughters.

Elizabeth Abbott's administrative bond of \$500 was secured by her brothers Richard Abbott and Moody Abbott. The inventory and appraisal of Frances Abbott's estate, dated 3 Nov 1823, was made by three neighbors, one of whom was James Fulkerson, brother of Richard's wife Catharine Fulkerson Abbott. [HWB13:114]

During the 1820s, Richard and Catharine Fulkerson Abbott's family continued to grow. After their first son, John J. Abbott, was born in 1821, they had four more sons and a daughter born by the 1830 census. Three of those sons were Joseph M. Abbott (born abt. 1824); William Abbott (born abt. 1827) and Richard M. Abbott (born 8 Apr 1830, per his grave marker). The fourth son was born abt. 1828 but died before 1840. (Another son born bet. 1831-1835 died before 1850.)

The daughter enumerated in 1830 as under age 5 and enumerated in 1840 as age 10-14 was their daughter Sarah "Sallie" F. Abbott, born abt. 1826. Sallie never married and continued to live and work with her widowed mother, Catharine, after her siblings married. It is always risky to speculate about names, but her full name could be Sarah Frances Abbott, named for each of her grandmothers. Richard and Caty's only other daughter to survive to adulthood was their last child, Cassandra Abbott, born abt. 1835.

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1830: Halifax Co, VA

RICHARD ABBOTT - Males: 4(<5), 1(5-9), 1(50-59); Females: 1(<5), 1(30-39) - 7 Slaves

Note:

Richard was abt. age 60, and Caty abt. age 41 this census. Richard's 1830 taxes listed 4 slaves. Thus, 3 of his 7 slaves listed in the census were under age 12 and not included in tax lists.

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The legacies Richard's brother Moses Abbott left in 1815 to his siblings, including Richard, were substantial for that time, especially given Moses' relatively young age, amounting to well over \$3000. However, in 1833, ten years after the death of their mother who had a lifetime interest in Moses' estate, and seventeen years after Moses died, there were still outstanding debts owed to Moses' estate. Apparently trying to collect on the debts was costing more than they were worth to Moses' legatees, who fortunately were prospering and not dependent upon the legacies for their welfare. Thus, in Jan 1833, Richard Abbott and his siblings sold their interest in Moses' estate for \$250 to Mel Spraggins, a Halifax resident and Justice of the Peace, to whom Moses' executor, John Abbott, separately granted power of

attorney. [HDB40:495] One of the witnesses to both deeds was 34-year-old Wesley M. Abbott, the only surviving son of their brother William Abbott, both of whom still lived adjacent to Richard and Caty.

Date: 12 Jan 1833

From: John Abbott, RICHARD ABBOTT, Moody Abbott, Elizabeth Abbott, and Patsy Abbott of Halifax County [all legatees of Moses Abbott, dec'd]

To: Mel Spraggins of Halifax

For: \$250

Description: "All the right title and interest both real and personal of every description which we have in and to all the estate of Moses Abbott, dec'd (late of the City of Richmond) which we are interested in as legatees agreeably to his last will and testament bearing date 24 Dec 1815 and especially to all the debts of every description which are now due to the said John Abbott, Exor. of the aforesaid Moses Abbott dec'd as aforesaid or due to the estate of the said dec'd or due to us as legatees of him the said Moses Abbott dec'd as aforesaid by virtue of the will of him the said Moses Abbott dec'd which said will was admitted to probat[e] by the County Court of Henrico on the first day of April 1816"

Signed: John Abbott, RICHARD ABBOTT, Moody Abbott, Patsy Abbott, Elizabeth Abbott

Witnesses: John Owen, Wesley M. Abbott, James P. Roberts

Recorded: 28 Jan 1833

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 40, p. 493, Reel 19, LVA. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Richard Abbott and his siblings were very well-off financially for their time and place. Although they were far from the wealthy elite, they were also far above average. Like Richard, each seems a good steward of his or her assets, and none show any indications of speculating in land or purchasing taxable luxuries they could not pay for. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, Richard Abbott had 4-5 slaves over age 12 and 3-4 horses. Richard also owned 481 acres of land, only 150 of which he inherited and most of which he had held since 1811.

Nevertheless, the economic situation in Halifax County had been deteriorating for several decades. Times were changing everywhere as the Industrial Revolution affected the economy. However, this was exacerbated in Halifax as a small group of wealthy merchants and large landowners gained control of the sources of vital supplies and resources such as general stores, mills, tobacco warehouses, and granaries. (Some call these the first chain stores; others call them a monopoly.) The ensuing heavy indebtedness and widespread foreclosures in their credit-based economy caused a great exodus from Halifax County from which some local historians say the county never recovered. Those who stayed in Halifax were having a harder time keeping up with the cumulative effects upon a farming community needing credit from a few interconnected and interrelated suppliers.

Deed records show that Richard Abbott (along with his other land-owning brothers still living, William and Moody, and Caty's brothers and mother) was among the numerous Halifax residents living under the burden of mortgages (deeds of trust) while they struggled to pay off mounting debts with interest yet not lose all their assets. By a deed of trust dated 27 Aug 1827 [HDB34:687] and repeated in 1833 to the same trustees, Richard Abbott secured his growing unpaid store debts with the same securities and under the standard conditions and

terms. In 1827, Richard used his land and two slaves with the female slave's future children. In 1833, he added to these assets his interest in his deceased father-in-law's estate by right of his wife, Catharine Fulkerson Abbott. (As mentioned above, a married woman could not hold property separately in her name alone, and the husband was the legal owner of all assets and interests of his wife.) However as of 23 Jan 1832, the Fulkersons had lost all their land to their own debts, so only slaves remained from John Fulkerson's 1803 estate.

[HDB39:374]

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Date: 15 Oct 1833 - Deed of Trust

From: RICHARD ABBOTT and CATHARINE his wife of Halifax

To: James Adkinson and Samuel Williams of Halifax, Trustees, to secure debts owed to James Bruce surviving partner of the late mercantile concern of John Chappell [and Company], and to James Bruce and James S. Easley merchants trading under the firm of James S. Easley & Co.

For: \$10

Description: 608 acres on both sides of Difficult Creek, bounded by William Abbott [Richard's brother], Nathaniel Barksdale, Chloe Moore [Chloe Irby, widow of Reuben Moore], and David Allen; plus slaves James (age abt. 32), Lidy (age abt. 24) and her infant child Milton; plus the whole and entire interest in the estate of John Fulkerson by right of Richard Abbott's wife formerly Catharine Fulkerson [next line blacked out on microfilm]

Purpose: Richard Abbott by a deed of trust made to the said Adkinson and Williams 27 Aug 1827 for a tract of land and negroes to secure debts then due James Bruce surviving partner of John Chappell & Co. [for \$1147.21, per 1827 deed] and the said James S. Easley & Co. [for \$170.98, per 1827 deed] no part of which has been since part[sic, paid] excepting interest this day settled and the said Abbott has since the above transactions contracted new debts to the said James Bruce & partners by bond dated this day and on demand with interest from this day for the sum of \$437.77 and to the said James S. Easley & Co. by bond this day and on demand with interest from this day for the sum of \$589.93 which is for transactions with the said Easley & Co. to 1st March last past. The object of this deed is in the first place to secure the two debts first mentioned and in the next place the two bonds last mentioned

Conditions: If Richard Abbott shall fail to pay the full debt with interest plus costs on or before 1 Oct 1834, the Trustees, upon the request of [the creditors] shall sell the above properties at public auction, with the proceeds to go to pay the debts, interest, costs, expenses, etc. Remaining balance, if any, to go to Richard Abbott.

Signed: Richard Abbott

Witnesses: Peter B. Sydnor, William Penick

Recorded: 28 Oct 1833 - Acknowledged in court by Richard Abbott

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 41, p. 228. LVA Reel 19. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added; comments in parentheses included in original.]

Note:

The 608 acres in this deed are a miscalculation. Deeds show that Richard's total land purchases plus his inheritance amount to 481.25 acres by 1827 and were never higher.

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The above properties held in trust were released three years later, showing Richard's debts with interest, costs, etc. had been paid in full.

Date: 14 Dec 1836 - Deed of Release

From: James Adkisson, surviving trustee, with James Bruce and James S. Easley concurring

To: RICHARD ABBOTT

For: \$1.00

Purpose: Richard Abbott by deeds of trust of 27 Aug 1827 and 15 Oct 1833 did secure payment of \$2345.89 owed to James Bruce, surviving partner of John Chappell & Co., and James Bruce and James S. Easley merchants and partners trading under the firm of James S. Easley & Co. by conveying to James Adkisson and Saml Williams certain properties [deed repeats the assets listed in the 1833 deed but gives the 1827 deed's ages for the slaves]. The said Richard Abbott has fully satisfied and paid the sum of money thereby secured, which is hereby acknowledged, and all properties held in trust are hereby released.

Signed: Jas Adkisson, James Bruce, James S. Easley

Witnesses: James C. Bruce (as to J Bruce), B. C. Allen (as to J B), Will Penick, John M. Arendall (as to J A), John S. Priddy (as to J A), Geo. W. Davenport (as to J A)

Recorded: 26 Jun 1837

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 44, p. 90-92. LVA Reel 21. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added; parentheses in original.]

In 1840, Richard owned 8 slaves, 3 of whom were over age 12, and 5 horses. Through the years, his deeds of trust notwithstanding, Richard had retained all the land he purchased, except for the sale of 56 acres in 1811. However, in 1840, Richard Abbott began selling off his Difficult Creek property, presumably to help cover expenses. The 1840 purchaser and "bound," Nelson K. Foster, purchased at least some of his adjacent land from Richard's brother William Abbott in 1838. [HDB45:33] This was the land originally devised by Joseph Abbott's will to their brother Leonard Abbott, whose heirs sold the land to William Abbott in 1832. [HDB40:257] In the 1850 census, Nelson K. Foster, age 47 and unmarried, is listed as a physician. He owned land valued at \$1200, but he was not living on or near the land from either William or Richard.

Date: 27 Jan 1840

From: RICHARD ABBOTT and wife CATHARINE

To: Nelson K. Foster

For: \$137

Description: 68.5 acres on waters of Difficult Creek

Bounds: Elisha Barksdale Jr., Nelson K. Foster, and the said Richard Abbott (metes & bounds included)

Signed: Richard Abbott, Catharine (x) Abbott (her mark)

Witnesses: William Allen, James Young

Release of Dower: 14 Jun 1841

Recorded: 5 Apr 1842

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 47, p. 478. LVA Reel 22. Abstract by J. Horsley.]

Note:

Although Catharine is entered here and again in 1843 as signing by mark, her 1818 marriage consent statement, the 1821 deed of agreement among her siblings, and a letter she wrote in 1854 prove she was literate, as she is marked in the 1850 and 1860 censuses.

Richard and Caty's last child, Cassandra, was born abt. 1835, so their 1840 census includes all their children. In the following list of Richard Abbott's 1840 household, I have assigned Richard and Caty's children to the enumerated age groups based on their ages in the 1850 census (the first census to list each household member by name) or on other information we have as to their ages. So far, the only exact birth dates we know are for sons John J. Abbott and Richard M. Abbott, both from their grave markers.

1840 - Halifax Co, VA - North District

Males:

2(5-9) - Richard M. Abbott - b. 1830 (age 10); 2nd son b. 1831-1835: unknown, d. bef. 1850

1(10-14) - William Abbott - b. c1827 (age 13)

1(15-19) - Joseph M. Abbott - b. c1824 (age 16)

1(20-29) - John J. Abbott - b. 1821 (age 19)

1(70-79) - Richard Abbott - b. c1770 (age 70)

Females:

1(<5) - Cassandra Abbott - b. c1835 (age 5)

1(10-14) - Sarah F. Abbott - b. c1826 (age 14)

1(50-59) - Catharine Abbott - b. c1789 (age 51)

8 Slaves

By 1840, only 4 of Richard's 15 siblings were still living: William (then age 84); John (67) and Martha/Patsy (68), who were unmarried and living together; and Moody (65), who was widowed and raising a daughter then abt. 12 years old. All were still living on or near the original Abbott lands.

On 22 Nov 1841, Richard and Caty's eldest son, John J. Abbott, married in Halifax County to Paulina S. Lax/Lacks, daughter of Royall Lax and Mary Hodge. Later down the family line in Alabama, Paulina was known as Perlina Lacks, the Deep South pronunciation of her first name (and later spelling of her last), although the 1932 death record of her youngest son, Matthew T. Abbott, properly names his mother as Paulina. (Matthew's death record also is the source for John J.'s middle name of James.) Paulina's last name was spelled Lacks on the marriage record but Lax in her father's will the same year, and Lax is the spelling used for the family in Halifax up to this time and for generations before. (All spelling prior to the early 1900s was phonetic.) The Lax family long had been neighbors of the Abbotts in Halifax, and Paulina's great-grandmother Susanna Chandler Lax was a daughter of William Chandler Sr., whose family lived near the Abbotts since the early 1760s and later also intermarried with Caty's Fulkerson family.

The next year, in 1842, after a 7-8 year hiatus, once again Richard Abbott had to sign a deed of trust to secure his debts to merchants. (His brother William Abbott signed a similar deed of trust for debts to the same merchants three days before Richard. [HDB47: 469])

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Date: 5 Apr 1842 - Deed of Trust

From: RICHARD ABBOTT and wife CATHARINE

To: William T. Ballow and John S. Kent, Trustees, to secure debt to James Young & Co. etc.

For: \$10

Description: 473 acres, bounded by William ABBOTT, Elisha Barksdale Jr., and David Allen; plus slaves: Lydia (age 32), Milton (age 10), Amelia (8), man Ned, woman Jinncy, boy Charles, girl Sally,

girl Mary, boy John, girl Jinnycy daughter of Lydia; plus undivided interest in estate of John Fulkerson dec'd, including all land, slaves, monies, and any other properties due to the heirs - to the only proper use and behoof of the said trustees, their heirs and assigns

Purpose: Whereas William Bailey and James Young [merchants trading under the firm of James Young & Co] stand as security for Richard Abbott in a bond to James A. Luck for \$1468.72 and interest from 1 Apr 1842 until paid; also the said Richard Abbott is justly indebted to James Young & Co. for \$1402.23 by bond bearing date with this Indenture from 1 Mar 1842 until paid as well as to insure all further dealings and transactions with James Young & Co. from 1 Mar 1842 until the closing of this Indenture

Conditions: Payment in full, plus interest, costs, expenses, etc. due by 1 Sep 1842, otherwise subject to public sale of properties to meet all debts; balance remaining, if any, to go to Richard Abbott.

Signed: Richard Abbott

Witnesses: None

Recorded: 16 Jul 1842

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 48, p. 6-8. LVA Reel 23. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added; comments in parentheses in original.]

Note:

Unlike Richard's deeds of trust in 1827 and 1833, this one correctly states to within 10 acres the amount of land Richard actually owned per the recorded deeds. (His sale of 68.5 acres in 1840 is not included here, as the deed was not recorded until the same day as this deed of trust was written.)

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The above mortgage continued with a deed of trust the next year to the same trustees. This time, in addition to the land, slaves, and interest in John Fulkerson's estate that Richard used in 1842, in 1843 Richard used literally everything he owned. Thus, we have an inventory of Richard's current personal estate and the crops he farmed. Even the six beds are an indication of his relative affluence and likely were specified because of their worth compared with other typical household furniture. Many families, often with more children than Richard, were fortunate to have just one or two such beds.

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Date: 22 Aug 1843 - Deed of Trust

From: RICHARD ABBOTT and wife CATHARINE of Halifax

To: William T. Ballow and John S. Kent, Trustees, to secure debt owed to William Bailey and James Young merchants and partners trading under the firm of James Young & Co.

For: \$5.00

Description: Land, slaves, and other properties, to wit: 473 acres, bounded by William Abbott, Elisha Barksdale Jr., and David Allen; slaves Lydia (age 32), Milton (age 10), Amelia (8), man Ned, girl Sally, girl Mary, boy John, girl Jinnycy daughter of Lydia and the increase [ie, children] of the females; also their undivided interest in the estate of John Fulkerson dec'd [and] the widow of John Fulkerson dec'd (including land, slaves, monies, and any other properties they may be entitled to receive from the said John Fulkerson dec'd estate), plus 3 head horses, 13 head cattle, 51 head hogs, 30 head sheep, 6 feather beds and furniture and bedsteads, also balance of household and kitchen furniture, plantation tools of every description, present growing crop of tobacco, corn, wheat, and oats & fodder, one ox cart and one yoke of oxen - to the only proper use and behoof of the said trustees, their heirs and assigns

Purpose: Whereas William Bailey and James Young [partners as James Young & Co] stand as security for Richard Abbott in a bond to James A. Luck for \$1468.72 with interest from 1 Apr 1842 and also Richard Abbott is indebted to James Young & Co. for \$1402.23 with interest from 1 Mar

1842, subject to a credit of \$449 paid 23 Jan 1843. Also Richard Abbott is indebted to James Young & Co. for \$236.22 by bond of this date with interest from 2 Apr 1843. This indenture is taken to secure the last mentioned debt and the better to secure the first mentioned debt and to secure all future transactions with James Young & Co. from 1 Mar 1843 to the closing of this indenture.

Conditions: Payment in full, plus interest, costs, expenses, etc. due by 1 Nov 1843. Otherwise, properties are subject to public sale to meet full debt. Any balance remaining to go to Richard Abbott. If payment date met, then indenture to be null and void.

Signed: Richard Abbott

Witnesses: Edwin R. Ferrell, David Gibbs, William F. Thomas

Recorded; 22 Aug 1843

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 49, p. 1-4. LVA Reel 23. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added. Information in parentheses included in the original.]

Although from this deed the situation appears dire, the inventory and appraisal of Richard's estate at his death less than six years later shows he was able to retain a significant amount of his personal property and to leave his family well-provided at his death. What is striking is not that Richard incurred these kinds of debts--the Halifax deed books for this and the previous two decades are filled with such deeds as well as foreclosures sold by public auctions. What is striking is Richard's ability to manage by persistence and apparent diligence and prudence to retain an estate still well above the average after all the debts were paid. As we shall see, Richard's only major loss, though likely a hard one, was his Halifax land that had been his parents' and then his home for 80 years.

In 1843, Richard and Catharine Abbott began finalizing their preparations to join the ongoing exodus and leave Halifax County. Perhaps one reason they had not left before was that Catharine's mother was still living. Sarah "Sally" Roberts Fulkerson died at abt. 80 years old (and widowed for 39 years) between 2 Mar 1842, when she wrote her will, and 22 Aug 1842, when her will was proved in Halifax Court. [HWB20:83] Sally Fulkerson, with the same concerns Richard's mother had shown, bequeathed all she held in her own right, consisting of household furniture, kitchen utensils, and a cow and calf, to her one unmarried daughter, Jane Fulkerson (named as Jenny Fulkerson in the family's 1821 deed of agreement).

Three months after the above deed of trust, Richard Abbott and wife Catharine sold their remaining land on Difficult Creek. (The actual survey reduced the number of acres estimated "more or less" in his deeds by 18.25 acres.) Since the trustees who held the property released the land to the purchaser with the approval of the creditor, the proceeds from the sale obviously went toward the payment of Richard's debts, which left a balance of \$665.95 on the principal.

Date: 21 Nov 1843

From: RICHARD ABBOTT and wife Catharine of Halifax

To: David P. Hudson of same

For: \$1992.22

Description: 394.5 acres (by late survey) on Difficult Creek

Bounds: Dr. Foster, Clarks Road [formerly Bonds Ferry Road], Terry, Difficult Creek, down meanders and crossing creek, Penick's line (other bounds are natural landmarks)

Purpose: By a deed of 5 Apr 1842, recorded 16 Jul 1842, and deed of 22 Aug 1843, recorded same day, for the purpose of securing debts owed to James Young & Co. and also to secure William Bailey

and James Young as securities on a bond to James A. Luck, a tract of land in Halifax and other properties were conveyed to William T. Ballow and John S. Kent, Trustees. The land now having been sold to David P. Hudson, the Trustees aforesaid are made parties to the deed for the purpose of releasing all title to the land, and William Bailey and James Young as James Young & Co. are made parties to the deed for the purpose of registering their approbation to the sale and securities.

Signed: Richard Abbott, Catharine (+) Abbott (her mark), John S. Kent, James Young, W. Bailey

Witnesses: None

Notation in margin: W, T, Ballow's acknowledgement recorded page 217

Release of Dower: 21 Nov 1843

Recorded: 21 Nov 1843

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 49, p. 165-167. LVA Reel 23. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added.]

Note:

Again Catharine is entered as signing by mark, although as stated above, there is ample proof she could read and write.

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So it was that in the final weeks of 1843, Richard Abbott, then abt. age 73, along with Caty and their five unmarried children left their Halifax birthplace and moved to adjacent Pittsylvania County, VA. Their son John J. Abbott and his family remained in Halifax another seven or eight years, although in 1845, John, too, had to make a deed of trust to the same James Young & Co. securing his debt with all his personal property as well as his interest in the estates of Royall Lax and Mary Lax, his wife Paulina's deceased parents. *[HDB51:49]*

Richard and Catharine Abbott moved their family between 21 Nov - 21 Dec 1843, when a copy of the 22 Aug 1843 Halifax deed of trust was admitted to record in the Pittsylvania County Court Clerk's Office upon a certificate endorsed by the Clerk of the Halifax County Court. The Pittsylvania copy was the exact wording of the Halifax deed, even though the land mentioned in the deed had just been sold and the debt was thereby significantly reduced. *[PDB48:119]*

The following year in fall of 1844, Richard had to make one last deed of trust, this one to replace the 1843 deed and needing only his slaves to secure his current balance on his debt of less than \$710 plus interest.

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Date: 11 Oct 1844 - Deed of Trust

From: RICHARD ABBOTT of Pittsylvania County

To: William T. Ballow and John S. Kent of Halifax County and James A. Luck of Pittsylvania County, Trustees

For: \$1.00

Description: 6 slaves and future increase; namely, negro woman Lidia [Lydia], negro girl Amelia, negro girl Sally, negro girl Jane, negro girl Ann, negro boy Milton (children of the woman Lidia) and the future increase [ie, children] of the females - to the only proper use and behoof of the said trustees, their heirs and assigns

Purpose: To secure debt of \$708.43 due by bond on interest this day to William Bailey and James Young merchants and partners trading under the firm and style of James Young & Co. of Halifax County, being the balance due on former Deeds of Trust

Conditions: Payment of debt, interest, and costs due in full by 1 Mar 1845; otherwise subject to public sale of the properties to meet debt along with interest, costs, and expenses; any balance remaining to go to Richard Abbott. If payment date met, then indenture null and void.

Signed: Richard Abbott

Witnesses: None

11 Oct 1844 - Acknowledged by Richard Abbott before John Wilson and John S. Lewellen, Justices of the Peace for Halifax County, and he desired them to certify his acknowledgement to the Clerk of Pittsylvania County Court

Recorded: 24 Oct 1844, Clerk's Office, County Court of Pittsylvania

In margin: Sent to James Young & Co. by mail 14 Dec 1848

[Pittsylvania Deed Book 49, p. 46-48. LVA Reel 21. Abstract by J. Horsley. Comments in brackets added; comments in parentheses in original.]

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Richard Abbott purchased no land in Pittsylvania County, but probate records several years later show Richard was still farming and apparently still profiting by it. The area of Pittsylvania where Richard and his family lived is shown by the later appraisers of his estate, as appraisers usually were adjacent or close neighbors (whom we discuss more below). They show Richard lived in southeastern Pittsylvania near Birch Creek and Oliver Creek about 10 miles northeast of Danville, VA. The creeks come together on the south side of today's Keeling, VA, which is on the main road that led from Danville to the Halifax Courthouse and was close to the Halifax line. (This is also the general area where Catharine continued to live during widowhood.) Although the neighboring appraisers were from families long-established in that area, records reveal no close connections between them and Richard's Abbott family in north-central Halifax, abt. 30 miles to the northeast. That Richard and Caty chose to leave Halifax is certainly understandable, but it would be interesting to know what led Richard to lease land in this particular part of Pittsylvania. However painful the uprooting, though, this seems to have been a good move for the family in the years ahead.

On 14 Sep 1847, Richard and Caty's second surviving son, Joseph M. Abbott, married Martha J. Fitzgerald in the town of Danville, VA, just down the road from where his family lived. Martha's parents are not known, but almost certainly she was related to William Fitzgerald who witnessed Richard's will six months before Joseph and Martha married.

Richard Abbott wrote his will on 18 Mar 1847. He died in early Dec 1848 or shortly before at abt. age 78. The evidence for his approximate date of death is that on 14 Dec 1848, Richard's 1844 deed of trust was mailed to his creditor. *[HDB49:46]* Richard certainly was deceased by 25 Dec 1848, when two of his slaves were sold at public auction to close out his remaining debt, as we shall see. *[HDB53:52]* Richard's will was first presented in Pittsylvania Court 15 Jan 1849 and fully proved and recorded 19 Mar 1849. *[PWB2:68]*

WILL OF RICHARD ABBOTT

Abstract

Dated 18 Mar 1847, Pittsylvania County, VA.

Partially proved 15 Jan 1849. Fully proved and recorded 19 Mar 1849

Legatees: wife Catharine, sons Richard M. Abbott, John J. Abbott, Joseph M. Abbott, and "every surviving child or their heirs" (not named)

Executor: wife Catharine; if she declines, then son Joseph M. Abbott
 Witnesses: Wm F. Wilkerson, James M. Hodnett, William Fitzgerald
 Source: Pittsylvania Will Book 2, p. 68-69

Transcription

In the name of God Amen. I RICHARD ABBOTT of the County of Pittsylvania and State of Virginia being of sound mind and memory, but knowing that it is appointed unto all men to die, do make & constitute this my Last Will and Testament in manner & form following (to wit):

It is my wish and desire in the first place: that all my just debts be paid

Item 2nd I give to my son RICHARD M. ABBOTT one colt now in my possession

Item 3rd It is then my wish and desire that my beloved wife CATHARINE after my [death] and the discharge of the two items first mentioned, shall take possession of the entire remainder of my estate of all sorts, to have and enjoy during her life.

Item 4th It is my desire after the death of my wife Catharine everything shall be [sold] and out of the proceeds of sale every surviving child or their heirs shall draw one hundred dollars each before my son JOHN J. ABBOTT or his heirs shall take any part, after which [my] said son John J. or his heirs shall participate equally with the other children or their heirs [in] the residue.

Item 5th It is my wish and desire, and I do hereby constitute and appoint my wife Catharine my exetrix [underlined] and in the event she shall decline, then and in that case my son JOSEPH M. ABBOTT to qualify as my Executor and carry into effect this my last will [and] testament, and it is my wish that the worshipful Court of Pittsyl County & state of V^a do [allow] my executor in either case to qualify as such without security.

Given under my hand and [seal] this 18th day March in the year of our Lord 1847.

/s/ Richard Abbott

Signed, sealed in the presents of

/s/ Wm F. Wilkinson, James M. Hodnett, William Fitzgerald

At a Court held for Pittsylvania County on the 15th day of January 1849 [15 Jan 1849] This last Will and Testament of Richard Abbott dec'd was presented in Court & proved by the oath of Wm F. Wilkinson a subscribing witness to be the act & deed of the decedent –
 And at another day to wit: At a Court held for said County the 19th day of March in the year aforesaid [19 Mar 1849], The said Will was further proved by Wm Fitzgerald a subscribing witness thereto, and ordered to be recorded. And on the motion of Joseph M. Abbott the Executor in said will named who made oath entered into bond in the penalty of Five thousand dollars [\$5000], conditioned according to law, certificate was granted him for obtaining probate [of said] will in due form, no security being required of the Executor under the said will, the Executrix refusing to qualify –
 Teste – W^m H. Tunstall Clk

[Source: Pittsylvania Will Book 2, p. 68-69. Pittsylvania County Courthouse, Chatham, VA.
 Transcribed by Joan Horsley. Original spelling retained; caps and comments in brackets added. Note:

The side of the page in the will book is worn away causing words to be missing. Words in brackets are mine based on the legible fragments, on standard form, and on the wording in other wills on nearby pages. The month the will was recorded was confirmed by the Clerk's Office.]

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"Account of Sales of Richard Abbotts property sold under a deed of trust"

Date: 25 Dec 1848

Cash for James Young & Co.: Total: \$850

To Edwin Grubbs - negro girl Amelia for \$450

To Charles B. Bomar - negro girl Rosey for \$400

/s/ Jno. S. Kent "as one of the trustees"

Recorded: 22 Jan 1849

[Source: Halifax Deed Book 53, p. 52. LVA Reel 25. Abstract by J. Horsley]

Note:

Although Richard's will was not presented in court until 15 Jan 1849, there is no doubt he was deceased by the date of this sale. The deed of trust under which these slaves were sold was signed 11 Oct 1844, and a notation on the deed says it was sent to the creditors James Young & Co. on 14 Dec 1848, likely immediately upon Richard's death. The wording of his brother William Abbott's sales account 28 Feb 1848 is the same, and William, like Richard, was not called "deceased" even though William's will was proved the month before on 24 Jan 1848. Like William's, this sale was to clear the remaining debts Richard Abbott owed to James Young & Co. under the earlier deed of trust.

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Inventory and Appraisal of the Estate of Richard Abbott, Deceased

Date taken: 29 Apr 1849

Appraisers: William F. Wilkinson, Yancy Oliver, and Ayres Hodnett

Includes: 22 hogs; 3 cows; 2 calves; 2 yearlings; 1 sorrel colt; yoke of oxen; 1 ox cart; 1 lot barrels; 7 hill hoes; 3 grub hoes; 2 scythes & cradles; 1 lot plows; 2 sets plow gear; cross cut saw; 1 Log & 2 trace chains; 3 axes & pail wedges; lot pots, ovens &c; 1 pr flat irons; 1 pr and irons [andirons]; 1 lot tools, saw, drawing knife &c; 1 gun; 1 loom, sleis [slays] & harness; 2 cotton wheels; 12 chairs; dining table; cupboard & contents; cherry bureau; 4 beds; wood clock; 1 lot water vessels; 1 lot stone ware; grind stone; 700 lbs bacon; 75 lbs lard; lot wheat supposed [to be] 12 bu's [bushels]; lot fodder supposed to be 1600 lbs; lot oats supposed to be 1000 lbs; crop corn supposed to be 110 bar's [barrels]; crop tobacco good leaf 1,916 lbs (\$76.64); [illegible] 500 lbs; Negro woman Lydia & child (\$325); Negro girls Jane (\$325), Sally (\$280), and Adaline (\$270).

Total appraisal: \$1,731.39

Crop of tobacco sold for the stated price and delivered "some time since"

"Negro woman Lydia & child sold sometime since by the Legatees for the price of -- as reported to us by WILLIAM ABBOTT, one of the Legatees."

/s/ Wm. F. Wilkinson, Yancy Oliver, Ayres Hodnett

Recorded 21 May 1849, Pittsylvania Court

[Source: Pittsylvania Accounts Current Book 16, p. 436-437. LVA Reel 39. Abstract by J. Horsley. Caps and comments in brackets added.]

Note:

The appraiser Ayres Hodnett (Jr.), related to will witness James M. Hodnett, had a large estate on Birch Creek in southeast Pittsylvania County. Birch Creek runs generally west to east on the south side of today's town of Keeling, VA near the border with southwest Halifax. There is also an Oliver Creek (note appraiser Yancy Oliver) that joins Birch Creek about two miles south of Keeling, and in

1837, Yancy Oliver's land was one removed from the estate of Thomas Fitzgerald (d. c1836). [PDB40:329] Thomas Fitzgerald may be related to Richard's will witness William Fitzgerald and/or to Martha J. Fitzgerald who married Richard's son Joseph in 1847 six months after Richard wrote his will. Appraiser William F. Wilkerson lived in the immediate area and owned land near the Danville-Halifax Road that ran through Keeling. [PDB63:105] The area where they lived is roughly 10 miles northeast of Danville, VA, which became a prominent mill town and commercial center by the later 1800s. A number of Richard and Caty's grandchildren later lived in Danville after their families spent up to 40 years in adjacent Rockingham Co, NC

Richard Abbott's will did not name all of his six surviving children, but between the will and the inventory notation regarding "William Abbott, one of the legatees," all four of his known sons are proved: John J. Abbott, Joseph M. Abbott, William Abbott, and Richard M. Abbott. Richard and Caty's two surviving daughters, Sarah "Sallie" F. Abbott and Cassandra Abbott, are proved in various ways including the enumerations in Richard's censuses, the 1850 census with their widowed mother and unmarried brothers, Caty's 1860 census with Sallie, and an 1876 family letter from Cassandra to her brother John J. Abbott.

The 1850 census for this family has caused untold research problems, primarily because Richard's widow Catharine is listed by the wrong name of Susan (proved not to be Catharine's middle name). This kind of census error did not happen frequently, but when it does, it demands extensive checking and cross-checking in every census and any other pertinent records to be certain of the person's correct identity. In this case, in the end there is no doubt. Not only are the children in her household proved to be children of Richard Abbott (one with the unusual name of Cassandra), but also the 1860 census, family letters in 1854 and 1873, the 1860 Slave Schedule, and the absence of any Susan her age among Abbott relatives or non-related Abbots in the area all prove that this "Susan" is merely an enumerator's error and that it truly is Richard's widow Catharine Abbott instead. (Contrary to some online posts, Richard's widow is not the Catharine Abbott living in Halifax with the Richard Boyd family in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. That Catharine Abbott is proved to be the unmarried daughter of Richard's brother Joseph Abbott Jr. and Magdaline Lacy. For more details, see the report for Joseph Abbott Jr.)

Further complicating this 1850 census entry is the fact that Catharine's age and her daughter Sarah Abbott's age are also wrong. Catharine is listed as age 50 instead of 61, and Sarah is listed as age 18 rather than 24. Why the ages for these two are so far off while the ages of the other three children in the household are basically correct is a mystery. However, there is ample strong evidence for both Catharine's and Sarah's correct ages.

1850 - Pittsylvania Co, VA - Southern District
 Abbott, Susan [sic; Catharine] - 50 [sic; abt. 61] - VA
 William - 23 - laborer - VA
 Richard - 20 - farmer - VA
 Sarah - 18 [sic; abt. 24] - VA [listed as "under 5" in 1830, "10-14" in 1840]
 Cassandra - 15 - VA

Note:

The Abbott family is listed several households away from a John Wilkinson with wife Nancy, likely related to William F. Wilkinson who helped make the inventory and appraisal of Richard Abbott's estate in 1849 and who is listed in 1850 in the same immediate area.

Richard and Caty's two eldest sons, John and Joseph, were married with children in 1850. John J. Abbott was an overseer in southwest Halifax, not far from the rest of his family. Joseph M. Abbott was living in the general vicinity of his mother and siblings in southeastern Pittsylvania.

1850 - Halifax Co, VA - Southern District
 Abbott, John J. - 31 - Overseer - VA
 Pelina *[sic]* - 26 - VA [wife Paulina S. Lax/Lacks]
 James B. - 7 - VA
 John H. - 4 - VA
 Mary C. - 2 - VA
 Nicholas W - 5 mos. - VA

1850 - Pittsylvania Co, VA - Southern District
 Abbott, Joseph - 26 - Real Est: \$2,200 - Occupation: none listed
 Martha - 21 [wife Martha "Patsy" J. Fitzgerald]
 Georgiana - 2

Richard and Catharine Abbott's children began to disperse soon after this census. About 1851, John J. Abbott and wife Paulina S. Lax moved their family from Halifax County to Alabama. They spent a short time in Lauderdale County, AL before settling abt. 1853 in Talladega County and then in adjacent St. Clair County, AL, where descendants still live today.

William Abbott left Pittsylvania County about the same time for parts unknown. William emerged 20 years later in Jefferson County, AL, adjacent to his brother John in St. Clair County. In 1871, William married, apparently for the first time at age 44, to Mandeline F. Davis, a native Alabamian.

On 24 Oct 1852, Cassandra Abbott married Moore W. Dollahite in Person County, NC, located at the VA/NC state line just southeast of Pittsylvania County, VA. Moore was from Person County, and the couple settled among his family there.

Richard M. Abbott also married abt. 1852, and by Sep 1853, he and wife Leticia "Lettie" J. Downs were in Henry County, VA, adjacent to the west side of Pittsylvania. Abt. 1856, Richard and Lettie moved their family just over the state line to Rockingham County, NC, where his brother Joseph M. Abbott and wife Martha J. Fitzgerald had moved their family from Pittsylvania County the year before.

In May 1854, Catharine Abbott was living with her son Joseph and family still in Pittsylvania County. [*Letter from Catharine to son John formerly in possession of Ernestine Abbott Almon (d. 1967). Information to me 2004 from Mary Joe Abbott Wise*] However, Catharine chose not to leave when Joseph moved his

family to nearby Rockingham County, NC the next year. Instead, Catharine and her unmarried daughter, Sarah "Sallie" F. Abbott, remained in Pittsylvania County, VA, where the 1860 census shows they were seamstresses and Catharine owned five slaves. (See report on Catharine Fulkerson for more about her life during widowhood.)

1860 - Pittsylvania Co, VA - Southern Dist. - PO: Spring Garden
 Abbott[sic], Catharine - 60 [sic, 71] - Seamstress - Real Est: 0; Pers. Est: \$3000 - VA
 Sallie F - 25 [sic, 34] - Seamstress - VA

1860 Census Slave Schedule - Pittsylvania Co, VA - South Dist.
 Slave Owner: Catharine Abbott - 5 slaves (including one "fugitive")

Catharine and her daughter Sarah/Sallie are both missing in the 1870 census, and they are proved not to be living with any of Caty's children in nearby North Carolina counties. Caty's youngest son, Richard M. Abbott, moved his family back to Pittsylvania from Rockingham Co, NC abt. 1871, and by 1873, Caty was living with them. [*Letter from Richard to brother John J. Abbott formerly in possession of Ernestine Abbott Almon*]

Catharine "Caty" Fulkerson Abbott, for 30 years the wife and 27 years the widow of Richard Abbott, died in Pittsylvania County, VA in December 1875 at abt. 86 years old. [*Death date from Ernestine Abbott Almon information*] No death record or probate exists for Catharine.

No burial place for Richard or Catharine is included in any published cemetery or graveyard book for Pittsylvania County. We their descendants are the memorials to their lives.

For information about their children's later lives and families, see individual Notes for each of them. For more about Catharine Fulkerson Abbott, see separate report on her.

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Researched and written by Joan Horsley  
 Based on research as of Dec 2013  
 Contact: JHGenResearch-Abbott@yahoo.com  
 Website: www.joanhorsley.org

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