

# THE BATTLE BOOK UPDATED

The James Smith Battle Family

by  
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## Table of Contents

Introduction	7
The Descendants of James Smith Battle	11
Last Will and Testament of James Smith Battle	16
Old Town Plantation and Cool Spring	20
A Brief History of the Rocky Mount Mills	25
Documents and Quotations	27
Ancestors of James Smith Battle	34
Genealogical Tables	35
Table A- Decendants of William S. Battle and Mary E Battle (Battle Book, Table 63)	35
Table B- Descendants of Turner W. Battle and Lavinia B. Daniel (Battle Book, Table 64)	56
Table C- Descendants of Kemp P. Battle and Martha A. Battle (Battle Book, Table 59)	66
Notes on Genealogy	83

## DEDICATION



**Dorothy Battle Wilkinson**

c. 1948



**Dorothy Battle Wilkinson**

c. 1992

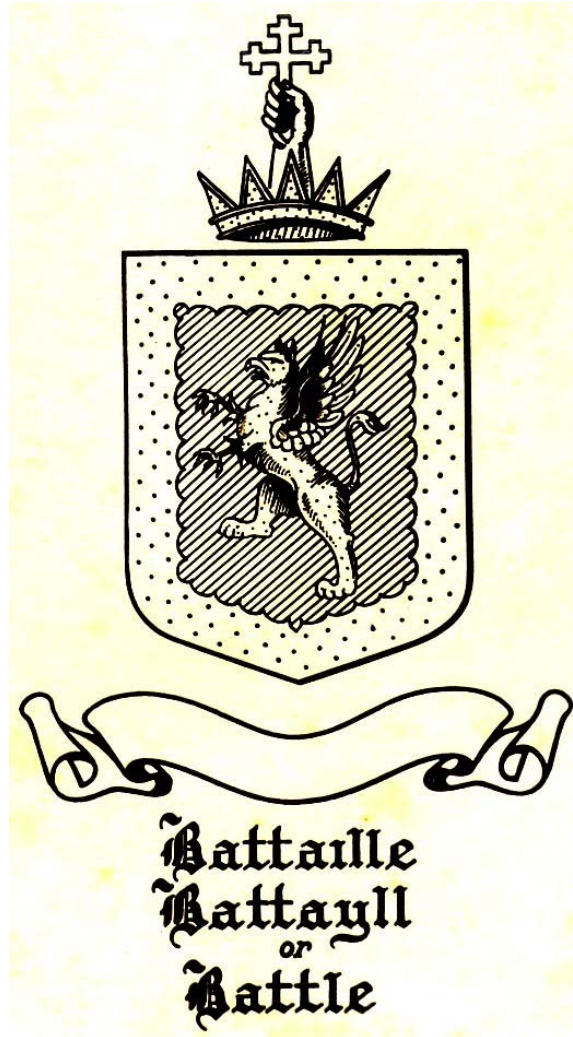
## Dedication

When I was a child and later as a young adult, I spent hours with my favorite aunt, Dorothy Battle Wilkinson, reviewing and discussing family and genealogical items. We both marveled at our good fortune in having *The Battle Book* as a resource. It gave us a detailed history of the Battle family in America and also gave us individually a sense of who we are. Aunt Dot and I remarked how fast this valuable 1930 volume was becoming outdated. With my aunt's love, encouragement and playful, but persistent prodding, I promised to update and gather information on our specific branch of what has become an enormous family.

We both decided that James Smith Battle (1786-1854) might make a good starting point since of all his father's children, he was the only one who left descendants and also since he lived in North Carolina, his descendants would be easier to trace than those of our more remote ancestors. By choosing James Smith Battle, we would be tracking our immediate ancestors, and also the families of William J. Battle and Herbert B. Battle, the two primarily responsible for the original *Battle Book*. Early in this process, I collected information about a number of individuals whose families are in the original volume. I hope that publication of this volume will encourage other parts of the now vast Battle descendants to organize and publish information on their part of the family. I have information from a number of distant relatives and would be delighted to share what I have and to encourage additional volumes to be published in manageable formats. I found out that the family is extensive enough now to fill many volumes the size of the original *Battle Book*.

During this period, I became familiar with a number of intriguing individuals I did not know earlier. I was able to follow the moving of Old Town Plantation across Highway 97 and its subsequent meticulous restoration. I visited the Barracks, the house that William Smith Battle built in Tarboro, NC in 1858, which was designed by noted English architect William Percival. It is now a bed and breakfast and beautifully maintained. I had a number of splendid afternoons at William Smith Battle's later residence, Lone Pine Plantation, outside Tarboro and still owned by a descendant, Edward Lewis. Additionally, I learned more about the Rocky Mount Mills and its history and have mourned its closing in 1997. Its office, a lovely classical house built in 1835 and standing next to the Mills, was where my grandfather was born in 1852 when his grandfather, James Smith Battle, owned the Mills. I heard wonderful, interesting and sometimes bizarre family stories from my grandmother, Nell G. Battle, from Martha Battle Mebane, from distant cousin Emily Battle, from Treadwell Covington Jr., and from numerous other family members. I thank my good friend writer and fellow Rocky Mount native Allan Gurganus for his suggestions and support of this project. A number of cousins of the next generation have shown interest and provided assistance in coming up with data and information. I would especially like to thank William Battle Mebane, Dorothy G. Wilkinson Folger, Frank S. Wilkinson, Chris and Kathy Wilson, Johanna Bourne Vanderbeek and brothers T. Westray, Stephen and Richard Battle. With the closing of the Rocky Mount Mills in 1997 and of the Battle, Fowler law firm in New York City in 2000, it felt like time was of the essence to record our family history and to make it available to family members in a document that could be passed on and enjoyed. While it might have been preferable to update the entire *Battle Book*, I decided that it was more important to tackle something achievable with a segment of now-overwhelming Battle family in America and make it available to others.

I hope that this volume will provide for the next generation an enriched sense of who they are. I trust it will prove useful in other ways as well. It is intended as a tribute to my beloved aunt, Dorothy Battle Wilkinson, whose erudition, love of family and delight in travel inspired me and many others. Just knowing her influenced us and changed our lives. She was a great friend and a great lady.



Purp. A griffin sergeant, within a bordue engr. or.

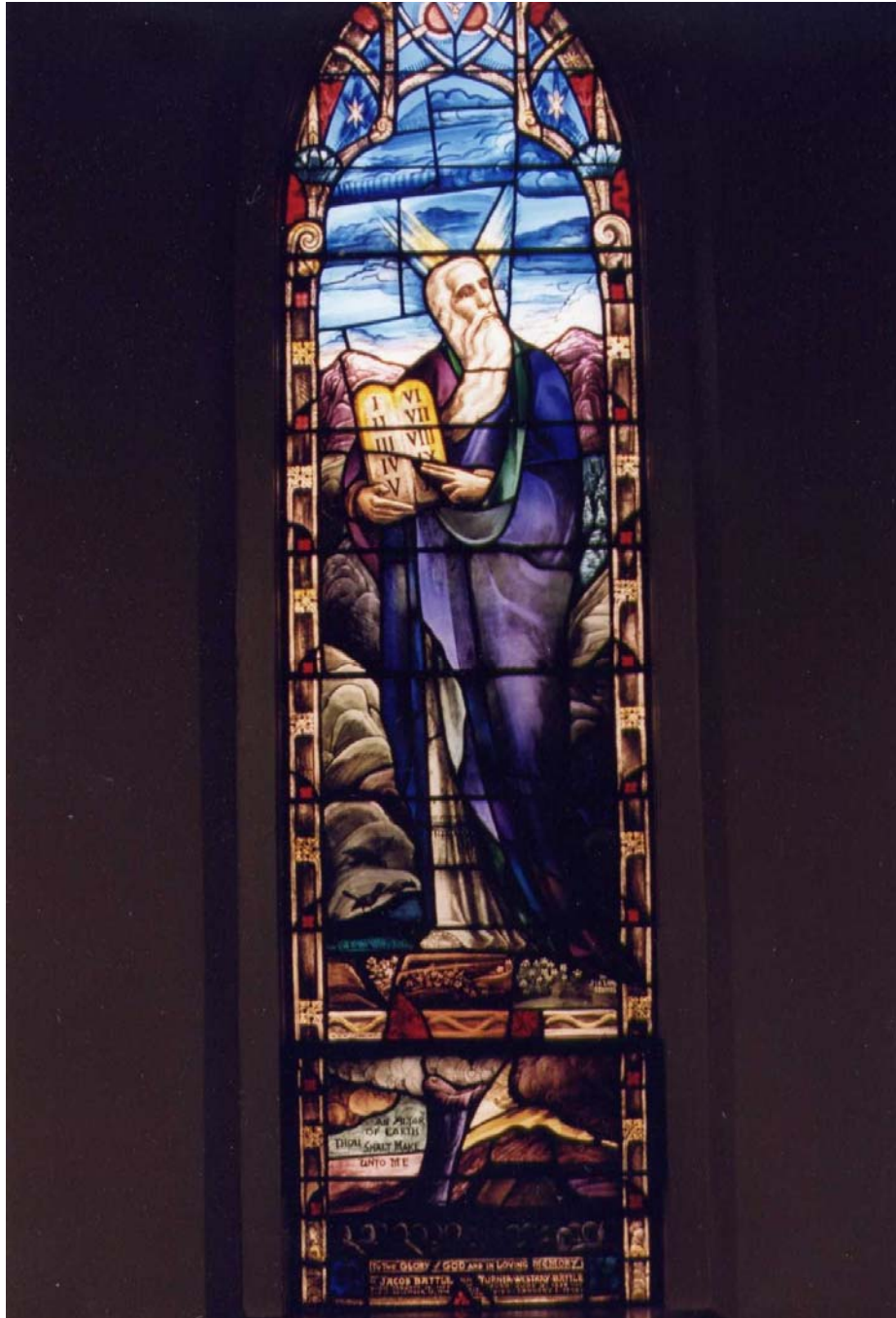
That is: a purple (pur.=purpure) shield bearing a gold (or) griffin rearing (sergeant), within a gold (or) border (bordure) whose inner edge is scalloped (engr.-engrailed).

For the Battayll or Battaile crest Burke gives: Out of an antique crown or, a dexter arm ppr. holding a cross crosslet fitchee in pale gu.

That is: A right arm in natural colors (ppr.=proper) rising out of an antique gold (or) crown holding upright (in pale) a red (gu.=gules) cross crosslet with a pointed foot (fitches).

Earlier editions of Fairbairn give the same blazon as Burke. The latest adds the word cubit before arm:

Out of an antique crown or, a dexter cubit arm ppr., holding a cross crosslet fitched (the same as fitchee) in pale gu.



Moses 1

Church of Good Shepherd – Rocky Mount, NC

Given in memory of  
Jacob Battle  
1/16/1852 – 12/2/1916  
Turner Westray Battle  
6/3/1899 – 1/1/1944

**Introduction**

## JAMES SMITH BATTLE (1786-1854)

James Smith Battle was the only son of Jacob Battle (1754-1814) to live to adulthood and the only child of Jacob Battle and Mrs. Penelope (Langley) Edwards to have children and descendants who survive him. His sister, Elizabeth Langley Smith Battle (1797-1815) married her first cousin, Dr. Cullen Battle, and died in childbirth. Her only daughter, Harriett Elizabeth Cullen Battle, died two years later.

James Smith Battle was named for his mother's grandfather, Captain James Smith, the founder of Scotland Neck, NC. Like his sister, his first marriage was to a cousin, Mrs. Temperance (Battle) Fort, Jethro Battle's daughter whose first husband, Jeremiah Fort, had recently died. Temperance Battle died in 1814, two years after the birth of their only child, James Marmaduke Battle (1812-1850). After some research, I discovered that the Marmaduke name, which I have always considered a bit strange, was not uncommon in the Langley family, that of James Smith Battle's mother.

According to Smith family genealogy provided by Dr. Claiborne Smith of Rocky Mount, James Smith Battle is a descendant of Richard Smith who died in Surry County, Virginia in 1713. This family was from Essex County, England and was first traced to their receiving lands following the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of King Henry VIII (following 1535). Support of the King's policies probably including the split with the Church of Rome enabled this family to rise from relative obscurity to that of minor landed gentry. The son of Richard Smith, Nicholas Smith, moved from Northhampton County, Virginia to North Carolina in the mid 1730's. According to the Smith family, Nicholas Smith was a Church of England man and worshiped in the Old Kehukee Chapel several miles from his plantation in what is now Bertie County, NC and when he died he was a wealthy man. Nicholas's second son, James Smith, (1720-1811) was the great grandfather of James Smith Battle, and accumulated much of the land that the present town of Scotland Neck, NC is now on. In a 1749 grant to him by the Earl of Granville, he is listed as "James Smith of Edgecombe County, Gentleman." He was also known as Captain James Smith. On tax lists for Halifax in 1782, James Smith is listed with 4,184 acres of land and 66 slaves. He also owned the local grist mill and was on the Governor's Council of 1760, was a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and a Captain of the County Militia. According to tradition he was married five times. By his first wife, Mary Edwards, he had one daughter, Lucy, born in 1746. He had five children of the second marriage but none of the subsequent three marriages. His eldest daughter, Lucy, married Thomas Langley and had one child, a daughter, Penelope Langley born April, 1762. A widow, Lucy Smith Langley married second Ruben Norfleet, from whose family the Marmaduke name comes. Penelope Langley, the daughter of Lucy, married first a Mr. Edwards and then a widow, Penelope Langley Edwards married Jacob Battle in 1785. Jacob and Penelope Langley (Edwards) had five children. James Smith Battle is the only of these five children to have descendants living today, and is the subject of this short article.

By his first marriage to his cousin Temperance Battle, James Smith Battle had one son, James Marmaduke Battle. I had always heard that James Marmaduke Battle, named for his uncle Marmaduke Norfleet and buried by himself in an isolated corner of the Battle family graveyard, was a "black sheep" of the family, but I had no idea what that meant. The Battle Book refers to James Marmaduke Battle as being unmarried and having died in Mississippi. However, his father's Will, written in 1847 before James Marmaduke died, refers in Item 9 to his "grandson, John Paul Jones Battle". Was this a child of James Marmaduke Battle? Neither was alive or mentioned in the court papers filed after the death of James Smith Battle in 1854. I wrote to Mississippi to find out if a Will had been filed in or around 1850 for James Marmaduke Battle since I had understood that James Smith Battle had bought a plantation for his son in Mississippi. I was unable to locate a will for James Marmaduke Battle. Genealogist and distant cousin Emily Battle in Rocky Mount, NC, told me that she had always heard that James Marmaduke was killed in

a “questionable” incident and that he was actually not buried in the Old Town Cemetery. His tombstone in the corner has nothing beneath it, she said. The only thing I was able to make sense of was why would he have gone to Mississippi, being the oldest son of a wealthy planter? His half brother from his mother’s first marriage, Jethro Fort, had also gone to Mississippi, and I now assume that he went to join his half brother. If he died in 1850 unmarried and his father had bought him a plantation or other real estate that reverted back to his father, it was not reflected in his father’s estate filings in 1854. Being the oldest son of a man everyone labeled as upright and a “man of Christian virtue”, I had assumed that maybe James Marmaduke was simply rebellious. But this “black sheep” of the family unfortunately remains an enigma. Recent burials at the Old Town Graveyard now make James Marmaduke’s grave less alone and thereby more embraced by the family, perhaps a nice metaphor for changes in society and in our family since his death.

James Marmaduke’s father, James Smith Battle (JSB) was renowned to be the wealthiest man in Nash and Edgecombe Counties, NC. In fact, when he died, his son William Smith Battle, was said to be the wealthiest man in Edgecombe County after he inherited the Rocky Mount Mills. I had seen copies of an earlier portrait and the later posthumous Thomas Sully portrait of JSB and quite frankly, he looked just like the stern, upright (even by 19th century standards), and virtuous Baptist that he was so frequently described as. He seemed too puritanical to interest me much. But as I learned more and more about him, he did take on a greater sense of humanity.

Kemp Plumber Battle, the son-in-law of JSB, in *Memories of An Old Time Tar Heel* described his father-in-law as “an excellent neighbor, a wise farmer, exceedingly kind to his many slaves. He as of such a serious disposition when I knew him that I conjecture he was afflicted with the Bright’s disease that carried him off at age sixty-seven. He had no liking for politics and office-holding.” page 118. Kemp Plumber Battle also states that JSB maintained a second residence (other than Cool Spring Plantation) in Nashville, NC, near his in-laws, the Westrays. Two of JSB’s children, Penelope and Martha, were born there, and the house remained Battle family property for thirty years. Sally Ann Arrington, a cousin, bought the property from the JSB heirs in 1860 for \$1,350. Later, the house became the popular Nashville Hotel at the turn of the century “with the reception room and its marble mantle still in good condition.”

The portrait of JSB was painted by Thomas Sully, then the preeminent portraitist in the United States. It was rendered the year after JSB’s death from a photograph sent to Sully then in Philadelphia. I have seen a copy of the letter JSB’s son Turner Westray Battle sent to Turner’s sister in Philadelphia before she was to meet with Sully, directing Sully to paint the portrait in “his best style.” I was a bit amused that Sully charged one hundred dollars (\$100) for a portrait that did not include hands and two hundred dollars for one that did. The portrait does not have hands, and I have seen the receipt from Thomas Sully for one hundred dollars. This portrait, along with a number of William Garle Brown portraits of descendants of William Smith Battle, the oldest son of JSB, is presently displayed in the Blount-Bridgers House in Tarboro, NC. And the director of this small museum at the time of this writing is a direct descendant of JSB, Meade Bridgers Horne.

It is JSB’s second wife, Sally Harriett Westray, from whom all his descendants are traced. She was from Nash County, NC and was the daughter of Samuel Westray and Mrs. Sallie Bradford (Turner) Short. She was the recent widow of David Short when she married JSB. It is clear that many of the names that repeat themselves so frequently in our family tree, especially those of “Turner” and “Westray” are from the Westray and related families of the second marriage of JSB. In fact, Sally Harriett Westray Battle’s brother was named Turner B. Westray, who was named as the co-executor of JSB’s will. Kemp Plumber Battle reports that Sally Harriett Westray Battle was in poor health for a number of years near the end her life. She got off the train on which she was traveling and died in Hickford, VA in 1840 on her way to a Virginia health resort with her husband. She was 37 years old.

The Battle Book lists JSB as the Judge of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, the contract builder of many miles of the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad, and the purchaser of the Rocky Mount Mills. He is listed as a Baptist. When the Baptist Church at the Falls published its history recently, it claimed that it was still using income from a \$1250 bequest to it by JSB in Item 1 of his will for for the purpose of paying



its pastor. It must be very fortunate or astute to have a fund still yielding income 145 years later after numerous recessions and the Depression of the 1930's. JSB's father, Jacob Battle, had been active in the same Baptist church and was for many years an elder. However, of JSB's six children by Sallie Harriett Westray, none remained Baptists. Each at different times became Episcopalian. According to *The Battle Book*, but in a separate section, JSB attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1800-1802 and was graduated in 1802. In her research, Dr. Margaret Battle stated that when James S. Battle died in 1854, he was possessed of 20,000 acres and over 500 slaves making him the richest man in Edgecombe and Nash Counties.

After reading all this, I still did not feel that I knew anything about what type of man JSB was. I then read the letter he sent to his daughter, Martha Ann Battle, when she was a student in Washington, DC in 1849. He wrote in response to her decision to become an Episcopalian. After expressing his concerns and reservations with her decision, he shows himself to be a loving, gentle father to his youngest. "I have written more than I expected. If I have said anything improperly I am sorry for it... Your devoted father who wishes you well. My mind seems to be barren and unfruitful. Take the will for the deed. James Smith Battle". (A copy of the complete letter is included in documents in *The Battle Book*, page 86.)

I gained a further sense of JSB's character by reading the decision of the Supreme Court of North Carolina in 1837, that of the *State v. Negro Will, Slave of James S. Battle* (NC Reports of 1837 at page 121). In this case, Will, a slave, with due provocation and thinking that it was in self defense, killed the Cool Spring Plantation foreman, a Richard Boxer. JSB underwrote the defense of his slave for killing his foreman since he apparently thought that the killing was in some way justified. The court recognized the mitigating circumstances and overturned a conviction of murder. It was thereby recognized that a slave had the right of self-defense against his master. This was a unique decision in the pre-Civil War American South since it recognized a slave as something more than chattel. It acknowledged a slave's having the right of self-defense, and North Carolina was the only state to take such an action at that time. While this is a step forward in recognition of human rights, it had a sad personal ending. The defendant Will was freed and unfortunately within a few short years killed another man. This time Will was hanged. In this regard, JSB's early defense of a slave's rights strikes me as foresighted. It is interesting to note that JSB's descendant, Martha Westray Battle Boyce, was head of the Womens' Army Corps (WAC) at the end of World War II. Colonel Westray Battle Boyce was given the responsibility as head of the WAC for enforcing the racial integration of that segment of the armed forces.

The Westray family of JSB's second wife, hailed from Westrayville, Nash County, NC. Sally Harriett Westray Battle's siblings were Turner B. Westray, Martha Westray Arrington, and Turner Page Westray. There was a lovely family house and an Academy in Westrayville. The Academy had been organized in 1810 by Sallie's father, Samuel Westray and it was the first organized school in Nash County, NC. Turner Page Westray, Sallie's brother, had only one son, also named Samuel Westray, for his grandfather. Therefore, Samuel was first cousin to the children of JSB. He decided that he did not want to continue farming his large plantation in and around Westrayville after the Civil War and moved in with Turner Westray Battle and his wife Lavinia Daniel Battle at Cool Spring Plantation in the 1870's. When he died unmarried and childless, he left an estate of over \$250,000 to his cousins, helping greatly at a time when the South was undergoing post-Civil War recession. Thomas Hall Battle, the son of Kemp P. and Martha Ann Battle was the executor of Samuel Westray's estate. In an amusing story related by Kemp Plummer Battle, Samuel's father, Turner Page Westray, was described as a man of "pluck." The story has it that armed deserters came to the house at Westrayville and demanded a supply of bacon. Turner Page Westray walked on the porch with his double barreled gun and with "fiercest vituperations," he drove the deserters away. After the house was torn down and the Westray family graveyard was plowed under, the remains of Samuel Westray, the benefactor of a number of Battle family members, was moved to Pineview Cemetery in Rocky Mount, NC.

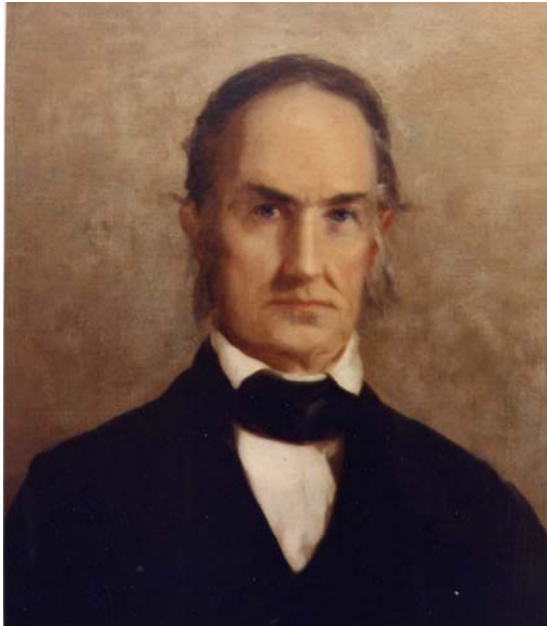
Advice written by James Smith Battle in 1847 for his children to be read after his death tells us something about the nature of this complex 19th century man. "I wish you to do well both in time and

eternity. Be industrious, economical and benevolent. And attend to your temporal concerns, but not to place your affections too much on them, knowing that time is short and your sojourn here will soon be over.”



**James Smith Battle**

c.1834



**James Smith Battle**

Painted by Thomas Sully 1854,  
Now at Blount Bridgers House,  
Tarboro, NC

### **The Descendants of James Smith Battle**

Stories of the descendants of James Smith Battle are numerous and some worth repeating. These stories often capture the personalities of certain individuals or of an era. For instance, Cool Spring Plantation was burned in 1899 by a disgruntled suitor of a family cook. The suitor mistakenly thought that the cook was sleeping in the plantation house and torched it. Joseph Daniel Bunn died saving the life of his aunt Mrs. George Gordon Battle. He threw her out of the second story window as the fire was raging. She survived but walked with a limp for the rest of her life.

The beautiful house that George Gordon Battle bought for his wife outside Charlottesville, VA named Campbell Field, was bequeathed by her to the Blue Ridge School, established to educate bright young men from poor families in western Virginia. Although the school has become considerably more upscale in its student population, the house is still used as the home of the President of the school and is still named the Martha Burrell Bagby Battle House. A photo of this house is included in this volume.

George Gordon Battle's mother, Lavinia Bassett (Daniel) Battle (wife of the first Turner Westray Battle) was the daughter of NC Supreme Court Justice Joseph J. Daniel, who was one of the three justices sitting for the State v. Will decision discussed above, but well before his daughter married JSB's son Turner Westray Battle. She was the great granddaughter of Col. Nicholas Long, the Commissary General of the Continental forces of NC during the American Revolution. Her obituary recites her lineage including Virginia's Randolph, Churchill and Stith families. Her correspondence with many family members reflects a well-educated and elegant style. I have had the pleasure of reading a number of her letters. However, each attempt to provide her with a namesake failed. Of the five female children named for Lavinia Bassett Daniel Battle, none reached adulthood and most died shortly after birth.

William James Battle, professor of classics for many years at the University of Texas was for a brief time UT's President. Always having a love of architecture, he designed an Italianate style building which now houses the School of Architecture and is named Battle Hall. He planted the Battle oak in front of this building and it is still standing there and so designated. William James Battle left the University of Texas his collection of what he thought were Greek and Roman busts. Although they are now seen as primarily 18th and 19th century copies, they are valuable nevertheless and housed in Battle Hall. After retirement from the University of Texas, William James Battle, a bachelor, returned to Rocky Mount, NC and lived with his nephew Hyman L. Battle Sr. until his death.

George Gordon Battle, during the time he practiced law in New York City, was known as "Mr. Southern", because of his great interest in helping the South and southerners after the Civil War. He was especially generous to family and charitable endeavors in and around his native eastern North Carolina. It was he who paid for a marker to be put at the grave of Elisha Battle whose wooden marker had long since decomposed. He established a trust fund in his Last Will and Testament for the maintenance of both the Old Town Graveyard (where JSB and a number of his descendants are buried) and the Cool Spring Graveyard (where Elisha Battle, his wife and a number of his immediate descendants are buried). However, George Gordon Battle and his wife are buried with her family at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, VA.

The law firm that George Gordon Battle founded in New York City survived him for fifty years, closing its doors in 2000. After Battle Fowler closed its doors, a number of the partners in Battle Fowler, including Hyman Battle Jr., merged with the Paul Hastings law firm in mid-town Manhattan. There remains two conference rooms with George Gordon Battle memorabilia, including newsclippings of his anti-Nazi and other political activities in the 1920's and 1930's, two drawing portraits and the lovely portrait of him that graced the Battle Fowler board room for so many years. It was nice seeing that he had not been forgotten. A number of readers of this will remember from the Watergate political scandal the name George Gordon Battle Liddy who was convicted and after serving time, hosted a radio talk show.

Depending on your view of this individual, you may be relieved or saddened to know that he was not related to George Gordon Battle, but his father had been an early non-attorney employee of the Battle law firm and named his son after his employer.

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Rocky Mount has long been a focal point in the life of the Rocky Mount Battle family. The first person confirmed there was Lavinia Bassett Daniel Battle (Mrs. Turner Westray Battle) in 1855. For example, more than half of the stained glass windows have been given in memory of the Battle family members. I have the 1920's correspondence of my grandmother for the "Moses window" located in the left rear of the nave in memory of my grandfather, Jacob Battle. Much of the church's interior decoration and the brick wall surrounding its front were given by or in memory of Mamie Louise Braswell Battle and her husband, Hyman L. Battle Sr. Over the years a number of Battle family members have served as Senior Warden of this church, including Judge Jacob Battle, Thomas Hall Battle, Kemp D. Battle, Hyman L. Battle, Sr., and at the time of this writing, John M. Mebane, Jr. In addition to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Rocky Mount, members of the Battle family have been involved in Calvary Church, Tarboro; Christ Church, Raleigh; Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill; and numerous other Episcopal churches including those in Asheville, NC; Austin, TX; Charlotte, NC; Savannah, GA; and Washington, DC., to name a few. A number of Battle descendants are presently married to Episcopal priests.

One family member, Gaston Battle (1871-1937) was the curate of the Church of the Good Shepherd for a number of years. However, in 1905, when he inherited from his mother, Lavinia Bassett Daniel Battle, the Old Town Plantation rather than the Cool Spring Plantation he had expressly wanted, he sold Old Town, left Rocky Mount, abandoned his career in the Episcopal priesthood and became a Roman Catholic. He became an executive with Sinclair Oil in Atlanta, Georgia. His youngest daughter, Harriett Gordon Battle, attended a private girls' school in Havana, Cuba and fell in love with Cuba, where she remained even after the revolution until her death in 1992. Her husband, Raul Primelles, had grown up on a large farm in Cuba contiguous to that of the Castro family and after the revolution, became for a short time the Cuban ambassador to Spain.

Calvary Church in Tarboro, NC was the church of the William Smith Battle family. The church is surrounded by a lovely graveyard, a large section of which is devoted to William Smith Battle, his family and descendants. As of this writing, Ed B. Lewis is very active in the choir at Calvary Church. The parish house at the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, NC was named and dedicated to the memory of Kemp Plumber Battle and his wife Martha Ann Battle in 1918. From the period of 1850 through the 1970's, well over ninety per cent of our branch of the Battle family have been at least nominal Episcopalians (or Anglicans). That, of course, has changed in recent years.

My specific memories of growing up in Rocky Mount include the beautiful house on Sunset Avenue belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Hyman L. Battle, Sr. I especially remember the dazzling Christmas decorations and a family gathering there each holiday season. The house, which had belonged to Mrs. Battle's family, and where she had spent her childhood, was a landmark in downtown Rocky Mount and was then being encroached upon by commercial development. Mrs. Battle (Mamie Louise Braswell Battle) was considered the pinnacle of graciousness and elegance in our small town. I remember being surprised to learn from guests at a party in New York when I was practicing law there in the early 1970's that a pair of sophisticated New Yorkers vividly remembered being entertained at the Sunset Avenue Battle house. They could not stop talking about that experience. It heightened their impression of Southern hospitality; they had clearly had a splendid time at the Corinthian columned house. The site of the house, which was demolished in the 1970's, is now a bank's offices. Paneling from the house is now in a restaurant. And a portion of Mrs. Battle's renowned wardrobe now belongs to the Rocky Mount Museum where it is from time-to-time on display.

In the early 1920's, Mrs. Hyman L. Battle's father, Dr. Mark Russell Braswell, had underwritten the first public library in Rocky Mount and named it in honor of his son, Thomas Hackney Braswell, who had

died as a child. My grandmother, Nell G. Battle (Mrs. Jacob Battle), recently widowed, became its first librarian and the founder of the first bookmobile (mobile library) in North Carolina.

Dr. Newsom P. Battle in Rocky Mount was descended from both branches of the Battle family, the Mathew and John Battle lines, both of which had come to Virginia from England in the 17th century. His wife, Dr. Margaret (White) Battle, became a Battle family historian and wrote numerous newspaper articles during Rocky Mount's centennial celebration and the American Bicentennial on the Battle family. She decided to have her dining room done as a mural with many of the homes of members of the Nash and Edgecombe County Battle families. The entire dining room was surrounded with approximately fifteen different houses, drawn from photographs in an idealized setting more resembling a rolling English pastoral scene than flat Nash and Edgecombe Counties. Their son, named for his maternal great uncle, is named Octavius Battle Battle. Dr. Margaret Battle, like all converts, had become more Battle than the Battles themselves.

When Turner Westray Battle (1899-1944) and his first wife, Helen Staats, were divorced in the 1920's, the trial in Nashville, NC caused quite a stir in Nash and Edgecombe Counties. In those pre-television days when divorce was a rarity, a contested divorce for the custody of their son, Turner Westray Battle (1921-1974) provided entertainment value and endless talk to an otherwise quiet community. People lined up outside the Nash County Court House for seats. Newspapers were filled with stories of accusations and the glamour of prominent out-of-state attorneys. The case was decided in a courtroom where Turner's father, the late Judge Jacob Battle, had frequently presided until his death in 1916. Turner was represented by his then-prominent New York uncle, George Gordon Battle. The final decision, as unusual as divorce itself was at that time, gave the custody of their young son Turner to his father, not his California-born mother.

In the recession and economic turmoil of the 1870's, William Smith Battle lost possession of the Rocky Mount Mills, which his father, JSB had left him. At this time, William Smith Battle was the owner, but his son James Smith Battle had actually managed it since his majority. Additionally, William was forced to give up his beloved William Percival-designed home, the Barracks in Tarboro, NC. He and his wife moved to a property that she had owned, Lone Pine Plantation outside of Tarboro. His descendants, Edward Battle Lewis and his family, are still living at the Lone Pine Plantation at the time of writing. In William Smith Battle's obituary, he was praised for the dignity with which he bore his misfortune and the diligence in making good on all of the debts incurred with the Rocky Mount Mills, even those he could have legally avoided. When writing about his brother-in-law William Smith Battle, Kemp Plumber Battle stated that had William died shortly after the War Between the States, he would have only been remembered for his social and economic success, not for his long life (he died in 1915) following economic disaster.

Dr. Samuel Westray Battle was the son of William Smith Battle and maintained a thriving medical practice in Asheville, NC from 1885 until his death in 1927. He helped build Asheville into a health resort and among his patients was George Vanderbilt, the founder of the 254-room Biltmore House, now a museum. Dr. Battle had a stroke while chairing a meeting of the NC Chapter of the Society of Cincinnati in Raleigh. Painted in his white linen suits and Panama hats, I always thought that his photograph would have been the perfect advertisement for a Southern restaurant chain! His second wife and widow, Mrs. Jane (Hall) Liddell Battle, who survived him by 25 years, was affectionately referred to as "Lady Jane" by her friends and neighbors. Her obituary referred to her as the unquestioned "No. 1 social leader" of Asheville for her untiring charitable, literary, historical and social activities.

Dr. Samuel Westray Battle's grandson, Westray Battle Hancock, was born in England to an English father and at 6'8" was the tallest man in the British forces during World War II. The descendants of Samuel Westray Battle now all live in England. Unfortunately, Westray Battle Hancock's only son, Westray Douglas Hancock, contracted Legionnaires Disease on a wedding trip with his American wife to the United States and died in Philadelphia in 1994. Westray Douglas Hancock was the only great grandson of Dr. Samuel Westray Battle, although he did have two sisters and two half sisters from his father's first marriage.

Josephine (Battle) Comer Reid was a neighbor and always delighted to relate interesting family stories to me as a child. The daughter of Thomas Hall Battle, she had bought a house on the ocean at Nags Head, NC and for many years would move there for the summer months. She became such a fixture in the Nags Head community and its social life that she was for years referred to as the “Mayor of Nags Head.”

Marion C. “Peter” Laughlin (b. 1944) was born in Seattle, WA, but has always had keen interest in his North Carolina roots. His great, great grandfather was William Smith Battle, and his great grandfather was James Smith Battle (1846-1894). When he came to study at the University of North Carolina in the 1960’s he not only became a favorite with his cousins at the Lone Pine Plantation and elsewhere in North Carolina, but acquired a Southern accent that would put many native North Carolinians to shame. Although his prime business and expertise is antiques, he has restored a number of mid and late nineteenth century houses in Lexington, KY where he presently lives. Many of these houses are now showplaces. When I was talking with a native of Lexington a few years ago, I was told that Peter is a frequently sought after party guest of the Whitneys and others in the international horse set.

In 1998, Frank S. Wilkinson and Dorothy Gordon Wilkinson Folger, the two children of Dorothy Battle Wilkinson, decided to re-inter their parents, Dorothy Battle and Francis Smith Wilkinson, from the Rocky Mount cemetery to the Old Town (Battle) Graveyard. The gathering first for a service at the graveyard and then a lovely luncheon at Old Town Plantation house became a family gathering to see and visit with Battle cousins, but also a chance to see the restoration of the Old Town Plantation house and the renovation in progress of the Cool Spring house which was then being restored to be used as a hunting lodge for which zoning permission was later denied. Luckily, the massive flooding in Eastern North Carolina in the autumn of 1999 did not materially damage or affect the Old Town or Cool Spring graveyards or either of the two main houses. The graves of Francis Smith (Frank) and Dorothy Battle Wilkinson now bring the grave of James Marmaduke Battle in contact with the rest of his family after a century and a half of isolation.

Kemp Plumber Battle, the post-Civil War President of the University of North Carolina and the husband of Martha Ann Battle, had become a legendary figure in the history of the University and of the state. He was a second cousin of his wife, Martha Ann Battle, who was the youngest daughter of James Smith Battle. Therefore, their descendants represent two lines of the Battle family from Elisha Battle. Kemp Plumber was a descendant of Elisha’s oldest son, William, and his wife, a descendant of a later son Jacob, the father of James Smith Battle. So many articles and books have been written about the enormous energy of Kemp Plumber Battle in reopening the University of North Carolina in 1870, that I can only refer you to *The Battle Book* and numerous histories of the University to explore more about this remarkable and beloved man, for whom Battle Hall, Battle Park and the parish house at the Chapel of the Cross are all named.

Although I could continue with anecdotal accounts, this is solely intended as snapshot ramblings and reminiscences about James Smith Battle and his descendants. In my broad correspondence, I realized that the largest chapter of the Children of the American Revolution (founded by the DAR) is the Elisha Battle Chapter in Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX and that a number of its members trace their ancestry back to our ancestor Elisha Battle of Edgecombe County, NC. A number of these distant cousins have made the pilgrimage to North Carolina to see Old Town, Cool Spring and the respective graveyards located there. The son of distant cousin Timothy Battle of Texas chose as an archeological project to discover which family members were buried with Elisha Battle in the Cool Spring graveyard. That information is included in the article by Chris and Kathy Wilson on Cool Spring and Old Town.

I have been fortunate to have known numerous members of our part of the Battle family and this experience has enriched my task at hand, which could have otherwise have been rather dry. I hope that publication of this volume will add personal qualities on to what can sometimes be dry genealogical charts and supplement the charts and documents included in this volume. I am enormously grateful to Chris and Kathy Wilson for their article on Old Town and Cool Spring plantation houses. Our family owes an enormous debt of gratitude to him for his knowledgeable and meticulous restoration of the Old Town house

which would have probably been lost were it not for his efforts. And, I thank John M. Mebane, Jr. for his information included on the Rocky Mount Mills.

George Hackney Eatman  
August, 2000  
NewYork, NY

## Last Will and Testament of James Smith Battle

Edgecombe County, NC, executed Dec. 8, 1847 and and filed for probate August term, 1854.

In the name of God Amen:

I James Smith Battle of the State of N. Carolina & County of Edgecomb, being of sound mind and memory, thanks be to God for the same; do this the 8th Decbm A.D. 1847 make & ordain this to be my last will and testament in Form & manner as follows (viz):

Item 1. I give & devise to the Deacons & their successors in office, of the predestination Baptist church at the Falls of Tar River, Nash County, N.C. (In Trust) so long as the doctrine and principles, now held & advocated in said Church & no longer; (If ever such principles should be abandoned) twelve hundred & fifty dollars (\$1250) to be loaned out with good security, & the interest annually arising therefrom, to be given to the Pastor or Minister of sd Church & so continued from year to year, to be given to the person who it shall be the will of providence to be set as a Watchman over Her; but it is my will & desire for the principal not to be diminished, but remain as a perpetual Monument of the Donor, a poor repentant sinner. If saved at all entirely & solely by Grace.

Item 2. I will and direct that my debts be paid out of the money due me, & such portion of the stock & the perishable estate, which I may die possessed of, as may not be needed to keep up & conduct my farms, in the manner hereinafter directed, & if from the sources, there should not arise money enough for the purposes aforesaid, I do not wish my Farms to be unstocked, & therefore direct that the deficiency be raised from the sale of any of my negroes thought best.

Item 3rd. I give and devise to all my children (Viz) my three sons James M. Battle, Wm. S. Battle, & Turner W. Battle & my three daughters Mary E. Battle, Penelope B. Battle & Martha A. Battle, all my lands in the County of Edgecomb lying on both sides of the Tar River, with this specific instruction, James M. Battle having had lands to the amount of ten thousand dollars & the eights part of the Cotton Factory at the Falls of Tar River valued at five thousand dollars given to him, total fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) to be considered part of his distributive share of the real Estate & likewise Wm. S. Battle having rec'd one eights 1/8 of the Factory & its appurtenances valued at five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to be considered a part of his distributive share, & the plantation on which the said Wm. S. Battle now lives, formerly belonging to J.M. Battle, he can retain and keep at its proper valuation, or let it be valued & divided with the other lands; If the sd Wm. S. Battle should prefer keeping the lands he occupies, the improvements he may have put on them, is not to be taken in the valuation, & if he should chose to surrender for division, the sd Wm. S. is to be paid for the improvements he may have made on sd lands as above stated to be equally divided between all my children.

Item 4. I devise and bequeath all my slaves which may not be needed to execute the provisions of the 2nd Item of this will, to all my children, Viz, James M., Wm. S., Turner W., Mary E., Penelope B., and Martha Ann Battle; with this proviso & expressed understanding, that James M. Battle is to surrender or give an account of all the negroes given to him & likewise the amt of stock, provisions heretofore given to him, to the other legatees, to be accounted as a part or whole of his proportionable part, as the case may be: And likewise having given off to Wm. S. Battle the following negroes (Viz) Caesar, Rebecca, Ovid, Aggy, Annie, Derry, Esther, Alfred, Joiner, Cadman, boy', girl, Powel, Mary, Martha, Billy, Boston, Lazarus, Eliza, Hester, Joseph, Priscy, Penny, Penny & son, Fred, Liley, Mary, Richard, Sally Ann, Dred, Henry, Caroline, John, Cloe, Albert, Caesar, Peter, Katy, \_\_\_\_\_, Son Isham, Sam A., Barret, Jack, Albert, Port, Lewis; forty eight negroes (48) valued at fourteen thousand four hundred dollars (14,400) & likewise stock, provisions, household & kitchen furniture, farming interests valued to the amount of nineteen hundred dollars (\$1900); Cash one thousand dollars to buy carriage \_\_\_\_\_-. Total amount in Negroes, stock, money, eighteen thousand four hundred and fifty dollars (\$18,450) valuation of 1845 to be taken in part or



the whole of sd Wm. S. Battle's proportionable part of negroes, stock, etc. as the case might be, when a proper accounting and estimate is made. Turner W. has had four hundred dollars advanced to him while prosecuting the study of the law & all farther advances must be accounted for by him as a part of his proportion. I desire as above stated to be equally divided between all my children. I also give to them all the stock, crop, money and all the perishable estate which I may die possessed of and what may not be needed to discharge my debts or pay the legacy given to the deacons of the Church at the Falls of Tar River.

Item 5. My will & desire is & I hereby direct that my Farms & lands heretofore mentioned be kept up and cultivated by the executors & the surplus annual produce be sold by them in such manner & upon such terms as they may deem advisable & the proceeds after deducting expenses, I give in equal shares to my childn except James M. & Wm S. Battle; with those exceptions, all my children to be entitled to an equal interest in the profits of the whole til division shall be demanded by one of full age or married, when it is my will that such child or children as may be entitled to division shall receive his, her or their shares of land & slaves in severally, together, with equal portions of stock & other perishable property kept and provided for conducting the Farms, but the residue of all the property from which shares & portions may be taken, shall remain for the common benefit of those not having a right to division.

Item 6. It is my will & desire that if either my children should die under the age of twenty-one 21 years, without leaving issue, him or her surviving \_\_\_\_\_, the slaves herein bequeathed to the one so dying shall go to & belong to the surviving children & this shall take place as often as there shall be a death amongst them under the circumstances above named; & if after arriving to the age of 21 years either my children should die without leaving issue, him or her surviving, in that case one half of the slaves shall return & belong to the surviving children. And if upon any such death there shall be a child or children of the dead brother or sister who would not fall under the term survivor, yet such child or children shall take what his, her or their parent would if living \_\_\_\_\_ thus pass in the event of a death as aforesaid, but also such property as may have been acquired by a death or survivorship before: It is further my desire & intention, that what the child of a dead brother or sister may acquire under this claim by being regarded as a survivor, shall be subject to no further termination, but belong to him in absolute estate.

Item 7. If either of my children to whom I have devised real estate, should die without issue him or her surviving, the real estate hereby devised to such child shall go to the survivors, and this shall take place as often as there may be a death amongst them, under the circumstances above named; & if upon any such death there shall be a child or children of a dead brother or sister who would not fall under this term survivor yet such child or children shall take what his, her or their parent would if living & to this extent shall be regarded as a survivor & not only shall the real estate by this will heretofore devised thus pass in the event of a death as aforesaid, but also such real estate as may have been acquired by a death as aforesaid, but also such real estate as may have been acquired by a death & survivorship under this Item. It further is my intention that what the child of a dead brother or sister may acquire under this Item, by being regarded as a survivor, shall be subject to no further limitation but belong to him in absolute Estate.

Item 8. I give & devise my real estate in the County of Nash to all my children to them & their heirs to be equally divided between them & until partition thereof, which I presume will be effected by sale, I direct my Extrs to manage it according to their discretion, for the common advantage of my sd children. I do not intend to subject this portion of my real estate to any contingent limitations.

Item 9. I give & bequeath to my grandson John Paul Jones Battle my negro boy \_\_\_\_\_ to him, his heirs, & c.

Item 10. My will & desire is, that if there be any nature or kind not disposed of heretofore by this will, the residue equally divided between my children.

Lastly, I nominate, constitute, & appoint as Executors of this my last will and testament, written & signed by my own hand my friend Turner P. Westray & my sons James M. Battle, William S. Battle and Turner W. Battle. I desire & thereby invest them with full power to execute the provisions of my will. Given under my hand & seal, this the day and year aforesaid.

James S. Battle (also his seal)

PROBATE DOCUMENT

William S. Battle	Edgecombe County Court
Turner Battle	August Term AD 1854
Mary E. Battle	
vs	
P. B. Battle	In the matter of
M. A. Battle	James S. Battle will

William S. Battle and Turner Battle, the Actors or plaintiffs aforesaid bring into court a script or paper writing bearing date the 8th day of December A.D. 1847, & having no subscribing witnesses thereto which they propound for probate in solemn form as the last will and testament of James S. Battle deceased who was Domiciled in this county and it appearing to this court that the said plaintiffs and the defendants the said Mary E. Battle, P.B. Battle, & M. A. Battle are the children of the said James S. Battle & the only devisees and legatees heirs at law & next of kin or distributees of the said James. S. & that the said defendants have been duly notified & cited to attend at the time to see proceedings – and the said defendants having informed the Court through their counsel that they decline to contest the validity of the said script or paper writing as the last will and testament of said James S., the Court proceeds to the probate solemn, & it being proven to the satisfaction of this Court that the said script or paper writing was found after his decease among the valuable papers of the said James S. and it being further proven to the satisfaction of the court by the oath & examination of John S. Dancy, Redding S. Petway, Dempsey Trevathan & Thomas L. Manes competent & credible witnesses that the handwriting of the said James S. is generally known by his acquaintances & that they verily believe that the name of the said James S. subscribed to the said script or paper writing and the said script paper writing itself and every part thereof are in the handwriting of the same James S. It is therefore considered & declared by the court that the said script or paper writing is the last will and testament of the said James S. & the same ordered to be recorded and filed – and therupon the said William S. Battle and Turner Battle, two of the Executors nominated in the said last will and testament duly qualified as such.

Information compiled from The Battle Book, The Sunday Evening Telegram's Rocky Mount Centennial issue in 1967 and from information published by the Rocky Mount Mills. The photographs included in this volume include both pictures and copies of paintings by Chris Wilson of the Rocky Mount Mills and its headquarters house next to the Mills.

Letter from Turner W. Battle to his sister Eliza Battle in Philadelphia who had met with artist Thomas Sully concerning the portrait of their late father, James S. Battle. The letter is not dated but would have been sent in early 1855.

Dear Eliza,

I send you above a draft on J. C. Wilson & Co for \$100. I think that it will be enough to buy what you wish & pay for the portrait which Mr. Sully will paint & also for the articles which Livy will write you to get in

a few days. Dr. Watson will be able to get you the money for the draft or he can use it when you purchase your piano. Give my love to Little Neppie & remember me to Cousin Sally and Dr. Watson.

Your brother T.W. Battle

Brother William wishes you to make selection of the style of portrait. I do not think it worth while to have the hands painted; it adds considerably to the price without adding anything to the appearance of the painting. I think the size which he should make for \$100 would suit brother Wm. Impress it on him that he wishes it done in his best style.

Receipt:

Received – March 24, 1855 of Miss Battle one Hundred Dollars for the copy of a Portrait of her late Father.  
Thos Sully 100 Dollars

## Old Town Plantation and Cool Spring

### THE SEAT OF THE BATTLE FAMILY IN NORTH CAROLINA

Written by Chris and Kathy Wilson

Old Town Plantation, a substantial house in its day, is a survivor of the influx of early settlers into the Tar-Neuse River Basin. It was once thought to have been built in 1742 which would have given this house the distinction of being the oldest house in Edgecombe County, as well as one of the earliest inland houses surviving in North Carolina. The original attribution was based on the presence of two 1742 date bricks (one surviving in an original chimney, one surviving in a 19th century replacement chimney), the style, materials, and early land deeds. The assumption had been that the house must have been built by Samuel Holloman who held the first deed directly from the Lords Proprietor on this tract of land. Four hundred acres were sold to Elisha Battle in 1747 with no mention of structures or location. The family oral history and the account in the original Battle Book always suggested a different date for construction.

In the Fall of 1994, Old Town Plantation with nine other important North Carolina structures that had unproven dates of construction were part of a pilot project in North Carolina to scientifically date structures using the newly patented technique of dendrochronology. Dendrochronology dates the wood used in structures by known and documented growth patterns. The growth patterns are plotted on the computer and matched to known growth and weather patterns for that region then compared to the growth patterns on structures such as town halls whose dates of construction are without question. The results of the dendrochronology study of Old Town Plantation revealed that the principle framing timbers in the construction were felled in the 1785-1786 growing season. This better paralleled family history since 1785 is the year of Jacob Battle's marriage to Mrs. Penelope (Langley) Edwards.\*

The house descended in the Jacob Battle line until it was purchased along with a large tract of land by M. C. Braswell, Elizabeth Braswell Pearsall's father, in 1908. The house was largely used as tenant property throughout the modern period. This house was one of the first that The Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, now Preservation/NC, attempted to acquire in order to sell it to a sympathetic buyer for restoration. In 1983, Elizabeth Pearsall and her son Mack B. Pearsall agreed to have the house moved rather than sell any property so that the house might be restored on its original site. A large swine operation on the property also jeopardized the potential survival of the house on site. Dorothy "Dot" Battle Wilkinson, who had long cared for the cemeteries at Old Town and Cool Spring, and who had lived for a time when she was a girl at Cool Spring, agreed to give to Preservation/NC enough land for the house to remain in its original context to the Tar River in a rural setting and near to the cemetery where Elisha Battle, and presumably Jacob Battle and their families are buried. This was the last Battle land of the plantation remaining in Battle ownership. The house was moved in June 1983 and sited at the end of a lane of cedars that had been planted by Dot Battle Wilkinson in the early 1950s and originally led to a cabin built by Dot and her husband Frank Smith Wilkinson as a retreat near town on her family land. Shortly after Frank's death the city of Rocky Mount acquired the rear portion of the inherited Battle land along with the cabin. The land was used for the Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility with the cabin being used by the Rocky Mount Police Department for events and a pistol range. The cedar path no longer had a

purpose until Dot decided that it would be a suitable location for the Old Town Plantation House. A tract of land shaped somewhat like a lollipop was donated to Preservation/NC for the purpose of relocating the Old Town Plantation House and an early dependency. Protective covenants were placed on the house and land in perpetuity and sold in June, 1983, to John Christian Wilson and his wife. The family of Dot Battle Wilkinson donated an additional seventeen acres to protect Old Town Plantation several years later and this land continues to be held in trust by Preservation/NC. Chris and Kathy Wilson completed the restoration of the house in 1995 and the adaptive rehabilitation on the early dependency in 1998.

The house had been on the National Register of Historical Places and was re-nominated along with its early dependency after the house was moved from its original site to its present location. Dot Battle Wilkinson's commitment to the restoration of Old Town Plantation was substantial. She took an active roll in each early stage of the process and offered support for the restoration of the original wainscot in the main room of the house. She visited the house frequently and saw her dream of the preservation of this historic house realized.

Photographs of Old Town Plantation and descriptions of the architectural or historic features of the structure have appeared in numerous publications and television features including *The Architecture of North Carolina* by Kathrine Bishir and Tim Buckman, *Good Country People* in an essay "The Architecture of Eastern North Carolina in the Antebellum Period—A Primer on Form and Beauty," by J. Chris Wilson, *Colonial Homes of North Carolina* published by NC Department of Archives and History, *American Homes Magazine*, and *A Passion for Place*, a public television production of Preservation/NC and North Carolina State University. Tour groups, student groups and other visitors often come to Old Town Plantation.

The house is a Georgian Style structure with a gambrel roof with three pedimented dormers on each side. The façade's most distinctive feature is the pair of piazza rooms on each end of an open shed porch. These small, unheated rooms opening only onto the porch were used for sleeping rooms or storage. Two front doors open into the hall-and-parlor- structure and each room has a six-over-six light window opening onto the porch. The porch is raised on piers, the foundation is English bond, and the two original outside chimneys are laid in Flemish bond with a chevron of glazed headers at the lowest shoulder. The two 1742 chimney date-bricks on the hall side of the house are perhaps recycled from an earlier structure on the property. The wide flush beaded sheathing under the porch is painted to match its original near-white color; the remainder of the structure is covered in beaded weatherboards painted the red of their earliest documentable color. The smaller porch on the east gable was added shortly after the original construction, when the rear east shed room was extended. A modern addition in the rear, designed and built by Chris Wilson, and consistent with the original architecture, is connected by a hyphen to the original stairhall through its double back doors. The stairhall is finished in original beaded sheathing and opens into both east (a nineteenth century opening) and west (original) shed rooms and into the hall which is the largest and most important room in the house.

The finish in the hall (main room) of this hall-and-parlor plan structure is the most elaborate in the house. The fully panelled wainscot has a double register with horizontal panels above and vertical panels below. The chimneypiece, flanked by four-over-four windows, has an arched opening and four vertical panels with a shelf slightly above head height. The walls are plastered above the wainscot, and the ceiling carries its original beaded sheathing. The woodwork is restored to its original blue. The great hall, which is 18' x 16' and has 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>' ceilings, is connected to both the stairhall and the parlor.

The parlor is fully sheathed with its original paint scheme restored. A painted dado or wainscot at the bottom is black glazed over tan. The painted baseboard is a mahogany color, and the door and window surrounds and other mouldings are Spanish brown. The original mantle, which matches the one in the hall, is painted its original black. A door with a stationary six light sash above is adjacent to the mantle and opens onto the side porch. It replaced the four-over-four flanking window when the early extension to the rear shed was made. Another door connects the parlor to the enlarged rear shed room.

The rear shed is divided into three sections with a partially enclosed stair ascending in straight run from the center section, through the parlor and towards the front elevation. The upstairs is divided into two unequal sections that correspond to the hall-and-parlor-plan below. The upstairs and shed rooms are finished with flush beaded sheathing and plaster. All of the ceilings in the shed rooms conform to the slant of the shed beginning at the 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>' height in the middle of the rooms and sloping to 7'3" above the floor on the outside wall of the shed. The ceilings upstairs are sheathed and are 6'1" high. The upstairs side walls conform to the steep slope of the gambrel and are plastered.

The restoration of Old Town has been an academic restoration which means that the house has been made to look as much like the original as technology and scholarship can indicate, but brought up to modern levels of utility to ensure survival. The wainscot, which is the most important architectural feature of the interior, was removed in the early 1950s while the family of Orlando Pollard were living in the house as tenants. The wainscot was stored for about a decade in the dirt-floor smokehouse immediately behind Old Town where additional deterioration occurred from contact with the dirt floor. In the early 1960s the wainscot was reworked and used in the breakfast room of a house being built by Mack B. Pearsall in Rocky Mount. Several original wainscot pieces were stored and never stripped making original paint color analysis possible. Chris Wilson was given permission to remove the Old Town wainscot from the Pearsall home and restore it to its original location in Old Town.

Kathy and Chris Wilson continue to assemble and maintain documents, publications, geneological research and photographic archives relating to the Battles and to Old Town Plantation. Often Battle descendants, including those from Texas and other places, have generously deposited copies of their research into the Old Town Plantation Archives. Within the collection of furnishings and decorative arts at Old Town Plantation is a walnut dressing table from Miss Emily E. Battle. Made in Edgecombe County, probably at Old Town or Cool Spring c.1785, the dressing table has tapered legs and shaped skirt and was originally in the house of Jethro Battle, Jacob Battle's brother. Other appropriate pieces of furniture have come to Old Town from Dorothy Battle Wilkinson.

Moved onto the property from Old Town is also an early structure that was once thought to have been constructed in 1834 based on a surviving date-brick. Recent rehabilitation work on the structure clearly indicates that in 1834, the structure was altered and probably moved and is in fact an 18th century house. The structure is clearly older than Old Town and appears to be a mid-18th century timber frame. Future dendrochronology would determine its actual age. It may be the first plantation house built on the property.

Originally this earlier building was a two-room house with a floored loft and enclosed staircase. It had a center wall equally dividing the two downstairs rooms. Each room had a chimney at the gable end and the chimney at the first and second floor levels was flanked by windows—four-over-four at the lower level and a single swinging four light sash at the second level. The front of this house had a central door with equally spaced six-over-six windows. The rear of the structure mirrored the front. There is no surviving original woodwork. The frame is fully mortised. All timbers were prepared without saws. Each timber is marked with Roman numerals and original nails are hand wrought providing evidence this is a mid-18th century structure. The proportions and the number and placement of windows and doors clearly indicate a Georgian style structure. The building has been rehabilitated as a single large room, currently used as an art studio, with a narrow addition on the rear. The structure has been placed behind and to the left side of the Old Town Plantation House.

In preparation for moving the earlier building with Old Town in 1983, the badly deteriorated step-shoulder chimneys were demolished. One of the chimneys had an 1834 date brick and there was a center wall of board and batten and two front doors suggesting an 1834 two-family slave house. By this point the original sills had been lost, there was no longer a staircase and the finish would suggest that in 1834 it was already rather old and no longer suitable as a plantation house and was converted either to an overseer's house or a slave house. In the modern period it also survived being used as a tenant house and was occupied until the 1950s. There were about a dozen roughly similar-appearing structures. All others except this one and one other were burned in the 1960s without architectural or historical evaluation. The other

surviving structure was moved near Battleboro where it continues to be used as a tenant house. (Source Jerry Bullock, Battleboro, NC) This grouping of a dozen buildings which survived into the modern period was immediately across Highway 97 from the Old Town cemetery and was traditionally said to be the antebellum slave quarters. It has been suggested that the name of Old Town throughout the modern period was derived from this grouping of buildings because the Old Town Plantation House and the group of buildings looked like a small, aged town. Although only a dozen of these buildings survived into the modern period there may have been substantially more structures at that site in order to accommodate the slave holdings of the antebellum period. It has also been suggested that the name Old Town was derived from the evidence of native American Indian settlements along this part of the Tar River.

Also on the property are an early 19th century structure moved from Warrenton, NC, and a modern tool shed constructed by Chris Wilson from remaining materials used in the restoration of Old Town.

Immediately behind the Old Town Plantation house on its original site was a dove-tailed square smoke house with a pyramidal roof that survived into the 1960s. A few photographs of this smokehouse survive. Also at the original site of the Old Town Plantation house is the cemetery known as the Old Town cemetery. Although presumably Jacob Battle, the builder of Old Town, is buried with Elisha Battle, his father, in the middle of Taylor Field, Jacob's son James Smith Battle and his first wife, Temperance Battle Fort, and second wife, Sally Harriett Westray, are the first generation in the Old Town cemetery.

There are other graves in the Old Town cemetery, including some of the modern period. Noteworthy is the grave of Westray Battle Boyce Leslie Long who was the highest ranking woman in the army during World War II serving under General Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1999 the state of North Carolina honored Westray with a state historic marker on Highway 97 East at the site of the Old Town cemetery. In 1998 the Old Town Cemetery underwent a complete restoration and in that same year Dorothy Battle Wilkinson and her husband Frank Smith Wilkinson were re-interred there. The re-interment ceremony became part of a Battle family reunion including a luncheon at Old Town Plantation. The reunion was commemorated by the Battle family members signing the plaster wall in the main room of Old Town in the same place where Dorothy Battle Wilkinson's signature can be found. There is an endowment for the maintenance and upkeep of the cemeteries at Old Town and the Elisha Battle cemetery. Although the endowment had been begun by George Gordon Battle, it was Dorothy Battle Wilkinson's intent to eventually increase the endowment to fully maintain the two cemeteries.

The cemetery long known as the Elisha Battle cemetery is in Taylor Field on the north side of Highway 97 East/Cool Spring Road (in the middle of the field across from Cool Spring house) where Cool Spring Road takes a 90 degree turn to Battleboro and is no longer Highway 97 East. The cemetery has a slab and fence built in the 1930's by George Gordon Battle of New York City. The slab commemorates the site where Elisha Battle is buried. In 1997 Timothy Battle from Texas arranged with the North Carolina Branch of Archives and History to do an assessment of both the Elisha Battle cemetery and the Jethro Battle (Elisha's son) cemetery on Cool Spring Road. The state of North Carolina's chief archeologist, John Clauser, assisted by Timothy Battle of Texas' son Mark, documented that in the Elisha Battle cemetery there are 14 graves. There are both males and females buried and arranged in a manner suggesting related family groupings and more than one generation. Multiple graves were also documented in the Jethro Battle cemetery and the Jethro Battle slave cemetery .5 miles west of the Elisha Battle Cemetery. The Jethro Battle cemetery is not fenced but currently is marked by a large cedar tree on the north side of Highway 97 East and a stone with a bronze plaque, which has been moved, is on the south side of Highway 97 East. In the field where the Elisha Battle cemetery is located there are shards and bits of brick suggesting there had been a structure, now demolished, quite near the cemetery. No archeology has been done on the site to verify the location and nature of a structure.

The Battle Book published in 1930 says that Elisha Battle bought the first 400 acres in 1747 from a Samuel Holloman. Presumably there was a house on the property which Elisha and his family would have initially inhabited. Further the Battle Book says that before his death in 1799, Elisha built another house at the bend in the river which is presumably at the site of what is called Cool Spring. It is said that in the late

1840's when James Smith Battle, Elisha's grandson, began construction on his Greek Revival style house which is pictured in the Battle Book that James Smith Battle's house was built in front of the old house which has not survived or been documented with archeology. There had been a fire in 1896 causing damage, but the Greek Revival house was totally destroyed by fire in 1898. All of the furnishings then in Cool Spring were lost in the fire of 1898 except a coverlet, which was wrapped around a child. However, a number of items such as a hand made blanket chest and a fireplace mantle with the Battle family coat of arms had been removed from the house after the 1896 fire and were saved. As of this writing, the blanket chest is in the possession of George Eatman and the mantel is owned by Turner Westray Battle (b. 1947, resident Palm Beach, FL) after having been in his parents' residence in Rocky Mount, NC until their deaths. We do know in surviving letters in the possession of Dr. Margaret (Mrs. Newsome) Battle that even after the death of James Smith Battle, Lavinia Bassett Battle continued to arrange for the purchase of furnishings from Philadelphia including mirrors and argon lamps for the mantle. One ante-bellum dependency of the Greek Revival Style survives and has been referred to in the 20th century (by Dorothy Battle Wilkinson) as the washhouse. It is a two room structure with center chimney, shallow hipped roof and typical, plain mid-19th century finish. The Greek Revival dependency is connected by a covered walk to the house bearing the name of the original Cool Spring house which was on that site. The current Cool Spring House was a one-story structure with high-hipped roof, two interior chimneys and porch on the front and extending to the side elevations. Although the front of the façade is symmetrical, many of the original exterior and interior details reference the Queen Anne cottage style. The interior is finished with narrow double-board beaded sheathing and plaster. It has a broad center hall plan with flanking rooms. It appears that the front portion of the broad hall was used as the parlor and the rear as the dining room because of built in dish cupboards. It is said that the floor to ceiling windows, which were commonplace at the turn of the 20th century, were employed to prevent anyone from being trapped should there be another fire.

Dorothy Battle Wilkinson lived at this Cool Spring House for part of her youth. She has told of remembering as a young girl the Tar River having breached its banks and seeing mules swimming by the house where the Highway 97 roadbed is now. It seems safe to infer that in the flood in the early 1920's the ground immediately surrounding the house did not flood since Dot made no mention of that nor did Cool Spring have any flood water immediately around the house in the great flood of 1999. Dot also remembered eating off of Blue Willow china, of which a few pieces survive.

Beginning in 1998, the current Cool Spring House underwent extensive renovations and additions by Winslow and Nancy Goins who live nearby in another Battle house on Springfield Road, and then in 1999 by Joel and Jean Boseman. The Goinses added a rear loggia with arched windows and the Bosemans added front and rear dormers and a staircase to create additional space in the original attic. The Bosemans also added a decorative pond in front of the grove immediately adjacent to Highway 97 East.

The current site of the Old Town Plantation House did flood from Hurricane Floyd on September 16, 1999, resulting in no damage or loss of original materials. Although 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> feet of water surrounded the house, because of being set on brick piers that are the height of the original piers, no water got into the house and only 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches of water got into the mid-18th century dependency and other buildings at Old Town Plantation. Only modern restorations and mechanicals were lost. Friends of Old Town including George Eatman and North Carolina author Allan Gurganus assisted with the restoration of the flood-damaged portions of the Battle dependency. The cemeteries at Old Town and Cool Spring did not suffer damage as a result of the flood of 1999.

Chris Wilson often chooses as subjects for his paintings scenes at Old Town, Cool Spring and the Falls of the Tar from Battle Park that pictorially document Battle sites and structures. Many of these paintings have been shown at regional museums and exhibitions and have been acquired for private and public art collections.

Old Town Plantation is on North Carolina Highway 97 East (Cool Spring Road), three miles from the city limits of Rocky Mount, NC. The address is 3550 Cool Spring Road, Rocky Mount, NC 27801 and the telephone number is (252) 442-2203.



## A Brief History of the Rocky Mount Mills

The Rocky Mount Mills founded in 1818 and closed in 1997 was at the time of its closing the oldest cotton mills in North Carolina. In 1997 when it closed, its President was John M. Mebane Jr., seven generations removed from his ancestor Joel Battle, the Mill's co-founder in 1818.

Apparently the first commercial venture in the Falls vicinity was a grist mill established about 1807 and operated from water power developed by the Falls of Tar River. The grist mill was owned by a man named John Watkins and his associates, all near neighbors of Joel Battle, who lived at Shell Bank plantation approximately three miles east of the Falls. In 1816, Joel Battle and his brother in law Peter Evans brought to North Carolina a man of Scotch ancestry from New England named Henry A. Donaldson who had practical experience in the cotton mill business. The three partners began buying land around the Great Falls of the Tar and soon became owners of the entire area.

The construction of the original stone building for the cotton mill was begun in either 1816 or 1817. Manufacturing certainly had begun by 1818 since in 1819 the building was enlarged to accommodate the business it was receiving. In about 1821, Donaldson bought out Evans's interest and then, according to a deed dated August 26, 1825, Donaldson sold his entire interest in the mill and the property at the Falls to Joel Battle. The price listed was \$15,000.

Joel Battle continued to operate the mill until his death in 1829 when his estate was divided among his children. They operated the mill as "Battle and Bros." under the leadership of the oldest son, William H. Battle, who later became a justice of the NC State Supreme Court. The handsome building that housed the Mill's offices for many years was built in 1835 by another son of Joel Battle, Benjamin D. Battle. It luckily escaped destruction when the Mills was burned by Union forces during the Civil War in 1863.

In 1839, a charter was granted by the North Carolina legislature, in order to alter the capital structure of the Mills to a corporation. Since capital was not forthcoming, the property remained in the hands of Joel Battle's descendants.

Five years later in 1844, three sons of Joel Battle purchased the Mills outright from the other heirs of Joel Battle. The three owners were William H., Benjamin D. and C.C. Battle. This generation operated the Mills until 1847 when they sold it to a cousin, James S. Battle and his son William S. Battle. When James S. Battle (the prime subject of this volume) and his son William S. Battle bought the Mills in 1847, they were large landowners in Nash and Edgecombe Counties, North Carolina, with over 20,000 acres and more than 500 slaves.

Upon the death of James S. Battle in 1854, William S. Battle was the sole owner of the Mills until 1878 although the daily operation of the Mills was under the care of William's oldest son, also named James S. Battle. During the time the Mills was operated by William S. Battle and his son James S. Battle, it was operated under the name of Battle and Son.

Because the Mills was a supplier of cloth and other cotton items used by the Confederacy during the Civil War, it became a prime target for Union forces. On July 20, 1863, Union raiders torched the cotton factory, the gin and the grist mill burning them all to the ground. Not deterred, William S. Battle erected another brick Mills on the site in 1865.

Ill fortune plagued this attempt to rebuild after the Civil War, and an incendiary torched the Mills on November 10, 1869, when it again burned to the ground. Still undaunted, William S. Battle prepared to

build an even larger Mill at the site. He obtained a State charter of incorporation and raised capital stock of \$150,000 with the right to increase that up to \$1 million. William S. Battle and two of his sons were named as incorporators. However, William S. Battle and his two sons owned all of the capital stock of the Mills until 1874. Unfortunately, because of hard financial times, William S. Battle had to transfer his capital stock to trustees in 1878, thereby losing control of the Mills.

When the Mills was reorganized in 1885, the plan of reorganization was worked out largely by Thomas H. Battle, a young lawyer and great grandson of Joel Battle and a nephew of William S. Battle. Thomas H. Battle became the secretary of the corporation. Even without adequate working capital, the Mills was increased in size in 1888 and at that time, Thomas H. Battle was elected its president. The first dividend was declared in April, 1892 since all profits had been plowed back into the company following its reorganization. In 1898, Thomas H. Battle succeeded as treasurer of the company, it being a long established policy of the Mills for the treasurer to be the executive head of the company. Throughout the time of Thomas H. Battle's management, his cousin, Turner Battle Bunn, was his assistant and secretary of the Mills until Bunn's retirement in 1940.

It is interesting to note that from 1893 until 1927, the Mills and its surrounding village, in large part owned by the Mills, was separately incorporated as Rocky Mount Mills and did not become a part of Rocky Mount proper until 1927. During the time of its separate incorporation, the Rocky Mount Mills had its own mayor, post office, police department, the first water system, a school, a sewerage system and power plant.

Hyman L. Battle succeeded his father as treasurer-manager in 1933. When Hyman L. Battle became the Mill's President, he was succeeded by his son, Thomas H. Battle as treasurer-manager. Hyman L. Battle's brother, Kemp D. Battle, a prominent attorney, also served as the Mills's vice president. Thomas H. Battle's younger first cousin, John M. Mebane Jr., also a grandson of Thomas H. Battle, followed first as the Mills treasurer-manager and then as its President serving as its president when the Mills, hit by low priced cotton products from the far East, closed its doors in 1997. As of this writing the Mills has not been sold but is being marketed for sale.

## Documents and Quotations

FROM MARCH 11, 1933 NEW YORKER, "PROFILES: MR. CHAIRMAN" PROFILING THE LIFE OF GEORGE GORDON BATTLE:

"Courtesy and chivalry come as naturally to George Gordon Battle as his Southern accent, and forty-odd years in an impolite community have done little to eradicate either. He is a singularly genial and urbane man, and at sixty-four, a very handsome one, with a striking profile, a shock of white hair, and bushy black eyebrows.... He has preserved a feeling for the South which manifests itself today not only in the legal championing of Dixie widows but in his membership in the North Carolina Society, the Virginians, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and the New York Southern Society, of which he was President last year. On all appropriate occasions, he is the volunteer Southern ambassador in New York.

His law firm, successor to a number of previous partnerships in which only the name of Battle has been a constant, is not a corporation affair. You do not associate the senior partner of Battle, Levy, Van Tine & Fowler with any large bank or trust company as you might Paul Cravath with Kuhn Loeb; or Jown W. Davis with the Guaranty Trust. Nor do overworked young men from Yale and Harvard Law Schools pore over briefs in the Battle offices until two or three in the morning. Located in the heart of Wall Street, the offices are quiet, leisurely and old-fashioned. The partners do most of the work themselves. Mr. Battle sits in a spacious room, its walls lined with pictures of Southern jurists and of Abraham Lincoln. He makes a point of coming out to the reception room to usher in his next client, and if others are waiting also, never fails to greet them. His manner, without being in the least effusive, is calculated to make any stranger feel at home, and his technique with clients follows the most approved stage-lawyer tradition. Pacing up and down the room, hands behind back, head bowed in thought, he asks questions gently, persuasively; listens sympathetically, delivers opinions emphatically and without hesitation."

The law firm of Battle, Fowler in New York City founded by George Gordon Battle was closed in 2000.

FROM "IN MEMORIAM WILLIAM JAMES BATTLE" PRESENTED TO THE GENERAL FACULTY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS; JAN. 17, 1956, AFTER HIS DEATH:

"In September 1893 he came to the University of Texas as Associate Professor of Greek in charge of the School, as the Department was then called. In 1898, he was made Professor; in 1908, Dean of the College of Arts; in 1911, Dean of the Faculty; in 1914, Acting President....

Another characteristic of Dr. Battle was his intensely religious nature. He was a devout member of the Episcopal Church, serving for a great many years as a senior warden of All Saints Chapel...and a member of the House of Deputies of the General Convention....

In all his varied activities as teacher, administrator, churchman, and citizen, Dr. Battle's first love was Greek.... In the course of years he accumulated a magnificent personal library of some 15,000 volumes. It is especially strong in Greek and Latin literature, Greek archeology and books on travel in Italy and Greece. Among the authors he built up an uncommonly fine collection of Homer, Virgil, and Horace.... Most fittingly this collection has been left to the University and will remain in the handsome room which was especially designed to house it on the 27th floor of the Tower."

FROM "WILLIAM SMITH BATTLE: BY ONE WHO KNEW HIM" BY KEMP DAVIS BATTLE.  
DELIVERED AFTER THE DEATH OF WILLIAM SMITH BATTLE.

His (William's) father (James Smith Battle) had (when William graduated at the University of North Carolina) recently purchased the Rocky Mount water-power, running the cotton mill built by his cousin Joel Battle in 1820. Together with a large plantation and sufficient slaves, he conferred on William the sole management of this water-power, who determined to devote himself to manufacturing and farming. He showed conspicuous energy and sound judgement and for years had the reputation as a highly successful business man.

Until the Civil War, fortune smiled on him. His people chose him... to be their delegate to the Seccession Convention of 1861, and his Legislative acts won his approval. If he had died when the convention died, his career would have been conspicuous for its happiness. His last years brought heart rending family afflictions and heroic business struggles which ended in disaster. (The mills was burned in 1863 by federal cavalry and burned again after it was rebuilt.)

When the end of all his struggles came he showed the greatness of his character. He met misfortune with a serene courage which refused to surrender to repinings. He gave to his creditors all his possessions, and stepped down with dignified equanimity from the commanding financial position he had held for so many years, without loss of self-respect, or the respect of his neighbors.

I first met William Battle seventy-five years ago, when his kind manners won my little heart. I have known him intimately ever since and without exaggeration I say that there was never in my acquaintance a more benevolent, just and honorable man."

FROM "KEMP DAVIS BATTLE: A PRINCE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY" BY FRANCIS E.  
WINSLOW, SEPTEMBER, 1973

Former University of North Carolina Chancellor Robert House wrote in the Chapel Hill Newspaper that "Kemp Battle resembled his grandfather, President Kemp P. Battle, in his power of quiet persuasion, and also in his folksiness. He was as plain as an old shoe, he was at home with everybody, he was witty and humorous, he loved anecdotes that carried wisdom in them, he loved songs and jollifications. I never saw a man who knew Kemp Davis Battle that did not regard him as a personal friend. He had a genius for making friends. Ever since I first knew the University, I have known of the friendship of the Famous Four – Frank Graham, Charlie Tillett, Francis Winslow and Kemp Battle. They were all high honor men of the class of 1909. They were all lawyers and thinkers. They were as famous as Damon and Pythias in classical mythology. At least they were so in the opinion of the University students of their generation, and they are still so in the hearts and minds of all of us who loved them."

Francis Winslow's tribute to his former law partner and close personal friend: "Chivalry is not dead, unless it died with Kemp. He was instinctively protective of women, collectively and individually. I remember that once an invited Speaker at the Kiwanis Club, a Roosevelt hater, told some scurrilous stories, supposed to be funny, about Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Kemp got up and walked out of the room to show his resentment. He was virile and attractive to women as well as men, but especially to women. I think they knew he was as chivalrous as the knights of old were supposed to be. His humor was contagious. In any gathering he was the center of attraction, his laughter drawing people around him to enjoy the fun... To me he was always a golden lad.

"COOL SPRING PLANTATION: ONE OF FINEST EDGECOMBE ANTE-BELLUM HOMES

BURNED TO GROUND IN 1899" BY DR. MARGARET W. BATTLE PUBLISHED IN THE ROCKY MOUNT SUNDAY TELEGRAM, APRIL 23, 1967.

In 1747 Elisha Battle (1723-1799) came into North Carolina from Virginia, bringing his wife, two children, and about six slaves with him. He obtained land grants along the Tar River. The plantation was called Cool Spring, getting its name from a spring on the river bank about 400 yards from the house. The kitchen building stands today; the big fireplace (now minus its stone hearth) still has a hook hanging from its chimney. An adjoining room was a loom room in the early days, an ironing room later.

Elisha's son Jacob Battle (1754-1814) lived in a house on the plantation about one mile from his father's; this house became known as Old Town.

James Smith Battle (1786-1854) enlarged his father's and grandfather's lands to 20,000 acres and the slaves to over 500. There were spinners, tailors, weavers, shoemakers, a blacksmith, carpenters, and masons at Cool Spring. All the workclothes were made on the place, as well as wagons, carts and ploughs. James restored his grandfather's old house. Rose garden and kitchen garden were north of the house; east of it were the dairy, smoke house, stables and gin house.

About 1850 he built a new house in front (south) of the old one. Here was a library with books from floor to ceiling on one wall, and on both sides of the marble fireplace on another. The parlor also had a marble fireplace. Master bedroom, nursery, another small room and dining room completed the first floor. Upstairs were 4 bedrooms, each with an alcove for a washstand with its china accessories. The alcoves were curtained off or screened from the main room. A green house was on the west side and beyond that stretched the cotton fields as far as the eye could see. The front yard was a 12 acre grove with a curving drive. A double lane of cedars bordered the walk to the dairy; 12 separate walks led from the house. The walks are gone now, but the daffodils still come up as mute witnesses to their former patterns. There used to be beds of iris, tulips and lilies of the valley.

In 1854, on the death of James Smith Battle, the 20,000 acres were divided between his five surviving children. The eldest son William received the cotton and grist mills and the farm called California; Cool Spring (now 3,000 acres) went to his son Turner Westray; Walnut Creek farm went to his daughter Martha Ann, later Mrs. Kemp Plummer Battle; Penelo farm went to Penelope (married Gen. William Ruffin Cox); Shell Bank and Elm Grove farms went to Mary Eliza (who married first William Dancy and later Dr. Newsom Jones Pittman).

In 1854, Turner Westray Battle (1827-1895) became owner of Cool Spring. Some ideas of living conditions and customs may be had from the following letters:

January 29, 1850, Mrs. Turner (Lavinia) Battle wrote to Miss Mary Eliza Battle, "The distressing weather has rendered travelling almost impractical, but as soon as the roads are in a better state, we will count on having you at home. Turner will see Brother William tomorrow and make arrangement as to your escort. Our quiet routine of home duties and pleasures lacks much of its zest when you girls are absent. We miss the joyous laughter and pleasant evening music that soothe or enliven us... We should feel thankful for escaping colds and coughs this bitter, bitter winter... The river has been frozen across, and though I have wished to go over to Pork Island, the state of the roads has prevented my making this attempt. The stove reached here this evening, more than a month since it started from Raleigh..."

On Feb. 22, 1855, Mrs. Turner Battle wrote to Mary Eliza Battle (Philadelphia), "Turner reached here today and I write you to let you know his wishes about the commissions that you are kind enough to attend to for us. He neglected to mention anything about the chamber sets. Please get two sets of colored ware for two chambers. I do not wish them at all costly; no gilt about them. The parlor chandelier I prefer to be of bronze four burners to burn oil. The dining room lamps, please get of bronze also, with two burners. Please get these plain and substantial, to burn lard or oil. I hardly think it necessary to get one for the hall.

"Turner mentioned seeing some mirrors with gilt frame. The mantel measures 5 feet 4 inches... I think the parlor mirror would be prettier to be rounded off in some graceful way at the top...square at the bottom,

and somewhat curved out at the top. In getting the lamps, please get some of those 'little concerns' (I do not know the name) that protect the walls from the smoke of burners, one for each burner.

"I miss you girls very much and look forward with great eagerness to your return to dear quiet home. The white hyacinths are looking so lovely. They bloom prettier here than anywhere else, I think. Cool Spring is beginning to assume its vernal beauties and then you know how sweetly everything looks."

March 3, 1855, Mrs. Turner Battle to Mary Eliza Battle in Philadelphia: "... please when selecting the suspension lamps, be careful not to forget to have them provided with a plenty supply of wicks. As to the parlor mirror, I can only say I leave it to your taste... though I have a penchant for a mahogany or rosewood frame. You know our carpet and curtains are dark and the mantle is of Egyptian marble." (The gilt mirror was selected). The house will be ready when they reach here I expect. Mr. Price will be here next week; isn't he worrying? We must make him hurry when he comes, if we hope to get in a new house this spring." (This house was started in 1850, so it may be that 'Livy' was only redecorating.)

November 28, 1855 on the marriage of Martha Ann Battle to Kemp Plummer Battle, Mrs. Turner Battle writes: "We had 40 guests who remained all night, so you may know I was busy to make them all comfortable such cold weather and thus stored them away two by two. The Misses Somerville, Miss Bronlowe, Miss Sue Plummer, Miss Margaret Norfleet, Miss Betty Parker, Mrs. Austin, Mollie Battle, Mittie and her little ones were the lady part of the company who rested here all night and such a nice clever set of gentlemen... 'Pattie' (the bride) behaved in the most proper manner imaginable. She was a good deal frightened, but evinced her usual self control. She looked more handsome than I ever saw her, in a dress of white corded silk, worn under an embroidered lisse, with three shirts. Kemp, of course, was all smiles and happiness... The girls accompanied her to Chapel Hill on Friday where there was to be great feasting and merry making." (This was right after the wedding.)

Jan. 17, 1856, Ellen Brownlowe to Mary Eliza Battle on the above wedding; "I have been wishing to write you ever since I was at Pattie's wedding; to tell you how much I enjoyed the party, how delighted I was to be with you all; how I admired Livy as mistress of ceremonies. I think Cool Spring one of the most beautiful country residences I ever visited. But far more striking to a visitor is the hearty hospitality of its master, seconded so admirable by the unequaled grace and dignity, the gently elegance of Livy's welcomes. I do think Livy is the loveliest creature I ever beheld. Now I am not saying this for you to tell her Eliza, I am expressing an opinion in confidence. Then in the family picture come the fair young sisters -hem - (I'm clearing my throat, Eliza). But I shan't tell you what I think of you. I think Neppie is beautiful... only here is more intelligence in her beauty, and a vein of quiet humor... Pattie, I have thought the best almost of the earth and having more common sense than any of you."

The church was a very important part of Mrs. Turner Battle's life. She used to come to church every Sunday in a carriage drawn by two horses. She always brought a pail full of flowers for the church and food for the needy at the Falls. Livy was remembered as a very dainty person, always seen with a book in her hand and never involved in domestic chores.

One of her closest friends was Mrs. Benjamin Bunn, Mittie Harriet Amanda Bunn. They lived only six miles apart, but communicated mostly by mail, because the roads were so bad. On a fateful night in 1899, three members of the Bunn household were awakened from a sound sleep by something. Little Maud Bunn came crying to the head of the stairs; her mother downstairs had been awakened too. The house was searched, the men in the family were armed with gold headed canes as no guns were allowed in the house. Nothing was found, no doors were open, the grounds were searched. But no explanation was apparent. Then in the morning came the news that Cool Spring had burned to the ground in the same hour that the Bunn family six miles away had been alarmed. The Turner Battle's grandson who was also the cousin of the Bunn children, Joe Bunn had been fatally burned in the fire.

So upset were the Turner Battles by this tragedy, that the rebuilt Cool Spring was one story high and all rooms in the house had windows that opened to the floor. No one would ever again be trapped in an upstairs room.

After Turner Battle's death, the property was divided between his five children; Jacob (1852-1916); Turner Westray (1863-1907); George Gordon (1868-1949); Gaston (1871-1937); and the descendants of Harriet Westray Battle Bunn (1866-1884). The second Turner was a bachelor and left the Cool Spring home place to his nephew, the third Turner, son of Jacob. This third Turner was an Annapolis graduate and eventually sold his share to Mr. Tom Simmons. Mr. Simmons daughter, Mrs. Betty Lynch, now owns the part of Cool Spring that has the house and grove. Jacob's share, about 750 acres, was left to his two daughters, Dorothy Battle Wilkinson and Mary Long Gordon Battle Eatman. After the death of Mary Long Gordon Battle Eatman, her children sold her portion of Cool Spring to their mother's sister, Dorothy Battle Wilkinson. Jacob's share is now in the possession of the children and grandchildren of Dorothy Battle Wilkinson. So this part of Cool Spring has been in the family over 250 years and through seven generations (updated by George Eatman in 2000).

The workers on Cool Spring have contributed much to the success and legends of the plantation. The Battle sons have grown up knowing the Negro boys on the plantation as their friends. Many of the daughters have learned the art of cooking from the mistress of the kitchen. Nobody can forget the slave Will and his trouble with the new overseer. There was a misunderstanding with the result that the overseer shot Will in the back with bird shot, then overtook him and in the scuffle, Will pulled out his knife and inflicted a minor wound. But this became infected and the overseer died. Will walked all night to find James Smith Battle then 25 miles away to present his case. On hearing all the evidence, the master decided his slave was innocent and set a precedent in getting him a lawyer. Will was found guilty in the lower court, but cleared in the higher court. (And a precedent was set in North Carolina in which a slave was recognized as having the right to defend himself).

Uncle Dick had a wife who belonged to the neighbors. When the latter decided to move to another state, Uncle Dick came in great distress to James S. Battle. Arrangements were then made to have the neighbor buy Dick. Then he came again to James Battle, asking to be kept. Whereupon his wife was bought by the Battles. Uncle Dick and Aunt Rose, his wife, are buried close to James S. Battle in the family graveyard at Old Town on Uncle Dick's request.

During the War Between the States, the three white men on the plantation were away; this left Mrs. Turner Battle running the estate. The farm products were being used to supply the Confederate Army. Nevertheless the 30 or 40 black families on the plantation were just as well behaved and industrious as if the master and the overseers had been home. (Please excuse the "political incorrectness" of the above, but it was taken verbatim from earlier writings. (GHE)

FROM MEMORIES OF AN OLD TIME TAR HEEL BY KEMP PLUMMER BATTLE ABOUT HIS  
WIFE'S, MARTHA ANN BATTLE, UNCLE TURNER PAGE WESTRAY, BROTHER OF SALLIE  
HARRIET WESTRAY, THE WIFE OF JAMES SMITH BATTLE.

Note: Turner Page Westray married and left one son Samuel Westray who never married. Samuel Westray was active in civic affairs in Rocky Mount, NC, and died around 1900.

"I often made the journey to Edgecombe by horse and buggy. A very convenient and most pleasant trip was to go by Westrayville (in Nash County), the home of my wife's uncle, Turner Page Westray, and spend the night there. Mr. Westray was a highly intelligent man with such a well balanced judgment that it was pleasant and profitable to listen to him. As I lived in the capital and often met leading actors in the strife going on, he gave me the impression that my visits were grateful to him. This and the winning welcome of his beautiful wife and only child, Samuel, made my evenings delightful. The roads were so good that the fifty miles to Raleigh were passed without injury to the horse, or horses, for sometimes I had two. Mr. Westray was a man of pluck. Once a number of deserters from the army came armed at night to his dwelling and demanded a supply of bacon. He walked into his porch with his double-barrelled gun and

with the fiercest vituperations, drove them away. After the war he found it irksome to carry on his farm with hired negroes and accepted the invitation of his nephew and namesake, Turner W. Battle to live with him at Cool Spring. A short time afterwards, he died of heart disease while travelling on the railroad. He left his estate of about \$250,000 to his son and after his son's death it was divided among his heirs at law. My son, Thomas, was his executor."

FROM PRESENTATION OF PORTRAIT OF MARTHA WESTRAY BATTLE LONG'S PORTRAIT TO THE NORTH CAROLINA ARCHIVES AND MUSEUM OF HISTORY BUILDING IN RALEIGH, NC:

Martha Westray Battle Boyce (Long) (Aug. 10, 1901- Jan. 31, 1972), second director of the Women's Army Corps, was born in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, the daughter of Jacob Battle, Jr. and Mattie Nash Wright....

In March, 1934, she entered civilian services of the federal government in Washington, DC. In 1934 and 1935 she served with the National Recovery Administration as Administrative Director of Litigation; from 1936-1940 with the Rural Electrification Administration, first as Administrative Assistant to the General Counsel and later as Chief of the Insurance Section; with the Federal Works Agency in 1941 and 1942 as Assistant Chief...

In 1942 she entered military service as an Officer Candidate in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps... She was promoted to First Officer (Captain) in December 1942.

In August 1943 she was transferred to the North African Theatre of Operations as Theater WAC Staff Director on the Staff of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. She was promoted to the grade of Major in August 1943 and to the grade of Lt. Colonel in February, 1944. She received the European-African ribbon with battle star and the Legion of Merit for work done on this assignment. This was the first Legion of Merit to be awarded to a woman.

In August, 1944 she was transferred to the War Department General Staff, Washington, and assigned as Military Personnel Staff Officer, Personnel Division, G-1...

In May, 1945 she was appointed Deputy Director of the Women's Army Corps. In July, 1945 Westray Battle Boyce, her name during these years, was appointed to succeed Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby as Director of the Women's Army Corps and promoted to the grade of Colonel. She served in this capacity until March, 1947 when she was hospitalized. In 1945 she made a flight around the world to arrange for the orderly return to the United States of WAC's eligible for discharge. She was awarded the Pacific Theatre Ribbon...

In January, 1946 Colonel Boyce was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Legion of Merit for work done in connection with the problem of Psychoneurosis in the Army and for accomplishments as Director of the WAC. In November, 1946 she was presented the Cross of Military Service by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the first woman to receive this award...

A portrait of Westray Battle Long in uniform is in the Archives and Museum of History Building in Raleigh and at the Armory in Rocky Mount, NC. Her war-time papers are available at the Truman Memorial Library in Independence, Missouri.



## DOCUMENTS AND QUOTATIONS

ON THE TOMBSTONE OF ELISHA BATTLE  
COOL SPRING PLANTATION, EDGECOMBE COUNTY, NC

Born – Nansemond County, Virginia, January 9, 1723

Settled on this plantation 1747.

Judge of Edgecombe County Court

Member of Commission to lay out Town of Tarboro

Member, Clerk, for many years Moderator of

Kehukee Baptist Association

Member for twenty years Provincial General Assembly

Member State Senate and Constitutional Convention

Edgecombe's Member Committee of Safety during Revolution

Died nearby March 6, 1799

Successful planter – sturdy patriot – sincere Christian

The patriarch of the Battle clan, his name is revered by a  
host of descendants.

This stone erected 1935 by  
George Gordon Battle  
New York

## Ancestors of James Smith Battle

**John Battle** and **Elizabeth** \_\_\_\_\_(surname unknown) were founders of one line of the Battle family in America. They arrived in Virginia in 1654, and settled on the west bank of the Nancemond River, in a district later known as Nancemond County, and later combined with Surrey County, Virginia. He secured his first royal patent, dated December 14, 1654, for 200 acres of land from the Governor of the Colony of Virginia. On September 25, 1663, he secured from the Royal Governor, Sir William Berkeley, additional grants, one of which included 640 acres of land located on the Paspetank (now called Pasquotank) River in North Carolina. The exact date of his death is unknown and The Battle Book states that he died about 1690. There is also speculation as to whether there is a “lost generation” here, perhaps another John Battle? although if he immigrated to America (The Battle Book guesses that he came from Yorkshire) as a very young man, there may only be one generation. It is unlikely that his wife who accompanied him in 1654 was the mother of a son in 1682.

**William Battle** was born in North Carolina on the Paspetank River in 1682. After the death of his father about 1690, he returned to Virginia, where he resided until his death in 1749. He married **Sarah Hunter** (b. 1682, d. 1769; d. of William Hunter).

**Elisha Battle** was born in Nansemond Co, VA, Jan 9, 1723, in 1747 he moved to Edgecombe County, NC where he died on March 6, 1799. He was a planter and family tradition has it that he lived at the Old Town House at Cool Spring, Edgecombe Co, NC. He was 1756-95, Justice of the Peace; 1759, Justice County Court, Edgecombe County; 1760 one of the five commissioners to found and lay out the town of Tarboro; was a deacon the Falls River Church for 28 years (primitive Baptist); 1765 assisted in founded the Kehukee Assoc; patriot American Revolution; 1771 member General Assembly serving 20 years; Apr 4, 1776 member Provincial Congress, Halifax; Nov 12, 1776 member Congress, Halifax, forming State Constitution; 1777-81,83,85-87, State Senator; mbr. Comm. Safety, Edgecombe Co; 1788, Chair Comm. of Whole of Constitutional Convention; m. Nansemond Co. Va., 1742, **Elizabeth Sumner** (d. Edgecombe Co., NC, Jan. 19, 1794; d. of John Sumner whose brother, Jethro Sumner, was the father of Brig. Gen. Jethro Sumner of the Continental Arm, the first President of the Society of Cincinnati).

**Jacob Battle** was born in Edgecombe Co., NC, April 22, 1754, was a planter and died in Oxford, NC, April 1, 1814, was a Baptist deacon and married July 21, 1785, **Mrs. Penelope (Langley) Edwards** (b. Apr. 14, 1762; d. Edgecombe Co., May 26, 1800, g-daughter of Captain James Smith, the founder of Scotland Neck, NC, and the person for whom James Smith Battle was named.