

Source: *Waltons of Old Virginia and Sketches of Families in Central Virginia* by Wilmer L. Kerns, Willow Bend Books, Westminster, Maryland, 2005

Wilmer L. Kerns
4715 North 38th Place
Arlington, VA 22207-2914

Chapter 25

The Vawters of Lynchburg¹

Benjamin Vawter Sr., son of Richard Vawter of Essex County, Virginia,² was the progenitor of the Vawters who settled in Lynchburg, Virginia. Benjamin was born circa 1758 in Essex County and died in 1815 in Caroline County, Virginia.³ According to personal property tax records in Caroline County, he paid taxes in that County from 1787-1799.⁴ He was there when the 1810 U. S. Census was taken for Caroline County.⁵ There is no evidence that this Benjamin Vawter Sr. lived in Lynchburg, but it was his sons John and Benjamin Jr. There were two Benjamin Vawters who served in the Revolutionary War, one of whom may have been our Benjamin. Our Benjamin Sr. married Susannah Parker,⁶ who was

¹ The compiler appreciates the assistance by Ms. Georgene Jurgensen, 2142 Crowsnest Drive, Palm Harbor, FL 34685-1503, who has a national database on the Vawters of America, including the monumental research of William Snyder Vawter.

² Benjamin Vawter was appointed Executor of his father's will that was dated Oct. 24, 1798 and proven on Jan. 24, 1799 in Essex County.

³ Caroline County, Virginia *Will Book 19*, pp. 216-217. This document provides an account of the sale of Vawter's personal property by Sheriff John Scott, July 8, 1816.

⁴ Library of Virginia, Personal Property Tax Records for Caroline County, Virginia, 1787-1799. A study of the taxes from 1800-1815 has not been completed.

⁵ 1810 U. S. Census for Caroline County, Virginia, p. 48.

⁶ A letter written on Dec. 13, 1928 by William Snyder Vawter, 359 Front Street, New York City to George H. Vawter, (son of Benjamin Silas Vawter, M.D.), 221

born about 1761 and died on March 14, 1837 at the home of her son, Silas Vawter, at Bent Creek, Buckingham County. She was a member of the Baptist Church.⁷ Burial was in Lynchburg with the Vawter burial plots.

Children of Benjamin Sr. and Susannah (Parker) Vawter:

1. Benjamin Vawter Jr. was born circa 1787 in Caroline County, Virginia and died on April 25, 1830. He married Mildred Gentry on Jan. 7, 1811 in Lynchburg. A Richmond newspaper gave this report on the death of Benjamin Vawter Jr. of Lynchburg: "On Sunday morning the 25th inst. Mr. Benjamin Vawter, of this place, terminated his mortal existence by cutting his throat! He was, it seems, at the time of committing the fatal deed in a high state of intoxication."⁸ Mildred married second the Rev. Obadiah Echols of Pittsylvania County on Aug. 4, 1831.⁹ Robert B. Semple, Baptist historian, said this about his ministry regarding the Lower Falls Baptist Church: "The downfall of Obadiah Echols was very affecting to all churches to which he had ever ministered. This church participated in the distress."¹⁰

Children of Benjamin Jr. and Mildred (Gentry) Vawter:

a. Silas Vawter was born circa 1811 and died on July 31, 1833 in Lynchburg.¹¹ He married Sarah Fear (Farrar?) on Dec. 28, 1830 in Lynchburg by the Rev. Robert Ryland.¹² Sarah married second Daniel B. Hurley in 1839 in Lynchburg. They moved to and lived in Pittsylvania County where Daniel worked as a tailor.

West Cumberland Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania stated that Benjamin's wife was Mary "Polly" Parker. The public records show her name as Susannah

⁷ *The Lynchburg Virginian*, p. 3, c. 3, March 16, 1837.

⁸ *The Richmond Whig*, May 3, 1830, p. 2.

⁹ A prenuptial agreement and marriage contract may be found in Lynchburg City Courthouse, *Deed Book K*, p. 329, dated July 7, 1831.

¹⁰ Robert Baylor Semple, *History of the Baptists in Virginia*, (New Orleans, Louisiana: Polyanthos, Inc.) reprinted in 1972, p. 275.

¹¹ *The Lynchburg Virginian*, Aug. 8, 1833, p. 3.

¹² *The Lynchburg Virginian*, Jan. 3, 1831, p. 1.

b. Benjamin Vawter III was born circa 1813 and was buried on Oct. 23, 1827.¹³

c. Bransford Vawter was born circa 1815 and died on Nov. 15, 1838.¹⁴ He was a poet, and a member of the Patrick Henry Society.¹⁵ Bransford attended the University of Virginia.

2. Aaron Vawter, born circa 1790, received a plot of land in Caroline County from his father. Researchers who claim him as an ancestor are in error, in that this Aaron “died without descendants.”¹⁶ The court record stated that this Aaron died intestate and unmarried. Evidently, the Aaron Vawter who lived in Goochland County and received Revolutionary War land in Kentucky was not the same person.

3. Moses Vawter received land in Caroline County from his father. He died intestate, unmarried and without descendants. A study of the land records in Caroline County will shed more light on the dates and circumstances.¹⁷

4. John Vawter was born circa 1793 and was deceased by 1839. John married Mary _____. He served in the War of 1812; was living in Lynchburg during that period, and was on the 1830 Census for Campbell County.¹⁸

5. Phoebe Vawter, born circa 1794 in Caroline County, married first Charles Hay Beasley, son of Cornelius Beasley, of Bowling Green, Virginia. After his death about 1832, she married John Lumpkin.¹⁹ According to the 1870 U. S. Census for Caroline County, Phebe was born circa 1783. The 1850 census shows her birth year circa 1798 and her husband John Lumpkin with a birth year of circa 1788. Louisa

¹³ Lucy Harrison Miller Baber *Behind the Old Brick Wall, A Cemetery Story*, (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet and Shepperson), 1968, p. 173.

¹⁴ Lucy Harrison Miller Baber, *Behind the Old Brick Wall, A Cemetery Story*, (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet and Shepperson), 1968, p. 173.

¹⁵ *The Lynchburg Virginian*, Nov. 22, 1838, p. 3, c. 5.

¹⁶ Caroline County, Virginia *Deed Book 45*, p. 137, Feb. 22, 1846.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Ruth Hairston Early, *Campbell Chronicles and Family Sketches*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Regional Publishing Company), 1978, p. 279-280.

¹⁹ The 1850 U. S. Census for Caroline County, Virginia, p. 286, Family No. 992 gives Phoebe's age as fifty years, and John Lumpkin as sixty-two years.

Lumpkin, presumably their daughter, was born circa 1834. My guess is that Phoebe was born somewhere between those dates, circa 1794.

6. Silas Parker Vawter was born in 1797 in Caroline County, and died on March 21, 1865 at Bent Creek, Appomattox County. He married first Martha Phelps and married second Elizabeth Farrar Christian.

Silas Parker Vawter

Silas Parker Vawter, son of Benjamin and Susanna (Parker) Vawter, was born in 1797 in Caroline County, and died on March 21, 1865 at Bent Creek, Appomattox County. Silas may have gone to live with his brothers in Lynchburg after their father's death in 1815. He was buried on a hill overlooking the Walton Cove Farm in Appomattox County. He was scheduled to be buried beside his wife in a Christian family graveyard in Nelson County, but the James River was at a flood-level and could not be crossed. Silas married first Martha Phelps on Dec. 25, 1820 in Campbell County. Martha died circa 1822, without any record of children being born to their union. Silas P. married second Elizabeth Farrar Christian, daughter of James and Cordelia (Watts) Christian, on Jan. 19, 1824, in Nelson County, Virginia. Elizabeth was born in 1799 in Nelson County and died May 26, 1859 in Appomattox County. She was buried in a Christian family cemetery in Nelson County. When a young person, Silas P. Vawter was bound to Ambrose Page of Lynchburg to do an apprenticeship as a tailor. Silas P. accumulated a large estate through his ability as a businessman. He was a partner in several companies in the Bent Creek area, and served as an attorney and justice for Appomattox County. His primary residence was at Bent Creek in Appomattox County. The medical society stated that his medical practice was "allopath."

Children of Silas P. and Elizabeth F. (Christian) Vawter:

1. Martha Susan Vawter was born on Jan. 11, 1825 at Bent Creek and died young.
2. Mary Jane Vawter was born on Oct. 9, 1827 at Bent Creek and died June 24, 1888 in Nelson County.²⁰ She married John William Walton, son of William and Elizabeth W. (Chick) Walton, April 2, 1844, in Nelson County. Mary Jane was educated at Hollins College.

²⁰ A death certificate in the Library of Virginia states that she died of "heart disease."

3. Benjamin Silas Vawter was born at Bent Creek on Aug. 28, 1831, and died Jan. 5, 1910 in Washington, D.C. He married Sarah Watts.

Dr. Benjamin Silas Vawter

Dr. Benjamin Silas Vawter, son of Silas P. and Elizabeth F. (Christian) Vawter, was born on Aug. 28, 1831 at Bent Creek in Buckingham County, Virginia and died in Washington, D. C. on Jan. 5, 1910.²¹ He graduated from the University of Virginia and the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania. He was listed as a physician and dentist in the *Chataigne's Virginia Gazetteer and Business Directory for Appomattox County, Virginia, 1888-1889*, with practices in Bent Creek.

Unknown to most people in his county, Dr. Vawter had a clandestine romantic relationship with and eventually married Sarah "Sally" Watts, daughter of Edmond and Lucy (Davis) Watts.²² Sarah, who was born in May 1857 in Appomattox County, was a Negro who was twenty-six years younger than Benjamin. Sarah's parents lived next door to Dr. Vawter at Bent Creek, and may have had slave status prior to emancipation in 1866. Sarah gave birth to their first child when she was only seventeen years old. The child was named Edmund Silas Watts, for both of his male grandparents. Sarah worked for a family on the other side of the James River, in Nelson County, when the first children were born.

Benjamin was enumerated as a single man when the 1880 census was taken for Appomattox County.²³ Sally Watts was enumerated with her two children, Edmund and Annie Watts, on the 1880 Nelson County census.²⁴ Sally stated that she was a widow, which was a cover for her *de facto* husband.

²¹ *Vital Records: Directory of Deceased American Physicians, 1804-1929*, per Genealogy.com

²² The 1870 U. S. Census for Appomattox County, Virginia, Stonewall District, p. 81, Family No. 8, states that Edmund Watts, a "cripple," was born circa 1804. Lucy, his wife, was born circa 1824. Sarah was listed as "Sally," age thirteen, occupation "cook."

²³ The 1880 U. S. Census for Appomattox County, Virginia, Stonewall District, p. 404A.

²⁴ 1880 U. S. Census for Nelson County, Virginia, Livingston District, p. 21, family No. 204.

Evidently, Dr. Vawter loved her deeply or he would not have fathered eight of her children. In 1890, Dr. Vawter decided to move to Washington, D. C. where they could have privacy. Rumors about Dr. Vawter had been circulating for sometime in the Bent Creek community. After the move to Washington, D. C., the children's names were then changed from Watts to Vawter, as proven by the censuses, to reflect their true biological surname. Sarah's name changed, too, from Watts to Vawter.²⁵ Their children were listed as mulattos on the 1900 census.

In 1900, she stated to the census taker in Washington, D. C. that she had been married twenty-seven years and that five of her eight children were still living. This is consistent with the Bible record that was maintained by one of their children. When the 1920 U. S. Census was taken in Washington, D. C., she was listed as Sarah Vawter. They lived at a good address in the North West section of Washington, D. C.

Children of Benjamin S. and Sarah (Watts) Vawter:²⁶

1. Edmund Silas Vawter was born on Aug. 1, 1874 in Nelson County, Virginia when his mother was seventeen years old. Edmund was named for his two grandfathers. He was listed in the census household of his mother in 1900 in Washington, D. C. where his surname had been changed from Watts to Vawter. He was living on Elsworth Street in Philadelphia when the 1910 Census was taken.²⁷ He and his wife Mamie were classified as Black. The 1920 census lists Mayme Vawter as a widow, forty years old, employed by the War Department. Edmund and Mamie were married in 1906 and had no children when the census was taken. Edmund was employed as a waiter in a restaurant.

2. Lucy Elizabeth Vawter was born on Sept. 14, 1875 and died in Nelson County in 1876. She was named for her two grandmothers.

²⁵ 1900 U. S. Census for District of Columbia, E. D. 50, Sheet No. 17, p. 68A.

²⁶ Information on the children was provided by Edmund S. Vawter, 1410 North 18th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to William Snyder Vawter, GPO Box 361, and New York City, undated. The birthplaces are from the same source. The document was forwarded to the compiler by Georgene Jurgensen, 2142 Crowsnest Drive, Palm Harbor, FL 34685-1503, who is the authority on the Vawter family of America.

²⁷ 1910 U. S. Census for the 36th Ward of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, p. 25A, Sheet 11A, Family No. 232.

3. Alice Louise Vawter was born on Nov. 17, 1876 and died in July 1878 in Nelson County.
4. Annie Mitchell Vawter²⁸ was born on March 15, 1878 at Bent Creek, Appomattox County. She was living in her mother's household in Washington, D. C. when the U. S. Census was taken in June 1900. She was named for her father's niece, Annie (Walton) Mitchell of Appomattox County.
5. George Henderson Vawter was born on July 16, 1880, in Nelson County. He moved with his parents to Washington, D. C. about 1890. On Oct. 1, 1903, he married Annie H. Harley in Alexandria, Virginia.²⁹ George married second Amelia H. Green, who was born in 1899 in Mississippi. George visited his Walton relatives about 1928 in Appomattox County, after which he wrote a letter containing information on the Negro (mulatto) Vawters and their Walton relatives. He visited Dallas Walton, John C. Walton and Lizzie Abbitt. George's address at that time was 311 Cumberland Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The 1930 U. S. Census for Philadelphia lists his occupation as a "clothes dyer," and his race as a Negro. No children were listed in their household.
6. David Doggett Vawter was born on March 19, 1882 in Nelson County He was listed as a jeweler on the 1910 U. S. Census for Washington, D. C., E. D. 147, Sheet 5B, Line 66 His wife was named Sarah Louisa, who was born in the West Indies. They were married in 1905, but were still childless in 1910. Both were classified as mulattos.
7. Abraham Benjamin Vawter was born on June 27, 1884 in Appomattox County and died on June 25, 1893 in Washington, D. C.
8. Enoch Marvin Vawter was born on April 5, 1888 in Lynchburg. When the 1900 Census was taken, he was listed as a student in school. On Jan. 8, 1905, he married Lularetta Ricks in Alexandria, Virginia.³⁰

²⁸ The 1880 U. S. Census for Nelson County, Virginia, Lovington District, p. 21, Family No. 204, gives her name as Ann Marie Watts.

²⁹ Wesley E. Pippenger, *Alexandria, Virginia Marriage Index, 1893-1905*, (Westminster, Maryland: Willow Bend Books), 1999, p. 103.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 163.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.