

The Douglas family of Rowan County



Our Family

Our earliest known forefather was John Douglas of Rowan County, North Carolina. Shortly after the marriage of his parents, his father returned to Scotland or Ireland on business. While there, he became suddenly ill and died. Shortly after the birth of John, his mother died. John was taken by his grandparents and reared as their son. When the war of the Revolution began in 1776, John Douglas was twelve years old. On May 20, 1776, he enlisted as a drummer and served two-and-a-half years with Captain Samuel Reid's Company, the 6th North Carolina Regiment.

In 1801, the Natchez territory became part of the United States. It had been previously owned by the Spanish, and was now the only land owned by white people in Mississippi. This prompted a major migration of white settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas. Apparently John was caught up in the same motivation. Records show "That pass ports through the Creek Nation to the western territory be prepared for John Douglas and William Walton which were presented and signed.—Journal of the proceedings of the Executive Department of Government, during the administration of his Excellency, John Milledge, Governor of the State of Georgia. Page 469, Wednesday 28th April, 1802."

When the travel group arrived at Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, friendly Indians warned them that the Creek Indians were at war, and it was not safe to travel further. John bought a farm on Lookout Mountain and lived there for the three-year delay.

His travelling party left from Georgia with the intention of going to Amite County, Mississippi. When they arrived at Doak's store on the Natchez Trace, their guide for Amite County was not there. However, there was a man there extolling the opportunities of Lawrence County, and he offered to take them there. The party agreed to go to Lawrence County instead of Amite. John Douglas settled with his second wife, Nancy, and his father-in-law, William Walden, about six or eight miles west of Tyrus near the Fair River. (John lost his first wife by death, and there is no record of her name, nor that they had any children.)

John Douglas, born October 4, 1764, died November 9, 1839, married Nancy Denman Walden, born May 20, 1774, died August, 1836. They had five children: Ransom, Jephthah, Joel, Elisha, and Elijah (twins). Elijah died at the age of three, and Elisha was the next forebear in our Douglas family lineage.

Elisha was born in 1814 and was a delicate child. He was in ill health most of his life and had only one or two opportunities for education—a

three-month school at about age six, and once more when he was an older teen. Nonetheless, he learned to read and write and continued self-study the rest of his life. Like another famous American, he would walk miles to borrow a book after a day's work, then consume a good part of the night reading and studying the book. He became one of the most educated men of his day, knowledgeable in almost every field of learning. He married Miss Mary Davis, daughter of Zaborn Davis of Copiah County, and again his health failed. For many years he struggled with ill health and poverty. In 1852, his church, New Providence, licensed him to preach, and ordained him a year later. In 1858 he moved to Lawrence County, buying a farm near his brother, Joel, where he lived the rest of his life. During the Civil War, he spent much of his time in camps. With his knowledge of medicine, he was able to assist the doctors with the wounded, and was present in the Army Hospital in Jackson when his nephew, Andrew Douglas, died. He also ministered to the troops as a chaplain. He was called to preach at Shiloh Church shortly after his move to Lawrence County, and he served this church as pastor for the next thirty years. And for the next fifty years, he preached to small and struggling churches in Lawrence, Lincoln, and Copiah Counties. He was granted passports to go through Federal lines to preach in revival meetings during the war.

After the death of his wife, Mary Davis Douglas, he married Adaline Conn, and had a total of ten children. His ninth child, John Alexander Douglas, born January 15, 1880 to Elisha and Adaline, became our family patriarch.

John Alexander married Virginia Maude Case, and pursued a career of vegetable and dairy farming near Brookhaven, Mississippi. When market conditions deteriorated, John paid a visit to his sister in West Monroe, Louisiana, and arrived just when she and her husband were about to move. The farm owner, Mr. Frank Ford, offered John the opportunity to work on his farm in their place. The family moved with all their possessions to the Mount Vernon community near West Monroe in 1929 to start fresh in the farming business. After two years with Mr. Ford, John saw another opportunity to farm near Delhi, Louisiana. Hard times were peaking during this time, and John moved the family several times around the Monroe-West Monroe area, trying to take advantage of the best opportunities. After several years of sharecropping, he was finally able to finance his own property near Bosco, Louisiana. After all their children were gone, John and Maude retired in West Monroe. John died in October, 1960, and Maude died in January, 1972. They had ten

children:

(NOTE: In our family, we refer to John and Maude as our Number One generation, and their children as the Number Twos. Their children, basically within the bounds of the current "Baby Boomer" definition, are the Number Threes. Beyond that, the numbers get too great for this introductory look at our family. Perhaps a later study can outline our successive generations.)

Marshall Douglas, born November 16, 1907, married Fannie Conley, and they had four children: Annie Mae, Donald, Ruth, and Marshall, Jr. Marshall was a farmer and carpenter, and he and Fannie are currently retired and living in West Monroe, Louisiana.

Jim Douglas, born June 19, 1909 (died 1991), married Annie Sue Conley, and they had two children: Virginia Sue and Patricia. Jim was a farmer and worked in steel fabrication before his retirement in Pelahatchie, Mississippi.

Carey Douglas, born March 1911 (died 1917 of typhoid fever).

Clotilde Douglas, born October 18, 1913, married Webb Wink. They had five children: Austin*, Jo Ann, Rita Gay, Douglas, and Kaye. Webb worked his entire career at the paper mill in West Monroe and died after his retirement. Clotilde worked as an office clerk for a time at the Palace department store in Monroe, and is retired and living in West Monroe, Louisiana.

Navy Gay Douglas, born September 16, 1915 (died March, 1990), married Effen Sebastian "Dick" Hendrix and they had two children: Virginia and Carey. Dick worked most of his career for the City of Monroe as a painter and truck driver. He died after retirement in 1978 in Pollock, Louisiana. Navy Gay worked most of her career at the Palace department store in Monroe, and died in Pollock, Louisiana.

Hosea Elisha "Happy" Douglas, born December 23, 1918, married Elaine Soileau, and they had eight children: Patricia, Helen, Hosea, Larry, Michael, Karen, Dale, and Robert. Happy was an engraver most of his career in the paper industry. He and Elaine are retired and living in Monroe, Louisiana.

Maude Christine Douglas, born April 20, 1920, married Dwight Young, and they had four children: Fred, Vicky, Roy Carroll, and Sherry. Dwight was a farmer, worked for a sawmill, for the railroad, and eventually the department of highways. Maude and Dwight are retired and

* Deceased

living in Sikes, Louisiana.

John Roger "Jack" Douglas, born December 12, 1921 (died 1983), married Edna Ruth Whitman, and they had three children: John, Roger, and Beverly. Jack spent most of his career in the building trades. Edna Ruth works for the LSU Extension service and resides in West Monroe, Louisiana.

Etta Mae Douglas, born July 20, 1924, married Edward Tillman and they had one son, Butch (Cary Kny Tillman).^{*} Eddie is currently retired from a career in the heavy construction industry and volunteers most of his spare time at the local Mason Lodge, and Etta Mae works part time for the Ouachita Citizen in West Monroe, Louisiana.

William S. "Bill" Douglas, born October 28, 1926, married Hazel Averett, and they had three children: Clifton, Timothy, and Marilyn. Bill spent a career in chemical-related production and safety while Hazel worked in nursing. Bill and Hazel are retired and living in Swartz, Louisiana.

With few exceptions, most of John and Maude's descendants still live in Louisiana and Mississippi.

^{*} Deceased

SOURCES: Book, The John Douglas Family of Mississippi, Edgar Lamar Douglas, 1962. Interview, Carey P. Hendrix with William S. Douglas, April 19, 1992.