

Eight Generations of the Redding Family

Francis – Francis – James – Francis – John B. – Alfred Fear – Chancey Francis – Roy Lee

Virginia – North Carolina – Tennessee – Illinois – Iowa – Missouri – Kansas – Illinois

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October 2011

Foreword

For more than 30 years I have been patching together bits and pieces of information about our family, and for twice that many years I have listened with fascination to family stories told by my mother and father, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Genealogy, and the history that goes along with it, is the closest thing I have to a hobby. I have written a few family histories, but that never ends the story. The information just keeps accumulating, and sometimes the “facts” change with new discoveries. At times I have determined to bring it all to a happy conclusion, but a new mystery would captivate me and I would chase down another trail in search of a breakthrough. The next thing I knew, it was a year later. Or two years. Or three. So I don’t suppose that what I produce at this juncture will put an end to the hunt.

This time I have attempted to weed out some of the superfluous detail, especially about all the contributory branches to the Redding stream. I provide for each generation a straight-forward introductory profile for readers who would rather travel the broad highway of our family history than retrace each twist and turn along the way. I keep setting goals for myself for when I will put this work to print—before Dad turns ninety. Too late. Before the next Christmas. Missed that one, too. So I will refrain from the pressure of a target date this time.

One part of genealogy is simply getting the facts right—names, birth dates, marriages, deaths, locations. Another part is getting the connections right; genealogists use the term “former cousin” to describe the branches we once thought were attached to our tree until later discovering that we had connected a child to the wrong parents. Our family doesn’t make the search easy, with all the common surnames—Redding, Allen, Bradshaw, Bennett, Reynolds, Bush, Anderson, Brown, Moore, Bailey, and other British names found in abundance in any region of the country.

I shouldn’t complain. What our family sacrifices in the ordinariness of its surnames it more than compensates for in the richness of its history. Our family’s history is America’s history, from its colonial roots to today, and from seas to shining sea. In any location, our family was among the first there and the first to leave. Always chasing the sunset to find a new land of opportunity, they personified America’s great optimism. For every place and time, I have read a dozen books of history, and that has been an insurmountable joy in the quest.

Tracing to the immigrant in any family line is always a goal, and one seldom reached with our family. Many of our lines simply vanish into the colonial mists of the Virginia or North Carolina hills. But when we find the immigrant, he or she is likely to be English or Scots-Irish, but sometimes Welsh or Scots. A stray Frenchman and a Palatinate German are found in the mix. Not a single king, duke, or earl has been discovered in our family tree, but hundreds of hard-working farmers, a few farmer-preachers, and more than a few veterans of our wars.

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Chapter 1: Our Roots in America

A Francis Redding first appears in Virginia land and parish records in the 1740s and disappears there in the late 1750s when a Francis Redding first appears in North Carolina, just across the southern border of Virginia. Then, in 1763, a Francis Redding and Francis Redding, Sr. appear together in a Halifax County, North Carolina land record. Our theory is that this is a father and son, and the father is the one who was found in the Virginia records twenty years earlier. We call the father Francis I and the son Francis II, but several more Francis Reddings emerge in later generations. Francis II is our proved ancestor by virtue of his will probated in North Carolina in 1804.

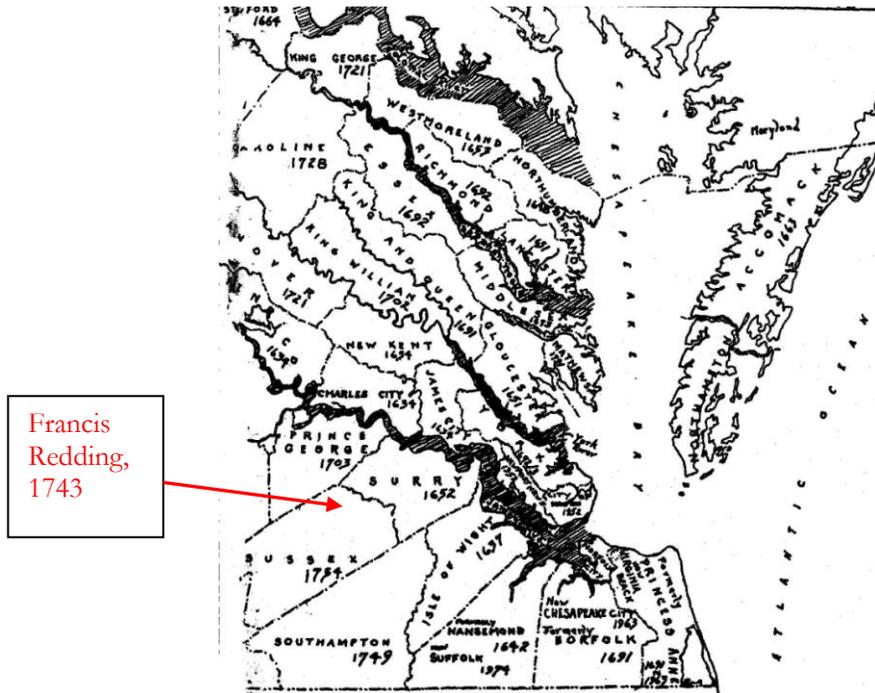
The best guess is that our Redding line originated with one of the immigrants to Virginia in the 1600s. Most of these Reddings came as indentured servants, originating in the south and east of England where many Reddings remain today. The name Redding may be a variant of Reading, a city in Berkshire, England, west of London in the south-central region of the island. The name may be from the Saxon word O'Erydding, meaning "one who dwells in the meadow or clearing." Or it could be from a Saxon tribal chieftain, Raeda, who was in south-central England around 900 AD. Of course, we have not yet traced our family past the mid 1700s, so we do not know for sure when our first ancestor came to these shores. But we do know that our line extends to Virginia and North Carolina in the 1740s and 1750s and that the names "Francis," "James," and "John" appear in every generation to the present. The name William was also common in the early generations.

While our Redding line is most likely English, the many variations in the spelling of the name (Redding, Reding, Reading, Redden, Reden, Redin) by our first few generations of American ancestors make this anything but certain. Also, some Reddings are Welsh, some Scots, and others Irish. Redding and Reddingmuirhead are both villages, known for their collieries, in Stirlingshire, Scotland, where there is also a Redding Moor. "Redding" is a Dutch name for a seaworthy boat, and Reddingers are Germans who sometimes shorten their name to Redding.

The Redden family is of Scots and Scots-Irish origins. This name is probably taken from the weaving hamlet of Redden in southern Scotland and derives from the Saxon meaning of "from the meadow or clearing," same as the English Redding and Reading. The Redden family is found first in Scotland in the parish of Sprouston, Roxburghshire, a grange of the Abbey of Kelso, beginning in the eleventh century. Scots Reddens were among the many lowlanders who colonized Ireland at the beginning of the seventeenth century, becoming the Scots-Irish. One family history claims the original North Carolina Reddings were Scots-Irish and of the Redden line.

Until proven otherwise, I'll call us English, and for sure British of one sort or another. There is no indication that our line descended from nobility, wealth, or fame. The first of our ancestors that we can prove were simple yeoman farmers, the stock that settled colonial Virginia and then kept moving, looking for better land and new opportunity. Whether they arrived on these shores as farmers, we do not know. But England exported its surplus of second sons and hopeless poor to its colonies, most arriving by virtue of their indenture. They sold themselves into several years of labor in exchange for passage to the New World. Once free from their indenture, they claimed a piece of ground, planted crops, survived Indians, droughts, disease, and famine, and prayed for something better for their sons and daughters. There is nobility in that story, if not wealth or fame.

Map of Early Virginia



Reddings in Southside Virginia

The part of Virginia that lies south of the James River between the Blue Ridge Mountains on the west and Hampton Road on the east is called Southside Virginia. Early settlers grew tobacco, a labor-intensive crop, and settled along the waterways in order to transport their crops to market. The primary rivers were the James, Appomattox, Blackwater, Meherrin, Nottoway, Dan, and Roanoke, including their tributaries, referred to as swamps, creeks, and branches. The colonists in Southside ordered their society along English lines, with the Anglican parishes and English-style courts and land records. Unfortunately, most of the counties in Southside are “burned” counties, meaning that the records were burned by the British in the Revolutionary War or the Yankees in the Civil War.

Charles City County was formed in 1634 as one of the eight original shires of Virginia, and Prince George County was formed from Charles City in 1703. Surry County was formed in 1652 from James City County and Sussex County from Surry in 1753. Much of the history of the Redding family to which we can trace our roots lies in this area of four small counties clustered together south of the James River. Nansmond, where some Reddings also arrived in late 17th century and early 18th century, was established in 1645 and was then southeast of Surry/Sussex, on the Virginia-North Carolina border, with Isle of Wight County in between. Records that include Reddings refer to four Anglican parishes: (1) Bristol Parish was established in 1643 and covered the area of Charles City County, south of the James River, which included what is now Dinwiddie, Henrico, and Prince George Counties; (2) Lawne’s Creek Parish (3) Southwarke Parish was east of Bristol Parish, in what is now Surry and Sussex Counties, and (4) Albemarle Parish, created in 1738 from those parts of Lawne’s Creek and Southwarke parishes that lie south of the Blackwater River (the remaining portions of these parishes, north of the Blackwater, were consolidated into Southwarke).

The entire area of Albemarle Parish was incorporated into Sussex County when it was formed from the southwestern end of Surry County in 1753-54. Albemarle Parish, a district parish of the Church of England,

now the Episcopal Church, then, became coterminous with Sussex County, which was all of the former Surry County south of the Blackwater River.

Joseph Swamp and Jones Hole Swamp, mentioned in several Redding land descriptions, run northwest to southeast and cross the Prince George County-Sussex County line. Pigeon Swamp and Black Water Swamp are very close by, to the northeast, and are in Sussex County. This entire region is between the Nottoway and Blackwater Rivers. Raccoon Swamp is several miles to the southwest on the south side of the Nottoway.

Profile of Francis Redding I

In the 1740s, several Reddings were in the records in Virginia, in a small area south of the James River known as Southside. They are in land records and the surviving parish records of the Anglican Church. Timothy, William, John, Arthur, and Francis were their Christian names, and Timothy seems to have been the eldest. We don't know how they were related or how long they had been in these parts. We think Francis was our ancestor, and that about 1758 he hopped across the colonial line to North Carolina, where he somehow acquired ownership of 522 acres that he (or his sons) had surveyed for another man who had obtained the land in a Granville Grant. He sold the land over the next few years.

At the same time, in the 1760s, another Francis Redding purchased land, and we believe he was the son of the original Francis. This second Francis may have had brothers named William, John, and Sanders (or Saunders), and a sister named Elizabeth.

By the depth of the Revolutionary War in 1780, the second Francis, Sanders, and Elizabeth (married to Melchizedek Nordan, great-grandson of one of the first English Baptist ministers to win souls in the New World) were all in Wake or Johnston County in the center of North Carolina. Francis died there, leaving a will probated in 1804 that named his wife, Mary, and eight children. Among these eight children was James, our ancestor, who by 1804 had married Susannah "Sukey" Crocker, daughter of Jacob Crocker and sister of two prominent Baptist preachers.

Francis Redding in Surry/Sussex (born about 1700-1715)

A Francis Redding appears in the records of Surry/Sussex County, Virginia from 1743 to 1751. Because so many records in this region have been destroyed, we do not know if Francis was here prior to 1743, but he must have been of age by then, thus born no later than 1722. Our assumption is that this is the Francis Redding found in Halifax County, North Carolina in 1758 and our ancestor. We suspect that Francis was related to Timothy Redding, Arthur Redding, John Redding, and William Redding who also appear in the Surry and Sussex County area in the same time period and prior to at least 1692.

March 26, 1744: Processing of bounds, pursuant to an Order of Vestry of October 13, 1743 and recorded March 26, 1744 showed Francis Redding, owner of land in Albemarle Parish, Surry County. This is the first record found of Francis Redding. It reads:

In pursuance to an Order of Vestry dated the 13th of October 1743. We the Subscribers have procession'd the Land of the Several persons hereafter mentioned that is to say the Land of Major Benjamin Harrison, Captain John Mason, Mrs. Judith Eldridge, William Shands, Jr., William Saunders, John Heath, John Peebles, Sarah Peebles, Edward Prince, Joseph Prince, **Francis Redding**, John Ivey, Joseph Barker, Hugh Ivey, Joseph Mason, John Mason, Jr., John Wilkason, John Underhill, John Rosser, Mary Dean, David Jones, William Cook, In presence of the persons

above mentioned. Witness our hands ye 26th March 1744. Joseph Mason, Hugh Ivey, Procession Masters.

Albemarle Parish in Surry County would be the area of Surry that became Sussex County in 1753.

November 15, 1747: Francis Redding was named godparent for Amy, daughter of John and Eliza Williams, in the Register of Albemarle Parish of Surry and Sussex Counties. Mary Eppes and Sarah Williams were also named godparents. Note that when Henry Mitchell was christened on August 31, 1745 in Sussex County, Virginia, Henry's sponsors were Thomas Mitchell, Nathaniel Mitchell, and Eliz Williams. Henry was the brother of Amy and Mary Mitchell, for whom Arthur Redding was a sponsor in 1742 and 1743.

December 1, 1748: Francis Reading listed as owning land adjacent to John Goodwin in Surry County, Virginia [Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants]. The Goodwin property of 1,190 acres in Surry County “on both sides of the main Road, on both sides of Warwick Swamp, down the Drain of the Black Swamp, in the Drain of the Tarkiln Branch, up the Run of Pidgeon Swamp, down the Run of Cottens Branch; adjacent James Jones, David Jones, Richard Tomlinson, **Francis Reading**, Thomas Peeples [Peebles], William Saunders, Colo. Benjamin Harrison, William Shands, his old Patent Lines, John Mason, James Gee & Robert Hunnycut; 1 December 1748, p. 81. 4 pounds. 425 acres part formerly granted unto Thomas Goodwin by Patent 22 January 1717/18.

Note: In 1707, Timothy Redding purchased land from Charles Gee, who died two years later; James Gee (in 1748 land record above) was his son. In 1722, Timothy Redding sold land on Josephs Swamp that was bounded by William Shands. Also, in 1681, Thomas Busby sold 200 acres to Edward Greene that was bounded by James Jones, the Blackwater Swamp, and the Green Plantation. Benjamin Harrison and Robert Wyatt witnessed.

March 17, 1751: Francis Redding was godparent to Joel King, born on November 17, 1750, son of John and Mary King, with David Woodrun (elsewhere Woodroffe) and Frances Williams as other godparents. In this transcription of the Albemarle Vestry record, Boddie has the children of John and Mary King as: Moses (1/21/1742); Amy (2/14/1746), James (2/14/1746), and Joel (11/17/1750). Godparents of other children included: William King, Richard King, Jr., Anne King, Nathaniel Hood, Thomas Battle, Mary Rodgers, and Anne Evans. A family record of the King family shows Joel King born in Surry, Virginia, November 17, 1750, died 1822 in Talbot, Georgia, son of John and Mary Powell King, Revolutionary War veteran, received bounty land in Georgia, married Mary Adkins in 1775 in Georgia.

Note: A family record of the Woodruff family has David Woodroffe married to Frances Williams in Surry, Virginia, about 1752, with children: James, Richard, David, William, Frances, Charles, Patty, Winny, and John.

July 22, 1751: Francis Redding listed in land transfer from John Goodwin to James Gee for property bounded by the Black Swamp, **Francis Redding**, Thomas Peoples, the Tarkiln Branch, Pidgeon Swamp, Col. Benjamin Harrison and William Shands.

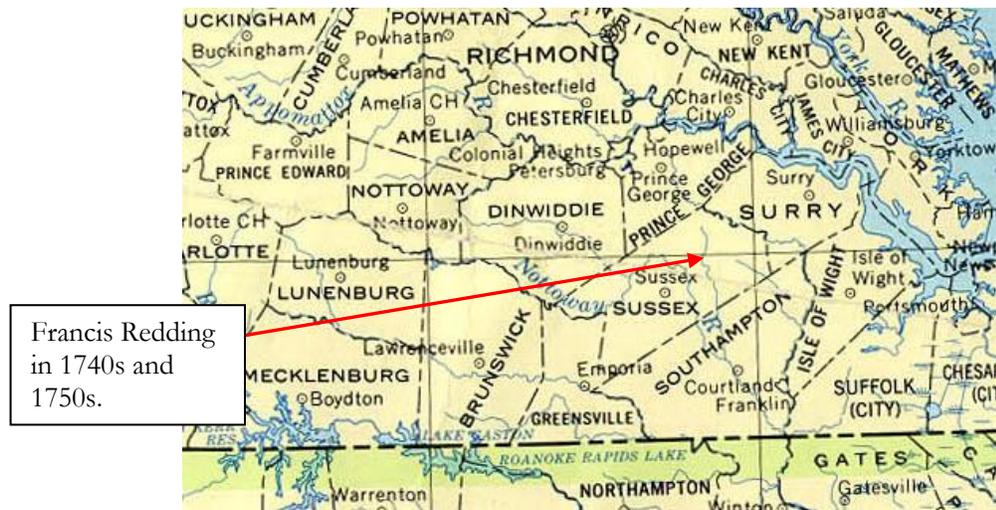
Note that Arthur Redding sold land on Blackwater Swamp in 1734 that he had purchased in 1731.

The Blackwater River flows from its source near Petersburg, Virginia to where it joins the Nottoway River to form the Chowan River and empty into Albemarle Sound along the border between Virginia and North Carolina. The Blackwater River forms part of the border between Surry County and Sussex County, collecting tributaries called Warwick Swamp, Otterdam Swamp, Coppahaunk Swamp, and Cypress Swamp. The Blackwater is a dark, tannin stained river which drains many swamps in a forested and swampy region. The upper Blackwater River is called Blackwater Swamp, and the swamps in this area resemble streams. Elsewhere along the river's course, it runs through wetlands and bog-like pocosins. The Blackwater River was

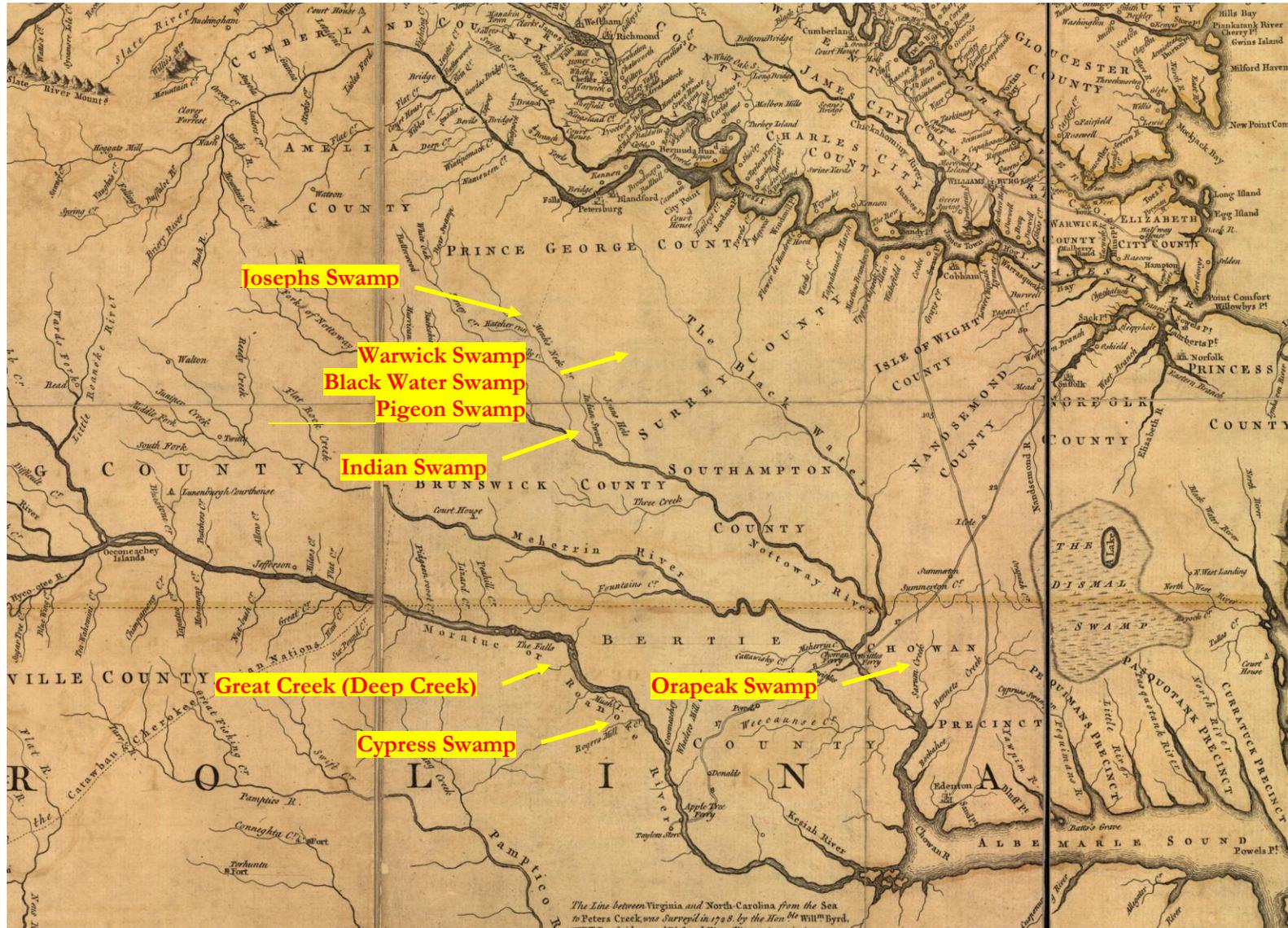
a transportation route in the 17th and 18th centuries, connecting the Chesapeake Bay with the Albemarle Settlements. The Blackwater was an early migration route southward from the James River area into Southside Virginia and into the Albemarle District of North Carolina.

The area where Francis Redding held property around 1750 is near current day Waverly, Virginia, in Sussex County, south of the Blackwater River. Joseph Swamp, Pidgeon Swamp, and Black Swamp all lie within a few miles of each other in what is now Sussex County, between the Nottoway River and Blackwater River. Indian Swamp is about 10 miles due west. **Timothy, Arthur, William, John, and Francis Redding** were all in this general area in the mid-1700s.

Map of Virginia Counties Today



1751 Map by Joshua Fry and Peter Jefferson



Locations of Reddings in Sussex County, Virginia

