

ROBERT MARTIN, CSA
8/16/1825 -12/23/1906

Not a lot is known about Robert Martin, my Great-great Grandfather, born in Due West, Abbeyville District, SC. Robert, the son of James D. Martin, born 1798, and Mary Lindsey, born 1800 and grandson of John Martin, born 1750, an Irish immigrant, and Sarah Dunn, born 1772, the daughter of James Andrew Dunn, born 1734, who fought in American Revolutionary War. The Martins were primarily farmers who had received a grant to settle in the area of Long Cane Creek, west of then Boonsboro Community, present day - Abbeyville, South Carolina. The South Carolina Colony granted land for settlement and as a buffer between the Indian territory and settled populated communities in northwest South Carolina.

According to the 1850 Abbeyville District Census, Robert Martin, age 25, was serving as a carpenter apprentice to Jacob Painter, of Anderson, SC. It appears that Robert's sister, Sarah Jane, married Thomas L. Painter, brother of Jacob Painter. Robert married Frances Elizabeth Greene of South Carolina on February 4, 1851, and according to the 1860 census, were living in the 42nd Regiment of Anderson County, SC.

The Martins were conservative Calvinist Presbyterian and, according to their Christian beliefs, were anti-slavery and did not own slaves. However, due to the invention of the cotton gin, the need for more manpower to cultivate and pick cotton, ownership of slaves was considered essential to do so. At the same time, in the early to mid 1850's, the production of cotton was diminished due to over-utilized soil and lack of manpower. As such, the majority of the ARP Church membership, primarily cotton farmers, became receptive to the use of slaves to keep up with the efficiency of the cotton gin. During this time, the populace had grown angry at the US Government, due to its stand on taxes and slavery. Abbeyville District became very active as early as 1832 and promoted the idea of secession of South Carolina from the Union. It was also prompted by Vice President, John C. Calhoun, SC, a Martin cousin. Additionally, the Nullification Act (States Rights) of President Andrew Jackson signing the Act, voiding from nullifying Federal Taxes by the Union.

The James D. Martin family left South Carolina for North Mississippi in late 1856 or early 1857, where cotton land was reported at a low price. However, the Robert Martin family and several members of the ARP Church left by wagon train for Mississippi at a later date. Records do not show the Martin family as slave owners, either due to religious belief or not prosperous enough to purchase slaves. Robert did not move to Tate County, Mississippi until 1861. It is believed that the hostility of the proslavery and secessionists towards anti-slavery and unionists was one reason that resulted in their move. The Martins were strongly involved in the establishment of the ARP Church in Due West, as well as North Mississippi. Beliefs and persecution is most likely the reason for leaving South Carolina.

In the late summer of 1863, the 5th Regiment, Mississippi Calvary, was assembled. In June 1864 Robert Martin at the age of 38 enlisted in the CSA, and was assigned to Company H of the 5th Mississippi Calvary as a Private. As this was late in the "War of Northern Aggression" the 5th Calvary with Colonel Barksdale in command, was engaged in preventing the Union Army from advancing further south of Memphis, Tennessee. On August 23, 1864, at noon in Abbeyville, Mississippi, just north of Oxford, the 5th engaged the Union Army. The 5th was overwhelmed by Union troops and reinforcements and thus retreated. According to history, casualties were 15 Union killed – 19 Confederates killed - 15 wounded. Among the wounded was Private Robert Martin. A physician's report listed him with gunshot wounds to the left thigh and loss of left leg at hip. Robert Martin was discharged from the CSA on August 23, 1864. He and his wife Frances continued to live in Tyro, Tate County, Mississippi, where he became a blacksmith, a trade that he learned from his father, who had a blacksmith shop in Due West, SC.

Several of the Martin men served in the CSA. Samuel Pink Martin and Marshal Newton Martin, Robert's brothers, enlisted on the same day, March 22, 1862, serving in Company I, 34th Mississippi Infantry. Several of the Martin's in South Carolina, uncles and cousins of Robert, served in the CSA. Brothers John, Robert and Allen B. were in the 19th Infantry, SC. Three sons of Samuel and Mary served: Robert Marshall (died of fever in the war); Benjamin Jasper, and Pinkney. Following the war, Robert and Frances, then in advanced years, moved in 1889 to Spring Creek, Lee County, Arkansas, to be near their daughter, Amelia, who married Silas Douglas. There Robert practiced limited blacksmithing until his death which occurred on December 23, 1906. Frances had died the year before on August 25, 1905. Both are buried at the Spring Creek Cemetery in Lee County, Arkansas. All of the twelve children of Robert and Frances (except for two who died in infancy) lived to be adults.

I am fortunate to have pictures of Robert and Frances, as well as copies of pages from their Bible. I also was able to secure copies from the State of Arkansas of Robert's application and granting of a Civil War Pension.

~Submitted by Frank E. "Gene" Martin