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The Doby family leaves its mark on the Fort Mill area

Fort Mill History

By Louise Pettus Fort Mill Times

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Shortly before the American Revolution, three large and interconnected families by the names of Doby, Massey and Cureton, all Whigs, came into the Waxhaws of Lancaster County as planters.

Others of the family settled in Camden and became merchants. The merchants were often planters.

The first John Doby was married to Elizabeth Massey. He secured a deed of 514 acres on Cane Creek in the Waxhaws. He and his eldest son William were killed at the battle of Eutaw Springs. The other two sons, Joseph and John, became Camden merchants.

Joseph Doby married Sarah White. He died in 1811, leaving six young children. One of the children was John Miller Doby, who graduated from South Carolina College in 1818 and became a prominent planter in the Indian Land section of Lancaster County. He married a sister of Gov. Stephen D. Miller, and after her death he married Elizabeth Phifer Crawford.

Beginning in 1824, Doby managed to secure leases from the Catawbans on at least 1,611 acres of land along the Catawba River. One of the leases was for 502 acres, which he got from John Hutchison, who had held the lease for less than a year. This was the last acreage held by the Catawbans. The land had been known as the Kings Bottoms since the 1750s.

On the river just south of where Sugar Creek flows into the Catawba, J.M. Doby & Co. constructed a flour mill. When the Industrial Census was taken in 1850, Doby's water-powered mill was declared a value of \$4,000. The census-taker recorded that there was on hand 4,000 bushels of wheat, 12,000 bushels of corn and 3,000 feet of logs. The yearly product total was \$7,300 worth of flour; \$4,000 of corn meal and \$4,500 worth of plank. The mill, later known as Ivy Mill, was destroyed in the Great Flood of 1916.

To make it possible for surrounding farmers to come to his mill, Doby's workers cleared space for a wagon road and built a bridge across Sugar Creek. The road soon became known as Doby's Road - a name that still identifies a road that leaves Tom Hall Street in Fort Mill and heads to Hwy. 521 with its terminus alongside Indian Land High School.

In September 1853, John M. Doby placed an ad in the *Lancaster Ledger* with the heading "King's Bottoms for Sale." The ad read in part: "... on Catawba River about eight miles from Fort Mills depot containing 1300 acres, sixty or seventy acres of which is first rate bottom land. Half the balance is in wood land, well adapted to the culture of cotton and grain. On the premises are a good dwelling house and a well of the best water, also a new Gin House and all necessary out buildings."

A year later he was still advertising, this time referring to the King's Bottoms, "so termed by the

Indians for its extent and fertility as best bottom land on the Catawba river. . . ."

It wasn't until 1856 that he managed to sell the land and move to Clark County, Ark.

Not only did Doby's own children go with him, reminiscent of his grandparents' removal from Virginia to the Waxhaws, Doby was accompanied by a large number of Griers from Steele Creek in Mecklenburg County and also Whites, Boyces, Nisbets and McGills from York and Lancaster counties. One descendant wrote that there were about 120 wagons in the wagon train that crossed the North Carolina mountains into Tennessee.

In central Arkansas, the Carolinians built a town called Dobyville. They named their church the Carolina Presbyterian Church (now called Dobyville Presbyterian Church).

One of the tombstones there reads: "John M. Doby / 18 January 1801-29 May 1878."

Louise Pettus is a renowned local historian. This monthly column is sponsored by the Fort Mill Downtown Association. Check them out on the Web at www.fortmilldowntown.org.