



ROOTDIGGER

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Family Experiences and New Deal Relief: The Correspondence Files of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 1933-1936 (Part One)

By John P. Deeben

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At the height of the Great Depression in November 1934, Mae E. Sanford of Chicago penned a heartfelt letter to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House. Using a Biblical allusion to emphasize the dire effects of the Depression on her personal and economic situation, Sanford bluntly asked for help:

My home is heavily mortgaged and I have been a cripple for years. The time is near where I am in fear of being disposed, as it had been hard for me to meet my payments and almost impossible to get along. . . . Dear Mrs. Roosevelt Please help me and let me keep my home after all we are God's children and he teaches us to ask that we shall receive.¹

Mrs. Roosevelt passed Sanford's request on to an administrator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) in Washington, D.C., who dutifully advised Sanford to contact her local emergency relief administrator in Chicago for assistance.

The Great Depression was one of the most important events of the mid-20th century, an economic catastrophe that touched all facets of American society. It devastated personal finances (including incomes and investments), drastically restricted national revenue and international trade, and caused unemployment to skyrocket. Such an all-encompassing event changed family narratives as well. As with any major historical event—and especially those of a decidedly traumatic nature—how relatives responded to or weathered the crisis of the Great Depression formed an essential aspect of family history.

The efforts of the federal government to counteract the Depression through the various programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal—and in particular the work of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration during the depths of the Depression—produced many records that document such personal experiences, offer-

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ing useful information about individuals and family members at a dramatic moment in history.

The New Deal in Action: FERA Gives Economic Aid



Construction of a masonry wall in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Many of the jobs created in 1933–1934 were construction jobs for unskilled workers. (Records of the Work Projects Administration, RG 69)

The Federal Emergency Relief Act of May 12, 1933, implemented President Roosevelt's first major initiative to combat the adverse economic and social effects of the Great Depression. The act established the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, a grant-making agency authorized to distribute federal aid to the states for relief. By the end of December 1935, FERA had distributed over \$3.1 billion and employed more than 20 million people.

FERA assumed the responsibilities of the former Emergency Relief Administration (ERA) that President Herbert Hoover had established to loan federal funds to state governments for their own relief efforts. In the early years of the Depression, responsibility for emergency relief had rested almost entirely on state and local governments, but swelling unemployment and economic hardship fostered the growing perception that the Depression required a greater, national response.

That viewpoint launched Roosevelt into the White House in 1932 and provided the catalyst for his subsequent New Deal programs.²

In contrast to the ERA's local approach, FERA gave the federal government a more centralized role in economic recovery by allocating (rather than loaning) funds for both direct relief (cash payments to individuals for immediate necessities such as food and shelter) and state-directed work relief (projects intended to get the unemployed back to work, even if only temporarily).

Rather than establish a whole new federal hierarchy, which might delay relief to the general public, FERA assumed oversight of existing state relief programs. To ensure compliance and foster better understanding of relief needs in response to economic and social conditions, FERA established minimum national relief standards and served as a clearinghouse for information on relief problems, policies, and procedures.

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By November 1934, FERA had been divided into several divisions that focused on different kinds of relief, including Work; Rural Rehabilitation; Research, Statistics and Finance; and Relations with States (Transients).³ Another major and innovative—if only fleeting—component of FERA included the Civil Works Administration (CWA), a temporary agency established on November 9, 1933. Conceived in response to the need to put millions of unemployed people immediately back to work during the harsh winter of 1933–1934, the CWA created thousands of construction jobs for unskilled laborers. Projects mainly included building or improving roadways, schools, playgrounds, and airports; laying sewer pipes and masonry walls; or simply raking leaves and shoveling snow in public and national parks.

Women employed by the CWA often sewed garments for the destitute. Employing approximately 4 million workers by January 1934, the CWA proved immensely popular among the general public but was nevertheless disbanded by Congress on March 31, 1934, due to increasing political fears that the program would create too much "public" employment centered on temporary work devoid of lasting value.⁴

The work of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration eventually came to an end after the passage of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act on May 6, 1935. Permanently shifting the focus of economic recovery from direct relief assistance to enhanced work relief, the act implemented a massive public works program under the direction of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The largest and most ambitious of the New Deal agencies, the WPA essentially resembled a much amplified version of FERA, and by the end of 1935 it had assumed all of its predecessor's relief functions. The WPA even expanded work relief by creating projects for professionals and artisans as well as unskilled laborers, including the Federal Arts Project, the Federal Writers Project, and the Federal Theater Project. The WPA continued until 1943, when the economic boom of America's industrial war effort during World War II finally wiped out the last lingering effects of the Great Depression.⁵

Subject Files Reveal Depression Experiences

As soon as FERA opened for business in May 1933, applicants seeking relief assistance flooded the agency's main offices in Washington, D.C.,

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with correspondence, usually addressed to top administrators such as FERA director Harry L. Hopkins. Letters sent directly to Roosevelt at the White House were also forwarded to FERA for a response. All letters received, along with carbon copies of replies, were arranged in the agency's central correspondence file.

Now part of Record Group (RG) 69, Records of the Work Projects Administration (WPA), FERA's central file was divided into two parts, the "Old General Subject Series, March 1933–January 1935" (Entry 8) and the "New General Subject Series, February 1935–1936" (Entry 9). The "Old" series uses an alphabetical arrangement by subject, while the "New" series uses a three-digit decimal classification scheme. General subject series for the central files of the CWA (Entry 2) and the WPA (Entry 11) contained similar arrangements, respectively.⁶

The categories or topic headings in the subject series demonstrate various aspects of general relief efforts. In FERA's "Old" subject series, for example, subjects range from such items as "Adjustment Division" cases, "Chattel Mortgages," and "Commissary Complaints" to "Social Work," "Women's Camps," and "Work Relief." Some categories included subtopics as well, such as "Work Relief," which contains not only general correspondence but also letters addressed to federal departments, field representatives, and the White House (including communications relating to a White House Conference on Emergency Needs of Women, held on March 20, 1933).

Correspondence filed under "Rural Rehabilitation" addresses such subtopics as "Appeals for Relief," "Applications of Stranded Families for Land," "Employment," the "Canning Program," "Grape Purchases," "Land for Sale," and "Sub-marginal Land." Categories containing large volumes of correspondence were usually arranged alphabetically by the name of the correspondent.⁷

The central files of all three agencies also include a "State" series, which covers administrative matters and reports concerning relief operations within a single state or territory. FERA's "State Series, March 1933–1936" (Entry 10) contains important correspondence with state relief administrators, arranged alphabetically by state or territory and then by decimal scheme according to the following classifications: "General Correspondence" (400), "Rural Rehabilitation" (410), "Transients" (420),

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Learn More About:

- [How the 1940 census provides a glimpse of the demographics of the New Deal](#)
- [How to find employment and income data in the 1940 census](#)
- [How John Steinbeck used New Deal government records in writing *The Grapes of Wrath*.](#)

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"Education" (430), "Medical Care" (440), "Work Relief" (450), and "Complaints" (460).

Some classifications once again include subcategories. "General Correspondence," for example, contains letters relating to "Finance and Statistics," "Policies," "Personnel," and "Field Reports" (with the latter being further divided into reports from field representatives and field examiners). Other "State" correspondence among the central files in RG 69 include "State Series, 1933–34" (Entry 1) for the CWA, and "State Series, 1935–44" (Entry 12) for the WPA.⁸

Editor's Note: The second half of this article will appear in the next issue of Rootdigger (1st Quarter 2014, January–March).

Notes:

¹ Mrs. Mae E. Sanford to Eleanor Roosevelt, Nov. 19, 1934; Appeals and Applications for Employment, "Old General Subject" Series, March 1933–January 1935 (Entry 8); Federal Emergency Relief Administration Central Files, 1933–1966 (FERA Central Files); Records of the Work Projects Administration (WPA), Record Group 69 (RG 69); National Archives at College Park, Maryland (NACP).

² Frances T. Bourne, *Preliminary Checklist of the Central Correspondence Files of the Work Projects Administration and Its Predecessors, 1933–1944*, Preliminary Checklist 37 (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1946), pp. iii, 48–51.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid; see also the online article "[Civil Works Administration during the Great Depression](#)" by Colt Justice, accessed on November 28, 2011.

⁵ Bourne, Preliminary Checklist 37, p. iii.

⁶ Ibid, pp. iii–iv.

⁷ Ibid, pp. iii–iv, 3–7.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 11–12.



Marriages 1844-1900

The following is a portion of an indexed list of marriage licenses from the Marion County Marriage Books A, B, and C (1844-1900) and Alachua County Marriage Book 1 (1837-1845). The list is organized alphabetically by the grooms' name. A copy of the original records can be obtained by contacting the Clerk of Court of either Alachua or Marion County.

Groom Name	Bride Name	Date Married	Note	Book & Page
Allen, John S.	Keep, Francisca	25 Jun 1895		2-096
Allen, Lott	Hagget, Sarah A.	18 May 1887		E-264
Allen, Oscar E.	Elissa, Mary	24 May 1868		C-223
Allen, Peter	Taylor, Mary	28 Nov 1897		2-300
Allen, Robert	Barber, Louisa	15 Sep 1886		E-195
Allen, Will	Dunnaway, Egenia	4 May 1898		2-348
Allen, William	Jackson, Rosa	26 Feb 1895		2-067
Allinson, Shadrack	Dykes, Frances	7 Feb 1867		C-171
Allison, Pleasant	Constance, Mariah	5 May 1870		D-036
Allred, Neil M.	Hubbard, Nelle	7 Dec 1899		2-481
Allsop, W.	Gatlin, S.F.	5 Feb 1882		D-570
Allsopp, William S.S.	Faror, Claried	5 Feb 1894		1-546
Alsabrook, T.J.	Seigler, L.A.	31 Oct 1865		C-010
Alston, Eddie	McRae, Lilly	12 Mar 1899		2-425
Alston, Lewis J.	Davis, Mary Ellen	10 Sep 1890		1-246
Ambrose, Amos	Johnson, Sarah	14 Feb 1877		D-297
Ambrose, Herbert	Gaskins, Addie	5 Mar 1900		2-517
Ambrose, Samuel	Taylor, Mariah	7 Jan 1871		D-050
Ambrose, Samuel	Gaskins, Hannah	28 Jan 1881		D-487
Ambrose, Tom	Jacobs, Sallie	30 Mar 1896		2-156
Ammerson, Edward	Slik, Ida	16 Jul 1890	(237)	1-239
Anderson, Adam	Cradle, Ann	10 Jun 1887		E-207
Anderson, Alex	Wilkerson, Arkey	12 Mar 1900		2-519
Anderson, Alexander	Jones, Martha	6 Apr 1873		D-201
Anderson, Alexander	Holland, Mary	13 Aug 1870		D-005
Anderson, Andrew	Clark, Ailsey	22 Jan 1880		D-428
Anderson, Capt	Jenkins, Eliza	25 May 1883		D-682
Anderson, Captanio	Hopkins, Rissa	10 Jan 1878		D-312
Anderson, Charles	Dunn, Martha	19 Sep 1880		D-465
Anderson, Chris C.	Alexander, Fanny S.	3 Mar 1896	(1)	2-149

Notes:

(1): The date shown as marriage date is the date the marriage license was issued. No marriage date or minister certification was recorded. It is not known if these people were actually married.

(237): Bride surname on license is Slyk and on certification in Slik.

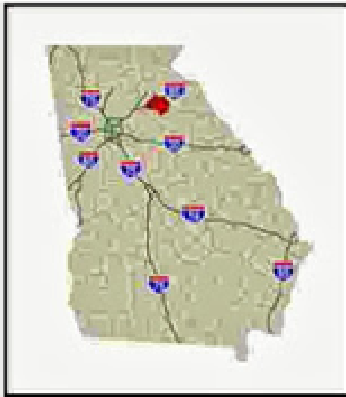


John Valentine Gates (1791-1839)

Gone to Texas!

By Margaret Sasser

Jackson County, Georgia



Georgia, Property Tax Digests, 1791-1807

Name:	Valentine Gates
Year:	1798
District:	Captain Thomas Kirkpatricks Company
Place:	Jackson, Georgia, USA
Name:	Volintine Gates
Year:	1801
District:	Captain Nicolas Tuttlers Company
Place:	Jackson, Georgia, USA

John Valentine Gates, son of Patsy Rossen and Valentine Gates was born in Georgia about 1791. Family trees found on the internet state that John was born in Interence, Georgia. Where the heck is Interence? I've never heard of it. I tried to Google it without success. Nor was it listed on the *Georgia Info* Place names list. So where was John born? According to John's 1812 military record, he was born in Jefferson County, Georgia.¹ Jefferson County is located in in east central Georgia southwest of Augusta.

Sometime before 1798, the Gates family moved to Jackson County which is located in northeast Georgia. Settlement in Jackson County began in 1784. By 1801, the pioneers had built homes, a church, a grist mill, a small iron foundry, and the first school in the County.

Tax records available on Ancestry.com show that John's father Valentine paid taxes in Jackson County, in Northeast Georgia in 1798, 1799, and 1801.^{2,3}

Around 1812, John married Martha Jane Hampton who was born about 1793 in North Carolina. She is said to be the daughter of John Wade Hampton and Joyce Malone.

Most family trees state the couple was married in Tennessee. I believe this is false—I believe the couple was married in Georgia. I was unable to locate a marriage record in Tennessee or Georgia but my guess of the location of their marriage is based on the following clues:

1) John and Martha met in Jackson County. Tax records show the Hampton family was living in Jackson County, near the Gates family.²

2)John enlisted in December 1813 in Jackson City, Georgia.

3)Their daughter Martha Polly (Dean) was born about 1814 in Georgia.

In 1812, the United States declared war against Great Britain. At war with the Napoleon Bonaparte's French Empire since 1793, Britain claimed the right to intercept American ships on the high seas, seize their cargoes, and search their crews for British navy deserters. By 1811, the British Royal Navy had impressed at least 6,000 mariners who claimed to be citizens of the United States. In addition to impressments, Americans were dismayed by British agitation of the native population on the western frontier.⁴

On December 23, 1813, in Jackson City, Georgia, John Gates an "18 year old farmer" enlisted as a private in the 43rd Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment under Captain Edward Tattnall. He is described as 5'9" tall with dark hair, dark eyes, and a dark complexion.

In the winter of 1815, the Regiment was defending Fort Peter located

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John Valentine Gates

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on Georgia's marshy coast near the town of St. Marys. On January 15th, 1816, 600 British troops landed at a plantation on Cumberland Island. They overwhelmed the small American force, and took Point Peter easily.

On January 15th, 1816, 600 British troops landed at a plantation on Cumberland Island. They overwhelmed the small American force, and took Point Peter easily.

As they headed for the town of St. Marys they encountered 160 American soldiers which included the 43rd Infantry Regiment headed by Tattnall. A skirmish ensued before the badly outnumbered Americans retreated. The skirmish at Point Peter happened almost a month after the peace treaty had been signed.

John was discharged at Ft. Moultrie, South Carolina on Sept. 16, 1815. After making his way back to his family, John and Martha packed up their belongings and moved to Tennessee. While living in Tennessee, Martha gave birth to a son named Hampton about 1816 and a daughter named Mary Ann (Hawkins) about 1817.

When Tennessee was admitted to the union, 40% of the land belonged to the Cherokee and Chickasaw nations. An 1818 treaty with the Chickasaw nation secured western Tennessee for settlers. The family moved to Madison County shortly after the treaty was signed. Their son William Norwood was born in Jackson, Tennessee in 1818.

The area must not have suited them for the family soon packed up their meager belongings and moved to Russellville, Alabama. Perhaps the Gates family was affected by the Panic of 1819.

During the War of 1812, American manufacturers found markets in Europe for cotton, tobacco, wheat and corn. The soaring prices led to prosperity that fueled a speculative land boom in the South.

When the hostilities ended, crop yields in Europe reduced the demand for American farm products. Prices plunged, and banks in Europe and America reduced credit. By early 1819, credit was unavailable to many Americans, many banks failed, and other businesses followed. Sales of public lands plummeted.

On the 1820 Alabama State Census, the John Gates family was enumerated in Franklin County (the names and ages have been added by the author):⁵

- 1 Male > 21 (*John 25*)
- 2 Males < 21 (*Hampton 4 & William 2*)
- 1 female > 21 (*Martha 27*)
- 2 females < 21 (*Martha 6; Mary Ann 3*)
- 0 Slaves

War of 1812

John Valentine Gates - Military Record

Line 1249 - Gates, John Private 43rd Infantry, US Army, 5'9-1/2" tall, dk eyes, dk hair, dk complexion, age 18, farmer, born in Jefferson County, Georgia
Enlisted on Dec. 23, 1813 in Jackson City, Georgia by Capt. Hyde for the Period of the War

Remarks: D.R. Capt. Edward F. Tattnall's Co. Feb'y 16, D.R. Point Petre, Ap'l 30, June 30, & Sept. 16/15. Present. Discharged at Ft. Moultrie, S.C., Sept. 16/15 term exp'd. See pension case

RECORDS OF MEN ENLISTED IN THE U. S. ARMY.															
No.	NAME	ORGANIZATION			DESCRIPTION			WHERE BORN							
		REG.	REGIMENT	CURRENT COMMAND	COMP.	REG.	REG.	AGE	OCCUPATION	TOWN OR COUNTY	STATE	WEEK			
1249	Gates, John			43rd Infantry	Private			5'9-1/2"	dk	dk	18	farmer	Jefferson Co	Georgia	

101

PRIOR TO THE PEACE ESTABLISHMENT, MAY 17, 1815.			
ENLISTMENT		REMARKS	
WHERE	BY WHOM	PERIOD	
Jackson City, Georgia	Capt. Hyde	Dec. 23, 1813	Enlisted for the Period of the War by Capt. Hyde for the Period of the War. Discharged at Ft. Moultrie, S.C., Sept. 16/15 term exp'd. See pension case.

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John Valentine Gates

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While living in Russellville, Martha is said to have given birth to the following children: Francis Caroline (Sanders) about 1820, Bartholomew James about 1823, Joseph Hampton about 1825, Abner Valentine about 1827 and John Jr. about 1829.

Sometime after John was born, the family moved west. Family tradition says the family moved to Natchitoches Parrish, Louisiana and lived there until 1854 when they emigrated to Texas. I was unable to locate the family in the 1830 census. Where was the family? Did they paint “*G.T.T.*” (Gone to Texas) on their door?

In 1821, Mexico gained its freedom from Spain. Virtually bankrupt and unable to control their borders, Mexico encouraged settlement in the sparsely populated northern states. The first Anglo settler colony was established by Stephen Austin in 1822.⁶ As news of his success spread, the rush to Texas was on.

In 1824, the Mexican government invited foreigners to become Mexican citizens. If they would swear allegiance to Mexico and their laws, embrace the Catholic religion, occupy and work the land for six years, the immigrants could claim up to 4,605 acres at a cost about four cents an acre (\$184) payable in six years.⁷ Comparable land in the United States was running \$1.25 an acre payable in cash.

People packed up everything they owned and headed for the wide open spaces of Texas; they wrote *G.T.T.* on the doors and fence posts of the abandoned property.

The Legislature of *Coahuila and Tejas* passed a state colonization law in 1825, which authorized *Empresarios* to act as land agents for the government.

In 1826, Joseph Vehlein, a German merchant, obtained a contract to settle 300 families near Nacogdoches in eastern Texas. Accord to immigration documents, John Gates was recruited as a settler by Vehlein.⁸ On October 16, 1830, Vehlein transferred his contracts to the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company.⁹

The area that John settled in was wooded; timber was available to construct a cabin. Perhaps he raised livestock. According to the *Guide to Texas emigrants* there was a good market for cattle, mules, hogs and tamed mustangs in New Orleans.

Immigrants who brought slaves to Texas planted cash crops of cotton and tobacco. Although slavery was prohibited, many immigrants ignored the law. There is no record of John bringing slaves to Texas. He could have planted less labor intensive crops of maize, beans, sweet potatoes, oats, barley, flax, rye, and hemp. Wild honey was plentiful and the native grapes were cultivated as well¹⁰.

John’s neighbors were mostly Anglos. Between 1821 and 1834, the

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Map of Mexico showing the state of Coahuila and Tejas
Map courtesy of Wikipedia



John Valentine Gates

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number of Tejanos (people of Mexican heritage living in Texas) who mostly worked as ranchers and small farmers numbered 4,000. In 1830 the number of Anglo settlers, including slave-owning plantation owners numbered 10,000. By 1834, the number of white Anglo settlers had jumped to 20,700.¹¹ As more Anglos settled in Texas, tensions increased.

John settled in the Tenaha district in east Texas (near current day Shelby County) where the family was enumerated in the 1835 census of Tenaha, as follows:¹²

1835 Mexican Census - Tenaha

Gates	John	Farmer	47 (1788)
Gates	Jane	Wife	46 (1789)
Gates	Hampton	Son	19 (1816)
Gates	William	Son	17 (1818)
Gates	Fanny	Daughter	15 (1820)
Gates	James	Son	12 (1823)
Gates	Valentine	Son	10 (1825)
Gates	John, Jr.	Son	8 (1827)
Gates	Samuel	Son	6 (1829)
Gates	Sarah	Daughter	4 (1831)
Gates	Susan	Daughter	2 (1833)

Luroy Gates age 23 from Tennessee was enumerated in the Tenaha district in 1835. He has been included as a son of John Gates in many of the family trees found on the internet.¹³ Perhaps this is the reason most people state John and Martha were married in Tennessee.

In 1828 the Mexican government sent a team to investigate the status of the Texas colonies. In a report of their finding the diarist wrote: “the spark that will start the conflagration that will deprive us of Texas, will start from this colony.”¹⁴ The expedition concluded in January 1829.

Responding to the warnings, in 1830 the Mexican government cracked down on Texas. It ordered Texans to end slavery. It halted further American immigration. It required Texans to pay taxes for the first time. They sent Mexican troops to Texas to enforce collection of customs duties.

In 1832, blood was spilled. At the **Battle of Velasco**, Anglo insurgents attacked Fort Velasco. The conflict ended when the Commander was forced to surrender due to lack of ammunition. The troops were allowed to return to Mexico City.

In 1832 and 1833 the Anglo settlers petitioned for reforms and requested a separate state for Texas. Stephen Austin went to Mexico City to present the requests.¹⁵

President Santa Anna agreed to repeal the immigration restrictions, but he refused to grant statehood. Frustrated, Austin wrote an inflammatory letter advising the settlers to proceed without permission of the central government. The letter was intercepted and Austin was arrested. He was freed by a

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John Valentine Gates

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general amnesty law in July 1835 and returned to Texas.

Amid these tensions, John submitted paperwork in 1835 to obtain a deed for land in Texas. He signed the document on September 16, 1835, in Nacogdoches with his mark.¹⁶

In order to be eligible for land, a settler had to provide proof of good character. Character certificates were issued by local authorities in Nacogdoches to settlers who intended to petition for land grants. Two character certificates were found in the Texas General Land Office (GLO) for John Gates. The first one was written in English.¹⁷

Free state of Coahuila and Tejas, Municipality of San Augustine

I certify that John Gates, a native of Georgia of the United States of America is a man of family consisting of seven persons, and a man of good moral habits industrious and a good citizen and friendly to the laws and religion of the country given at the instance of the party interested

May 26th, 1835 John Chumley Alcalde interim

The second one was written in Spanish and translated by the author:¹⁸

To the Honorable Radford Berry , Mayor of this town and its municipality

I certify that the foreigner John Gates is a man of high moral standards, an adherent of the constitution and laws of the country and the Christian religion; he is married with a family, and been in this area from 1829 until now. It has been proven by witness and oral declaration at the Town of Nacogdoches on 9 Nov. 1835.

G Pollite Alcalde in Tenna

In 1835, Santa Anna overthrew the constitution of 1824 and appointed himself dictator. He ordered the military to disarm state militias. Soldiers were sent to Gonzales, Texas to repossess a cannon provided to the residents for defense against Indian raids. On October 2, the Texans loaded the cannon with scrap iron, and fired at the troops. Outgunned the soldiers retreated. War had begun.¹⁹

The colonists formed an ad hoc Army and marched to San Antonio de Béxar where they laid siege to the garrison housing 1200 troops under the direction of General Cos. After about 2 months, the stalemate ended when Col. Ben Milam appealed to the Texans "Who will go with old Ben Milam into San Antonio?"

Before dawn on December 5, Milam and 300 volunteers attacked the town. Milam was killed by a sniper during the house-to-house combat. After four days of fighting, General Cos signaled a truce. In exchange for the parole and return of Cos and his men to Mexico, the Texans gained controls of the public property, guns and ammunition in San Antonio.

John's 17-year-old son, William Norwood, joined Ben Milam in the storming of San Antonio. In William's pension application he described his service as follows:

"I was at San Antonio with Col. Milum when he fel and then after whipping

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John Valentine Gates

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Cross out of the alamo I returnd home I belonged to Baly Anderson Company I got home in January 36 I was in the battle of San Antonio yours truly, W.N. Gates”²⁰

After the battle William returned home to his family (near current day Shelby County, Texas). William was credited with service to the Republic of Texas for which he received a Bounty Warrant No.179 for 320 acres of land.²⁰

In February 1836, Santa Anna led the Mexican Army into Texas to put down the rebellion. The troops arrived in San Antonio on Feb. 23. The Texans defending San Antonio took refuge inside the Alamo. After a thirteen-day siege, Mexican troops stormed the Alamo and killed all rebel fighters sparing only a few women and slaves.

Santa Anna and his troops then continued east. General Jose Urrea marched additional troops up the Texas coast. Houston retreated leaving the settlers unprotected. Fearing Santa Anna’s policy of taking no prisoners, Texans fled their home and took refuge in Louisiana.

On April 21, 1836, the Texans defeated Santa Anna’s army at the Battle of San Jacinto; Santa Anna was captured the following day. The Mexican army retreated back to Mexico City, ending the Texas Revolution.

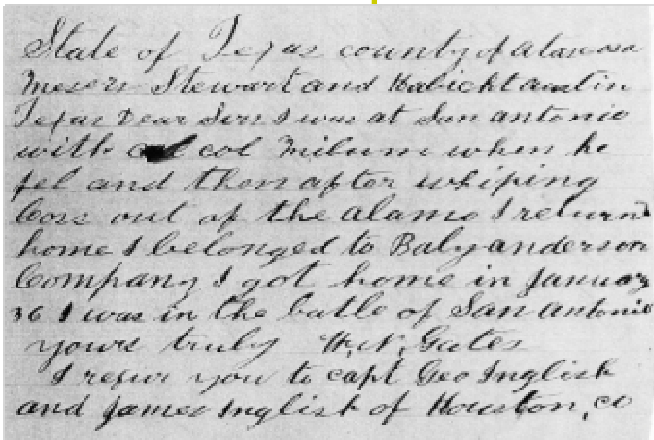
It appears the Gates family was among the Texans who fled to Louisiana. John settled in Natchitoches Parrish, Louisiana. A land patent show John Gates acquired 160 acres in Township 10N, Range 10W, southeast quarter section 29.²¹ According to the BLM tract books, John bought 159.90 acres at \$1.25 per acre on February 5, 1939.²² Natchitoches Parrish contained vast cotton and tobacco plantations. It is likely that the family farmed the land growing cash crops of cotton or tobacco as well as garden crops to feed the family.

Family tradition states John died in 1837 in Natchitoches leaving behind his wife Martha Jane and several under-age children. Based on the land records, John’s death was after February 1939.²¹ The patent for John Gates was recorded on April 1, 1843. The deed may have been recorded when the property was sold or divided to satisfy John’s estate.

It is possible that after John’s death, Martha married a second time. An entry found on a message board posted by Jane Skjorthaug May 22, 2002 stated:

“Martha Gates, widow of John Gates, married James Maxwell between 1840 and 1842 probably in Natchitoches Parish. Need to know when. In a

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John Valentine Gates

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law suit filed against her Dec. 1842 by Geo. Fuller in Natchitoches Parish it states that "Martha Gates, widow of John Gates, newly married to James Maxwell, is leaving the state of LA forever". She signed the note for a loan under the name Martha Gates."²³

James and Martha moved to Hopkins County, Texas before 1847. The last known location of the couple was Hopkins County, Texas where they were living when the 1850 census was taken.

John and Martha's children must have requested assistance in obtaining land bounty based on their father's Mexican land grant. On February 3, 1860 *An Act for the relief of the heirs of John Gates* was passed by the Texas legislature. This act cancelled the title issued to "John Gates as a Colonist in Vehlin's Colony" and issued a certificate to his heirs.⁸

Paper work dated 1878 listed his heirs as: W.N. Gates; A.V. Gates, Mary Hawkins, Avarilla Gates (widow of Bartholomew), Caroline Sanders, and Joseph Gates.²⁴ At least one sibling who was still living was not included as an heir, Samuel who was living in Florida; perhaps he had lost touch with his siblings.

Researchers credit the following children to the couple:

Name	Birth	Death
Leroy	1812 TN	
Martha Polly (Dean)	1814 GA	1862 MS
Joseph Hampton	1816 TN	after 1878
Mary Ann (Hawkins)	1817 TN	abt 1900 IL
William Norwood	1818 TN	1903 TX
Francis Caroline (Sanders)	1820 AL	1876 TX
Bartholomew James	1823 AL	1860 LA
Abner Valentine	1825 AL	1916 TX
John, Jr.	1827 AL	
Samuel	1830 TX	1890 FL
Sarah	1831 TX	
Susan	1833 TX	
Martha Emaline (Parsons)	1837 LA	1855 TX

Notes:

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(Continued on page 14)



John Valentine Gates

(Continued from page 13)

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**Marion County
Genealogical Society**

Mission Statement

The Marion County Genealogical Society is dedicated to creating and promoting an interest in genealogy, focusing on research in Marion County, Florida and in supporting members in their research.

4th Quarter: October –
December 2013

**The Rootdigger
MCGS
P. O. Box 1206
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All I Want For Christmas Is A New Surname

Author Unknown



Dear Santa: Don't bring me new dishes,
I don't need a new kind of game.
Genealogists have particular wishes
For Christmas I just want a surname.
A new washing machine would be great,
But it's not the desire of my life.
I've just found an ancestor's birth date;
What I need now is the name of his wife.
My heart doesn't yearn for a ring
That would put a real diamond to shame.
What I want is a much cheaper thing;
Please give me Mary's last name.
To see my heart singing with joy,
Don't bring me a red leather suitcase
Bring me a genealogist's toy;
A surname with dates and a place.